

Vision for Sustainable Infrastructure: Leeds will ensure the delivery of an accessible and integrated transport and communications system which focuses on public transport and active travel

What is this topic about?

As part of our aspiration to make Leeds zero carbon by 2030 we want to ensure that our communities are resilient to the impact of climate change. This includes policies that aid the delivery of low emissions transport and improved digital connectivity, to help reduce journeys by car.

Where are we now?

Our current Local Plan already has policies for the growth of the airport and provides general support for digital connectivity. However there are no detailed policies for HS2, Leeds Station or Mass Transit. Nor are there detailed consideration of digital infrastructure. We feel that now is the time to consider these policy areas.

The proposed policy areas



Where do we want to get to

- We want to consider new policies for HS2, Leeds Station and Mass Transit to maximise the benefits of these schemes.

- We want to improve digital infrastructure provided through new developments to ensure that digital connectivity is given priority.

- We want to review existing policy at the airport to ensure it is effective for managing growth

Have your say

We need your views on whether you think our aspirations for the Local Plan Update are correct. Do you agree that the topic of Sustainable Infrastructure should be considered. If so, what would you like to see new policies contain?

Sustainable Infrastructure Topic Paper

Introduction to the Topic

This topic paper covers a specific range of different types of infrastructure which all have a role to play in supporting sustainable development and responding to the climate emergency. This includes transport infrastructure, considering the proposed High Speed 2 and West Yorkshire Mass Transit schemes, as well as the growth of Leeds City Station and Leeds Bradford Airport. It also considers digital infrastructure, and access to reliable and high speed data networks. Whilst there are other types of infrastructure including health and education, these are not proposed to form a part of this LPU because they are not directly provided by the Council or housebuilders, are for the market to deliver or they are covered by existing policy.

For each topic, general background is provided, and the current policy position is outlined. The reasons that we are considering enhancing the planning framework relating to these types of infrastructure, and what a policy could potentially address, is then identified. This includes:

- **Leeds Station and HS2:** preparing for and maximising the benefits that the national High Speed 2 rail infrastructure project may bring to the City should it be built. This includes shaping the development of Leeds Station, integrating the HS2 line into our city and seeking opportunities for new green and public spaces to be created alongside HS2;
- **Mass Transit:** preparing for any mass transit system that is provided in Leeds so that it can align with wider spatial priorities and deliver wider benefits;
- **Leeds Bradford Airport:** managing the development of Leeds Bradford Airport and access to it in a sustainable manner;
- **Digital Connectivity:** supporting reliable, high-speed data at work, home and whilst on the move, so that Leeds is a modern, resilient and efficient economy which can support increased remote working;

Consultation questions for each topic are then set out. These aim to gain insight into the views of residents, businesses and other interested parties about the proposals and what future planning policy should do or say.

As we are at an early stage in the plan making process, the level of detail provided on each topic varies. This reflects that some of the infrastructure schemes that the policies proposed to respond to – such as High Speed 2 and the growth and development of Leeds Station – have been in preparation for a number of years, and so more detailed information about the proposals (and the potential role of planning policy) is known. Other proposals – such as for Mass Transit – are at a much earlier stage of development, and specific details are still being worked on.

It is important to recognise that some of the schemes that the topics in this paper respond to are being advanced by organisations other than Leeds City Council. For example High Speed 2 is being driven forward by central government, and the Mass Transit scheme is led by West Yorkshire Combined Authority. This consultation is not about getting views on the principle of these schemes in themselves, but about how they should be addressed or responded through new or revised planning policies.

Leeds Station and HS2

Background

The railway network is hugely important for Leeds' economy and the decarbonising of transport. Over the next two decades Leeds Station, which is already the busiest in the north of England, is expected to see passenger numbers double as more people choose to travel by more sustainable modes of transport. We will also see substantial investment being made into our railway infrastructure, with the High Speed 2 (HS2) and Northern Powerhouse Rail schemes having the potential to transform our intercity connections.

The Planning System will have an important role to play in supporting this change by helping to guide and manage the implications that it has for buildings and the use of land, so that the benefits are maximised and any potential adverse impacts are limited.

This paper sets out some initial ideas about how we might introduce a new planning policy for Leeds that responds to this. It focusses particularly on the redevelopment of Leeds Station and on the implications that HS2 would have for the use of land under and around the line, as this is where we think that there is a particular need to enhance and strengthen the planning policy framework.



There is currently some uncertainty about which combination of rail network improvements the Government will prioritise for funding, including which aspects of Northern Powerhouse Rail will be taken forward and whether the HS2 network will reach Leeds. However, despite this, we believe that it is important for us to consider the implications that the different options may have in terms of land use and planning policy requirements now. This is to make sure that we are on the 'front-foot' when these decisions are made by Government, and can quickly respond by getting the necessary policies into place as part of the Local Plan update. This will mean that we are in the best position to maximise the benefits that investment in the rail network and station presents for Leeds, and to minimise any potential adverse impacts that it could have.

What is proposed at Leeds Station?

