

Highways Agency Improvement Plan Review Report							
Ref. No.	Title	Description	Timescales	Comments on Progress and Next Steps			
				January 2013	July 2013	January 2014	July 2014
1	Policy Review	Work with Department for Transport policy colleagues on new policy setting out how the Agency will work to its new remit to promote sustainable development	Published October 2013	Additional regulatory clearance requirements introduced in Autumn 2012 delayed approval to consult Consultation now will commence in February 2013 with target for publication revised to July 2013	Consultation undertaken in February and March 2013. Agreement achieved with HMT, BIS and DCLG on changes to detail of policy. Submission made to Roads Minister at end of June asking that he seek write around approval for publication of new policy and government consultation response.	The revised policy in form of DfT Circular 02/2013 'The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development' was published in October 2013. A series of briefing/training events have been held in each Agency regional office during Autumn 2013.	The Highways Agency is to be transformed into a new government-owned company. The company's approach to the delivery of its planning role will be set out in a new document which will be owned by the company. It will be drafted with the assistance of the external members of the Agency's Sustainable Development Steering Group. In parallel with this, DfT will prepare a replacement for Circular 02/2013 which will set out the government's expectations of the way that the company will discharge its role in the Planning system and the arrangements for handling cases referred to the SoSIT by LPAs that wish to challenge a company recommendation.
2	Performance Reporting	Analyse the performance measures within our reporting system and make recommendations to drive further positive behaviours in the business e.g. to reduce the number and frequency of holding directions, to encourage pre-application discussions.	Completed by January 2013	Implementation is ongoing. Analysis of the Planning Metrics is reported monthly within the Agency at senior management meetings. This has resulted in a downward trend in the proportion of Holding Directions issued and an increase in the number of No Objections. We are now proposing to build on this by doing further work to revise the Metrics reporting and the supporting databases that will permit us to better analyse the data around holding directions and conditioned responses.	Use of the Metrics is now business as usual. The review process for improving the system will be ongoing.	Business as usual. The metrics information is uploaded each month onto the Agency website and is shared with the Development Community through the Sustainable Development Steering Group (formerly the Spatial Planning Steering Group). Capture of reasons for holding and conditional responses is now mandatory, and trends are emerging. A draft refinement of the Metrics report has been developed, which if approved in January 2014, would give a breakdown between larger and smaller applications so a clearer picture is formed on the impact on the economy. Trends have shown that the Agency still is struggling to the proportion of applications where there has been formal pre-application engagement. We are looking if there are patterns with specific Developers or LPA's to help inform more focussed engagement to stimulate greater take-up of pre-application engagement.	A Summary National Planning Report was produced from May 2014, which focuses on performance around planning applications, and importantly, differentiates between large and non-large applications in terms of performance. Analysis of available data around pre-applications referred to in the Jan 14 entry has not revealed any patterns of note. The importance of that pre-application engagement has been re-emphasised to teams and to Developers at the Spatial Planning Steering Group.
		Increase the transparency of our reporting by sharing our performance data more widely with applicants, local authorities and other government departments	Implemented by July 2013	Implementation is ongoing. The summary of our monthly metrics reports is now published on our website and is discussed at the quarterly Spatial Planning Steering Group that has representation from wider public and private partners involved in the planning and development sectors.	The publication and discussion of the metrics will be ongoing as part of normal business.	Publication of the National Planning Report's summary for stakeholders continues to be published monthly on the website, and the full National Planning report is shared monthly with DfT and DCLG. The Agency's Annual Report to DCLG on its planning performance for 12/13 has also been made available on the website.	The Summary National Planning Report has replaced the stakeholder summary on the Agency's website, and as the document that is shared with DfT and DCLG. It gives more information than previous to stakeholders, and a more concise view of performance for DfT and DCLG. The full National Planning Report remains useful for an internal audience, giving as it does, a Regional breakdown and information on other aspects of work around our planning teams.
