

TECHNICAL NOTE

Date: 2 September 2021

File Ref: PZ/CS/P21-2041/01TN

Subject: Fews Lane, Longstanton – Access Review

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Create Consulting Engineers Ltd (Create) has been commissioned by our Client, the Fews Lane Consortium, to consider the suitability of Fews Lane to accommodate any additional development, in the light of salient highways and access issues.
- 1.2 Fews Lane (which connects with High Street) at the north-western end of Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, already serves a very limited amount of residential development and functions as a Public Right of Way.
- 1.3 Create visited the Site on Tuesday 24 August 2021 and completed a series of “snap-shot” speed measurements using radar gun equipment to ascertain current vehicle speeds along the local section of High Street (major arms) at the junction with Fews Lane (minor arm). Various geometric measurements were also undertaken.
- 1.4 The purpose of this Technical Note is to advise the Fews Lane Consortium on specific matters regarding Fews Lane and its T-junction connection with High Street given the planning history associated with the Site.
- 1.5 The Site’s location is highlighted in Figure 1 below, while Figures 2 & 3 (also below) highlight Fews Lane when viewed from High Street to the North and South of the T-junction also viewing into Fews Lane itself.



Figure 1 – Site Location (Source: Google Maps)



Figure 2 – Fews Lane Access from High Street



Figure 3 – Fews Lane Access

2.0 SITE DETAILS & PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Fews Lane currently provides direct access for four dwellings. Access is also available to the rear garden and garage of 135 High Street. As a result, a total of five dwellings currently access Fews Lane via an unmade track approximately 2.9m wide. The total width of the corridor accounting for current vegetation and verges is approximately 3.9m.
- 2.2 As shown in Figure 3, forward visibility along Fews Lane is constrained and there no opportunity for vehicles to pass within the Applicants ownership.
- 2.3 Fews Lane is also a route of an established Public Right of Way as a designated footpath indicated on Figure 4 below, and well used.

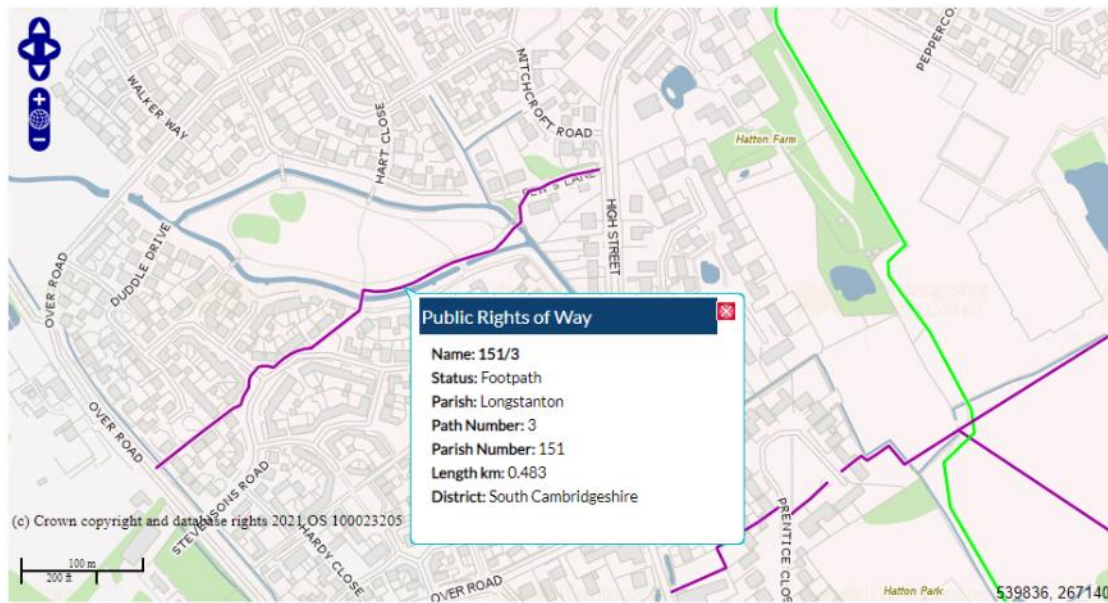


Figure 4 – Public Rights of Way (Source: Cambridgeshire County Council)

- 2.4 Two dwellings along Fews Lane were built in 2017 and are now occupied. Planning permissions for additional dwellings have been granted, although it should be noted that those permissions have been challenged through Judicial Review. A second Judicial Review is also pending concerning the discharge of a pre-commencement surface water drainage condition.
- 2.5 In 1988, an application for an additional dwelling within the garden of The Retreat was refused by the Local Planning Authority because of insufficient visibility at the junction of Fews Lane and High Street.
- 2.6 This decision was appealed; however, the Inspector dismissed the appeal due to the lack of adequate visibility at the junction, stating:

My concern is not because Fews Lane is unadopted, but because of the considerable restrictions on visibility at the junction. Although the B1050 is straight to the south of the junction the visibility in that direction is considerably impeded by the vegetation include a substantial tree. The effect of this vegetation is that vehicles would have to nose out into the road in order to achieve adequate visibility in a southern direction, this being the direction from which traffic approaching the junction on the near side of the road would be travelling. This I regard as being unsafe because, although the junction is in a restricted area, the road is straight and I anticipate that vehicles would be travelling close to the maximum permitted speed. Accordingly I am of the opinion that the effect on traffic safety affords a sound and clear-cut objection to this proposal.”

