

# Agenda Item IMD10

## INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD 2018/10

<b>TITLE</b>	Major Road Network Consultation
<b>DECISION TO BE MADE BY</b>	Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning
<b>DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME</b>	15 March 2018 SF4 - Shute End 09:30
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg

### OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

A response is provided to the Department for Transport consultation on the creation of a new Major Road Network, a new process to manage and fund the Local Authority owns routes that support the National Strategic Route Network

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transport

- notes the contents of this report;
- approves the recommended response to the Department for Transport () consultation as detailed in this report (appendix 1); and
- authorises officers to return the recommended response to the Department for Transport on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council

### SUMMARY OF REPORT

The consultation document proposes the creation and definition of a new Major Road Network (MRN) to support the Strategic Road Network (SRN). In practice, this means the major A roads that link up the motorway network will be given new status and access to funding that was previously ring fenced for use on the SRN. The newly defined MRN will be about the same size and mileage as the SRN and is defined on an interactive map showing the initial proposal for the MRN within the document – a link to the interactive map is in the supporting information at the end of this report. For Wokingham Borough this means the inclusion of the A329M/A3290, parts of the A33 and the A4.

The consultation recognises that ownership and responsibility for the roads that will make up the new MRN will remain with the council as Highways Authority and that they will not be taken over by a similar body to Highways England. To accompany the new network there will be a new funding stream, but as yet there is no defined mechanism for its allocation or indication of how much funding might be available. The consultation asks 16 questions; a recommended answers to these questions are given in this report.

The recommended response is aligned with the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), ensuring a consistent response to the MRN across Berkshire.

## **Background**

On the 23rd December the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, launched a consultation on the creation of the Major Road Network (MRN) for the most important local authority A roads, following on from the Transport Investment Strategy published by Department for Transport (DfT) in July last year.

The consultation proposes creation of a specific new funding stream dedicated to investment in this network (which is anticipated to be of a similar size to the existing Strategic Road Network (SRN)), with the aim of improving performance standards for all users whilst supporting economic growth and housing delivery.

This has been previously trailed by Government and builds on the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund Study: A Major Road Network for England. The consultation runs until 19th March 2018 and is seeking views on three main areas of the MRN programme:

- Defining the Network.
- Investment Planning.
- Eligibility and Investment Assessment Criteria.

## **MRN OBJECTIVES**

The consultation highlights the core objectives for creation of the MRN as follows:

- Reduce Congestion: Through enhancement of the local road network to reduce delays and congestion, making journeys quicker, more reliable with environmental and safety improvements.
- Support Economic Growth and Rebalancing: Improving connectivity to boost economic activity and productivity, widening access to labour markets and encouraging further investments.
- Support Housing Development: Improving accessibility and unlocking land for housing development.
- Supporting All Users: Proposals for improvements to the MRN will need to consider all users, including pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities.
- Supporting the Strategic Road Network (SRN): Improvements to the MRN will need to consider relationships with the SRN, both directly but also providing resilience during disruption/roadworks on the SRN.

Aims for the MRN definition and the supporting funding and management processes are to:

- Form a consistent, coherent network;
- Provide funding certainty to enable improvements; and
- Provide clear roles for local and regional partners as well as Government.

## **CONSULTATION THEMES**

### **Network Definition**

The consultation lays out proposals for defining the network using objective analysis supported by local evidence as follows:

- Use of current traffic volume as a starting point for identifying the MRN;
- Use of qualitative evidence to identify a coherent network (identifying routes; removing isolated links; ensuring connections to major conurbations/economic centers and key transport hubs);
- Consider de-trunked roads;
- Review the MRN on a 5 year cycle.

Significant work has already been undertaken as part of the Rees Jeffreys Report and by a number of Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs), Combined Authorities (CAs) and Local Authorities collating evidence to identify roads that should be included in the MRN.

