

Transport for the North - Strategic Transport Plan 2

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal 2

Post Consultation Non-Technical Summary

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this summary

This Report summarises the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA2), which identifies the likely sustainability impacts of implementing the Strategic Transport Plan 2 (STP2). STP2 has been produced by Transport for the North (TfN). The ISA2 has been independently produced by Ove Arup and Partners (Arup).

This non-technical summary has been revised following the consultation on the STP2 to take into account feedback received during the consultation. This revised summary is to aid in the understanding of the Integrated Assessment (IA) process undertaken to support the development of the STP2. Consultation responses raised that ISA2 documents were complex and technical. Therefore, this post consultation summary uses the same information within the previous non-technical summary, however explanations have been summarised in a different format to help understanding of ISA2. The content and results of the assessment have not changed, it is only the format in which this is presented that has changed. A list of changes between the non-technical summary issued for consultation and this post-consultation summary can be found in Appendix A.

1.2 What is the role of TfN?

TfN became England's first statutory sub-national transport body in April 2018. As a partnership, TfN brings the North's 21 local transport authorities and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) business leaders together with Network Rail, Highways England, and HS2 Ltd, while working closely with central government. STP2 sets out, on behalf of the North of England, the strategic ambitions and priorities for transport in the North.

1.3 The Strategic Transport Plan 2

Following public consultation, the first Strategic Transport Plan (STP1) was adopted in 2019. Since the publication of STP1, TfN has continued to evolve its evidence base. Therefore, TfN now want to develop a second strategic transport plan. To support and shape STP2, TfN proposed three Strategic Ambitions. These are:

- Transforming Economic Performance
- Rapid Decarbonisation of Surface Transport
- Enhancing Social Inclusion and Health

STP2 has been created around four ‘building blocks’ to ensure that its evidence base is robustly and comprehensively set out. These are:

- The Case - Setting out the case for change, summarising the evidence headlines and setting the scene for the STP, including the principles of the ‘Sustainability Stool’.
- The Vision - Setting out TfN’s overarching vision for transport in the North of England, supported by three strategic ambitions.
- TfN’s Strategy for the North’s Transport System - TfN’s overarching strategy and priorities for rail, the road network, freight and international connectivity, and local connectivity.
- Action and Impact Framework - Setting out the role and responsibilities of TfN, its action plan and how it will measure its impact.

Following consultation and TfN approval, the plan is to be adopted in December 2023.

2. ISA2 Methodology

2.1 Purpose of the ISA2

The ISA2 supports the development of the Plan. The ISA2 aim is to promote sustainable development, health and equality, social, environment and economic considerations within the Plan. The ISA2 and Plan have progressed together, allowing recommendations from the ISA2 to be included as the Plan has developed.

The ISA2 meets the requirements of:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/ 1633, “2004 Regulations” as amended).
- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (as required by section 19 (5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (as required by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as amended).
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) (as outlined by national government policy).

Further information in relation to the requirements of the above can be found in the ISA2 Main Report.

A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been completed, as required under Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994/ 2716, “1994 Regulations”, as amended). The relevant scoping and assessment can be found within the HRA Stage 1 and Stage 2 Report.

2.2 Reporting and consultation as part of the ISA2

Consultation is a key part of the IA process. Consultation completed to date has been on the ISA2 Scoping Report. The Scoping Report was shared with statutory consultation authorities and other relevant stakeholders in 2022. Following the consultation, all feedback was considered and the Scoping Report was updated based on consultation responses.

Consultation responses received as part of this Plan consultation have been considered and actioned. Changes resulting from the consultation are summarised in Appendix F of the ISA2 Main Report. All documents relating to the ISA2 were published as part of the Plan consultation.

2.3 ISA2 Stages

The ISA2 process follows the standard Integrated Assessment (IA) stages. We are currently within Stage D of the process.

