

WDC/7

**Wycombe District Council's
Delivery and Site Allocations Plan
Examination Statement**



MATTER 7 – TRANSPORT

November 2012

Matter 7 – Transport

1. Are the Council’s transport objectives for development sites appropriate? (DM1)

- 1.1 The aim of policy DM1 is to set out a number of common elements that will be sought from large-scale development to avoid reproducing them in site specific policies. The policy seeks to ensure that large-scale developments make an appropriate contribution to the provision of transport infrastructure and minimise their impact upon the transport network.
- 1.2 The policy would apply to sites that propose a significant level of development and require a Transport Assessment as defined in appendix B of the DfT guidance on Transport Assessment¹. The scale of development that triggers this includes (amongst others) residential development of 80 units and greater, office developments of greater than 2,500 sq.m. and food retail developments of greater than 800 sq.m.
- 1.3 The requirements of this policy are supported by the NPPF² including:
- that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable travel modes,
 - the requirement to undertake a transport assessment and that plans should take account of opportunities to take up sustainable modes of transport.
 - that developments (where practical) should be designed to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists, give access to high quality public transport facilities, create safe and secure layouts and incorporate facilities for charging plug-in vehicles.
 - that Travel plans are a key tool in delivering the above.

¹ CD3.2.10

² See paras 29, 32, 35 and 36 in particular

- 1.4 Policy DM1 specifically seeks to secure sustainable travel measures and ensure new development delivers genuine travel choices. The policy sets out a range of measures for achieving this, a number of which are specifically referred to in the NPPF.
- 1.5 The supporting text of the policy contains a definition of a high quality public transport service, and this was first included in the DSA in 2010 as a result of a representation from the then Government Office³. Overall responses in 2010, 2011 and to the proposed submission plan (June 2012) have been supportive of the policy and the requirements⁴. A response to the proposed submission version of the policy (June 2012) challenged the requirement to meet this policy unless “*there is a demonstrated need which is supported by robust evidence*”, particularly in relation to criterion 2(a). The Council appreciates that it may not be practical to deliver every measure on every site and this is reflected in the supporting text⁵ to DM1, which sets out that the approach taken will be guided on a case by case basis in consultation with the Highway Authority. However, there are many measures and principles in the policy which new developments of this scale should be delivering as a matter of good planning to deliver overall development plan and NPPF objectives. It will be for the development management process to assess the appropriateness of including such measures on sites and the evidence to justify them.
- 1.6 This policy supports Local Transport Plan aspirations that include reducing the need to travel by working in partnership to influence land use planning to minimise the impact of growth and encourage more sustainable modes of travel.

³ CD1.5, pg 86

⁴ CD4.6.4 pg 12 and pg27 and CD4.7.5 page 20

⁵ CD 0.1, p.54, para 6.3

2. Is the concept of protecting potential improvement lines reasonable and appropriate in view of the period over which such lines could continue to be safeguarded? (DM2)

- 2.1 Transport Improvement Lines (TILs) are designated/adopted by the County Council under different legislation to local plans⁶ and, as such, the issue is rather whether they need to be shown in a local plan such as the DSA. The designation of a road protection line by the Highway Authority means that development proposals that come forward which overlap or impact on an area with an improvement line will be assessed by the Highway Authority in their role as a statutory consultee. This could lead to an objection if the proposal jeopardises the intention/design of an improvement line and, ultimately, the delivery of the transport infrastructure on the ground. The NPPF indicates that authorities should identify and protect routes critical in developing infrastructure to widen travel choice, where there is robust evidence.⁷
- 2.2 The Council is therefore indicating the location of these lines to inform development proposals and to protect them from being compromised, and thus enable improvements to be made to the transport network. This is a reasonable and appropriate approach as not protecting them would have the effect of compromising long-term transport objectives for the District.
- 2.3 TILs support the Local Transport Plan (LTP) vision and objectives that identify challenges and priorities for the District, supported by an LTP implementation plan and more detailed transport strategies, such as the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan⁸ and the forthcoming Wycombe Transport Strategy. In addition to strategic purposes, improvement lines have been identified where there are aspirations to improve highway capacity, traffic management and address road safety concerns.

