

Technical Note



PROJECT: Harecroft Farm, Wisbech

DATE: November 2013

SUBJECT: Highways Opportunities and Constraints

Introduction

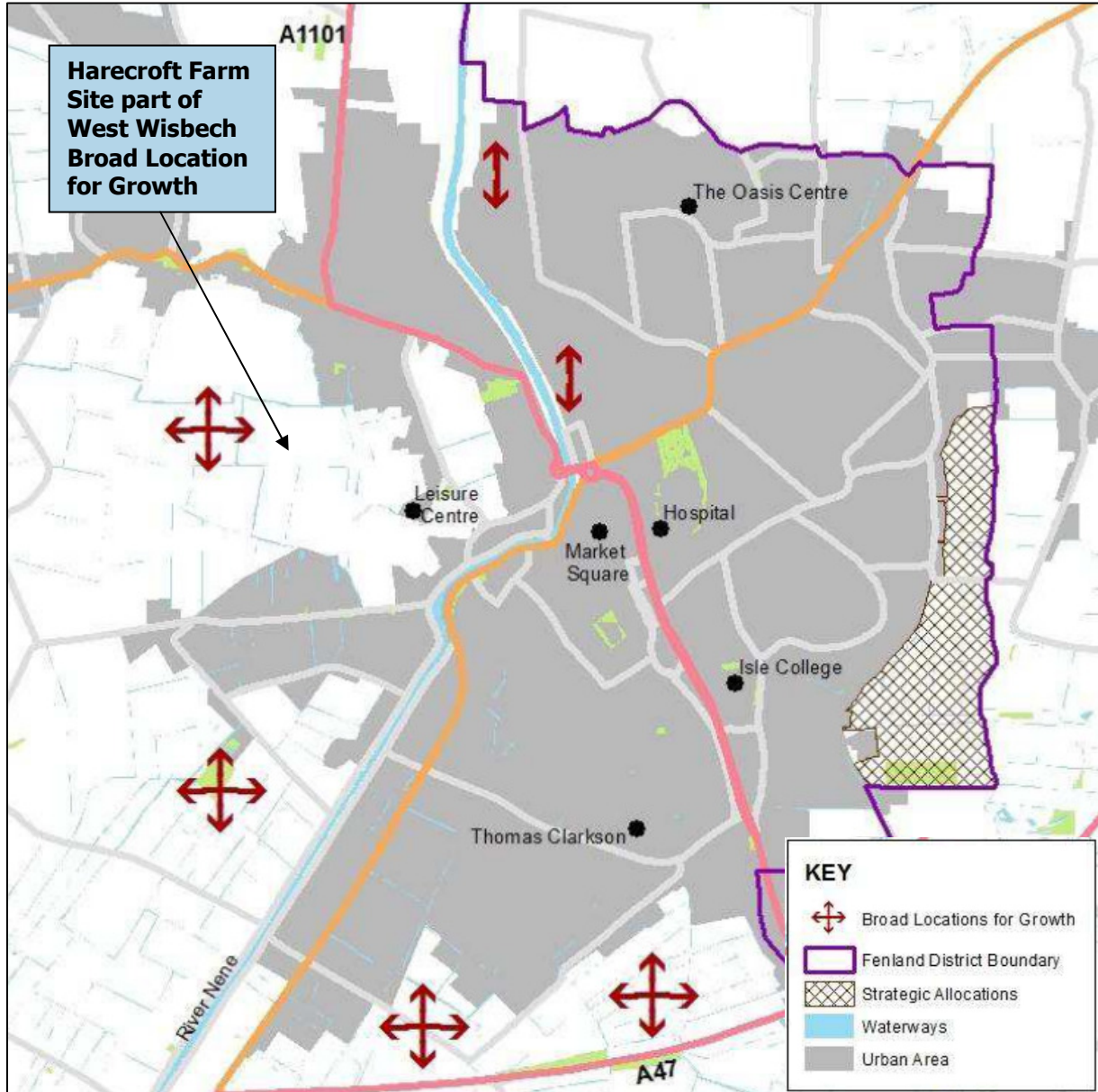
- This Note has been prepared to outline the findings of our research in relation to the comprehensive delivery scheme for land to the north of Barton Road (known as the Harecroft Farm Site and referred to as 'the Site') in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. The Planning Authority is Fenland District Council (FDC) and the Highways Authority is Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC).
- The latest Concept Masterplan drawing (dated November 2013) produced by Atkins demonstrates that the 30ha site could be developed to provide approximately 11ha net area of residential development, supported by a primary school and local centre facilities equating to just over 2ha net area.
- This technical note assesses how the proposed quantum of the masterplan conforms with the emerging Fenland Local Plan Core Strategy (CS) and documents closely linked to this, including Wisbech Area Transport Study and the Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan (FIDP), which details the main transport infrastructure projects necessary to help deliver policies in the CS.
- The note concludes with a review of proposed vehicular access options to serve the Site from Harecroft Road.

