Northamptonshire Highways comments on SNC Part 2 Local Plan

Section 13 of the Part 2 Local Plan contains a number of proposals for new employment sites.

Paragraph 13.2.5 refers to a new roundabout access at the Hulcote turn on the A43. The A43 forms part of the strategic road network and is therefore the responsibility of Highways England. Northamptonshire Highways would however seek to understand any impacts of a new roundabout on the traffic flows and operation of the local highway network and any mitigation measures necessary. In this context, it would be helpful to provide greater clarity in this paragraph by referring to Highways England and Northamptonshire County Council as appropriate, rather than using the term Highway Authority as this can cause confusion.

As outlined in our previous consultation response in November 2017, the policy wording for the new employment sites contain almost identical wording with regard to the provision of new bus services/facilities. We remain concerned as to whether consideration has been given to whether a bus service in these locations is likely to become commercially viable once any Section 106 funding secured has run out. To assist with considering these sites within the Plan, we have provided specific comments relating to access and public transport in relation to each of the proposed sites below.

Policy AL1: Land at Bell Plantation Towcester proposes only one access point from the A5. From a public transport view, one access point can prove very challenging to serve a site efficiently as it requires a bus service to loop back on itself, and therefore the ability to divert services particularly of interurban routes is reduced due to the time penalty.

One solution to this would be to provide a spine road between the A5 and proposed roundabout on A43 (Hulcote turn) through the Land at Bell Plantation and Land at Tiffield Lane site (see map below). This proposed spine road would permit sites AL1, AL2 and AL3 to potentially be served by diverting the existing hourly Towcester – Northampton bus service, subject to discussions with Stagecoach. Additional journeys may need to be sought through a S106 to cater for workers at times when this hourly service is not operating. Bus stops and shelters would need to be provided on both the A5 and the spine road.

Marked in red – AL1: Land at Bell Plantation
Marked in green – AL2: Land at Woolgrowers Field
Marked in blue – AL3: Land at Tiffield Lane
Marked in black – Indicative road suitable for bus operation between proposed junction on the A5 and

![Map of proposed sites and roads](image-url)
This approach would require both sites to come forward at a similar timeframe and to be master planned together. However, without provision of a spine road, this site would require a dedicated bus service to serve the site which would be both costly and would be unlikely to become commercially viable once S106 funding ran out.

Bullet point 4.a of Policy AL2: Land at Woolgrowers Field, Towcester (extension of existing Tove Valley Business Park to the north of Towcester) refers to access being from the A5 and/or the Greens Norton Road. We welcome that the policy makes reference to the local highway authority in Bullet point 2. However we would also expect to see reference to consultation with Highways England in relation to the A5. As the site appears to be smaller than 400m in length, a diversion of Northampton to Towcester service via a spine road could also serve this development providing bus stops were provided on the A5.

Policy AL3: Land at Tiffield Lane, Towcester (adjacent to Bell Plantation employment allocation) provides for access from a new roundabout at A43 Northampton Road (Hulcote Turn). As part of the strategic road network, the A43 comes under the responsibility of Highways England. We welcome the policy wording which outlines consultation with Northamptonshire County Council as local highway authority as provision of a roundabout at this location has the potential for attracting more traffic onto Northampton Road impacting on the effectiveness of Towcester Relief Road. Therefore the impact of a new roundabout at this location and its impact on the wider local and strategic highway network needs to be tested and carefully considered.

In summary, we would wish to see provision for a spine road between sites AL1 and AL3.

Policy AL4: Land at Shacks Barn Whittlebury makes reference in bullet point 3.c. for provision for good accessibility to public transport services. In principle the Silverstone – Towcester – Milton Keynes / Northampton bus routes could serve the site. However bus stops would have to be installed on the A413 south of the roundabout. This would be difficult to achieve, due to the road being 60mph and the sightline from the roundabout. Diversion of the bus service via Whittlebury is also likely to be required to serve these stops, which could be expensive as the additional running time (while modest) may require an additional bus in the duty cycle. This makes the long-term viability of the service unlikely. We therefore remain concerned as to how this site can be safely served by public transport. Any intensification of the existing access would be subject to traffic modelling and testing.

In terms of public transport provision to serve Policy AL5: Land at Former Furtho Pit Old Stratford/Cosgrove, bus stops on the A508 could serve the western part of the site as there is an existing service that provides two buses per hour to both Northampton and Milton Keynes. However, employment units more than 400m from these stops would require a bespoke bus service, probably based around bringing in
staff from Milton Keynes rather than relying on diverting interurban services such as the X7.

There are a number of existing public rights of way within the site (RS16/ RS17) these should be considered and protected as part of the master planning process and within the policy wording to ensure wider connectivity to open countryside through the development.