

CITY PLANS PANEL - 26 JUNE 2014

SUPPLEMENTARY BACKGROUND REPORT ON HIGHWAY MATTERS

Planning Applications 14/02521/FU and 14/02514/OT

Introduction:

Both the above planning applications if approved would result in additional vehicular trips on a sensitive part of the highway network. The critical part of this network is considered to be Austhorpe Road and its junction with Station Road.

The traffic implications of the current applications are still being assessed, and their acceptability is related to a complicated site history. This report provides a general analysis of the highways background and implications of various planning approval or uses in the Manston Lane / Austhorpe Road area prior to the completion of a full assessment. Members may also be aware of significant changes to the highway network that are anticipated in the future, namely the Manston Lane Link Road (MLLR) and East Leeds Orbital Road (ELOR).

There are a number of sites and developments that are relevant to the planning background and the amount and character of traffic using the corridor. These sites are considered in the report and include but are not limited to: -

- The former Vickers tank factory (Threadneedle site) – The Bellway development known as the Limes (122 dwellings pre-MLLR) is almost complete on a portion of this site. A small portion of the remainder of the site is currently providing storage for an engineering company.
- The former Optare site – Ben Bailey are currently constructing the first phase (103 houses) of the 192 dwellings approved.
- The former Draka cable manufacturing site – This site is part of the same Ben Bailey development referenced above.
- The Richmond Ice Creams site – Operations recently ceased.
- The Longs of Leeds site – Occupied by a haulage company.
- The Communisis site – Occupied by a communications company.

The recent Ben Bailey housing development, currently on site and partially occupied, encompasses the Optare and Draka sites.

The former Vickers tank factory site has effectively been broken down into three phases. The western portion of the site (Phase 1) is the approved Bellway Homes development and has been substantially built and occupied (the phase 1 total is for 122 dwellings). The remainder of the Threadneedle site is the subject of the coal extraction application, an application for 100 residential units prior to MLLR (Phase 2) and a further 385 residential units following the opening of MLLR (Phase 3).

Background:

A chronological background is described below beginning around 2002 when the lawful Fallback position for the Threadneedle site was established. The detail is not exhaustive but includes the relevant major developments.

Up-to 2002

The Longs of Leeds site has been long established resulting in HGV trips along Austhorpe Road in addition to employee trips. The site is still in operation generating in similar traffic movements as it did in this period.

Similarly, the Communisis site has been long established resulting in commercial/employment trips along Austhorpe Road and other surrounding roads. The site is still in operation and understood to result in similar traffic generation as it did in this period.

The Threadneedle site is a large industrial site (approx. 24Ha) that was formally the Vickers tank factory. Tank manufacturing and its associated trips ceased in 1999. Planning permission (ref: 32/374/01/FU) was granted in 2002 for its change of use to a B8 use. An agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 required the owners to use 'reasonable endeavours' prior to the opening of the MLLR to limit traffic generation to 2400 vehicles in a 24 hour period of which no more than 35% should be HGV's; and to ensure that HGV traffic uses Austhorpe Road rather than inappropriate residential roads. The Highway Authority was not supportive of this planning application due to the increased potential for HGV traffic on Austhorpe Road. The application was approved at the former Plans Panel East.

Following approval it has been evident that the Threadneedle site has generated only limited traffic up to the present day.

2002 to 2005

During this period the Draka cable factory stopped operating and became vacant and the associated commercial traffic was removed from the area.

2005 to 2009

During this period several planning applications were received for residential development relating to the Threadneedle Phase 1 and Optare/Draka sites.

The Optare operation employed in excess of 300 people and therefore generated employee trips in addition to HGV movements. Accordingly the traffic associated with this site has been removed from the surrounding roads. These trips are now being replaced by the trips associated with the approved housing development (122 dwellings pre-MLLR).

Through negotiation, which included the variation of a Section 106 agreement affecting an extant B8 permission on Threadneedle site (to reduce the number of permitted trips from the site) and subject to some limited off-site highway measures a certain amount of residential development was considered acceptable (eventually settled at 192 at Optare/Draka and 150 at Bellway Phase 1 pot-MLLR).

