

**CBC HIGHWAYS WORKSHOP 13 NOVEMBER
TRANSCRIPTION**

This transcription is produced in relation to part of Copeland Borough Council's meeting held on 13 November 2021. During this meeting a representative of ARUP explained and presented the ARUP report to Members. The transcript has been undertaken by Walker Morris LLP. Walker Morris have based the transcript on the recording of the meeting. Whilst reasonable endeavours have been used in the transcription of the audio recording, there may be gaps and or errors, particularly where the recording is inaudible. Walker Morris accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the transcript the purpose of which is solely to assist in the presentation of the appellant's case in relation to the related planning appeal.

PRESENT

Abbreviation:	Name:	Title:
<u>Councillors:</u>		
Cllr JH	Joan Hully	Councillor
Cllr GC	Graham Calvin	Councillor
Cllr TH	Tom Higgins	Councillor
Cllr LJB	Linda Jones-Bulman	Councillor
Cllr CM	Charles Maudling	Councillor
Cllr MM	Michael McVeigh	Councillor
Cllr GM	Graham Minshaw	Councillor
Cllr DW	Doug Wilson	Councillor
<u>Officers:</u>		
NH	Nick Hayhurst	Head of Planning and Place
CH	Christopher Harrison	Principal Planning Officer
MP	Michaela Peet	Assistant Solicitor
CW	Clive Willoughby	Democratic Services Officer
LC	Leila Cox	Communications Officer
<u>Arup Representative:</u>		
PW	Peter Webster	Author of Arup Report

Cllr5: Is it fair to say that this young man doesn't come cheap, so we want the best from him?

NH: Haha; no comment.

Cllr5: We're not vain are we?

NH: Do you want to sit down?

Cllr5: Yeah of course I do. [Inaudible].

NH: Right members, if we can just start the meeting. So, you should all have a copy of the report that Peter Webster from Arup has prepared for us., this is a follow on meeting from the last meeting. You remember the last meeting was to look at the scope of what we were asking Peter to look at, which was effectively to review all the highways information and we wanted his independent view of what had been presented, so Peter's report is now with us. I've also given members a list of questions which Peter hasn't seen yet, so, those are the questions that us officers have identified that we need to ask for some clarification on, on a number of things in the report. There is also at the bottom of that on the page two, a list of issues that we want Homes England as applicants to consider. So, probably best if we start Peter with you just giving us a summary of your findings in your report please.

PW: Yep. Do we need to?

NH: That would be useful.

PW: Okay, so, I think as we set out last time, there are some key things that we are looking for in this review. Firstly whether the scope of assessment was agreed with the relevant highway authorities and if it was appropriate given what was being applied for in terms of scale of development, the nature and it's location. Then subsequently, was that scope of works followed through, in the work that was presented in terms of the Transport Assessment that went in with the planning application. Then did we agree that the impacts that they'd identified within that assessment were correct, and were they constant with the methodology that had been followed, and then finally was the mitigation proposed as part of that development appropriate to mitigate those impacts and then was the conclusion of the applicant and the authorities to support that application, was that reasonable?

So, in summary, within our report we think that the scope of assessment was appropriate. It's quite a detailed assessment that has a large geographic scope and is constant with the best practice that we would expect in terms of the standards that are done for these types of reports. It's clear within the report and the accompanying documentation that both Highways England and Cumbria County Councils as the local highway authority have been consulted on; there has been quite a bit of back and forth between them, certainly the original transport assessment that was done, there were some gaps in it, but they've by enlarge been closed through that further consultation, that additional information that has been provided.

In terms of the methodology, it's a fairly standard methodology that has been followed that's in line with what we would expect, there's some key parts to that so, in terms of the safety aspect there is a review of accident data; that's from an appropriate source; it's from the Department of Transport, it covers the periods that we would have expected it to in terms of the last five years, and again the geography is, is, covers, you know, the area that we would anticipate any, potential impacts to be identified within.

In terms of the accessibility of the development, er, we found that, you know, there has perhaps been a bit of... er, that's more subjective, but the assessment concludes that it's a, you know, a very accessible location; we think that there are some things that could perhaps be done to, to enhance that, because it is a location that you would get a lot of people driving to. But at the same time the assessment doesn't over-play, or doesn't under-play the amount of people that would drive to the development, so it doesn't really effect the validity of what's been done.

In terms of the access to the development; so this is a detailed matter, not an outline matter, the two accesses... we think that that's an appropriate number and the layout of them is in line with the appropriate standards, I know at the... at the last meeting there were some alternatives that were suggested and that's also in some of the documentation, but there's, as Nick said I think when we last met, we can only assess it

on what's been proposed. There is nothing fundamentally, wrong with what's been proposed on those.

The survey work that has been done to support the assessment, covers the, and I know this was... again, this was discussed last time; it covers the, the appropriate parts of the day that we would expect to cover the sort of commuting rush hour period, but also school drop off periods as well and we are happy that it was done on a, on a neutral month and outside the main school holiday periods that might have effected it.

There's consideration that's been given to other developments, so the adjacent development on there, and then in terms of how the applicants generated the forecast of what traffic it would generate and where that traffic would go; again, which is I'm sure something that we will come back to, but that's based on a... you know, there is an evidence based methodology that's a fairly standard approach. It's clear that, Cumbria County Council has again provided some local knowledge to support that and it's something that when we've replicated it as part of that independent check, we've come up with a fairly similar... similar outcome.

