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Subject: Percy Wood Golf Club and Country Park, Swarland

Review of Planning Application - Reconfiguration of existing golf course, change of use of land to accommodate up to 216 holiday caravans, erection of leisure 'hub' building and separate golf building, and associated access and landscaping works

Dear Chris,

Further to the provision of information relating to the development proposals, this letter seeks to provide a review of the submitted information in order to advise Highways England in relation to the potential impact of the proposed development on the safe and efficient operation of the Strategic Road Network [SRN]. The considerations presented within this letter have been prepared with reference to:

- The Department for Transport [Circular 02/2013 The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development](#) (and mindful of Highways England's draft replacement policy document);
- The Department for Communities and Local Government [National Planning Policy Framework](#) [NPPF] publication, March 2012;
- [A Protocol for Dealing with Planning Applications](#) by Highways England; and
- The DCLG published [Planning Practice Guidance – Travel plans, transport assessments and statements in decision-taking](#).

Context

Highways England has asked CH2M to consider the Transport Assessment [TA] prepared by Bryan G Hall [BGH] submitted in support of a full planning application (Ref: 17/00194/FUL) for the reconfiguration of existing golf course, change of use of land to accommodate up to 216 holiday caravans, erection of leisure hub building and separate golf building, and associated access and landscaping works at Percy Wood Golf Club and Country Park, Swarland, Northumberland.

In addition to the reconfiguration of the existing golf course, planning permission is also being sought for 20 residential dwellings, and this will come forward through a separate planning application. A Transport Statement for the residential dwellings is included within the appendices for the TA for completeness and information, but has not been reviewed as part of this letter.

Percy Wood Golf Club and Country Park is located approximately 1 mile west of the A1, which forms part of the SRN. CH2M are reviewing the planning application to identify the level of impact from the development proposals on the capacity, operation and safety of the SRN.

The TA is reviewed within this letter, with conclusions provided at the end. For ease of reading, the pertinent issues within the TA are reviewed in the order in which they are presented.

Transport Assessment Review

The TA states that the development proposals seek approval to remove the 6 northernmost holes of the existing golf course and construct up to 216 holiday caravans, a leisure hub and new golf club clubhouse on this part of the existing site. It is stated that the leisure hub will include a restaurant, shop, gym, pool and beauty parlour. The proposals will form an extension of the existing country park and take access from the existing junction with Leamington Lane. Currently, the country park has 384 holiday caravans on site.

Furthermore, it is stated that the existing golf club clubhouse on Coast View will be demolished and 20 residential dwellings will be constructed on this land, although this will be considered by a separate planning application, separate to this review.

It is stated that pre-application advice has been obtained from Northumberland County Council [NCC] and that the TA has been prepared paying due cognisance to this advice. It is noted that no pre-application discussions were held with Highways England.

KEY POINT – No pre-application discussions were held with Highways England.

The TA states that it is considered that there are no on-site or off-site highway constraints that prevent the proposed development coming forward. Furthermore, BGH state that the TA demonstrates that the development proposals are acceptable and planning consent should not be withheld on highways or transportation grounds.

A policy review has been provided which is welcomed, but Circular 02/2013 has not been considered. Given the site's proximity to the SRN, it is considered that Circular 02/2013 should be included within the policy review.

KEY POINT – Circular 02/2013 should be included within the policy review section of the TA.

The site is located approximately 1 mile from the A1, where there are three primary access points to the SRN. It is stated within the TA that the country park will retain vehicular access from its current junction with Leamington Lane.

A study area is defined within the TA, describing local junctions and how they connect with the SRN. To the east of the junction with The Avenue, Leamington Lane continues for approximately 1km before reaching a priority controlled T-junction with an unnamed road. Where the unnamed road meets the A1, this junction is known as, and identified within this review as, the Rasherap Junction.

Approximately 700 metres to the north, the unnamed access road meets the A1 and another unnamed access road to the west at a priority controlled crossroads. There is a waiting area between the northbound and southbound carriageways of the A1 which allows vehicles going straight ahead / turning right to undertake the movement in two manoeuvres. This junction is known as, and identified within this review as, the Guyzance Crossroads.

Similarly, approximately 600 metres to the south of the junction with Leamington Lane, the unnamed access road meets the A1 at a priority controlled T-junction. There is also a waiting area between the northbound and southbound carriageways of the A1 at this junction which allows right-turning vehicles to undertake the manoeuvre in two movements. This is known as, and identified within this review as, the Leamington Lane Junction.



KEY POINT – The study area with regards to the SRN is considered appropriate and is accepted.

The TA contains a record of Personal Injury Collisions [PIA] that have occurred on the defined study area, for the five-year period commencing 1st July 2011 to the 31st June 2016, which has been obtained from NCC. It is stated that within the study area considered there have been a total of 13 personal injury accidents, of which 10 have been classified as slight in severity, with 3 as serious in severity.

