



THORP ARCH GROUP - TAG
OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 17/07970/OT
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OBJECTION

Section 2

Highways

TAG objection to planning application 17/07970/OT

Outline planning application for residential development with community facility. Land Off Walton Road Walton Wetherby.

Introduction:

TAG is the acronym for Thorp Arch Group. TAG has a mandate from over 135 people to oppose this development on Planning Grounds. The Thorp Arch Parish Council also held a well attended open meeting for residents to discuss the application on 18 January. Opposition to the application was unanimous.

2.0 Section 2 - HIGHWAYS:

This Highways objection is split into two parts. Consideration of the application without any highways mitigation, then consideration with the proposed 'widening' mitigation scheme.

2.1 Situation without mitigation.

2.1.1 This first part considers whether the existing highways network can cope with the traffic from this development. The applicant clearly has doubts about this, and recognises the local view that the network cannot cope. Section 6 of the Transport Assessment, and particularly paragraph 6.10.3, make it clear that the applicants themselves do not believe that the current highways arrangements at 'the complex' (Thorp Arch bridge, Bridge Road, High Street/A659 junction) are suitable for the current traffic volumes.

2.1.2 At the Appeal Inquiry into PA 16/05226, both TAG and LCC showed that the traffic movements through this 'complex', including the T-junction, were interlinked and not suitable for modelling as discrete units (i.e. modelling the bridge and the T-junction separately).

2.1.3 TAG also presented visual evidence to that Appeal in the form of still photographs and videos showing the current congestion issues, and also the illegal and dangerous traffic movements which resulted.

2.1.4 Even modelling the T-junction as if it were a 'stand alone' junction with free feed of traffic to it along all arms, it already shows a current pm RFC of 0.86, and a '2022 without development' figure of 0.98. (See Traffic Assessment table 6.9). As local people know all too well, the reality of that junction, and indeed the whole 'complex', means that the level of congestion is already far greater than the simplistic modelling predicts.

2.1.5 The existing situation is already exceeds the capacity of the complex. It is also dangerous. The number of cyclists who actually ride on the Bridge Road pavements is a testimony to the degree of difficulty in cycling on this steep and congested section of road. (See table 1 of the Transport Technical Note 01). There are also many cyclists who push their bikes up that pavement ('south east' side). In general, local cyclists do not ride on the pavements, as they are law abiding. However it is already very dangerous to cycle up Bridge Road, and cyclists are presumably balancing their desire to follow the highway code against the obvious risks of doing so. The risks win.

2.1.6 The capacity of the 'complex' was one of the major issues at the Appeal Inquiry into PA 16/05226. The facts are now before the Inspector, Mr Richard Clegg, who is known for his expertise in Highways matters. If the LCC/TAG position is supported by the Inspector, it will be apparent that the 'complex' is already overloaded with traffic. As such ANY planning applications which involve increased traffic volumes through the complex MUST be rejected.

2.1.7 To make any decision involving a non-mitigated highways proposal is clearly totally PREMATURE until the Inspector's decision on the 'complex' highways situation is known.

2.1.8 Other routes. There are only two practical routes from Thorp Arch to the A1(M) or destinations to the west of the A1(M). They are via Thorp Arch Bridge, which is covered above, or via the Walton to Wetherby Road.

2.1.9 The route via the Walton to Wetherby road crosses the A1(M) and intersects with the A168 Local Access Road (LAR) at a roundabout. This roundabout is the site of considerable congestion at commuting times (not necessarily normal peak hours, as traffic volumes are very dependant on the high proportion of Industrial, Prison and Commercial traffic, some with shift patterns).

2.1.10 When the A1(M) upgrade, including the LAR, was built around 2009, it was known that this roundabout was one of the pinch-points in the design of the LAR. It exceeded the 0.85 RFC in the design year. Since then considerable new housing has been constructed in north Wetherby, and more is planned.

2.1.11 In addition, this roundabout had to be 'shoe-horned' into a tight site due to land ownership issues. The alignment both horizontal and vertical, when approaching from Walton, is very 'unusual', and sight lines on that approach are poor. The applicant notes that the junction model used by the Appellant in the 16/05226 appeal was not calibrated for the lane assignments currently used. This may have been one reason why their model predictions resulted in theoretical queuing that was much less than observed in practice. However it is TAG's view that the major difficulty with that roundabout is the lack of site-line to the north east for traffic entering from Walton, combined with the difficulty in assessing whether traffic already on the roundabout is intending to exit towards Walton, or continue past the Walton road exit. The applicant's proposal on lane markings is likely to make that situation even worse.

2.1.12 TAG's position is that the roundabout's physical configuration is unsuitable for any increase in traffic volume on the Walton-Wetherby road. This will be exacerbated by the new housing in Wetherby, both already with planning permission, and being proposed.

2.1.13 The villages of Walton and Thorp Arch will have both their access routes subject to severe congestion. This is not acceptable.

2.1.14 Due to growth of industrial/commercial businesses on the Trading Estate, the traffic volume and congestion is only likely to increase, even without this proposed development. The new Matthew Clark warehouse, and the seven units on Ash Way, comprising 24,000 sq ft., have recently been completed. A second similar set of units on Ash Way is planned. There are also two large new warehouse-type buildings going up near to the SAY location, just outside TATE.