Some of the impacts, so the assessment, concluded that there were two junctions affected by, or potentially affected by the development. Er, we concurred with that and we think that it is appropriate to provide mitigation at those. and in terms of what that mitigation might be, there's still some uncertainty in terms of how that might come forward, particularly with regards to Highways England, so we can't really comment on the appropriateness of the scheme, but it's clear that both local author... the local authority and Highways England are confident that something can be delivered, er, and I assume that that will be a condition of the, of any planning approval.

In terms of safety and I guess particularly in terms of the pinch point between the A595, I mean, it's clear that that is a pinch point and I can understand concerns that members might have around that, but in terms of the evidence presented, there is nothing to indicate that there would be a significant increase in, er, traffic at that location based on the methodology, and there is nothing within the accident data that suggests that there is a current safety issue. There are other... there are, you know, things that could be done at that location potentially, but er, whether that's a requirement of this particular development we don't see that this development in particular would lead to a direct impact on that location.

So, I mean, in conclusion, er, we think that this, you know, the assessment done, er, is a sound assessment. It's a robust assessment that follows the, the, what we would expect to be in it. Within all of these things there's always an element of subjectivity and it might be that we'd have done some things slightly different or come to, you know, proposing slightly different mitigation, but, you know, there is nothing fundamental in there that, that is incorrect and that is not what should have been done in terms of that assessment work.

So on that basis we can't see anything within the assessment work that suggests that there would be, an unacceptable impact on safety or highway capacity in terms of what the best practice is in terms of following that, that process through.

Do you want to start Nick?

NH: It's currently over to members now to, ask for any clarification, queries, issues, and Peter can contribute with his highways knowledge. Just the mitigation that you said might have been appropriate but hasn't been suggested; can you just expand on what you mean by that? What, what is that?

PW: Yeah, so, it goes back to the point I was making in terms of, this is clearly housing, er, a housing led scheme that, you know, fundamentally will be served by the town centre. The assessment work that has been done talks about, that the site is accessible because it's within 2km of the town centre etc. It might be that if a different consultant

did the work for you, you'd approach it slightly differently; you might have proposed some mitigation to actually improve that connectivity through, because at the moment it's, whilst the distance isn't necessarily great, the quality of that connection isn't, isn't perhaps what it could be; not helped by the sort of topography as well. So, there could have been some mitigation proposed to putting improved crossings to the town centre to, er, better link the site through to provide improved transport, er, in terms of bus routes through the site, but I think that that sort of mitigation is more, er, it's not to say that the development is acceptable or not, but it would be something that would make it a better development as a whole I would have thought in terms of, sustainable transport. But I think in terms of the highways mitigation, that mitigates the, the key impacts.

NH: Does anyone...

Cllr1: Can I just come in please?

Unknown: Yes

Cllr1: To what extent was Harras Road considered, because that was where members' concerns were last time; particularly the other side of the bridge going past St. James School? Has that been covered off by all the data? Different counting and the applicant's transport consultants considered?

Can I just also mention the, er the, pedestrian way through the pinch point; the tunnel?

PW: Mmmm.

Cllr1: Because when you look on Google Maps, there is absolutely no pavements there; what you've got is a pavement coming down the left hand side of Harras Road, which narrows and narrows and narrows I think to 0.8 of a metre which is not wide enough for prams and this disappears.

PW: Mmmm.

Cllr1: So have you got pedestrian coming underneath the tunnel? And to what extent will that be accessible? I'm just curious as to what, to the extent from the tunnel, down past the school has been considered.

PW: So it's been considered in terms of there is er, a forecast in terms of the amount of traffic that would take that route and a demonstration of the percentage increase that that would be. The report doesn't then, you know, clearly a development like this will add traffic to a number of locations that it won't necessarily say, it won't go into specific detail on each of those to say there is an impact or not, it will just look at where are the largest impacts? Are those acceptable? The forecast increase on that particular bit, peculiarly as you go down the hill, in terms of the methodology that's been used to forecast the traffic, shows a low increase. In terms of the pedestrian routes, and that's one of the things that we have highlighted actually where we've talked about increasing the pedestrian links to the town but actually, pedestrian links on that route down Harras Road is one of the key ones that actually could have been something that could have been proposed as mitigation. Not necessarily to say it's unacceptable without that mitigation, but it would be, if, if this is a scheme where you want people to feel that they can walk into the town centre and to the schools and to, to other facilities down there, there are opportunities to, to enhance that, to make that a more attractive option.

NH: Do you want to chair Joan?

Cllr JH: It's an informal meeting.

NH: Right, okay. Right, right.

Cllr2: I'd like to follow up on one, er, thing that your saying because... first thing, I'm disappointed in... we were asked to give you a scope as Councillors, and I think in the meeting a lot of us focused on the Harras Road and the pinch point after the, er, the bridge at the bottom of the hill. I note the comment about people turning right toward Albert Terrace. Having driven down that road and turned right down Albert Terrace, the last thing you want to do is to turn left, because it is a nightmare. You're talking about a 120 degree turn to try and get in the traffic; that's impossible. And I don't know who's written that, because if they've looked at it, it is incredibly difficult. At the meeting originally we actually asked, what was the percentage who would come out the Harras Road development and go left towards that bridge, and how many would right to elsewhere, and if my knowledge serves right, the County Council came up with this figure of between, was it, 12% and 18%? Can I ask you yourselves, in terms of the robustness of your report; how have you calculated the flow of traffic at that exit point onto Harras Road?

