

Highway Development Management Consultation Response

Planning Application Ref: PL/2026/02458

Site Address: Land East of Eastern Way, Melksham

Proposal: Full application for the construction of a new food store (Class E) with associated parking, landscaping, drainage and servicing.

The proposed development incorporates:

- A single storey building with a total floor space of 2184m² (GIA) including a net sales area of 1529m².
- 132 car parking spaces including 6 disabled bays, 9 parent and child spaces and 2 electric vehicle charging spaces.
- Comprehensive landscaping scheme.
- SUDS drainage scheme.

Date of Consultation Response: 08/07/2026

Recommendation: Holding Objection, additional information/ revisions required

Introduction

The proposals seek consent for a new Lidl food store, consisting of a total of 2,184m² GIA, with a public sales area of 1,529m², on previously undeveloped land to the East of Eastern Way and South of Sandridge Common. The land is a designated Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment site (SHELAA site Ref 3552) and is thus promoted for development. As such, the principle of such a development in this location is accepted in highway terms.

I am aware that the proposals subject to this submission only seek development of part of this allocation site, but the development of the Southern part of the allocation is safeguarded through the combined access proposals.

Principle Access Matters

The development seeks to provide access from Eastern Way in the form of a right turn lane, with the new internal access road providing access to both the proposed development site and the remainder of the SHELAA site 3552.

Visibility splays have been shown at the new access of 2.4m x 104m in both directions. The Transport Assessment (TA) submitted also includes details of a speed survey in the vicinity, the results of which have been used to determine the required visibility splays. The visibility splays shown are thus considered sufficient for the context.

The right turn lane geometry shows 3.25m wide through lanes and a 3.25m wide turning lane, which again, are considered sufficient for the context. This is supported by the submitted swept path analysis for a 16.5m long articulated delivery vehicle, which shows that the necessary manoeuvres are adequate. The overall deceleration length and turning lane lengths are also considered sufficient for this development.

The priority junction site access road is shown at a width of 9m, with three, 3m wide lanes. This thus includes a right turn on exit lane, which will help to avoid delay for left turners should right turners be delayed on exit. This additional lane is welcomed, however, it does have an impact of extending the crossing distance for pedestrians and cyclists, which is discussed further later.

Whilst the general geometry of the right turn lane junction is considered acceptable in principle, I do have concerns that the additional width created on Eastern Way will attract vehicles to overtake other vehicles, especially Southbound. As such, I require a physical splitter island to be provided within the hatching to the North of the right turn lane.

I note that there have been five collisions resulting in injury on Eastern Way in the last 5 year survey period, which is significant. However, on analysis of these individual collisions, they are all of a differing nature and suggest driver error was at fault for the majority. Therefore, the inclusion of the right turn lane junction, subject to the splitter island provision mentioned above, is not expected to increase the likelihood of collisions in this vicinity.

Traffic Impact

In terms of capacity, the submitted TA has undertaken an assessment of both the site access junction and the nearby Eastern Way/Sandridge Common roundabout. Vehicle count survey data was collected at all arms of the Eastern Way/Sandridge Common roundabout to establish existing traffic levels and TRICS has been used to establish likely trip rates for the proposed development site. The development trip rates have also been distributed on the network based on the directional percentages from the surveys.

The TRICS assessment has been summarised for the highway peak periods and the Saturday peak period and based upon the whole GIA of 2,184m² for the store, which is considered a robust approach. The assessment has predicted a maximum of 229 vehicle trips in the Saturday peak period, with 221 in the Weekday PM peak. Given the nature of the store, these trip rates have been 'discounted' by 30% for the junction assessments to account for pass-by trips, which is a common expectation for developments of this nature and supported by national research studies. The trip rates are thus accepted.

The junction assessments have been split into three scenarios, 2026 baseline, 2031 without Lidl and 2031 with the new Lidl store. This also takes into account the additional traffic likely to be generated by the nearby Blackmore Farm development. TRL's Junction 9 software has been used for these assessments, with the PICADY module used for the right turn lane junction and ARCADY for the roundabout junction. The methodologies are accepted. The right turn lane is shown to fall well within capacity for the new Lidl store, which also supports its use as a shared access for the future development site. However, any future submission on the remainder of the SHELLA allocation will need to demonstrate that this arrangement remains suitable for the additional development, both in terms of geometry and capacity.

