

M54 to M6 Link Road

TR010054

Volume 7

**7.2 Case for the Scheme and National
Policy Statement Accordance Table**

Regulation 5(2)(q)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

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Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms and
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

**M54 to M6 Link Road
Development Consent Order 202[]**

**7.2 Case for the Scheme and National Policy Statement Accordance
Table**

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 This Case for the Scheme and National Policy Statement Accordance (CftS) has been prepared to accompany an application by Highways England for a Development Consent Order under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 for the M54 to M6 Link Road. The M54 to M6 Link Road (the Scheme) involves the construction of a 2.5 km new dual carriageway between M54 Junction 1 and M6 Junction 11 including replacement junctions at either end and ancillary works.
- 1.1.2 The Scheme falls within the administrative boundaries of South Staffordshire Council, Staffordshire County Council and City of Wolverhampton Council. The works within the City of Wolverhampton Council area are limited to minor signage works, with the majority of the Scheme being in the area administered by South Staffordshire Council and Staffordshire County Council.
- 1.1.3 The M54 provides the strategic link connecting the west of the country and urban areas such as Telford with the M6 South. The M6 is a main link for strategic traffic in the West Midlands heading north and south connecting Birmingham and the West Midlands with Stoke-on-Trent and the North West. The M54 eastbound merges into the M6 southbound at Junction 10a but there is no direct motorway link from the M54 to the M6 northbound or the M6 Toll. There is also no motorway link between the M6 southbound and the M54 westbound.
- 1.1.4 Therefore, a large volume of east-west trips travel along the A460 primary route, or the A449 and A5 trunk roads. The interaction between strategic and local traffic along these routes leads to congestion and delays along the A460 and at the A449/A5 Gailey roundabout. The traffic also contributes to noise and air pollution along these routes, particularly along the A460 Cannock Road, and reduces the attractiveness of these routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- 1.1.5 The Scheme would provide a new section of modern dual carriageway whilst retaining the existing roads for local traffic. The majority of the existing A460 Cannock Road between the M54 and the M6 would be reclassified to an unnumbered C road to reflect the fact that strategic traffic is able to divert on to the new link running parallel to the existing A460. The new link would improve road safety and provide more reliable journey times for road users on the A460, A449 and the A5. It would reduce volumes of through traffic in villages and support economic growth by improving journey times, enhancing access to east-west and north-south routes and providing additional capacity to enable and support proposed developments in the area.
- 1.1.6 This CftS provides more detail on the need for the Scheme, the options considered, the planning history and the compliance of the Scheme with the requirements of relevant planning policies at the national and local scale.
- 1.1.7 The National Policy Statement for National Networks, National Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Road Investment Strategy 2015-2020 provide strong support for the delivery of national transport networks that meet the country's long-term needs, whilst supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving the quality of life for all. The Government has committed to the delivery and funding of

the Scheme through its inclusion in the Road Investment Strategy 2015-2020 and the Highways England Delivery Plan.

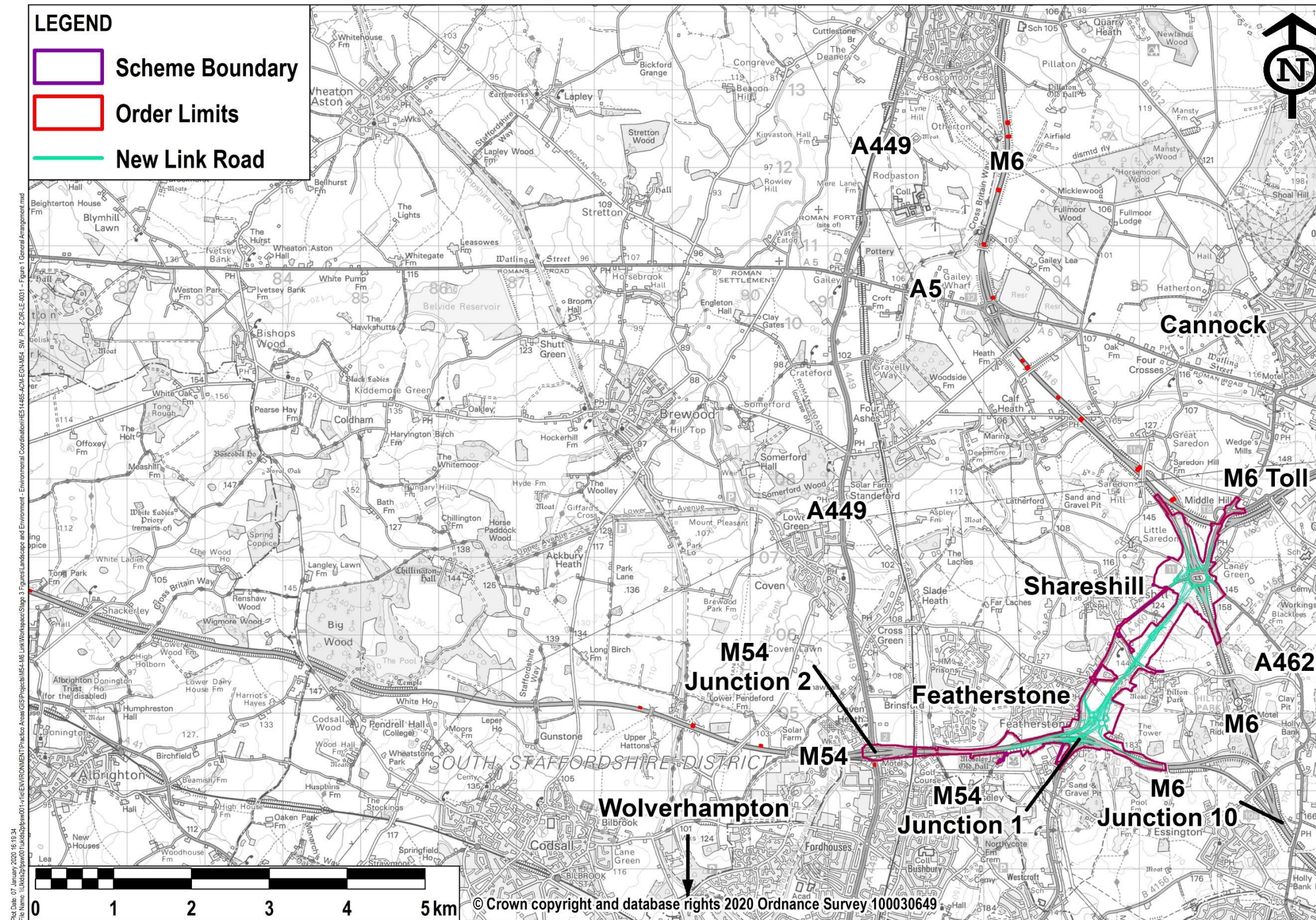
- 1.1.8 This CftS demonstrates that the need for the Scheme is supported in principle and when considered against the 'assessment principles' and 'generic impacts' required by the National Policy Statement for National Networks. It is the conclusion of this CftS that the Scheme is in accordance with the National Policy Statement for National Networks and provides significant benefits for the local area and the wider region.
- 1.1.9 The Scheme is also explicitly supported by numerous regional and local documents. The West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study recognises the need for the project and Midlands Connect's document 'Our Routes to Growth' calls on the 'earliest possible construction' of the Scheme. Staffordshire County Council's Integrated Transport Strategy recognises the current traffic delays on the A5, A460 and A449 and the importance of the Scheme to address issues.
- 1.1.10 Recognising that local planning policy can be a material consideration in the determination of applications for development consent, it is clear that (although there are no explicit policies which reference the Scheme) the M54 to M6 Link Road Scheme is broadly consistent with the objectives of relevant Local Plan policies. In particular, the Scheme will support achieving Objective 11 of the South Staffordshire Core Strategy 'to support the growth of a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable economy' and support delivery of Strategic Employment Sites located along the M54 and the M6.
- 1.1.11 The Planning Act 2008 requires that this application for development consent must be decided in accordance with National Policy Statement for National Networks, unless the adverse impact of the Scheme would outweigh its benefits. The Environmental Statement **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** provides a thorough summary of the positive and adverse impacts of the Scheme.
- 1.1.12 Mitigation has been designed to address effects where possible. The mitigation that has been designed into the Scheme is proportionate and reasonable to the level and range of environmental effects predicted, which includes delivering no net loss in biodiversity as part of the Scheme.
- 1.1.13 The Applicant considers that the benefits of the Scheme outweigh the adverse effects. Overall, it is concluded in this Case for the Scheme that the planning balance lies strongly in favour of the grant of development consent for the Scheme.

2. Introduction

2.1 Introduction to the Scheme

- 2.1.1 The M54 to M6 Link Road ('the Scheme') will provide an improved link between the M54 and the M6, approximately 6 km to the north of Wolverhampton. The Scheme is defined as all works within the Order limits, which is the area shown in red in Figure 2.1.
- 2.1.2 Currently, there is no direct strategic route from the M54 to the M6 north. Road users wanting to access the M6 north or M6 Toll must use local roads such as the A460, A449 and A5. Figure 2.1 shows the location of the Scheme in the context of these surrounding routes. This means high volumes of both long-distance and local traffic use the regional and local roads to travel this route.
- 2.1.3 A large volume of local and long-distance traffic uses the A460, which passes adjacent to the villages of Featherstone, Hilton and Shareshill.
- 2.1.4 The A460 has just one lane in each direction with numerous junctions and stretches of road with a 30mph speed limit. It was not designed for the amount and type of traffic currently using it. This results in delays, congestion and above average accident rates.
- 2.1.5 There is therefore a need to provide a link road to address the current levels of congestion and its impacts on local residents and motorists. Investment in additional capacity will support local economic growth for Telford, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Cannock and Tamworth by improving traffic flow and enhanced east-west and north-south routes.
- 2.1.6 The Order limits define the area covered by the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the Scheme and incorporates land required temporarily and permanently for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Scheme. The Order limits include the boundary of the main works (referred to in the Environmental Statement (ES) [TR010054/APP/6.1] as 'the Scheme boundary') and a number of isolated pockets of land required only to update existing highway signs. The Scheme boundary was used to help define study areas for the ES because the impact of the isolated signs in the existing highway is more limited than that of the new link. The Scheme boundary and Order limits are shown Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Routes between the M54 and the M6



2.1.7 The Scheme would provide a strategic link between the M54 Junction 1 and M6 Junction 11. From south to north the main components of the Scheme are:

- Replacement of the existing M54 Junction 1 with free flow slip roads between the new link road and the M54. This would allow the freeflow of traffic between the M54 and the new link road in both directions and maintain connectivity with the existing local road network, via three new roundabouts.
- Construction of a new dual carriageway between M54 Junction 1 and the M6 Junction 11. The alignment of the carriageway would be located to the east of the existing A460 and the villages of Featherstone, Hilton and Shareshill and west of Hilton Hall.
- Dark Lane would be stopped-up between the final property and the junction with Hilton Lane.
- The realignment of Hilton Lane on a bridge over the mainline of the Scheme. The bridge would be reconstructed on a similar alignment and would provide sufficient clearance for the new road.
- Provision of an accommodation bridge and access track across the mainline of the Scheme to retain access to severed land to the east of the Scheme. The route of the new link road would then continue north to the east of Brookfield Farm to link into the M6 Junction 11.
- Enlargement of the M6 Junction 11 signalised roundabout to accommodate a connection to the new link road and realign existing connections with the A460 and M6. Two replacement bridges would be required over the M6 to provide an increase in capacity from two lanes to four lanes of traffic on the roundabout. This work would raise the height of the junction by approximately 1.5m.

2.1.8 The West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study (Ref 1.1) recommended the construction of a link road between the M54 and M6 to provide a strategic network link between the M54 and the M6 northbound. The Government formally committed to the delivery of the Scheme in 2014 in the Road Investment Strategy: 2015 to 2020 (RIS1) (Ref 1.2), which sets out the long-term approach to improve England's motorways and major roads.

2.1.9 The applicant for the Scheme is Highways England (henceforth the 'Applicant'), the Strategic Highways Company as defined in the Infrastructure Act 2015. The Applicant is charged with modernising and maintaining the highways, as well as running the network and keeping traffic moving.

2.1.10 The Scheme falls within the administrative boundaries of South Staffordshire Council (SSC), Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC). These Councils are the host authorities for the Scheme.

2.2 Purpose of this document

2.2.1 This Case for the Scheme and National Policy Accordance document (CftS) has been prepared to accompany an application for a DCO under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) (Ref 1.3) to deliver the Scheme.

- 2.2.2 The DCO application will be determined by the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department for Transport (DfT), informed by a recommendation provided by the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate), as the Examining Authority for the application. The purpose of this CftS is to assist decision-making by providing a detailed assessment of how the application performs when assessed against the criteria for determining DCO applications as set out in the PA 2008.
- 2.2.3 This Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 5(2)(q) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (Ref 1.4) and Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 6 Preparation and Submission of Application Documents 2019 (Ref 1.5).
- 2.2.4 The PA 2008 requires that applications for development consent be decided in accordance with the relevant National Policy Statement(s) (Section 104(3)) except to the extent that the adverse impact of the Scheme would outweigh its benefits (Section 104(7)). The other exceptions in sub Sections (4) to (8) of Section 104 are not relevant in this case. This document examines in detail the benefits and adverse impacts of the Scheme (Chapters 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9). It concludes that the benefits of the Scheme significantly outweigh the adverse impacts.
- 2.2.5 The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) (Ref 1.6) published by the Department for Transport in December 2014 is the relevant NPS for the Scheme. This CftS provides an assessment of the extent to which the Scheme is in accordance with the NPSNN in Chapter 8, with a more detailed assessment provided in the NPSNN Accordance Table enclosed as Appendix A.
- 2.2.6 Although an application for a DCO is not subject to Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Ref 1.7), Local Plans and other documents such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ref 1.8) are material considerations when making decisions on DCO applications. In determining the application, the PA 2008 states that the SoS must have regard to the NPS, any local impact reports produced by host authorities, prescribed matters and any other matters which the SoS thinks are both important and relevant to the SoS decision. Policies in Local Plans and the NPPF are frequently considered 'important' and 'relevant' matters and can influence the content of local impact reports. For these reasons, the compliance of the Scheme with these policies is also considered in this CftS.
- 2.2.7 This CftS also provides a description of the Scheme and the surrounding environment, a summary of the design options considered and how the design has evolved during the project.
- 2.2.8 This remainder of this CftS is structured as follows:
- chapter 3 The Scheme Development and Options Considered: Providing an overview of the options considered and consultation;
 - chapter 4 Scheme and site description;
 - chapter 5 The Transport Case for the Scheme: Need for the Scheme from a transport perspective including an overview of the traffic model, current and future network performance, road safety and impact on non-motorised users;

- chapter 6 Economic Case Overview: Overview of the economic appraisal, including economic, environmental and social benefits of the Scheme as well as value for money;
- chapter 7 Planning History: planning history within the Scheme boundary and significant developments that may be affected by the Scheme or affect the Scheme design;
- chapter 8 Conformity with Planning Policy and Transport Plans: Assessment of the accordance of the Scheme with planning and transport policy; and
- chapter 9: Conclusion.

2.3 Requirement for a Development Consent Order and Environmental Impact Assessment

Requirement for a Development Consent Order

- 2.3.1 The Scheme is defined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under Sections 14(1)(h) and 22(1)(a) of the PA 2008 (as amended by Article 3 of The Highway and Railway (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project) Order 2013) (Ref 1.9) by virtue of the fact that:
- it comprises the ‘construction’ of a highway;
 - the highway to be constructed is wholly in England;
 - the Secretary of State is the highway authority for the highway; and
 - the speed limit for any class of vehicle on the highway is to be 50 miles per hour or greater and the area for the construction of the highway is greater than 12.5 hectares (ha).
- 2.3.2 Therefore, in accordance with the PA 2008, a DCO is required to allow the construction of the Scheme. Further details concerning the qualification of the Scheme as an NSIP can be found within the Application Form **[TR010054/APP/1.3]** and in the Explanatory Memorandum to the draft DCO **[TR010054/APP/3.2]**.

