

To LGCHF, HCC Highways, NHDC

Technical Note

Cc

From Steer

Date 9 March 2021

Project Letchworth Garden City – Site LG3

Project No. 23045806

Letchworth Garden City Site LG3 – Recycling Centre

Overview

1. This Technical Note has been produced in response to local stakeholder concerns regarding current traffic issues on Blackhorse Road associated with the Letchworth Recycling Centre (located at the eastern end of Blackhorse Road) and the perception that the proposed LG3 development will further exacerbate these.
2. It is understood that before Covid-19 there were occasional queues present on the eastbound carriageway of Blackhorse Road at peak times, which infrequently blocked the Blackhorse Road/ Flint Road junction. However, the Covid-19 emergency and access restrictions to the recycling centre – notably a one in, one out arrangement, reduced unloading spaces on-site and a shortage of land for the operators to stack vehicles to avoid queuing on the highway, have temporarily significantly worsened queuing.
3. The Letchworth Recycling Centre is currently open from 10:00 – 18:00 on Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Letchworth Recycling Centre Assessment

4. The Transport Assessment (TA) submitted alongside the planning application for the proposed LG3 development included junction turning count surveys at the Blackhorse Road/ Flint Road and Blackhorse Road/ Green Lane junctions which were used to inform junction capacity assessments of both junctions with and without the proposed development traffic flows.
5. The junction turning count traffic surveys were undertaken on Tuesday 4 February 2020 (pre-Covid). For robustness, the busiest potential hourly rates of traffic generation for the new development were combined with the busiest observed hours at the junction. Accordingly, the turning count junction capacity assessments for the “with development scenario” were based on the following LG3 site vehicle trip peak hours and highway network peak hours:
 - **Blackhorse Road/ Flint Road junction AM peak** – Proposed Development AM peak hour flows (08:00 – 09:00) added to junction AM peak hour flows (07:45 – 08:45).
 - **Blackhorse Road/ Flint Road junction PM peak** – Proposed Development PM peak hour flows (17:00 – 18:00) flows added to junction PM peak hour flows (16:15 – 17:15).
 - **Blackhorse Road/ Green Lane junction AM peak** – Proposed Development AM peak hour flows (08:00 – 09:00) flows added to junction AM peak hour flows (07:45 – 08:45).
 - **Blackhorse Road/ Green Lane junction PM peak** - Proposed Development PM peak hour flows (17:00 – 18:00) flows added to junction PM peak hour flows (16:30 – 17:30).
6. The assessments therefore, assessed a worst case synthetic peak for the development impacts using the peak hour data from the Tuesday 4 February 2020 junction turning count surveys and the anticipated peak hour LG3 development trip generation.
7. On Tuesday 4 February 2020 when the junction turning counts were undertaken the Letchworth Recycling Centre was closed. However, alongside the one-day manual count, the traffic survey programme included

a seven-day Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) which was undertaken on Blackhorse Road to the west of Ashfield Drive. This captured traffic flow data (including a weekend) in each direction from Tuesday 4 February to Monday 10 February 2020. The full data from this traffic count by direction is included in **Appendix A**.

8. The following observations can be made following analysis of the ATC data:

Eastbound Traffic Flows

- Blackhorse Road eastbound traffic flows were highest during the AM peak hour (08:00 – 09:00) and flows recorded on Tuesday 4 February (263 vehicles) were higher than all other weekdays with the exception of Wednesday (288 vehicles).
- Weekday peak hour traffic flows are higher than the peak hour flows on the weekend days.
- The traffic flows from 10:00 – 11:00 on all days (the recycling centre opens at 10:00) are significantly lower than those experienced from 08:00 – 09:00.
- On Tuesday 4 February 2020 and Wednesday 5 February 2020 (the days when the recycling centre was closed) from 10:00 – 11:00 traffic flows averaged 86 vehicles, compared to an average of 162 vehicles for Monday, Thursday and Friday when the recycling centre was open. It is therefore likely that the difference in flows of 77 vehicles are vehicles accessing the recycling centre. This is verified by data provided by the HCC Waste Management Unit which identifies that there were on average circa 80 – 90 visits to the recycling centre from 10:00 – 11:00 in February and April 2019 (Pre Covid-19). The full data is included in **Appendix B**.
- In the anticipated LG3 development PM peak hour (17:00 – 18:00) the traffic flows observed on Tuesday 4 February are lower, but not significantly lower than the other days.