3	Improved ways of working with developers and LHAs	We will encourage pre-application discussions by refreshing our protocol for dealing with planning applications in line with NPPF, and re-launch it to ensure that it is widely publicised and accessible to all. This will enable us to work with developers in identifying solutions that will facilitate the delivery of their proposals in a manner that avoids the need for highway related non-planning consents, and to reduce the number of holding directions.	Completed by July 2013	Action complete. Refreshed protocol for dealing with planning applications was launched on 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2012. The emphasis on the benefits of pre-application discussions was made clear at the launch event. Effectiveness will be monitored by the Spatial Planning Steering Group based on customer/stakeholder feedback.	Protocol is now the subject of operational implementation. Living document which will be reviewed based on experience.	The plan of Asset Development Regions and the associated contact details have been updated and the revised plan should be up loaded onto the Agency's website early in February. We have identified a need to improve customer/stakeholder feedback to the Agency's regional teams. This will be addressed in the next reporting period. The latest revision of the protocol is awaiting senior management sign off and will be uploaded onto the Agency's website in the next reporting period.	Protocol published and uploaded to HA website. No further action required
		Where this would not compromise our statutory response requirements in respect of new application consultations, we will prioritise responses to re-submissions or modifications and replies to our requests for additional information	Implemented by July 2013	Implementation is ongoing.	All applications are tracked so that resubmissions are identified. The Agency also is working with local authorities and developers to resolve issues prior to (re)submission. Early in the consultation process the Agency identifies the developer's proposed start of works date and applications with a tight deadline are then prioritised where this does not unreasonably disadvantage other developers.	Now business as usual	
		We will develop and introduce a protocol for securing and delivering Section 278 agreements, which are needed to deliver 3rd party funded highway improvements.	Introduced by July 2013	Action complete. New protocol launched on 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2012. Effectiveness will be monitored by the Spatial Planning Steering Group based on customer/stakeholder feedback.	Protocol is now the subject of operational implementation. Living document which will be reviewed based on experience.	The mini s278 agreement template and the latest revision of the protocol is awaiting senior management sign off and will be uploaded onto the Agency's website in the next reporting period.	Protocol published and uploaded to HA website. No further action required

		We will develop and introduce a protocol for engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships and the delivery of Development Orders	December 2012	Action complete. New protocol launched on 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2012. Effectiveness will be monitored by the Spatial Planning Steering Group based on customer/stakeholder feedback. Further advice to LEPs on engagement with Highways Agency in respect of Strategic Growth Plans will be issued in January 2013.	Protocol is now the subject of operational implementation. Living document which will be reviewed based on experience. The additional guidance to LEPs remains in preparation.	HA administrative boundaries can be very different from LEP boundaries. The Agency needs to establish and publish the lead for engagement of each LEP within the HA. This will be addressed in the next reporting period. The latest revision of the protocol is awaiting senior management sign off and will be uploaded onto the Agency's website in the next reporting period (see also action 12 below).	Protocol published and uploaded to HA website. No further action required
		We will ensure that all local authorities are provided with a copy of the revised planning protocol and the new protocols as and when these are published.	Completed by July 2013	Action complete. Documents published on HA website on 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2012 and each Asset Development Team will write to all of their Local Planning Authorities to inform them of the new protocols in January 2013	All local authorities contacted as indicated. No further action required	The local authorities will need to be informed as and when the latest revisions of the protocols come to be published	Protocol published. Letter sent to all LPAs. No further action
4	Improved internal practices	We will establish a structure of peer reviews of planning activity within the Agency to share best practice and specifically to review individual cases involving directions of non approval.	Implemented by July 2013	Implementation is ongoing. Non-approvals issued by our planning teams around the country and each reviewed by an operative from another team to ensure that the use of a Direction of Indefinite Non-Approval was the most appropriate response to have been issued. To-date, the Peer Review process has supported all Non-Approvals issued, with the vast majority associated with small/single dwelling proposals that have required unsafe access with the Trunk Road Network.	Total of just four directions of indefinite non-approval issued in the financial year 2012/13 and only one in first half of 2013/14. All were for reasons of safety. Peer review of these decisions supported the action taken.	There have been three directions of indefinite non-approval so far in 13/14. One of these was on policy grounds of departure from published government policy and was reviewed by the Agency's policy team. The outcome of the peer reviews are pending.	A note outlining again the Agency's planning review procedures, including around directions of indefinite non-approval, was issued to Regions on 11 June 2014.