- 2.7 In 2012, an application was submitted for planning permission for two dwellings within the garden of The Retreat. The Local Highway Authority requested that the following two planning conditions be attached to any permission granted.

“Please forward the amended drawing showing the below requirements to the Highway Authority for approval prior to determination of the application. The access will need to be widened to a minimum width of 5m, for a minimum distance of 5m measured from the near edge of the highway boundary.

Reason: in the interests of highway safety.”

“Please add a condition to any permission that the Planning Authority is minded to issue in regard to this proposal requiring that two 2.0 x 2.0 metre pedestrian visibility splays be provided and shown on the drawings. The splays are to be included within the curtilage of the existing access. This area shall be kept clear of all planting, fencing, walls and the like exceeding 600mm high.

Reason: in the interests of highway safety.”

- 2.8 When planning permission for that application was granted by the Local Planning Authority in 2013, the following two conditions were attached.

“Prior to the occupation of the dwellings hereby permitted visibility splays shall be provided on both sides of the access and shall be maintained free from any obstruction over a height of 600mm within an area of 2m x 2m measured from and along respectively the highway boundary.

(Reason - In the interest of highway safety in accordance with Policy DPI3 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007).”

“No development shall take place until a scheme for the widening of the existing access has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The access shall be a minimum width of 5 metres for a minimum distance of 5m from the junction of the carriage- way of High Street. The works shall be carried out on accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the dwellings hereby permitted.

(Reason - In the interests of highway safety).”

- 2.9 In 2016, an application was made for planning permission for the erection of an additional single dwelling, refused by the Local Planning Authority. That decision was the subject of an appeal, which was determined in 2018 and the appeal was allowed.
- 2.10 While planning appeal above was being decided in 2018, the Appellant also submitted a second application for the same development to the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.11 In that application, the Local Highway Authority again requested conditions for 2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays and the widening of the carriageway to 5m for at least the first 5m from the boundary of the adopted public highway.

- 2.12 During the Local Planning Authority’s consideration of this application, the Applicant stated that they did not own the land necessary for the improvements to Fews Lane sought by the Local Highway Authority.
- 2.13 In response, the Local Highway Authority removed its requests for conditions.
- 2.14 In a letter dated 12 December 2018, the Local Highway Authority explained the reasoning for the decision, stating that:

*“The Local Highway Authority can only request works within land that is within the ownership of the applicant or within the public highway.
 as confirmed previously the applicant does not own the access and the public right of way is only approximately 2m in width in this location therefore the access cannot be widened to 5m in width, however it could be constructed in a bound material for 5m from the rear of the footway and the Local Highway Authority will seek a condition to reflect this.”*

- 2.15 Whilst the Local Highway Authority have provided a reason for changing their position from the previous Inspector-determined decision, it is not clear why an objection on the application was not raised given the lack of ownership, or the imposing of the same condition for the Applicant to resolve.
- 2.16 The current application seeks a further dwelling off Fews Lane. If accepted, Fews Lane would provide direct access to five dwellings with a rear access to 135 High Street bringing the total to six dwellings without improvement works to Fews Lane.

3.0 FEWS LANE/HIGH STREET JUNCTION

- 3.1 During our visit to the Site, a series of vehicle speed measurements were recorded to inform the technical team of the current vehicle speeds along the local section of High Street in the vicinity of the Fews Lane junction. The findings are below:

High Street from B1050 (southbound)	Average speed 18mph
High Street towards B1050 (northbound)	Average speed 32mph

- 3.2 The current available junction visibility at the Fews Lane junction based on a 2.4m set back from High Street is shown in Figure 5 and confirmed below:

