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29<sup>th</sup> November 2023

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear [REDACTED]

**Draft Dudley Local Plan: Regulation 19 Consultation**

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above consultation and we look forward to ongoing engagement with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC).

Set out below are officer-only comments from WCC's Transport Planning Unit.

We trust that our response will be helpful and assist you with preparing your Local Plan. If you require any further clarification on these points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

WCC is the Local Highway Authority for Worcestershire and is responsible for operating and maintaining the County's local road network, both in respect of its current activities and needs, as well as its long-term operation and integrity. We are interested in the potential traffic and transport implications of development proposals and/or policies in the Local Plan.

The DLP area adjoins Worcestershire's highway network. We are concerned with any allocation, policy or proposals which could have significant impact on the WCC highway and transport network, and any potential for unacceptable road safety, operational and severe congestion impacts. In this case impacts of concern would be on: -

- A491 Hagley Road & A4036 Ham Lane
- A456 Birmingham Road/Hagley Hill
- A451 Stourbridge Road
- B4551 Bromsgrove Road

#### **1. Regulation 18 response**

In our Regulation 18 response (December 2023) we noted several matters, including: -

- the intended approach to preparing the necessary transport evidence base and associated infrastructure strategy.
- potential for increased cross-boundary movement utilising Worcestershire's transport network, particularly the A491 Hagley Hill and A456 Birmingham Road.
- the need for the plan to set out how necessary highways and transport infrastructure would be identified and delivered in relation to windfall housing sites.
- the need to consider peak-hour traffic flows particularly on the A491 Hagley Road and A456 Birmingham Road associated with employment development.
- the need for adequate transport infrastructure, including any necessary highway capacity improvements in Worcestershire, to provide for cross-boundary movements.
- the need for further engagement regarding potential cross-boundary impacts.

- the need for the inclusion of a policy to require proposed new development to assess its impact on the capacity of the transport network and include mitigation.
- concerns that the PRISM model network does not extend to Hagley or the northern-most extents of Worcestershire’s highway network.
- the absence of A456 Birmingham Road/Hagley Hill from the modelled network extent, and limited analysis of the A491 Hagley Road.
- the absence of information relating to the traffic impacts of the Draft DLP growth on Worcestershire’s transport network or the necessary infrastructure required to support and accommodate planned development.
- the lack of adequate evidence of the calibration of the modelled network (in the Hagley to Dudley growth areas).
- the lack of clarity on whether minimal forecast journey time changes are a result of the assumed delivery of highway and transport schemes in advance of emerging allocations being brought forward, or if these were a result of model anomalies.
- the (lack of) provision of the Assessment Technical Note (ATN) appendices, which include flow difference plots and volume capacity ratio plots for all modelled scenarios.
- the need for further engagement regarding the development of the transport evidence base.
- the need for WCC to review the PRISM transport model, Local Model Validation Report, data collection reports and any forecasting reports in order to give WCC confidence in the transport modelling outputs.
- the need to identify any necessary infrastructure improvements to be included within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

**2. Dudley Local Plan (DLP) Publication Plan Regulation 19 Public Consultation (Autumn 2024)**

We have read the Guidance Notes on the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) website. We understand that the purpose of this public consultation is to invite comments on the soundness and legal compliance of the plan.

- In terms of the ‘Justified’ test, we have focused on the transport evidence, namely the Black Country Transport Modelling Report (October 2024).

- We have considered the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (October 2024) in our assessment of the deliverability ('Effective' test) of the Plan.
- We have assessed the consistency of the Publication Plan (October 2024) (Part One setting out the Spatial Strategy and Strategic Policies and Part Two setting out the Centres and Site Allocations) with national policy.

