

A1 Birtley to Coal House Development Consent Order

Written questions – responses

1.0.1 - Chapter 5 of the Applicant's Planning Statement [APP-171] includes an assessment of the relevant local planning and transport policies.

a) Which documents constitute the Development Plan for each local authority area?

b) Do you agree with the list of relevant policies set out by the Applicant in this document? Are there any additional policies you consider to be relevant to the proposal? If so please provide them along with a justification for their relevance.

c) Are there any relevant emerging policies? If so, what is their current stage in the plan adoption process?

d) Please provide copies of all relevant adopted and emerging policies.

From a transport perspective the HE's inclusion of both the Core Strategy and Urban Core Area Action Plan and Making Spaces for Growing Places covers the transport aspects of the local plan. At a local level the Council also has an adopted Cycling Strategy (adopted as SPG to the previous Unitary Development Plan) which establishes a cycle network for Gateshead. HE should be mindful of the strategy and cycle routes in the vicinity of their scheme.

In relation to emerging policy, it is intended that in the near future the Transport Manifesto 2016-2036 will be superseded by the North East Joint Transport Committee's Transport Plan. HE should be mindful of the emerging objectives and principles of the plan, a draft of which is expected to be available later in 2020.

At the national/regional level the one omission is the Strategic Transport Plan developed by Transport for the North. This recognises the importance of providing a consistent level of service and resilience for the A1. It also includes proposals to improve the capacity of the East Coast Main Line and HE should be mindful of the ongoing work in relation to Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Gateshead Cycling Strategy (document)

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/3854/Gateshead-Cycling-Strategy/pdf/cyclingstrategy.pdf?m=636443661863630000>

Gateshead Cycling Strategy (plan)

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/3858/Gateshead-Cycle-Network-Map/pdf/Gateshead-Cycle-Network-map.pdf?m=636443664001970000>

Northern Powerhouse Rail

https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Potential-of-NPR_TfN-web.pdf

Transport for the North Strategic Plan

<https://transportforthenorth.com/reports/strategic-transport-plan-2019/>

NE Joint Transport Committee Transport Plan (Item 6 on the Agenda)

<https://northeastca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/JTC-21.1.2020-Public-Agenda-Pack.pdf>

It is not considered the above will have a major impact on the proposed improvements. However they do provide further context on the need for the road, and reinforce comments about the importance of improving cycling connections.

1.0.2 - The outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [APP-174] including the Record of environmental actions and commitments (Table 3-1) and outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) (Appendix B) includes measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or, where possible and appropriate, offset the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction of the Proposed Development. Please comment on the acceptability of the outline CEMP including any potential amendments or additions that may, in your view, be required. Provide appropriate justification for any amendments or additions sought.

The status of the document as an outline CEMP, with the intention to develop a detailed one in due course (s1.1.4) is welcomed. Currently the assessments relating to transport are relatively light in content, and further detail is needed. The preparation of a more detailed CEMP would also provide a basis for addressing issues of concern outlined below.

Appendix A shows the proposed location and layout of the site compounds to be used during the scheme. Details of the access arrangements for these, and related arrangements for wheel washing and road sweeping, should be agreed with Gateshead Council prior to their construction.

For other transport related matters see response to question 1.9.3 below.

1.1.2 - Included within Table 5-3 of the ES [APP-026] there is reference to the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations. It states that Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council have been directed to undertake feasibility studies in relation to measures to deliver compliance with EU limit values and that such work is ongoing. The Councils are requested to provide an update on the progress of this work and explain what, if any, relevance it may have for the Examination of this application?

Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside Councils were subject to a legal direction to submit a full business case to address nitrogen dioxide pollution which has been identified by government as exceeding the EU limit values. The Councils have now submitted a full business case for their clean air plan to the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit. The business case sets out proposals for a number of measures including:

- a category C (bus, coach, taxi, HGV, LGV) Clean Air Zone in central Newcastle;
- the reduction of the Tyne Bridge to one lane of general traffic in both directions along with a northbound bus lane and a safe working area/southbound bus lane (dependent upon award of maintenance funding for the bridge by DfT); and
- traffic management of the merge between New Bridge Street and the A167M.

In addition to this a package of mitigation measures has been submitted to government including grants/leases for businesses and people effected; funding for school streets; public transport priority and a freight consolidation centre. The local authorities are awaiting the

response of government to their proposal. The authorities have also submitted a bid to Highways England for an electric van centre of excellence (which would be match funded by the mitigation fund bid). If approved, the clean air plan will need to be delivered in the shortest possible time which would be 2021.

If implemented, the A1 improvements are likely to support the clean air measures by ensuring a more attractive alternative route is available to vehicles than using the urban road network.

1.8.5 – (d) Are any affected PRoW likely to be used by school children and, if so, what are the implications for journeys to and from school?

