

Dear Becky,

Planning Application PL/2026/04182

Place Farm, Court Street, Tisbury, Salisbury SP3 6LW

You will recall conversations we had during 2024, when I was the elected Wiltshire Councillor for Tisbury, regarding the longstanding issue of providing a safe pedestrian link between Tisbury and Place Farm. At that time, I convened a meeting with Fowler Fortescue, representing the Fonthill Estate, representatives of neighbouring residents, the Parish Council and others concerned with pedestrian safety in the area.

As you will also recall, the central concern in those earlier discussions was how a pedestrian link could be provided safely in what is an unusually difficult highway location. It is that same concern which prompts this representation.

You will not be surprised, therefore, that I welcome this application. I am also pleased to see the work carried out over the past few days to remove roadside trees and vegetation, previously approved, as a necessary precursor to the proposed footlink.

However, although I strongly support the principle of providing a safe pedestrian link between Tisbury and Place Farm, I wish to object to this application in its present form, for the reasons I set out below.

Background

The proposed footlink arises from a longstanding commitment associated with the redevelopment of the Tithe Barn and Place Farm. Condition 4 of permission 15/11990/FUL required a footway link to be provided before the Arts Centre development was brought into use. The present application represents a welcome attempt by the landowner to fulfil the original purpose of that condition. The applicant's Design and Access Statement confirms both the history of the condition and that previous proposed routes were rejected because of pedestrian visibility and safety concerns.

The redevelopment of Place Farm and the barns has, however, increased both vehicular and pedestrian movement at this location. It is therefore particularly important that the eventual footlink should be genuinely safe, rather than simply the least unsafe route presently available.

The highway context

The proposed crossing lies on what is already an exceptionally difficult section of highway.

To the west, most of Tisbury is subject to a 20 mph speed limit. That limit ends at the bridge at the bottom of Court Street, only a few metres before the proposed crossing.

Eastbound drivers encountering the 30 mph sign at this point are permitted to accelerate precisely as they enter the series of bends leading to the proposed footlink.

From the east, vehicles approaching along Chicksgrove Road enter the village through a narrow section where residents' parked vehicles frequently reduce the usable carriageway substantially. They then negotiate a blind right-hand bend followed almost immediately by the left-hand bend at the proposed footlink.

For through traffic between Tisbury and Chicksgrove/Salisbury the whole location is, in practical terms, a sequence of three closely spaced bends: the bend across the Court Street bridge, the bend at the proposed footlink and the succeeding bend into Chicksgrove Road. Sight lines are restricted throughout.

In my view this has become one of the most hazardous sections of highway within the built-up area of Tisbury, yet, anomalously, it lies immediately outside the village's 20 mph zone.

The applicant's claim that this is a "safe route"

The Design and Access Statement concludes:

"The proposed route is the only safe route for a footlink due to limited visibility splays."

It goes on to claim that the development will provide a route which

"is safe for pedestrians using the route and for vehicles on Court Street".

I do not believe that the evidence submitted justifies those statements.

What the visibility assessment establishes is that, of the crossing locations examined, the proposed field-access crossing is the only one which achieves the specified visibility splay. The applicant describes it elsewhere, more cautiously, as the

"only viable crossing location".

That is not the same thing as demonstrating that the whole pedestrian route is safe.

Indeed, the scheme has an important and unusual feature: because the crossing cannot be made at the grass island as originally envisaged, pedestrians will have to walk for approximately 35 metres within the carriageway itself. The applicant proposes to mitigate that risk by means of a 1.2 m-wide coloured "virtual footway", warning signs and road markings.

This is therefore not simply a question of whether a pedestrian waiting to cross has an adequate visibility splay. It is also a question of the speed at which vehicles encounter pedestrians who will deliberately be directed into and along the carriageway through a constrained, bending section of road.

Limitations of the Road Safety Audit

I recognise that the applicant commissioned a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and that the audit team stated that they had not identified an area of concern associated with the scheme as presented.