Fews Lane looking to right	12.4m
Fews Lane looking to left	34.3m



Figure 5 – Fews Lane Junction Visibility 2.4m Set Back Right and Left

- 3.3 Clearly the extents of visibility in the “critical” direction to the right are extremely limited and well below the standard prescribed by the Manual for Streets (2007). Against the recorded average northbound speed of 32mph (not even allowing for an 85th percentile design speed) the requisite level of visibility would be in the order of 47m at a set back of 2.4m.
- 3.4 Actual levels of visibility would achieve only approximately 25% of standard in the critical direction to the right in anticipation of northbound traffic. It should also be noted that historic imagery on Google Maps suggests that vehicles park on the West side of High Street in the vicinity of the junction with Fews Lane, and this would hinder visibility further.
- 3.5 This is coupled with negligible emerging visibility of pedestrians using the footway on this side of High Street, meaning that drivers pulling out of Fews Lane would not have adequate visibility of vulnerable road users, particularly young children given they would be obscured by existing vegetation and boundary treatments.
- 3.6 The Cambridgeshire Design Guide for Streets & Public Realm dated 2007 states there should be some inter-visibility between pedestrians using a footway and drivers emerging from private driveways and that a 2m x 2m splay will help oncoming pedestrians to negotiate the route more comfortably.
- 3.7 The Council’s Highway Development Management General Principles for Development (2021) states that vehicle to pedestrian inter-visibility splays of 2m x 2m will be sought on all new private drive and shared private accesses measured from the back of the footway or the highway verge, as may be appropriate.

3.8 It is noted that there are various methods for measuring pedestrian visibility and junctions and private driveways. However, the a robust method (as adopted by a number of Councils) is that which details the required extents of pedestrian visibility as follows:

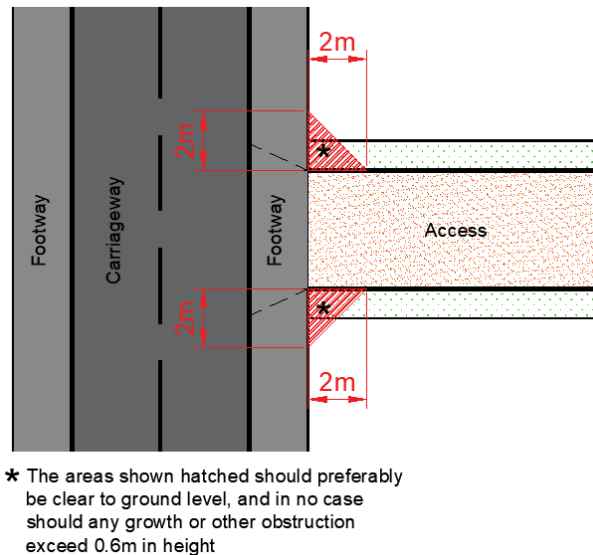


Figure 6 – Pedestrian Visibility Splay Measurement

3.9 The Local Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority appear to have accepted that it is not possible to provide 2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays at the junction. We see no reason why the standards presented in the aforementioned guidance should be relaxed in this case, as to do so potentially puts pedestrians at undue risk.

Trip Generation

3.10 An estimation of average vehicular demand associated with the existing quantum of development served via Fews Lane derived from trip rates obtained from the TRICS database is presented in Table 3.1 below:

Land Use	AM Peak		PM Peak		12 Hour	
	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
Trip Rate	0.131	0.395	0.358	0.175	2.265	2.397
Trips	0.786	2.370	2.148	1.050	13.590	14.382
Total Trips	1	2	2	1	14	14

Table 3.1: Trip Generation Estimation (Six “dwellings” in total)

3.11 Over the course of a day, average levels of trip generation could be expected to be in the order of 28 movements (two-way). This is significant amount of traffic particularly given the substandard levels of visibility at the junction with High Street. Clearly any increases in the use of Fews Lane could potentially trigger an increase in the risk or road traffic accidents occurring at this location and without significant improvement to the existing access arrangements, further development off Fews Lane should be resisted.

- 3.12 Additionally, given the narrowness of Fews Lane and absence of formal footways any increases in traffic demand arising from any further development are likely to put existing users of Fews Lane (and the associated Public Right of Way) at increased risk. This would particularly be the case when larger vehicles such as delivery and servicing HGVs may need to access the Site as these would effectively squeeze more vulnerable road users up against the lane's existing boundary treatment to enable such vehicles to pass.
- 3.13 The narrowness of Fews Lane also means that a vehicle turning in from High Street would need to hang back to enable a vehicle from the minor arm to turn out prior to being able to turn into Fews Lane itself. This increases the chances of rear end shunt accidents occurring on the major arm and clearly this risk would be exacerbated by any increase in development being served off Fews Lane. This would be particularly so on the southbound approach given the existing bend High Street obscures and upstream drivers view towards Fews Lane and therefore, a vehicle waiting to turn right into Fews Lane.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 It is, therefore, concluded that any further development off Fews Lane should not be permitted due to significant concerns relating to the visibility and geometry of the Site's existing access arrangements. Increased traffic demand associated with any increased development off Fews Lane could in turn lead to an increased likelihood of road traffic accidents occurring at this location and put more vulnerable road users (i.e. pedestrians) along Fews Lane and at the junction with High Street at undue risk.

5.0 DISCLAIMER

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