

TfN Spatial Planning Policy Framework

January 2022



Context

Transport for the North (TfN) are a Statutory Transport Body (STB) of elected leaders and a partnership of business leaders who collectively represent the region's 15m people. As a partnership, TfN brings 20 Local Transport Authorities and 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships together with Network Rail, National Highways, HS2 Ltd, and UK Government.

Through its statutory powers, TfN provides a single voice for the North to support the development and implementation of transport strategies across the region, determining investment decisions and working with Government to enable northern priorities to be included within national priorities. Operating within this strategic position, TfN and partners work collaboratively to identify the transport infrastructure and policy measures required to achieve the North's ambition. Our Strategic Transport Plan (STP) is a formally adopted plan, and this should be a key consideration for any spatial or transport plans within the North.

TfN currently have a remit to influence and promote strategic transport interventions, across spatial development within the North. This regularly requires joint working with combined authorities and groups of co-operating authorities to develop Statements of Common Ground in line with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019), which maintains the importance of effective cooperation within spatial planning. At present, spatial planning is undertaken at the national level through the NPPF which recognises the importance of collaboration with statutory and non-statutory consultees. This includes with regional consultees such as TfN. An annex to this policy framework provides further detail on the NPPF process¹.

In developing TfN's position on spatial planning, we want to support partners in adopting a place-based approach to the development of local plans and strategies, as well as informing the development planning process to consider TfN's pan-northern ambitions and facilitate cross-boundary collaboration. TfN are already involved in significant spatial planning projects across the North through Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) which will transform cities and places and we will consider the future spatial planning implications of the Integrated Rail Plan.

The importance of masterplanning and adopting a place-based approach to scheme development is essential to ensure effective spatial planning. Drawing on our experience through NPR and related workstreams, we believe we have the pan-northern expertise and evidence base that can support partners in their spatial plan development. Therefore, we will share data with partners where possible, to support future scheme development and funding applications. This includes our assessment of international case studies for spatial planning which is available as an annex to this policy framework.²

TfN recognise that Government requirements for funding applications can vary depending on the department and nature of the application. As partners develop

¹ TfN Spatial Planning Policy Framework Annex A – NPPF and the Planning Process (TfN, 2021)

² TfN Spatial Planning Policy Framework Annex B – International Case Studies in Spatial Planning (TfN, 2021)

their own plans and progress key schemes, TfN will work with partners to adopt a place-based approach that will connect the economic appraisal focused requirements for the Department for Transport (DfT) and HM Treasury, with the regeneration and housing priorities of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This will ensure spatial plans for the North are well-positioned to secure future development funding that can realise scheme delivery and achieve the Government's levelling up agenda.

TfN are currently undertaking a detailed appraisal of our proposed pan-northern transport investment programme. This work will assess impacts of future policy drivers, including spatial planning policy, on transport demand, levels of modal shift between road and rail and future movements of freight. Outputs from the work will include a set of TfN recommendations on a programme of future transport investment up to 2050, as well as an assessment of the expected social, environmental and economic outcomes from that investment. These tools will be available for all local transport and planning authorities across the North to use when revising their local plans and strategies over time.

Through developing our policy framework for spatial planning, TfN can add value to emerging local plans and economic strategies, utilising the strategic narrative and evidence base of the STP and the objectives of the forthcoming Decarbonisation Strategy. We will also ensure we align our own position with that of other key stakeholders such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), through their Great North Plan and the promotion of Green Growth Boards.

This policy framework outlines TfN's spatial planning position and the steps we will take to support partners across the North to deliver our pan-northern ambitions within spatial planning.

Challenges

For TfN, there are several challenges to address as we develop our spatial planning policy framework, which are:

- As a Statutory Transport Body, TfN has the remit to influence and promote strategic transport interventions, and our STP is a formal plan that should be a key consideration for any spatial or transport plans within the North. However, until we have developed a defined position on spatial planning, we have not had the ability to administer this function.
- The absence of a defined spatial planning position for TfN has generated uncertainty for partners around what TfN's defined role is and the added value TfN can provide.
- With a remit across the entire North, TfN's resources have responsibility across a broad range of policy development and strategy implementation. This limits the extent to which TfN can review and engage in detail on partner's plans and strategies.
- Currently, many of the spatial planning ambitions of partners are localised based on local authority boundaries. However, cross-boundary collaboration does take place, such as at a Combined Authority level.

