

# Kirklees Council

## Summary Proof of Evidence of Adam Darwin FIHE

**Appeal reference:** APP/Z4718/W/25/3375000

**Application reference:** 2024/91242

**Site:** Land north east of, Shepley Road, Stocksmoor, Huddersfield, HD4 6XW

**Description of development:** Erection of residential development (50 dwellings) with associated access, parking, public open space, landscaping and infrastructure

**Appellant:** Newett Homes

**Date:** 27/01/26

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 My name is Adam Darwin. My evidence relates to highways, traffic and transportation matters, and specifically Reason for Refusal 1.
- 1.2 The 1.05km length of Stone Wood Lane between the Appeal site and Shepley is subject to the national speed limit, is unlit, and signed as unsuitable for HGV's. Due to the lack of footways, it operates as a shared surface highway.
- 1.3 The road provides an important local access function, particularly for residents of Stocksmoor, providing the most direct route to Shepley, where there are a range of facilities, including education uses, shops, medical facilities, and other amenities required on a daily basis. To access these facilities by active travel modes from Stocksmoor, Stone Wood Lane is the most direct route, and the only available route for pedestrians based on a reasonable walking distance.
- 1.4 Stone Wood Lane forms part of National Cycle Network (NCN) route 627 and the Trans Pennine Trail, and so is of regional and national importance.
- 1.5 Whilst the number of existing active travel users on the route may be considered low in an urban context, it is a well-used rural road, used on daily basis by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. However, active travel users may already be avoiding the route to some extent during weekday network peak periods, possibly due to the effect of motor vehicle traffic on their safety, comfort and enjoyment of the route.
- 1.6 Stone Wood Lane is single-track for much of its length, and has sub-standard passing places, in terms of frequency, geometry and lack of adequate inter-visibility. It also has a range of other physical constraints along the route, including sub-standard carriageway widths, alignment, lack of adequate forward visibility, and steep gradients. There are no dedicated pedestrian facilities, and the verges that exist that allow pedestrian to step off the carriageway to avoid passing vehicles, are consistently narrow or absent in places.
- 1.7 The existing physical constraints and operational issues I have identified, give rise to highway safety concerns for all users, but are most problematic for active travel users, who are at risk from passing traffic, and in particular from reversing vehicles, which occur frequently during network peak periods, due to the sub-standard

passing place provision. These reversing manoeuvres, which are often over long distances and involve multiple vehicles, compound the highway safety risks, and are difficult for drivers due to the physical constraints along the route.

- 1.8 Of greatest concern is the long section of single-track road on the hill through Stone Wood, which lacks inter-visibility between passing places, has sub-standard forward visibility at the top of the hill at the bend, where the road transitions between single-track and two-way. This single-track section also lacks suitable verges where pedestrians can safely wait to allow traffic to pass. Problems occur on this single-track section on a regular basis, where vehicles frequently come into conflict. This results in long and hazardous reversing manoeuvres, which are of most concern to waiting pedestrian who are at risk of being struck by these vehicles. This section of Stone Wood Lane is beyond the scope of the proposed mitigation measures, and so the existing problems in the area, and many other sections of the route, will be exacerbated by additional development traffic.
- 1.9 The Appellant has suggested that the lack of recorded personal injury accidents demonstrated that Stone Wood Lane operates safely. This is a flawed assumption, and ignores the concerns expressed by local people, and the clear highway safety issues associated with this shared surface rural road, where the safety and amenity of active travel users is critical.
- 1.10 Whilst existing traffic speeds along the route may be low compared to the national speed limit that is in force, these speeds are not low based on the context of the road. The existing traffic speeds along the road range from 22.1 - 33.3mph, with some well in excess of these speeds. These speeds are higher than are acceptable for a shared surface road, with a maximum speed of 20mph regarded as the upper limit for the safety and comfort of active travel users. The speeds are also higher than the design speed of the road, based on its physical constraints, which mean that safe levels of inter-visibility between motorists and active travel users, and other motorists, is not available for much of its length.
- 1.11 Similarly, whilst existing traffic flows may be low compared to a local distributor type road, with existing peak hour flows of up to 90 two-way vehicles per hour, they are not low for a shared surface road. The upper limit of traffic flows for shared surface roads based on local and national guidance is 100 vehicles per hour.

