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Cheswick Green Primary School

Transport Assessment and Travel Plan Audit

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Executive Summary

This Technical Note has been prepared by Pell Frischmann on behalf of Cheswick Green Parish Council, in order to review the proposals for an expansion to Cheswick Green Primary School in Cheswick Green, Solihull. In particular this review considers the highways and transport issues of the development proposals based on the May 2021 Transport Assessment (TA) prepared by PJA, on behalf of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC). The approach towards sustainable travel is also considered based on the Travel Plan (TP) prepared by SMBC to accompany the planning application.

The audit concludes that there are a number of fundamental issues with the proposed expansion of the existing school and this includes the appraisal presented within the submitted TA. The primary concern is that the basis for the proposed expansion is to cater for additional pupil demand from outside Cheswick Green and in particular from the Blythe Valley Park development, which the TA acknowledges is not accessible by active modes, such as walking and cycling. The proposed expansion therefore directly contradicts current planning policy at national, regional and local levels.

As a result of children being unable to walk or cycle to school, the TA proposes to fund a dedicated escort bus service from Blythe Valley Park. However, no details are provided on the duration of the funding commitment period, the practicalities of this service safely accessing the currently constrained site and whether this will be based on free or subsidised travel. There are also concerns about the long-term sustainability of this proposal should the required funding not be maintained. If the service is withdrawn, then parents will have no other option but to drive their children to school. Again, this directly contradicts current planning and transport policy at national, regional and local levels.

The TA provides a review of the current on-street parking issues that are generated by the school operations; however this does not fully reflect the extent of the existing problems, which have been temporarily diluted during COVID-19. In particular, the existing parking problems are not limited to parents' vehicles dropping off or collecting their children during the morning and afternoon peak periods but are as a result of regular long stay staff parking of between 14 and 20 vehicles. In order to address the existing staff parking issues, the TA proposes that additional on-site parking is provided in the form of tandem spaces. However, this proposal is reliant on an overly complex Parking Management System, which is based on permits and the provision of telephone numbers so that those drivers blocked in can be contacted. This approach does not guarantee to rectify the problem in a timely manner, and it may also not be practical for some staff to leave their location in order to move their vehicle whilst supervising children. As a result, staff will soon become frustrated and revert to parking on street in greater numbers. This increased demand will encourage parents to park in unsuitable locations rather than walk further to reach the school and thus exacerbate existing issues for local residents and impact on road safety.

In terms of the appraisal presented within the TA, this includes a number of errors and discrepancies. For example, the assessment of the impact on road safety is not based on the full data sample, the more onerous travel survey data provided by parents is ignored, the sustainable travel targets are extremely optimistic and differ from the Travel Plan and there appears to be some confusion over those existing, completed and occupied residential developments, with proposed or committed future housing. There is also no information provided on the proposed phasing of the development over a 'number of years' and how this relates to the 'temporary' construction access on Creynolds Lane. Despite requests from SMBC during scoping discussions, no detailed assessment of the A34 Stratford Road / Creynolds Lane junction is presented. This is considered fundamental to determining the impact of the proposals.

Overview

Pell Frischmann has been commissioned by Cheswick Green Parish Council to review the proposals for an expansion to Cheswick Green Primary School in Cheswick Green, Solihull.

In particular this review considers the highways and transport issues of the development proposals based on the May 2021 Transport Assessment (TA) prepared by PJA, on behalf of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC). The approach towards sustainable travel is also considered based on the Travel Plan (TP) prepared by SMBC to accompany the planning application.

This technical review follows the same basic format as the TA in assessing each section of the document in order. The assessment will determine whether the evidence presented within the TA demonstrates that the highways and transport aspects of the proposals are in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) and in general that:

- Satisfactory access can be provided for all people;
- The development proposals are accessible and sustainable; and
- Off-site traffic impacts are not 'severe' or their effects can be mitigated.

In addition to the above, this audit will consider whether the requirements set out by SMBC during scoping discussions with PJA have been met. These scoping discussions are summarised within the TA as follows:

- Details regarding the impact of COVID-19 should be included within the assessment, to understand the impact this has on observations made during site visits, parking beat surveys and mode share data collected;
- The number of pupils attending before / after school clubs and wrap around care should be provided within the report;
- Justification of the on-site parking provision for staff should be provided;
- Concerns raised regarding the number of vehicle trips that would be generated by the expansion should suitable mitigation measures not be implemented, and the impact this would have on the capacity of the local highway network and occurrence of on-street parking within the vicinity of the site access;
- Consideration should be given as to the impact of the expansion at the A34 Stratford Road / Creynolds Lane junction;
- Proposed mitigation should form a coordinated package of measures, with evidence to demonstrate that these would be used by parents;
- Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) should be consulted to understand current and future aspirations for bus routes to / from Cheswick Green and how S106 monies from Blythe Valley Park have been spent.

The remainder of this audit will include comments on each section of the TA based on the following Red, Amber, Green (RAG) classification:

- **Red** – comments that could potentially have a significant impact on the overall conclusions of the assessment and which should be addressed accordingly;
- **Amber** – comments that could result in changes to the assessment and so should be addressed accordingly; and
- **Green** – comments that are unlikely to have a significant impact on the assessment, but where further details or clarification are required.

Introduction

Section 1.1.2 of the TA states that the proposed school expansion will be phased over a 'number of years', however no details are provided to confirm the extent of building works that are to be undertaken during each phase and when these will be implemented.

In particular, it is not clear when the proposed increase in parking supply is to be constructed and how this relates to the associated phased expansion of the school buildings and parking demand. It is considered that no additional buildings should be implemented in advance of suitable parking supply and/or management measures being provided.

Furthermore, no details are provided in order to confirm how access for construction vehicles will be maintained over a 'number of years', given that the proposed route from Creynolds Lane is only intended to be provided as a 'temporary' access arrangement.

Further details on the proposed phasing should therefore be provided within the TA in order to fully clarify the associated parking and construction impacts and justify their appropriateness.

