

Statement of Common Ground between Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England

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 only.

Purpose

- 1.1 This is a Statement of Common Ground prepared by Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England and is specifically focussed on the transport implications that may 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 Junction 11.
- 1.2 The Government expects Local Authorities to significantly boost the supply of housing in their areas to meet identified needs and address affordability issues.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 During preparation of the evidence, 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 have also been 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).
- 1.4 The purpose of this SoCG is to inform the Inspector and other interested parties about the areas of agreement, ongoing cooperation and matters not yet agreed between the constituent parties to this SOCG for the purposes of the Local Plan Examination in Public (EIP).

Background

- 2.1 Runnymede Borough Council is preparing a 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 Initially, 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 6th 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 the County Council's current method for assessing the transport impacts of Local Plan development growth in Surrey, 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 their 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 30th 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 22nd 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 representation. A response was provided to Highways England to clarify all remaining points and to supply any further requested data.
- 2.5 Two further meetings were held with Highways England on 14th June and 20th July 2018 to discuss outstanding concerns and agree a process to resolve them
- 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 on this section of the 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 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'*.

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 is unable to accommodate much increase in vehicle trips arising from Runnymede's Local Plan during peak times.
- 3.2 It is agreed there is a need to maintain the safety and operation of the M25 mainline flow through Junction 11 and slip roads. This might be achieved by controlling the arrival rate of vehicles from the A320/A317 during peak periods.
- 3.3 It agreed that any potential severe impacts on the Strategic Road Network resulting from the Local Plan will need to be mitigated as part of the Local Plan. Runnymede Borough Council (with the assistance of Surrey County Council) and Highways England will work together collaboratively to identify mitigation that will assist the safe and efficient operation of Strategic Road Network.
- 3.4 Both parties 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 policies (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 is 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 complimentary benefits of relevant proposals, secure the relevant funding, to benefit the strategic and local road networks, and deliver active and sustainable transport schemes in a timely manner.

Ongoing Cooperation

- 4.1 Highways England and Runnymede Borough Council both commit to continued dialogue on the run up to, during and after the Council's Examination in Public, including on-going work with Surrey County Council to resolve the outstanding concerns set out in section 5 at the earliest opportunity in relation to potential impacts of development schemes on the SRN. This will include consideration of the cumulative impacts of all unconsented developments on the SRN.
- 4.2 Under the Duty to Cooperate Runnymede Borough Council agree to respond positively to all reasonable requests for information from Highways England to allow informed decision making about the soundness of the Local Plan.
- 4.3 Runnymede Borough Council (with the support of Surrey County Council) and Highways England are committed to continuing their dialogue regarding the high level modelling of Junction 11 of the M25 undertaken as part of the A320 corridor study.
- 4.4 Runnymede BC and Highways England will continue to work together especially in relation to any highway schemes being promoted on and in the vicinity of the A320 to resolve outstanding concerns that may have an impact on the SRN.
- 4.5 The A320 corridor study is being developed for major scheme submission for the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). As part of the design and feasibility process, Runnymede Borough Council and Surrey County Council will continue to liaise with Highways England and share the outcomes of the assessment, particularly with respect to any impacts to Junction 11 of the M25.
- 4.6 Highways England are willing to guide the Council through the assessment requirements to demonstrate that any proposed mitigation to support the Local Plan is fit for purpose.

Matters of disagreement

- 5.1 For this Local Plan and emerging local plans within the County moving forwards, the methodology adopted by Surrey County Council for assessing the potential highway impacts of development proposals set out in emerging Local Plans is a matter of ongoing discussions between Highways England and Surrey County Council. The matters of disagreement over this methodology are summarised in the context of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.3.
- 5.2 With regards to the SHAR, Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England have been unable to agree that the assessment complies with national planning practice guidance covering transport evidence base requirements for Local Plans, and the use of appropriate trip rates. Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England have been unable to agree the methodology of establishing correct "with" and "without" development scenarios to determine the impacts of the Local Plan upon the highway network.

- 5.3 Runnymede Borough Council and Highways England have been unable to agree that the use of Department for Transport's trip rate model has been correctly applied.
- 5.4 In light of the above, Highways England has yet to agree that the Local Plan has no severe impact upon the strategic road network, nor that any impacts can be mitigated. Both parties are committed to the ongoing cooperation set out in this Statement of Common Ground.

Signatories



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Councillor Gail Kingerley, Chairman Runnymede Planning Committee.



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Janice Burgess Asset Manager (Planning) Highways England