PW: So. So, the methodology that we've taken is, er, fundamentally the same as was within the application, which was to look at the census data for that area as exists, and within the census there's data that says for the people who live there, where is their place of work that they commute to, and you can use that data then to look at which percentage, what percentage of people travel in a certain direction. So, that's... that essentially then informs from the people who are travelling out from the development, where would they be going. That is then informs which route they would take to get to those locations and then we have mapped that onto, onto the network to say well if you were going from point A to B, which route would you take?

Cllr2: Can I ask you specifically if you are talking about Harras Road?

PW: Well that is...

Cllr2: In terms of what you're saying there, you've done that work etc., but could you keep it to Harras Road?

PW: Well, well, it's not possible to keep it to Harras Road because it's in terms of where people are going from that development, it will depend... that will dictate where they're travelling to.

Cllr2: No I'm not intending that we ask, asking, we gave you a scope to say Harras Road in particular.

PW: Yeah.

Cllr2: So what I'm assuming from you is that you will tell us that there is a.... in terms of your surveys and your modelling, there is an exact percent who would turn left from Harras Road and go down there, 18% possibly, then another... what is it? 82% would turn there, and what you're saying is that is that... that the first, the first issue is work, yep?

PW: Yep.

Cllr2: Other issues?

PW: Well, it's not that 18% are turning left and 82% are turning right, because obviously there's the second access as well; so its 18% of all of the vehicles leaving from that development are turning left onto Harras Road. So there's also, I need to check the numbers but, you know, the percentage that are coming out onto Caldbeck Road as well. So, it's, I'll just find the numbers...

Yea, on Harras Road itself, it, it, it's closer to.... Probably a 40%:60% split, but clearly there is roughly half the development is only, only roughly half of the development is coming out onto Harras Road, the other half is coming onto Caldbeck Road to the

South; so obviously that 18% is the 18% of the overall rather than 18% of the stuff that's coming out at Harras Road.

Cllr2: So coming out of Harras Road 18% will turn left and 82% will do terrible the distance through five sets of traffic lights to get into Whitehaven etc. The 18% which will turn left, which is the nearest junction to actually access to loop road, which is one of the key, the key routes so if anybody's going to Carlisle they will come out and presumably, I don't know, they'll maybe go right further down.

Cllr3: Just on the... the thing that also puzzles me; you said earlier that you're modelling worked on the census as exists, was the word you used.

PW: Yep.

Cllr3: In the exit opposite that development there is now a hundred and something houses that are in the planning stage to be built with the development.

PW: Yep.

Cllr3: And planning permission has also has occurred for houses to be built further down Harras Road. So, going back to that; when you did your modelling, did you actually include all those houses that are in addition to the houses that could be built on Harras Road?

PW: No because... this is in terms of... the census, the census data has been used to say where the people who live in this area travel to. It's not... as a percentage. So, it doesn't... well, firstly we can't survey future development that's going to happen. So that's just to get an idea of what is the distribution of traffic from a development in this location. The mod... the modelling itself in terms of what is the impact on each of the junctions does look at the... the, the existing traffic, the future growth due to... population growth and other things within the area, increased car ownership and specific new developments. So, specific new developments that have planning permission has... that, the traffic for all of that has been added on top. The census data has only been used as I say for this postcode where does... where does traffic travel to? And going back to the, the 18% and 82%; it's not that its travelling through five sets of, of traffic signals, there's a large amount of the development that is South facing and would access through Caldbeck Road to the South to get to the A595 Southwards. So, as I say, the traffic onto Harras Road is more 40%:60%, but that's of 50% of it, so it's...., in overall terms it's roughly 20%:30%, if that makes sense.

Cllr3: I notice not the reversing mentioned in the report because, that's that traffic coming out, but there's nothing on the traffic coming up on return.

PW: Well there... there is; it's the same... the same distribution.

NH: I suppose, the key point to note is, we've got a transport consultant who was working for the applicant...

JH: Can you put your mic on please.

NH: The transport consultant who worked with the applicant has come up with an assessment. Peter's done an independent assessment that is concurring with the results of the assessment and the evidence, and I suppose if we were to go against that evidence we've got two highway consultants agreeing. So, if we were to go against that evidence, what would be using to say that's incorrect? That's the issue. Although you might think, you might seem that it's different, or it would be different, it, it, you've got to have robust evidence to back up that claim. If, if, if you were asked that question, what would you response be in terms of evidence? We've got an agreed standard methodology based on best practice, two people agree, the County Council think it's

okay, Highways England think it's okay. It's what could we put forward to say we don't agree with that because of "X".

Unknown: And yet Nick, you know in the report that was sent through, you'll find it's there.

JH: Use your mic McVeigh.

Cllr MM: Sorry. I apologise. I, I mentioned at the meeting that it says in here that the County Council agreed and yet in, in that, the portfolio of materials there is that specific letter from one of the County Council officers that actually recommends that the loop road is the better alternative and that Harras Road and the other junction would cause significant issues, and yet that was mentioned in our pre-meeting in terms of scope, and yet even that isn't sort of an addendum in here, because the opinion in here appears to agree with the County Council.... actually it fully agrees with what's here, and the evidence there is that there is disagreement within the County Council because of the email that was actually sent through.

PW: The.

