Warwick University Hybrid Planning Application 2018

The University details an ambitious program of development, with 9 key projects described under planning application OUT/2018/2115. This application is available to review on the Coventry City Council Planning Application webpage; Transport Assessment documents 1, 2 and 3 are especially relevant.

It must be noted that Cannon Park Community Association is fully supportive of development of the University in keeping with its excellent national and international status. However, such developments must take into account their effect on the local community, as expansion of the University exacts a negative effect on local residents. It really is time for both the University and Coventry City Council to be concerned with this and demonstrate positive actions for the benefit of all these council tax paying residents.

The key concern with the University’s application is the increase in traffic that will result, and how this will further impact on the adjacent residential road system, which has already seen the traffic burden increase dramatically over the past 10 years.

It should be noted that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and these must be taken into account as material consideration in all planning decisions.

The City Council previously adhered to the National Planning Policy Framework and for the University’s 2009 outline masterplan, Council gave consent for the University to set a maximum car parking limit of 5,422 spaces across the Campus. The proposal in the current application seeks to lift this cap by 1,030 spaces.

The University’s travel plan in their current application, and the impact assessments, illustrate where A roads and junctions surrounding the University locality are already at or above capacity. The significant congestion caused at peak time is well known and has grown considerably over the past 10 years. This can only increase over the next 10 years as car ownership continues to rise. The assertion that as congestion is bad now, that some more will not make much of a difference, is completely unacceptable.

The impact that this congestion has on local residential streets is that:-

- commuters perpetually find and increasingly use residential roads as “rat-runs”.
- residents are being prevented from reasonable access to and egress from their homes, particularly at peak times.
- The growth of such infringement has grown dramatically over the past 10 years.
- The Council and Councillors have been increasingly been lobbied by residents of Cannon Park, Cannon Hill Road and Westwood Heath over traffic matters compounded by the dominance and scale of the University’s growth.
- Residents’ petitions have requested the Council to implement traffic calming measures to restrict the impact of commuter traffic infringement in residential areas.
In Warwickshire County Council’s strategic plan for the local highway structure, specific reference is made to the A46 link road. Please also see:

https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/a46linkroad

This link road has parts 1 and 2. Part 1 is a major redevelopment of the A46/Stoneleigh junction. This is planned to be built in 2019-2020. It is important to note that this will improve the flow of traffic off and onto the A46 at peak times but will not reduce the number of vehicles using Stoneleigh Road itself to access or exit the University. The same pressures on local roads adjacent to the University will remain.

It is only with the completion of Phase 2 that local relief will occur. Phase 2 is planned for construction in 2023-2024. One option here is a link to the Stonebridge junction at the intersection of the A45/A452 (the junction on the A45 just before the M42).

Warwickshire County Council’s strategic case for the completed A46 link road project aims to address the following key issues:

1 Improved access to the University of Warwick and Stoneleigh Park

2. A45 Corridor Congestion Reduction

3. Local Benefits

At a local level, the completed A46 link road will:

- Significantly reduce the amount of traffic on Stoneleigh Road and Gibbet Hill Road which is trying to access the University of Warwick and surrounding employment areas.
- Reduce the current trend for “rat running” of traffic on local roads.
- Provide an opportunity for other A roads through rural communities and village centres to be downgraded, allowing a series of public realm/environmental enhancements to be implemented.

Residents in Cannon Park, on Cannon Hill Road and adjacent streets need measures instituted to curb and restrict University traffic and its associated burden on these streets. This must include physical speed calming. Councillors and Council Officers are fully aware of this.
Cannon Hill Road has suffered significantly through the University's actions. In more detail:

- The University’s Travel Plan states clearly that “the A429 Kenilworth Rd/A45 Kenpas Highway junction is over capacity in both peak periods with long queues on A45 eastbound and westbound and queues on Kenilworth Rd”.
- The effect of this is that vehicles use Cannon Hill Road as a “rat-run” in both directions, from the Charter Avenue dual carriageway at the north end and Kenilworth Rd/A46 from the South.
- The Traffic Plan figures regarding peak flow on Cannon Hill Road have been understated by 79% in the morning north/west travel and by 10% in the afternoon south/east travel when compared to previous reliable Mott Mac Donald data.
- Even the south/east afternoon travel yields queues for 2/3rds of the total length of Cannon Hill Road and daily Google Map traffic screen-prints during term time clearly show this.
- The 20mph traffic calming along Gibbet Hill Road and through the campus that was constructed in the summer of 2016 has directed further traffic off that road. The consequence has been that as soon as it was introduced, residents noticed a step-change increase in Cannon Hill Road traffic.
- The current Hybrid application predicts a further increase in traffic of 19% due to the increased construction and additional 1030 car parking spaces. Even though the Travel Plan claims success over the past 10 years in managing transport and restricting traffic growth, this is clearly not the daily experience of residents in the areas adjacent to the University.
- Residents have requested a 20mph zone (approved by the Council, but never actioned), physical traffic calming, a safe road crossing for the Primary School, and a 7 tonne weight restriction.
- Cannon Hill Road is less than 5m wide at many points and buses and cars struggle to pass without one or both stopping. The bus operator needs to be encouraged to use slimline buses on safety and obstruction grounds.
- The Primary School has assembled a petition, with Councillor help, to ask for these traffic control measures. A final count has to be confirmed, but it is expected that signatures will be in the order of 600.
- The University has repeatedly been asked to concede to these minimal mitigation measures for Section 106 funding but have so far not given any agreement and have cancelled consultation meetings with their Traffic Consultants.

It must be noted that roads off and adjacent to Cannon Hill Road, especially Tutbury Avenue and Cannon Park Road, are also affected by the “rat run”. This needs to be recognised. (It is on these roads that University staff/students park, causing yet further inconvenience and obstruction for local residents).
In conclusion........

Coventry City Council is asked to adhere to the original agreement attached to the 2009 outline masterplan consent for the Campus that set a maximum car parking limit of 5,422 spaces across the Campus.

This application for additional car parking must be rejected until:

1. Phase 2 of the A46 link road is completed.
2. Traffic calming and 20mph zones are introduced to all streets in residential areas surrounding the Campus.
3. That A roads in local rural communities be downgraded and lower speed limits and traffic calming, as well as HGV restrictions are introduced.

A more detailed version of this document has been submitted to Council as the objection of the Association to the planning application.