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Dear Sir/Madam,

## **CHELTENHAM LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION MATTER 8: TRANSPORT**

This letter sets out Highways England's response to the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions published on 20 December 2018 in respect of the Cheltenham Local Plan Examination Matter 8: Transport.

*1. To what extent has the impact of proposals within the CP been assessed in accordance with the package of key transport and highway improvements in both the local and strategic networks proposed to accommodate the proposals in the JCS?*

The assessment of the transport impacts of the proposals within the CP is described in documents EB003 (Cheltenham Plan Transport Assessment Phase 1) and EB003 (Cheltenham Plan Transport Assessment Phase 2). These documents are dated 22 Feb 2018.

As set out in previous representations, Highways England have not been given the opportunity to review the assessment work that informs these reports so cannot comment on the accuracy of their findings.

As set out in paragraph 2.2 of the Phase 1 report, "*A robust evidence base will enable an assessment of the transport impacts of both existing development as well as that proposed, and can inform sustainable approaches to transport at a plan-making level. This will include consideration of viability and deliverability*".

The objective of the phase 1 report is stated to be - to identify the locations on the Highway Network which would be impacted on by the CP proposals. Two main tests are described:

- Firstly, an assessment of the highway network excluding the JCS DS7 package of highway interventions and

- Secondly, an assessment of the highway network including the JCS DS7 package of highway interventions and

The purpose of the first test is to identify a list of junctions impacted on by the CP proposals.

It should be borne in mind that the JCS transport evidence base made assumptions regarding the spatial distribution of development within the individual planning authority boundaries and identified a package of transport measures which was necessary to accommodate the JCS growth. The second test referred to above would therefore confirm if the spatial distribution of development now included in the CP is likely to change the pattern of transport demands from that considered for the JCS to the extent that a refinement of DS7 is necessary. In respect of the SRN, HE has previously expressed the view that this is unlikely.

To take account of the greater level of detail of the spatial distribution of development included in the CP when compared to the JCS, paragraph 5.4 of the Phase 1 report describes that the 14 development sites were assigned to 15 new zones in the CSV model.

In relation to the first test described above, the report concludes that 19 junctions would be impacted on by the CP growth. These are listed in table 1 of the Phase 1 report. In relation to the second test described above, tables 13 and 14 of the Phase 1 report show the change in highway network performance which is due to the refined spatial development distribution now included in the CP. The results indicate that the DS7 package of highway schemes remains suitable for accommodating planned growth with Cheltenham growth delivered in accordance with the CP. The only junction shown to exceed capacity and to suffer increased demand is the Old Gloucester Road / B4063 junction at Staverton Bridge. The impact at this junction would present no implications for Highways England. On face value, the findings of the Phase 1 report therefore confirm Highways England's stated opinion that the pattern of development within the CP does not change the transport interventions identified within the JCS. It can also be concluded that DS7 resolves the impacts at the locations listed in table 1. However, the Phase 2 report describes further work that has been undertaken with the aim of identifying mitigation options for these same junctions.

The scope of the additional work is described at paragraph 1.2 of the phase 2 report which states "*The Scope of Works for Phase 2 of this commission comprises modelling the junctions identified in Phase 1 and presenting any required mitigation options. These concept mitigation options are to be quantified and an indicative cost assigned to each option that can be apportioned to the proposed developments*". The report concludes in section 4 however that "*no mitigation options have been suggested*".

Recommendations for further work are made at section 5.1 of the phase 2 report. The evidence base, in so far as it is described in the Cheltenham Plan Transport Assessments therefore remains incomplete. However, the JCS Transport base together

with the Phase 1 Cheltenham Plan Transport Assessment would appear to present a complete evidence base.

Given the conclusions from the Phase 1 report, Highways England would question if CBC intend to commission the further work set out in section 5.1 of the phase 2 report and if so:

- What weight CBC would wish to be given to the additional work in light of the JCS evidence base and the conclusion of the phase 1 report and;
- When will the additional work will be made available?

*2. Do the proposals for new development in the CP comply with scenario DS7 in the evidence base to the JCS?*

Yes, the JCS evidence base which lead to the derivation of DS7 included a number of assumptions regarding the spatial distribution of development within Cheltenham. The conclusion of the “sensitivity test” described in the Phase 1 Cheltenham Plan Transport Assessment confirms that the CP does not change the pattern of transport demands from that considered for the JCS to the extent that a refinement of DS7 is necessary.

*3. Does the CP include policies which adequately manage the delivery of development so that severe transport impacts do not arise?*

CBC have confirmed that the policies included within the JCS also apply to developments included within the CP. Policy INF1 of the JCS states “(INF1(2) – *Planning permission will be granted only where the impact of development is not considered to be severe. Where severe impacts that are attributable to the development are considered likely, including as a consequence of cumulative impacts, they must be mitigated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authorities and in line with the Local Transport Plan*”.

It is accepted that other inspectors have appeared content that this point is also addressed by para 109 (formerly para 32) of the NPPF. HE is content to be guided by the inspector in relation to this matter.

*4. Does there need to be any assessment at the time of submission of relevant planning applications to determine how much development may proceed in advance of the JCS highway interventions being in place? If so, does this need to be made clear in any relevant CP policies?*

In HE representations dated 28 March 2018, HE’s suggested that it may be necessary for Transport Assessments to include such an assessment. For clarity, this was meant to provide clarification on the specific contents of a TA rather than to a requirement for a TA. This point relates to two queries:

- Firstly, is it sufficiently clear in the CP that development proposals coming forward in the Cheltenham Plan area will need to comply with both the Local Plan and the JCS as the complete Development Plan for the area?
- Secondly, for the purposes of clarification, and to ensure there is no ambiguity for decision-makers or developers, is it necessary to set out in CP policy that any transport mitigation required to accommodate the impacts of the development proposals is that set out in the JCS and DS7, and therefore that transport assessments will be required to assess the amount of development which can proceed in advance of the JCS highway interventions being in place?

HE is content to be guided by the inspector in relation to this matter.

*5. Is the safeguarding of the former Honeybourne rail line (Policy TN1) justified?*

This is not a matter for Highways England.

I trust the responses set out above are clear, but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

*Rachel Sandy*

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