NH: I think that was part of an appendix in the assessment. The applicant contacted the County Council to agree the scope of where the access points should be, how many etc. and they followed the advice of the County Council, and it's not to say that you can't connect it to other access points because clearly you can though. We've actually put a map up on the screen just to demonstrate that. But you'll notice at the end of the points we were asking Peter to look at, issues for the applicant; we're actually asking the applicant why didn't you consider other access points? Is there, is there another access point you could use that would reduce TRIP movements on Harras Road, and... I mean, it's one of the questions that I sort of have for you Peter is, if we were to use one of the existing access points adjacent to the site as a third access, what, what would that do to traffic movement in terms of Harras Road? Because you could clearly do... there's a potential connection to Highlands estate, there's a potential connection to ca... it's called, what's the other one? It's on the Hillcrest estate isn't it?

Multiple: Mumbling.

NH: And its er... Standing Drive isn't it? And it's if there was an access point put to serve the bottom bit of the development or a route through the Highlands estate, what, what would you think that would do in terms of vehicular movements on Harras Road?

PW: Well, I mean, you'd expect that it would reduce them, by a proportion. I think clearly in terms of the connection through to the Highlands estate... I think that's a real opportunity in terms of trying to get a sort of through bus route through that development as well. Er, because that could be something that then actually... because at the moment all of the bus connections are sort of Caldbeck Road and South of the site, so if you had something that came through, that would benefit not just this development but potentially The Highlands.

Cllr MM: That's right.

NH: So, so I suppose in answer to your question, we are going to raise that point with the applicant. I don't know what the response will be, um, they might come back and say, well, we've done what the County Council asked us to do in terms of the scope, so. Is it worth just clarifying for members' benefit Peter what the scope of the, the radius of the scope that the County.... because I think they extended it didn't they? They asked for it to be wider than originally proposed.

PW: Yeah. So, I mean, it's... there's 15 junctions in all that, that, is included within the assessment, so that's, that's all the way from the... junction between the A595 and Rose Hill to the North, down to the Egremont Road, A595 junction to the South picks

up, one, two, three... five junctions.... Five of six junctions on the 595 itself and then another 10 local junctions within the area. So, for... you know, for a development of just under 400 units, that, that is a... you know, quite a sizable number of junctions that, that, have been looked it.

Cllr4: Thank you Chair.

Cllr JH: I'm not Chair.

Cllr4: No, no. Thank you. Anyway, yeah... I... I just accepted the report and, given that you've basically, been asked the same questions that the, the applicant was asked, and you're using the same or similar tools that they would be using, I guess that it's inevitable that you would come up with a similar or very similar answers, and I guess that they're.... they're applying the tools to their proposals, and it strikes me that we may have asked the wrong question, or the question that we might have been asking is, is there a better alternative than what's been proposed? And I don't know whether that should have been the question, but it seems that.... this is all a sign of madness isn't it? If we keep asking ourselves the same question and keep coming back with the same answer it's just a sign of madness. But... and, and so I think, possibly we asked the wrong question, because what seemed to strike me was that members were concerned necessarily about the proposed, principal access and egress route, and that the majority of the... or a large volume of the traffic at least turning left to go down that route, um, what we were principally asking was, wasn't there another solution to the, the access to the site, and, er, I don't think we necessarily asked you to do that.

PW: I mean with any development there is always alternative ways of doing things, alternative accesses. I think in terms of the planning process, you know, the panel can only assess what the applicant wants to propose and I suspect that in terms of where accesses are proposed, there's, there's other issues than just a transport and highways issues; some will be landownership, there might be... you know ecological or er, ground condition issues of why other locations might not be... might not be selected to come forward. I think all we... I think we've not necessarily, answered the same question, but we've more reviewed have they done their work properly and done...

Cllr4: Yeah.

PW: ...you know, the answer that they've given, is that correct to the question that they have been asked.

Cllr4: Yeah. I appreciate that. Thank you. Yeah.

NH: Just... just worth probably clarifying; if members are saying we... you want us to go back to the applicant and asked them to consider alternative access, that's something we can do. I'm not convinced we'll get the answer you want them to give, but, um, you know, if you know the point that are set down in terms of what we want to ask we are actually suggesting, we're going to ask them why, why didn't you choose more than two access points? So we are going to pick that up with the applicant, but um, you know, at the end of the day, they're being guided in terms of the scope of what they've been asked to do. They've produced a scheme based on that scope and they've got both highway authority and Homes England, Highways England agreeing that it's, it's er, an acceptable solution for this scale of development. So, we can ask, but I don't... the point is we haven't asked the wrong question, the point is... is what's being proposed acceptable in highway terms?

Cllr4: Mmm.

NH: And there's concurrence that it is. So, we can ask the question, but I don't know what the answer is going to be.

