



## CABINET – 14 DECEMBER 2021

### NATIONAL HIGHWAYS ROUTE STRATEGIES DEVELOPMENT

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

#### PART A

##### Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of National Highway's (NH) proposed Route Strategies development process and to seek approval for a response to be submitted to NH as the views of the County Council.
2. The Route Strategies process will inform the Government's decisions on investment in England's motorway and trunk road network (the Strategic Road Network, otherwise referred to as the SRN) in the period 2025 to 2030 and beyond.

##### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that:
  - a) The response set out in the Appendix to the report be forwarded to National Highways (NH) as the views of the County Council on the proposed Route Strategies development process concerning the Road Investment Strategy 3 (2025 – 2030);
  - b) It be noted that the County Council will continue to work through Midlands Connect (the region's Sub-National Transport Body) to seek to inform NH's and the Department for Transport's (DfT) decisions concerning future investment in the County's Strategic Road Network for the Road Investment Strategy period 3 (2025 to 2030) and beyond.

##### Reason for Recommendations

4. An effectively functioning Strategic Road Network (SRN) is important to support Leicester and Leicestershire's economy, enable the area's future growth and to address environmental and climate change challenges. NH is currently undertaking a consultation exercise as part of developing its evidence base for this Route Strategies process, and the County Council's response will be submitted as part of that exercise.
5. As the region's Sub-National Transport Body, Midlands Connect brings together key transport bodies from across the Midlands. Amongst other things,

its role is to establish regional priorities for investment in the region's SRN and to work with DfT and NH to achieve their delivery.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

6. Following the Cabinet's approval, a response will be submitted to NH by the 31 December 2021 deadline, taking into account any additions or amendments arising from consideration by the Cabinet.
7. The Route Strategies process will ultimately inform investment decisions by the Government as part of the Road Investment Strategy period 3 - 2025 to 2030 - (RIS3) and beyond.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

8. In March 2011 the County Council approved the third Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP3). This contains six strategic transport goals. Goal one is to have a transport system that supports a prosperous economy and provides successfully for population growth.
9. In 2018 the County Council, Leicester City Council, the seven district councils in Leicestershire, and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, approved the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) which provides the long-term vision for planned growth for the area up to 2050. The SGP highlights the need for investment in strategic transport infrastructure to enable the area's growth.
10. In May 2019, the County Council declared a climate emergency and committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 for its own operations, to work with others and to lobby the Government to make the wider 2030 target possible. On 13 September 2019 the Cabinet approved work to be undertaken to revise the Council's Strategic Plan and Single Outcome Framework to incorporate the new environment and climate change commitments.
11. The Council's Strategic Plan (2018 to 2022) "Working together for the benefit of everyone" was approved by the County Council in July 2020 (having been revised following the Council's declaration on climate change). It has five strategic outcomes, including the delivery of 'Affordable and Quality Homes' and 'Strong Economy'.
12. The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities (LLTSTP) was approved by the Cabinet on 20 November 2020. This document was developed by the County and City Councils alongside the SGP to ensure the long-term development needs and associated transportation requirements are coordinated.
13. At its meeting on 17 September 2021, the Cabinet considered a report setting out comments on Charnwood Borough Council's pre-Submission Local Plan. Amongst other things that report noted:

*“...the transport evidence work undertaken to support the Local Plan’s development suggests that existing problems both on the local transport system and Strategic Road Network are likely to be a barrier to the ‘acceptable’ delivery of further growth in the Borough, unless a route(s) (i.e. alternate to developer funding) can be agreed towards identifying other ways to plausibly and reasonably address the problems within the Plan period.”*

14. At that same meeting, the Cabinet also considered a report setting out comments on the Draft Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan. Those comments included inter-alia:

*“Closer partnership working is required with Hinckley and Bosworth BC across key disciplines and at a senior level in recognition of:*

- a) the challenges presented by the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in the Borough and wider area;*
- b) the lack of capacity on the Local Road Network;*
- c) the need to take a strategic approach to education and other infrastructure provision; and*
- d) the need to secure deliverable planned growth supported by infrastructure rather than unplanned speculative development.”*