A summary of the existing and proposed number of pupils and staff is provided in Table 1.1 of the TA. This suggests that the number of pupils will increase by 240 (approx. 89%) whereas the number of staff will increase by 21 (approx. 48%). These figures suggest a disproportionate increase in the number of pupils when compared to staff and so further clarification on the assumptions surrounding the likely increases should be provided within the TA.

Section 1.1.4 suggests that additional primary school places are required in order to accommodate demand from the Blythe Valley Park and Cheswick Place developments. However, the application information appears to confuse those existing, completed and occupied residential developments, with proposed or committed future housing. These developments have been under construction for a number of years and, in the case of Cheswick Place, all properties have been occupied for over 1 year. Further details on the number of properties completed and those still to be developed, should therefore be provided within the TA accordingly. This is required in order to justify the proposed assumptions around the future generation and distribution of trips as a result of the expansion proposals.

Policy Framework

This section of the TA provides a review of the various local, regional and national policies that should be adhered to when generating proposals for new developments, such as the proposed expansion of Cheswick Green Primary School. In section 2.5 of the TA, a summary is provided which suggests that 'the development proposals have been developed to accord with policy at all levels'

However, as detailed in the remainder of this audit, there are a number of fundamental issues which suggest a contradiction between the proposed school extension and the policies that are listed in the TA. For example, the proposed expansion is being promoted on the basis that additional pupil places are required to accommodate those living in the Cheswick Place and Blythe Valley residential developments. However, in the case of the latter, the TA acknowledges that it would not be feasible for pupils to either walk or cycle when travelling to and from Cheswick Green Primary School. This therefore contradicts some of the key aims of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), West Midlands Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2026) and the Solihull Local Plan (2013) to promote active travel.

Baseline Conditions

Section 3.1 of the TA states that site visits were undertaken during the morning (08:00 to 09:15) and afternoon (15:00 to 16:00) peak periods on Tuesday 10th and Thursday 12th November 2020. However, at this time the school was operating a staggered start / end to the day for all pupils, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Whilst this is acknowledged within the TA, it is clear that the full extent of impacts could not be fully appreciated or accurately appraised during the site visit.

Information has been provided regarding the levels of occupation in the morning at Pre-School (6 pupils) and Nursery (20 pupils) which represents 20% and 66% of capacity respectively. In addition to this the TA indicates that 5 staff were on-site, however no details are provided in order to specify what a normal level of staffing would be without the reduced COVID-19 capacity. Given the reduced capacity of the Pre-School and Nursery it would also be fair to assume that staffing levels would be similarly lower than normal.

Whilst attendance levels of both the pre-school and nursery have been provided for the day of the site visit, there is no information on the levels of occupation for those other year groups at the school or the number of staff present. For consistency and in order to understand the overall impact it is suggested that this additional information is provided within the TA.

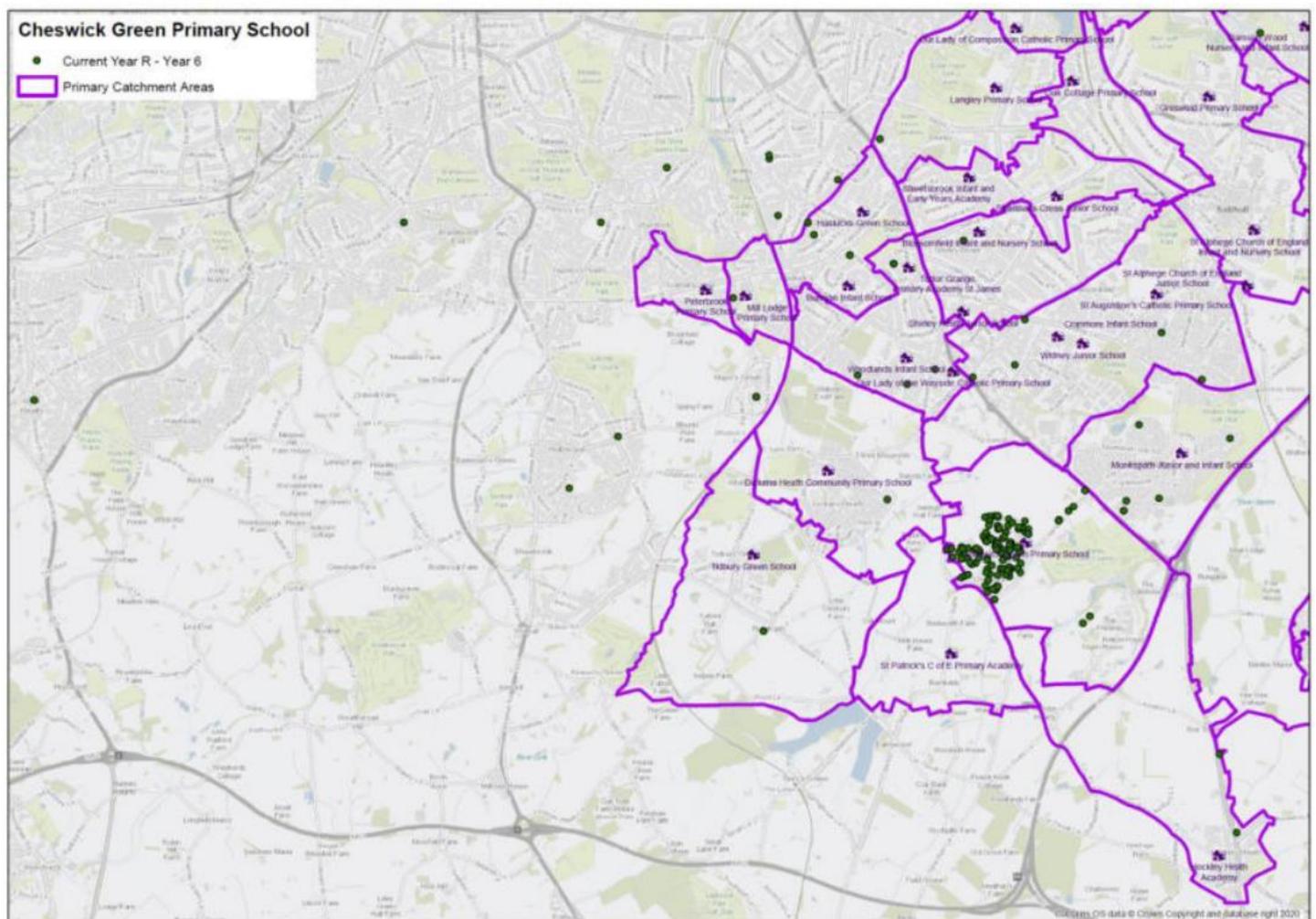
The TA states that the school offers before and after school provision in the form of Breakfast Club (from 07:30) and After School Club (until 18:00), attended by approximately 30-40 pupils each day Monday to Friday; After School Sports Clubs

(15:30-16:30) are attended by approximately 15-20 pupils at each session Monday to Thursday; and Before School Club (08:00-08:45) are attended by approximately 10-15 pupils at each session two days a week.