- Some of TfN's partners are not local planning authorities, for example Combined Authorities, reflecting that strategic transport and planning are often undertaken at different levels.
- There is current uncertainty for planning reform on a national level with future policy decisions for spatial planning yet to be defined.

Within the remainder of this policy framework, we outline our position on spatial planning which aims to overcome the challenges as outlined within this section.

Role of TfN

As a sub national transport body, TfN's role is to set the overall transport vision and to provide statutory advice on planning and priorities for large scale transport investment. Within this context, TfN will adopt a collaborative and open approach to engage with all local planning authorities across the North that is proportional to the resources available to TfN.

STP Policy position

In the Strategic Transport Plan, which was adopted in 2019, the following statements are made in relation to our role regarding spatial planning:

- Continue to work with Partners to develop and implement their local plans and strategies, ensuring they complement the policies and proposals set out in the Strategic Transport Plan, to deliver packages of improvements that support a more seamless, integrated end-to-end experience. Where possible, this should encourage modal shift and promote active transport, and further develop public transport networks as important sustainable modes of travel.
- Work with Partners to ensure that future strategic housing, commercial and industrial developments are well connected, and have high expectations on developers to provide access to public transport facilities, high levels of cycle parking and storage, and provide electric charging facilities to support a greener and cleaner road network.
- Ensure that improvements to the strategic transport network align with local spatial plans and other key strategies, and are in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Ensure that necessary strategic transport interventions are delivered in the right place and at the right time to support the delivery of major development proposals, including Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project developments, Enterprise Zones and Garden Towns/Villages.

This policy framework aims to provide more detail on TfN's defined role within spatial planning, to ensure the delivery and implementation of the above STP statements. This will provide further clarity for partners across the North as well as for TfN's programmes.

Links to other workstreams

Spatial planning also sits across several other TfN workstreams:

- **Decarbonisation:** Policy measures to ensure local plans consider TfN's decarbonisation trajectories and pre-agreed targets. The evidence base generated by our activities in this area can be used to directly inform the development of partner's plans and development strategies.
- **Multi Modal Hubs:** Promoting opportunities for greater public transport use and car sharing opportunities embedded within new developments.
- **Freight and Logistics:** Ensuring TfN are clearly communicating and supporting the development of key freight routes across the North to maximise the economic development opportunities for well-connected logistic warehousing sites and freight distribution networks as identified in the TfN Freight and Logistics Strategy.
- **Active Travel:** Supporting more liveable and low-traffic neighbourhoods through enabling developments which promote walking and cycling.
- **Transport-Related Social Exclusion (TRSE) Research:** TfN's research on transport-related social exclusion provides a robust evidence base on the causes and consequences of TRSE across the diverse geographical and population contexts of the North. This includes the consequences of spatial planning decisions that lock residents into car dependency and forced car ownership, and those which facilitate local service and public transport access in mixed development contexts.
- **Health and Wellbeing Research:** TfN are undertaking research to expand evidence on the impacts of transport on health and wellbeing in the North, including the issues of severance, physical inactivity, and access to green space. This will enhance the evidence base on the consequences of different spatial planning decisions.
- **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI):** Application of the TfN modelling suite to build an EVCI model which will enhance assessment of EVCI requirements and associated sustainability, spatial and social considerations. This includes assessment of optimum timing for implementation of various charging infrastructure across different spatial typologies. This also allows for the assessment of interactions with residential and commercial building stock and appropriate parking locations, planning, and policies.
- **Future Travel Scenarios:** Spatial planning is one of the key external factors which frames our scenario development. The external strategic factors used in our 2020 scenarios are based on the STP (2019) policy positions deemed as critical influencing strategic factors which the transport sector should consider. This results in different assumptions for spatial distributions, impacts, and considerations across our scenarios.
- **TfN's work on updating our 2020-2050 Investment Programme:** Assumptions on future development and spatial planning policies are critical to shaping our work on recommending future transport investment in the North's rail and major road networks. This analysis is being informed by local development plans and long-term spatial planning assumptions within our Future Travel Scenarios.
- Through the **Major Road Network (MRN) Regional Evidence Base:** With most passenger and freight travel via road, future planning decisions will have a major impact on future demand on our road networks. TfN are

promoting the delivery of several improvement schemes, including schemes that may unlock wider development, as well as considering the first and last mile of journeys and how they can be sustainably embedded within development sites.

