

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE APPEALS PANEL

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

24th June 2011

TRAFFIC CALMING, TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER AND FORMAL PEDESTRIAN CROSSING PROPOSALS WHITETHORN DRIVE, BRACKLA IN CONNECTION WITH THE NEW ARCHBISHOP MCGRATH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek a resolution to the formal objections received in relation to the proposals at Whitethorn Drive, Brackla for Traffic Calming, Traffic Regulation Order and Formal Pedestrian Crossing in connection with the new Archbishop McGrath Comprehensive School development.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities.

- 2.1 The issue of introducing traffic management and road safety measures cross-cuts a number of aims in the Corporate Improvement Plan. This includes the Strategic Themes *Strong Communities*, where the aim is to 'build safe and inclusive communities' and *Young Voices*, where we want all children and young people to be safe. Road safety also forms part of the aims of the Community Strategy to have Strong Communities where there is a reduction in crime and people feel safer in their communities.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 As part of the proposals to site the new Archbishop McGrath Comprehensive School at Brackla, planning consent was granted in 2009 which was subject to a number of planning conditions.

- 3,2 The condition that has led to this report is **Condition 11 of the planning consent notice, which states;**

*"No works whatsoever shall commence on site until such time as a comprehensive scheme has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority **for traffic calming restricting 85% tile traffic speeds to 20 mph on Whitethorn Drive, 100 metres either side of the school access junction and between Whitethorn Drive and the Community Route crossing point east of the bus/staff school access..... Such scheme, as agreed,***

shall be implemented as agreed by the Local Planning Authority prior to the development being brought into beneficial use.”

- 3.3 The reason for this condition is to protect the interests of children travelling to school by bus, car and especially as pedestrians who are considered a vulnerable group. Therefore every effort must be made to protect them from potential harm.
- 3.4 In correspondence sent to local residents the Corporate Director Children has stressed the point that the new development is not just a school but is also a Community Leisure facility which will bring much needed additional Community Leisure provision/ facilities to the local area, including an All Weather Pitch, some Multi Use Games Areas and hard play areas to compliment the existing grass pitches which are being upgraded as part of the scheme, totalling some 8.1 Hectares.
- 3.5 The new school, which will accommodate 750 pupils over three floors, will also have a co-located purpose built ‘Leisure Block’ adjacent to the school sports hall incorporating a reception area, internal and external changing rooms with shower facilities and equipment storage. The school’s sports hall will be made available for community use outside of school hours, with current plans being for this and the outdoor facilities to be operated by Bridgend County Borough Council’s (“BCBC’s”) Wellbeing Directorate. These facilities will be served by an on-site car park. The ‘Leisure Block’ building and all of the outdoor facilities will remain in the ownership of BCBC.
- 3.6 The school element of the development is a partnership scheme involving the Archdiocese of Cardiff and BCBC and will provide a much needed replacement for the existing Archbishop McGrath Voluntary Aided School currently situated at Ynysawdre. The school serves the entire County Borough of Bridgend. Some of the current school children are from this area and the Corporate Director Children anticipates that more parents living in Brackla may decide to seek places for their children at the school once it opens.
- 3.7 The decision to site this particular school and attached Community Leisure Facility in its present position was taken after extensive studies had been undertaken. The site benefits from a recently developed cycle route to its south, connecting it to a network of urban cycle and pedestrian routes designed to improve the links between Bridgend town centre and the major residential areas that surround it. To ensure the operational efficiency of the highway, network capacity tests were conducted by engineers at the identified critical junctions. The study demonstrated that the proposed development should have no perceptible detrimental impact on the local network as the anticipated development traffic can be accommodated within the existing highway system. The likely increase in traffic in the area was taken into account when allocating the site within the Unitary Development Plan and therefore the surrounding infrastructure was designed to cope with the proposal.