Above this level, guidance suggests that roads become dominated by motor vehicles, to the detriment of active travel users.

- 1.12 Based on the 'Sensitivity Test' trip rates used in the Transport Assessment Addendum submitted at the application stage, and that I have now suggested should be reduced by 10% to take account of the agreed Travel Plan measures, the development is estimated to generate up to 32 two-way weekday peak hour vehicle trips. Based on a reasonable future scenario of 50% of development traffic using Stone Wood Lane during peak periods, this equates to an additional 16 two-way weekday peak hour vehicle trips along the route. Based on the current maximum two-way flow of 90 two-way vehicles, development traffic would increase traffic flows to over 100vph, in exceed of the maximum upper limit for a newly designed shared surface road, which Stone Wood Lane falls well short of in design terms.
- 1.13 The Appellant does not accept the Sensitivity Test trip rates, which were agreed at the application stage, and have now undertaken a further assessment of development traffic, using a new assessment methodology. This new methodology was not agreed by the LPA, which has been requested consistently since the pre-application stage, and is contrary to national guidance that requires assessment scenarios to be agreed in advance. The Appellant's new assessment of development traffic and distribution includes a number of questionable assumptions and apparent flaws, which makes it unreliable. The Appellant's new assessment is also not robust, as it does not take into account the sites low level of accessibility and very limited amenities in Stocksmoor, which will result in the development being heavily reliant on private car use. Based on the Appellant's assessment, they consider that the development would generate 28 two-way network peak hour vehicle trips, of which they consider 7 two-way trips would use Stone Wood Lane. I do not accept that this is a robust assessment and underestimates the impact of development traffic on Stone Wood Lane.
- 1.14 National guidance on the production of Transport Assessments requires that a range of realistic future scenarios are assessed. Therefore, as I have demonstrated, even if the Appellant's assessment of development traffic flows and distribution were accepted, which I have demonstrated is not robust, this would

still represent a material increase in traffic along Stone Wood Lane, with traffic increases of between 9-10%. This is in-excess of what previous national guidance (as current national guidance is silent on this matter) suggested represented a material increase in traffic in sensitive locations of 5% (or 10% in other locations), which I believe is still a useful threshold to consider matters of highway safety impact. Based the 'Sensitivity Test' trip rate scenario, (including the 10% Travel Plan reduction), the impact would be much greater, with the increase in traffic along Stone Wood Lane being between 21-22%.

- 1.15 Whilst it is welcome the Appellant eventually accepted improvements were necessary to mitigate the development's impact on Stone Wood Lane, their proposals provide only margin benefits to some of the sub-standard informal passing places that already exist along the route. These proposals will not offset the negative impacts of development traffic, in terms of highway safety and amenity for of all users, and do little to assist active travel users on this important active travel route. The mitigation works also do nothing to address the most problematic section of Stone Wood Lane on the steep single-track section through Stone Wood. There are also concerns that a number of the improvements may not be deliverable, due to highway boundary constraints and unidentified impacts on trees.
- 1.16 Therefore, I remain of the view that the detrimental impact of development traffic on the local highway network, namely Stone Wood Lane, would adversely impact the safe and efficient movement of traffic by all modes, and be particularly detrimental to active travel users, leading to unacceptable impacts on highway safety and the amenity of active travel users utilising the route, and would compound the existing problems that already exist, which are of particular concern during weekday network peak periods.
- 1.17 As such, the development is contrary to Kirklees Local Plan (2019) Policy LP21 and Policy LP24 (dii), together with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2024) policies 115-118 relating to considering development proposals and promoting sustainable development.