To accommodate the predicted doubling of passenger numbers at Leeds Station significant investment and development is going to be required. This will be phased over a number of years to ensure that the station can continue to function throughout the construction work. To make sure that all of the different phases of development

work together to respond to all the various opportunities and challenges that the redevelopment presents, a Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan (LISM) has been prepared¹. This outlines proposals for a £500m development that will create a new station campus. It aims to improve the experience of everyone using the station by increasing pedestrian capacity, supporting the regeneration of the South Bank, and incorporating the High Speed Two (HS2), Transpennine Upgrade (TRU) and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) improvements. It will also create opportunities for significant new commercial and residential development in the centre of Leeds.

In October 2020 planning permission was granted² for various improvements and alterations to the station. This enables the creation of a fully accessible multi-modal transport hub, with free flowing pedestrian movement out of the station to the city centre and wider city areas. It involves various improvements to the arrival space to the front of the station, which reduces the flow of vehicular traffic, improves connectivity and creates a safer and more welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists using the station and adjacent streets. It also includes the creation of a new purpose built taxi shelter, and environmental enhancements to the area under the Neville Street Bridge and along Dark Neville Street to make these places feel safer and more attractive for users.

Further applications are expected to come forward in the future, to enable the delivery of additional improvements to the station and to increase its capacity.



What is HS2 and how will it be granted consent?

¹ <https://southbankleeds.co.uk/assets/documents/2017.11.03-Leeds-Integrated-Station-Masterplan-LR-v6-DS.pdf>

² Application reference no. 20/02048/FU

High Speed 2 (HS2) is a new high speed rail line proposed by the Government to link London to Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester. It will serve over 25 stations, connecting around 30 million people. By enabling fast trains to travel on their own dedicated tracks, it will free up space on the existing lines for increased commuter and freight services. In doing so HS2 aims to support the transition to a net zero carbon economy, by providing greater opportunities for people to travel by lower carbon forms of transport.

It is proposed that the HS2 line will be delivered in three phases:

- Phase 1: linking London to Birmingham
- Phase 2a: linking Birmingham to Crewe
- Phase 2b: split into two legs, with the western leg connecting Crewe to Manchester and the eastern leg connecting Birmingham to Leeds.

The new HS2 lines will connect with the existing rail network, enabling HS2 services to run onwards on existing lines, and will also be integrated with other rail investments including Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Engine Rail.

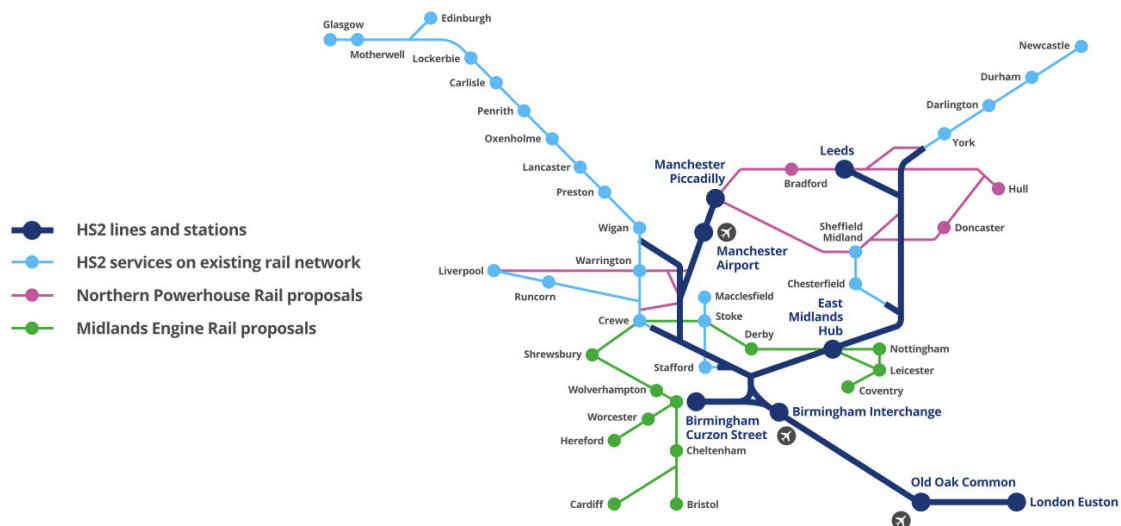


Figure 1 – HS2 route map

Within Leeds, it is proposed³ that the HS2 rail line will enter the district from the South close to M62 J31, with the line of the route splitting to the south east of Oulton. The Leeds spur will enter a tunnel under Woodlesford, before continuing on a viaduct through Stourton and Hunslet and arriving into a new, integrated train station which is connected to the existing station by a common concourse. The mainline continues north between Woodlesford and Swillington, including a 2km viaduct over the River Aire, and then to the north of Garforth before continuing on to Church Fenton. A rolling stock depot (RSD) is proposed in the Temple Green area (part of the Leeds Enterprise Zone), immediately adjoining the western side of the M1.

³ This is based on the route plans published as part of the consultation on the Working Draft Environmental Statement in October 2018, read alongside the revisions made as part of the Design Refinement Consultation in July 2019 and the update to the safeguarding area boundary published in July 2020.