The PIA information has been considered for the three junctions on the A1, as well as the A1 mainline between the three junctions. For consistency, the junctions have been named according to the naming convention established within this review:

- **Leamington Lane Junction** - At this junction 2 PIAs have been recorded in the five-year period of which both were classified as slight in severity. Both PIAs occurred due to a vehicle pulling out onto the A1 into the path of an oncoming vehicle;
- **Rashercap Junction** - There have been no reported collisions at the junction of Leamington Lane and the local access road to the A1 over the five-year period;
- **Guyzance Crossroads** - At this junction, a total of 6 PIAs have been recorded over the last 5 years. 4 of these PIAs have been recorded as slight in severity and 2 have been recorded as serious in severity. The first PIA classified as serious in severity (ref: P222612) occurred when a vehicle intending to cross straight over the A1 towards Acklington, crossed into the southbound lane, causing a collision with a second vehicle. The second serious PIA (ref: P087616) occurred as a bus, travelling southbound on the A1 indicating to overtake a tractor, was believed to be turning right by a vehicle waiting to turn onto the A1 mainline. In relation to the four slight accidents 2 of these occurred because of vehicles failing

to brake in time to make safe turning manoeuvres at the junction, whilst the remaining 2 slight PIAs occurred because of vehicles turning in to the path of other vehicles; and

- **A1 mainline** - Along the A1 mainline between the local access road junctions to Swarland, 1 PIA has been recorded over the five-year period. This PIA was classified as serious in severity (ref: P668315) and occurred between a car and a light goods vehicle. The light goods vehicle travelling south west failed to see an oncoming vehicle travelling south on the A1 and collided with its off side.

The TA states that analysis of the PIAs which occurred during the five-year period show that the majority include contributory factors that can be related to driver error, i.e. poor judgement or failing to look properly. Furthermore, it stated that there is a small cluster of accidents at the Guyzance Crossroads, however given there are differing causation factors for some of the accidents at this junction it is considered within the TA that there are no significant shortfalls in the geometric design of the junction that are having a significant adverse impact upon road safety on the network.

KEY POINT – BGH state within their TA that they do not believe there is an accident / safety problem at the SRN within the study area.

CH2M has liaised with Highways England regarding the operation of the SRN within the study area defined within the TA. Highways England considers that the development proposals will intensify the use of the SRN within the study area, over and above the population of Swarland for which the junctions on the A1 were originally constructed for.

The junctions at the SRN within the study area were constructed in the 1950s when demand for travel was lower and highway design standards were not as well developed as they are today. Consequently, each of these junctions is at-grade, have narrow central reservations and are not in line with TD 42/95¹.

Further information on each of the junctions has been provided by Highways England:

- **Leamington Lane Junction** – Banned turning manoeuvres are in force at this junction due to the lack of offside diverge facilities. A nearside diverge facility has been installed adjacent to the A1 northbound carriageway but this is both too short (80m rather than 110m long) and too narrow (2.7m rather than 3.5m). Furthermore, forward views on the approaches to this gap are restricted in both the northbound and southbound directions by the vertical alignment changes in the vicinity of the junction. This makes sightlines substandard, including from the narrow central reservation gap (8m wide rather than 10m wide). A fatal collision was recorded at this junction on 30th December 2011, although Nationally Validated Collision records inappropriately indicate this as a slight collision.
- **Rashercap Junction** – All steps should be taken to discourage any intensification of the use of this junction.
- **Guyzance Crossroads** – The junction has poor forward visibility sightlines on the southbound approach due to the junction being sited over a crest. As such, the southbound descending gradient results in increased travel speeds.

The central reservation opening is 7.0m wide, and is considered to be significantly substandard. Offside diverge lanes have been installed adjacent to both the north and southbound carriageways, both of which are substandard in length, the southbound being approximately 30% shorter than recommended. No nearside deceleration or acceleration lanes have been installed adjacent to either carriageway.

In addition, a fatal collision was recorded on 8th April 2017 on the A1 northbound carriageway to the north of Guyzance Crossroads due to a driver entering the carriageway and travelling in the wrong direction from Newton-on-the-Moor.

¹ <http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/ha/standards/dmrb/vol6/section2/td4295.pdf>

The information provided by Highways England identifies issues with the existing junctions on the SRN within the study area defined within the TA. As such, it is considered that it is not possible for the development proposals to come forward, which will intensify their use, without improvements taking place at the junctions on the SRN within the defined study area.

KEY POINT – As a consequence of design and safety issues at the SRN within the study area raised by Highways England, it is not possible for the development proposals to come forward without improvements on the SRN taking place to ensure that the intensification of use of junctions on the SRN does not worsen safety.

Highways England has studied the Guyzance Crossroads as it was observed as having the greatest number of collisions of all the gaps on the length of the A1 between Felton and Alnwick. Guyzance Crossroads falls outside of the scope of the Morpeth to Ellingham dualling scheme, and as such, funding for improvements are required to be procured from alternative funding sources.

