MEMO

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

To	Lucy Greene Planning & Infrastructure	Date Your Ref. Our Ref.	27/4/2015 P141026 (ZLF) TR/MW/1/51/2
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Planning application no. P141026
Hazledene Road (Land at), West of, former Dobbies Garden Centre
Hotel development with circa 250 bedrooms and country club incorporating spa and swimming pool, function and conference facilities and restaurants including holiday chalets, equestrian centre and country clubhouse with associated car parking and alterations to access roads

A revised Transport Assessment (TA) has been prepared by Hyder, the applicant's transport consultants, in support of the above planning application, to investigate various access options, in greater detail than in the preliminary TA. Note that the development content has also been altered from the preliminary TA, and now comprises the following in the location referred to as "Site A":

- 200-bed hotel including Spa, Gym, Swimming Pool & Restaurant
- Banquet / Function facilities for up to 800 guests
- Wedding Ceremony / Dinner / Reception facilities for two weddings of 300 guests each

There is no longer considered to be a travel impact associated with "Site B", which would now simply be a replacement of the existing Hayfield Equestrian Centre, with a new and improved equestrian facility. Site B would also be exempt from consideration for a Strategic Transport Fund contribution, to address the cumulative impact of developments on the strategic transport network.

I have considered matters in the order outlined in Scottish Government policy "Designing Streets" (2010) which advocates greater permeability of new developments by street users on a hierarchical basis, giving highest priority to pedestrians and lowest priority to private motor cars.

1. Pedestrian Access

The revised TA outlines the current footpath network in the vicinity of both development sites, A and B. It states at par. 3.2 that, due to the low level of traffic using the roads within the park, on-road walking is common and deemed to be safe.

Gordon McIntosh
Corporate Director

Bus stops, local residential areas and local shops are considerable distances from development sites A and B. Appendix B to the revised TA indicates that there would be a high standard of pedestrian facilities within the development (sites) but it would remain the case that pedestrian linkage to the development would be second rate in terms of excessive distance from local residential areas and local shops, lack of segregation from traffic and poor standard of surface, both on road and off road.

2. Cyclist Access

Cyclists can currently gain access to the development (sites) via the existing network of roads and shared use paths through Hazlehead Park. Obviously, cycling is quicker than walking so the considerable distances from local residential areas and local shops are less prohibitive to choosing cycling as an effective mode of travel to the development sites.

Appendix B to the revised TA indicates that there would be a high standard of cyclist facilities within the development (sites) but it would remain the case that cyclist linkage to the development would not be good enough, due to lack of segregation from traffic and poor standard of surface, both on road and off road.

3. Access by Public Transport

The nearest bus route is First Group service No. 15 which operates between Airyhall and Beach Retail Park, via Union Street, at a 30-minute frequency on weekdays. The revised TA states at 3.3.2 that this service will be extended into the committed residential development at Pinewood, to the east of the proposed development site. This would provide the opportunity for staff and visitors to access the hotel development by bus, via the core path network. The approximate distance between the nearest proposed bus stop in Pinewood and the hotel development is 800m. There is no road or footpath lighting within Hazlehead Park at present.

Other public services listed in the revised TA operate via Skene Road and Queen's Road, but the bus stops are further away from the proposed hotel development than the stop proposed in Pinewood. Talks have been held between the developers and First Group, who seem keen to extend or re-route existing services into the development, provided that "pump-priming" funding was provided by the developer until any such service addition became self-sufficient.

However, this would require the development access to be upgraded to an adoptable standard in order to become a bus route; that would present a direct conflict to the objective of keeping the park roads low speed and safer for pedestrians and cyclists to share with vehicles.

4. Access by Coach / Taxi

A courtesy shuttle bus service would be provided for hotel staff and guests. This would operate on an hourly basis between 7am and midnight and run between the hotel and Union Street. .A coach parking bay is proposed within the hotel development to support this proposal.

A taxi drop-off / collection zone is also proposed within the hotel development.

