

Intended for

**Department for Transport**

Project

**1620013852**

Date

**February 2024**

# NATIONAL NETWORKS NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT

## APPRAISAL OF SUSTAINABILTY



Bright ideas. Sustainable change.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 This report

This report is the updated version of the Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS) report for the National Networks National Policy Statement (hereafter referred to as the NNNPS). This report should be read in conjunction with the appendices and with the AoS scoping report.

The original AoS report was subject to consultation alongside the draft NNNPS in March 2023 and provides information to stakeholders on the potential sustainability effects (positive and negative) of the NNNPS. A separate Habitats Regulations Assessment report (HRA report) was also produced. The HRA report provides information to stakeholders on the potential effects of the NNNPS on sites designated for their European level value for nature conservation.

A range of responses were submitted during the March 2023 consultation and where appropriate these responses have been taken into account in the revised version of the NNNPS. A review has been undertaken of the changes made to the NNNPS in response to the public consultation and TSC response. It is considered that these changes do not materially alter the results of the original AoS. As such, the results of the assessment of the consultation draft NNNPS presented within Appendix 3 and in this report remain unchanged.

An AoS adoption statement will be produced at the end of the process. This adoption statement will include responses to consultation comments received on the original version of this AoS report and as a result of the scoping consultation, and reporting on the review of changes made to the NNNPS. Further details of what the AoS adoption statement will cover are included in Section 7.

### 1.2 Background

Under the Planning Act 2008, National Policy Statements (NPSs) are required to provide guidance for decision-makers on the application of Government policy when determining development consent for major infrastructure. The function of NPSs is to outline how existing policy applies to development consent for those projects defined as a “Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project” (NSIP) in the Planning Act 2008.

The NNNPS sets out the need for development of NSIPs on the national road and rail (including Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges or SRFIs) networks in England and provides planning guidance for promoters of NSIPs, and the basis for their examination by the Examining Authority and decisions by the Secretary of State.

The current NNNPS was published in December 2014. The Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport has concluded that the policy should be reviewed to align with the Government commitment to net zero, carbon budget 6<sup>1</sup> and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan (DfT, 2021)<sup>2</sup>. This review of the NNNPS also provides an opportunity to update other aspects of the document and ensure that it continues to provide a relevant policy framework for planning decisions.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/>

<sup>2</sup> Transport decarbonisation plan - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE NNNPS AND AOS

### 2.1 Purpose and content of the NNNPS

The NNNPS is a high-level document which sets out the need for, and Government's policies to deliver, development of NSIPs on the national road and rail networks in England. It also provides planning guidance for promoters of NSIPs on the road and rail networks, and the basis for the examination by the Examining Authority and decisions by the SoS.

The NNNPS:

- Sets out government policy;
- Outlines the need for development on the national networks;
- Outlines assessment principles; and
- Provides guidance on generic impacts.

The NNNPS will remain in force in its entirety unless withdrawn or suspended in whole or in part by the SoS. It will be subject to review by the SoS approximately every 5 to 10 years or earlier, if necessary to ensure that it remains appropriate. Once the NNNPS is designated, the SoS will use it as the primary basis for making decisions on any development consent application for road and rail NSIPs.

### 2.2 Purpose and content of the AoS

The Planning Act 2008<sup>3</sup> requires that an AoS is carried out before an NPS can be designated. Further, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004<sup>4</sup> requires that a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) be carried out during plan preparation. In addition, Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) are a requirement of the European Directive EC/2001/42 (SEA Directive)<sup>5</sup>, which was transposed into UK law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations)<sup>6</sup>. Central Government guidance<sup>7</sup> has merged these processes to allow for a single joint assessment to be carried out. For the purpose of this assessment the term AoS has been applied to the application of AoS, SA and SEA as this joint single assessment.

<sup>3</sup> Planning Act 2008 (legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> Strategic Environmental Assessments - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>7</sup> Government Guidance on Sustainability Appraisal and local plans although comes from 2005 Practical Guidance on the SEA Directive <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-local-plans>.