Westbound Traffic Flows

- Blackhorse Road westbound traffic flows during the AM peak hour (08:00 – 09:00) were higher on Tuesday than on all other days, and higher than the 10:00 – 11:00 period when the recycling centre opens.
- Westbound traffic flows were highest during the PM peak hours (16:00 – 17:00 and 17:00 – 18:00) than at any other time. It was during this period the junction capacity assessments were undertaken.
- On Tuesday 4 February 2020 and Wednesday 5 February 2020 (the days when the recycling centre was closed) from 16:00 – 17:00 traffic flows averaged 210 vehicles, compared to an average of 224 vehicles for Monday, Thursday and Friday when the recycling centre was open. This difference is negligible. From 17:00 – 18:00 (the anticipated LG3 development peak hour), Tuesday and Wednesday (recycling centre closed) average traffic flows were 240 vehicles. This was higher than the average flows for the days when the recycling centre was open (212 vehicles).

9. In addition to the above points the following should also be noted:

- The recycling centre opens at 10:00 and closes at 18:00, whereas the weekday highway network AM peak based on the turning count surveys is 07:45 – 08:45 and the LG3 development trip generation AM peak is 08:00 – 09:00. Both of these periods occur earlier than the recycling centre opening time and associated queuing issues.
- The weekday PM peak trip generation for the LG3 development will be 17:00 – 18:00, with the majority of the trips travelling back to the development. Although the recycling centre closes at 18:00 and there will be some residential and recycling trips on Blackhorse Road at the same time, the recycling centre peak trips are not from 17:00 – 18:00 and the majority during that period are likely to be departing the recycling centre. This is verified by the data provided by the HCC Waste Management Unit included in **Appendix B**, which demonstrates that average visits to the recycling centre are significantly lower from 17:00 – 18:00 compared with other hours during the day.
- The traffic issues associated with the recycling centre are existing traffic issues which have been significantly exacerbated by the Covid-19 situation and are not created by the proposed LG3

development to which the planning application relates. The worsened traffic issues associated with the recycling centre are a result of additional management measures implemented due to Covid 19 including one in, one out entry arrangements to the recycling centre and a likely reduction in on-site parking/ unloading spaces due to on-site social distancing measures. These issues are likely to reduce following the Covid 19 pandemic, when the future LG3 development would be due to open, if consented.

- A recent meeting was held between the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Head of Waste Management & Environmental Resource Planning and local stakeholders to discuss the existing traffic issues associated with the recycling centre, and a number of mitigation measures are currently being explored to improve matters in the short term, whilst the current restrictions are in place. The Heritage Foundation is also trying to support this where it can. We have also received information on the level of usage of the centre in 2019, before the current restrictions were put in place that are causing these challenges.
- A potential mitigation measure has been suggested in the Site LG3 TA report, that if the authorities consider it appropriate, traffic conditions will be monitored on Blackhorse Road (including any potential recycling centre queuing issues blocking the Blackhorse Road/ Flint Road junction) post occupation of the development, with remedial measures identified such as keep clear markings at the junction. Monitoring could also be undertaken during the construction period.

