

# AGENDA ITEM 6

**Report to: Planning and Conservation Committee**

**Report from: Chair of Planning and Conservation**

**Date: 15 December 2022**

**Subject: White House Farm Update: Phil Jones Associates' (PJA) Findings**

## 1. Introduction

PJA reported to Chichester City Council at the end of November 2022, and I suggest that this was money well spent as the misgivings of Residents Associations and the local community have been well and truly justified.

PJA were asked to evaluate the design of the proposed southern access road (SAR) planned to support the development of White House Farm, also known now as Minerva Heights and historically as the Land West of Chichester Development (WHF Phase 2 Planning Application 22/01485/OUTIEA).

As PJA says towards the end of their report

The requirement for the SAR was set out within the Local Plan. However, the road has had a very limited planning brief and is not supported by a supplementary planning document or design code. **This has led to the design of a road that supports the ambitions of the development but delivers little to preserve use by existing highway users nor support sustainable potential of future occupiers.**

The misgivings of the community contained in their letters of objection to CDC can be summed up as criticism of 'questionable figures' and objections that the developers have failed entirely to deal adequately with road safety issues, congestion, capacity, and pollution (from idling vehicles caught up in congestion). PJA agrees, concluding

**that various assumptions made within the traffic assessment have potentially resulted in an underestimation of potential traffic flows on the highway network and has resulted in a design that is unlikely to achieve the design expectations of the SAR.**

## 2. Detailed Analysis of PJA's Report

I quote from their report which

- has identified **several issues with the data used in analysis** which informed the design of the SAR and its junction with Sherborne Road. In general, analysis would benefit from being drawn from a more robust, evidentiary base and applying the Decide and Provide methodology appropriately.
- It appears that **the Local Plan did not provide a development brief as to the purpose/function of the SAR.** It seems the Planning Inspector anticipated a

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Supplementary Planning Document/Design Code would follow but it is unclear if it was anticipated that either CDC or the developer would initiate work on these. **What is abundantly clear is that material changes, both in terms of the A27 improvements and design guidance, have affected proposals in West Chichester and risk compromising the delivery of this site [WHF].**

- It seems possible, indeed likely, that the Pandemic compromised the applicant's ability to undertake additional traffic surveys, such that proposals have advanced based on a combination of available data to support the application.
- **PJA consider the use of 2014 data as a basis for the assessment unreasonable to form the basis of the assessment, without further validation against current traffic flows to demonstrate their suitability.**
- **There has been a material change in standards/guidance (LTN1/20 et al) highlighting other constraints in the National Cycle Network. These show that the existing 'mixed traffic' (Westgate) will become less attractive to cyclists and undermine the potential for the development to achieve mode shifts in the longer-term. The prospect of model filter could therefore support Local Cycle Walking Infrastructure Plans with only modest levels of traffic redistribution.**
- **The Transport Assessment is littered with assumptions that traffic flows/growth will fall and that behavioural changes will support reductions. However, little or no evidence is provided to justify these assumptions or the prospect that residual travel demands could be materially higher.**
- **The proposals for access onto Westgate appear to adopt greater weight for highway design standards and ignore a range of guidance documents intended to support existing and future non-car movements. As little or no assessment has been undertaken to assess active travel it can be concluded that the traffic forecasts are woefully inadequate as they rely on mode shifts that would not be achieved due to the inadequacy of active travel infrastructure.**

### 3. Conclusions

PJA do set out some possible alternative proposals to the design of the SAR that could be considered to address the above concerns of residents and other interest groups such as the cycling lobbies:

- West-facing slip roads from the A27 to Clay Lane
- Reconfiguration and extension of the College roundabout to incorporate the SAR/Westgate

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- A modal filter at the junction of the SAR/Westgate/Sherborne Road or alternatively on Westgate to deter traffic using Westgate as a through route

PJA analyses these different options: the pros and the cons and their conclusions. However, they also highlight – throughout their report – that the key capacity restraint on all these plans is the Fishbourne roundabout. Delivery of improvements there will be required to support the full, satisfactory delivery (to all residents) of the SAR.

There is no discussion in the report of the Automatic Number Plate Recognition Scheme (ANPR) which has been endorsed enthusiastically by the members of the Westgate Residents Association who have lodged almost 200 objections to the WHF Phase 2 Planning Application.

**As City Councillors, we shall need to decide whether PJA's Report delivers what we anticipated - and what we are going to do with this information.**

There is an assumption by PJA that we shall wish to identify a way forward – a mutual compromise - which supports housing delivery and economic growth.

I believe that I have said already that the argument about housing numbers is 'done and dusted' on WHF. I believe that our argument is based now on what the implications of the current planning application, relating to the staggered junctions at the bottom of Sherborne Road where it meets Westgate, will be for our neighbourhoods in Chichester West should they be accepted unchallenged.

**PJA added that as the application has not completed an appropriate assessment in accordance with Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, any consent would risk judicial review and legal challenge.**

You will recall that National Highways have placed a second embargo on CDC discussing this application which expires at the end of January 2023. National Highways have yet to receive any response to their questions to the developers. You can view National Highways' trenchant comments on CDC's Planning website.