Progress on the eastern leg of Phase 2b (which is the part of the line that will travel to Leeds) is currently paused pending the publication, by the Government, of an Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands. This is expected to be published in 2021.

HS2 is being driven forward by central government. To do this, the Government has established HS2 Ltd, a non-departmental public body, who are responsible for overseeing the development and operation of HS2. HS2 Ltd are funded by the Secretary of State for Transport and are sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT). They are responsible for deciding the route of the line, preparing all the evidence base studies and assessments underpinning the proposals, seeking the necessary approvals for the scheme and then managing its construction and operation.

Due to the scale of the HS2 project, and the range of statutory powers and authorisations that a project of its size and complexity requires, the Government intends to grant planning permission (and the other necessary approvals) for the construction and operation of HS2 through hybrid Bills. A hybrid Bill is set of proposals for introducing new laws, or changing existing ones, that address both public and private matters. They are generally used to secure powers to construct and operate major infrastructure projects of national importance, for example the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and Crossrail.

The route and form of the HS2 route, the measures to be taken to minimise or offset any adverse impacts associated with the construction or operation of the line, and the location, boundaries and heights of the new HS2 part of Leeds Station will all be agreed through the hybrid Bill. Through the hybrid Bill, HS2 Ltd will also be given powers to;

- operate and maintain HS2 and its associated works;
- compulsorily acquire interests in the land required;
- affect or change rights of way, including stopping up or diverting highways and waterways (permanently or temporarily);
- modify infrastructure belonging to other organisations (like utility companies);
- carry out work on listed buildings and demolish buildings in Conservation Areas; and
- carry out protective works to buildings and third-party infrastructure.

The planning consent provided by the hybrid Bill is, broadly speaking, similar to an outline planning permission. **Leeds City Council will not have any authority over determining the above matters.**

What role does Leeds City Council have in planning HS2?

As outlined above, HS2 is being led by HS2 Ltd and will be decided on by central government through the hybrid Bill process. Over the last few years we have been actively engaging with DfT and HS2 Ltd to try and secure a scheme design which minimises impacts on our communities, businesses and the environment, and

maximises the economic and regeneration opportunities it presents for us. This has included;

- Responding to the HS2 Phase 2 route announcement in 2013 and securing subsequent changes to the design, including an integrated station design and a tunnel rather than viaduct design through Woodlesford,
- Responding to HS2's consultation on the Working Draft Environmental Statement for HS2 (WDES) in December 2018;
- Responding to the DfT's consultation on the design refinement in September 2019, which revised the plans to propose a viaduct based scheme between Woodlesford and Leeds Station.

As part of this, we have sought a number of changes to the HS2 plans, which we hope will be addressed through the final proposals for the line that will be set out in the hybrid Bill.

In the event that HS2 does not make all of the changes or requests we ask when the Bill when it is submitted to Government, there will be a further opportunity for us (and any other interested residents or stakeholders) to respond to a public consultation on the Environment Statement supporting the Bill. We (and other interested parties) will also be able to petition and seek amendments to be made as the Bill makes its way through Parliament. This gives us the opportunity to make the case to the Select Committee responsible for considering the Bill about why we consider amendments are necessary.

The consent granted by the hybrid Bill is, broadly speaking, similar to an outline planning permission. As part of the Bill, Local Planning Authorities can opt to become a 'Qualifying Authority' which has limited powers to approve detailed matters related to the scheme. It is expected that we (Leeds City Council) would opt to become a Qualifying Authority.

The issues that we would be able to consider when determining applications for detailed elements of the scheme would be likely to include whether the works ought to be modified to preserve the local environment or local amenity, prevent prejudicial effects on the free flow of traffic, or preserve a site or archaeological or historic interest or nature conservation value. It is important to note, however, that refusals can only be justified where the development could reasonably be carried out within the boundary of the scheme as set out in the Hybrid Bill.

The Council will also have direct responsibility for managing non-HS2 development under and around the HS2 line (before, during and after construction of HS2). These applications will be considered through the 'usual' planning application process overseen by Leeds City Council, with HS2 Ltd being consulted on the application where appropriate.

Vision

We want to support the role of Leeds Station as key part of the City Centre. We want to see it redeveloped to make the most of the potential it holds to enhance the experience of those using the station, incorporating the new HS2 line and Northern Powerhouse Rail upgrades and supporting the expected growth in the number of passengers choosing to use more sustainable forms of transport. We want to see the station form a 'world class' and welcoming entrance to our City, which improves connectivity north-south and east-west across the city centre, and complements the offer of the rest of the City Centre and the South Bank. We want the energy efficiency of the station to be maximised, in line with our overarching objective to address the climate emergency.

We want to ensure that the potential social, environmental and economic benefits of HS2 for Leeds, and the areas and communities around the line, are capitalised on, and that any potential adverse impacts are avoided wherever possible, and minimised or mitigated where not. We want to use the planning system to help support this where possible, recognising that consent for the HS2 line itself would be granted through the hybrid Bill process.