Fenland Local Plan Core Strategy Submission (September 2013)

- The Fenland Local Plan is a Core Strategy document and sets out how the District expects to achieve sustainable growth over the next 20 years. Policy CS4 – Housing demonstrates that the District has ambitious housing growth plans. In Wisbech alone, FDC are considering 3,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031 at 'strategic' and 'broad locations for growth' sites. The Site forms a significant element of the West Wisbech broad location for growth and as such is an indicative area of growth, as opposed to a specific allocation and will be determined at planning application stages.
- Policy CS8 'Wisbech' and Policy CS15 'Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland' are most relevant to the proposed development Site in relation to the requirement for highways infrastructure and the sustainable access to enable it to be brought forward through the planning process.
- Policy CS8 provides a summary of new urban extensions to Wisbech that will be supported by FDC and includes the Site as part of the West Wisbech broad location for growth, as shown on **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: Fenland District Council Development Strategy for Wisbech



Source: FDC Core Strategy Local Plan

- Policy CS8 makes direct reference to transport infrastructure it is thought might be required to serve any development in the West Wisbech Broad Location for Growth. This reference is directly extracted from page 37 of the Plan below:

'Transport Infrastructure: Transport Infrastructure required to serve the area must ensure that there will be no unacceptable adverse impact on the local and strategic highway network. Subject to detailed assessment through a comprehensive delivery scheme, it is highly likely that a link connecting the A1101 in the north to the B198 Cromwell Road in the south (including a new river crossing) will be required, with the arrangements for delivering such a link being agreed as part of the comprehensive delivery scheme for the broad location,



the funding of which is likely to be sourced from not only this development scheme but wider funding sources. To enable this link road to be constructed using significant developer contributions from this urban extension, the Council will be willing to negotiate appropriate levels of other wider infrastructure, such as affordable housing, to ensure the development remains viable.

The design solution for the area should take into account the need to avoid any unacceptable adverse impacts on the setting of nearby listed buildings, the Wisbech and Leverington Conservation Areas, and the scheduled monument at Rabbit Hill.

The area will also require new educational facilities, local convenience shopping and community services, and direct pedestrian and cycle routes to key facilities, including the town centre.

Indicatively, the area should be able to support around 750 new dwellings and a small area of employment, subject to detailed investigation and agreement through a comprehensive delivery scheme.'

- The above extract suggests that it is 'highly likely that a link connecting the A1101 in the north to the B198 Cromwell Road in south, including a new river crossing, will be required.' This requirement has been informed by strategic highway modelling work undertaken by Atkins as part of the Wisbech Area Transport Study (WATS). Technical Notes produced by Atkins relating to the WATS have been reviewed and are summarised in the following section of this Note.

Wisbech Area Transport Study (2008 – 2013)

- The WATS was commissioned in 2008 to provide a detailed evidence base on Wisbech Transport issues, following Highways Agency representation regarding a 2007 Core Strategy consultation.
- Technical Note A was produced by Atkins in November 2009 and summarised SATURN modelling results for a total of five tests relating to Local Development Framework (LDF) options, as well as a 'Do Minimum' case. The assessment looked at future years in line with the structure plan at the time, being 2016, 2021 and 2026 from a validated base model from 2008. A total of 10 key junctions in the Wisbech study area were monitored in terms of delays and flows to provide an indication of stress at each junction under each scenario.
- In the 'Do Minimum' test, which includes no additional infrastructure other than minor junction changes in future years, it was projected that there will be an increase in transient and over-capacity queues particularly at the junction of B198 Cromwell Road / Weasenham Lane junction, the A47 / B198 Cromwell Road roundabout and A47 / A1101 Elm High Road Roundabout.
- Test 1 (with infrastructure) assessed the impact of providing a new Western Relief Road (WRR) to support the LDF allocation of 2,000 dwellings. It concluded that the WRR would reduce the level of impact on the overall network and provide relief to one of the main corridors into and out of Wisbech, namely B198 Cromwell Road, which will come "under severe pressure" due to other proposed developments within the corridor. The modelling results also showed that the WRR would also provide some relief to the A1101 corridor and therefore lead to reduced traffic flows in the centre of Wisbech.
- Test 1 (no infrastructure) will contribute to increased delay and congestion over both the Do-Minimum and Test 1, highlighting the requirement to provide some form of infrastructure to support the LDF



allocation if the network performance in Wisbech is to be maintained at Do-Minimum levels of operation.

