

IKEA ON VERGE OF GO-AHEAD - BUT CONCERNS REMAIN OVER ROADS

Pollution and traffic fears over IKEA store

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BY PETER KAY
peter.kay@jpress.co.uk
@peterkaybing

Warnings are being given over rising traffic levels and air pollution in the east end of Sheffield alongside the proposed go-ahead for an IKEA store.

The regeneration and employment benefits and boost to the city's image of a £60m development on former industrial land will be underlined next week to councillors, who are expected to accept that the

balance has tipped to an extent that planning permission is justified.

But the report from council officers makes clear the need to address predicted traffic congestion around M1 junction 34 at peak times, especially at weekends, Easter and Christmas, as a result of a development with almost 1,000 parking spaces, and to be aware of the increased health risks from more exhaust fumes.

Already a major strategy is being prepared to further

tackle traffic issues in the wider area using Government and European funds so that ambitions to redevelop more land are not stifled because the roads network cannot cope.

Although there is some uncertainty, it is predicted there is some capacity for roads to take the extra vehicles going to and coming from IKEA when it is due to open in 2015/16, but saturation will be reached within ten years, especially if

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COUNCIL VERDICT NEXT TUESDAY

Benefits of IKEA will outweigh the costs, say council officers

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Meadowhall and steel firm Outokumpu roll out their own plans. A big Next store is being built on Meadowhall's doorstep.

"IKEA is adding significant additional traffic to an already congested network whilst delivering a number of fairly modest highway improvements in order to mitigate its traffic impact," says the council report.

It also makes clear the dangers from traffic fumes. "It is the view of the council's Director of Public Health that the public health harm caused by the slight worsening of already poor air quality, whilst not precisely quantifiable, will comprise additional cases of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, and will lead to a small number of additional premature deaths. This is despite the effects of the mitigating measures."

In addition, the damage to health will be in part of the

city, around Tinsley, which already suffers from health inequalities, and this is "unlikely to be outweighed by the health benefits that will flow from the additional jobs and training opportunities created".

On balance, though, officers say that all the advantages outweigh all the disadvantages - a recommendation that has been widely welcomed by the public, many of whom see the IKEA scheme as a test of Sheffield's ambitions.

There would be "undoubted regeneration benefits and it is considered that these should be given significant weight in the current economic climate. The jobs and training are likely to particularly benefit the local deprived communities of Tinsley and Darnall which will help to address social and economic inequalities and help offset some of the health impacts."

*IKEA's bill, page 14.