

Cycling UK Stevenage comments on 24/00690/FP

Application for a variation of condition 3 (Restriction of use) under Section 73 attached to planning permission 21/00054/FP to allow the widening of retail goods to be sold

Unit 11A And 11B Roaring Meg Retail Park London Road Stevenage Herts SG1 1XN

The SBC Local Plan SP6 states the intent to “create the conditions for a significant increase in passenger transport, walking and cycling”. Whilst the infrastructure beyond the perimeter of the Roaring Meg site is good, access to the site and across it to the proposed Next store is poor or non-existent. This must be rectified if this change of use is to go ahead.

Change of use of these units to Next is the latest in a succession of cumulative changes made since the retail park was first built in the 1980s. We have now reached a tipping point. The Transport Statement para 3.18 acknowledges that with increased trip generation, the car park “may operate close to capacity for short periods” but states, “The Applicant and Occupier are satisfied that the existing number of parking spaces would be sufficient under normal trading conditions with opportunities to travel by other modes.”

However, in the case of Roaring Meg, the infrastructure at access points and across the carpark is poor. It does not provide safe, direct and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists with links to the existing cycleway and pedestrian networks. These are required to be in line with SBC Local Plan IT5.

The northern access from London Road has pavement on only one side, on the north side of the road the otherwise continuous pedestrian path leading directly from the proposed Next units is broken by a grass verge and pedestrians must walk along the road or cross over the road at the busy traffic entrance.

At the London Road south entrance, there is no pavement adjacent to the road; pedestrians must walk on the car park road entering the site from the roundabout. The nearby entrance via the service road from the roundabout has a pavement on only one side and is not step free.

At the pedestrian exit to Monkswood Way, pedestrians must walk along the car park road in front of Burger King.

There are no designated cycling routes within Roaring Meg. Cyclists need use the car park roads within the site and at road access points where they can join the cycling infrastructure routes on the perimeter. The car park itself is laid out in a diagonal fashion which means there are many junctions to be negotiated by cyclists.

Someone who has cycled to the site using traffic free segregated cycleways is then faced with difficult manoeuvres such as various types of right turns in heavy traffic to cross the carpark. This may be enough to put off some people off cycling to destinations on the site so is not in accordance with SP6.

The Transport Assessment Figure 2.4 shows the pedestrian entrance adjacent to Burger King. This is not a cycleway, the signage on it indicates arrival at a cycleway to pedestrians leaving Roaring Meg. Many cyclists do use this access point although visibility is extremely poor, they may do so to avoid having to cross the very busy access road from Monkswood Way which has no markings in line with the Highway Code H2 to give pedestrians and cycle lane users priority, nor a central refuge to aid safe crossing.

If this change of use is to go ahead, links to existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure need to be improved across and into and out of the entire Roaring Meg site to the standard of the national LTN1/20 Guidance.