



Northumberland County Council

COMMITTEE: TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

DATE: 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

Queen Elizabeth High School – Highways matters

Report of: Rob Murfin Director of Planning

Cabinet Member: Cllr Colin Horncastle

Purpose of report

Application reference : 19/03998/CCD Redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth High School:
Update on proposed Highways works

The report provides a review and update on the highways issues raised by Local members and residents regarding this development. This report sets out the background, context and matters arising with respect to highways works associated with the redevelopment at Queen Elizabeth High School along with discussion and options on the highways works under review.

Recommendation

To note the contents of the report in respect of the update provided by Highways Development Management to the Discharge of Conditions Application

Link to Corporate Plan/ Legislation

This report is relevant to how the County Council discharges its statutory duties.

Key Issues

The discharge of planning condition 27 for highways works in relation to planning permission reference 19/03998, is being carried out under planning reference 21/00389/DISCON.

There has been a notable level of interest in this application and there are 63 recorded public comments, of which 47 are objecting, 1 supporting and the remainder recorded as neutral. The majority of comments relate in whole or part to the proposed highways works.

The objections predominantly relate to the scope of waiting restrictions, including zig-zag markings, single yellow lines and double yellow lines. In general, the comments note that the loss of parking will further impact on residential amenity. Some of these objections have also identified that there is a live consultation for a Traffic Regulation Order to implement these waiting restrictions running concurrently.

A number of objections relate to bus routing to and from Whetstone Bridge Road. Whilst the planning condition does not specifically relate to this matter, the proposed works have highlighted this concern amongst local residents and interest groups.

A smaller number of objections relate to the number of crossing points proposed and the requirement for tactile paved provision.

Background

A planning application was submitted in September 2019 for 'Redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth High School including the refurbishment of Grade II listed hydrobuilding and Westfield house for ongoing school use and new build school buildings of 2 and 3 storeys. Demolition of existing school buildings and associated new access points, car parking, bus parking, landscaping, grass playing fields, hard courts, and the artificial sport pitches including sports lighting, Queen Elizabeth High School Whetstone Bridge Road Hexham Northumberland NE46 3JD'

During the planning application process there were specific highway related concerns raised by local residents, Hexham Town Council and the local members. The concerns included

- the width of local footways which are narrow in places, as little as 60cm. This was a concern as no footpath widening was proposed.
- the speed limit on local roads,
- the bus activity and travel plan.
- And general Road Safety concerns

Following members questions and debate the application was approved at Strategic Planning Committee on 7 January 2020, with the decision notice issued on 29 January 2020.

The approval was subject to a number of planning conditions with the highways works detailed in approved plans Condition 27 Plan 46020/5501/006 rev C and condition 27 which says;

'Notwithstanding the details submitted with the application, and within 9 months of the commencement of development, details of the following proposed permanent highway works, including a timetable for their implementation, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority: -

New and amended vehicular access points to Whetstone Bridge Road;

Uncontrolled pedestrian crossings improvements to Whetstone Bridge Road;

Footway connection along existing desire line on highway verge at existing controlled pedestrian crossing on Allendale Road to the east of its junction at Whetstone Bridge Road;

Traffic and Parking Management Scheme on Whetstone Bridge Road and at its junctions with Tynedale Terrace, Alexandra Crescent and Hellpool Lane;

Traffic and Parking Management Scheme and extension of existing 20mph school zone on Allendale Road;

Resurfacing of Whetstone Bridge Road;

All other associated works associated with the above.

The highways works shall be constructed in accordance with the approved plans, details and in accordance with the approved timetable of implementation. Reason: In the interests of highway safety and sustainable transport, in accordance with Policy GD4 of the Tynedale Local Plan, Policy GD4 of the Tynedale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.'

Specific Highways Matters

Technical Background

Highways Schemes follow a similar design process whether promoted by the authority or by developers. Schemes are initially taken through feasibility, then move through to detailed design, approval and construction. When schemes are promoted through planning it is common that schemes are only designed up to feasibility level at the planning approval stage.

Road Safety Audit (RSA) – An RSA is the process utilised to provide an effective, independent review of the road safety implications of engineering interventions for all road users. It should be carried out when works to the highway will result in a behavioural change for the use of the highway. It is not a technical check of design standards but an independent check that the design characteristics do not contribute to collisions and/or incidents on highway schemes.

It is not a requirement to agree with all matters raised within a Road Safety Audit. It is acceptable to disagree and reject any matters raised with appropriate reasoning.

