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Via email: planningpolicy@winchester.gov.uk

13 October 2024

Dear Planning,

NETWORK RAIL RESPONSE TO WINCHESTER COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN (REGULATION 19) CONSULTATION

Thank you for providing Network Rail the opportunity to make comment on the Regulation 19 version of the Winchester Local Plan.

It is important that opportunities to promote the use of the railway as a more sustainable modes of transport are identified and taken forward. The railway network is a vital element of the country's economy and a key component in the drive to deliver the Government's sustainable agenda.

Network Rail is the statutory undertaker for maintaining and operating railway infrastructure of England, Scotland, and Wales. As statutory undertaker, Network Rail is under license from the Department for Transport (DfT) and regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to maintain and enhance the operational railway and its assets, ensuring the provision of a safe operational railway. As a matter of course, proponents of sites which are close to the railway boundary or sites which could affect the railway asset directly are required to engage with our Asset Protection and Optimisation team (ASPRO).

Network Rail's comments are set out below in relation to the soundness of the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan within areas of relevance. For this, Network Rail have considered the main points of soundness as required through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at para 35:

(a) Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs ²¹; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;

(b) Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;

(c) Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and

(d) Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant

Spatial strategy for Winchester

Strategic Policy SP2 – Spatial strategy and development principles

Network Rail consider this Policy to be sound and are supportive of the promotion of sustainable transport as a development principle. As recognised in part x of the Policy it is essential to ensure that any identified infrastructure needs are provided in a timely manner to support growth and where possible these should be fully funded by the developer or a third party that is generating the pressures on infrastructure.

High Quality well-design places and living well

Strategic Policy D1 – High quality, well designed and inclusive places

Network Rail consider this Policy to be sound and are supportive of making access to public transport easier as in part iii of the Policy. This would fit with Network Rail’s policy on first and last mile to provide safe, continuous access from home to a rail station for pedestrians and cyclists where possible.

Strategic Policy D2 – Design Principles for Winchester Town

Network Rail believe this Policy to be sound and is supportive of the principles governing growth within Winchester Town. This is especially the case with the promotion of Transport Strategies within part xiii.

Strategic Policy D6 – Brownfield Development and making best use of land

Network Rail believes that Policy to be sound and is supportive of maximising densities on brownfield sites close to public transport.

Strategic Policy T1 – Sustainable and active transport and travel

This Policy is not sound in its current form as it fails to be consistent with national policy, specifically para 108 of the NPPF. The Policy does not consider transport networks as whole which should include the railway rather than just be limited to the road network. To address this, Network Rail suggest the following additions (in italics):

v. Safe, attractive, secure and convenient ways that encourage all users, including those with disabilities and reduced mobility, to use more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, wheeling, cycling, buses *or the rail network*, at every stage of the development;

vi. The continued safe and efficient operation of the strategic and local road networks *and the rail network*

The application of the above changes would be sufficient to make the Policy sound.

Policy W8 - Station Approach Regeneration Area

Network Rail supports the allocation and the principles behind this. On-going discussions will need to take place with both Network Rail and South Western Railway over the delivery of the railway car park as part of the allocation. This appears to be sufficiently covered by part i of the Policy. The monitoring of capacity at Winchester rail station should be an integral part of the approach to this regeneration area. Network Rail believe that this can be covered through the masterplan approach involving landowners and interested parties as stated in part i of the Policy.

Policy SH2 – North Whitely

Network Rail believe the Policy to be sound. The need for a public transport strategy and off site contributions are noted within the Policy and this is supported. Improving access to and around Botley rail station should remain a priority for the allocation.

The lack of a specific infrastructure Policy providing an approach towards securing planning obligations for infrastructure improvements is a concern for Network Rail. Developments that require mitigation due to impacts on the rail network should fully fund those mitigations to ensure the development can be supported and growth does not overwhelm the existing infrastructure.

Network Rail wish to be kept informed of the progress of the Plan and reserve the right to appear at the Examination in Public.

Yours faithfully,


Senior Town Planner