

Swale Borough Council Local Plan Examination Statement

Matter 5: Infrastructure

This statement has been produced as part of the examination of the Swale Borough Local Plan: Bearing Fruits 2013 and its Proposed Main Modifications June 2016. It answers the Inspector's questions relating to Matters 5.1-5.5

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5. Infrastructure

1. This statement should be read in conjunction with the Council's responses within SBC/PS/117.

Matter 5.1 Transport Infrastructure – is the modified Plan supported by robust infrastructure planning which demonstrates that the proposed development is deliverable?

2. SBC/PS/103 gives a comprehensive account of the transport infrastructure needed to support the Local Plan as proposed to be modified.
3. At the EIP Hearings in 2015, Kent County Highways expressed the view that based on transport research already done; the OAN figure of 776 dwellings per annum could be satisfactorily accommodated on the County road network.
4. For the Strategic Road Network (SRN), SBC/PS/011 (Statement of Common Ground by Swale Borough Council and Highways England) noted that Highways England, although concerned that the level of development in the submitted plan, would impact on M2/J5, this did not expect this to be significant in the first few years of the plan period. The announcement of major improvements to M2/J5, scheduled to commence 2019-20, has alleviated this concern to a degree. It was further noted at para 4.2 that even at higher levels of development, provided capacity was not exceeded, the Strategic Road Network would deal with the traffic levels at least in the short term.
5. SBC/PS/011 (para 4.7) also noted that further research would be needed to establish the impact of a higher development target on the A249 junctions at Sittingbourne at Key Street; Bobbing and Grovehurst with the local network; and to establish how any impact upon the safe and efficient operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) could be mitigated. Following on from ID/09 and the endorsement of the development strategy of the plan, the lion's share of new development has been located in the Kent Thames Gateway part of the Borough. Consequently, HE's representation on the Proposed Modifications to the Plan reasserted the need to look at the impact on the A249 junctions. To that end, the Council, Kent Highways and HE have been working closely with the major developer teams (who have schemes coming forward to planning application stage), to research the impact of those schemes, cumulatively with other local plan allocations on these junctions.
6. The results of this work and the way the findings will need to be used in policy and determination of planning applications is set out in the Statement of Common Ground between the Council, Kent Highways and Highways England at SBC/PS/121.
7. Highway infrastructure issues in respect of Faversham and Sheppey are covered at Matters 5.3 and 5.4 respectively, although these are less complex and further advanced in terms of implementation and delivery.

8. The Council therefore believes that appropriate infrastructure planning has been done and the means to put necessary highway improvements in place to support local plan development have been demonstrated and that it is therefore deliverable.

Matter 5.2 Does the Plan include adequate infrastructure planning for highway improvements along the A249 corridor to accommodate growth to the west of Sittingbourne?

M2/ Junction 5

9. A key highway improvement for the A249 corridor is the major improvement planned for M2/J5 itself, which remains in the national road programme as a funded scheme with a commencement date of 2019-20. At this point a Preferred Route Scheme (PRS) has not yet been identified by Highways England, but consultation on design options is scheduled for late Spring 2017. The eventual PRS will have a bearing on what if any interim transport mitigations will be needed ahead of implementation of the scheme and how this may impact on the amount of development which can be delivered. Until the PRS is confirmed, this is a detailed matter which will have to be assessed through Transport Assessments on the planning applications. It is expected that some development will be able to proceed ahead of improvements, and this will need to be demonstrated through detailed Transport Assessment work. Appropriate governance and monitoring arrangements between the highways and planning authorities can be agreed to ensure that timely mitigation is provided (see SBC/PS/121).
10. The potential to offer an interim improvement to M2/J5 for a dedicated London bound lane could also be achieved through the developer promoted extension to Policy MUX1 (SW Sittingbourne).
11. As stated at para 5 above, work is ongoing with the highway authorities and developer teams to put more detail into the improvements noted in SBC/PS/103 and relevant allocation policies for the A249 corridor junctions with the local road network. SBC/PS/121 and supporting evidence presents the findings to date and the way forward.
12. Any planning applications coming forward on sites not proposed through the Local Plan which may also impact on the A249 corridor junctions are being required to establish the cumulative impact of their growth, local plan proposed growth and background growth. The Council and Highway Authorities will expect these matters to be covered through the Transport Assessments accompanying the applications. If mitigation is required, they will also need to contribute to suitable mitigation of their scheme in a timely way.
13. SBC/PS/121 sets out a broad structure for the governance measures which will be needed to achieve this (and can be further detailed through a revised Local Transport Strategy).

