

## **Examination of the Chichester Local Plan 2021-2039 Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs)**

### **Matter 4A: Transport National Highways' Statement**

**Issue: Would the Plan be effective in ensuring that any significant impacts from the development proposed on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree?**

**Issue: Are the individual transport policies clear, justified and consistent with national policy and will they be effective?**

#### **Statement Introduction**

1. National Highways 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). In respect of the Chichester Local Plan, the SRN consists of the A27 and in particular, that section locally referred to as the Chichester Bypass.
2. National Highways have had on-going and generally constructive involvement with the development of the 2021-2039 Local Plan evidence base for some time, this being a continuation of the work that led to the evidence base for the previous plan. It is recognised generally that the Chichester bypass is currently congested at peak times and is operating at capacity. The previous plan identified a package

of junction improvements to reduce congestion on the A27 and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) set out a mechanism to collect contributions to fund these improvements.

3. As set out in the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between National Highways and Chichester District Council (CDC), these improvements are no longer deliverable due to unrealistically low original cost estimates and escalating costs over the intervening period. Also as confirmed in the SoCG, there is no Department for Transport (DfT) funding available for improvements to this part of the strategic road network.
4. National Highways ('NH') prime concern is the continued safety of those that use our network. Congestion is also a concern but we recognise that on its own this results in inconvenience to the road user and as set out in NPPF, unless the residual effects of development are severe, congestion would not be a reason to refuse development. Congestion is therefore a secondary consideration.
5. It should be borne in mind that the Local Plan is required to address only the impacts on road safety and congestion which are caused by the proposed development in the Plan. The Plan is not required to also address and remedy existing issues.
6. A Monitor and Manage approach is acceptable to NH on the basis that the scale of the development allocated in the CDC Local Plan is modest and that the traffic impacts of the plan will build up over time, providing an opportunity to refresh the evidence base keep under review the appropriateness of the mitigation and consider a comprehensive transport solution of which the A27 will form part.
7. On this basis and as expressed in previous correspondence to CDC, NH anticipate that necessary improvements to the A27 to address road safety issues caused by the traffic likely to be generated by the growth in the Local Plan, would be of a lesser scale than those proposed in the previous plan and which remain undelivered or those included in the current transport evidence base as

Provisional Concept schemes. These smaller scale improvements, coupled with traffic reduction measures such as improved modal choice, may result in a satisfactory transport strategy for the plan, i.e., one that does not result in unacceptable road safety impacts. In the absence of agreed proportionate improvements to the A27, NH are content for details to be identified through a Monitor and Manage process.

8. It is recognised that the current transport evidence base is imperfect and it is unfortunate that work to revisit the evidence has not progressed further but CDC and NH are continuing to work together in a constructive and on-going basis, along with West Sussex County Council and other stakeholders to reach a position whereby the Monitor and Manage proposals, which form the basis of Policy T1, provide sufficient surety that development would not have an unacceptable safety impact and that the residual cumulative impacts on the SRN would not be severe. The Monitor and Manage process includes the commissioning of a new transport model as an early action, as set out in the 'Monitor and Manage - Provisional Methodology (TA03.20)'.
9. Against this background, we have provided below, brief responses to those questions relating to matter 4 which are directly relevant to NH's position.

#### **Transport Evidence**

**Q.20 The Chichester Area transport model was updated in 2018, and further analysis and surveys were undertaken in November 2023 in order to verify its outputs and to attempt to confirm that the evidence may be relied upon. Is the Plan underpinned by relevant and up-to-date transport modelling evidence? Is this evidence adequate and proportionate?**

10. It is generally accepted that the Chichester Area traffic model is not up-to date and does not replicate present day traffic conditions. CDC undertook further surveys in November 2023 to try to confirm the validity of the 2013 modelling and

concluded that there was a close correlation between the new information and the existing traffic model. NH's view is that the November 2023 traffic counts were not representative of a typical day and did not record the demand for movements along the A27 corridor. The new data cannot therefore be used to verify the previous modelling work.

11. It is possible that the existing model could be refined to give a better understanding of the likely transport impacts of the plan and discussions on this matter have been held between respective technical advisors. NH has yet to see any proposals for an interim refinement of the transport model from CDC.
12. The early refresh of the transport evidence is however a central part of the Monitor and Manage approach to accommodating transport demand. NH is a key member of the Transport Infrastructure Management Group (TIMG), set up to develop the Monitor and Manage process and to guide the delivery of its outcomes.

**Q.22 The broad spatial distribution of housing proposed in the Plan is for 535 dwellings per annum (dpa) in the southern plan area. In transport terms, what is the justification for the 535 dpa 'cap' on new homes in the southern plan area?**

and

**Q.23 What is the evidence that there would be unacceptable impacts on highway safety, and/or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe with a level of housing development in the southern plan area with a level of housing provision over 535 dpa?**

13. The Monitor and Manage approach was first suggested in discussion with CDC and WSCC in 2022 and due to the recognised challenges of delivering the mitigation as then identified, on the A27 it was agreed that a distribution based on 535dpa, this being the level of housing being delivered by CDC at that time, was an appropriate basis on which to test a quantum and distribution of development in the southern plan area, to allow for planned development while

a longer-term solution for the A27 was found.

