

## Little Reeds Farm, London Road (A23), Hickstead RH17 5LY

### Response to National Highways comments to Email dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025

#### Background

National Highways Response dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025 to the Departure from Standards applications is as follows:

#### Summary

*There are omissions from this Departure which prevent an informed decision from being made. This Departure is therefore **returned for rework**.*

*The specific areas that need addressing are:*

- 1. The designer should update the Departure Application text to be consistent with the additional information provided within the May 2025 Risk Assessment.*
- 2. In the Departure Application text and new Risk Assessment, the designer states that the diverging taper will be 52m (as per the existing layout). It is noted by the reviewer that the Transport Statement, dated July 2023, states that the deceleration lane is 57m in length. This inconsistency between the length given in the Departure Application text and the Transport Statement needs to be resolved by the designer.*
- 3. The designer should review the 'Project safety risk' and 'Departure safety risk' categories given for the Departure and provide details of the Safety Control Review Group review as appropriate, if the risk category is deemed to be B or C. Any inconsistencies between the Departure Application text and Risk Assessment should be addressed.*
- 4. The designer should consult with the National Highways regional Operational Team to ascertain if they would be accepting of the potential impact on the network in this location. Any rework of this Departure Application should also summarise the details of any consultations with the National Highways regional Operational Team.*
- 5. The designer should confirm in the Departure Submission text what will happen to the junction following completion of the acoustic earth bund. It is understood from the May 2025 Risk Assessment that the access is proposed to remain in situ, however the diary section of the Departure Application form suggests that the access will be returned to its existing condition to technically avoid it being capable of supporting a higher level of activity on the site. The designer needs to resolve the inconsistencies between the Departure Application text and the Risk Assessment and clarify whether the improved access arrangement will be retained*
- 6. It is still not stated within the reworked Departure Application whether any additional trips (such as workers working on the site) will be using the junction, nor does it reference the existing site usage or the existing volume of trips using the site. It is also not clear what volume of traffic will use the junction following completion of the earth bund. This information should be provided in any rework of this Departure to ascertain the full impact the proposals will have on the A23. It is noted that the May 2025 Risk Assessment states that "The existing lawful use of the access is as a residential access involving 5.5 trips a day", the designer should confirm that after the works are completed that the access will be used for a single residential access only. The reviewer notes that that the client on the Transport Statement is MRL Grab and Tip and therefore there is some concern that the access is being used by a business that operates large machinery from the access, and this will continue in the future.*
- 7. The Departure Application text should be updated to include details of the mitigation measures proposed in the updated May 2025 Risk Assessment. However, it is not clear to the reviewer why 'New Road Layout Ahead' signs are suggested as mitigation as the proposed road layout will not materially change from the existing*

## Civil Engineering - Transport Planning - Flood Risk

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situation. The Traffic Signs Manual recommends that these signs should be used sparingly, and their display should be limited to a maximum period of 3 months after completion of the works.

8. There would appear to be several other siting Departures in relation to the location of this junction and the adjacent lay-by and Grade Separated Junction. The designer should consider if additional Departure Applications are required for the siting of this proposed improved junction and confirm this has been considered in any update to the Departure Application text.

## GTA Response

### Using the same numbering as the National Highways response:

1. The text has been made consistent with the Transport Statement (TS) and DfS application. The updated TS, DfS & Risk Assessments are submitted separately.
2. The merge and diverge lengths have been made consistent throughout the documents.
3. The 'Project safety risk' and 'Departure safety risk' categories have been reviewed. In accordance with GG104 Table E/2.8.1 which states that if 3 or more features are Type A then the activity is characterised as Type A. As 3 or more features are Type A, then the classification is Type A.
4. The National Highways regional Operational Team were involved in the original discussions in 2023 and had accepted the proposals on the basis of the work being short-term (12months). Please refer to Kevin Bown of the Spatial Planning Team who was in attendance at that meeting.
5. *It is intended that the improved access will remain in place following completion of the works to form the bund. Discussions were held with the Spatial Planning Team (and included the Operations Team) in 2023 in respect of whether to leave the improved access in place following completion of the works. At the time, the Spatial Planning Team were of the opinion that it would be better to leave the improved access in place. Therefore, the proposal is to leave the improved access in place. This seems to be the pragmatic approach as the upgraded access will be an improvement on the current situation.*
6. The existing lawful use of the access is as a residential access involving 5.5 trips a day. I confirm that after the works are completed that the access will be used for a single residential access only.
7. The existing access is extremely poor but there is no record of accidents in the last 10 years. The upgraded access is therefore, an improvement on the existing with only a relatively small and time-limited increase in trips. Therefore, no permanent mitigation measures are required. A Traffic Management Plan including appropriate signing will be provided in accordance with The Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 8 as part of the detailed drawings for the Section 278 application post planning approval.
8. It is acknowledged that the distance between the site access and the layby to the north and the grade separated junction to the south do not meet the DMRB standards. Therefore, technically Departures from Standards would be required. However, the existing access does not meet DMRB standards and this situation does not change as a result of the proposals. Therefore, no separate applications are needed for these aspects. The location of the layby and grade separated junction were a consideration of the Road Safety Audit Stage 1. The Designer's Response has been updated and is included in the reworked submission.

- End of Report -