

Substantive response of the Local Highway Authority to a planning consultation received under The Development Management Order.



Response provided under the delegated authority of the Director of Environment & Transport.

APPLICATION DETAILS:

Planning Application Number: 23/00948/FUL

Highway Reference Number: 2023/0948/04/H

Application Address: Twycross Zoological Park Burton Road Norton Juxta Twycross Atherstone
Leicestershire CV9 3PX

Application Type: Full

Description of Application:

Development of new animal enclosures and associated infrastructure, new lecture theatre, education block, education facilities, sub stations and associated residential block and lodges, new access from Orton Hill, new car park, landscaping and other associated works (following the demolition of some existing buildings).

GENERAL DETAILS

Planning Case Officer: Sullivan Archer

Applicant: C/o WSP

County Councillor: Bertie Harrison-Rushton

Parish: Twycross

Road Classification: Class C

Substantive Response provided in accordance with article 22(5) of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015:

The Local Highway Authority does not consider that the application as submitted fully assesses the highway impact of the proposed development and further information is required as set out in this response. Without this information the Local Highway Authority is unable to provide final highway advice on this application.

Advice to Local Planning Authority

Background

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) are in receipt of a consultation for a full application for the development of new animal enclosures and associated infrastructure, new lecture theatre, education block, education facilities, sub stations and associated residential block and lodges, new access from Orton Hill, new car park, landscaping and other associated works (following the demolition of some existing buildings) at Twycross Zoological Park, Burton Road, Norton Juxta Twycross, Atherstone, Leicestershire.

The Applicant has submitted a Transport Statement authored by WSP and dated October 2023 in support of the proposals. It is understood the site is located within the boundary of Twycross Zoo and comprises land to the south of the zoo, located partially in the area open to the public

(specifically the lemur enclosure) and the private land to the south of this, which has been used as a compound for other aspects of the zoo. It is understood the Applicant is looking to deliver three new developments, these include:

A new Orangutan Habitat

This would provide a new home for the zoo's existing orangutans within an enhanced environment. The building would include zookeeper back of house spaces, a visitor centre and rooms for research.

A National Science Conservation Centre (NSCC)

The Applicant has stated the NSCC comprises of a two-storey higher education campus building. It would offer researchers from around the world the opportunity to study apes, plus over 100 endangered species in naturalistic complex environments.

Classrooms, breakout rooms, a lecture theatre (216 seats) and laboratories have all been included within the design to research and educate those who come to visit the facility. Bedrooms (11 on ground floor and 13 on the first floor) have also been included within the design proposal to show where researchers will stay when working.

Accommodation (Lodges)

Researchers would have the option to stay in longer term accommodation in the form of lodges. These lodges would also provide accommodation for members of staff who stay on site to look after/research the animals kept at Twycross Zoo.

Based on the submitted information the LHA believe the bedrooms and accommodation lodges will be for the purpose of overnight accommodation for staff or those visiting the zoo/NSCC for research purposes and will not be available to the general public to book as holiday accommodation, unless advised otherwise by the Applicant.

Site Access

The Applicant is proposing to utilise an existing access to the site, which is situated on Orton Hill. Orton Hill is a C classified road subject to a 30mph speed limit. The Applicant is not proposing to make any amendments to the existing site access arrangements.

The Applicant has submitted WSP drawing number 70096419 SK01 041 Rev P01 which provides details of 2.4 x 43 metre visibility splays at the site access, which is in accordance with Part 3, Table DG4 of the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide ([LHDG] available at <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/lhdg>). The LHA have undertaken a site visit and acknowledge that visibility splays would exceed this distance in both directions with splays of approximately 2.4 x 90m to the south and 2.4 x 215m plus to the north.

Swept path analysis of a refuse collection vehicle and a minibus have been provided on WSP drawing number 70096419 SK01 041 Rev P01 showing each vehicle turning left in and right out of the access. The LHA note that the refuse collection vehicle appears to hit or over-run the kerb on both ingress and egress of the site. Given the carriageway widths in this area, the LHA suggests the Applicant considers widening of the carriageway in the vicinity of the access and/ or improvements to the existing access width/ radii. The LHA request that swept path analysis is also provided showing the vehicles turning right into and left out of the site.

Improvements to the site access should be accompanied by an independent Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and, if necessary, a Designers Response to any problems raised along with a revised drawing.

It is understood that regular visitors to the zoo will not be able to use this access and would continue to use the main access to the zoo and the car park on Burton Road (A444). The LHA highlight to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that as part of application reference 21/00386/FUL, the Applicant was required to provide a ghost right turn lane at the Burton Road access. Condition 9 states:

'Within 12 months of the development hereby permitted the access arrangements generally shown on WSP drawing number: 8771-TZ-WSP-PLA-DR-003, Revision P01, shall be implemented in full.'

Application 22/00098/CONDIT sought to vary the condition to implementation within 16 months which was stated to be October 2022, which was subsequently granted by the LPA. The LHA is aware that to date, the proposals have not been implemented. At this stage, the LHA does not require the Applicant to undertake any further consideration of the Burton Road access as part of this current application, however, the LHA advise it cannot rule out that this may need to be considered by the Applicant at a later date. Further information is provided within the Trip Generation section further below.

