

Dear Mr. Owen

Thank for providing me with a copy of the Transport Report conducted by AECOM to assess the traffic impact of the proposed new school at Hesketh Meadow.

I write on behalf of the Hesketh Meadow Residents Group and the vast majority of residents of the estates adjoining Hesketh Meadow. I find the report interesting and informative but I would challenge the validity of its content and conclusions for reasons outlined below.

I refer to section 2 under the heading 'Existing Conditions' in which observations of the three schools indicates that, in each case, most children would appear to walk to school; in the case of Lowton High School from residential areas to the east and in the case of Golborne High School from residential areas in proximity to the school.

Under the heading 'Summary Comments' on page 5 the report confirms that site visit observations indicate that 'most children from the three schools tend to walk to school at present'. I would accept that this is to be expected since most children live in proximity to the school they attend.

However, there follows under the same heading, a telling caveat, I quote ***'It is considered important to ensure that the proposed new school complex does not change this situation and does not lead to an increase in the number of people being picked up and dropped off for the school'***.

I suggest that it cannot be realistically expected that children who at present walk to a school which is close to home will, with equal enthusiasm, elect to walk to the proposed new school over the considerably longer distances resulting from the wider catchment area. The reality is that the majority of children who at present walk to school will instead be dropped off and picked up at the proposed new school.

It follows that the requirements set out in the caveat referred to earlier, and which form the basis of the estimates throughout the Traffic Report, cannot be guaranteed, the conclusion being that the report is based on a false premise. The predictions of traffic impact on Hesketh Meadow Lane and its environs, contained in the report, are therefore rendered invalid and cannot be accepted as a reliable and accurate assessment of the consequences of using Hesketh Meadow Lane as an access route to the proposed school complex.

I would also point out that the report omits to address the likelihood of traffic using the alternative route at the junction of Newton Road and Laburnum Road and the inevitable creation of 'rat runs' through the estate adjoining Hesketh Meadow Lane along routes which are totally inadequate to take that volume of traffic. Nor does it address the disruptive impact and risk posed to residents of the estate.

On the basis of the above observations, on behalf of the Hesketh Meadow Residents Group I would challenge the validity of the conclusions reached by the Transport Report and the choice of Hesketh Meadow Lane as a suitable access road to the proposed school complex.

Yours sincerely
Mrs. I Gillette

Mr Owen's reply follows:

Dear Mrs Gillette,

Considering your letter of 3 December, I did state at the meeting held on 17 November that I consider that it is not possible to introduce a suitable junction on Newton Road along the existing frontage of the Civic Hall, in the area of the former rail bridge, to serve the new school site. I maintain that position. There is insufficient space to construct a junction that can accommodate and control the traffic and pedestrian movements that will be generated as a result of the development. Clearly, and as your Chartered Engineers have advised, it is possible to provide some form of junction on Newton Road. However, I have to be confident that the new junction is safe, appropriate and will not be detrimental to management and movement of traffic on the Strategic Route Network, part of which is Newton Road.

If you have any further information regarding the type of junction that your experienced Chartered Engineers envisage, I will consider that submission. They may wish to utilise the information contained within the Traffic Report that I have forwarded to you, to carry out any capacity assessments of the junction that will be required before exploring the submission further.

With reference to your email (and letter of 14 December) the report does include comments made during a site visit which is primarily carried out to validate the junction modelling. Clearly whilst AECOM staff are on site they have made some observations on pedestrian movements to the schools in question. Obviously, relocating two schools onto a single site will result in changes in travel patterns and there may be some children and staff that live too far to walk to the new facility. Notwithstanding, the site is well served by good walk and cycle connections as well as a number of bus services, including the high frequency 600 service. This along with other incentives such as the 20mph near Schools Strategy, Travel Planning and Active that will form part of the suite of measures that will be in place at the new site, it cannot be stated with any confidence that 'the majority of children who presently walk to school will instead be dropped off and picked up'

The traffic assumptions are based on trip rates included within the industry standard TRICS Database. This database is made up of numerous observations of suitable sites throughout the country. I am satisfied that the traffic assumptions are robust and reflect well the situation that is expected at the junction of Hesketh Meadow Lane and Newton Road. Again, if your Engineers have any specific issue with the content of the report I will consider their submission.

The report deliberately does not consider the possible use of Laburnum Road and the adjacent residential estate. It also does not consider the numerous other roads that are directly connected to the site by easy walk routes, which depending on the direction of approach may be utilised as drop off locations. This ensures that the report is robust in its findings. If your suggestions are considered, this would intimate that less traffic than predicted within the Traffic Report will utilise Hesketh Meadow Lane to access the site.

The issue of potential rat running traffic on the adjacent residential estate was raised by some residents of the estate at the evening meeting. It is likely that this area will be included within the 20mph Zone area for the new school site. This will also benefit the existing private school and the nursery's located within the estate. It may be possible to include a planning condition, on the development, to provide traffic calming measures within the residential estate, but obviously this will be subject to further consultation with the residents.

Given the foregoing, I consider that the transport statement is robust, adequate and supports the use of Hesketh Meadow Lane as a suitable access to the development site.

Yours Sincerely,

Rob Owen - Senior Engineer - Traffic and DC

Environmental Services Department, Highway Services

Civic Buildings, New Market Street, Wigan, WN1 1RP

Tel: 01942 404315 Fax: 01942 404210

r.owen@wigan.gov.uk