

Technical Note

Project:	Mildenhall Hub	Job No:	60525557
Subject:	Consultation Response		
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM have been commissioned by Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) to prepare a Technical Note setting out responses to the comments and queries raised at the public consultation event for the proposed Mildenhall Hub project.
- 1.2 The comments and queries raised have been grouped into similar areas and a response provided within the following sections.

2. Link or Relief Road

- 2.1 The proposed Mildenhall Hub development involves the localised redistribution of existing trips that are already on the transport network because it comprises consolidation of existing facilities in Mildenhall. As a result, the net impacts of the development proposals are minor in transport terms and would not justify significant infrastructure such as a new Link Road. Assessment of the Local Plan highlighted that detailed assessment of further planned growth in Mildenhall will require localised traffic management measures in the medium term to reduce traffic movements through the constrained Town Centre.
- 2.2 It is expected that a link or relief road will be required at Mildenhall in the long term to accommodate growth beyond the Local Plan, including the potential redevelopment of RAF Mildenhall. This will be subject to be further study as part of the next Local Plan process to determine viability and alignment.

3. Sheldrick Way

- 3.1 The Sheldrick Way access junction has been tested for emergency vehicle use and redesigned to make it easier to accommodate them. Sheldrick Way has been reviewed by the emergency services who have confirmed that the junction with Queensway and the access road into the site is sufficient for their needs. The emergency services do not consider it necessary to provide any form of additional signal, other than the blue lights on emergency vehicles, to stop traffic on Sheldrick Way or Queensway. The emergency services are content that the blue lights on vehicles will be sufficient enough to ensure that other road users are aware of their presence. Furthermore an emergency access route will be retained along Wamil Way, however this will only be used should Sheldrick Way be blocked.
- 3.2 A capacity assessment of the Queensway / Sheldrick Way priority 'T' junction has been undertaken which highlights that the junction as currently designed has sufficient capacity to cater for the vehicular trips associated with the proposed development and therefore no amendments to the junction are proposed to increase capacity.
- 3.3 As part of the Transport Assessment, a parking accumulation assessment was undertaken to determine the maximum combined level of parking required at the proposed development across a day. This assessment was based upon the operational profile of each of the elements which forms the proposed development and the level of parking proposed has been identified with this in mind. An area has also been set aside within the development to be used for overflow parking if required. Providing car parking significantly over and above that identified in the parking accumulation assessment would be expected to result in overprovision, compromising scheme design and cost, and would encourage more private car trips. It is expected that the overflow area should only be required to cater for particular events, such as school sports or open days.

3.4 A Travel Plan will be implemented at the proposed development which will seek to encourage those travelling to the site to do so by sustainable modes. It should be noted that none of the components of the proposed development currently implement Travel Plans. This means that there is significant scope to reduce the number of vehicular trips associated with the proposed development by implementing an effective Travel Plan, particularly given the proximity of the development to the Town Centre and established bus routes.

4. A1101 North Terrace / A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street (with Queensway) three-arm roundabout

4.1 The A1101 North Terrace / A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street (with Queensway) three-arm roundabout has been reviewed as part of a number of studies being undertaken by both FHDC and Suffolk County Council (SCC) to determine what, if any, improvements to increase capacity and the operation of the junction can be identified. These studies found that given the spatial constraints at this junction there are no obvious improvements to facilitate the capacity enhancements required to fully accommodate the future year traffic flows without queuing.

4.2 The three-arm roundabout is expected to operate at or slightly over capacity during peak periods with the proposed development in place. This means that there is likely to be a slight increase in delays through this junction during peak hours as a result of the proposed development but it is not significant enough to warrant large scale improvements. To improve the operation of the junction in the short term, and minimise the potential for increased peak hour delays, a number of operational measures could be implemented to improve the efficiency of the existing junction. These would include:

- Possibility of providing a Yellow Box Junction in place of the existing 'Keep Clear' markings to ensure that right turning traffic into Queensway is able to manoeuvre more freely and thus reducing delay for vehicles travelling to the Hub. A Yellow Box Junction would be an enforceable arrangement;
- Encouraging further use of New Street which may require removal of on-street parking; and
- Encouraging use of more sustainable modes of transport through promotion of initiatives set out in the Travel Plan.

4.3 It is proposed that funding be set aside by the development towards the investigation and delivery of such improvements.

4.4 The proposed development will include both the fire and police stations. When these services are on emergency callouts, they will most likely utilise the Queensway Roundabout junction. It is understood from both services that emergency callouts are infrequent however all vehicles are utilising the junction to go to emergency callouts from their existing locations. The measures highlighted above would help improve the resilience to allow efficient movement of emergency vehicles through the junction when required.

