



**National Highways**

**Bassetlaw Local Plan**

**Examination in Public**

**HEARING STATEMENT:**

**Matter 13 – Transport and Connectivity**

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## 1 Introduction

National Highways, formerly Highways England, has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015, and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (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.

The SRN is a critical national asset and as such National Highways works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity. The SRN within and near to the district of Bassetlaw includes the A1 trunk road which bisects the plan area, and the M1 motorway approximately 8km to the west of the plan area.

This hearing statement has been prepared by National Highways in response to the Matters, Issues and Questions which have been identified by the Inspectors in relation to **Matter 13 – Transport and Connectivity**. We will attend the hearing for this matter represented by Mrs Catherine Townend, Spatial Planner for the Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland area. Our attendance will be to provide an update on our current position and any clarification to the Inspectors as required.

The questions identified focus on the issue ‘does the Plan set out a positively prepared strategy and policies for transport and connectivity which is justified, effective and consistent with national policy’ and our responses are provided under the relevant questions.

## 2 Response to Questions

***Issue 13 – Does the Plan set out a positively prepared strategy and policies for transport and connectivity which is justified, effective and consistent with national policy?***

*13.1 a) Is there robust evidence to demonstrate that the likely significant impacts on the road network arising from the development proposed in the Plan have been adequately assessed. Is there robust evidence that these can be effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree and that, if required, such mitigation can be delivered?*

Through a series of consultations on the Bassetlaw Local Plan dating back to 2016/17, National Highways has welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback and offer advice for understanding the potential transport implications for the Local Plan growth in the district. In our consultation responses to Bassetlaw District Council (BDC), we highlighted the need for a robust transport evidence base and we have provided feedback on the technical reports submitted for our consideration.

Of note to National Highways is the Bassetlaw Transport Study (updated May 2022) which was produced as a strategic transport study to identify the cumulative transport impacts of Local Plan housing and employment development within the district.

This study identified the A1 Apleyhead junction (eastern roundabout) as exceeding its operational capacity with the full Local Plan growth at the end of the Plan period (2038). Other links and junctions on the A1 were reported to operate within their capacity with the addition of Local Plan growth.

When providing our written responses to BDC (dated 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022, and 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022) following our review of the Bassetlaw Transport Study (BTS) it was unclear as to whether the BTS constituted a robust enough evidence base without the provision of the detailed modelling results on which the report was based. As such, we requested the detailed modelling outputs for our

understanding and verification, as is normal practice when undertaking any review.

On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022 we attended a meeting with BDC and their transport consultants to talk through the methodology used in the BTS. Through this meeting, it was confirmed to National Highways that the BTS appeared to utilise a robust enough methodology for understanding the cumulative transport impacts of the Local Plan growth. However, we again requested the modelling files and outputs for our verification before we could advise if we concur with the report's findings and recommendations. These requested items were forwarded to us on 19<sup>th</sup> October, and at the time of writing this statement, we are still in the process of undertaking their review.

In the meantime, we have entered into a Statement of Common Ground (CoCG) with BDC setting out our current position and commitment to ongoing engagement and working with BDC to ensure that the transport impacts of the Local Plan growth are adequately assessed. This may include an addendum to the BTS, should our review of the modelling files raise any discrepancies.

With regard to the highways mitigation required on the A1, the BTS identifies a possible mitigation scheme for the A1 Apleyhead junction. However, the suitability of this scheme to mitigate the Local Plan growth rests upon our review of the modelling outputs as mentioned above. It should also be noted that the BTS does not present any 'with mitigation' modelling results, suggesting that the suitability of the scheme to mitigate the impact is untested. In addition, the potential impact of the proposed mitigation on any adjacent junctions is also unknown.

It is important to note too that the transport improvements contained in the BTS are in outline form only and more detailed assessments will be required to identify definitive improvement proposals. As such, whilst National Highways has no objections in principle to the proposed improvement, there is still a degree of uncertainty surrounding the appropriate mitigation scheme and its associated cost. Cost estimates included in the BTS (and subsequently in the IDP) should be viewed as high-level estimates only and may be significantly higher than estimated.

In summary, at the time of writing this statement, National Highways is not able to confirm that the transport evidence is robust enough or that the Local Plan impacts with respect of the Strategic Road Network (i.e., the A1) can be effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. We hope to be able provide an updated position during the examination hearing on this matter following our review of the additional data as set out above.