

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision

Consultation Response Form on the West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Revision
Draft submitted by the West Midlands Regional Assembly

Making Comments

It is very helpful to us if you use this form to make your comments and if possible e-mail or post it to the following:

WMRSS Panel Secretary
c/o Government Office for the West Midlands
5 St Philip's Place
Colmore Row
Birmingham B3 2PW

E-mail: wm.panelsecretary@gowm.gsi.gov.uk

Deadline for Comments

Deadline for receipt of completed forms is **12.00pm on 8th December 2008**

Additional Copies

Additional copies of the form can be downloaded from the Government Office for the West Midlands web site at <http://www.go-wm.gov.uk> or www.wmra.gov.uk or can be requested by contacting Government Office for West Midlands on: 0121 352 5476.

How to complete this form

Please complete a separate copy of the form for each matter that you wish to comment on, showing each time which policy or paragraph of the WMRSS Phase Two Revision Draft Submission documents you are commenting on.

Please note that all comments will be made available for the public to read – they cannot be treated as confidential. However, please be assured, WMRSS Panel Secretary will only use the contact details provided for the sole purpose of distributing appropriate information about this consultation and the next stages of the process.

Contact Details

Title	Mr
First Name or initial	Neil
Surname	Hansen
Organisation (if applicable)	Highways Agency
Address	5 Broadway, Broad Street, Birmingham.
Post Code	B15 1BL
E-mail address	neil.hansen@highways.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone	0121 678 8215

I am commenting as (please tick)			
A private individual		Local Authority of Parish Council	
Business representative group		Campaign Group	
Utility and emergency services		Statutory Body or Government Agency	X
Landowner, Developer or Agent		Voluntary / Community group	
Representative of a client		Other (please specify)	
If you are commenting on behalf of a client, please add their name here			

Please indicate which Paragraph or Policy your comment relates to:	
Paragraph 3.23 - 3.78 Number	Policy Number

Please use the section below to give your comments.

The Sub-Regional Implications of the Strategy

PPS11 advises that the RSS/RTS should add value to national guidance by setting out a policy framework for specific sub-regions, where an integrated and coherent approach across boundaries is essential to the delivery of policy priorities. This should provide a steer on policies, initiatives and measures of regional or sub-regional significance to be addressed through the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs) and Local Transport Plans (LTPs).

Consideration should be given to including a more detailed set of spatial planning policy statements for those sub-regions where major growth and development is anticipated over the period of the RSS. These should set out a strategy for the wider development of the sub-region, including housing and employment land targets, strategic employment allocations, future priorities for development within centres and the key transport interventions and priorities required to support the delivery of the spatial strategy.

The sub-regional spatial planning policy statements could also provide a context for the development of Strategic Investment Plans (SIPS) which would assist in identifying and co-ordinating the delivery of the required infrastructure improvements. Where significant cross boundary development and infrastructure issues exist, consideration should be given to the need to set out in the RSS the requirement that local authorities should inform the preparation of their Core Strategy (and other LDDs) by undertaking joint transport and infrastructure studies. These should be developed in partnership with relevant infrastructure providers including for example the Highways Agency and Network Rail.

In parallel with this, the Highways Agency would also like to see consideration being given in the RSS to the development of a corridor approach towards managing the scale, nature and phasing of future development and infrastructure provision. This will be important particularly where future development pressure could lead to unsustainable levels of traffic growth and congestion on the strategic road network. This should be done with the objective of promoting the use of sustainable transport modes as the preferred means of intra-urban movement along these defined corridors, improving access to markets for business and maintaining the safe and efficient functioning of the SRN to meet wider national and regional policy objectives.

Support for the development of a corridor management approach to dealing with the problems caused by future traffic growth is provided by the findings and conclusions of the *“West Midlands Strategic Road Network Study Final Report”* (December 2008). This study examines the implications of the RSS2 (December 2007) for the region’s Strategic Road Network (SRN). It considers the capacity of the network to accommodate development planned within RSS2 and the likely impacts of a range of transport interventions for maintaining the efficient operation of the region’s highways.

The report also considers the possible scale and nature of the transport impacts of two of the nine spatial options that were considered during the preparation of the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) Housing Options Study. The options modelled included Option 7 (medium growth – an additional 45,600 houses) and Option 9 (high growth – an additional 80,700 houses).

