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Dear Roger

Rutland County Council – Main Modifications Consultation

National Highways welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Main Modifications and supporting documents, prepared in line with the emerging Rutland County Council (CC) Local Plan (2021-2041).

In relation to the Rutland CC Local Plan area, National Highways' principal interest is ensuring the safe and efficient operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), particularly the A1, which plays an important role in facilitating the movement of people and goods around the area.

National Highways 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 SRN. It is our role to maintain the safe and efficient operation of the SRN whilst acting as a delivery partner to national economic growth.

In responding to Local Plan consultations, we have regard to the Department for Transport (DfT's) Circular 01/2022 - SRN and the delivery of sustainable development ('the Circular'), which sets out how interactions with the SRN should be considered in the making of local plans. Paragraph 28 of the Circular sets out that:

"The policies and allocations that result from plan-making must not compromise the SRN's prime function to enable the long-distance movement of people and goods. When the company assists local authorities in the development of their plans and

strategies, the local authority should ensure that the SRN is not being relied upon for the transport accessibility of site allocations except where this relates to roadside facilities or SRN-dependent sectors (such as logistics and manufacturing). The company will also work with local authorities to explore opportunities to promote walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared travel in plan-making, in line with the expectations set out in the NPPF and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.”

In addition to the Circular, the response set out below is also in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other relevant policies.

Previous Engagement

National Highways has engaged throughout the preparation and examination of the Rutland CC Local Plan, including representations at the Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages, participation in the Examination process, and responses to subsequent consultation documents.

We previously recognised that any site-specific transport impacts and mitigation requirements can be appropriately considered through the planning application process, supported by proportionate transport evidence where necessary. Through its earlier review of the evidence base, National Highways concluded that there were no significant outstanding strategic highway matters that would prevent progression of the Local Plan.

Review of Main Modifications

Housing Provision and Strategic Allocations

National Highways notes that amendments to Policies SS1 and H1 through MM13 confirm that, whilst the Local Plan continues to be based on a minimum housing requirement of 2,460 dwellings (123 dwellings per annum), provision is now made for approximately 2,705 dwellings through the application of a 10% flexibility allowance.

MM19 and MM20 remove Policy SS4 and delete the St George's Barracks and Woolfox Future Opportunity Areas from the Local Plan and Policies Map. The supporting text now confirms that neither site is required to meet the development needs of the current Plan period and that any future consideration of these locations will be undertaken through a subsequent Local Plan review. Given the potential scale of development previously associated with these strategic opportunity areas, National Highways notes that their removal provides greater certainty regarding the distribution of growth to be delivered through the current Plan period.

Revisions introduced through MM25 update the housing distribution table and amend the figures relating to completions, commitments, and residual housing requirements across the settlement hierarchy. These changes primarily provide updated evidence

regarding the anticipated distribution of housing delivery rather than introducing additional strategic growth locations.

MM29 introduces a new Housing Land Supply section, updated housing land supply calculations, and a revised housing trajectory forecasting delivery of approximately 3,145 dwellings over the plan period. National Highways notes that these modifications principally relate to the monitoring and reporting of housing supply and delivery and do not materially alter the broad spatial distribution of growth previously assessed through the Local Plan evidence base and Examination process.

A number of site-specific housing allocations have also been amended. For example, MM31 (Land South of Stamford Road, Oakham) introduces stronger requirements relating to highway mitigation measures and active travel infrastructure, including a Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 compliant shared footway/cycleway and supporting public transport improvements. MM33 (Land South of Whitwell Road, Empingham) clarifies pedestrian and cycle connectivity requirements and identifies improvements to local walking infrastructure, whilst MM34 (Land South West of Belmesthorpe Lane, Ryhall) retains requirements for appropriate access arrangements, highway mitigation measures, and off-site highway improvements. National Highways welcomes the continued emphasis on sustainable transport measures and improved opportunities for walking and cycling within these allocations.

Amendments have also been made to Policy H2 relating to the Stamford North Sustainable Urban Extension. In particular, MM35 removes the specific requirement for increased capacity at the A1/A606 junction and replaces this with a requirement for "appropriate mitigation measures to the Strategic Road Network" to be agreed with Highways England. This amendment reflects previous discussions during the Examination process and ensures that any future mitigation requirements are informed by detailed transport evidence and site-specific assessment rather than prescribing a specific highway intervention through policy. However, we do request that Highways England be updated to National Highways.

Employment Land and Economic Growth

National Highways note that MM13 amends Policy SS1 and increases the employment land requirement from 16 hectares to 26 hectares over the plan period.

Amendments have also been made to Policy E1 and the associated strategic employment allocations. MM46 revises the overall employment allocation portfolio, including the removal of allocations at Uppingham Gate (MM50) and Burley Appliances (MM51) and the introduction of a new employment allocation at Land West of Bosal Way, Barleythorpe (MM55) for Class E(g), B2 and B8 uses. MM55 includes requirements for a Transport Assessment, Travel Plan and appropriate vehicular, pedestrian and cycle connections, which National Highways supports.

Furthermore, of particular relevance from an SRN perspective are the amendments proposed through MM53 to Policy E1.5 (Woolfox Depot, Great North Road). These modifications increase the allocation area from 8.2ha to 19.11ha, revise the proposed employment uses to include B2 (General Industrial), non-strategic B8 (Storage and Distribution) units under 100,000 sq. ft and Class E(g) employment uses, and update the site access requirements to reflect the extant planning permission, including access via a new roundabout on Great North Road. Given the site's proximity to the A1 corridor and the nature of the proposed employment uses, National Highways notes that future planning applications will need to be supported by appropriate transport evidence to demonstrate that any impacts on the SRN have been adequately assessed and, where necessary, mitigated.

National Highways also notes the amendments to the supporting text through MM57, which recognise the role of the A1 corridor in supporting employment growth and acknowledge the potential for strategic employment development associated with logistics and industrial uses.

Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure

National Highways welcomes the amendments to Policy INF2, including MM37 which promotes a range of transport choices and introduces reference to rail freight, together with MM83 which clarifies the circumstances in which Transport Assessments and Transport Statements may be required. The promotion of walking, cycling, public transport and rail freight is consistent with the principles of DfT Circular 01/2022 and supports the objective of reducing reliance on private car travel where possible.

We also support the clarification provided through MM83, which confirms that transport evidence may be required where smaller developments have the potential to create significant highway impacts or cumulative effects. This provides an appropriate mechanism for identifying and addressing transport impacts at a proportionate level.

Minerals Allocations

National Highways notes the additional minerals allocation at Hooby Lane North, Stretton under Policy MIN5 and the continued allocation of New Road, Hooby Lane. National Highways previously reviewed these allocations during the Examination process and noted that, due to their proximity to the SRN and potential to generate HGV movements, traffic impacts should be fully considered through future planning applications. The amendments do not alter this position.

Conclusion

National Highways welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Main Modifications Consultation. Having reviewed the proposed Main Modifications and supporting documents, National Highways considers that the amendments do not materially alter

the development strategy or transport impacts previously assessed through the Local Plan preparation and Examination process.

We therefore do not object to the proposed Main Modifications and are satisfied that any site-specific impacts on SRN can continue to be appropriately considered through the development management process.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Rutland CC as the Local Plan progresses.

Yours sincerely



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