

The Implications of the Network North Government Announcement for Leeds

Date: 18th October 2023

Report of: Director of City Development

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

On 20th September 2023 Executive Board considered a report which set out the history behind the development of the HS2 proposition for Leeds, the implications of the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP) on 18th November 2021 and the subsequent publication of the terms of reference for a study into how to bring HS2 trains to Leeds and Leeds Station Capacity on 17th July 2023. Executive Board endorsed a proposal which would resolve the gaps left by the IRP taking a pragmatic and cost effective approach which had been recommended by independent consultants SLCRail commissioned by the HS2East group of authorities.

On 4th October 2023 the Government published the Network North document which cancelled HS2 Phase 2, HS2 East and the IRP study into how to bring HS2 trains to Leeds. It committed to invest £36bn in alternative transport schemes across the country.

This report sets out the Network North references for Leeds and considers the interfaces and impact that this may have on existing infrastructure programmes, the operation and growth of the city. It begins to identify where further clarity is required.

Recommendations

That Executive Board

- a) note the implications of the DfT Network North (document attached at Appendix A) Government announcement for Leeds.
- b) Seek Government assurance that the rail commitments in the Integrated Rail Plan and Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline will remain commitments apart from HS2 Phase 2 and endorse the Council writing to government seeking clarity regarding the proposed Leeds Area Study which incorporated a study into Leeds Station Capacity and which is still required to understand how to accommodate the revised services referenced by Network North including whether a T shaped station is required.

- c) Endorse a continued collaborative approach to development and implementation of the detail behind the proposals in the Network North document, the development of a new Leeds Station Integrated Masterplan and Integrated Transport Growth Strategy. This is critical to ensuring that Leeds remains a resilient, globally competitive and investible city which continues to operate for all our businesses and residents. Further reports to be brought back to Executive Board as more information becomes available including safeguarding and future consenting strategies.

What is this report about?

- 1 Leeds is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK with a population of 812,000 and an 8.1% increase over the last decade which exceeds the national average. It has delivered approximately 3,000 new homes per annum over the last decade, it is a tariff authority and has been recognised in the Deloitte Crane survey over the last couple of years as having significant live building developments underway and compares well with other cities across the country. The city attracts global investment which supports its policy of inclusive growth.
- 2 The 2018 Leeds City Region HS2 Growth Strategy anticipated that the delivery of the HS2 infrastructure would deliver £52 billion Gross Value Added (GVA) to the Leeds economy over a 30-year period, including delivering over 8,000 additional homes and 35,000 new jobs.
- 3 On 20th September 2023 Executive Board approved a report which set out the gap in rail provision which had arisen as a result of the publication of the Government's IRP on 18th November 2021 and the subsequent publication on 17th July 2023 of the terms of reference for a study into how to bring HS2 trains to Leeds and Leeds Station Capacity. The report proposed a pragmatic, cost effective phased solution building on the IRP commissioned by the HS2East authorities and produced by SLCRail.
- 4 Subsequently on 4th October 2023 the Government published Network North which cancels HS2 Phase 2, HS2East and the study into how to bring HS2 trains to Leeds. It sets out a new £36bn plan to improve the country's transport. The proposed HS2 funding will instead be used to change the Government's approach to transport infrastructure in line with 3 priorities. They are to:
 - a) drive better connectivity within towns, suburbs and cities
 - b) drive better connectivity between towns and cities
 - c) improve everyday local journeys for people
- 5 We understand that whilst some of the proposals in Network North have previously been announced in a number of different funding programmes, the proposals in the 2021 IRP except HS2 Phase 2, HS2 East and the Leeds HS2 study, remain committed. It is also understood that the commitments in the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline for Leeds remain committed. However, it is recommended that clarity is sought on this point given the lack of reference in the Network North document.
- 6 The references set out in Network North which impact Leeds are as follows;
 - a) Electrification and upgrade of the Leeds – Sheffield line to deliver 3-4 fast trains (40 minutes) an hour and increase capacity on this line by 300%.
 - b) Bring Hull into Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) – improving the line speed between Leeds and Hull providing 2 fast trains an hour to Leeds reducing journey time from 58 to 48 minutes and doubling capacity.
 - c) Fully fund mass-transit metro in West Yorkshire with £2.5bn (£500m already committed in CRSTS 2 Spring Statement). Network North sets out that this could, in time, create a transformative network of up to 7 lines, which could eventually connect Leeds with Huddersfield, Wakefield, Bradford and Halifax. Separate to Network North, the Government

website also identified the initial £2bn funding being made available in CRSTS 3 (2030) and clarity is being sought on whether this is correct as it is later than currently envisaged.

