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29 July 2026

Dear Christine,

Ashfield Local Plan 2023-2040: Main Modifications Consultation

National Highways welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Main Modifications on the submitted Ashfield Local Plan 2023-2040. We note that Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination in April 2024 and that public hearing sessions were held in November 2024 and again between November 2025 and January 2026.

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 for national economic growth. The SRN is a critical national asset and as such we work to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity.

In relation to this consultation, National Highways' principal interest is in safeguarding the operation of the M1 which routes adjacent to the Ashfield area.

Policy context

In responding to this consultation, we consider to the Department for Transport's (DfT) Circular 01/2022 - Strategic Road Network and the delivery of sustainable development ('the Circular') which sets out how interactions with the SRN should be considered in the making of Local Plans. Paragraph 28 of the Circular sets out that:

The policies and allocations that result from plan-making must not compromise the SRN's prime function to enable the long-distance movement of people and goods. When the company assists local authorities in the development of their plans and strategies, the local authority should ensure that the SRN is not being relied upon for the transport accessibility of site allocations except where this relates to roadside facilities or SRN-dependent sectors (such as logistics and manufacturing). The company will also work with local authorities to explore opportunities to promote walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared travel in plan-making, in line with the expectations set out in the NPPF and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

In addition to the DfT Circular 01/2022, the response set out below is also in accordance with the NPPF and other relevant policies, which helps to ensure the soundness of the Local Plan is being appropriately considered (from a transport perspective).

Main Modifications

We have reviewed the Main Modifications and consider that the variations made to the allocations will not result in any material change to the traffic impacts from the growth proposals on the SRN from that previously consulted on and agreed. We therefore have no comments to raise regarding the Main Modifications.

Transport Evidence Base

National Highways has entered into a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with Ashfield District Council, dated December 2025, for which the position set out below has been agreed on the transport evidence base.

Ashfield District Council commissioned a Strategic Transport Assessment to examine the likely traffic impacts associated with planned growth and to identify the highway infrastructure required to accommodate future development.

The transport modelling undertaken to date has not identified any insurmountable constraints within Ashfield District or on the Strategic Road Network, including at M1 Junctions 27 and 28, arising from the policies and proposals set out in the Ashfield Local Plan. Whilst the proposed development will generate additional traffic and associated impacts at these junctions, the evidence indicates that such impacts can be appropriately mitigated through the delivery of a suitable package of highway infrastructure improvements.

National Highways agreed the methodology adopted for the Strategic Transport Assessment and is satisfied with its conclusions.

National Highways supports Policy SD10 (Transport Infrastructure) within the Ashfield Local Plan. The policy appropriately requires new development proposals to demonstrate that adequate measures are in place to ensure that the operation of the transport network is not compromised. Furthermore, where development places additional demands on transport infrastructure, suitable mitigation measures should be identified and delivered. National Highways also supports the requirement for Transport Assessments to accompany applications for large-scale development.

Paragraph 9.108 of Policy SD10 recognises the importance of understanding the cumulative transport impacts arising from planned growth across the district. National Highways welcomes the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with highway authorities to ensure that infrastructure requirements are properly investigated and delivered where necessary.

Duty to Co-operate

While we acknowledge the Council's dedication to collaborating with neighbouring authorities and relevant bodies to achieve sustainable development, we recommend a coordinated approach for any developments impacting neighbouring local authorities. This approach should involve joint approach with National Highways, other local authorities, and future developers or applicants. Such collaboration will ensure that all parties' interests are safeguarded and a unified solution is reached.

National Highways will continue to be consulted on planning applications where development proposals are likely to have a material impact on the Strategic Road Network. This process will ensure that the impacts of individual developments are assessed in detail and that any necessary mitigation measures are identified. Where highway improvements are required, these should be secured through appropriate mechanisms, such as Section 278 Agreements.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments then please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provided, and through our email address PlanningM@nationalhighways.co.uk

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Townend
Spatial Planner