

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

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

Focus Area	Response
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:

Area to Evolve	Response
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).