- 3.8 A travel survey was conducted in 2008 at the existing school. When comparing the quality and level of accessibility of sustainable modes of travel between the existing school and the new site, a baseline travel pattern of journeys to the new school site was predicted as follows:

Main Modes	Travel Pattern	
	Existing	Proposed
Walk	14.2%	10.7%
School Bus	66.9%	71.8%
Travel By Car	16.8%	12.7%
Cycle	0.0%	0.8%
Public Transport	0.8%	0.8%
Share Lift	1.3%	3.2%
Total	100.0%	100%

(Based on existing population of 724 pupils)

- 3.9 As indicated in the results of the travel survey (above) the vast majority of pupils will travel by school bus. In order to maintain the popularity of this form of transport and thereby reduce travel by car, a total of 7 school bus service routes have been identified and put in place. Based on this information, those travelling by car will actually reduce once the school is operating from its new location.
- 3.10 Dedicated bus lay-bys sufficient for 10 buses will be located within the school's car park close to the main entrance. These will provide a safe 'pick-up and drop off' point for pupils within the school's boundary. The vehicular access to the proposed relocation site will be off Whitethorn Drive in the form of a priority T-junction, with school traffic giving way to general traffic on Whitethorn Drive. A swept path analysis has been conducted to ensure ample road space is allocated to facilitate the manoeuvres of buses and service vehicles.
- 3.11 Dedicated parking and bus turning facilities will also be provided 'on-site'. Consequently, all parking and a significant number of traffic movements (e.g. buses and cars turning) will be confined to the school site itself.
- 3.12 Public notice of the proposed school relocation was published in the Glamorgan Gazette on Thursday 21st and Thursday 28th May 2009. In addition, the notice was displayed on BCBC's website, the school's website and at many other locations across the County Borough. This distribution is in line with BCBC's usual handling of public notices and exceeds that which is called for by the statutory process. Schools Management and Effectiveness Division, Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills at Welsh Assembly

Government confirmed on 22nd July 2009, that no objections were received in respect of the proposal to relocate the school.

- 3.13 The planning application for the new school and community facilities was subsequently approved by the Development Control Committee in their Committee Meeting of 30th July 2009.

4.0 Current situation / Proposal

- 4.1 To comply with planning condition 11 of the above-mentioned consent, namely that *"a comprehensive scheme ... for traffic calming restricting 85% tile traffic speeds to 20 mph on Whitethorn Drive"* was required, a number of options were considered.

- 4.2 Experience has shown that the most effective way of achieving such low speeds on any road is either to design a road with sufficient bends and short straights to make higher speeds impossible or to introduce raised traffic calming. This is reinforced by the fact that the police will not support 20mph speed limits unless there is physical calming of this nature in place. Given that the new school is being introduced on the existing straight road that forms Whitethorn Drive, the first option of significantly changing road alignments was clearly not possible.

- 4.3 Having discounted alignment changes, other types of calming measures such as priority narrowings were considered. However, such narrowings were previously used on Brackla Way and Princess Way very near to Whitethorn Drive and had to be removed due to congestion issues. The unsuitability of using such features to meet the planning condition was also emphasised when, during a site visit to Whitethorn Drive, a car parked near the roundabout was seen blocking one lane with the result that traffic trying to pass it was queued back on to the roundabout/Brackla Way.

- 4.4 It was therefore concluded that the only feasible option to achieve the low speed required by Planning Condition 11 was to design a scheme which consisted of raised traffic calming

- 4.5 To further emphasise the need to slow traffic down it was felt that the addition of a 20mph speed limit zone covering Whitethorn Drive and the adjacent residential streets was appropriate. Given that all of the estate roads beyond Whitethorn Drive are culs-de-sac, and that it is generally desirable to achieve 20mph speeds in all residential areas, there was justification for promoting a 20mph speed limit throughout the whole estate accessed off Whitethorn Drive as well as on Whitethorn Drive itself. Guidance states that the spacing of traffic calming measures in 20mph zones should ensure that the zone is self-

enforcing and it is essential that any scheme developed is designed to achieve that goal.

