

Technical Note

Project:	Mildenhall Hub	Job No:	60525557
Subject:	Transport Assessment Non-Technical Summary		
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1. Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM have been appointed by Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) to provide transport planning advice to accompany a planning application for the provision of a development on land adjacent to and including the Mildenhall Academy off Queensway in Mildenhall, Suffolk. The development will provide for a number of existing amenities and facilities in Mildenhall to relocate to one site and thus create a 'hub'.
- 1.2 The amenities and facilities within Mildenhall which will form part of the 'hub' and relocate from their existing sites are:
- The Fire Station;
 - The Police Station;
 - The Health Centre;
 - The Library;
 - The Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool;
 - Forest Heath District Council offices; and
 - Mildenhall Academy Secondary School and Sixth Form.
- 1.3 In general, the majority of the amenities and facilities will continue to operate as at present; however there will be some changes in staff and pupil numbers.

Policy

- 1.4 It has been demonstrated that the 'hub' is compliant with relevant national, county and local transport policies, through the preparation of a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. The Travel Plan will aim to encourage journeys to the 'hub' to be by walking, cycling and public transport. The principle of consolidating this range of services in a single location allows efficient use of the transport network by removing external trips from the network, supporting better public transport services by focusing demand at one location, and allows for sharing of facilities such as parking.

Existing Situation

- 1.5 There are a number of existing pedestrian and cyclist links to the nearby residential areas as well as the town centre which will encourage people to walk and cycle to the 'hub'. A number of frequent bus services are also available from bus stops located within reasonable walking distance of the 'hub' which will encourage journeys to be made to the 'hub' by bus. A proposal to increase the number of bus services serving the stop at the 'hub' is discussed in paragraph 1.8.
- 1.6 Accident data recorded by the police and obtained from Suffolk County Council (SCC) confirms that only six accidents occurred at the junctions assessed in the Transport Assessment over the last five years, and that none of the accidents recorded resulted in fatalities and one classified as serious. The five remaining accidents were classified as slight in terms of severity. The data provided by the police does not detail the exact nature of the injuries incurred to any parties involved. There is no evidence of any existing safety issues that would be made worse by the development and subsequently requiring improvement.

Proposed Facilities

- 1.7 Pedestrians and cyclists will still be able to access the 'hub' from Queensway and Wamil Way. The access from Wamil Way will be for pedestrians and cyclists only with no access by motorised vehicles. This will provide a traffic free route into the 'hub' linking with the existing public footpaths and bridleways which should encourage more journeys to be made on foot or by bicycle, reducing traffic levels.
- 1.8 A new bus stop will be provided within the development. It is proposed that this will be served by public bus services serving Mildenhall and the surrounding villages therefore providing a direct link to the 'hub'. It is anticipated that this will encourage a greater number of trips to be made by bus. Discussions regarding the exact details of the services which could serve the 'hub' are currently ongoing. Generally the consolidation of jobs and activity in this one location will offer revenue potential for bus providers and will support additional bus services.
- 1.9 Vehicular access to the development will continue to be provided from Queensway via Sheldrick Way. This access has been assessed in terms of establishing if it can cater for the number of vehicles which will travel to the 'hub', and it is forecast to be within capacity. Some localised changes will be undertaken to allow larger vehicles such as coaches and fire tenders to be comfortably accommodated.
- 1.10 It is proposed to provide a total of 300 car parking spaces across the development, including some 78 spaces identified as overflow spaces. Some of the spaces will be designated for specific uses. These include 27 spaces for use by the police and fire services and 19 spaces for use by the mobility impaired.
- 1.11 To encourage a greater number of trips to the 'hub' to be made by electric powered vehicles, four of the car parking spaces will be provided with charging points. A further 15 of the car parking spaces will be provided with the means for electric charging points to be fitted in the future.
- 1.12 To encourage journeys to the development to be made by bicycle, it is proposed to provide a total of 200 cycle parking spaces situated close to the building for use by all site users. Of the total some 100 cycle parking spaces are to be designated for use by the Academy with the remaining shared amongst the general public uses. Areas within the site have been identified to provide further cycle parking should it be required in the future.

Traffic Assessment

- 1.13 To understand the levels of traffic travelling through certain junctions in Mildenhall, traffic surveys were undertaken. The data provided from the survey allows for the AM and PM peak hours to be identified. The results confirmed that the largest number of vehicles on the network occurs between 08:00 hours and 09:00 hours (AM peak hour) and between 16:45 hours and 17:45 hours (PM peak hour).