The conclusions of this work and its implications for each of the seven sub-regions/areas identified in the Preferred Option is summarised and discussed below. It is important to consider the impacts of regional growth and the various transport packages on the SRN from a geographical perspective so that the spatial effects can be understood and appropriate policy responses developed at the regional and sub-regional level to the problems identified.

Birmingham, Black Country and Coventry City Region

M5 – junctions 1 to 3

- None of the regional growth options are likely to have any significant negative impacts on this stretch of the motorway, even with the Do Minimum package of transport investment.
- The severity of saturation levels will decrease as more transport interventions are implemented. As such, if ‘Do Something 3’ investment was implemented saturation levels in both directions, AM and PM, and for all growth scenarios will be below 80%.

M6 – junctions 4 to 10a

- There are already patches of fairly significant delays between junctions 8 and 10a in both the morning and evening peaks.
- In the AM, investment options Do Something 1 and Do Something 3 could have a beneficial impact reducing these delays for all growth options, with the exception of NLP Option 9.
- In the PM peak, Do Something 3 will again reduce delay periods between junctions 8 and 10a. The picture is consistent under all of the growth options.
- If only the Do Minimum level of investment is made delays will emerge in the PM peak between junctions 4a and 5. The Do Something intervention packages should prevent these delays from occurring.
- Junctions 4a to 5; 6 to 7; and 8 to 10a are already experiencing significant congestion which looks likely to be sustained under all growth scenarios, regardless of the level of transport investment.
- Do Something 1 transport investment is likely to be beneficial in preventing rises in congestion across other links, particularly between junctions 5 and 6.

M42 – junctions 3a and 7

- There are no serious delays on these links in the 2001 base position. However node delays of over 60 seconds are present at junction 6 and junction 9 in the AM peak.
- Significant link delays are only predicted to be a problem in future years between junctions 4 and 5 in the morning peak – this will be the case with all of the different growth options.
- Do Something 1 could help to reduce delays, although its impact with NLP9 growth would be less effective.
- Junction delays at 6 and 9 are likely to require future attention.
- Saturation levels are already high between junctions 3a and 3 and 4 and 6 and will remain so regardless of growth or the mitigation measures implemented.
- Under all growth scenarios future congestion is forecast in the morning peak, westbound between junctions 6 and 7. In the evening this will only be the case if NLP7 and NLP9 growth is realised.

Telford

M54

- The south of Telford is dissected by a stretch of the M54. Strategic level forecasting does not report any significant impacts of regional growth on base level delays although congestion is expected to rise between junctions 2 and 4.

Coventry and Warwickshire

M6 – junctions 1 to 4

- According to the 2001 base, delays on this stretch of the M6 are minimal. However, by 2026 significant delays are expected eastbound between junctions 2 and 3, particularly in the morning peak. This will be the case for all growth/intervention combinations, with the exception of TEMPRO growth. In the evening peak, the delays will be witnessed between junction 3 and 4 eastbound.
- Saturation levels are already high eastbound between junctions 2 and 4 in the morning peak. This is likely to continue and become aggravated. By 2026, levels will be similarly high in the evening peak. This is the case for all growth/transport combinations.
- Saturation levels will be over 100% between junctions 2 and 4 for both the AM and PM peaks for all of the scenarios, which represents a considerable increase from the base position.
- There is some evidence to show that the mainline carriageway between Junction 1 and 2 will suffer increasing stress by 2026 under all growth scenarios.

M40 – junction 11 to the intersection with M42

- Significant delays are not presently experienced along this stretch and are unlikely to emerge under any scenarios.
- M40 saturation paints a different picture. It is already high northbound in the PM

peak between junction 13 and the intersection with the M42. However, by 2026 saturation is likely to be over 80% from junction 13 northbound to the M42 intersection under all growth options, both AM and PM. The particular transport package adopted is not expected to have any differential reduction effects.

M42 – junctions 7 to 11

- The base position does not record any significant delays anywhere on this stretch.
- Future forecasts show that only westbound between junctions 8 and 9 in the morning peak is likely to experience problems. However, Do Something 2 and 3 would appear effective in addressing these delays.
- Saturation levels are not highlighted as particularly high in the 2001 base position. However, this is not predicted to remain the case.
- Under all growth/intervention combinations AM saturation will rise to over 100% in the morning peak between junctions 7 and 8 westbound.
- High levels of saturation will be witnessed between junctions 8 and 10, particularly in the AM, although Do Something 2 and 3 investments could help to limit these rises.

