

Alan Goforth
Planning Department
Ryedale District Council
Ryedale House
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 7HH



21 January 2021

Dear Alan

20/00695/FUL + 20/00696/LBC - Change of use and alteration of farm buildings to form a mixed use events and venue barn (wedding ceremonies and reception and small conferences etc..) with associated facilities, landscaping and parking, Sproxton Hall Farm Main Street Sproxton Helmsley YO62 5EQ

Further to previous correspondence from my colleague, Georgina Stares, dated 4th November 2020, I write again on behalf of George and Maureen Skinner, and many of the residents of Sproxton, who wish to collectively maintain and re-enforce their objection to the above applications. This objection is made in the context of a review of the revised Transport Assessment, prepared by Sanderson Associates and submitted to the Council in late December 2020. It also considers comments made by the Highways Officer at NYCC. I would like to respectfully draw your attention to a number of further concerns in connection with the proposals and the additional technical information submitted in support of the application.

Access and the Local Highway Network

The TA states that the Village Street is adopted up to the point at which it enters the applicant's ownership and that the adopted section has a carriageway width of between 4.0m and 5.4m, however, the NYCC Highways Officer noted in their consultee response dated 3rd December 2020 that during a site visit, measurements were carried out of the Village Street and confirmed that the actual carriageway widths measure between 3.75m and 5.3m, with an average of 4.6m. This carriageway width would not be suitable for a car to pass a larger vehicle or to pass a horse and rider, safely.

The TA references Manual for Streets (MfS) as a means to justify the road width as suitable, stating that 4.1m is the minimum width that will permit two cars to pass and the (adopted) section of the road is only less than 4.1m over a short length (25m). However, the guidance provided in MfS is based upon a perfectly straight alignment of both road and vehicle. Far from following a straight alignment, the Village Street has significant curvature along its length and consequently we would maintain that there is insufficient evidence provided that two vehicles could pass safely.

The revised TA states that, following discussions with NYCC, proposals to address the more significant width restrictions have been included, through three sections of isolated widening, as presented in drawing 11547-005. The TA implies that these proposals have been confirmed to be acceptable by



NYCC, however, in the consultee response dated 3rd December 2020, the Highways Officer states that *"It is recommend that consideration of mitigation measures for the public highway within the village be addressed. I await amended documents before making a formal recommendation"*.

The proposals, which are illustrated overleaf for ease of reference, do not satisfactorily demonstrate that the proposed widening is of sufficient benefit to make the development proposals acceptable in highway safety terms. Swept path analysis should be provided, illustrating that that at the very least, a car and large vehicle can pass each other safely, not least because observations provided by local residents in a letter outline that large vehicles such as a JCB have attempted to pass LGVs outside of Whitestone Lodge and have barely been able to pass each other, which is due to lack of forward visibility, despite a raised driver position and therefore, simply widening the road slightly, without accounting for the road alignment or intervisibility, isn't an adequate solution.

