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Via Email: localplan@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Operations (East)
National Highways
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13 February 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Public Consultation on the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

National Highways welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation document which is in line with the adopted local Plan for Central Bedfordshire covering the plan period from 2015 to 2035.

National Highways has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as 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). It is our role to maintain the safe and efficient operation of the SRN whilst acting as a delivery partner to national economic growth.

In relation to the Design Guide SPD, our principal interest is in safeguarding the operation of the SRN routes within the Central Bedfordshire area, these include A1, A5, A6, A421 and M1, all of which intersect the Bedfordshire county in the north south direction and provide links between Bedford in the north and Luton in the south, which are the two largest settlements within the area.

We understand that the Design Guide SPD is required to be in conformity with relevant national and county-wide planning and strategic policies which includes the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 (adopted in July 2021), the Sustainability Plan, Vision 2050 and Strategic Plan, to name a few.

We note this document has been updated since the previous one adopted in 2014 to conform with the new policies which influence design and sustainability. It is expected, this draft document will replace the current version of the Design Guide in the summer of this year (2023).

This document sets out the requirements for high-quality design in Central Bedfordshire, with focus on Policy HQ1 of the adopted Local Plan and the need to deliver high-quality new development, the document provides a more detailed guidance on how this can be achieved within Central Bedfordshire.

The key chapters of interest for National Highways include the following: Chapter 7 which discusses movement and chapter 10 focusing on land uses.

Chapter 7 discusses the importance of the user hierarchy and the importance of prioritising sustainable modes of travel at the very top and reducing the reliance on motor traffic with the key of permeability being achieved through new developments in a way to minimise the need to travel and encouraging sustainable modes of travel that are easily accessible for all. National Highways supports the promotion of sustainable modes of travel within new developments as it reduces the impact of new developments within the vicinity of the SRN to have a significant impact on the local SRN network.

Chapter 10 focuses on the development of mixed-use developments, as per the point above, the more reasons there are to visit a place, the fewer trips are then required, resulting in a positive sustainable impact. The document supports the promotion of '20-minute Neighbourhoods' which provide a wide range and variety of local services and community facilities within close proximity of each other. National Highways supports the promotion of mixed-use developments and developments close to existing facilities as it reduces the impact of new developments within the vicinity of the SRN to have a significant impact on the local SRN network by reducing the potential trip generation.

Chapter 13 of the document includes some examples of developments that have been well designed from the outset and implemented successfully by incorporating sustainable, future-proof designs at their core. It is noted, National Highways has been consulted on regular basis in relation to any potential changes and impacts of these large schemes on the SRN in the area and therefore have no comments in relation to any of the mentioned schemes.

We consider that this document is not expected to have any significant impacts on the operation of the SRN in the area due to the type of document this is, (other than the schemes already discussed with National Highways), it is considered that the designs set out within the document are unlikely to cause a severe impact on the operation or capacity of the SRN as the main purpose of this document is to promote sustainability.

Henceforth, we have no further comments to provide and trust that the above is useful in the progression of the Design Guide SPD for Central Bedfordshire.

Yours sincerely,



Jen Searle
Spatial Planner, Beds, Bucks and Herts