

Review of planning application for Old Telephone Exchange and Masonic Lodge site, Elmsleigh Road, Staines upon Thames

Prepared for:

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Version 2.0

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Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Reviewed	Issued
1.0	18/02/2021	A Thomas	P Davidson	Draft to SBC
2.0	29/03/2021	A Thomas	P Davidson	Final to SBC

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A planning application for a development of 206 dwellings has been submitted to Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC). The Council has commissioned Peter Davidson Consultancy Ltd (PDC) to provide independent advice on the proposed parking provision, possible impact of spill-over parking on neighbouring roads, and possible congestion.

The work involved the following tasks:

1. Reading the documents in the planning application that relate to parking and traffic congestion, and other linked information such as the local parking standards.
2. Using our professional judgement to identify items in the above documents that might be of concern – for example omissions or unrealistic assumptions.
3. Reporting on our findings.

Our review and this report covers the proposed number of parking spaces per dwelling, in comparison with the local guidance. We outline possible impacts of a shortfall of parking provision. We use available documents to suggest locations where spill-over parking might occur.

Regarding traffic congestion, we looked at the site plan and proposed connections to the existing road network in order to identify the roads and junctions which are most likely to experience increased traffic as a result of the development.

Chapter 2: Parking

Parking Provision

The site is in Staines town centre, bounded by Elmsleigh Road on all sides. The 206 proposed dwellings are flats of types and sizes summarised in Table 1.

Type of dwelling	Proposed number
Market housing – 1 bedroom	57
Market housing – 2 bedroom	55
Shared ownership – 1 bedroom	17
Shared ownership – 2 bedroom	18
Affordable rent – 1 bedroom	31
Affordable rent – 2 bedroom	28
Total	206

Table 1 Number of proposed housing units by type

The proposed vehicle parking provision for the development is shown in Table 2. We understand from the Transport Assessment that in pre-application correspondence Surrey County Council indicated they would not have an objection to the proposed number of car parking spaces.

Type of vehicle	Proposed spaces
Car	48
Cycle	220
Motorcycle	6
Other car club	2

Table 2 Number of proposed parking spaces

Spelthorne Borough Council's Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document (adopted 26 February 2009) sets out the needs, key issues and objectives of the Borough and includes policies designed to achieve them. Policy CC3 (Parking Provision) states the Council's need for "appropriate

provision to be made for off street parking in development proposals in accordance with its maximum parking standards.” In summary, consideration needs to be given to:

1. Anticipated level of parking demand.
2. Scope for reducing the need for on site parking by encouraging alternative means of travel – particularly in areas with good public transport provision.
3. Potential on-street parking and its impact on highway safety.
4. Need for disabled parking.
5. Provision of cycle parking.

A separate supplementary planning guidance document contains the Council’s parking standards. The standards were originally expressed as a ‘maximum’ in line with Central Government’s PPG13. PPG13 has been superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which does not specify how parking standards should be applied. It was announced that matters such as parking standards should be decided locally and as such, SBC used evidence from their own surveys to establish minimum parking standards for residential development.

The parking standards document specifically mentions “town centre locations such as Staines” as an example of a location where “good accessibility to public transport may justify a lower provision”.

The relevant standards are shown in Table 3.

Type of dwelling	Car parking spaces per dwelling	Cycle parking per dwelling
General needs housing – 1 bedroom	1.25	1
General needs housing – 2 bedroom	1.5	1
Affordable housing – 1 bedroom	1	1
Affordable housing – 2 bedroom	1.25	1

Table 3 Residential parking standards

If the minimum standards in Table 3 were applied to the proposed development, 260 parking spaces (1.26 per dwelling) would be required. The proposal for 48 spaces (0.23 per dwelling) is substantially fewer – only 18% of this number.

It is clear from SBC’s Parking Standards document that the location of the proposed development means consideration can be given to a reduction in car parking provision.