Table 1: IA Stages

Stages	Overview
Stage A	This scoping stage is to set the context for the assessment which includes a review of relevant plans, programmes and strategies; collection, analysis and summarisation of current and future baseline data; identification of key issues and opportunities for the North; refinement of ISA objectives; preparation of the scoping report and consultation with statutory bodies and relevant organisations.
Stage B	This assessment stage is to consider the proposed policy options and assess their effects, using the framework developed in stage A including assessing the vision and objectives of the Plan and reasonable alternatives, identifying mitigation measures, explaining why the preferred policy options were taken and to propose monitoring measures for the policies.
Stage C	This reporting stage involved preparing the IA report which explains Stage B.
Stage D	This consultation stage involves consulting of the proposed Plan (STP2) and associated IA, with feedback from the consultation considered and appropriately actioned.
Stage E	The post-adoption stage will involve the creation of the Post Adoption Statement following the adoption of the Plan. The statement will include an explanation of how the IA report and consultation responses have been considered, how reasonable alternatives have been evaluated and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted and the monitoring measures in place to track the effects of the implementation of the plan.

2.4 ISA2 Assessment Methodology

To undertake the IA stages above, the IA uses an ‘assessment framework’ against which to challenge and test the emerging Plan. The IA Framework is used to identify the likely social,

economic and environmental effects of the Plan, recommend ways of avoiding or reducing any negative impacts, but importantly, also recommending ways to further enhance the policy.

This framework of objectives is created as part of stage A. The ISA2 has 16 objectives covering sustainable development, health and equality, social, environment and economic topics. These objectives are bespoke for this Plan. Each objective has assessment criteria which help the assessment team to decide if the Plan policies meet the objective. The objectives are outlined here:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from surface transport in the North
2. Minimise embedded emissions from the development of new transport infrastructure and the maintenance of existing infrastructure
3. Protect and enhance the biodiversity, geodiversity and the green infrastructure network
4. Conserve and enhance internationally designated environment sites
5. Protect and enhance local air quality
6. Increase resilience of the transport network to extreme weather events and a changing climate
7. Protect and enhance the blue infrastructure network including inland and coastal water environments
8. Protect and conserve soil and remediate and avoid land contamination
9. Support the conservation and enhancement of the quality and distinctiveness of historic assets, industrial and cultural heritage and their settings
10. Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes
11. Promote the prudent use of natural resources, minimise the production of waste and support the re-use and recycling of materials
12. Enhance long term economic prosperity and promote a clean and green economic transformation
13. Coordinate land use and strategic transport planning across the region
14. Promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens and reduce Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRSE), particularly for the North's most vulnerable groups.
15. Improve the health and wellbeing for all citizens and reduce inequalities in health

16. Promote community safety and reduce crime and the fear of crime for all citizens

The STP2 has been assessed against these ISA2 objectives to understand their effects on these sustainability aspects. We've assessed the strategic ambitions, the plan policies and reasonable alternatives to the Plan. This has been completed as part of stage B.

Each objective and policy is assessed for the effect it has against each objective. It is scored by following Table 2 below.

Table 2: ISA2 Assessment Outcomes

+++	Largely Beneficial
++	Moderate Beneficial
+	Slightly Beneficial
0	Neutral
-	Slightly Adverse
--	Moderate Adverse
---	Strongly Adverse
?	Uncertain
+/-	Combination

Combined symbols are sometimes used in the assessment (e.g. '+/ ?' or '- / ?'). This happens because there is a strong likelihood of both positive and negative effects for example, but that there is not enough information to know for certainty at this stage. Alternatively, there may be a combination of positive or negative effects, depending on how the policy is delivered.

The assessment also seeks to identify if the likely effects are direct, indirect, temporary and/or permanent. The assessment also considers whether the effect will be a local or on a regional scale. Where applicable, a description of what could be affected is also given, along with any cumulative, secondary or synergistic effects which might occur. When thinking about the effect of the thematic policies (such as road or rail for example), the types of effects a policy could have are also considered over the short-, medium- and long-term.