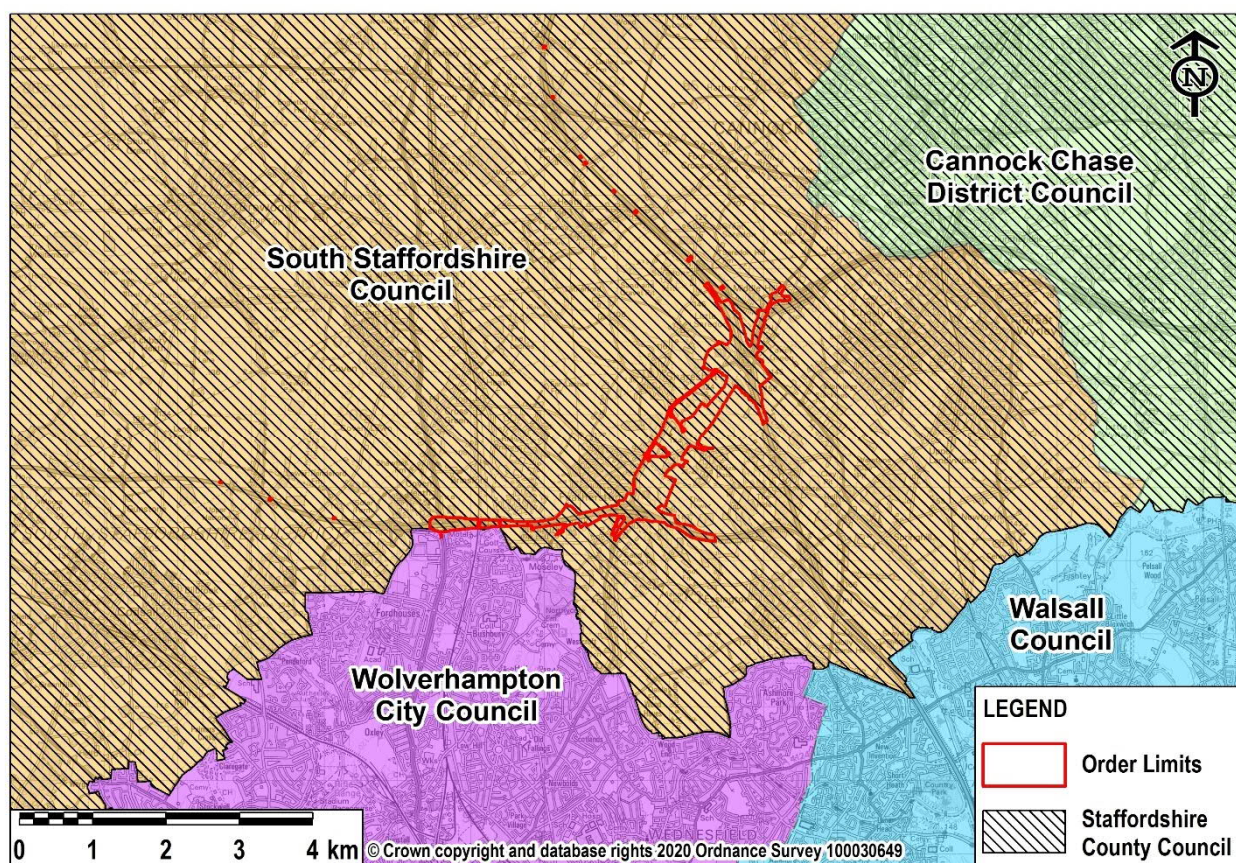
Requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment

- 2.3.3 The Scheme is an ‘EIA development’ because it is of a type listed within Schedule 2 Regulation 3(1) Part 10 (f) (construction of roads) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Ref 1.10) (herein referred to as ‘the EIA Regulations’), and has the potential to generate significant environmental effects by virtue of its nature, scale and location.
- 2.3.4 In accordance with Regulation 8(1) (b) of the EIA Regulations, Highways England notified the SoS in a letter to the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) dated 11th January 2019 that an Environmental Statement (ES) presenting the findings of the EIA will be submitted with the DCO application. The Inspectorate reviewed and consulted on the EIA Scoping Report, publishing a Scoping Opinion on 21st February 2019.

2.4 The planning policy context

- 2.4.1 The NPSNN is the primary national policy document that guides decision making on the application. Consideration is also given to the NPPF, which is a material consideration in the determination of the application. The majority of the Scheme is located within the administrative boundary of SCC and SSC, with a very small area of the Order limits within the CWC area.
- 2.4.2 The boundary of Walsall Council is located approximately 2km south east of the Scheme and Cannock Chase District Council is located approximately 3.5km north east of the Scheme. Figure 2.2 shows the location of the Scheme in the context of the local authorities in the surrounding area.

Figure 2.2: The Scheme and Local Authorities



- 2.4.3 This CftS also considers the local planning policy context. The key local planning documents of relevance to the Scheme comprise:
- South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS) (2012) (Ref 1.11)
 - South Staffordshire Site Allocations Document (SSSAD) (2018) (Ref 1.12)
- 2.4.4 Further local planning policy and transport policy documents are referenced throughout the report where relevant.

- 2.4.5 There are defined Neighbourhood Plan Areas within the relevant local authorities, but none of these are impacted by the Scheme.

3. The Scheme Development and Options Considered

3.1 Development of the Scheme and alternative options

3.1.1 Paragraph 4.27 of the NPSNN states:

'Where projects have been subject to full options appraisal in achieving their status within Road or Rail Investment Strategies or other appropriate policies or investment plans, option testing need not be considered by the examining authority or the decision maker. For national road and rail schemes, proportionate option consideration of alternatives will have been undertaken as part of the investment decision making process. It is not necessary for the Examining Authority and the decision maker to reconsider this process, but they should be satisfied that this assessment has been undertaken'

3.1.2 Given that the Scheme is identified in RIS1 and was previously subject to consideration of alternatives as part of the investment decision making process, it is not necessary for the Examining Authority or the SoS to reconsider the option testing stage of design development. However, this Section provides an overview of the key options considered in the optioneering and design development of the Scheme.

3.1.3 Initial design options for the Scheme were first developed in 2001 and an extensive set of options and Scheme designs have been considered over the Scheme development. Further detail on alternatives is considered in Chapter 3 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. The process whereby options were consulted upon and how the consultation shaped the process is explored in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Consultation Report **[TR010054/APP/5.1]**. The CftS does not attempt to replicate this assessment, but to provide a summary of the key options considered. In 2014 the Scheme was announced in the RIS1 and development of the Scheme intensified. Figure 3.1 shows the key points in Scheme development since 2014.

Figure 3.1: Key stages in Design Development 2014-Present



3.2 Route options identification and selection

3.2.1 The options identification and selection stages took place from 2014 up until the Preferred Route Announcement (PRA) (Ref 1.13) in September 2018. PRA is the stage where Highways England make an announcement on the broad route of a scheme for further design development. Options have been developed based on two general route corridors, one to the east of Featherstone, Hilton and Shareshill and the west of Hilton Hall and the second broadly following the route of the existing M6 to the east of Hilton Hall. Options have been based on three designs originally described as:

- **Option A:** a new link road from M54 Junction 1 to M6 Junction 11, using the existing junction roundabouts and providing no free-flow links to any motorways. This route severs connections to these junctions for the A460,

and a mid-point junction around Hilton Lane was included on the new link road to provide a connection for local traffic.

- **Option B:** a new link road from M54 Junction 1 with free-flow connections to the M6 and M6 Toll, bypassing M6 Junction 11.
- **Option C:** provision of the 'missing' slip roads between the M54 and the M6 (eastbound to northbound and southbound to westbound respectively) at M6 Junction 10a, and a free-flow link to the M6 Toll.

3.2.2 Design development has identified a range of alternative route alignments, junction layouts, requirements and positioning of structures, and the standard of the link road.

3.2.3 Non-statutory public consultation was undertaken in 2014/2015 and in 2017, and has informed options testing, design development and decision-making. Further design development has been undertaken since the PRA to prepare the design presented for statutory consultation. Statutory consultation on the Scheme was carried out between May and July 2019, with informal consultation, supplementary consultation of Scheme changes and consultation with interested parties continuing throughout the process. Further consultation was undertaken in November and December 2019 with select parties on minor changes to the Order limits (primarily to address comments received during statutory consultation) and consult additional interested parties identified through the land referencing process.

3.2.4 The development of the Scheme design has been an iterative process, including consideration of the opportunity for options to:

- meet the Scheme objectives (see Section 4.5 of the CftS);
- minimise significant environmental effects, including the ability to avoid, reduce or compensate for adverse environmental effects;
- incorporate environmental enhancement where possible;
- address feedback received during consultation with the public and other stakeholders;
- address the requirements of the NPSNN and other material policy considerations;
- provide a scheme that is viable, deliverable and with consideration of requirements for long-term management and maintenance of the network.

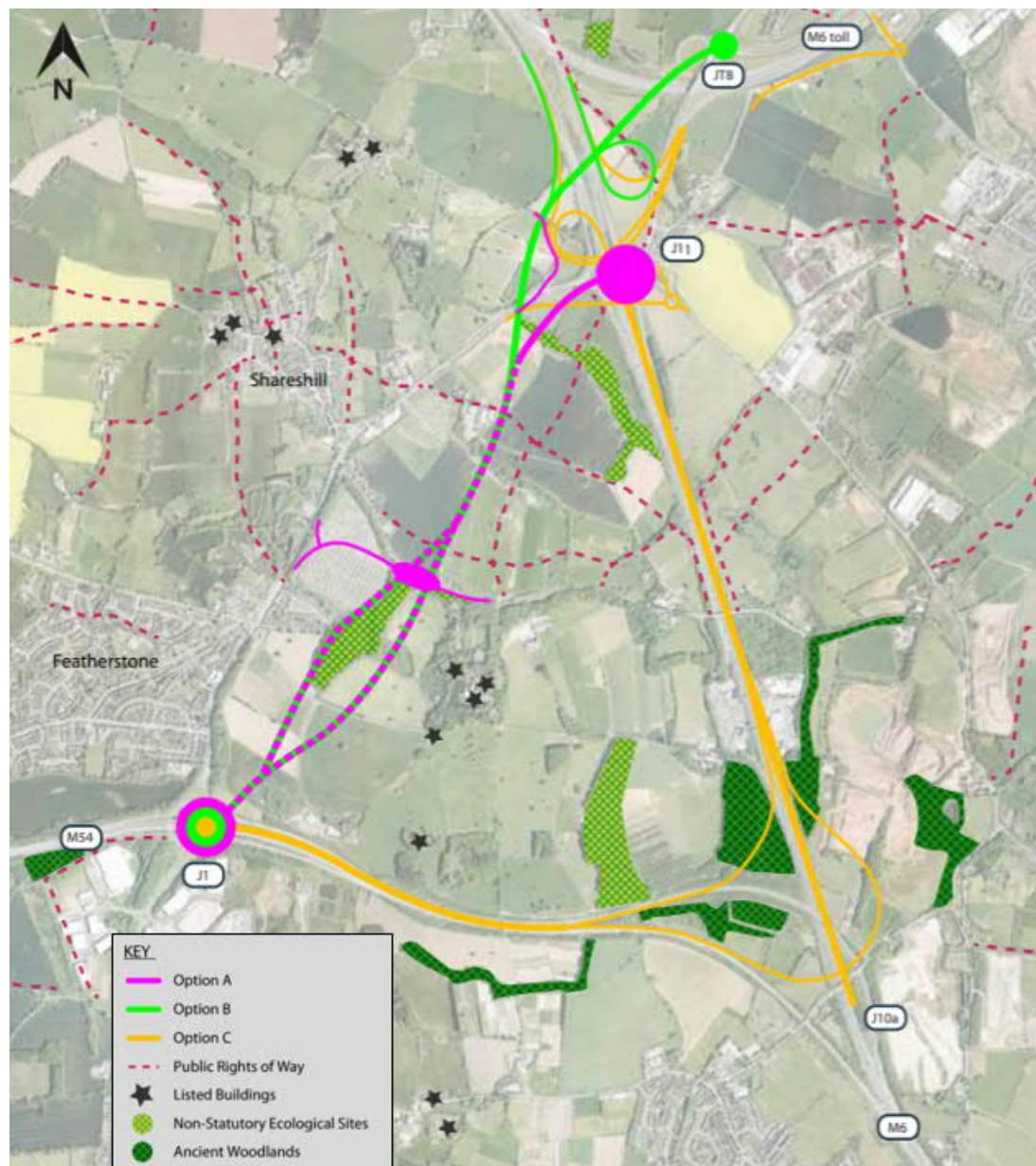
3.2.5 The key options considered and decisions made are outlined in the remainder of this section.

3.3 [First non-statutory options consultation \(December 2014 - January 2015\)](#)

3.3.1 Three options were consulted upon in between December 2014 and January 2015 as shown in Figure 3.2. Further detail on this consultation process and the results are presented in Chapter 2 of the Consultation Report **[TR010054/APP/5.1]**. Options B and C had eastern and western variants as shown on the plan, presenting

options on either side of Lower Pool Site of Biological Importance (SBI), situated between the two.

Figure 3.2: Three options consulted upon in 2014/2015



- 3.3.2 In total, 502 responses were received from members of the public via the response form or letter / email to the first non-statutory options public consultation. The project team read and considered every response and comment received.
- 3.3.3 Option A was the least popular option with local people and stakeholders. Following further technical analysis it was concluded that it did not present a strong case in terms of transport, social, economic and environmental benefits. Option A included a junction in the middle of the proposed link and no free flow links at the junctions, which were seen as negative features of this option. This option was therefore discounted as a possible solution.

- 3.3.4 Option B was the public's second favourite with 22% preferring this option. Further analysis showed that the eastern route option would have greater impacts on the setting of the grade 1 listed Hilton Hall and associated buildings and the locally designated historic landscape than the western variant. Therefore, the western variant was selected for further technical work alongside variants of Option C. Prior to the second non-statutory consultation in 2017, Option B (west) was modified (to become Modified Option B (west)) in response to stakeholder concerns, as described in Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].
- 3.3.5 Option C was most favoured by the public with 63% preferring this option. Further technical assessment showed that this option would cause increased congestion on the M6 in future years. This work identified two alternatives for this option which would remove this issue, known as Modified Options C (west) and C (east).
- 3.4 **Second non-statutory options consultation (September to October 2017)**
- 3.4.1 A second non-statutory options consultation was undertaken between September 2017 and October 2017. This consultation sought feedback on the three modified route options which were developed as a result of further technical work and feedback from the previous non-statutory consultation. These options are shown in Figure 3.3. The green route is Modified Option B (west), the orange route is Modified Option C (east) and the purple route is Modified Option C (west).

Figure 3.3: Options Presented for Consultation in September-October 2017



- 3.4.2 In total, 462 responses were received from members of the public and other stakeholders. The project team read and considered every response and comments received. Of the respondents who answered the question, 71% preferred Modified Option B (west), 17% preferred Modified Option C (west), 8% preferred Modified Option C (east) and 4% did not have a preference. Modified Option C (east) would have had a significantly larger effect on ancient woodland than the other two options, was the least popular option and offered the lowest value for money of the options. Modified Option C (west) reduced the impact on ancient woodland, but still presented a longer route than Modified Option B (west) so was not as effective at improving journey times and removed less traffic from the A460, A449 and A5. The three options were subject to assessments in terms of factors such as environmental impacts, performance when assessed against Scheme objectives, deliverability and popularity with respondents to the questionnaire and of the three options, Modified Option B (west) was the one selected to proceed for further design development.

3.5 Preferred Route Announcement

- 3.5.1 Modified Option B (west) was taken forward as the preferred route. Prior to the route being announced, changes were made to the junction arrangement with the M6 that removed the free-flow link to the M6 Toll. The connection to the M6 Toll Junction T8 was subject to other contributions. However, the level of contributions available was not enough to meet the cost of the free-flow link. After assessing that the Scheme still provided value for money and achieved the Scheme objectives without the link, the Scheme was amended to provide a direct connection to M6 Junction 11 only. This resulted in Modified Option B (west) excluding M6 Toll.
- 3.5.2 The PRA for the Scheme based on Modified Option B (west) excluding M6 Toll was made in September 2018.

3.6 Design refinement since Preferred Route Announcement

- 3.6.1 Following PRA, the Scheme was refined through an iterative process informed by design development, survey work, consultation and the EIA. This process is outlined in detail in Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].
- 3.6.2 The most significant change to the road alignment was in the location near Dark Lane. Concerns were raised following PRA by SSC and Parish Councils that Modified Option B (west) was located too close to residents along Dark Lane. Dark Lane is located between the Scheme and the existing A460 in the vicinity of Featherstone. The distance between the edge of the carriageway and the façade of the closest property on Dark Lane for the PRA alignment was approximately 17 m.
- 3.6.3 Following PRA, the Applicant continued stakeholder engagement with Parish Councils and SSC and looked to design an alternative alignment that moved the route further from Dark Lane. Alternative routes were assessed by the environmental specialists to compare the effects of routes located further to the east. Following the engagement and assessment process, the Applicant decided to move the alignment to the east in this location, resulting in a 46 m gap between the edge of the carriageway and the façade of the nearest property. This increased the impact on Lower Pool SBI but reduced noise and air quality impacts on Dark Lane and Park Road residents and enabled the retention of trees between properties and the alignment to provide screening for the nearest residents in this area. The Scheme design was revised to accommodate this change in alignment between PRA and statutory consultation in May 2019.
- 3.6.4 Statutory consultation on the Scheme was held between May and July 2019 with full details of the process and how the Applicant has had due regard to responses provided in the Consultation Report [TR010054/APP/5.1].
- 3.6.5 During the consultation period SSC requested that the alignment be moved further still from Dark Lane towards a location similar to that shown as Option B (east) in the 2014/15 consultation. Extensive consideration was given to this request including optioneering, consideration of further alternative alignments, environmental and deliverability assessments of alternatives options (referred to as Options B (west) baseline, 1, 2, 3 and 4) and consultation with key stakeholders. In particular, consideration was given to Option B (west) 4, which would have moved

the alignment to a location east of Lower Pool SBI providing a 190 m gap between the road and Dark Lane. Figure 3.4 shows the potential highway alignment in this area alongside the Lower Pool SBI (shown in green hatching), the nearest properties and Hilton Hall. The inset plan shows the location of the plan within the locally designated historic parkland, Hilton Park.

Figure 3.4: Indicative plan of potential route alignment B(west) 4



3.6.6 The above option was rejected because it would:

- move the alignment into the open area of the historic parkland, segregating a larger portion of Hilton Park from the area with the listed buildings and significantly increasing the visibility of the road from within the Park;
- increase the impact of the Scheme on the setting of the grade I listed Hilton Hall, grade I listed Conservatory and associated assets;
- require felling of between four and seven veteran trees. No veteran trees in the area would be affected by the Scheme as proposed in this application;
- have increased noise levels to the east of the Scheme along Hilton Lane and the properties to the north of Hilton Hall. Initial analysis suggested that this would have likely led to one property on Hilton Hall having more than a 3dB change in noise levels. This would have been considered a 'significant' effect in EIA terms and on initial analysis, it did not appear to be possible to mitigate the effect using a noise barrier and this effect would not have been experienced with the Scheme as proposed in this application.