The roundabout assessment also shows that all three arms will remain well within capacity in all three scenarios. Whilst the Lidl store will clearly have an impact on the roundabout, with forecast delays increasing by around 2 seconds in the peak periods, this is not considered 'severe', which is the measure that must be reached for a highway refusal, as stated within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Active Travel Accessibility

In terms of active travel accessibility, the proposals include a significant amount of additional shared use foot/cycleways, which are welcomed. The 3m routes are shown connecting the site access road and the store to the existing refuge crossing to the South of the roundabout and to the proposed puffin crossing further South on Eastern Way.

As is noted within the submission, the proposed puffin crossing is to be provided by the Blackmore Farm development and the applicant has offered to fund the costs of upgrading this proposed crossing to a Toucan, to allow use by cycles. This offer is welcomed and will aid accessibility to the store significantly for cyclists. The costs of the upgrade are generally considered to be around £30,000 and this would need to form a S.106 obligation.

Whilst the new infrastructure proposed is welcomed, there are some omissions/areas where connections are lacking. For example, the existing refuge crossing to the South of the Sandridge Common roundabout is not suitable for shared use by cycles at its current width and this will thus need to be improved to 3m also, so both foot/cycleways are properly connected. This should form part of the S.278 works.

A new dropped kerb will be required on Sandridge Common to allow cyclists to leave the carriageway and enter the site from the North, along the internal 3m wide path towards to cycle parking stands.

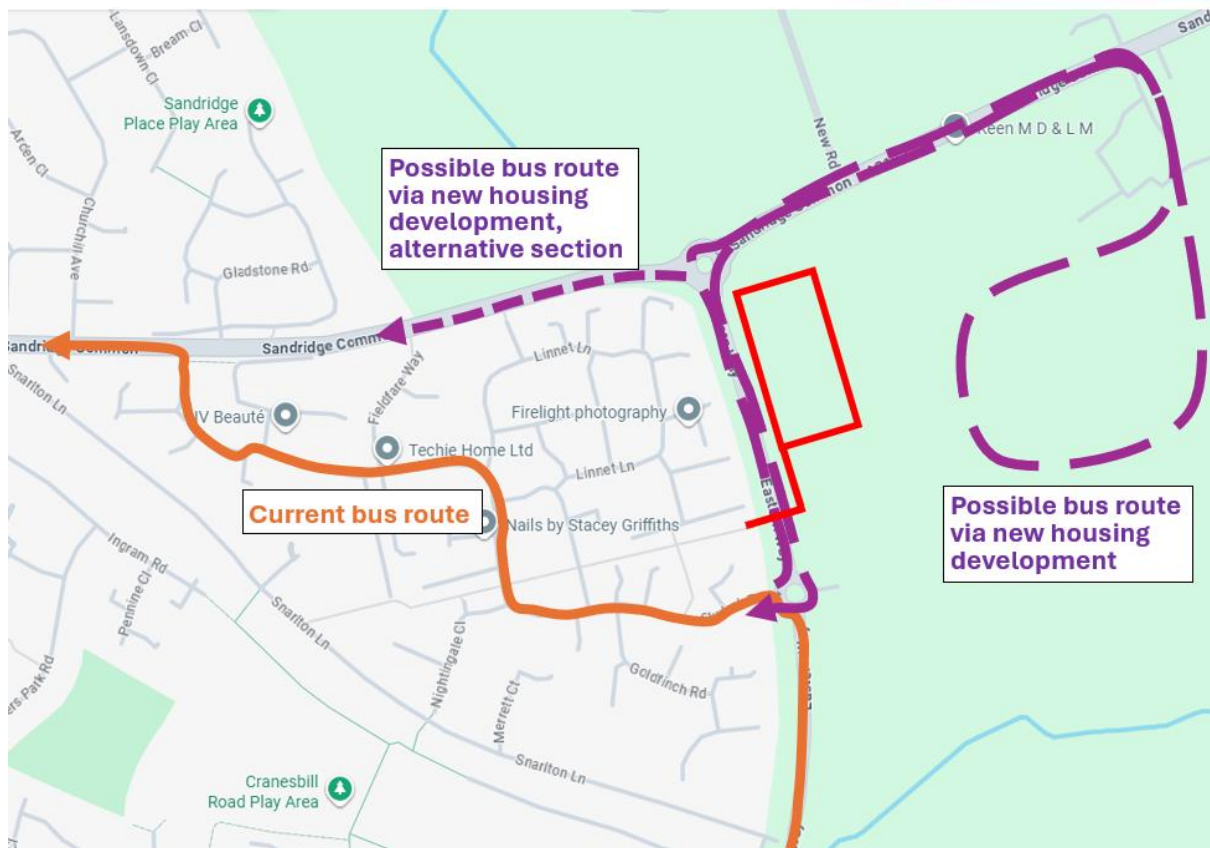
Additionally, the new access road is 9m wide and shows a tactile crossing point for peds/cycles. This width, along with the potential of over 200 vehicle trips in the peak hour periods, would make crossing here extremely difficult and this thus needs to be reconsidered to allow suitable crossing opportunities here.

