

Smithson Hill Planning Inquiry - Statement of Rupert Kirby, Hinxton Resident

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June, 09.30

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- My name is Rupert Kirby and I am speaking as a resident of Hinxton against the business park proposed by Smithson Hill. I have lived in Hinxton for 9 years and am therefore very familiar with the local roads and the traffic issues we face every day. Every time we leave the house at either end of the day, I look across the fields to check the traffic on the A1301 and check on Waze and Googlemaps to plan a route that avoids the inevitable congestion, predominantly at what is called the “McDonalds roundabout” at the junction of the A1301 and A505.
  - It is not therefore surprising that 121 of the 160 representations made against the application raised the issue of existing congestion, as well as other transport related issues including the lack of transport infrastructure and ‘rat running’ through the villages. As a local community we therefore find it very surprising and disappointing that the Council has stated that it now has “*no reasons for objecting in principle on the basis of highway matters*”, although this ‘in principle’ agreement remains subject to agreeing appropriately worded conditions and obligations.
  - I am grateful for being given the opportunity to speak today and am going to focus on 3 issues:
    1. The baseline data does not reflect the reality of the existing traffic conditions.
    2. The aim to limit commuting by car to 50% of staff is over-ambitious considering the location.
    3. The restricted car parking ratio of 1 space for 2 employees will not be commercially viable.
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1. Existing Baseline Data

- 1.1. The A1301 will be the road most affected by the proposed park, as all the traffic created by the forecast 4,000 staff will enter and exit the park onto this road. With the majority of residential areas to the north and restricted access to/from the M11 to the south, the impact will mainly be on the McDonalds roundabout to the north. This is roundabout Number 7 in the traffic analysis.
- 1.2. The original traffic counts were performed by Alan Baxter Associates between Monday 23 January and Sunday 5 February 2017, along with a single day of queue counting on Wednesday 1st February 2017, between 7:00 to 10:00 and 16:00 to 19:00, at various locations including the said roundabout. As far as we know, those results have not been expanded or updated.
- 1.3. Table 10.7 below is extracted from Technical Note 04 (dated May 2019) (page 37) provides **observed** queues of 10 cars in the morning and 9 cars in the evening as shown highlighted.

The consultants compare those observed queues to those predicted by their computerised traffic modelling and obtain similar results, thus "calibrating" and validating their computer model.