- not have sufficient benefits for Dark Lane residents to outweigh the adverse effects of moving the alignment to the Option B (west) 4 location. Noise levels and air quality would improve at many properties along Dark Lane compared to existing noise levels with either option due to the reduction in traffic along the A460. Properties experiencing an increase in noise levels along Dark Lane would be limited to an increase of less than 3dB, with the current option with the introduction of a noise barrier. Therefore, no properties along Dark Lane would experience a 'significant' effect in noise terms as a result of either option. Air pollution for the Scheme would also be far below EU limits at all properties in the Dark Lane area for all pollutants considered. Given that noise and air quality were acceptable without moving the alignment, the adverse effects of moving the alignment outweighed the benefits.

3.6.7 Further information on the process to assess options for the alignment at Dark Lane is provided in Appendix 3.2 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3].

3.6.8 A number of changes to the Scheme were made following statutory consultation, including a number of changes that resulted in minor changes to the Order limits. The changes that affected the Order limits were:

- inclusion of the whole length of the A460 between the M54 and the M6 to enable reclassification of the A460 as a C road as part of the DCO as agreed with SCC;
- extension of the draft Order limits to the south of the M54 to include Whitgreaves Wood. This area has been included as temporary land acquisition at the request of Natural England (NE) so that improvements can be made to the ancient woodland as part of the strategy to compensate for the impact of the Scheme on ancient woodland elsewhere. This approach has been discussed with National Trust, as landowner, and they are in agreement on the approach;
- extension to the Order limits in the area to the north west of M54 Junction 1 to allow for a potential alternative diversion route for the high-pressure gas main managed by Cadent at their request;
- change to the Order limits in the area to the north of the M54 between Junctions 1 and 2 to relocate an attenuation pond to a location further towards the edge of the landowner's holding at their request;
- removal of small areas that are no longer required, including removal of two plots of land within Hilton Park and a number of small areas where design refinements have enabled the Order limits land to be reduced in size or corrected to reflect property boundaries.

3.6.9 Supplementary consultation with affected land interests, host authorities, parish councils, NE and relevant utility providers was carried out on the changes to the Order limits between 11th November and 11th December 2019. All land interests were consulted on revised Land Interest Plans over the same period.

- 3.6.10 All new land interests identified during the application preparation process have also been consulted with letters informing them about the Scheme and provided with a timescale of at least 28 days to respond. In particular, land interests identified during a land registry refresh in Autumn 2019 were consulted between 21st November and 20th December 2019.

3.7 Conclusion

- 3.7.1 In conclusion, the optioneering process of the project has involved analysis of an extensive variety of route options and options for other aspects of the Scheme from junctions to structures with a view to reducing the environmental effects of the Scheme where possible. Options are described in Chapter 3 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**, with changes resulting from consultation described in the Consultation Report **[TR010054/APP/5.1]**. As a result, the Scheme being proposed as part of this application provides the optimum route and design that:

- provides the shortest journey times and the highest benefit to the economy; whilst responding to consultation feedback in terms of the Scheme alignment, design and mitigation to provide a balance between the Scheme objectives and all environmental, and social impacts;
- balances the adverse impacts on sensitive residential areas from operational noise with a need to protect the historic character of the area;
- provides a high level of congestion relief for the A460, A449 and A5 (and benefits in terms of noise reductions and improved air quality for residents nearest the A460 Cannock Road), whilst maintaining good local connectivity;
- avoids loss of ancient woodland and veteran trees where possible;
- reduces noise and air pollution effects on properties close to the alignment when compared with other options; and
- provides environmental mitigation measures and delivers additional benefits where possible.

4. The Scheme and the Site

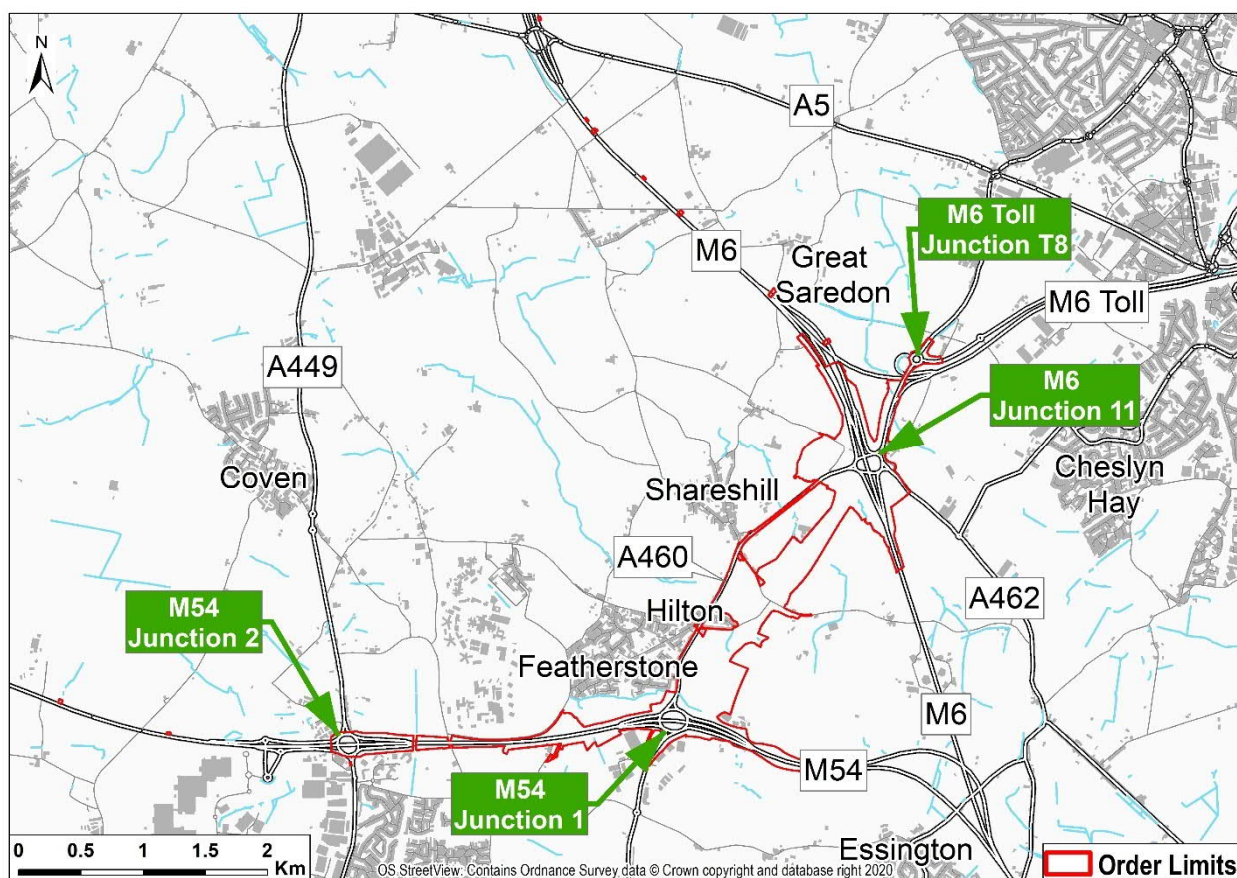
4.1 Requirement for the Scheme

- 4.1.1 The M54 provides the strategic link connecting the west of the country and urban areas such as Telford with the M6 South. The M6 is a main link for strategic traffic in the West Midlands heading north and south connecting Birmingham and the West Midlands with Stoke-on-Trent and the North West.
- 4.1.2 The M54 eastbound merges into the M6 southbound at Junction 10a. There is no direct motorway link from the M54 to the M6 northbound or the M6 Toll. There is also no motorway link between the M6 southbound and the M54 westbound. Traffic wishing to make these movements leaves the motorway network and uses the primary and trunk road network including the A449, A5 and A460.
- 4.1.3 The signed route between the M54 West and the M6 north is via two trunk roads: the A449: which is a dual carriageway that is subject to the national speed limit, and the A5 that is subject to a 50mph speed limit travelling between M54 Junction 2 and M6 Junction 12.
- 4.1.4 The A460 Cannock Road between the M54 and the M6 has one road marked lane in each direction with numerous junctions and accesses and a stretch of road with a 30 mph speed limit from the M54 Junction 1 to approximately 170m north of its junction with New Road / Dark Lane. It has eight minor roads and numerous private accesses joining it between the M54 and the M6, requiring six 'give-way' priority junctions and one traffic signalled crossroads. These junctions provide access to Featherstone, Shareshill, Hilton, Little Saredon, Hilton Hall. Other isolated premises have accesses onto the A460. These priority junctions and accesses mean that right turning traffic is required to cross on-coming traffic to exit and enter the junctions. The A460 was not designed for the amount and type of traffic currently using it, resulting in delays. The volume of traffic causes noise and air pollution for properties along the route, severs communities and reduces the attractiveness of the route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- 4.1.5 The existing road network is not adequate to cope with the high volumes of traffic, often consisting of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). There is a need to deliver a link road to provide for the high east-west trip demands that are being met by an existing highway network that can only provide low levels of service. Investment in additional capacity will support local economic growth for Telford, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Cannock and Tamworth by improving traffic flow and enhanced east-west and north-south routes.
- 4.1.6 This Chapter presents a summary of the main land uses, features and environmental designations in and around the Scheme. A more detailed description of the site and the Scheme is presented in Chapter 2 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

4.2 The Scheme location

- 4.2.1 The Scheme is located in Staffordshire between the M54, M6 and A460. The land within the Order limits includes the M54 Junctions 1 and 2 with the intervening link and an area of mixed agricultural land and scattered woodland between the M54, A460 and M6. The location of the site is shown in Figure 4.1 below:

Figure 4.1: Scheme Order limits and surrounding villages



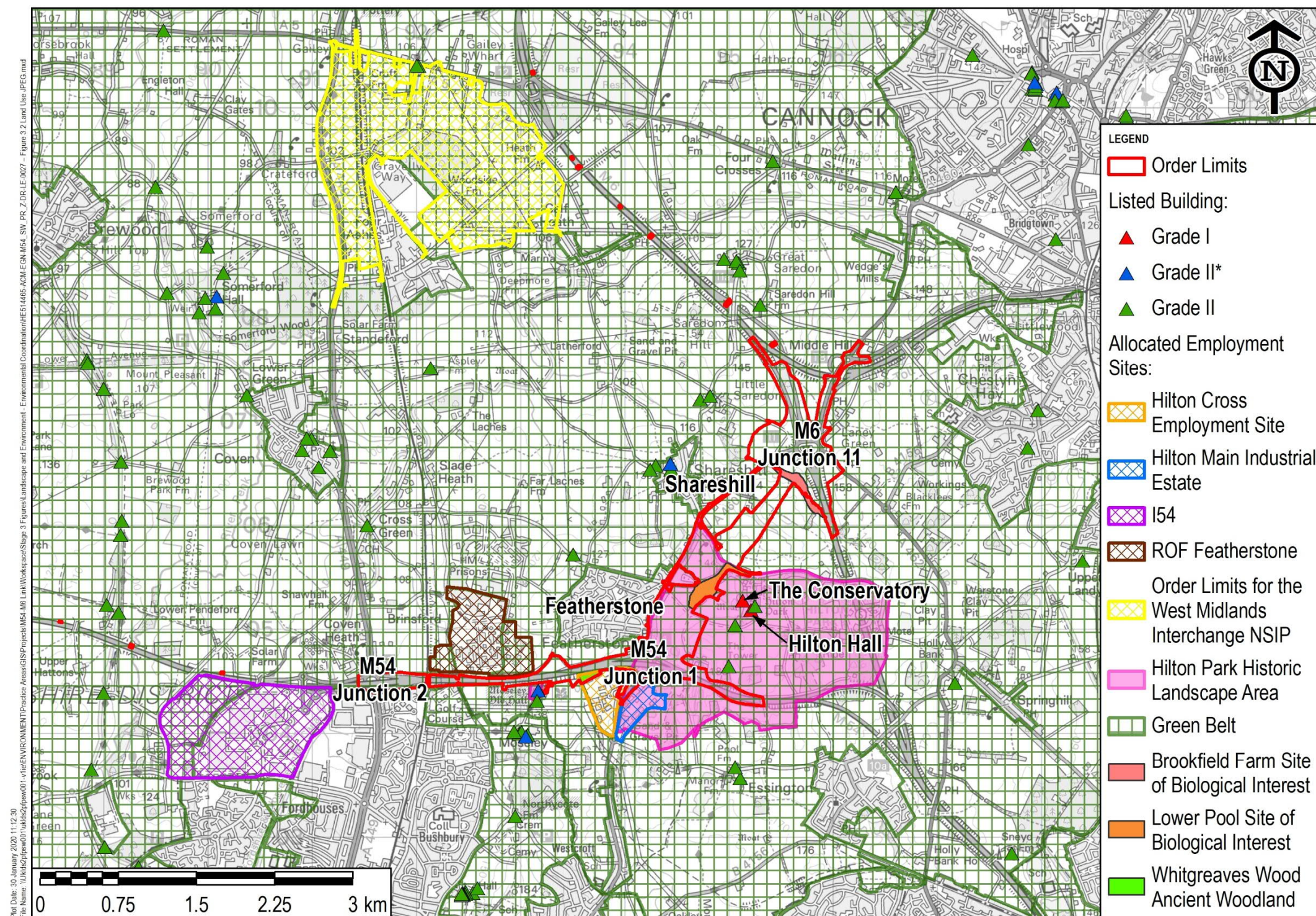
- 4.2.2 The nearest residential areas include the villages and hamlets of Shareshill, Great Saredon, Little Saredon, Hilton and Featherstone to the north west and west of Scheme. Essington is located south of the Scheme beyond the M54 and Cheslyn Hay to the east beyond the M6. There are also a number of more isolated residential properties and farm holdings in the vicinity of the Scheme.
- 4.2.3 The nearest residential properties to the Scheme comprise the individual dwellings and farmsteads located along Hilton Lane and in the area around Hilton Hall. The residential properties located along Dark Lane and Park Road between the Scheme and the A460, known as Hilton, comprise the nearest group of properties to the Scheme.
- 4.2.4 The grade I listed Hilton Hall and Conservatory, with associated outbuildings, are located to the east of the Scheme.
- 4.2.5 The four Strategic Employment Sites (SES) allocated in the SSCS are all in the vicinity of the Scheme. The Scheme will improve connectivity for businesses at all these sites and measures to minimise the impact on employment sites during construction will be considered as part of the ongoing development of the Traffic Management Plan [TR010054/APP/7.5].

4.2.6 The SESs in the district include:

- **i54 South Staffordshire:** a 90 hectare site at Billbrook located to the south west of M54 Junction 2. A 40 hectare extension to the site to the west was allocated in the SSSAD in 2018.
- **Royal Ordnance Factory Featherstone (ROF Featherstone):** A former Royal Ordnance Factory located to the west of Featherstone village and the north of the M54 between junctions 1 and 2. It was identified for employment use in the 1996 Local Plan and the Core Strategy in 2012. The site remains vacant and/or derelict. In September 2012 an application was approved subject to a Section 106 agreement for B1 and B2 uses but was subsequently withdrawn. An extension to deliver up to 12 hectare of additional employment land, in addition to the 24 hectares of land previously allocated, was allocated in the SSSAD in 2018.
- **Hilton Cross Business Park:** A 18 hectare site to the south west of M54 Junction 1. The Order limits include a sliver of land within the allocated site. To the east of the site on the other side of the A460 is Hilton Main Industrial Estate/ Vernon Park.
- **Four Ashes:** A well-established freestanding employment site located to the east of the A449, approximately 3.5 km from the M6 Junction 11. The site is approximately 72 hectares.

4.2.7 Figure 4.2 shows the location of the above employment sites and the designations in the area.

Figure 4.2: Allocations and Designations in and around the Scheme



4.3 Existing land uses and character

- 4.3.1 The Scheme is located within a semi-rural setting, heavily influenced by linear road infrastructure and traffic flow between Cannock, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. There are no international or national designated ecological sites, listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments, National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the Order limits.
- 4.3.2 The Scheme is located in the South Staffordshire portion of the West Midlands Green Belt, which covers approximately 80% of South Staffordshire.
- 4.3.3 The Scheme is essentially split into two sections, the first being the stretch from M54 Junction 2 to the new M54 Junction 1, and the second being the stretch between M54 Junction 1 and M6 Junction 11.

The M54 Junctions 2 to 1

- 4.3.4 The western portion of the Scheme comprises the M54 Junctions 2 and 1, and the majority of the motorway between the two junctions. A small area to the south of Junction 2 is included for new or replacement signage. Other small areas are included to the north and south of the M54 for ancillary works, including an area between the M54 and Brookhouse Lane, included for development of an attenuation pond, and an area to the south of the M54 to include Whitgreaves Wood and access so the Scheme can include environmental improvements to the woodland. Land around Junction 1 is included for works to existing roads and utility diversions as well as development of the new junction.
- 4.3.5 The land to the north and south of the M54 is located within the Green Belt and comprises mainly agricultural fields with parcels of land occupied by former industrial and manufacturing facilities.
- 4.3.6 The land to the north of M54 Junction 2 comprises open countryside in the Green Belt, with the small settlement of Coven Heath located to the north of the junction. The land south of Junction 2 is occupied by industrial and manufacturing facilities located on the outskirts of Wolverhampton and is not in the Green Belt. The brownfield SES ROF Featherstone is north of the M54 between the two junctions.
- 4.3.7 At Junction 1 of the M54 the land use becomes more urban in character with the Hilton Cross SES located to the south west of the junction and Hilton Main Employment Area located south east of the junction. Mature trees located between the M54 and the employment areas provide some screening between the employment sites and the M54 and the A460.
- 4.3.8 The land north of Junction 1 is situated in the Green Belt and the settlement of Featherstone is situated north west of the junction's gyratory. The land north east of Junction 1 comprises open countryside and ponds within Hilton Park.

