



# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of an **INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION** will be held in LGF8 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **FRIDAY 4 AUGUST 2023 AT 11.00 AM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage  
Chief Executive  
Published on 27 July 2023

Note: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in line with the Council's Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be watched live using the following link:  
<https://youtube.com/live/FcTJ5WksOzg?feature=share>

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# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Our Vision

***A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business***

### Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

### Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

### A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

### Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

### Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

### Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

**For consideration by**

**Paul Fishwick, Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways**

**Officers Present**

**Robert Curtis, Transport Planning Team Manager**

**Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist**

<b>IMD NO.</b>	<b>WARD</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	
IMD 2023/18	None Specific	<b>DFT/NATIONAL HIGHWAYS ROUTE STRATEGIES CONSULTATION RESPONSE</b>	<b>5 - 68</b>

**CONTACT OFFICER**

**Callum Wernham**

**Tel**

**Email**

**Postal Address**

Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

0118 237 9559

callum.wernham@wokingham.gov.uk

Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

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# Agenda Item IMD18

## INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: IMD 2023/18

<b>TITLE</b>	DfT/National Highways Route Strategies Consultation Response
<b>DECISION TO BE MADE BY</b>	Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways - Paul Fishwick
<b>DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME</b>	4 August 2023 LGF8 at 11am
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER</b>	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framalocco

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)**

This report sets out our responses to consultations regarding the Strategic Road Network and particularly the M4.

The consultations are intended to inform:

- The Department for Transport's long term vision to 2050 and
- National Highways' ongoing strategy and its development of the next Route Investment Strategy which will set out the expenditure that National Highways will consider from 2025-2030.

Key areas of interest relate to the Climate Emergency, noise, and safety.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways agrees the responses be submitted to the consultations regarding the Strategic Road Network and particularly the M4, as appended to the report.

### **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report outlines the consultations which have been launched by the Department for Transport and National Highways. The responses to these consultations are appended along with a summary of each of the documents considered as part of completing these.

## Background

National Highways issued an invitation to stakeholders on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023, requesting feedback on their draft Route Strategies documents. Twenty '**Route Strategy Initial Overview Reports**' have been published by National Highways. These cover twenty areas or routes within England, of which the key one for Wokingham Borough Council is the London to Wales report as this covers the section of M4 within the borough.

Alongside these reports, National Highways has also published their **Strategic Road Network (SRN) Initial Report** and **Connecting the Country** report.

The SRN Initial Report features National Highways' proposals to government about what is required in the next road period ("Route Investment Strategy 3" (RIS3)), covering 2025 to 2030. The SRN Initial report is informed by the Route Strategy reports which cover the state of the network now and in the immediate future. Connecting the Country is National Highways' long-term strategic plan setting out their 2050 vision (and masterplan) for the SRN. The 2050 vision underpins the SRN Initial Report and Route Strategies for future road periods to align delivery towards the 2050 vision.

The above suite of three National Highways documents is accessible via the Future Roads website <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/futureroads>

To capture feedback on these documents, National Highways has launched online feedback forms for the **Route Strategy Initial Overview Reports** and **Connecting the Country**. The feedback forms for these can also be found at <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/futureroads> and are open until 11th August 2023. Feedback provided on these documents will be taken into account when National Highways finalise their suite of planning documents and their advice to Government on the future of the strategic road network.

Separately, the Department for Transport (DfT) has consulted on the National Highways' proposals in the **SRN Initial Report** and **Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads** on the gov.uk website.

The DfT consultation ran for eight weeks from 18th May to Thursday 13th July 2023. Due to these timescales the response to this has been submitted subject to IEMD ahead of our submission to the consultation/feedback on the other two documents. Stakeholders such as Wokingham Borough Council have been invited to contribute to this as feedback will inform how the Government shapes the next stages of the Road Investment Strategy (RIS process). The link to the Department for Transport consultation on the **SRN Initial Report** and **Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads** can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/shaping-the-future-of-englands-strategic-roads>.

Finally, a fifth document has also been published by National Highways. This is their '**Environmental Sustainability Strategy**' <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/ESS> which complements the Road Investment Strategy reports. This latter document appears to be a final document and is not part of the consultation process.

The Appendices to this report contain the responses and summaries of each of the documents considered in the two consultations. In addition, the links to the original documents are provided above. These appendices are numbered as follows:

- Appendix 1 – Response to Consultation on SRN initial report and Shaping the Country (sent on 13 July 2023)
- Appendix 2 – Summary of SRN initial Report and Shaping the Country documents
- Appendix 3 – Response to Connecting the Country consultation (due to be submitted by 11 August)
- Appendix 4 – Response to Route Strategy Initial Overview Report (London to Wales) (due to be submitted by 11 August)
- Appendix 5 – Summary of Connecting the Country and Route Strategy Initial Overview Report (London to Wales)

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

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

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
This IEMD is to agree the submissions to both National Highways’ and the Department for Transport’s consultations. There are no cost implications relating to the responses, however in the longer term this might influence those departments decisions in future which may in turn impact on the council. These decisions and the impact they might have on the council cannot be predicted at this time.

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>						
In the Shaping the Future of England’s Strategic Road report National Highways proposed the “trunking” and “de-trunking” of several routes. Of the nineteen routes proposed for trunking nationally two pass through Wokingham Borough as follows:						
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Road</th> <th>Route</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A329(M) + A322</td> <td>A329(M) + A329 + A322 – Reading to Guildford</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A33+A339</td> <td>A33+A339 – Reading (M4 J11) to Basingstoke</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Road	Route	A329(M) + A322	A329(M) + A329 + A322 – Reading to Guildford	A33+A339	A33+A339 – Reading (M4 J11) to Basingstoke
Road	Route					
A329(M) + A322	A329(M) + A329 + A322 – Reading to Guildford					
A33+A339	A33+A339 – Reading (M4 J11) to Basingstoke					
“Trunking” means adding roads to the Strategic Road Network which are currently managed locally. This could have wide-ranging implications for the council across a range of council departments including planning as an increased number of developments may have an effect of the SRN. This may also impact upon the Local Plan. In response to our thoughts on whether to “trunk” these roads the Council responded “No”.						

As part of RIS3 there is an objective for Improved Environmental Outcomes. The following challenges are noted within the Wokingham section of the M4; air quality, high noise levels, risks of flooding along the M4 South of Reading. The documents state that they will work toward mitigating these, but this may have an impact across the council, including with the Climate Emergency Team.

As these documents will be guiding both the short term and long term visions for National Highways and the Department for Transport there is the possibility for implications to be felt across the council, in particularly with the Climate Emergency team. The Climate Emergency Team has been consulted and agree with the support for the environmental/sustainability objectives as mentioned above, but also note that this may have impacts on the team's budgets/capacity depending on the extent to which these are implemented. As such this may require additional support from national government sources and the council itself.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

This IEMD is to agree the submissions to both National Highways' and the Department for Transport's consultations. As per the finance section, there are no Equality implications to the responses, however in the longer term this might influence those departments decisions in future which may in turn impact on the council. These decisions and the impact they might have on the council cannot be predicted at this time.

### **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

<b>Director – Resources and Assets</b>	No comment
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	No comment
<b>Leader of the Council</b>	No comment

### **For Highways use only**

#### **Town and Parish Councils**

Twyford Parish Council	Twyford Parish Council are in full support of Wokingham Borough Council's submissions regarding the National Highways Route Strategies Consultation documents.
Woodley Town Council	<p>The Council shares WBC's concern regarding the M4 Smart Motorway, in terms of the proven danger of the loss of a hard shoulder on the M4 and other motorways.</p> <p>The Council believes more attention should be paid to net zero environmental targets.</p> <p>The Council is against road charging as a solution to reducing car use; this should be avoided in view of the pressure it would likely put on local roads - Woodley has (or is connected to) two access points to the M4 along the A329(M) and, as such, would suffer greatly from traffic finding alternative routes.</p> <p>Verges' and central reservations on motorways must be kept cut at all times; long grass on verges and central reservations provide a danger to motorists by reducing visibility.</p>



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

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Appendix 1 – Response to Consultation on SRN initial report and Shaping the Country (sent on 13 July 2023)
Appendix 2 – Summary of SRN initial Report and Shaping the Country documents
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<b>Contact</b> Robert Curtis	<b>Service Place</b>
<b>Telephone No</b> Tel: 0118 974 6489	<b>Email</b> robert.curtis@wokingham.gov.uk

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## **Appendix 1 – Response to Consultation on SRN initial report and Shaping the Country on gov.uk website**

It should be noted that the wording in the on-line form and the downloadable response form differ slightly. Additionally, in the on-line and downloadable response forms, questions 1-4 are questions identifying the name/organisation of those providing each response, with question 5. The numbering below is taken from the downloadable form, with some questions being sub-divided into two. The on-line form contains the same questions as the downloadable form, but the questions have not been sub-divided in the same way, so the numbering will be different.

### **Question 5 - What level of importance, if any, do you assign to the RIS3 strategic objective of:**

*Options: very important/important/neither important or unimportant/unimportant/very unimportant/don't know*

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Improving safety for all</b>	very important
<b>Improved environmental outcomes</b>	very important
<b>Network performance to meet customer needs</b>	important
<b>Growing the economy</b>	important
<b>Managing and planning the SRN for the future</b>	important
<b>A technology-enabled network</b>	important

### **Why?**

Safety of road users is paramount. Of particular local interest to Wokingham Borough Council is the operation of the M4 Smart Motorway. It is also very important that environmental outcomes are given a high priority including meeting Net Zero targets and addressing the climate emergency. Local residents within Wokingham live close to the SRN (M4 motorway) and pollution and noise from the SRN need to be minimised for the benefits of residents. Whilst concentrating on safety and environment as top priorities, the other strategic objectives are also important. The economy and specifically freight traffic depends upon the SRN. The resilience of the SRN is important as any incidents or closures result in traffic routing via local authority roads. Diversion routes need to be planned accordingly with contributions provided to local highway budgets for maintaining these routes. Electric Vehicle charging points at motorway service areas should be provided to encourage transfer to EVs. Consideration should be given as to how to reduce car traffic, but any introduction of Road User Charging should not be introduced on the SRN in isolation as this would lead to some of this traffic routing via less appropriate local authority networks.

### **Question 6. What, if any, other specific roads do you think we should consider as:**

- **trunking candidates?**
- **de-trunking candidates?**

None – the A329(M) and A33 should not be trunked.

**Question 7. Do you think National Highways has identified the right focus areas?**

*Options: Yes/No/Don't know*

<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Response</b>
How much its customers will travel (growth and levelling up, car travel, freight and logistics)	Yes
How its customers will experience travel (safety, digital, decarbonisation)	Yes
How it will manage its network (customer experience, sustainable network development, asset resilience)	Yes
If no, why not?	Not applicable

**Question 8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with National Highways' approach to improving safety on its network? –**

*(Options: Strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/don't know).*

Agree

**Question 9. If you “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, why do you disagree with the approach?**

Not applicable

**Question 10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with National Highways' approach for making the best use of the existing Strategic Road Network?**

*(Options: Strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/don't know)*

Agree

**Question 11. If you “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, why do you disagree?**

Not applicable

**Question 12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that National Highways should evolve its:**

<b>Area to Evolve</b>	<b>Response</b>
Customer offer?	Agree
Community offer?	Strongly Agree
Proposal for designated funds?	Strongly Agree

**If you disagree, why?**

Not applicable

**Question 13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with National Highways' approach for driving decarbonisation and environmental sustainability on the SRN?**  
*(Options: Strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/don't know)*

Strongly Agree

**Question 14. If you disagree or strongly disagree, what proposals do you disagree with and why?**

Not applicable

**Question 15. To what extent, do you agree or disagree with National Highways' approach for its future enhancements programme?**  
*Options: Strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/don't know*

Agree

**Question 16. If you disagree or strongly disagree, why do you disagree?**

Not applicable

**Question 17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the assessment in the SRN Initial Report on the most important performance outcomes to measure?**  
*Options: Strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree/don't know*

Agree

**Question 18. If you disagree or strongly disagree, why do you disagree?**

Not applicable

**Question 19. What, in your view, could be done differently to meet the needs of people affected by the:**

**Presence of the SRN?**

Air quality/noise - it is very important that environmental outcomes are given a high priority, including meeting Net Zero targets and addressing the climate emergency. Pollution and noise from the SRN need to be minimised for the benefits of local residents. Any sections of missing noise barrier need to be completed, including where new developments have been built since original noise barriers were installed.

Visual intrusion/environment – street lighting should be screened from nearby local residents whilst moving to more efficient forms of lighting such as LED.

