

Swale Borough Council Supplementary Note – Matter 5: Infrastructure

6 February 2017

Cumulative Strategic Road Network and Local Road Network implications for the Local Plan

1. At last week's Examination in Public session, the Council argued that all the proposed allocated sites were capable of mitigating their own impacts on both the Strategic and Local Highway networks and this was reflected in the Statement of Common Ground (SBC/PS/121) signed between the Council, Highways England and Kent County Council Highways (KCCH).
2. Over the last few days the Highway Authorities have been receiving further evidence to support the allocations in Policies MU1 and MUX1 (MUX1A). These relate to the cumulative impact of all the local plan developments and include evidence that the major junctions on the A249 (as part of the strategic highway network) are capable of being mitigated to meet these additional capacity demands. As such, Highways England are satisfied with the approach being taken.
3. This exercise has identified the requirement for additional mitigation to be introduced at key junctions on the A249 to manage queues on the Strategic Road Network (SRN). However, the result of this mitigation requirement by Highways England has now been shown to demonstrate further material queuing and congestion on parts of the A2 corridor, which would have a severe adverse cumulative impact on journey times and safety within the local highway network falling under the jurisdiction of KCCH.
4. It should also be noted that the evidence indicates that even without Local Plan development and in absence of any mitigation, the Local Highway Network would become unacceptably strained during the peak hours within a 5 to 10 year period. Therefore 'do nothing' is also considered not to be an option.
5. At this juncture, it is considered by KCCH that this situation would impact particularly on the Sittingbourne area and its surroundings, along the A2 corridor between Teynham, through to Key Street and onwards to Newington. These matters are considered not only to impact upon Local Plan allocations, but also to other alternatives before the Examination involving omission sites. Suggestions of redirecting growth to other areas would also give rise to other general strategic or local highway network issues. Therefore, this is a problem which relates to the whole of the Borough in the sense that it cannot be addressed by alternative distribution of development or the allocation of alternative sites.

6. As a result and notwithstanding KCCH signing up to a statement of common ground (SBC/PS/121) in the belief that there would be no severe impact on the local highway network, KCCH now considers that, whilst the local highway network can accommodate the likely traffic impact of the local plan growth within the next 5 years (to 2022), it cannot accommodate the likely impact from local plan growth toward the end of the plan period. This view takes into account the currently proposed interventions identified within the draft Transport Strategy (TS) and Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) documents. This is reflected in their recently submitted statement to the Inquiry (see letter of 2 February 2016 appended to this document).

7. KCCH further state in their letter that;

‘In order to enable the Local Plan to progress and contribute to the immediate 5 year housing land supply, KCCH propose that a review of the local plan and TS (draft Swale Transport Strategy 2014-31 CD/008) is undertaken and completed by 2022. Further discussions and continuing our effective co-operation will identify the prospective delivery mechanism for the strategic sites. Precisely this approach has been suggested in the neighbouring Local Plan for Maidstone and was encouraged and accepted by the Inspector within the last month. We must encourage your Inspector to be consistent with this.’

8. In order to support delivery of the Local Plan strategy for a further 5 years to April 2021, some development will need to be allowed to come forward, as set out in the Council’s housing land supply statement at SBC/PS/113. Subject to suitable interim mitigation, KCCH is prepared to accept the impact of the local plan on the local highway network. Suitable schemes have been identified for the NW Sittingbourne allocation (Policy MU1). For SW Sittingbourne (Policy MUX1), there may need to be additional minor modifications to the policy and Implementation and Delivery Schedule (SBC/PS/103). This would be to ensure that the funding for further mitigation of the Key Street/A249 junction is achieved from this and other Local Plan allocations impacting upon it in the short term; and that it is supported by synchronised signalisation at the Wises Lane /A2 junction.

9. The transport evidence indicates that there would be significant additional highway benefits arising from the MUX1a proposals, which are set out in the Council’s Statement on Matter 3 (SBC/PS/127 paras 29-31). Consideration will need to be given as to whether these proposals would be appropriate to mitigate the local highway network impacts and whether these benefits outweigh any other planning related impacts arising from the extended site allocation and associated infrastructure.