As detailed in our Regulation 18 response (December 2023), our responses to Local Plan consultations are guided by relevant policy and guidance including the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) (NPPF), namely paragraphs 16, 25, 26, 27, 34, 104, 105, 106, 111, and 124. Transport strategies to support local plans need to be based on a robust evidence base. As a minimum, for the transport evidence base to satisfy the requirements of NPPF, it is necessary to establish: -

- transport impacts of the development allocations.
- the transport improvements necessary to ensure that the impacts are not severe or unacceptable.
- land requirements for the delivery of the necessary improvements.
- cost(s) of the necessary improvements.
- any other deliverability constraints.

Our comments are set out in the following pages and include matters for future discussion.

### **3. Cross-boundary issues and Duty to Cooperate**

The Plan aims to deliver at least 10,470 net new homes and at least 22.6ha of employment land across the Dudley Council area for the period up to 2041.

In response to the preferred approach: -

- We note that the Policies Map recognises the A491 and A456 but does not acknowledge the potential for cross-boundary movements utilising the A451 and B4551. However, these routes are included in the transport modelling report. We support the preferred approach (para 3.35) that the unmet housing and employment land needs can be met without requiring development opportunities in the Worcestershire County Council local authority area. However, given the proximity of the Plan area to Worcestershire and the key highway links connecting the county to Dudley

Borough, there is the potential for cross-boundary movement to utilise Worcestershire's transport network, particularly the A491 Hagley Road and A456 Birmingham Road, but also the A451 Stourbridge Road and B4551 Bromsgrove Road. Therefore, mechanisms need to be identified to determine the potential impacts on these routes and the associated solutions to those impacts.

#### **4. Part One - Spatial Strategy and Policies (October 2024)**

We support the principles in the vision of sustainable urban growth, more accessibility and promoting more active forms of travel, especially public transport and a network of footpaths and cycleways providing connections to the countryside around the borough (para 4.1). We also support (Table 4.1) Strategic Priority 7 - Delivering the resources, infrastructure and services to support growth by: successfully addressing borough-wide infrastructure needs and maximising the efficient use of existing infrastructure capacities; exploring opportunities for new sustainable infrastructure, including through delivering an enhanced footpath and cycleway network within the borough; and ensuring appropriate and timely delivery of infrastructure to support new developments.

The Dudley Borough Spatial Strategy (Section 5) focusses on growth and development across the borough. WCC will continue to be interested in the regional connections, monitoring, and mitigation measures for the largest Regeneration Corridors (RC) and those closest to the WCC highway and transport network. Namely:

- RC2 - Dudley to Brierley Hill to Stourbridge
- RC3 – Stourbridge to Lye
- RC4 – Lye to Halesowen

We support Dudley Council's policy (Policy DLP6 3d para 6.19) to secure infrastructure provision from future planned development and new guidance for integration with infrastructure within adjoining local authority areas, and that the Plan acknowledges the importance of delivering new homes in places with good sustainable transport and access to key residential services (para 8.8).

We support the key characteristics of Strategic Employment Areas (para 9.33) that sites are to be highly accessible to the Strategic Highway Network and to have good public transport accessibility.

We support that highway improvements (para 16.21) will be expected to address the needs of all users, especially pedestrians and cyclists, and to cater for bus priority in line with current Government guidance. We also support ensuring that both new developments and existing facilities identify travel and transportation impacts and proposals for mitigation maximised by Transport Assessments and Travel Plans and there is accessibility by a choice of sustainable modes of transport (para 16.28).

In response to Part One: -

- We note that the Policies Map recognises the A491 and A456 but does not acknowledge the potential for cross-boundary movements utilising the A451 and B4551. However, these routes are included in the transport modelling report.

## **5. Part Two - Centres and Site Allocations (October 2024)**

Part Two sets out the Centres and Site Allocations. The largest sites and sites closest to the WCC network are Brierley Hill Strategic Centre (1,546 new homes), Stourbridge Town Centre (229 new homes) and Halesowen Town Centre (228 new homes). In response to Part Two: -

- WCC notes that the scale and location of these individual sites are unlikely to impact on the safe and efficient operation of WCC roads. However, at this stage it is challenging for WCC to determine the cumulative impacts on Worcestershire's highway network in the absence of an appropriate evidence base.
- As set out in our Regulation 18 response (December 2023) WCC seeks further engagement and to work with DMBC to understand potential cross-boundary movements utilising Worcestershire's transport network, particularly the A491 Hagley Hill and A456 Birmingham Road, peak-hour traffic on the A491 Hagley Road and A456 Birmingham Road associated with development, including windfall housing sites, and any necessary highway capacity improvements in Worcestershire to provide for/support cross-boundary movements.

