

# PEMBURY PARISH COUNCIL

Working for Pembury People



Mr Stephen Baughen  
Head of Planning  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Town Hall  
TUNBRIDGE WELLS, KENT  
TN1 1RS

24 July 2019

Dear Mr Baughen

**Planning Application 19/00884/FULL - Development of a Motor Village Car Dealership and Minor Alterations to Tesco Food Store Car Park, Land Adjacent Tesco Car Park, Cornford Lane, Tunbridge Wells Kent TN2 4NE**

The Parish Council submitted initial comments on the above application to TWBC by e-mail on 17 May 2019. As you will know, our primary concerns relate to the traffic impact arising from this major new development on the A264/A228 Pembury Road and on a number of local roads in Pembury, particularly Cornford Lane and Pembury High Street. The Parish Council would now like to make some additional comments.

## 1. Transport Assessment

The Parish Council found it hard to reconcile local residents' daily experience of widespread traffic congestion in Pembury with the applicants' submitted Transport Assessment (TA) (Mayer Brown consultants – March 2019), which concluded that the traffic impact of such large-scale development proposals can be satisfactorily accommodated on the local highway network, provided that minor junction improvements are carried out.

Therefore, the Parish Council commissioned a specialist transport consultant – Les Henry Associates - to examine the TA and the traffic surveys, modelling techniques and assumptions, and the engineering judgements that underlie its conclusions. Mr Henry concludes that the TA has not correctly identified the existing traffic conditions within the local area and subsequently have not accurately assessed the implications of the proposals on the local highway network or identified any appropriate mitigation because:

- *The TA relies on very sparse data much of which is not detailed in the document (i.e. a single day traffic count and lack of data to back up trip assignment diagrams) (NB. The traffic count was on a single Thursday, whereas food superstore traffic generally peaks on Friday evenings and around the middle of the day on Saturdays and Sundays).*

- *The TA has not identified any clear initiatives or improved public transport*

*and highway improvements that would provide a modal shift away from the private motor car as a form of transport.*

- The transport issues associated with the proposals have not been correctly considered and therefore the impacts of the proposed development have not been addressed.*
- The environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure have not been identified, assessed and considered.*
- The significant impact from the proposed development in terms of capacity and congestion and highway safety have not been fully identified and therefore, no mitigation is proposed.*
- The proposals have therefore been prepared by a strategy that fails to meet the infrastructure requirements and cannot therefore satisfy the NPPF requirement for soundness.*

A copy of Mr Henry's report is attached for your information, so that you can see the detailed analysis on which he draws. The Parish Council asks that you liaise with KCC Highways on the significant issues he raises about the dependability of the applicants' TA as a basis for determining this important planning application and, as necessary, takes up these matters with the applicants, so that the traffic impact of the development can be properly understood.

## **2. Strategic development allocations in the forthcoming local plan**

Since the Parish Council prepared its initial comments, the Borough Council has announced that the forthcoming local plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough up to 2036 which include strategic development allocations at Capel, Paddock Wood and Tudeley, which will together provide around 6,000 new homes, employment, social and physical infrastructure (such as schools and health facilities), and retail development in Paddock Wood centre. This set of proposals will have very significant implications for transport along the A264 / A228 corridor between Tunbridge Wells, Pembury and Paddock Wood. The applicants in this case could not have known about these proposals in framing their TA. However, the Parish Council consider it essential – now that the strategic allocations are in the public domain – their transport implications are fully taken into account for this planning application in terms of both:

- future traffic levels along the A264 / A228 corridor and its implications for major development there, such as the application proposals
- options for promoting sustainable transport along the A264 / A228 corridor including public transport, walking, cycling, and modal transfer measures, such as "park and ride"

## **3. Planning policies**

In considering this planning application, the Parish Council asks the Borough Council to give careful consideration to relevant national and local planning policies, in particular:

- **National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) : paragraphs 102 - 111** This part of the national planning policy seeks to promote sustainable transport , so that (para.102) :

*a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;*

*b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;*

*c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;*

*d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains;*

*and e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places*

In particular, the national policy states that "*significant development should be focused on locations which are, or could be made, sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a choice of travel modes*". (Para. 103) The Parish Council does not consider that this site offers such choices, as its customers and employees will be drawn from a wide area and the site has infrequent bus services, which do not operate early or late enough for workers to use in their commute, and is distant from railway stations. These factors, and of course the very nature of a "motor village" development, are likely to make it highly car dependent.

