

By Email

9th September 2022

Letter sent by email to tfse@eastsussex.gov.uk

Transport for the South East
County Hall,
St. Anne's Crescent,
Lewes
BN7 1UE

DRAFT Strategic Investment Plan for the South East Consultation Response from Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

This response has been prepared by the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Berkshire LEP) on behalf of the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB). We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Draft Strategic Investment Plan for the South East by Transport for the South East.

Berkshire LEP is an alliance between business, education and the public sector and is charged with a mandate to support and drive economic development and growth. In terms of transport and infrastructure we work to ensure that economic potential is not restricted by labour supply issues, strengthening networks to enable the flow of information between people and to use ideas better and making Berkshire's towns genuine hubs in the knowledge economy. The LEP has a key role in influencing and lobbying, especially in relation to national government and its delivery bodies such as Network Rail or National Highways and hence is closely aligned to the objectives and activities of TfSE.

The BLTB was established in March 2013 to prioritise and implement transport capital schemes across Berkshire. It provides a single voice for the area focusing on a range of strategic initiatives designed to enhance connectivity, covering national, sub-national and local transport, housing growth, digital communications, water resources and flood defences, energy, and waste.

Representing the LEP and the six local authorities across Berkshire, the BLTB is also a member of Transport for the South East and participates fully on the Board (providing the vice-Chairman), Transport Forum, Senior Officer Group and Transport Strategy Group and hence has been very closely involved in the development of the Strategic Investment Plan. We are therefore fully supportive of the broad direction and ethos of the proposed approach to shaping the economy and connectivity around the South East.

SECTION 1: Background information

Q1 In what capacity are you completing the survey



On behalf of a group, organisation or government body

Q2 Which category of organisation or group are you representing? (Please tick all of the boxes that apply)

Business representative group (includes CBI, Chambers of Commerce, LEPs)

Transport, infrastructure or utility organisation (includes transport bodies, transport providers, infrastructure providers and utility companies)

Member of a TfSE stakeholder group

Q3 Please specify which organisation you represent

Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Berkshire Local Transport Body

Q4 How much do you know about TfSE?

My knowledge of Transport for the South East is: active involvement

Q5 Have you reviewed the relevant SIP documentation?

Yes – I have read the SIP

SECTION 2: Investment Priorities

Q6 Which of the above investment priorities do you feel are important for the SIP to deliver? (Tick all that apply)

Decarbonisation & Environment
Adapting to a New Normal
Levelling up Left Behind Communities
Regeneration and Growth
World Class Urban Transit Systems
East - West Connectivity
Resilient Radial Corridors
Global Gateways and Freight

Q7 Do you have any further comments on the SIP's investment priorities?

Suggest consideration should be given to prioritising the list of investment priorities. As indicated in the response to Q6, they are all important, but some are arguably more important than others. My view is that the top priority must be decarbonisation and the environment and then there is worthwhile debate to be had around the others. This exercise will also be useful for the future if and when there is a need to prioritise the interventions in the SIP themselves, in response to limited funding opportunities.

As identified within the global policy interventions, virtual access and reducing the need to travel through digital connectivity is going to be an integral part of the delivery of the SIP. However, whilst implied as part of adapting to the new normal, this does not come over strongly enough within the priorities listed above, or the supporting text in the full SIP. Our preference would be to see an additional investment priority specifically around reducing the need to travel.

SECTION 3: Packages of Interventions

Place Based Packages of Interventions

Q8 For the purposes of data gathering and analysis, the TfSE region has been split into four geographies. Which of the following geographic areas are you most interested in? Please be aware that some local authority areas appear in more than one of the geographies and you may need to select more than one of the geographies if this is the case for your specific area of interest.

Wessex Thames (Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey)

Q9 To what extent do you agree that the packages of interventions for the Wessex Thames area will deliver on the priorities of the SIP?

Definitely agree

Q10 Please select all of the packages for the Wessex Thames area that you feel are important in achieving the priorities of the SIP. Tick all that apply.

Wessex Thames Rail
Wessex Thames Mass Transit & Active Travel
Wessex Thames Highways

Q11 Do you have any further comments on the Packages of Interventions for the Wessex Thames area?

There are a number of long-term highway enhancement and packages that incorporate a range of capacity, safety and sustainable transport schemes that are within Berkshire, but are not included within the packages identified. It is understood that the SIP is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all potential long-term intervention, however there are some specific corridors and schemes named. I would have some concerns if there was an implicit priority being given to these over and above those not included and would suggest there could usefully be some clarity included in the narrative. The interventions within Berkshire that would fall into this category include:

- M4 Junction 8/9 Improvements
- M4/A4 Junction to Langley
- M4/A4 Junction 6 to Slough Town Centre Relief Road

- A4 Maidenhead to Slough Corridor Enhancements
- A4 Safety Improvements
- A4 Thatcham Improvements
- A308 Corridor Improvements
- A412 Widening
- A3095 links to M4
- B3022 Bracknell Road Improvements
- Amen Corner South Spine Road
- Slough Northern Relief Road

There is no mention of Park & Ride within the SIP, or inclusion of any proposals. It could be implied that they be part of some of the strategic corridor and furthermore Strategic Mobility Hubs have the potential to perform this function as part of a package of measures, but there are none of these proposed for the Berkshire area. We would suggest that this needs to be given more consideration and some reference made within the SIP. Within Berkshire the following Park & Ride schemes have been identified:

- M4 Junction 7 Park & Ride
- Maidenhead Park & Ride
- Mere oak Park & Ride Expansion
- North Reading Park & Ride
- South West Reading Park & Ride
- West Reading Park & Ride

The railway package in the plan is rightly focussed on strategic interventions and makes explicit reference to the possible Theale Strategic Rail Freight Terminal. However, there are also references to a range of station upgrade across the area, but I do not consider those listed to be comprehensive. There are a number of proposals in Berkshire that have not been included and I would suggest a consistent approach across the SIP in required. Particular projects in Berkshire under consideration are:

- Tilehurst Station Interchange
- Twyford Station Access Package
- Twyford Station Car Park & Interchange

We welcome the inclusion of the Western Rail link into Heathrow as this remains the top strategic infrastructure priority for Berkshire with a compelling economic/business case as well as stands alone as a major carbon reducing sustainable transport scheme. This scheme is key to achieving the connectivity to support the economy in the Thames Valley. We are therefore pleased to see explicit reference to accessing Heathrow within the Wessex Thames Rail package.

Global Policy Package of Interventions

Q12 Which of the above Global Policy Interventions do you feel are important for the SIP to support? (Tick all that apply)

Decarbonisation
Public Transport Fares
New Mobility

Road User Charging
Virtual Access
Integration

Q13 Do you have any further comments on the SIP's Global Policy Interventions?

All of the global policy interventions are supported. Decarbonisation is rightly identified as a key policy intervention, but we consider that it should be given a status over and above the other interventions, if we are going to be able to contribute to national target to achieve net zero and fully align the TfSE approach with the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

TfSE role is rightly identified as giving a Regional perspective and as such we would like to have seen more emphasis and specific commentary on the potential provision of hydrogen infrastructure for HGVs across the South East. Within the 30 year time horizon of the SIP it is reasonable to assume that hydrogen as a fuel will become more mainstreamed and hence the need for a comprehensive fuelling infrastructure across the area will be compelling and given the TfSE geography, we believe TfSE should be offering to be a key player leading in its development. To a lesser extent, but perhaps a higher priority in the short term, is a similar role supporting the development of EV infrastructure and energy to enable electric vehicles to fulfil their potential contributing to decarbonisation of road transport. Again TfSE can bring a unique strategic perspective to this in the South East.

Section 4: Benefits and Costs

Q14 Do you think that the SIP captures the benefits and costs of the proposed packages of interventions adequately? Choose any one option

Yes

Q15 Please explain your answer to the above question here.

At this stage in the development of the packages, which by necessity is at a high strategic level, the analysis and conclusions reached are proportionate.

Q16 Do you have any further comments on the funding and finance approach of the SIP?

We welcome the debate on alternative funding sources and agree that TfSE can play a pivotal role in leading the way and being genuinely innovative. The LEP can also support this area of activity by bringing expertise from the private sector to support the opportunities for private sector investment that must evolve going forward.

The approach to funding understandably takes a long term perspective but there could usefully be more emphasis and consideration given to short term funding pressures in the South East. The overall funding ask in the SIP assumes that historic levels of investment in the South East are maintained. However, this does not reflect the current situation in this area and the draft SIP misses an opportunity to reflect this and highlight the current dearth

of funding for major infrastructure in the Region. Until recently the Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund, administered by LEPs, provided significant capital funding for transport infrastructure. Their successors the Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund, which are channelled through local authorities, are not providing anything like the level of investment of their predecessors and what is available is inevitably skewed to the North. Whilst the SIP makes a decent case to address the deprivation that does exist in the South East, it should also include a stronger narrative around the case for investment in the more prosperous parts to the Region such as investing in transport infrastructure needed to support the Thames Valley economy. There is plenty of evidence that investment in economically successful areas provides significant benefits across the whole Country and there is a real danger that if investment is starved from these parts of the South East, that business will relocate, not to the North, but out of the UK altogether.

As stated in the SIP to achieve maximise this opportunity will require an integrated approach to investment and delivery and working across institutional, sectoral, and spatial boundaries. The LEP is keen to actively involved in this aspect of the SIP development going forward.

Section 5: Delivery of the SIP

Q17 To what extent do you agree that, as a whole, the packages of interventions will deliver on the priorities of the SIP?

Definitely agree

Section 6: Integrated Sustainability Appraisal and Conclusion

Q18 Do you have any comments on the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal?

No

Q19 Overall, to what extent do you agree that the SIP makes the best case possible for investing in transport infrastructure in the South East?

Definitely agree

Other comments

Berkshire LEP and Berkshire Local Transport Body welcome the SIP and the approach taken. The same principles are writ large in the Berkshire Economic Recovery and Renewal Plan, in particular a commitment to responsible economic growth. Further, the urgency with which carbon emissions need to be reduced means that we must respond to the environmental implications of our growth processes. This is challenging. Most obviously, whilst we must harness the advantages associated with proximity to Heathrow Airport, we need to do this in a way that delivers environmental gains as well as economic benefits.

The SIP also needs to be mindful of the significant changes taking place across industries recently with the impact of Covid, Brexit and fuel prices, we need to ensure that future ways of working are factored into the SIP, and it demonstrates a truly multi-modal approach.

We note that the timeline for the SIP is 30 years, which is a long timeline. However, the LEP supports this and notes that investment in transport and infrastructure has a long lead in time and also need to change the mindset of the Government and the general public to be successful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Travers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Kevin Travers
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