The main purpose of this AoS is to:

- Examine the likely social, economic and environmental effects of designating an NPS (and the reasonable alternatives to the NPS);
- Set out measures to mitigate any significant negative effects identified (and enhancement measures for all effects); and
- In this way help inform the preparation of the NPS to promote sustainable development.

The contents of this AoS report are as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction to the report;
- Section 2: Introduction to the NNNPS and AoS;
- Section 3: Methodology of the AoS;
- Section 4: Sustainability context;
- Section 5: AoS results;
- section 6: Monitoring; and
- Section 7: Next steps.

### **2.3 Links to Habitats Regulations Assessment**

A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the NNNPS has been undertaken in compliance with Regulation 63 and 64 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017<sup>8</sup> ('the Habitats Regulations'). The main purpose of the HRA is to consider the potential effects of a plan or project on European Sites before it is authorised. The methodology for the HRA assessment is set out in HRA Methodology Report<sup>9</sup>.

Effects identified in the AoS that are directly linked to the HRA have been reviewed to ensure there is consistency between the AoS and HRA with respect to effects on designated sites.

The HRA is produced under a separate report entitled National Networks National Policy Statement Habitats Regulations Assessment<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (legislation.gov.uk)

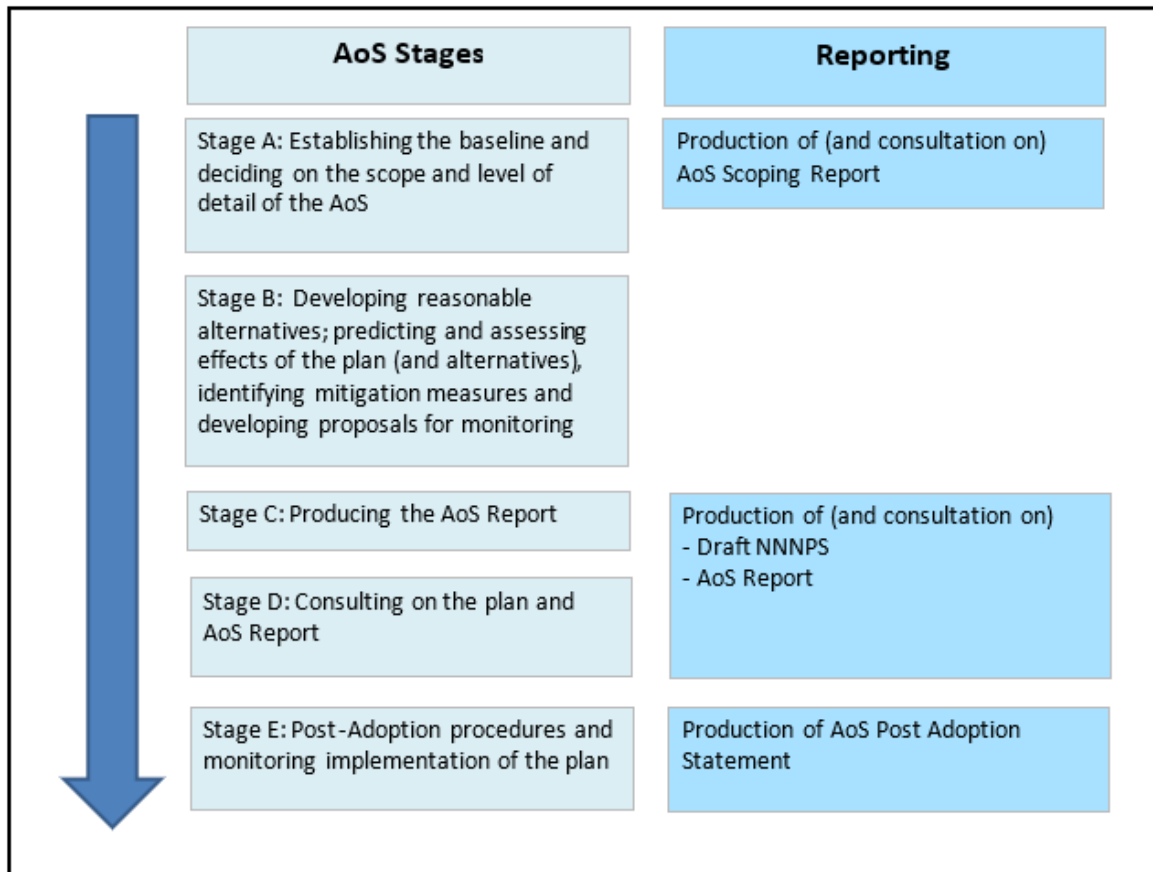
<sup>9</sup> National Network Policy Habitats Regulations Assessment Methodology Report, March 2022 WSP and Ramboll