- **TfN Strategic Rail and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR):** Suitable rail access is imperative to spatial planning as demand increases from new people and businesses in an area. This should also consider the impact of COVID-19 on rail travel with a likely increase in leisure travel and less demand for commuter trips. At a smaller scale, improvements to station buildings with more commercial and non-commercial facilities could transform and revitalise the communities which they are located. At a larger scale, increasing densities and mixed-use developments around public transport hubs will enhance the attractiveness of public transport across all parts of the North. Emerging spatial masterplans around proposed HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail stations are demonstrating how transport is a catalyst for growth such as at Manchester Airport, Manchester Piccadilly and the South Bank area of Leeds city centre.
- **Technical Assurance, Modelling and Economics (TAME):** TfN's TAME team have developed a Development Log which visualises all live planning applications and allocated development sites across the North, this can provide assessments by different classes of housing at MSOA level across the region. Further spatial planning policy development will support TAME in gathering new information that will enhance TAME's capabilities further.
- **Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (NPIER):** The NPIER sets out a transformational future for the North's economy by 2050, including geographic breakdowns of economic growth, employment and population. These forecasts can help us to understand potential future housing and business demand for premises based on transformational growth.

TfN's role in spatial planning

TfN will encourage collaborative spatial planning across the North, to support partners in developing local plans and strategies which reflect TfN's pan-northern priorities outlined within the STP and wider TfN workstreams. TfN will share our evidence base to support plan development and work proactively with partners to encourage cross-boundary collaboration.

As an STB, TfN have a statutory responsibility to prepare, advise and coordinate transport strategies across the North, promoting the investment priorities of the North at a national scale. Our STP is a formal plan and therefore as part of our role within spatial planning, we aim to ensure the ambitions and priorities of our STP are included as a key consideration for any spatial or transport plan developed within the North by local partners.

To support partners embedding the transport objectives of the STP within their own spatial plans and development strategies, we have summarised the following key considerations for spatial planning:

Increasing efficiency, reliability, integration and resilience in the transport system.

- Ensure new developments are well-connected to the public transport system, as well as embedding high-quality, safe active travel infrastructure within new development sites.
- Ensure that the transport impacts of proposed new developments are fully considered, both in terms of impacts locally and on strategic transport routes, including the cumulative impact of area wide development.
- Create opportunities for multi-modal hubs in which people can interchange efficiently between modes, as well as access to wider commercial opportunities and community services located around these hubs.
- Support shifting commuter patterns and changing leisure aspirations following the pandemic, providing greater flexibility in public transport travel throughout the day.

Transforming economic performance

- Ensure new development sites are aligned with the NPIER's ambitions to deliver 850,000 jobs and £100bn GVA in the North, considering the contribution from individual projects towards these growth figures.
- Consider linking greater densification and transport infrastructure investment to help close the productivity gap, exploring opportunities for minimum density requirements around new rail stations and routes.
- Support warehousing and logistics clusters which are well connected by both road and rail as recommended in TfN's Freight and Logistics Strategy. Our modelling scenarios can help partners make informed decisions on future warehouse locations, based on different assumptions of fleet mix.

Improving inclusivity, health and access to opportunities for all

- Embed well-planned, low traffic neighbourhoods and high-quality, safe public realm within new development sites which will support greater active travel, particularly for short journeys. This will improve air quality, reduce severance between communities, improve accessibility requirements for those with reduced mobility and enhance health and wellbeing through increased physical activity.
- Deliver communities where public transport is the natural choice for everyday journeys that cannot be met through active travel, and where access to public transport is available to groups most at risk from TRSE. This can be supported by greater densification to reduce the need to travel to access key services and reducing forced car ownership. TfN will provide partners with robust evidence on the causes and consequences of TRSE among these and other population groups to inform this.
- Through the Zero Emission (ZE) Vehicle Framework, improve access to electric charging points for all and support the uptake of zero carbon vehicles, contributing to improved air quality across the North.
- Consider appropriately TfN's commitments as set out in our Decarbonisation Strategy and ensure partners' plans achieve, as a

minimum, what is required by TfN's Decarbonisation Trajectory. We will work with partners to provide the evidence they need to develop appropriate measures to achieve decarbonisation, through workstreams such as our pan-northern ZE Framework, and our Clean Mobility Visions, as well as providing the ability to understand and appraise the carbon outcomes from plans utilising our existing analytical framework.