Highways England had undertaken an assessment of a grade-separated junction for Guyzance Crossroads, but the scheme could not be progressed once the cost/benefit ratio had been considered. As a consequence, Highways England has investigated other options for improvement to reduce collision risk at this location. Options include:

- Installing a nearside diverge lane adjacent to the A1 southbound carriageway;
- Installing priority markings in the central reservation; and
- Other minor signing and marking improvements.

These options are expected to be considered by Highways England's Value Management Team later this year, with the intention of implementing the scheme (if successful) the following year. However, it is considered the options will only have a minimal impact on the safety of vehicles turning to and from the western side of the A1.

KEY POINT – Highways England are progressing a scheme at Guyzance Crossroads, but if successful in achieving funding, will only have a minimal impact on the safety of vehicles turning to and from the western side of the A1.

The junctions within the study area were surveyed on Friday 12th August between 14:00 and 18:00 and on Saturday 13th August between 11:30 and 15:30 and included the Leamington Lane Junction, Rasherap Junction and the Guyzance Crossroads. The operational assessment of the junctions using the 2016 base flows show that the Leamington Lane Junction, Rasherap Junction and Guyzance Crossroads operate within capacity with no queuing in the peak periods defined by the TA.

KEY POINT – The TA states that the Leamington Lane Junction, Rasherap Junction and Guyzance Crossroads operate within capacity in the 2016 assessment year.

The TA identifies that a 10-year horizon year, post submission of the planning application, should be undertaken to understand the future year impact of the development, and this is welcomed by CH2M as this complies with the requirements of Circular 02/2013. To generate a 2026 future year assessment, BGH has used TEMPro to derive factors to growth the 2016 base flows. Furthermore, despite a search of the NCC planning portal by BGH, no significant developments have been found to be considered for inclusion as committed development flows. This approach is accepted, and as such the 2026 assessment year flows are accepted.

KEY POINT – The inclusion of a 2026 (10-years hence) assessment year is welcomed and the approach undertaken to derive the 2026 assessment year flows is accepted.

The operational assessment of the junctions using the 2026 future assessment year flows show that the Leamington Lane Junction, Rasherap Junction and the Guyzance Crossroads operate within capacity with no queuing in the peak periods defined by the TA.

KEY POINT – The TA states that the Leamington Lane Junction, Rasherap Junction and Guyzance Crossroads operate within capacity in the 2026 assessment year.

The development proposals look to remove the 6 northernmost holes of the golf course and construct up to 216 static holiday homes, leisure hub and new golf club clubhouse on this part of the existing site. It is stated that the leisure hub will include a restaurant, shop, gym, pool and beauty parlour and is considered by BGH to be ancillary to the rest of the development.

It is considered within the TA that the leisure facility will prevent existing residents on the site from having to leave the site for leisure and retail facilities and as such BGH state that it is not anticipated that it would generate significant additional traffic movements. The TA states that the development will be required to accommodate service and refuse type vehicles; and as the country park is currently serviced by these vehicles and is not expected to experience a significant increase in this sort of traffic because of the development proposals.

Trip rates have been derived from the traffic count survey undertaken at the existing site access junction with Leamington Lane, by applying the movements in and out of the site access to the 384 holiday caravans that comprise the existing operation. The use of a first-principles approach to trip generation is welcomed, as this is considered the most robust approach in such circumstances.

As such, the trip generation figures provided in Table 8.2 – for the proposed 216 static holiday homes and the new golf club clubhouse – are accepted.

KEY POINT – The approach to deriving trip generation and proposed development trips are accepted.

The TA states that the trip distribution of the development proposals has been assumed as routing all trips accessing / leaving the site via the A1. From a Highways England perspective, this a robust approach for assessing the impact of the development proposals at the SRN. The distributed flows have then been added to the 2026 assessment year flows to assess the impact of the development proposals in a future year scenario.

The operational assessment of the junctions using the 2026 future assessment year flows with the development traffic added show that the Leamington Lane Junction, Rasherap Junction and the Guyzance Crossroads operate within capacity with no queuing in the peak periods defined by the TA.

KEY POINT – The TA states that the Leamington Lane Junction, Rasherap Junction and Guyzance Crossroads operate within capacity in the 2026 assessment year when the trip generation from the development proposals is added.

Conclusions

Highways England has asked CH2M to consider the TA prepared by BGH submitted in support of a full planning application (Ref: 17/00194/FUL) for the reconfiguration of existing golf course, change of use of land to accommodate up to 216 holiday caravans, erection of leisure 'hub' building and separate golf building, and associated access and landscaping works at Percy Wood Golf Club and Country Park, Swarland, Northumberland.

In addition to the reconfiguration of the existing golf course, planning permission is also being sought for 20 residential dwellings, and this will come forward through a separate planning application. A Transport Statement for the residential dwellings is included within the appendices for the TA for completeness and information, but has not been reviewed as part of this letter.