

## **Updated Statement of Common Ground between Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England: September 2019**

### **Constituent parties to this Statement of Common Ground**

-Highways England

-Runnymede Borough Council

### **Geographical area covered by this Statement of Common Ground**

This Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) covers the Borough of Runnymede and part of the Borough of Spelthorne in so far as it also relates to Junction 13 of M25.

### **Purpose**

- 1.1 This is an updated Statement of Common Ground prepared between Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England. It supersedes a previous Statement of Common Ground agreed between the two parties, dated November 2018.
- 1.2 The Statement of Common Ground is specifically focussed on the transport implications that arise from the development proposals contained in the submission Runnymede 2030 Local Plan on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) junctions; in particular, but not exclusively to, the effects upon the M25 in the locality of Junctions 11 and 13.
- 1.3 The Government expects Local Authorities to significantly boost the supply of housing in their areas to meet identified needs and address affordability issues.
- 1.4 Department for Transport Circular 02/2013 sets out the policy of the Secretary of State in respect of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the Delivery of Sustainable Development.
- 1.5 This Statement of Common Ground reaffirms that Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England have cooperated during the production of the transport evidence base which has underpinned the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and which has been produced utilising the SINTRAM 72 model to assess the strategic transport impacts of the development proposals.
- 1.6 During preparation of the evidence base, Highways England raised a number of queries and requested more information to understand the impacts of the proposed development in the Borough of Runnymede over the period of the Local Plan on the SRN, particularly in terms of vehicles entering and leaving the SRN at Junction 11 of the M25 which is located centrally in the Borough. A number of meetings were held under the Duty to Cooperate to discuss the transport implications of the Local Plan on the SRN more fully. These meetings have been attended by Highways England, Runnymede Borough Council and Surrey County Council (who provide Runnymede Borough Council with specialist technical advice on highway matters).
- 1.7 The purpose of this updated SoCG is to inform the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan Examination in Public (EiP) and all interested parties about the areas of agreement between Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England, including matters agreed between the parties

following the Stage 2 Examination hearings held in February 2019, the matters of ongoing cooperation between the parties and to clarify any outstanding matters yet to be agreed between the parties to help inform the current EiP.

## **Background**

- 2.1 Runnymede Borough Council has prepared a draft Local Plan which will supersede the existing Runnymede Local Plan, Second Alteration, 2001. The new Local Plan will cover the period up to 2030 and sets out the overall vision, objectives and policies to guide future development in the Borough over the plan period.
- 2.2 Runnymede Borough Council commissioned Surrey County Council in the early part of 2016 to assess the traffic impact for multiple scenarios using the County's strategic highway model SINTRAM version 6, with OmniTRANS modelling program, version 6.0.22. The overall aim was to help inform the decision making surrounding the suitability of potential development sites which had been identified, and to highlight junctions and sections of road to focus mitigation solutions. This initial Transport Assessment was completed in June 2016 and shared with Highways England. Highways England raised a number of comments which were subsequently discussed in more detail at a meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016. Specific concerns related to; the suitability of the model being relied upon given the age of the underlying data; the lack of an evening peak hour assessment; the use of average peak hour assessments instead of single hour peak assessments.
- 2.3 Given the concerns about the suitability of the model, in May 2017, Runnymede Borough Council commissioned Minnerva, working with Surrey County Council to re assess the proposals emerging in the Council's draft Local Plan using the new Surrey County Council SINTRAM72 model. This is Surrey County Council's current method for assessing the transport impacts of Local Plan development growth in the county, which has a more recent base. The decision to use Surrey County Council's replacement county model was based on a desire to be as informative as possible. The new model had been developed in part to ensure it addressed Highways England's comments about the previous model (e.g. the use of average peak hour trips as opposed to using AM and PM peak hours). The methodology for undertaking the assessment was based on the Department for Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance (webTAG), specifically unit M4, 'Forecasting and Uncertainty'. Highways England was not consulted about its requirements for the assessment at this stage.
- 2.4 On completion of the strategic modelling, known as the Strategic Highway Assessment Report (SHAR) in October 2017, Runnymede Borough Council shared the SHAR with Highways England and a meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017 which covered the transport model building and modelling process for the Local Plan. Following this meeting, Highways England confirmed in their representation to the draft Local Plan received 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018, that they were 'largely content' with the contents of the Runnymede Local Model Validation Report and that clarifications provided by Minnerva and Surrey County Council to relevant parts of the model building documentation had answered most of the queries presented at the meeting in relation to the model validation. Outstanding concerns were set out in the

February 2018 representation. A response was provided to Highways England to clarify all remaining points although it was unable to fully address Highways England's concerns.

