HIGHWAYS AGENCY

Safe roads, reliable journeys, informed travellers

WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

HIGHWAYS AGENCY WRITTEN STATEMENT: MATTER 8 – POLEGATE AND WILLINGDON AND STONE CROSS AREA STRATEGY

JANUARY 2012 EXAMINATION

MATTER 8 – POLEGATE AND WILLINGDON AND STONE CROSS AREA STRATEGY

MAIN ISSUE: WHETHER THE STRATEGY FOR POLEGATE AND WILLINGDON AND STONE CROSS AREA, INCLUDING THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS, IS SOUNDLY BASED AND DELIVERABLE

8a: Have reasonable alternatives to the strategy been considered?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8b: Is there a clear audit trail showing how and why the preferred strategy was arrived at?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8c: Have the infrastructure implications of the strategy clearly been identified and supported by the evidence base? Is it clear who is going to deliver the required infrastructure and by when?

1. Transport studies jointly carried out by the Highways Agency and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) in 2002/2003 identified that major growth in Hailsham and Polegate would require significant improvements to the Strategic Road Network (SRN). Five junction improvements were identified and incorporated in to Policy TR3 of the Non Statutory Local Plan (Para 9.28) as being required before any development was occupied.

2. A costing exercise undertaken by the Highways Agency in 2008 using preliminary designs from the Shepham Lane Transport Assessment estimated the TR3 junction improvements would cost £2,023,000 (2008 prices). The costs did not, however, include VAT; and the design and supervision and diversion of service providers were only approximated. The cost also did not include the commuted sum which would be payable to the Highways Agency for maintenance. It is also worth noting that the schemes put forward have changed from those costed in 2008.

3. In line with Government policy, developments will be expected to mitigate against the transport impact of their proposals and provide a nil detriment solution on the road network. It was agreed with Wealden that developers should mitigate the

impact of their development and as such the TR3 improvements will be funded through developer contributions.

4. The South Wealden and Eastbourne Transport Study (SWETS) forms the transport evidence base for the Core Strategy and supports the conclusion from the earlier study that to deliver the proposed growth in Wealden SRN junction improvements will need to take place. SWETS identified that to mitigate the impact of Core Strategy allocations the following junction improvements would be required:

    a) Signalisation of the A27 Cophall roundabout
    b) Revised signal timings at the A27/A2270 junction to allow bus priority
    c) Signalisation of the A27/A22 roundabout
    d) Signalisation of the A22/Dittons Road roundabout (non HA)

5. The Highways Agency has been identified as the delivery agent for the SRN improvements. In correspondence dated 28 September 2011, in response to the Core Strategy submission, the need to prioritise the junction improvements and develop a delivery timetable based on development trigger points was highlighted as a requirement. This has not been prepared to date. A delivery timetable is necessary for the Highways Agency to schedule the improvements and is also a requirement of PPS12 Paragraph 4.8. As such, the lack of a timetable affects the delivery of infrastructure that has been identified as 'critical' in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and evidence base. In its current state the necessary infrastructure cannot be deemed to be deliverable and therefore, in accordance with PPS12 soundness criteria, the Core Strategy is not considered sound from the point of view of the Highways Agency.

6. As noted in the 28 September correspondence, the SWETS model should be used to identify the priority afforded to each of the junction improvements. This could be achieved by iteratively testing the junction improvements against the development scenarios to determine when they would be required in the plan period. The DfT and Highways Agency do not have any available funding to pay for any part of the improvements but assuming that the improvements can be paid for by Wealden District Council sources or through developer contributions, consultation could then take place to discuss a delivery timetable.

8d: Has the impact of the strategy on the Strategic Road Network been adequately assessed and is there a reasonable prospect that the transport infrastructure required is deliverable?

1. The impact of the strategy on the SRN has been assessed using the SWETS SATURN model. The Highways Agency initially undertook a review and submitted comments on SWETS in July 2010 identifying several areas where clarification was required. Correspondence from Wealden dated 7 October 2011 attempted to address the outstanding issues. In response, the Highways Agency submitted a request for further information dated 24 October 2011 to address relatively minor issues pertaining to the modelling of the transport interventions. Wealden have now provided the further information (12 December 2011) which will allow a review to be undertaken of the robustness of the transport intervention modelling. The Highways Agency will review this information to verify the conclusions of the study. Subject to

the outcome of our review verifying the information provided to date, the Highways Agency will be satisfied that the impact on the SRN has been adequately assessed.

2. In terms of infrastructure deliverability, our correspondence dated 28 September 2011 identified the need for an up to date costing exercise of the junction improvements outlined in the IDP to be undertaken to determine the likely costs and therefore funding requirements which are currently unclear. It was also stated that the junction improvements would need to be wholly funded by Wealden District Council or through developer contributions (as previously agreed) as there is no scope for DfT/Highways Agency funding. This is also consistent with the principle that the onus is on developers to mitigate the impact of their development. It would be unrealistic and may add delay to the plan if funding from the DfT/Highways Agency was awaited.

3. Whilst the costing exercise undertaken for the TR3 junction improvements included costs associated with signalising the Cophall roundabout it is not considered wise to rely on the accuracy of the costing given the age of the data and the factors that were not included. Costs for the signalisation of the A27/A22 roundabout, A22/Dittons Road roundabout and improvements to the A27/A2270 junction are also unknown. Wealden District may wish to consider reviewing and updating the cost analysis in order to fully understand the current deliverability of the junction improvements given that the DfT / Highways Agency do not have any funding available and that the schemes put forward have changed since the original costing exercise.

4. Given that the costs associated with the necessary improvements are unknown it is unclear whether the committed highway funding and developer contributions outlined in recent correspondence from Wealden would be sufficient. As noted previously, the onus is on developers to mitigate the impact of their development and the DfT / Highways Agency do not have any funding available to meet any shortfall should one arise.

5. In accordance with PPS 12 Paragraph 4.9, the infrastructure costs should be identified to determine funding sources and shortfalls. At present the costs associated with the junction improvements are not clear and allocated funding may not be sufficient. It is considered therefore that the necessary infrastructure required to support the Core Strategy is not deliverable and as such, the Core Strategy is not considered sound, from the point of view of the Highways Agency, in accordance with PPS 12 soundness criteria.

6. The preferred approach to address the above would be for a new costing exercise to be undertaken to determine reliable costs. The level of developer contributions and Wealden District sourced funding required to deliver the improvements could then be understood.

8e: Is the strategy sufficiently flexible to respond to an unexpected change in circumstances?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8f: Is SD4 justified and deliverable?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8g: Is SD5 justified and deliverable?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8h: Is SD6 justified and deliverable?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8i: Is SD7 justified and deliverable?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8j: Is there appropriate justification for the phasing of housing at SD4 from 2019?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue

8k: Have reasonable alternatives to SD4, SD5, SD6 and SD7 been considered – omission sites?

The Highways Agency does not wish to comment on this issue