Table 10.7 Junction 7 Model – Updated Calibration

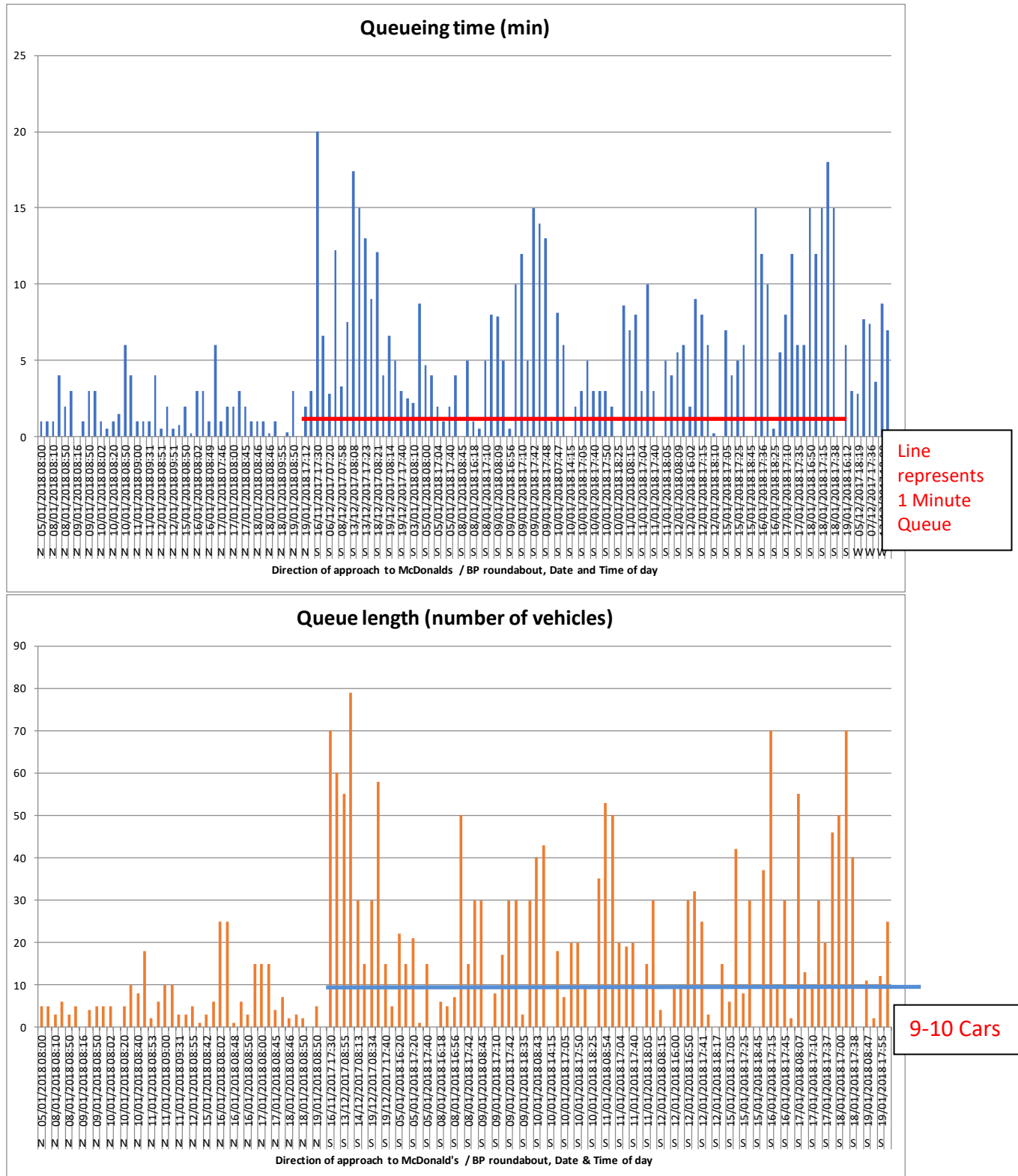
Arm	Observed Queues		New Intercept adjustments (and previous)	Modelled Queues	
	AM	PM		AM	PM
East (A505)	26	28	110.0 (72.5)	24	12
South (A1301)	10	9	109.0 (80.0)	11	8
West (A505)	20	15	122.5 (82.5)	22	21
North (A1301)	18	17	110.0 (85.0)	20	10