Feasibility designs should be supported by a Road Safety Audit Stage 1 and Detailed design should be supported by a Road Safety Audit Stage 2. The highways work proposed that relates to Condition 27 were up to feasibility but had not been subjected to a Road Safety Audit Stage 1.

When highways design is undertaken by external consultants the HDM team act as the overseeing organisation for Safety Audits so is experienced in the Road Safety Audit process.

A Traffic Regulation Order has been advertised for the proposed waiting restrictions on Whetstone Bridge Road and connecting roads. This has occurred as the applicant sought for the administration of the Traffic Regulation Order.

The procedure for formalising Traffic Regulation Orders is made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (the Act). If the appropriate processes are not carried out in accordance with the Act then any waiting restrictions and associated signs set out on a public highway would be unenforceable.

Discharge of Conditions: 21/00389/DISCON

Application reference 21/00389/DISCON was made to discharge a number of conditions including condition 27 for the highways works on 3 February 2021. Prior to making this application and following the granting of planning permission the applicant has engaged the services of NCC Technical Services to produce a competent design that can be discharged in planning and subsequently delivered. As the design was undertaken in-house the Road Safety Audit process was carried out with Technical Services acting as the overseeing organisation.

The plan in Appendix A was submitted for a Road Safety Audit Stage 1 (preliminary) on 7 September 2020. The RSA 1 highlighted a number of observations and these related to:

- Potential ponding of water
- Potential conflict between buses and pedestrians
- Lack of tactile paving for visually impaired users
- Lack of cycling infrastructure
- Bus Parking

The RSA 1 was taken through a designer response process and all identified matters were accepted for further review. As a result of the RSA 1 and further design review the scheme was amended to the proposals shown in Appendix A.

The amended scheme in Appendix A is at detailed design level and was taken to RSA Stage 2 (detailed design) for further independent safety review.

The RSA 2 highlighted observations and these repeated some of the RSA 1 issues of ponding, visibility from side roads and tactile paving. It also introduced new matters as follows:

- Surface water drainage
- Extension of double yellow lines at Hellpool Lane
- Visibility Splays

Further amendments to the proposals were made following the RSA 2. The scheme changes are shown on the last page in Appendix A.

As a result of Road Safety Audit and design checks undertaken by Technical Services the scheme proposals now have a greater impact on local road parking than anticipated at the planning application stage, whilst adding safety benefits.

There have been several objections, formal complaints and other correspondence relating to the increased scope of the lining restrictions and number of tactile crossing opportunities as well as concerns relative to the timing of the works and opening of the school.

The HDM team has reviewed the RSA 1&2 along with the submitted design when considering the Discharge of conditions application. The review, for the purposes of discharging this condition, has concluded that there are insufficient grounds for the greater extent of waiting restrictions, on the basis of road safety, as there will not be a behavioural change nor would the outcome of a collision change. HDM therefore recommend that revised drawings reducing the scope of waiting restrictions but retaining all other features are submitted.

On the basis that revised plans are submitted the HDM response to the Discharge of conditions application will be to recommend:

- To implement the highways works as follows including waiting restrictions in accordance with PBA drawing (appendix A)
- All other highways works in accordance with 'Final Design following RSA 2' (Appendix A) including
 - Tactile paving crossing points
 - Improvements to controlled crossing points
 - Footway widening
 - New vehicle and pedestrian access points to school
 - Resurfacing of Whetstone Bridge Road
 - 20mph zone extension

Works will be delivered in accordance with the agreed programme (Appendix B) and monitored with a travel plan expectation to promote any further parking restriction, if required.

It is considered that the scale and timed delivery of these works will result in the safe and suitable operation of the school.

The impacts of the reduced waiting restrictions were considered at the planning stage and remain acceptable. Following the outcome of the Discharge of conditions application the pending Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) maybe revised.

Implications

Policy	Determination of Planning applications are in line with policy unless stated in individual applications.
Finance and value for money	Ensuring most appropriate scheme is implemented
Legal	Legal Services will be instructed to assist with required TRO's
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Each application will have regard to the Equalities Act 2010
Risk Assessment	Included in individual applications
Crime & Disorder	N/A

Customer Consideration	
Carbon Reduction	Included in individual applications
Health & Wellbeing	N/A
Wards	Hexham Central with Acomb Hexham East Hexham West

Background Papers

Planning Application Files:

19/03998/CCD Redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth High School: Update on proposed Highways works

Discharge of Conditions: 21/00389/DISCON

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