I note that some local representations have suggested a connection to the Blackmore Farm development to the East and whilst this would be welcomed, the development would be connected via the new foot/cycleway and footpath MELW27 further South, which will be subject to surface improvements through the Blackmore Farm development.

Public Transport Accessibility

As the TA suggests, the site is not directly served by frequent bus services, but bus services are available on Skylark Road. Whilst the development will be providing additional pedestrian/cycle infrastructure to connect in the Skylark Road direction, this is still around 350-400m door to stop, which is not really attractive for customers carrying bags of shopping.

The Council's Public Transport Unit have been working on additional bus service proposals with a view to improving service frequency and serving the forthcoming Eastern developments, such as Blackmore Farm. Currently, the proposals are shown indicatively below;



The redline is the approximate Lidl site, with the orange the existing infrequent bus service route and the purple, the likely route for the proposed future bus service. As can be seen, the future service would directly pass the Lidl site and offer much improved accessibility and mode choice for customers and staff.

The Blackmore Farm development to the East is providing a £750,000 financial contribution towards this bus service, however, no new bus stops have been secured on Eastern Way/Sandridge Common. There are existing unused bus stop areas on Eastern Way, however, these will be replaced by the Puffin/Toucan Crossing mentioned above. As such, new bus stop infrastructure will be required on either Eastern Way to serve the Lidl store. As these proposals include significant S.278 highway works for the new right turn lane junction and ped/cycle paths, it would seem prudent for the new bus stops, consisting of raised kerbs, landing areas, shelters and flags, to be installed as part of these wider S.278 works. Alternatively, if the applicant was not amenable to this, we could consider a financial contribution.

On Site Matters

In terms of car parking, 132 car parking spaces have been proposed and I am content that this is sufficient for the scale of development and in accordance with Wiltshire's Car Parking Standards. However, all of the spaces shown on plan are only 4.7m long, when they should be a minimum of 4.8m long. This will require alteration.

For cycles, 12 cycle parking spaces are shown, which meets Wiltshire's Cycle Parking Standards and I am general satisfied with their proposed location.

For delivery vehicles, swept paths have been provided that shown the necessary manoeuvres can be undertaken. However, increasing the car parking spaces length to 4.8m may affect this and this should thus be redrawn accordingly to ensure access is unimpeded.

Travel Plan

The submitted Staff Travel Plan is welcomed and is largely suitable, however it will need to include the provision of £300 green travel vouchers for each staff member in the first year of occupation. This will thus need to be updated. These, alongside the monitoring of the plan set out in section 5, will need to be secured via S106.

Summary

The principle of the development is accepted in highway terms. The principal access arrangements are accepted in terms of geometry and capacity for the new food store, subject to a physical splitter island being provided. The access arrangements will require further assessment if additional development served through this access comes forward.

The additional pedestrian and cycle infrastructure is welcomed, but additional works/connections are required.

Therefore, I invite the applicant to provide the following amendments/additions, prior to offering a formal Highway recommendation.

- Provide splitter island within hatching to North of RTL.
- Show existing refuge crossing South of the Sandridge Common roundabout widened to 3m (both dropped kerbs and refuge)
- Provide dropped kerb on Sandridge Common for cyclists leaving the carriageway.
- Reconsideration of ped/cycle crossing options at site access
- Provide two new bus stops on Eastern Way
- Extend length of all car parking spaces to 4.8m (redraw delivery vehicle swept paths to ensure access not impeded).
- Update Staff Travel Plan for inclusion of £300 travel vouchers.

Likely S.106 Obligations (for info)

- £30,000 towards the costs of upgrading the proposed puffin crossing on Eastern Way to a toucan crossing.
- Provision of two new bus stops on Eastern Way – either works under S.278 or financial contribution of £35,000.
- Staff Travel Plan

If you have any queries regarding the above advice, please contact Chris Manns using Christopher.Manns@wiltshire.gov.uk