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Twycross Zoo

Proposed Access Junction Improvements

Planning, Design and Access Statement

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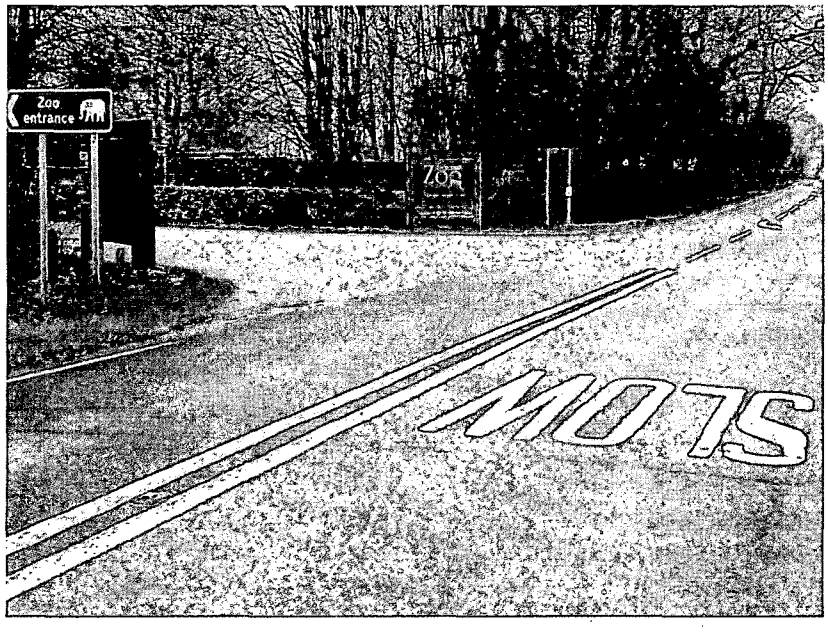

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Twycross Zoo

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Planning, Design and Access Statement

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Twycross Zoo, Access Improvements

1.0 Introduction

This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared as supporting documentation for the submission of a planning application for proposed access improvements at Twycross Zoo. This report should be read in conjunction with the associated Junction Assessment Report. A number of proposals requiring planning permission are currently being developed by the zoo as part of their overall development plan. Although the individual proposals may not directly result in the generation of additional traffic for that development, they will increase the attractiveness of the zoo as an entity, which contributes to the zoo's long term plan to double the overall number of visitors.

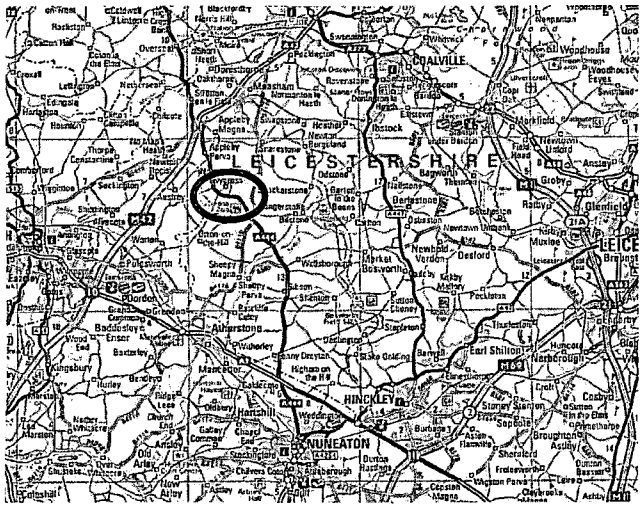
In light of these possible increases in visitor numbers and the zoo's desire to ensure its visitors can enter and leave the site safely whilst meeting the requirements of the Highway Authority, Twycross Zoo has commissioned Cundall to design the layout for a new access junction arrangement on the A444.

It is understood that, subject to the approval of the access junction planning application, the works will be programmed to coincide with the construction of the new access roads as part of the approved Welcome Centre construction programme.

2.0 Site Location

Twycross Zoo is located north west of Twycross village in west Leicestershire. The zoo, opened in 1963, houses approximately 1000 animals, attracts over 450,000 visitors per year and is open every day of the year except Christmas Day.

