



Transport Statement of Common Ground  
between Cannock Chase District Council  
(CCDC), Staffordshire County Council (SCC)  
and National Highways (NH)

Cannock Chase Local Plan (2018-2040)

March 2025

## Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Cannock Chase District Council (CCDC), Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and National Highways (NH) hereafter referred to as “the parties” to inform the examination of the Cannock Chase Local Plan (2018-2040).
2. Staffordshire County Council are the Highways Authority for Cannock Chase district. National Highways have responsibility for issues relating to the strategic road network.
3. This SoCG has been prepared in accordance with national guidance and is intended to cover matters of strategic importance relevant to the parties. It documents those matters agreed by the parties with regard to the Cannock Chase Local Plan and any areas which remain subject to further discussion. This Statement of Common Ground covers the following matters:
  - Key strategic transport matters relevant to the Cannock Chase Local Plan (2018-2040)
4. Cannock Chase District Council published consultation material and invited comments relating to its Local Plan process at the following stages:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Issues and Scope	2 <sup>nd</sup> July - 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2018
Issues and Options	13 <sup>th</sup> May - 8 <sup>th</sup> July 2019
Preferred Options (Regulation 18)	19 <sup>th</sup> March -30 <sup>th</sup> April 2021
Pre-Submission (Regulation 19)	5 <sup>th</sup> February - 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2024

5. Staffordshire County Council and National Highways were consulted at each stage and responded as they considered appropriate.

## Geography covered by Statement of Common Ground

6. This SoCG covers the Local Authority area of Cannock Chase District Council.

## Key Strategic Matters

7. The following issues outlined below are considered to be the key strategic matters with regards to on-going plan making. All parties are committed to further dialogue moving forward, not just limited to the periods of plan preparation.

## Engagement

### Issues and Scope 2018

8. Staffordshire County Council and National Highways provided comments on the first consultation on the new Local Plan. A meeting was held between all

parties on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018 which enabled discussion of transport schemes, studies in development and any specific issues with junctions. The Issues and Scope was the initial stage of development of the new plan and therefore comments reflected this and did not raise any specific issues.

## **Issues and Options 2019**

9. Following the Issues and Scope consultation in 2018, the Council published the Issues and Options document for consultation from Monday 13th May until Monday 8th July 2019. This document contained potential options for housing and employment growth with a range of quantities and options for distribution across the District without identifying specific sites. It was therefore fairly high level and therefore not supported by transport modelling at that stage.
10. A meeting was held between officers for Cannock Chase District Council, Staffordshire County Council and National Highways during the consultation on 23/5/19 to discuss the Local Plan options and specific junctions.
11. In response to the Issues and Options consultation; Staffordshire County Council supported the approach to site selection and recommended regular engagement with the County Council on the identification of the preferred package of highway and transport schemes to be included in an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). They drew attention to evidence in production at that time including the Staffordshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), and the Integrated Transport Strategy. The LCWIP was published in Oct 2021 and the new Integrated Transport Strategy will be finalised and published to coincide with the adoption of the Local Plan.
12. They also stated that the County Council will provide advice on existing highway constraints at locations such as Five Ways junction and the impact of traffic generated from potential new development sites, to help inform selection of the Preferred Option. This could be informed by existing traffic volume and journey time data, spreadsheet models (to be developed) and available strategic traffic models. Appropriate traffic appraisals will need to take account of emerging Midland Connect studies and the impact on the local highway network of strategic highway schemes such as M54/M6 link road.
13. National Highways (formerly Highways England) provided a high-level review of the potential impacts of the development options presented as part of the Cannock Local Plan determining the potential trip generations and distributions/assignment of development traffic onto the Strategic Road Network (SRN).
14. They stated that their principle concern was the A5 corridor, which runs through the centre of Cannock in an east/west direction while skirting the southern boundary of the district. They also considered the potential impact of local plan development traffic on M6 Junctions 11 and 12.

15. The analysis provided guidance on which of the options proposed would have the greatest impact on the SRN. They noted that residential Options B2, C1, C2, C3 and employment Options C1 and C2 were likely to present the largest levels of development trips onto the A5 and M6.
16. National Highways also highlighted schemes and studies for referral in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan including the M54/M6 link road project and that Midlands Connect were carrying out a study of the A5 corridor between M6 J12 and M1 J18.
17. Ultimately at the Issues and Options stage they concluded that it is not possible to determine the implications for the operation of the SRN. In order to identify the location of any severe impacts arising and the identification of appropriate mitigation, further technical analysis will be required.