15. In October 2021, the Cabinet approved for consultation the draft Strategic Plan (2022-26), which includes as one of its five strategic outcomes ‘*Clean, Green Future*’ Outcome: *Reflects the need to protect and enhance the environment and tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable resource usage.’*

### **Resource Implications**

16. There are no direct resource implications to the Authority arising from this report.
17. This Route Strategies process will inform the Government’s decisions for investment in the SRN for the period 2025 to 2030 (RIS3). If RIS3 is similar to previous periods, the investment would be in a mixture of: schemes to be built (or begin construction of) in that period; the continued development of previously identified schemes towards construction in future RIS periods; and the undertaking or work to identify a pipeline of potential schemes for future development and delivery.
18. It is more than probable that the RIS3 period will be oversubscribed, i.e. funding demands will exceed the levels of funding that can be made available.
19. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

This report has been circulated to all Members of the County Council.

**Officers to Contact**

Ann Carruthers - Director  
Environment and Transport  
Tel: (0116) 305 7000  
Email: [ann.carruthers@leics.gov.uk](mailto:ann.carruthers@leics.gov.uk)

Janna Walker - Acting Assistant Director, Development and Growth  
Environment and Transport  
Tel: (0116) 305 0785  
Email: [janna.walker@leics.gov.uk](mailto:janna.walker@leics.gov.uk)

## **PART B**

### **Background**

#### **Road Investment Strategy**

20. In 2014, the Government reformed the way England's Strategic Road Network (SRN) was funded and managed. While safety remained the number one focus, the new arrangements were also intended to give new emphasis for customer service and delivery. Highways England (recently renamed as National Highways – NH) was established as the steward of the SRN, with a remit to operate, maintain, renew and enhance the Country's motorways and main 'A' roads to *“the benefit of road users, people who live next to or depend on the network, and the natural, built and historic environment.”*
21. The Government committed to a five-year funding settlement, the first Road Investment Strategy (RIS1), which was published at the end of 2015 and covered the period 2015 to 2020. It allowed Highways England, and its supply chain, to plan their work efficiently and provided the confidence needed for them both to invest in people and equipment, growing the skills and capability necessary to deliver the scale of improvements planned to the network. RIS1 invested some £17bn in strategic roads – not only in upgrades, but in maintenance and measures to address the effects that old roads have on nearby communities.
22. The second RIS (RIS2) period (2020 to 2025) intends to deliver a further investment of £27.4bn. If the current funding structure is maintained, RIS3 will run from 2025 to 2030, RIS4 from 2030 to 2035, and so on. Investment decisions for each RIS period are normally made by the Government in the financial year immediately preceding the start date.

#### **Route Strategies**

23. Route strategies are one of the key steps of initial research in the development of the RIS. NH are required to produce them as a condition of their operating licence, to inform future decision making.
24. NH are now preparing the route strategies for RIS3 (2025 to 2030) and beyond, which will cover strategic routes, centres of population and industry. They will also include international gateways served by the routes, types of road and patterns of use.
25. NH set out that their route strategies will describe the current performance, constraints, and anticipated performance of routes and where appropriate, they will consider influencing driver behaviour and examine other modes of travel. They have also outlined they want their next round of route strategies to:

- a) establish a strategy for their routes that takes account of the performance of today as well as the challenges and opportunities of the future;
- b) be grounded in evidence informed by interested parties and road user input; and
- c) meet wider connectivity needs of communities and economies as well as the significantly changing needs of people who use our network or live nearby.

26. NH has further set out that their route strategies will be:

- a) **Forward looking:** They will collaborate with interested parties and road users to identify future requirements for each route. These requirements will balance:
  - i. local plans and priorities for roads and other transport networks, considering wider socio-economic developments and Government policy;
  - ii. the need for effective integration with other forms and systems of transport;
  - iii. the need to connect communities and support their growth aspirations;
  - iv. the views of national and local interested parties and road users. These include Transport Focus and the Office of Rail and Road, as well as sub-national transport bodies and elected representatives.
- b) **Widely supported:** They will work with interested parties to ensure that route strategies are recognised externally as the principal network planning tool for the strategic road network. To develop successful route strategies, it's vital to engage with interested parties and road users throughout the route strategy process, ensuring that:
  - i. their priorities are reflected in our current route priorities;
  - ii. we consider their needs for our roads at a local and strategic level when developing each route requirement;
  - iii. we incorporate their data and intelligence in the evidence base that supports our route requirements and our programme of potential interventions;
  - iv. we collaborate wherever we can develop route requirements, including joint studies where they will benefit the SRN.
- c) **Integrated and collaborative:** NH will consider the needs of interested parties and road users. Their approach being widely accessible and integrated with the rest of the transport system where it benefits the SRN. They will consider opportunities for integrated and collaborative solutions as they develop their programme of potential investment priorities. They want to make sure that they consider how strategic routes interact with other transport networks, particularly the interfaces between the SRN and local roads.