The M54 Junction 1 to M6 Junction 11

- 4.3.9 The mainline of the new link road part of the Scheme starts at M54 Junction 1 and leads in a north easterly direction through a rural setting for approximately 2.5 km to M6 Junction 11. Built development is less prevalent and field boundaries are provided by rows of mature trees providing a sense of enclosure and screening. This area is in the Green Belt.

- 4.3.10 To the west of the Scheme are the residential properties along Dark Lane. Further west is the A460 and beyond that the villages of Featherstone and Shareshill. The route for the Scheme continues in a northerly direction crossing Hilton Lane and passing through agricultural land before reaching the M6 Junction 11. The Scheme joins the existing carriageway at the M6 Junction 11, which is located in a rural setting. A small number of residential properties are located to the east of the M6 Junction 11 along Wolverhampton Road.
- 4.3.11 The Scheme passes through the Hilton Park Historic Landscape Area (HLA) defined in the Local Plan Policies map and protected under SSCS policy EQ4. Hilton Park is locally designated but is not a Registered Park and Garden. The HLA includes areas of ancient woodland, including an area at Brookfield Farm that will be affected by the Scheme. The HLA also includes a number of veteran trees, with the Scheme alignment finalised to avoid impacting these trees.
- 4.3.12 Hilton Hall and associated outbuildings are set within woodland approximately 470 m east of the Scheme within the HLA. Hilton Hall and the nearby Conservatory are both grade I listed. A coach house and stable block located approximately 50 m north east of Hilton Hall and Gate Piers located approximately 200 m south of Hilton Hall are grade II listed structures. Portobello Tower is grade II listed and is located to the east of the new link road within the HLA close to the M54. The Tower is in a state of disrepair.
- 4.3.13 There are two locally designated SBIs within the Order limits, namely Brookfield Farm SBI and Lower Pool SBI. Both sites are also Local Wildlife Sites. The Brookfield Farm SBI is an area of wet woodland comprising alder and willow carr that is drying out in some areas of the site. Part of site has been confirmed as ancient woodland through surveys carried out as part of the ES for the Scheme, although the area is too small to be listed in the Ancient Woodland Inventory. The proposed new link would cross the western end of Brookfield Farm SBI to the north east of Brookfield Farm near M6 Junction 11. The Lower Pool SBI comprises a large ornamental pool with both emergent and floating vegetation and the woodland surrounding it, located to the east of Dark Lane. The new link would pass through the woodland and part of the pool.
- 4.3.14 The Order limits also include a sliver of land allocated as the Hilton Cross SES under SSCS Policies CP1 and EV1, located to the south-west of M54 Junction 1. The Scheme passes through a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for Sand and Gravel and part of a MSA for Brick Clay.

4.4 Description of the Scheme

- 4.4.1 This section presents a description of the main features of the Scheme from south to north. A full description of the Scheme is presented in Chapter 2 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**.
- 4.4.2 The Scheme design has been developed through an iterative process informed by traffic demands, knowledge of environmental constraints, the environmental assessment of emerging design proposals and engagement with stakeholders (including the responses received during statutory consultation).

- 4.4.3 The General Arrangement Plans [TR010054/APP/2.5] show the preliminary design for the Scheme and identify its key components and features. The Engineering Section Drawings [TR010054/APP/2.10] and Outline Drainage Plans [TR010054/APP/2.11] present further Scheme design information.

M54 Junction 1

- 4.4.4 The existing eastbound diverge at M54 Junction 1 would be upgraded from its current single land drop arrangement to a ghost island (separation of the slip road and mainline using chevrons) lane drop arrangement. The existing westbound merge slip road at the M54 Junction 1 would be upgraded from a single lane gain, to a ghost island merge with two diverging lanes. The slip roads at M54 Junction 1 would also be realigned slightly.
- 4.4.5 The existing M54 Junction 1 roundabout would be removed and the junction rebuilt in a new arrangement. The total footprint of the proposed M54 Junction 1 arrangement would be approximately 13 ha.
- 4.4.6 The new junction arrangement would provide free flow links from the eastbound carriageway of the M54 to the northbound carriageway of the link road and from the southbound carriageway of the link road to the M54 westbound. The free flow links would pass underneath the new Junction 1 arrangement (Featherstone bridge). The southbound free flow link would then pass underneath the existing M54 (which is on embankment at this location) at approximately existing ground level to merge with the westbound carriageway of the M54. The free flow links through M54 Junction 1 would be an extension of the M54 therefore would be subject to motorway regulations with a speed limit of 70 mph. The motorway regulations end at the point where the slip road from the western roundabout joins the carriageway in the northbound direction and where the slip road to the eastern roundabout leaves the carriageway in the southbound direction. Beyond this point the scheme would be constructed to a dual carriageway standard.
- 4.4.7 In order to maintain local connections, the new junction would also consist of three smaller roundabouts, one to the south of the M54 carriageway (southern roundabout) and two to the north of the M54 carriageway in a dumbbell arrangement to the east (eastern roundabout) and west (western roundabout – the smaller of these two) of the new link road. The existing access to the A460 (north) from M54 Junction 1 would be closed.
- 4.4.8 The southern roundabout would provide access to and from the westbound carriageway of the M54 and the A460 (south). The southern roundabout would be at approximately existing ground level.
- 4.4.9 A new short section of dual carriageway approximately 370 m in length would provide a link between the southern roundabout and the eastern roundabout which would cross under the M54.
- 4.4.10 The eastern roundabout would provide access to the eastbound carriageway of the M54 and would be accessible from the southbound carriageway of the Scheme. Two access roads would be provided off the eastern roundabout to maintain access to Tower House Farm and Hilton Park which are approximately 100 m and 400 m in length respectively. The eastern roundabout would be approximately 3.9 m above

existing ground level. The new entry slip road to the M54 eastbound would result in the loss of a pond at Tower House Farm.

- 4.4.11 The eastern roundabout would also be connected to the western roundabout by a short section of dual carriageway approximately 90 m in length which would cross over the Scheme mainline on Featherstone bridge.
- 4.4.12 The western roundabout would provide access to and from the existing A460 (north) for local traffic. This roundabout would also provide access to the northbound carriageway of the mainline of the Scheme and would be accessible from the eastbound carriageway of the M54. The western roundabout would be approximately 6.2 m above existing ground level.
- 4.4.13 The speed limit of the connecting dual carriageway links between the roundabouts would be 40 mph.

The A460 (between M54 Junction 1 and M6 Junction 11)

- 4.4.14 The existing A460 would be realigned to connect into the western roundabout of the new M54 Junction 1. The realigned A460 would be gradually raised on an embankment to tie into the western roundabout of the M54 Junction 1 at approximately 6.2 m above existing ground level. A new priority T junction would be provided between the existing A460 and the realigned A460 to maintain access to The Avenue. Two new entry and egress points would be provided for the petrol station and local businesses along the existing A460 affected by the realignment of the road.
- 4.4.15 The speed limit of the realigned existing A460 at M54 Junction 1 would be 30 mph.
- 4.4.16 The majority of the existing A460 Cannock Road between the M54 and the M6 would be reclassified as a 'C' class road, retaining the name Cannock Road. The new link road would be numbered the A460. This reclassification is proposed to reflect the fact that a new road has been constructed parallel to the A460 and as a consequence, it is anticipated that traffic flows along the A460 would be limited to trips to local origins and destinations. Denoting the new link as the A460 would also reduce the need to change signage on roads some distance from the Scheme.
- 4.4.17 The mainline of the Scheme would be a dual carriageway road approximately 2.5 km (1.6 miles) in length, with a direct free flow link to the M54 and entry and exit slip roads to the M54 Junction 1. The new road would have a 70 mph speed limit.
- 4.4.18 The mainline would pass through M54 Junction 1 in a cutting, passing under Featherstone bridge with a headroom clearance of 5.3 m. The mainline would extend northwards from the M54 Junction 1 across greenfield land which is located to the east of Featherstone and Hilton. The mainline of the Scheme would pass to the west of Hilton Hall through part of Lower Pool (a large ornamental pool) and Lower Pool SBI. The Scheme would be roughly at existing ground level, as it passes to the east of Dark Lane. The distance between the edge of the new carriageway (back of verge) and the closest property (façade) on Dark Lane is approximately 46 m. Dark Lane would be stopped up between the final property along Dark Lane to the west and the existing junction with Hilton Lane to the east. In order to maintain connectivity for walkers and cyclists a new bridleway connection is proposed between the point at which Dark Lane is stopped up and Hilton Lane.

- 4.4.19 Continuing north, the Scheme would cross under the existing Hilton Lane at approximately 6.0 m below existing ground level. A section of Hilton Lane would be rebuilt on a new bridge (Hilton Lane overbridge) over the mainline of the Scheme to maintain access across the Scheme. Approximately 500 m of Hilton Lane would be reconstructed to build the new bridge on a similar alignment to the existing road (within the limits of deviation). The carriageway of the road would be raised by approximately 1.7 m in height at the highest point of the bridge. The speed limit of Hilton Lane would be reduced from the national speed limit to 30 mph to address safety issues, reduce noise impacts and limit the amount of land take required with a steeper vertical alignment, reducing tree loss.
- 4.4.20 The mainline of the Scheme would then continue to the east of Brookfield Farm resulting in the total loss of one pond and partial loss of a second pond, before continuing north. Due to the undulating nature of the existing ground in this location the mainline transitions from cutting at Hilton Lane, to a short section of embankment to the south of Brookfield Farm with a height of approximately 3.5 m then immediately back to cutting to the east of Brookfield Farm with a depth of approximately 5.5 m.
- 4.4.21 An accommodation bridge wide enough to carry a single lane access track for farm vehicles would be provided to the south of Brookfield Farm across the mainline of the Scheme. This accommodation bridge is required to retain access to severed land to the east of the Scheme and maintain a public right of way (PRoW) over the Scheme. The accommodation bridge would be approximately up to 4.0 m above existing ground level at its highest point.
- 4.4.22 South of the M6 Junction 11 the Scheme would start to rise on an embankment to link into the junction, passing over Latherford Brook and through Brookfield Farm SBI. At this point the northbound and southbound carriageway start to diverge away from one another to connect into M6 Junction 11. At the highest point the Scheme would be approximately 8.5 m above existing ground level which is around Latherford Brook.

M6 Junction 11

- 4.4.23 Junction improvements are proposed at M6 Junction 11. These improvements would consist of an enlargement of the M6 Junction 11 roundabout to provide additional capacity and accommodate a connection to the new link road. Two new structures would be required over the M6 which would increase the capacity of the junction, increasing the number of lanes of traffic from two lanes to four. The structures would be designed to be built offline to the north and south of the existing structures to avoid undue disruption during the construction period. The existing structures would be demolished once the new junction arrangement is operational. Improvements to Junction 11 of the M6 would raise the roundabout level by approximately 1.5 m in height to approximately 5.5 m above ground level.
- 4.4.24 The connection to the existing A460 (south) from the M6 Junction 11 would be realigned to the west to accommodate the mainline of the Scheme. New entry and exit slip roads to and from the M6 would be constructed offline to maintain access to the junction where possible during construction. The A460 (north) would be widened northbound and southbound. The southbound carriageway would be

widened from 2 lanes to 3 lanes to connect into the new junction. The northbound carriageway would be widened to three lanes to exit the roundabout, this would taper down to two lanes before passing over the M6 Toll. The A462 would also be aligned locally to tie into the roundabout. Minor alterations to the access and egress to Wolverhampton Road are required as part of the realignment of the existing A460 and A462.

Road signage, lighting and barriers

- 4.4.25 New road signage and markings would be installed across the Scheme. Barriers would be installed on new and improved sections of road, with the appropriate type of road surfacing applied to new and improved sections of road depending on local conditions.
- 4.4.26 Lighting would be required at the two motorway junctions, M54 Junction 1 and M6 Junction 11, for safety reasons. The lighting proposed includes columns of approximately 15 m in height at M6 Junction 11 and columns of approximately 12 m in height at M54 Junction 1, the slip roads and the mainline of the Scheme up to and through Junction 1. The lighting scheme aims to minimise CO₂ emissions by using more energy efficient lighting in the form of Light Emitting Diodes (LED). LEDs are more energy efficient than conventional luminaires and reduce light spill into adjacent areas. It is proposed that the new lighting system shall be capable of being dimmed, trimmed and monitored remotely by a central management system.
- 4.4.27 The majority of the mainline of the Scheme (1.7 km) would be unlit to reduce adverse impacts on nocturnal species (such as bats), landscape and visual receptors and impacts on the setting of listed buildings and the associated historic parkland reduce minimise visual intrusion upon nearby residents.
- 4.4.28 The proposed signing strategy seeks to integrate the Scheme into the existing road network. This would be achieved by providing consistency and continuity of signing across local authority boundaries and on the mainline of the Scheme. The proposed signing strategy also supports the Scheme objective of reducing accidents and congestion by transferring strategic traffic from the local road network onto the new dual carriageway. The use of signs has been minimised along the mainline of the Scheme to reduce sign clutter and minimise landscape and visual intrusion. The Order limits include rectangles of land along the M54 and the M6 to allow for the replacement of sign faces to ensure the Scheme is appropriately signed from the existing network.
- 4.4.29 New and improved sections of road would be fenced with wooden post and rail fence. Additional measures, such as guide fencing to direct badgers to the locations of mammal tunnels beneath the mainline link road, would also be installed as part of the ecological mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the Scheme.
- 4.4.30 Fencing would be installed along existing and new boundary lines to separate the road from adjacent land and would incorporate a narrow strip of land between the fencing and the outer edge of cutting or embankment slopes for maintenance access. Access to off-carriageway assets such as landscaping and drainage infrastructure would be provided via gated access points.

- 4.4.31 Part of the existing wall along the southbound carriageway of the A460 (locally referred to as Mile Wall) would be demolished. The Applicant is in discussions with Hilton, Featherstone and Shareshill Parish Councils about the nature of this demolition and the potential for a future wall along the realigned A460.

Watercourse crossings and Flood Risk

- 4.4.32 The Scheme is primarily located in Flood Zone 1¹, with areas within Flood Risk Zones 2² and 3³ in the area around Latherford Brook. Further information on flood risk is presented in the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) [TR010054/APP/7.1]. Surface water flood risk and flood risk from artificial sources has also been considered in the FRA.
- 4.4.33 There are six watercourses within the Order limits, four of which would be severed by the Scheme. The locations of the watercourses are shown in Figure 13.1 in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.2]. To minimise the impact of the Scheme on the watercourses five new crossing structures would be required.
- 4.4.34 Watercourse 2 would be severed by the mainline of the Scheme and the realignment of the M54 Junction 1. To allow the watercourse to pass under the Scheme two new box culverts would be required to allow Watercourse 2 to pass under new arrangement of M54 Junction 1 and the M54 entry slip road.
- 4.4.35 Watercourse 3 passes through Lower Pool. The pond would be partially lost to accommodate the Scheme and the watercourse would be severed. The watercourse would be realigned east of the mainline, parallel with the southbound carriageway and would pass under the Scheme in a culvert.
- 4.4.36 Watercourse 4 is located south-east of Brookfield Farm. The watercourse would be realigned in a culvert to pass under the Scheme.
- 4.4.37 Latherford Brook (Watercourse 5) is located south of M6 Junction 11 within Brookfield Farm SBI. A 10 m wide single span bridge is proposed to carry the mainline of the Scheme over the watercourse, limiting the impact on the watercourse. The structure would be approximately 78 m in length. Mammal ledges would be built into the design of this structure.
- 4.4.38 No works are proposed to any of the existing culverts within the Order limits.
- 4.4.39 Mammal tunnels would be constructed adjacent to the culverts described above to allow the movement of protected species across the Scheme.

Overview of the drainage design

- 4.4.40 The drainage design has been developed in accordance with Highways England's design standards. The requirements of the NPSNN and the NPPF have also been considered in the design process, alongside advice from environmental practitioners responsible for undertaking water related assessments reported in Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] with regards to minimising:

¹ Defined as less than 0.1% (1 in 1000-year) annual exceedance probability in any given year.

² Defined as between 1% and 3.33% (1 in 100-year to 1 in 30-year) annual exceedance probability in any given year.

³ Defined as greater than a 3.33% (1 in 30-year) annual exceedance probability in any given year.

- effects on water quality, through the use of natural storage, treatment and discharge solutions where appropriate to manage drainage during the construction and operational phases of the Scheme;
- changes to watercourse and ditch alignments, by incorporating solutions into the design of the Scheme that would not result in changes to hydromorphology; and
- land take within areas identified as being at risk of flooding, by directing development away from such areas where possible.

4.4.41 The Drainage Strategy is provided in ES Appendix 13.2 [TR010054/APP/6.3]. Where possible, betterment of existing runoff rates to existing outfalls would be provided. However, where betterment cannot be provided, existing discharge rates would be maintained (refer to ES Appendix 13.2 [TR010054/APP/6.3] for details). The highway drainage design includes the provisions as follows:

- five attenuation ponds situated throughout the Scheme;
- attenuation using oversized pipes;
- attenuation using ditches;
- narrow filter drains;
- combined kerb drainage units;
- trapped gully pots;
- surface water channels; and
- hydrodynamic separators at outfalls as applicable.

4.4.42 The location of attenuation ponds is illustrated on the Environmental Masterplans, in ES Figures 2.1 to 2.7 [TR010054/APP/6.2]. Outfalls would be provided to local watercourses, with flow rates limited in accordance with Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) requirements.