The zoo is accessed from the A444 Burton Road, which is identified by the Highway Authority, Leicestershire County Council (LCC), as a Principal Route within the county. The A444 provides direct links to the strategic road network at the M42 / A42 Junction 11 to the north and the A5 to the south.
Site Location Plan



3.0 Scheme Description and Design

Following analysis of the flow levels and turning movements, it is proposed to provide a ghost island priority junction on the A444 at the existing access location to Twycross Zoo. This junction has been designed in accordance with Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 6 Section 2 Part 6, TD 42/95 "Geometric Design of Major/Minor Priority Junctions". The layout of the zoo access road will be formalised and two exit lanes will be provided along with a channelising island. This will be tied into the proposed access works being carried out as part of the development of the Welcome Centre.

The width of the through lanes on the A444 and right turning lane are to be 3.0m, the minimum permissible width detailed in TD 42/95. The existing road width is approximately 6.8m to the west of the access and approximately 6.6m to the east. Limiting the width of the right turning lane it removes the impression of a sense of space for drivers that could encourage hazardous overtaking at the junction. This is particularly important due to the safety concerns along the A444 and the double bend to the east of the junction that has limited forward visibility and double solid white line road markings.

The following geometric parameters have been used in the design of the junction based on the design speed of 85kph:

- 1:25 taper for the approach to the ghost island from both directions;
- 15m direct taper length;
- 55m deceleration length (this distance includes the direct taper);
- 10m turning length;
- An additional 5m in the length of the protected right turn pocket to accommodate storage in the junction;
- The two lane approaches to the junction from the zoo are 3.15m in width.

Visibility splays of 4.5m × 160m have been provided as part of the junction design.

4. Planning Policy

4.1 Local Planning Guidance

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan (2001)

The Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan was adopted in February 2001 within this, a number of relevant policies were "saved" by the Local Authority for use beyond September 2007. These are therefore still part of the Statutory Development Plan and Planning Applications need to be determined in accordance with them unless there are other material considerations. Relevant provisions of the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan are set out below.

The Local Plan has seven strategic objectives; Strategic Objective 1 promotes economic growth through sustainable development and states that strategies which promote tourism that will benefit the local economy should be adopted (Objective 1d). In terms of employment, the Local Plan aims to facilitate growth in the economy without adversely affecting the environment or local communities (Objective 1b).

In order to protect, maintain and enhance sites in Leicestershire good design is essential in both new developments and extensions to existing developments (paragraph 4.3.1). New development must take into account existing features of the site and location and exploit these wherever possible. Policy BE1 offers guidance on how this should be done and in what circumstances planning permission will be granted in relation to the design and siting of development.

Chapter 5 gives regard to development in the natural environment. It considers development in order to protect, enhance and improve the existing local environment and wildlife. Policy NE5 gives guidance on acceptable development in the countryside.

Chapter 8 of the Local Plan concerns tourism and its development, in particular with response to the increased demand for facilities for leisure activities.

Policy T5 of the Local Plan outlines highway design and vehicle parking standards.

The proposed access improvements have been designed to specification of both local and national standards (as outlined in the associated Junction Improvement Statement). The proposal is considered to be accordance with the objectives as set out above and policy T5 of the Local Plan.

The Local Plan highlights the significance of local major visitor attractions in terms of their valuable and increasing contribution to the economy; Twycross Zoo is specifically mentioned as a major contributor to the local tourist economy. It is stated in paragraphs 3.2.5 and 8.2.3 that Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council encourages the provision, development and improvement of tourist facilities throughout the Plan area. The Borough Council expect all new developments to make provisions for disabled people (paragraph 8.2.4) stating that sensitive and well planned tourist development can play an important role in stimulating investment and contribute to the economic status of an area (8.13.1) and as such, the Borough Council encourages this. Paragraph 8.13.13 states that established activities are important for attracting visitors to the area and it is necessary to consider positively any prospects for expansion of these facilities where sites are located in the open countryside; Twycross Zoo is specifically mentioned as one of these established activity areas.