- Test 2 (with infrastructure) tested the same level of development as Test 1 of 2,000 dwellings, but with a reduced level of employment of 21 acres compared to 100 acres in Test 1. The infrastructure provided to support the LDF allocation in this test was in the form of a Northern Relief Road (NRR). It was concluded that the NRR would have a similar effect on the centre of Wisbech as the WRR, in that North/South trips are removed from the A1101 corridor. However, unlike Test 1 it does not provide as much relief to the minor roads linking the outlying villages. Furthermore, the NRR was only considered adequate to support LDF allocation up to 2021, by 2026 the network is becoming congested with delays occurring greater than 'Do minimum' case.
- Like Test 1 (no infrastructure), Test 2 (no infrastructure) will contribute to increased delay and congestion over both the Do-Minimum and Test 2, highlighting the requirement to provide some form of infrastructure to support the LDF allocation if the network performance in Wisbech is to be maintained at Do-Minimum levels of operation or better.
- Test 3 (with infrastructure) tested the same quantum of development as Test 2 (i.e. 2,000, plus 21 acres employment) but included the provision of additional infrastructure in the form of a Northern Local Road (NLR). Atkins concluded that the NLR would not provide relief to the centre of Wisbech and would in fact increase levels of delay at key junctions on the network. Test 3 (no infrastructure) performs similar to Test 3 (with infrastructure) scenario indicating that the NLR would not contribute at all the reducing the level of LDF allocation impact on Wisbech Town Centre.
- There was no Test 4 included in the Atkins technical note. Test 5 (no infrastructure) tested 1,900 dwellings and 3.7 acres of employment. Unsurprisingly, this was not shown to provide the relief to the centre of Wisbech as with Tests 1 and 2, there are also increased traffic flows on the eastern side of Wisbech, reflecting the development traffic accessing the network via existing links and adding to the level of delay on the A1101 corridor.
- Almost one year on from the submission of Technical Note A, Atkins produced Technical Note B in November 2010, which outlined the findings of additional tasks undertaken to complete Wisbech LDF modelling work. Technical Note B concentrated on the level of use of the WRR option and the routing of traffic generated by developments identified in the LDF, following discussions with the Highways Agency, FDC and CCC in November 2009.
- In 2013, Technical Notes F and G have been submitted to FDC and provide the latest updates on the WATS. Technical Note F was produced to demonstrate the impact of forecast year network changes and tested 1000 dwellings in the (referred to as the East Opportunity Zone) and 750 dwellings in the (referred to as the West Opportunity Zone). 'Do Minimum' (DM) forecast networks were updated to include smaller schemes such as:
 - The new junction layout at Freedom Bridge Roundabout.
 - One way regulations near Nene Waterfront.