## **6. Infrastructure Delivery Plan - Supporting evidence base document (October 2024)**

The DLP adopts a brownfield-led spatial strategy, which aims to bring vacant or underused sites back into use to help regenerate the Borough (para 1.1.2), which WCC supports.

The aim of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is to understand 1) capacity of existing infrastructure and 2) infrastructure requirements necessary to support the proposed development. The transport infrastructure evidence base is based upon the Black Country Transport Modelling (SWECO 2024). The Black Country Transport Modelling (2024) concludes (para 4.1.2) that although transport in Dudley is heavily dependent on the private vehicle and congestion is a problem on some key roads, it is not expected that the development proposed under the DLP will have any significant adverse impact on the network, and that initiatives to increase more sustainable transport methods are expected to improve the situation. The IDP acknowledges that transport in the Dudley Borough is heavily car dependent and that the key roads running through it, including the A491 heading south out of the Borough, suffer from congestion.

In response to the IDP: -

- WCC welcomes this acknowledgement of the A491, however the infrastructure schedule (Part 2 – Infrastructure Delivery Schedule) which accompanies the IDP document, and which identifies numerous transport schemes for active travel, public transport, and highways at the strategic and local level, does not include capacity improvements and/or mitigation measures for cross-boundary movements with WCC.
- In the absence of a Monitor and Manage policy commitment, the current uncertainties of future travel patterns are such that WCC are concerned that unacceptable impact may arise. Modifications to policy text (adequate ‘Monitor and Manage’ processes) would address this and help to provide surety that development would not have any unacceptable cross-boundary highway impacts.

## **7. Transport Evidence Base - Black Country Transport Modelling Report (October 2024)**

The SWECO modelling report concludes (para 6.2.7) that the PRISM model is unable to predict regular trips and finer traffic movements and interactions for authorities outside the area, including Worcestershire. The report assumes that the impact(s) of the proposed DLP on the roads leading out of the study area and into neighbouring districts, including Worcestershire, to be minor. The report notes (para 4.1.16) that the model results indicate that, on the whole, the network is largely able to accommodate the level of traffic that would be generated by the Local Plan, but that some corridors may require additional modelling to better understand and accommodate the changing travel patterns seen when the Local Plan is adopted. In response to the Modelling: -

- As set out in our Regulation 18 response (December 2023), WCC has concerns that the PRISM model network does not extend to Hagley or the northern-most extents of Worcestershire's highway network (except for the 1km buffer around the study area). WCC would seek to review the PRISM transport model, Local Model Validation Report, data collection reports and any forecasting reports. As such, and without sight of the above-mentioned information, this confirms the need for a 'Monitor and Manage' approach to help to provide surety that development would not have any unacceptable cross-boundary highway impacts.

## **8. Summary**

We have reviewed the publicly available Publication Plan, Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Black Country Transport Modelling Report and provided comments in relation to the transport implications of the plan for the safety and operation of the WCC highway and transport network.

We support that the housing and employment land needs can be met without requiring development opportunities in the Worcestershire County Council local authority area. We would, however, recommend that a 'Monitor and Manage' approach would be appropriate to provide sufficient surety that development would not have unacceptable cross-boundary highway capacity and safety impacts.



In the absence of further assessment work, the County Council requests that Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council continues to engage to develop a monitor and manage process/strategy to help determine the cumulative impacts on Worcestershire's transport network.

We trust that our response will be helpful and assist you. We look forward to working with you through the remainder of the plan-making process.