4.4.43 The Scheme drainage design includes an allowance for the effects of climate change (refer to ES Appendix 13.2 [TR010054/APP/6.3]). Attenuation has been provided for up to and including 100 years plus 40% climate change allowance, through sustainable urban drainage system (SuDs) features described above.

Public rights of way and accommodation works

4.4.44 In undertaking the design of routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders (WCHs), the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Ref 1.14) have been considered to ensure the needs of disabled users are considered in the design. An Equalities Impact Assessment [TR010054/APP/6.7] has been provided with the application. Public rights of way (PRoW) have been realigned as close to their original alignment as practical to avoid extending WCH routes.

4.4.45 Impacts to existing PRoW are identified and assessed in Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The Scheme design includes the following provisions for WCH:

- Featherstone Bridleway (BW) 3 would be realigned approximately 10 m to the south of the existing alignment, along the bottom of the M54 entry slip road embankment.
- A new shared footway and cycleway would be provided alongside the new M54 Junction 1 arrangement.
- A new shared footway and cycleway would be provided parallel to the Scheme linking Dark Lane and Hilton Lane.
- New footway provided adjacent to the eastbound carriageway of Hilton Lane.
- Shareshill Footpath (FP) 5 to the west of the Scheme would be closed with users diverted south, parallel to the Scheme on the eastern side. The footpath would link into the new footway on Hilton Lane to maintain the existing level of access.
- Shareshill BW1 would be realigned over the Scheme on a new accommodation bridge located to the south-east of Brookfield Farm. The bridge would be designed to accommodate equestrians and farm vehicles.
- Saredon FP 8 would be realigned approximately 40 m to the east along the bottom of the embankment of the Scheme with access provided to the road level of M6 Junction 11 via a ramped access.
- Saredon FP1R/2214 would be closed as this short section of footpath is no longer required to link into the WCH routes at the M6 Junction 11.

4.4.46 Consideration was given to whether to close Mill Lane to vehicular traffic and use it as a cycleway. However, following consultation with local residents, Highways England confirmed that Mill Lane will be kept open. This is due to concerns raised by residents over the impact of its closure on HGV traffic on other local roads and the potential for fly tipping. Dark Lane will be stopped up at the eastern end.

Land acquisition and accommodation works

- 4.4.47 The rights to compulsorily acquire the land required to deliver the Scheme are being sought by the Applicant through the powers set out within the DCO.
- 4.4.48 The Scheme's temporary and permanent land take requirements have been identified through a combination of the design-development, environmental assessment and consultation with landowners and other key stakeholders. The land requirements are shown in the Land Plans **[TR010054/APP/2.2]**.
- 4.4.49 The Order limits include land which would be taken permanently to accommodate the engineering, drainage and environmental components of the Scheme. Land has also been identified within the Order limits that would be acquired temporarily to facilitate construction of the Scheme. This temporarily acquired land would be required for elements of the Scheme such as utilities diversions, vehicular access, haul routes, construction working areas, the temporary storage of materials and for environmental purposes e.g. temporary noise barriers and the temporary realignment of a watercourse.

- 4.4.50 In addition to the permanent land acquisition, permanent rights over land are being sought within the DCO to undertake activities such as utility diversions, future maintenance access and public rights of way.

4.5 Scheme Objectives

Primary Scheme objectives

- 4.5.1 The primary Scheme objectives are to:

1. Relieve traffic congestion on the A460, A449 and A5 and provide more reliable journey times.
2. Keep the right traffic on the right roads and improve safety by separating local community traffic from long distance and business traffic.
3. Reduce volumes of through-traffic in villages, improving local community access.
4. Support local economic growth for Telford, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Cannock and Tamworth by improving traffic flow and enhancing access to east-west and north-south routes.

- 4.5.2 The Scheme would reduce traffic along other roads in the area. For the Opening Year of 2024, 'Core' forecasts are that the Scheme would:

- reduce the primary route traffic using the A460. The existing flow on the A460 at Shareshill of 26,800 vehicles a day is anticipated to reduce to 3,020 vehicles a day with the Scheme. A flow reduction of 23,780 vehicles per day would remove 88% of the existing traffic on the A460 Cannock Road; and
- reduce traffic along the A5(T)/A449(T) route by more than 4,500 vehicles a day.

- 4.5.3 The Scheme would therefore significantly reduce flow volumes on the above routes in line with Scheme objective (1) and provide more reliable journey times for traffic using both the new link and the existing roads.

- 4.5.4 The Scheme would segregate local traffic and walkers, cyclists and horseriders from the long-distance east-west trips by transferring strategic road network users from the A460 to the new link; contributing to the achievement of objective (2). This would make the network safer for all users by reducing the number of personal injury collisions on the A460 and the A449, whilst attracting these trips to the new link designed to modern highway standards. The Scheme would also reduce driver stress and provide adequate capacity for predicted traffic levels in the future. The Scheme would provide increased lane capacity and improved junction capacity and operational performance to meet predicted traffic growth.

- 4.5.5 The reduction in traffic through villages such as Featherstone, Hilton and Shareshill would improve community access in line with objective (3) and reduce noise and air pollution at properties closest to the A460.

- 4.5.6 The Scheme would encourage economic growth by increasing the capacity and resilience of the highway network providing better access to and from the Midlands for businesses and commuters, enabling major residential and commercial

developments to proceed, leading to increased economic growth, regionally and nationally in line with objective (4).

4.5.7 Overall, the Scheme performs well when assessed against the Scheme objectives.

Strategic objectives in the NPSNN

4.5.8 Chapter 2 of the NPSNN sets out the need for the development of the national networks and states that:

'The Government will deliver national networks that meet the country's long-term needs; supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving overall quality of life, as part of a wider transport system. This means:

- *Networks with the capacity and connectivity and resilience to support national and local economic activity and facilitate growth and create jobs.*
- *Networks which support and improve journey quality, reliability and safety.*
- *Networks which support the delivery of environmental goals and the move to a low carbon economy.*
- *Networks which join up our communities and link effectively to each other.'*

4.5.9 It is considered the Scheme will assist the Government in meeting these four strategic objectives. The Scheme will separate strategic and local traffic to reduce congestion and journey times, whilst improving journey reliability. This will encourage investment in the area and improve conditions for the transit of the people, goods and materials required to support a thriving economy. The Scheme design has been carried out as part of an iterative process to avoid and minimise adverse environmental impacts and provide enhancements where possible. The separation of the local and strategic traffic will improve connectivity and journey times for motorised vehicle users undertaking local and short distance journeys. Finally, the reduction in traffic using local routes and reclassification of the existing A460 would encourage pedestrians and cyclists to use these routes more frequently.

Conformity with Highways England Licence

4.5.10 Adopted in April 2015 the Highways England Licence (HEL) (Ref 1.15) provides that Highways England is appointed by the SoS as a strategic highways company to act as the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority.

4.5.11 Part 4 of the HEL provides the aims and objectives for Highways England and states that the Strategic Road Network (SRN) is a critical national asset that Highways England must operate and manage in the public interest. The HEL provides that Highways England must:

- ensure the effective operation of the network;
- ensure the maintenance, resilience, renewal, and replacement of the network;
- ensure the improvement, enhancement and long-term development of the network;
- ensure efficiency and value for money;

- protect and improve the safety of the network;
- cooperate with other persons or organisations for the purposes of coordinating day-to-day operations and long-term planning;
- minimise the environmental impacts of operating, maintaining and improving its network and seek to protect and enhance the quality of the surrounding environment; and
- conform to the principles of sustainable development.

4.5.12 The Scheme assists Highways England in fulfilling its role as Licence holder. The Scheme will ensure that strategic traffic can flow more effectively between the M54 and M6 north and southbound in the long term. An economic assessment has been carried out to ensure that the Scheme delivers good value for money. A summary of the methodology and findings of the economic assessment are presented in this Chapter 6 of this CftS. The Scheme has been designed to minimise the adverse environmental effects during construction and operation as part of an iterative design process.

Conformity with the Highways England Environment Strategy

4.5.13 The purpose of the Highways England Environment Strategy (HEES) (Ref 1.16) is to communicate to key stakeholders how the organisation will protect and improve the environment. The HEES recognises that it is the role of Highways England to operate, maintain and improve the SRN in England. The Strategy acknowledges the government's ambition to create a modern SRN through the RIS, but that this presents an environmental challenge alongside an opportunity to deliver these Schemes in greater harmony with the environment.

4.5.14 The HEES sets out Highways England's commitment and vision that will guide Highways England's environmental actions and activities and will protect, manage and enhance the quality of the environment with a focus on people, and the built, natural and historic environment.

4.5.15 The Strategy sets out six strategic levers that when applied will help towards achieving the environmental vision. These six levers are:

- leadership and culture;
- health, safety and wellbeing;
- engaging stakeholders;
- design quality;
- asset knowledge; and
- appraisal, evaluation and performance.

4.5.16 These strategic levers have been implemented during the development of the Scheme design, including leadership through the design and assessment process, consideration of the health safety and wellbeing of employees, customers and the community. Engagement has taken place with communities, statutory undertakers and regulators to define the scope of assessment, minimise potential environmental

effects and produce a Scheme design that is of high quality. Where necessary surveys and baseline data has been collected to understand the existing environment before undertaking assessments in accordance with the relevant standards.

Highways England's Sustainable Development Strategy

- 4.5.17 Adopted in line with the RIS, HEL and HEES, the Highways England's Sustainable Development Strategy (Ref 1.17) page 1 recognises sustainable development as '*encouraging economic growth while protecting the environment and improving safety and quality of life for current and future generations*'. The Strategy sets out that Highways England will put sustainable development into practice giving regard to the following five factors to establish sustainability:
- a) Financial: supporting national and local economic growth and regeneration.
 - b) Human: protecting and improving the safety of road users and road workers.
 - c) Natural: protecting managing and enhancing the environment.
 - d) Social: seeking to improve the well-being of road users and communities affected by the network.
 - e) Manufactured: ensuring efficiency and value for money.
- 4.5.18 The Scheme contributes to the achievement of all five 'factors' of sustainable development. The Scheme will contribute to factor (a) as it will generate investment and demand for construction products and services. During the operation phase of the development the Scheme will improve journey times and journey reliability for strategic traffic using the new link and local traffic using roads with reduced congestion, particularly the A460. This will assist businesses and attract inward investment to the area. The Scheme will reduce traffic on the local road network and safety improvements are anticipated, contributing to factor (b). The design has sought to deliver environmental benefits and reduce adverse environmental effects where possible in line with environmental factor (c). The Scheme will improve the wellbeing and reduce driver stress for users of the Scheme and the local road network, whilst also reducing noise and air pollution for residents living closest to the A460 in line with factor (d). An economic assessment has been undertaken which demonstrates that the Scheme will provide very good value for money based on the financial investment and wider economic returns in line with factor (e).

5. Transport Case for the Scheme

5.1 Existing Network: Operational Performance

- 5.1.1 Chapter 2 of the Transport Assessment Report **[TR010054/APP/7.4]** discusses the baseline highway infrastructure and the level of service that is provided.
- 5.1.2 There are two key issues with the existing network in the area:
- 1) Trips from M54 West cannot access the M6 North without using other roads. Traffic making this journey tends to use the signed route that leaves the M54 at Junction 2 and uses the A449(T) to M6 Junction 13.
 - 2) There is no signed route to the M6 Toll East from the M54 West. Traffic modelling shows that the majority of the traffic flow on the A460 passing Featherstone, Hilton and Shareshill consists of vehicles that either originate from or are destined to the A4601 Wolverhampton Road to Cannock, the M6 Toll Road East, or the A5(T) East.
- 5.1.3 The A460, in particular, is not designed to cope with the volume of traffic using it.

5.2 Baseline Data and Overview of Traffic Model

- 5.2.1 Chapter 3 of the Transport Assessment Report **[TR010054/APP/7.4]** describes the source traffic data collected and how the Scheme's traffic model was prepared.
- 5.2.2 The Scheme's traffic model was developed to assess the likely changes in traffic flow and highway network performance changes that could be attributable to the Scheme, whilst also forecasting a baseline case where the Scheme is not brought forward.
- 5.2.3 The Scheme's traffic model was developed to support the appraisal of the highway improvements and then validated in accordance with the Department for Transport's TAG guidance (Ref 1.18). Industry-standard (SATURN⁴) software was used to develop the traffic model.
- 5.2.4 SATURN is a traffic assignment and simulation package that models delays on links and the vehicle interactions at junctions. The highway network contained within the SATURN model is based on the MRTM (Midland Regional Traffic Model), which was commissioned by Highways England and has been continuously maintained and improved since 2016.
- 5.2.5 The geographic coverage of the Scheme's traffic model extended beyond the area around the A460 between the M6 and M54 junctions in order to consider impacts on both the local and strategic road networks.
- 5.2.6 The Scheme traffic model was developed to consider potential transfers into the A460 from competing strategic routes e.g. the route using the A449 and the A5, and to represent the full length of strategic trips.

⁴ SATURN stands for "Simulation and Assignment of Traffic to Urban Road Networks". The software was developed by the Institute of Transport Studies, University of Leeds..

- 5.2.7 In order to develop an accurate base year traffic model, traffic data was collected to inform the demand and supply models. Such traffic data falls into three types: volumetric traffic flow counts, journey time (JT) data and Origin-Destination (O-D) data.

Traffic Counts

- 5.2.8 Volumetric flow data was counted using Automated Traffic Counters (ATC) and Manual Classified Counts (MCC) and were used in the development of the demand-part of the traffic model.
- 5.2.9 Existing traffic flow data was obtained from the wider model area from the MRTM count database and Highways England's TRADS database. In addition, local Scheme area traffic flow data was obtained from SCC. Count data was also obtained and factored into the model from previous traffic models.
- 5.2.10 To supplement the existing traffic data a series of study specific ATC sites were also used to gather data as well as a series of MCC undertaken at key junctions where a more detailed understanding of turning movements and vehicle types was considered to be beneficial. A full set of locations and data sources is set out in Chapter 3 of the Transport Assessment Report [TR010054/APP/7.4].

Journey Time Surveys

- 5.2.11 A number of routes used for the calibration and validation of journey time data were based on those which had been used for the model prior to PRA. These routes are:
- JT Route 1 – from A460 (Stafford Street) to M6 Toll Junction T8;
 - JT Route 2 – from A460 (Stafford Street) to M6 Junction 13;
 - JT Route 3 – from M54 Junction 5 to M54/M6 Merge;
 - JT Route 4 – from Hollinswood Roundabout to Churchbridge Roundabout;
 - JT Route 5 – from the A462 and A4124 Roundabout to the A4601/A34 Junction;
 - JT Route 6 – from the M6 Junction 10 to M6 Junction 12; and
 - JT Route 7 – from the M6 Toll Junction T8 to M6 Toll Junction by Weeford.
- 5.2.12 Journey time data for these routes for the Wolverhampton area was taken from the Trafficmaster GPS database for the period from 27th March 2017 to 30th November 2017 inclusive.
- 5.2.13 Journey time data has been calculated for routes within the study area using anonymised data supplied by Trafficmaster plc from around 100,000 probe vehicles across Britain that are equipped with global positioning system devices. These devices record speed and location information which is collated, digitally mapped, and matched to the road network.

Origin-Destination Matrices

- 5.2.14 To supplement the volume of trips data and the time taken to move along key routes it is also of importance to understand the origin and destination of trips to be able to forecast the impacts of re-routeing. The main source of this data was from demand

matrices extracted from the 2015 MRTM, combined with observed traffic flow data from the local Scheme area surveyed in 2017.

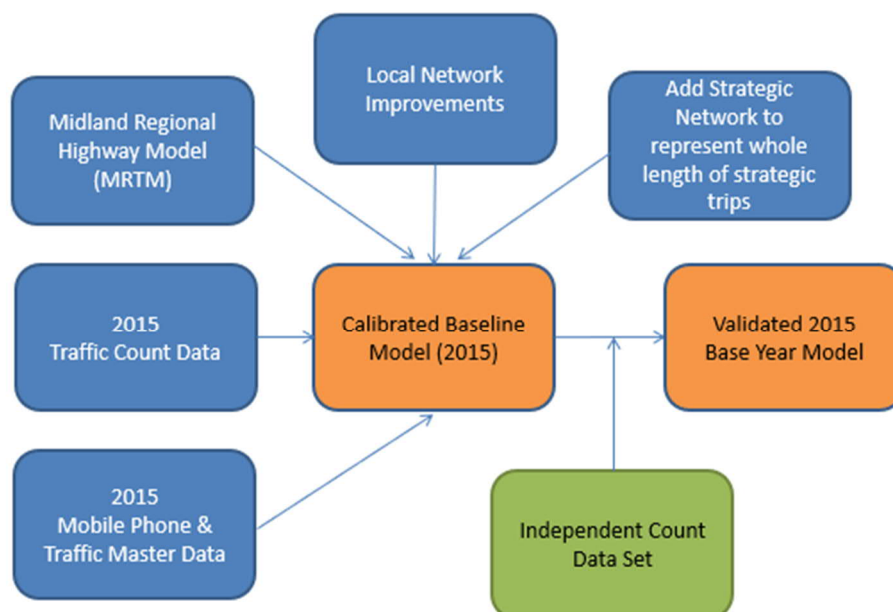
Highway Network Data

- 5.2.15 The study area contains signalised junctions that are considered ‘key’ junctions or congestion ‘hot spots’. The signal timings for these junctions in each of the busy modelled time periods (i.e. AM, Inter-Peak, and PM periods) were carried forward from the previous model developed for the earlier design stage of the project within the study area and from MRTM in the external area. These were then coded into the highway model’s network as fixed time plans, with the timings being different for each modelled time period. As part of the calibration/validation process, some of the junctions were ‘optimised’ in the SATURN assignment model where these would be realistically operate as demand-responsive dynamically-adjusted signals.