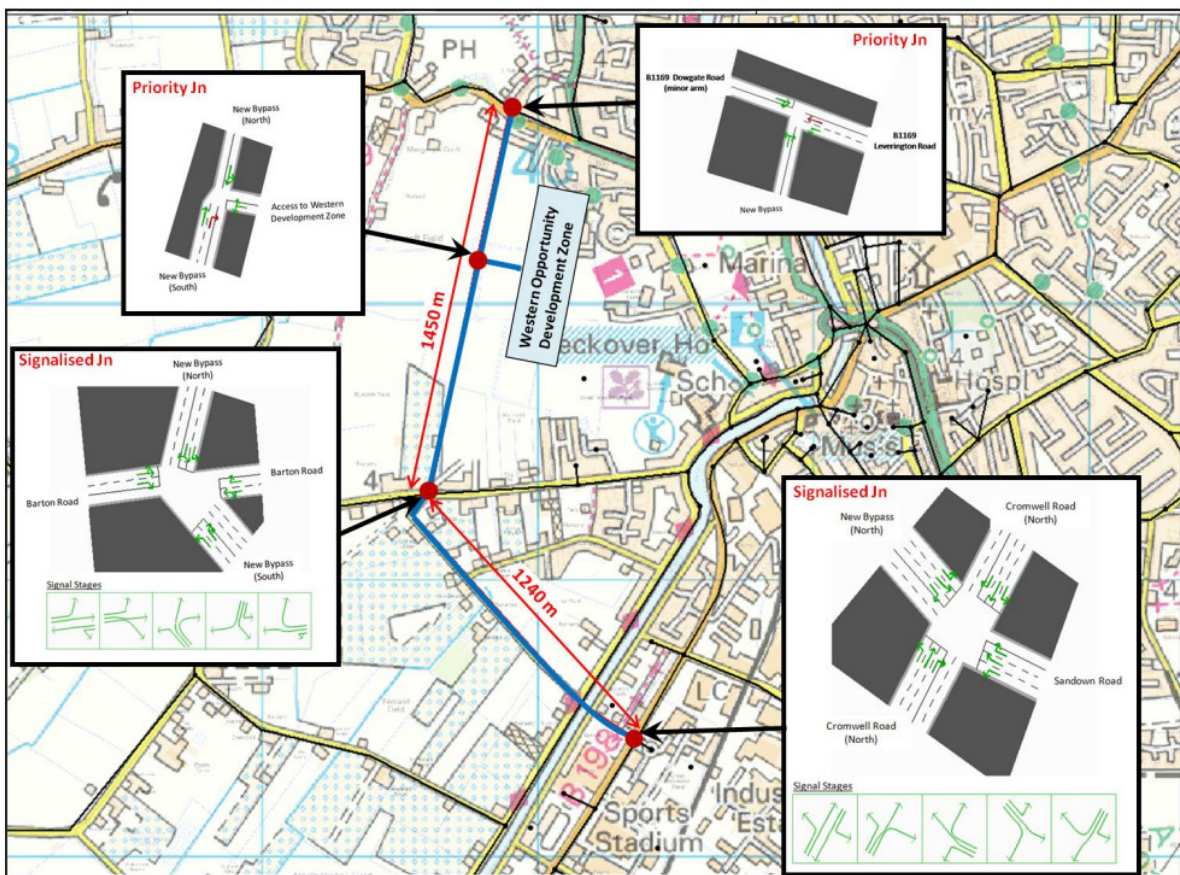


- New traffic signals at Lynn Road / De Havilland Road junction.
 - New traffic signals at Cromwell Road / Weasenham Lane.
 - Existing New Bridge Lane and New Drove roads are added to the model.
 - Change in junction layouts of access junctions to Wisbech stadium site and Tesco stores site.
- In addition to changes in DM network, schemes and mitigation measures were considered in the Do Something (DS) including:
 - New roundabout at A47 Broad End Road Junction;
 - Changes to access arrangements from Kings Lynn development, East opportunity development;
 - Changes to the bus station entrance and corresponding changes to Freedom Bridge Roundabout junction layout;
 - A new road at Boleness Road/Newbridge Lane linking Weasenham Lane to Cromwell Road;
 - New bridge and bypass road connecting B198 Cromwell Road to B1169 Leverington Road following the route of Cox's Lane crossing Barton Road;
 - Increased entry and exit capacity for movements along A47 at A141 Guyhirn Roundabout and A47/B198 Cromwell Road Roundabout.
 - It is important to note that all of the above measures were added to the network in one step. There was no sequential testing or scheme optimisation process involved in this stage of traffic modelling.
 - Technical Note F modelling results demonstrated that the mitigation measures have the capability of reducing the impacts associated with the development changes. The capacity enhancements at junctions and within the Wisbech network for DS scenario indicate that the forecast year junction and link delays can be improved and are comparable to the corresponding DM scenario – recognising that these delays will be higher than base year delays.
 - Whole Network Performance as a comparison between the do minimum (smaller mitigation schemes) and do something (whole mitigation strategy) – although there is an increase in the use of the network there is improvement in the performance. The improvement can be shown by a decrease in average trip distance and in total travel time. There is also a decrease in transient queues and a significant decrease in over capacity queues. There are improvements in accessibility and reductions in delays.
 - For demands and delays at key junctions there are a number of performance differences. Town Bridge traffic signals, B198 Cromwell Road and Weasenham Lane junction both benefit from a reduction in traffic flow as a result of the new Link Road and river crossing.
 - Traffic levels and impacts at Freedom Bridge remain similar between the 'do minimum' and 'do something' options. This is because a decrease in traffic as a result of the bypass is replaced by traffic using the bridge from the west development. It was concluded that a full western bypass would not remove as many trips as first anticipated. This suggests that more trips are internal to the town and that a bypass would only offer short term traffic relief to Freedom Bridge.