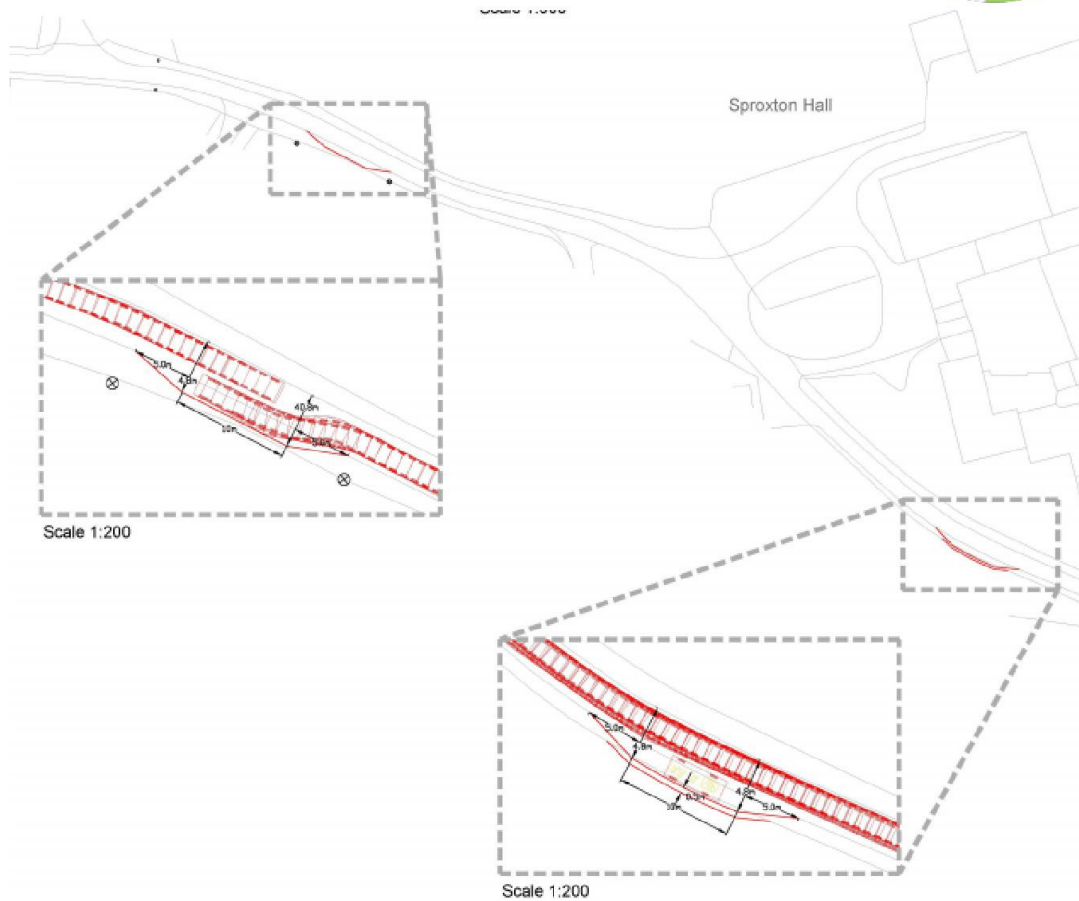
Furthermore, it is noted in residents' observations that the first section of widening shown in the following figure is just beyond the eastern end of one of the most constrained sections of the carriageway. This constrained section, bordered by high hedges, joins the B1257 to the west. This proposed widening outside Sunnyview is not visible for the first 50m from this junction, due to the curvature and fall of the slope. Consequently, the proposed widening will lead to a bottleneck, potentially onto the B1257, depending on the direction of traffic flow. In addition, the proposed widening could potentially increase speeds going east towards section 2 which would have a detrimental impact on road safety.

Additionally, no inter-visibility is provided between section 2 and section 3 of the proposed widening, due to the curvature of the road, and there are hedges and walls on either side along the narrow intervening stretch. Therefore any proposed widening at this section of carriageway would not mitigate the issue.

In addition, the wall outside The Annex and Stable Cottage (opposite the proposed widened section) is very close to the road. It is at the approach to the bend at the eastern end of the widened section and could be at risk of significant damage due to the alignment needed for a large vehicle and car to pass at that point i.e. where the road narrows again on the bend.



In addition to the above proposed widening, two formal passing places are proposed that will increase the road width to 4.8m, as shown overleaf. The first formal passing place is located to the west of Sproxton Hall, and the second is located to the east of Sproxton Hall, along the stretch of bridleway that leads to the proposed car park for the venue. Neither passing place would allow a horse and rider to be safely passed by the quantum of vehicles associated with the development proposals.



A width of 4.8m might be considered suitable for a car and a HGV to pass (tightly, on a perfectly straight alignment), however, this is not sufficient to enable a car to pass a combine harvester or tractor and trailer, which are typically in excess of 2.5m wide, particularly when the curvature of the carriageway is taken into account, as previously noted. The swept path analysis shown above only demonstrates that two cars can pass simultaneously and not a car and a HGV or agricultural vehicle.

During the Saturday peak hour, traffic flow to the development is expected to result in at least one additional vehicle movement every 45 seconds. Based on our review of the widening / passing place proposals, it is our concern that these do not provide sufficient comfort that such an uplift in traffic movements on the Village Street could be accommodated without detriment to road safety.