<sup>10</sup> National Networks, National Policy Statement Habitats Regulations Assessment, January 2023 WSP and Ramboll.

### 3. METHODOLOGY OF THE AOS

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the AoS stages. The process followed for the AoS (which is based on Government guidance) is set out in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1: AoS stages**

Figure 3.1 outlines the stages of the AoS and the associated reporting requirements. These stages are described in textual form in the remaining parts of this section.

#### 3.2 Stage A: Scoping

The purpose of scoping is to set the context (including the relationship of the NNNPS with other plans and programmes), establish the baseline and define the scope and broad methodology of the assessment.

The scoping report defined the scope and level of detail of the assessment via the development of an AoS framework. This framework is a list of criteria that the NNNPS and reasonable alternatives are assessed against. This approach facilitates a consistent assessment which enables a clear comparison between alternatives.



Please note that the scoping report has been updated in line with consultee comments where appropriate and an updated version of this scoping report has been published at the same time as this AoS report (this is reported in Appendix 2 of this AoS report).

### **3.3 Stage B (i): Developing alternatives**

The SEA Regulations make it clear that reasonable alternatives to a plan should be identified and assessed. In addition to this, the AoS report should include an outline of the reasons for “selecting the alternatives dealt with” (SCHEDULE 2, Regulation 12(3)). This section of the report sets out the approach taken to defining alternatives and the reasons that DfT selected the alternatives that were assessed.

Devising alternative approaches to the development of the NNNPS is not a straightforward process and it is theoretically possible to construct a very extensive range of alternatives. A large number of nuanced alternatives, each with minor variations (or in areas where the NNNPS cannot significantly influence decision making) do not best serve planning or sustainability requirements. Planning practice has shown that outlining a set of clear and meaningful alternatives (that address the areas that the plan can significantly influence) ensures a logical decision-making process and a more sustainable plan outcome.

The development of strategic alternatives to the NNNPS was guided by the Department for Transport (DfT). In developing the alternatives DfT focused on the key strategic choices the Government has in setting policy related to development of the national networks.

DfT consider that there are three reasonable approaches to development of the NNNPS. These reasonable approaches are:

- An approach which delivers balanced national priorities (as selected by the DfT as the basis of the draft NNNPS);
- An approach which prioritises environmental sustainability benefits (Alternative 1); and
- An approach which prioritises wider economic and levelling up benefits (Alternative 2).

The Government is committed to a vision led approach to transport development, which moves away from unconstrained traffic growth and towards using investment to tackle specific issues. This underlying commitment means that the alternative scenarios presented are not vastly different in their approach. Rather, they present subtle variations with regard to the way issues (and therefore investment) are prioritised.

As the SoS for Transport has concluded that the existing NNNPS policy should be reviewed to align with the Government commitment to net zero, carbon budget 6<sup>11</sup> and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan (DfT, 2021)<sup>12</sup>. In the light of updated travel demand forecasts and the policy framework provided by the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, it was not considered reasonable to include a 'do nothing scenario' as an alternative.

Details of what is included in the reasonable alternatives are provided in Appendix 1.

### **3.4 Stage B (ii): Assessment of the effects**

The stages of the assessment comprised:

- Identification of the potential effects of the NNNPS and alternatives;
- Assessment/scoring of effects; and
- Identification of potential mitigation.