Summary

- 5.2.16 A summary of the method to create the baseline model is provided in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Production of baseline traffic model



5.3 Future Network Performance

- 5.3.1 Chapter 4 of the Transport Assessment Report [TR010054/APP/7.4] discusses the two cases appraised:

- ‘Do-Minimum’ – i.e. there would be no new link road and no improvements to the M6 Junction 11 and M54 Junction 1. This takes into account growth in trips on the highway network that would happen regardless of whether the Scheme goes ahead or not.

- 'Do-Something' – i.e. the junction improvements would be implemented at M6 Junction 11 and at M54 Junction 1 and the link road would be built. Traffic growth would occur into the future as for the 'Do-Minimum' case, plus some induced trips where new opportunities for travel would be delivered.

5.3.2 Each case was appraised in three forecasting years: an Opening Year (2024), an Intermediate Year (2031) and a Design Year (2039):

Without the Scheme

5.3.3 The Transport Assessment Report provides the journey times of seven routes during the AM peak, inter peak PM peak, evening and overnight periods for seven routes. The journey times have been determined for each route in 2015 (baseline year), 2024 (the opening year), 2031 (the interim year) and 2039 (the design year). The AM and PM peak periods are typically the times when the road network is busiest.

5.3.4 The journey times in 2015 (the baseline year) and 2039 (the design year) for the routes without the implementation of the Scheme have been compared for the AM and PM peak periods and observations are provided below:

- Journey times for the route between from A460 (Stafford Street) to M6 Toll Junction T8 will increase by approximately 2 minutes between 2015 and 2039. During the PM peak period journey times will increase by over 4 minutes for north bound traffic.
- Journey times for the route along the A460 (Stafford Street) to M6 Junction 13 will increase during the AM peak period by approximately 1 minute and 30 seconds. The increase in journey times is more significant during the PM peak when journey times increase by 3 minutes and 20 seconds between 2015 and 2039 for north bound traffic and 3 minutes for south bound traffic;
- Journey times from the M54 Junction 5 to the M54 / M6 merge will generally increase by 30 seconds for east and west bound traffic during the AM and PM peak period.
- Journey times along the route from Hollinswood Roundabout to Churchbridge Roundabout will generally increase by over 3 minutes for east bound traffic and 1 minute and 30 seconds during the AM peak period. During the PM peak period journey times may increase by as much as 4 minutes for east bound traffic and 2 minutes for west bound traffic.
- Journey times from the A462 and A4124 Roundabout to the A4601/A34 Junction will increase by over 3 minutes and 30 seconds for north bound traffic and over 2 minutes and 30 seconds for south bound traffic during the AM peak period. During the PM Peak period journey times will increase by approximately 1-3 minutes for north bound traffic and 1-2 minutes for south bound traffic.
- Journey times between the M6 Junction 10 to 12 remain relatively unchanged during the AM peak period. During the PM peak period journey time will increase by between 10 seconds and 40 seconds for north and southbound traffic.

- Journey times for the route between the M6 Toll Junction T8 to M6 Toll Junction by Weeford will increase by approximately 1 minute for east bound traffic and only 10 or 15 seconds for west bound traffic. During the PM peak period journey times will generally increase by up to 1 minute for east bound traffic and 45 seconds for west bound traffic.

5.3.5 The assessment included in the Transport Assessment Report [TR010054/APP/7.4] also concluded that existing junctions would not provide sufficient capacity to accommodate future levels of forecast demand and without the Scheme there would be increased delays within the highway network.

With the Scheme

5.3.6 With the Scheme implemented, the Transport Assessment Report [TR010054/APP/7.4] concludes that the proposed junctions would operate satisfactorily, and journey times would improve as a result of the Scheme.

5.3.7 Journey times for seven routes have been considered in the Transport Assessment Report and observations of the improvements to journey times are summarised below:

- Journey times for north bound vehicles travelling along the route from A460 (Stafford Street) to M6 Toll Junction T8 will reduce by at least 2 minutes during the AM peak period. Journey times for vehicles travelling south bound will remain relatively unchanged.
- During the PM peak period journey times for north bound traffic will reduce by up to 2 minutes and 46 seconds for northbound traffic and will remain relatively unchanged for southbound traffic.
- Journey times for vehicles travelling along the A460 (Stafford Street) to M6 Junction 13 will experience a slight reduction in journey times of up to 47seconds during the AM peak period. Journey time will reduce by up to 48 seconds in the PM peak period along this route.
- There will be a slight increase in journey times of 28 seconds along the route from M54 Junction 5 to the M54 / M6 Merge during the AM peak period and up to 38 seconds during the PM peak period;
- Journey times along the route from Hollinswood Roundabout to Churchbridge Roundabout will reduce during the AM peak period by up to 2 minutes for east bound traffic and 1 minute and 9 seconds for west bound traffic. During the PM peak period journey times will reduce by up to 2 minutes and 16 seconds for east bound traffic and 59 seconds for west bound traffic.
- Journey times from the A462 and A4124 Roundabout to the A4601/A34 Junction will reduce by up to 1 minute and 23 seconds during the AM peak period. During the PM peak period journey times will reduce by up to 1 minute and 2 seconds.

- Journey times along the route from M6 Junction 10 to M6 Junction 12 will remain relatively unchanged during both the AM and PM peak periods since journey time will change or fluctuate by less than 30 seconds.
- Journey times along the route from M6 Toll Junction T8 to M6 Toll Junction by Weeford will remain relatively unchanged fluctuating less than 8 seconds for both east and west bound traffic.

5.3.8 In addition to the above specific routes, consideration is given in the Transport Assessment Report to the journey time savings between an origin and destination when travelling eastbound and westbound between two points in the area should road users have a free choice of route. The origin and destination point selected were the i54 development site at the M54 Junction 2 and the community at Catshill in Brownhills located on the A452. The analysis shows that in 2039 (the design year) the journey times in the AM period would reduce by 5 minutes and 11 seconds for eastbound traffic and 4 minutes 52 seconds for westbound traffic.

5.3.9 During the PM peak period journey times along this route would reduce by up to 6 minutes and 31 seconds for eastbound traffic and 5 minutes 21 seconds for west bound traffic.

5.3.10 The Scheme would reduce traffic along other roads in the area, for the Opening Year of 2024, as follows:

- Reduce the primary route traffic using the A460. The flow of 26,800 vehicles a day would reduce to 3,020 vehicles a day with the Scheme; which flow reduction of 23,780 vehicles per day would remove 88% of the existing traffic flow passing through the communities of Featherstone, Hilton and Shareshill.
- Reduce traffic along the A5(T)/A449(T) route by 4,500 vehicles a day.

5.4 Road Safety

5.4.1 Chapter 5 of the Transport Assessment Report **[TR010054/APP/7.4]** describes the Scheme's road safety assessment.

5.4.2 Observed road collisions, in the form of STATS19 data, was procured from Telford and Wrekin, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Wolverhampton and Walsall Local Authorities and from Highways England for trunk roads, which data covered the three-year period from January 2016 to December 2018.

5.4.3 The accident data was combined with link length and traffic flow data extracted from the Scheme's traffic forecasting models. The road safety assessment was prepared using Highways England's software, COBALT. The accident model and its study area is described in the Transport Assessment Report **[TR010054/APP/7.4]** at section 5.2.

5.4.4 Across the highway network covered by the COBALT model's study area and assessed over the 60-year period from 2024 to 2083, the Scheme would reduce the number of personal injury collisions (PIC) by 330. Associated with these PIC reductions there would be 465 casualties saved. The number of killed and seriously injured casualties saved would be 93 (20%), which includes 10 fatalities.

- 5.4.5 These beneficial collision and casualty saving results would be a consequence of drivers changing their routes away from less-suitable roads and onto the new link road. One of the Scheme's transport objectives is to improve road safety by separating local community traffic from long-distance and business traffic. The road safety assessment indicates that this transport objective would be met by the Scheme.

5.5 Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Assessment

- 5.5.1 The Scheme may give rise to impacts to pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians as a result of changes in amenity, journey length and severance. This section considers the impact of the Scheme on the exposure of these users to traffic, impact on journey lengths and any visual intrusion to recreational enjoyment. These issues are considered in greater detail within Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

Baseline

- 5.5.2 There are a number of WCH facilities located within the Scheme study area and these are listed in **Error! Reference source not found.** of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and illustrated on ES Figure 12.3 [TR010054/APP/6.2].
- 5.5.3 There are also a number of formal crossing points on the A460, which include:
- an uncontrolled at grade crossing point at Shareshill;
 - a signalised crossing point at the northern extent of Featherstone;
 - signalised crossing points on New Road and northern arm of the A460 at the New Road/ A460/ Dark Lane junction (the other arms of the junction utilise traffic lights however, there are no signalised crossing points in place);
 - an uncontrolled at grade crossing point south of The Avenue; and
 - uncontrolled at grade crossing points on all the arms of the M54 Junction 1.
- 5.5.4 WCHs utilising these facilities along the A460 are exposed to heavy traffic, a high proportion of which are HGVs.
- 5.5.5 There are no routes designated under the National Cycle Network within the Scheme study area. However, there is a traffic free cycle route along the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal north of M54 Junction 2 and a short section of cycleway painted on the carriageway on the northbound A460 south of New Road.
- 5.5.6 A survey of the numbers of WCHs utilising the PRoW in the vicinity of the Scheme was carried out, with results presented in ES Appendix 12.2 [TR010054/APP/6.3]. The results of this survey showed that there was very low usage of all of the identified routes by equestrian users. However, the following routes were used consistently by reasonable numbers of pedestrians and cyclists:
- Dark Lane footway and advisory cycle route
 - Hilton Lane (Near A460 junction) partial footway and advisory cycle route;
 - Hilton Lane (Near M6);
 - A460 (M54 Junction 1) footway;

- A460 (Featherstone to Shareshill) (footway); and
- A460 (Shareshill to M6 Junction 11).

Accidents

- 5.5.7 Accident data over a three-year period (between January 2015 and December 2017) recorded four slight accidents⁵ involving cyclists within the study area looking at WCHs. No pedestrian or equestrian accidents were recorded in this time. The cycling accidents all occurred along the A460 or M54 Junction 1. No serious or fatal accidents for pedestrian, equestrians and cyclists were recorded in this period. This data is presented in ES Appendix 12.2 [TR010054/APP/6.3].

Temporary Effects

- 5.5.8 Changes to journey times, local travel patterns, and certainty of route for WCHs would arise from the temporary closures and diversions of PRoWs through direct land take, severance, and provision of access routes required for the construction of the Scheme.
- 5.5.9 The Scheme is likely to result in the diversion or temporary closure of several routes during construction, some of which would become permanent diversions for the operation of the Scheme. There are also likely to be some routes (for example the footway on Hilton Lane), which will require temporary diversion during construction, but with a final reinstatement on the current alignment.
- 5.5.10 Planning of the Scheme construction works would be undertaken in order to minimise the need to close and divert footways, PRoW and cycle facilities, and minimise closures and diversion durations. It is anticipated that a number of routes would be at risk of diversion or temporary closure during construction. Where the closure of routes for WCHs would be required, safe and appropriate alternative means of access would be provided to ensure access would be maintained at all times in order to minimise temporary severance.
- 5.5.11 The construction contractor would agree temporary diversion routes in advance with SSC, SCC and CWC as applicable. Appropriate signage for all closures and diversion of footpaths and cycleways would be used to inform pedestrians and cyclists with sufficient notice of such closures and diversions being provided.
- 5.5.12 The ES concludes that taking account of the existing usage of these routes and the measures proposed the Scheme would result in a temporary minor adverse effect on WCHs.

Permanent Effects

- 5.5.13 The proposed permanent realignments, diversions and improvements of WCH facilities are shown in ES Figure 12.3 [TR010054/APP/6.2].
- 5.5.14 Featherstone BW3 (medium sensitivity) would be permanently realigned 10 m south of its current alignment to accommodate the widening of the M54 Junction 1 westbound on-slip. The realignment would result in a negligible reduction in journey

⁵ One in which at least one person is slightly injured but no person is killed or seriously injured.

length of approximately 8 m. The Scheme would have a negligible beneficial impact on a PRow of medium sensitivity resulting in a neutral effect, which is not significant.

- 5.5.15 The southern end of the A460 would be closed as part of the Scheme (medium sensitivity) with WCH permanently diverted along the realigned A460 and through the new alignment of M54 Junction 1. For users travelling to or from north of the Red White and Blue public house in Featherstone, to the south of the M54 would experience an increase in journey length of 245 m to 300 m. However, the new route would be a shared footway and cycleway providing improved facilities. Traffic flows at Junction 1 would also be reduced, with the junction predominantly used by local traffic, with long distance Heavy Duty Vehicles (HDVs) traffic utilising the free flow link to the mainline of the Scheme. This is anticipated to improve the amenity and perceived safety of this route. Therefore, despite a moderate increase in journey length the Scheme would result in at most, a slight adverse effect. For cyclists this route provides an improvement to the existing facilities despite the increase in journey length resulting in a permanent minor beneficial impact and slight beneficial effect.
- 5.5.16 The northern end of Dark Lane (medium sensitivity) would be permanently closed during construction reducing traffic along Dark Lane. A new shared footway and cycleway would be built to the west of the mainline to maintain the WCH route between the A460 and Hilton Lane. The shared route would result in either approximately an 80 m reduction or 40 m increase in journey length, depending on the direction of travel. The new facilities are anticipated to improve the perception of safety and convenience resulting in a minor beneficial impact and a slight beneficial effect on WCH, which is not significant.
- 5.5.17 Shareshill FP5 (low sensitivity) would be permanently severed during construction of the Scheme and realigned along Hilton Lane, over the new Hilton Lane overbridge on a new section of footway, then diverted north parallel to the Scheme to tie into the current alignment of the footpath. This would result in a minor increase in journey length of approximately 120 m. Though this would result in an increase in journey length for walkers using this route, it would provide greater connectivity to other WCH facilities, providing a link between Hilton Lane and the new shared footway/cycleway off Dark Lane. Therefore, this would result in a neutral effect which is not significant.
- 5.5.18 Shareshill BW1 (low sensitivity) would be permanently severed during construction of the Scheme and the bridleway realigned on an accommodation bridge built to accommodate horse-riders over the mainline of the Scheme. This would result in a major increase in journey length of approximately 605 m. As this route is of low sensitivity due to the number of users recorded (1 walker) and is anticipated to be used largely as a recreational route for WCH, the significance of effect is anticipated to be slight adverse which is not significant.
- 5.5.19 Saredon FP 1R/2214, Saredon FP8 and Shareshill FP4 form a continuous footpath linking the footway around the eastern side of the M6 Junction 11 to Shareshill BW1 and Shareshill FP4 (low sensitivity). The permanent change in journey length has therefore been considered as a single route rather than considering the footway and footpaths in isolation. The footway on the new M6 Junction 11 would link directly into

Saredon FP8 due to the widening of the junction making Saredon FP 1R/2214 redundant. Though this would result in the loss of a PRoW it would not significantly change the route used by walkers permanently. Saredon FP8 would be realigned approximately 40 m to the east adjacent to the mainline of the Scheme. Access would be maintained across Watercourse 5 details to be considered during the detailed design of the Scheme. The change in journey length along the full length of this route (A460 (north of Junction 11) to the tie in with Shareshill BW1) resulting in a permanent slight beneficial effect, which is not significant.

- 5.5.20 As part of the realignment of the A460 and M6 Junction 11, the footway (adjacent to the west of the A460 and through M6 Junction 11) and Saredon BW13 (low sensitivity) would be permanently realigned which would result in a negligible reduction in journey length of approximately 18 m. The steps between the bridleway and the junction would be removed and the bridleway appropriately regraded to link into the junction without the need for steps. The footway around Junction 11 would be replaced with a shared footway and cycleway which would link directly into Saredon BW13 to the north and the advisory cycle route on Mill Lane to the south and providing an improved perception of safety for cyclists using this route. It is therefore anticipated that this would result in a slight beneficial effect which is not significant.
- 5.5.21 No further impacts on WCH are anticipated during operation of the Scheme. The Scheme is not anticipated to result in a significant adverse or beneficial effect on WCHs.

6. Economic Case Overview

6.1 Overview of Economic Assessment and Methodology Used

- 6.1.1 This chapter presents a summary of the methodology and findings of the economic assessment that has been carried out in respect of the Scheme. All Highways England projects are subject to an economic assessment that takes into account the anticipated benefits and disbenefits of a Scheme to determine whether it provides sufficient value for money. The economic assessment that has been undertaken by Highways England is not included in the documentation for the DCO submission. If the Inspectorate or the Examining Authority considers it necessary to review the detail of the economic assessment, or any information from it, this would be provided at the discretion of Highways England.
- 6.1.2 Economic aspects of the assessment include the cost to construct the Scheme along with tax revenues generated once the Scheme becomes operational. The economic assessment also takes into consideration the environmental aspects of the Scheme and seeks to quantify them by monetising them in a positive or negative manner. A positive cost is presented where a particular aspect of the Scheme would result in a benefit e.g. an improvement in air quality and a negative cost is presented where the Scheme would have a negative effect e.g. an increase in noise levels which would result in an adverse effect at receptors. This method takes into account the effect of various aspects of the environment including: the effect of noise, air quality, greenhouse gases.
- 6.1.3 The economic assessment also takes into account of social aspects such as journey time savings and delays and wider economic impacts. The economic assessment includes a Transport Economic Efficiency (TEE) appraisal which seeks to assign a monetary amount to the social benefits/disbenefits resulting from the Scheme.
- 6.1.4 The total value of the economic, environmental and social monetised benefits and disbenefits are calculated to obtain a ratio. This ratio is referred to as the benefit cost ratio (BCR) and provides an indication of whether the Scheme provides a sufficient level of benefits to be considered as good value for money.
- 6.1.5 The economic assessment for the Scheme has been undertaken using Scheme TUBA (Transport Users Benefit Analysis) analysis software. TUBA is used to carry out transport economic appraisals using information from the Scheme traffic model. Traffic accident data from COBALT (**C**ost and **B**enefit to **A**ccidents – **L**ight **T**ouch) program is also used in the economic appraisal. The economic assessment is based on a 60-year appraisal period of 2024 - 2083 inclusive. The approach to the assessment follows the DfT WebTAG guidance and HM Treasury's Green Book (Ref 1.19).
- 6.1.6 The economic assessment is based on the assignment of a forecast Core Growth Scenario, with alternative sensitivity tests using Low Growth and High Growth assumptions for the volume of traffic using the Scheme. The Core Growth Scenario traffic forecast is based upon what is deemed the most likely land use and traffic growth assumptions for the route.