Key Street/A249 Junction

14. The Key St/A249 junction is currently over capacity at peak times and will require mitigation to support any further development loading onto it. As a minimum this will be signalisation, contributed to by development schemes within the Sittingbourne and Newington area (as indicated by SBC/PS/103).
15. In purely highway terms, the major new allocation at Policy New MUX1 (Wises Lane SW Sittingbourne) as proposed through the Modified Local Plan, can be adequately mitigated through improvements to both the junction of Wises Lane and the A2; and through signalisation of the Key Street/ A249 junction.
16. In terms of the performance of the SRN and the section of the A2 between Wises Lane and the Key Street/A249 roundabout, the extension to Policy New MUX1 and the associated additional mitigation proposed by the developer (to include alteration to the southbound A249 on-slip) offers a superior solution. This is particularly so for the SRN, (and for parts of the local network) when the cumulative impact of new development allocated in the Local Plan is taken into account. As stated in para 10 above, this also offers the potential for an interim improvement to Junction 5, with a dedicated London-bound lane from Maidstone Road.
17. SBC/PS/127 in respect of the proposed extension to Policy New MUX1 looks at the detail of the implications and benefits of this extended allocation proposal and its sustainability implications in a broader way, including the potential of rat running and the means for addressing that, as well the potential for additional mitigation offered for the Key Street/A249 junction.

Bobbing and Grovehurst Junctions with the A249

18. In terms of the Bobbing and Grovehurst junctions with the A249, the key impacts are likely to be from the major allocations at Policy MU1 North West Sittingbourne) and Policy New AX5 (Iwade). SBC/PS/103 does however indicate other developments within Sittingbourne which impact on this junction and which may be required to contribute to longer term mitigation at Grovehurst and/ or Bobbing, such as traffic from new employment locations at Kemsley and Eurolink within north Sittingbourne.
19. The residential allocations were made in anticipation of major improvement of the Grovehurst/A249 junction. Early in 2016, Kent Highways designed a scheme for major improvement of the Grovehurst / A249 junction, costed at £37m which was considered for a funding bid for Local Growth Fund 3. This scheme involves a major reconfiguration of the current two roundabouts in a dumbbell arrangement into a single large grade separated roundabout. This would provide potential additional capacity to cover not only the Local Plan period to 2031, but well beyond that. In the event, it was not selected to go forwards for the LGF bidding, in the interest of maximising the chances of success for other vital Kent schemes (including the A2500 at Sheppey).

20. The developer initiated research to support planning applications at NW Sittingbourne has therefore sought to explore the degree to which Bobbing junction has capacity to support at least the early stages of development of this scheme, considered cumulatively with other Local Plan development; and in combination with an interim improvement of the Grovehurst / A249 junction. The research has been carried out in cooperation with the highway authorities and the Council and is reported at SBC/PS/121 and supporting evidence (SBC/PS/123b).
21. The outcome of the initial research is that the Grovehurst junction is already at capacity at peak times and the research indicates that this will worsen considerably even in the absence of further development within 10 years. Interim mitigation to support Local Plan proposed development will therefore be essential.
22. As a minimum, a package of interim improvement to Grovehurst/ A249 will be required including:
- Improvement to the eastern roundabout at Grovehurst, in particular to the A249 southbound off slip and at the eastern roundabout at Grovehurst, to facilitate left turns into Swale Way. This would be likely to include utilisation of land which has been reserved through a S.106 agreement (for the Nicholls transport site north of Swale Way);
 - Retention of the existing pedestrian crossing at Grovehurst;
 - Provision of alternative pedestrian and cycle facilities via the Old Sheppey Way and Bramblefield Lane bridge;
 - Subject to further testing through Transport Assessment and any mitigation required to the satisfaction of the highway authorities to address impacts at Bobbing /A249 junction, a proportion of the development at Policy MU1 could be accessed from Quinton Rd at the southern end of the allocated site;
 - Traffic calming measures through Bobbing village.
23. The outcome of the Transport Assessment work will determine what needs to be in place and by when to support the development, although some development will need to come forward ahead of mitigation to enable it.
24. Contributions towards a longer term mitigation scheme will be sought from other developments through S278 agreements and pooled contributions. Monitoring by highways authorities will be undertaken to ensure continuing safe and satisfactory operation of both the SRN and local networks and that suitable mitigation is in place to support development.
25. The means of delivery of the mitigation required to support the Local Plan development along the A249 corridor has been identified in cooperation with the highway authorities and each part has been appropriately dealt with.

