ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
23 JANUARY 2014
DfT DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR ROAD AND RAIL NETWORKS, 2013

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider the DfT Consultation on a Draft National Policy Statement for the National Road and Rail Networks (NN NPS), December 2013 and to respond by 26 February 2014.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the DfT be informed that the Council broadly supports the draft NN NPS, in terms of additional investment in the rail network, the transfer of freight from road to rail including the development of a network of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges and continued investment in road infrastructure including existing routes and pinchpoints but not the construction of new road alignments and links.

2.2 That the draft response to the consultation questions detailed in Annex 1 be approved and submitted to the DfT by 26 February 2014.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 The Government recognise that transport is “an engine for growth” and that well-connected road and rail networks are important to meet long term needs and support a prosperous economy.

3.2 The NN NPS identifies the draft Government policy as:-

• Roads – to reduce congestion and unreliability by improving and enhancing the existing national road network including the provision of some new road
alignments and corresponding links will be needed.

**Comment** – Support is given in principle for future improvements to the A5 Trunk Road including the Churchbridge junction. The construction of new strategic roads is not supported as previous reports and most significantly the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, 1994, have shown this to be a failed policy as it is not physically possible or indeed acceptable on environmental grounds, to build road capacity to meet demand. The future of the M6Toll should also be reviewed in terms of its ownership and tolling regime.

- **Rail** – to improve the capacity, capability and reliability of the rail network at key locations for both passenger and freight movements to improve journey times and to maintain or improve operational performance. New or re-opened alignments to improve capacity, speed, connectivity and reliability should be considered.

**Comment** – The recognition of the need to improve the capacity, capability and reliability of the rail network is fully supported. 30% of all am peak journeys into Birmingham City Centre are now made by rail and this trend needs to be encouraged, if not accelerated, including reducing the costs of rail travel. In the Cannock Chase District, there is an urgent need for funding to deliver the Chase Line, Walsall-Rugeley linespeed improvement, restoration of a half-hourly off-peak service, new inter-urban services and continued investment in station facilities, particularly after electrification in December 2017.

- **Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges** – to support the transfer of freight from road to rail and facilitate sustainable rail freight growth. There is a need for an expanded network of SRFIs to serve regional, sub-regional and cross-regional markets providing good connectivity with both the road and rail network. These will be private sector led.

**Comment** - The Council has already given its support for such initiatives and fully supports the development of a sub-regional facility at the Pentalver Mid Cannock site. However, as the NN NPS requires all applications for strategic rail freight interchanges to include warehouses to which goods can be delivered from the railway network, Mid-Cannock would not be capable of being classified as a SRFI.

Rail freight produces 70% less CO2 than road freight, up to fifteen times lower NOx emissions and nearly 90% lower PM10 emissions. It also has decongestion benefits – depending on its load, each freight train can remove between 43 and 77 HGVs from the road.

### 4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 This report supports the Council’s Corporate Priorities as follows:-

Securing improvements to the strategic road network and Chase Line rail service accords with the priority outcomes with respect to promoting People – Active and Healthy Lifestyles; Place-Improved Living Environment through promoting a
5 Report Detail

5.1 Government National Policy Statements set out the need for new or expanded infrastructure and detailed guidance on how impacts of developments are to be assessed and impacts mitigated setting out the Government’s policies. They are intended to provide clarity and certainty for scheme promoters and remove the need for long planning inquiries. They also have to undergo public consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny.

5.2 There are 12 designated or proposed National Policy Statements, setting out Government policy on different types of national infrastructure development, which are:

**Energy NPSs** (Produced by Dep’t for Energy and Climate Change (DECC)).
- Overarching energy
- Renewable energy
- Fossil Fuels
- Oil and Gas Supply and Storage
- Electricity Networks
- Nuclear Power

**Transport NPSs**
- Ports
- **Transport Networks (including rail and roads)**- THIS REPORT
- Aviation

**Water, waste water and waste NPSs**
- Water Supply
- Hazardous Waste
- Waste Water Treatment

5.3 The National Networks National Policy Statement (NN NPS) set out the Government’s vision and approach to development of nationally significant infrastructure projects on the road and rail networks in England, including the development of strategic rail freight interchanges. The thresholds are defined in the Planning Act 2008 as amended in 2013. HS2 is not covered by NN NPS.

5.4 The Government considers that there is a compelling need for developing the national road and rail networks and of strategic rail freight interchanges. Transport is as an engine for growth and the need for well-connected and high performing networks with sufficient capacity are seen as vital to meet the country’s long-term needs and support a prosperous economy.