Promoting and enhancing the built, historic and natural environment

- Recommend new developments are in keeping with the surrounding areas to protect the natural environment and promote biodiversity.
- Maintain public access provision to existing built, historic and natural assets of the North, as identified in TfN's recent Visitor Economy analysis.³

Local Plan development

TfN recognise the importance of statutory local plan development undertaken by partners, in delivering inclusive spatial planning across the entire North and ensuring strategies reflect the pan-northern priorities as illustrated by TfN's STP. This facilitates the opportunity to realise development which encourages sustainable travel whilst reducing private car trips, provides liveable and safe neighbourhoods and enables access to opportunities for all.

As a proactive partner supporting local partners in spatial planning, TfN are committed to:

- Early engagement with partners in their development of spatial plans and working openly to support appropriate development of infrastructure options.
- Share our evidence base to support the development of consistent and robust analysis of the likely relationship between proposed developments and TfN's strategic transport vision for the North. This includes our Transport Decarbonisation trajectories, Northern Evidence Hub and TAME capabilities.
- Share knowledge and experience of how TfN's strategic transport vision aligns with the proposed development, to ensure future spatial plans are aligned with the delivery of future transport infrastructure.
- Work collaboratively to support partners to prepare strong policies and proposals that are sustainable, practical and well-designed. This will ensure key proposals are aligned with Government priorities and funding objectives to progress through to scheme delivery.

TfN are keen to actively work with local planning authorities throughout the plan-making process to determine the suitable location and scale of development, whilst maximising connectivity to new developments. We can also support partners in developing other statutory plans where appropriate such as Local Development Orders and Strategic Regeneration Frameworks, as well as working with stakeholders such as Network Rail to support various applications.

³ TfN's Visitor Economy and Transport in the North of England study (TfN and Atkins, 2021)

Our evidence base and research is available to support Local Planning Authorities to set their strategic context as they develop their local plans and strategies. This includes through various channels such as TfN's Northern Evidence Academic Forum and the Northern Evidence Hub. Additionally, our NPIER refresh will also offer partners the opportunity to engage on future growth forecasts which will help to understand potential future housing and business demand and inform future spatial planning decisions across the North.

We can also work with partners to provide some opportunities for more bespoke support using our modelling tools developed by TAME, and then to request from TfN more detailed analysis in proportion with resource availability. TfN are currently liaising with the DfT, DLUHC and Homes England on workstreams such as our Development and Intervention Logs, as well as collaborating and exchanging knowledge with Transport for Scotland and other STBs.

Furthermore, our work on Future Travel Scenarios (FTS) ensures our planning is adaptive and resilient to a range of different plausible futures. They outline four potential future transport and growth scenarios to understand the current and emerging complexity of the future of transport. These scenarios are available to support partners in their own local plans and growth strategies and can be used to ensure future development proposals align with future travel demand and associated transport solutions.

Through sharing our expertise with partners, we can together develop inclusive and sustainable strategies which consider transport demand, economic growth and low carbon opportunities. This will build on the workstreams supporting the Decarbonisation Strategy, such as our ZE Vehicle Framework and work on TRSE, which are becoming increasingly critical in securing funding from Government. The recent Transport Decarbonisation Plan references the importance of ensuring that funding is justified in carbon reduction terms to which TfN can support partners through sharing our evidence base across these workstreams.

We recognise the varying requirements for Government funding applications subject to the funding stream and Government department. TfN can work with partners to ensure funding applications represent the place-based approach that will connect the economic appraisal focused requirements for the DfT and HM Treasury, with the regeneration and housing priorities of the MHCLG. This will help unlock further development funding that will help deliver key schemes and contribute to inclusive and sustainable spatial planning in the North.