- 6.1.7 The traffic flows, times and distances have been extracted from the forecasting traffic model for the forecast years of 2024, 2036 and 2041. These forecast model outputs have been used in the economic appraisal of the Scheme to produce a monetised cost benefit analysis. The monetised cost benefit analysis of the Scheme has included the assessment of road user benefits, changes in revenues (i.e. indirect taxes), accident costs, and costs during construction and maintenance.

6.2 Monetised Benefits

- 6.2.1 The assessment and monetisation of the anticipated economic, environmental and social benefits associated with the Scheme has been undertaken in accordance with DfT guidelines. The initial BCR contains all costs and benefits that are routinely quantified within economic assessments of transport schemes. The adjusted BCR for the Scheme includes the benefits associated with journey time reliability, as well as those defined as wider economic benefits.
- 6.2.2 A summary of the economic, environmental and social benefits of the Scheme for the BCR is provided in the Analysis of Monetised Costs and Benefits (AMCB), presented in Table 6.1 below. The figures provided are based upon the core growth forecast assignments, taking the accident benefit and a number of additional monetised benefits into account.

Table 6.1: Analysis of Monetised Costs and Benefits (AMCB) for the M54 to M6 Link Road scheme⁶

Sub-Objective	Costs and Benefits ⁷
BENEFITS	
Noise	-0.8
Local Air Quality	2.0
Greenhouse Gases (Carbon)	-39.3
Journey Quality	
Physical Activity	
Accidents	22.4
Economic Efficiency: Consumer Users – Commuting	75.2
Economic Efficiency: Consumer Users – Other	111.7
Economic Efficiency: Business User and Providers	268.8
Delays During Construction	-7.7
Maintenance Costs	-2.0
Wider Public Finances - Indirect Taxation Revenues	13.6
PRESENT VALUE OF BENEFITS (PVB)	443.9
COSTS:	
Broad Transport Budget	
Local Government Funding	0
Central Government Funding	148.4

⁶ The AMCB calculation does not include monetised journey time reliability benefits.

⁷ All entries are in 2010 market prices and discounted to 2010 present value year in £millions; except for the BCR, which is a dimensionless ratio.

Sub-Objective	Costs and Benefits ⁷
PRESENT VALUE COST (PVC)	148.4
OVERALL IMPACTS	
NET PRESENT VALUE (NPV)	295.5
BENEFIT TO COST RATIO (BCR)	3.0

Economic Benefits

- 6.2.3 Economic benefits arising from the Scheme can be summarised as relating to transport economic efficiency improvements, road safety improvements and Indirect Taxation Revenue (ITR) increase.
- 6.2.4 The construction of new link road running from the M54 Junction 1 and tying into the M6 J11 would add extra capacity to the network of a good standard. This would generally result in more reliable and faster trips compared to the existing capacity provision on the A460, A5 and A449.
- 6.2.5 The Scheme would also relieve other routes in the study area, through the provision of a better alternative, which would realise further time savings.
- 6.2.6 These time savings have associated monetised benefits. The total time savings are monetised and then broken down into three sub-groups which are consumer users (commuters), consumer users (other) and business users and providers.
- 6.2.7 The economic benefits for each of these categories is summarised as:
- Consumer Users (commuters) - £75.2 million;
 - Consumer Users (other) - £111.7 million; and
 - Business Users and Providers - £268.8 million.
- 6.2.8 Associated with travel time benefits there are benefits related to Vehicle Operating Cost savings, resultant from fuel and non-fuel costs and toll charges.

Environmental Benefits

- 6.2.9 The Analysis of Monetised Costs and Benefits also considers monetised environmental benefits that may potentially arise from the scheme. For this Scheme, factors in relation to noise, air quality and Greenhouse Gases (Carbon) have been considered.
- 6.2.10 This assessment has concluded there would be a £2 million local air quality benefit resulting from the Scheme. Such a benefit is attributed to reduced traffic flows near to sensitive receptors and a reduction in stationary traffic as a result of an improved road network.
- 6.2.11 However, the Scheme would result in costs as a result of increased traffic noise (-£0.8 million) and Greenhouse Gases (-£39.3million). These costs are attributable to an increase in the number of vehicles using the Scheme' new links and the associated noise impacts of such movements.
- 6.2.12 Social Benefits include ITR, which relates to the effect of the Scheme on government revenues. In the case of a road scheme, these predominantly relates to fuel duty.

An increase in fuel consumption would generate an increase in government revenues through extra fuel duty.

- 6.2.13 Under the Core growth forecast scenario the Scheme would result in an increase in ITR to £13.6 million. The additional revenue raised may be spent by government to the benefit of society and therefore is accounted as a benefit to the Scheme.
- 6.2.14 Once implemented, the Scheme would result in an accident savings benefit, estimated to be £22.4 million. This benefit directly results from improved safety performance of the whole highway network, through the provision of more suitable road conditions and as a result of lower flows on existing links leading to fewer collision events.

6.3 Non-Monetised Benefits

- 6.3.1 Reliability is measured by the variability in journey time savings and that variability may be the result of congestion caused by weight of traffic (day-to-day variability) and congestion causing incidents (incident related variability). The monetised value of the reliability benefits of the Scheme were assessed to be £9.4 million (a 2010 market value and discounted to a 2010 present value year).
- 6.3.2 Reliability benefits of the Scheme were not included in the AMCB table because the magnitude of the benefit is less certain than the other monetised values in the AMCB table. Given this degree of variability, journey reliability values were excluded from the unadjusted cost-benefit assessment.
- 6.3.3 Welfare analysis considers wider economic benefits that are considered to be commensurate with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The wider economic benefits could be of the order of £26.8 million, at 2010 market prices and discounted to a 2010 present value year.
- 6.3.4 Wider economic benefits of a Scheme were not included in the AMCB table because the magnitude of the benefit is less certain than the other monetised values in the AMCB table. Given this degree of variability, reliability benefits were excluded from the unadjusted cost-benefit assessment.

6.4 Value for Money

- 6.4.1 Various impacts emanating from the Scheme have been monetised in order to calculate a BCR, which indicates whether the Scheme would provide overall value for money. As the Scheme would be operational for several decades, and the standard approach is to evaluate the economic assessment for the Scheme over a 60-year period. As a result, monetised benefits and disbenefits are attached to a set year. The costs for the construction of the Scheme and the monetised benefits of the Scheme were based on 2010 market prices and discounted to a 2010 present value year.
- 6.4.2 The BCR is calculated as a ratio of the Present Value of Benefits (PVB) compared with the Present Value of Costs (PVC). The unadjusted (i.e. excluding reliability and wider economic benefits) Net Present Value (NPV) for this Scheme is the difference between the PVB and the PVC and was £296 million.

- 6.4.3 The unadjusted (i.e. excluding reliability and wider economic benefits) BCR of this Scheme was 3.0.
- 6.4.4 A DfT benchmark is a BCR of 2, above which a project is considered high value for money. The unadjusted BCR for this Scheme is 3.0 and therefore is considered to be a high value for money Scheme.

7. Planning History and Allocated Land

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 The NPSNN paragraph 5.165 states that the applicant should identify existing and proposed land uses near the Scheme, any effects of replacing an existing development or use of the site with the proposed project or preventing a development or use on a neighbouring site from continuing. The NPSNN states that applicants should also assess any effects of precluding a new development or use proposed in the development plan and that the assessment should be proportionate.
- 7.1.2 To inform the above assessment, a review of the planning history for the land within the Order limits and the surrounding area has been undertaken through analysis of host authority websites and consultation with local authorities and landowners. A review has also been undertaken of land allocated in local planning policy documents and potential future allocations in emerging documents. The search included applications with no time limit because in areas within the Order limits the Scheme could affect future land use so understanding the future potential of sites is important for assessment of Scheme impacts.
- 7.1.3 SSC is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan. The Issues and Options consultation formed the first stage of the Local Plan Review and was carried out in November 2018. The consultation provided the opportunity for landowners and agents to put forward sites to be considered by SCC for allocation for residential or employment development. At the point of submission, SSC had not formally assessed these sites and had not published preferred sites for inclusion in the new Local Plan. The sites submitted have been published on the SSC website and have been reviewed as part of this planning history review. A second consultation was carried out between October and December 2019 on the 'Spatial Housing Strategy' and 'Infrastructure Delivery Plan' (Ref 1.20). These documents did not identify sites.

7.2 Planning history within the Order limits

- 7.2.1 A planning history search for the land within the Order limits has been carried out to include all planning applications, approvals, refusals and planning appeals. Given that the majority of land within the Order limits is either greenfield land or existing highway, planning applications in the Order limits generally comprise minor developments such as extensions to existing residential properties, applications for change of use and applications for works to trees. Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1 show applications identified in the planning history review within the Order limits. The table presents the planning applications by following the Scheme south to north.
- 7.2.2 There are three sites within the Order limits that have been reported as being used to host car boot sales. The first site is located to the west of the M6 Junction 11 between Mill Lane and the A460. The second is located east of the A460 between Hilton Lane and Park Road. The third is located to the north of M6 Diesel. The records of planning applications and planning permissions available on the SSC website has been reviewed and there are no records of planning permission being granted for the use of agricultural land for the purposes of holding events or car boot sales. It is anticipated that the car boot sales are carried out under Permitted Development Rights that are available for events. Part 4 Class B of the Town and

Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) allows the temporary use of land to hold a market for no more than 14 days in any calendar year without the need to apply for planning permission.

Figure 7.1: Planning Applications within and in close proximity to the Order limits (See tables 7.1 and 7.2 for the key)

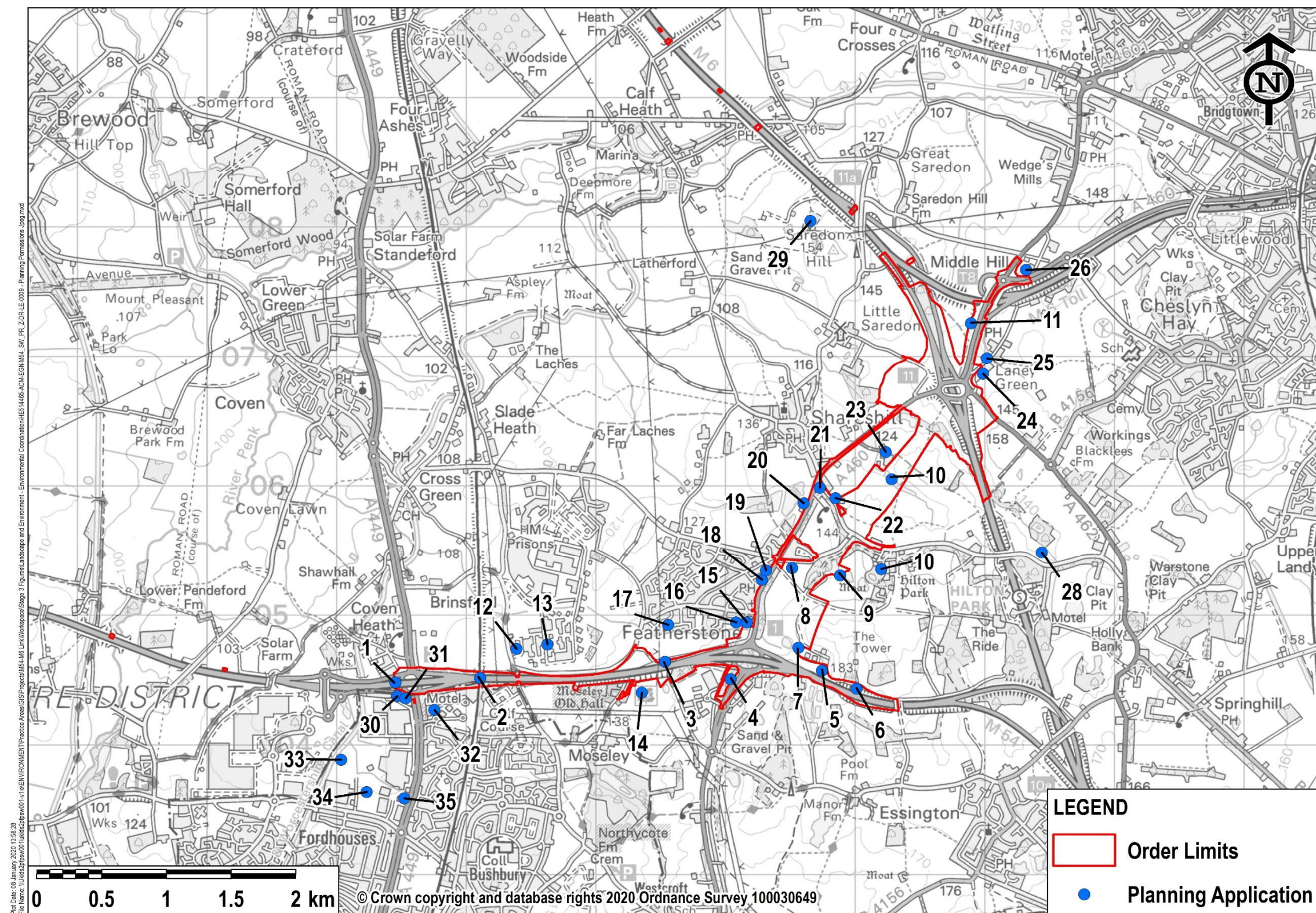


Table 7.1 Planning history for land within the Order limits

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
1	05/01312/FUL; Approved March 2007. 05/01311/OUT; Approved March 2007	Provision of an access to the M54 motorway from the i54 strategic employment site located south west of the M54 Junction 2. Comprehensive redevelopment of land to provide a strategic employment area comprising offices, workspaces, industrial units, education and research, hotel, ancillary services, open space and associated highways, footpaths and landscaping at the i54 Site located south west of the M54 Junction 2.	None. Constructed so already accounted for in traffic modelling and highways design considerations.
2	05/00677/OUT; Refused locally and dismissed at appeal in October 2008.	Proposals were for improvements to infrastructure to facilitate a bus and rail based Park and Ride. The application site included a railway line that runs in a north to south direction and passes underneath the M54 between Junctions 1 and 2.	None. Appeal dismissed over ten years ago and no new applications submitted.
3	06/00638/OUT; Refused at appeal in October 2008 following non-determination of the application. 07/00547/OUT; submitted in 2007 and withdrawn in	Residential development for up to 360 dwellings with associated access, public open space, community facilities and infrastructure on land north west of the M54 Junction 1 between the M54 and Featherstone. A planning application was submitted in June 2006 for this development. The applicant then appealed to the Planning Inspectorate for the non-determination of the application. The appeal was recovered for the SoS's determination, with the SoS dismissing the appeal and refusing planning permission in October 2008. 07/00547/OUT residential development for up to 120 dwellings with associated access, open space and drainage infrastructure. The site is	Part of this land is proposed to be used as an attenuation pond for the Scheme. The attenuation pond has been moved at the request of the landowner to enable more holistic development of the site in the future. However, it should be noted that the site is not allocated, does not have planning permission and is in the Green Belt so there is no certainty any residential development will ever happen on the site.

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
	November 2018 following appeal decision above.	within the northern part of the site subject to application 06/00638/OUT (which is not within the M54 to M6 Link Road Scheme boundary). See Section 6.6 of this CftS for more information on this site.	
4	99/00724/FUL; Application withdrawn in October 1999	A planning application was submitted for the renewal of outline permission 100/94 for B1 and B2 Business Park and ancillary uses and highways and landscape works. The planning application included the land at Hilton Cross Business Park located south west of the M54 Junction 1, now allocated as a Strategic Employment Site.	None.
5	98/01134/FUL; Approved March 1999.	Levelling of ground to improve access at Tower House Farm, Hilton Lane, Essington east of the M54 Junction 1.	None.
6	00/00230/COM; approved March 2001.	Regrading and levelling of agricultural land at Tower House Farm east of the M54 Junction 1.	None
7	00/00119/COU, approved April 2000	Change of use of irrigation reservoir to fishing pool for hire of angling clubs at Tower House Farm east of the M54 Junction 1.	The fishing pool will be lost as a result of the Scheme.
8	02/00665/COU; submitted May 2002 and withdrawn January 2003	Change of use of land to Sports Ground, car park and access and changing facilities in the Green Belt east of the A460 and south of Dark Lane.	None. Not consented and no application submitted since 2003.