Source - Observed Queues: ABA TA, Modelled Queues: Junctions 9 v. 9.5.06896

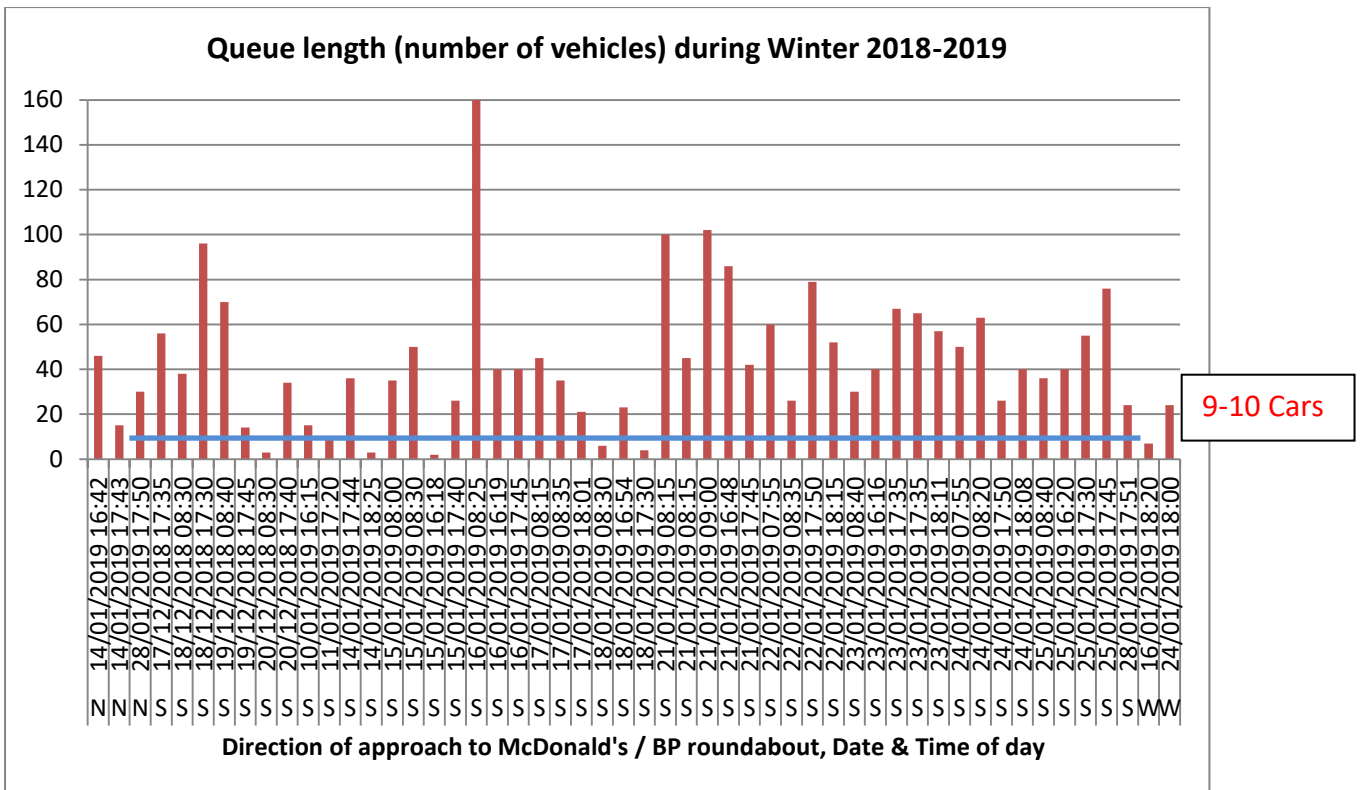
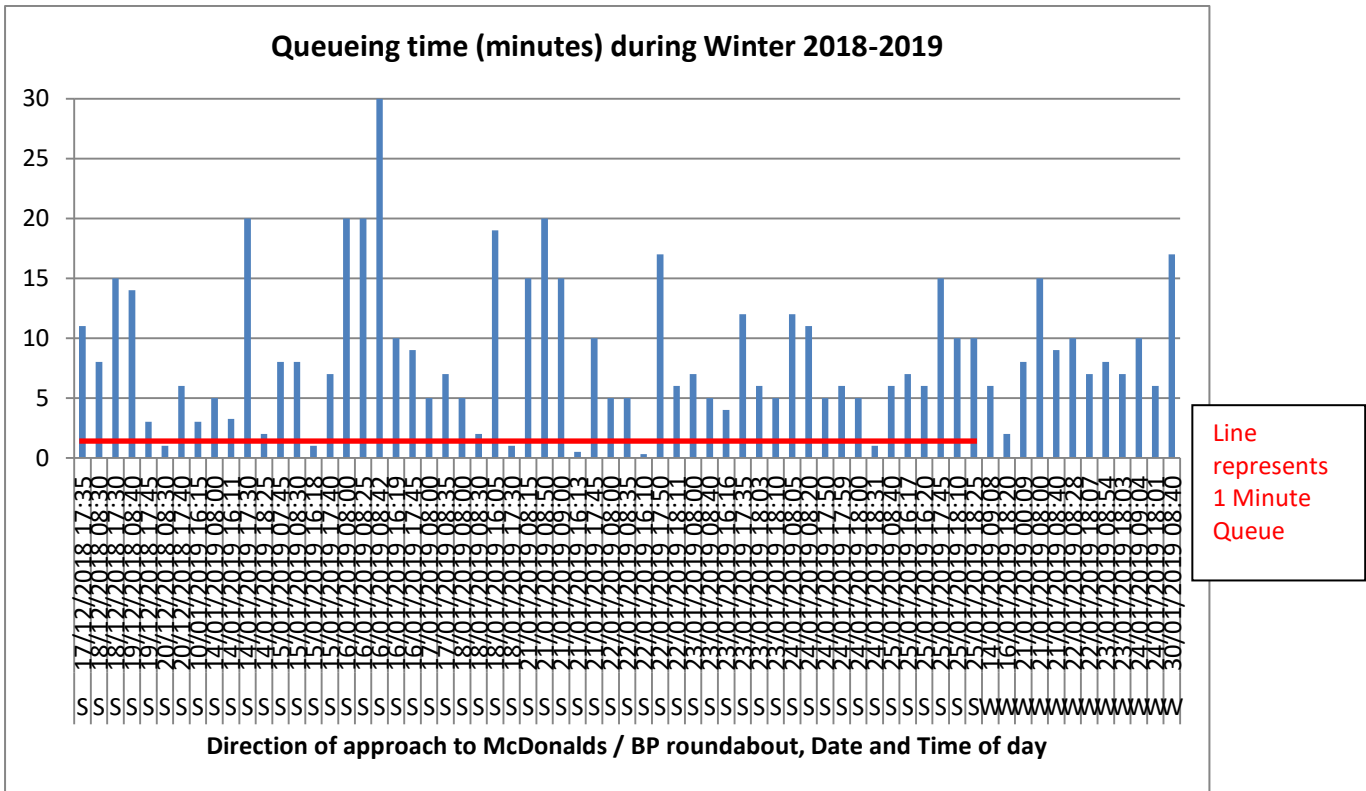
10.24 The updated Base Model results are illustrated as follows and at **Appendix K** and demonstrate that the junction currently operates at maximum capacity during the AM peak and close to maximum capacity during the PM peak. Considering the PM calibration in Table 10.7, this is likely to be an underestimate of delay during PM peak period.