Unknown: Can I be a horrible bore and take you back to Wellington Road and just before the primary schools? Personally I pick my granddaughter up a couple times a week and coming down that area, and as you get to St James' Junior and round the corner to St James Infants, at the moment, this is without any of this development, from 14:55 or maybe 15:30 you have a gridlock situation, and you're in that situation because highways, what they've done is they've allowed parking on two sides, and therefore in the middle you've only got one lane of traffic and it's who blinks first. Does the stream of traffic come up from the bottom, or does the stream of traffic go down from the top? And literally what happens very often is people sit there, and argue, and it's a face-off situation, and that can actually backup literally 50, 60, 70, 80 cars, and yet that's the present time. And that happens certainly twice a week, er, and certainly at other times and the worst part also is if you actually follow one of our refuse lorries down or whatever, which just so has enough space to get through, that particular road... I noticed you talked about numbers and accidents; accidents seem to be very rare on that road because people are doing about two miles an hour, and if there are accidents, they're minor shunts where somebody scraps a car etc. and people get out and play merry Hell with each other, rather than something say, while on the other side where you've got Red Lonning where the kids are coming out of school etc. and I just find it quite strange that one of the... the poorest roads in terms of size is being focused, and this is, this is where you come back.... and I appreciate what you're saying because I think in many respects that's the way out of the whole situation. I don't think any of this.... now I'm speaking personally... I have no objection to the development. None. But I am really worried about that particular road and it's junction. You refer to it as "the pinch point", don't forget that I specifically asked the gentleman from Highways what plan he had for the future for that pinch point, and he said "none". Now, I find that appalling, because if the County Council are saying that's okay, now... which is fair enough; but when you take all the percentage of cars that will go down and up etc, then that pinch point is going to become really severe and it will be more of a gridlock than necessarily accidents. So, I would say to you... I'd almost plead with you; you need to turn round as say if this development is to go ahead, and the developments want all us Councillors..., I've not [blackballed?] anything, I'm just saying personally, if there is alternatives then surely those alternatives would be so much better and so much safer in terms of the travel of people going into the development and out of.... the development itself is fine; brilliant. It's the safety factor that is the really worry; in particular, that road. Sorry.

Unknown: No, it's a big thing

Cllr GC: I fully endorse what Councillor is saying here. Sometimes the methodology... and I agree that's the only methodology you can work with because it's the only methodology we've got, but sometimes in practice this isn't so. I mean, I've done a little survey myself with 30, 40 people and asked them if they were driving up that estate..., I'm not ask... I didn't ask them which junction they would choose to drive on, but I asked them if you were driving..., if you bought a house on that estate, which junction you.... and you were driving up to Harras Moor junction and you wanted to go into town or you wanted to go to Workington or you wanted to go to Sellafield, which way would you turn? And over 78% of them said "left". And.... I'm... I mean, it's fairly obvious that they're expecting a lot people to go out the Harras Moor junction because they're talking about all the roundabouts on the right, so... I think here, this is the conflict that the methodology actually going on to what people when they move onto the estate will do. That's my only worrying. Thank you.

Cllr5: Sir, Nick or whatever. It is the reality that the NPPF would be used with a dramatic and adverse impact, and I don't think that we are running in front of cars with red flags. And, sadly, unfortunately, wherever there is a school and I live quite near one, the biggest offenders are the parents who park, and yesterday it took me quite a bit to get a couple of yards because of the way that the parents park near schools, and I personally know, I have no concerns.

Cllr JH: Nick.

NH: Yep.

Cllr JH: I'll speak on a personal level. My sister lives opposite St Benedict's School. I've just said to this list.... Clint.... Yeah? Clinton, yeah? I'm not good with names. There was an accident that literally gauged the place. A young lad literally when right over her garden, and as you know there is a big verge before you get [inaudible], I don't know how he's done it. But that was another accident. We're on about, the Academy which will increase the children in the next school further up. That another thing with the roundabout. And I know that you can't take that into cognisance at the moment, but that's going to exacerbate it as well. The other school, the one at St Benedict's; that's the plan to have more pupils in. So will that lot, and you know you're on about the bus route? Caldbeck. Caldbeck Road.

PW: Yep.

Cllr JH: There is a bus route down there because I catch the bus that goes down... I can't remember the roads' names.

Unknown: [Inaudible].

Cllr JH: That's it; down that way. So you say going to... the other way; what do you call that other spot? Highlands?

Unknown: Yeah.

Cllr JH: Right, thank you; I just want that clear in my head. Thank you.

NH: So, so far, I've got a message that you would like up to ask the applicants to consider an additional access point or other...

Cllr GC: Yeah.

NH: ...means of access. And you would also be in favour of a bus route through the development.

Cllr JH: Can I just ask; what is best practice?

NH: One for you.

PW: In regards to transport assessment? So, there is a... there is the Department of Transport guidance that sets out what should go into a Transport Assessment, what methodology should be used in terms of data, how old should that data be, what period should it cover. So lots of it is guidance that's coming from the Department of Transport, but then there's also... that is just guidance, so it's then to the discretion of the highways authority and that... a lot of that will be based upon their local knowledge but also based upon other assessments that have been undertaken so precedent essentially for developments of this scale.

Cllr JH: What bothers me; I can't get my head round their assessment on something that hasn't been built; it's on past practice, it's on past data. I know you can't predict the future, nobody can, but if there is another 370 houses and there's 2.5 cars on there, we don't know where they will be employed, it's alleged that [inaudible] or Sellafield. I want to know how that...

PW: Yeah, the...

Cllr JH: ...that feeds into that bit.

PW: Yeah sorry, the assessment is based on the future. It's based on... with this development. But in order to understand, when we do have these, or if we did have these additional 380 houses, where would that traffic go? And you can only... er, you, you know... the only data that you can use to estimate that is for what happens at the moment with some corrections in terms of things that you know are going to happen in the future. So, the assessment of all the forecasted traffic movements, the impact on the junction; that is all based upon, with this development here, with an additional 380 dwellings with the additional one hundred and... however many units on the other side, and other developments that have got planning consent. That's all included in the assessment work. It's just in that... the sort of build-up of what traffic this generates; that's the bit that relies on use of existing information.

Cllr JH: So, somewhere in this report there's how many cars, or how many vehicles... I think it's on page 20. Two way traffic [inaudible] Harras Road are both forecast at 341 vehicles in the morning peak and 388 in the evening peak.

PW: Yep.

Cllr JH: So that's including the traffic that's already there now?

PW: Correct, yep.