#### **3.4.1 Identification of the potential effects of the NNNPS and alternatives**

This stage involves identifying changes to conditions in the baseline which are predicted to arise from implementation of the NNNPS. These are identified against the SA criteria listed below:

- AOS Criteria 1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- AOS Criteria 2: Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- AOS Criteria 3: Air Quality;
- AOS Criteria 4: Climate Change Resilience;
- AOS Criteria 5: Community Impacts and Accessibility;
- AOS Criteria 6: Heritage;
- AOS Criteria 7: Landscape and Townscape;
- AOS Criteria 8: Noise and Vibration;
- AOS Criteria 9: Critical Infrastructure and Security;
- AOS Criteria 10: Macro-Economic Impacts;
- AOS Criteria 11: Levelling Up;
- AOS Criteria 12: Circular Economy;

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/>

<sup>12</sup> Transport decarbonisation plan - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

- AOS Criteria 13: Water Resources;
- AOS Criteria 14: Soil, Land, Minerals and Agriculture;
- AOS Criteria 15: User Experience; and
- AOS Criteria 16: Safety.

Assumptions have been made regarding the broad level and scale of investment across the road and rail network. These assumptions are outlined in Appendix 1.

In line with SA/SEA practice, a qualitative assessment was made through use of expert judgement and discussion. This has been supported by analysis of baseline data and trends plus other evidence where available.

### 3.4.2 Assessment / scoring of the effects

To ensure that effects are defined in a robust, consistent way, a set of significance criteria have been developed to guide the assessment and are set out in Table 3.1. The terms used to identify significant effects are aligned with SEA Guidance<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 3.1: AOS scoring**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Score</b>
Significant positive	Major positive effect on relevant receptors and fully supports the achievement of sustainability targets and objectives relevant to national networks. For example, the effect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantially accelerates an improving trend.</li> <li>• Substantially decelerates a declining trend.</li> <li>• Substantially supports delivery of a declared objective or target.</li> </ul>	++
Minor positive	Minor positive effect on relevant receptors and partly supports the achievement of sustainability targets and objectives relevant to national networks. For example, the effect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves or accelerates an improving trend but in a marginal way.</li> <li>• Decelerates a declining trend but in a marginal way.</li> </ul>	+

<sup>13</sup> Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005. A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive.

Effect	Description	Score
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports delivery of a declared objective but in a marginal way.</li> </ul>	
Neutral	No change. Either no effects, or on balance (taking account of positive and negative effects) a neutral contribution.	0
Uncertain*	<p>The potential for an effect is unclear. This may be due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clarity of how the policy will be applied / affect the baseline; or</li> <li>Due to data gaps in the environmental/sustainability baseline (or both).</li> </ul> <p><i>Please note that uncertain effects will be treated as significant negative effects and mitigation and monitoring recommended.</i></p>	?
Minor Negative effect	<p>Minor negative effect on relevant receptors and could conflict with the achievement of sustainability targets and objectives relevant to national networks. For example, the effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decelerates an improving trend, but in a marginal way.</li> <li>Accelerates a declining trend, but in a marginal way.</li> </ul>	-
Significant negative effect	<p>Major negative effect on relevant receptors and actively works against the achievement of sustainability targets and objectives relevant to national networks. For example, the effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substantially decelerates an improving trend.</li> <li>Substantially accelerates a declining trend.</li> <li>Substantially detracts from delivery of a declared objective or target.</li> </ul>	--

\*Treated in AoS as a significant effect

Table 3.2 provides a summary of the terminology applied during the assessment.

