Developments Affecting Trunk Roads and Special Roads
Highways England Response & Formal Recommendation to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Divisional Director, Network Delivery and Development, South West Region, Highways England.

To: Simon Smith, Wiltshire Council

CC: DfT c/o Highways England Growth and Economic Development Team

Council’s Reference: 14/12118/OUT

Referring to the notification of a planning application reference above, in connection with the M4 motorway junction 17 for a mixed use urban extension comprising residential, employment and education uses at Rowden Park, Chippenham Wiltshire notice is hereby given that Highways England’s formal recommendation is that we:

a) offer no objection;

b) recommend that conditions should be attached to any planning permission that may be granted (see Annex A – Highways England recommended Planning Conditions);

c) recommend that planning permission not be granted for a specified period (see Annex A – non determination);

d) recommend that the application be refused (see Annex A – Reasons for recommending Refusal).

Should you decide to not accept this Recommendation, you have 21 days to make a challenge through referral to the Secretary of State for Transport (SoSfT).

Signed by

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<th>Date:</th>
<th>1 February 2016</th>
<th>Signature:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Name: Rachel Sandy</th>
<th>Position: Asset Manager</th>
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Highways England: Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6HA

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Condition(s) to be attached to any grant of planning permission:

No development shall commence, except for works referred to in conditions [...], until a detailed scheme for the highway junction improvement works at M4 Junction 17 (comprising signalisation of the M4 east bound and westbound off-slips) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with Highways England. The occupation of development authorised by this permission shall not commence until such scheme is completed and open to traffic.

Reason(s) for the direction given at b), c) or d) overleaf and the period of time for a direction at e) when directing that the application is not granted for a specified period:

To ensure the safe and effective operation of the strategic road network.
Annex A
Highways England recommended Planning Conditions /
Highways England recommended further assessment required /
Highways England recommended Refusal.

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND ("we") has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the SRN. The SRN is a critical national asset and as such works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity.

This response represents our formal recommendations with regard to planning application (App Ref - 14/12118/OUT) and has been prepared by Rachel Sandy of the Network Delivery and Development Growth and Improvement Team and Asset Manager for the SRN in Wiltshire.

We have undertaken a review of the relevant documents supporting the planning application to ensure compliance with the current of the Secretary of State as set out in DfT Circular 02/2013 “The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development” and the DCLG National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), being advised on this matter by our consultants, CH2M.

Statement of Reasons

Highways England has previously provided a formal consultation response in respect of this outline planning application (ref: 14/12118/OUT) on 4 November 2015. At that time, Highways England referred to work being undertaken in partnership with Wiltshire Council to identify and understand the impact of planned local growth at M4 Junction 17 and the improvement measures necessary for accommodating the Core Strategy growth.

As previously stated, we have agreed-in-principle with Wiltshire Council that the signalisation of the junction off-slips provides the appropriate mitigation necessary to accommodate planned growth to 2026, and a minor amendment was proposed in this respect to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan.

Without the scheme, our transport modelling undertaken to support the Site Allocations Plan shows that vehicle queuing would occur at Junction 17, which would extend beyond the off-slips and onto the M4 mainline carriageway prior to the end of the Plan period (2026). This is prejudicial to the primary function of the strategic road network, which is to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, potentially resulting in an increase in vehicle conflict and injury accidents on the high-speed mainline.

As referenced in previous TR110 responses, the applicant’s assessment of the proposed development at Rowden Park had used Highways England’s S-Paramics model to determine development impact at M4 J17. That assessment indicated that the traffic impact of the development on the operation of the M4 would not be severe. At the same time, Highways England were receiving reports from the Police, traffic officers and Highways England’s Area 2 Managing Agent (Skanska) of occasional peak hour queueing observed on the off-slips at M4 Junction 17, which were identified to extend onto the mainline carriageway.
The Highways England S-Paramics model, which was built to evaluate Core Strategy impacts did not forecast this level of traffic congestion and the decision was taken to revalidate the model to better reflect observed traffic flow conditions. The model originally used by the applicant was based on traffic data from November 2011 and the model was subsequently revalidated and recalibrated using traffic data from 2015.

Highways England’s position has not changed in relation to the use of the Highways England S-Paramics model in considering SRN traffic impacts, although clearly any evidence base needs to be based on known conditions and accurately replicate current network operation.

The revalidation of the model has now been completed and has been used to predict when the M4 J17 scheme needs to be in place to ensure that significant road safety issues do not materialise on the M4 mainline. The new model shows that based on 5090 homes plus the employment allocated in the Chippenham Core Strategy, mainline queuing would occur on the M4 eastbound off-slip at 25% of the occupation of allocated homes. This equates to a total of 1,273 homes which can be occupied in Chippenham before the scheme becomes necessary. Circular 02/2013 sets out our policy regarding the acceptability of development proposals and the requirement to mitigate at opening year:

Development proposals are likely to be acceptable if they can be accommodated within the existing capacity of a section (link or junction) of the strategic road network, or they do not increase demand for use of a section that is already operating at over-capacity levels, taking account of any travel plan, traffic management and/or capacity enhancement measures that may be agreed. However, development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. (Circular 02/2013 para 9).

It is Highways England’s understanding that a total of 2,612 new homes across strategic sites in Chippenham and the wider Chippenham area have either been completed or are already committed, i.e. have a formal approval from the local planning authority including resolution to grant consent. As such, the existing junction layout cannot safely accommodate traffic from further Chippenham developments beyond current commitments.

Recommendation
In light of the reasons set out above, Highways England recommend that a planning condition be placed on the granting of any planning permission relating to the Rowden Park application, to ensure that the occupation of dwellings cannot take place until the necessary junction improvement scheme is in place.

Highways England are continuing to discuss the delivery of the identified improvement scheme with Wiltshire Council who have notified us of their commitment to design, fund and deliver the scheme in a timely manner in pace with development.