(e) Are additional safety measures required to be put in place for the ProW diversion across Junction 66?

d) None of the affected PRoW are likely to be used by school children.

e) These issues were covered in the previous Written Representation about PRoW diversion.

1.9.1 - The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment Report (TAR) [APP-173]. Do the Council's agree with the content and findings of the TAR? Provide reasons for any disagreement with any aspect of it.

The Council agrees with the overall content and findings of the Transport Assessment report, subject to the following:

- While the Transport Assessment includes an analysis of provision for walking, cycling and horse riding, it gives insufficient attention to the need to promote, as far as possible, more sustainable modes of transport. It is also unclear how far the recommendations for Highways England suggested in tables 17 to 22 have been followed through either in the detailed design of the scheme or by other means. This matter is commented on more fully in the response to questions 1.9.5, 1.9.10 and 1.9.11;
- Since preparation of the Transport Assessment there have been a number of changes to the wider context for the scheme, in particular:
 - o The proposed measures to improve air quality within central Gateshead and Newcastle have been agreed by the relevant local authorities. This matter is considered in more detail in the response to question 1.1.2;
 - o Gateshead, along with other local authorities in the region have declared a climate emergency. This matter is considered in more detail in the response to question 1.9.11.

1.9.3 - The outline CEMP [APP-174] includes an outline CTMP (Appendix B). Details of construction phase traffic diversions have been provided in Appendix 11.12 of the ES [APP-156].

Submissions from the Councils are requested with regard to the adequacy of content of the outline CTMP with particular regard to managing and mitigating the effects of construction traffic within the respective Council areas.

The preparation of the CTMP proposals, and commitment to develop a more detailed document as part of the CEMP, is welcomed. The current document does raise a number of issues where it would be useful to have further discussions with Highways England as part of the development of the detailed CEMP. Particular issues include:

Road closures

Any road closures will require a permit from April 2020 and be registered with the street works team at least 3 months before the start date of the closure, with the relevant requests for temporary traffic regulation orders also made three months before the start of the closure. A full diversion route would need to be agreed with the Council which may also (due to the location of the works) require agreement with the Highway Authorities of Sunderland City and County Durham.

Non-motorised (NMU) road users

Various routes proposed for construction traffic form part of the local cycle network or interact with Public Rights of Way. While an overall assessment of the project impacts on walking, cycling and horse riding has been undertaken, it is not clear the extent to which possible additional impacts from construction traffic have been assessed.

Arrivals/departures

Further information will be needed on the likely spread of arrivals and departures to the compounds, including deliveries, and how the risks of traffic queueing on the public highway will be minimised.

Construction worker trips

Given the location of the site compounds, close to well established bus services, it is disappointing that no effort seems to be being made to promote alternative to car access for construction workers.

Specific routes:

Lamesley Road

This road is rural in nature with narrow sections (5m) and limited visibility and therefore should not be used as a specified route to the construction sites. In addition it has a bridge structure which has a weight limit. While not an issue for non-abnormal loads we would not wish to promote its use for construction traffic.

This road is part of the local cycle network and is affected by junctions with Public Rights of Way. Use of this road should be minimised as far as possible to reduce the impact on NMU modes.

Chowdene Bank

This has a 7.5 ton weight limit. It is also part of the local cycle network, so its use should be minimised as far as possible to reduce the impact on NMU modes.

Durham road (A167)

This has a weak structure. While not an issue for non abnormal loads we would not wish to promote its use for construction traffic. It also takes vehicles toward the proposed Clean Air Zone and access restrictions in central Gateshead and Newcastle (see response to question 1.1.2).

The A167 forms part of the National Cycle Network (NCN 725) and the traffic plan should ensure that cyclists do not see a deterioration of conditions which may deter their use of this important route. Currently it has on average 223 cycles per day. Given the proposed construction works at the Eighton Lodge area, adequate mitigation measures need to be put in place – currently it is not clear either in this plan or the PROW diversions what these are.

Long Bank

Long bank becomes a residential road as it heads into Wrekenton and therefore the proposals should minimize the effect of any increase on traffic using this route. This road is affected by junctions with Public Rights of Way, some of which may be diverted directly onto Longbank as part of the works. Therefore use of this road should be minimised for use as a route to and from the site to reduce the impact NMU modes.

1.9.5 The representation from Gateshead Council [AS-007] draws attention to the what the Council considers to be the poor nature of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at the Coal House roundabout (Junction 67).

- a) What scope and justification is there for improvements to access and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in this location through the Proposed Development?*
- b) How could such improvements be secured through the dDCO?*

Appendix D of the Transport Assessment Report (APP-173) provides a walking, cycling and horse riding assessment review. This highlights a number deficiencies in provision along the length of the improvement, and includes a number of proposals to improve these. Proposals included in section 5 of the review to improve provision are in general supported, although it is not clear the extent to which these have been incorporated to date in the scheme design.