Cllr JH: But if there's 370 houses with 2.5 cars.

PW: But...

Cllr JH: All it says [inaudible], sorry, let me establish....

PAW: Yep.

Cllr JH: Okay, I missed that bit.

Cllr GC: Making sure?

Cllr JH: Yeah, yeah. Just trying to get it right.

Cllr GC: The path, the path is really hard to access, and that is the existing junction that's there at Harras Moor now, with the houses going through, it won't be easy to assess, but the fact is that junction isn't there now.

PW: Nope.

Cllr GC: That's the plan where the methodology falls down slightly, and it's because we can't assess the actual junction that isn't there, but when it is there, that will then become the easiest route for people on the estate and that's where the methodology falls foul in ability.

Cllr JH: [Inaudible].

PW: Yeah, in terms of the methodology, if that was an existing access for, say, 100 houses and they were going to build 400 more...

Cllr GC: Yeah, yeah.

PW: ...you would say, well of those 100...

Cllr GC: Yeah, yeah.

PW: ... where are they currently turning and we'll factor it up, but...

Cllr GC: So we use...

PW: So in the absence of that you've got to use another methodology to...

Cllr GC: Yeah we use the methodology of people that aren't in, on an estate that isn't even there yet.

Cllr JH: Yeah that's what I was saying, yeah.

PW: Yep.

Cllr GC: That's a [inaudible].

NH: Charles.

Cllr CM: When we're talking about going through Highlands, remember the meeting we had when the general public were there; a lot of the public that were there live on the Highlands, so there isn't any kind of way for them just to come round and check that as well, if the proposal links to the Highlands.

NH: What the applicant did, before they submitted the planning application, they had a public meeting and er, displayed all the plans. It was an open event where people could come in and talk to employees of the planning consultant and Homes England and the feedback from that event was that there was strong opposition from the residents of The Highlands estate of any access going through the Highlands estate. So, yes you are correct, it raises different issues. It would raise implications in terms of how we deal with the application in; we'd have to potentially have it withdrawn and put back in with a different access point, then we'd have to consult again. But, you move the problem from one place to another. It's whether the route through the Highlands estate is acceptable for the volume of traffic proposed and whether that access onto the link road is, obviously, of standard.

Cllr CM: Yeah.

NH: So, yes, at the event that they had, there was strong opposition from the Highlands estate residents.

Cllr CM: The other one was correctly as you said before, Caldbeck Road and Standings Rise. There is, like we were this morning, like the layby into just a parcel of land which is probably 30 yards from Standings Rise to Caldbeck Road. So there is two like, if you like, what were this morning the two like laybys there. Would you not... lets obviously very little to open that road up to take you through that estate isn't it? For another poss... for a possible route.

NH: Could you just say that again Charles?

Cllr CM: So you know, Caldbeck Road...

NH: Yep.

Cllr CM: ...its on the right on there isn't it. This is your turnaround by the [inaudible] isn't there? There's like... you know like we drove into this morning, you see that field?

NH: Yep.

PW: Yeah.

Cllr CM: That one's on Caldbeck Road and likewise it goes all the way up Standings Rise with nothing there at all, so there's very little space to put the... I mean, there is space to put

the road, but very little ground to cover from one area to the other; you know, from Standings to Caldbeck Road. Is that going to be a possibility there?

NH: So what Charles is saying is, this is Caldbeck Road, and when we went on the site visit you will remember we went up here and we stood in this turning circle, and I think what Charles is saying... this is Standings Rise, but there is not much distance between there and there to link the route through, which would then bring out to this junction on the loop road.

Cllr CM: Then another link road there.

NH: So, if we're asking for alternative [inaudible] that's a possibility...

Cllr CM: I'm just wondering a), obviously that we are going to have to speak to the developer if he ever looked at that to start with, or consulted Highways or yourself.

NH: I think that just falls into the category of alternative access points.

Cllr CM: Right, yeah.

Cllr3: Can I just say, at the bottom of page three it talks about, sustainable forms of transport which obviously you... you've got to negate criticism which we have, you know, in terms of... I mean its cars, cars, or no cars. I mean, walking and bike services are not getting a favourable response either. It's just my worry where it says there they consider that the overall assessment is demonstrating that the proposed development is not anticipating the result in... this is what's bothers me... "significant adverse impacts on either the safety or the operation of the surrounding highway network". And that's the bit I find quite puzzling, because we're talking about 700, probably, I don't know, 700 cars there. I know you can't take them into account, but you know, there's cars from the other estate that'll go on, another hundred and odd. So we're talking about that area having, I don't know, potentially a thousand cars. Is that not going to have a significant adverse... it depends how you view the word adverse, I know. In your traffic data you might have, you might interoperate adverse differently from somebody who doesn't analyse it and it just a sort of a, you know, normal citizen etc. Not saying you're not normal, you know what I mean? in terms of either the safety or the operation of the surrounding network. That the bit I find... in some areas, it's going to be right. In other areas, I think this is where we came across to yourselves as being several folk concerned about the one unclassified road suddenly having phenomenal extra traffic, and I find that quite strange that we can actually say that on an unclassified road, which... I'm correct am I Nick aren't I; Harras Road is unclassified?

NH: Erm...

PW: Yeah.

NH: Yeah.

