

Proposed Relocation of Village Store

Blockley, Gloucestershire



Transport Statement For Blockley Village Co-Operative

Issue 1 – January 2011




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CONTROL SHEET

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Appendix A – Site Location Plan

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 W. A. Fairhurst & Partners have been commissioned to undertake, on behalf the Village Co-operative at Blockley, a transport statement to support a planning proposal for the relocation of a village store in High Street, Blockley, near Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire.
- 1.2 This statement has been prepared to provide the planning and highway authorities with sufficient information for the purposes of assessing the impact of the development proposal on the local transport network.
- 1.3 This study has been prepared in accordance with recommendations set out in Department for Transport (DfT) Guidelines on Transport Assessment (2007).
- 1.4 WAF carried out a site visit on Monday 13th December 2010 where traffic levels and parking conditions were observed. The traffic levels through Blockley are very low and there is adequate on street parking for customers of the local store.
- 1.5 The shop is currently operated by local people and serves the small village of Blockley. A high proportion of customers are therefore likely to continue to walk to the shop rather than drive. This will remain the case for the proposed shop.
- 1.6 The statement concludes that the traffic generated by the proposed relocation can be satisfactorily accommodated on the local transport network and that the proposals are consistent with local transport policy.

2.0 Site Location and the Local Transport Network

- 2.1 The proposed site for relocation is located on High Street, Blockley within Cotswold District in Gloucestershire, approximately seven kilometres by road northwest of Moreton-in-Marsh. The nearest large towns are Cheltenham, 26 km in a straight line to the southwest and Stratford upon Avon, a similar distance to the north. The location of the site in relation to the surrounding transport network is shown in Appendix A.
- 2.2 Blockley lies on, but largely to the west of, the B4479 which runs south to the A44 that links with Moreton-in-Marsh and Evesham and northeast through Paxford towards Shipston on Stour. Branching from it are two minor roads, one running north to Chipping Campden and the other west to the A44, giving a shorter route to Evesham. High Street in effect is a local access road that terminates about half a kilometre to the southwest at the end of the built-up part of the village. It is signed as leading to “Blockley village only” and “Unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles”. The roads in much of this part of the village are narrow, however there is no evidence to suggest that servicing the existing store causes any transport difficulties.
- 2.3 Blockley (civil parish) has a population of 1,997 of whom 1,132 live in the village itself. According to the 2001 Census, 29.1% of people in the village are aged over 60 compared with 25.3% in the whole of Cotswold District and 20.8% in England. There are 1.36 cars or light vans per household in the village, very similar to 1.44 in Cotswold District but above 1.11 for England. The village population is thus comparatively mobile but also comparatively elderly.
- 2.4 The speed limit in the vicinity of the proposed site is 30 mph and High Street benefits from street lighting. High Street does not have separate footways, but its layout does not encourage high speeds or heavy traffic and the roadspace is effectively shared. Site observations indicate low levels of traffic on High Street with two-way traffic flows of 24 vehicles an hour.

- 2.5 There are no officially designated cycle routes in Blockley but the quiet conditions make cycling trouble free although restricted by the hilly terrain. The nearest bus stops are located on High Street approximately 150 metres to the north of the proposed site next to the Village Green. The bus services destinations and frequencies are discussed in further detailed in Section 5.
- 2.6 The existing shop is the only one in the village and is shown in Photograph 1. It was founded in 2008 by a co-operative of local residents after the closure of the village post office. The buildings surrounding the site, apart from St Peter and St Paul Church to the east of the shop, are almost entirely residential.



Photograph 1 – Existing Village Store

- 2.7 There are no designated parking bays in the vicinity of the existing shop and a number of customers either park on street or in front of the shop. This area provides space for approximately seven vehicles.

3.0 Development Proposals, Access and Parking

- 3.1 The planning proposal for the site is to relocate the village shop to an adjacent site to the east of the existing shop. There are currently issues with the existing building lease and the moderate increase in floor area will allow the provision of additional services. The proposed site is currently occupied by a public toilet block which will be demolished. The new single storey building will cover 161 square metres comprising a retail area of 63 square metres, a café of 34 square metres with a kitchen of 10 square metres, till and storage space totalling 27 square metres, an office area of 10 square metres, toilet facilities of 12 square metres and bin storage of 5 square metres. The ground floor area also includes an outdoor but roofed-over seating area of 9.5 square metres for the café. Service vehicles will be accommodated on street similar to the existing case and goods will be moved into the building via a side access.
- 3.2 It is intended that the new shop will continue to benefit from the public parking area adjoining the High Street. This gives parking for approximately seven cars (individual parking bays are not marked out). There is additional on-street parking nearby but this has to be shared with residents as few of the houses have off-street parking or garages.
- 3.3 The detailed design plans showing the development layout are contained in the planning application documents.
- 3.4 The absence of footways means that there will be level access from the street into the building and the shop will be wheelchair accessible throughout.