### **Preferred Options 2021**

18. In forming the Preferred Options document, the Council considered the response to the options presented at Issues and Options stage as well as a range of evidence which had been completed. The Council had also undertaken site selection work and presented evidence and held discussions internally with the cross-party Local Plan Members and Officers Working Group.
19. In 2020, the Council wrote to site promoters to request any specific transport evidence which had been prepared to support sites for allocation to share with Staffordshire County Council, but most were awaiting more certainty through the preferred options stage before producing site specific transport evidence.
20. The Preferred Options plan identified two strategic employment sites; a site was identified between the A5 and M6 Toll, Norton Canes (9.4ha) as well as a smaller new employment site at Turf Field, Watling Street (2.21ha).
21. The greatest level of new residential development proposed at Preferred Options stage was located in areas proposed for release from the Green Belt in Heath Hayes (Land at Wimblebury Road 410 dwellings and Land south of Lichfield Road 875 dwellings) and on a site to the north of Norton Canes (Land west of Hednesford Road, 175 dwellings).
22. It was identified the traffic generated by these sites in combination would impact the Five Ways junction and therefore transport evidence would be required to understand the potential impact and options for mitigation. An Expression of Interest was submitted by Staffordshire County Council to the DfT for Local Pinch Point Funding in 2020 to fund a roundabout improvement scheme at Five Ways supported by Cannock Chase District Council.
23. Unfortunately, at the detailed design stage it emerged that land outside the Highway maintainable at public expense (HMPE) was required to develop and deliver the concept design, and this could not be made available to the planned

delivery programme. Funding for third party land acquisition had not been included within the EoI and the submission was withdrawn from consideration for funding (to the successive Levelling Up Fund - LUF).

24. Staffordshire County Council responded to the Preferred Options consultation summarising the Expression of Interest and subsequent withdrawal. They also detailed the concerns regarding the existing deficiencies in the Five Ways roundabout design and the lack of an identified solution or funding mechanism to deliver improvements to make the proposed strategic housing allocations acceptable in transport terms. Comments were also made regarding transport policies in the Local Plan and the need for those to refer to highway improvements at Five Ways. More general transport comments were also made with regard to policies and proposals in the plan, but the response did not indicate any other particular constraints on the local highway network resulting from the Local Plan.
25. The response from National Highways (formerly Highways England) did not raise any specific concerns with policies or proposals including preferred site options in the Local Plan. They stated: we generally support an increase of development within and adjoining the larger settlements in the area, which benefit from a good concentration of amenities and public transport services. We consider that focusing housing in urban areas would be likely to have a lesser impact on the SRN than in rural locations or in close proximity to the A5 due to reduced vehicle trip generation and availability of key facilities and services locally, therefore minimising journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.
26. National Highways also added that 'we would expect that future allocated sites within these strategic locations or any other sites with the potential to impact the operation of the SRN to be subject to Transport Assessments in order for their impacts to be assessed appropriately and mitigation to be identified as required'.

### **Regulation 19 (2024)**

27. To inform the final consultation on the Local Plan, specific modelling was undertaken to assess the impact of proposed growth on the Five Ways roundabout junction. In June 2022, Staffordshire County Council (SCC) prepared a report assessing the traffic impact of the proposed housing sites located near to Five Ways roundabout but this was subsequently revised to take into account lower levels of proposed growth in 'The Impact of Preferred Option Developments on Five Ways Roundabout – Revised Report with Lower Levels of Housing (Draft Regulation 19 Local Plan Sites)' which was produced in October 2022. Between Preferred Options and Reg 19. Stage the Council reduced the housing numbers at site SH1 Land south of Lichfield Road from 875 dwellings to 700 dwellings and removed Land west of Hednesford Road, 175 dwellings as an allocation, instead designating it as a 'safeguarded' site.