- 1.4. Even with these very modest recorded queues, paragraph 10.24 acknowledges that the roundabout is at capacity in the morning peak, and close to maximum capacity during the afternoon peak.
- 1.5. Unfortunately those observed results, obtained on a single day, are gross underestimates of the actual situation. The reality is shown in the tables on the following pages. Figure 1 is data originally submitted by Hinxtion Parish Council in January 2018 and Figure 2 shows more recent data submitted in May 2019. I have added lines on the graphs to show the baseline data figures that the traffic analysis relies upon.

**FIGURE 1 – Data submitted by Hinxtton Parish Council – January 2018**



**FIGURE 2 – Data submitted by Hinxton Parish Council – May 2019**



- 1.7. More importantly, the model used by TPA in their analyses, when applied to the A505/A1301 junction, grossly underestimates the long queues and significant delays that are currently experienced on the northbound A1301 on an almost daily basis.
- 1.8. Table 10.8 (from TN04) below shows this as the model translates the queues into waiting times of around **1 minute** on the A1301 (south) as highlighted. If this were really the case, it would seem surprising that 121 people would take the time to write in to the council about the state of the current traffic.

**Table 10.8 Junction 7 Model – 2017 Base**

	AM					PM				
	Queue (Veh)	Delay (s)	RFC	LOS	Junction Delay (s)	Queue (Veh)	Delay (s)	RFC	LOS	Junction Delay (s)
Existing Layout [Lane Simulation] - 2017 Base										
1 - A505 (E)	24.3	78.66		F	66.41	12.0	39.44		E	44.49
2 - A1301 (S)	X 10.9	65.38	X	F		X 7.7	52.41	X	F	
3 - A505 (W)	22.1	47.78		E		20.8	46.10		E	
4 - A1301 (N)	20.4	86.32		F		10.1	43.26		E	