**Table 3.2: Effects terminology**

Effect	A change which is a result or consequence of an action or other cause.
Direct	Direct effects are those which arise as a direct consequence of an action.
Indirect (secondary)	Indirect effects include, for example, the effect on air quality and ambient noise as a result of increased traffic flows (rather than the direct effect of building new infrastructure).
Cumulative	The combined effects on a receptor.
Trans-boundary effects	Effects which are outside of the jurisdiction of the plan. For the NNNPS this would be outside England. As the plan is not spatial it has not been possible to assess the likelihood of trans-boundary effects. However, it is acknowledged that individual schemes could have effects in Devolved Administrations. This is assessed at the individual scheme level.
Longer term	20+ years
Long term	10-20 years
Medium term	5-10 years
Short Term	up to 5 years
Reversible	Capable of being reversed so that the previous state or situation is restored.
Irreversible	Permanent
Receptor	A component of the natural or social environment (such as a human being, water, air, a building or a habitat/species) that is affected by an effect. In this AoS receptors are represented by the AoS criteria.

### 3.4.3 Identification of potential mitigation

Where potential negative effects are identified, or where further potential for benefits are identified, potential mitigation or enhancement measures are considered. These

include recommendations for those that could be delivered through amendments to the NNNPS.

#### 3.4.4 Cumulative Effects

In the context of the NNNPS it is considered that cumulative effects could arise in the following ways:

- Different elements of the NNNPS combine to have an effect on a receptor;
- Development brought forward under other plans and programmes combines with the NNNPS to have an effect; and
- Other policies or strategies of the Government (or other bodies) could have an effect in combination with the NNNPS (either exacerbating or ameliorating the effects of the NNNPS).

The way that these different effects has been addressed is set out below:

- The NNNPS assessment tables are focused on receptors (as represented by AoS criteria). Therefore, the cumulative effects of activities within the NNNPS has (as far as possible) been intrinsically addressed in the way that the assessment has been considered;
- With regard to development that comes forward under other plans and programmes, the NNNPS has the potential to combine with many different activities, resulting in cumulative sustainability impacts. However, the non-spatial nature of the NNNPS means that it is not possible to identify such impacts in any detail within this assessment. Uncertainties inherent in such an assessment means that any results would not be useful to the planning process; and
- With regard to the cumulative effect of the NNNPS and other policies or strategies, this has been built into the assessment for each line in the assessment table, where applicable. For example, the assessment of the carbon emissions from construction and maintenance activities examines how the Transport Decarbonisation Plan could impact the likely effects of the NNNPS and its alternatives.

### 3.5 Stage C: Preparation of the AoS Report

A table of AoS requirements is provided as Table 3.3, demonstrating how this AoS report meets the requirements of the Regulation.

**Table 3.3: AoS requirements**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Where covered</b>
An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	Section 2.1 - background to the NNNPS.  Appendix 2 (scoping report) - relationship to other plans and programmes
The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme	Appendix 2 (scoping report)
The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	Appendix 2 (scoping report)
Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC	Appendix 2 (scoping report)
The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation	Appendix 2 (scoping report)
The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects)	Appendix 3 and Section 5
The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme	Appendix 3 and Section 5

<b>Task</b>	<b>Where covered</b>
An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with	Appendix 1
A description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	Section 3
A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring	Section 6
A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	Non-Technical Summary issued with this report
The report must include the information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment, the contents and level of detail in the plan or programme, its stage in the decision-making process and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process to avoid duplication of the assessment	Whole AoS Report
Consultation: Authorities with environmental responsibility, when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental report (Art. 5.4)	Consultation was carried out at the scoping stage and issues and options stage with consultees
Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme	Consultation on this AoS Report
Other EU Member States, where the implementation of the plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment of that country	Not applicable
Taking the environmental report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making (Art. 8)	This will be outlined in the AoS adoption statement which will be produced after the final designation of the plan.
Provision of information on the decision: when the plan or programme is adopted, the public and any countries consulted under Art.7 must be informed and the following made available to those so informed: the plan or programme as adopted.	To be reported in the AoS adoption statement



Task	Where covered
<p>A statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report of Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of consultations entered into pursuant to Art. 7 have been taken into account in accordance with Art. 8, and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with.</p> <p>The measures decided concerning monitoring</p>	
<p>Monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the plan's or programme's implementation</p>	<p>A final monitoring programme will be outlined in the AoS adoption statement</p>

### 3.6 Stage D: Consultation

The scope and the level of detail to be included in the AoS (reported in the AoS scoping report) was consulted on in March 2022. The AoS scoping report was subject to consultation in accordance with the SEA Regulations. Formal responses were received from the Statutory Environmental Bodies:

- Environment Agency;
- Natural England;
- Forestry Commission; and
- Historic England.