- 2.5 Two further meetings were held with Highways England on 14th June and 20th July 2018 to discuss outstanding concerns. However, Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England were unable to agree upon the Local Plan transport impacts as further evidence was required by Highways England to satisfy outstanding concerns.
- 2.6 In March 2017, Runnymede, Surrey Heath and Woking Borough Councils working alongside Surrey County Council commissioned an A320 Corridor Study which focussed on the part of the corridor between the Chilsey Green Road / B388 Thorpe Road / Staines Road / St Ann's Road roundabout, Chertsey in the north, to the Victoria Way / Chertsey Road roundabout, Woking in the south. This was in response to the findings from both the June 2016 Transport Assessment and October 2017 SHAR, both of which identified specific concerns regarding the impacts of growth in Runnymede Borough on this section of the A320 corridor. Particular concerns had been expressed about congestion in the vicinity of St Peters Hospital which is located on this corridor and which contains a major accident and emergency department. The conclusions of the October 2017 SHAR raised concerns that cumulative growth in the area had the potential to affect emergency vehicle access to the accident and emergency department and cause a severe transport impact. A corridor study for the A320 was therefore recommended and subsequently commissioned. A meeting was held with Highways England to discuss the project in December 2017. Highways England confirmed in February 2018 that, *'It is evident that the A320 Feasibility Study is in its early stages. We are pleased to see that mitigations are being considered for the M25 J11 and we look to continue to work with you as you progress this study. However, further work is required to demonstrate that there is reasonable prospect that any of the proposed mitigations may come forward for delivery. We would need to see satisfactory designs, safety audits, costs and funding sources before we can support these as mitigations within the Local Plan moving forward'*.
- 2.7 Following the Stage 2 Hearings, held in February 2019, a series of further meetings have taken place between Runnymede Borough Council (supported by Surrey County Council) and Highways England. Those meetings discussed and agreed the additional technical work Highways England required to help it fully assess the impact of the Runnymede Local Plan proposals on the Strategic Road Network (SRN), in particular Junctions 11 and 13 of the M25 (Junction 13 being located just within the Borough of Spelthorne).
- 2.8 In light of the discussions with Highways England, Runnymede Borough Council commissioned further technical work to assess impacts on Junctions 11 and 13 of the M25. The methodology for this 'Step 1' work was agreed with Highways England and concluded that whilst the developments proposed in the Runnymede Local Plan would not have a significant impact on M25 Junction 13, the additional impacts on M25 Junction 11 would require improvements to mitigate the impacts of upon the M25 main carriageway and slip roads. A 'Step 2' study was therefore agreed and undertaken to test the feasibility of providing a scheme of mitigation at M25 Junction 11. Both these studies have been undertaken and concluded in close

cooperation with Highways England and have been published as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

### **Matters Agreed**

- 3.1 It is agreed that the M25 is subject to congestion and during the peak periods the motorway is operating at capacity. As a result the motorway will be unable to accommodate the increase in vehicle trips arising from Runnymede's Local Plan during those peak periods.
- 3.2 Following the conclusion of technical assessment and feasibility work to understand the detailed impacts of the proposals in the Runnymede Local Plan on the Strategic Road Network (SRN), it is agreed that the low level of assessed impacts at M25 Junction 13 does not require any mitigation to be considered in association with the Local Plan proposals.
- 3.3 It is agreed, that in light of the assessed impacts of the Local Plan proposals and the need to maintain the safety and operation of the M25 mainline flow in the vicinity of Junction 11, that a scheme of mitigation is required at M25 Junction 11. It is also agreed that this can be achieved by controlling the arrival rate of vehicles from the A320/A317 on to the M25 during peak periods.
- 3.4 It is agreed that the 'Step 2' Feasibility Study for M25 Junction 11 shows a reasonable prospect, subject to detailed design, that the proposed mitigation scheme can be delivered at Junction 11 which will enable the impacts of the Runnymede Local Plan proposals to be mitigated.
- 3.5 It is agreed that a detailed scheme of improvement at and adjacent to M25 Junction 11, based upon the concept for improvements set out by the technical work, should be progressed and should be timed for practical delivery in parallel to delivery of the Local Plan, as agreed to be most appropriate by Highways England.
- 3.6 It is agreed that the cost of the M25 Junction 11 mitigation works will not require any financial contribution from Highways England and will be fully met from a combination of developer contributions and local authority/government funding. This also includes any ongoing management costs specifically associated with the mitigation scheme delivered.
- 3.7 Subject to the provisions of paragraphs 3.4 to 3.6 of this Statement of Common Ground, Highways England agrees to withdraw its previous objection to the Runnymede Local Plan.
- 3.8 Highways England acknowledges the delivery trajectory for homes and jobs set out in the Runnymede Local Plan 2030. It is recognised that there are unlikely to be any impacts from Local Plan development upon the M25 main carriageway and slip roads prior to the completion of the planned M25 Junction 10 to 16 Smart Motorway Scheme, at which point the Local Plan mitigation scheme will require implementation to maintain the safe operation of the motorway. This will need to be reviewed to ensure the timely implementation of mitigation as the Local Plan progresses.
- 3.9 Both parties similarly agree the importance of sustainable transport and traffic management measures as required by policies SD4: Active and Sustainable Travel, SD5: Highway Design

Considerations, SD6: Infrastructure Provision and Timing, SD10: Longcross Garden Village and other relevant wording within the remaining Housing Allocation polices (SL2-SL18) of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan. It is agreed that these policies promote alternatives to car based transport. It is agreed that moving forwards, it remains important that Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England (along with other relevant organisations such as Surrey County Council) continue to work together to explore the complementary benefits of relevant proposals, secure relevant funding to benefit the strategic and local road networks, and deliver active and sustainable transport schemes in a timely manner, as an integral part of the sustainable delivery of Runnymede's Local Plan proposals.

**Ongoing Cooperation**

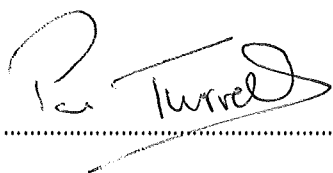
- 4.1 Highways England and Runnymede Borough Council commit to continued dialogue and joint working to ensure the timely delivery and operation of the M25 Junction 11 improvement scheme.

**Matters of disagreement**

- 5.1 There are no remaining matters of disagreement between Highways England and Runnymede Borough Council in respect of the Runnymede Local Plan.

12<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Signatories



Paul Turrell, Chief Executive, Runnymede Borough Council



Janice Burgess, Asset Manager (Planning) Highways England