4.0 Transport Policies

4.1 National Policy

4.1.1 Planning Policy Guidance Document 13 – Transport (PPG13) has the objective of integrating planning and transport at the local level to promote more sustainable travel choices, to promote accessibility to shops and services by sustainable modes and to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car (paragraph 4). To achieve this, local authorities should locate day to day facilities in local centres so that they are accessible to their clients by walking and cycling (paragraph 6).

4.1.2 Paragraphs 6 and 41 in PPG13 advocate that shopping and services in remote rural areas should be focused on service centres, designated in the local plan, which can also be the foci for housing development. However, paragraphs 43 and 44 note that in determining such applications the likely catchment and impact on vehicle movements should be taken into account. The implication is that small scale developments would not be out of place in smaller villages.

4.2 County Policy

4.2.1 Among the objectives of the Second Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2) are (page 61):

- to enable high quality access to services by all forms of transport;
- to provide financially sustainable access to services for those without cars, particularly in rural areas; and
- to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

4.2.2 The Framework Accessibility Strategy, incorporated as Appendix D to the LTP2 quotes from one of the Gloucestershire Rural Economic Strategy's objectives, i.e. to achieve more cohesive, supportive and economically active rural communities

(page 8). Mapping of food shops in Gloucestershire makes it clear that the sparsely populated rural areas have only scattered food shops and the north Cotswolds in particular are identified as a priority area for action (page 38). The Strategy refers to a Food Vision developed by Gloucestershire First (a sub-partnership of the Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership involving businesses, business organisations and support agencies) that aims to “enable wider access to healthier, safe and affordable food” by, among other things, furthering the development of retail outlets (pages 46-7).

4.3 *Local Policy: General*

4.3.1 The Cotswold Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2012 sets out local priorities for Cotswold District as drawn up by the Local Strategic Partnership. In addition to six Headline Themes (Children & Young People, Healthier Communities & Older People, Housing, Safer & Stronger Communities, Natural & Built Environment and Economy & Skills) it lists Transport and Access as an important cross-cutting issue. In a rural district with a dispersed population physical access is a critical factor that particularly affects children and young people, older people and those who find it hard to afford their own transport. The Strategy notes that addressing transport and access issues is therefore essential in addressing social exclusion.

4.3.2 The Cotswold District Local Plan 2001 – 2011 was adopted in April 2006. The Secretary of State directed in January 2009 that some of the policies would be saved pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework documents.

4.3.3 The Plan notes in paragraphs 4.4-5 that, despite high car ownership, many people experience transport difficulties. These include elderly and disabled people, those who cannot afford a car and those with no car available during the working day when the “breadwinner” needs it for work. To develop a more sustainable transport system in the Cotswolds it is necessary among other things to minimise the need and distance that people have to travel to gain access to facilities and services.

4.3.4 Saved Policy 25 on the Vitality and Viability of Settlements states that in villages such as Blockley that are not defined as Principal Settlements proposals for commercial development will be permitted if:

- they are of an appropriate use, size, function and scale;
- they will enhance the viability and help to meet the needs of the local community; and
- they are easily and conveniently accessible to the local community, and would reduce the need and distance for local people to travel.

4.3.5 With respect to transport to new developments, Saved Policy 38 states that:

- vehicular access to the site must be of an appropriate standard and have no unacceptably adverse effect on the function of the highway to which it links;
- traffic arising from the development must not unacceptably affect traffic movement and road safety or cause undue noise, vibration or reduced amenity; and
- there must be safe and convenient access for pedestrians, cyclists (including cycle parking), public transport users and people with impaired mobility.