- Atkins modelling results show that the Wisbech Transport Mitigation Strategy will reduce delays at B198 Cromwell Road/Weasenham Lane junction, A47/A141 Guyhirn roundabout, A47/B198 Cromwell Road roundabout and A47/A1110 Elm High Road roundabout.
- Technical Note G provides information from mitigation workshops attended by FDC, CCC and Highways Agency officials. Consideration was given to issues of land constraint and to assess opportunities associated with new transport schemes, including possible locations for the new link road and river crossing. A site visit and assessment day was held in relation to the North Brink and Barton Road Link Road and River Crossing.
- A plan of the new bypass alignment and junction layouts as part of the WATS mitigation measures is shown in **Figure 2** as extracted from Appendix Two of the WATS technical notes.

Figure 2: New Bypass Alignment and Junction Layouts



- The suggested location for the bridge is off Cox’s Lane adjacent to the existing Lidl and Tesco stores on Cromwell Road. A new road would be built from B1169 Leverington Road to Barton Road and then from Barton Road to Cox’s Lane linking into the bridge. From A1101/B1169 Junction there will be an access only route for HCVs, with the expectation that all other HCVs will use the new road rather than Freedom Bridge roundabout. A new access road is proposed from B1169 Leverington Road to Barton Road and linking to a bridge over the river at Cox’s Lane.



Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan (February 2013)

- A summary of key infrastructure requirements and phasing of development is set out in the Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan (FIDP). The FIDP is a living document and helps to coordinate infrastructure provision and ensure that funding and delivery timescales are closely aligned to that in the Core Strategy.
- The table below summarises key transport infrastructure required to be brought forward and its relation to the Local Plan CS Policies outlined earlier in this Note. It includes the Western Link Road and Bridge, which is anticipated to cost in the region of £20m and it is suggested would be partly funded by developer contributions. This infrastructure is considered 'necessary if West Wisbech broad location is to be delivered'.

Table 1: Highways Infrastructure Requirements and Phasing of Development

Source: Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan (p.34)

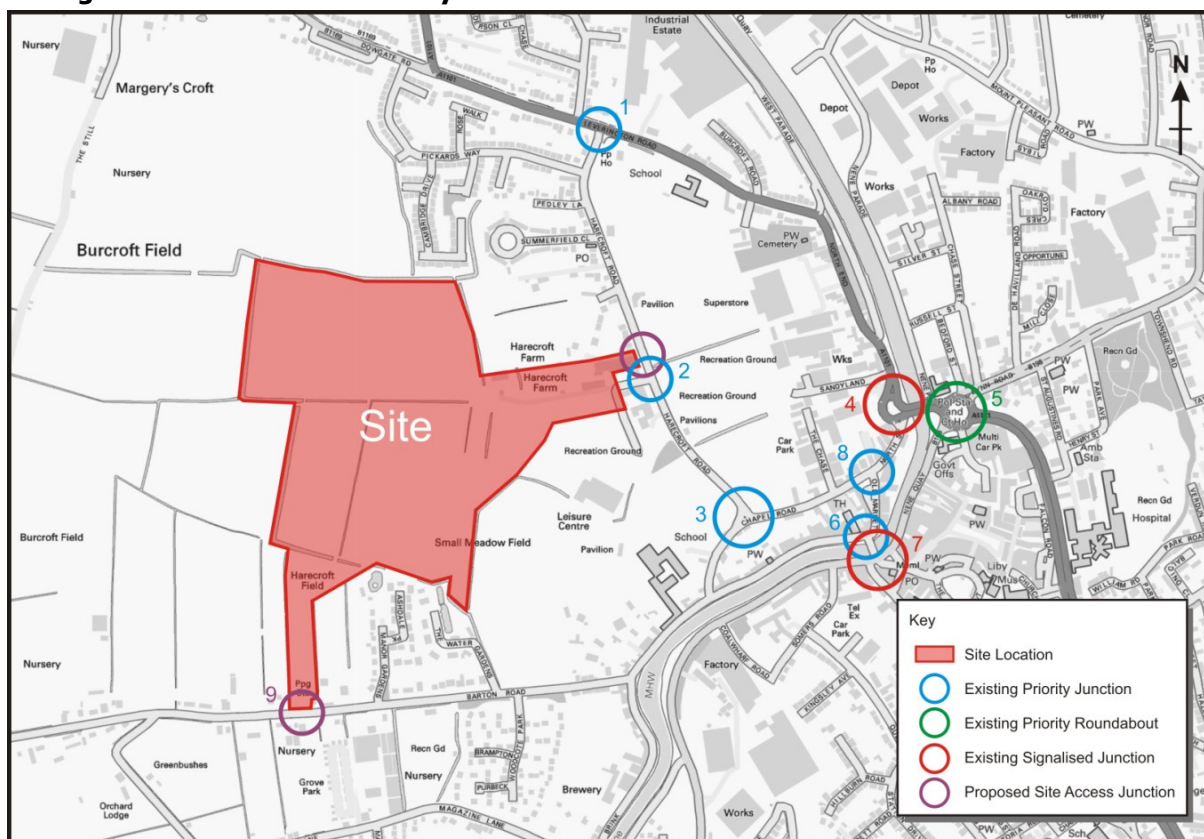
Scheme	Description	CS Policy Link	Lead Delivery organisation	Funding Source	Total Cost	Delivery Requirement	Importance to CS
Wisbech A47 Junction Improvements at B198 Cromwell Road	Improvements to existing rbt.	CS8 and CS15	Highways Agency	Developer Funded	£2m (approx)	Medium Term – feasibility work to be undertaken	Necessary if Wisbech growth is to be delivered
Wisbech Western Link Road and Bridge	Provision of new western link road including a new road bridge over the River Nene	CS8 and CS15	Cambs Highways	Developer Funded	£20m (approx)	Medium Term – feasibility work to be undertaken	<u>Necessary if West Wisbech broad location is to be delivered</u>
A47 Junction improvements at A141 / Guyhirn Roundabout	Improvements to existing rbt.	CS13	Highways Agency	Developer Funded	£2m (approx)	Medium Term – feasibility work to be undertaken	Necessary if Wisbech growth is to be delivered
Wisbech – new east-west road in the South-west Wisbech area	New east-west road to reduce congestion	CS13	Cambs Highways	Developer Funded	£5m (approx)	Medium Term – feasibility work to be undertaken	Necessary if growth in Wisbech is to be delivered esp south Wisbech growth