10. In these circumstances, it is proposed that the Inspector invites the Council to consider whether a further main modification(s) will be required, with the intention of off-setting the identified adverse impacts on the local highway network arising from the Strategic Road network mitigation. This would enable the Council to investigate with the highway authorities, the options for further local highway network mitigation including whether MUX1a proposals should be considered as part of the solution. It would also allow for the full assessment of whether such mitigation is capable of handling the whole Plan period.
11. It may be considered that this type of review is already part of the provisions of the Local Plan (for instance in policy AS1, in Chapter 8 as modified and in the IDS), which are wide enough to include the consideration of further transport mitigation and proposals. The Council will keep the effects on the strategic and local highway networks under review, in order to identify any further adverse impacts, and how far they can be ameliorated, beyond the first five years of the Plan. There is the ability for the wording of these review provisions to be strengthened if it is considered necessary to make the plan sound. For instance, a time frame for a Local Plan review could be included, similar to the approach proposed for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan through that Planning Inspector's Interim Findings (Interim Findings from the Examination of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 22 December 2016; Inspector Robert Mellor, BSc Dip TRP DipsBEnv DMS MRICS MRTPI).
12. It is the Council's belief that the flexible approach put forward above provides the most appropriate way forward to minimise any further delay in the adoption of the Swale Local Plan.

Appendix 1: Letter dated 2 February 2017 from Kent County Council Highways

Highways and Transportation
Development Planning Team
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Mr James Freeman
Head of Planning
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Ask for: Tim Read
Your ref:
Date: 2 February 2017

Dear James

Clarification of the Position of Kent County Council in relation to A2 corridor Traffic Issues

I would like to take the opportunity to clarify the position of Kent County Council Highways & Transportation in relation to the ongoing Local Plan examination process.

As you will be aware from recent discussions, the promoters of strategic housing allocation sites have been continuing to provide more detailed transport modelling evidence to identify specific impacts on both the local and strategic highway networks. The consequence of this exercise has identified the requirement for additional mitigation to be introduced at key Junctions to manage queues on the Strategic Road Network (SNR). The result of this mitigation requirement by Highways England has now demonstrated further material queuing and congestion on the A2 corridor, which will have a severely adverse cumulative impact on journey times and safety within the highway network falling under the jurisdiction of KCC.

As a result the highway authority consider that, whilst the local highway network can accommodate the likely traffic impact of the local plan growth in the medium term, it cannot accommodate the likely impact from local plan growth toward the end of the plan period, taking into account the currently proposed interventions identified within the draft Transport Strategy (TS) and Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) documents.

In order to enable the local plan to progress and contribute to the immediate 5 year housing land supply, KCC propose that a review of the local plan and TS is undertaken and completed by 2022. Further discussions and continuing our effective co-operation will identify the prospective delivery mechanism for the strategic sites. Precisely this approach has been suggested in the neighbouring Local Plan for Maidstone and was encouraged and accepted by the Inspector within the last month. We must encourage your Inspector to be consistent with this. Sally Bengel will provide a copy of the Maidstone Local Plan Inspector's Interim Report.

To facilitate the further growth identified in the local plan to 2031, it will be necessary for SBC to fund further transport modelling and route study works to inform potential revisions to the TS and IDP. Depending on the scale of impact and subsequent mitigation required, it may be necessary to

review the details supporting individual allocations to ensure that interventions are economically viable and CIL compliant.

KCC would also expect Swale Borough Council to use its statutory powers under the Planning Act to compulsorily purchase any third party land required to achieve satisfactory mitigation.

KCC are keen that both authorities work proactively together to broker a solution to provide the Planning Inspector with the confidence to allow the Local Plan examination to progress as outlined above. I am sure we can achieve this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Read', written in a cursive style.

Tim Read
Head of Transportation