				Since November 2012, we have also started a pilot exercise in one of our regions to peer review a small sample of No Objections issued. This fits in with our anti fraud campaign and is being done to test that the use of No Objections is not being inappropriately influenced. This pilot will run for the remainder of this financial year before deciding whether it is appropriate to roll out across the Agency.	Anti-fraud measures in place and operating	The anti-fraud process was rolled out to the Agency's regional teams in October 2013	A note outlining again the Agency's planning review procedures, including the no objection anti-fraud process was issued to Regions on 11 June 2014.

		We will refresh our internal processes in line with LEAN principles to ensure the successful operational implementation of planning policy.	Implemented by May 2014	Implementation is ongoing. LEAN is being operated in our teams across the country and best practice shared at monthly meetings of our Asset Development Managers. The Planning Metrics also report the level of expenditure and staff resource we have been dedicating to engaging in planning. This has shown reductions in planning team sizes across the country of 47% compared to 2010/11 and average consultancy spend per application which was similar so far in 2012/13 compared to the 2011/12 but was 69% lower than 2010/11.	Trials of LEAN have been completed in associated areas of Agency activities. Best practice from those trials will be rolled out into planning role. Planning team staffing levels and consultancy spend per application have been maintained at similar levels to those reported in January 2013	Costs to the Agency per planning application processed have remained stable in the past 12 months despite an increase in the number of larger applications. Reported Planning team resources have increased in line with an increase in the volume of applications being processed. LEAN process reviews are underway in a number of areas.	New LEANer ways for the internal handling of applications have been implemented, and monitoring is in place on timeliness of responses.
5	External checklist for developers	We will disseminate our pre-application meeting check list and agenda via our external website to enable developers to prepare for pre-application discussions with the Agency therefore saving time and financial cost.	Completed by July 2013	Action complete. Published as Appendix E to the Protocol for Dealing with Planning Applications	No further action required.	Now business as usual	
6	Local Enterprise Partnerships	We are proactively working with LEPs across all areas and have contacted all to pledge our support to enable growth and the support of Enterprise Zones. We meet regularly with established LEPs and will continue to forge relationships with all as their presence is developed.	Completed by July 2013	All LEP's were written to in early 2012 by the local contacts in the Agency promoting engagement and joint working in helping to realise local growth aspirations. This was followed up in March with letters to the LEP's seeking their ideas for potential schemes to be included in the Pinch Point Programme. This programme has proven to be very successful, with more money made available in the autumn statement. The collaborative approach adopted by the Agency has also helped to further develop good working relationships with the LEP's. Implementation is ongoing.	Now business as usual. LEP Local Transport Boards are being established at which the Agency is/will be contributing at both Board and sub-group level. Regular meetings are being held with LEPs. This work will be built upon through the planned consultations on the various Route Based Strategies	Now business as usual. During the reporting period the Agency has reviewed and commented on the various SEP's working to a very tight timescale.	
