

## **Local Plan Hearings – statement by Rt Hon Maria Miller MP**

### **Issue 9: Transport**

#### **19 Transport**

***19.1 Has the capacity of the transport infrastructure been assessed, and is there a deliverable framework for improvements that are required, including in relation to the proposed major sites allocations?***

Policy CN9, taken with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, is unsound; it is not effective, as it does not appear to be deliverable over its period. It is not positively prepared, as it is not consistent with achieving sustainable development. It is also inconsistent with national policy. Government policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework; policy CN9 does not meet the overarching principle set out in paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework that “pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life, including (*inter alia*)... improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure”. As currently presented, Policy CN9 does not provide for truly sustainable development.

#### **Congestion**

The capacity of the transport infrastructure is examined in detail in the updated Transport Assessment by Parsons Brinckerhoff dated February 2015. This document acknowledges that there will be a significant increase in traffic in and out of Basingstoke as a result of the development envisaged in the Local Plan, and highlights 27 “congestion hotspots” that will need to be addressed. The Transport Assessment selects 13 of these “congestion hotspots” for further detailed assessment, on the basis that improvements for others have already been identified outside of this study.

The central Government funding secured by the M3 Enterprise LEP for some of these “congestion hotspots” is to be welcomed; so too is the Government funding for the upgrading of the Black Dam roundabout and M3 Junction 6, as well as upgrading of the M3 in the Basingstoke area.

However, in carrying out its further detailed assessment of the 13 junction considered of prime importance, the Transport Assessment identifies a considerable programme of mitigation works that will be needed to accommodate the scale of housing development identified in the Local Plan.

The indicative costs for the 13 junctions amount to a total of some £26.4 million.

These works, and the associated costs, do not take account of the link road being considered between the A339 and the B3400, for which no costs at all appear to have been identified. However, the Transport Assessment does appear to have made assumptions about altering the routes of a proportion of traffic that would be expected to use this link road, and accordingly reducing projected levels of congestion at four roundabouts. Without a fully costed plan for the link road, the projections for the four associated junctions should be revised to reflect projected congestion levels based on there being no link road.

Furthermore, the Transport Assessment notes that this list is not exhaustive and other junctions and links may also require improvements and further studies as the Local Plan is taken forward. There are no contingency costs identified for these.

It is also of considerable concern that the Transport Assessment concludes that, for two major junctions, there is still no technical solution identified that would effectively mitigate the increased traffic:

Brighton Hill roundabout is forecast to operate with only two of its six arms effectively mitigated in the AM peak (despite works costed at £6,360,000); and

Aldermaston roundabout will have only three of its six arms effectively mitigated in the AM peak, but all arms operating below 100% (despite works costed at £1,917,000).

The Transport Assessment acknowledges that “*the majority* of the forecast impacts on the highway network resulting from the Local Plan development scenarios could be accommodated after mitigation”.

If only the majority of the forecast traffic impacts can be accommodated, this leaves a significant unanswered question about the balance of the traffic impacts that by implication cannot be accommodated. It is quite unacceptable to allow development to take place without proper planning to accommodate the increased traffic that it is acknowledged will be generated. It follows that development should only be allowed to take place once the correct planning and provision of transport infrastructure has taken place to accommodate it.

## **Funding**

There is also insufficient evidence as to how the required road schemes, totalling some £26.4 million, will be funded, particularly at a time of constrained Government spending, and with the emphasis on the Northern Powerhouse. Further clarity about how funding is to be secured should be provided.

## **Phasing**

There is also insufficient consideration given to how the road schemes will be brought on stream at the appropriate time, in line with the rate and phasing of development. The Transport Assessment attempts to prioritise the junctions for which mitigation is proposed, but there is no evidence to suggest that this has been correlated with the proposed phasing of delivery of the housing development sites. Policy CN6 states that new infrastructure should be provided prior to occupation of the development. In order to ensure that the necessary roads infrastructure is in place ahead of occupation, there needs to be further planning regarding phasing and timing of road improvements.

The prioritisation apportioned in the Transport Assessment indicates that mitigation at some eight major junctions will need to be implemented during the forecasting period 2019. While the aspiration to deliver the road improvements in a timely fashion is welcome, it is unclear whether any consideration has been given to phasing works in such a way as to minimise inconvenience and delay to road users when multiple roadworks are taking place.

Local residents and businesses have experienced significant inconvenience due to the works at Black Dam roundabout, which have overrun by a considerable amount, largely due to the inadequacy of inaccurate historical mapping of utilities. Given the enormous scale of works envisaged, and the potential for added disruption due to the cumulative impact of multiple sets of roadworks, it would be advisable for preparatory work in identifying utilities to be carried out as a priority.

If the conclusion is that the road network cannot be mitigated in such a way as to accommodate the increased traffic generated by the level of new house building proposed, then that level of development is not sustainable. It should therefore not be permitted and agreement should be reached on a reduced number of new houses.

## **Omissions from Policy CN9**

Policy CN9 does not refer to the rail network. It does refer to public transport but this appears to be solely in the context of local travel, by implication buses. This is unhelpful as increased use of public transport is more sustainable and therefore contributes to the objective of sustainable development.

With the increased levels of housebuilding envisaged under the Plan, it is reasonable to assume that many new residents of the Borough will need to travel by train, including particularly for commuting. There is already a 20% shortfall in train capacity on peak service trains to Waterloo and a further 40% capacity increase will be needed to meet the demand forecast in 2043.

Network Rail has been developing its Wessex Route Study, which is a vital part of the long term planning process for the railway. It is disappointing that Policy CN9 fails to take this important element of sustainable transport into account.

I note the Policy SS10 deals with Chineham Railway Station, but I also note that it does not consider the rail service to which the station would provide access.

## **Proposed amendments to Plan**

To be sound, the evidence base needs to be re-examined, to determine whether technical solutions to Brighton Hill and Aldermaston roundabouts can be found that would effectively mitigate the increased traffic.

Additionally, further evidence should be produced to demonstrate that the level of mitigations required can be funded within appropriate timescales; and further master planning should be carried out urgently regarding the timing and phasing of road improvements in line with, and ahead of, release of sites for development.

Policy CN9 should be amended as follows (amendments in italics):

(second paragraph)

“Development proposals will *only* be permitted *where the evidence shows that they:*

- a) Integrate into (etc)...*

(third paragraph)

*“Development proposals that generate significant amounts of movement – whether on their own account, or taken cumulatively with other development proposals – must be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment and will normally be required to provide a Travel Plan. All development proposals, either individually or taken cumulatively with other development proposals in the Local Plan, must be able to demonstrate that the road traffic increases can be effectively mitigated, and that the funding is in place to ensure that this mitigation takes place before occupation of a development. Where this cannot be demonstrated, the development proposal cannot be considered sustainable and should not be permitted until such time as the above conditions can be met.”*

Rt Hon Maria Miller MP  
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