5.5 The NN NPS key vision and strategic objectives for the national Networks statement is detailed below:-
Government's vision and strategic objectives for the national Networks

The Government will deliver national networks that meet the country’s long-term needs; supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving overall quality of life, as part of a wider transport system. This means:

- Networks with the capacity and connectivity to support national and local economic activity and facilitate growth and create jobs
- Networks which support and improve journey quality, reliability and safety
- Networks which support the delivery of environmental goals and the move to a low carbon economy
- Networks which join up our communities and link effectively to each other.

5.6 The NN NPS predicts that increases in economic prosperity and population will increase the pressure on the networks even further. Road traffic is forecast to increase by 30% by 2030 and rail journeys by 40%, while rail freight has the potential to nearly double.

5.7 Areas of high growth, housing developments, new employment opportunities and development of other large infrastructure projects will impact on the use of the national networks. Without development, the networks will constrain sustainable economic growth, quality of life and wider environmental objectives.

5.8 Government’s policy is for a package of improvements and enhancements across the road and rail networks, targeting key pressure points.

5.9 Government’s policy is therefore:-

- **Roads** – reduce congestion and unreliability by improving and enhancing the existing national road network*. Some new road alignments and corresponding links will be needed.
  (* The National road network largely includes strategic routes, i.e. trunk roads and motorways).

- **Rail** – improve the capacity, capability and reliability of the rail network at key locations for both passenger and freight movements to improve journey times, and to maintain or improve operational performance. New or re-opened alignments to improve capacity, speed, connectivity and reliability should be considered.

- **Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges** – support the transfer of freight from road to rail and facilitate sustainable rail freight growth. There is a need for an expanded network of SRFIs to serve regional, sub-regional and cross-regional markets providing good connectivity with both the road and rail network. These will be private sector,

5.10 While the Government expects most schemes will be brought forward primarily for economic reasons, they will also seek to bring forward schemes to improve
safety, enhance the environment and improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

5.11 Wider Government policy is also to minimise environmental and social impacts and also address existing problems, to deliver environmental benefits, address existing environmental problems on the strategic road network, improve water quality and reduce flood risk.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial
There are no direct financial implications in the report.

6.2 Legal
There are no Legal implications arising from the report.

6.3 Human Resources
There are no human resource implications in the report.

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)
There are no Crime Preventions in the report.

6.5 Human Rights Act
No Human Rights Act implications.

6.6 Data Protection
None.

6.7 Risk Management
Failure to respond to the consultation would deny the Council the opportunity to influence Government transport policy.

6.8 Equality & Diversity
None.

6.9 Best Value
None.

7 Appendices to the Report
Appendix 1 Response
Previous Consideration

None.

Background Papers

Consultation on a Draft National Policy Statement for the National Road and Rail Networks. DfT, December 2013
Q1. Does the draft NN NPS clearly establish the need for development of the national networks? If not why not? (see Chapter 2 of the NN NPS)

R1. Yes but with qualifications as detailed below as it may not provide a sufficiently strong strategic steer to local authorities or scheme promoters.

Chapter 2/paragraph 2.8, sets out the Government Policy “for a significant and balanced package of improvements and enhancements across the road and rail networks targeting key pressure points...”.

With regards to the road network, part of this approach is supported in principle and mirrors the policy position followed over the last 10 years. Future measures to bring forward junction improvement schemes such as National and Local Pinchpoint, are supported together with capacity improvements to the existing primary and strategic road network, such as additional sections of dualling.

However, there are concerns on proposals for new roads and which do not reflect lessons from the past. A landmark report published by the Standing Advisory Committee on 'Trunk Roads and the Generation of Traffic' (SACTRA), 1994, received all party support and who’s conclusions were accepted by the DfT. This recognised that after four decades of attempting to build roads to meet capacity, this was a failed policy that was not achievable, as well as having unacceptable environmental consequences.

This report found that when a new road is built, new traffic will divert onto it. People made new trips they would otherwise not make and travelled longer distances because of the presence of a new road. This effect known as ‘induced traffic’, meant that the predicted congestion benefits of a new road were often quickly eroded. Traffic levels on bypassed roads can also rise faster than expected due to induced traffic, all of which means the hoped-for benefits of a new road can evaporate very quickly.

Inaccurate traffic forecasts and failure to allow for induced traffic, mean the benefits and costs of a new road are not accurately calculated.