7	Improved pre-application service	We will meet our statutory duty to provide responsive consistent pre-application advice to discuss issues early on in the planning process.	Immediate	Implementation is ongoing. Performance is being measured as part of the metrics. The importance of pre-application discussions was re-emphasised at the Protocol launch on 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2012.	Partnering with developers is ongoing. The Agency is putting in place plans to establish a 'Strategic Planning Group' headed at SCS level whose function will be to strengthen relationships with planning stakeholders. The added emphasis on the Agency's role in economic development will include the development of a system for auditing consistency of approach/decision making	A 'Growth and Economic Development Group' has been established within a new 'Strategy & Planning Directorate' with strategic responsibility for the Agency's contribution to the delivery of economic growth and sustainable development	Now business as usual
8	Maintaining and improving relationships with developers	We will build and maintain relationships with the developer community by continuing our quarterly Spatial Planning Steering Group and identifying opportunities for closer working. This group is attended by key developers and agencies where we consult attendees on the operational implementation of planning policy.	Completed by July 2013	Implementation is ongoing. The Steering Group continues to meet quarterly. The make-up of the Group has widened to include both the Home Builders Federation and the British Property Federation. This offers extended communication across two key sectors. Next meeting is scheduled for 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2013.	Now business as usual. With the publication of the Protocols achieved, thought is being given to the ongoing role/function of the Group and its relationship to the Agency's proposed 'Strategic Planning Group'	The new Strategy & Planning Directorate will take on responsibility for the now re-named 'Sustainable Development Steering Group'. It will work with existing and new stakeholders to redefine the function and purpose of the Group	Now business as usual
				Additional regulatory clearance requirements introduced in Autumn 2012 delayed approval to consult Consultation now will commence in February 2013 with target for publication revised to July 2013.	Agency is on track to achieve revised target for publication of policy	Links to the revised policy and associated guidance and advice has been published on the Agency's website	
		We will compile and publish links to our revised policy (when published) and other post-NPPF guidance and advice on the Highways Agency website.	Completed by November 2013	Other guidance and briefing is being published on the Agency website as and when this is produced. Future additions will include the current Spatial Planning Advice Notes as and when an ongoing review is completed.	Review of SPANs has been completed. Where appropriate these have now been incorporated as an Annex to the new policy. Of the remainder, some have been cancelled whilst the others will be re-issued as internal operational guidance when the new policy is published.	A number of the SPANs were incorporated into the policy. The remainder have been subjected to further review.	
		We will create regional libraries of all existing traffic models, which may be shared with developers.	Completed June 2013	NW Regional library completed and ready for publication on the HA Website. NW version with the Regions for comment.	Work is ongoing	A new webpage has been set up by the Planning & Economic Development policy team and this includes links to an extensive range of Planning policy, guidance and advice.	HA webpages are in the process of being migrated to the Gov.Uk website
		We will bring forward further clarification of the Agency's complaint procedures, as an amendment to our Planning Protocol, for agreement by the Spatial Planning Steering Group	Completed January 2014	The Agency continues to publish details of senior managers in each region who should be contacted where developers or LPAs feel that escalation is necessary. This point was re-emphasised at the Protocol launch on 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2012. A detailed proposal will be taken to Steering Group in January 2013.	Action remains to be completed.	Action still remains unresolved	Published as part of revision to Planning Protocol
9	Implementing Penfold	We will publish a report setting out progress against each of the recommendations in the Penfold Review and refresh it twice yearly.	Completed by July 2013	The only action assigned to the Highways Agency by the publication 'Implementation of the Penfold Review' (November 2011) was to publish its Planning Improvement Plan. Consequently, this action now may be considered as 'complete' and no further reports will be produced.	No further action required.	No further action required.	
10	Working with Parishes and Neighbourhood Forums	We will develop and publish advice note on engagement with the Highways Agency in the development of Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Orders	Completed September 2012	Action complete. New protocol launched on 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2012.	No further action required.	The latest revision of the protocol is awaiting senior management sign off and will be uploaded onto the Agency's website in the next reporting period.	Protocol published and uploaded to HA website. No further action required

11	Improved customer service	We will improve our awareness of the customer experience of working with the Agency by developing a customer satisfaction survey to capture feedback on working with the Agency through the planning system on a case-specific basis.	Immediate	Developers' feedback survey in place from 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2012. Link issued to all regional teams to distribute the survey to developers on completion of key pieces of work. Link provided on Regional Planning pages of the HA Website.	Pilot survey completed with 158 organisations receiving invitations to provide feedback. Rollout of survey in progress. Now business as usual.	A revised survey was launched in September 2013. This splits out 'holding direction' casework from all other applications so as to permit separate analysis. A link to the survey is sent to all developers at the time that the Agency responds to the application consultation. On the front page of the survey confirmation is given that all responses will be treated in confidence.	Initial analysis of revised survey still indicates low level of return although satisfaction rate within returns is still high. Discussed at June PDGP meeting and Action Plan to improve response rate identified.