As such, the proposals clearly do not comply with the requirement of NPPF to '*ensure that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users*' and thus the application should be refused on these grounds.

Policy Compliance and Sustainable Access

The revised Transport Assessment is explicit in its acknowledgment that the opportunities to travel to the site by sustainable means are very limited. As you are aware, Sproxton Village Street is a 30mph no through road, which is narrow and winding, has no footway provision and is unlit for the most part. This means that pedestrians and other vulnerable road users share the carriageway with all vehicular traffic. The anticipated increase in traffic resulting from the proposals would have a significant and negative impact on the safety of these users.

The TA briefly outlines the contents of a Travel Plan, however a full detailed Travel Plan report should be submitted. This should be prepared ahead of any planning approval to demonstrate if / how access to the development by modes other than single occupancy car will be facilitated. The indicative measures mentioned within the TA do not provide any comfort that staff and guests will do anything but drive to the venue. The revised TA suggests that "*To encourage staff and guests to travel to and from the site using sustainable travel modes other than single occupancy car journeys, it is particularly important that they are made aware of the sustainable transport alternatives that are available.*". It has however already been established that the development is not readily accessible by sustainable means and thus it is unclear how any such information-giving exercise would have any bearing on mode split of journeys to the venue.

The revised TA maintains that car sharing will be promoted, however, as noted previously, given the rural nature of the site and the likely spread of home locations, this is likely to have a very limited impact on the number of vehicle trips generated.

The revised TA also suggests that the venue will recommend the use of taxi companies who offer electric / hybrid vehicles, however this implies that such taxi companies have an available fleet of low carbon vehicles. The residents of Sproxton have suggested that it is difficult to get a taxi to Sproxton, unless from Helmsley and there are a limited number available there. As such, to suggest that electric / hybrid vehicles might be readily available is unrealistic.

As such, the proposals clearly do not comply with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to '*ensure that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up*' and thus the application should be refused on the grounds of sustainability / accessibility.



Car Parking

The development layout includes 50 parking spaces, while the revised TA also discusses the potential availability of 20 additional overspill spaces; however, the justification for this is weak, given that there is capacity for up to 220 guests (on an evening), along with 15 staff.

Lack of suitable parking provision will lead to obstructive / overspill parking within the site and potentially onto the adjacent highway network, to the detriment of other vehicles and road users using the Village Street (including emergency vehicles, as required), bridleway and highway safety.

Summary

A review of the Transport Assessment dated December 2020 submitted alongside application ref: 20/00695/FUL has identified a number of significant highways-related concerns; the key points can be summarised as follows:

- The only route to the development site is via Sproxton Village Street which has a carriageway width of between 4.0m and 5.4m, however, the NYCC Highways Officer noted in their consultee response dated 3rd December 2020 that during a site visit, measurements were carried out of the Village Street and confirmed that the actual carriageway widths measure between 3.75m and 5.3m. There is no footway and very limited street lighting. Any increase in traffic will therefore increase the safety risk to vulnerable road users;
- The proposed highways improvements do not provide a meaningful degree of opportunity for a car to pass a large vehicle;
- The level of trip generation associated with the development proposals at peak times is likely to result in an inability for large vehicles to safely pass other vehicles and would lead to vehicles being trapped against the tidal flow of traffic approaching or leaving the venue;
- The proposals to increase the width at specific points are not considered to address this road safety issue sufficiently, given that the application proposals would see a significant intensification of traffic along the route.
- Contrary to the prevailing policy agenda, which encourages development that is accessible by a range of modes of travel, the site does not provide safe access for those on foot / by bike and public transport provision is extremely poor. As such, trips to the site will be dominated by private car;
- Furthermore, a brief, nonspecific, Travel Plan is discussed in the TA, referencing general information which will be provided to staff and guests. However, it is unclear how this will be of help to reduce single occupancy car trips.



In light of the above, it is considered that the proposals would be to the detriment of highway capacity and road safety and the planning application should be refused on highways grounds.

If you require any further explanation of the issues highlighted, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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