Provide non-motorised users connectivity across the SRN in order to reduce community severance and promote travel by active modes. This could be by provision of new crossings where crossings do not exist already or upgrading existing crossings so that they are safe and DDA compliant.

Work with local highway authorities so that designated funds can be used to benefit communities that live close to the SRN.

National Highways should work with the Government/Department for Transport on ways to reduce car traffic in order to reduce congestion/air quality/noise issues and to provide more reliable journeys for bus/coach and freight traffic. Consideration should be given as to how to reduce car traffic, but any introduction of Road User Charging should not be introduced on the SRN in isolation as this would lead to some of this traffic routing via less appropriate local authority networks.

Whilst reducing overall car traffic is important, National Highways should encourage/work with the Department of Transport in encouraging manufacturers to reduce tail pipe emissions from their vehicles and to encourage switching to electric/hydrogen vehicles.

### **Operation of the SRN?**

Safety of road users is paramount. Of particular local interest to Wokingham Borough Council is the operation of the M4 Smart Motorway. Retrofitting of more frequent refuge areas is required on the more recently built Smart Motorways. The systems and processes required to observe and communicate to other users that there are incidents ahead, need to be resilient.

Improve facilities for drivers, parking, freight, EV charging.

Use digital technology to encourage/facilitate integration with local roads and multi-modal forms of transport.

More rapid Electric Vehicle charging points are required at motorway service areas in order to encourage transfer to EVs. National Highways should work with operators/power suppliers to ensure that enough capacity/grid connection is provided at service areas.

Efforts should be directed to improve the resilience of the SRN, as any incidents or closures result in traffic routing via local authority roads. Funding should be provided to local highway authorities for maintenance of signed diversion routes.

Minimise road building – funds should be targeted at maintaining and operating the existing road network together with small scale schemes to increase road safety or to help integration/bus & coach travel.

Maintenance activity should involve low carbon materials and plant.

Road building should not be undertaken in order to meet forecast future car growth as this needs to be limited if net zero targets are to be met.

**Question 20. Do you think the approach to digital technology set out in the SRN Initial Report puts National Highways on the right track for meeting its vision for 2050?**

*(Options: Yes/No/Don't know)*

Yes

**Question 21. If no, why not?**

Not Applicable

**Question 22. What, if any, evidence and other insights can you supply towards the development of our RIS3 equality impact assessment?**

*At this stage there is an option to upload additional documents and leave comments*

The Wokingham Borough emerging Local Plan will provide information in due course about access to the SRN. Consideration needs to be given to all users and residents including lower social economic classes, across all ages of the population and people with disabilities. Severance from, and the presence of the SRN can affect some of these people more than others.

**Question 23. What, if any, comments do you have on the analytical approach?**

It is positive to see that investment appraisal will take account of the interests of users, as identified by Transport Focus.

It is also positive to read that it is acknowledged that a good understanding is required of how the decisions made can reduce environmental impacts and improve environmental assets and services, such as natural capital, biodiversity, air quality, emissions; and reduce noise and water pollution.

**Question 24. Are there any other issues you think the government should consider as part of this consultation?**

Further consideration should be given as to how to reduce car traffic to free up SRN road space for freight traffic. However, any use of Road User Charging should not be introduced on the SRN in isolation as this would lead to some of this traffic routing via less appropriate local authority networks.

**Question 25. Any other comments?**

Diversion routes for SRN road closures need to be well planned with financial contributions provided to local highway budgets for maintaining these signed diversion routes (given the extra traffic, including HGVs, that they carry during SRN road closures).



## **Appendix 2 Summary of Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads and the Strategic Road Network Initial Report**

### **Shaping the Future of England's strategic Roads**

The full report can be viewed at the link below; this document is generally high level with limited local detail. The one area which does focus in on local detail is the section on trunking and de-trunking.

[Shaping the future of England's strategic roads - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

This document summarises evidence and proposals provided to the Department for Transport (DfT) about the current performance of the SRN, future priorities for the next road period and beyond, as well as the analytical strategy they have adopted. It represents the final part of the research phase in developing RIS3, and seeks comments on:

- National Highways' proposals in its **Strategic Road Network Initial Report** (referred to here as the 'Initial Report')
- their analytical approach
- whether they have heard the full range of views that should be incorporated into the RIS3 programme

The principal focus of this document, however, is to consult on the set of proposals made in National Highways' Initial Report, which outlines:

- the company's view on the current state of the SRN
- its potential future needs
- their proposed priorities for the next Road Period (RP3), covering the financial years 2025-26 to 2029-30

The DfT previously provisionally identified six strategic objectives for Road Investment period 3 (RIS3) in their "Planning Ahead" document published in December 2021. These objectives will be reviewed and updated in the light of this public consultation.

The six strategic objectives are:-

1. Growing the economy
2. Improving safety for all
3. Network performance to meet customer needs
4. A technology-enabled network
5. Managing and planning the SRN for the future
6. Improved environmental outcomes

### **Detrunking & Trunking**

The principal purpose of the SRN is to enable safe, reliable, predictable, rapid, and, often, long-distance journeys of both people (whether as drivers or passengers) and freight in England. It:

- links our main centres of population
- facilitates access to major ports, airports, and rail terminals

- enables access to geographically peripheral regions of England
- provides key cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales

As demand patterns change, it is important to be ready to amend the geographic extent of the SRN, so that roads best managed at a local level to meet a communities' needs are in the hands of local highway authorities. Similarly, where a road's strategic significance suggests it should be managed by National Highways, the department is willing to examine the case for adding it to the SRN with the support of the relevant local highway authority.

DfT state that they are currently in discussion with relevant local highway authorities and National Highways regarding the existing extent of the SRN and the scope for any changes during the current road period to 2025.

These include:

- 'trunking' - adding roads to the SRN that are currently locally managed
- 'de-trunking' - transferring parts of the SRN to the relevant local highway authority / authorities)

DfT is inviting suggestions about trunking and de-trunking as part of this consultation.

### **Proposed roads for trunking**

Nineteen routes are proposed for trunking nationally. The two routes passing through Wokingham Borough are as follows.

<b>Road</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Route</b>
A329(M) + A322	South East	A329(M) + A329 + A322 – Reading to Guildford
A33+A339	South East	A33+A339 – Reading (M4 J11) to Basingstoke

Six routes are proposed for de-trunking but none of these are located within the south-east region.

The document states that “Any changes of ownership between National Highways and local highway authorities would be subject to discussion between the relevant parties before they are finalised.”

### **Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3)**

Under this topic, it is stated that:-

The boundaries of the SRN should not be a barrier to action. It is possible that investment may involve spending money off the SRN. For example, investment in a neighbouring local road or an alternative mode of travel may help the SRN to perform better.

## **Focus Areas**

The external focus areas that National Highways identify are principally:

- how much its customers will travel
- how its customers will experience travel
- how it will manage its network

### **Improving safety for all**

Maintaining current safety performance will not be enough if the National Highways is to achieve its long-term goals, including the long-term commitment to zero fatal and serious injury accidents by 2040. Investing across every aspect of safety, from infrastructure measures to education campaigns for its staff, contractors, and customers, to improving the roads which present the highest safety risk is essential.

### **Taking a targeted approach to enhancing the network**

Despite the progress already made in RIS1 and RIS2, road users continue to face delays and unreliability when using the strategic road network. In the current context of high-cost inflation and a considerable tail of committed RIS2 scheme spend, completing these projects is likely to be the priority for enhancement spend during the RIS3 period.

Where there is the opportunity for new enhancements, users of the SRN and other stakeholders have made the case for an increased priority on smaller, locally focused enhancement schemes in the third road period. These schemes would tackle known issues on the network and bring tangible local benefits helping to enable local and regional growth. These schemes can typically be delivered quickly and cost-effectively, with the benefits realised sooner. They also usually have lower environmental impacts than larger, more complex schemes.

### **National Highways' Performance**

The Initial Report (summarised below) considers how National Highways delivers its vision, including: how it must change as an organisation; how it evolves the way it works with its supply chain; and the outcomes it intends to achieve in Road Period 3 and the shape and nature of the performance framework that will underpin these.

National Highways performance framework brings together the requirements that it is committed to delivering. This includes targeted key performance indicators (which together make up the suite of RIS performance metrics) and descriptive commitments. The Initial report summarises insights on the current RIS performance metrics, including improvements that could be made to the existing measures and gaps where new metrics and targets may be needed.

### **Analytical approach**

The report states that the department's analysts are working closely with colleagues in National Highways to ensure there is a sound, well-understood evidence base available for both organisations to draw on through the decision-making process. Alongside this

consultation they have also published a strategic outline of the approach they are taking on analysis for RIS3.

The aim is for relevant, robust, and trusted analysis to support decision making in all key RIS3 areas. Analysis that provides sound information which can be relied upon when forming decisions, and that policymakers, analysts and key stakeholders have confidence in the methods used to produce its results.

The strategy describes the analytical platform in place to support the development of RIS3 and summarises the analytical approach for assessing different types of RIS3 investment working with National Highways, ORR, and Transport Focus. It also explains how investment appraisal takes account of the interests of users, as identified by Transport Focus.

In addition, it sets out how they are developing appraisal methods and models compared to RIS2.

## **SRN Initial Report**

The full report can be found here:

[Strategic Road Network Initial Report - National Highways](#)

The Strategic Road Network (SRN) Initial Report summarises:

- National Highways' performance over the current road period to-date
- research into customer, community and stakeholder priorities as well as local, regional and national insights
- the condition of the network, along with corresponding challenges and opportunities
- proposals for targeting improvements across the SRN over the third road period (2025-2030)
- how National Highways will deliver these proposals and the outcomes that they could achieve

This report looks ahead to 2025-30, the third road period (RP3)

It has been guided by the twenty Route Strategy Initial Overview Reports, along with "Connecting the Country" (the long-term strategic plan), both of which are subject to a separate consultation.

The SRN initial report contains five targeted proposals for the third road period as below.

## Our third road period proposals

### Our proposals

We have developed five targeted proposals to help us deliver and balance the broad range of objectives specified by government, while also ensuring we make progress towards our long-term strategy. We also set out how we will evolve and change as an organisation to meet our changing demands and deliver our ambitions.

#### 1. Improving safety for all

Reducing the risk on our 1-star and 2-star iRAP rated roads, lifting the rating to 3\* or better where possible, and play a stronger role in influencing user behaviour and vehicle standards.

#### 2. Making the most of our network

By operating increasingly connected roads, undertaking increasing proactive maintenance, making our technology more resilient and investing in vital renewals to deliver safer, more reliable journeys.

#### 3. Evolve our customer and community services.

By improving the data and information we provide to our customers. Taking a broader approach to supporting end to end journeys, including improved facilities for freight and non-motorised users. Supporting growth and development alongside the SRN and addressing legacy impacts on our network, including air quality and noise.

#### 4. Taking a targeted approach to enhancing our network

Continuing to invest in our network, following the fundamental principles of PAS 2080 and only building when the problem cannot be fixed by other approaches. Meeting network needs by completing schemes committed as part of the RIS process, investing in Lower Thames Crossing, and delivering more, smaller value, £2 million - £25 million schemes where funding allows.

#### 5. Drive decarbonisation and environment sustainability

Achieve net zero corporate emissions, and reduce maintenance and construction emissions between 40 and 50%. Facilitate low-carbon travel and demonstrate wider environmental leadership, including around biodiversity and climate resilience. Invest in low carbon technology to drive a step change in manufacturing.

Contents of interest include the following information.

Given that the M4 through Wokingham is a Smart Motorway, the following text (on page 22) is of local interest.

“In its response to the Transport Select Committee’s report into smart motorways the Government committed £390m over the duration of the second Road Investment Strategy to roll out an emergency area retrofit programme. This would see over 150 additional emergency areas being added to ALRs (*All Lane Running motorways*) in operation and construction. We will continue working with DfT to consider the case for retrofitting to the remainder of all lane running smart motorways. This will be part of the development of RIS3, based on the evidence of safety benefits we are gathering and assessing.”

It is reported that the *“route strategies highlighted region-specific priorities These scheme-specific references will inform discussion with Government about the needs of the network, but should not be taken as funding or delivery commitments for roads investment periods. Key examples include”* (Page 39):

- Improved connectivity to the international gateways (including M25 Heathrow);
- Congestion, delay and journey unreliability issues on some A-roads and for east-west corridors in particular (including the M25 south-west quadrant);
- Improved journey time reliability particularly in peak times and during holiday season (including the junction of M4/M25 and the M3);
- Greater consideration of modal shift and integration with alternative modes of transport and connectivity (including M4 Reading);
- Improved north-south links between M4 (Midlands) and the south coast;
- Improved resilience of our network at key intersections (including M4/A34);
- Reduced impact of traffic on air quality, noise pollution and severance (including the A404 at High Wycombe).

