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Timber Merchants, Importers and Sellers of Allied Products



03 December 2020

Planning appeal ref APP/T5720/W/20/3250440

Statement by Philip Champion to the Public Inquiry on 8th December 2020.

This statement will be read by Steve Lister Non-Executive Chairman of AW Champion on behalf of Philip Champion who is unable to attend due to an unavoidable personal obligation.

My name is Philip Champion, I am Managing Director of AW Champion, timber merchants with ten branches throughout Surrey and Kent. We have operated the New Malden branch at the southern end of Burlington Road for many years. It is the largest branch within the group and it also accommodates our head office. The proposal will have a very detrimental impact upon our business due to the additional traffic generated by the proposed development.

I am grateful for the opportunity to explain to you directly our concerns and to support the local community who also have very valid reasons for requesting that the appeal be dismissed.

I spoke against the proposal on the evening of 13th February when the Merton Council Planning Committee rightly refused the planning application. The principle of some housing on this site is acceptable, provided it is of an appropriate design and comes with the necessary highways improvements which we have suggested to the Council. But the scheme as proposed will have severe adverse impacts that significantly outweigh any benefits that the scheme may offer.

We are surprised and disappointed that the Borough have withdrawn the substantive parts of Reason 1 of the reasons for refusal. We have to contend on a daily basis with the traffic queues that result from the level crossing on West Barnes Lane. Regardless of any extant permissions these queues are particularly severe on Burlington Road, and it is hard to accept that 456 new flats on the application site will not make an already unsatisfactory situation even worse.

The NPPF states at para 38 that a local authority should "secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area".

At para 108 *Considering development proposals* it states:

In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) *appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;*
- b) *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and*
- c) *any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.*



This proposed development will have severe negative impacts on the adjoining road network. Policies within the London Plan and Merton Council's Core Strategy support local businesses and seek to minimise traffic congestion – but these objectives have been completely ignored.

A W Champion

We are part of the construction industry and supply a range of timber products to many local builders and businesses. We have a comprehensive delivery service, but also a very significant amount of our product is collected, so good vehicle access is essential. Builders do not use cars and bicycles they use vans and lorries. Even with the current Covid 19 restrictions we have an average of 260 collections per day at the branch. Over 90% are builders lorries and vans.

If there are queues of traffic on Burlington Road this means that customers cannot access the branch and this effects our trade. We operate in a very competitive market and it is therefore very important that the proposed development will improve and certainly not exacerbate the present highways impacts. Para 7.10.13 of the committee report of 13th February disguises the acknowledgement that the proposal will result in a significant increase in the level of traffic resulting from the development.

The level crossing at West Barnes Lane

The committee report acknowledged that the level crossing at the end of Burlington Road as it changes into West Barnes Lane is a major source of congestion when the barriers are down for any significant time. When the barriers are down vehicles travelling north and wishing to turn across the level crossing need to wait in a short stacking lane on Burlington Road. This stacking lane is adjacent to the entrance to the application site. When this stacking lane is full, which happens when the barriers are down long enough to allow several trains to pass it obstructs the filter lane and this causes long queues to form on Burlington Road. These extend past the Claremont Avenue roundabout, to the Shannon Corner roundabout, on to the A3 and towards Kingston.

We have provided the Council's officers with photographs that were taken when the level crossing barrier is down enabling several trains to pass. When this prolonged gridlock occurs it is common for frustrated drivers to try to circumvent the end of the queue at Claremont Avenue by mounting the pavement, or driving down the wrong side of the road. This despite the hazard to pedestrians.

We are also mindful that when Crossrail 2 is implemented this will result in additional trains so that the level crossing will be down for additional periods of time, thus exacerbating the current problems.

Covid 19

You will be aware that as a result of the current pandemic the volume of traffic on all roads is currently less than when the application was submitted and determined but even with the current restrictions there are still regular times when the barriers are closed for significant periods and the queues are forming.

Impact of the proposed development

The site has a PTAL score of 2 or 3, so residents will not necessarily be able to rely upon public transport. It is likely that many residents will be car owners and that they will be obliged to park their cars on surrounding streets which will further slow traffic. The Arup Proof of Evidence of November 2020 suggests new reduced traffic projections. We will leave the Highways Consultants to address this matter. But buses already struggle to use Burlington Road due to the problem with the filter lane, the application will only exacerbate the situation.

There is a solution to this problem. We have asked for an extension to the filter lane to be provided as part of this planning application.

In order to allow traffic to flow more freely on Burlington Road when the level crossing barriers are down for a significant time the length of the stacking lane needs to be increased, so that it does not block the filter lane. To achieve this we have provided the Council's officers with drawings. These show how the section of road between the two islands that are significant pinch points could be increased in width and how part of the frontage to the application site could be used to allow the filter lane to operate freely. Enabling this section of road to run freely will also enable vehicles to enter and leave the Redrow Homes development when the level crossing barriers are causing the significant queues.