There is no information within the TA regarding any crossover between pupils attending before and after school provision, as can be seen above, there is potential for quite significant fluctuation in the number of pupils on site before and after school. Given the similarity in timings it is highly likely there is some crossover between the 'clubs' and as such this should be clarified.

Within the TA, Figure 3.2 provides a plot of current pupil postcodes and the primary catchment area of the existing school. Whilst it is possible to establish some of these current trends, the key information included within this figure is not legible and as such an updated plan should be provided accordingly.

Figure 3-2: Cheswick Green Primary – Postcode Plot



Despite the legibility issues, some of the key trends shown within Figure 3.2 can be established. For example, there is currently a cluster of pupils living within Cheswick Green itself as well as those in Cheswick Place. This is not surprising given the proximity and size of the surrounding residential area and the fact that Cheswick Place has been completed for over 1 year. However, beyond Cheswick Green, it is clear that the existing catchment is spread across several locations, which includes Monkspath and Shirley.

The TA suggests that additional pupil places are expected to come from Cheswick Place and Blythe Valley Park. However, as Figure 3.2 suggests, the current trends show a more sporadic catchment beyond the immediate village extents. Given the potential impact on travel patterns, it is suggested that evidence to support the assumption that

additional places will be limited to Cheswick Place and Blythe Valley should be provided within the TA. If this is not the case, then further consideration should be given to the allocation of trips from those other residential locations.

Existing mode share data was established through surveying pupils, parents and staff. Whilst details of the survey period for pupils (December 2020) are provided in section 3.4.1, the same information is not included for the parent and staff surveys. As such, it is requested that further details on these surveys are provided within the TA.

The survey results indicate that the majority of trips to and from the school are made by car, with 75% of staff and 46% (3% car share) of parents using this mode. Walking accounts for the next most common method of travel with 22% of staff and 44% of parents respectively. In terms of public transport, this accounts for only a very limited number of journeys with approximately 2% of pupils and 3% of staff travelling by bus and no record of any rail trips occurring. This is not surprising given the limited availability of public transport within the vicinity of the school.

In terms of changes in travel behaviour due to COVID-19, the TA has sought to address this through an additional parent travel survey. The TA suggests that the majority of respondents are using the same mode of transport as they did prior to March 2020, however a total of 14% of respondents stated that they now use a different mode. In total 10 respondents suggested that they now walk rather than drive their children to school, with only 1 respondent now walking rather than driving. If these values are applied to the parent survey data, then this results in a 5% increase in car (driver) trips from 43% to 48%.

The TA states that a Travel Plan for the school targets a 2% reduction in pupils travelling by car with a 2% increase in trips made by cycling and scooting, compared with current modal splits. This is considered to be only a modest target but reflects the limitations on the potential for cycling trips to occur. As previously indicated, travel to the school on foot or bicycle is only considered to be feasible for those that live within Cheswick Green. This is due to the distance from other surrounding settlements being too far, the age of pupils and the fact that there are no dedicated cycle facilities that link the village with surrounding areas.

Given the above, any increase in cycling is likely to result in a corresponding drop in walking trips to the school rather than an overall decrease in those travelling by car. This is because the majority of those trips made on foot are currently from within the village itself. Trips from within Cheswick Green being made by car will most likely be due to a specific reason and so changing these trips to cycle is likely to be very limited.

The TA has considered two committed developments in the vicinity of the site, which are at Cheswick Place and Blythe Valley Park. Cheswick Place is a residential development to the west of the school which was granted outline approval for up to 220 dwellings in 2014 (subsequently increased to 275). This development has already been completed and fully occupied for approximately 1 year. This is evidenced by the existing pupil catchment. Blythe Valley Park is a mixed use development which has approval for up to 750 residential dwellings. Whilst this has yet to be fully developed, a number of properties are already built and occupied and as such these details should be provided within the TA.

In terms of on-site observations, the TA states that:

- The on-site car park was at capacity and staff were parking on Cheswick Way;
- Parking occurred on both sides of Cheswick Way reducing traffic to one-way shuttle operation;
- Vehicles were observed to park within bus stops, on double yellow lines and in close proximity to junctions due to a lack of availability on Cheswick Way;
- Vehicles were observed turning in private drives, in the junction of Cheswick Way / Foxland Close and completing 3-point turns on Cheswick Way;
- As availability of spaces was reduced on Cheswick Way vehicles were parking on Foxland Close;

As already noted, a site visit to inform the TA was undertaken by PJA in November 2020, when school start and finish times were staggered, and operational levels were reduced, due to COVID-19. Consequently, the trends observed within the TA do not reflect 'normal' conditions.

Together with local residents, the Parish Council has extensive knowledge of the conditions that are regularly observed in the vicinity of the school and as such are in a unique position to provide suitable insight to inform the planning application. Further details of these trends are considered below alongside a supporting selection of photos which are also provided for reference.

