

National Highways (NH) / St Albans City and District Council (SADC) / Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)**Wednesday 18th December 2024**

Attendees: Chris Briggs (SADC) ; Wendy Frost (SADC) ; Issy Spence (SADC) ; Sue Jackson (HCC) ; Craig Dennan (WSP on behalf of HCC) ; Neal Dyson (WSP on behalf of HCC);

Diana Ngobi (National Highways) ; Matthew Lewis (National Highways) ; Nigel Walkden (Jacobs on behalf of National Highways)

Apologies: Janice Burgess (National Highways)

Agenda item #1 : National Highways response to the SADC Regulation 19 consultation

- CB runs through representation letter from National Highways summarising key points and welcomes the continued ongoing engagement and dialogue with National Highways to date. CB set out that the Duty To Cooperate Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has gone through iteration with NH colleagues and should have reached a stage where it can be signed and returned to SADC. In the future a further SoCG will need to be produced to assist the Inspectors through the Examination process and address the matters raised by NH in their reg 19 response and subsequently, but we haven't reached that stage yet. DN set out that she understood that Janice Burgess was due to respond to CB shortly regarding the DtC Statement of Common Ground

Action: DN to check where the finalisation of the Duty to Cooperate Statement of Common Ground with NH colleagues (including Janice Burgess) and return a signed version to SADC.

- SJ runs through the table produced by WSP / HCC (in November) in response to the NH representation
Action: SJ to share response table (This is included below and has been updated to reflect actions discussed.)
- SJ queries the definition of 'significant' impact. NW confirms that the historic use of the definition of 5+% increase of trips was discontinued and it is whether the additional trips are significant in creating an impact at locations. Thresholds of less than 30 are typically discounted, threshold is likely above 100 vehicle trips. Consideration if the existing junction is at capacity feeds into defining if flows are significant.
- SJ questions what level of detail regarding flows is required for National Highways. NW confirms it is flows on each arm of the junction – absolute flow and the change of flow.
- NW raised that the SADC COMET report lacked flow detail around the M25, in particular.
- SJ and CD confirm that the addendum issued in July 2024 contained additional information.
Action: HCC to resend report for NW to check the required information is included.
- NW – mentioned merge and diverge assessments

- CD – mentioned WSP could supply the flows so that NW can say which ones will need to look at in more detail – which NW indicated would be ok
- **Action – WSP to set out flow information to allow NW to understand what is needed with regard to merge and diverge assessments**

St Albans Local Plan – Reg 19 Technical Consultation

National Highways Response (Transport Evidence Base/Modelling)

Prepared 25 November 2024, updated following meeting discussion on 18 December 2024

The table below summarises the main points related to the transport evidence base/transport modelling in email from Diana Ngobi, 8 November 2024, subject ‘NH/24/08091 Publication of the draft St Albans Local Plan 2041 (Regulation 19 Technical Consultation)’.

Para No.	National Highways Comment	Actions agreed at the meeting with National Highways 18/12/24
	Introductory / general comments	
2	For the purposes of the emerging St Albans Local Plan, we would be concerned with development patterns that have the potential to impact on the operation of the A1(M), M1, M25 specifically M25 J21, 21A, 22 and 23 , although subject to the scale of impact, this may include other SRN positioned further afield.	Action: WSP to provide plot of flow changes across wider SRN area. Provide further details of flow changes on all approach arms at M1 junction 8 and M25 junctions 21/ 21A,22 and 23 and at other SRN locations where flow changes by >30 vehicles as a result of the local plan development. Plots should show absolute flow and the change in flow with the local plan growth.
	Transport Evidence Base & IDP	
16 & 17	We previously raised concerns over the suitability of the [COMET] model due to the lack of suitable calibration and validation evidence provided to demonstrate that the model was operating satisfactorily. Although some evidence was provided and agreement was reached on a suitable transport modelling methodology for the Local Plan assessment, some of the requested information about the model validation/calibration and evidence on mode shift was not provided. This specifically concerned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the COMET model could replicate base year traffic flows on the M25 and other parts of the SRN – information is still outstanding and this raises concerns as to the validity of the transport modelling evidence in relation to impacts on the SRN. • Evidence of how mode shift in modelled scenarios 2 and 3 could be delivered - while there is some further information provided 	<u>SRN Validation</u> WSP provided the Base year SRN review note to HCC on 15 th April 2024 and a further addendum to the SRN note on 8 th July 2024 to National Highways (Janice Burgess) which included Webtris counts on M25. Action: HCC to resend report for NW to check the required information is included. <u>Mode Shift</u> The opportunity to shift mode technical note provides the evidence for the modelling assumptions for Option 3 and was attached as an appendix to the Local Plan Modelling Report. This has been reviewed by NH who view it is useful to evidence the potential for mode shift and are supportive of the vision but require further evidence to demonstrate measures to