2.1.15 The increase of traffic locally has been very noticeable, and is continuing. Each development in isolation may have only a small incremental effect, but the cumulative effect has led to the severe congestion already being experienced. A halt must be called now. This application must be rejected.

2.2 Situation with proposed mitigation, involving narrowing of the north west pavement.

2.2.1 This scheme is unsafe, against MfS and LCC guidance, and totally opposed by the local communities. Pedestrians should take priority. Creating a footpath with unobstructed width down to 0.9m, and width to obstruction (sign-posts, CATV cabinet etc) down to 0.66m is in itself completely unacceptable.

2.2.2 Doing so when simultaneously creating two way traffic in a supposedly 4.8m carriageway, is ridiculous. The northbound traffic will have to hug the kerb to be able to pass opposing traffic. There needs to be a 'security buffer zone' between pedestrians and vehicles. With these pavement widths such a zone will not exist.

2.2.3 The following points indicate just some of the flaws in the proposed carriageway widening (or footway narrowing) scheme:

2.2.4 The proposal is completely unacceptable for pedestrians. A footway at times only 900mm wide, and less if any street furniture or cabinets remain, would mean walking single-file. Not only that, but normally there needs to be a protection distance between traffic and pedestrians. This is demonstrated on Thorp Arch Bridge, where the roadway has been hatched with a solid white line edging for 500mm out from the kerb. This despite the traffic

being only uni-directional on the bridge at any one time, and thus being able to travel further from the kerb and footway.

2.2.5 On Bridge Road the volume of traffic means that, if traffic actually chooses to travel in both directions at once (which we dispute) then the traffic will be hugging the kerb adjacent to the footway. Indeed parts of the vehicle and mirrors are likely to overhang the kerb above the footway, thus reducing its usable width further.

2.2.6 What about disabled, people with buggies (even double ones), people holding onto toddlers and dogs? The width would be insufficient. It doesn't bear thinking about in safety terms.

2.2.7 The narrower pavements will restrict the sight lines for cars entering Bridge Road from the houses and Bridge Close. Entering the Bridge Road from Bridge Close, or local housing, is already very difficult/dangerous. (The current uni-directional flow does help with this manoeuvre, that help would be lost).

2.2.8 The north west corner at the Bridge Road/High Street junction is already very narrow. Because of the tight radius, and often stationary cars waiting to exit from Bridge Road, vehicles running onto the footway (normally with their rear wheels) is a very frequent occurrence, many times a day. The proposal would narrow the footway still further at that point, to about 900mm, or less where obstructed by signage. This is the point with a dropped tactile curb where pedestrians and wheelchairs are supposed to wait to cross. Completely unacceptable.

2.2.9 The proposal to have all car park vehicles exiting onto the High Street is flawed and dangerous. It is opposed by Boston Spa and conflicts with their 'pedestrian friendly' Neighbourhood Plan aspirations. That entrance is also closed completely for village functions several times per year. How could the car park operate at these times?

2.2.10 If the mitigation proposal is modified to have the only car park exit onto Bridge Road, then all the comments in 2.2.7, regarding sight lines, will apply. It is already very difficult to get a good view to the north. You do not get an adequate visibility distance until the bonnet of the car is already protruding onto the

carriageway. That protrusion would increase by a further 670mm because of the reduced pavement width at that point. In general the only method to safely exit, at present, is to wait for the northbound traffic to stop due to the uni-directional flow system. The mitigation proposal would lose that opportunity, so an exit there would be completely unsafe.

2.2.11 TAG have examined flows on the High Street (A659) in the vicinity of number 205, the doctors' surgery. At this point the carriageway is exactly the same width as that proposed in the mitigation scheme: 6.8m. There is also parking on one side of the road, as per the scheme. However the pavements on both sides of the road are much wider than Bridge Street, at about 2m. This makes it easier for cars to hug the kerb whilst not 'crowding out' pedestrians. They can leave a buffer zone.

2.2.12 Despite this, the reality is that cars are not generally prepared to travel in both directions at once, they wait instead. (TAG can provide visual evidence of this, taken in one short visit to the location, so representative of normal conditions, and reinforcing what locals know from experience).

2.2.13 Two direction flow would also be more practical at this point, than on Bridge Road, as the length of road taken by parked cars, and the opportunities for knowing that there are potential gaps if passing proved difficult, are much more apparent.

2.2.14 This evidence shows that the concept of traffic flowing two-way on Bridge Road, after the mitigation 'widening' proposal, is not realistic.

2.2.15 The MfS and LCC guidelines referred to by the applicant are not appropriate ones. They refer to feeder streets to residential development, where traffic can be expected to be mainly cars, where footways are to minimum standards (2m) and where very slow and careful passing manoeuvres can be acceptable.

2.2.16 Bridge Road is a thoroughfare, with very narrow pavements. It is a bus route. The traffic flows are already close to the maximum limit for the residential access guidance referred to. A carriageway of even 4.8 metres (which in practice will be

narrower because of large or poorly parked vehicles) is just not safe or practical.

2.2.17 TAG have conducted a survey of the widths of Bridge Road. The applicants drawing P17040-003A "Potential Bridge Road Improvement Scheme" has been used to show the measurements, and the drawing supplied to LCC's transport development team. This clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of the proposal.