The Plan's strategic ambitions, called objectives within this assessment, were assessed with different assessment outcomes; 'Potential Conflict', 'Dependent Upon Nature of Implementation

Measures', 'Broadly Compatible' and 'Not Relevant'. This was because the ISA2 needed to test their compatibility with the ISA2 Objectives.

Further information regarding the methodology used as part of the ISA2, is included within the ISA Main Report within Section 2

3. Assessment Results

3.1 Compatibility Assessment

Four assessments on the STP2's strategic ambitions, called 'objectives' within this assessment, have been undertaken in November 2022, January 2023, March 2023 and January 2024 as the Plan developed. The Plan has 3 objectives:

- Transforming Economic Performance.
- Rapid Decarbonisation of Surface Transport.
- Reducing Transport Related Social Exclusion, which changed to Enhancing Social Inclusion and Health in March 2023

The January 2024 assessment followed changes made to the Plan after the public consultation. The reassessment found that there were no STP2 Plan objectives scored with a 'Potential Conflict' against the ISA2 objectives. Following changes in wording within Objective 1, the Objective improved its score from 'Dependent Upon Nature of Implementation Measures' to 'Broadly Compatible' compared with the March 2023 assessment against ISA2 Objective 5 (protecting and enhancing air quality). Objectives 2 and 3 also had wording changed however they were found to score the same as in March 2023.

Therefore, the assessment found that the plan's objectives provide a strong basis to help ensure that the sustainability performance of the plan can be maximised.

Information on the three previous assessments and more information about this assessment can be found in the ISA2 Main Report.

3.2 Assessment of Alternatives

TfN identified three reasonable alternative scenarios. The alternative scenarios were developed through the development and implementation of STP1 and informed by the ongoing evidence base work TfN are undertaking. The ISA2 provides an assessment of each alternative against the ISA2 objectives and helps to enhance the transparency of the decision-making process, as part of the development of the STP2.

In light of consultation feedback, in January 2024, we revisited how the previous scoring against ISA objectives 1,9 and 13, had been applied.

The result of this assessment in January 2024, was:

- an amendment improving the scoring for Local Modal Shift Max scenario against ISA2 objective 1;
- an amendment reducing the scoring for Continuation of STP1 scenario against ISA2 objective 9;
- an amendment reducing the scoring for Balanced scenario against ISA2 objective 9;
- an amendment to the scoring for Local Modal Shift Max scenario from ‘neutral/uncertain’ to ‘uncertain’ against ISA2 objective 9;
- amendment in relation to objective 13, reducing scoring for the Balanced scenario; and
- amendment in relation to objective 13, improving scoring for the Local Modal Shift Max scenario.

Considering these changes to the assessment scores, the overall conclusion of the alternatives assessment remained consistent with previous iterations of assessment in finding that the ‘Balanced Scenario’ performed the best overall across the ISA2 Objectives. The ‘Continuation of STP1 Scenario’ performed well against the ISA2 Objectives, with a slight, moderate or largely beneficial impact against seven objectives. The Local Modal Shift Max Scenario scored similarly to the Continuation of STP1 Scenario, albeit with strengths in different areas. Across all three scenarios, it will be key to ensure any adverse effects are reduced and beneficial effects are enhanced where possible through the carefully considered and identified mitigation measures.

It is not the purpose of the ISA2 to decide which alternative scenario should be pursued. This is the responsibility of TfN who have considered the preferred, most appropriate strategy to be taken forward. More information on the reasonable alternatives assessment can be found in the ISA2 Main Report.

3.3 Assessment of the STP2’s Policies

Four assessments on the Plan’s policies have been undertaken in November 2022, January 2023, March 2023 and January 2024 as the plan developed. The March 2023 assessment and January 2024 assessment, assessed the four thematic policies included in the Plan:

- Rail
- Road
- Freight and Logistics
- Local Connectivity

The policies performed well against the ISA2 objectives in the March 2023 and January 2024 assessments. The policies scored well in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting

local air quality; enhancing long term economic prosperity; and promoting inclusive and safe environments for all, which support the three overarching ambitions of STP2.