A46

- The A46 between the M6 and M40 suffers from existing stress in terms of link capacity and some junction delays. By 2016 delays at major junctions increase significantly under all growth scenarios with many links also at or over capacity.
- The effects of junction improvements on the corridor by 2026 mitigate many of the junction delays although some link capacities continue to be exceeded, particularly just north of the A4177 and between the junctions with the A452 and the A45.
- There are some significant local effects of NLP7 and NLP9 in terms of junction delay.
- The A46 to the south and west of the M40 does not have any significant existing delay or link capacity problems. The effects of the RSS2 growth forecasts indicate some localised junction delay to the north of Stratford-upon-Avon by 2026 as do NLP7 and NLP9.

Staffordshire and the North Staffordshire Conurbation

A38

- The A38 experiences link stress on a number of sections between Swinfen and Claymills as well as junction delay. The link and junction capacity issues will deteriorate further under the growth scenarios with sections immediately south of Burton and around Lichfield the worst. Even assuming the RFA scheme, there remain stress and capacity issues.

A50/A500/A449

- In the base year there are a number of sections and junctions on the A500 and A50 that are experiencing significant capacity issues and delays in both peak periods. Under the various growth options the extent of the delays and over capacity spreads to most of the parts of the A500 and A50 in Stoke. The transport

interventions have, at best, a very marginal impact on the delays.

- Local capacity issues currently also occur at A50 Uttoxeter and A449. There are currently only limited delays on the remaining SRN in Staffordshire, with the exception of the urban A5 through Cannock. Under the various growth options the existing problems on the A50 and A449 will be exacerbated. In addition more localised problems are likely to arise on links and junctions on M6 Toll/A5 at Cannock and A5 at Tamworth.

Worcestershire

M5 – junctions 3 to 8

- The 2001 base position shows delays of between one and two minutes per kilometre between junctions 4a and 5 on the northbound carriageway in the morning peak. These are likely to intensify as the region grows, under all growth/transport intervention scenarios.
- Saturation levels northbound between junction 4a and 5, both AM and PM are already high; this will continue.
- M5 Junctions 5 and 6 have existing problems with excessive queuing on the slip. The most conservative estimate of growth (TEMPRO) indicates that queuing and delay will worsen at these junctions but the effects can be mitigated by proposed signalisation and merge and diverge improvements by 2026.
- The effects of RSS2 when compared to TEMPRO are not significant with some incremental increases in queuing at the junctions and saturation on the mainline. It is concluded that by 2026 certain sections of the mainline between M5 Junctions 5 and 7 will start to experience flow breakdown but this will occur even under the lowest TEMPRO growth assumption rather than as a result of RSS2 growth.

A46 Evesham

- There are no significant existing delay or congestion issues on the A46 around Evesham. The TEMPRO growth forecasts indicate increasing levels of stress in terms of link saturation by 2026 but at no point is the road capacity exceeded. However, there are expected to be localised junction delay issues.
- The effects of RSS2 when compared to TEMPRO are marginal with no material difference in terms of link saturation. A similar conclusion can be made for NLP7 and NLP9.

Herefordshire and Shropshire – the rural west

M54 – junctions 3 to 4

- No significant problems with delays are likely to emerge as a result of regional growth over the next two decades.
- However, saturation levels are expected to exceed 90% along the entire link – under all growth and transport investment options. This is a considerable increase from the 2001 base position.

A5

- South of Shrewsbury the A5 does not currently suffer from significant delay at junctions or over capacity on links.
- The major junctions all show signs of increased queuing and delay over the next two decades.
- The effects of RSS2, NLP7 and NLP9 are marginal when compared to TEMPRO
- Link saturation does not increase as significantly as junction delay indicating that the primary constraints in the corridor are junction based.

A49

- There are already significant delays in terms of queues and over capacity on links in Hereford City Centre.
- By 2016 under all growth scenarios levels of delay and link saturation are predicted to increase significantly both north and south of the City Centre. The inclusion of an Outer Distributor Road by 2026 provides some relief but there are still significant delays on tidal flows to and from the City Centre in peak periods.
- The effects of NLP7 and NLP9 are marginal.