Construction Impacts

10. As the submitted planning application was an Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved except access), a Construction Traffic Management Plan was not submitted but it has been assumed this would be conditioned as part of any planning consent. Therefore, construction trips were not assessed in detail within the Transport Assessment.
11. The requirement for a full Construction Logistics Plan (CLP) will form the basis of an appropriately worded condition or separate Reserved Matters Application if planning permission is granted by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). This would be anticipated to include required details of the following;
 - Construction vehicle routing solely via Flint Road;
 - The demolition and construction programme;
 - Policy context relevant to construction;
 - Quantifying estimated demolition and construction vehicle trips;
 - Details of agreed construction vehicle routing to and from the Site;
 - Targets to encourage sustainable construction movements and minimise impacts on surrounding highways and land uses; and
 - Management of the CLP, raising awareness and review and monitoring.
12. Construction contractors would feed into the above document and the CLP would need to be formally agreed with NHDC and HCC prior to construction works commencing. Mitigation measures would take into consideration any existing highway network issues, such as at the recycling centre, and aim not to exacerbate the situation. The Heritage Foundation intends to work with the County Council to reduce the potential for heavy vehicles accessing the site via Blackhorse Road/Flint Road at the peak times for the recycling centre. This will then form part of the CLP and the Foundation's contract with a future developer of the site.
13. Contractors appointed to the scheme would work in accordance with a CLP to be agreed with NHDC and HCC. The CLP would aim to minimise the impacts of construction-related vehicle movements and facilitate sustainable construction travel to and from the site. The CLP would cover the following issues amongst others:
 - Encouraging construction workers to travel by non-car modes to the Site;

- Promoting smarter operations that reduce the need for construction travel overall or that reduce or eliminate trips particularly those in peak periods;
- Encouraging greater use of sustainable freight modes;
- Encouraging use of greener vehicles;
- Managing the on-going development and delivery of the CLP with contractors;
- Communication of site servicing/delivery facilities (through dissemination of information) to workers and suppliers; and
- Encouraging the most efficient use of construction freight vehicles.

14. It is currently anticipated that if outline planning permission is granted in 2021, a further detailed planning application would be required once the Foundation has found a suitable partner, meaning that should permission be granted, construction is unlikely to commence until 2023. It is therefore, likely that this will be following the Covid-19 period, when the operation of the recycling centre access controls return to normal.

Appendix A – Blackhorse Road 7 Day Automatic Traffic Count (Tuesday 4 February – Monday 10 February 2020)

Eastbound Hourly Traffic Flows

Time	Eastbound Vehicles							5 Day Avg	7 Day Avg
	Mon 10-Feb	Tue 04-Feb	Wed 05-Feb	Thu 06-Feb	Fri 07-Feb	Sat 08-Feb	Sun 09-Feb		
00:00	5	4	2	1	5	4	4	3	4
01:00	1	0	2	0	1	4	6	1	2
02:00	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
03:00	2	3	1	1	3	3	0	2	2
04:00	3	5	7	8	7	2	0	6	5
05:00	21	17	18	21	19	7	7	19	16
06:00	82	71	72	71	75	24	14	74	58
07:00	210	211	185	207	174	23	5	197	145
08:00	258	263	288	259	246	45	2	263	194
09:00	142	138	158	152	125	58	24	143	114
10:00	179	82	89	161	147	117	72	132	121
11:00	145	100	101	179	153	120	74	136	125
12:00	170	110	121	201	178	131	61	156	139
13:00	176	151	162	202	193	118	68	177	153
14:00	162	101	109	177	141	140	62	138	127
15:00	127	82	95	146	148	125	52	120	111
16:00	114	89	85	120	100	115	44	102	95
17:00	78	64	78	83	86	43	30	78	66
18:00	37	45	56	33	45	28	25	43	38
19:00	17	21	21	21	27	16	18	21	20
20:00	18	22	16	20	18	12	10	19	17
21:00	6	15	10	11	14	9	2	11	10
22:00	4	4	9	7	12	10	3	7	7
23:00	2	2	3	3	5	5	2	3	3
07-19	1798	1436	1527	1920	1736	1063	519	1683	1428
06-22	1921	1565	1646	2043	1870	1124	563	1809	1533
06-00	1927	1571	1658	2053	1887	1139	568	1819	1543
00-00	1960	1601	1689	2084	1922	1160	585	1851	1572