Parking on both sides of Cheswick Way



Delivery Vehicle Parked on Footway and double yellow lines

Bus and van unable to pass due to parked car



Delivery Vehicles Parked on Footway and double yellow lines

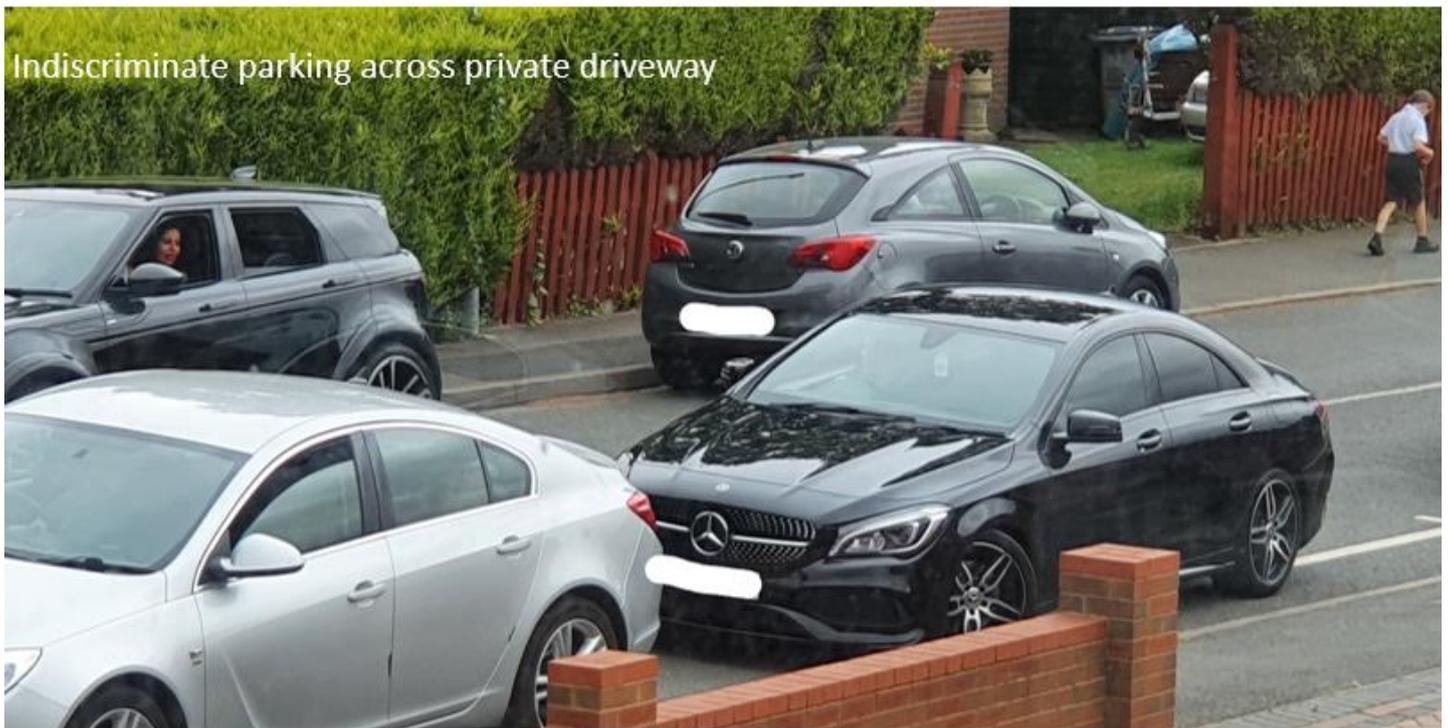


Delivery vehicles parked opposite school access





Restricted movement for passing vehicles due to parking



Indiscriminate parking across private driveway



Long Stay Staff Parking
at 10am



Narrowed carriageway due to staff parking

As can be seen in the photos above, there is currently extensive on-street parking in the vicinity of Cheswick Green Primary School and this is a direct result of the existing school operations. The lack of existing parking for staff within the site means that there are typically between 14 and 21 staff vehicles regularly parked on Cheswick Way for the duration of the school day. The presence of this long stay parking restricts the movement of general traffic along Cheswick Way and has resulted in the local bus company re-routing their service away from these bus stops around the village.

During the both morning and afternoon peak periods, when children are being dropped off or collected from school, the issues associated with parking are further exacerbated and extensive. As noted in the TA and can be seen in the photos above, vehicles regularly park on both sides of the carriageway along Cheswick Way, Foxland Close, Badger Close, Saxon Wood Road and Boscobel Road. The photos confirm that parents and delivery vehicles have been observed parking their vehicles in unsuitable locations. This includes parking across private driveways, at junctions and on double yellow lines as well as partially on the footway, restricting access for pedestrians.

The TA notes that Creynolds Lane has a footway along the northern side of the carriageway providing links to bus stops on the A34 Stratford Road and residential areas to the north. However, as can be seen in the photos below, the existing footway on Creynolds Lane is narrow, of a sub-standard width (less than 2m) and so does not provide a suitable route for parents to walk alongside their children or pass other users safely without stepping into the carriageway.



There are also sections of Creynolds Lane that have multiple private accesses with poor visibility for emerging vehicles (see photo below). These conditions are therefore likely to discourage parents from walking with their children in order to travel to and from school beyond the extents of the village.



Section 3.10 of the TA confirms that an existing toucan crossing is provided on the A34 Stratford Road. However, as can be seen in the photo below, there are currently no controlled crossing facilities on the Creynolds Lane arm of this junction.



Given the footway conditions and available crossing facilities shown in the photos above, as well as the age of pupils and the distance involved in travelling along Creynolds Lane from the A34 (approximately 1km), it is considered **highly unlikely** that parents will choose to walk their children to school using this route. As a result, this effectively removes the potential for journeys to be made on foot beyond the extents of the existing village of Cheswick Green.

The TA states that 57% of pupils currently travel to school on foot or by cycle and that 75% of pupils live within the preferred maximum walking distance of the school (2km). As a result, the TA suggests that walking and cycling trips could potentially increase by 10% to 20% with the proposed Travel Plan measures and mitigation.