14. Alternative levels of housing growth have been assessed as part of the transport evidence base. Appendix H of the Chichester Transport Study (TA04.01) included within the 'Transport Study 2023 – Appendices' (TA04.02) reports on an assessment of 700 dwellings per Annum. The conclusion at paragraph 5.1 of the report is that "*generally the proposed SRN mitigation identified for the Core Scenario, can accommodate in the most part, additional increase in development to 700dpa*". The 'Core Scenario' is confirmed in paragraph 1.2 of that report as 535 dpa.
15. As higher levels of growth are assessed, traffic becomes increasingly unable to use the A27, due to congestion, and diverts onto the local road network with associated consequences. These effects are less clear from the evidence submitted but have been demonstrated to National Highways previously. It is however apparent from the information provided that the main impacts of the planned development on the A27 relate to congestion on side roads as traffic attempts to join, junction hop or cross the A27. Congestion effects are greater on the side road approaches, which form part of the local road network, than on the A27 itself.
16. The 535dpa figure therefore formed an agreed pragmatic assumption for testing local plan development impact. The decision to cap development in the Southern plan area was however CDC's as the local planning authority responsible for preparing the Local Plan. NH can only advise on the transport implications of development distributions proposed by CDC in their Plan in so far as they relate to the SRN.
17. NH's position is that it is not opposed to a Plan at 535 dpa, subject to the agreement of the Monitor and Manage process as referenced in Policy T1. As confirmed in the Chichester Transport Study (see paragraph 14 above) the impacts of housing provision on the A27 at levels above 535 dpa would be similar to the plan allocation. Therefore, subject to the agreement of the Monitor and

Manage process, a higher number (eg 700 dpa) would not be a concern to NH.

**Q.25 Policy T1 refers to integrated transport measures ‘being developed’, rather than setting out any specific measures. Does Policy T1 set out an effective overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for infrastructure for transport as per NPPF 20?**

18. Policy T1 contains a policy commitment to a Monitor and Manage process, which National Highways supports. Monitor and Manage approaches are relatively new and few examples of best practice exist. In essence, the approach is reactive to actual change in travel demand. The actual transport measures will be dependent on how travel demands change over time which will be informed by monitoring evidence. Specific measures are identified in the supporting text of the Plan but further work is required to either confirm that the schemes described remain appropriate or to identify alternatives. The expectation is that the Monitor and Manage process, as required in Policy T1, will ensure appropriate and sufficient provision for transport improvements relating to the SRN.
19. CDC are aware of NH’s requirements for an effective Monitor and Manage process and discussions are ongoing.

**Q.26 Is there sufficient certainty regarding the effectiveness of the proposed transport mitigation measures to conclude that the Plan is sound?**

20. The proposed transport mitigation measures for the A27 are yet to be confirmed which means there is a degree of uncertainty, but they are likely to comprise small scale measures which are complementary to the overall transport strategy. These measures would be focused on addressing the road safety impacts arising from the planned growth in the Local Plan.

21. CDC are aware of NH's requirements for an effective Monitor and Manage process to provide certainty regarding the effectiveness of the transport mitigation package. Discussions are ongoing.

**Q.27 A number of potential transport mitigation schemes are described in the evidence base. What is the evidence that these schemes are feasible and could be delivered in the plan period?**

22. The schemes included in the Local Plan evidence base for the A27 junctions are not feasible or deliverable in the plan period. The reasons for this are set out in the modified supporting text of Policy T1. The A27 schemes, included in the Chichester Transport Study, are consequently labelled as 'Provisional Concept' schemes and National Highways position is that the actual schemes to be delivered to support the Local Plan should be deferred until refreshed evidence (through the Monitor and Manage process) either re-confirms that the schemes remain appropriate or alternatives are identified.

**Q.30 What is the evidence that sufficient transport mitigation measures can be delivered to ensure that any significant impacts arising from the level of development proposed on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree?**

23. As previously stated, the current transport evidence base is imperfect and it is unfortunate that work to revisit and up-date the evidence has not progressed further. NH are however supportive of the role of the Monitor and Manage process in addressing this.
24. A successful Monitor and Manage approach would clearly require mechanisms to ensure that funding was available when needed for the delivery of sufficient transport mitigation either through some form of advanced funding for mitigation or development controls on the pace of growth. CDC are aware of NH's requirements in this regard and discussions continue.

25. NH would like to highlight that priorities for the SRN are set by DfT in the Government's Road Investment Strategies (RIS). There cannot be any presumption that transport improvements to the SRN necessary to support the growth in the Local Plan will be funded through a future RIS. This is made clear in the DfT Circular 01/2022. This means that National Highways cannot accept any liability in respect of funding schemes on the SRN which are outside of RIS. For this reason, the responsibility for funding schemes which are necessary to mitigate growth in a Local Plan remains with the Local Planning Authority. CDC's approach to funding has been through a contributions SPD for the current plan and it is expected that this will be updated after adoption of the new plan. Given this, it is for the Local Plan and the local planning authority to ensure funding for future mitigation schemes for the SRN is adequately secured and delivery bodies are identified, National Highways will work with CDC on the process of developing the schemes but will not accept monetary contributions towards schemes.

**Q.31 Are the suggested MMs necessary for soundness?**

26. The Main Modification of interest to NH is that made to policy T1 sub point 7. The modifications are similar to and have the same effect as those previously suggested by NH in our letter of 8th November 2023. The overall effect of the changes is to alter the focus of the transport strategy to be less car-led and therefore less dependent on improvements to junctions on the A27 , and more reliant on a comprehensively planned and balanced transport strategy.
27. On this basis the MM for policy T1 sub point 7 is necessary for soundness.