- d) All six northern city regions will receive 75% more funding than they do now to improve connectivity in their areas, benefitting those who live in towns and suburbs around their cities including Leeds, and could pay for schemes such as extending the bus rapid transit corridors in Leeds.
 - e) Share an additional £100 million between the North and Midlands to support the development and rollout of London-style contactless and smart ticketing, supporting seamless travel by enabling contactless or smartcard payment.
 - f) Commit an additional £3.3 billion to tackle potholes as part of a new nationwide road resurfacing scheme.
 - g) Review consenting legislation to deliver infrastructure schemes including Transport and Works Act Orders as part of a broader reform programme to speed up planning, decision-making and delivery for big infrastructure projects.
 - h) The £2 bus fare was due to expire at the end of October but will now continue with it until the end of 2024.
 - i) Improve the accessibility of train stations. It is not yet clear which stations will be able to benefit from refitted lifts, tactile surfaces, ramps and footbridges, new ticket gates and accessible waiting rooms and toilets and how this fits into the existing programme of works.
 - j) A purpose of the proposals is to enable the increase of services including a third train an hour to London terminating at Bradford. Over the last 4 years there has been a significant reduction in services to Leeds and therefore this is welcomed, however as the services will run on the existing network into Leeds existing station and it is hoped that the services cancelled during covid and subsequently will be reinstated, it will be critical to understand how this additional capacity on the network within the Leeds boundary and at Leeds Station will be created.
- 7 As can be seen, these proposals were published on 4th October and are at very high level. Given neither WYCA nor LCC has been party to the Network North development, work needs to continue to analyse and review what this means for the city and West Yorkshire.
- 8 Over the last decade the city has been able to develop and grow because of the spatial planning undertaken for the proposed integration of HS2 into the city. This has enabled the rapid development of the city ahead of HS2 by providing developers and investors with certainty. It has been achieved through the adoption in 2018 of the Leeds Station Integrated Masterplan, the South Bank Regeneration Framework, the HS2 Growth Strategy and in 2023 the adoption of the update to the Local Development Framework for Leeds Station. In light of the Network North, it is plausible that proposals set out in these documents no longer provide that spatial framework and certainty.
- 9 Over the following months we will need to work closely with DfT to understand the implications of introducing Network North and while we welcome the ambition for inter and intra city connectivity it will be of critical importance to ensure that the proposals are integrated spatially into the development plans for the city and do not conflict with existing spatial proposals.
- 10 Network North refers to the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) Rail Needs Assessment which was undertaken to support the IRP. It should be noted that as reported at the time this assessment ranked Leeds equivalent to Wigan and Warrington in terms of the size of its Travel To Work Areas (TTWA). Executive Board endorsed a formal response to DfT with an independent assessment which refuted this position at the time as it significantly downplayed the importance and passenger numbers at Leeds Station.
- 11 Leeds station has consistently been the busiest in the north for a decade with passenger numbers growing from 9 million in 2000 to 34 million in 2019. While post COVID passenger return has been slow in the southeast it has bounced back in the North with Leeds Station at on average 86% of pre COVID levels despite a significant reduction in train services, and days lost

through industrial action and disruption on the Network. Recently published figures by On Time Trains, which reviews national rail data, showed that 42% of all services to Leeds were either delayed or cancelled.