The improved access will allow the tourism function of the zoo to develop, without compromising highway safety or impacting upon the character of the wider environment. Access for all will be improved throughout the overall zoo development, which are best facilitated through the redesigned access.

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy Preferred Options (2007)

The Core Strategy Preferred Options report sets out the strategy and core policies for the Borough to 2026, is in conformity with the East Midlands Regional Plan and National Guidance. Whilst this has not been adopted it will still be a material consideration in determining planning applications; therefore it is important to assess if the development will comply with the Preferred Options report. The Core Strategy emphasises the importance of activity attractions, namely Twycross Zoo, as day trips to such places currently contribute greatly to the local tourism industry (paragraph 3.8).

Spatial Objective 1 aims to strengthen the economy to encourage the growth of, amongst other things, tourism. Spatial Objective 9 wants to ensure that new development contributes the local distinctiveness through the quality of good design. This theme is continued in paragraph 4.36 where it states that development should be in harmony with its location and neighbouring uses and the layout of the development must follow the principles of good planning and design and must enhance the local distinctiveness and character of the area. The design must be of high quality and reflect the character of its surroundings.

4.2 Regional and National Guidance

Regional Spatial Strategy for East Midlands (2005)

As part of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Regional Planning Guidance became part of the statutory development plan and has been renamed the Regional Spatial Strategy. The East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (EMRSS) replaced the Regional Planning Guidance and the latest version was published in 2005. The new visitor welcome centre at Twycross Zoo is not a scheme large enough for the EMRSS to have a direct relevance to it; however, the scheme generally conforms to the general principles of the EMRSS.

Policy 4 aims to promote the design standards of new development as recently some new developments have been of an unacceptably low standard (paragraph 3.2.1). One of the priorities of the EMRSS relates to the economy and regeneration and so it wants to promote sustainable economic growth in the region. Policy 25 outlines the regional priorities for tourism. The EMRSS states that local planning documents should identify areas of potential for tourism growth which maximise economic benefit whiles minimising its adverse impact on the environment and local amenity. One of the suggested ways in which to improve the local tourist economy is to improve the quality of the existing tourist facilities.

It is considered that through the introduction of the access improvements to the zoo that the potential for improvement to existing services will lead to an increase in visitor numbers to the benefit of the local tourist trade in line with the aims of the EMRRS.

Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (2001)

Planning Policy Guidance 13 was published in 2001 to provide policy guidance on national objectives relating to transport, including the promotion of sustainable transport usage, the promotion of accessibility to jobs, facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling and to reduce the overall need to travel. New development should be designed in a way that safety and security is a priority in terms of transportation to and from the site, as well as in and around the site (paragraphs 28 and 29). PPG13 gives direct reference to transport provision in tourism developments; the development must pay attention to the scale, layout, parking and access arrangements (paragraph 37). The new access design will lead to a safer solution for transportation of visitors to and from the site and will adequately serve, and will reflect the intentions of the ongoing development of the zoo.

5.0 Conclusions

In light of the possible increases in visitor numbers and the zoo's desire to ensure its visitors can enter and leave the site safely whilst meeting the requirements of the Highway Authority, Twycross Zoo has commissioned Cundall to design the layout for a new access junction arrangement on the A444.

The access improvements have been designed to be in full accordance with both local Highways Authority and National design standards.

The proposal is considered to be in accordance with local, regional and national planning policy, and will provide a safe access to users of the zoo without significant impact upon the surrounding rod network.

The expansion of the zoo is in line with local and regional aims for tourist development and the improved access will form an important part of that development which in turn will help to secure wider economic benefits.

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Appendix 1

Planning Policy References
Appendix

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan (2001)
http://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/pp/gold/viewGold.asp?IDType=Page&ID=8416

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy Preferred Options (2007)
http://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/ppimageupload/Image39774.PDF

Regional Spatial Strategy for East Midlands (2005)
http://www.gos.gov.uk/497296/docs/191913/237644/rss8.pdf

The Good Practice Guide in Planning for Tourism (2006)
http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/151753.pdf

Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (2001)
http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/155634.pdf