

**Statement of Common Ground**  
Between  
**West Berkshire District Council**  
and  
**National Highways**

May 2024

## Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) sets out the jointly agreed position between National Highways and West Berkshire District Council (WBC) in relation to the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) 2022-2039 and its supporting Transport Assessment (TA).
2. National Highways (NH) 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). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such NH works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity. NH will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the SRN.
3. NH's interest with regard to the West Berkshire LPR primarily relate to the impact of LPR development on the M4 (particularly Junctions 13-11) and the A34 (particularly between the junction of the B4640 at Tothill and the M4 J13 interchange at Chieveley).

## Cooperation and consultation to date

4. WBC's Duty to Cooperate statement (March 2023) identifies transport as one of the 'Strategic Matters for Co-operation', which have required cooperation with key bodies (NH in this instance). The NPPF ([NAT1](#)) sets an expectation that Local Plan policies should 'be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned' (paragraph 106b).
5. Paragraphs 5.20-5.22 of the DtC outline the level of engagement that has taken place between NH & WBC in relation to the Regulation 18 response and through regular meetings of the Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum. There is a commitment for WBC to work with NH and respective transport modelling consultants as the LPR gets finalised.
6. A response from NH to the LPR Regulation 18 consultation was submitted in February 2021. The response noted that the focus for strategic growth in the LPR would be in Newbury and Thatcham alongside proposals in the Eastern Area. There could be impacts from this growth on the M4 and A34. NH indicated that they would expect to see an assessment of the potential impact on the SRN, particularly at the main junctions. NH indicated a willingness to work with WBC to undertake further transport modelling to support the Regulation 19 submission. This was considered essential to identify an

appropriate package of mitigation measures to support the delivery of growth whilst maintaining a continued safe and efficient SRN.

7. Representatives from NH & WBC met to discuss the NH Regulation 18 response in July 2021 and the transport modelling and assessment work done to date. NH outlined that they were content with what WBC had done so far and that there were no major showstoppers. WBC agreed to share the TA Forecasting Report and to share further reports and outputs with a focus on the links to the SRN and the local network around those nodes with the A34 and M4 junctions.
8. A response from NH to the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission consultation was submitted in March 2023 along with a Technical Note prepared by Jacobs-SYSTRA covering a review of the LPR Transport Evidence Base. The NH response stated that to ensure that the Local Plan is deliverable, the transport evidence base should demonstrate the Local Plan impact on the SRN and, as necessary, identify suitable mitigation. NH considered that the Transport Evidence Base was not sufficiently developed to inform a view whether the plan is sound. NH supported WBC's commitment to work with NH to consult on potential developments coming forward and the TA supporting the LPR and suggested a meeting to discuss issues raised in the Technical Note (see Transport Evidence below).
9. Representatives from NH & WBC met to discuss the NH Regulation 19 response and accompanying Technical Note in April 2023. WSP, on behalf of WBC, produced a Technical Note to address queries raised by Jacobs-SYSTRA in relation to Local Plan Transport Modelling methodology and results. NH & WBC agreed to continue working together to discuss the assessed impacts of the LPR on the SRN and to determine the next steps.
10. WBC shared additional modelling outputs produced by WSP with NH/Jacobs-SYSTRA during 2023 and into 2024. Further detailed modelling work was also undertaken around specific junctions on the SRN to address issues identified in the Technical Note (see Transport Evidence below).
11. Representatives from NH & WBC (plus respective modelling consultants) met in January 2024 to discuss the additional modelling outputs. It was agreed that more assessment work was needed, particularly in relation to the need for more localised assessment around M4 J13 ahead of the hearing sessions.
12. A further meeting between NH & WBC (plus respective modelling consultants) took place in April 2024. The meeting discussed the results of the specific modelling work undertaken to address issues raised by NH. Both NH & WBC agreed that an SoCG between both parties could be prepared as part of the Examination ahead of the hearing sessions.