WYG Transport Feasibility Study (February 2013)



- In February 2013, the Commissioners instructed WYG to undertake a sensitivity test to determine the level of development that could be reasonably accommodated on the Site, without having a significant impact on the highway network, and therefore without the requirement for major infrastructure improvements.
- A total of 11 junctions were assessed for capacity, comprising nine existing off-site junctions and two proposed site access junctions. The off-site junctions are listed below and labelled in **Figure 3** overleaf:
 - Junction 1 – Leverington Road (A1101) / Harecroft Road;
 - Junction 2 – Harecroft Road / Existing & Proposed Site Access;
 - Junction 3 – Consists of three priority give-way junctions:
 - Harecroft Road giving way to Harecroft Road, Chapel Road Junction;
 - Chapel Road giving way to Chapel Road, Harecroft Road Junction; and
 - Harecroft Road giving way to Chapel Road Junction.
 - Junction 4 – North End (A1101) / North Street / ALDI Access / Sandyland signalised junction;
 - Junction 5 – North End (A1101) / Lynn Road (B198) / Churchill Road (A1101) / Horse Fair / Nene Quay / Petrol Filling Station Exit, Roundabout;
 - Junctions 6 and 7 – Nene Quay (B198) / South Brink (B198) / Bridge Street / Alexandra Road signalised junction with Old Market / North Brink priority junction;
 - Junction 8 – Old Market / Chapel Road / North Street / Oil Mill Lane priority; and
 - Junction 9 – Barton Road / Proposed Site Access.

Figure 3: WYG Network Study Area in relation to the Site



- Classified turning counts were undertaken at the junctions on Tuesday 12th February 2013 along with pedestrian counts at the zebra crossing on Churchill Road and the staggered pelican crossing on North End at the approach to North End / Lynn Road Roundabout. The survey data was used to identify the AM and PM peak hours of the local highway network, which were found to be 07:45-08:45 and 16:30-17:30 respectively.
- Assessments were undertaken using industry standard traffic modelling software packages, PICADY v5.1 for priority junctions, ARCADY v6 for priority roundabouts and LinSig v3 for signalled junctions.
- The results of the 2013 base assessments showed that all (excluding 6 and 7 -Nene Quay/ South Brink/ Bridge Street/ Alexandra Road signalled junction linked with Old Market/ North Brink priority junction) junctions operate within capacity. The LinSig results for combined junctions 6/7 showed that in the AM peak hour the junction has 0% practical reserve capacity and a mean maximum queue of 10 vehicles on the Old Market approach. In the PM peak Alexandra Road has a degree of saturation (DoS) of 87.8% and South Bank a DoS of 88.8% resulting in a practical reserve capacity of 1.3%.
- Total people trip rates were extracted from the TRICS database (v2013a 6.11.1) from 22 similar C3 residential survey sites. The modal split of these trips was determined using Census 2011 data for 'Fenland (003) Super Output Area, Middle Layer' which covers the Site area. The modes split percentages were applied to total person trips to determine accurate trip rates for each travel mode.