However, the combined traffic impact of the first Threadneedle and Optare/Draka applications was considered to be higher than acceptable prior to the opening of the MLLR, notwithstanding the off-site highway works proposed. Given that both the Threadneedle and Optare applications were in a position to be determined at the same

time, both planning applications were refused by officers using delegated powers for the following reason:-

The Local Planning Authority is unable to support the proposed residential development as it represents piecemeal development within an area that is known to suffer from existing congestion problems and no solution has been put forward to address this issue. As such, to support the current application in isolation and in advance of a suitable comprehensive highway solution having first been brought forward would be premature to the proper planning of the area and would create a situation where the traffic associated with the proposed scheme, together with any other future schemes would lead to unacceptable congestion of the existing highway network and in particular at the Austhorpe Road/Station Road junction. As such, the proposed development is contrary to Unitary Development Plan (Review) Policies GP5 and T2 and the guidance contained within PPG 13 'Transport' and PPS 1 'Delivering Sustainable Development'

Eventually, and during the course of a Public Inquiry, the two applicants agreed to share the available capacity at the Austhorpe Road / Station Road junction and phase their developments (a level of housing prior to MLLR and the remainder after MLLR is opened).

Subsequently, Outline applications on both sites were considered at Plans Panel (refs. 08/03440/OT Threadneedle Phase 1 and 08/00298/OT Optare/Draka) and in due course approved. As stated above these permissions restrict the amount of housing that could be built on either site until the opening of MLLR. The level of combined development was restricted to that level considered acceptable at the Public Inquiry where the operation of the Austhorpe Road / Station Road junction was considered to be the determining factor.

The approved applications allowed for 256 dwellings on the Optare/Draka site and 151 on the Threadneedle Phase 1 site, i.e. a total of 407 dwellings. However, the phasing restriction allowed up to 260 dwellings to be occupied (138 Optare/Draka and 122 Threadneedle Phase 1) until such time as the MLLR is opened to the public. The remaining 147 dwellings cannot be constructed until the Manston Lane Link Road is opened. Following further revisions the two sites can deliver the following:

Optare/Draka = 103 dwellings pre-MLLR, 89 post-MLLR.

Bellway phase 1 = 122 dwellings pre-MLLR, 28 post-MLLR.

As stated earlier the legal agreement that allows 2400 vehicle movements within a 24 hour period (of which 35% can be HGV's) was also amended during the course of negotiations. The legal agreement was altered to reduce by 50% the traffic that is permitted on the wider and much larger Threadneedle Phase 2/3 site. This was considered a significant benefit to the area in traffic terms if the site were to attract a more intensive user than existed at the time, removing 1200 potential commercial/employee trips including 420 HGVs over a 24hr period.

2011 to 2013

In early 2011 a 7.5t weight restriction was implemented on Austhorpe Lane / Whitkirk Lane. The alternative route to Manston Lane for HGVs is via Station Road and Austhorpe Road.

During this period the Optare operation closed removing the traffic impact of over 300 employees and associated commercial traffic from the area.

Following their Outline approvals detailed applications were received and approved on the Threadneedle Phase 1 site (Bellway Homes) and the Optare/Drake site (Ben Bailey Homes). Both applications were considered at Plans Panel. The amount of traffic impact and phasing was the same as previously approved but with a slightly changed housing mix.

Both the Bellway Phase 1 and Ben Bailey developments are being built and occupied. The Bellway Phase 1 site is substantially occupied within its planning restriction.

Towards the end of this period the Richmond Ice Cream factory stopped operating and became vacant and the associated commercial traffic has been removed from the area. It is understood this is a potential housing site.

2014

Planning Applications 14/02521/FU (coal extraction) and 14/02514/OT (hybrid residential application) are received.

Description of Highway Network:

Manston Lane

Manston Lane is a distributor road between Barnbow Lane (to the east) and Austhorpe Road (to the west) and has a speed limit of 30mph. Historically, Manston Lane serves mainly industrial premises but also residential and agricultural premises and sports pitches used by the Leeds Lions AFC. As detailed above, industrial uses have recently been vacated or replaced by residential development

In the vicinity of the Threadneedle site, Manston Lane has an average carriageway width of 7.3 m. The carriageway is bounded on its northern flank by a 2m wide footway. For the majority of its length Manston Lane has no footway on its southern flank. Here footway provision begins around the Bellway Phase 1 site. A footway is introduced by the MLLR and is indicated on the current masterplan.

Austhorpe Road

Austhorpe Road runs between Manston Lane (to the east) and Station Road and has a speed limit of 30mph. Austhorpe Road serves mainly residential premises along its eastern section including access to Austhorpe Lane and Penda's Way. The western portion of Austhorpe Road passes through the Cross Gates town centre. At the western extent of Austhorpe Road there is a signalised junction with the A6120 Station Road. Austhorpe Road has variable carriageway width. This is due to a variety of traffic management measures employed along its length. These measures include sheltered parking, junction build-outs, Zebra crossings, lay-bys, waiting restrictions and parking bays. The carriageway is bounded on both flanks by footways.