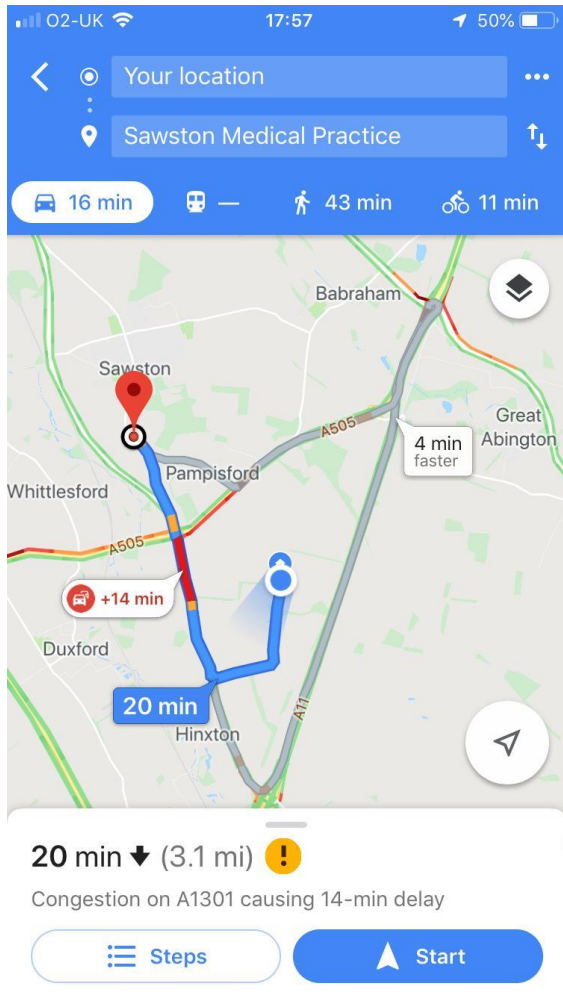
Source: Junctions 9 v. 9.5.06896

- 1.9. The computer software clearly does not accurately model the current situation; as such, what confidence do we have that it can model anything in the future accurately, reliably, and successfully?
- 1.10. The Parish Council's data, and that collected by my family, which is set out my previous representations and shows an average of 43.7 cars in the PM peak, shows that the reality is that there is invariably morning and evening peak time queues on the A1301, with generally 20 to 80 cars, and occasionally over 100 cars, queueing. The waiting time has been shown to be approximately 5 minutes per 20 cars, so one will frequently queue for 10-15 minutes.
- 1.11. As a result of the delays some cars resort to turning around in a hazardous position on the bend in the road close to Hinxton Grange as the photograph below taken on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 illustrates:



1.12. The queues also cause rat running at dangerous speeds through the villages of Hinxton, Ickelton, Duxford and Pampisford, which will no doubt get worse with all the additional traffic from the proposed business park. The likelihood of 'rat running' is exacerbated by the increasing use of satnavs and apps such as Googlemaps and Waze. I have included a couple of examples which demonstrate this issue.

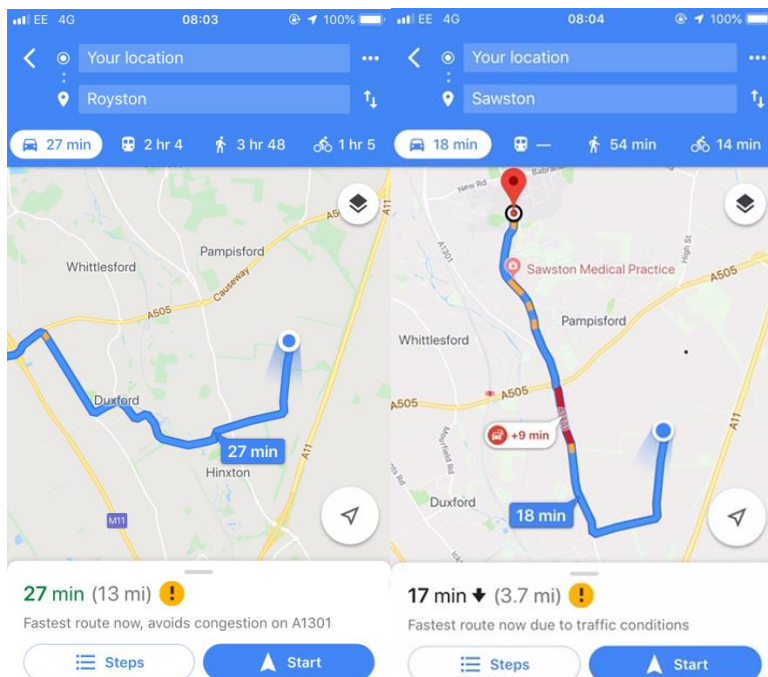
### 1. Googlemaps Route to Sawston Medical Practice – 17.57, Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019.