				Planning authority survey drafted and with the HA centre for comment.	Some further work is required to enable the publication of the survey. Target for implementation now is September 2013	The LPA survey was launched in September 2013	Initial analysis of revised survey still indicates low level of return although satisfaction rate within returns is still high. Discussed at June PDGP meeting and Action Plan to improve response rate identified.
		The results of the survey will be reviewed and the findings reported to the Highways Agency Board and published on the Agency website. Based on those findings we will develop further action plans to drive continuous improvement.	Completed but potential for further work	Process in place for feedback analysis at a regional and national level. First analysis scheduled for end of March 2013.	Initial level of response has been disappointing. Insufficient to render publication viable. Consideration being given as to how to developers might be encouraged to provide more feedback.	A revised version of the survey was launched in September 2013 which is simpler to complete. The response rate is now being monitored.	Second analysis carried out May 2014. Low return rate achieved. It will be supplemented by Big 5 survey which is being piloted imminently. (The Big 5 survey is a combined customer satisfaction survey which has been developed to record LPA satisfaction with the way that the Big 5 Agencies deal with planning applications).
		We will undertake a review of all long-term holding directions. As part of this process we will write to the relevant LPA to ascertain the position in respect of all cases where there has been no contact with the developer for a period of six months	Completed by July 2013	Implementation is ongoing. To ensure that reported "holding directions" continue to reflect a real intention for development to progress, we reviewed our development control database in November and December 2012 to identify those cases which have either stalled significantly or no longer require directions. This resulted in 62 cases being closed, a 26.7% reduction in the number of cases previously reported as being in our system longer than 13 weeks. The number of holding directions issued has continued to fall since 2010 as a proportion of overall responses issued (i.e. in 2012/13 to-date, only 10.5% of all responses issued have been "holding directions", compared to 14.9% in 2010/11).	Now business as usual. Regional Teams being asked monthly to regularly review older applications and whether they should be closed on our database. To facilitate this, the Monthly National Planning Report now contains a link on each Regional page to the dataset and a tab listing the oldest open applications first. The number of applications still open after 13 weeks has declined by 40% (from 255 cases in May 2011 to 153 cases in May 2013). Use of Directions of non-approval for a defined period ("holding") has halved since 2010/11 from 15% to 7.4% of responses in 2012/13, and is continuing around that lower level so far.	The number of applications still open after 13 weeks has continued to decline with just 99 at the end of Dec 2013. The proportion of "holding" directions has increased however, alongside a significant increase in large applications. An Action Plan is to be put in place to reduce this and investigate the causes more deeply.	Now business as usual

12	Working with Local Government and the Local Enterprise Partnerships	We will seek to establish ongoing engagement with representatives from the Local Enterprise Partnerships at the national and sub-national level to discuss strategic actions to facilitate the delivery of growth	Target is for initial discussions in Spring 2014			New action for January 2014	First appointments to Agency's national engagement team made in July 2014
		We will seek to establish ongoing engagement with representatives from the Local Authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnerships within each Agency region to discuss practical actions to facilitate the delivery of growth	Target is for initial discussions in Spring 2014			New action for January 2014	Engagement with LEPs at a local level is now business as usual.
13	Improved pre-application engagement	Where effective pre-application discussions between the Agency and a developer have facilitated agreement on technical issues including highway impact and mitigation measures, the Agency will provide the developer with documentary evidence to that effect and advise the local planning authority that we do not need to be consulted at the planning application stage unless there should be a material change to the proposals	With effect from the commencement of the financial year 2014/15			New action for January 2014	Agency continues to engage with developers and LPAs at the pre-application stage
14	Enhanced monitoring and reporting capability	We will enhance our capability to monitor and report on the Highways agency's engagement with the Planning system by the development of a new Database covering the full scope of our role from input to the development of Local plans and pre-application discussions through to the delivery of agreed development mitigation measures	Target is to bring the new Database on line at the commencement of the FY 2015/16			New action for January 2014	Scoping study for improved planning database commenced June 2014 with target for implementation of first phase at the beginning of April 2015