- 4.6 The scheme subsequently designed was mindful of the existing commercial bus route serving Whitethorn Drive and the likely number of school buses accessing the school entrance in future. It also took into account the number of houses and the other community facilities such as a public house, shopping precinct, dentist, doctor's surgery and church along Whitethorn Drive which would be accessed via the traffic calming. For this reason, in formulating the design, it was important to introduce measures which would have the least impact on vehicles complying with the 20mph speed limit within the zone. That is why it is proposed that bus-friendly speed cushions and a shallow-humped zebra crossing will be introduced as the raised features and why their use will be restricted to the short lengths of road either side of the new school access, rather than throughout the neighbouring estate culs-de-sac as well.
- 4.8 In addition to dealing with the low-speed requirements of the planning condition, the measures proposed also address other problems that have been apparent in this area for a number of years, namely:-
- Road Safety - In the last 10 years, 6 personal injury accidents have been reported to the police on Whitethorn Drive/ in the culs-de-sac leading from it. Three of the accidents occurred within the extent of the calming (slight severity collisions in 2004 and 2009 and serious severity collision in 2006)
- Parking problems - The scheme also introduces prohibition of waiting restrictions to keep Whitethorn Drive and the nine accesses/side roads which lead from it clear of parked vehicles. There have been significant parking problems at several of those locations e.g. adjacent to Oak Tree Surgery where there have been long-standing issues and numerous complaints have been received from residents and local Members of both BCBC and Brackla Community Council.
- 4.9 Having taken all of the above-mentioned factors into consideration, and with particular emphasis on the need to meet the requirements of Planning Condition 11 for "*traffic calming restricting 85% tile traffic speeds to 20 mph on Whitethorn Drive*", the scheme attached as '**APPENDIX A**' was developed.

Consultation and invitation to object to the proposals

- 4.10 In accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation covering Traffic Calming, Traffic Regulation Orders and Formal Pedestrian Crossings, consultation letters and a plan showing the proposals in Appendix A were sent to the Statutory Consultees in December 2010.

At the same time, letters and plans were sent to a wide range of additional persons/organisations, including all frontage properties on Whitethorn Drive within the extent of the proposed traffic calming and also to the Local Ward Members.

- 4.11 Five written responses were received within the consultation period. Those responses are summarised in **APPENDIX B**. The Panel will note that one of these responses is from the police supporting the scheme and that no fundamental concerns over the nature and scale of the proposals were raised at the consultation stage.
- 4.12 As a consequence, Delegated Powers to proceed were obtained on the 21st February 2011. In accordance with the legislative requirements, Public Notice of the proposals was subsequently published in the local press and Notices were erected on site on numerous street lighting columns within the extents of the proposals on 28th April 2011. In addition, following representations from the local Ward Members and local residents, additional copies of the notices were also posted on 28th April 2011 to every property in Whitethorn Drive and to every property in the culs-de-sac leading from Whitethorn Drive – in all 292 notices were posted to properties. The notices invited objections in writing by 24th May 2011.
- 4.13 By the closing date, 28 formal objections to the proposals had been received. In addition, the closing date was extended to accept an objection from the representative for the Bridgend Visually Impaired Society who was not initially aware of the press/site notices. All 29 objections are summarised in **APPENDIX C** and a complete copy of the objection letters is attached as **APPENDIX D**.
- 4.14 Therefore following the issue of 292 individual copies of the notice inviting objections, 29 objections were received equating to approximately 10%.
- 4.15 However, strong local representation has been made to the four Local Ward Members by some of the objectors. As a result, following meetings all four Local Members have requested that a scheme which reduces the number of raised traffic calming features on Whitethorn Drive be developed so that, if the Panel are minded to uphold the views of the objectors, an alternative scheme may be considered instead.
- 4.16 Responding to the Local Members request an alternative scheme, which has been approved by all four Local Member's has been developed. A drawing showing details of the alternative scheme is attached as **Appendix E**.
- 4.17 Members of the Panel will note that, in the alternative scheme, the number of pairs of speed cushions is reduced from 5 to 3 with a greater distance between them. The alternative scheme still covers the same length of Whitethorn Drive and may still meet the planning condition

imperative of “**restricting 85% tile traffic speeds to 20 mph**”. However, if introduced, it will need to be monitored to check whether it is meeting the planning condition, and additional measures introduced if it does not. The alternative scheme also retains the humped zebra crossing and the 20mph speed limit zone throughout Whitethorn Drive/the adjacent culs-de-sac. With regard to the proposed waiting restrictions, in view of the concerns expressed by several objectors the alternative scheme retains the proposal to introduce a Prohibition of Waiting at Any Time along Whitethorn Drive but no longer includes a proposal for a loading ban to accompany those restrictions.

