

PLANNING APPLICATION NO DM/15/03555/VOC

Variation of condition 3 (approved drawings) pursuant to planning permission CMA/4/83 in regard to a revised masterplan that includes landscape and drainage modifications by Banks Group.

Lack of provision for cycle travel parallel to the A177

The A177 is a 40mph road for most of its length alongside the Mount Oswald site, and 30mph from the new access road into town. The speed limit is often exceeded: there has occasionally been a temporary illuminated speed indicator sign positioned part way down the hill within the 30mph stretch, and cars have been observed exceeding 40mph even here.

There is no special provision for people wishing to cycle, and the footway is, at times, little more than a track and terminates completely on the Mount Oswald side after the access road to the manor house. It is important for the sustainability of the development to ensure that residents of the southern quarter (currently under construction) have safe routes available for cycling and walking to destinations elsewhere in Durham.

On the “Movement Framework” drawing it is clear that people wishing to cycle to the north-west corner of the site, and beyond to Neville’s Cross are well-served. There are three options:

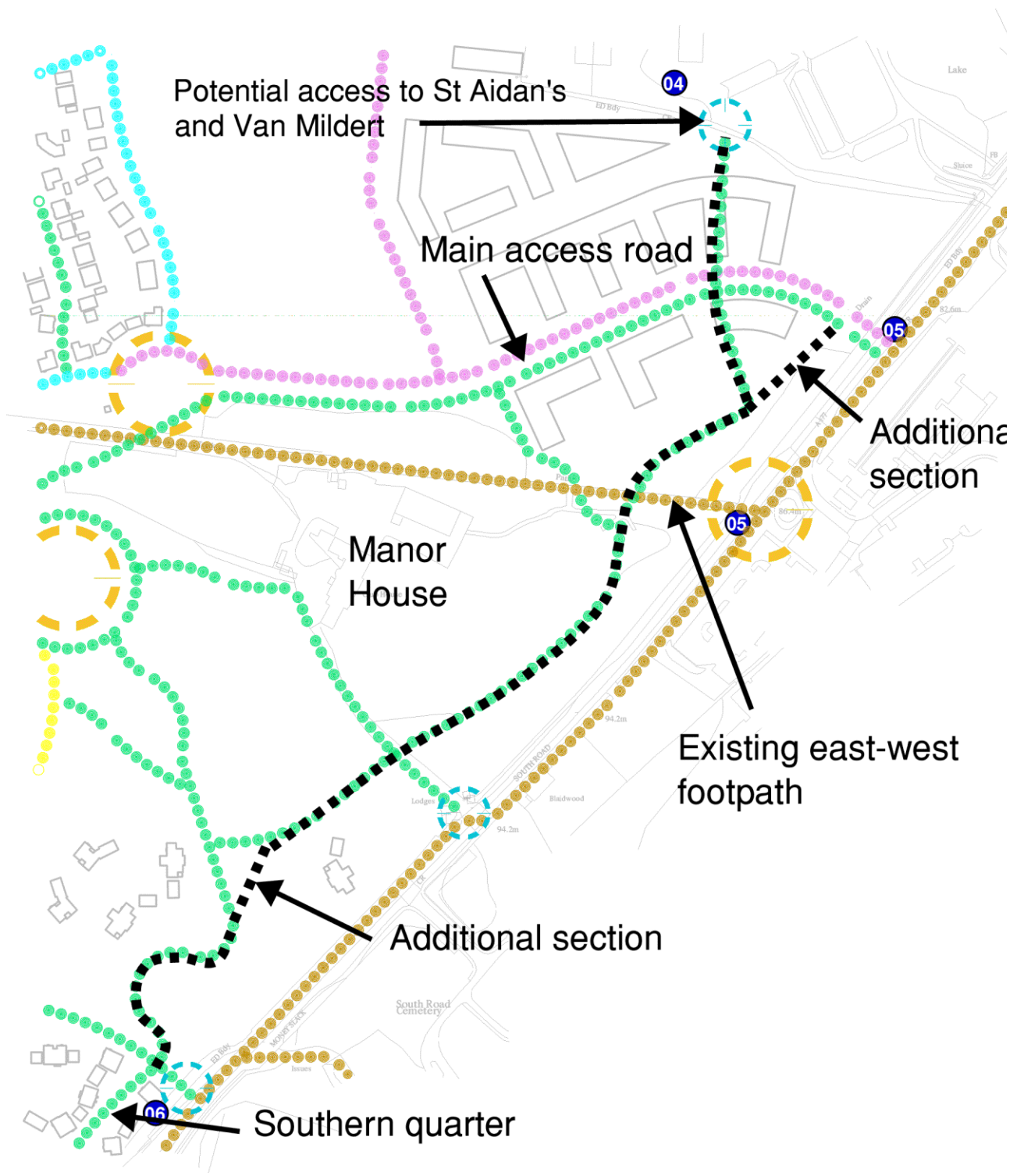
1. Along the existing high-quality segregated cycle path along the east side of the A167, outside the development.
2. By means of the proposed lightly-trafficked adopted roads parallel to the A167, leading from the southern quarter, across the existing east-west footpath by means of a short traffic-free link, and then via the streets of the northern quarter and finally an adopted section of segregated cycleway.
3. Via the “informal cycle route” (which would not be lit) through the proposed parkland to the circular feature dubbed “The Open”, and then via the central corridor north-west through the northern quarter.

These routes give plenty of choice, and allow direct and easy access to destinations in Neville’s Cross, such as the two primary schools, and onwards towards Durham Johnston School.