However, the TA subsequently acknowledges that the ability for parents to take their children to school on foot or by bicycle will be dictated by personal circumstances and the practicalities of travelling long distances with young children. **In order to achieve the suggested 10% to 20% increase, it would be necessary for nearly all trips within the maximum walking distance to be on foot or cycle. It is therefore concluded that these ambitious increases are not achievable or realistic.**

The TA notes that both Cheswick Way and Creynolds Lane are designated as quiet roads for cycling by SMBC and, as a result, suggests that these could facilitate connections from the school to residential areas, including Monkspath and Dickens Heath. However, due to the existing conditions, it is considered highly unlikely that parents would opt to cycle along the carriageway on these routes whilst accompanying their young children to school. As already noted, during school hours Cheswick Way is characterised by parked cars which restrict visibility and the flow of traffic, whereas Creynolds Lane is subject to a 40mph speed limit and is predominately rural in its nature. At school start and finishing times these roads are often busy and so the attractiveness of using the road for cycling will also be diminished. In addition to this, the practicalities of travelling between areas such as Monkspath and Cheswick Green with young children by bicycle do not make it an attractive mode of travel. The designation of these routes as 'quiet roads' by SMBC is considered to be more reflective of older and more proficient cyclists than suggested within the TA.

The TA notes that based on postcode data of pupils, the majority reside within 2km of the school and as such the level of accessibility by bicycle has the potential to be high. However, as already noted, the practicalities of parents travelling to school by bicycle and then returning home before going about the rest of their day means that increasing the levels of travel by this will be challenging, as those that can do this already are. Whilst this is acknowledged within the TA, it is suggested that cycling may be a more viable option for staff. However, the catchment area for staff is expected to be much wider than for pupils and as such for many this would mean that travel by this mode is not viable.

The TA notes that bus stops are present on both sides of Cheswick Way to the south of the school access, however only the eastbound stop is currently in operation. The Parish Council and residents have commented that one of the reasons for services being withdrawn is as a result of parking associated with Cheswick Green Primary School.

The only realistic bus service that could be used to travel to and from the school stops on Creynolds Lane (approximately 350m from the school). As can be seen in the photo below, using this service requires children to cross Creynolds Lane immediately, as no footway is provided on the southern side of the carriageway and there is only limited waiting capacity. As a result, pupils would need to be carefully supervised when crossing the road. For the return journey, the closest stop is over 550m from the school. Unless parents were to commit their time to accompany their children on these buses, and for their own return, a very high level of responsible adult supervision would be required.



The TA has obtained Personal Injury Collision (PIC) data from TfWM for the three-year period between 01/03/2017 and 29/02/2020. Ordinarily when analysing collisions trends it is best practice to review data over the most recent five-year period. This is because trends often take longer to establish. It is therefore suggested that the road safety appraisal is expanded accordingly.

In addition to the above, a review of the raw collision data indicates that there have in fact been 4 collisions at the Vicarage Road / Illshaw Heath / Watery Lane junction rather than the 1 stated within the TA. This assessment should therefore be updated accordingly.

Development Proposals

A summary of the existing and proposed number of pupils and staff is provided in Table 4.1 of the TA. This suggests that the number of pupils will increase by 240 (approx. 89%) whereas the number of staff will increase by 21 (approx. 48%). **These figures suggest a disproportionate increase in the number of pupils when compared to staff and so further clarification on the assumptions surrounding the likely increases should be provided within the TA.**

Section 4.1.4 suggests that additional primary school places are required in order to accommodate demand from the Blythe Valley Park and Cheswick Place developments. However, the application information appears to confuse existing, completed, occupied residential development, with proposed or committed future housing. These developments have been under construction for a number of years and, in the case of Cheswick Place, all properties have now been occupied for over 1 year. **Further details on the number of properties completed and those still to be developed, should therefore be provided within the TA accordingly. This is required in order to justify the proposed assumptions around the future generation and distribution of trips as a result of the expansion proposals.**

The school currently has 13 on-site car parking spaces with one disabled parking space. The staff surveys undertaken as part of the TA indicate that 75% of staff currently travel to work by car, meaning there is currently demand for approximately 33 spaces leaving a surplus of 19 vehicles. The TA states that anecdotal evidence suggests that some staff double park within the site, with the rest parking on Cheswick Way. However, feedback obtained as part of this

review suggests that the vast majority of surplus parking is understood to park on Cheswick Way rather than double parking within the site. As already noted, the level of staff parking along Cheswick Way is estimated to be between 14 and 21 vehicles. This suggests that more parking currently occurs on-street than within the site itself.

The TA states that the development proposals will increase provision in order to provide 36 car parking spaces, with nine of these being tandem spaces, plus one disabled space. However, a review of the site layout plan included as Appendix A shows provision of 33 car parking spaces, ten of which are tandem spaces with two disabled spaces. The actual proposed number of parking spaces therefore needs to be clarified and consistent between the report and site layout.

Based on the existing staff travel survey, it is estimated that there will be demand for 49 staff car parking spaces once the expansion proposals are fully implemented. As a result, there will be a minimum surplus of between 13 and 16 vehicles that are unable to park within the site. However, this assumption is based on a 100% take up of the proposed tandem spaces, which will require careful management and compliance from staff. **Given the existing off-site parking trends and the unrestricted and readily available parking supply on Cheswick Way, it is considered highly unlikely that staff will choose to use all of the tandem spaces and risk being blocked in. As a result, this could reduce the overall on-site parking use by approximately 10 vehicles.**