The NPPF goes on (para.104) to state that "*planning policies should identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choices and realise opportunities for large scale development*". This national policy is very relevant as much of the application site has been allocated for a park and ride facility in a recently approved development plan (2016)

The site is within the High Weald AONB. Paragraph 172 of the NPPF states that:

*"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks*

*Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.*

*The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.*

*Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of: a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.*

The Parish Council does not consider that the proposed development meets these tests. Whilst it may bring some local economic benefits, there is clearly no national need for such a development, and the applicants have not demonstrated that any need for it could not be met on a site outside the AONB.

- **Local planning policies** : Much of the application site was first allocated for a "park and ride" facility to serve Tunbridge Wells in 2006 ( policy TP17 of the 2006 Local Plan ), subsequently a "saved" policy after 2007. This policy provided a large surface car park with frequent and attractively priced bus services into the town centre . The intention of the policy is to relieve traffic and to improve air quality on the A264, and to relieve traffic congestion and pressure on car parks in the town centre. Park and ride was also endorsed as part of the transportation strategy set out in policy 3 of the Core strategy (2010)

The Borough Council's draft Transport Strategy (2013) retained the park and strategy and a specific allocation of land on the application site was carried forward into the Site Allocations Local Plan (2016) as follows:

*Policy AL/VRA 2 Park and Ride facilities Land at Woodsgate Corner, adjacent to Tesco, Pembury*

*This site, as shown on the Villages & Rural Areas (Pembury) Proposals Map, located outside the Limits to Built Development of Pembury, is allocated for development as a Park and Ride facility. Proposals for development of this land to provide Park and Ride facilities must demonstrate that: landscape proposals can minimise the impact of development on the surrounding landscape. Proposals shall include detailed planting schemes to screen the new development the erection of buildings, structures, lighting and signage shall be kept to a minimum.*

The terms of this policy reflect the location of the site within the High Weald AONB, adjacent to the Metropolitan Green Belt, and outside the limits to built development. Policy AL/VRA2 seeks a development which is sensitive to the surrounding landscape, is well landscaped and screened, and where the erection of buildings, lighting and signage

is kept to a minimum (in other words, an essentially open use where impact is mitigated as far as possible by planting measures). The proposed development involving well over 7,000 square metres of new buildings, which will be brightly lit, and with extensive direction and corporate signage, would clearly fail the requirements the Borough Council has set for this site in a nationally protected landscape.

Local planning policies reflect the national policy to protect and enhance the AONB in saved policy EN26 (Local Plan 2006) and policy 4 (Core Strategy 2010).

The new Local Plan will soon be published for consultation and, whilst it will attract limited weight at this stage, still needs to be considered as part of the emerging policy background for this application. In particular, the effect of proposals for strategic development allocations at Capel, Paddock Wood and Tudeley on the A264 / A228 corridor needs to be carefully considered. These allocations must require consideration of measures to manage traffic flows on this route. It would be short-sighted in the extreme to lose the opportunity to widen travel choice by providing park and ride facilities at a critical location on a radial route into Tunbridge Wells.

**The Parish Council re-iterates its very strong objection to the Motor Village proposals and urges the Borough Council to refuse this application. These proposals are contrary to national and local planning policy, will harm the High Weald AONB, and will limit the scope for sustainable transport proposals to support the development strategy in the forthcoming local plan.**

I have copied this letter to Vicki Hubert at KCC Highways, so that she can consider the transport issues we have raised

Yours sincerely

Helen Munro  
**Clerk to Pembury Parish Council**

Cc: Vicki Hubert (by email)