28. The conclusion of the initial modelling was that a large roundabout improvement would be difficult to deliver but that a new relief road diverting traffic from Wimblebury Road to Lichfield Road would create enough headroom to deliver the growth arising from allocations in the Local Plan without making the traffic situation any worse than it would be at the end of the Local Plan period without development. However, Five Ways roundabout would not be operating within capacity and a further roundabout improvement has been identified which would be required to enable the junction to operate more efficiently.
29. Air Quality Consultants were also engaged to undertake the Air Quality Assessment: Five Ways Island Local Plan Modelling which was published in February 2023. Five Ways Island had been declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for exceedances of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) objective in 2017. Whilst the AQMA was subsequently revoked, the modelling was commissioned, it examined potential impacts of additional traffic associated with sites allocated in the Local Plan on future air quality in the vicinity of the former AQMA area. It took account of the changes in traffic flows due to the proposed new relief road referred to as the Wimblebury Relief Road (WRR), and of proposed alterations to the roundabout.
30. The assessment demonstrated that pollutant concentrations will be well below the objectives at all existing receptors in 2030 in all scenarios, and that the emissions from the changes in traffic as a result of the Local Plan growth, WRR and junction improvements will have a negligible to slight beneficial impact on air quality conditions at existing receptors along the local road network. The overall air quality effects of the Local Plan at Five Ways Island AQMA were judged to be 'not significant'.
31. Staffordshire County Councils response to the Regulation 19 consultation in relation to transport highlighted some site allocation policies where reference to evidence such as Transport Assessments and Travel Plans may be required. They also raised an issue with regard to transport evidence to support Policy SE2: Watling Street Business Park Extension as the site was not identified as an allocation at the previous stage. These issues have been addressed in a separate Statement of Common Ground between Cannock Chase District Council and Staffordshire County Council (SOCG 11) agreed 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
32. There remains concern from Staffordshire County Council regarding the delivery of critical infrastructure serving the key strategic housing allocations at Heath Hayes (SH1 Land south of Lichfield Road and SH2 Land to the east of Wimblebury Road) as the delivery of both sites in combination is required to deliver strategic transport and education infrastructure. The SoCG highlights the wording in the plan ensuring that no substantive housing completions should occur [on either site] until the funding and phasing of critical infrastructure is agreed by the applicant, Local Planning Authority and Staffordshire County Council. However SCC in their response to the Regulation

19 document still sought confirmation that the Policy for SH1 and SH2 (with or without modification) is sufficient to deliver the infrastructure at the right time and also seek assurances from the two developers they will work together to bring forward the sites within an agreed phasing/delivery strategy.

33. National Highways response to the Regulation 19 was received after the close of the consultation. Subsequently, all late representations have been deemed admissible.
34. A range of comments were made on the plan, providing guidance on a number of policies, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and in relation to the Duty to Cooperate to which National Highways welcomed engagement on a Statement of Common Ground.
35. National Highways highlighted the increase in housing and employment figures between the Preferred Options consultation and the current publication version of the Local Plan, noting that there were no employment allocations at Preferred Options stage but that two large allocations in the proximity of the A5 had been identified in the final draft plan. The Council refute this as there were two different strategic employment allocations identified at the previous stage, both within proximity of the A5, but as there were no draft site allocation policies in the previous version of the plan (the sites were identified in the Preferred Options policy SO4.2 Provision for new employment uses and Policies Map), this was not set out as clearly as the Reg 19 plan. They also noted that the safeguarded site S4 would have access directly onto the A5 and that access to the SRN will need to comply with the DfT Circular 01/2022 and comply with DMRB standards.
36. In terms of housing numbers, National Highways stated 'we have reviewed these quantum against those set out at the Preferred Options stage and note that there is an increase in the overall scale of growth to be delivered across strategic residential site allocations. Specifically, we expect that the scale and location of allocations SH1: South of A5190, Lichfield Road, Cannock, for around 700 dwellings and SH2 Land East of Wimblebury Road, Heath Hayes for 400 dwelling are likely to impact upon the capacity of the SRN. This in-turn can create potential congestion and safety issues.
37. Whilst the total housing requirement had increased overall in line with the extension to the plan period, the new strategic residential allocations had decreased in number (with removal of the site north of Norton Canes, 175 dwellings from allocation to safeguarded, removal of a site at Brereton (45 dwellings) and a reduction in the dwelling numbers ascribed for the site south of Lichfield Road (reduced from 875 to 700 dwellings) and Land at Wimblebury Road (410 to 400 dwellings). New large scale strategic residential allocations remain concentrated in the Heath Hayes area, well located to local facilities and with the requirement to be supported by a new primary school and in this respect, there had been no change since the preferred options stage.