Matter 5.3 Has the highway impact of the proposed level of growth on Sheppey been properly addressed?

26. In the past 15 years, Sheppey, as part of the regeneration drive in the Kent Thames Gateway, has attracted public road investment in the form of both the Sheppey

bridge crossing and also the recently completed Rushenden Link Rd to the A249. The latter serves the major regeneration site at Queenborough and Rushenden. Minster, at the heart of the island, is served largely by the A2500 Lower Road, which links back to the A249 at Cowstead Corner. Minster has also been the focus of new development as a result of allocations in previous adopted local plans, which continue to build out, as well as new allocations in this area made through the Proposed Modifications.

27. The modelling undertaken to support the submission version of the Local Plan evaluated a residential target of 740 dwellings per annum. For the purposes of that exercise, sites were included to allow for an additional 1100 dwellings on the island over and above the allocations shown in the submitted version of the plan (CD/01). The results of that exercise did not show any significant highway issues on Sheppey. In the event, the Proposed Modifications have increased allocations in the Queenborough and Rushenden area by 45 dwellings; and in the Minster and Halfway area by 875 dwellings (ie less than previously tested). Background traffic levels have also increased and are compounded in the case of Sheppey, by summer tourist traffic. At peak hours, congestion on the A2500 Lower Road, at the (signalised) junction with Barton Hill Drive is of considerable local concern and despite traffic management initiatives by Kent Highways, is in need of major improvement.
28. Allocation of the Policy New AX1 for 620 dwellings at Barton Hill Drive, through the Proposed Modifications to the plan will result in the release of land for a roundabout to replace the signals at the Barton Hill Drive/A2500 junction (which was confirmed by promoters of this scheme to the Local Plan EIP Hearing in December 2015). Developer funding from developments at Thistle Hill and Harp Farm at Minster have already been secured towards construction of this scheme.
29. A detailed scheme for the roundabout was prepared and costed by Kent Highways in summer 2016, which future proofed the scheme to 2031 to take account of all committed and local plan proposed development on Sheppey. This was used to support a Local Growth Fund 3 bid for complementary funding for Phase 1 (the roundabout at Barton Hill Drive) to add to the land and developer funding already secured. Phase 2 will involve road widening between Barton Hill Drive and the A249. The Implementation and Delivery Schedule (SBC/PS/103) also lists other development allocations in the area which would be expected to contribute to the Lower Road improvements.
30. The LGF funding bid for Phase 1 has a high priority within those submitted from the South East and Kent Highways are confident that this will be successful when the LGF3 monies are finally distributed in the wake of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2016. However even if this funding does not materialise, given the commitments to date, there is confidence that the roundabout could be provided from development contributions, either financial and/ or in kind, without impinging to an unacceptable degree on development costs and viability of development within the area. This has been confirmed in the developers' written submission for

Policy New AX1 to this Hearing (see Statement ID 876785 from DHA Planning submitted the Inspector's Matter 4 of this Hearing).

31. The Council is therefore of the view that the level of growth on Sheppey has been adequately addressed and there are means to deliver appropriate mitigation to the local highway network, in a timely fashion to support new development.

Matter 5.4 Does the Plan include robust infrastructure planning to ensure that the highway network can accommodate the level of growth proposed in and around Faversham with particular regard to the impact on J7 of the M2.