5. Access by Service Vehicles / Emergency Vehicles

Space has been set aside for servicing and delivery vehicles within the hotel development. It is proposed that service vehicles access the site from Countesswells Road, to remove the need for larger vehicles travelling through the park.

However, emergency vehicles should be able to access both development sites, from Countesswells Road, Hazledene Road, Hazlehead Avenue, and Groats Road.

6. Private Car Access

Regarding the three access options which were investigated in the revised TA, the second option offers more than the first in terms of providing an additional entrance route to the development from the adopted road network, at Countesswells Road. The third option would be unacceptable, since it provides a sole access to Site A from Countesswells Road, and a sole access to Site B from Hazledene Road.

National trip generation forecast software, TRICS, has been used by Hyder to estimate the traffic impact for each of the three access options. Traffic from committed developments was factored in, and three development scenarios were tested, viz. day-to-day operation; weekday conferences (10.00am starts); and weekend weddings.

The modelling for the revised TA was conducted in accordance with Transport Assessment Guidance published by Transport Scotland, and the results indicated that 3 existing junctions needed to be modelled:

1) Hazledene Road / Queen's Road priority junction
2) Countesswells Road / Den Wood priority junction
3) Countesswells Road / Springfield Road signalised junction

It is accepted that the Queen's Road / Hazlehead Avenue / King's Gate roundabout – which is heavily congested at peak times – does not need to be modelled because the uplift in traffic caused by development related traffic would be less than 5%.

The modelling output demonstrates that the junctions numbered 1 and 2, above, would continue to operate well within capacity during peak periods with development traffic added.

The junction numbered 3 will be upgraded as part of the Pinewood / Hazledene committed development requirements, so the upgraded layout was modelled in the predicted Hazlehead Hotel development opening year (2017) and compared with the scenarios of development traffic added for each of the 3 proposed access options.

The modelling output demonstrates that the access option 3 would have a significant adverse impact on the PM peak period, however access options 1 and 2 would not have a significant adverse impact on the degree of saturation of the junction. This compounds our view that option 3 should be discounted because it fails to provide sufficient entrances and egresses to spread the impact of the development traffic across the road network.

Note that for the 3 development scenarios, the junction would operate over capacity in the PM peak period (17.00 – 18.00) and the degree of saturation would increase slightly with the addition of the proposed development traffic. The revised TA has also indicated that changing of staging and timing of signals could improve the above results, plus the pedestrian crossing stage is not called every cycle, although it is modelled this way as a "worst case". The practicality of altering the signalised junction in this manner would need to be assessed fully before we agreed to its implementation.

An alternative option is to physically modify the signalised junction. The merit of such "No Net Detriment" solutions is debatable and their implementation can cause annoying queues and delays to road users.

The hotel development would be eligible to make a contribution to the Strategic Transport Fund, which has been established to help ameliorate the cumulative impact of new development on the strategic transport network. The provisional sum – based on a Use Class 7 development area of 5.48Ha in Site "A" – is £306,000.

To help minimise the impact of development traffic on the local road network, a Travel Plan would be required to promote sustainable forms of transport as an alternative to travel by private car to and from the development.

Also, a signing strategy would need to be developed so that visitors to the hotel could use the most appropriate routes. In section 4.8 of the revised TA, the potential rat-running issue through Craigiebuckler Avenue (by motorists with local knowledge) is set in perspective and I agree that this should not become a problem.

7. Other Considerations

7.1 Park Roads

The revised TA indicates that it is not intended that any internal roads within Hazlehead Park will be adopted by the roads authority, so any works which would be carried out at the developer's expense, would need to be agreed with Steven Shaw, Environment Manager.

It is assumed in the revised TA that the shuttle buses would only use the Den Wood access to enter and leave the hotel development, and it has been deemed acceptable that a 5.0m width would be sufficient to allow the proposed shuttle bus to pass other vehicles between the site and Countesswells Road.

Internal roads to the north of the hotel development have a proposed width of 5.0m on 2-way links, and swept path assessments for emergency vehicles would be required to check that this provision would be sufficient at bends / junctions.