We know that to enable the construction of the HS2 line, land along and surrounding the proposed route would be acquired by HS2 Ltd and cleared. Once the construction phase is complete, this land would no longer be required by HS2 Ltd. We also know that the HS2 line is proposed to travel along a viaduct between Woodlesford and Leeds City Centre. We want to ensure that, when the HS2 line is in operation, best use is made of the land under and surrounding the line. In some areas, this could see the land reverting to its previous use, but in others (particularly in the urban area between Stourton and the City Centre) it could include re-designating it as development land, as land for public space and recreation, for landscaping and ecological enhancements, to provide pedestrian, cycling and vehicular connections, or for uses associated with the operation of the railways. We want all of these uses to integrate well into the surrounding area, supporting regeneration and connecting to, complementing and enhancing our existing green infrastructure and transport networks.

The development of the HS2 line may affect sites which are allocated for development, or which are currently in use by businesses. We want to ensure that the creation of the HS2 line does not adversely affect the ability of Leeds to meet our city-wide needs for employment land, and ensure that provision is made to meet changing needs and displacement impacts.

We have an aspiration for a pedestrian and cycle link to be created along the full length of the HS2 line, though we recognise that in some locations this may be technically challenging. We also want to ensure that the development associated with HS2 and Leeds Station minimises any risk of flooding, with sustainable urban drainage systems that reduce run off and improve water quality to any receiving water courses or sewers. In addition, we would like heritage assets along the HS2 corridor to be protected and enhanced, and for opportunities for their sustainable use and re-use to be taken.

We know that the construction of HS2 would be likely to take around 10 years. As not all of the land within the construction boundary is likely to be used consistently throughout this period, we would like to see temporary 'meanwhile' uses take place.

This could include a range of temporary greening measures, cultural, community or commercial uses occur around the line, which help to keep the area attractive and vibrant during the construction phase.



Current Policy Position

Leeds Station is mentioned on multiple occasions within existing policy documents (including the Core Strategy, Site Allocations Plan and Aire Valley Leeds AAP). The important role of the station as a regional transport hub is recognised and supported. However, there is no specific policy to guide the future development of the station.

HS2 is referenced in the Core Strategy, SAP and Aire Valley Leeds AAP. The indicative route is shown on the Core Strategy Key Diagram, and support to the scheme in principle is given by Spatial Policy 12(i). Through the preparation of the AAP and SAP efforts were made to ensure that policies, allocations and designations do not conflict with the safeguarded area of HS2. However, timing of all of these documents meant that plans for HS2 were not sufficiently advanced to enable it to be considered in detail. The South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework SPD does contain some guidance relating to the HS2 element of Leeds Station and the integration of the line into the city, but this only covers the South Bank area and does not have full weight as policy.

Rationale for Enhanced Policy Framework

Leeds Station

The existing references to Leeds Station in our Local Plan documents do not specifically recognise or reflect the extent and scale of change that is now proposed at the station to increase its capacity, incorporate rail infrastructure improvements and enhance the user experience. They also do not recognise the potential for significant new commercial floorspace to be created as part of these works. Furthermore, the redevelopment and expansion of the station will be phased over a number of years. This will make it particularly important for all schemes for development in and around the station work together to achieve the overall ambitions for the transformed Integrated Station.



Whilst the South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework SPD does include some masterplanning principles for the Integrated Station, these do not have full weight as policy. Enhancing the policy framework for the station would help support the delivery of our vision and maximise the potential benefits associated with the redevelopment of the station for the City, and the wider sub-region.

HS2

The hybrid Bill for HS2 will be focussed on the construction and operation of the railway infrastructure, and the measures to mitigate or compensate for adverse impacts. It will not include the development of any residual land following construction, or integration into surrounding areas outside of the red line boundary. This leaves a gap which could make the delivery of our vision more challenging, particularly in the urban area where the line and viaduct will have many implications for buildings and the use of land.

It is considered that the potential benefits of strengthening the planning policy framework relating to HS2 are twofold:

- 1) It would ensure that the Council is the best position to manage the consequential development / land use implications that result from HS2 through the planning process. This will ensure that proposals, particularly in the urban areas where HS2 will open up new brownfield development opportunities and/or the potential for changes in land use, relate well to wider regeneration plans and support key council strategies and priorities. It also provides the opportunity to secure appropriate mitigation for the scheme (which may go beyond that currently proposed by HS2 Ltd). This will help to maximise the

potential benefits associated with HS2, and minimise any potential adverse impacts.

- 2) It would provide a clear statement of the aspirations and expectations of Leeds City Council in relation to the detailed design and construction of HS2, with particular regard to its integration into the City. Whilst planning policy documents will not hold the same statutory weight in the hybrid Bill process as they do in the planning application process, they nonetheless would be a relevant consideration that could be signposted to in responding to any future consultations on HS2 and/or the petitioning process to support the Council's case.