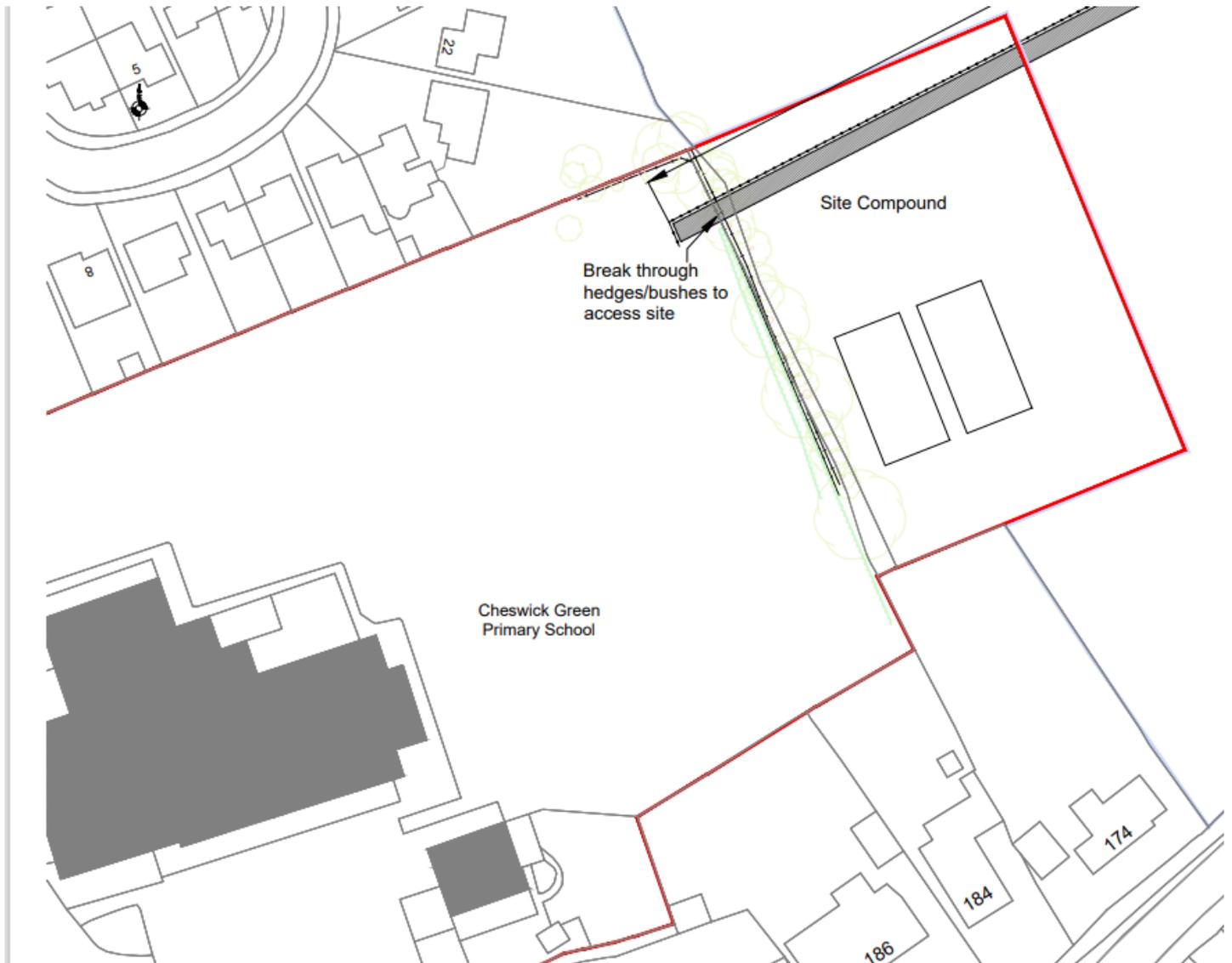
Given the above issues, the proposed use of tandem car parking spaces within the site is not considered to be suitable and it is unlikely that these spaces will receive a high take up. The most likely outcome is that on-street parking by staff will substantially increase as a result of the development proposals. It is therefore considered that the development proposals will exacerbate the already unsustainable parking levels on Cheswick Way and surrounding streets. **As noted in 4.3.5, the reason for the proposed use of tandem parking is because of the existing site constraints, which mean that there is insufficient space to implement an appropriate parking layout. This therefore questions whether the proposed extension proposals can be viably accommodated.**

The TA states that the school Travel Plan will be used to promote car sharing and uptake of sustainable modes, this will be done in part through the provision of seven cycle parking spaces for staff. However, the Travel Plan states that two staff cycle parking spaces will be provided. **The actual number of cycle parking spaces should therefore be clarified accordingly.** Given that currently zero staff travel to work by bicycle, it is clear that the likelihood of reducing staff travel by car is very limited.

The proposed car park management strategy noted within the TA is considered to be fundamentally flawed and is unlikely to result in mass take up of the tandem parking spaces. This is because the provision of telephone numbers in order to contact people that are blocked in does not guarantee to rectify the problem in a timely manner. It may also not be practical for some staff to leave their location in order to move their vehicle whilst supervising children. As a result, staff will soon become frustrated and revert to parking on street.

The TA suggests that the proposed construction access on Creynolds Lane is designed to reduce or remove the impact of construction vehicles on Cheswick Way. However, the drawing provided in Appendix H does not include tracking of the likely construction vehicles that are expected to use this access. Furthermore, no information is provided on the proposed width of the access track and so it is unclear whether two vehicles could feasibly pass each other when entering and exiting the site.

The plan also fails to show how construction vehicles will navigate the site once within the school boundary. As can be seen in the drawing below, the proposed access track ends once inside the existing field boundary, whereas construction traffic will need to cross onto the other side of the school field in the vicinity of the existing school buildings.



Travel Demand and Impacts

The TA states that of the additional 210 school places that are proposed, a total of 196 will be drawn from Cheswick Place and Blythe Valley Park. Cheswick Place will account for 49 of the spaces and Blythe Valley Park 147 spaces. It is assumed that all places will be taken up by 2028/29.

However, as already noted, the TA appears to confuse these existing, completed and occupied residential developments, with proposed or committed future housing. These developments have been under construction for a number of years and, in the case of Cheswick Place, all properties have now been occupied for over 1 year. Indeed the postcode plot of existing pupils included within the TA confirms that a number of those attending the school already live within Cheswick Place. This therefore questions whether the additional demand associated with these properties is indeed correct.

Notwithstanding the above, in order to determine the existing mode share at the school, the TA has based its assumptions on a classroom based 'hands up' survey of pupils, rather than the survey of parents that was also carried out. Whilst the response rate of the 'hands up' survey was better than the parents' survey, it is considered that utilising information obtained from young children, especially those in the lower years at the school, is not as robust.

The below table shows a comparison between the mode share when considering the responses from the 'hands up' and parent surveys for the existing and proposed school.