There are five relevant factors against which this should be assessed:

1. Distance from public transport node, i.e. main railway station, bus station, main bus stop.

The site is approximately 11 minutes’ walk from Staines railway station (according to Google Maps). Staines Bus Station is approximately 6 minutes’ walk away (according to Google Maps). The closest other bus stops are Thames Street (Stop H), Staines Bridge (Stop Z), and Ripley Way (Stop K). These public transport nodes are all within a reasonable walking distance of the site.

2. Frequency and quality of train service

Staines railway station is served by South Western Railway services from London Waterloo to Windsor, Reading and Weybridge. Due to COVID-19, a reduced timetable is currently in operation (as of February 2021). However, the applicant reports in the Transport Assessment that normally at peak times there are eleven trains per hour to Waterloo, two to Windsor & Eton Riverside, three to Reading, and two to Weybridge.

3. Frequency and quality of bus service

As with trains, bus services are currently reduced due to COVID-19. However, according to the Transport Assessment, there are normally frequent services between the bus stops / station and numerous destinations with long operating hours.

It should be noted that Heathrow Airport Ltd have recently removed their subsidy (and hence the buses) on many bus routes and removed the free travel pass for local workers at the airport. This makes bus travel a less attractive option for commuting trips to this major employment site.

4. Availability and quality of pedestrian and cycle routes

Pavements and dedicated footpaths are available for walking, including the pedestrianised High Street.

5. Range and quality of facilities supportive of residential development within a reasonable walking distance (or well served by public transport), e.g. retail, leisure, educational, and possibly employment.

The Transport Assessment includes analysis of facilities “accessible within a 20 minute walk distance, including schools, doctors surgeries and convenience stores.” Retail and employment sites in Staines town centre are within this walking distance.

On the basis of the factors above, we can conclude that it would not necessarily be unreasonable for the development’s car parking provision to be lower than SBC’s standard. However, consideration should still be given to whether the amount proposed is appropriate.

The Travel Plan Statement submitted as part of the planning application includes “measures that will be delivered upon occupation of the site to inform residents of their travel options and encourage sustainable patterns of travel from the outset.”

We comment on the final sentence in paragraph 1.3.3, “As agreed with SCC This Travel Plan Statement does not include targets or monitoring.” Without targets or monitoring it is difficult to gauge the success of the plan. A related issue is the role of the Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC), briefly outlined in chapter 4. This person will be responsible for implementing the Travel Plan measures. If, as anticipated, “the TPC role will be undertaken by a member of the sales or management team at the site” then, especially with no targets or monitoring in place, it is not clear what level of resource is to be allocated to this important issue.

One of the proposed measures in the Travel Plan statement is the Car Club (paragraph 6.5.1). In principle this should be an attractive alternative to private car ownership. “Residents at the site will be provided with one year free Car Club membership and 25 miles free car club travel to incentivise the uptake of this measure.” No analysis is provided about the costs after this, nor about the level to which the cost comparison makes the Car Club attractive compared to private car ownership.

If the Car Club proves popular with residents, two vehicles might not be enough to cater for peak demand, with the effect that lack of car availability deters potential users.

The car park management plan is mentioned in section 4.3 of the Transport Assessment, with spaces being leased to residents by the building management company. The cost of this, along with the scarcity of spaces, could work as a deterrent to car ownership for the building residents. The potential for spill-over parking into nearby streets should also be considered.

No visitor car parking is included in the development proposal.

A shortfall of parking provision could lead to spill-over parking into nearby streets. This might mean higher competition for on-street parking for current local residents, and possibly even parking in unsafe locations on the highway. Spill-over parking is discussed further in the next section.

The planning application proposes 220 cycle parking spaces, which meets SBC's standard. These should be secure, lockable, maintained, and not competitive (i.e. allocated for each flat and visitors).

In general, the measures contained in the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan Statement go some way towards encouraging reducing car use and promote alternative travel modes. Their efficacy is of course not guaranteed and the question remains as to whether the measures support the proposed low level of parking provision.