The January 2024 assessment found changes to ISA2 objectives 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15 and 16 across the Thematic Policies which improved the policies performance since the March 2023 assessment. For example, the Road Thematic Policy improved from ‘Slightly Beneficial’ to ‘Largely Beneficial’ on the short-term timeframe due to policy wording being added which provides greater explicit references to alternative fuels, impacting on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the March 2023 and January 2024 assessment findings also found areas of uncertainty surrounding avoiding land contamination conserving and enhancing historic assets, landscapes and townscapes. The January 2024 found one change to ISA2 objective 12 (enhancing long term economic prosperity), which reduced the ‘Rail’ policy performance since the March 2023 assessment. This assessment outcome reduced from ‘Largely Beneficial’ to ‘Moderately Beneficial’ in the long-term timeframe due to changes in the within the policy wording to reflect the recent cancellation of the HS2 rail link to the North of England. These wording changes make the policy less specific and therefore the ISA can be less certain about the extent to which the ISA objective will be met in the long-term. However, the overall assessment score for the policy remains ‘Moderate Beneficial’ across short, medium and long-term timescales in supporting long term economic prosperity for the North of England. No further recommendations were identified following this change.

Table 3 summarises the findings of the January 2024 assessment of thematic policies against each ISA2 objective.

The March 2023 assessment found a number of strengths in the Policy and Places Framework when assessed against the ISA2 objectives. The policies scored well in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting local air quality; enhancing long term economic prosperity; and promoting inclusive and safe environments for all which support the three overarching ambitions of Plan. The Policy and Places Framework also scores strongly against protecting and enhancing blue and green infrastructure, conserving and enhancing historic assets, landscapes and townscapes.

The assessment also found areas of uncertainty or only slightly beneficial impacts across the Policy and Places Framework. The Policy and Places Framework relates to distinct place types, therefore whilst certain policies did not perform strongly it was not considered proportionate to amend the policy wording where it had instead been addressed elsewhere, at a higher level, within the Plan. Therefore, mitigation was not identified where it potential weaknesses were felt to be addressed

when the Plan was read as a whole. Table 4 summarises the findings of the assessment of the Policy and Places Framework policies against each ISA2 objective. These policies were not assessed in January 2024 as only a minor level of changes were made to the policy wording within the Plan as a result of the consultation, and those changes did not materially affect or impact on the ISA objectives.

It should be noted that some of the recommended actions across both the thematic policies and the Policy and Places Framework to address these identified uncertainties would need to be considered at the design stage or project level and therefore led by delivery authorities. For this reason, it was felt this information did not need to be included within the Plan. This is because TfN would work with and influence the delivery authorities to minimise the adverse environmental and social impacts, as outlined within the Action and Impact Framework.

Therefore, when the plan is read as a whole, the STP2 provides a firm basis for future transport planning for the North. Information on the two previous assessments and more information about this assessment can be found in the ISA2 Main Report.

For reference, the ISA2 Assessment Outcomes Key from Table 2 is re-created here to help review Tables 3 and 4.

+++	Largely Beneficial
++	Moderate Beneficial
+	Slightly Beneficial
0	Neutral
-	Slightly Adverse
--	Moderate Adverse
---	Strongly Adverse
?	Uncertain
+/-	Combination

Table 3: Summary of assessment scores for the STP2 Thematic Policies (January 2024)

Thematic Policies	ISA2 Framework Objectives																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14a	14b	14c	15a	15b	16a	16b
Rail	+++	+/?	+/?	+/?	+++	+	0/?	0/?	0/?	+	++	++	++	+++	+++	+++	++	+++	++	+++
Roads	+++	++	++	0	++	+++	+	0/?	0/?	+	+	++	++	++	+	++	++	++	++	++
Freight and International Connectivity	+++	+++	+/?	+/?	+++	++	+	0/?	0/?	+	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+++	++	++
Local Connectivity	++	++	+	?	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	+++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+

