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To Case Officer, West Suffolk District Council

Re: A submission by Nick Timothy, MP for West Suffolk, on planning application ref: **DC/24/0151/HYB** i.e. residential development in the Western section of Mildenhall of around 1,000 or more dwellings, and associated infrastructure and amenities.

1. It has long been my position that a development of this size, and in this location, would only be feasible with significant investment in — and improvements to — **Mildenhall's** traffic infrastructure, including an additional access or 'relief' road. This latter improvement is needed to ease vehicle pressure on the heavily-used **Queensway / West Row Road**, and on the town centre more generally. I met Suffolk County Council (SCC) to make this argument in October 2024. And on 21 November 2024, I wrote to SCC to reiterate the points, noting that *the new housing scheme in West Mildenhall should only proceed if a new relief road and other amenities are delivered alongside it.*

2. As those who live and work in Mildenhall know all too well, the town's roads can already become very congested, especially during peak times and at certain pinch points. This can only get significantly worse as more residents move into the new development.

3. I refer below to three specific key traffic issues in Mildenhall:

- A) There are already very heavy traffic flows during peak periods on **Queensway / West Row Road**, particularly at the junction with **Sheldrick Way**, which is the access road for Mildenhall College Academy and the sixth form college, and the police station, library and the community and sports facilities at **Mildenhall Hub**. As residents move into the new housing, the usage of, and congestion on, this road and junction — and the safety risks — can only grow more acute.
- B) There are additional congestion concerns during peak times at **Police Station Square**, which is currently a mini roundabout at the junction of **North Terrace, Queensway, the High Street** and **Kingsway**, and the **A1101 Kingsway / Brandon Road Roundabout** and on the **Bury Road** approach to **Fiveways roundabout**.
- C) There is a serious road safety concern — especially for pedestrians and school children crossing the street — on and near **Worlington Road**, in the area of the **Mace Road Estate**, where there is a change from the national speed limit to 30mph.

4. In reference to **A)** above, the traffic survey submitted as part of the planning application referred to above suggests residents in around 780 of the new homes (phases 1, 2 and 4 of the development) would have **West Row Road** as the only ingress / egress point.

5. Mildenhall Town Council has pointed out in its submission on this application that the town's 2022 Masterplan included an additional road link — through Folly Farm — for traffic to access the A1101 as an extra ingress / egress point to the site. They believe the housing plans *“will significantly increase traffic going through the town centre, which is already under significant pressure at peak times, as [West Row Road] will effectively be the only route between the site and the town centre.”*



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6. A relief road would help to ease existent traffic pressure on **Queensway / West Row Road**, as well as to mitigate the impact of future demand. If it is agreed, it should be built prior to any new residents moving in. One vision of such an access road would create an additional point of ingress / egress — in addition to those at **West Row Road** — to the north the planned estate at the industrial estate via **Fred Dannatt Road**, especially for use by those moving into phases 1 and 2 of the new development. I note that **Suffolk Highways**, as the relevant Highway Authority, has now confirmed — in its submission to West Suffolk District Council dated 21 February 2025 — that *‘development shall not commence until details of the proposed access from Fred Dannatt Road... have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority’*. This is welcome, as is the statement by Suffolk Highways that an access road will be *‘made available prior to first occupation of any residential or non-residential area to be served by the access’*.

7. Also with reference to **A)** above, I have previously said that SCC, both as the applicant with an interest in the workability of their proposal — and as the relevant highway authority — should reassess the safety of the **West Row Road / Sheldrick Way** junction well in advance of the housing construction, with a view to addressing any safety issues. As an aside, such safety concerns have been mentioned to me repeatedly by residents, and are a major worry for a number of people who use the facilities located in the area of the Hub. In this connection, I welcome the statement by Suffolk Highways that an additional pedestrian crossing will be required on **West Row Road** *‘in addition to the proposed crossing to the east of Sheldrick Way’* on p.13 of its document dated 21 February 2025.

8. In commenting on the application, some residents have expressed the view that a different iteration of such a ‘relief’ road, linking the western part of **Mildenhall** with a more direct access to the A11, is needed to enable those living in the new housing estate and others to commute southwest e.g. to Newmarket, Cambridge and other points, without having to travel through the town centre. Such a road might, it is said, might proceed across the river Lark on a route to **Worlington** so that vehicles could travel to Red Lodge and, from there, on to the A11. In light of issues with **Mildenhall**’s traffic pinch points, consideration by the applicant of this proposal is sensible.

9. In reference to **B)** above, as **Mildenhall**’s population increases, the **Police Station Square** mini-roundabout junction will need to be upgraded so it is safer to use by a greater volume of traffic. It is a clear pinch point for the town. West Suffolk District Council, as the relevant planning authority, should require the applicant to promptly improve this junction for the benefit of all of those who live and work in **Mildenhall**.

10. Also in reference to **B)** above, I also note that Suffolk Highways has asked West Suffolk Council for *‘a suitable pre-commencement condition... to secure precise details of improvements to the A1101 Kingsway / Brandon Road Roundabout’*. It is welcome that such improvements are under discussion.

11. A final point in reference to **B)** above. Plans have been on the cards for a number of years for an A11 by-pass of the **Fiveways Roundabout**. In light of this application, such work should be expedited by National Highways. As Suffolk County Council noted in a letter to National Highways, dated 29 August 2024, this was previously listed in the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) plan, envisaged for commencement during the period 2025-2030. However, this was subsequently moved



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to RIS4 as a pipeline scheme, for commencement after 2030. In its document dated 21 February 2025, Suffolk Highways confirms that the West Mildenhall development was included in the assessment of the junction. I will be writing to National Highways to underline the urgency of commencing with this work as **Mildenhall** faces the addition of a significant amount of new housing. However, West Suffolk District Council, as the planning authority, should ask the applicant to obtain from the Government clarification of the latest timetable for this upgrade work, as well as an undertaking by the applicant that it will make strong representations to the Government for the **Fiveways** by-pass scheme to be expedited.

12. In relation to C) above, it is important to improve traffic safety on **Worlington Road**, along which homes are present, for example at **Mace Road**, especially in light of the extra population that will be living in **Mildenhall** should this application receive approval. This road is often used by children as they walk to school or college. As part of a need to address the wider traffic issues in **Mildenhall** prior to the construction of this housing development, West Suffolk District Council, as the relevant planning authority, should require the applicant to ensure this safety concern is addressed in advance of residents moving in. For safety reasons, the change from the national speed limit to 30 mph should be moved further to the west along **Worlington Road / Mildenhall Road** so that traffic travelling along the road in the vicinity of the residential area is moving at slower speeds.

13. In summary, I consider it crucial for West Suffolk District Council to have clear undertakings from the applicant committing to upgrade work in three particular areas:

- i) A new **relief road** is needed, especially to ease pressure on **Queensway / West Row Road**;
- ii) The mini-roundabout junction at **Police Station Square** should be upgraded as a matter of urgency to address a key traffic pinch point within Mildenhall town centre;
- iii) The speed of traffic on **Worlington Road**, near the Mace Road area, should be brought down to address safety concerns.

14. Furthermore, I consider it crucial for West Suffolk District Council, as the relevant planning authority, to gain a clear undertaking from the applicant that it will do all it can to obtain from the government the latest timetable on the **Fiveways roundabout by-pass**, while also making submissions in the strongest terms that this work should be expedited in light of this application.

Yours sincerely

Nick Timothy
Member of Parliament for West Suffolk