

27 September 2025

Mr Callum Harvey
Durham County Council Planning Department
PO Box 274
Stanley, Co. Durham
DH8 1HG

Dear Mr Harvey,

DM/25/00762/FPA – Land at Red Barns, Brandon, Durham DH7 8DA

Hybrid application comprising full planning permission for the construction of 140 dwellings, primary site access and associated SuDS and landscaping; and outline planning permission with all matters reserved for the construction of up to 260 dwellings, secondary access, local centre incorporating retail (up to 4,000 sqft) (Use Class E) and mini-mobility hub, and associated SuDS and landscaping.

The Trust notes the revised A690 junction design and supporting documents recently submitted by the applicant. The removal of staggered crossings for pedestrians is an improvement. It is still unclear whether the pedestrian route from the development to Sawmill Lane is intended to be a shared-use route for pedestrians and cyclists. The “Proposed signalised northern access Rev B” drawing labels the route as “3.0m shared footway/cycleway” but there is still no indication as to how to cyclists transition on/off this route at either end. Use of this path by cyclists does not feature in the ATE Junction Assessment Toolkit submission for the junction. Aside from the removal of the staggered crossings, the many other objections made by the Trust in its letter of 5 May 2025 still stand.

Junction assessment

The applicant has provided two new assessment documents. The Junction Assessment Toolkit submission, “ATE JAT – Signalised Site Access”, scores the proposed northern access junction. For each of the six possible cycle movements through the junction the applicant has assessed the score as 1 out of 2, giving an overall score of 50%.

Firstly, for a development with the aspiration, as stated in the Transport Assessment para. 1.6.1 that aims to

create a community where walking and cycling are the preferred modes of transport for most short trips, achieved through a well-designed network of safe, accessible pedestrian and cycling paths that seamlessly connect homes to the essential amenities in the area

a score of only 50% is not good enough, especially for a new junction with few constraints on its design. It should be redesigned by someone with more experience of LTN 1/20.

Secondly, the Trust disputes the assessment. One of the six possible movements is described as a “two-stage right turn via ASL”, but it is, in fact a single-stage right turn (see LTN 1/20 paras. 10.6.28 to 10.6.33 for the definition and diagrams). With this correction, four of the six possible movements have scores justified through the provision of Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs) “where the signals on the approach are on green for <30% of the cycle time”. These movements are those heading north to south and south to north on the A690, and turning from the A690 (north

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or south) into the development. No information on traffic signal cycle times has been provided, but where a housing estate access road makes a T-junction with a major road, including a separate right-turn lane from the major road into the estate, the normal practice would be for the lights in both directions on the major road to be green at the same time. The claim that these phases of the cycle would occupy less than 30% of the total implies that over 70% of the time will be assigned to traffic emerging from the estate and to the pedestrian crossing phase. This is simply not credible: it is not a plan which will survive contact with the Highways Authority.

Accordingly these four scores should be zero, and the overall junction rating will be 17%.

(Even the scoring of the movements out of the estate is doubtful, in the absence of timings, because it depends on providing an “extended intergreen” for the cycle movements.)

Cycling audit

The applicant has submitted a Walking Route Audit which assesses seven different routes. By contrast, the Cycling Audit Tool submission only assesses one route, the off-road railway path that passes through Brandon and which is accessible from Sawmill Lane. There is no map to indicate which part of the path has been assessed.

The Active Travel Response (24 June 2025) notes cycling accessibility as a critical issue, and strongly recommends an assessment of key off-site routes. Note that the plural is used. It appears that the applicant has confined the assessment to the only designated cycle route in the area. Almost none of the amenities which the applicant claims to be accessible by cycle can be reached direct from the railway path.

The applicant should identify direct routes to these amenities, even if these have no cycling infrastructure, and routes which allow for a diversion to benefit from cycle infrastructure where appropriate, and assess these.

Even the off-road route has scored poorly for Cohesion and Attractiveness. The high score of 88% for Safety is of no benefit if the route is not sufficient to give access to amenities.

Conclusion

The additional assessments submitted by the applicant, when interpreted with knowledge of the national cycling design guidance, support the Trust's evaluation that the development will not be readily accessible by cycling.

The Trust continues to ask that the application be refused.

Yours sincerely,

John Lowe

Chair, City of Durham Trust