As a highway authority, Wokingham BC will be affected by these aims (page 114 onward):-

Increasing proactive collaboration:-

- Building on our route strategies, we want to work more proactively with mayors, local authorities, STBs and other transport network providers to identify needs and support development objectives.
- We propose engaging earlier in the local and regional planning development process, helping shape high-level development plans that align with our route strategies and enable sustainable development.
- We want to continue supporting local development sites as a statutory planning consultee, aligning to government’s growth and environment objectives

Points for further consideration:-

- Partnering with local authorities more extensively to support local transport plans, to tackle specific congestion on our network

Increasing integration with local roads and other transport modes, providing more extensive support for local transport:-

- We could partner with local authorities more extensively to support local transport plans. This could mean working to deliver a programme to tackle specific congestion on our network, identified through our route strategies and scheme assessments.
- It could also include delivering or supporting further park and ride facilities, increasing access to public transport and promoting journey choice, or wider actions to support modal shift in towns and cities.
- We could also explore a programme to increase vehicle occupancy, working with local authorities, industry and local businesses to encourage measures inc lift sharing and bus and coach travel.

Evolving our customer and community services, Investing through designated funds:-

“We want to make our funds more accessible and simpler to apply for, reaching and appealing to a broader set of third-party organisations. With that in mind we are reviewing the processes and governance for our designated funds. Designated funds investment proposals will: -

- Demonstrate collaboration and strong support: Investment decisions will be informed by stakeholders and the Designated Funds Advisory Group to more fully understand how and where we should invest and maximise value. We will look for opportunities for partnership working and joint funding.”

One of the designated funds is the Environment and wellbeing fund. National Highways explain that “We will seek out areas in and around our network where we are not already doing work, and use this fund to help address historic network issues, improve the health and wellbeing of our neighbours and promote environmental sustainability. The types of activities would include:

- Addressing the severance of communities by our roads in the past or restoring urban centres that have been de-trunked.
- Reducing noise, improving air quality, improving our heritage assets and restoring a sense of pride in place back to areas on or close to our network.
- Taking opportunities to improve the natural environment on or near to our network through restoring the landscape and improving flood resilience, biodiversity, beyond statutory obligations, and landscape integration.

A second Designated Fund of interest is the Users and communities fund. National Highways explain that “We want to work more closely with local community groups and local planning authorities as well as other stakeholders. Such collaboration would help us identify where we can use this fund to promote and support active travel, small scale regeneration and improve services for more modal choice and better journeys. The types of activities would include:-

- Building facilities to enable active travel and supporting non-motorised transport on and around our roads, would help improve journeys as well as support people’s health and wellbeing.
- Supporting our communities through local initiatives such as small-scale regeneration schemes to restore social cohesion, by learning more about community priorities and building stronger relationships. This will be enabled through a grants administration service, making funding more easily accessible to a more diverse range of stakeholders.
- Improving services, including working with third parties. Improving infrastructure for coaches, buses and freight on and around our roads, providing high quality lorry



parking in the right places and driving improvements to roadside facilities. In addition our work continues in improving the quality and timeliness of information for road users and improving inter-modal operability.

- Our developing active travel strategy and plan, which will create a portfolio of work to target active travel, will be a vital input to the communities fund, alongside the developing integration investment plan. This will set out the activities we need to do around bus stops, park and ride facilities and public transport hubs. Both these plans will inform our Designated Funds programme.

Reducing Road User Emissions, continuing in the third road period. National Highways proposals include:-

- We want to implement our plan to improve public transport on the SRN, which we aim to publish in 2023.
- To encourage and enable electric vehicle travel on our network, we could go further to support electric vehicle charging facilities. This could mean going beyond our current role and providing the physical infrastructure for charging points that can then be used by our customers.

Wider environmental sustainability, Driving decarbonisation and environmental sustainability.

National Highways state that “The relationship between our network and the wider landscape is key to the health, wellbeing and overall quality of life of communities close to the network, and their sense of place. Our proposals for the third road period will support community wellbeing by tackling local environmental impacts and increasing climate resilience.

These include “Air quality: Trialling technologies and developing a programme of initiatives to improve NO<sub>2</sub>, NH<sub>3</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> to support our work to bring all our network into compliance with government’s national air quality limits on NO<sub>2</sub> and improve the health and wellbeing of local communities.”

Smart Motorways- “We propose to continue working towards achieving the commitments set out in the Smart Motorway Safety: Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan and working to deliver the recommendations made in the Transport Select Committee’s report to further improve the safety of smart motorways. A decision on whether to retrofit emergency areas across the remainder of all lane running smart motorways will be considered as part of the development of RIS3, based on the evidence.”

Tackling pinchpoints and problem areas:-

- We propose, subject to funding, increased focus on into smaller £2-£25 million schemes.
- We want to focus, in particular, on the edges of our network, helping address the forecast congestion around them and with cities at the end of the second road period.
- This would help us improve how our roads connect with the wider road network, for example through better slip roads, as well as improve integration with other transport networks, for example through redesigned junctions. This would support local movement and local priorities, such as reducing traffic in city centres

Other specific items covered with the consultation questions are summarised within the **Initial Report** as below.

### **Improving safety for all**

The SRN Initial Report includes the intention to improve road safety in Road Period 3 through a 'safe systems' approach, of which improvements to provide 'safe roads' is one element.

National Highways state that "Above all, our roads must be safe. This is a top priority for us, our customers and industry. By making our roads safer and more accessible, we will enable even more people to benefit from our SRN, connecting them to families, work, education and other opportunities. For RIS3, we want to focus on reducing the risk on our 1-star and 2-star roads, rated by the International road Assessment Programme (iRAP), lifting the rating to 3-star or better where possible. We will also continue our work to influence positive driver behaviour and vehicle standards through driver education programmes, reaching as many of our customers and communities as possible. We will increase professional driver training with operators with a focus on maintaining the roadworthiness of HGVs and vans. We are committed to improving our understanding of the experiences of disabled people who use our roads and how we can improve our infrastructure and services to meet their needs. By doing this, we will be able to offer a more inclusive, accessible experience to all of our road users. We will continue to invest in initiatives to protect our vulnerable users such as walkers, cyclists and horse riders. For example, by installing barriers to separate non-motorised users from our network, and providing signed and well-lit dedicated crossing points and lanes.

### **Making the most of Our network**

The SRN Initial Report considers the role of National Highways' 24/7 operational services to improve incident response capability and the safety and reliability of everyday journeys for its customers. It examines the case for expanding its maintenance programme, including increasing proactive maintenance to reduce large repairs and avoid unnecessary restrictions and closures. It also highlights continued renewal activities needed to keep the SRN open, safe, and serviceable – in particular replacing worn out road surfaces, renewing aging structures and replacing operational technology that requires major work to improve reliability and security.

National Highways key proposals include:

- "Continuing to keep road users safe through active traffic and incident management, including using and improving the technology at our disposal to monitor our network and respond to issues as they occur.
- Expanding our maintenance programme to support the increasing number of assets under our direct operational responsibility as a result of DBFO contract take-back.
- We want to prioritise proactive maintenance, with the aim of reducing large repairs and disruption, better planning of our interventions to reduce delays and carbon-emitting congestion.
- Taking action to build climate resilience and prepare for the forecast impacts of climate change.
- Delivering increased targeted renewals. Our advice is that in responding to our ageing assets which are more complex to manage and in response to historically deferred works, we should: i) Increase the volume of renewals of our flexible asphalt

surface and continue the proposed increased investment in our concrete road replacement programme as set out in RIS2. ii) Ramp up our structures renewals programme targeting those that present the greatest potential for disruption to our network and movement of freight and people, and ensure the condition and stability of our asset stock remains.

- Tackling the backlog of technology assets which are at end-of-life, upgrading legacy or out-dated systems to current standards and increase consistency across our technology estate.”

#### ‘Evolving our customer and community services’.

Highways England states that:-

“To realise our long-term vision we believe we will need to evolve our traditional remit as a highway operator. We see a need to increasingly work in partnership, whether with third party wayfinding providers and the automotive industry to support our closer digital relationship with customers, or with local and regional stakeholders to strengthen the SRN integration with public and active modes. We see a potentially greater ‘off-network’ role improving freight parking, refuelling and welfare facilities, as well as identifying gaps in existing provision. We want motorway service areas to become more enjoyable places, where customers can take time to relax amongst high-quality greenspace, retail, and charging infrastructure.”

Priorities for the third road period

“Across our activities we seek to reduce congestion and improve journey times, which is key to customer satisfaction. This is not the only a requirement of our customers. We want to grow our capabilities to understand and respond to the complex needs of our diverse customer base, and recognise and address the legacy impacts of the SRN.

Our key proposals include:

- Providing customers with more real-time information that they can personalise and tailored to their route requirements, before and during their journeys, and developing strong relationships with a range of third parties to encourage data sharing.
- Ensuring early adopters of connected and autonomous vehicles can take advantage of increasing connectivity, while also ensuring that our network continues to run effectively for all our customers, regardless of their vehicle capabilities.”
- Continuing to work proactively with mayors, local authorities, STBs and other transport network providers, in particular engaging earlier in the local and regional planning development process.
- Broadening our activities around improving customer travel choice and supporting better end-to-end journeys, including developing a third road period programme of improvement and enhancements schemes on our active travel infrastructure.
- Developing new freight corridor studies for priority areas, continuing to conduct joint strategic planning with Network Rail.
- Refocusing designated funds, investing across a more specific set of priorities aligned to our strategic objectives and to meet the needs of customers, communities and the wider environment.

Points for further consideration

- Partnering with local authorities more extensively to support local transport plans, to tackle specific congestion on our network.
- Look for more extensive opportunities to introduce segregated provision for non-motorised users along our network.
- Setting out an approach to improve the provision of freight facilities, supporting end-to-end journeys and driver welfare.

Driving decarbonisation and environmental sustainability’.

National Highways state the following priorities for the third road period:-

*“Carbon: (Embedding and enabling low-carbon approaches across our organisation, network, supply chain and industry):-*

- Achieving net zero corporate emissions by 2030, without purchased offsetting, including by decarbonising our own travel and transitioning our energy generation and usage.
- Reducing maintenance and construction emissions by between 40 and 50%, against a 2020 baseline, by minimising new construction, using Lean construction practices, circular economy principles and other carbon management approaches that minimise construction emissions.
- Enabling the transition to zero carbon motoring on our network, including by encouraging the use of alternate transport, such as active travel, and supporting the installation of approximately 2,500 high-powered, open access charge points across our network by 2030 through the government rapid charging fund.

*Wider environment: (Demonstrating wider environmental leadership, working holistically to support social value, health and wellbeing, improving ecosystems and conserving natural resources.)*

- Supporting community wellbeing by tackling local environmental impacts such as air, water and noise pollution and increasing climate resilience.
- Delivering activities that restore, enhance and manage a richer, resilient and more bio-diverse environment for current and future generations.

Points for further consideration:- to encourage and enable electric vehicle travel on our network, we could go further to support electric vehicle charging facilities. This could mean going beyond our current role and providing the physical infrastructure for charging points that can then be used by our customers.

“The most important performance outcomes to measure.”

National Highways report the following:-

“Reflecting the proposals set out in this report, it is important that our performance framework reflects the plans and proposed outcomes we have set out in this Initial Report. This means: -

- Developing a carbon metric to reflect our ambition to enable and embed low-carbon approaches, building on our existing KPI and helping us monitor progress against our net zero plan.
- Updating our biodiversity metric to reflect the latest legislation and achieve 10% biodiversity net gain from nationally-significant infrastructure projects.

- Exploring how we can effectively measure improvements in our operational technology as we work to increase the reliability and security of our roads.
- Reviewing how our renewals programme is monitored to reflect the greater focus on investment to provide a reliable, sustainable and safe road network.
- Reviewing our approach to monitoring designated funds, recognising its targeted approach to deliver social value and support Levelling Up.
- Exploring a performance indicator that supports active travel by understanding the views of our cyclists and walkers.

### The approach to digital technology

National Highways report the following:-

“As the reliance on technology has rapidly become a core component in the way we operate our network and connect with our customers, we need to maximise the opportunities and benefits of our current technology and ensure that our systems are reliable, secure and resilient.”