This situation demonstrates:

1. There is a 14 minute queue to get the roundabout, and my experience is that queueing times are invariably underestimated by Googlemaps.
2. The recommended route is to go south away from Sawston, past the Genome campus, up the A11, around the A1307 roundabout, back onto the A505 and then to cut through the village of Pampisford to avoid the congested McDonalds roundabout. This would save 4 minutes, assuming the queue time is correct.
3. The route is 9 miles - 3 times further than the most direct route via the A1301 McDonalds roundabout, causing a significant environmental impact.

## 2. Googlemaps Route to Royston – 08:03, Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019.



This example demonstrates that Googlemaps was recommending cutting through Hinxton and Duxford to go west onto the A505. The comment on the recommended route states “**Fastest route now, avoids congestion on the A1301**”.

- 1.13. It is also worth noting that the Googlemaps Journey Time Outputs included in the Mr Lyons’ Supplementary and Rebuttal Proof of Evidence (APP 7.4) show red sections of traffic indicating delays at the A1301 South junction. These add between 3 and 7 minutes when compared to “night journey time” output that he has included, therefore do not corroborate the 1 minute queues in the “Existing Layout – 2017 Base” assumptions.

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## 2. Mode Split

- 2.1. The other key assumption that I believe to be hugely over optimistic in a rural location such as Hinxton is the developer’s “Target Mode Split” - essentially what method of transport people will use to travel to work. The transport plan assumes only 50% of employees drive to work, compared to 79% currently doing so according to Census data.
- 2.2. I appreciate that Mr Lyons states that we should take comfort that the traffic analysis is modelled on a “Business as Usual” case. As I have set out already, we do not believe the traffic modelling to be correct in any event, but I think the question here is whether the location is accessible enough by public transport to justify the assumptions in the target mode split, which is being proposed to enhance the scheme’s environmental credentials.

- 2.3. Noting that the highways report states that the proposed travel plan is ambitious, if the target mode split is not achieved, then the location will be less sustainable than hoped.
- 2.4. The Traffic and Transport report indicated that the site is 1.6km from the station, but I think this is only to the nearest corner of the park. The centre of the proposed buildings is around 2.5km from the rail station, therefore the average distance from the station is over 30 minutes walk, walking at 80m per minute. The accepted walking distance from a station is 800m (i.e. a 10 minute walk). The whole of the Smithson Hill site is well beyond a 10 minute walk from Whittlesford Parkway as well as the proposed bus interchange. The transport plan sensibly acknowledges that few people will therefore walk to the site.
- 2.5. As a result of the distance from public transport links, the Transport Plan is based around a shuttle bus service, with 30% of staff forecast to use the service, to then connect to a train or local bus service.
- 2.6. It seems that the main basis for this assumption comes from the Wellcome Trust site, where 55% of staff commute by car and 32% using the coach service. Whilst the location of the Wellcome Trust site is clearly comparable, being beyond walking distance from the station, I do not think it can give any comfort to SmithsonHill's target of only 50% of employees travelling by car. There are a number of reasons:
- According to their website, Wellcome *"provides 21 private bus routes to and from the site, serving Cambridge, Saffron Walden and several of the surrounding villages"*.
  - Crucially, it is a free service, subsidised by Wellcome. Staff on SmithsonHill's park will need to pay for bus or train fares.
  - I would suggest that the Wellcome Trust staff experience will be markedly different to that proposed by SmithsonHill:
    - SmithsonHill is only offering shuttle buses to the new transport interchange. Staff will then need to transfer to the trains or a normal bus or train.
    - The timescale and journey for business park staff would therefore be:
      - Average 5 minute wait for shuttle bus, as buses are suggested to be every 10 minutes.
      - Around 5-15 wait in traffic on A1301 to get to the bus interchange. The unreliability of the traffic will cause users' stress and issues with trying to co-ordinate with train and bus timetables.
      - Staff will then either connect to a bus, or walk a further 10 minutes to Whittlesford Parkway. It is therefore likely to have taken close to 30 minutes to get to the train station – the same time as walking.
      - Convenience for staff will then depend on:
        - Train timetables and occasional disruption issues
        - The indirect, and currently, infrequent nature of bus routes, with more stops and traffic than the more direct coaches.
        - The proximity of the destination train station or bus stop to their home.