Station Road / Ring Road

Station Road is part of the A6120 and also a part of the Outer Ring Road (ORR) of Leeds. The ORR, including Station Road, is also part of the national Primary Route Network. The ORR generally has a speed limit of 40mph, however, the speed limit on Station Road

changes to 30mph as it passes through the Cross Gates town centre. As it passes through the Cross Gates town centre, Station Road is a dual carriageway. The central reserve has numerous gaps to facilitate turning traffic from side roads and various premises. A signalised junction is formed between Austhorpe Road and Station Road. Farm Road opposite Austhorpe Road is not signalised and allows vehicles a left turn only on a give way basis. Because of the capacity constraints of this junction, traffic is prevented from turning right or straight on into Austhorpe Road, the right turn from Farm Road is also banned. To the north of this junction, the signals/traffic control on Station Road extends onto a partially signalised 4 arm roundabout. One of the key objectives of the ELOR is to remove traffic from the existing ORR and allow a variety of interventions along its length.

Austhorpe Lane / Whitkirk Lane

Austhorpe Lane is a residential collector road between Austhorpe Road (to the north) and the A6120 Ring Road Halton (to the south) via Whitkirk Lane. Austhorpe Lane and Whitkirk Lane have a speed limit of 30mph and serve mainly residential premises along their length and are traffic calmed throughout to discourage through traffic and improve road safety and are subject to environmental weight limits that were part of the mitigation measures required of the Bellway and Ben Bailey developments.

Penda's Way

Penda's Way is a residential collector road between Austhorpe Road (to the south) and Barwick Road (to the north). Penda's Way has a speed limit of 30mph and serves mainly residential premises along its length and is traffic calmed throughout its length to discourage through traffic and improve road safety.

Leeds Inner Ring Road Stage 7 and The East Leeds Link

The Leeds Inner Ring Road Stage 7 which will form part of the Strategic Highway Network was opened in late 2008. The East Leeds Link which is part of the Strategic Highway Network was opened in early 2009. These major highway schemes are relevant to the Cross Gates area as they have potentially altered flows on the ORR at Station Road since the assessment of the Austhorpe Road / Station Road junction which limited the level of development on the Optare/Drake and Threadneedle Phase 1 sites at the time of the Public Inquiry. Notwithstanding this, as previously mentioned, the flows at the key junctions around Manston Lane/Cross Gates is generally the same today as before the approval of the Ben Bailey and Bellway phase 1 developments.

Manston Lane Link Road

Planning permissions have been granted for the Manston Lane Link Road. The road is included in the RUDP under policy T21 as a scheme to improve public transport accessibility to existing and future development, and bring relief to existing residential areas subject to commercial traffic. The MLLR includes the widening of Manston Lane including a section within the Threadneedle site. The north south section of MLLR extends southwards over the Leeds to York railway line and pass through the Thorpe Park site to the M1 motorway. The delivery of the MLLR is linked to the continued development of the Thorpe Park site. The MLLR is currently programmed to be open in late 2016.

East Leeds Extension and ELOR

The East Leeds Extension is included in the RUDP under policy H3-3A.33 and identified as a Phase 3 housing site. The development of this 196Ha site includes an orbital relief road ELOR that would connect with MLLR (and hence the M1 motorway) immediately to the east of the Threadneedle site. The RUDP allocation requires the development to provide a comprehensive solution to highway matters in the east Leeds area. An application in part of this allocation (the Northern Quadrant between the A58 and A64) is currently being considered, and the Council is taking a leading role in the delivery of the ELOR and this is expected to be open by 2021.

Traffic Impact and Existing Conditions:

As stated above, the implications of the current applications at the Threadneedle site are still being assessed. The grant of Outline planning permissions at the Threadneedle Phase 1 and Optare/Draka sites (following a Public Inquiry) could be argued to have set a baseline as to what level of traffic is acceptable at the critical Austhorpe Road / Station Road junction. The highway evidence at the Public Inquiry was centred around the overall amount of traffic that would use the junction rather than the amount of HGVs on the corridor. The reason for this was the applications for residential dwellings if approved would replace commercial / industrial uses thereby reducing the potential for HGVs on Austhorpe Road.

However, the evidence used at the Public Inquiry not only includes information on the amount of traffic considered acceptable at the Austhorpe Road / Station Road junction, but also the amount/proportion of HGVs using the route.

Reviewing the Public Inquiry documentation, several traffic counts were referenced. The Council relied on the most recent surveys available at the time that were carried out in 2007.

An initial analysis of the AM peak hour shows a total 2 way flow of 719 vehicle movements on the Austhorpe Road arm of the Station Road junction. The percentage of Buses was 5% and the percentage of HGVs was 6%. The developers 2013 surveys submitted in support of the current applications reveal similar traffic flow and proportion of HGVs on Austhorpe Road in 2013.