Key Issues for the RSS Preferred Option

Considering both the local and strategic analysis of impacts of the various regional growth assumptions on the SRN, as summarised above, the following overall observations can be made:

- The level of anticipated development does not make a fundamental difference to congestion levels across the network. Demand on the SRN is expected to increase over the next two decades. However, this is will not be a direct result of the growth planned in RSS2. Traffic volumes and saturation are anticipated to rise irrespective of the revised strategy; many of these trends have already been identified in multi-modal studies that pre-date this report. The RSS2 options primarily reflect different spatial distributions of new housing stock as distinct from an increase in population or employment. The levels of change are also comparatively small when considered against existing population and through traffic levels.
- In terms of significant link delays, growth will tend not to give rise to many new problems on the network. There are recurrent patches of the network where delays are predicted (on the M5, M6 and M42) but these tend to be isolated areas rather than substantially affecting entire corridors. Elsewhere on the strategic network, delays of up to 30 seconds per kilometre may be encountered but they are not nearly as significant as the pinch points on the M5, M6 and M42 that have been outlined above. This conclusion can be drawn about each set of growth assumptions from TEMPRO through to NLP9 – there is not a discernible difference between their effects.
- Requiring more detailed consideration will be node delays. Several junctions across the SRN may suffer as a result of increased demand and, in addition, there are

likely to be resulting impacts on local roads, particularly in and around city centres. These issues will certainly need closer consideration at a local level during the preparation of Core Strategies and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs).

- In terms of the transport intervention packages, there is not a large difference between the effectiveness of their mitigation measures. Do Something 3, which includes some road user charging, does emerge as most likely to contain or reduce negative impacts on the network, although its effectiveness is more limited with NLP 9 levels of growth. Do Something 1, which is the HA's ATM programme and Do Something 2, which would see the addition of some C-TIF schemes, are also expected to yield successes on some places across the network; their effectiveness tends to vary depending on the corridor in question and the time of day.
- It is important that it is understood that RSS2 cannot be considered to be solely responsible for causing volume, congestion and some delay increases and, therefore, the HA would remain aligned with Circular 02/07 by supporting the RSS2 Preferred Option. However, there must be a recognition that there is a residual need for regional investment to address existing demand and also that envisaged to occur under any of the regional development forecasts (from TEMPRO through to NLP9). Solutions are likely to require both public and developer funding. In addition, investment is not likely to be only required on the roads, but also in other modes of transport suggesting the need for a multi-agency, corridor management type approach to meet the region's future transport requirements.
- It is likely that an appropriate strategy to respond to forecast regional growth should not only be multi-modal in nature but should involve a blend of demand-side and supply-side and soft and hard mitigation measures.
- On the demand side planning solutions could help in the medium term. Careful sustainable and accessibility planning could help to identify locations for development which will not result in a concomitant surge in travel demand; this could help to alleviate future pressure on the network. It is also worth highlighting 'soft' demand-side measures, which include solutions such as introducing flexible work patterns, sustainable travel plans and the increased use of ICT to reduce the need to travel. Such mechanisms are typically smaller, lower in cost, less controversial and have shorter lead-in times. They can comprise a short-term strategy, which could run alongside, for example, Do Something 1 investment. It is not easy to model the impacts of these soft measures, but qualitative research suggests that they yield considerable success in reducing motorway demand. A study for the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2004¹, predicted that an intensive ten-year smarter choices programme could cut urban peak-hour traffic by as much as 21%, with the potential for non-peak traffic levels to fall by 13%. The DfT estimates that for each £1 spent on these measures, there is £10 benefit from reduced congestion.²
- Necessary for the Highways Agency to consider going forward is the fact that a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to realise most network benefits. This study

¹ DfT written by Cairns et. al. '*Smarter Choices: Changing the way we travel*' (2004). This report was later used in the DfT's publications '*Making Smarter Choices*' (2005)

² Highways Agency News Release (659/SW/07) (November 2007)

has highlighted the vagaries across the SRN in terms of how different corridors 'react' to different levels of investment. Whilst Do Something 3 appears as the most effective mitigation package overall, Do Something 1 and Do Something 2 result in uneven success. As such, an approach which works in one sub-region will not necessarily work in them all. Coupled with this issue is the expected rise in morning node delays scattered in and around some of the city centres.

- The evidence described above, means that there may well be a need for further assessment at a sub-regional level in order to enhance understanding of local consequences and consider a more tailored implementation strategy to mitigate the impact of background traffic growth. It is also worth noting that this study has given no consideration to phasing of development over the next two decades as the local information did not exist with which to do so. As this information becomes locally available, it will be necessary to integrate this with more detailed analysis at a sub-regional level.
- The locations for development under the NLP options in particular, are yet to be clarified at a level of detail which would enable local impacts to be considered. The options tested in this report are similar in scale to the eventual NLP options but are not exactly the same as the options in the final NLP report.

(Please continue on a separate sheet if required)