For people wishing to cycle in other directions, the proposed amended masterplan is less satisfactory. Access is required to Elvet Hill Road leading towards Potters Bank for journeys to the city centre via Prebends Bridge. Journeys to the University’s main campus, to St Oswald’s Primary School and to other areas of the city via New Elvet require a route parallel to the A177. It would also make a lot of sense to facilitate cycle journeys from the southern quarter to the proposed convenience store. At present the best option shown is circuitous, involving the informal cycle route (not suitable after dark) or the lightly-trafficked streets, and then the main northern access road emerging near the Park & Ride.

Given that the previous masterplan had designated the route past the manor house as a main cycle and pedestrian route, I request that this aspect of the previous plan be retained, so that good quality cycle routes parallel to both the A167 and the A177 are provided. I suggest that an additional link be provided to give more direct access to the A177 by linking to the access road for the northern quarter.

The path shown overlaid with a black dashed line should be retained as a cycle route as in the previous masterplan, with a couple of modifications to give a more direct route (where the black dashed line is not on top of the green spots).



The Mount Oswald network should exhibit best practice design for cycling, where cyclists can maintain momentum via routes which are gently curved and which have priority at road crossings. The longer-distance routes, where people would want to cycle faster, should be parallel to walking routes, not shared use. This can be reinforced by a distinctive surface and a slight upstand of about 55mm using a kerb of 45° splay. If the cycle path is provided with a painted white dashed centre line that gives a strong visual cue to users as to the purpose of the path, and is more effective than painted cycle symbols which generally only appear at the ends of the paths.

The *Manual for Streets* says:

If cycle tracks are provided they should be physically segregated from footways/footpaths if there is sufficient width available. (6.4.8)

The design speed for a cycle track would normally be 30 km/h (20 mph). (6.4.7)

The recent *Making Space for Cycling: a guide for new developments and street renewals* stipulates a 2.5m width for segregated cycle paths. Paths should be well drained and machine-laid.

As this is a green-field development, there is sufficient width available for high quality cycling provision, fitting with the stated aims of the developer for a high quality development overall.

I suggest that the route parallel to the A177 should have segregation of cyclists and pedestrians. The “informal route” linking the NW corner of the site with the southern quarter might not need this level of separation because the existing path by the A167 and the route via the lightly-trafficked streets offer good alternatives for fast cycling.

Inconsistencies and ambiguities in the plans

On page 6 of the document entitled “Landscape Concept Design” which is available on the planning portal as “LANDSCAPE AGENCY CONCEPT LANDSCAPE DESIGN - 1 OF 2 APPENDIX 2” in the section headed “1.2 Key strategies” there is a plan showing access and circulation routes. Two green dashed lines are shown, one following the route west to east of the existing public right of way from the A167 to the A177. The other leads from the southern development (already underway) northwards to the proposed circular green space, crossing the existing public footpath and then heading to the north-west corner of the site, joining the A167 at its junction with the existing cycleway along the northern boundary of the site. According to the key, the green dashed lines are a “proposed main pedestrian and cycle corridor”.

However, on the plan labelled “MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK” on the web site and entitled “Masterplan Layer – Movement framework, drawing 07B” the same routes are shown with different labels. The existing footpath crossing the site east to west is merely shown as “Existing footpath”. There is no indication that it is to be upgraded for use by cycles. The path linking the southern quarter to the north-west corner of the site is shown with three different indications along its length. The southern section, reaching as far as the existing east-west footpath is shown in yellow, meaning an “informal cycle route” (unlit and unadopted). The next section, reaching two-thirds of the way to the boundary, is shown as “new footpath” with no mention of use by cyclists. The final section is shown in pink, meaning “segregated cycle path”. This corresponds to the section shown in orange on the “Highways & Adopted Roads” plan which is described as “adopted footpaths”. It appears this signifies that this section is lit.

I suggest that the plans should be amended, or planning conditions be applied, to ensure that the whole length of each of these routes is designed, designated, and maintained for the use of people cycling as well as walking.

Towards the west of the site, crossing the existing east-west footpath, is a link between the proposed adopted road network in the northern quarter and the proposed reconfigured housing development in the middle portion of the site. On the “Highways & Adopted Roads” plan this is shown in orange as an “adopted footpath”. On the “Movement framework” drawing this is shown in light blue as a “pedestrian / cycle route along lightly trafficked adopted road” and finally on page 6 of the “Landscape Concept Design” it appears as an orange arrow meaning “proposed footpath”.

Again, the plans should be amended or a condition attached to make clear the intention that this is a link which is lit, designed for use by people walking and cycling, and is not available to motor traffic.

Thirdly, the plans are inconsistent in their treatment of routes running north-east past the manor house parallel to the A177. On page 6 of the “Landscape Concept Design”, a footpath is shown round the pond just north-east of the southern development. This joins the access road to the manor house, but proceeds no further. On the “Movement Framework” drawing this route is shown in green (meaning “new footpath”), and continues directly across the access road to the manor house, parallel with the A177, and splitting in two as it reaches the existing east-west footpath. The right-

hand fork then appears to go through the outline of the convenience store building, cross the main access road for the norther quarter, and continue north through the outline of buildings in the university quarter. The “Highways & Adopted Roads” plan does not show the last section of this path.

As the development of the manor house area is to be taken forward by a third party, it is not clear what influence Banks Group has still on the access to this part of the site. Paragraph 3.4 of the accompanying Section 73 Planning Application statement mentions changes to this area of the masterplan, and notes that

These changes to the masterplan are considered to be a significant enhancement to the sustainability of the development. The previous footpath/cycleway was routed around the sustainable drainage system (SUDS) and through the Manor House which was a more circuitous route. This route is now proposed to be a footpath.

It is unclear what status each of the documents has, but I hope that in accordance with the “Movement Framework” plan the path would continue through to the northern quarter and the point labelled (4) which indicates “connection to St Aidan’s College and Van Mildert College subject to University”.