One-way links are proposed, comprising 3.5m wide sections plus 2.0m wide passing places, which should be inter-visible and spaced no more than 100m apart. The design of the road construction of any consequent road widenings will depend on the underlying ground conditions and consideration of the likely volume of traffic using each section of road.

Suitable drainage of the park roads shall be a requirement of any detailed planning application or matters specified by condition application.

7.2 Development Parking

The revised TA indicates suitable levels of parking for the proposed development content. In addition to the total permanent spaces which would be provided (284 car, 16 mobility, 57 bicycle and 22 motorcycle) a robust parking management strategy would be deployed to deal with parking demand for large, infrequent events.

7.3 Construction Traffic

Construction traffic routing could not be imposed as a planning condition or a Road Construction Consent condition, however the developer could devise a regime whereby the construction workforce and delivery vehicles arrive and leave the development sites on agreed routes and during agreed periods. The revised TA proposes that construction traffic only access / egress the site via the Countesswells Road access.

8. Conclusions

The highest priority in terms of street user hierarchy is pedestrian movement, but between the development sites and the adopted road network, existing provision is poor and the distances would be restrictive to people choosing walking as the travel mode to gain access to the developments.

The next highest priority in terms of street user hierarchy is cyclist movement, but between the development sites and the adopted road network, existing provision is poor and it is not expected that a significant number of people would choose cycling as the travel mode to gain access to the developments.

Next in terms of street user hierarchy is public transport, but even when the First No. 15 bus service has been extended into Pinewood, the distance required to walk to and from the nearest bus stop would be restrictive to people choosing public transport as the travel mode to gain access to the developments.

Alternative provision is proposed via a courtesy shuttle bus, running an hourly service to and from Union Street, which would potentially capture a significant proportion of non-car mode share.

Regarding access for service vehicles and emergency vehicles, it is debatable how access by delivery vehicles would be restricted to Countesswells Road, especially given the requirement for emergency vehicles to have access from all routes. The barrier system would require some detailed consideration to help prevent service vehicles taking access via Groats Road, Hazlehead Avenue and Hazledene Road.

The deployment of the barrier system to prevent rat-running through the development by private cars is essential. The impact of the traffic generated by the development would not have a significant impact on the surrounding adopted road network, however there would be an adverse impact on the park roads, with increased traffic causing inconvenience and safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists.

Local Development Plan Policy T2 – Managing the Transport Impact of Development – indicates that to take a reasoned decision in assessing the transport impact of new development, account must be taken of the availability and quality of types of transport that are currently available; and proposed measures to ensure that a reasonable choice of transport modes will be available.

It also states that planning conditions and / or legal agreements may be imposed to bind the targets set out in the Travel Plan and set the arrangements for monitoring, enforcement and review.

9. Recommendations

I would recommend that this application be supported with various transport-related conditions, to help provide adequate sustainable means of transport and reduce the adverse impact of development generated traffic on the roads through Hazlehead Park, as follows:-

- Signing strategy to be agreed to direct visitors to the hotel development
- Need to retain all existing access arrangements within the park and provide emergency vehicle access to the development (which would need to be approved by emergency services)
- Barrier system would need to be installed to ensure there is no potential rat-run between Hazledene Road and Countesswells Road (it is also proposed that service / delivery vehicles only take access / egress from Countesswells Road so the barrier control would need to be set up to prevent alternative access / egress by service / delivery vehicles)
- Swept path assessments would be required for coaches, service vehicles and emergency vehicles (road widening and passing places and bend improvements may be required as a result)
- Improvement of roads through the park, including the existing bridge, and suitable drainage provision, would be required (need to debate whether a Maintenance Agreement with ACC Environment would be required; whether park roads should be illuminated; whether advisory speed limit of 15mph should be retained; whether to remove or alter the current Prohibition of Driving Order)
- Improvement of off-road paths through the park would be required (need to debate issues of maintenance and lighting)
- Travel Plan required to encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car (this should include a Parking Management Plan and commitment to providing courtesy shuttle bus service)
- Strategic Transport Fund contribution would be required

Mark Wilkie
Senior Engineer