Table 4: Summary of assessment scores for the STP2 Policy and Place Framework (March 2023)

Policy and Place Framework	ISA2 Framework Objectives																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14a	14b	14c	15a	15b	16a	16b
Commuter Towns	+++	++	++	+	++	++	++	0/?	+/?	+	+	++	++	++	+++	++	++	+	+	+
Large Conurbations	+++	++	++	++	+++	+++	++	0/?	+++	+++	+	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	++	++
Rural Villages & Dispersed	+++	++	+/?	+	++	+	0	0/?	+	+	+	++	++	++	+++	++	++	++	++	++
Rural Town and Fringe	+++	++	++	+	+++	++	++	0/?	++	++	+	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++
Transformational Places	+++	++	+	+	+++	++	0/?	+/?	0/?	+	+	+++	++	++	++	++	+	+++	++	0/?
Other Urban	++	++	++	++	+++	++	++	+	+++	+++	+	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++
Visitor Destinations	+++	+	++	++	+++	++	+	0/?	++	++	+/?	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++
Former Metropolitan Counties	+++	+	+	+	+++	+	0/?	0/?	+/?	+/?	+/?	+++	++	++	+	++	++	+	++	++
Industrial Places	+++	++	++	+	++	++	++	0/?	+++	+	+	+++	+++	++	+	++	++	+	++	+

4. Cumulative, Synergistic and Indirect Effects

The ISA2 has considered cumulative, synergistic and indirect effects, as explained within Section 2 of this summary. These are defined as:

- Indirect effects are not a direct result of the plan but occur as a result of actions. An example of this would be development that changes a water table, therefore affecting the ecology of a nearby wetland.
- Cumulative effects are where several insignificant individual effects have a combined significant effect. An example of this would be noise or dust pollution from multiple new developments.
- Synergistic effects are where a total effect is greater than the sum of the individual effects. An example of this would be a wildlife habitat becoming progressively fragmented with limited effects on a particular species until the last fragmentation makes the areas too small to support the species.

Overall, 11 effects from the Plan were identified as part of the ISA2 and these vary across environmental, social and economic effects. For example, a mix of cumulative positive and negative effects would likely be had on biodiversity across the North from the Plan and intentions derived from it. The use of land for new infrastructure, for example, for transport infrastructure, commercial uses and housing could result in habitat degradation, loss or fragmentation. However, positive effects are anticipated following the introduction of the Environment Act (2021) with the 10% BNG requirement and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Another example, is potential cumulative effects upon historic assets across the North. It would be likely that a mix of negative and positive effects on historic assets, industrial and cultural heritage and their settings would likely be had across the North from the Plan and intentions derived from it. Better integrated and more accessible sustainable transport modes could improve access to heritage sites, however changes to transport infrastructure could have potential negative effect on the integrity and setting of heritage assets that form part of the transport network without appropriate mitigation measures.

The completed list of identified effects are explained in more detail in the ISA2 Main Report within Section 10.

5. Mitigation

As part of the assessment, mitigation and enhancement has been suggested to strengthen the performance of the STP2 against the ISA2 objectives. Mitigation is where recommendations have been made to reduce negative effects. Enhancement is where recommendations have been made to improve positive effects further. A summary of the most commonly recommended enhancement and mitigation measures given for the Plan to help further enhance the positive effects of the STP2, is listed below. The complete list of identified mitigation measures are explained in more detail in the ISA2 Main Report within Section 11.