- 2.7. The SmithsonHill journey is disjointed, less reliable, probably considerably longer, and it is not free. It is not comparable to that offered by Wellcome. More importantly, for many people, it will be more of a headache than just getting in a car to drive to work.
- 2.8. Also, even with a single owner co-ordinating and subsidising an award winning travel plan, and the free service being provided, Wellcome has only managed to reduce car commuting to 55% of staff. SmithsonHill is assuming 50%.

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### 3. Restricted Car Parking Provision

- 3.1. Allied to the 'Mode Split' assumptions, is the issue of restricted car parking provision. SmithsonHill propose to provide 0.5 spaces per employee. This is equivalent to 1 space per 58 square metres, or 624 sq ft of space.
- 3.2. In my representations, I included a table titled Science & Technology Park ratios, which was provided by the leading agents, CBRE – this is attached as Appendix 1. This shows that the proposed parking ratio of 1 space per 624 sq ft will be very low in relation to competing business parks across the south-east of the UK, including around Cambridge. CBRE suggest that this will put the SmithsonHill scheme at a significant disadvantage in terms of attracting tenants to the park, and institutions to fund the development of the buildings.
- 3.3. The Head of National Capital Market at CBRE commented on the Smithson Hill proposals as follows:

*Generally if the car parking ratio is worse than 1:300 sq ft this will have a material effect on the lettability of any business park. This will have a knock on effect on whether any institutional money will be attracted. Cambridge Bio-med park for example has a worse car parking ratio but is in reality a City centre location- people can walk, cycle and use public transport to get to work.*

*The scheme you are referring to being a number of miles outside Cambridge will not attract occupiers unless people can drive there. The public transport is just not good enough. Business parks can't hinder themselves with not having enough car parking, they are under threat from younger talent wanting to be located in City Centres where there is more of a sense of place/destination. There are enough other challenges in terms of place making/ critical mass/viability of ancillary uses (cafes, Gyms etc) without car parking being an issue.*

*I think you can take comfort that no other science/business parks have been developed out with that car parking ratio in a non City centre location. There is also a move for occupiers to use their space more efficiently which is driving down density ratios to 1:100/150 sq ft. If companies cannot get staff to the park they simply will not relocate there.*

*For the above reasons I am almost certain that no institutional money will come forward for a scheme with such a restricted car parking ratio."*

3.4. Another Cambridge agent made the following comments:

*"Parking at a ratio of 1:58 sq m on the GFA [Gross Floor Area] will put SmithsonHill at a significant disadvantage to competing land.*

*Looking at the parks around:*

*Granta Park – The remaining development land has a ratio of 1:323 sq ft on the GFA*

*Cambridge Research Park – The undeveloped land has a ratio of 1:269 sq ft on the GFA.*

*Chesterford Research Park – The plots have ratios of 1:323 sq ft on the GFA.*

*Cambridge Science Park – The new consents are coming through with ratios of 1:323 sq ft /1:431 sq ft on the GFA.*

*Peterhouse Technology Park – ARM achieved 1:323 sq ft GFA on the new buildings.*

*Experience of letting schemes that are not in central Cambridge is that parking is essential. The more spaces that occupiers can secure, the more attractive the property. Once parking ratios hit 1 :431 sq ft then letting becomes very difficult. This is particularly relevant to schemes that do not sit on public transport hubs. SmithsonHill very much falls into that category.*

*A parking ratio at the sort of levels being put forward at Smithson Hill will make the scheme unlettable and therefore unfundable. The exception will be to very low employment density occupiers such as distribution type occupiers or datacentres etc."*

- 3.5. Mr Lyons suggests that the Genome Campus is "conspicuous by its absence" from the schedule provided by CBRE. The reason it doesn't appear on an agent's list is because it is not a commercial park as such, so is not marketing land or buildings to third party owners or tenants.
- 3.6. As well as the commercial issue of the proposed parking restriction, I believe that the restricted car parking provision and inconvenient alternative public transport options will cause major issues for the surrounding villages.
- There will be 'fly-parking' around the site in Hinxton, Duxford and in laybys and on the side of the A505 and A1301 and along the private Tichbault Road. Parking controls will be needed over a wide area.
  - Staff that do not have parking permits will park in nearby villages and be picked up colleagues with permits, so although the statistics may report that fewer people are driving, the surrounding traffic impact will be similar.

