




Network Rail
1 Puddle Dock
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EC4V 3DS



20 September 2024

Dear Planning,

NETWORK RAIL RESPONSE TO SURREY HEATH LOCAL PLAN (REGULATION 19)

Thank you for providing Network Rail with the opportunity to comment on the pre-submission version of the new Local Plan. 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 a statutory undertaker responsible for maintaining, operating and developing the main railway network and its associated estate. Our aim is to protect and enhance the railway infrastructure, therefore any proposed development which is in close proximity to the railway line or could potentially affect Network Rail's specific land interests will also need to be carefully considered. In developing this response, Network Rail has collaborated with South Western Railway (SWR) who are the train operating company (ToC) for the rail network within Surrey Heath. Therefore, this should be treated as a rail industry response.

Rail network context within Surrey Heath

The National Rail network provides some transport capacity and connectivity throughout Surrey Heath however this is fragmented and would benefit significantly from upgrades and improved connections. The stations are as follows:

- Bagshot

- Camberley
- Frimley

Rail patronage remains relatively low compared to other stations within Surrey however London Waterloo remains the most frequent destination station for those using the rail network. Improving train services through the Borough is an important goal however finding the most appropriate means for this remains a challenge.

A significant proportion of people living in the Borough tend to travel to Farnborough station in particular to utilise faster, direct services to London. Improving the rail service from station in the Borough, especially, at Camberley is complicated due to a lack of capacity on the South West Main Line (SWML) and the need for significant alterations to the existing rail network. At present, Network Rail do not believe these alterations are implementable without significant upgrades however a new study will be undertaken in 2025 to establish if journey times from Camberley can be improved.

Strategic Objectives

Network Rail are supportive of the objectives set out in the Local Plan strategy, especially objective L. Network Rail will continue to work with Surrey Heath BC and Surrey County Council to deliver active travel and promotion of sustainable modes of transport, especially rail.

Spatial Strategy

Network Rail notes the proposed distribution of housing within the Borough as set out in Table 4. Opportunities to encourage active travel especially at Deepcut should be pursued given its relatively isolated location away from public transport. The focus on Camberley presents opportunities to improve the rail station as part of wider town centre improvements to create a gateway as well as the potential for maximising land around the station and tying this with potential service improvements. Reducing the reliance on cars within the Borough remains a challenge given the lack of rail stations and access to these. This will require a combined approach with bus companies and the rail network to enable Objective L of the Local Plan to be achieved.

The clustering of employment land around the A331 presents a continued challenge in discouraging travel by car and promoting the use of public transport. Opportunities to connect Frimley and Camberley stations in particular with these employment sites, likely through dedicated direct bus routes, should be explored to discourage travel by car. This approach will also need to encompass Farnborough rail station, which is outside the Borough, and so demands a joint approach with Rushmoor and Hampshire and Surrey County Councils. Providing improved, dedicated bus routes from these stations that users can rely on would be an effective means of encouraging more sustainable modes of transport. Network Rail are keen to explore options around this and undertake joint working to support this approach.

Site Allocations

HA1/03 - Camberley Station, Station House, Pembroke Broadway, Camberley

Network Rail supports the draft allocation of Camberley station for a minimum of 150 units. The site presents a significant opportunity to deliver station improvements including enhanced accessibility for passengers and improved facilities alongside residential development. As part of this, Network Rail would like to explore the

opportunity to resolve the issues around the level crossing however this would likely require alterations that sit outside the draft allocation. This would however open opportunities to provide an enhanced station alongside improved safety for pedestrians and would be of significant local benefit and create an effective gateway to Camberley. The reference within the Policy to public realm and safety improvements within part e is supported.

HA1/05 - Sir William Siemens Square, Chobham Road, Frimley

Network Rail is supportive of the inclusion of the need to provide appropriate linkages to Frimley station. This would need to be continuous to encourage first and last mile principles from the new development site to the station. However, at present, the draft policy is not sound and should include the need for the development to fund improved facilities at Frimley station. This will ensure that the facilities can support increased use from the development. Network Rail believe the wording should be updated to include the following in italics:

g. incorporate improved pedestrian and cycle access to, and through, the site, with appropriate linkages to Frimley District Centre and the station *and provide a financial contribution to improve facilities at Frimley station.*

HA1/08 – Land off Spencer Close

Network Rail notes the proposed allocation of this site and its proximity to the railway. This site was previously identified for the Sturt Chord which could have been utilised to provide a turnback onto the SWML to provide rail network upgrades. Network Rail no longer believe this chord provides a realistic option to pursue and therefore no further safeguarding of this land is required. Noting the proximity to the railway, it is essential that the draft Policy requires the developer of the site to engage with Network Rail. This should include engagement over measures to protect the railway in terms of access and drainage. The following wording should be included within the Policy:

ensure sufficient safeguards are agreed with Network Rail to protect the railway from impacts of the development.

HA3 – Land East of Knoll Road, Camberley Town Centre

Network Rail is supportive of the inclusion of the need to provide improved pedestrian and cycle links to Camberley station. However, at present, the draft policy is not sound and should include the need for the development to contribute towards improvements at Camberley station. This will ensure that the facilities can support increased use from the development. Network Rail believe the wording should be updated to include the following in italics:

k. improved pedestrian and cyclist links between the site and Camberley High Street, and Camberley Station, *and provide a financial contribution to improve facilities at the station,* with suitable crossing points implemented at Knoll Road.

Town Centres, Retail and Economy

CTC3 – Movement and Accessibility

Network Rail supports the draft Policy and believe it to be sound.

Infrastructure

IN1 – Infrastructure Delivery

Network Rail is supportive of the securing of on-site, off-site and financial contributions towards mitigating the impact of development as set out in the draft Policy. As a key provider of infrastructure, Network Rail require funding of mitigations required because of third party development. Additionally, the phasing of development to ensure necessary infrastructure is delivered is also supported.

IN2 – Transportation

Network Rail is supportive of the draft Policy and its intention to secure improvements to the public transport network. Where possible, the funding and delivery of the required improvements should be undertaken as early as possible.

DH2 – Making effective use of land

Network Rail supports the draft Policy to maximise densities close to railway stations and the Policy is sound as it accords with national policy and is justified. As noted in the table within the draft Policy, these densities should be a minimum and if higher densities come forward in Camberley or close to the rail stations then this should be encouraged. It is important to ensure that where development takes place close to rail stations, opportunities to secure funding towards improvements in facilities, accessibility, public realm and capacities are considered. Network Rail will investigate opportunities to improve service provision on the railway in the Borough and other improvements should also come with this work.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Network Rail provided an update to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan in June 2024 and we are appreciative that these updates are included in the latest version published as part of the consultation. These updates remain relevant and should be used as the basis for securing improvements to the rail network as the Plan progresses and development comes forward.

Network Rail are keen to work with Surrey Heath Borough Council going forward in supporting the development of the Plan and to identify infrastructure needs and funding opportunities to improve the rail network within the Council area for the benefits of the local economy and residents.

I trust that the above is clear, should you require additional information or to have a meeting to discuss the above then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Hatton MRTPI
Senior Town Planner