The assessment highlights the severance effect of the A1 on routes at both the Eighton Lodge and Coal House junctions. It proposes action at both these (Table 20 and Table 22 respectively), albeit via a Designated Funds study followed by a funding bid, rather than directly via the DCO. The proposal at both locations is for full signalisation, which would allow for the introduction of pedestrian phases to provide controlled crossing points, reducing the severance impacts at these locations.

It is not known whether either of these studies or bids has progressed. The Council would support the proposal at Eighton Lodge and can confirm it is developing proposals for complementary improvements to the cycleway along the A167 between Birtley and Low Fell.

At Coal House the Council has specific concerns that a wider approach is needed. Previous studies into signalisation at this location have concluded that this is unlikely to be a viable solution to the problems faced by pedestrians and cyclists. This relates to the large number of entry/exit arms at the roundabout, making an effective signalised solution difficult to achieve.

Appendix D (table 10) notes the current modest levels of usage of pedestrian and cycle facilities at this location. However the Council consider this may, in part at least, be due to the very poor current provision deterring its use. In addition these figures understate the current and potential future importance of the route, notably:

- It provides the only practical pedestrian route from residential properties on Banesley Lane and at Lamesley to shopping facilities at the south end of Team Valley. While

these may be small in number the absence of any alternative emphasises the importance of adequate provision;

- The link at Coal House provides a potentially good route for cyclists to Team Valley from the south. Many of the roads to the south of Coal House are Advisory Cycle Routes and connect to significant residential populations at Birtley, Kibblesworth and villages in north Durham;
- There is potential for this to become a more important travel corridor in future. The Gateshead/Newcastle Core Strategy includes a major housing site at Kibblesworth for some 240 new homes, and for which a planning application has been received. In the longer term the possibility of rail related development in the Lamesley Marshalling Yards area remains.

Given this, and the problems with signalisation at the junction, the Council believes current proposals are unlikely to provide an effective resolution to this problem. As a result a wider review of provision, and how it might be improved, is needed at this location.

It is recognised the scale of this task means that it is unrealistic to seek to achieve this as part of the particular improvement being proposed within the DCO process. However the Council is seeking an appropriate commitment from Highways England to ensure collaborative work continues on this problem in parallel with the main scheme proposals.

1.9.10 The representation from Gateshead Council [AS-007] draws attention to the need to address what it considers to be the poor nature of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at Coal House roundabout.

The parties are requested to liaise and address this issue within their Statement of Common Ground to be submitted at Deadline 2. The Council should provide details of any measures it considers to be necessary and justified through the proposed scheme.

The Council is keen to continue discussions around this matter in line with the response to question 1.9.5.

1.9.11 - The representation from Gateshead Council [AS-007] draws attention to the need for a complimentary programme of measures to promote sustainable transport.

Please can the Council provide further details of i) the form of measures it considers would be appropriate and ii) the justification for those in connection with the proposed scheme?

i) Form of measures

The priority for any measures should be on promoting alternative to the car for relatively short journeys in and around the A1 corridor. It is for these journeys that walking, cycling and public transport are most attractive as an alternative to the car and also where the risk of increasing car dependence as a result of road improvements is likely to be greatest.

The approach suggested would be a programme of behaviour change activity based on the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) approach. This initiative ran between 2011/12 and 2015/16 across a number of areas in England, and sought to promote reduced car dependence through the introduction of packages of measures.

Research into the impact of this included an analysis of the effectiveness of measures to promote sustainable travel to strategic employment sites and business parks (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/Isf-evaluation-strategic-employment-sites-and-business-parks>). Given the nature of land uses adjacent to this section of the A1, with a number of major employment areas close to the road, it is suggested this would be a good template to use for any measures.

It is acknowledged that the commitment to any such programme cannot be open ended in terms of its timescales. A four year programme is suggested, starting before or during the construction phase and continuing beyond completion. This would help embed activity prior to completion, and ensure this is reinforced in the early years post opening.

ii) Justification

The tendency of additional road capacity to stimulate additional demand is well established (see, for example, the review by WSP for the Department of Transport in 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762976/latest-evidence-on-induced-travel-demand-an-evidence-review.pdf). The summary to the WSP report notes that '*induced demand is likely to be higher for capacity improvements in urban areas or on highly congested routes,*' circumstances which apply to the A1.

Induced demand of this kind will undermine the benefits of increased capacity and have a detrimental impact on other objectives by:

- reducing the level of congestion relief;
- increasing emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

Given the likelihood of induced traffic occurring it is important the scheme includes measures to try and prevent this as far as possible. The provision of a complementary programme of smarter choices measures to promote sustainable transport is seen as a flexible and practical means of seeking to minimise induced traffic.

The declaration of a Climate Emergency reinforces the need for activity of this kind. Induced traffic risks seeing capacity improvements lead to increase in greenhouse gas emissions and measures of this kind would help minimise that risk.