38. National Highways also listed proposed developments outside the boundary of Cannock Chase District which could impact traffic levels on the SRN within Cannock Chase.
39. In summary, National Highways commented 'from our review of the growth proposals put forward as part of the Publication Version of the Local Plan, we welcome the development of an evidence base in the form of a STA to assess the cumulative impact of the strategic allocations and the identification of subsequent schemes which aim to provide traffic mitigation along the A5. We would welcome engagement in the development of a STA to ensure its suitability for underpinning the transport evidence base for the Local Plan'.

### Duty to Cooperate Discussions

40. Following review of the representations, Cannock Chase District Council held a meeting with National Highways and Staffordshire County Council to discuss the issues raised in the representations on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024. It was agreed at the meeting that all transport evidence to date including transport evidence undertaken by the developers of the four largest residential and employment sites proposed for allocation in the Local Plan, to be provided by Staffordshire County Council to National Highways for review. This information was sent 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
41. National Highways responded to the Council on 20<sup>th</sup> December detailing their review of the transport evidence to date. Their review included a high-level estimation of Strategic Road Network impacts, using Red-Amber-Green (RAG) ratings based on typical peak hour traffic delay at each SRN junction observed using Google Mapping software.
42. As a result of this review, National Highways have recommended that a cumulative impact assessment be developed as part of a Strategic Transport Assessment (STA) in order to test the following junctions:
  - A5 / B4154 Turf Island
  - A5 / A452 Rising Sun Island
  - A5 / Washbrook Lane
  - A5 / Norton Lane
  - A5 / A460 / Walsall Road
  - M6 Junction 11
  - A5 / A5195 / Chase Road

### Next Steps

43. A meeting will be arranged between the parties to discuss the scope of the new Strategic Transport Assessment (STA) with a view to forming a working group to oversee the commissioning and implementation of the STA.



44. The STA will inform the need for, location of, form of and funding for any mitigation for the SRN. In terms of any mitigation identified as being necessary to maintain the free flow and safety of the SRN. National Highways will seek to enter into Section 278 agreements with developers to deliver specific improvement schemes on the SRN where they are found to be necessary.
45. The IDP is intended to be a living document, meaning that this can be updated with information on identified schemes.

## Summary

46. Cannock Chase District have engaged with Staffordshire County Council and National Highways from the start of the plan process to ascertain the impact of development proposed in the Local Plan on the local and strategic road network and are committed to ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to any required mitigation measures to enable development.
47. The Council has sought guidance on the transport evidence required to support the Local Plan and reviewed feedback from Staffordshire County Council and National Highways at each stage of consultation. This initially focused on the impact of proposed development at the Five Ways junction raised by Staffordshire County Council, where separate modelling exercises looked at the impact on the local road network and on local air quality in the area of the AQMA (since revoked). Solutions have been identified to mitigate the impact of growth on the Local Road Network at Five Ways junction in Heath Hayes.
48. The Council are committed to undertaking a Strategic Transport Assessment to understand the cumulative impact of growth proposed in the Local Plan on the Strategic Road Network which will inform the IDP and the implementation of the Local Plan including assessment of planning applications for the strategic site allocations.

## Signatures

We confirm that the information in this Statement of Common Ground reflects the joint working to address identified strategic matters that has been undertaken between Cannock Chase District Council, Staffordshire County Council and National Highways. The parties will continue to work together to address cross-boundary and strategic issues in relation to transport and potential impacts on the Local and Strategic Road Network.

**Cannock Chase District Council**

**Name: Dean Piper**

**Position: Head of Economic Development & Planning**

**Signature:**



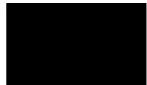
**Date: 27 March 2025**

**Staffordshire County Council**

**Name: Annabel Chell**

**Position: Head of Connectivity Strategy**

**Signature:**



**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**National Highways**

**Name: Kathryn Simmonite**

**Position: Spatial Planner**

**Signature:**



**Date:**