WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICES CONSULTATION

FROM: Paul Addison
TO: Crawley Borough Council
FAO: Paul Fairham

SUBJECT: Outline application for a mixed development comprising 170 dwellings, doctors surgery, Respite care centre and residential care home, site of former Ifield Community College, Lady Margaret Road, Ifield, Crawley

CONSULTATION: Reconsultation

RECOMMENDATION:

Advice [ ]
Modification [ ]
No Objection [x]
More Information [ ]
Refusal [ ]

TAD contribution: £0 – Specific transport + highways improvements listed below

I refer to my previous consultation comments dated 17th August 2006 when I advised that additional information would be required from the applicants to assess whether the proposed traffic signal junction improvements at Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue and Overdene Drive/Gossops Drive are achievable in both capacity and safety terms. (there was also an issue relating to the lengthy pedestrian cycles on both traffic signal junctions which needed to be addressed). There was also a requirement for both junctions and the two mini-roundabouts to be subject to a Stage 1 Safety Audit. Consideration also needed to be given to using the Section 106 monies at Apple Tree Farm to assist in delivering the infrastructure improvements identified, particularly the Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue traffic signals and the traffic calming in front of Ifield Parade.

Following my previous consultation comments, I have been in discussions with the applicant and the applicants transport consultant, Mott MacDonalds (MM), in order to address the above issues and an Addendum to the original Transport Assessment (TA) has now been submitted. This Addendum has involved additional work relating to the availability and capacity of public transport services in Ifield, the traffic generation from the residential element of the development scheme, the traffic signal improvements and safety audit findings at both the Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue and Ifield Drive/Overdene Drive junctions, the installation of real-time public transport passenger information and the access links to the development itself from Lady Margaret Road.

For the sake of clarity, I shall deal with each issue in turn

Public Transport Services

In order to minimise the existing traffic capacity problems at the Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue and Overdene Drive/Gossops Drive junctions, the applicants were asked to consider measures to reduce vehicle trip generation from the proposed development by looking at ways of encouraging greater use of public transport, not just from the development, but also in the surrounding neighbourhood.

Although Ifield is not served by Fastway high quality public transport services, there are a number of regular bus services that pass along Ifield Drive within a short walk of the development site with bus stops in Ifield Parade. MM have contacted Metrobus, the bus operator, to establish the existing patronage and capacity of these bus services which concluded that there is approximately
71% occupancy on route no. 2, and 43% occupancy on route no. s 200, 526 and 527. Although routes no. 2 and 200 can run close to capacity at peak times, Metrobus confirmed that there was usually some spare capacity on these routes and there was always spare capacity on service no.s 526 and 527. There would therefore appear some scope to increase bus patronage as part of a sustainable transport package such as new bus stops with real-time passenger information and introducing this real-time information into new dwellings and community facilities such as the doctors surgery. It would also be possible to include the sustainable transport benefits when marketing the development by the house builders together with personalised travel planning which pilot studies have indicated can reduce car trips by between 6-10% when supported by frequent and attractive bus services.

It is therefore considered that the following package of measures would achieve a degree of modal shift away from the private car and therefore help mitigate the traffic impact of the development on the junctions of Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue and Overdene Drive/Gossops Drive.

- The installation of real-time bus passenger information at 6 existing bus stops in Ifield Drive, including new or relocated shelters at 4 locations.
- The installation of real-time bus passenger information displays in each new household for the 170 dwellings being proposed.
- Sustainable transport modes to be highlighted during the marketing of the new residential dwellings.
- A personal travel planning campaign before and after occupation.
- Possible public transport ticket subsidies.

The off-site improvements to provide improved real-time bus passenger information at existing or new bus stops in Ifield Drive would encourage public transport usage over a wider area than just the development site as lack of information about public transport is cited as one of the primary reasons why people do not use it.