Through sharing our expertise with partners, this will also enhance TfN's own business case development for future transport infrastructure with its pan-northern focus on regional connectivity. This collaboration will further enrich our cohesive vision for spatial planning and the North's transport infrastructure.

Action: Build links with local planning partners to showcase the added value TfN can offer in local plan development and spatial planning policy. This includes showcasing our modelling capabilities, FTS work and wider evidence base to gain feedback and potential future extensions of key TfN workstreams.

Action: Collate evidence from partners in collaboration with our NPIER workstream to understand partners' current spatial planning policy and future local plan refresh and adoption timescales. Explore opportunities to collate this information centrally for the North and to quantify the scale of development proposed across each area of the North.

Action: Work with partners to recognise the varying requirements for Government funding applications and support applications which reflect the place-based approach embedding TfN's key workstreams. This will illustrate to Government the social, environmental and economic benefits of spatial plans, net zero strategies and key schemes.

Development Planning

TfN have established a Development Log (D-Log) and Intervention Log (I-Log) to visualise all significant new development applications across the North. This can support partners to identify locations where potential mitigation measures may be required for the transport network. These logs can also support cross-boundary collaboration identifying sites which will require collaboration between local planning authorities to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on neighbouring authorities.

These logs are updated annually through TfN's TAME team requesting relevant data from local planning authorities. TfN are engaging with Government on future opportunities to apply our D-Log/I-Log and add value to spatial planning across national and regional levels. TfN cannot legally publish the data publicly but there are opportunities to work with partners and utilise the D-Log/I-Log to inform spatial planning and decision-making on development applications across the North.

Action: Continue to maintain the D-Log/I-Log through TAME's annual data collection process and engage with partners on the capabilities and added value these modelling tools can provide for spatial planning across the North.

When partners are reviewing a specific development proposal or planning application which they view as being of significant regional importance, TfN would encourage partners to engage with us as early as possible. We can undertake a 'bottom-up' assessment of the development impacts on neighbouring local planning authorities and the level of accessibility of the proposed development via all transport modes.

We define proposals of significant regional importance as developments which fall into at least one of the following:

- Will create over 1,000 new homes.
- Will create over 700 new jobs.
- Is located within 2km of the Major Road Network and is expected to have a direct impact on the network in the area.
- Is located within 2km of a rail station and is expected to significantly increase demand at the station.

- Is located within 2km of a boundary with neighbouring local authority and is of significant scope that it will require cross-boundary collaboration to realise the development.

This assessment will draw upon the evidence base of our D Log with potential opportunities to utilise our modelling capabilities. Through this, we will support local planning partners to ensure developments embed the pan-northern priorities outlined in the STP and are designed with suitable transport mitigation measures where necessary.

Through consulting with local planning partners on these proposals, we can maintain an up-to-date evidence base which is critical to our modelling, forecasting and appraisal work, to ensure models provide a more accurate level of outputs reflective of real-world scenarios. This also ensures TfN's business cases are more accurate and reflective of current and forecasted future demand.

Action: In collaboration with our TAME and Economics & Research teams, formalise the forum in which TfN can engage with partners on all elements of spatial planning.

Engagement with stakeholders

TfN recognise that central to supporting partners within spatial planning is the need for robust engagement throughout the process, which must be underpinned by an effective communication channel. To achieve this, we will work to formalise the process for partners to engage regularly and openly with TfN on their spatial planning proposals.

We will also engage wider stakeholders to support partners further where appropriate, including but not limited to DfT, DLUHC, Homes England and the RTPI.

Action: Engage with wider stakeholders to consider their perspectives on spatial planning and how this aligns with TfN and local planning partner ambitions.

Next steps

The next steps for TfN's spatial planning policy framework are to progress engagement with partners and wider stakeholders to ensure that the policy actions are effective and will add real value to partners' spatial plans across the North. We will establish a suitable forum of engagement for partners to communicate on spatial planning priorities and to access our evidence base.

We will continue to develop our evidence base, progressing key workstreams that support our spatial planning policy. This includes our work on the D-Log/I-Log and TAME's modelling capabilities, as well as ensuring wider TfN workstreams align with the ambitions of our spatial planning policy framework such as the NPIER, our Decarbonisation Strategy and our research in TRSE and health and wellbeing.



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