⁶ Schedule 9 of the Highways Act 1980 – Improvement Lines and Building Lines

⁷ NPPF para 41

⁸ Contained within the High Wycombe Town Centre chapter of the DSA

- 2.4 The inclusion of the potential improvement lines also supports the allocation of resources in capital spending budgets for their implementation and may also support bids for funding such as the Community Infrastructure Levy funds.
- 2.5 Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) regularly reviews, protects and rescinds improvement lines⁹. However, this process is outside of the DSA timetable, although improvement line reviews are undertaken to reflect changes in local planning policy.
- 2.6 Policy DM2 refers to two sets of improvement lines – those existing as identified in previous work undertaken by the Highway Authority¹⁰ and new improvement lines¹¹ primarily relating to the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan. BCC undertook a review of improvement lines in 2010¹², the aim of which was to assess which existing improvement lines were required to support the DSA and the Local Transport Plan for Buckinghamshire as well as if any new improvement lines were required. The review summarises the justification for each improvement line. It should be noted that the review of improvement lines has rationalised the number still being protected, with a number of improvement lines having been rescinded and hence excluded from protection in the DSA.
- 2.7 The County Council has agreed that, once the DSA is adopted, they will commence the formal process to designate the improvement lines where new ones are proposed. This process has not been undertaken to date as the majority of the potential improvement lines relate to proposals for High Wycombe Town Centre and, as such, once the soundness of these proposals has been established by the Inspector, it will be appropriate to formally designate them.

⁹ Around 30 improvement lines have been rescinded in the District since 2007

¹⁰CD 0.1 Appendix A

¹¹CD 0.1 Appendix B

¹²CD 2.7

- 2.8 Fifteen potential, or new, road improvement lines are identified in appendix B of the DSA, twelve of these are to support the implementation of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan¹³, for which the timescale is the duration of the Plan¹⁴.
- 2.9 The three improvement proposals that are not linked to the Masterplan are set out at the beginning of appendix B in the DSA and the justification for them is set out in the High Wycombe Improvement line review undertaken by the County Council¹⁵.

3. What are the consequences if some new road links cannot be delivered?

- 3.1 The following new road links are included in the DSA:
- The Hughenden Spine Road (Map1 and Map13)
 - Desborough Road to Queen Alexandra Road (Map1)
 - Westbourne Street to West Wycombe Road (Map1)
 - Kingsmead Road Recreation Ground Access road (Map 16)
 - Queens Road to Princess Gate (Map 16¹⁶)
- 3.2 The Hughenden Spine Road is an existing improvement line¹⁷. It is an important part of Core Strategy policy CS4.2¹⁸ for the Hughenden District being an integral part of proposals for the redevelopment of this area, and is justified further in paragraph 4.23 of the Core Strategy. Its importance is demonstrated by the fact that planning permission was granted for the southern section of this road in 2010 and the northern section in 2012. The Council initiated compulsory purchase proceedings in 2012 to facilitate delivery of the southern section.

¹³ As set out in the High Wycombe Town Centre chapter of the DSA

¹⁴ See page of the DSA regarding the implementation of the Masterplan

¹⁵ CD 2.7

¹⁶ See para 3.12 below re proposed change

¹⁷ See Appendix A of the DSA

¹⁸ CD 5.2.1 pg.34

- 3.3 To further support its delivery, the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) has agreed in principle to provide support from the Growing Places Fund¹⁹.
- 3.4 If the spine road is not delivered it would lead to a sub-optimal solution to the redevelopment of the area due to there being a lack of bus penetration, an alternative route to north High Wycombe and a lack of relief on a busy road both into and out of town.
- 3.5 To support the delivery of the vision for High Wycombe town centre as set out in the DSA, significant option appraisal and testing has been undertaken to identify the most appropriate alternative routing of traffic through the town centre²⁰. The preferred option includes the need for new road links around the town centre – the gas works link road and Westbourne Street link road²¹.
- 3.6 Detailed option appraisal was undertaken to establish the most appropriate alignment for the gas works link road, which concluded that an alignment on the western edge of HWTC13 should be promoted²². Policies HWTC13 and HWTC14 require any re-development proposals for the sites to provide the necessary land for the new link road²³. If HWTC13 Lily's Walk and HWTC14 Buckingham House were to be developed without allowing for the provision of land for the link road, this would in effect prevent the re-routing of traffic around the town centre and frustrate the long term aim to reduce the impact of Abbey Way flyover. It is essential therefore that this link is safeguarded.