- d) **Broad:** They will identify a full range of options and opportunities in each RIS cycle informing operational and investment priorities.
- e) **Dynamic and easy to maintain:** They will adapt and update route strategies when significant changes occur. The route strategies will be dynamic, rather than fixed at a particular point in time. They will achieve this by using regularly updated digital platforms to visually represent future opportunities.

27. NH are taking a phased approach to route strategies, as set out below in the table that they have published:

Phase	When	What it involves
1	Complete	A baseline review of all interventions NH have identified through previous route strategies and subsequent network changes, consolidated into an easily accessible format.
2*	2021 to 2022	Engaging with interested parties and road users, to understand their future aspirations for the network. Publishing our high-level initial overview reports for each route with our Strategic Road Network Initial Report (SRNIR).
3	2021 to 2023	Undertaking a gap analysis between the current state and future requirements for the SRN. This will influence how NH deliver work and investment in the RIS period.

\*The Authority's response is being provide as part NH's Phase 2

28. It is important to note that this is a national process that will likely result in a list of proposals that will exceed levels of funding available. This emphasises the importance of submitting a comprehensive, robust set of comments at this time and the need to seek to work through Midlands Connect (as the region's Sub-National Transport Body) to seek to inform NH's and DfT's decisions about investment in the SRN for the RIS3 (2025 to 2030) and beyond.
29. Most (if not all) of the schemes identified for delivery during RIS3 will either be:
- a) Schemes that were originally identified for delivery during RIS2 and subsequently deferred (around 80% of all RIS2 committed schemes were originally identified for delivery during RIS1).
  - b) Schemes that were identified and developed during RIS2 as 'pipeline projects'. Within Leicestershire there are three ongoing or planned RIS2 pipeline projects (covering the M1 'Leicester Western Access' (J21 to J21a), M1 'North Leicestershire Capacity Improvements' (J21a

to J23a) and the A5 Hinckley to Tamworth) which may result in schemes for delivery during RIS3.

Conversely, most (or all) 'new' issues or potential schemes identified through this round of route strategies are likely to be taken forward as RIS3 pipeline projects, for potential delivery during RIS4 (2030-35) or later RIS periods.

30. From recent evidence, it has become increasingly apparent that significant improvements to the SRN (both in terms of capacity and access) will be needed to facilitate the delivery of emerging and future Local Plans across the Leicester and Leicestershire housing market area (HMA), as well as the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP). It is important that future RIS schemes take full account of these requirements.
31. In relation to this point however, it is worth noting that NH current RIS Pipeline Project scoping and business case modelling processes and requirements (as determined by the Government) only take full account of future development that have secured planning permission. Conversely, development that is allocated through Local Plans (adopted or emerging) but has yet to secure planning approval is classified as 'aspirational growth' and is not included in the main RIS business case modelling and appraisal scenarios (this also applies to longer-term growth identified through the SGP). This would appear to inhibit the identification of future SRN improvements capable of supporting longer-term growth identified through Local Plans (or wider/HMA-wide strategies such as the SGP) as part of the RIS process.