4.5 As highlighted through assessment of the local plan assessment, whilst there are no obvious improvements to facilitate the capacity enhancements required to fully accommodate the future year traffic flows without queuing, there is potential for a localised traffic management scheme including a package of measures such as a restriction of some movements to be implemented to make Mildenhall and this junction less attractive for through-traffic, allowing local traffic and pedestrian movements to be prioritised, facilitating enhanced pedestrian/cycle linkages to the town centre and enhanced public realm to create a greater sense of place at the junction. This will be subject to further investigation as planned growth continues to come forward. Beyond the local plan a larger scale solution will be required in the form of a relief road. As previously explained the impacts of the current development proposals would not warrant such a scheme, particularly as it will involve the redistribution of existing traffic, and provides significant potential for a reduction in trips arising from the co-location of these facilities.

5. Queensway

5.1 Accident data obtained from SCC confirmed that no accidents which have resulted in fatalities have occurred within the study area of the Transport Assessment over the most recent five year period. Details relating to the accidents which have been recorded by the police over the last five year period are included in Section 3 of the Transport Assessment.

- 5.2 The consultation has revealed a local view that there is an existing issue relating to on-street parking impeding traffic flow along Queensway. Queensway has been reviewed and it is noted that there is little scope to implement changes to the road layout without impacting upon on-street parking. Double yellow lines could be implemented along Queensway; however this would need to be through a Traffic Regulation Order which would be subject to a consultation period with the public. Funding towards pursuing such a measure is proposed to be set aside by the proposed development.

6. Comet Way Estate

- 6.1 Based on the calculations undertaken, the level of parking proposed would provide sufficient capacity to cater for the maximum need of the proposed development and overspill parking is not expected to occur on local roads. Furthermore, an area within the site has been identified to provide overflow parking should it be required.
- 6.2 It is considered likely that some trips to the proposed development will be made through the Comet Way Estate. These will generally be those travelling from the north of Mildenhall as this would constitute the quickest route. However, this is likely to be offset by the fact some of the trips associated with the proposed development will be made from Comet Way itself and an increasing amount of these trips could in the future be made by more sustainable modes as much of this area will be within 400 metres of the development.

7. Wamil Way and Church Walk

- 7.1 Wamil Way, Church Walk and the roads leading off are already well utilised as pedestrian and cyclist routes linking the existing Mildenhall College Academy with the town centre. Furthermore, other public rights of way are present within the site which link to the wider area.
- 7.2 The 'Mildenhall College' sign on Wamil Way may be removed as part of the access improvements but access for pedestrians and cyclists to the school will still be provided from Wamil Way. Vehicular access from Wamil Way will not be allowed except by emergency vehicles, however, the existing parking area has been retained at the request of local residents, for 'non-hub' uses. Vehicular drop off facilities are expected to take place within the proposed development.
- 7.3 Discussions were held with SCC as to whether the route through the site to Mildenhall town centre could be improved and it was agreed that some form of raised surface would help raise the profile of vulnerable road users and highlight the dominant pedestrian and cycle route. This is expected to be delivered as part of the development proposals.

8. Town Centre – Knock on Impacts

- 8.1 The majority of traffic associated with the proposed development is already on the local road network travelling to the existing uses. Whilst the consolidation of uses in one location reduces the dilution of those trips on the network, it also significantly increases the potential for sustainable trips and linked trips. Linked trips occur through visitors being able to travel to the proposed development site and visit, for example, both the health centre or library and the swimming pool without needing to undertake separate journeys. Equally the proximity to the Town Centre will allow development trips to be linked by foot with other town centre uses. The consolidation of uses in one location also provides an attractive focal point of demand for public transport operators supporting public transport service improvements.
- 8.2 The proposed development represents a sustainable proposal in transport terms and should ultimately help reduce the need for travel through the Town Centre. The Transport Assessment has not taken account of such reductions in order to assess the most robust case and, notwithstanding this, the impacts are predicted to be manageable.

9. Public Transport

- 9.1 A new bus stop for public services is to be provided within the development located near to the main building entrance. It is the aspiration of FHDC for this to be served by existing and future bus services serving Mildenhall. Discussions between all parties are still on-going but the provision of a focal point of demand at this co-location of services greatly supports enhanced public transport services.

10. Footpaths and Cycleways

- 10.1 Those pedestrian and cycle rights of way which enter into the site will be upgraded as part of the masterplan for the site.
- 10.2 No other improvements are proposed as part of this development, however the footways and cycleways in the wider area will form part of future developments located near to the Hub.

11. RAF Mildenhall West Row Gate

- 11.1 Concerns were raised by RAF Mildenhall in relation to the impact of the proposed development on traffic volumes passing the gate on West Row Road.
- 11.2 Traffic flows along Queensway are predicted to increase due to the relocation of the individual elements of the Hub which are currently sited to the east and therefore do not currently travel along Queensway.
- 11.3 The increase in vehicles travelling along West Row Road past the access gate for RAF Mildenhall is predicted to be minimal. This is because most of the Hub related vehicles travelling from the west are already travelling passed the gate to reach the individual elements. Therefore, any increase in traffic volumes associated with the Hub is not considered likely to negatively impact on access to the West Row gate.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 Where possible and appropriate the comments raised are being taken account as part of the proposed development. Many of the issues raised relate to existing issues affecting the Town which are not significantly affected by the development proposals. These issues are being taken on board by the Client team and provided to the Highway Authority, Suffolk County Council for information purposes.