4.4 *Local policy: Parking*

4.4.1 Saved Policy 39 in the Local Plan states that parking provision at developments should be “part of a package of measures” and take account of the proposed use, its scale and location, its accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, and the proximity and capacity of any existing off-street public parking. Appendix 9 (Table 3) of the same document sets out a maximum provision for shops of under 1,000 square metres of one space per 25 square metres though a lower provision will be required in locations that are readily accessible by a choice of means of transport. For a development of 126 square metres this implies a maximum of five to six spaces but that a lower provision could be justified in view of the smallness of the village and the fact that many customers will live within walking distance.

- 4.4.2 The same policy requires convenient, safe and secure cycle and motorcycle parking. Table 1 in Appendix 9 requires a minimum of one cycle and/or motorcycle space per 60 square metres for food retailers, subject to a minimum of two spaces. Although Policy 38 and Appendix 9 mention changing facilities and other infrastructure, the Appendix makes it clear that this only applies to developments of a strategic nature and the present development does not meet the criteria for “strategic significance” (ibid., Table 3). The standards suggest that two or three spaces should be provided.
- 4.4.3 Although the Appendix states that cycle and motorcycle parking should be under cover, this would appear excessive at this location as cyclists are unlikely to be spending a long time at the shop.

5.0 Existing Transport Services and Shopping Opportunities

- 5.1 Most bus services call at the village green. Johnson's Coach and Bus Travel operate route 22 between Moreton in Marsh and Stratford-upon-Avon with six departures on Mondays to Fridays and five on Saturdays. The last bus back to Blockley is at 19:16 from Moreton and at 18:46 from Stratford. The same operator also runs route 21 that takes a longer journey between Chipping Camden and Stratford with three departures each way Mondays to Saturdays. Together the two routes give a bus every 1 – 1½ hours to Moreton or Stratford through the day.
- 5.2 Pulham's Coaches operate route 608 with one departure on Thursdays only at 09:33 for Cheltenham, arriving at 10:47 and giving nearly 3½ hours there before arriving back at Blockley at 14:30. On Saturdays the same operator runs route 612 to Evesham, leaving at 13:40 and returning at 16:45, giving just under two hours at Evesham.
- 5.3 Hedgehog Community Bus' route H7 leaves at 09:23 and returns from Moreton at 12:20. This service operates on Fridays only and replaces the former service 816 which was operated by Pulham's Coaches.
- 5.4 The nearest alternatives to the village shop are various groceries in Moreton, including a Co-op supermarket near the station. However, there is no handy alternative for convenience shopping and for those without cars the lengthy bus journey is a major obstacle (despite the relatively frequent service to Moreton), particularly when carrying bags full of goods. The problems will be exacerbated for elderly and disabled people who want to retain their independence.
- 5.5 In Moreton the bus services terminate at the railway station which forms the railhead for the village. First Great Western operate 16 trains on Mondays to Fridays, 14 on Saturdays and 12 on Sundays on the London Paddington – Oxford – Worcester line. First departures are around 05:40 each way Mondays to Fridays, 07:00 Saturdays and 09:55 Sundays, with last departures at around