- A maximum development potential of 560 units was tested. The TRICS data indicated that this level of development would generate 377 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and 344 two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak hour.
- Development traffic was distributed based on surveyed turning count flows. A total of five areas around Wisbech were identified and labelled as zones. Total flow into and out of the network by each zone was divided by the sum of all zones to extract distribution percentages.
- The modelling considered a total of four assessment scenarios - 2018 Base ('Opening Year') AM, 2018 Base PM, 2018 Base + Development AM, and 2018 Base + Development PM.
- Like the 2013 Base assessment, in the 2018 Base assessment all junctions were shown to work well with spare capacity excluding Junctions 6/7. In the AM peak hour, background traffic growth caused the DoS to increase from 87.8% to 95.4% on the Old Market approach and the mean maximum queue increased from 10 to 13 vehicles. The practical reserve capacity was shown to decrease to -6% in the AM peak and -5.4% in the PM peak indicating that the junction does not operate effectively in 2018 without any development.
- To address this, the LinSig model was run for the same scenarios (2018 Base AM and PM) but with the junction optimised (same cycle time). This dramatically improved the PRC to 18.8% in the AM peak, the PRC in the PM peak remained the same (-5.4%) as this was already fully optimised.
- Finally, the impact of a 560 unit development at Harecroft Farm site was assessed. This reduced PRC in the AM peak to 7.1% and -13.3% in the PM peak. The PM was shown to remain the worst peak with the highest DoS of 102% recorded on the Alexandra Road arm.
- WYG suggested mitigation at Nene Quay / South Brink / Bridge Street / Alexandra Road Signalised junction with Old Market / North Brink priority Junction in the form of increased cycle times. The cycle times were increased to maximum green level for all phases, the existing cycle time of 198 seconds was increased to 240 seconds, including Alexandra Road running once every two cycles. The result of the mitigation was an improvement in practical reserve capacity from -13.3% to 0.8% in the PM peak.
- The findings of the WYG feasibility study indicate that there is potential to accommodate up to 560 units at the Harecroft Farm site with relatively minor improvements to the local highway network. The current masterplan for the site indicates that in the region of 380 units could be developed. It is considered that this quantum of development as part of West Wisbech broad location for growth can be supported without a requirement for significant highway infrastructure.
- In addition to traffic modelling, the WYG feasibility study reviewed the accessibility of the Site by sustainable travel modes.
- The Site is located approximately 800m west of Wisbech Town Centre and it is considered that any potential development would be ideally located to benefit from the proximity of key facilities.
- There are existing pedestrian routes between the Site and town centre from both its eastern and southern boundaries. An existing Right of Way is located immediately to the west of the development



site, providing linking onto Harecroft Road. Harecroft Road then provides access to the town centre via Chapel Road and the Old Market river crossing. Pedestrian footways are located along the entirety of this route, together with signal-controlled crossing facilities on Harecroft Road, providing a safe route to the town centre for potential residents of the site.

- An alternative pedestrian route to the town centre could be achieved from the south of the site via the proposed access onto Barton Road. Linkage to the town centre can then be achieved via North Brink and the Old Market river crossing, with footways located on at least one side of the carriageway on the entirety of the route.
- Although there is currently no designated provision for cyclists, both of the pedestrian routes detailed above would be suitable for shared use and provide fast and convenient link between the site and the town centre.
- It is considered that there is potential for additional pedestrian access to the south-east section of the site from the existing playing fields/Leisure Centre, which could provide a more direct link towards the town centre.
- Norfolk Green is the principal bus operator in Wisbech, providing six routes serving the town. The nearest bus stops to the site are located on Harecroft Road and Barton Road. The bus stops on Barton Road are served by the number 46, and the bus stops on Harecroft Road are service by the number 50/51. Both sets of bus stops have footways linking them to the site providing safe access for pedestrians.
- The feasibility study suggested that there is potential to increase the frequency of the existing no. 46 service at peak hours to increase opportunity for commuter trips to Kings Lynn for future and existing residents. Extension of the existing no. 66 Wisbech Town Service was also considered. This would incorporate the bus route into the development by providing an internal bus route, increasing accessibility to the town for residents.