Analysis also carried out of the AM peak hour has been carried out on Station Road immediately north and south of the Austhorpe Road junction. South of Austhorpe Road shows a total 2 way flow of 3245 vehicle movements. North of Austhorpe Road shows a total 2 way flow of 2714 vehicle movements. The developers 2013 surveys in support of the current applications again reveal similar traffic flow in 2013.

The review of the PM peak hour shows a total 2 way flow of 905 vehicle movements on the Austhorpe Road arm of the Station Road junction. The percentage of Buses was 4% and the percentage of HGVs was 3%. The developers 2013 surveys in support of the current applications reveals a significant reduction in traffic flow (total 2 way flow of 840) and a slight reduction in buses and HGVs in 2013 (from 61 to 47 movements).

The 2007 surveys show that on Station Road south of Austhorpe Road there is a total 2 way flow of 2786 vehicle movements. North of Austhorpe Road shows a total 2 way flow of 3477 vehicle movements. The developers Transport Statement in support of the current applications reveal similar traffic flow in 2013.

The above analysis reveals there are currently very similar traffic conditions on Austhorpe Road and Station Road as existed in 2007. In terms of HGV traffic on Austhorpe Road, this appears generally similar now as it was in 2007 in spite of the weight limit introduced on Austhorpe Lane and Whitkirk Lane. It is also relevant that traffic associated with the approved Bellway and Ben Bailey developments are included in the 2013 surveys.

The Threadneedle Fall Back Position

The applicants justify the level of development that can be brought forward, prior to the MLLR, by comparing a level of anticipated traffic to the theoretical but lawful consented B8 trips from the site. The consented 'fall back' B8 trips on the site are 1200 vehicles per day (of which 35% are HGVs). The 35% equates to 420 HGV movements. However, the consented trips are the maximum allowed, not the actual trips that might be reasonably expected. Until to the opening of the MLLR, it is likely that the site would continue to generate very little traffic as it suffers from poor access. The site would become a more attractive B8 site after the opening of the MLLR, as the commercial traffic would then have good access to the motorway.

The Transport Statements in support of the current applications considers two options for remediation of the site, grouting (pouring a concrete mix down boreholes into the underlying voids that then sets, providing a solid underground structure) and coal extraction. Both options clearly involve HGV traffic in the area. The information submitted suggests the grouting option would take 2 years to complete and involve around 14,000 HGV movements whereas the coal extraction would take 44 weeks and involve 8,750 HGV movements. The coal extraction is clearly less intensive in terms of HGVs. The day to day HGV movements from the proposed coal extraction would give rise to 40 two way movements (20 arrivals and 20 departures) per day and a maximum of 6 two-way movements (3 arrivals and 3 departures) per hour during the working day.

The 40 HGVs over a 24 hour period arising from the coal extraction is significantly less than the 420 HGVs permitted by the fall back. Approval of either application at the former Vickers site would remove the remaining 1200 permitted trips including 420 HGVs.

Notwithstanding the above, and as stated earlier, the consented trips are the maximum allowed, not the actual trips that might be reasonably expected. Officers are therefore still assessing what mitigation might be appropriate and necessary in conjunction with the developer's highway consultant.

Similarly, the proposal for 100 residential units to be occupied prior to MLLR is also being assessed (as is the full development post MLLR) and will be more onerous than either of the remediation options in terms of traffic generation.

The remaining number of units to be delivered post-MLLR at Bellway phase 1 is 28 dwellings with 89 remaining at the Ben Bailey site (a total of 117 dwellings).

The current timescale for opening the MLLR is the end of 2016.

The highway assessment is ongoing and a further report will be prepared when this work has been carried out including any associated mitigation measures that would be required.

Summary:

The key points for Members to appreciate are as follows:

- Actual flows at the key junction of Austhorpe Road and Station Road are roughly the same today as at the time of the surveys carried out in 2007 when agreeing the Ben Bailey and Bellway phase 1 housing developments.
- At the time of agreeing Bellway phase 1 and Ben Bailey developments (adding 225 dwellings), there were 1,200 vehicular movements permitted on the remainder of the former Vickers site, the R&R ice cream factory was still in operation and there were other commercial uses on Manston Lane were in operation including Longs.
- The key changes between the two surveys include the closure of Optare bus depot, the winding down and ultimate closure of the R&R ice cream factory, Austhorpe Lane receives a weight restriction to prevent HGVs, Bellway phase 1 becomes almost fully occupied and Optare partially built/occupied. There is also very limited vehicle movements at the former Vickers site associated with the storage of engineering equipment.
- There are still up to 1,200 vehicle movements permitted on the Threadneedle site each day, albeit nothing like this amount is achieved or would be expected to be achieved.
- The extent of residential development permitted (and therefore vehicle trips) at Bellway phase 1 and Ben Bailey developments are still restricted until the MLLR is opened.