

KCC Highways Position Statement: Development in Hawkhurst Summary

Background

Hawkhurst Village has grown around a junction where two major A roads cross. This junction is recognised by KCC as being at capacity with significant delays experienced, particularly during peak hours. Following KCC's investigation into several possible improvement schemes during the last few years, no solution has been found that can both be delivered and achieve the required additional capacity.

NPPF and defining 'severe'

Without a mitigation scheme at the junction for future developers to implement, officers refer to NPPF paragraph 32 which stipulates that *development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.*

There is no definition in law of the term 'severe', so in the case of this junction KCC officers require solid evidence to show the existing impact of traffic. The results of subsequent surveys show that the journey time through the junction in the peak hours can take more than 23 times longer than the minimum recorded time. Queue lengths varied just as widely during the day, meaning journey times owing to queueing are significantly higher than at off-peak times. Owing to these results, KCC officers consider that the junction is currently running severely over capacity at peak times.

Conclusion

Additional traffic from new development would have a severe adverse impact on the highway network, in terms of congestion and inconvenience to local residents and other road users, and on the strategic transport planning of the area generally, and this would be contrary to the aims of paragraph 32 of the NPPF which states that where the residual cumulative transport impacts are identified as severe, development should be refused.

It is therefore KCC's position that, in line with NPPF paragraph 32, no development will be recommended for approval within the parish boundary that generates any additional trips through the junction, unless the developer can demonstrate a scheme that mitigates their specific impact.

Suggested wording for refusing future planning applications

The proposal is contrary to paragraph 32 of the NPPF as the development proposed has **failed** to demonstrate:

- a) That improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development.
- b) That the traffic generated by the development could be safely accommodated on the existing highway network which is already inadequate, and conditions are 'severe'.
- c) That the residual cumulative impact of the development would be less than 'severe'. There are planning permissions already granted but not yet built which will add to traffic at the junction. This will lead to even longer queues, particularly during the AM and PM peaks. Due to existing over capacity, the residual cumulative impacts of the development could be severe.