### **Investment Planning**

Proposals for identifying the MRN and prioritising/approving investment are laid out as:

- Strategic Transport Boards, or Regional Groups (e.g. Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)) will develop Regional Evidence Bases (to be updated every 2 years) that will include an assessment of the network, identification of priority corridors, development of specific interventions and potential sequencing over, at minimum, a 5 year period;
- Regional Packages of improvements to be developed (including scheme proposals from LAs) and submitted to DfT;
- In consultation with Regions a nationwide MRN investment programme will be created;
- Once in the programme LAs will be responsible for their development and delivery, with DfT responsible for business case approval at scheme level;

There will be a role for Highways England to support local, regional and national bodies involved in the MRN Programme.

### **Eligibility**

The proposals for eligibility are laid out as follows:

- Proposals should be seeking a DfT contribution of over £20m and generally less than £50m, although in strong cases up to a maximum of £100m;
- Scheme types include: bypasses; new 'missing' links; widening of existing MRN roads; major structural renewals; major junction improvements; 'technology' schemes; and packages of improvements (along a specific corridor).

### **Consultation Questions and Wokingham Borough Councils Response**

The full consultation document can be found at;

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/670527/major-road-network-consultation.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670527/major-road-network-consultation.pdf)

There are 16 questions that are asked; these questions and our response are set out in appendix 1;

### **Analysis of Issues**

The proposal for the creation of a MRN that sits between the SRN and the local road network is considered a sensible idea and is welcomed by Wokingham Borough Council along with access to the National Roads Fund previously ring fence for the SRN. The keys dates for this process are as follows;

- Consultation closes March 2018
- DfT response to the consultation – Summer 2018
- DfT will publish guidance – Autumn 2018
- The start of the National Roads Fund – 2020/21

For Wokingham Borough the indicative MRN network proposed shows the inclusion of the A329M/A3290, parts of the A33 and the A4. . The inclusion of these is agreed however there are a number of addition that would in our opinion qualify for inclusion in

the network, namely the B3270 and the remainder of the A4 to the Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead boundary. There are other routes within Wokingham Borough that may be considered suitable but at this time do not qualify for inclusion, e.g. A327. This could be considered a key routes and will be over time, however presently the traffic flows circa 14,000 AADF do not make it qualify. The proposal for the MRN to be refreshed every 5 years will enable these roads to be considered at a later date.

The core principle and the objectives for the MRN are all supported. However it is noted that the benefits that Public Transport and interventions for non-motorised users is under played or missing. Also the investment assessment criterion make no reference to Public Transport.

The proposal includes eligibility criteria which suggests that only proposals for contributions of £20 - £50 million would be considered. Whilst the promotion of a package of interventions along a corridor may ensure proposals achieve this threshold, there needs to be a recognition that some schemes that cost considerably less than £20m can provide significant benefits in support of the MRN objectives.

A further consideration is that all roads designated as part of the MRN should meet a certain minimum standard to ensure consistency across the network. This standard will need to reflect the different needs between urban & rural roads and should include expected minimum standards for non-motorised users.

Finally, any revenue spending implications as a result of these capital investments must be considered and addressed accordingly. It should be expected that the day to day maintenance of the MRN within the councils area will remain with the local authority, however any increased cost for maintenance requirements as a result of the MRN standards being applied or as a result of increase asset management & maintenance must not adversely affect councils existing budget and maintenance funding will need to be adjusted accordingly.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	nil	nil	nil
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	nil	nil	nil
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	nil	nil	nil

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
N/A

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
N/A

<b>SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES</b>	
<b>Director – Corporate Services</b>	Josie Wragg
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	Andrew Moulton
<b>Leader of the Council</b>	Charlotte Haitham Taylor

<b>For Highways use only</b>	
<i>If your item is not about a highways matter you do not need to complete the Town and Parish Council information or the Local Ward Member information</i>	
<b>Town and Parish Councils</b>	
<b>Local Ward Members</b>	

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
<p>Proposals for the creation of a Major Route Network  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670527/major-road-network-consultation.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670527/major-road-network-consultation.pdf</a></p> <p>Interactive Map of the Indicative MRN  <a href="http://maps.dft.gov.uk/major-road-network-consultation/">http://maps.dft.gov.uk/major-road-network-consultation/</a></p> <p>Details on Transport for the South East (TfSE)  <a href="https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/">https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/</a></p>

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