- 1.14 FHDC have confirmed that none of the sites where the amenities are currently located will be reused for the same purpose, i.e. the swimming pool site will not be replaced by another swimming pool. Therefore, traffic estimated for the 'hub' is not considered to be 'new' to the road network – it is, for the majority, already on the local road network travelling to these amenities and will continue to do so when they relocate. The increase in vehicles on the road network will therefore be significantly less than if the 'hub' was a brand new development.
- 1.15 It is estimated that the 'hub' will result in an additional 56 two-way vehicular trips in the AM peak hour and 104 two-way trips in the PM peak hour. These numbers do not take into account the likelihood that by relocating the amenities to one location people will be able to visit more than one amenity without the need to drive across Mildenhall.
- 1.16 For the purpose of this assessment, all additional traffic has been assumed to use the primary routes through Mildenhall, i.e. Northern Terrace, Kingsway and B1102. In reality this traffic will be somewhat diluted across the network where alternative routes exist from the various origins.
- 1.17 The level of traffic impact identified in this assessment is therefore likely to be higher than what would actually occur and is considered to represent a robust assessment.
- 1.18 Any future redevelopment of the existing sites will be subject to their own Transport Assessment where all traffic estimated to be generated will be considered to be 'new'.
- 1.19 The following junctions within Mildenhall were assessed to establish how they are currently operating:
- Queensway / Sheldrick Way priority 'T' junction;
 - A1101 Kingsway / College Heath Road signalised 'T' junction; and
 - A1101 North Terrace / A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street (with Queensway) three-arm roundabout.
- 1.20 The results confirm that at present all three junctions still have some spare capacity to cater for additional traffic.
- 1.21 The 'hub' is due to open in early 2020, however as this was a late change to the development proposals, after all of the assessment work had been undertaken, there has not been time to amend the assessment from the previous opening year of 2019. The impact of this change on the results of the assessment has been undertaken. A 1% change in baseline traffic is expected between 2019 and 2020 has been identified however this is not considered to be significant enough to alter the results of the assessment work undertaken as the traffic predicted to be generated by the proposed development was considered to be robust as they do not take into account linking of trips or changes in mode share.
- 1.22 . An assessment of the junctions listed above for the previously proposed opening year of 2019 has also been undertaken. This includes an assessment of the proposed layout of the Queensway / Sheldrick Way priority 'T' junction following its re-positioning 25 metres west of its current location.
- 1.23 The results confirm that the re-positioned Queensway / Sheldrick Way priority 'T' junction and the A1101 Kingsway / College Heath Road signalised 'T' junction are shown to operate with spare capacity in 2019 with the 'hub' open and therefore no further improvements have been proposed.
- 1.24 The results for the A1101 North Terrace / A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street (with Queensway) three-arm roundabout suggest that the junction will operate at or slightly over capacity and that queuing will increase however the level of delay experienced at the junction is not considered to increase by more than 30 seconds on any approach at peak times. The junction has been reviewed as part of a number of studies being undertaken by both FHDC and SCC to determine what, if any, improvements to increase capacity, reduce delay and queuing and the operation of the junction can be identified. These studies found that there are no obvious improvements to enable the junction to accommodate planned growth

without queuing. There is potential for a localised management scheme to restrict some movements and make the junction less attract for through traffic allowing local traffic and pedestrian movements to be prioritised. This is something that is expected to be explored as planned growth in Mildenhall comes forward. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that for Mildenhall to cater for growth beyond that set out in the Local Plan, including the redevelopment of RAF Mildenhall, some form of relief road would be required.

Mitigation

1.25 A number of studies have been undertaken, as part of the Local Plan process, by FHDC and SCC which consider the future increase in traffic associated with further development in the town. The studies have considered a number of changes to the A1101 North Terrace / A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street (with Queensway) three-arm roundabout. None of the changes considered will provide significant improvement to the junction. Therefore, an alternative route for traffic through the town is considered to be the best option for easing congestion within Mildenhall town centre in the longer term.

1.26 Due to the relatively low level of traffic impact associated with the 'hub', the provision of a new traffic route would not be justified. Interim measures are however proposed at the A1101 North Terrace / A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street (with Queensway) three-arm roundabout. These measures are proposed to improve the reliability of the junction and to alleviate impacts of town centre activities on through flow at the junction in the short term. Measures proposed in the short term 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';
- Encouraging further use of New Street which may require removal of some or all on-street parking; and
- Encouraging use of more sustainable modes of transport through promotion of initiatives set out in the Travel Plan.

1.27 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.

1.28 The measures adopted will require consultation and further investigation by the local authority. It is proposed that a budget is identified to fund the delivery of these localised measures by Suffolk County Council.

1.29 The Travel Plan will be key to maximize the opportunity to promote sustainable travel to the proposed development. A Travel Plan has been prepared which sets out how the proposed occupants can work together to promote sustainable travel choices by staff and visitors, thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the road network within Mildenhall. Any reduction in traffic arising from the Travel Plan has not been accounted for in the traffic impact assessment.

Conclusions

1.30 The co-location of existing amenities in Mildenhall to the 'hub' will:

- Reduce people's need to travel between sites therefore reducing the number of vehicles travelling within the town and assist in reducing congestion;
- Encourage a greater number of journeys to and from the 'hub' to be made by walking, cycling or using public transport; and

- Encourage greater use of the amenities.

1.31 The assessment undertaken has adopted a robust approach. The net traffic impact of the proposed development will be relatively minor and is not significant enough to warrant large scale capacity improvements. To manage the impacts of increased traffic it is proposed to promote sustainable travel in so far as possible through adopting a Travel Plan, providing good pedestrian and cycle connection to the town centre and promoting improved bus service. Funding will also be provided towards additional traffic management measures at the A1101 North Terrace / A1101 Kingsway / B1102 High Street to improve junction efficiency.