¹⁹ <http://www.buckstvlpe.co.uk/interesting-stuff/board-meeting-minutes>

²⁰ See Chapter 3 and Scenario G (p.37-45) of CD3.10.3 High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan: Option Development and Appraisal Report

²¹ The former links Desborough Road to Queen Alexandra Road, the latter links Westbourne Street to West Wycombe Road

²² See section on Policy HWTC13 (p.32-38) of CD1.5 Overview and Audit Trail Report. The proposed alignment of the link road is shown in Appendix 4 of CD2.2 High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan Background Paper.

²³ Any highway works deemed necessary in line with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 with regards to the redevelopment of HWTC13 and HWTC14 will be required to be provided in a way which is consistent with the strategic town centre vision and the requirements of Policy HWTC3. See response DSA12/036 and CD7.6 Statement of Common Ground between WDC and GL Hearn on behalf of National Grid and FC17, CD7.7.

- 3.7 The transport appraisal work also looked at the options for connecting the alternative route into the A40 West Wycombe Road/ Oxford Road²⁴. Initially the preferred option was to utilise Bridge Street but following the opening of the new bus station on Bridge Street in 2008, previous options were reconsidered and a new link connecting Westbourne Street with West Wycombe Road became the preferred option. Policy HWTC18 requires any re-development proposals for the site to provide the necessary land for the new link road²⁵. If the Westbourne Street link road were not safeguarded and delivered, then traffic connecting into the A40 would have to use either Bridge Street, which would have an unacceptable impact on the movement of public transport in this location, or Desborough Avenue, which would put additional pressure on junctions which already suffer from congestion and which would increase journey times for those vehicles wanting to travel north of the town via the A4128. The provision of a new access point from Westbourne Street onto the A40 will also help support the regeneration of sites in this area (in particular HWTC18 Baker Street).
- 3.8 The formal process of designating the TILs will be undertaken by the Highway Authority after the receipt of the Inspector's report, subject to the proposals for the town centre being found sound. The Council has agreed with National Grid a proposed change to paragraph 6.19 of the supporting text for DM2²⁶, to ensure that on-going consultation with stakeholders is undertaken in finalising the TILs²⁷ and in relation to HWTC13 in terms of how the TIL is referred to²⁸.
- 3.9 The detailed funding and other issues relating to the delivery of these two link roads and other aspects of the Masterplan is explained further in the Council's statement on Matter 6. This includes the recent support from the Council's

²⁴ See Chapter 3 of CD3.10.3 High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan: Option Development and Appraisal Report

²⁵ Any highway works deemed necessary in line with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 with regards to the redevelopment of HWTC18 will be required to be provided in a way which is consistent with the strategic town centre vision and the requirements of Policy HWTC3. See FC18, CD7.7.

²⁶ FC20, CD7.7

²⁷ The process for the designation of TILs is set out in Schedule 9 of Highways Act 1980

²⁸ See FC17, CD7.7

Cabinet for capital funding of £1.2m to support the implementation of the Masterplan.

- 3.10 The Kingsmead Recreation Ground access road is required to create a direct access to the sports facilities, which include a well used netball centre and car park. This would alleviate congestion on local roads (King's Road and Fennels Road) leading to the ground. The proposed link would remove traffic seeking to access the recreation ground, improving the quality of life for the residents and better link the site to the existing road network. Failure to provide this link would leave these local issues unresolved.
- 3.11 The Queens Road to Princess Gate link would create a cycle and pedestrian link towards the town centre/rail station from the residential areas along the London Road whilst avoiding the main roads and able to connect with the route of the former High Wycombe to Bourne End railway line where this is able, or has the potential, to be used by pedestrians and cyclists. If this improvement line were not included, then it would be very much more difficult to achieve a pedestrian/cycle route away from the main road – the alternative of using the former railway line along this stretch would be much more costly given the difference in levels.
- 3.12 It has come to the Council's attention that the Queens Road improvement line has not been shown on the maps included in the DSA. To rectify this situation the Council proposes adding the improvement line to map 16²⁹.
- 3.13 It is envisaged that both the Kingsmead and Queens Road links would be provided as part of onsite redevelopments.

