

# National Highways Route Strategies Consultation 2021

## Planning Policy Committee Thursday, 25 November 2021

Report of: Chief Planning Officer

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Purpose: For decision

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Publication status: Unrestricted

Wards affected: All

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### **Executive summary:**

National Highways (formerly Highways England) are consulting on route strategies for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). These strategies are one of the steps in the development of the national Road Investment Strategy (RIS), which is a rolling programme produced by the Department of Transport that sets out plans for the SRN.

The consultation offers the opportunity for the Council to input to this process and raise issues of importance to the District, thus influencing the government's future investment decisions in the SRN.

This report proposes a response to the National Highways Route Strategies consultation and sets out the issues associated with capacity at M25 Junction 6 and the need for investment in infrastructure at the junction and make reference to the wider geographic context.

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### **This report supports the Council's priority of:**

- Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need
- Supporting economic recovery in Tandridge

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## **Recommendation to Committee:**

It is recommended that Members agree that the proposed response attached at Appendix A be submitted to National Highways as a response to the current route strategy consultation.

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## **Reason for recommendation:**

This consultation offers the opportunity for the Council to input to the process of developing the route strategy and raise issues of importance for the district, thus influencing the government's future investment decisions in the SRN through the Roads Investment Strategy (RIS 3) 2025-2030 and beyond.

Improving infrastructure is one of the Council's priorities, and with two motorways running through the District it is considered important to take the opportunity to represent a District perspective on the route strategy, particularly as work undertaken in connection with the Local Plan has demonstrated the need for investment in M25 Junction 6.

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### **1.0 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 National Highways (formerly Highways England) are consulting on route strategies for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). These strategies are one of the steps in the development of the national Road Investment Strategy (RIS), which is a rolling programme produced by the Department of Transport that sets out plans for the SRN.
- 1.2 National Highways (NH) are currently preparing route strategies for RIS 3, which covers the period 2025-2030 and beyond, and are seeking feedback by 30 November on planning for the future. Further information on route strategies is given in the document, 'Vision for Route Strategies – planning for the future of our roads':  
[vision-for-route-strategies.pdf \(highwaysengland.co.uk\)](https://www.highwaysengland.co.uk/vision-for-route-strategies.pdf)
- 1.3 The development of the route strategies brings together input and information from several sources, including local planning and highways authorities. This consultation therefore presents the opportunity for Council to raise the profile of the problems identified with the capacity of M25 Junction 6 to a national level, and to flag the need for investment for the future, not just to serve the District but also users of Junction 6 from the wider area.

## **2.0 The Issues**

- 2.1 The key issue with Junction 6 is that an assessment carried out by the Council's consultants as part of work on the Local Plan, in association with SCC, showed that the junction is operating over capacity in the AM and PM peaks. It is forecast that by 2025 background growth in traffic will result in a worsening of the situation, with a detrimental impact on the functioning of the junction. Details of this are set out in Appendix A, which is the proposed response to the consultation.
- 2.2 Members will be aware that improvements to the junction formed part of this Council's unsuccessful bid to the government's Housing and Infrastructure Fund, the decision on which was received in April 2020. As such, we have not received any financial assistance from Government to overcome the challenges with the junction.
- 2.3 Members will also be aware that further work, funded by this Council, is being undertaken to assess the nature of mitigation which would be needed at the junction to accommodate growth associated with the draft Local Plan as well as the forecast background growth mentioned above. This work continues in order to refine results, and both SCC and National Highways are aware of it and involved in an appropriate way.
- 2.4 It is clear that, regardless of the Local Plan, improvements to Junction 6 will be required, including to the merge/diverge arrangements for vehicles joining and leaving the main motorway.
- 2.5 A further issue is the current Gatwick Airport Development Consent Order consultation, and any implications that developments at the airport may have for traffic joining the M25 via the M23 and using Junction 6. This and other wider strategic implications are referenced in Appendix A.
- 2.6 The current consultation represents an early stage in the route strategies process and runs until 30<sup>th</sup> November. SCC, as highways authority, will also be responding as while their remit is wider than the District, the impacts of junction 6 has implications for the functioning of the A22 which remains under the remit of SCC. Therefore, securing improvements at Junction 6 is of wider benefit and transport officers at SCC have supported Tandridge officers in putting together the proposed response and will be reflecting it in their own submission.
- 2.7 It has been suggested in discussions with National Highways that it would be appropriate for the Council to input to the route strategy development to raise the profile of the issues with Junction 6 and get it "on the map" at the national level.
- 2.8 At the time of writing, work is continuing on potential short to medium term mitigation options for the junction which may need to be undertaken prior to government's next Route Investment Strategy period commencing in 2025. However, it is not clear if a longer term, more comprehensive solution will still be needed and securing recognition in the RIS is an opportunity that should not be missed. While there are no guarantees, if successful strategic recognition of the need for improvements will strengthen the Council's position and bids for funding.

## **Other options considered**

The option of not responding to the consultation was considered but discounted for the reasons set out above.

## **Consultation**

SCC, as highways authority, will also be responding to the consultation. Officers from this Council and SCC have liaised in order that the issues identified in this report and the attached Appendix A are reflected in SCC's response.

## **Key implications**

### **Comments of the Chief Finance Officer**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, any action that is identified as needing to be taken must have the cost implications considered. The impact of any additional cost pressures will be shown in the monthly budget monitoring reports.

### **Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Views are simply being asked for on proposals raised in the National Highways Route Strategy Consultation.

### **Equality**

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

### **Climate change**

The use of petrol and diesel vehicles has detrimental impacts on the climate. However these can be minimised by reducing incidences of queueing and stationary traffic through efficient junction design.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A** - Proposed response to National Highways Route Strategy Consultation

## **Background papers**

None

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