

Speaker Notes 8 April 2025

Neil Strachan, Haslemere resident of 20 years and retired Highway Engineer, previously employed by West Sussex County Council, County Surveyors, Hampshire County Council Highways and Halcrow Group Consulting Engineers.

Due to my employment background, I will only be commenting on Highway matters. I will refer to the appellant's Transport Assessment dated 21 June 2022 and manual traffic counts (MTC) carried out during the morning peak on 11, 13, 18, 19, 20, 26, 27 and 31 March 2025.

These MTCs were carried out at the same locations as identified in the Transport Assessment, namely junctions 1,2 and 4:

Junction 1: A286 Midhurst Road / Scotland Lane

Junction 2: A286 Midhurst Road / Bell Rd cut through

Junction 4: A287 Sturt Road / Bell Road cut through

An additional MTC was carried out at the junction of A287 Sturt Road and B2131 Camelsdale Road.

During the morning peak the majority of traffic is heading South to North, as a consequence southbound traffic was not counted. In the morning peak southbound traffic levels on the A286 and A287 were approximately 30% of northbound traffic levels. It is highly likely that the situation is reversed in the evening peak, with higher levels of traffic heading south.

Morning Peak Traffic Flows South to North:

On the A286 at Junction 1, the number of vehicles per hour varied between 452 and 621.

On the A287 at Junction 4, the number of vehicles per hour varied between 403 and 572.

However, in addition to the northbound traffic flows, a minority of traffic was travelling West to East and East to West through the four junctions that were surveyed.

Morning Peak Traffic Flows West to East:

On the A286 at Junction 1, the number of vehicles heading north and then turning right into Scotland Lane varied on different survey days, to a maximum of 20%.

On the A286 at Junction 2, the number of vehicles turning left on to the A286 from Bell Road varied on different survey days, to a maximum of 40%.

Traffic heading East to West was slightly less than West to East, and not counted.

Assessment:

The amount of traffic travelling north in the morning peak is higher on the A286 than on the A287. It is likely that there are two reasons for this. For through traffic heading north to the A3 it is a shorter mileage via the A286 to enter the A3 at Milford, rather than the A287 via Hindhead and the A3 Tunnel. This traffic on the A286 also uses 'rat runs' through Haslemere to avoid Shepherds Hill, some of this traffic is likely to be using Scotland Lane. Secondly it is likely that traffic from the A287 Sturt Road has been displaced in the last year since the Sturt Road development of 135 houses has become live. Sturt Road is subject to on-street parking and queuing traffic during morning and evening peaks.

The quantity of traffic travelling West to East was surprising. The likely assessment is that this is traffic attempting to 'by-pass' Haslemere to the south. During the morning and evening peak, the main route through Haslemere West to East (via Weyhill, Lower Street and the High Street) is subject to significant delays and regular gridlock. As a consequence local and through traffic attempting to avoid this is travelling via Camelsdale Road, Bell Road, Midhurst Road, Scotland Lane, Blackdown lane and Petworth Road, thereby avoiding the town centre.

The consequence of these South to North and West to East traffic flows is likely to explain why the stretch of the A286 Midhurst Road between Junctions 1 and 2, (where the appellant plans the access to their site) has the highest traffic flows during the morning peak.

Access Arrangements:

From a highway design perspective a Right-Turn Lane is far from the ideal solution to access the site. Right and left turning traffic leaving the main highway and accessing the site is catered for, but right turning traffic attempting to leave the site is not. There will be traffic conflict and during the morning peak when the majority of traffic is likely to be heading north there is highly likely to be queuing. The best solution for site access is a roundabout, with traffic conflict substantially reduced.

Other issues:

The Transport Assessment quoted that an 'RFC value of less than 0.85 demonstrates that a junction is operating within design thresholds', it is noted in Table 6.5 that Junction 2 would be operating close to that limit by 2026, with a figure of 0.72, even without development. Also the queuing ('Q') figures in Tables 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 were unrealistic only showing a maximum of '3'. On survey days there were regularly queues of 7 or more at Junction 2. (Comment: suggest the queuing figures in Transport Assessment dated 2022 will need to be resurveyed).

As in paragraph 3.17, the A286 Midhurst Road in the vicinity of Junction 1 and northwards towards the town has a width of approximately 6m, this is sub-standard with new single lane carriageways designed to a width of 7.3m. In addition the footway to the north of the Scotland Lane junction on the west side of the carriageway is 0.6m wide in places, which is unsafe for pedestrians. No pedestrians were noted at Junctions 1 and 2 during survey days. In addition no cyclists were noted at any of the four traffic count survey points over the eight days. It is almost certain that reduced width carriageways and steep hills make cycling a far from ideal option in this area of Haslemere.

Summary

The highest traffic flows for traffic heading North or East are on the A286 Midhurst Road a Principal carriageway, where the Appellant plans an access to the site. The addition of '592 vehicle trips' per day (paragraph 6.2), to this busy road already near to capacity, would almost certainly inhibit the flow of traffic in to and around Haslemere.