Traffic Generation

The initial estimates of traffic generation used in the TA were taken from mixed-use developments on the TRICS trip rate database which included the overall trip rates from a number of developments throughout the country. This indicated that the proposed development would generate a material increase in traffic using the junctions of Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue and Overdene Drive/Gossops Drive which are already congested, particularly in the AM and PM peaks. However, the predicted increase in traffic using these junctions as a result of the proposed development would be relatively small in percentage terms, although it is acknowledged that it would add to the existing capacity problems and increase queue lengths.

Since the initial TA was produced and the likely type of housing unit has become more firmly established, a further analysis of trip rates has been carried out based upon the breakdown between private and affordable housing and whether the dwellings are houses or flats (I am advised that 30% are to be affordable units and that 74% of the units would be flats and 26% houses). According to the TRICS database, houses generate a higher trip rate than flats and private houses a higher trip rate than affordable houses. On this basis, therefore, the level of trips generated by the proposed development could be up to 50% less than originally estimated using the average trip rates from a number of mixed-use developments in the TA. The original trip rates in the TA should therefore be seen as a possible worst case scenario when a more realistic figure is more likely to be the lower trip rates established from the specific housing types on the TRICS database. This would, effectively, reduce the impact of traffic generated at the two aforementioned junctions, in percentage terms, although, again, it is acknowledged that even a small increase in traffic at these junctions would add to the capacity problems and increase queue lengths.
The applicants were asked to consider possible junction improvements at Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue and Overdene Drive/Gossops Drive. Two preliminary junction improvement schemes were subsequently prepared showing the mini-roundabouts as being removed with both junctions being converted to traffic signal operation. Stage 1 Safety Audits were carried out on the proposed traffic signal schemes for both junctions which raised a number of safety issues, particularly at the junction of Overdene Drive/Gossops Drive where a number of private accesses fell within the junction area. It was difficult to find a way of satisfactorily overcoming this safety problem so it was concluded that it would be safer to retain the mini-roundabout arrangement in this location. It was, however, possible to develop a satisfactory traffic signal scheme for the Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue junction. I do though have some concerns regarding its proximity and interaction with the A23 Crawley Avenue/Ifield Avenue roundabout, although I have been advised that it would work in capacity terms and could be delivered within the boundary of the existing public highway.

Whilst the proposed traffic signalling of the Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue junction would appear to work in both capacity and safety terms, I should stress that traffic signals would work most efficiently during the AM and PM peak hours and that outside of these periods, the existing mini-roundabouts seem to function reasonably well. As mentioned previously, the increase in traffic generated by the development at both junctions would be relatively small and it may actually be mitigated by the aforementioned public transport package if a small amount of modal shift away from the car occurs. I therefore have reservations about requiring a junction improvement at Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue to take place before the public transport package has been delivered and monitored to establish whether modal shift has actually occurred or not. However, I consider that the funding for this junction improvement does need to be secured as a safeguard should traffic conditions worsen.

According to MM's estimate, the traffic signal junction improvement at Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue is likely to be in the region of £200,000, so I would require that this sum is secured from the applicant by way of a Section 106 agreement. If the junction improvement is considered necessary and the cost of the actual improvement is more than £200,000 then I would expect a contribution to made from the £206,000 secured from the Apple Tree Farm development to make up the balance. If the junction improvement is not required, then it should be spent, alternatively, on environmental and safety improvements in the Ifield Parade area, again with a contribution from the Apple Tree Farm development.

I should advise that a new road link from the proposed development to the new A23 Ifield School has been investigated and strong objections have been raised by Education Services due to its impact on school playing fields. Likewise, strong objections have also been raised to an alternative access to the new Manor Green School from the A23 Ifield School entrance. Therefore, the only access available to the proposed development is off of Lady Margaret Road and the planning application has been submitted on this basis.

