

## QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC TO THE CABINET MEETING ON 26 JANUARY 2021

### West Chelmsford Masterplan

#### 1. John Hammond – To be put in person

Before agreeing the West Chelmsford Masterplan, councillors should check whether the proposed offsite cycle and pedestrian routes are deliverable and fit for purpose. Otherwise, there will not be sufficient sustainable transport mitigation.

There should also be a commitment that offsite cycle route improvements will be implemented before the first occupation of houses.

Just to give example, I attach photo [at the end of this document] of the narrow footway which is proposed as a route from Warren Farm to Hylands School in the draft Masterplan. Some sections are only 1.5 metres wide, which is unacceptable for a shared path. There is little space to widen it, especially because this section of Roxwell Road has been squeezed for extra traffic lanes. In the absence of a suitable path, most parents would choose to drive children to Hylands School, adding to traffic negative impacts on Roxwell Road, Lordship Road and outside the school.

Similar constraints of boundary features and land ownership are likely to prevent continuity of the proposed cycleway in Chignal Road and widening of footway on east side of Lordship Road.

The cycle plan shows a cycle route linking Chignal Road across Roxwell Road to Beachs Drive. A specific cycle crossing of Roxwell Road is needed but the Masterplan and addendum proposed motor traffic scheme for Roxwell Road/Chignal Road have no provision for this, so need amending.

#### 2. Chignal Estate Residents' Association

##### Joanne Hawkins – To be put in person

If I may, I would like to briefly respond to some comments from previous consultation meetings and some local media. The bus gate sits on the only park and play area for the Chignal estate and will not only impact the Chignal inhabitants, but residents of Warren Farm also. As of November last year, combined petitions against the bus gate stood at close to 900 signatures. The entire Chignal community is united against the bus gate, not just 'a few local residents' as it has been falsely suggested.

The safety issues around the bus gate must be acknowledged.

Officers commissioned a Road Safety Audit, carried out by specialist safety consultants, in February 2019.

Amongst others, the following results were listed within section 3 of their report:

- Risk to children's safety from the bus route proximity to the playground
- Compromised pedestrian viability with risk of collision from oncoming traffic
- Compromised visibility and swept paths increasing the risk of collisions
- Risk of buses colliding with through traffic due to proximity of nearby access and parking
- Risk of bus and pedestrian collisions

Please picture these issues; and then include a large play park directly adjacent with numerous families, dog walkers and children; shops and two schools each side of the link and potentially hundreds of cyclists each day.

The formal response to these results, noted on the audit document is, quote, "this problem is not accepted by the design team".

One of the responses, again, within the audit was, and I quote, "there hasn't been an accident here in 20 years". If we took that approach, the flyover would still be standing! And that was **also** clearly not safe for the future.

Professional, specialist consultants are telling us there are problems with safety of the bus gate! However, as you can see, they are not being listened to. This suggests a wilful disregard for the safety and wellbeing of the Chignal community.

There will be approx. 2500 more people living next to and using this link, including high numbers of cyclists and children, additional shops, parks and schools. **That** is what we should be building for.

What message does it send to the Chignal residents, and those of the new development, when safety advice from specialist consultants is just dismissed in such a way? What if there was a severe accident at this junction, potentially with a child? What could councillors say to the local community, considering all the warnings and evidence that was given to them highlighting the safety concerns?

The lives and wellbeing of the Chignal community matter. The safety of the community, children, pedestrians and cyclists using the link - matter. These aren't expendable, they can't be discarded just so something that is unsafe and environmentally destructive can be forced on them.

The officers' addendum report states that buses accessing via A1060 will have no adverse affect on the operation of Roxwell Rd. So why choose a strategy that is so destructive on one community and a risk to its safety, when there is an option that has minimal disruption on either communities?

The addendum is clearly the way forward.

## Naomi Poole – To be put in person

There have been concerted efforts from some to deliberately downplay the impact of the bus gate, even in the face of extensive evidence clearly showing the destructive implications it entails.

In addition to significant safety issues, the bus link imposes the following on the Chignal community:

- Approx. 2m high flyover carving through the open green space and overlooking gardens.
- The proposed design shows buses will travel uphill through the gate; meaning higher revving engines; causing increased noise and pollution, directly adjacent to properties, gardens and playground. The lower the bridge - the steeper the slope, the worse the impact.
- Buses will run from 5.30am to 11.30pm most days.
- The proposed road is within 1 foot of neighbouring properties.
- There is a clear risk to residents from noise and vehicle pollution and no consideration has been made to risks from heavy vehicle vibrations, over time, on the neighbouring buildings.
- Removal of 3 large, high quality trees from Avon Rd; ruining the local environment further and removing screening from traffic.
- Loss of allotments
- Spatial standards far below recommended standards for such a location. The quote "just because you can, doesn't mean you should" comes to mind!
- It requires 10 traffic signals, ill repeat that...10 signals, in the vicinity of the junction. There are junctions on Parkway with fewer signals. Yet no lux level analysis has been carried out.
- **Planning policy DC4: protecting existing amenity:** states- all development proposals should safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of any nearby properties by ensuring that development would not result in excessive noise, activity or vehicle movements, overlooking or visual intrusion. The bus gate compromises **all** of these.

None of these impacts were shown in the local plan, and none of these would be the result of cycle link! CERA understand a cycle link requires some loss of habitat. However, there is no comparison between a bus fly over and a pedestrian cycle way!

Yes...buses use Avon Rd. But houses are 10m from the road, with trees and hedging in front. Buses passing within 1 foot - uphill, from early morning until near midnight, is clearly not the same. Lets not pretend it is.