Other consultee responses were received from:

- An independent consultant/campaigner;
- Sustrans;
- Representative from Climate Emergency Policy and Planning; and
- Transport Action Network.

DfT have also undertaken several stakeholder workshops. At these workshops the NNNPS team provided the background of the NNNPS, an update on progress, the strategic context, the statement of need, climate change, the natural environment, the assessment process and Equalities Impact Assessment.

The results of the scoping consultations and the AoS team's response to them will be published in the AoS adoption statement that will be produced at the end of the process. This AoS adoption statement will also include responses to comments received as part of the March 2023 consultation on the draft NNNPS and the AoS that accompanied it.

### **3.7 Stage E: Monitoring**

Stage E requires the monitoring of potential significant effects and uncertainties with the purpose of identifying unforeseen negative effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Monitoring is proposed in Section 6.

### **3.8 Assumptions made and difficulties encountered**

The purpose of the AoS is to assess the sustainability effects of the NNNPS and reasonable alternatives. Strategic level assessment relies on expert judgement, which is guided by knowledge of the likely effects of the NNNPS, the baseline data available and responses, and information provided by consultees and other stakeholders. The assessment has been carried out and reported using an expert, judgement-led qualitative assessment. A 'precautionary approach' is taken, especially with qualitative judgements and judgements are documented in the assessment tables.

The SEA Regulations state that effects assessment should include assessment of trans-boundary, secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects. At this strategic level (especially with a non-spatial plan) the information is often not available to assess this level of detail. However, where information is available on the likelihood of different types of effects, this has been included in the results.

The NNNPS is a non-spatial plan (likely locations of developments are not specified) and on this basis the AoS is a high-level assessment of the likely effects of the NNNPS and does not include the assessment of individual projects or schemes. However, in order to aid the identification and assessment of effects, some assumptions relating to the potential different types of infrastructure and policy interventions that are expected to come forward under the NNNPS are provided in Appendix 1.

Other assumptions that have been made are that the assessment is based on the current regime of planning and environmental protection in place; and that the NNNPS will run to a similar timescale as the Government's current and foreseeable road and rail investment strategies or processes. Should any of the conditions change it is imperative that this AoS is revisited. In addition, should Government

policy change substantively, such that the NNNPS no longer reflects current policy, the AoS would need to be revisited.

## **4. SUSTAINABILITY CONTEXT**

This section sets out the sustainability context that was established during the scoping (Stage A), which included establishing the baseline, reviewing relevant plans and policies and identifying key sustainability issues. This section of the report should be read in association with the updated scoping report which is presented as Appendix 2 of this report.

### **4.1 Legislation, plans and policies**

One of the first steps in undertaking the AoS was to review relevant legislation, policies, plans, and programmes that could influence the NNNPS, to identify how the NNNPS could be affected by these, or how the NNNPS could affect those other policies and environmental objectives. The review also helped to support the completion of the social, economic and environmental baseline and identification of the key issues for sustainable development. Full details are presented in the updated scoping report which is presented as Appendix 2 of this report.

### **4.2 Baseline**

An integral part of the AoS process is to characterise the current baseline sustainability conditions and their likely evolution following a 'business as usual' scenario, thereby identifying key sustainability issues and establishing the current baseline against which likely significance may be judged. Full details of the baseline and evolution of the baseline are provided in the updated scoping report which is presented as Appendix 2 of this report.

### **4.3 Sustainability issues**

The key sustainability issues identified are presented in the updated scoping report which is presented as Appendix 2 of this report.