- Our priority is to ensure that our existing technology functions effectively, which we propose to address through our renewals programme.
- We want to further improve our use of roadside and regional operations centre technology, such as stopped vehicle detection and sign settings. This will help us improve how we manage our network and make decisions, enabling us to respond quickly and appropriately to incidents.
- We also want to make better use of technology, such as flood sensors and embankment slip warnings, to increasingly provide us with real-time asset data. This would reduce the need for manual inspections of the different parts of our network.
- There is also the opportunity to significantly increase remote access to technical assets and fault resolution capabilities, reducing road worker exposure and equipment down-time.
- We want to improve the quality of our data, and how we use it, to help us manage risk more effectively and increase our resilience to events that could impact our network.

Our role could range from providing better real-time data on current and predicted travel conditions to vehicles and customers to implementing a full Intelligent Transport System which uses sensors, real-time data, traffic and control systems and data analytics to maximise network performance. Our operational role will depend on the type of road and customer needs, as well as wider policy and technology developments. In the third road period, we need to lay the foundations to prepare for greater levels of system operation. This will range from improving the data we collect and provide to customers to increasing the security and reliability of our technology.

Providing better real-time information:-

- We want to provide customers with more real-time information that they can personalise and tailored to their route requirements.
- This would include advanced information on planned roadworks, events affecting their journeys, current incidents, congestion and availability of electric vehicle charging points.
- This live, data would also give our customers greater travel choice, whether by presenting options for alternative routes or by giving details of available electric

vehicle chargers. Meeting changing customer expectations and connectivity through technology Evolving our customer and community services.

Sharing our data more widely:-

- We want to develop even closer relationships with a range of third parties, including transport authorities, transport operators and infrastructure owners. This would enable us to share data and support the delivery of a seamless and integrated end-to-end journey experience for our customers. This would include working with third party information providers, such as Waze.
- Data on customer journeys and needs could also support policymakers and investors with future decision making.
- This could, for example, include evidencing the need for increased investment in electric vehicle charge points based on the number electric vehicles travelling on our network and the journeys they are making.

Preparing our network for autonomous vehicles

- Transitioning to high levels of autonomous vehicles is likely to provide many exciting benefits and opportunities, both for our network and those who use it. This will be a gradual process and there is likely to be a mixed traffic environment for a significant period.
- In the third road period, we need to make crucial changes to our systems, data and technology to ensure early adopters can take advantage of increasing connectivity. We also need to ensure our network continues to run effectively for all our customers, regardless of their vehicle capabilities.
- We will work with manufacturers, technology bodies and regulatory and standards bodies to understand the requirements for full network connectivity. This will support preparation for the integration of connected and autonomous vehicles and widespread communication with in-vehicle systems, allowing for the future decommissioning of roadside operational technology.

**Do you feel that the *Connecting the country: Our long-term strategic plan* reflects your view of what the future of the Strategic Road Network should be?**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

**Please could you tell us why you gave this rating?\***

Please refer to the individual sections below where further comments are provided. It is difficult to completely agree with an approach as there are many ways this could have been undertaken, however, Wokingham Borough Council is broadly supportive of the approach taken.

**Do you feel that national corridors, inter-regional routes and regional connections are the correct categories for the Strategic Road Network?**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

**Do you have any further comments on how we have categorised our view of where we should focus the future of the Strategic Road Network?\***

Although there is some logic to the categorisation, the roads network has already been categorised and the Strategic Road Network has been named as such due to its strategic nature. If a part of the SRN is a regional connection it perhaps suggests that it has less strategic importance than a national corridor and thus should be managed as a local route by a local authority who understands the movements in an area. This feels a little like watering down the importance of some strategic routes. Having said that, there is clearly a need to prioritise routes in some way as some will be more important than others, it is perhaps a case of looking at those with something like a Multi Criteria Assessment Tool to determine these rather than defining them with a less subjective and arbitrary method. It is not clear from the document but it is possible that these higher category of road could be subject to different rules around preventing local traffic using these routes, for instance, and this could significantly impact on the local networks around these roads; all of the SRN should therefore be treated in the same way.

**Do the nine focus areas match your view of where we should focus the future of the Strategic Road Network?**

*Options: Yes, No, Undecided*

Yes

**Which focus area would you like to engage with?**

*You may select and provide feedback on more than one focus area.*

All options selected except for Growth and Levelling up, Freight and Logistics and Decarbonisation. This is because for each of the questions in these focus areas we have selected “completely agree” and do not wish to make further comment. For those questions below where “completely agree” is selected the text box accompanying this is left blank.

### **Car Travel**

**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Car travel' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 21-23)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Undecided

#### **Why:**

Whilst the uncertainty of any projections is acknowledged, it appears that the document is accepting that there will inevitably be an ongoing increase in private motor vehicles despite the efforts Government and Local Authorities are making to increase Active Travel, public transport use, shared mobility, etc. This also ignores the efforts of the LTP process becoming more aligned to Local Plan development to minimise additional trips and also trends experienced nationally of younger people being less likely to drive or own a private vehicle.

**Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Car travel' reflects your view of the future? (Page 52)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

#### **Why:**

Supporting increased Active Travel as per P21 should be supported further and moving people away from car travel should be part of the vision; whilst car travel will remain an important mode for some journeys the vision is not explicit in making any attempt to reduce people's dependence on car travel.

**Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Car travel' reflects your view of the future? (Page 57)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

#### **Why:**

In terms of integration and Modal shift there is mention of public transport but this does not consider rail as an alternative to the SRN which it could be for many trips. The introduction of hubs is welcome but there is potentially a case for hubs (e.g. public transport hubs at rail Stations) that do not attract long distance car trips to/from them.

The actions by 2050 still assume a high level of use and congestion on the network which would suggest that the vision of decide and provide has not been fully implemented. If the



levers suggested are implemented to a high degree to restrict use of the SRN (e.g. a high cost of road user charging) it is essential that the impact of doing this on the surrounding local roads is carefully assessed and mitigations completed to assist with affected areas; we would ask that a high level of consultation and engagement with local councils and their residents is undertaken if such measures are studied further as there could be a significant impact on our residents.

### **Safety**

**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Safety' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 29-31)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Safety' reflects your view of the future? (Page 53)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Safety' reflects your view of the future? (Page 59)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

### **Why:**

We agree that Safety should be the first imperative for the organisation. If this is the case, more could potentially be done in terms of enforcement and speed limit reduction; the plan suggests that “where there is an identified need” some of this will occur, however, it is not clear how this need is identified. Other violations such as poor lane discipline and driving too close to other vehicles should be recognised as safety problems and dealt with accordingly, modern technology should be utilised to identify poor and potentially dangerous driver behaviour.

### **Digital**

**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Digital' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 32-35)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

### **Why:**

The uncertainty in this section is rightly highlighted. This level of uncertainty makes it very difficult to plan for the longer term and so this should be closely monitored and the plan updated regularly (this should be completed for all sections but particularly in this area).

**Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Digital' reflects your view of the future? (Page 53)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

**Why:**

The vision suggests “CAV-enabled by 2050”, our only comment would be that this may need to come sooner given the pace of change in the industry.

**Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Digital' reflects your view of the future? (Page 60)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

**Why:**

Again, as mentioned above, the level of uncertainty makes this plan difficult to clearly define beyond the next few years, however, at this time it does appear reasonable.

**Decarbonisation**

**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Decarbonisation' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 36-38)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Decarbonisation' reflects your view of the future? (Page 53)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

**Why:**

Whilst we agree with the vision to an extent, we believe everyone should be doing all they can to accelerate this as much as possible.

**Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Decarbonisation' reflects your view of the future? (Page 61)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

As above, we feel that greater focus should be on decarbonise to achieve net-zero as soon as possible.

## **Customer Experience**

**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Customer Experience' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 40-42)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Customer Experience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 54)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Undecided

### **Why:**

Whilst we support the focus on transition to EV and making information more widely available, the key causes of delay do not appear to be addressed in the vision, improving congestion, incidents, roadworks and road geometry should be a focus of this vision. This is potentially dealt with in some of the other areas of this plan but to omit it from this section seems to ignore the primary cause of concern for both freight and car users.

**Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Customer Experience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 62)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely

Somewhat

### **Why:**

As per the previous comment, congestion is a cause of nearly 50% of all delays but is not considered in this section, reference could be made to other sections to cover this, but it should not be omitted.

## **Sustainable network development**

**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Sustainable network development' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 43-46)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Sustainable network development' reflects your view of the future? (Page 54)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Sustainable network development' reflects your view of the future? (Page 63)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

**Why:**

Our residents are impacted by noise and air quality issues along the SRN. The “communities” section of the delivery plan is welcome, however, consideration should be given to how National Highways will support new development along its corridors in order to assist with sustainable development of the communities as well as focussing on development of the network itself.

**Asset Resilience**

**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Asset Resilience' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 47-50)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Asset Resilience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 54)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Completely

**Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Asset Resilience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 64)**

*Options: Not at all, Undecided, Somewhat, Completely*

Somewhat

**Why**

Whilst the plan covers many of the key issues described in the future trends section, the vision states: “Where roadworks are required, new standards of planning and communication will help us put customers in control. This means customers will be able to make timely decisions about alternative routes, modes and departure times.” However, there is no evidence of this in the delivery plan. Advance notice and widely shared information regarding works and closures as well as more information for our residents regarding alternative modes or recommending not to travel at all is potentially a very useful tool for managing the network during works and should be explored further and included in the plan.

Our roads are consistently used as diversion routes both formally during works as well becoming alternatives during incidents and congestion on the SRN. This can lead to higher traffic volumes as well inappropriate (e.g. large/heavy freight) using the network leading to deterioration of our roads; it is suggested that these routes should be constructed to a higher standard with contribution from National Highways as well as an ongoing increase in maintenance allocation to assist those areas that experience these issues.

**Thank you for providing us with your feedback on Connecting the country: Our long-term strategic plan. Please use this space for any general comments.**

No Further comments.

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**Appendix 4 – Response to Route Strategies Initial Overview Consultation Questions  
(London to Wales Report)**

**Route Overview:**

The London to Wales route is in the south of England; which includes 167 miles of the SRN. It runs from the M25, passing through several counties, from Greater London in the east through to the west of England and the River Severn crossings at the border with Wales. Please use this space for general comments on the selected route:

**London to Wales**

*For example: How well does this Initial Overview Report identify the challenges? How well does it map out a way forward?*

No comment (our comments are included within the responses below)

**Please select which chapters you would like to comment on for the selected route:**

**London to Wales**

*Please note you can pick more than one chapter to comment on. Select the All Chapters option to comment on all chapters specifically.*

All Chapters

**What specific comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (1)  
Introduction?**

None

**What specific comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (2) The  
Route?**

The report suggests that economic development is confined to Reading, this should at least include “and the surrounding area” or could specifically mention Wokingham as this is where a large proportion of future development is proposed.

**What specific comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (3)  
Engagement with Customers and Neighbours?**

As a borough we have been involved in some of the workshops described, this appears to be a good reflection of these discussions. The engagement has been appreciated and it is hoped this can continue and be a key component of decision making for future projects.

**What specific comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (4)  
Network Integration?**

For clarity the A3290/A329(M) provide access to Reading from the M4 whilst the A329(M)/A322 provide connectivity to Surrey (in the opposite direction rather than onward connectivity). Junction 10 of the M4 remains a concern for many in the local area following previous works by (then) Highways England which have still not been addressed.

Regarding Freight, the need for additional capacity in the vicinity of Wokingham is noted and investment in this area is welcome.

Whilst diversion routes are agreed there remains an issue that excessive use of these routes (particularly during the Smart Motorway upgrade) leads to degradation of local roads and both inconvenience and poor health outcomes to those living on these routes.

**What specific comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (5) Challenges and Issues?**

Growing the economy – note that the Local Plan update referred to here is the consultation document from 2022, it should be noted that this is not the final approved Local Plan Update which is still in development.

Improved environmental outcomes – the report suggests that severance is an issue in the Wokingham area as well as being a Noise Important Area, an AQMA with receptors close to the M4, and flooding south of the M4, however these are not considered key challenges. Given the number of issues on this short stretch and the potential for further development in this area, these issues are likely to be exacerbated and should be considered a challenge for the future.