Consideration should also be given to providing parking for disabled users. Ten of the proposed 48 spaces will be accessible. We assume (because it is not clear from the Transport Assessment) that these spaces would only be allocated to blue badge holders. This would mean the number of parking spaces for non blue badge holders is only 38, which, if accessible spaces were excluded, would reduce the available spaces to 0.18 per dwelling for others.

According to the Transport Assessment (paragraph 4.2.3), consideration has been given to electric vehicle charging facilities, with "40% of spaces... fitted with a fast charge socket for electric vehicle charging" and "All other spaces will be provided with power supply and a feeder pillar or equivalent permitting future connection."

Possible spill-over parking

In the Transport Assessment, the applicant has reviewed existing on-street parking restrictions within approximately 400m walking distance of the site. They conclude (paragraph 5.4.2):

"Given the prevalence of restricted parking in the area, it is extremely unlikely and not practical that residents will own a vehicle and park it off-site. People who own a car are therefore unlikely to purchase or rent a flat on the development if there is not a parking space available for them to lease. The potential for the development to exacerbate any on-street parking constraints is therefore minimised."

On Elmsleigh Road, parking and loading are prohibited Monday to Sunday, 8.30am to 6.30pm. This might be the first place overnight parking would take place.

The closest roads without any parking restrictions appear to be in and around Richmond Road and Gresham Road to the south-east of the site. This area is identified by the applicant, stating:

"Whilst it is considered highly unlikely that any overspill parking would occur ..., the developer would be willing to fund a consultation into a residents parking zone for the Richmond Road / Gresham Road area, which the closest area of uncontrolled parking to the site. If the scheme were to progress following the consultation, the developer would subsequently fund the appropriate signage and road markings."

An overnight parking beat survey was conducted on 2 and 3 March 2021, with results summarised in a Technical Note (04550-T-06-B-Parking Note.pdf). It covered residential roads close to the site (up to 1.1 km to the north and 900m to the south).

Roads with yellow line restrictions would require a car parked overnight to be moved early in the morning every day. There is low overnight use of these spaces, only 3% being occupied on both surveyed nights. The applicant therefore concludes that these spaces would not be attractive for residents of the proposed development.

Roads with unrestricted parking have higher overnight use, with overall 67% and 65% of spaces being occupied on the two nights of the survey. On some roads, the number of parked vehicles is higher than the capacity (the Technical Note mentions Edgell Road, Langley Road, Budebury Road, Wyatt Road and Beehive Road), which could either be residents parking across their own dropped kerbs or people parking in inappropriate locations. The Technical Note states, “The levels of parking in these locations will mean that any residents from the proposed development who may wish to park a vehicle off-site would be very unlikely to regularly find an available space and therefore would choose to park in alternative locations.” An alternative outcome might be a further increase on parking stress in these areas.

There are also roads which appear to have unrestricted parking to the north-east and east of the site, such as Sidney Road, Rosefield Road, and Greenlands Road. The Technical Note identifies these three roads as the locations of the majority of available spaces. It goes on to state that these roads are over 800 metres walking distance from the proposed site, “making them unlikely to be attractive to the majority of residents at the proposed development”. However, we note that these roads are accessible using the same walking routes as the town centre and railway station and should also be considered possible locations for spill-over parking.

SBC also provided PDC with a parking beat survey report from another planning application (Charter Square phase 1C), which was conducted on 27 and 28 January 2021. This covered a wide area, overlapping the area of the Elmsleigh Road parking beat survey. The reported parking capacities and usage are broadly similar.

Off-street car parks are also available near the site which could be used by visitors and residents. At most times, payment is required, unlike the on-street alternatives. The car parks include¹:

- Elmsleigh surface car park (Approx 6 minute walk from the site. 316 spaces + 23 disabled bays, 10 parent & child bays. Open 24 hours, 7 days. Cost to park for over 5 hours £12.00. Season tickets available, e.g. £715 for 12 months).
- Elmsleigh multi-storey car park (Approx 9 minute walk from the site. 463 spaces + 30 disabled bays, 18 parent & child bays. Open 10am-5pm, 7 days. Cost to park for over 5 hours £12.00. Season tickets available, e.g. £715 for 12 months).
- Tothill multi-storey car park (within 100m of the development site. 522 spaces + 27 disabled bays, 18 parent & child bays. Open Mon-Sat 8am-7pm, Sun 9am-5pm. Cost to park for over 5 hours £7.30. Season tickets available, e.g. £715 for 12 months).
- Elmsleigh Road car park (A small car park within 100m of the development site. Open 24 hours, 7 days. Cost to park for over 5 hours £12.20).
- Kingston Road car park (Approx 9 minute walk from the site. 165 spaces + 6 disabled bays. Open 24 hours, 7 days. Cost to park for over 5 hours £7.30. Season tickets available, e.g. £715 for 12 months).
- Riverside surface car park (Approx 2 minute walk from the site. 79 spaces + 5 disabled bays, 5 parent & child bays. Open 24 hours, 7 days. Cost to park for over 5 hours £12.20).
- Lammas Recreation Ground car park (Approx 14 minute walk from the site. Open 7 days a week, 7.30am-8pm (summer), 7.30am-6pm (winter). Cost to park for over 4 hours £7.00).

¹ Car park details from Spelthorne Borough Council’s website, <http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/article/17338/Car-parks-in-Staines-upon-Thames>

Summary of other planning applications

SBC has made us aware of the following planning permissions/applications in Staines Town Centre. All have more parking spaces per dwelling than the Elmsleigh Road proposal.

Charter Square (Phase 1A, ref 09/00566/OUT and Phase 1B, ref 17/01923/FUL)

Phase 1A has 260 dwellings and 218 car parking spaces (0.84 per dwelling).

The Phase 1B proposal is for 104 one- and two-bedroom residential units plus commercial floorspace. 27 parking spaces are provided (0.26 per dwelling) and 108 cycle spaces.

The Officers Report for this development states “It is anticipated that additional car parking space will be available within Phase 1A and therefore any additional demand for residential car parking will be accommodated within this car park. As such, the car parking level across the site will be provided at a level of 0.67 per dwelling.” It also states that Phase 1A and Phase 1B should be considered in isolation and that Phase 1B’s reduction in parking supply compared to the usual minimum standards is “considered appropriate given the mitigation measures indicated and the desire to reduce traffic movements on the surrounding network”.

Berkeley Homes (19/00290/FUL)

This proposal is for six buildings on London Road, Staines, containing 467 residential units plus commercial floorspace. 346 car parking spaces would be provided (0.74 per dwelling).

Bridge Street Car Park (15/01718/FUL)

This proposal is for 205 residential flats plus commercial floorspace. 134 parking spaces would be provided (0.65 per dwelling) plus 16 motorcycle and 205 cycle spaces. There is a loss of public car parking, but SBC is satisfied there is sufficient capacity at other car parks in the town centre.

SBC informed PDC that this permission has recently expired but it is likely that a new planning application will come forward in the future.

Thameside House (20/00344/FUL)

This proposal is for the demolition of existing office block and replacement with 140 residential units, plus flexible commercial and retail floorspace. It was submitted in 2020 and is pending consideration.

The proposal’s Transport Assessment states 195 car parking spaces (of which 140 are for the residential development, i.e. 1 per unit) and 165 cycle parking spaces are proposed. It is relevant to note that this proposal involves the loss of some public car parking at Elmsleigh surface car park.

Renshaw industrial Estate (21/00010/FUL)

This proposal is also pending consideration. It is for a scheme comprising 397 residential flats. 192 car parking spaces (0.48 per unit) are proposed.

The site has outline planning consent (17/01365/OUT) for 275 units with 248 car parking spaces (0.90 per unit).

