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Dear Sir/Madam

NIC Consultation – London’s Transport Infrastructure

For this topic area, we have not attempted to answer each question as set, however, we would hope it may be helpful to contribute some remarks that might inform the process and suggest a direction toward future lines of enquiry.

London’s Transport Infrastructure

London is a “world city”. It is a leading financial and commercial sector, hosting many of the world’s leading banks and corporations. It is a global hub for professional, legal, accounting, consultancy, and media related services. It is home to world-class research and development in numerous fields supported by a thriving academic network. And London is a global cultural centre, boasting world-class museums, galleries, theatres and night life.

In short, it is a thriving 24/7 metropolis that ranks among the most desirable locations to live and work in the world.

Much of that success is built on major infrastructure projects delivered successfully over the city’s history from Bazalgette’s sewers to the Jubilee Line Extension. Yet there is no room for complacency. As globalisation takes hold, there has never been a more pressing need to prepare for the future and ensure the Capital is fully equipped to compete in the new global marketplace, while providing for the domestic needs of its citizens.

With the capital’s population growing faster than homes, jobs and infrastructure can keep pace with, the case for strategic infrastructure investment is pronounced. London’s population is expected to increase from the current 8.6 million to more than 10 million by 2030 and reach a staggering 11.3 million by 2050. This prompts the obvious question ‘where will everyone live and work?’

Not only that, but London is also a major generator of wealth within the UK, so it is critical that London retains its pre-eminent role as an engine of growth for UK plc, as well as providing a roadmap for progress in other cities around the country.

London must remain competitive and it must remain an attractive place to live and work. Not just for the mobile global citizens contributing to the city's growth, but also for the many millions of Londoners who provide the critical lifeblood of the city. As such, London has to provide the hard and soft infrastructure needed to meet the needs of everyone.

To do so means supporting thriving commercial hubs alongside varied and affordable housing, as well as delivering accessible social infrastructure linked by seamless and effective, integrated transport systems.

Infrastructure investment in London can therefore no longer be a series of speculative thoughts about what could be delivered in the future. Rather it must deliver a comprehensive series of packages to drive growth and demonstrate to investors that London can and will stay ahead of the curve.

London's strong performance can support the infrastructure investment required in the North and elsewhere. However, the purse strings cannot simply sit within public sector coffers. A new system of funding and de-risking projects needs to be explored in partnership with the commercial sector. Options for new financial vehicles and delivery arrangements akin to some of the successful projects delivered in recent years across the USA and Asia should be carefully examined as part of the Commission's process to find appropriate and new financial solutions.

The transport element here provides a major challenge for London. Not only is much of London's existing transport network over 100 years old, it is operating at a capacity level way beyond that envisaged by the original design. As a result, London's road and rail networks require a high level of maintenance to operate at these levels.

Under-investment in this area would represent a clear brake on the city's prospects for development and growth. Equally a massive shortage of affordable housing, especially adjacent to good transport facilities, represents a potential curb on future development and the city's global status.

There are a number of potential schemes which address some of the issues and should certainly feature on the core list of priorities including the Upper and Lower Lee Valley, Barking Peninsula, Old Oak Common, Ebbsfleet and other areas of South London. Additionally, there is a need to investigate the multiple value outcomes of future infrastructure which includes flooding, landscape, development value, and transport with multiple outcomes which should be acknowledged earlier on in the cost benefit analysis of projects.

A particular project that Arup considers fundamental to the infrastructure investment plan in London is Crossrail 2. It needs to deliver an ambitious scheme which links the fortunes of highly productive parts of London, with other areas of latent potential. Yet, we also consider an approach should be taken where Crossrail 2 has a focus on orbital connectivity so that we do not see 'all roads leading to the CAZ and major employment areas', but instead to capitalise on the opportunity to develop successful growth nodes in outer parts of the capital.

Analysis points to the need to improve orbital connectivity around London and we think can be delivered incrementally with less burden on financial resources. The case is particularly strong when looking to areas with latent potential to deliver housing and employment clusters. Moreover, links to strategic growth corridors stretching out of

London to places like Cambridge, Gatwick and Brighton provide a growth story greater than the sum of its parts.

Looking to these examples, it is the ability to deliver jobs and homes which drives the choices for the route, rather than the route dictating the growth. In the instance of connecting Wimbledon to Croydon, a whole new corridor for connectivity could drive investment and jobs to supplement the growth of CAZ with new opportunities for complimentary growth corridors.

A link from Purley to Gatwick that takes in a link to Crossrail at Heathrow also provides for a series of employment and housing opportunities that will be lost with a radial route straight through the centre of London.

Our proposal is to consider a 'star and cluster' approach to London's growth which improves connections in these areas, with targeted regeneration investment alongside to transform the places which need it most, including Croydon, Barking and the Upper Lee Valley.

The challenge for the NIC will be to decide which projects are the easiest to fund; which offer the maximum potential for development; and which provide the greatest capacity and resilience gain for the network as a whole. It is undoubtedly a challenging prospect, but one that will be made easier with the advent of the NIC and a chance to develop a truly long-term view of how the UK should meet the needs of the Capital.

Arup stands ready to support the work of the NIC in the months and years ahead to make this initiative a success for the benefit of both London and the UK as a whole.

Yours faithfully

James Kenny
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