Proposed policy options

At this stage, we are looking at creating a new Core Strategy policy, which creates a high level framework for considering proposals that are relevant to the development of the station and HS2. The specific implications that HS2 it has for particular sites (including the need for any new or revised allocations) would be addressed in due course, through the review processes for the AVLAAP and SAP. The phasing of this work reflects that it is likely to be a number of years before any sites affected by the HS2 line would become available for (re)development, and so allocations are not a necessity at the current point in time. This will also minimise the potential for abortive work if changes are made to the HS2 scheme.

In the future, we could also look to prepare further guidance that supports the integration of HS2 into the urban fabric of Leeds. This could provide more detailed information about the opportunities, aspirations and expectations for development in particular areas / specific plots under and around the line, and how they relate to the regeneration and development plans for the wider area.



There are a number of options about what a strategic policy on Leeds Station and HS2 could address. This includes;

- 1) **Leeds Station** – it could provide support for the growth and development of the station. As part of this, it could give formal weight to the design principles that have been devised to guide its development and ensure the redevelopment of the existing station, and the new HS2 station, come together to form a single

integrated station. It could highlight the importance of improving access through the station to enhance connectivity and permeability, including through the provision of a second southern entrance. It could also indicate how much new floorspace might be likely to be developed at the station, the uses that would be appropriate, and the importance of this complementing the offer of the wider City Centre and South Bank.

- 2) **Development opportunities** – it could identify the types of uses that would be appropriate alongside (or under) different parts of the new HS2 line, recognising that uses suitable around the Station may be likely to differ those which are appropriate in Hunslet or in Stourton. It could also highlight the importance of taking opportunities to protect and enhance heritage assets along the rail corridor through their sustainable re-use and ensuring that surrounding development is sensitive to their presence.
- 3) **Integration with the Green Space network** – it could emphasise the importance of any new public spaces created alongside or underneath the HS2 line complementing and connecting into the city's existing green space network. There may be an opportunity for a new public park to be developed in Stourton, which incorporates the drainage and flood alleviation infrastructure that will be needed for the proposed HS2 Rolling Stock Depot, and this could be given specific support through the policy. The policy could also provide specific support for the expansion for Rothwell Country Park and Water Haigh Woodland Park, which we know would be adversely impacted by the construction of the HS2 line and their expansion could help to sure a long term benefit.
- 4) **Maximising the potential contribution to addressing climate change** – it could highlight the importance of any new buildings (such as the HS2 element of the station and the Rolling Stock Depot) being built to high standards of energy efficiency. It could also support the provision of new Green Infrastructure under and around the HS2 line, additional tree planting, and the provision of flood alleviation and sustainable urban drainage measures.
- 5) **Pedestrian, cycle and bridleway routes** – it could outline the importance of supporting and enhancing permeability as part of HS2 by protecting and enhancing existing public rights of ways and bridleways wherever possible, and of ensuring that new pedestrian and cycle routes are created alongside (and across) the rail corridor which connect to and complement the wider network.
- 6) **Temporary 'meanwhile' uses** – it could encourage temporary greening measures or cultural, community and commercial uses of land within the HS2 construction boundary in periods where it is not actively required for construction purposes, to help keep these areas attractive and vibrant during the long construction phase.

If the plans for the eastern leg of HS2 (which would connect Birmingham to Leeds) are significantly altered or are not progressed by the Government this would have implications for the scope of this policy. However, even in the absence of HS2, it is considered that there could still be a role for a policy which focussed specifically on guiding and shaping the development of Leeds Station, and any associated works needed as part of delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail or any other rail network investments.

Questions for consultation

- 1. Do you agree that the Local Plan Update should include a new policy on Leeds Station and HS2?**
- 2. If so, what are your views on the suggestion that this policy could focus on Leeds Station, development opportunities, integration with the Green Space network, climate change, pedestrian, cycle and bridleway routes and temporary uses?**

Whilst we think this policy is important, and will help to strengthen our position in steering development at Leeds Station and responding to the implications that HS2 will have for Leeds, it is important to recognise the limitations that this policy would have.

As explained in the background section of this paper, HS2 is a project of central government and is being delivered by HS2 Ltd. Permission for it will be sought through Parliament, through the hybrid Bill process. As a result this, consultation is focussed solely on the principle of creating a planning policy in Leeds which focusses on the growth and development of Leeds Station, and the implications that HS2 would have for the use of land under and surrounding the line. The consultation does not provide an opportunity to debate the principle of creating HS2 in the first place, the line of the route or the mitigation measures that HS2 Ltd are proposing (or any details about the scheme itself). This lies out of the control of Leeds City Council, and so such comments would need to be directed towards HS2 Ltd and the government.

Mass Transit

Background

The [draft Leeds Transport Strategy](#) sets out a vision for Leeds to be a city where you don't need a car and where everyone has an affordable zero carbon choice in how they travel. It acknowledges that a significant number of new jobs are forecasted in Leeds City Centre over the next 10-15 years, and that this will put extra pressure on the already heavily congested transport system. If transport capacity is insufficient, not everyone will be able to access the employment opportunities in the City, which in turn could constrain city centre employment and development. There is also a vital need to respond to the Climate Emergency declaration by reducing transport related emissions across the city.