Statement of Common Ground (October 2013)

- Following discussions with FDC's Transport Development Manager in November 2013 it is apparent that the information in Wisbech Area Transport Study Technical Notes F and G provide the most recent evidence for traffic and transport implications of Wisbech Core Strategy broad locations for growth.
- A Statement of Common Ground document was produced by FDC in October 2013 and sets out the current position between the following organisations:
 - Fenland District Council;
 - Highways Agency;
 - Cambridgeshire County Council;
 - Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk; and,
 - Norfolk County Council.



- A theme running throughout the document is that there 'must be one approach with regard to the planning of the new homes and employment for Wisbech'.
- The document summarises the results of the mitigation strategy outlined in WATS Technical Note F. Paragraph 5.1 summarises the report and states:

'There are no fundamental issues from a transport perspective related to the indicated levels of growth. It is however, recognised that certain mitigation measures are required for which further modelling and scheme development will determine the precise extent. Such detail will be covered by the developer(s) by way of detailed transport assessments for their proposal. All parties will continue to work together to ensure that the transport network is properly managed and developed in line with the delivery and implementation of the strategic growth target.'

Vehicle Access from Harecroft Road

- A total of six potential access options have been considered for the primary access to the Site from Harecroft Road. It is concluded that it is possible to provide access to the Site via an existing junction located between no. 57 Edina Court and no. 61, a freehold dwelling.
- Title Plans have been obtained from Land Registry for all properties adjoining the proposed access road. The plans show that the road and the strip of land running alongside the southern boundary are associated with property no. 61 Harecroft Road owned by the Commissioners.
- Drawing number A080550-010 presents Site Access Option 6 and is appended to this technical note for reference. It shows how a proposed access road can be accommodated. The plans are to upgrade the existing road to provide a 6.0m wide vehicle access between plots 57 and 61. Pedestrian access would be provided in the form of a 2.0 metre wide footway along the southern side of the access and a 1.8 metre wide footway extending part-way along the northern boundary, an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing point could be provided to assist pedestrian crossing the access road between footways.
- As part of the potential site access option, the access road down to Hudson Leisure Centre will become a priority junction and vehicles travelling to and from this road will be required to give way to vehicles travelling to and from the Site. The access drawing shows that adequate visibility 2.4m x 20m can be achieved without the need for third party land.
- Swept path analysis has been carried out and shows that the swept path of a large car can be accommodated within the extents of the proposed carriageway for all turning movements at the proposed priority junction, located adjacent to the tennis courts.



Conclusions

- Initial strategic network modelling work undertaken by Atkins on behalf of FDC indicated that transport infrastructure in the form of a western relief road could provide the greatest benefit to traffic relief in the town centre when compared to Northern Relief Road and Northern Local Road infrastructure options.
- However, the results of the further modelling runs set out in Appendices F and G of Wisbech Area Transport Study suggest that a full western relief road would not remove as many trips from Freedom Bridge as was initially anticipated. The modelling indicates that many trips are internal to the town and a western relief road would only offer short term relief to the bridge. It is therefore considered that mitigation in the form of a western relief road and bridge would not satisfy a cost benefit analyses based on the high projected costs, in the region of £20m as noted in Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- It is important to note that the WATS strategic modelling work assumes that highway infrastructure mitigation measures would be implemented all at once and does not test the sequential roll out of these measures.
- A recent feasibility study undertaken by WYG indicates that up to 560 units can be accommodated on the Site without the requirement for any infrastructure improvements, other than extending cycle timings at Nene Quay / South Brink / Bridge Street / Alexandra Road junction in the PM peak hour. The concept masterplan shows that the site can deliver in the region of 380 units and it is considered that this quantum of development can be achieved within the existing network supported by minor highway mitigation measures.
- It has been demonstrated that there is adequate land between no. 57 and no. 61 Harecroft Road to accommodate an upgraded access road, which would serve the Site as the main vehicle access. A secondary access is planned at the southern boundary of the site and would link onto Barton Road.
- It is concluded that the Church Commissioner's site at West Wisbech can deliver a significant contribution to Wisbech's housing requirements and as demonstrated by the technical work, can be achieved without significant infrastructure improvements.

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