- Measures could be taken to reduce the amount of carbon from the North's transport system. This could be enhanced by prioritising in policy, Climate Change mitigation and adaptation measures in the development of new, or improvements to existing transport infrastructure.
- There could be a greater consideration of using innovative low carbon construction materials and techniques for the development of new, or improvement of existing, transport infrastructure as well as for maintenance activities
- More complex measures could be considered to support ecological connectivity such as animal over or under passes on the road network, the development of wildflower meadows along linear features such as roads and railway lines or the active control of invasive species
- There could be greater consideration within projects to the conservation and enhancement measures of internationally designated environment sites, particularly those designated as SSSI or Natura 2000.
- There could be greater consideration to increase the understanding of the transport systems vulnerability to climate change effects, as well as to encourage adaptive management and design to respond to uncertain climatic effects.
- Further consideration could be given to the use of nature-based solutions to protect the blue infrastructure network, including aquatic habitats.
- Further opportunities could be taken to utilise areas of previously developed land and to remediate contaminated land when possible.
- Further opportunities could be taken to support supporting improved access to historic or culturally important sites by sustainable transport modes.

- The design, construction, repair and maintenance of transport infrastructure could be encouraged further to respect and enhance where possible the landscape character and townscapes of the north of England.
- Greater consideration could be given to ensuring that new or upgraded infrastructure is resource efficient and encouraging the use of recycled materials, local suppliers and locally produced materials in construction.
- Greater consideration could be given to supporting the development of connected communities and coordinating public transport infrastructure with the future development of employment and housing within 15/20-minute neighbourhoods to enable coordinated strategic planning across the plan area.
- Greater consideration could be given to reducing emissions and other aspects such as noise pollution and vibration dust which potentially effect health and well-being.
- Further opportunities could be taken to support of natural surveillance and to reducing the potential for accidents and collisions involving wildlife.

6. Monitoring

Monitoring of the STP2 will be commenced once the Plan is adopted. This is currently planned for March 2024. This in accordance with the SEA Directive and Regulation 17 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It requires the organisation who created and adopted the Plan, in this case TfN, to monitor how it is implemented to identify any unforeseen effects and to take action to resolve these effects.

Monitoring for the Plan will cover social, environmental and economic effects and it will include indicators that will enable the link between the implementation of the Plan and the likely significant effects (both positive and negative) to be monitored. A bespoke monitoring framework has also been developed to specifically monitor those effects relevant to the ISA2 objectives. The monitoring framework is outlined in Section 12 of the Main ISA2 report. The monitoring arrangements will also be set out in a Post-Adoption Statement after the plan is adopted.

7. Conclusion

This non-technical summary describes the process and the findings of the ISA. This document has been revised following the consultation on the STP2 to take into account feedback received during the consultation. This revised summary is to aid in the understanding of the ISA process undertaken to support the development of the STP2.

Overall, the ISA2 process undertaken has positively influenced the development of the Plan and strengthened its sustainability performance. The Plan performs strongly against a number of ISA2 objectives, specifically: reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting local air quality; enhancing long term economic prosperity; and promoting inclusive and safe environmental for all. Although to a lesser extent, the Plan has also been found to have likely beneficial effects on objectives relating to: protecting and enhancing blue and green infrastructure, and conserving and enhancing historic assets, landscapes, and townscapes.

It is important to note however, that there remains areas of uncertainty or only slightly beneficial impacts relating to avoiding land contamination and promoting the prudent use of natural resources. In relation to these areas, the level of detail that could be addressed by the Plan was limited, and it was not considered proportionate to include a project design detail within the Plan policies. The areas of uncertainty should be addressed at a project level by delivery authorities. Despite this, it is considered that this plan would have a strong, positive influence on the North's transport network across environmental, economic, societal and health indicators and provides a firm basis for future transport planning for the North.

Following the Plan consultation held in Summer 2023, consultee comments have been considered and where appropriate, changes made to the ISA2. These changes, along with TfN's response to the consultee comments are documented within Appendix F. The next stage is to adopt the plan, which is planned for March 2023. Once the plan is adopted by TfN, a post-adoption statement will be written as part of stage E of the IA process. The purpose of the post-adoption statement is to set out how the IA report and consultation responses have been considered, how reasonable alternatives have been evaluated and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted and the monitoring measures in place to track the effects of the implementation of the plan.

A.1 Changes made to the Post-Consultation Non-Technical Summary

Text added = underlined

Text removed = Strikethrough