During the planning stages of a road scheme, if induced traffic is not included properly, the full environmental impact of the scheme, for instance, carbon and noise levels, will be underestimated. By predicting a longer period of relief from congestion, underestimating induced traffic will further distort the benefit-cost ratio leading to false expectations of the economic returns of a road.

Local people will also have too high expectations for a road scheme if induced traffic is not included properly in forecasts. Even if induced traffic is forecast correctly, it will still cause damaging environmental impacts and extra congestion that make building big new road unsustainable.

Rail- The recognition of the need to improve the capacity, capability and reliability of the rail network is fully supported. 30% of all am peak journeys into Birmingham City Centre are now made by rail and this trend needs to be
encouraged, if not accelerated, including reducing the costs of rail travel. In the Cannock Chase District, there is an urgent need for funding to deliver the Chase Line, Walsall-Rugeley linespeed improvement, restoration of a half-hourly off-peak service, new inter-urban services and continued investment in station facilities, particularly after electrification in December 2017.

Government policy support for new and re-opened rail alignments is long overdue but must be backed up by meaningful funding from central Government and not left to local authorities to take the lead as per existing policy, ‘Reforming our railways’, DfT, March 2012. There are several potential reopenings in the Midlands that would provide many strategic benefits that would not lend themselves to be reopened as high speed routes on cost and engineering grounds. Several potential routes were identified in the Railtrack Network Management Statement 2000, which to date have not made any progress, such as Walsall-Lichfield, Matlock-Buxton and Stratford-Cheltenham/Oxford.

Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs)

The Council has already given its support for such initiatives and fully supports the development of such a sub-regional facility at the Pentalver Mid Cannock site. However, as the NN NPS requires all applications for strategic rail freight interchanges to include warehouses to which goods can be delivered from the railway network, Mid-Cannock would not be classified as a SRFI.

It is not without significance that The Panel Report on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy P2 Revision, September 2009, had cause to comment:-

“5.25 It seems to us that it is axiomatic that an RLS should be rail-served if such facilities are to be encouraged in the interests of sustainable transport and that in relation to off-site road movements the key point to recognise is the relative lengths of travel by the different modes”. They also commented,

“we consider that the expectation that the full suggested 50 or more ha should be on a single site is both unnecessary and unrealistic.”

As currently worded, the section 4.78-85, does not encourage smaller or sub-regional rail freight facilities without on-site warehousing provision.

Q2. Does the draft NN NPS adequately explain the Government’s policy for addressing the need set out in the NN NPS? If not why not? (see Chapters 2 and 3 of the NN NPS)

Chapter 4 of the draft NN NPS sets out assessment principles and Chapter 5 sets out guidance on generic impacts.

R2. As above.

Q3. Do the Assessment Principles provide adequate guidance to the Secretary of State on how he should assess applications for developments of the national networks? If not why not? (see Chapter 4 of the NN NPS)
R3. The comment in 4.62 that, “safety is unlikely to be the main driver for development”, while technically correct, could be misleading if a decision had to be made between a competing new road versus additional investment in a new or upgraded railway. The safety record of rail over road is substantial.

There is a risk that paragraphs 4.78-4.79 of the NN NPS (full version) could encourage developers to occupy new warehouses at rail connected SFRI sites, with no intention of using rail, which would not achieve the modal change objective the NN NPS seeks to encourage.

Q4. Does the draft NN NPS give appropriate guidance to scheme promoters? If not why not? (see Chapter 5 of the NN NPS)

R4. Yes on Government Policy but not on accompanying measures, and particularly funding, to deliver future proposals.

Q5. Does the draft NN NPS consider all of the significant potential impacts of national network development? If not, what other impacts should be included and why? (see Chapters 4 and 5 of the NN NPS)

R5. It does not allow for comparison of road and rail schemes together in terms of favouring the most environmentally friendly or sustainable solution.

Q6. Does the draft NN NPS give appropriate guidance on appropriate mitigation measures? If not why not? (see Chapter 5 of the NN NPS)

R6. Yes.

Appraisal of Sustainability
The draft Appraisal of Sustainability document is at Annex B, C, D and E of this consultation document. A non-technical summary is at Annex F.

Q7. Do you have any comments on the Appraisal of Sustainability of the NN NPS?

Appropriate Assessment
The Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulation is at Annex G.

R7. No.

Q8. Do you have any comments on the Appropriate Assessment on the draft NN NPS?

R8. No.

General

Q9. Please provide any further comments regarding any aspect of this consultation.

R9. No further comments.