## 5. RESULTS OF THE AOS

### 5.1 How the AoS has influenced the NNNPS

The AoS has been undertaken alongside development of the Draft NNNPS and has been an iterative process. The AoS/HRA teams and the DfT team responsible for the development of the NNNPS have held weekly meetings from the beginning of the process. This has increased to daily meetings during key phases of the NNNPS development to ensure that recommendations made are considered.

Assessment work has included reviews of emerging drafts of the NNNPS against the AoS framework, with recommendations made to strengthen the Draft NNNPS. Some key amendments made to the Draft NNNPS as a result of these reviews include the following:

- Stronger references to any future species or habitats targets which may be set in the future as part of the Environment Act process;
- A reframing of the biodiversity mitigation section to clarify the importance of enhancement in addition to mitigating harm and providing compensation;
- Strengthened requirements for air quality assessments ensuring that all schemes likely to have adverse effects on air quality are assessed, and a requirement for refusal of consent where the increase in air pollutant emissions resulting from the proposed scheme would significantly impact the Government's ability to comply with a statutory limit or statutory air quality objective;
- Strengthened requirements for applicants to work with relevant authorities to avoid any breach of air quality limits or objectives;
- A stronger requirement in the section on impact on transport networks which requires applicants to provide evidence that new severance issues (relating to non-motorised users) have been addressed;
- The land use section been strengthened to require applicants to consider whether prior extraction of minerals would be appropriate; and
- A recognition that soils are important carbon sinks.

### 5.2 Reasons for the selection of the preferred approach

As stated in Appendix 1, the Government is committed to a vision led approach to transport development which moves away from unconstrained traffic growth and towards using investment to tackle specific issues. This underlying commitment means that the alternative scenarios tested are not vastly different in their approach. Rather, they present fairly subtle variations with regard to the way issues (and therefore investment) are prioritised.

The Government has selected the approach it has taken to the development of the NNNPS in recognition that different issues will need to be balanced, at different locations on the National Networks, and an approach which seeks to support this flexibility is the approach that will help to promote sustainable growth.

### **5.3 Results of the assessment**

The results of the assessment of the consultation draft NNNPS and reasonable alternatives are reported in full in Appendix 3 of this report. Table 5.1 presents a summary that focuses on the significant effects and the uncertain effects identified (as required by the SEA regulations). This table also identifies the mitigation measures recommended for the potential significant and uncertain effects. Appendix 3 also reports on neutral, minor negative and minor positive effects.

Mitigation measures are measures outlined to prevent, reduce or offset effects. Where an element of the NNNPS has a significant negative effect, measures have been recommended to prevent, reduce or offset these effects (please note that Appendix 3 also outlines some recommended mitigation measures for minor negative effects and also enhancement measures to increase the benefits of neutral and positive effects).

In addition, any uncertain effects have mitigation recommended in order to reduce uncertainty and the potential for this to give rise to a significant negative effect.

**Table 5-1: AoS assessment results**

<b>Potential effects</b>	<b>Mitigation measures recommended</b>
<p><b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b> Uncertain effect on greenhouse gas emissions from construction and maintenance activities (Road, Rail and SFRIs) – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>All new SRN, rail and SFRIs could be required to ensure they can be delivered without impacting on ability to meet net zero GHG emissions at a network/investment programme level.</p>
<p><b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b> Uncertain effect on greenhouse gas emissions from road users due to investment in road infrastructure (Operation) – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>All new SRN, rail and SFRIs could be required to ensure they can be delivered without impacting on ability to meet net zero GHG emissions at a network/investment programme level.</p>
<p><b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b> Uncertain effect on greenhouse gas emissions from railways – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>The NNNPS could include a commitment that (wherever possible) all new rail development will be electric.</p> <p>The NNNPS could include a commitment to prioritise electrifying the network around new SFRIs.</p>
<p><b>Air Emissions</b> Uncertain effect on direct emissions to air from railways – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>The NNNPS could include a commitment that all new rail development will be electric, prioritising electrifying the network around new SFRIs.</p> <p>The NNNPS could include a consideration of mitigation measures for non-exhaust emissions via train management measures including speed control, minimising braking, etc.</p>
<p><b>Macro – Economic Impacts</b></p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