Parking Conclusions

PDC has reviewed the the documents in the planning application that relate to parking and traffic congestion, and other linked information such as the local parking standards. The Elmsleigh Road proposal is for 206 flats and 48 car parking spaces (0.23 per dwelling, which reduces to 0.18 per

dwelling if the ten disabled parking spaces are excluded). We understand Surrey County Council indicated they would not have an objection to this number. In our opinion, the applicant has adequately demonstrated that due to site location and sustainable travel options the criteria for some reduction in car parking provision, compared to SBC's minimum parking standards, have been met. However, the rate of 0.23 spaces per dwelling is much lower than any of the other similar proposed developments we have been made aware of nearby and is likely to result in spill-over parking. Consideration should be given to either increasing the parking space provision or demonstrating, with some scientific underpinning, that spill-over would not occur.

If spill-over parking were to occur, the nearest streets without parking restrictions appear from mapping data to be in and around Richmond Road, Gresham Road, Sidney Road, Rosefield Road, and Greenlands Road. Off-street parking is also available in a number of locations near the site.

Based on the results of the parking beat survey, the applicant states that roads with currently high parking stress are unlikely to be attractive to residents of the proposed development. In our opinion, if these roads are within a reasonable walking distance of the development site then spill-over parking could actually increase parking stress.

The applicant also states that roads more than 800 metres walking distance from the proposed site are unlikely to be attractive for parking (specifically Sidney Road, Rosefield Road, Greenlands Road). Given that they are accessible using the same walking routes as the town centre and railway station, we suggest they are possible locations for spill-over parking.

Chapter 3: Traffic Congestion

For this review, PDC has looked at the site plan and proposed connections to the existing road network in order to identify the roads and junctions which are most likely to experience increased traffic as a result of the development.

The existing road layout at the site is shown in Figure 1. Elmsleigh Road is currently connected to a roundabout, which also provides access via a ramp to the servicing entrance for Elmsleigh shopping centre. Elmsleigh Road itself is also used for access to Elmsleigh Road car park, Tothill multi-storey car park, and some commercial servicing accesses. Beyond the roundabout is a signal-controlled junction with the A308 (Thames Street). There is a pelican crossing at this junction.

