



**STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

**BETWEEN**

**WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**AND**

**NETWORK RAIL, ENGLEFIELD ESTATE AND BEFTONFORTH**

**MARCH 2024**

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is to set out areas of agreement between West Berkshire Council (WBC) and Network Rail (NR), Englefield Estate and Beftonforth hereafter referred to as “the parties”. It documents those matters agreed by the parties with regard to the West Berkshire Local Plan Review and specifically with regard to Policy DM43 Theale Rail-Road Transfer Site.
- 1.2 It is confirmed that a separate SoCG is being progressed between NR and WBC which covers other matters raised by NR in its consultation responses and principally related to the Thatcham Level Crossing.

## **2.0 West Berkshire Local Plan Review Consultation**

- 2.1 This SoCG confirms the position agreed by all parties in response to representations made by the NR, Englefield Estate and Beftonforth to the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 (January 2023) in relation to Policy DM43 Theale Rail-Road Transfer Site.

## **3.0 On-going engagement between the Parties**

- 3.1 There has been on-going engagement between NR and WBC to discuss the representations made in respect of Policy DM43. This has more recently included discussions with the Englefield Estate and Beftonforth with all parties meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to review this matter.
- 3.2 Subsequently WBC has issued suggested changes to address matters raised both by the Inspector and by NR, Englefield Estate and Beftonforth in respect of Policy DM43.

## **4. Matters on which the Parties agree**

- 4.1 The parties agree that Policy DM43 is a safeguarding policy which deals with the existing Theale Rail-Road Site.
- 4.2 It is agreed that there is no policy bar imposed by policy DM43 on an extension (growth) of the rail freight uses beyond the area designated in the Local Plan Policies Map.
- 4.3 The parties agree to the proposed changes to Policy DM43 and supporting paragraphs 12.100 -12.103 as set out at Appendix A.
- 4.4 The changes agreed to paragraph 12.102 to Policy DM43 are required to provide clarification in terms of the expectation that demand for rail freight generally will grow, that Theale is the only location in West Berkshire which offers rail-road transfer facilities and which may have the potential to support rail freight growth.

## **5.0 Areas of Disagreement**

- 5.1 There are no areas of disagreement in respect of Policy DM43 Theale Rail-Road Site.

## 6.0 Agreement

### Signed on behalf of West Berkshire Council



Name: Katharine Makant  
Position: Chief Planning Officer  
Date: 20 March 2024

### Signed on behalf of Network Rail



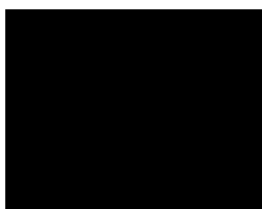
Name: Colin Field  
Position: Town Planner Manager, Network Rail  
Date: 20 March 2024

### Signed on behalf of Englefield Estate



Name: Vilna Walsh  
Position: Firstplan (Director) on behalf of Englefield Estate  
Date: 20 March 2024

### Signed on behalf of Beftonforth



Name: Patrick Gurner  
Position: PSP (Director) on behalf of Beftonforth  
Date: 20 March 2024

### Policy DM43 Theale Rail – Road Transfer Site

The site at Wigmore Lane in Theale, as defined on the Policies Map, shall be safeguarded as a rail-road transfer facility site at Theale is reserved solely for those industries which require a rail road transfer facility and access to the highway network.

Redevelopment for any uses not expressly for this purpose of the site, in part or in whole, for uses that would compromise the operation of this facility will not be permitted.

### Supporting text

12.100 The rail-road transfer site at Wigmore Lane, Theale, is an important infrastructure facility within the District allowing for the transfer of goods from rail to road, and this policy seeks to safeguard the site, as defined on the Policies Map, as a rail – road transfer facility.

12.101 The facility is primarily an aggregates terminal, and the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2022-2037 safeguards the site to ensure the supply of minerals and the continued export of minerals from the District by road. Proposals for aAny non-mineral and waste development on the site would need to comply with the exceptions set out in Policy 9 of the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2022-2037. Should the exceptions be deemed to apply, Policy DM43 will ensure the site continues to remain in use as a rail – road transfer facility, allowing the continued movement of freight from rail to road for other industries requiring such a facility, including for example the transfer of consumer goods.

12.102 ~~Nonetheless,~~ The movement of freight by rail is vital to the local economy and plays a significant role in reducing congestion and carbon emissions. Many industries rely on rail freight for the movement of goods, and with the drive to reduce carbon emissions globally it is expected that demand for rail freight will continue to grow transport of consumer goods by rail continues to be important for the local economy and. Theale is the only location which offers rail – road transfer facilities in the area and which may have the potential to support rail freight growth. The the site should be protected to ensure the infrastructure exists to allow for the transfer of rail freight for those industries which require a rail road transfer facility and access to the highway network.

12.103 The extent of the rail-road transfer site is defined on the Policies Map.