3.7. Related to the comments about younger talent wanting to be closer to city centres, an independent view on staff attitudes to the location of the proposed development is provided by the entry for the Sanger Institute on the job review website 'glassdoor.co.uk' (see Appendix B). This suggests that employees cite the location as one of the main downsides of working there, even with the free campus bus. Smithson Hill's suggested transport solution is a lot harder and more expensive than that provided by Wellcome.

3.8. I will read a few of the comments:

#### Cons

"Limited opportunities for **career progression** for staff and low number of independent fellowships for non-faculty members" (in 5 reviews)

"Free bus but the campus is **far away** and it takes at least 30 minutes to get there" (in 4 reviews)

"far away from **cambridge city** centre (30 mins bus, free shuttle)" (in 4 reviews)

"Poor benefit schema, campus located **far from Cambridge**" (in 3 reviews)

"Site is located in the **middle of nowhere**" (in 3 reviews)

### Conclusion

In summary, my key objections are:

- In relation to the **baseline traffic data**, 121 representations and a large amount of survey data have been submitted by the local community to evidence that the suggested baseline figures completely underestimate the reality of the existing traffic situation. Forecast traffic levels are based on these unrealistic figures so the forecast and proposed mitigation cannot therefore be relied upon. If the scheme were to proceed, it will cause chaos on the surrounding roads.
- Secondly, although I am fully behind the attempt of any development to limit its impact on the environment, the assumptions must be deliverable. The **proposed travel plan** is far too ambitious for the location and will not be deliverable. The location is reliant on access by car and is therefore unsustainable in a planning context, being an out of town site with poor and distant public transport connections, very limited local services and a road system that is already at capacity.
- The exceptionally low proposed **car parking ratio** is not viable from an occupational or funding perspective.

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17<sup>th</sup> June 2019

## Appendix 1 - Science & Technology Park – Parking Ratios

### Science / Technology Business Park




Town	Address	Parking Ratio
Milton Keynes	Cranfield University Technology Park	1:189 sq ft
Cambridge	Chesterford Research Park	c. 1:350 sq ft
Cambridge	Abcam Building, Cambridge Biomedical Campus	1:694 sq ft
Oxford	Oxfam HQ, Oxford Business Park	1:283 sq ft
Oxford	Sherard Building, Oxford Science Park	1:255 sq ft
Cranfield	Cranfield University Technology Park, University Way	1:194 sq ft
Oxford	Building 9600, Oxford Business Park	1:239 sq ft
Cambridge	310 Cambridge Science Park	1:337 sq ft
Cambridge	Cambourne Business Park Phase 1000	1:221 sq ft

### General South East Business Park

Town	Address	Parking Ratio
Farnborough	Farnborough Business Park	1:260 sq ft
Basingstoke	Chineham Business Park	1:210 sq ft
Luton	Capability Green	1:180 sqft
Watford	Croxley Park	1:335 sq ft
Heathrow	Bedfont Lakes	1:221 sq ft
Reading	Winnersh Triangle	1:246 sq ft
Uxbridge	Uxbridge Business Park	1:364 sq ft
Heathrow	Stockley Park	1:367 sq ft
Reading	Green Park	1:350 sq ft

## Appendix 2 – Sanger Institute Entry on Glassdoor.co.uk

<https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Reviews/Sanger-Institute-Reviews-E38883.htm>



### Sanger Institute

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×

Pros

"Its a very beautiful campus with great benefits" (in 9 reviews)

"" (in 9 reviews)

"Great campus atmosphere and work-life balance" (in 7 reviews)

"Free bus service (mainly from Cambridge only)" (in 7 reviews)

"Great place to engage in world-class genomic research" (in 6 reviews)

Cons

"Limited opportunities for career progression for staff and low number of independent fellowships for non-faculty members" (in 5 reviews)

"Free bus but the campus is far away and it takes at least 30 minutes to get there" (in 4 reviews)

"far away from cambridge city centre (30 mins bus, free shuttle)" (in 4 reviews)

"Poor benefit schema, campus located far from Cambridge" (in 3 reviews)

"Site is located in the middle of nowhere" (in 3 reviews)

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