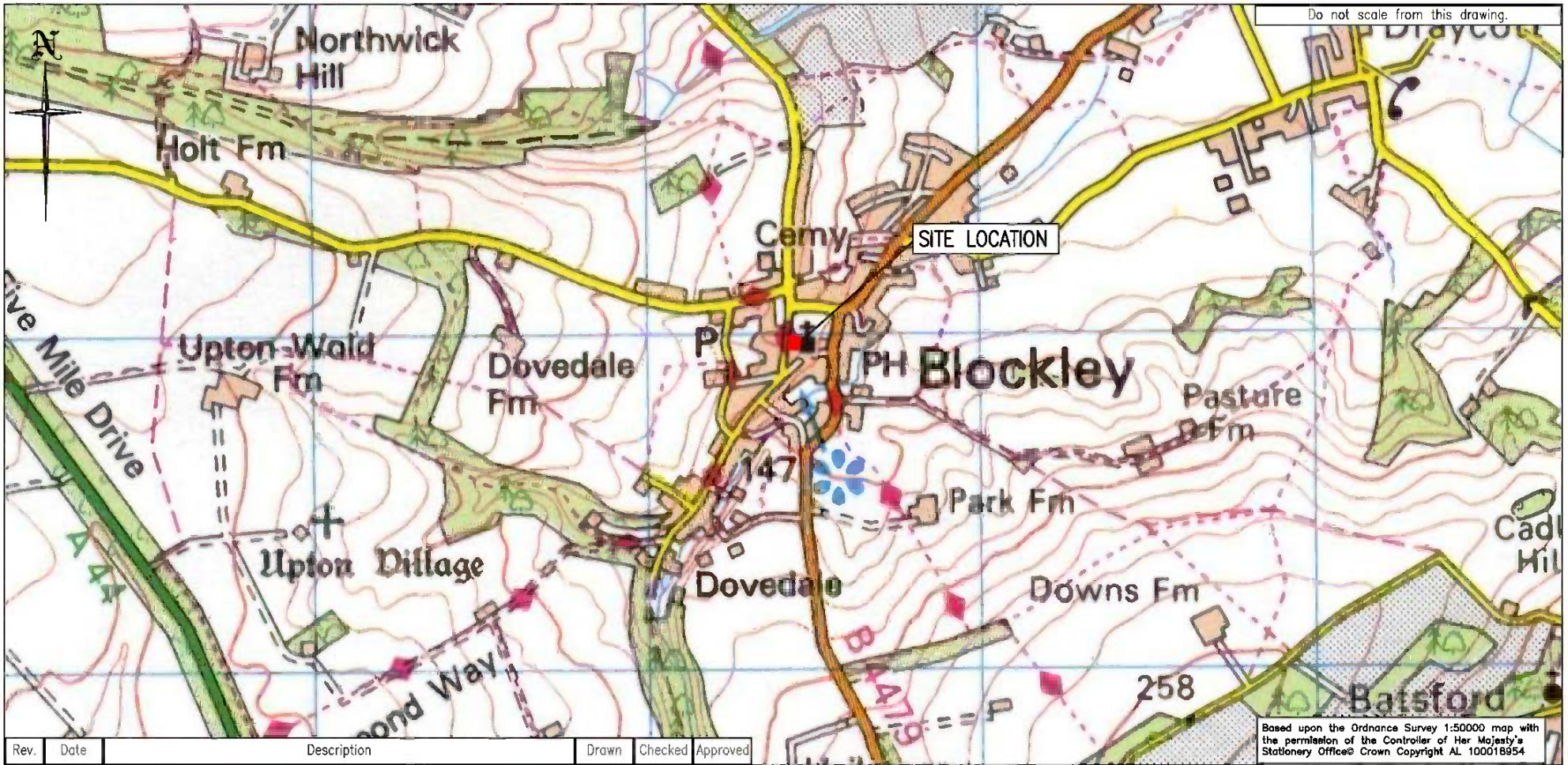
00:41 Mondays to Fridays and 23:30 at weekends. First Great Western plan to improve the service when current work to restore double track between Moreton and Evesham, and between Ascott and Charlbury, is completed. Clearly, however, the shopping opportunities in Oxford or Worcester cannot be seen as an alternative to a village shop; their role and market are completely different.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Blockley village is compact and nearly all of the population of 1,132 live within less than one kilometre of the shop. It is expected that most shoppers will come on foot. The hilly terrain will discourage many people from cycling although there may be some demand from people touring the area. Because of the low demand, short duration of stay and the low risk of theft, there appears to be no need for formal cycle parking facilities, however these could be provided if required by the local highway authority.
- 6.2 It is not expected that many shoppers will travel by public transport but the nearest bus stop is about 150 metres away.
- 6.3 There is parking for about seven cars in front of the existing and proposed shop which is consistent with adopted parking standards. This appears adequate for the existing shop and no major increase in customer numbers is expected. Although manoeuvring space is limited traffic levels are low and there are no grounds to expect any additional traffic problems in the vicinity.
- 6.5 The shop offers a valuable local service in an area where providing access to food shops is designated a priority for action. In this respect it is fully compliant with the Local Transport Plan Accessibility Strategy, Gloucestershire First's Food Vision, the Cotswold Sustainable Community Strategy and the Cotswold District Local Plan. By offering local facilities it reduces the need for travel to other towns or villages and hence the burden on providing subsidised transport.
- 6.4 It is concluded that transport arrangements for the proposed relocated shop are adequate and do not constitute grounds for refusing planning permission.

Appendix A

Site Location Plan



Rev.	Date	Description	Drawn	Checked	Approved

Project Title:
BLOCKLEY VILLAGE STORE

Drawing Title:
SITE LOCATION PLAN

Based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:50000 map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office© Crown Copyright AL 100018954

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