**What general comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (6) Initial Route Objectives?**

*Comments related to specific objectives can be given in the Chapter 6 - Objective questions following this question.*

**Would you like to provide feedback on Chapter 6 - Objective 1?**

**Objective 1: Safe and reliable journeys**

***Provide safe and reliable journeys through provision of a resilient and consistent route particularly on the M4 in Berkshire, Bristol and the A417.***

*Options: Yes, No*

No

**Would you like to provide feedback on Chapter 6 - Objective 2?**

**Objective 2: Strategic Connectivity and access to key gateways**

***Support strategic connectivity between England (M49, M4, M48, M5 and M32) and South Wales as well as facilitating efficient access to key gateways at Heathrow Airport, Port of Bristol and Bristol Airport.****Options: Yes, No*

Yes



The M25 south west quadrant and its relation with M3-M4 connectivity is an ongoing concern to Wokingham Borough. It is not clear whether any specific routes have been identified, however the A322/A329(M) and the A33 are both key routes whilst previous studies have hinted at a new link or improved links between the two motorways, we would prefer that mode shift and smart infrastructure are considered and supported by National Highways. It should be noted that the expanded ULEZ and work by Heathrow Airport are likely to impact on many people's travel behaviour and this could lead to changing travel patterns regionally but particularly to the airport itself.

**Would you like to provide feedback on Chapter 6 - Objective 3?**

**Objective 3: Support regionally significant and sustainable economic development in the Berkshire authorities, Swindon and Bristol**

***Support the delivery of regionally significant and sustainable economic development in the Berkshire authorities, Swindon and Bristol whilst maintaining the safe and effective operation of the network.***

*Options: Yes, No*

Yes

Note that the Local Plan update referred to here is a consultation document from 2022, it should be noted that this is not the final adopted Local Plan Update which is still in development.

**Would you like to provide feedback on Chapter 6 - Objective 4?**

**Objective 4: Support local connections and integration**

***Support effective local connections and integration with other transport modes to reduce short-distance travel demands on the SRN and promote the transfer to alternative modes of transport and reduce carbon particularly in the Berkshire authorities, Bristol and Swindon.***

*Options: Yes, No*

Yes

We agree that that "the M4 serves a dual use in Reading" (though note that less than 1km of the M4 is in Reading borough, the majority passing through Wokingham and West Berkshire). Issues such as reducing car use on the SRN is highlighted in other reports such as "connecting the country"; this is of particular importance in the Wokingham/Reading area due to the known issue of short trips being made on the M4 (e.g. jn10 to jn11); reducing severance caused by the M4 for all modes but particularly bus and active travel should be further considered.

**Would you like to provide feedback on Chapter 6 - Objective 5?**

### **Objective 5: Support the needs of the freight sector**

***Support regional and national economies through the efficient movement of freight on the M4 and A417/A419, by enhancing lorry parking and driver facilities along with the transfer of freight to alternative modes, where appropriate.***

*Options: Yes, No*

No

**Would you like to provide feedback on Chapter 6 - Objective 6?**

### **Objective 6: Reduce adverse impacts on communities**

***To be a better neighbour by safeguarding the environment and reducing the impacts of severance, adverse air quality and noise on local communities along the M4 in Reading, the M4 and M32 in Bristol and the A417/A419 in Swindon.***

*Options: Yes, No*

Yes

Note that the severance, adverse air quality and noise referred to are mainly impacting on Wokingham residents not Reading; it is therefore essential that Wokingham communities are considered in addition to those in Reading. We do, however support and look forward to assisting in delivering this objective where possible.

We agree and support the development of new safe and suitable crossings for vulnerable road users along this section.

### **What specific comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (7) Locational Areas for Consideration?**

Whilst we broadly agree with the locations and area issues identified, it is suggested that the Junction 10-13 area of interest should be split into two. This is taking into consideration the change in nature of land use to the West of Junction 11 leading to fewer issues with Noise, Air Quality receptors and severance compared to the more urban areas which abut the M4 in the section from Junction 10 to 11.

### **What specific comments would you like us to consider in relation to Chapter (8) Next Steps?**

None

**Considering the route selected, **London to Wales**, to what extent do you agree with the locational areas identified for further consideration in Chapter 7?**

*Options Please answer 1 - 5 , where 1 represents **Strongly Disagree** and 5 represents **Strongly Agree***

4 - Agree

**Please could you tell us why you gave this rating?**

As mentioned above, it is suggested that the Junction 10-13 area of interest should be split into two.

**Considering the Initial Overview Report for **London to Wales**, how well does this report consider your needs?**

**Options:** Please answer 1 - 5 , where 1 represents **Not Very Well** and 5 represents **Very Well**

4 – Well

**Please could you tell us why you gave this rating?**

Overall, the report covers the majority of the challenges and issues, however, some elements remain outstanding, though it is likely that they would be picked up as part of the next steps for the work.

- Firstly, the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update is in development and so cannot yet fully inform the study, but any changes to the previously used version for this study will need to be accounted for.
- The report appears to confuse Reading and Wokingham areas, this should be clarified in future reports.
- Lastly, there continue to be outstanding issues which should be addressed such as:
  - the A329(M) junction works undertaken by Highways England which continue to require remedial work and;
  - the diversion routes through urban areas which the borough feels should be constructed to a higher standard and maintained accordingly at the expense of those projects leading to their use.

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## **Appendix 5. Summary of Connecting the Country and Route Strategy Overview Report**

### **Connecting the Country**

**The full report can be found here:**

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/futureroads>

The overarching summary from the website states:

Our 2050 vision is that the Strategic Road Network (SRN) is part of a seamlessly-integrated transport system. This will meet our customers' needs by connecting the country safely and reliably, delivering economic prosperity, social value and a thriving environment.

Connecting the country will inform our investment planning for each future Road Period toward 2050.

This long-term strategy is based on an analysis of available evidence to understand both historic and future trends. We've grouped this into 9 focus areas under 3 core themes:

- how much our customers will travel
- how our customers will experience travel
- how we will manage our network

Connecting the country introduces our future approach to the SRN. This involves defining routes by customer needs. We'll develop these categories in future, based on your feedback.

The proposed categories are currently:

- national corridors
- inter-regional routes
- regional connections

Connecting the country brings together our existing strategies, including:

- [Route strategies](#)
- [Net zero highways](#)
- [Digital roads](#)
- [Customer service](#)

Crucially, it also aligns our business and investment planning processes with wider government aspirations.

## **Executive Summary**

The three core themes mentioned above each have three focus areas as follows:

- How much our Customers will travel:
  - Growth and Levelling up
  - Car Travel
  - Freight and Logistics
- How our customers will experience travel
  - Safety
  - Digital
  - Decarbonisation
- How we will manage our network
  - Customer Experience
  - Sustainable Network Development
  - Asset Reliance

The main points from the plan are covered effectively in the Executive Summary (pages 5-10 in the report) which is pasted below for ease; for the full report go to:

[cre22\\_0150-masterplan-national-highways-ris3\\_final-1.pdf \(nationalhighways.co.uk\)](#)

The report is relatively easy to read and well laid out, the chapters include:

### **Our strategic planning approach** (page 12):

- Creating our long-term plan (page 13)
- How our plan integrates with the regulatory cycle (page 14)

### **Trends shaping the future** (page 15):

- How much our customers will travel (page 16)
- How our customers will experience travel (page 28)
- How we will manage our network (page 39)

### **Our vision** (page 51):

- How much our customers will travel (page 52)
- How our customers will experience travel (page 53)
- How we will manage our network (page 54)

### **How we will deliver** (page 55):

- How much our customers will travel (page 56)
- How our customers will experience travel (page 59)
- How we will manage our network (page 62)

### **Next steps** (page 65):

- Informing third road period planning (page 66)
- Continuing to evolve our analysis (page 66)

# Executive summary

## How much our customers will travel

Our network will play a critical role in supporting growth as part of an integrated transport system.

Focus area	What is changing?	Our ambition	Our delivery
 <p>Growth and levelling up</p>	<p>Government's priority is on <b>growth and levelling up</b> following the Covid-19 pandemic, placing infrastructure as a pillar of recovery. The <i>Levelling up the United Kingdom</i> White Paper has also set out how government intends to spread opportunity more equally across the UK.</p>	<p>Regardless of which region our customers are travelling through, they will receive the <b>same high level of service and connectivity</b>. We will have defined service levels across our roads and will work with stakeholders to remove regional disparities in performance and connectivity, affording equal opportunity to all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing <b>productivity and competitiveness</b> through delivery of nationally-significant infrastructure</li> <li>Improving <b>performance monitoring</b>, visibility and targeted enhancements</li> <li><b>Enabling businesses to grow</b> through close collaboration with SRN-reliant sectors</li> <li><b>Unlocking sustainable growth and productivity</b> by working in partnership with other network operators and the private sector</li> </ul>
 <p>Car travel</p>	<p>Demand for our network is <b>growing and, while there are uncertainties, we expect this to continue to 2050</b>. Commercial and housing growth on urban fringes are likely to increase network pressures around major towns and cities.</p>	<p><b>Network optimisation and modal integration will enable fast and reliable journeys</b>. We will optimise the SRN and create a fully-integrated national transport network, working with partners to deliver seamless multi-modal travel. We will help customers choose the right mode for their journeys and support viable alternatives to short hop journeys on our network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective <b>network optimisation improvements</b> to bring tangible local benefits, such as reduced incidents and congestion</li> <li>Seamless <b>network integration</b> with other roads, modes and hubs</li> <li>Supporting <b>modal shift</b> by making it easy for customers to choose the right mode(s) for their journeys, including active travel</li> <li>Increased visibility and management of <b>live network performance</b></li> </ul>
 <p>Freight and logistics</p>	<p>Growth in e-commerce has been identified as a key factor impacting the freight system over the long-term. Reflecting the accessibility and flexibility it provides, <b>it is assumed that the majority of future freight will rely on road transport</b>'.</p>	<p><b>Our network will provide unimpeded access to domestic and world markets, driving national competitiveness</b>. Freight will move freely across the SRN, enabled by network improvements on key freight corridors, around international gateways and at major consolidation centres. High-quality corridors will serve autonomous freight movements and we will work with partners to create a national multi-modal freight network that maximises the efficiency of movements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-quality <b>freight corridors</b> to all major ports of entry and hubs</li> <li>Targeted <b>modal shift</b> of freight to short-sea shipping and rail</li> <li><b>Consolidation</b> of freight, particularly where the SRN meets urban areas</li> <li>Accelerated delivery of infrastructure to facilitate <b>autonomous freight</b></li> <li>Improved freight facilities</li> </ul>

# Executive summary

## How our customers will experience travel

Travel on our network will be safe, sustainable and increasingly connected.

Focus area	What is changing?	Our ambition	Our delivery
 <p>Safety</p>	<p><b>Total road fatalities have fallen over time, but incremental rises are now becoming increasingly challenging.</b> Technological advances to vehicles, adaptation of our physical infrastructure and the way we manage our network will bring radical change and opportunity.</p>	<p><b>Our roads will be the safest in the world. No one will be harmed when using or working on the SRN.</b> Our focus on safety will avoid physical, mental and emotional harm to individuals. A safer network will also improve journey time reliability, providing economic benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Safer roads</b>, targeting every part of our network to be rated iRAP three-star or above, where possible</li> <li>▪ <b>Safer people and vehicles</b> through driver education and campaigns, minimum standards of vehicle connectivity and dynamic network management</li> <li>▪ <b>Safer speeds</b>, improved <b>post-collision response</b> and <b>road safety management</b></li> <li>▪ Digital design and construction to reduce risk associated with road works and <b>maintenance activities</b></li> </ul>
 <p>Digital</p>	<p><b>Digital services will bring opportunities to transform how we manage our network.</b> This will range from digital design, intelligent asset management, connected and autonomous plant (CAP) and vehicles (CAV) through to how we generate and use our data.</p>	<p><b>National corridors will be CAV-enabled, providing congestion and safety benefits. Freight automation will be established on routes to major international gateways.</b> Our customers will travel on digitally-enabled roads, making their journeys safer, more efficient and environmentally sustainable. Our design, construction and operational activities will be fully digitised and automated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Digital design and construction</b> by default, with greater automation as well as modular and off-site construction to drive productivity gains</li> <li>▪ Increasingly <b>digital operations</b> by leveraging data to support increasingly pre-emptive interventions</li> <li>▪ Delivering <b>digital for customers</b> through increased visibility and management of the live network to keep customers better informed and in control</li> </ul>
 <p>Decarbonisation</p>	<p><b>Transport must decarbonise.</b> In 2019, government amended the Climate Change Act to introduce a legally-binding commitment to reducing all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.</p>	<p><b>The SRN will be decarbonised, placing roads at the heart of the UK's net zero future.</b> We will remove carbon from our operations (by 2030), our construction activity (by 2040) and support the transition to carbon-free travel on our network (by 2050).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Achieving <b>net zero operations</b> by decarbonising our fleet, estate and operational activities</li> <li>▪ Achieving <b>net zero maintenance and construction</b> through zero-carbon materials and construction innovation</li> <li>▪ Achieving <b>net zero travel</b> through electrification of our network and supporting the provision of low carbon fuel options for HGVs</li> </ul>



# Executive summary

## How we will manage our network

We will deliver stress-free customer journeys while also acting 'beyond roads' to improve the quality of life in local communities.