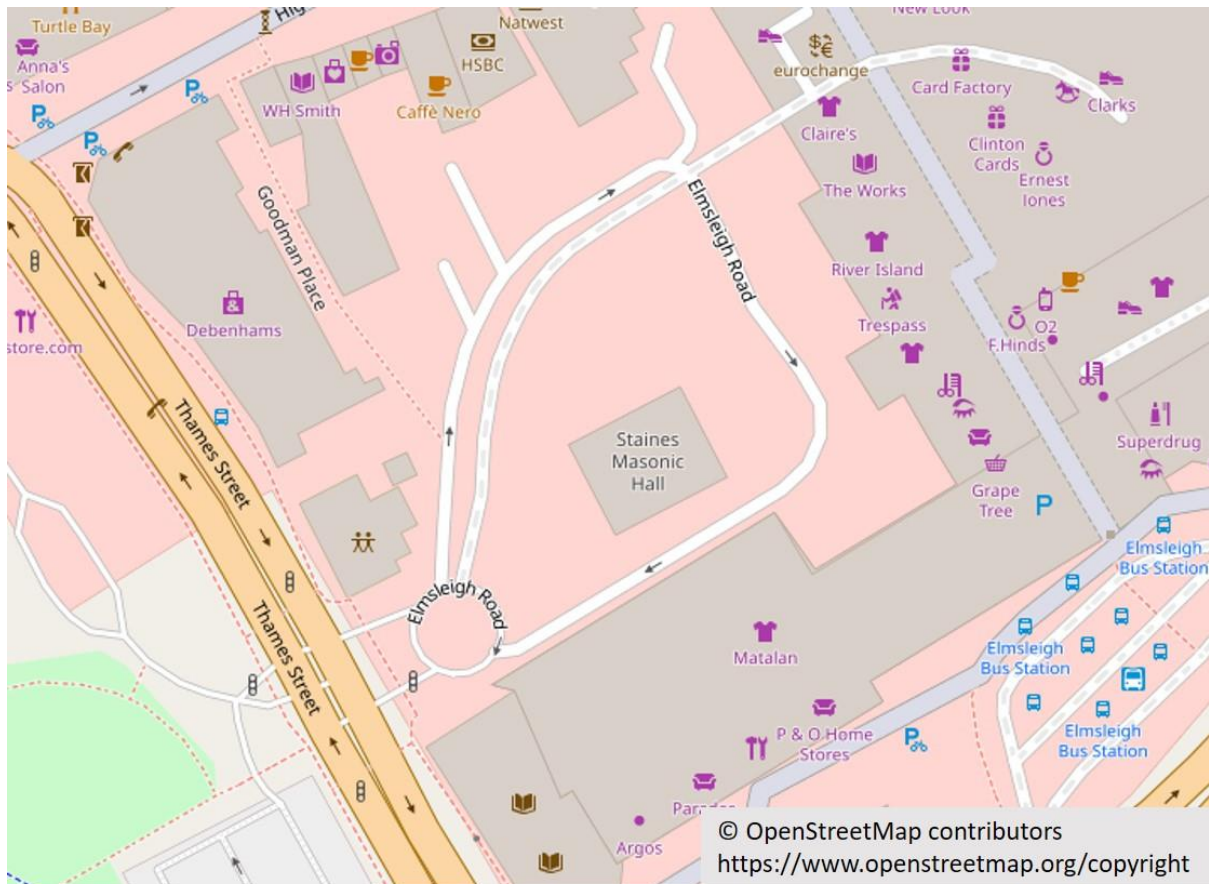


Figure 1 Site location (existing road layout)

Changes to the existing road layout are included in the planning application. These are described in section 4.4 and Appendix F of the Transport Assessment. The junction with Thames Street is redesigned, with the removal of the existing roundabout. New pedestrian facilities are provided. Vehicular access to the development's car park would be on the north-eastern part of Elmsleigh Road.

If any increase in traffic congestion were to arise as a result of the development, the most likely place for the biggest impact is the Elmsleigh Road / Thames Street junction.

Chapter 6 of the Transport Assessment covers Traffic Impacts. This includes junction modelling for both the existing road layout and the proposed road layout at the Elmsleigh Road / Thames Street junction. The procedure reported is as follows:

- Use of TRICS for trip generation numbers.
- Trip distribution and assignment based on classified turning counts undertaken in 2020.
- Junction modelling using the LinSig software.

An appropriate junction modelling methodology and appropriate software packages have reportedly been used. Note that PDC has not verified or assessed the validity of the numbers reported or the junction capacity calculations, nor have we been provided with the model files.

According to paragraph 6.4.4, the "model was run with the pedestrian stage called every second cycle". It would be useful to know whether this is based on observed data or an assumption. If there are fewer car trips into the development there will be correspondingly more pedestrian trips and the

junctions will need to accommodate the extra pedestrians possibly with extra pedestrian signal green time. This needs to be considered in the junction modelling.

As reported in paragraph 6.4.11 the junction modelling for the proposed layout included several changes to inter-green times. Inter-green times are an important safety consideration, so we advise that the developer must demonstrate that these changes do not compromise safety for road users or pedestrians.

The Transport Assessment concludes that the development “would not have a severe residual cumulative impact on the road network”. PDC has not had access to the LinSig files used in the junction modelling, so we cannot agree or disagree with this conclusion. One potential cause for concern is that Table 6-5 shows the existing junction operating over capacity in 2025 and Table 6-6 shows the modified junction operating within capacity in 2025. This is perhaps surprising given that the modified junction reduces the width (and therefore capacity) of Elmsleigh Road. We recommend this issue is investigated further, along with the points about inter-green times above.

Chapter 4: Next Steps

If required, more detailed assessment could be undertaken to collect new data and undertake further analysis so as to scientifically understand the effect of the development so that the council can make a more well-informed decision. This could include (if this has not already been undertaken), to design and undertake a junction capacity survey to determine whether the junctions are at capacity, to check the capacities used in the applicant’s LinSig model and to assess the effect of the development on possible congestion.

If SBC wish us to undertake the above, we are happy to do so with any other work if needed at our daily rates given in our proposal.