	Existing				Proposed			
	'Hands Up'		Parents		'Hands Up'		Parents	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Walk	124	97	119	92	235	193	224	185
Cycle	32	25	8	6	61	50	15	13
Park & Stride	5	4	8	6	10	8	15	13
Car Share	0	0	8	6	0	0	15	13
Car	108	84	116	90	240	168	219	181
Bus	0	0	5	4	0	0	10	8
Other	0	0	5	4	0	0	10	8
Vehicles	113	88	132	103	214	176	250	206
Reduction for Wrap Around Care	-13	-13	-13	-13	-26	-26	-26	-26
Total Vehicles	100	75	119	90	188	150	224	180

Based on the 'hands up' survey and according to the TA, the proposed school expansion could be expected to generate an additional 88 and 75 vehicles on the local highway network during the AM and PM peaks respectively. **Had the parents survey been considered within the TA, then the proposals would be expected to generate an additional 105 vehicles in the AM peak and 90 in the PM peak.**

Section 5.3.11 of the TA acknowledges that it would not be feasible for pupils to travel on foot or bicycle from properties located at Blythe Valley Park. Given that pupils from Blythe Valley are predicted to account for 70% of the proposed new places at the extended school, it is clear that this represents a fundamental flaw with the proposals and a contradiction of planning policy objectives at all levels. The proposed increase in vehicle trips will also impact on local air quality and remove the potential for children to benefit from healthier active travel alternatives.

The TA states that a S106 agreement secured as part of the Blythe Valley Park development will fund improvements to the existing A7/A8 bus service for a period of six years. However, no details are provided on when this six-year period will commence and how this relates to the phased extension of the school, which is due to be undertaken over a number of years. Whilst it is suggested that these changes could include amendments to align with school start and finish times, as well as a 30-minute frequency, the specific improvements to the service have yet to be finalised.

Section 5.6.2 of the TA suggests that after the initial six-year funding period, it is expected that the enhanced A7/A8 service will have become commercially viable. However, no evidence is provided within the TA to support this claim. The assumption within the TA that the proposed dedicated service will become commercial viability once funding period has ended is therefore considered to be optimistic and not based on supporting evidence. Furthermore, given the proposal to stagger start and finish times it is not clear how this service would feasibly be implemented to cater for all year groups. The existing bus stops are also located over 350m from the primary school access on Creynolds Lane.

The TA submitted for the Blythe Valley Park development suggested that public rights of way and Illshaw Heath Road could be used by 85% of primary school trips to Cheswick Green Primary School. As can be seen in the photo below, Illshaw Heath Road is currently a rural single carriageway that has no footways along its length and so would clearly not be suitable for parents to use this route in order to take their children to school by bicycle or on foot. This therefore suggests that the assumptions presented within this approved application are flawed.



The alternative route from Blythe Valley is via the A34 Stratford Road, however this route has no pedestrian or cycle facilities along the southern side of the carriageway. In order to use this route pedestrians would have to cross the carriageway twice and also detour through the adjacent Tesco petrol station via uncontrolled crossings. Given the substantial limitations described above, the TA submitted for the proposed extension to Cheswick Green Primary School states the following

'it is recognised that due to the age of pupils and distances included, walking and cycling will not be viable based on current infrastructure provision. In addition, based on the current timetable, the current bus service between Cheswick Green and Blythe Valley Park would not be a viable route for pupils to travel to school'.

Given the above, it is clear that the only existing viable means of travel from Blythe Valley Park to Cheswick Green Primary School is by car. All other travel options are not currently feasible from this location and so would require substantial mitigation and a permanent funding commitment by SMBC in the form of additional bus services. Based on the figures presented in the TA, this would result in an additional 136 two-way trips being added to the network in both the AM and PM peak periods and further increase the pressure of on-street parking and local air quality within Cheswick Green.

Section 5.4 of the TA considers the vehicle impact of the proposed development, including sections on site access and highway capacity. The section on highway capacity concludes that 'no further assessment of junction capacity is necessary'. However, the justification for not carrying out detailed junction assessments is considered to be fundamentally flawed. These flaws are summarised below:

- **Staff Trips Excluded** – the assessment suggests that all staff trips should be excluded on the basis that these will occur outside the peak hours of 8am to 9am and 3pm to 4pm. However, this assumption is disputed as some existing staff trips have been observed arriving or departing during these times and the proposed staggering of hours is unlikely to fundamentally change these trends for additional new staff.
- **Linked Trips** – the TA suggests that between 6% and 43% of school trips could potentially be linked with other purposes. However, given the proportion of predicted new trips generated by the Blythe Valley development (70%) and the limited number of destinations within Cheswick Green, it is suggested that the potential for linked trips within the immediate network is limited. It is more likely that any linked trips will be diverted from the A34

Stratford Road and as such this would increase movements through the key A34 Stratford Road / Creynolds Lane junction.

- **Blythe Valley Park Trip Generation** – the TA suggests that trips associated with the already committed Blythe Valley Park development have been accounted for in previous Transport Assessments. However, the assumptions surrounding active trips made by parents and children using public rights of way (85%) indicates that the overall approach to trip generation from this development is fundamentally flawed.

Given that SMBC specifically requested consideration of the A34 Stratford Road / Creynolds Lane junction as part of the scoping discussions, it is recommended that detailed junction assessments are undertaken.

Mitigation Measures

In order to overcome the numerous existing issues and cater for new demand generated from locations outside Cheswick Green, the TA proposes a number of mitigation measures. However, as summarised below, these measures are unlikely to address the existing issues and will most likely exacerbate current trends which are well established and understood.

In terms of the proposed Travel Plan measures, these are considered to be relatively light touch options and are arguably already being implemented by the school to some extent, with only a limited impact. **The Travel Plan measures are also focused on active travel measures; however these are of little relevance to the vast majority (70%) of the proposed expansion trips, which the TA acknowledges are not feasible from the Blythe Valley Park development.**

The proposed staggered start and finish times may in fact lead to an overall increase in the dwell time for some parents who are dropping off or collecting more than one child in different year groups (39% with more than one child). Whilst this may have been acceptable to parents during COVID 19, it is evident that a reasonable proportion of respondents (26%) were not in favour of this proposal as a long term measure.

The parking accumulation graphs presented within the TA do not account for the substantial increase in on-street staff parking that is likely to occur.