Investment in public transport infrastructure capacity can help address these issues. The draft Leeds Transport Strategy sets a vision for a fully integrated low carbon transport network. It aligns with the wider vision of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) for a modern, integrated transport system for West Yorkshire. It is proposed this will include improved walking, cycling, bus and rail networks alongside a new 'Mass Transit' network. 'Mass Transit' is the term used to describe a large-scale public transport system, which typically uses modern high capacity buses, trams and tram-train vehicles (or a combination of these). The vision of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is that Mass Transit can fill the gap in public transport provision between bus services and heavy rail, adding capacity to the key corridors within the city region, making it easier for more people to access more jobs. A city region mass transit solution will deliver the right blend of technology, priority and capacity to move high volumes of people in the parts of our transport network where demand is greatest. This is a crucial missing element of our transport investment pipeline for corridors where heavy rail is not an option and the capacity of bus network solutions is insufficient. It also has the potential to help support regeneration, with the increased ease of movement helping to deliver wider benefits to the areas on the route. As such, Mass Transit can support the region's aims of raising productivity, delivering inclusive growth, and addressing the climate emergency through clean growth and a low carbon transport future, all of which are underpinned by a 21st Century transport system.

Plans for Mass Transit are still at an early stage, but WYCA has made clear that it will play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality for the region, primarily by being low emission and providing a sustainable alternative to the private car. Construction is estimated to begin in the mid-2020s, and will take place in phases, with a target completion date for all phases by 2040. Further details on the scheme can be found in WYCA's [Connectivity Infrastructure Plan and Mass Transit Vision 2040](#).

For clarity it is not for the Leeds Local Plan to approve Mass Transit in principle or its detailed routes. It is not the purpose of this consultation to seek your views on that principle or those detailed routes, as the Local Plan is not the mechanism for deciding on those matters. However, for the reasons set out below it is considered that there is merit in the Local Plan Update including a policy on Mass Transit.

Current Policy Position

There are currently no policies on Mass Transit within the Leeds Local Plan. Whilst the adopted Core Strategy makes reference to NGT (New Generation Transport), a trolleybus scheme for Leeds, this proposal did not proceed. Mass Transit is a different scheme, designed and promoted by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, at a regional level.

Rationale for Enhanced Policy Framework

Whilst Mass Transit is not a planning initiative it is considered important that up to date local policy is in place to ensure that Mass Transit can be delivered effectively. It will also be important that the other associated benefits it may present to places along the route are capitalised on, including through its integration with the green space network, future developments, and pedestrian and cycle routes.

Possible Policy Options

The Local Plan Update could contain a policy that sets out strategic support for the scheme, and that also seeks to ensure that important aspects such as biodiversity, greenspace, active travel and Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are integrated into the scheme. It could identify key principles to support the realisation of wider benefits of the route to the places along the line. Once the detailed route of the Mass Transit network has been determined by WYCA, there is also the potential for the Local Plan Update to protect the detailed route of Mass Transit in Leeds from other uses, as developments built on or next to the line could impede its delivery.

Questions for consultation

- 3. Do you agree that the Local Plan Update should include policy on Mass Transit? If so, what elements of the scheme would you like to see new planning policy focus on?**

Leeds Bradford Airport

Background

Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA) is located in north-west Leeds close to the settlements of Horsforth, Yeadon and Rawdon.

As a regional airport, LBA provides a significant role to the Leeds City Region and the City. It acts as an international gateway and forms a key part of our strategic and economic infrastructure.

The Council's current policy, adopted in 2014, encourages a well-connected and accessible airport by sustainable forms of transport and surface access improvements to manage development at the airport and address environmental impacts such as carbon emissions arising from buildings and access to the airport. Whilst the airport is within the Green Belt the current approach is to manage airport related development within a defined Airport Operational Land Boundary.

Following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, the Council recognised⁴ that:

- global emissions arising from aviation are significant and damaging to the environment
- planned increases to aviation in the national strategy over the next ten years will see a rise in emissions that will not be addressed by improvements to fuel efficiency or technology and that offsetting to compensate for the rise in emissions will not be sufficient
- aviation growth and meeting zero carbon targets are fundamentally incompatible until such time as new technologies are developed

The Council also recognises the contribution that the local airport makes to the local economy and the thousands of jobs, directly and indirectly, dependent on it along with the benefits that international travel brings, both for business and the individual.

- Leeds Bradford airport is the 15th busiest airport in the country. In 2016 all airports in the UK contributed 37.3 million tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (mtCO₂) through domestic and international flights. LBA flights contributed to 0.2 mtCO₂. This compares to Heathrow (19.5 mtCO₂) and Manchester (3.2 mtCO₂)

Most of the passengers from Leeds and the wider region currently choose to fly from other airports, so managing carbon emissions from flights at Leeds Bradford Airport alone will not control total aviation emissions generated by the city's population. Against this background we are mindful of the challenges of Leeds committing to an airport strategy, in the absence of a national strategy that takes a holistic approach covering all UK airports. Therefore the Council has asked Government to:

- set an ambitious national aviation strategy that integrates aviation into the national carbon roadmap;
- create a level playing field for all national and regional airports;

⁴ At a report to Leeds Executive Board 7th January 2020
<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s198403/Climate%20Emergency%20Cover%20Report%20191219.pdf>

- invest in rail to provide realistic alternatives to flying for domestic and European flights (questions on planning for rail infrastructure are set out elsewhere in this Topic Paper).

