

Statement of Common Ground

Highways England &
Havant Borough Council

May 2021

Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) sets out the jointly agreed position between Highways England (respondent no 314) and Havant Borough Council in relation to the Havant Borough Local Plan and its evidence base (HBLP).
2. Highways England (HE) is the strategic highway authority for the strategic road network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset, and as such, HE works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity. HE's interests with regard to the Havant Borough Local Plan relate to the potential impact of development on the A3(M) and the A27.

Background

3. As set out in HBC's Duty to Co-operate Statement (CD26) transport is considered to be one of the key strategic issues in the Plan, and the duty to co-operate includes working with the highways authorities to identify and address issues on the local and strategic networks. The NPPF sets an expectation that Local Plans should be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned (Paragraph 104b).
4. The two parties agree that positive engagement on transport issues in the local plan has taken place. Highways England attended workshops on the Mainland TA (EB05), as well as on the Southleigh Study (EB06) during their production where the approach to these studies was discussed, and Havant's civil engineers engaged with HE in assessing the feasibility of junction options onto the A27 for Southleigh (EB01).
5. Highways England submitted a formal response to the Regulation 19 Consultations in 2019 and 2020 (Respondent Number R314), as well as commenting at Regulation 18 in 2018 and following the publication of the Mainland TA Addendum Southleigh Study (EB06) in 2021.

Transport Evidence

6. Highways England has reviewed the transport evidence base and offered comments on sites throughout the plan and junctions on their network. These are formally set out in R314 C01 and R314 20C01 and are not repeated here.
7. Through representation R314 20C01, Highways England has advised they have concerns that the Local Plan may not meet the tests of soundness. Two concerns regarding the evidence base remain in particular:
 - a) Whether changes in employment land assumptions have been adequately considered; and

- b) Whether it has been demonstrated that the Southleigh development KP5 can be delivered without having a severe impact on the SRN (or that appropriate mitigation is necessary and can be delivered) during the plan period.
- 8. Highway England consider that these matters raise questions as to whether the plan may be considered 'justified' and 'effective'.
- 9. With regard to the employment land assumptions, it is noted by both parties that the Inspectors have followed up on this point since the Plan was submitted, through their questions to the Council in CR06, and the Council have explained why an update the TA was not made in CR08.
- 10. Turning to Southleigh, the two parties agree the key question is what its potential impact will be in the local and strategic highway networks, and whether a direct link onto the A27 represents a necessary, effective and deliverable solution to the mitigation of these effects.
- 11. It should be noted that at the time of Highways England making comment R314 20C01, the Mainland Transport Assessment Addendum - Southleigh Study (EB06) had not yet been published. Highways England have since reviewed the study.
- 12. As it stands, Highways England consider that the transport evidence does not demonstrate that the homes proposed for Southleigh through the Local Plan can be delivered without having a severe impact on the SRN (or that appropriate mitigation is necessary and deliverable), and that therefore the Local Plan may not be considered 'justified' or 'effective'.
- 13. Through the Mainland Transport Assessment Addendum - Southleigh Study (EB06) the Council has concluded that there is a likely need for changes to the Warblington junction and a direct link road on the A27 and has therefore safeguarded land to facilitate this. However, the Council is also clear that the TA and its addendum are designed as a strategic level assessment, which utilises the best available information at this level. Further detailed assessments by the site promoter are necessary following the plan's adoption to determine the most appropriate package of mitigation and would inform the scheme taken forward in an outline planning application.

Way Forward

- 14. HE would be concerned if any material increase in traffic were to occur on the SRN as a result of planned growth within Havant Borough, without careful consideration of mitigation measures. The Council agrees with this approach, and there is a commitment from both parties to work with partners to address infrastructure constraints to ensure proposed development can be safely accommodated on the SRN.
- 15. It is agreed by both parties that the development proposed by the Havant Borough Local Plan will likely require highway works to mitigate the impact of additional traffic on both the local and the strategic network. It is also agreed that it is important that the Local Plan provides a planning policy framework to ensure development cannot progress without the appropriate infrastructure in place.
- 16. It is acknowledged by both parties that a number of matters regarding the transport impacts and possible mitigation are still to be understood and agreed. Significantly more detailed assessments, including to establish costs, will be required to fully consider the deliverability of any necessary improvements on the A27.

17. The Council is committed to providing Highways England with further detailed technical information on the evidence studies and their modelling inputs so that they may be fully understood and where necessary refined to influence future transport evidence, in particular in relation to the Southleigh site and related mitigation proposals. It is also acknowledged that it is not known at this time who the scheme promotor would be and who would underwrite any financial risks to both the Local Road Network and proposals on the A27. When this is agreed and understood the Infrastructure Delivery Plan will need to be updated.
18. The two authorities both support the approach that major infrastructure improvements should be the last resort, and that managing down demand should be considered and sought in the first instance. This also aligns with the Statement of Common Ground between the Havant Borough Council and Hampshire County Council (SCG10). The need for all three parties, as well as site promoters, to work together on this strategy is acknowledged by both the Council and Highways England. The approach is also reflected in Policy IN2 of the Plan.
19. As well as continued joint working between the relevant authorities, the Local Plan evidence needs to be followed up with more detailed work to support an outline planning application. The site specific TA will have to consider the full avoidance and mitigation package for the development in the round and determine the most appropriate package and associated timescales for delivery. Accordingly, modifications to the supporting text of KP5 have been suggested through CD27, so that the supporting text on transport evidence (paragraph 3.108) now reads:
- While substantial evidence has been compiled to support this plan, including around the deliverability of the site and infrastructure needed to support it (Transport Assessment and Southleigh Transport Study; Viability Report; Infrastructure Delivery Plan), this evidence will need to be further refined before a planning application is submitted. In terms of transport infrastructure, the Local Plan Transport Assessment has identified possible mitigation measures for the local road network, and land is safeguarded through Policy IN2 for an access from this site directly onto the A27. The applicant will need to undertake a site specific transport assessment to supplement and update this evidence, and work with the Borough Council and its Highway Authority partners to agree a suitable transport mitigation package. This should include full consideration of reducing the need to travel and facilitating active and sustainable transport modes.*
20. The scope of future work will need to be discussed and agreed between the Scheme Promotor, Havant Brough Council, Highways England and Hampshire County Council.

Signatories

This statement has been prepared and agreed by the following organisations	
Havant Borough Council	Highways England
Signature 	Signature 
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Director of Regeneration & Place	Title Area 3 Spatial Planning Manager
3 June 2021	Date 3 June 2021