### **Overview of key aspect of the response**

32. The full response is set out in the Appendix to the report. In summary it:
  - a) Sets out issues on the area's current SRN, especially with regard to:
    - i. the M1, particularly congestion, road safety and general lack of network resilience in and around M1 Junction 21 to Junction 21a and continuing issues around Junction 24 to 24a;
    - ii. A5, in particular the poor standard of the route in the Hinckley area, and the congestion and frequent bridge strikes that have economic, environmental and local community impacts (not just in Leicestershire, but in Warwickshire, too), and the significant road safety issues, in particular at the Smockington Hollow and High Cross junctions;
    - iii. the A46 around the north-west edge of Leicester, especially the congestion (particularly at the Hobby Horse junction at Syston) and frequent accidents that have economic, environmental and local community impacts.
  - b) Highlights the air quality and carbon impacts of the SRN in Leicestershire;
  - c) Highlights strategic issues faced in Leicester and Leicestershire in terms of:



- i. the development, successful adoption and delivery of the round of Local Plans currently being prepared and/or on which work will be starting shortly (typically looking out to the mid to late 2030s);
  - ii. meeting the areas housing and employment needs looking out beyond those Local Plans towards 2050;
  - iii. accommodating further economic growth, including proposals for the Freeport and its likely impacts on M1 Junctions 24 and 24a.
- d) Sets out future strategic requirements of the SRN in respect of:
- i. supporting/enabling local plans;
  - ii. supporting Leicester's and Leicestershire's longer-term growth out towards 2050;
  - iii. contributing to reducing Leicestershire's Carbon footprint;
  - iv. continuing to provide effective support for the area's locally, regionally and nationally important logistics and minerals/construction materials sectors;
  - v. better and greater integration of planning and investment in the SRN with that of Major Road Network and Local Road Network.
- e) Sets out a number of 'asks', including:
- i. beyond this evidence gathering stage, to work through the region's Sub-National Transport Body, Midlands Connect with NH and DfT to:
    - secure the earliest possible delivery of the current RIS3 pipeline projects<sup>1</sup>, along with improvements to the A46 corridor, including at the Hobby Horse junction and investigation of a potential new M1 junction '20a' to the south of Leicester;
    - secure the delivery in RIS3 of schemes to address the significant accident problems on the A5 at Smockington Hollow and High Cross junctions;
    - identify any further projects on the SRN required to support Leicester's and Leicestershire's housing and economic growth in the shorter to medium term, i.e. over the next 10 to 15 years (timeframe covered by round of Local Plan's currently in development);
    - plan for what the SRN needs to look like to meet the area's long-term growth needs out to 2050;
    - in conjunction with the preceding points, seek changes to the RIS pipeline project development and appraisal processes that would allow greater account to be taken of longer-term growth requirements set out within Local Plans and/or wider/HMA-wide growth strategies such as the Leicester and Leicestershire SGP;
    - to ensure that the necessary strategies and investment are in place/made to support the decarbonisation of the SRN

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<sup>1</sup> M1 Leicester Western Access, M1 North Leicestershire Extra Capacity and A5 Hinckley to Tamworth

(including investment in sustainable transport modes away from the SRN, where that would help to remove 'local trips' from the SRN thereby helping to improve its operation);

- achieve a more coordinated approach to the planning of and the investment in measure on the SRN, Major Road Network and Local Road network, including longer-term funding settlements for Local Transport Authority aligned to the RIS windows.

33. It should be noted that the A46 Partnership, of which the County Council is a member of, will also be submitting a response to NH. Officers have contributed to the A46 Partnership response and the 'issues' and 'asks' raised are consistent with the County Council's full response set out in the Appendix.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

34. There are no equality and human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Environmental Implications**

35. The response specifies requirements of the SRN and asks of NH and DfT that which is taken up should deliver positive environmental benefits.

### **Background Papers**

Local Transport Plan (2011 - 2026)

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-maintenance/local-transport-plan>

Working together for the benefit of everyone: Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/council-plans/the-strategic-plan>

Report to the Cabinet on 23 November 2018 'Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan:

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5185&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 20 November 2020: Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities 2020 to 2050

<http://cexmodgov1.ad.leics.gov.uk:9075/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5999&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 17 September 2021: Response to Charnwood Borough Council Pre-submission Charnwood Local Plan (2021 to 2037) Consultation

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6446&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 17 September 2021: Response to the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) consultation

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6446&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 26 October 2021: Strategic Plan 2022 to 2026

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6447&Ver=4>

### **Appendix**

Appendix – Leicestershire County Council's response to National Highways Route Strategies Development for RIS3 - November 2021

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