In light of this challenging national context, at this early stage of the Local Plan Update we are seeking views from stakeholders on whether policies relating to the airport should be within the scope of the Local Plan Update and what issues an updated policy might address. In particular, we wish to explore whether our existing policies help to support the airport's role as a positive international gateway, striking the right balance between principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Within this review it will be important to be guided by current and emerging national guidance on airport development.

As you may be aware, Leeds Bradford Airport have recently submitted a planning application for a new terminal building and associated flight regimes, which the Council moved to approve in principle on the 11th February 2021, subject to planning conditions. This application was assessed against existing Local Plan policy and other material considerations. However, this Local Plan Update process is a separate planning process to the planning application, and will guide the long term future of the airport not the current planning application. Consequently the focus of any response ought not to be concerned with those matters detailed in the recent planning application, but rather should focus on the future of the Airport post-completion of the development already outlined.

Current Policy Position

The current **Aviation Policy Framework (2013)** sets out the Government's objectives and principles to guide plans and decisions at the local and regional level. The Government's objectives are that airports:

- help achieve long-term economic growth, recognising that the aviation sector is a major contributor to the economy.
- need to balance the benefits of aviation and its costs, particularly its contribution to climate change and noise
- can grow so long as they address specific local impacts on a case by case basis

The Government's approach to climate emissions from flights is for action at a global level as the best means of securing reductions in carbon from flights. Indeed, the Climate Change Act (2008) does not include international aviation emissions in the carbon reduction target set by the act.

Government is in the process of replacing the Aviation Policy Framework (2013) and the consultation document **Aviation 2050: The Future of UK Aviation (Consultation 2018)** considers emerging national policy. The consultation ended in April 2019. The Government signals support for the growth of aviation and the benefits delivered, provided the growth takes place in a sustainable way, with actions to mitigate the environmental impacts. Regional growth and connectivity is supported and the document says:

"The Government is supportive of airports beyond Heathrow making best use of their existing runways, subject to proposals being assessed in light of environmental and economic impacts." (para.4.3).

The Leeds Local Plan already contains a policy (SP12 of the Core Strategy) on the airport which is supportive of growth to enable the airport to fulfil its local and regional role, provided that a series of criteria would be met. These criteria address a need for major public transport infrastructure, surface access improvements and a strategy to guide this, environmental assessment and mitigation and management of local issues.

Rationale for an Enhanced Policy Framework

In considering whether the policy should be within scope of the Local Plan Update and what elements may be its focus the following issues are relevant:

- Environmental impacts and mitigation
 - noise impacts
 - air quality
 - landscape
 - carbon emissions from surface access (mainly by cars driving to the airport)
- Public Transport Infrastructure
 - surface access to and from the airport by sustainable travel options
 - the prospective rail halt
- Strategic Role
 - the role of LBA in Leeds and the wider region.
 - Connecting Leeds to a variety of international business and leisure destinations.
 - Inward investment and economic benefits derived through the airport
- The local area
 - the relationship of the airport with its nearest local communities

Consultation Questions

- 5. Do you agree that the Local Plan Update should contain new or updated policies for Leeds Bradford Airport? If so, do you have any views on what new or updated policies should contain?**
- 6. National policy refers to the importance of achieving sustainable development in environmental, economic and social terms. Should changes be made to airport policies within the Local Plan Update to improve the balance between these three aspects of sustainability?**

Digital Connectivity

Background

The Council has articulated an ambition to deliver wider digital connectivity benefits for the city as a whole with an ambition to have the best connectivity in the UK for all across the district, to be able to access gigabit capable services. Access to reliable, high-speed connectivity will allow people to work from home more easily and will give homes fast and reliable connections. One in five new-build homes are still being built without gigabit-speed connections nationwide. A range of evidence shows direct benefits from improved digital connectivity, including large increases in download speeds leading to more productive economic activity. Wider potential impacts are in areas such as remote healthcare, education, travel and transport, and wellbeing, including loneliness.

The provision of 'Sustainable Infrastructure' is an important Leeds Best City priority, and this includes the provision of digital infrastructure and increasing digital inclusion. This also aligns with the Council's inclusive growth ambitions to bring a choice of connectivity types and providers to residents in Leeds. The Covid-19 Pandemic has in particular highlighted the essential need for digital infrastructure, with increasing reliance on remote working, remote communication to include home schooling, online shopping and other services. Digital Connectivity in terms of gigabit connection is now seen as essential infrastructure to facilitate the services and facilities which are now an integral part of our lives.

The Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy also identifies Leeds as a digital city in particular promoting and growing the digital sector. The Strategy recognises that digital connectivity is an essential part of the modern economy and increasingly people are working in more flexible ways and that a smart digital city provides one solution to congestion and other challenges. Greater digital infrastructure coverage also increases social inclusion and equality by underpinning wider accessibility for all.

Current Policy Position

The National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) (November 2020), sets out a plan for long-term investment in the UK's infrastructure. The government is working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit capable coverage by 2025, but will seek to accelerate roll-out further to get as close to 100% as possible, this proposed policy helps to achieve that target.

National Planning Guidance is supportive of improving digital connectivity. Paragraphs 112 and 113 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set out support for improved connectivity. In particular the guidance sets out that (para 112) that 'Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being', and that 'Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks'. Also the NPPF recognises that Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments.'

On the 17th March 2020 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport announced that the government will legislate to make sure new-build homes come

with gigabit-speed broadband fit for the future. The move will mean developers will be legally required to install high-quality digital infrastructure from the outset, make it a priority as part of the build, and ensure broadband companies are on board. It is anticipated that the government will amend building regulations to support gigabit broadband and housing developers to work with network operators. The details and scope of this are awaited, it not yet known what level of provision may come out of this announcement or when this would be applicable.

It is also important to recognise that existing permitted development rights largely for mobile phone coverage, are wide ranging and it is likely these will be further widened in the future.

The Leeds Core Strategy sets out local planning policies. The Core Strategy Spatial Policy 8 (SP8): Economic Development Priorities provides general support for high quality communications as below;

SP8(ix) Support the advancement of high quality communications infrastructure to foster sustainable economic growth and to enhance business links subject to landscape, townscape and amenity considerations

Policy SP8 is supportive of high quality communications infrastructure however a new single complementary policy which sets out a requirement for new build housing for new developments is required to ensure that digital infrastructure is considered, designed and provided sympathetically and early as part of site development.

In addition Leeds City Council is committed to the provision of digital connectivity. Executive Board in December 2019 agreed the Full Fibre Network Programme for Leeds to go through a new procurement process for a partner to build and deliver full fibre connectivity to ensure the provision of the greatest amount of coverage, coupled with the opportunity to extend connectivity further with commercial investment within LCC's financial envelope. Development of a gigabit capable network provides the Council with an opportunity to influence the digital infrastructure position of the city which will have positive effects for businesses and residents across the district.

Rationale for enhancing the planning policy framework.

It is considered that there are benefits to introducing new policy for digital connectivity to focus on providing digital connectivity for new sites and new developments only.

A new policy could provide a policy hook to ensure that developers are incentivised to provide gigabit capable new housing. The benefits of this would be that; (i) we are providing housing which is meeting the needs of our modern lives, (ii) new housing is designed and built with good gigabit connectivity from the outset, (iii) new housing is not retrofitted later with digital connectivity provision, (iv) to future proof new housing, (v) to ensure that digital infrastructure is sympathetically designed as part of site development as essential infrastructure, (iv) to reduce digital poverty, this would ensure that digital connectivity is provided for all.

An approach which promotes access to all is supported. There is a disparity between the connection quality of high value and lower value homes, where more expensive homes are more likely to receive full fibre connections. The policy remit would not include mobile data connectivity for 4G/5G coverage.

Proposed policy options

There are two broad options for the approach to digital inclusion for new developments. These are set out below;

Option (1) Do nothing. This option recognises that digital connectivity is high on the Government's agenda, and national guidance may override the need for a policy in time. The Digital Secretary in March last year announced that 'The government will amend building regulations to guarantee that all new homes have the right infrastructure to support gigabit broadband and housing developers must work with network operators.' The outcome of the announcement is awaited. On the 26th Jan 2021, the first house builder 'Barratt Developments' announced that they will work with providers to ensure that "gigabit-capable" broadband infrastructure is "installed as standard" across all of their new UK build developments. This has shown that the industry is keen to develop digital infrastructure as an essential part of development, for sites of 20+ properties (and reduced rates for smaller sites where developers make a contribution towards the build). It is likely that other developers may follow in time.

Option (2) Introduce a new policy. The policy could set out a requirement for the provision of digital connectivity for new housing developments. The planning system can enable the delivery of new infrastructure by ensuring that all premises have appropriate ducting and other provision built into their design to future proof new developments. A connectivity strategy as part of a planning application could be encouraged to avoid the need for retro-fitting to provide full fibre connectivity. In taking this approach, it could be recognised that digital infrastructure is essential infrastructure and should not be retrofitted. National guidance may override the need for a policy, however, until the specification, details and timescales of this are known, the outcome of this cannot be guaranteed. By introducing a policy the City is being proactive in setting out a local policy direction which developers will be required to follow.

Consultation Questions

The Local Plan update consultation is seeking your views on what you think are the key issues for digital connectivity. In particular we would like to know;

- 8. Do you agree that digital connectivity is essential infrastructure for new housing in Leeds?**
- 9. Do you agree that a policy should be introduced on digital connectivity?**
- 10. Should the policy focus on residential development only or commercial development too?**
- 11. Should a digital connectivity strategy be a requirement for all planning applications?**