Westbound Hourly Traffic Flows

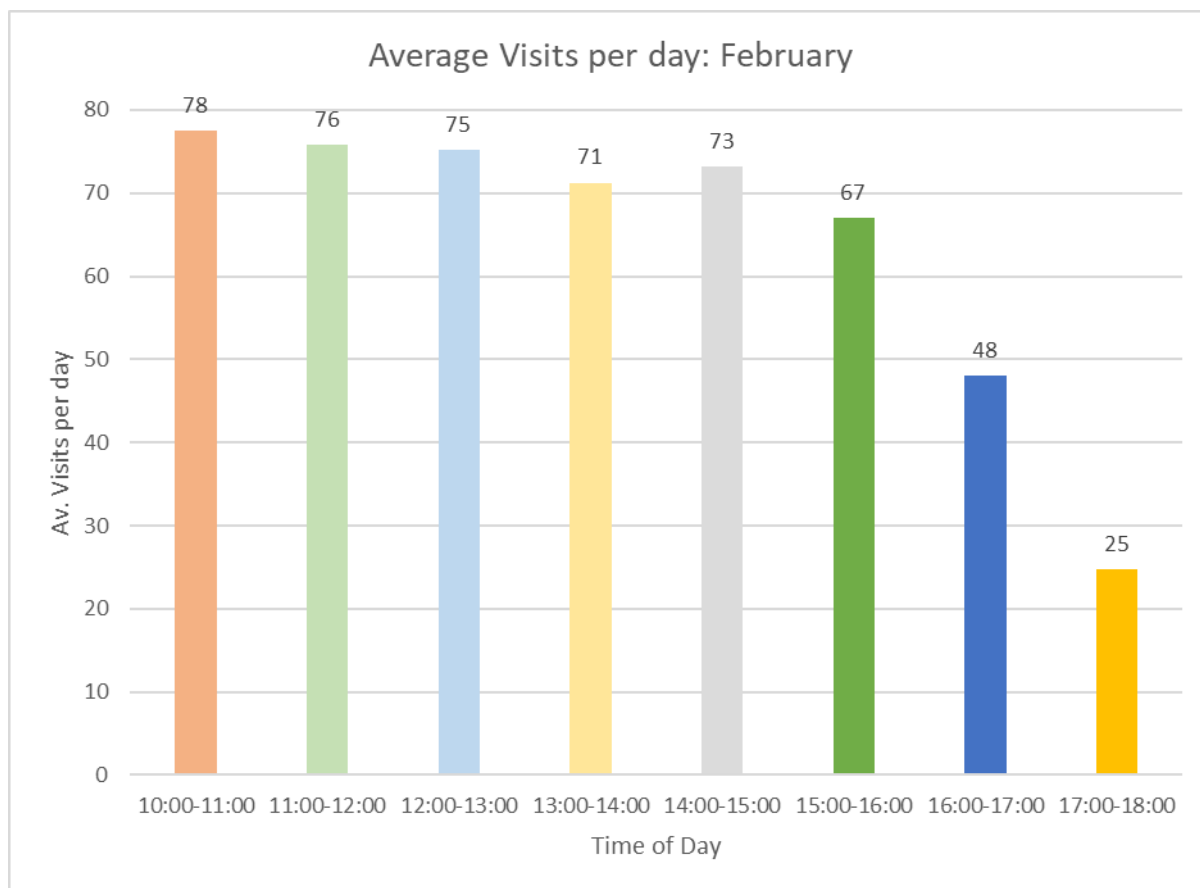
Time	Westbound Vehicles							5 Day Avg	7 Day Avg
	Mon 10-Feb	Tue 04-Feb	Wed 05-Feb	Thu 06-Feb	Fri 07-Feb	Sat 08-Feb	Sun 09-Feb		
00:00	3	11	12	8	11	3	1	9	7
01:00	1	1	1	0	0	3	6	1	2
02:00	1	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	1
03:00	0	1	1	1	2	3	0	1	1
04:00	2	4	2	3	5	3	0	3	3
05:00	5	10	9	8	10	2	5	8	7
06:00	20	18	21	24	15	7	4	20	16
07:00	91	80	82	101	83	23	14	87	68
08:00	144	164	154	144	146	39	6	150	114
09:00	97	89	87	105	74	62	18	90	76
10:00	141	79	99	153	139	124	77	122	116
11:00	174	98	98	175	155	129	78	140	130
12:00	194	128	139	201	208	152	65	174	155
13:00	165	137	150	191	209	116	60	170	147
14:00	167	96	129	193	172	132	73	151	137
15:00	165	121	119	181	199	137	51	157	139
16:00	233	211	208	252	188	120	44	218	179
17:00	243	234	245	225	169	56	30	223	172
18:00	52	66	71	73	61	24	14	65	52
19:00	30	33	30	29	39	27	20	32	30
20:00	12	14	10	14	28	13	5	16	14
21:00	7	11	8	7	8	8	5	8	8
22:00	7	12	12	10	8	5	5	10	8
23:00	1	0	2	3	2	3	1	2	2
07-19	1866	1503	1581	1994	1803	1114	530	1749	1484
06-22	1935	1579	1650	2068	1893	1169	564	1825	1551
06-00	1943	1591	1664	2081	1903	1177	570	1836	1561
00-00	1955	1619	1691	2101	1932	1193	582	1860	1582