This extension to the stacking lane and achieving the correct width for the filter lane by using a part of the frontage to the application site and the existing adopted highway is a realistic proposal that could be secured by S106 Agreement. We explained this proposal to the applicant's highways consultant at the initial public consultation exercise and have met with the Council's highways officers to explain our proposal. But it appears to have been dismissed because it is too complicated for them. This planning application is the only opportunity to remedy this very real problem. Please do not ignore this simple but deliverable proposal.

Conclusion

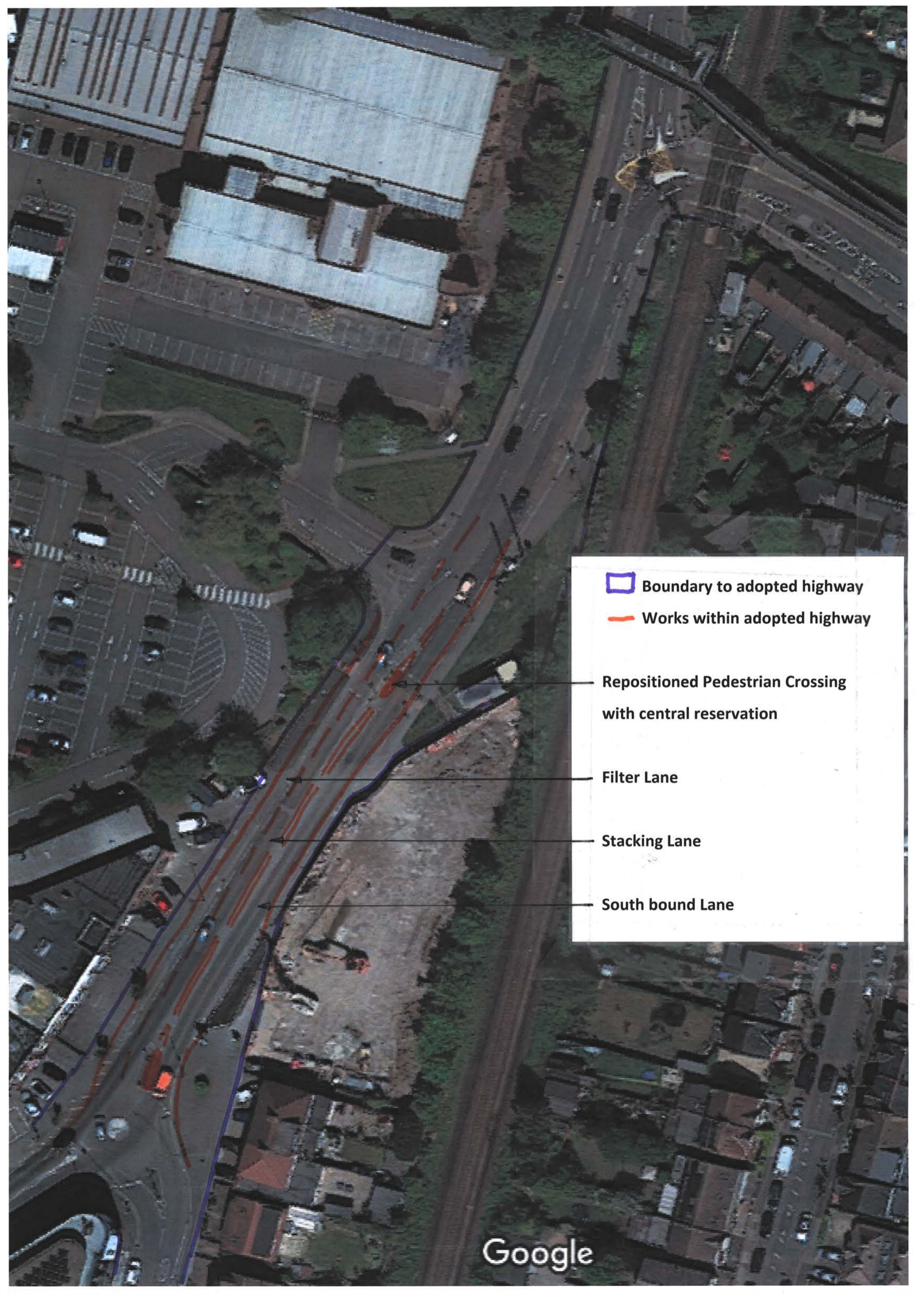
We attended the pre application exhibitions that were organised by Redrow and pointed out the problems that this development will cause. We have met with the Council's officers and explained our proposal to widen the stacking lane, but our proposal has been ignored. This development will cause severe detrimental impacts to the road network. AW Champion do not object to housing going on this site but it needs to incorporate appropriate mitigation, so I am left with no option but to urge you to DISMISS this appeal. It will cause irreparable detriment to "the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area".



Thank you.



Philip Champion





-  Boundary to adopted highway
-  Works within adopted highway

Repositioned Pedestrian Crossing
with central reservation

Filter Lane

Stacking Lane

South bound Lane