Focus area	What is changing?	Our ambition	Our delivery
 <p>Customer experience</p>	<p>While journey time reliability continues to be a key determinant of journey satisfaction, new technologies, such as electrification of the network and our transition to Digital Roads, <b>present exciting opportunities to enhance customer experience.</b></p>	<p><b>We will provide a trusted and stress-free end-to-end experience for our customers, with accurate and personalised journey information and attractive rest areas that offer rapid and reliable low-carbon fuelling.</b> Safe and reliable journeys will be the foundation for our 'whole journey' approach, which will make using the SRN, adjoining roads, modes and hubs more enjoyable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivering <b>reliable journey times</b> through consistent route and service standards tied to our future network plans, including rapid incident response and optimised roadworks</li> <li>Collaboration with private sector to transform <b>roadside facilities</b>, providing ample reliable and rapid charging provision for electric vehicles</li> <li><b>Connecting customers</b> through personalised, multi-modal journey information transmitted to vehicles through a choice of digital platforms</li> </ul>
 <p>Sustainable network development</p>	<p>The protection and enhancement of our shared natural environment is recognised as a key responsibility of infrastructure owners and operators. <b>Wide-ranging interventions will be needed to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and to use the SRN and our estate to promote wider environmental and social value.</b></p>	<p><b>Our network and wider estate will support a thriving environment, enabling healthier and safer communities and a richer, more biodiverse natural environment.</b> Our physical network will be largely complete and our enhancements focused on localised optimisation schemes. We will be an established force for good in communities, balancing network improvements with wider impacts and creating value beyond our roads.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying <b>PAS 2080</b> and increasing environmental standards for our enhancement and construction works</li> <li>Using our network and wider estate to support <b>nature</b> and deliver biodiversity net gain</li> <li>Significant investment in the protection and promotion of health and wellbeing in <b>communities</b></li> <li>Ensuring interventions support <b>active travel</b></li> </ul>
 <p>Asset resilience</p>	<p><b>We are responsible for a growing, ageing and increasingly complex asset base.</b> Increased frequency and severity of climate-related weather events also pose a risk to the condition and performance of our assets.</p>	<p><b>Asset and operational resilience will be maximised through an intelligent, data-led approach.</b> Assets will be digital by default, providing real-time updates of condition and performance to support predictive, data-led decisions that keep our network open, safe and serviceable. Where roadworks are needed, customers will know well in advance of their journeys, allowing them to compare alternative routes, modes and departure times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Connected assets</b> by default to allow for vehicle-to-infrastructure communication</li> <li>Using data to maximise whole-life asset value and plan our <b>asset renewals</b></li> <li>Making our network <b>resilient to the impacts of climate change</b>, for example to extreme heat or flood events</li> <li>Modernising operational technology, control centres and cyber security to ensure <b>digital resilience</b></li> </ul>

## Executive summary

### Introducing our future network

In support of our vision, we will investigate the benefits of categorising our network and defining the associated levels of services our customers can expect from them. The following categories and levels of service are conceptual only and require further development:

#### National corridors

National corridors will continue to be the vital spine of our network, supporting the highest levels of demand. These routes will be the key long-distance corridors, connecting major urban economies, acting as major freight routes and linking international gateways.

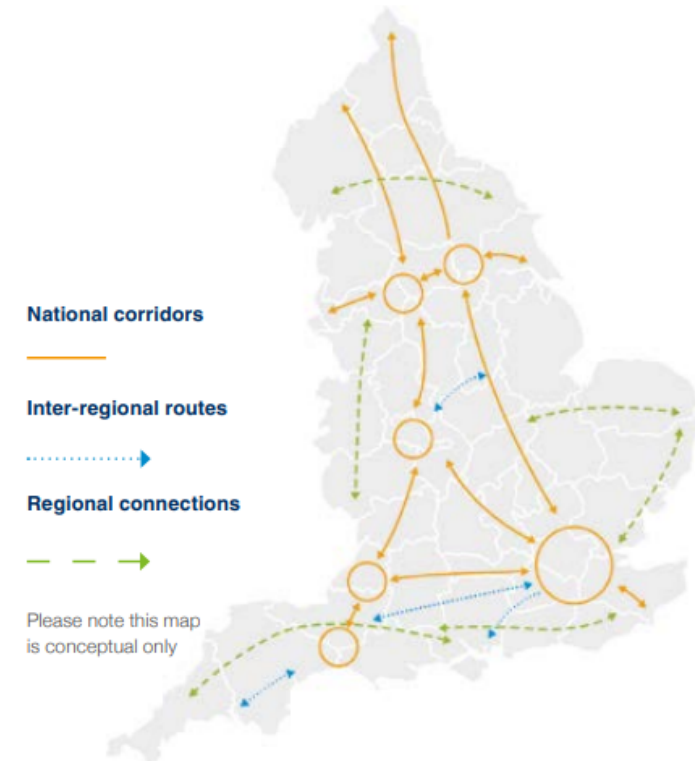
#### Inter-regional routes

Inter-regional routes will be high-demand, multiple-lane roads. These routes will connect regional economies and carry significant levels of freight and goods.

#### Regional connections

Regional connections will link local economic centres, both to each other and the national network.

On the following pages, we provide an overview of our vision for consistent levels of service that customers could expect for each category.



We know that our customers value reliable journeys on roads that provide a consistent level of service. We want them to experience exceptional service regardless of which part of our network they are on. To help guide the long-term development of our network, we have established aspirational levels of service across the SRN.

# Executive summary

## How customers will experience our future network

High standards for safety, environmental performance and operational management will continue to exist across the entirety of the SRN. In forthcoming road periods, we will take a customer-centric view to define the service levels customers can expect on different parts of our network.



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Focus area	National corridors	Inter-regional routes	Regional connections
<b>Safety</b>	← Safe roads as standard (targeting minimum iRAP three-star) with consistent geometric standards. →		
<b>Digital</b>	← In-vehicle management: supporting data sharing between vehicles, infrastructure and our control centres to enable high levels of compliance and journey reliability.	→	In-vehicle communication: including information and advice on traffic, incidents, roadworks and weather, as well as status updates from multi-modal hubs and interchanges.
<b>Decarbonisation</b>	← Electric and alternative fuel provision for all private and light vehicles plus heavy freight vehicles.	→	Convenient and high-quality electric charging provision for all private and light vehicles.

# Executive summary

## How customers will experience our future network



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Focus area	National corridors	Inter-regional routes	Regional connections
<b>Customer experience</b>	Highest pre-defined levels of on-road resource and monitoring enable rapid incident response.	Monitoring of routes, with automated incident detection and response to pre-defined service levels.	Monitoring of key junctions, local network interfaces and mobility hubs, with pre-defined levels of service.
	← High-quality and consistent service provision at motorway and all purpose trunk road service areas for private use and light vehicles, as well as at freight service and rest areas. →		
<b>Sustainable network development</b>	Use of nature-based solutions, particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. ← Targeted mitigation of air quality, noise and plastics through real time and increased monitoring and response. → An efficient and optimised physical network, integrating with local roads, the major road network, rail, light rail, ports and airports.		
<b>Asset resilience</b>	Majority of assets are digitally connected, providing real-time condition data and insight to minimise disruption to customers.	← Our key assets are digitally connected, providing real-time condition insight and minimising disruption to customers. →	

## **Route Strategy Initial Overview Reports**

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/futureroads>

Of the twenty Route Strategies, the London to South Wales route is of most interest to Wokingham Borough Council as this includes the M4. The other Route Strategies which pass close to Wokingham Borough are as follows:-

- *South West Peninsula – M3*
- *Solent to Midlands – A34*
- *London to Scotland West (south) – M40*
- *London Orbital and M23 – M25*

[London to Wales Route \(nationalhighways.co.uk\)](https://nationalhighways.co.uk)

### **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

This report is the initial overview report for the London to Wales route and summarises the outcomes of the route strategy. The report builds on the first two rounds of route strategies in 2015 and 2017. It aims to be more forward looking, integrated and collaborative, while being dynamic enough to respond to the future needs of our customers and neighbours.

For clarity, this document does not:

- identify committed schemes for delivery as part of future RIS periods. This will be part of the wider RIS setting process
- commit to the delivery of local plans or economic growth developments mentioned
- guarantee funding for any locations identified for further studying to understand the challenges and issues in more detail
- preclude the inclusion of other locations for consideration in the light of other evidence or imperatives

### **Chapter 2 - The Route.**

The London to Wales route is a key east-west link on the SRN in the south of England, extending for approximately 170 miles. It runs from the M25, passing through several counties, from Greater London in the east through to the west of England and the River Severn crossings at the border with Wales.

The M4 is important for growth, supporting communities and various strong economic sectors along the route, including the creative sector, high-tech, cyber security, information and communication, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, land-based services, and distribution and manufacturing. Key employers in the area include Verizon, Amazon, Microsoft, Cisco and Huawei. Further economic development is planned at key urban settlements of Bristol, Swindon and Reading which will place further demand on the route.

### **Chapter 3 – Engagement with Customers and neighbours**

Engagement with our customers and neighbours has been central to developing our route strategies. We have already gathered a wealth of evidence from the previous rounds of route strategies and through our ongoing monitoring of road condition and performance.

We carried out a detailed engagement programme for this round of route strategies to understand the current and future needs of those using and living alongside the SRN.

Building on engagement to date, we have worked with Sub-national Transport Bodies, Office of Rail and Road, Department for Transport, and Transport Focus to ensure a diverse range of people and their views are represented.

We will continue to evolve this engagement process for future cycles of route strategies. We used a range of methods to gather information from customers and neighbours throughout the route strategies' evidence collection period, which ran from August to December 2021. These included round tables, workshops, and an online feedback form and we designed the approach to be more inclusive by engaging with and learning from a wide range of interested parties.

Thinking about how the SRN integrates with the surrounding rail and road network, including parts of the major road network (MRN) and local roads, we designed our engagement around the following objectives:

- to understand the current role of the SRN and how it could better support the aspirations of customers and neighbours of the future
- to gather views and seek evidence on current and future issues, challenges and opportunities – both local and strategic

We have also gained an in-depth understanding of what our road users want nationally from Transport Focus' Strategic roads user survey 2021/228 into road users' priorities for improvements to journeys on the SRN. This research was based on focus groups and interviews with all types of road users across the country, alongside a survey of more than 5,000 drivers. It asked for users' views on key issues, such as sustainability and electric vehicles, and the stress of driving on the SRN.

From this research, Transport Focus identified that the majority of road users want the focus of investment to be on keeping National Highways' existing roads in good order before building new ones. Their top priority for improvement to journeys on the SRN is road surface quality, followed by the safer design and upkeep of roads.

Engagement during workshops with interested parties identified the following national priorities:

- better driver education aimed at teaching road users about new technology
- deeper consideration of environmental constraints at the earliest stage of planning, and consideration for key environmental issues such as biodiversity, air quality and sustainable transport
- a resilient and reliable SRN to support economic growth
- better integration between the SRN and local road network to improve journey times
- greater support for the freight industry in terms of:
  - the future of low emission vehicles and commercial fleet
  - the impact of congestion on productivity, fuel cost, driver breaks, lorry park locations and delivery times
- greater collaboration and early engagement with interested parties, and greater alignment between network operators, including consideration for joint funding opportunities

We have drawn out the common themes that emerged from our engagement with our customers and neighbours on the London to Wales route to inform our route objectives. These included:

#### Improving safety for all

The M4 in Berkshire authorities is used for short journeys because of severance. There is also a history of collisions and other incidents on the local road network to Reading, which raise safety concerns.

The Calcot to Theale footbridge across the M4 is insufficient for shared use between walkers and cyclists.

#### Network Performance

The M4 between Junctions 4B and Junction 13 (A34) is subject to much congestion (especially at peak times) where the motorway serves several built-up areas.

Potential M4 bridge between Junctions 10 and 11 west of Reading to relieve pressure

M4 congestion is generally at peak times (especially in the morning) at Junctions 11 and 12

Junction hopping has been identified as an issue around Reading and Wokingham

The need for better M4 and M3 connectivity via the MRN to relieve pressure on the M25 South West quadrant

Closures of the M4 and their impacts on adjoining routes

#### Improved environmental outcomes

Reading has promoted greater facilities for electric vehicle charging and shift in modes of transport to enable air quality and healthy travel benefits. Further promotion is needed for active travel and public transport promotion, including directional signage to park and ride sites.

