

Inspector's Matters, Issues & Questions (MIQs)

Matter 6 – Transport – Tuesday 15 June

Matter 6.3, 6.4 & 6.5: Are the Transport, Infrastructure, Implementation and Monitoring provisions of the Plan sound?

6.3 Are there any issues arising from the development allocations of the Plan on the strategic highways network or on any locations with potential highways/ pedestrian safety issues? Can these issues be satisfactorily overcome? Several representations state that the Council's independently commissioned highways and transport studies, which generally support the site allocations in the Plan, are flawed; in what ways are these studies flawed? Is it acceptable/good practice for the highways impact of a scheme to be considered less than severe if the existing traffic conditions in the area, which admittedly not the result of the proposed allocation, are acknowledged to be severe; in other words, should the cumulative impact be the determining factor in assessing traffic impact in relation to the impact of a specific housing allocation? Reference is made to a recent study by WSP in relation to traffic conditions in the East Grinstead area; what were the principal conclusions of this study?

1.1 The Transport Assessment (SA19.6) relating to SA19 undertook extensive traffic modelling of the A22/A264 signalised junction and concluded that it is forecast to operate at capacity, with minimal impacts arising from the proposed development in the 2026 future year scenarios tested. This finding is entirely consistent with the assessment undertaken by Systra on behalf of MSDC (Strategic Transport Assessment: Reg 19 Report, Non-Technical Summary, 3 March 2020, Topic Paper T8). This document concluded (at paragraph 5.1.2) that:

"The A264/A22 junction is not identified as having a severe impacts in the Scenarios. However, it should be noted that this junction is flagged as severe in the Reference Case, and operates over capacity; the Scenarios generate slightly more traffic passing through the junction, which increases these impacts further, but not enough to result in severe impacts for the scenarios. Although the nearby developments increase pressure, the model is reporting that the 'severe' conditions are attributable to the Reference Case situation rather than the Scenario developments.

1.2 The proposed allocation is thus acceptable in accordance with paragraph 109 of the NPPF. The assessment work undertaken has indicated that there would be no demonstrable harm arising from the proposed scheme and there are no identifiable cumulative residual severe impacts.

6.4 Is policy SA35, which addresses the safeguarding of land for and delivery of strategic highway improvements, sufficiently justified, detailed and effective to enable the delivery of the following schemes: (i) A22 Corridor upgrades at Felbridge, Imberhorne Lane and Lingfield Junctions; (ii) A264 Corridor upgrades at Copthorne Hotel Junction; (iii) A23 junction upgrades at Hickstead? Does the policy need to be extended to address potential highways issues in and around the proposed science and technology park to the north-west of Burgess Hill; the traffic impact of allocations SA12 and SA 13 to the south-east of Burgess Hill; and/or any other locations?

1.3 The delivery of new housing at SA19 is not reliant on any highway scheme requiring additional land outside of existing public highway land. Indeed, development at SA19 provides an opportunity to improve public transport services in the local area. These improvements could include funding to upgrade bus stops near to the site with real time information and provide a contribution towards bus priority measures along the A22 towards East Grinstead. We have had discussions with both the local bus operator and WSCC in relation to these opportunities and they are very supportive of the intention to improve public transport provision in the local area in the manner described.

6.5 Does the identification of detailed schemes for highways improvements provide the necessary certainty to enable key housing and employment allocations to be delivered, or is the opposite true, i.e. that securing detailed schemes at a relatively early stage in scheme delivery would be inflexible, and therefore counterproductive to effective scheme delivery? Is part of the solution in addressing the effectiveness of the Plan to set out a series of phased triggers or thresholds which would link the implementation of housing numbers to the delivery of key highways and sustainable transport improvements?

1.4 The Mid Sussex Transport Study, Transport Impact of Sites DPD Scenario, Non-Technical Summary, Topic Paper (T8) referred to also in Matter 6.3 above, makes it clear that the allocation of SA19 or other allocations, do not require any detailed schemes for highway improvement and thus phased triggers for the implementation of any schemes are not necessary.