However, that conclusion needs to be read in context.

The audit team's site inspection lasted approximately 45 minutes, from 15.30 to 16.15 on 6 February 2024. During that inspection no pedestrians, cyclists or motorcycles were observed, nor were any vehicles observed turning into Chilmark Road.

The audit was also based upon supplied traffic-flow and 85th-percentile speed data, with visibility envelopes based on a measured 85th-percentile speed of 25 mph.

Significantly, although it recorded no formal safety objection, the Audit itself identifies measures designed to reduce vehicle speeds. It suggests removal of the centre line through the area so that drivers are encouraged "to drive with care and at lower speeds". It also records that the proposed 1.2 m pedestrian provision is only the identified minimum suitable width.

These observations reinforce rather than remove the concern about traffic speed.

The fundamental problem is speed

The principal weakness in the application is therefore its treatment of the problem primarily as one of visibility splays.

Adequate visibility is clearly essential, but visibility distance alone does not make a pedestrian route safe. Vehicle speed determines both a driver's ability to react to an unexpected pedestrian and the severity of any collision which does occur.

This is particularly important here because the development is deliberately intended to increase pedestrian use of this precise stretch of road and requires those pedestrians to spend approximately 35 metres within the carriageway.

The anomaly is especially striking because the proposed footlink lies only metres away from the boundary of Tisbury's existing 20 mph zone. Neighbouring residents have repeatedly observed that drivers travelling eastwards along Court Street accelerate on approaching the 30 mph sign at the bridge, continuing to do so precisely as they cross the bridge towards the proposed footlink.

What is required

I therefore ask Wiltshire Council not to approve the application in its present form without resolving the associated speed-management issue.

In my view, the most straightforward and effective highway solution would be:

1. to extend the existing 30 mph terminal point eastwards along Chicksgrove Road to beyond the cemetery; and
2. to extend Tisbury's existing 20 mph limit from its present termination at the Court Street bridge through the Place Farm junction to beyond the dwellings that line the bottom of Chicksgrove Road.

A continuous 20 mph restriction through this constrained sequence of bends would protect existing road users as well as the additional pedestrians whom the proposed development is intended to attract.

This would also have the benefit, wider than the application itself, of providing a degree of protection for pedestrians who walk along Chicksgrove Road as far as the cemetery, outside the current 30 mph zone, on a section of highway where there is no footway, and no limit other than the national speed limit of 60 mph.

I recognise that alteration of a speed limit involves the Highway Authority and the appropriate traffic-order process and may not itself form part of this planning application. That does not, however, mean that the planning application should be considered in isolation from it. The Council is both Local Planning Authority and Highway Authority and should satisfy itself that an effective speed-management solution can be delivered before permitting a development whose purpose is specifically to direct additional pedestrians across and along this carriageway.

Given our earlier discussions about this site, I would therefore be grateful if, before determining the application, you would refer this particular issue back to your Highways colleagues and ask them to consider whether the proposed footlink can properly be brought into use without accompanying measures to secure lower vehicle speeds through this junction.

Conclusion

I support the provision of a footlink and recognise the considerable efforts which have now been made by the applicant to find a workable route, and in carrying out the necessary preparatory work on adjacent trees and vegetation.

My objection is therefore not to the principle of the development. It is to the assertion that the proposed route can properly be regarded as "safe" while vehicles remain legally entitled to travel at 30 mph through this exceptionally constrained sequence of bends and while the scheme itself requires pedestrians to walk within the carriageway.

The proposed crossing may well be the best available location, but "best available" and "safe" are not synonymous.

I therefore request that the application should not be determined until the issue has been considered further with Wiltshire Council Highways and satisfactory speed-

management measures have been identified. If permission is then granted, I ask that, so far as legally possible, those measures should be secured before the footlink is brought into use.

RICHARD BUDDEN