- 12 It is therefore proposed that the Council writes to government seeking clarity that the Leeds Station Capacity study previously announced in the IRP will continue to be undertaken albeit excluding HS2 services albeit still considering a conventional T shaped station.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 13 The cancellation of HS2 coming to Leeds will impact on the city not just in rail capacity, resilience and performance terms, but also in the loss of future solutions for bus, taxi and mass transit interchange with the station which the Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan presented. In the report to Executive Board in September the importance of Leeds Station in terms of volume of passengers, criticality on the network, multi modal integration for onward travel and the constrained location at the heart of the city centre was outlined and a number of critical tests were endorsed which would have been addressed by the new HS2 Station but which must still be resolved if the city and station are to function effectively in future. The critical tests are as follows;
- a) Resilience – ensuring that in the event of the closure of the existing station in a civil emergency alternative rail travel from the city centre is possible and even more importantly to ensure that the economy is maintained and grown for the city.
 - b) Local Connectivity - Onward travel – Pick up and drop off at the existing station is constrained, impacts negatively on the highway network and was to be solved through the T shaped station this must be solved as part of the preferred option.
 - c) Regional Connectivity - Must connect Leeds with its neighbours Sheffield and Bradford as well as regionally with Nottingham, Derby, Chesterfield, Newcastle.
 - d) Deliverability – unlike in 2000 there is no land in the city centre to build a temporary station while works to the existing are undertaken. Leeds station and approach lines are both constrained by geography and developments.
 - e) Economy - inevitably any proposals will cause disruption, but this needs to be balanced in terms of disruption to rail passengers, residents, employers, highway network and the delivery of early benefits.
 - f) Passenger Safety – pedestrian capacity is very constrained at Leeds Station, Leeds Existing Station Programme will improve this based on existing rail programmes, a preferred option must ensure that both pedestrian and network capacity issues are addressed.
 - g) At a strategic level consideration needs to be given to the critical importance of Leeds Station as economic enabler for the city and wider West Yorkshire region, and its role as the principal transport hub in the city and 12th busiest station in the UK located at a vital point in the national network.
- 14 The above critical tests remain valid and still need to be satisfied. The most effective way to do this is to develop an updated Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan, the surrounding spatial framework and develop a new Integrated Transport Growth Strategy based on the current proposals. It is recommended that this request is made to DfT as soon as possible given that at present certainty on the proposed infrastructure improvements cannot be given to developers and investors and this lack of certainty will act as a brake on economic growth. The Council's position remains clear that taking into these critical tests, the need to increase capacity within the existing station i.e by moving services into the new T shaped station that this is still the Council's preferred option in respect of increasing capacity albeit for conventional rail rather than HS2.
- 15 Network North outlines at a very high level additional proposals for NPR in addition to the core NPR proposals identified in the IRP. The Council would welcome a collaborative approach with

DfT and other Transport bodies to developing proposals for NPR and their interface with existing rail and emerging infrastructure programmes to ensure that interfaces with the city as a place to live and work are integral to the final scheme.