Two-way Hourly Traffic Flows

Time	Combined Vehicles							5 Day Avg	7 Day Avg
	Mon 10-Feb	Tue 04-Feb	Wed 05-Feb	Thu 06-Feb	Fri 07-Feb	Sat 08-Feb	Sun 09-Feb		
00:00	8	15	14	9	16	7	5	12	11
01:00	2	1	3	0	1	7	12	1	4
02:00	2	2	3	0	1	3	0	2	2
03:00	2	4	2	2	5	6	0	3	3
04:00	5	9	9	11	12	5	0	9	7
05:00	26	27	27	29	29	9	12	28	23
06:00	102	89	93	95	90	31	18	94	74
07:00	301	291	267	308	257	46	19	285	213
08:00	402	427	442	403	392	84	8	413	308
09:00	239	227	245	257	199	120	42	233	190
10:00	320	161	188	314	286	241	149	254	237
11:00	319	198	199	354	308	249	152	276	254
12:00	364	238	260	402	386	283	126	330	294
13:00	341	288	312	393	402	234	128	347	300
14:00	329	197	238	370	313	272	135	289	265
15:00	292	203	214	327	347	262	103	277	250
16:00	347	300	293	372	288	235	88	320	275
17:00	321	298	323	308	255	99	60	301	238
18:00	89	111	127	106	106	52	39	108	90
19:00	47	54	51	50	66	43	38	54	50
20:00	30	36	26	34	46	25	15	34	30
21:00	13	26	18	18	22	17	7	19	17
22:00	11	16	21	17	20	15	8	17	15
23:00	3	2	5	6	7	8	3	5	5
07-19	3664	2939	3108	3914	3539	2177	1049	3433	2913
06-22	3856	3144	3296	4111	3763	2293	1127	3634	3084
06-00	3870	3162	3322	4134	3790	2316	1138	3656	3105
00-00	3915	3220	3380	4185	3854	2353	1167	3711	3153