Cllr3: Yeah. So we're actually saying that an unclassified road which is going to have hundreds of extra cars leading down to an already gridlocked pinch point... because, I'll go back to what I've said to you before; if the County Council come and say "look, we recognise there is going to be an issue, you're passing a primary school there that has a ludicrous bend, so... as Mike said before there, of a morning, of an evening, people park indiscriminately down there and force traffic all over the place. It's already a disaster waiting to happen, but the only good part to this is everybody is fairly slow. But the significant amount of traffic that is going in this area is going to have a significant impact on both safety and the operation of this round and highway network specific to that road, which is where, you know... what I'm trying to say there is, and I would hope that people who answer you in terms of planning when you are "are there alternatives because there are serious issues... serious concerns about Harras Road", that they will actually take it on board and say "yeah, I think we do agree and we will have to look at

it. I mean you mentioned before about going down through Highlands, and the weird thing there as we all know is that Highlands Road was actually purpose built for the very reason we are actually talking about. I mean I can understand people on Highlands not being happy, but no roads, no houses actually have exits onto that road. That is a clear sort of, carriageway that was designed to take traffic up and down Highlands.

NH: After the last meeting we had with Peter, I've driven up that road on the Highlands estate, just to get clear in my mind about the suitability of it, and it is quite wide road and it's got a footpath in beside. So I think it was constructed with a view to serving additional land, but... you know... we can only ask the question, we can only tell you what the answer is once we've asked the question, whether they are prepared to look at alternative access points, but, you know, we've got that message and we will defiantly take that away.

Joan.

Cllr JH: With Sellafield wanting to move the workers, or the proposal to move the workers into the town centre; if those workers are coming from Cleator Moor, Edgermont, all over the spot, I mean... not so much Edgermont; Cleator Moor... they're going to come that way through that cutting into the town centre. So that's going to exacerbate it isn't it? So is that being taken into account? I don't mean the people who's going to live on the estate, I mean the people who are working at the Sellafield nuclear site now moving to the centre of White... being redeployed to the centre of Whitehaven. What impact will that have? Is that being?

NH: It's in the list of points we want Peter to look at, but it's difficult to predict where somebody might live and where they might work in the future, and part of the reason we want... if they're relocating off the site and working in the town centre you get more sustainable transport options certainly. It also has beneficial impacts in terms of how much traffic goes South of Whitehaven on the trunk road, so there is a balancing act there, but we can't just estimate how many people might live in Cleator Moor that might need to drive to Whitehaven. It's an impossible question to answer at the moment because we don't know the full extent of what that might be.

Unknown: Can I just say to you Nick, I... personally I feel I've reached the stage where I'm not going to say anything more because I need to allow your professionalism to work with the applicant and come back with whatever the applicant says, because I think... my impression now is that I think, not that you didn't before, but you have a clear picture of what your committee feels are the issues and I think, you know, your professionalism will deal with the applicant, and who knows where we go from there.

NH: So, is it worth just members summarising what they want me to do in terms of... I mean, we've given you the questions on the back of the single sheet that were issued we're going to raise with Homes England. Is that a fair summary of what you want us to ask them? Is there anything else you want us to pick up that isn't on that list? We've covered alternative access point, road safety audits of proposed access needs to be done now. We've got a question about whether additional traffic calming measures on Harras Road are being considered. We've suggested there might be scope for having a split in access arrangements so only half of the development can go out one way and half the other. We have put the question about funding a bus operator to do a public service from the estate. Enhancements for mitigation need to be secured now. Pedestrian routes need to be agreed now, or conditioned to be agreed to pick up the point that Peter has raised about permeability, sustainability and accessibility, and then are there any... is there any scope to secure other improvements off site as suggested by Arup, which would have to be part of a 106 Agreement, and two messages I've sort of got from today's discussion is: alternative access points need to be considered and you would welcome a bus route to improve connectivity to the town. Is that a fair summary?

Graham.

- Cllr GM: Yeah. One of the things that I picked up from the Arup report is the findings, their findings that the original report was flawed in terms of sustainable walking and cycling routes. It's obviously that it is a map based exercise by the sounds of it and nobody's thought of the actual elevations. That to me casts doubt on the whole thing anyway; if they've got that bit wrong they could have got other stuff wrong. But the point I'm making is that, on question one we are asking why haven't you considered other access points? Why not ask the question more directly to facilitate approval by the panel, I think I'm probably speaking for most of us here, that they come up with an alternative, rather than asking why they haven't; please provide an alternative that is acceptable to the panel. I think anything less than that then you're going to get the same answers you got a month ago.
- Cllr5: Chairman, we would be going down a dangerous road for anyone to assume anything from a decision from a panel of this sort of format. Definitely not.
- NH: You want to say something or not Clive?
- CW: I think I agree with both; yeah, you've raised concerns, particularly Brian has, you know, Brian said explicitly clear reform in terms of safety. Everything at the end of the day is coming back to, can another access be created? And the question then is: if another access is created, will members then... will that give more comfort to members to consider the application in a different light?
- Cllr GC: Yeah.
- CW: What it's coming down to; it doesn't matter how you put it over, but actually what it's coming down to, because you've got concerns over Harras Road in terms of number of vehicles, concerns over the highway reports. To me, I'm still unclear at what point does Harras Moor become unsafe in highway language? Does it take a thousand cars a minute up and down to before... I'm not quite sure. I've still got questions there. But everything comes back, when you look at the map... can another access road be done?
- Cllr GC: Yeah.
- CW: It's as simple as that. You know, nobody's predetermining it, nobody's making it...
- Cllr GC: No, no.
- CW: We're just at this stage, we're just asking a question.
- Cllr JH: We need to know this. We need to know.
- Cllr GC: My thinking is that on that... any other accesses that prove unsuccessful with the amount of traffic going through we can do something about. That one access going down there, if that proves unsuccessful there is nothing we could really do to alter the road. That's my concern.
- NH: Just, probably just worth...
- Cllr GC: Pardon?
- NH: I was just going to say, it's probably worth just clarifying that we can ask whether the existing route down Harras Road and Wellington road...
- Cllr GC: Yeah.