- 16 From the initial review of Network North it is not clear how or if improvements will be made to lines from Birmingham to the East Midlands and what this will mean for connections from Birmingham to Leeds. Network North provides for infrastructure to support HS2 compatible trains running on the West Coast Mainline from Birmingham to Manchester however it does not appear to provide for HS2 compatible trains to run from Birmingham to Leeds on the Midland Mainline meaning that at present HS2 compatible trains could only run to Leeds from Birmingham via Manchester and arriving via the western throat to Leeds Station in the future. Given that HS2 trains from Birmingham to Manchester will now have to run at a reduced speed, it is unlikely that there will be any journey time benefit derived from this route.
- 17 At this point it is understood that safeguarding of the HS2 East route in Leeds will not be lifted until Summer 2024 after the analysis of whether any of the safeguarding is required for the proposals in Network North. This means that uncertainty for businesses and residents impacted by the safeguarding will continue until that point.
- 18 The consenting strategies for the rail programmes identified in the IRP have not yet been confirmed but it is anticipated that numerous Transport and Works Act Orders will be required such as the TWAO for the TRU which is also on the agenda for Executive Board today. It is therefore important that any changes proposed to consenting legislation is developed in the context of the timescales for existing programmes and does not impact on delivery.
- 19 Network North commits to the delivery of the extension of HS2 to Euston Station. However, it is on the basis of a significantly reduced scope of 6 platforms which would mean that it would not be able to accommodate any increase in HS2 services from the North in the future which would have to terminate at Old Oak Common. The proposal is also reliant on increased private sector funding being identified. Consequently, it would appear that Kings Cross Leeds Station will remain the link between Leeds and London and the capacity of these two stations will be one of the limiting factors to any increase in rolling stock capacity between the two cities in the future.
- 20 Linked to the above, the IRP study into how to bring HS2 trains to Leeds and Leeds Station Capacity has been cancelled under Network North. This combined with the significant changes proposed by Network North means that elements of the SLC recommendation for how to build on the IRP and address the gaps it left, no longer provides a complete solution for Leeds. It is therefore recommended that further work is undertaken over the following months to understand the implications of Network North, how this interfaces with existing ongoing infrastructure programmes and the city, and this is brought back to Executive Board.
- 21 However, notwithstanding the above, it remains the case that the IRP Leeds Study is still required to consider Leeds Station capacity for the now proposed rail programmes and DfT needs to confirm that this work will be undertaken.
- 22 The delivery of mass transit on an accelerated programme also needs to be integrated into the city and existing transport modes. Delay to delivery would continue to constrain connectivity within the city. Clarity on the timing of funding stream needs to be confirmed by government as soon as possible.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 23 Health and Wellbeing – Network North sets out a series of transport proposals which when implemented will make it easier for passengers to travel within our city and region and between

regions in the North which will improve people's wellbeing by reducing stress, enabling people to work and live where they want and connect communities.

- 24 Inclusive Growth – Productivity in the North is significantly reduced as a result of poor transport connectivity and in particular rail connectivity. The Network North proposals go some way towards improving rail connectivity between Leeds and Hull, Bradford, Sheffield, Nottingham albeit there remain gaps particularly due to the lack of rail enhancements between the East Midlands and Birmingham. This improved connectivity means more opportunities for people to access jobs without having to move home. Additional monies towards pot holes will help keep traffic moving and therefore save delays in travelling.
- 25 Zero Carbon – All of the proposals within Network North to electrify railway lines are welcomed in supporting the Council's target to achieve net zero. This is particularly important given that only 26% of West Yorkshire railway lines are currently electrified. The confirmed funding for mass transit is positive in supporting a clean form of transport in the city and to travel to adjoining districts.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 26 Consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure have been consulted on the emerging Network North report.

What are the resource implications?

- 27 At this stage the proposals are high level and the implications for resourcing not yet defined. In addition, some of the resource requirements had already been anticipated for example to support and respond to the Combined Authority promoted mass transit system for West Yorkshire and the additional requirements will now need to be identified and put in place.
- 28 The Council will seek to work with the Department for Transport to understand the statutory consenting strategies and implementation plans for the new proposals but given the volume of work anticipated additional Council resources will inevitably be required to respond to these.
- 29 Funding for the Council resource to support the delivery of the proposals will be sought from the specific schemes as they become clear.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 30 Safeguarding – the Network North document indicates that safeguarding for HS2 will be lifted by Summer 2024 this means a further period of uncertainty for businesses and residents impacted by it. It is also not clear whether any of the existing safeguarded land may still be required to deliver proposals under Network North. Clarity will be sought from the Department for Transport.
- 31 Consenting powers – The majority of the proposals identified in Network North are not currently planned and therefore do not yet have consenting strategies. In order to deliver the proposals consenting strategies will need to be put in place and these may require the compulsory purchase of homes and businesses. Clarity will be sought from Department for Transport as

they develop the Network North proposals however it should be noted that this may take some years to become clear given the time required to develop schemes and their business cases.