Highway Safety

Based on available records to the LHA, there have been no recorded Personal Injury Collisions along Orton Hill within 500m either side of the site access within the last five years.

Trip Generation

It is understood that the existing access is used by trade and contractor deliveries, with around three trips per week on average.

School groups would continue to access the zoo via the main zoo entrance on Burton Road and travel on foot to the NSCC as part of their visit.

Higher education students would access via the Orton Hill entrance and would be catered for by the proposed car park. Some larger spaces for minibuses have been included within the proposed car park.

The Applicant has stated the NSCC development would result in the employment of an additional six employees who would park in the main zoo car park alongside existing employees. Other support staff and education staff at the NSCC are currently already employed by the zoo and would split their time between the main zoo site and the NSCC.

The Applicant has stated that based on the above, the zoo has provided the following expected level of daily and peak hour vehicle trips likely to be generated through the Orton Hill access:

- Typical peak hour – 10 vehicles; and
- Typical peak daily – 25 vehicles.

It is also stated that transport and access arrangements for educational establishments visiting the NSCC would be confirmed when the visit is booked in. This gives the zoo control over vehicle arrival and departure patterns at the site, enabling an ongoing management strategy to be put into

place to ensure effective and efficient use of the access and the car park. On occasions where a coach is required to transport students to the site, these would be directed to use the main car park for access, and the students would be escorted through the main zoo site to access the NSCC.

The Applicant has emphasised that the majority of users for the proposed development will already be visiting the zoo as part of an educational trip and will benefit from the enhanced facilities.

The LHA advise it is unclear precisely how the typical peak hour (10 vehicles) and peak daily trips (25 vehicles) have been derived, along with what the peak hours are considered to be for the proposed development, for example whether these are 08:00 - 09:00 and 17:00 - 18:00. The trips have also not been broken down in to arrivals and departures. Furthermore, given the proposed new car park has a capacity of 45 vehicles, it is unclear why up to 25 vehicles is considered to be the peak daily level of trips.

The LHA notes that there is a 216 seat lecture theatre, classrooms (approximately 65 seats across three classrooms) and breakout areas (approximately 19 seats) within the NSCC building. While it is acknowledged zoo visitors could use facilities as part of an enhanced overall visitor experience, it is considered the proposals have the potential to hold a considerably larger number of people/ school groups etc indoors than could currently be done so within the zoo site as a whole at present.

The LHA advise it would be beneficial for the Applicant to provide further information on how the classroom/ lecture theatre facilities would be used on a daily basis in order to provide further evidence in respect of how the proposals are likely to cater for those already visiting the zoo, rather than new visitors, which could generate additional traffic at the Burton Road access. It would also be beneficial for the opening hours of the facilities to be clarified and whether the facilities such as the lecture theatre would be used out of the main zoo opening hours. Given the size of the proposed new car park, the LHA believe a number of visitors would be required to use the existing main car park off Burton Road in the event the lecture theatre was used out of existing opening times, these would also be considered as new trips.

Junction Capacity Assessments

At this stage, the LHA considers it would not require junction capacity assessments for either the NSCC access on to Orton Hill, or the existing main zoo access on to Burton Road. The LHA will give further consideration to this following additional trip generation information being provided by the Applicant.

Internal Layout

Details of the parking arrangements for the site are provided on HLM Architects drawing number TWZ-HLM-00-00-DR-L00001 Rev P07.

The car park includes 13 standard bays, three accessible bays, two electric vehicle charging bays and nine minibus parking bays. A 10 space cycle shelter would also be provided within the site. The LHA acknowledge that the car park will not be open to members of the public visiting the zoo and that coaches would continue to access and park within the site via the existing access on Burton Road.

Given the narrow nature of Orton Hill which is predominantly a single track road, the LHA consider that the size of the proposed car park would in itself limit the amount of traffic which could be

directed to use the car park at any given time. The LHA would not wish to see an increase in coach trips along Orton Hill, therefore it is welcomed that the Applicant intends for coaches to use the existing main car park accessed off Burton Road and would have procedures in place to manage the parking of visitors to the NSCC.

While the LHA requires further information in respect of trip generation, in principle it considers the parking provision to be acceptable.

Closing

Based on the above, the following information should be submitted to the LPA for consideration by the LHA:

- Swept path analysis of a refuse collection vehicle and minibus turning right in/ left out of the Orton Hill access;
- A drawing detailing widening of the access and/ or carriageway and potentially increasing the junction radii of the access to accommodate refuse collection vehicles. A RSA1 and designers response (if necessary) would need to accommodate any proposed works; and
- Further clarification in respect of trip generation and how the site would operate, particularly the classrooms and lecture theatre, as well as the opening hours.

Date Received
24 October 2023

Case Officer
Ben Dutton

Reviewer
DH

Date issued
27 November 2023