Lady Margaret Road

Although it is likely that there would be a lower level of traffic generated by the proposed development, according to the latest assessment of traffic flows generated by the residential units, there will be a significant increase in traffic using Lady Margaret Road (LMR) even though school traffic flows from the former Ifield Community College have now been removed. The main traffic generators will be the new doctors surgery and the residential development with the latter generating the most traffic movements during the AM and PM peak hours. The Manor Green Special School is also a major traffic generator during the AM peak hour, but less so in the PM peak hour as the school closes in the afternoon. Access to the proposed development would be available from both junctions of LMR with Ifield Drive (ie. LMR West and LMR East). Both roads have frontage development along the first 80 metres or so from their junctions with Ifield Drive before the road turns at right angles to form an open ended access road loop that runs along the western boundary of the proposed development site.
Although LMR and its two junctions with Ifield Drive are of adequate capacity to accommodate the likely traffic flows from the development, traffic flows will increase and therefore it would be desirable to construct mini-roundabouts at both junctions to assist in turning movements and to reduce traffic speeds on the approach to Ifield Parade. However, there is on-street car parking along both roads leading to the proposed development which would interfere with the free flow of traffic. This could be addressed by the introduction of waiting restrictions on both roads, but this would be a little unfair on local residents who have no off-street parking facilities. Instead, it is intended to make Lady Margaret Road a one-way system whereby all traffic entering the proposed development would enter via LMR East and leave via LMR West (see Fig 4.3 in the Addendum). This would allow the reduction in the carriageway width of LMR East and West which would reduce traffic speeds and enable the provision of laybys that could be used by local residents and visitors. It would also allow some environmental improvements in both roads and the possible introduction of a 20mph speed limit. This would distribute traffic equitably across both sections of LMR and would reflect the traffic arrangements for the former Ifield Community College, albeit directionally opposite.

**Ifield Drive**

As mentioned in my previous comments, the proposed development would attract more traffic to the area and I expressed concerns about the effects this would have on highway safety in front of Ifield Parade. I advised that I would be seeking speed reducing measures along Ifield Drive between the Lady Margaret Road junctions to create a 20mph zone and improve pedestrian safety. I do consider, however, that any scheme would involve extensive consultation and unknown costs. In my view, this should be progressed if the junction improvements at Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue are found to be unnecessary (see above). In any event, I would expect Apple Tree Farm to make a contribution to any environmental enhancements that may be brought forward for the Ifield Parade area.

**Summary**

In summary, I confirm that I would have no highway or transportation objections to this outline planning application subject to a Section 106 agreement to secure the following:

- The installation of real-time passenger information at 6 bus stops along Ifield Drive including new or relocated bus shelters at 4 locations + annual maintenance for a period of 10 years. (prior to the occupation of the residential dwellings)

- The installation of real-time passenger information displays in each new household, doctors surgery, Respite care centre and residential home. (prior to the occupation of the residential dwellings)

- A financial contribution of £200,000 towards junction improvements at Ifield Drive/Ifield Avenue if considered necessary within 18 months of the completion and occupation of the residential dwellings. If the junction improvements are considered unnecessary, then the £200,000 shall be put towards a scheme for safety/environmental improvements at Ifield Parade.

- The construction of 2 x mini-roundabouts at the junctions of Lady Margaret Road with Ifield Drive and the introduction of a one-way system in Lady Margaret Road (east to west) together with the reconstruction of the existing road, the provision of laybys and environmental enhancements (prior to any occupation and subject to public consultation exercise)

- The introduction of a 20mph limit on Ifield Drive and within the development (prior to the occupation of the residential dwellings and subject to public consultation)
• A personal travel planning campaign before and after occupation of the new buildings.

• Site marketing to emphasise access to sustainable transport modes, including the provision of welcome packs providing information on public transport, cycleways and local facilities and services.

**Conditions**

- C8G Car parking
- C9B Works compound
- C9Ei Accesses
- C9Eiii Surface water drainage
- C9H Specification
- C9J Road completion
- C9K Existing access closed
- C9N Temporary parking
- C9O Access road construction
- C9P Plant, materials and contractors buildings
- C9S Wheel cleaning facility
- C9W Construction traffic route notices

The applicant will be required to enter into a Section 38/278/111 for the off-site highway works and any on-site road adoption works – please advise.

**Paul Addison**

**Development Control**