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Via Email: Laurence.King@dacorum.gov.uk

Dear Working Group,

Hemel Garden Communities 2050 Transport Vision and Strategy – National Highways Review

National Highways welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Transport vision and Strategy document as part of their participation in the transport stakeholder group. The document provides a vision for the future of the area and sets out a number of key objectives and planning policies that will be used to help support growth across the region.

This document will support both the Dacorum and St Albans Local plan and is intended to provide a technical summary to inform relevant stakeholders of the outcomes of the assessment process and direct further study where necessary.

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 Strategic Road Network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such we work 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.

Section 1 – Introduction

The Vision and Strategy is bold and ambitious and National Highways support the objective of the working group. It aims to move away from Predict and Provide and instead focus on a Vision and Validate approach to prevent increasing number of trips to the area and needing to provide highway focused Mitigation. National Highways are keen to support this approach.

As part of the Vision and Validate strategy it is proposed to use the WSP Opportunity to Shift modes and Propensity Tool. It is described as a data-driven tool that helps assess the opportunity and propensity for mode shift in transportation by analysing

factors influencing travel behaviour and preferences. The tool provides an initial step to validate the HGC Transport Vision and associated mode share targets. We understand the work to validate the Transport Vision and associated mode share targets is underway, via the Modal Share Study and we encourage further validation steps will be required as more detailed masterplans emerge for the sites and growth areas.

Section 2 - Desired Outcomes

This chapter sets out the long term and scale of ambition of the strategy for the area. The report is an open reflection of the current activity of travel within the Hemel Hempstead area. It states the following model split goals;

- *“By 2050, at least 40% of all trips originating from or to Hemel Hempstead will be undertaken by active and / or sustainable modes of travel; and*
- *By 2050, 60% of all trips originating from or to the new Hemel Garden Communities will be by active and / or sustainable modes of travel”.*

While we encourage the ambitious nature of the goals, we must query how this will be monitored and to ensure evidence of this is provided going forward.

The report uses 2021 Census Data, National Highways query the validity of this data and encourage the group to provide evidence of why they are confident in these results (as it was undertaken during the COVID-19 Pandemic). This back up will need to be provided as part of the Local Plan documentation which we believe will start from Appendix A and B.

National Highways agree that for Hemel Hempstead to meet its growth aspirations, there is a need to embrace change and maximise the value of new mobility services, technologies, and systems. Hemel Hempstead needs to ensure its transport networks are integrated, resilient, and adaptable so that beneficial new opportunities can be grasped as they arise. The transport network needs to not only meet the existing accessibility needs of its businesses and local residents today but the needs of those that will live, work, learn, and visit the area, for generations to come. We support this vision and we suggest evidence is presented of how they will do this.

Section 3 – Now and in the Future

The document states the existing census of the town, it is clear it knows and understands its area and how their residents live and work within it. It understand its strengths and weaknesses and highlights opportunities to improve sustainable travel options for its residents. Such as the Nickey Line. Its clear they are understanding of the current issues to enable their vision and Validate approach to be a success going forward.

It also understand the impact of the Dacorum and St Albans local plan which are both due to be adopted by 2025. This is welcomed by National Highways understanding the cumulative impacts is important for us to be able to demonstrate our support.

As part of the SRN, we are keen to understand the current and potential future issues with the A41, A414 and M1 strategic transport corridors which run through or are nearby to Hemel Hempstead. We understand they create a considerable volume of

inter-urban motor traffic. The document highlights the disbenefits of the A414 dual carriageway layout which currently lacks crossing points which is likely to lead to less active mode choices. We know Junction 8 on the A1 is a key junction for HGC, St Albans and Dacorum.

Section 4 – Realising the Vision

National Highways fully supports the assumption that new neighbourhood will be designed to include facilities that reduce the need to travel, including high speed internet connections to allow flexibility in work locations and local facilities.

Section 5 – Delivering the Vision and Strategy

National Highways encourage and support the current collaboration between HGC, the local authorities and key stakeholders including ourselves. While we understand the delivery and monitoring strategy is still being development, also, we agree to the current funding strategy of needing a mix of sources and this will be confirmed with evidence as the LP developed. National Highways request to be consulted on this when it becomes available.

Summary

National Highways are aware the existing COMET model will be used going forward and we encourage this. National Highways are currently undertaking a review of the model to provide an agreement in principle to enable both HGC, St Albans and Dacorum to progress with their Local Plan. We will be in touch once this review has been completed.

Overall, the Transport Vision and Strategy document is a well informed piece of work highlighting the currently benefits and disbenefits of the town. It is a good starting point to the evidence base required as part of the Local Plan documentation. National Highways agree with the principles listed to date and we look forward to continuing working with you to agree the monitoring and evaluation methodology and outcomes.

I have no further comments to make on the draft local plan and supporting documentation.

Yours sincerely



Jen Searle
Spatial Planner