- 32 Leeds Station Resilience – Leeds only has one city centre station which is built on a Victorian viaduct over 2 roads, a canal and a river in the centre of the city surrounded by closely packed buildings in a fine urban grain. HS2 would have provided resilience to this by creating a new adjacent city station and new lines from the south. The existing station is forecast to reach capacity by the beginning of the next decade and urgent discussions will be sought with Department for Transport on how this can be addressed taking into consideration mass transit will not increase capacity within Leeds Station.
- 33 Disruption on the existing network – All of the Network North proposals for Leeds are proposed to impact existing infrastructure and therefore services. As we have seen with the TransPennine Route Upgrade alternative transport solutions need to be put in place while the upgrades are taking place these need to be planned taking into consideration operation of the rail network, impact on the highway network of rail replacement buses to find the optimum compromise for community, business and place. We therefore need to consider the impact on existing network and services through these proposed upgrades.
- 34 Interfaces between schemes and the city to ensure the city can continue to function and grow - The Council will work with DfT initially to understand the programming and interfaces between the rail proposals and the crucially the impact on both passengers and place which ultimately impact the growth of the city.
- 35 Rail Connectivity between East Midlands Parkway (EMP), Derby and Birmingham – Network North does not appear to fill the gap left by the cancellation of the eastern spur of HS2 from Birmingham to EMP other than through a proposed bus route from Derby to EMP. Without detail it is difficult to analyse the impact but it appears that this means there is very little improvement in journey time between Leeds and Birmingham – Clarity will be sought from DfT on the rail network proposals in the East Midlands under Network North and what this means for rail connectivity with Leeds.
- 36 Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan and HS2 Growth Strategy are now outdated – These policy documents together with the Local Development Framework have enabled the city to grow around and with the land safeguarded for HS2. Now that HS2 has been cancelled it is critical that a revised Integrated Station masterplan is developed which resolves how pick up and drop off by private vehicles and taxis at Leeds Station can be resolved now that HS2 will no longer resolve this issue. It is also critical that a new integrated transport growth strategy is developed based on the Network North proposals. A request for funding and collaboration will be made to government to support the development of these as with the previous strategy.
- 37 Mass Transit – there is a risk that the funding allocation is not confirmed as part of CRSTS 2 but as part of CRSTS 3 which would potentially delay delivery of the infrastructure until 2030.

What are the legal implications?

- 38 Where land is currently safeguarded for HS2 the Network North document indicates that this will be lifted by summer 2024. It is anticipated that as with the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) additional land will be required to facilitate the new / revised proposals and this level of detail is not yet known. If additional land is required to enable the implementation of the revised proposals this will impact the homes and businesses located on the land required as the consenting strategies are implemented.
- 39 The Network North document sets out an intention for the Government to review the consenting legislation used to deliver infrastructure schemes including Transport and Works Act Orders (TWAOs). It is noted that numerous TWAOs will be required to implement the revised proposals in addition to the TWAOs and other consenting powers being used for existing, ongoing

schemes and it is important that the review of the legislation is undertaken through a place-based lens and does not delay or impact upon the implementation of the proposed and existing schemes.

40 An EDCI Screening document is attached at Appendix B with a highlevel assessment of the implications of Network North.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

41 Do Nothing – wait for government and other transport bodies to implement the proposals. This was discounted because the city has a positive track record of working collaboratively with government to plan and implement spatial frameworks to enable the operation and growth of the city around the safeguarding of land for infrastructure proposals.

42 Seek to continue to work collaboratively with Department for Transport, Transport bodies and other government departments to develop an integrated station masterplan, spatial framework and growth strategy which enables the implementation of the revised infrastructure proposals and the ongoing day to day workings of the city and its growth to take place simultaneously as happened successfully with the planning and development of HS2.

How will success be measured?

43 Success will be measured through seeing the implementation of the infrastructure proposals as soon as possible and through a place-based lens which minimises disruption to passengers and supports the replanning and growth of the city.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

44 Clarity is sought from Government about the detail for the implementation of the proposals. The rail infrastructure will be delivered by Network Rail and the road, bus and mass rapid transit proposals by the Council and Combined Authority.

Appendices

- Appendix A - Network North Document
- Appendix B – EDCI Screening

Background papers

- N/A