## Transport Evidence

13. The modelling work for the LPR TA was undertaken using WBC's West Berkshire Strategic Transport Model (WBSTM), which was built and is managed and maintained by WSP on behalf of WBC.
14. The Technical Note produced by Jacobs/SYSTRA for NH reviewed the following LRP TA documents.
  - Phase 1 Transport Assessment Report, December 2020
  - Phase 2 Transport Assessment Report, July 2021
  - WBSTM Local Plan Forecasting Report, March 2022
  - WBSTM Local Plan Forecasting Report Appendices, March 2022
15. Additional output plots covering the main SRN junctions were supplied by WSP/WBC for NH to review.
16. Following the review of the Forecasting Report and SRN junction plots, NH identified the following concerns:
  - i. Changes in node delay at M4 J12 on slip (n bound approach)
  - ii. 2017 to 2039 AM & PM Reference Case flow changes showing noticeable decreases through M4 J13 interchange and on A339 southbound towards Newbury
  - iii. 2039 Reference Case to LP + Mitigation flow showing noticeable decrease on the M4 westbound
  - iv. A34 & A4: mainline northbound between northbound left-out and left-in showing high Ratio of Flow to Capacities' (RFC's) in Ref Case which worsen with LP traffic (+/-100 trips in AM & PM peak hours)
  - v. M4 J13 RA: 100% or close to 100% relative queues on three of the four approaches, two of which with additional LP traffic (+/-200 and +/-270 LP trips in the AM & PM peak hours respectively):
    - Eastern approach – M4 westbound off-slip to M4 J13 rbt. (in RC too)
    - Western approach – M4 eastbound off-slip to M4 J13 rbt. (with addition of LP traffic)
    - Northern approach – A34 southbound off-slip to M4 J13 rbt. (with addition of LP traffic)
  - vi. A34 J13: A34 southbound on-slip (from J13 rbt. and MSA) showing 100% relative queues with addition of LP traffic (+/-130-140 & +/-200 LP trips in AM & PM peak hours respectively), and high RFC's which both decrease (AM) and increase (Inter Peak & PM) with LP traffic
  - vii. Network bottlenecks
17. WSP provided detailed responses on behalf of WBC for each of these points where it was possible. For detailed issues relating to M4 J13, WSP outlined a need to undertake more detailed LINSIG modelling of the junction. In addition, it was suggested by WSP that a DMRB merge/weaving assessment be undertaken for the A34/A339 weave junction to the south of M4 J13. NH requested further points of clarification regarding these.

18. WSP investigated a LINSIG assessment of M4 J13, however it was not possible to accurately derive 2023 observed flows for the assessment. Instead, growth was derived via simple growth factors based on TAG Unit M4 (Chapter 9) using NTM growth factors (“South East” region, “Motorway” road-type) adjusted for local peak hour factors obtained from NTEM dataset 8.0. Also, no queue data was available to validate LINSIG, with a suggestion that Google delay information on approaches be used (considered acceptable by NH). NH suggested that further checks be undertaken, which were carried out by WSP. WSP produced detailed LINSIG core and sensitivity reports which were provided to NH.
19. WSP undertook an assessment of the A34/A339 merge/weave in line with CD 122 guidance and produced a detailed Technical Note, which was passed to NH. This concluded that the existing layout and number of lanes on the merge/weave were deemed to be sufficient. A safety assessment of the merge/weave section was completed ahead of the hearing sessions.

### **Matters on which the parties agree**

20. Subject to NH completing a review of recently presented information detailed above, WBC will have addressed the questions and concerns raised by NH. NH do not consider that the issues raised to date relate to the soundness of the Local Plan. The completion of the current NH review will likely lead to further engagement and if necessary, inform future updates to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.


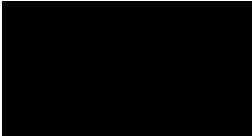
### **On-going engagement between WBC and NH**

21. Both NH & WBC are committed to working positively together, sharing information and best practice and continuing to engage beyond the EiP.
22. This cooperation will take place at senior officer level as well as technical officer level with the support of WBC’s modelling consultants, WSP and NH’s consultants, Jacobs/SYSTRA.

### **Timetable for review**

23. The SoCG will be reviewed where necessary to reflect progress made through effective cooperation on any issues that may arise through the EiP process.

## Signatories

West Berkshire Council	National Highways
	
Jon Winstanley Service Director, Environment	Patrick Blake Area 3 Spatial Planning Manager
Date: 3 May 2024	Date: 3 May 2024