

## **NEWRIVER, FOUR ASHES PUBLIC HOUSE, FOUR ASHES**

### **APPLICATION BY FOUR ASHES LIMITED FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS INTERCHANGE**

**PINS REF: TR050005**

### **CONNECT TECHNICAL NOTE 03 – OBJECTION ON BEHALF OF NEWRIVER TO PROPOSED RIGHT TURN BAN AT THE A449 STAFFORD ROAD / STATION ROAD JUNCTION**

**21<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2019**

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#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Connect Consultants Limited ('Connect') is a firm of transport planning and highway design consultants that have been instructed by NewRiver in relation to the Four Ashes Public House at Four Ashes.

#### **2.0 Background**

2.1 Connect have previously submitted a written objection on behalf of NewRiver dated 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Connect also attended and spoke at the 'Issue Specific Hearing 2: Accessibility and Transport' on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

2.2 Part of the West Midlands Interchange (WMI) scheme are proposed mitigation measures to ban right turning vehicles from the A449 south to Station Drive east at the A449 / Station Drive signal junction. NewRiver's suggested alternative is to close Station Drive to all vehicular traffic at the rail bridge (maintaining a link for non-vehicular traffic). The turning head on the western side of the rail bridge, proposed by the WMI applicant, would remain.

2.3 Following the written submission and hearing, WSP have produced 'Transport Technical Note 42 – Impact of Closing Station Drive at the Rail Bridge' dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (WSP TN42).

2.4 Connect Technical Note 02, provided commentary on WSP TN42.

2.5 WSP responded in 'Transport Technical Note 45' dated 5 August 2019.

2.6 This document, Connect Technical Note 03, responds to WSP's TN45.

#### **3.0 Connect General Response to WSP TN45**

3.1 WSP appear to have concluded that the mitigation proposed by the applicant meets the criteria set by themselves (albeit using flawed logic and some contradictory points).

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- 3.2 They have not yet, however, addressed NewRiver's actual objection, which relates to the applicant's proposed mitigation significantly undermining the operation of the public house (as set out in Connect TN01).
- 3.3 NewRiver's alternative mitigation, in their view, provides a lesser impact on the operation of the public house and better achieves the stated aims of the applicant's mitigation (reduction of traffic along Station Drive, reduction in conflicts relating to the height restriction).
- 3.4 So far, the applicant has failed to address the original objection submitted by NewRiver.

#### 4.0 Connect Specific Responses to WSP TN45

- 4.1 The following points briefly describe the specific responses to TN45, but the main point remains that the original objection has not been addressed by the applicant.
- WSP have still not presented accurate traffic flow diagrams (i.e. including U-turns at junctions) which raises questions regarding transparency.
  - Paragraph 2.5: WSP appears to be making a (diversionary) semantic argument relating to the meaning of "reduce", with the assertion that "remove" is not a subset of "reduce". This is equivalent to saying that any of the numbers one to nine are less than ten, but zero is not.
  - Some of the WSP's arguments regarding the relative attractiveness of travel between the A449 and A5 via Vicarage Road vs via the New Link road appear contradictory – VISSIM modelling still shows a fairly substantial number of eastbound vehicles on Station Road west of the bridge (despite the lack of U-turns on the traffic diagrams), and an increase in westbound vehicles. However, paragraph 2.12 states that "*the quickest route* [from A449 to the WMI development and the A5] *would be via the Link Road.*" Paragraph 2.9 states that the A449 to A5 route via the Link Road "*would offer a more convenient route*". These appear to be at odds.
  - Paragraph 2.9: The applicant's assertion that the "*suitable signage*" which would be included to direct traffic on to the appropriate routes is, in fact, "*suitable*", is optimistic at best, given that signage denoting the height restriction (and directing Four Ashes Industrial Estate HGVs to travel via the A5) is currently in place, and yet conflicts with the low bridge currently occur.
  - Paragraph 2.11: WSP accept that HGVs can still encounter the height restriction, approaching either from the east, or from the south (via U-turn at the A449 roundabout). So this problem is not solved by WSP's mitigation.
  - Paragraph 2.15: The (significant) increase in westbound queuing on Station Drive at the A449 / Station Drive junction may be acceptable to the highway authority, but the question is whether the New River mitigation has been properly considered in the round.
  - Paragraph 2.16: The westbound queue increase on Station Drive is clearly related to the increase in westbound traffic on Station Drive as a direct result of the proposed WMI, and not the "*two-way traffic flows*" referred to by WSP.

- Paragraph 2.19: WSP go on to agree with our journey time analysis, but only relate it to U turning at the roundabout, momentarily forgetting the route via the A449 / A5 Link (which they have referred to in other locations as being *"more convenient"* and *"the quickest"*).
- Paragraph 2.20: WSP state that the connecting road between the A449 / A5 Link and Vicarage Road will not be public highway, and that the applicant's mitigation scheme does not rely on the availability of this link for through traffic. This helpful clarification highlights that the applicant's mitigation scheme relies on the increase in westbound traffic flows on Station Drive, and the unnecessary banning of turning movements at the A449 / Station Drive junction, unnecessarily inconveniencing local residents and disadvantaging the Four Ashes public house.
- Paragraph 2.21: WSP go on to incorrectly compare dissimilar events in an attempt to discredit one of our points. U-turning and travelling back along the same link (the A449) is not the same journey experience as a route north on the A449, along the A449 / A5 Link, and through the internal estate road (or to the A5 and Vicarage Lane), and so does not suffer the same psychological disincentive as a U-turn and travel back along the same link. Consider one's own experience of missing a junction on a motorway and having to double back.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The applicant has not addressed NewRiver's original objection.
- 5.2 NewRiver's preferred mitigation on Station Drive, i.e. the closure of Station Drive to vehicles at the rail bridge, appears to be preferable in various respects of the applicant's proposed mitigation of banning right turning vehicle from the A449 in to Station Drive.
- 5.3 Station Drive closure meets all of the applicant's stated aims, and does so more effectively than the applicant's proposed mitigation.
- 5.4 Overall, the closure of Station Drive at the rail bridge (to vehicles) and maintaining access for pedestrians and cycles, is a better proposal than the banning of right turning vehicles at the A449 / Station Drive junction.
- 5.5 We therefore suggest to the Examining Authority that the herein suggested closure of Station Drive at the rail bridge is taken forward.