²⁹ See FC32, CD7.8

4. Is it feasible to use the former Bourne End to Wycombe railway line other than as a footpath/cycling route? (DM3)

- 4.1 The background to protecting the former railway line is set out in the background paper produced by Buckinghamshire County Council³⁰. This assesses a number of options for the former line, including not safeguarding it at all and three different safeguarding options.
- 4.2 Although the background paper identifies that since the line was closed, sections of the trackbed have been built on or demolished and there are a number of missing bridges and some sections that have now been built on, it is not the feasibility of using the former line for other types of transport use that dictates the final option, but the deliverability.
- 4.3 The background paper refers to previous work considering the re-opening of the former line as part of the Thames Valley Multi-Modal Study³¹. This identified that there are poor links between High Wycombe and the Thames Valley and that, although there was no business case for re-opening the former line, it should be safeguarded for a public transport route.
- 4.4 If there were a sufficient business case and funding available to justify safeguarding the former line for use as a heavy or light rail route, it would have to be informed by the need to resolve the issues set out in para 4.2. However, as there is currently no business case for either of these options, it is most appropriate to safeguard the line as a walking and cycling route. The background paper concludes by stating: *“If in the longer term circumstances were to change and a strategic business case led by Central Government were to emerge a different mechanism for delivery may be employed depending on the line of route. Whilst the route will not be safeguarded for this purpose this approach would ensure that the potential to implement an alternative use in the longer term would remain.”*³²

³⁰ CD2.6

³¹ CD 3.2.1

³² CD2.6 page 8

- 4.5 The High Wycombe Society³³ objection includes a number of grounds including that:
- the long-term aim should be to preserve the route for light rail use, to address the lack of a north-south route between High Wycombe and the Thames Valley;
 - a business case to address this issue should have been developed – especially as light rail would create greater modal shift than the proposed coachway;
 - the footpath option cannot be upgraded, has a weak level of protection as demonstrated by recent planning decisions, and will not provide a cross boundary link;
 - the Government now looks favourably on light rail as being cost effective and affordable and that funding has been made available supported by a well argued business case.
- 4.6 The Council accepts that north south connectivity is an issue. However, it is our position, informed by the County Council, that this can be addressed in the short term through the provision of the coachway at Handy Cross, which would link into the wider development of a bus and coach network.
- 4.7 The background paper³⁴ identifies that:
- the costs of putting a light rail route in place are in the region of £100 million
 - there would be capacity issues at the Maidenhead section as a result of Crossrail meaning the service would have to be a shuttle service
 - neither of the operators at either end of the safeguarded route are willing to operate a service
 - the business case for developing the coachway was stronger than re-opening the former railway line. Had there been a stronger business case, a scheme to promote or a strategic policy for the re-opening of the line,

³³ Respondent DSA12/025
³⁴ CD2.6

this would have strengthened the case for safeguarding the former line as a light rail route and more importantly submission for inclusion in regional infrastructure plans in a bid to secure funding.

- 4.8 The multi-modal study³⁵ identified that, in the absence of road user charging, revenue would be unlikely to exceed operating costs and that any economic benefits would not justify the capital expenditure required to re-open that line as a light rail link. In this context the most appropriate option is that contained in the DSA.
- 4.9 Recent inspectors decision on planning applications³⁶ have identified that safeguarding the route and redevelopment on some sections are not incompatible, especially in terms of a route for cycling and walking (or some form of public transport). Since these decisions, there has been no significant change in circumstances to warrant the Council taking a different position on this issue.
- 4.10 BCC are currently progressing the implementation of a walking and cycling corridor along the route in partnership with Sustrans. Sustrans are currently undertaking the legal requirements for land acquisition. Once this has been addressed, implementation will be progressed by BCC.
- 4.11 As part of reviewing the business case for the proposed Regional Coachway³⁷ at Handy Cross in High Wycombe, BCC employed professional experts in the field of rail to review the business case on the implementation of Light Rail along this corridor. The business case did not come out favourably and it was agreed that a Coachway would be a more favourable option to support North South links. In addition to this BCC do not, especially in the current economic climate, have the £25 million match funding available

³⁵ CD 3.3.1 page 7-14

³⁶ Appeal reference APP/K0425/A/08/2073840

³⁷ This regional coachway is specifically highlighted in the Core Strategy within the M40 Gateway area of change – see Policy CS4.3(iv) (CD5.2.1). Planning permission has since been granted for a regional coachway and park and ride scheme (as part of a mixed use development) on the current Sports Centre site near Junction 4 of the M40, and a revised application for the scheme is due to be considered by the Council's Planning Committee in December 2012.

to progress this scheme within the life of this plan. Therefore, to safeguard the corridor it was agreed that the most effective approach is to protect it as a walking and cycling corridor.