32. Faversham was not included in the original transport monitoring undertaken to support the submission version of Local Plan (CD/001). This was with the consensus of the highways authorities that the nature of the development strategy and levels of growth proposed at Faversham were not of a scale to cause an issue on the network at Faversham or M2/J7 (SBC/PS/011 para 3.2).
33. SBC/PS/011 further noted at para 3.3 that the Local Plan as submitted did not meet objectively assessed needs over the lifetime of the plan. In order to address this and challenging viability issues in parts of the Borough, additional sites had been allocated in the Faversham area at submission stage. It was also noted that there was further pressure for additional allocations there, which were coming through both the local plan process and the development management process. These would need to assess impact and mitigation through Transport Assessments.
34. Following the Inspector's Interim Findings which increased the overall housing target for the plan, and recommended a proportionate boost for housing numbers at Faversham, the total there has further increased through the Main Modifications to the plan. The potential impact of such a possibility was acknowledged even in SBC/PS/011 (para 6.1)
35. These sites have had to produce detailed Transport Assessments (TAs). These TAs have had to assess the **cumulative** impact of all local residential and employment developments which are consented and not built out; plus their own schemes; plus taking account of background traffic growth (as per national data sets) and assessing the impact to the end of the plan period.
36. All of the TAs for the respective development schemes then examined the traffic impact of the scheme on all junctions likely to be impacted by additional trips generated by the development in question. Any necessary measures to mitigate the identified impact are then secured as part of the S.106 or S.278 agreements and or planning conditions attached to the planning permissions for the scheme in question. Mitigation took the form of either highway improvement or capital contributions to such schemes where appropriate. As statutory consultees on both the Local Plan and planning applications, it has been necessary to satisfy both Kent Highways and Highways England in this respect and the Council is guided by their responses.

37. Most of the new allocations at Faversham from the submission plan and the Proposed Modifications have in fact now achieved planning permission or at least permission in principle (by December 2016). Preston Fields, (Policy New AX4); Land North of Graveney Rd (Policy New AX3); and the extended Lady Dane Farm (Policy MU5) are the only exceptions and a planning application for Preston Field has now been received.
38. Mitigation from the development schemes already permitted at Perry Court Farm (Policy New MUX2) and Oare (Policy MU4) have been required to contribute to mitigation work at the junction of the A251 /A2 (which serves M2/J6). Further local transport network improvements have been secured from permitted schemes at Western Link (Policy A12), and Brogdale Road (Policy A14.8).
39. In terms of the impact on M2/J7, so far none of the Faversham development proposals have been required to provide any major mitigation there. A strategic development scheme (4000 dwellings at Mountfield Park) within the Canterbury City Council area will be required to provide mitigation to improve efficiency of the junction layout and is subject to an occupancy condition. Beyond this, the Kent County Council proposal to include M2/J7 for a business case study for a major upgrade via funding from the Large Local Major Schemes for Local Growth Fund has not thus far been accepted following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2016.
40. In these circumstances, the conclusion is that all the proposed and committed development in the Local Plan at Faversham (and elsewhere) has been assessed for its highway impact on the local and strategic road network on a cumulative basis, as planning applications have come forwards and mitigation has been provided where necessary. All of the relevant local plan allocation policies require this, so even if the currently permitted schemes do not go ahead, any alternative development proposals, or any proposals which are not part of the Local Plan would also need to produce appropriate Transport Assessments and mitigation where needed.
41. No major improvement is envisaged in the public road programme for M2/J7 for the foreseeable future (although it may be considered through Highways England's information gathering for its forthcoming Route Investment Strategy 2). Subject to TA assessment, the quantum of any further unidentified development proposals in this location may be limited, should the need for a major improvement be identified. This may require identification of other sources of funding and a suitable and deliverable scheme. Should proposals on such a scale emerge, they would need to be matters for consideration through the Local Plan review.

Matter 5.5 Are modifications which add further reference to existing allocation(s) policies justified?

42. The Implementation and Delivery Schedule (SBC/PS/103) has been updated and revised in consultation with the infrastructure and service providers to reflect the increased housing target and cumulative impact of the Plan as proposed to be

modified. In respect of the specific Modifications queried by the Inspector, the following comments are offered.

43. MM 128 Policy A7 - Thistle Hill – Now has planning permission agreed and funding for the A2500 improvements are already secured.
44. MM 140 Policy A10 - Milton Pipes – policy wording amended to reflect updating of the IDS SBC/PS/103 as advised by service providers. Now has planning permission.
45. MM144 Policy A11 – Plover Road – policy wording amended to reflect updating of the IDS SBC/PS/103 as advised by service providers. Now has planning permission agreed.
46. MM153 – Policy A12 – Western Link – policy wording amended to reflect updating of the IDS SBC/PS/103 as advised by service providers. Now has outline permission.
47. MM183 – Policy MU1 – subject to the additional work outlined above in Matter 5.2; the satisfaction of the highway authorities; and consequent agreement between the developers promoting the site and the Council on further amendment to the policy.