

National Networks - National Policy Statement

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a National Policy Statement (NPS)?

- National Policy Statements are planning documents that provide the primary basis for making decisions on development consent order applications for ‘nationally significant infrastructure projects’ (NSIPs).
- NPSs set out the need for development, the Government’s policy for meeting that need and detailed planning guidance including on mitigation of scheme impacts. NPSs provide clarity, certainty and transparency on Government policy for scheme promoters, the planning inspectorate, decision makers and the wider public.
- NPSs have a special status under the Planning Act 2008 and go through an extensive process of consultation, parliamentary scrutiny and designation which means that after designation its contents are not open for debate at public inquiries held in relation to individual developments.

2. Why are NPSs necessary?

- To make it easier for decision makers, applicants and the wider public to understand Government policy on the need for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) and the way in which impacts and mitigations will be assessed.
- To streamline the planning process for NSIPs by eliminating the need for Government policy to be debated in the context of each planning application.

3. What is covered by this NPS?

- The National Network NPS covers Government policy on development of nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) on the road and rail networks as well as strategic rail freight interchanges (SRFIs) in England. It does not cover High Speed Two (HS2) as there is a separate Parliamentary process, the Hybrid Bill, for such large investment projects.

4. What are national networks?

- The national networks comprise the strategic road network (the network for which the Secretary of State for Transport is highway authority), the rail network and strategic rail freight interchanges (SRFIs). The strategic road network covers motorways and major A roads in England.
- In some circumstances local authority roads will be part of the national networks – the Secretary of State has a power under section 35 of the Planning Act to designate a local road development as nationally significant.
- The national networks link with networks of roads and public transport services for which local authorities or devolved administrations are responsible.

5. What is a nationally significant infrastructure project?

- Nationally significant infrastructure projects are usually large scale developments such as new harbours, power generating stations, Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges, which require a type of consent known as 'development consent' under procedures governed by the Planning Act 2008 (and amended by the Localism Act 2011).
- The 2008 Act and the Highway and Railway (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project) Order 2013 set out thresholds above which certain types of infrastructure development are considered to be nationally significant and require development consent.

6. What documents are you publishing and where can I find them?

- The main document we are publishing is the Draft National Networks National Policy Statement which sets out the Government's current policy on development of the road and rail networks in England, including the development of strategic rail freight interchanges.
- Accompanying the NN NPS is an Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS) that has been prepared by independent consultants. The Planning Act 2008 requires that, before the Secretary of State can designate a National Policy Statement, it must undergo an AoS. The purpose of the AoS is to ensure that National Policy Statements take account of environmental, social and economic considerations, with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. The AoS for the NN NPS incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the SEA Directive.
- We are also publishing a separate Non-Technical Summary of the AoS.
- An Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations has been carried out for the draft NN NPS by independent consultants. This examines the potential effects of the NN NPS on nature conservation sites that are designated to be of European importance.
- Finally we are publishing a consultation document that provides a summary of the documents and sets out a list of questions we are looking for input on over the consultation period.
- These documents can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-road-and-rail-networks-draft-national-policy-statement>

7. What is the Government's policy for development of national road and rail networks? Why is development necessary?

- The NN NPS will support a significant and balanced package of improvements and enhancements across the road and rail networks targeting key pressure points and transforming the networks for the longer term. Well-connected and high performing transport networks are critical for supporting economic growth and making our lives easier.
- However, economic growth must not be at the expense of our natural environment. The NN NPS sets out a very strong set of environmental safeguards including:

- Decarbonising the transport network through tighter efficiency standards for vehicles and supporting the switch to the latest ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs)
- Delivering developments in an environmentally sensitive way, through scheme design that is responsible to the surrounding environment. This includes providing a comprehensive package of measures to tackle schemes in areas with air quality problems, works to provide links across networks to reconnect habitats and ecosystems and effectively integrating new schemes into the landscape as far as possible.
- Bringing forward specific works, outside the nationally significant infrastructure project regime, to tackle existing environmental problems on the strategic road network and improve performance.

8. Why isn't the NN NPS scheme specific?

- The NN NPS is a high level strategic planning document to support development of NSIPs on the national networks. It is not a detailed plan or programme of road and rail schemes.
- Specifying individual schemes would limit the ability of scheme promoters to identify and develop the most appropriate solution to solve a transport problem in a particular area. It is important that scheme promoters retain the flexibility to develop the most appropriate solution to achieve the government's wider economic, environmental and social objectives, rather than have the solution centrally dictated from Whitehall.

9. What are the next steps?

- At the same time as the Public Consultation the National Networks National Policy Statement is also going through a process of Parliamentary Scrutiny where it is subject to rigorous examination by the Transport Select Committee.
- Once the consultation period and Parliamentary scrutiny is complete then the Government will produce and publish a response to the consultation and Parliament. The NN NPS and its supporting documents will be amended and updated taking account of the consultation responses and the Parliamentary scrutiny process.
- Subject to this consultation, continuing Parliamentary scrutiny and final ratification by Parliament, the Government intends to finalise and then formally designate this draft NN NPS later in 2014.

10. What is the status of the draft NN NPS prior to designation?

- In making decisions on nationally significant road and rail projects, the Secretary of State must have regard to any matter that is important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision. This will include the draft NN NPS.

11. Does the NN NPS set out new policy?

- The NN NPS sets out existing Government policy on national networks development. The Department has used the Appraisal of Sustainability process to further develop its

policies around environmental standards on roads, building on the approach set out in Action for Roads in Summer 2013.

- The policy on strategic rail freight interchanges confirms the policy guidance published in 2011. The 2011 guidance will be cancelled once the final national networks NPS has been designated.

12. How can I get involved in the consultation?

- The Government welcomes views on the draft National Networks National Policy Statement and its supporting documents and they can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-road-and-rail-networks-draft-national-policy-statement>.
- Responses can be via the online consultation response form, email and post. The Department also plans to directly engage with those with an interest in the NN NPS. Please contact the Department for Transport if you wish to get involved.