The officers' report for the October policy board meeting stated, and I quote: '...the Masterplan document does not include analysis on environmental impact '. This effectively emphasises CERA's position. Noise levels, emissions levels, heavy vehicle vibration, light pollution, risk to residents' health and wellbeing, risk to children's safety, loss of trees, loss of allotments, compromised parking, pedestrian and cyclist safety amongst others. None of this has ever been properly considered.

The premise that buses using Roxwell Rd will impact Writtle more than a bus gate would impact Chignal Estate has no merit! Item 40 of the addendum report states, "...These bus services would not have any adverse impact on the operation of Roxwell Road". Detailed evidence, presented by CERA together with a specialist consultant, confirms the bus gate will have a hugely destructive impact on the Chignal Estate, its environment and its residents. Not to mention the residents of Warren Farm.

CERA therefore, again, reiterate our position that there is an obvious common-sense decision to be made. And that is to adopt the masterplan addendum.

### 3. Writtle Parish Council

Writtle Parish Council's (WPC) Planning Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would like to highlight the following points on the revised masterplan. Some are completely new whilst others have been raised earlier, but not adequately dealt with. We are disappointed that we have only had a short time to consider the revisions to the Masterplan (first sight 19 January with the Cabinet Meeting on 26 January). Therefore the comments are brief but will hopefully identify our concerns.

1. This is the first time we have seen agricultural field on the north side of Foxburrows Lane marked as playing fields (Page 9). WPC understand this is an error and will be removed from the Plan.
2. There is still some doubt about the 'local' sports area shown within the Warren Farm development and the lay out of the playing fields with just football pitches shown and possibly an artificial cricket pitch and no facilities. It is difficult to understand how this will effectively be used for any organised sport. There is no maintenance plan. This facility is likely to attract traffic out of area. We strongly believe that this facility should be for the residents of the new estate and the children of our parish.
3. There is no evidence of significant proposed tree planting to enhance the biodiversity of the site and to help counteract flooding from excess surface water that will be caused by the buildings.
4. The pavements are shown still as narrow on Roxwell Road. Discussions were had about a wider path and segregated cycle route which would be supported by WPC.
5. The proposed bus stops close to the doctors cannot be accommodated in this location – this is an accident black spot already.
6. There needs to be greater recognition of the impacts of climate change. In the present Masterplan no effective mitigation measure proposals or renewable energy use are set out to help achieve the national (and local) net zero carbon targets either at this stage or in subsequent applications.
7. Details on how the environment at the cottages, close to the widened Roxwell Road/Lordship Road roundabout will be handled in terms of noise, fumes, dust and air quality needs to be identified at some point.
8. It is noted that village signs are shown to be erected along the Roxwell Road p37, identifying the Warren Farm Development as Chelmsford, when it is clearly in the Parish of Writtle. On p26 a village gateway feature has been mapped at a random location along Lordship Road and does not mark the start of the Parish of Writtle.

9. The cycle route using Lawford Lane to connect to Hylands School is still unviable even with the measures suggested these would not cover periods of flood when impassable, leaving reliance on cars when there is insufficient parking at the school for parents. Car travel for school journeys should be discouraged with a more viable route to the senior school.
10. There is still no clear biodiversity plan for improvement so as to achieve net gain nor to connect wilder places under a nature recovery scheme.
11. There seems little about Flood Risk in the document. This has been excessive and consistently so in Cow Watering Lane/Lordship Road, so measures must be in place to improve this and mitigate against this, as the village has been cut off in this direction several times recently.

It is considered that some of the above points could have been dealt with earlier in consultation with WPC, the developer and the city council rather than be presented with a document at this late stage. Planning proposals and applications should have due regard to the Writtle Neighbourhood Plan and to the AECOM Design Code, both of which the developer and the council are aware of. Writtle Parish Council looks forwards to such consultations.

## Other Questions

### 1. Stephen Leedham – To be put in person

As reported in The Yellow Advertiser on the 19th January 2021, there is a proposal to introduce parking charges at Hylands Park to help fill the budget shortfall brought about by current pandemic. And yet you are proposing discretionary spending of over one million pounds, including enhancements of a theatre that cannot even be used during said pandemic. Not to mention the £135,000 required to install the car park charging system. Should the committee rather consider deferring all non-discretionary projects until such time as the pandemic is over and revenues are restored?

Secondly, if such parking charges are introduced to cover the shortfall during the pandemic, will it then be removed once the pandemic is declared over and normal business has resumed?

Further, Councillor Chris Davidson has stated "we have no plans to charge for parking at any of the local parks and that includes Andrews Park. Hylands is a destination park with people travelling significant distances to visit, many of them from outside the City Council area, enjoying the fantastic facilities without paying for them."

If the focus is on those outside the City Council area then why not just charge them and keep it free (as opposed to discounted) for those local to, and already paying for the 'fantastic facilities' through their Council Tax?

## 2. Writtle Parish Council

Writtle Parish Council strongly objects to the introduction of car park charges at Hylands Park.

During the first lockdown, Paradise Road was gridlocked and the parish council's car park full. If charges were implemented at Hylands, it would have a serious impact on Writtle, especially those living in Paradise Road and for the users of the facilities at Writtle Sports and Social Club, where the demand on the car park is already at capacity over the weekends. Essex Highways has recently carried out a traffic count on the road due to the large increase in pedestrian footfall, cyclists and cars. This is due to the direct access to Hylands Park and the facilities at Writtle Sports and Social Club.

[Photo referred to in Mr Hammond's question](#)