There is no indication within the TA as to whether funding of a dedicated school bus from Blythe Valley Park would be free for pupils or if fares would be subsidised. It is also not specified how long the approved funding period will last. If fares are introduced or increased after the funding period has lapsed, then the attractiveness of the service will most likely be diminished and those trips will shift from bus to car and further increase demand for on-street parking in Cheswick Green. Given the limitations within the site as well as presence of on street parking on Cheswick Way, it is also unclear how the bus service will safely access and escort children to school. The specific detail and practicalities of implementing this service should be described within the TA in order to determine their overall feasibility. As already noted, the existing bus service operators have already diverted routes away from stops on Cheswick Way adjacent to the school due to presence of on-street parking.

The TA states that potential changes to the A7/A8 bus service have yet to be agreed but may involve altering the timetable in order to fit in with school start / end times. This may inconvenience existing users of the service causing them to transfer to alternative modes, likely car trips, putting additional pressure on the local highway network during the peak hours. **As already noted, the nearest bus stops for this service are located on Creynolds Lane, approximately 350m from the school.**

The TA suggests that a walking bus could be implemented but provides no specific details on how this could be applied to the proposed extension. As already noted, the proposed expansion is intended to primarily accommodate demand from Blythe Valley Park, which is not accessible by active travel.

The TA suggests that a parking strategy could be implemented in order to encourage parents to park further away from the school and avoid inappropriate locations. However, there is no viable means of policing and ensuring compliance with the proposed strategy and this is evidenced by the fact that existing parking habits are already very poor, despite the current school publicity. Indeed, the increase in parking demand is likely to have the opposite effect, with parents more likely to park in inappropriate locations in order to avoid parking further away.

Section 6.9 of the TA suggests that existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) could be reviewed as part of the overall mitigation measures. However, these are likely to have a limited impact and may simply move the parking problem and/or result in an increase in the number of vehicles parked inappropriately.

In terms of the proposed on-site parking strategy, as already noted this is fundamentally flawed and is unlikely to result in mass take up of the tandem parking spaces. This is because the provision of telephone numbers in order to contact people that are blocked in does not guarantee to rectify the problem in a timely manner. It may also not be practical for some staff to leave their location in order to move their vehicle whilst supervising children. As a result, staff will soon become frustrated and revert to parking on street.

Summary and Conclusions

Pell Frischmann has been commissioned by Cheswick Green Parish Council to review a Transport Assessment (TA) and Travel Plan (TP) that have been submitted to accompany a planning application for the expansion of Cheswick Green Primary School.

This audit has identified a number of issues with the proposals and assessment presented within the TA, which are summarised below:

- Further details on the proposed phasing should be provided in order to fully clarify the associated parking and construction impacts and justify their appropriateness.
- The figures presented in the TA suggest a disproportionate increase in the number of pupils when compared to staff and so further clarification on the assumptions surrounding the likely increases should be provided.
- The TA assumes that the additional pupil demand will be from Cheswick Place and Blythe Valley Park. However, Cheswick Place has been fully occupied for over 1 year and Blythe Valley Park is also partially complete. Further details on the number of properties completed and those still to be developed, should therefore be provided within the TA accordingly. This is required in order to justify the proposed assumptions around the future generation and distribution of trips as a result of the expansion proposals.
- There are a number of fundamental issues which suggest a contradiction between the proposed school extension against national, regional and local policy, particularly in relation to the potential for active travel.
- Analysis of the existing baseline conditions was undertaken during a period of substantially reduced operations due to COVID-19. However, only partial information is provided in order to fully appreciate these reduced conditions.
- The potential for active travel by walking and cycling from areas beyond Cheswick Green is extremely limited. The existing routes along Creynolds Lane and Illshaw Heath are not suitable for parents walking young children to school. This is due to the distance involved and facilities provided.
- In order to achieve the desired increase in pedestrian and cycle trips (10% to 20%) it would be necessary for all journeys within the maximum walking distance to be undertaken via these modes, which is extremely optimistic. These targets are also not aligned with the proposed Travel Plan, which suggests only a modest 2% increase in cycle trips.
- The Personal Injury Collision (PIC) data has been presented for a 3-year period rather than a more comprehensive 5-year appraisal period. There are also errors within the analysis, which suggests a fewer number of collisions at the Creynolds Lane / Illshaw Heath / Watery Lane junction than have been reported.
- Whilst the TA states that the school encourages parents to park responsibly, evidence presented by the parking beat survey and from the Parish Council and residents shows that as a result of the existing school operation vehicles are regularly parked in bus stops, resulting in the removal of services, on double yellow lines and over private drives / dropped kerbs. This is only likely to be exacerbated by the expansion proposals.
- The car parking proposals at the school are not suitable, especially the provision of tandem spaces. The proposed car park management strategy is unlikely to be effective enough to encourage staff to get blocked in when they can easily park on-street. The increased staff numbers and the poor on-site car parking proposals will put further parking pressure on the streets surrounding the school.
- No information has been provided to show that the proposed construction access is fit for purpose, it is not clear if two vehicles will be able to pass one another or if large vehicles will be able to suitably access / egress the site

onto Creynolds Lane. There has been no consideration given of how construction vehicles will move around the site once within the school field boundary.

- The existing mode share at the school, which has then been used to determine the impact of the proposed expansion, has been based on a classroom based 'hand up' survey of the pupils rather than a more robust survey of the parents, which has also been carried out. A sensitivity test undertaken by Pell Frischmann confirms that this would have a substantial impact on the assumed number of vehicle trips.
- No assessment of the A34 Stratford Road / Creynolds Lane has been undertaken and the justification for excluding this is flawed. This is despite a request from SMBC during scoping discussions.
- The proposed package of mitigation measures is considered to be either limited, not practical and/or reliant on substantial mitigation and on an ongoing funding commitment from SMBC. In particular, there are concerns that once funding ends for additional school / public bus services from Blythe Valley Park that vehicle trips to and from the school will increase significantly. This will inevitably result in further pressure on the streets in Cheswick Green surrounding the school and on the local highway network.

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