Conclusions

- 4.18 Although the objectors’ comments and concerns are an important consideration for the Panel, it is considered that a scheme of raised traffic calming, including a raised zebra crossing, 20mph speed limit zone and waiting restrictions is required on Whitethorn Drive to meet the planning condition requirements and to deal with previous traffic and safety problems that have been experienced in that area.
- 4.19 The raised traffic calming scheme proposed in the Notice (i.e. **Appendix A**) will achieve the planning condition of “*restricting 85% tile traffic speeds to 20 mph on Whitethorn Drive*”.
- 4.20 However, if the Panel is minded to accept that the points raised in the objections to the traffic calming have sufficient validity to require a lower impact scheme, the alternative traffic calming scheme, (**Appendix E**), could be introduced which may achieve the objective. However, this alternative scheme would have to be monitored to assess whether it meets the planning condition and that additional measures be introduced if it does not. As the alternative scheme in Appendix E constitutes a relaxation of the previously-advertised proposals it could be implemented without any further consultation or public notice processes being undertaken.
- 4.21 With regard to the objections to the 20mph speed limit zone proposals, as indicated earlier in this report, it is generally desirable to achieve 20mph speeds in all residential areas and the introduction of a speed limit to require travel at that speed is a logical progression of the raised traffic calming proposals. The proposal is also supported by a significant numbers of objectors and therefore the speed limit order should be made as originally proposed.
- 4.22 With regard to the proposed waiting restrictions on Whitethorn Drive, as mentioned earlier, there have been long-standing issues and numerous complaints about significant parking problems in this area. The introduction of the Prohibition of Waiting proposals is essential to address such issues, however, it is accepted that the deletion of the additional loading/unloading ban from the proposals should not have a

major impact on the effectiveness of the proposals and could therefore be deleted from the proposals.

- 4.23 With regard to the proposed zebra crossing, officers had previously met the representative from the Bridgend Visually Impaired Society before proposals for the new school were formulated to discuss her existing concerns related to accessing the Triangle Shopping Centre and other facilities on Whitethorn Drive. However, this crossing is located to access the school and no alternative location can be identified which would achieve this objective, serve the general public and still be safe.
- 4.24 It is important to note that the scheme as proposed reduces the speed of traffic, with the raised zebra crossing acting as one of the traffic calming features. This is considered to be safer than a level-grade pelican crossing which only impedes speed when the red light shows. Both zebra and pelican crossings are dependent upon traffic stopping as the pedestrian enters the crossing as they have the legal right of way over traffic. The proposed speed cushions preceding the crossing and the fact that the crossing itself is raised will ensure that the traffic is at a slow enough speed to stop safely for any pedestrian entering the zebra crossing. On that basis, it is considered that the proposal for a shallow-humped zebra crossing is the appropriate type of crossing to be introduced on Whitethorn Drive and it is stressed that, although a pelican crossing would cost more than a zebra, it is not the cost that is the issue here but, rather, the desire to implement the safest option.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules

- 5.1 This report has no effect upon the Policy Framework or the Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no negative equality implications.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 The costs of the proposed scheme will be fully funded by the developers of the new school.

8.0 Recommendations

The Members of the Panel are therefore recommended:-

- a) to refuse to agree to the objections received to the proposed raised traffic calming scheme on Whitethorn Drive and authorise either the implementation of:
 - i) the calming scheme detailed in Appendix A which is the preferred option, or;
 - ii) the calming scheme detailed in Appendix E with the requirement for it to be monitored to assess whether it meets the planning condition and that additional measures be introduced if it does not;
- b) to refuse to agree to the objections received to the 20mph speed limit zone detailed in Appendix A/Appendix E and authorise the appropriate permanent traffic regulation order for the speed limit;
- c) to refuse to agree to the objections received to the no waiting at any time restrictions but agree to the removal of the accompanying loading/unloading ban and authorise the making of the appropriate permanent traffic regulation order;
- d) to agree to the establishment of a humped Zebra Crossing.

LOUISE FRADD
CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES
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Contact Officer: John Duddridge,
Group Manager – Transportation & Engineering
Telephone: (01656) 642535
E-mail: John.Duddridge@bridgend.gov.uk

Background documents:

Equality Impact Assessment using the toolkit

Traffic Regulation Orders

Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996

Traffic Calming

Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999 and The Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1999

Formal pedestrian crossings (e.g. zebra, pelican, puffin and toucan crossings)

Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984