<b>Potential effects</b>	<b>Mitigation measures recommended</b>
Significant positive effect on economic contribution of road investment – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 2.	
<b>Macro – Economic Impacts</b> Significant positive effect on economic contribution of rail and SRFI investment – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 2.	Not applicable
<b>User Experience</b> Significant positive effect on improved user experience (including congestion) on the SRN and Rail Network (operation) – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.	Not applicable
<b>Safety</b> Significant positive effect on operational road, rail SRFI safety improvements delivered through new schemes upgrades. Effects on users, communities and transport operatives – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.	Require applicants to have included consideration of how technology can improve the safety of network users (enhancement measure).

## 6. MONITORING

The SEA Regulations require the significant environmental effects of plans and programmes to be monitored, in order to identify unforeseen negative effects. The monitoring undertaken should help to:

- Monitor the significant effects of the NNNPS;
- Track whether the NNNPS has had any unforeseen effects; and
- Ensure that action can be taken to reduce/offset the significant effects of the NNNPS.

Draft monitoring requirements for uncertain and significant effects are set out in Table 6.1. These will be finalised in the AoS adoption statement, and will reflect any changes necessary after consultation. It is recommended that comprehensive monitoring be undertaken, which should include predicted effects (i.e. predicted as part of Environmental Impact Assessments for NSIPs) and monitoring of effects during construction and operation of NSIPs. This scheme level monitoring should also be synthesised to provide monitoring of the overall effects of NSIPs delivered under the NNNPS. It is also recommended, that the monitoring programme be extended beyond uncertain and significant effects, to include a broader set of topics addressed within this AoS.



**Table 6.1: Monitoring of the significant and uncertain effects of the NNNPS**

<b>Significant and uncertain effects identified</b>	<b>Monitoring required</b>
<p><b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>                      Uncertain effect on greenhouse gas emissions from construction and maintenance activities (Road, Rail and SFRIs) – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Emissions associated with construction phases on individual NSIPs, and over the network.</p>
<p><b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>                      Uncertain effect on greenhouse gas emissions from road users due to investment in road infrastructure (Operation) – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Emissions associated with operational phases on individual NSIPs, and over the network.</p>
<p><b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>                      Uncertain effect on greenhouse gas emissions from railways – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Emissions associated with operational phases on individual NSIPs, and over the network.</p>
<p><b>Air Emissions</b>                      Uncertain effect on direct emissions to air from railways – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Emissions associated with operational phases on individual NSIPs.</p>
<p><b>Macro – Economic Impacts</b>                      Significant positive effect on economic contribution of road investment – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Macro level impacts of road investment delivered under the NNNPS.</p>
<p><b>Macro – Economic Impacts</b>                      Significant positive effect on economic contribution of rail and SRFI investment – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Macro level impacts of road investment delivered under the NNNPS.</p>

<p><b>User Experience</b></p> <p>Significant positive effect on improved user experience (including congestion) on the SRN and Rail Network (operation) – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Monitoring of user experience/satisfaction before and after implementation of NSIPs.</p>
<p><b>Safety</b></p> <p>Significant positive effect on operational road, rail SRFI safety improvements delivered through new schemes upgrades. Effects on users, communities and transport operatives – this relates to Draft NNNPS/Alternative 1/Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Monitoring of safety before and after implementation of NSIPs.</p>

## 7. NEXT STEPS

Once the NNNPS is designated, an AoS adoption statement will need to be published in accordance with the SEA Regulations. The regulations state that as soon as reasonably practicable after adoption, a statement should be produced and published setting out how environmental/sustainability considerations and opinions expressed through consultation have been taken into account in the planning process. The SEA Regulations set out the particulars that should be covered by the statement as follows:

- How environmental/sustainability considerations have been integrated into the planning process;
- How the AoS report has been taken into account;
- How opinions expressed in response to consultation have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the NNNPS as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental/sustainability effects of the implementation of the NNNPS.