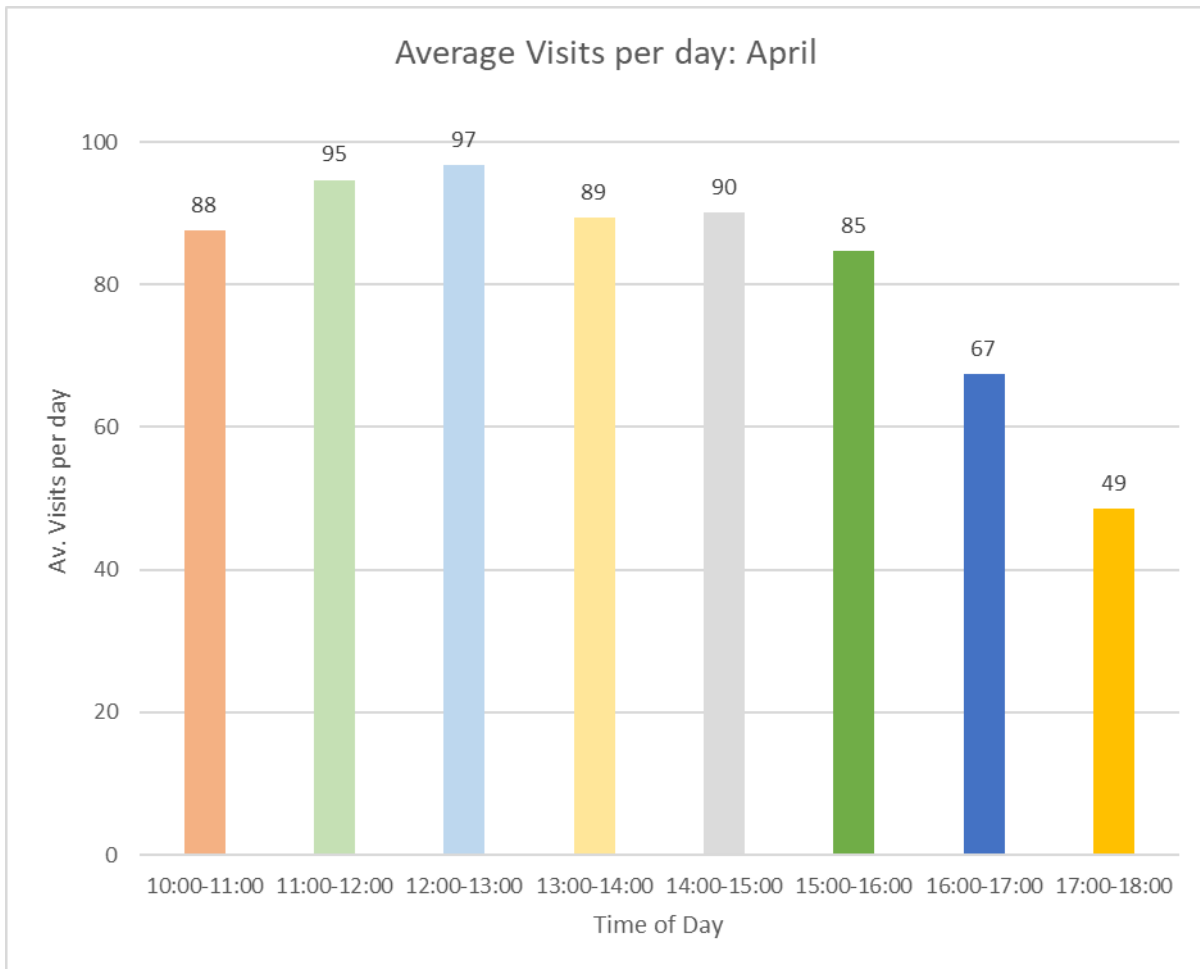
Appendix B – Letchworth Recycling Centre – 2019 Visitor Counts

February 2019 Visits



Visits – February 2019		
Time	Total Visits in Month	Average Visits per day
10:00-11:00	1550	78
11:00-12:00	1517	76
12:00-13:00	1504	75
13:00-14:00	1425	71
14:00-15:00	1464	73
15:00-16:00	1340	67
16:00-17:00	960	48
17:00-18:00	495	25
Out of Opening Hours	41	2
Total	10296	

April 2019 Visits



Visits – April 2019		
Time	Total Visits	Average Visits per day
10:00-11:00	1839	88
11:00-12:00	1988	95
12:00-13:00	2032	97
13:00-14:00	1878	89
14:00-15:00	1891	90
15:00-16:00	1779	85
16:00-17:00	1416	67
17:00-18:00	1019	49
Out of Opening Hours	44	2
Total	13886	