“Opportunity to decrease speed to 50 mph to reduce noise and pollution for the surrounding area” (in reference to the A329(M)).

#### Growing the economy

Wokingham development and associated journeys on the M4, or crossing the M4 to Reading

#### Managing and planning the SRN for the future

Rail proposals along the route such as the new Green Park Station in the south of Reading and the potential Heathrow Western Rail Link from the Great Western Main Line.

Potential Western Rail Link to Heathrow to relieve pressure from the M4 and increase public transport connectivity to the airport.

#### Technology-enabled network

Consideration for connected and autonomous vehicles and connected in terms of capacity and risks.

Opportunities for electric vehicle charging.

## Chapter 4 – Network Collaboration

The Strategic Road Network (SRN) does not exist in isolation. Most journeys on the SRN are part of a longer journey, involving other road networks or different transport modes.

Route strategies recognise the role that the SRN plays within the wider transport network. In planning for the future of the SRN, we recognise the importance of working closely with other network planners and operators to ensure our transport networks work well together, and that our investment priorities are aligned where possible.

At a more local level we also work with local authorities, who are the highway authorities for local roads, including those on the MRN. The local authority planning teams work closely with our spatial planning teams. In enabling new employment spaces and homes to be developed, we engage fully as a statutory consultee in the planning system and the evidence collected through the route strategies will support this decision making.

The MRN represents the roads that our partners in local authorities and Sub-national Transport Bodies see as being strategically most important, along with the SRN. The relationship between the SRN and MRN is complex. The two networks connect people with economically important locations across England, as well as providing resilience for each other. Interventions on one network can also significantly influence travel behaviours on the other. Most SRN journeys involve elements of both networks.

It is therefore important that decisions about the SRN, MRN and other local roads are made in a joined-up way to ensure that the networks are consistent, coherent, and complementary. We recognise that the key to the success of the Road investment strategy (RIS) is ensuring the impacts of any interventions are fully considered across all networks as well as at their junctions.

Within the vicinity of the London to Wales route, the MRN comprises the A4 for east-west connectivity between Slough, Reading and Newbury, and the A329(M) for access to Reading and onward connectivity to Surrey. Further to the west the A33 at Junction 11 connects the M4 to Reading and south to the A339.

### Freight

The National Survey of Lorry Parking undertaken by DfT in 2017.

This identified that the following M4 lorry parks were identified to have critical levels of utilisation in 2017: Moto Reading Westbound (120%), Moto Chieveley (102%), Moto Reading Eastbound (94%) and Moto Leigh Delamere Westbound (85%).

The report concluded that there was a practical need for a 37% increase in lorry parking spaces in the South East region.

As part of continued government action to boost driver welfare and tackle the effect of a current driver shortage impacting the UK, National Highways is investing in improved roadside facilities.

### Diversions routes

To operate a resilient road network, we need to be able to effectively divert traffic off the SRN in the event of unplanned incidents (such as collisions or emergency roadworks), or as part of planned closures (such as planned improvement schemes). The MRN, along with the rest of the local road network, supports the SRN as diversion routes during these events.



We have agreed diversion routes for emergency events with local authorities. Diversion routes for planned events are discussed and agreed with local authorities on a case-by-case basis.

### Chapter 5 – Challenges & Issues

There are existing challenges and issues on the network, and these are outlined against the DfT's six strategic objectives as part of the route strategy evidence base.

The six strategic objectives are:-

- 1) Growing the economy
- 2) Improving safety for all
- 3) Network performance to meet customer needs
- 4) A technology-enabled network
- 5) Managing and planning the SRN for the future
- 6) Improved environmental outcomes

#### Growing the economy

The importance of the route is outlined in a number of Strategic Economic Plans for Buckinghamshire, Thames Valley Berkshire, Swindon and Wiltshire, GFirst and West of England Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs). These priorities are highlighted in the strategies of the Sub-national Transport Bodies of the Western Gateway, England's Economic Heartland and Transport for the South East.

Key economic centres and sectors that are supported by the route within Berkshire include: sectors such as communications and information technologies, distribution and logistics; life sciences, healthcare and their associated corporate national/ international offices, are dominant, and in addition support thriving small and medium enterprises. Significant housing growth is planned, including locations at Reading, and as noted in the Wokingham Local Plan Update, Arborfield Garrison, Hall Farm and Loddon Valley east of Shinfield, and land adjacent to the M4 Junction 11.

From the engagement with interested parties, for this area, there were several developments mentioned, namely Reading Green Park, which is due to open in 2022 and an upgrade to park and ride status for Theale station at Junction 12, the expansion of Thames Valley Science Park, and developments in Wokingham. Further to this is the potential Heathrow Western Rail Link from the Great Western Main Line.

Key Challenges identified:-

- Managing and responding to the impacts of sustainable development where growth is anticipated; Reading, Maidenhead, Swindon, the Greater Bristol area, Cheltenham and Gloucester, and Wokingham.
- Importance of the route in underpinning thriving local and sub-national economies and sectors
- The need for good and improved connectivity not only for the movement of goods but also people, particularly for the grouping and future growth of key sectors.

#### Improving Safety for all

We are committed to reducing the number of road users killed or seriously injured on the strategic road network, by 50% (from the 2005-2009 baseline) by the end of 2025, with a long-term vision to eliminate harm arising from use of the SRN.

We recognise safety is National Highways' top priority. We believe that everyone who travels or works on our roads should get home safe and well.

The latest available iRAP Star Ratings show that the majority of the route has a 3-star rating. This indicates that most of the route is relatively safe and limits future risk of injuries.

Despite the 3-star designation of most of the route, there remain sections of the route where people have been killed or seriously injured. The sections of the route where collisions have resulted in a higher number of people being killed or seriously injured relative to the route include the following:

- M4 mainline between:
  - Junction 12 and Bradfield westbound
  - Junctions 11 and 10 eastbound
  - Junction 10 to the Holyport Interchange (Junction 8/9) eastbound and westbound.

Key challenges include:-

- The relatively higher number of collisions where people are killed and seriously injured on the A417 approaches to Air Balloon Roundabout, the A419 and the M4 mainline on stretches along the route
- the number of collisions involving walkers, cyclists and horse riders on the M32, the A404, the A417, the M4 between Swindon and Reading and from Junctions 10 to 4B on the mainline.

### Network Performance

- expectations over COVID-19 and travel demand
- our ambition for supporting freight, logistics and the coach industry
- our ambition for supporting end-to-end journeys for a variety of modes
- our approach to trunking and de-trunking for SRN

Car traffic on the SRN is now back to approximately 95% of pre-pandemic levels.

Continued hybrid working could see a redistribution of demand, flattening the daily morning and afternoon peaks, and instead creating a mid-week peak.

We continue to collaborate with our freight and logistics customers to better understand how the SRN can support their operations, and work with wider Government in the delivery of their Future of freight plan. We recognise that lorry parking and facilities are key to enabling freight and logistics businesses to operate safely and efficiently. A lack of parking and good quality facilities impacts the recruitment and retention of drivers into a sector that is crucial to the country's economy. We are keen to play our part in ensuring good quality facilities are in the right places and that we support the sector in recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of drivers.

In addition to supporting lorry parking, we remain focused on:

- reducing congestion on the SRN, which affects the speed, reliability and cost of logistics, as well as driver safety when journeys exceed regulated driving time
- improving the suitability of alternative routes and diversions off the SRN

Key challenges include:-

- Localised delays across the route, addressing congestion on the M4, A404 and A404(M), A308 (M), A417, A419 and M32
- Seasonal delay on the M4, A417, A419, A308(M), A404 and A404(M)
- The reliability of the M32, M4, A308(M) and A417

#### A technology-enabled network

On the route, electric vehicle charging infrastructure is present on the M4 at Moto Reading, Chieveley services, Membury services and Leigh Delamere services.

The Government's March 2022 UK electric vehicle infrastructure strategy sets out a vision for 2030 where charging infrastructure will be removed as both a perceived and real barrier to the adoption of electric vehicles. The Strategy outlines the intention to accelerate the rollout of high-powered chargers on the SRN through the £950m Rapid Charging Fund.

The M4 is dynamic hard shoulder smart motorway between Junctions 19 to 20 north of Bristol and all lane running smart motorway from Junctions 8/9 to 12 within the Berkshire authorities. Works at Junctions 3 to 8/9 have been completed in 2022.

Key challenges:-

- Communication with customers provides a key role in managing incidents and events, with potential opportunities to integrate new technologies
- Demand for increased quantity, capacity and speed of existing electric vehicle charging facilities
- Planning for increased use of new technology, including connected and autonomous vehicles and hydrogen fuelled vehicles.

#### Managing and planning the SRN for the future

We recognise that asset management is our core business.

Key challenges:-

- Contributing toward the national target of 96.2% or more of carriageway being in good condition
- Maintaining the good condition of the SRN's geotechnical assets
- Ensuring that drainage assets are maintained so that their good structural and service conditions can be upheld

#### Improved Environmental Outcomes

- Net zero highways: Our 2030 / 2040 / 2050 plan
- Our plan for net zero carbon travel on our roads covering emissions from the vehicles using the SRN
- Our approach to improved environmental outcomes

We published our ambitious net zero carbon plan in July 2021. It details how we will achieve net zero emissions for: our corporate space by 2030, our maintenance and construction emissions by 2040, and road user emissions by 2050.

More than ever we need to support the Government's wider plans for decarbonising transport. The SRN plays a pivotal role in supporting the transition to zero carbon cars, vans and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), but we also recognise that we need to better integrate with other modes of transport too, including public transport and active travel.

We know there's a requirement to balance people's need to travel on our roads with doing all we can to protect and improve the environment. That means we will continue to consider a wider range of environmental factors in our future planning, such as improving biodiversity, protecting ancient woodlands, reducing pollution in Air Quality Management Areas, and protecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These will form part of our considerations during our early planning. In response to these emerging issues, our latest route strategies take a balanced view on expanding the future capacity of the SRN.

In terms of air quality, there are receptors within 100 metres of the strategic road network which may be more likely to experience adverse air quality impacts at locations including:

- M4 (Junctions 11 to 10 eastbound)

Sections of the M4 subject to an AQMA include between Junctions 9 to 12 south of Reading,

There are receptors within 300 metres of the SRN which may be more sensitive to high noise levels at the following locations:

- M4 (Junctions 11 to 10)

More intense and longer periods of rainfall will increase the risk of surface water flooding and could overwhelm existing drainage systems leading to localised flooding. Sections of the route currently considered to be at risk of flooding from surface water include:

- M4 South of Reading

Interested parties raised the impacts of vehicles using the SRN upon local communities and highlighted the M4 in the Berkshire authorities as locations of severance

Noise Important Areas (NIAs) for roads are based upon the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) strategic noise maps results and have been produced in line with the requirements set out in the noise action plans. NIAs within the route include:

- M4 south of Reading

Key challenges include:-

- Potential adverse air quality impacts at locations where there are receptors within 100 metres of the SRN which may be more likely to experience adverse impacts, flagged on the M32, M4, A419 and A404 (M)
- Receptors within 300 metres of the SRN which may be more sensitive to high noise levels, flagged on the M32, M4 and the A419.
- Resilience on the SRN in response to future climate change

## Chapter 6 - Initial Route Objectives

We developed the route objectives based on:

- feedback from customers and neighbours outlined in Chapter 3
- opportunities to collaborate with other network operators, outlined in Chapter 4

- constraints and challenges, as highlighted in Chapter 5
- how best to contribute to the DfT's six strategic objectives

Each route strategy includes a series of specific route-based objectives.

The route objectives, their supporting narratives, and locations for further consideration will together inform the development of the Road investment strategy (RIS). They do not represent a commitment to road-based interventions but are intended to enable multimodal interventions to be explored as part of later study phases. These are detailed further below and comprise:

- A. Safe and reliable journeys
- B. Strategic connectivity and access to key gateways
- C. Support regionally significant and sustainable economic development in the Berkshire authorities, Swindon and Bristol
- D. Support local connections and integration
- E. Support the needs of the freight sector
- F. Reduce adverse impacts on communities

**A. Safe and reliable journeys** - Provide safe and reliable journeys through provision of a resilient and consistent route particularly on the M4, in the Berkshire authorities, Bristol, and the A417.

