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16 January 2024

Via Email: [localplan@ashfield-dc.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@ashfield-dc.gov.uk)

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re: Consultation on the Ashfield Local Plan 2023 to 2040: Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft**

Thank you for providing National Highways with the opportunity to consult on the pre submission draft Local Plan for the Ashfield district.

National Highways (formally Highways England) has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as a strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). It is our role to maintain the safe and efficient operation of the SRN whilst acting as a delivery partner to national economic growth.

With regards to the district of Ashfield and this consultation, our principal interest is in safeguarding the M1 motorway which routes through the district.

**Context**

Our handling of Development Plan consultations is informed by DfT Circular 01/2022: The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development ('the Circular'). This sets out how interactions with the Strategic Road Network should be considered in the making of plans and development management considerations. In addition to the Circular, the response set out below is also in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other relevant policies.

## **Background**

The Ashfield Local Plan has been prepared to guide development in the district for the period 2023 – 2040 setting out a vision and policies which will replace those of the Ashfield Local Plan Review (2002).

The draft submission Local Plan sets out that a minimum of 7,582 new dwellings will be delivered within the plan period. This is based on an objectively assessed requirement of providing 446 dwellings per annum. The Local Plan also aims to deliver an employment requirement of approximately 81 hectares.

Housing is proposed to be dispersed across the district with the Spatial Strategy (Policy S1) setting out that new housing should be concentrated primarily in and adjacent to the larger and more accessible towns of Hucknall, Sutton-in-Ashfield (Sutton) and Kirkby-in-Ashfield (Kirkby), whilst focused on sites of less than 500 dwellings.

Strategic employment is focused on key sites with good transport connections such as land adjacent to M1 Junction 27 and Sherwood Business Park.

## **Transport Impact on the Strategic Road Network**

National Highways has welcomed engagement with the Ashfield Transport Study (2023) which forms a key part of the Local Plan evidence base identifying the traffic and transport implications of the Local Plan growth.

The Transport Study includes modelling of the strategic traffic impacts of Local Plan allocations using the East Midlands Gateway Model. With regards to the SRN, this has identified cumulative impacts at M1 junction 28 and M1 junction 27 which will require mitigation to accommodate the Local Plan growth.

With respect of highways improvements designed and delivered by National Highways, our funding is determined through the Government's Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) in five-year funding periods. 'Committed' schemes are identified years prior to the RIS period in which they are to be constructed.

As such, unless a scheme is already 'committed' within the RIS, it is unlikely that National Highways would be able to forward fund improvements. This means that in these circumstances we would not support a developer contribution approach. Instead, where feasible, we will seek to ensure that highway improvements are secured via a Section 278 agreement under the 1980 Highways Act whereby the necessary infrastructure is designed and delivered by the developer.

With regards the traffic impacts at M1 junction 27, whilst there will be some cumulative impacts at this junction resulting from the growth dispersed across the district, a significant portion traffic at this junction will be generated by the strategic employment allocation at M1 junction 27 (Policy S6). In light of this, we consider it feasible and

appropriate for the development(s) within this allocation to be responsible for delivering the necessary improvements at M1 junction 27. Should the allocation be brought forward by more than one developer/applicant we consider that a Supplementary Planning Document (or similar) may be necessary to guide a Masterplan for the site which would set out any phasing and identify the scale and timings of infrastructure needed to facilitate the cumulative impacts of the allocation.

The situation at M1 junction 28 is slightly more complicated as the traffic impact at this junction is the result of the cumulative growth across the district as opposed to one or more individual allocations. It is also worth noting that congestion at this junction particularly in the peak hours is an existing concern. In response to the existing issues, National Highways has been working to identify potential mitigation options for the short term. This has led to the identification of an 'interim' scheme which could be delivered subject to funding.

At the same time, we are continuing to place efforts into developing a more substantial solution to support future growth and whilst this is one of our higher priorities for the region, there is no guarantee as to *if* or *when* we could expect funding of these improvements to be awarded through a future RIS period.

Notwithstanding this, we welcome that the need for improvements at M1 junction 28 to support the district's growth has been acknowledged and included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). This strengthens our case for investment under a future RIS period. In the meantime, it may be necessary to secure interim improvements to this junction by way of developer led schemes (as per M1 junction 27) which will be determined on a case-by-case basis at the planning application stage. These improvements could take the form of our interim scheme mentioned above or an alternative scheme put forward by the developer.

In summary, we consider that the traffic impacts of the Local Plan with respect of the SRN have been satisfactorily assessed as referenced in our signed Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with the Council.

### **Comments on Specific Policies**

In addition to the above, National Highway makes specific comments on the below policies set out in the Local Plan:

Strategic Policy S3 of the Local Plan sets out the Council's requirements for meeting the challenge of climate change. This includes ensuring new development does not increase the risk of flooding. In doing so we note that the policy allows for discharging surface water to highway drains. It should be noted however, that with respect on the Strategic Road Network, this would not be permitted (with reference to DfT Circular 01/2022 paragraph 59).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion we have no objections to the Local Plan with regards to its legal compliance, soundness, and meeting the duty to cooperate.

Yours sincerely,



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