NH: ...whether there is any mitigation that could be done on that route to improve highway safety.

Cllr GC: Yeah.

NH: So I'll add that on to the list.

Cllr JH: Can you ask specifically as well for pedestrians. We just said it's a pinch point, but there's no access... there's no, pavements is there? You can't expect somebody with a bike or a pram to win that pinch point. So is pedestrian safety... not more than the cars, I don't mean it that way, but this is uppermost.

NH: I mean, you need to bear in mind that the proposal was to create a cycle and pedestrian link through Highlands estate.

Cllr GC: Yeah.

Cllr JH: Yeah.

NH: And there's also a proposal to create an access, a footpath, onto loop road from the bottom of the development, so there is some connectivity.

Cllr GC: Yeah.

Cllr JH: Right.

NH: But I think what you might... correct me if I'm wrong here Peter, but I think what you're saying is there are opportunities for enhanced connectivity that would improve the development as a whole.

PW: Yeah, enhanced connectivity and enhanced pedestrian safety as well picking up on that other point.

Cllr5: Can I just make a point though there when we're speaking about cycling and pedestrians on that road, we have to bear in mind the existing site and any progressions that leave that road alone no offence to... so if you're putting another 500, 600 vehicles down there, creating vehicles that,

Cllr GC: Existing current users [inaudible].

NH: Okay. Any other comments? Are you happy we've captured that with the additional points?

Unknown: Yeah.

Cllr6: Outside of where we are at the moment, is there any way that... are we allowed to ask the likes of Highways England just how they react to another access point on the loop road or is that outside of our means?

NH: I don't think they would allow a new access point onto the trunk road.

Cllr6: No sorry Nick...

NH: You'd be using an existing...

Cllr6: No sorry Nick, I apologise, I didn't mean [inaudible] one I meant... additional usage of the present [inaudible] exit, sorry.

NH: If the applicants say they are happy to look at it then there's... more assessment needs to be done and obviously Highways England would have to verify that an appropriate use of that access. So, potentially there is more work to be done there, but, you know, leave that with us, we'll ask the question and then, if we get a positive response, then obviously we can do more investigation as to what that might be.

Cllr JH: The applicant is Homes England isn't it?

NH: Yes.

Cllr JH: That's not the developer?

Cllr GC: No could be [inaudible].

Cllr JH: No, not, that's why I'm asking, to give Clayton your name because at the last meeting it was that there was no developer. Could be five or six developers, so it's... Homes England. Yeah, thank you.

NH: So, I mean, what the applicant didn't do at the panel meeting was to explain who they are and what they do.

Cllr JH: Yeah.

NH: So Homes England effectively buys site, de-risk them, and then bring them back to market. So it's developing housing on sites that have issues that can be addressed. So, they would normally market the site and, given the scale of it, it would be probably two or three developers that would develop the site eventually. But, they're not housebuilders.

Cllr JH: No. You just said it Nick and I don't need to be facetious ; de-risk. De-risk the highway issue. Thank you.

CH: Nick.

NH: Yes.

CH: So, what we're basically saying in summary is: Arup's assessment backs up the original Transport Assessment...

NH: Yes.

CH: ... that was done.

NH: Yes.

CH: That members didn't think was adequate. But there are, ways of improving the site by opening up more access, but them mitigating all these transport issues because more ways in and out and off the site, that's what we're basically saying and that's what we're asking for...

Cllr JH: Yeah.

CH: ...is for the developer to look at opening up additional access on either side into the while estate.

NH: So, in summary; our independent report effect agrees with the applicant's Transport Assessment. As it stands...

CH: Yeah.

NH: ...both reports conclude there is not good reason to refuse planning permission on highway grounds.

CH: Obviously members have issues with various matters, so I think the appropriate course of action now is for us to explore if there are opportunities to change or secure additional mitigation before we bring it back to panel. If the applicants effectively choose not to because they feel they have enough evidence and a robust Transport Assessment that shows it's an acceptable form of development as it stands, then that's a matter for members to make a decision on it and... you know, I've said it several times; members have to make a decision based on robust evidence. So if we were to refuse planning permission, we would have to have a robust evidence base on which to make that decision, and... I don't need to tell you that we've got two independent... and independent consultant agreeing with the applicant's Transport Assessment, so. So I think, leave it with us... let us explore the opportunities and see what we can do with the applicants, and then I think, as it stands, we probably don't know which planning panel it will come back to at the moment.

Cllr5: Nick, just for complete clarity, who exactly is Homes England.

Unknown: It's the Government.

CH: It's a government agency.

Cllr5: Yeah, I just wondered for clarity's sake.

NH: I mean, its aim is to deliver housing effectively, and as you know, the Government have ambitious targets for housing delivery which we are, er, feeling the wrath of in terms of our five year land supply position. But um... yeah, that's why they've purchased the site – it's to bring it forward and deliver some housing in Whitehaven.

Unknown: Which I don't think anybody is disagreeable with.

NH: If everybody's happy we will close the meeting.

Cllr GC: That's fine, yeah.

NH: Thank you.

Cllr JH: Thank you very much.

Cllr5: Thank you.