The eastern end of the M4 exhibits relatively higher numbers of people either killed or seriously injured between Junctions 8/9 and 11 (Maidenhead to Reading) (*data taken from prior to the completion of the Smart Motorway scheme*)

Our network considerations include - safety on the M4, in particular Junctions 10 to 11 and west of 12 around Reading and between Reading and Junction 4B with the M25.

Outcomes - improved safety and reduced congestion along the M4 corridor between Reading and London and on the M32 in Bristol.

**B. Strategic connectivity and access to key gateways** - Promote strategic connectivity between England (M49, M4, M48, M5 and M32) and South Wales as well as facilitating efficient access to key gateways at Heathrow Airport, Port of Bristol and Bristol Airport.

Interested parties highlighted the M4 from the M25 Junction 4B to Junction 13 being subject to congestion especially in peak periods. According to interested parties, the current highway standards and the reduced capacity of the motorway connections between the M4 and M3 result in compromised resilience of the MRN in relation the M25 South West quadrant (near to Heathrow Airport); there are aspirations to improve this part of the SRN. This impacts on the local road network and the already significantly congested M25 South West quadrant, particularly when there are incidents or motorway closures.

There are access strategies in place to increase the uptake of public transport to the airport and to reduce the level of car trips. It is noted the Western Rail Link proposals to connect Heathrow to the Great Western Mainline would improve rail connectivity to the west and provide additional public transport capacity.

Our network considerations include - performance of the eastern section of the M4 between Reading and the M25 for onward access to Heathrow Airport.

Outcomes - Supporting national and regional economies in England and Wales through reliable and efficient access to international gateways.

**C. Support regionally significant and sustainable economic development in the Berkshire authorities, Swindon and Bristol.** Support the delivery of regionally significant and sustainable economic development in the Berkshire authorities, Swindon and Bristol whilst maintaining the safe and effective operation of the network.

The route links key economic centres of Bristol, Swindon and Reading with London and also provides strategic connectivity to local economies

Interested parties mentioned the expansion of the Thames Valley Science Park in Reading along with developments in Wokingham. Of note within the Wokingham Local Plan Update are aspirations for residential sites south of the M4 Junction 11 and at Hall Farm and Loddon Valley garden village east of Shinfield adjacent to the SRN.

The Green Park development site adjacent to the M4 Junction 11 in Reading is identified as a core employment area in the Reading Borough Local Plan and comprises business park uses and up to 700 houses. This will be accompanied by the Green Park Station and Interchange on the Reading and Basingstoke line which is set to open later in 2022.

Our Network Considerations include:

- Based on interested parties' feedback, 'junction hopping' occurs at a number of locations along the route, including around Reading and Wokingham as well as Gloucester. This puts additional pressure on the SRN and impacts strategic freight journeys.
- Interested parties also mentioned that the stretch of the M4 between Junction 4B with the M25 and Junction 13, including around Reading, is subject to congestion particularly at peak times

Outcomes

- Growth supported to unlock opportunities for local housing and employment development
- Coordination with local authorities to enable safe and efficient access to strategic sites by all modes of transport

**D - Support local connections and integration.** Support effective local connections and integration with other transport modes to reduce short distance travel demands on the SRN and promote the transfer to alternative modes of transport and reduce carbon particularly in the Berkshire authorities, Bristol and Swindon.

The M4 serves as the principal route through the Reading and Thames Valley area and is served by numerous junctions. Where the M4 passes by urban areas, many junctions suffer from poor journey time reliability, in particular from Junction 12 at Theale to the M25. The M4 serves a dual use at Reading; both for local traffic wanting to access local employment sites and strategic traffic. The alignment of the M4 and the location of employment on the edge of the town encourages junction hopping. To the south of Reading, Junction 11 of the M4 provides access to residential areas and employment sites such as Reading International Business Park, Green Park, Thames Valley Science Park and business parks along the A33.

Interested parties identified a need for improved public transport and active travel connectivity to Reading, as well as wayfinding for its park and ride facilities.

They noted a desire for better electric vehicle charging facilities and shift in modes of transport to improve air quality and prompt active travel. They also mentioned the interaction of motor vehicles and other modes between Reading and the M4 such as Junction 12, which suffers from limited connectivity across the SRN for active travel users. It was also identified that Reading Green Park rail station is due to open in 2022. This will help serve existing and future land uses for Green Park which is designated as a core employment area in the Reading Borough Local Plan

Our network considerations:

- Opportunities exist to improve local connections for users to make the transition to active travel from private vehicles, sustainable travel and Rapid Transit options in Reading and Bristol alongside a desire for greater public electric vehicle charging facilities
- Interested parties highlighted that the stretch of the M4 between Junction 4B with the M25 and Junction 13, including around Reading, is subject to congestion particularly at peak times.
- Opportunity to improve air quality and noise levels with public transport and active travel interventions where receptors may be more likely to experience potential adverse air quality and noise impacts, including south of Reading (M4 Junctions 11 to 10 eastbound).

Outcomes

- Improved local connectivity and greater travel choice for users across a range of modes for shorter trips which are competitive against the private car to remove shorter distance journeys from the SRN
- Improved network resilience especially in urban areas which suffer from knock-on impacts during periods of disruption
- Greater use of public transport and reduced demand on the SRN to facilitate more sustainable journeys, particularly between the West of England and South Wales

**E - Support the needs of the freight sector.** Support regional and national economies through the efficient movement of freight on the M4 and A417/A419, by enhancing lorry parking and driver facilities along with the transfer of freight to alternative modes, where appropriate.

HGV flow percentage data shows that the majority of the route has an HGV proportion of between 11% to 15% of daily traffic levels.

The M4 is a strategic corridor connecting multiple economic centres, but also has connections with other freight corridors including the M5, M25, A34 and A417 which places additional freight demands on the route.

The following M4 lorry parks were identified to have critical levels of utilisation in 2017: Reading Westbound (120%), Chieveley (102%), Reading Eastbound (94%) and Leigh Delamere Westbound (85%).

The Great Western Main Line (GWML) broadly follows the alignment of the M4 and is heavily used by passengers for access between the West and London

Recent investments in the line have increased both the capacity and capability on the network with more passenger services. The transfer of freight from road to rail along the GWML remains a strong aspiration for Network Rail.

Our Network Considerations:

The route is important for HGV access to Heathrow Airport, the Port of Bristol and for onward connectivity to Wales. There are high utilisation levels of lorry parking at motorway services on the M4 along with off-site HGV parking concerns noted in the South East and on the approach to the Port of Bristol.

The M4 corridor is served by existing motorway service areas with electric vehicle charging, but there is further potential to meet the future needs of alternative fuel vehicles and autonomous vehicles.

Outcomes

- Increased quantity and improved quality of HGV driver facilities, in particular on the A417 and A419
- Transfer of freight volumes by rail for longer distance trips and improved facilities for road-rail freight interchange
- Increased availability and uptake of alternative fuel sources around international gateways for freight vehicles

**F - Reduce adverse impacts on communities.** To be a better neighbour by safeguarding the environment and reducing the impacts of severance, adverse air quality and noise on local communities along the M4 in Reading, the M4 and M32 in Bristol and the A417/A419 in Swindon

The route passes through, or close to, a number of urban areas. Within these communities, the operation of the route has the potential to have adverse impacts in terms of air quality, noise and severance where roads create physical barriers preventing people accessing goods and services. These include Slough, Maidenhead and Reading in the Berkshire authorities. Interested parties raised the impacts of vehicles using the SRN upon local communities and highlighted the M32 and the M4 in the Berkshire authorities.

In the instance of the Berkshire authorities, it was raised by interested parties that the M4 is often used for short journeys as a result of severance.

The south of Reading in particular features a number of residential areas in proximity to the SRN at Junctions 10, 11 and 12 with potential residential development in the Wokingham Local Plan Update around the SRN south of the M4 Junction 11 and at the Hall Farm and Loddon Valley garden village east of Shinfield.

We recognise that vehicle emissions and noise from vehicles on our roads has the potential to adversely impact and can affect both the wellbeing and health of people living nearby. Whilst the transition to new and alternative fuel vehicles is expected to contribute to improved air quality in the longer term, National Highways has an important responsibility to respect the wellbeing of everyone who lives or works near the route. Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) feature on the M4 between Junctions 5 to 7 at Slough, between Junctions 8/9 to 12 at Reading and at the Air Balloon Roundabout on the A417.

A number of urban areas near the route are subject to AQMAs such as Bristol, Bath, Reading and Maidenhead.



Supporting data indicates receptors at the following locations on the route may be more sensitive to high noise levels as these receptors are within 300 metres of the SRN and includes M4 (Junctions 11 to 10)

Noise Important Areas (NIAs) for roads are based upon the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) strategic noise maps results and have been produced in line with the requirements set out in the noise action plans. NIAs within the route include M4 south of Reading.

Supporting data indicates that receptors at the following locations on the route fall within 100 metres of the SRN and may be more likely to experience adverse air quality impacts include M4 (Junctions 11 to 10 eastbound).

Our network considerations:

- Several sections of the route have nearby receptors which may be more likely to experience adverse air quality and noise impacts, particularly Noise Important Areas (NIA) which include south of Slough, Holyport and Maidenhead, between Reading and Wokingham and South Reading. AQMAs include: M4 between Junctions 5 to 7 at Slough, between M4 Junctions 8/9 to 12 at Reading, the Air Balloon Roundabout on the A417 and the M32 in Bristol south of Junction 1
- Severance created by the M4 and limited crossings of the road for vulnerable road users to the south of Reading where a number of residential areas are located adjacent to the M4. Demand for safe and suitable crossings will increase with future residential development either side of the M4 around Reading.

Outcomes

- Improvement in the quality of life for communities located along the SRN
- Improvements in air quality and reduce adverse noise impacts
- Reducing SRN related severance of local communities to enable improved access to goods and services

#### Chapter 7 – Locational areas for consideration and potential collaboration

We know the importance that investment in our network can make locally, regionally and nationally. It can make areas more attractive for inward investment, unlock new sites for employment and housing, and facilitate regeneration. It can also ease congestion, improve our customers' journeys and support environmental improvements.

Areas of Interest for further investigation include:-

##### From M4 junction 8/9 to junction 10

- high levels of people killed or seriously injured, higher percentage of fatal or serious collisions involving walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- Seasonal delay is noted between junction 4B and 12 of the M4.
- There is an AQMA on the M4 between junctions 8/9 to 12.

##### From M4 junction 10 to junction 13

- Relatively higher numbers of people killed or seriously injured on the mainline between Junctions 11 and 10 eastbound.

- Supporting RSF data also indicates that on the route there is a relatively higher percentage of fatal or serious collisions involving walkers, cyclists and horse riders on part of this section.
- Seasonal delay is also noted between Junctions 4B and 12 of the M4.
- Congestion was highlighted as a problem by interested parties, particularly at peak times. There are aspirations for residential and employment development sites near to Junction 11 and south of Reading.
- Pockets of south Reading are in the top 5% for deprivation nationally.
- Receptors may be sensitive to noise and air quality issues on the M4 at Junctions 11 to 10. This section of route is also home to an NIA and an AQMA (M4 Junctions 8/9 to 12). Furthermore, this section of the route is considered to be at risk of surface water flooding.

## Chapter 8 – Next Steps

The route strategy Initial overview reports will combine with other related evidence to inform the broader SRN initial report as part of the RIS process for the third road period. The SRN initial report includes an assessment of the current state of the network and user needs from it, potential maintenance and enhancement priorities, and future developmental needs and prospects. DfT will consult on this SRN initial report, which will serve to inform the RIS and Strategic business plan. We will finalise the Route strategy reports following feedback on the publication of these Initial overview reports. They will be used as a forward planning tool by National Highways to help identify investment opportunities for enhancements, as well as to support decisions around operating and maintaining our network. Providing an understanding of the strategies for each route will also help inform the decisions taken by our interested parties. These finalised Route strategy overview reports will also serve to inform the Road investment strategy and Strategic business plan.

## **Environmental Sustainability Strategy**

As background when considering the other three documents, it should be noted that:-

In developing this strategy, National Highways “*have listened to a broad range of government departments, public bodies and non-governmental organisations – working in the areas of both transport and the environment. We’ve developed this strategy to align with the goals of these organisations.*”

National Highways have identified the following nine priority areas:-



- National Highways will update this strategy once during every road investment period.
- National Highways will have a robust implementation plan, including assigned ownership and a set of actions with associated deadlines and metrics to monitor progress.
- They will publish an annual progress report on the implementation of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
- They will commit to an annual stakeholder conference with supply chain partners, other infrastructure operators, environmental stakeholders, landowners and civil society organisations to promote best practice and strengthen relationships.

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