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Site at Church Road, Reedham
Greater Norfolk Local Plan Submission
Preliminary Highways Assessment

INTRODUCTION

Schema has been instructed by One Planning, on behalf of Paul Dunthorne, to provide a preliminary assessment / response to comments received from NCC Highway's for the proposed development of the above site.

NCC Highway's comments:

The site is considered to be unreasonable for allocation as there is no safe walking route to Reedham Primary School which is some distance away and the surrounding highway network is poor.

ENGINEERING ASSESSMENT

Existing Highway Network

The proposed development is located on the northern side of Church Road with an existing row of residential dwellings immediately to the east. Church Road is a typical rural road and is estimated to be between 5-6m wide [No topographical survey available] along the site frontage and in the immediate vicinity of the site. the road has grass verges either side with no formal drainage systems.

Church Road joins into Pottles Lane which is similar to Church Road, although narrower [estimated to be 3 to 4m wide]. Similarly, Mill Road is narrower than Church Road [estimated to be 4.5 to 5m wide] and has steep verge / embankments either side. Witton Green is similar to Pottles Lane.

There are no footpaths serving any of these roads in the vicinity of the site. Reedham Village Hall is approximately 360m west of the site with the entrance located off Pottles Lane.

There are informal passing places along both Pottles Lane and Mill Road.

Reedham Primary School is located to the south of the development with the quickest route being along Mill Road [approx. 860m]. the road is signposted as 40mph.

Mill Road crosses over the network rail line close to Church view close where the speed limit drops to 30mph. The road narrows over the bridge and there is a narrow pedestrian margin on either side of the bridge. The forward visibility on approach to both sides of the bridge appears to be ok i.e. an oncoming vehicle can be seen at a suitable distance. However, this is based upon a walkover survey rather than survey data.

On the southern side of the railway line, Reedham Village becomes more residential with houses fronting the road and some footpaths along some of the cul-de-sacs off Mill Road. Mill Road south of the railway benefits from a more formal drainage system with gullies and manholes noted in some locations. However, the verge is narrow either side of the road and there is no footpath.

Proposed Solutions

The client owns land running along both Church Road, Pottles Lane and Mill Road. It is accepted that significant highway improvements to road widths and the provision of adoptable footpaths is unviable for the proposed development.

However, the client and One Planning have proposed a footpath link between the development site to the Village Hall to the west and a footpath link from the development site south towards the northern extents of the railway Bridge along Mill Road.

Both footpath links would be provided entirely within the client's land and be 2.5m wide. The final surfacing specification of the footpath is tbc however it could be of a compacted gravel / TROD specification. Further landscaping requirements are TBC to support the footpath along the highway i.e. for screening purposes etc.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide the footpath through the fields adjacent to Mill Road all the way to the bridge due to the embankment and large level difference between the fields and the Bridge over the railway.

The NCC Home to School and College Transport Policy 2020/2021 covers the use of footpaths for pupils walking to school. School children are eligible for free public-school transport subject to the following conditions:

2. Entitlement to transport for children of statutory school age

2.1 Free transport is provided for children of statutory school age who attend the nearest catchment school or nearest available school for their age and educational needs, provided they meet the distance and age criteria below:

- a. Under 8 years of age and living more than 2 miles from school or
- b. 8 years of age and over and living more than 3 miles from school
- c. Pupils of primary school age (up to the end of year 6) who are entitled to free school meals due to a qualifying benefit or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit, are eligible for free transport to their nearest catchment or nearest available school if living more than 2 miles away
- d. Pupils of secondary school age (Years 7-11) who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit are eligible for free transport to:
 - one of three appropriate schools closest to their home, where this is more than 2 and less than 6 miles away, or
 - the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief where this is more than 2 and less than 15 miles from their home (If Children's Services are unable to confirm that admission to the preferred school has been secured on religion/belief grounds, evidence of regular attendance at an appropriate place of worship

will be required from a person in authority at that place of worship).

The site is less than 2 miles from the school. However, the guidance described in Section 5.3 that walking routes must meet the criteria of Appendix 2 to be classified as a walking route or an Unavailable walking route.

If a route to school is assessed against these criteria as being unavailable for walking, the County Council will provide free transport for children attending their nearest catchment or nearest appropriate school/establishment.

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The existing condition of Mill Road combines, subject to further detailed investigation, several of the following factors below from Appendix 2.

What can make a route unavailable?

Roads and footpaths alongside roads

A route could be considered unavailable as a walking route, even to a child accompanied by an adult, if a **combination** of the following factors exists:

- There is no footpath or roadside strip;
- There is no verge by the side of the road that can be used to step onto to avoid passing vehicles;
- Where there is no path or verge, the road is less than 5.5 metres wide **and** has a traffic count of more than 240 vehicles and 12 large vehicles per hour;
- Visibility is impaired by sharp bends, banks, hedges or other obstacles;
- There is a history of road accidents involving pedestrians along the route;
- Where there are no crossing facilities, there are insufficient gaps in traffic to enable a safe crossing.

The provision of the footpath link through the field to the west of Mill Road does solve many of these issues. The footpath link does terminate before the bridge. Appendix 2 goes on to describe reasons which cannot be used to determine a route is unavailable:

What does not make a route unavailable?

The following are examples of factors that are not considered as part of a route assessment:

- it is isolated and there is perceived to be a moral danger;
- the route is muddy or soft underfoot;
- it will be dark at the time of walking;
- there is a need to cross a railway line at a designated crossing point;
- there are short lengths of road where there is no verge;
- there are short lengths of road within the village/urban environment where there is no verge or footpath;
- there are other variable conditions e.g. inclement weather or possible flooding

since in these instances it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to decide whether to accompany their child to school or to make alternative arrangements. Parents are also expected to provide protective clothing or other equipment as necessary.

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Therefore, based upon the above, the short length of road over the bridge to the southern side of Mill Road which has no usable verge to step onto can be used as justification to classify the route as Unavailable.

The remaining route to the school south along Mill Road would comply with the requirements for a suitable walking route with good visibility, a verge to step into and its current usage as a walking route for to the school and village (subject to further investigation).

On the proposed drawings the use of the bridge by pedestrians has been further enhanced with the provision of an informal margin delineated with line marking. This could be further enhanced with signage and other features which could be further investigated should it be required.

A site visit was undertaken on 09/03/21 between 3 and 5pm. The full route of the footpaths was walked and helped to inform both the existing and proposed highway drawings attached to this report. The time of the inspection also coincided with the afternoon school pick up run. Several minibuses and large taxis going to and from the school were observed along Mill Road.

Therefore, as an alternative option, should the footpath link discussion above not be accepted as a suitable safe walking route to the school, a pickup / drop off bay has been provided / shown within the site boundary which can be used for any school children who need to get to the primary school from the properties along Church Road and from within the proposed site.

It should be noted that no other route through the surrounding fields or roads through Reedham has been identified which would benefit from the proposed footpath and be able to comply with the NCC Home to School and College Transport Policy 2020/2021.

Further Work

Should it be required, further work could include traffic surveys, topographical surveys, pedestrian surveys, consultation with the school, highways safety audits.

Attachments

- Existing Highway Drawings
- Proposed Highway Drawings
- NCC Home to School and College Transport Policy 2020/2021 – Appendix 2

This report has been prepared by:

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