

Avanti House Free School, Whitchurch Playing Fields

Planning Committee Members Highways and Transport Briefing Note

March 2016

Introduction

This note considers the Highways and Transport comments raised by Harrow Council Planning Committee Members at Planning Committee on 17 February 2016. The queries relate to the Avanti House Free School proposal, Whitchurch Playing Fields (Harrow Council planning ref: P/4910/15).

At Planning Committee, members were minded to grant planning permission subject to referral to the Greater London Authority (GLA), conditions, and completion of a Section 106 obligation to be brought to separate committee by July 2016. The remainder of this notes seek to clarify and address member's highways and transport comments.

Member's Highways and Transport Comments

Wemborough Road / Abercorn Road / St Andrews Drive Roundabout

Comments were made in relation to the existing and proposed performance of the above roundabout junction to the west of the application site. Cllr Kendler in particular raised concerns over peak hour queuing and wished to see additional mitigation measures provided at this junction.

It is worth noting that the junction capacity modelling undertaken reflects *average maximum queuing* over the AM and PM peak hourly periods, and it is accepted that over an hourly period there will be inevitable peaks and troughs in traffic flow and queuing.

The analysis undertaken within the Transport Assessment submission took a robust approach towards junction capacity testing, by superimposing all Avanti House School morning / afternoon car trips onto the *network peak* hour periods. In reality, due to proposals to stagger school start / finish times this would not be the case - by example, in the AM only around 40% of Avanti trips would take place between 0745-0845 when local roads are at their busiest.

Whilst accepted that the roundabout junction does operate close to capacity and with notable queuing (in particular on the Wemborough Road (E) and Abercorn Road approaches), investigation has been undertaken into physical mitigation measures such as conversion to a signalised junction.

Table 1 below compares predicted queuing at the junction with Avanti House School traffic under both roundabout and signalised layout conditions. The signal arrangement tested uses optimised signal timings and makes no allowance for controlled pedestrians crossing facilities.

Table 1 Wemborough Road / Abercorn Road / St Andrews Drive Roundabout / Signals Queue Comparison

Approach Arm	AM Peak Ave. Queue		PM Peak Ave. Queue	
	Roundabout	Signals	Roundabout	Signals
Wemborough Road (E)	6.8	14.2	21.3	16.1
St Andrews Drive	2.5	8.5	3.6	7.0
Wemborough Road (W)	3.1	7.8	3.0	6.4
Abercorn Road	10.9	14.0	3.6	12.5
TOTAL:	23.3	44.5	31.5	42.0

The results indicate that under signalised conditions, although there would be a slight improvement in queuing on the Wemborough Road (E) approach in the PM peak all remaining approach arms would experience significant queue increases across both peak periods. This reflects the traffic flow characteristics at this location where high volumes of right-turning traffic enter from each approach.

It should also be taken into account that the junction arrangement as existing has no discernible record of personal injury accidents, and it would be beneficial to retain such a record given the vicinity to local schools.

On the basis of the above and in consultation with Harrow Council Highway Officers it has been concluded that retaining the existing roundabout arrangement represents the best option to maximise junction capacity and safety at this location.

Avanti House Minibuses

Planning Committee Members also queried whether Avanti House could increase the number of school-operated minibuses to minimise the number of pupils being brought to school by car. For clarification, it is proposed that the school minibus service will accommodate c. 50 pupils and will run 3 services in the AM and PM to reflect the staggered school start / finish times.

A route and strategic pick-up / drop-off points have been identified within the submitted School Travel Plan confirming that this operation would be feasible. The school minibus service would in total transport c. 150 pupils to and from the school.

Public Bus Services

Through consultation with the GLA and Transport for London (TfL) it has been identified that the route 186 bus, which runs along Wemborough Road, experiences capacity concerns at peak times. TfL have confirmed that Mayoral funds are available to mitigate the public transport impacts of free school developments, and they will contribute £75,000 to operate an additional AM and PM peak service on route 186 (exact timings to be confirmed – for confirmation see appended email). The bus will be double-deck and accommodate 87 seated passengers (with additional standing capacity).

Coordinated Marshalling and Travel Planning Strategy with Whitchurch Schools

Owing to the staggered start / finish times of Avanti House, it is not envisaged that there would be simultaneous drop-off / pick-up activity with Whitchurch Schools. It is however noted that a consistent and coordinated approach should be taken by both schools when managing traffic through the public car park area.

It is therefore suggested and will be written into the Avanti House School Travel Plan that regular termly meetings should be undertaken between Avanti, Whitchurch and Stanburn Schools to ensure that any travel issues between the schools are raised and addressed, and that coordinated approaches are taken to traffic marshalling with car sharing between siblings at separate schools encouraged.

Committee members also questioned whether additional controls could be implemented within the Harrow Council public car park, in particular with regard to use by Avanti House School Sixth Form students. Whilst this is not a matter that can be addressed through the planning mechanism, Harrow Council Highways will in consultation with their car parking and property services departments, investigate the option of introducing controls that would discourage long-term parking. This is with a view to maximising space available for pupil drop-off / pick-up for both Avanti and Whitchurch Schools.

Avanti House School Travel Plan

The Avanti House School Travel Plan as submitted includes details on the routing and operation of the school minibus service but will be updated to reflect proposals for the additional TfL 186 bus services and further emphasise the importance of coordinated Travel Planning between Avanti, Whitchurch and Stanburn Schools.

Whilst noted that the targeted 'Car Occupants' modal split of 9% is ambitious, this is reflective of the above measures and the track-record of Avanti House in their occupation at Common Road and Beaulieu Drive. It is therefore considered that, subject to baseline travel surveys, this target is maintained, monitored and enforced through the TfL STARS Travel Planning mechanism and the school's Section 106 agreement.

Summary

In light of the above measures and additional detail provided it is considered that the impact of the Avanti House School proposals has been duly considered with suitable and robust mitigation measures developed to ensure the school has a minimal impact on the operation of the local highway and transport networks.

Appendix 1 – Email Confirmation of TfL Funding for Increased Service on Route 186

From: Pak-Lim Wong <PakLim.Wong@tfl.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2016 3:52 PM
To:
Subject: RE: Avanti House School - TfL Buses

Hi

Following our conversation earlier in the week, based on the trip estimated in the transport assessment for school; TfL is currently envisaged that an addition return bus journey, likely to be the 186 would be required to mitigate increase demand to bus service following the occupation of the school. As per previous advice, TfL not seeking a financial contribution from this school having understood this is a Free School.

The cost for the additional service, estimated at approx. £75K per year will be funded by the lump sum granted by the Government to TfL toward bus service improvements for Free Schools.

I hope this is of helpful.

Kind regards

PakLim Wong
Planning Officer
Borough Planning, Transport for London
10th Floor, Windsor House, 50 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0TL
Tel: (020) 3054 1779 | Auto: 81779 |
Email: paklim.wong@tfl.gov.uk

For more information regarding the TfL Borough Planning team, including TfL's *Transport assessment best practice guidance* and pre-application advice please visit

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/urban-planning-and-construction/planning-applications?intcmp=3484>