	<p>within the evidence base, it is insufficient to demonstrate that the mode shift can be achieved.</p>	<p>encourage mode shift are achievable and can be implemented and funded. Action: WSP to check if there is evidence of change where measures have been implemented (linked to measures in the IDP) from the data bank underlying the Opportunity to shift modes work.</p> <p>If it can be demonstrated that growth can be accommodated on the SRN without mode shift (ie Scenario 1) then this point would be covered off. Action: WSP to provide details of flow changes at the SRN junctions for this scenario.</p>
18	<p>We have examined the transport assessment evidence base from St Albans' website, it appears that the main transport report has not been included. There is a tab labelled "Report Final Issued.pdf", however when clicking on the tab it produces a report "COMET 7 Forecasting Report" dated November 2022, identical to the report under a separate tab above on the same webpage. The main report has seemingly been omitted presumably by administrative error, so further documentation is required in support of the transport evidence.</p>	<p>SADC have updated the link on website to the correct report. SADC have confirmed that evidence is based on the 2 key documents and the link is correct (confusion that link goes onto two lines) No further action</p>
19	<p>Reviewing the modelling evidence provided in the Modelling Report (August 2024) there is insufficient information provided in relation to the SRN to determine whether there are any severe impacts or unacceptable safety concerns resulting from the Local Plan. We would need to see evidence at junction level relating to differences in queues and delays "with and without" the Local Plan. Additionally, we require evidence of traffic flows through merges and diverges on the SRN network "with and without" the Local Plan to determine whether the merges and diverges with the main carriageways can accommodate traffic flow changes.</p>	<p>See response to point 2.</p> <p>Action: WSP to provide further information to be provided on merge diverge assessments in line with DMRB guidance where flow changes are anticipated to be over 100 vehicles.</p>
20	<p>Therefore, in our judgement there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Local Plan growth can be accommodated in transport terms on the SRN. Further evidence will be required to demonstrate that the Local Plan is sufficiently robust on transport</p>	<p>Action: Further information to be collated by WSP, sent to NH in January and to be run through at the meeting arranged for Wednesday 29 January ahead of the wider HGC Transport Sub-Group on Thursday 30 January 2025.</p>

	<p>grounds. We would request the opportunity to discuss these matters in more detail to reach agreement on what additional evidence is required to demonstrate either that the Local Plan will not have any severe or unacceptable safety impacts on the strategic road network or that suitable mitigation is included within the Plan and that there is a reasonable prospect of delivery at appropriate junctures in the Plan period. Given the current timeline for Local Plan to Examination we would stress the urgency to enter into immediate dialogue.</p>	
	Statement of Common Ground	
23 & 24	<p>We are still liaising with the council and will review the supporting transport evidence from the ongoing traffic modelling discussion. It will be essential for National Highways and the council to agree a statement of common ground following our review of the modelling, setting out any potential concerns and agreed next steps in advance of an Examination in Public.</p> <p>National Highways are unable to confirm that the Plan is sound until further evidence is provided, the required sustainable transport mitigation measures to mitigate the impacts of the Plan have detailed cost estimates and funding sources are committed.</p>	<p>SADC currently agreeing a SOCG based on the duty to cooperate. SOGC signoff relating to more technical issues to be part of ongoing discussions as additional evidence is provided.</p> <p>Action: NH to complete and return SOCG to SADC</p>

Agenda item #2 : Trip Generation & Employment Figures

- Discussion around the trip generation figures, which have been provided by SLR Vectos.
- NW notes the Trip Generation report is complex, and it is difficult to attain a figure. However, the figures WSP have provided to National Highways, NH are happy with the method used for floorspace to employment figure assumptions. NW notes Research and Development and warehousing use types.
- SJ notes that the information provided by SLR Vectos is the most detailed information to date, and is part of the ongoing planning process. Sensitivity testing will be needed for the employment areas.

Agenda item #3 : Modelling update

- SJ sets out that there is additional modelling work that has been carried out for the Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) plan which was not ready for publication at the time of the DBC Regulation 19.
- SJ provided an update on the combined model work which is an Option 4a (Both Local Plans growth to 2041 and mitigation, without improvements to Junction 8) and 4b (Both Local Plans growth to 2041 and mitigation with improvements to Junction 8).
- SJ notes that the results have only just been provided and are subject to detailed review. SJ notes the additional trips result in pressure points and issues at locations which will need to be worked through.
- SJ states that a presentation on modelling, will be given at the Hemel Garden Communities Transport Sub-Group tomorrow which covers the modelling update (19 December 2024). ML confirms attendance to the meeting. The update at the HGC Transport Sub-group will cover modelling assumptions, trip distribution from the individual development and where flow changes and pressure points are, but will not be in a position to go through in detail.
- NW notes NH happy to consider combined evidence, however, NW confirmed that National Highways would seek to see individual model tests for both SADC and DBC, as NH would look at each authority in isolation and mitigates risk if an authority's Local plan timetable slips.
- ML notes that is really helpful that SADC and DBC Local Plans are at the same stage and welcome the joint-working with NH and all authorities. ML sets out the importance of further understanding the mitigations, what is required and when. ML has been reviewing the DBC Local Plan, and ML emphasises the importance of receiving the DBC COMET outputs with the mitigation and understanding the detail. Discussion around the sustainable travel schemes set out within the IDP, the more schemes resulting in more modes shift and therefore impact on the SRN.
- SJ / CB asks for an update on RIS3 and what the process and mechanism of an identified scheme. ML confirms that funding / implementation would be a different team, namely the Route Strategy Team. If an intervention is identified at a junction, ML/NW/DN can flag up internally to bring the right people into discussions.

- SJ notes that the outline design work for Junction 8 improvements, which was carried out some years ago, was the scheme developed with Hertfordshire LEP (now Hertfordshire Futures) and National Highways. This has been used for assumptions in the modelling work.

Agenda item #4 : Next Steps

- A follow up meeting on Wednesday 29 January will be set up on to run through items raised in the response table above, further evidence and detail from modelling outputs.
- WSP will be providing additional work to address some of the points raised above, which will commence in the new year.