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
9	99/01213/LUE; approved in January 2000	Certificate of Lawfulness for use of pools for sport fishing by not more than 45 anglers at any one time, for the placing of 2 storage containers 2m x 4m x 2m and the parking of anglers cars at Hilton Park.	It is our understanding that two fishing clubs fish at this location, one at Lower Pool and the other at Chubb fishing pond to the east of Lower Pool. The lower part of Lower Pool will be lost as part of the Scheme. Chubb fishing pond and the upper part of Lower Pool will be retained.
10	99/01144/LUE; approved in May 2000	Certificate of Lawfulness relating to coarse fishing pools at a series of existing ponds located at Yells Farm Hilton Lane, Essington. The application site included a series of ponds located north of Hilton Lane.	There are three pools at this location, with the far eastern pool being lost as a result of the Scheme.
11	02/01476/FUL; approved in January 2003	Planning application for a combined bridleway and field access from realigned A460 at Saredon Hall Road. The bridleway is located north of the M6 junction 11. The bridleway runs in a roughly north to south direction.	See Section 5.5. of this CftS.

7.3 Planning history for the area surrounding the Order limits

- 7.3.1 The planning history search for the land surrounding the Scheme has been carried out to include planning applications for development within 50 m of the Scheme boundary rather than the Order limits as developments near the remote new signage have little relevance to the Scheme. The search concentrated on sites that may be affected by the Scheme, where planning permission had been granted in the last five years. This timescale was used as following this period it is likely that developments would either have been constructed or the consent would have expired as most planning consents expire after three years.
- 7.3.2 Planning permission granted for development within the study area since 2014 and which may be affected by the Scheme are shown in Table 7.2 below and Figure 7.1. It was considered that planning permission granted for development prior to 2014 would have either been implemented or would have expired and so would be considered as part of the baseline or existing situation for the surrounding area. Planning permission for small scale developments such as individual residential properties, house extensions and conservatories are not listed where it is considered that the development is separated from the Scheme by existing built development and residential areas.
- 7.3.3 The results of this review found that planning applications and consents comprise minor development such as small scale residential development and residential extensions, an extension to a hotel and development to enable new employment development to take place.

Table 7.2 Planning history for land outside the Order limits

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
12	15/00545/DEM; approved July 2015	Demolition of redundant buildings, ground slabs, pits and voids. Land west of the former ROF Featherstone north of the M54.	None
13	18/00995/FUL; approved April 2019	Demolition and remediation of the former ROF Featherstone site and buildings and ancillary works allocated as a Strategic Employment Site. Land north of the M54 between junctions 1 and 2.	Once constructed the Scheme will improve accessibility of the site to and from the motorway network. During construction there may be delays on the motorway network in around the site but the Scheme will not affect the site of its access.
14	14/00904/FUL; approved December 2014	Car park and access improvements and change of use from farmland to public recreation and nature conservation at Moseley Old Hall, Featherstone located south of M54 between Junctions 1 and 2.	The Scheme includes Whitgreaves Wood to the east of this site and car parking/ access between the wood and Moseley Old Hall. However, this land is included only to make improvements to the wood and access with the support of Natural England and National Trust so would likely be complementary to the aims of application 14/00904/FUL.
15	16/00635/FUL; approved July 2016	Ground floor front side and rear extensions to a residential dwelling located north west of M54 junction 1 (14 South Crescent, Featherstone, WV10 7AU)	Extension taken into account in the EIA (i.e. where the location of the nearest façade is assessed for air

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
			quality, noise and landscape and visual impact assessments).
16	16/01003/FUL; approved December 2016.	Single storey extension to a residential dwelling located North West of M54 junction 1 (22 South Crescent, Featherstone, WV10 7AU).	Extension taken into account in the EIA (i.e. where the location of the nearest façade is assessed for air quality, noise and landscape and visual impact assessments).
17	13/00881/COND, approved 2015	Demolition of existing garages and construction of two two-bedroom affordable homes on former garage site located North West of M54 junction 1. (Land At Brookhouse Close, Featherstone).	Extension taken into account in the EIA ⁸ .
18	16/00986/FUL, approved Dec 2016	First floor side extension over an existing ground floor kitchen at a residential dwelling located west of the Scheme. (22 Cannock Road, Featherstone, WV10 7AD).	Extension taken into account in the EIA.
19	18/00249/FUL, approved June 2018	Two storey side and single storey rear extension at a residential dwelling (34 Cannock Road, Featherstone, WV10 7AD)	Extension taken into account in the EIA.
20	15/00263/FUL, approved May 2015	Demolition of three warehouse buildings and construction of a new dwelling (Kings Fishery, Cannock Road, Shareshill, WV10 7JP)	New dwelling taken into account in the EIA.

⁸ Extensions and new dwellings have been taken into account in the EIA in the noise, air quality and landscape and visual impact assessments. For example, where a property is a noise sensitive receptor and the extension extends the nearest façade towards the new road, the nearest façade is taken from the location of the extension.

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
21	15/00531/FUL, approved Aug 2015	Proposed Rear Elevation Conservatory at a residential dwelling located west of the Scheme. (Oakwell, Hilton Lane, Shareshill, WV10 7HU)	Extension taken into account in the EIA.
22.	17/00853/LHSHLD and 17/00422/FUL; approved 2017	Various side and rear extensions to residential property. (St Elvey, Hilton Lane, Shareshill, WV10 7HU)	Extension taken into account in the EIA.
23	17/00857/COU; approved Nov 2017	Use of former blacksmith's forge to uses within B1(c) and B8. (Brookfield Farm, Cannock Road, Shareshill, WV10 7LZ)	None
24	17/00665/FUL	Nine new dwellings at Hollies Farm (Wolverhampton Road, WV10 7LU).	New dwellings taken into account in the EIA.
25	17/01068/LUP; approved April 2018 16/00540/FUL; withdrawn	Extensions and erection of garage and summerhouse under permitted development at a residential property (Hollies Cottage, Wolverhampton Road WV10 7LU)	Extension taken into account in the EIA.
26	16/00102/FUL 14/00650/FUL 18/00358/FUL	Three applications for extensions at separate properties all in close proximity to each other (The Haven, Wolverhampton Road, WV10 7LT).	Extension taken into account in the EIA.

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
27	15/00745/TREE; approved 2015	Works to trees under a Tree Preservation Order TPO 262/2013 (Hilton Hall, Hilton Lane, WV11 2BQ).	None
28	15/00303/FUL; approved Aug 2015	Change of use from decommissioned sewage treatment works to outdoor environment centre. (Forest of Mercia, Hilton Lane, WV11 2BD).	None. Site is separated from the new link by the M6.
29	19/00015/COM; approved June 2019 17/01038/COM; approved July 2018	Extraction of minerals within the woodland area at Saredon Quarry and an additional area outside the woodland that was omitted from the original application and subsequent infilling with inert waste/material. (Saredon Quarry, north west of M6 Junction 11). Application to vary conditions: 1,12,13,14,24,46 and 47 of planning permission SS.16/10/602MW, to deepen extraction area and confirm the working Scheme details. (Saredon Quarry, north west of M6 Junction 11).	No direct impacts. When constructed the Scheme will improve links between the quarry and the motorway network. Delays on surrounding network are possible during construction, particularly construction of M6 Junction 11.
30	15/01390/FUL; approved Dec 2015	Erection of a Costa Coffee drive-through, landscaping and car parking south west of the M54 Junction 2.	None.
31	14/00994/FUL; approved Oct 2014	Proposed valet and car wash buildings south west of the M54 Junction 2.	None
32	15/00674/FUL; approved Sept 2015	Extension to existing hotel to provide a further 24 bedrooms with associated alterations to car parking, landscaping and the installation of A/C Compounds. Travel Inn, Broadlands, WV10 6TA	Extension taken into account in the EIA.

Site ID	Application reference, decision and date	Description of development and further notes	Implications for Scheme
33	17/00571/OUT; approved Nov 2017	Outline planning application including site access for redevelopment for flexible employment purposes within use classes B1b, B1c, B2 and B8. Wobaston Road, Wolverhampton, WV10 6QJ	Extension taken into account in the EIA.
34	17/00367/FUL; approved Feb 2018	Erection of two industrial buildings providing 18,021 sq m for flexible employment purposes within use classes B1c/B2/B8 with ancillary offices, car parking, landscaping, service yard areas and associated external works. Wobaston Road, Wolverhampton.	None
35	14/00878/FUL; approved Jan 2015	Change of Use from land to the rear of existing petrol filling station (Sui Generis) to Storage (Use Class B8) with ancillary parking/access and a temporary warehouse (Land And Premises behind B P Petrol Station, Stafford Road, WV10 7EG).	None

7.4 Planning history for major development and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects near the Scheme

- 7.4.1 Development Consent is being sought by Four Ashes Limited for the West Midlands Interchange (WMI) (Planning Inspectorate Reference TR050005); a new rail freight interchange located approximately 2.9 km north west of the M6 Junction 11. The WMI is classed as a NSIP and the application for Development Consent was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in August 2018. The examination period for the application closed in August 2019, with a decision expected in early 2020.
- 7.4.2 The WMI will comprise an intermodal freight terminal with rail connections to the West Coast mainline capable of accommodating up to ten trains per day up to 775 m in length. The facilities at the WMI will also comprise container storage, HGV parking and control buildings. The site will also provide up to 743,200 square metres of rail served warehousing and service buildings. The development of the WMI will also include new road infrastructure, demolition of buildings, earthworks and installation of utilities and new landscaping. The site of the WMI is approximately 297 hectares.
- 7.4.3 Chapter 4 of the ES for the WMI application provides the indicative phasing for the development of the WMI. It is anticipated that the development will take place in five phases over a 15 year period. Phase 1 will take place between 2020 and 2026 and will comprise the construction of the initial rail terminal and various infrastructure works including new access roads, bridges, earthworks and landscaping. Phase 2 will take place between 2026 and 2029, during which the rail terminal will be expanded and new access roads, warehousing and infrastructure will be constructed.
- 7.4.4 Phases 3, 4 and 5 will each comprise the construction of new warehousing, access roads, earthworks and landscaping. Phase 3 will take place during 2029 to 2030, phase 4 will occur during 2030 to 2033 and phase 5 will take place during 2033 to 2035.
- 7.4.5 The proposed WMI is located in relatively close proximity to the Scheme and there are planned construction works on the WMI during the period when the Scheme is proposed to be in construction. To minimise the cumulative impact of construction and conflict between the two projects, it is proposed that a forum be set up during construction to liaise on the Traffic Management Plan (TMP) for the Scheme. It is proposed that this forum include the contractors involved in the Scheme, WMI and contractors working at i54 and ROF Featherstone if appropriate. The forum would also involve SCC and SSC. This proposal is included in the outline TMP **[TR010054/APP/7.5]** submitted with the DCO application and proposals will be further developed as a more detailed TMP is developed following a decision on the application.

7.5 Current Allocations and Minerals Safeguarding

- 7.5.1 The SSC Local Plan comprises two documents, the SSCS adopted in 2012 and the SSSAD adopted in 2018. The designations and allocations in the two documents are presented in an interactive Local Plan Policies map on the website. The designations and allocations for area of the Scheme are shown on the Local Plan

inset maps 14, 17 and 29, with key designations and allocations of relevance shown in Figure 4.2 in this CftS.

- 7.5.2 The land south west of the M54 Junction 1 comprises the Hilton Cross Business Park which is designated as a SES and is excluded from the Green Belt. The Order limits include an area of land within the SES that is south of the M54 Junction 1 and west of the A460. The Scheme will affect a very small area of this SES currently used for vegetation and hard standing.
- 7.5.3 The Hilton Main Industrial Estate (also known locally as Vernon Park) is located south east of the M54 Junction 2 and is excluded from the Green Belt. The SES at ROF Featherstone is located north of the Scheme between the M54 Junctions 1 and 2. The i54 SES is located south west of the M54 Junction 1. The Order limits do not encroach into any of these allocations.
- 7.5.4 There is no land within or directly adjacent to the Order limits that is allocated for residential development. Beyond the Order limits there is a single plot of land allocated for housing. The plot of land is Housing Allocation Site 168 in the South Staffordshire Local Plan and is located on the western edge of Featherstone and approximately 260 m north of M6 Junction 11. The site would accommodate up to 60 houses. There are no current planning applications for this site. This allocated site is separated from the Scheme by open countryside in the Green Belt and the properties in Featherstone.
- 7.5.5 The Scheme also passes through a Mineral Safeguard Area for bedrock and superficial sand and gravel and also crosses safeguarded mineral infrastructure at Hilton Park Quarry. The Scheme does not cross active, permitted or allocated extensions to mineral sites.
- 7.5.6 Hilton Park Quarry, east of the Scheme, is a non-operational mineral infrastructure site but for which permitted reserves remain. Discussions between Highways England, Hanson and SCC have taken place regarding a replacement access off a new roundabout/junction so that operations at the Hilton Park site would not be prohibited by the Scheme should it become operational in the future. Therefore, the Scheme would not unduly restrict the mineral operations at the Hilton Park site should operations recommence in the future. This matter is considered in more detail in the Minerals Safeguarding Report in Appendix 10.1 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3].

7.6 Future Allocations: The SSC Local Plan Review (LPR) and History of Sites Proposed

- 7.6.1 The SSSAD committed SSC to carrying out an early review of the Local Plan in order to respond to the increasing need for development, both within South Staffordshire, and in the neighbouring authorities. The early review was an essential requirement of the Government's Planning Inspector who examined the SSSAD, and was largely in response to unmet housing needs in both South Staffordshire and the wider region. This means that SSC is required to submit a Local Plan Review (LPR) by 2021. The LPR is planning for a target of 8,845 dwellings between 2018 and 2037.
- 7.6.2 SSC carried out consultation on 'Issues and Options' (Ref 1.21) as part of its LPR in October and November 2018. Whilst further consultation was carried out at the end

of 2019, it did not identify specific sites or present results of site assessments, so it remains relevant to examine sites submitted in 2018. The consultation presented an opportunity for land owners and developers to put forward sites for SSC to consider whether to allocate in the LPR. SSC will consider each promoted site and publish a list of the preferred sites during the Preferred Options consultation stage scheduled to take place in Spring 2020, when further consultation comments will be invited. The final stages in the LPR will be the Publication of the draft Local Plan scheduled to take place in winter 2020/2021 and then the submission for the Examination in Autumn 2021.

7.6.3 Following the Issues and Options consultation, SSC undertook consultation during October and December 2019 on the 'Spatial Housing Strategy' and 'Infrastructure Delivery Plan', focusing on the broad locations for housing growth and infrastructure. The consultation was not site specific but considered seven options to deliver the housing required to meet the needs of South Staffordshire.

7.6.4 The Spatial Housing Strategy document outlines seven different options for housing delivery in South Staffordshire:

- **Option A:** rural housing growth focused on the district's larger and better connected villages;
- **Option B:** rural Housing growth dispersed across all settlements with a basic level of service provision within the district
- **Option C:** small-scale urban extensions on the fringe of neighbouring urban areas
- **Option D:** larger urban extensions on the fringe of neighbouring urban areas
- **Option E:** new freestanding settlements away from the existing villages/urban areas
- **Option F:** introduce minimum housing densities on all housing sites and intensify development within the existing village development
- **Option G:** infrastructure led development with a garden village area of search

7.6.5 The broad locations for new housing including existing allocations, areas of search for new settlements and urban extensions were shown on schematic spatial strategy plans for each option. None of the options show areas of search or urban extensions in the Order limits.

7.6.6 The Spatial Housing Strategy concludes that Options A to F would not provide sufficient houses for the District. The consultation document therefore identifies option G as the preferred option. Under this option, larger urban extensions are focused to the north of the Black Country conurbation, recognising the availability of larger sites in this location and the opportunities to deliver strategic infrastructure needs around the ROF Featherstone SES. The remaining housing requirement is split between the western edge of the Black Country and south of Stafford, in a manner that recognises the Black Country's role in contributing to the unmet housing needs of the Housing Market Area. Growth in the villages would be dispersed across

all four village tiers, with a larger proportion focused on Tier 1 and 2 villages. The Schematic Spatial Strategy Plan for Option G proposes an area around the A449 as the area of search for a garden village, for delivery in the next plan period. The area of search is to the west of the Scheme and does not extend as far as Featherstone.

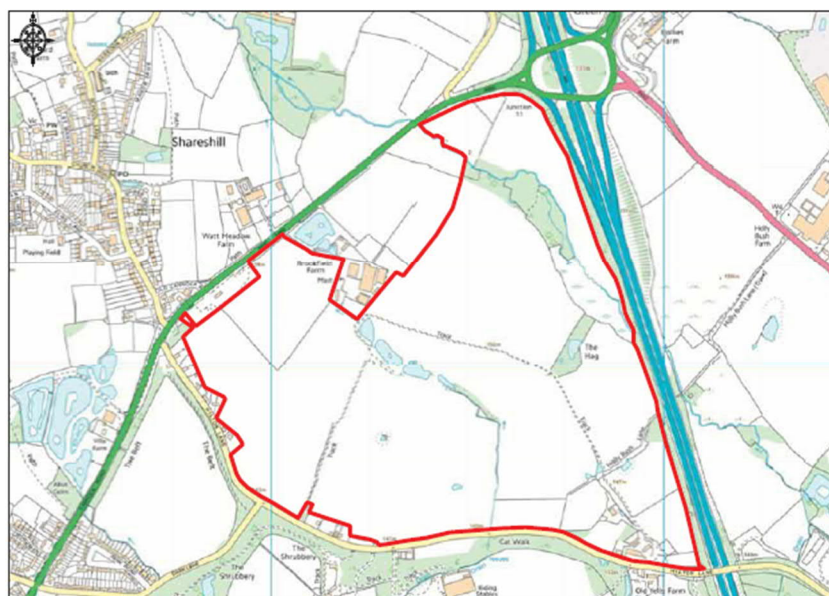
- 7.6.7 The Spatial Housing Strategy does not show any areas of areas of search for a proposed urban extension of new settlement within the Order limits or the settlements of Featherstone, Shareshill or Essington in the surrounding area. The descriptions and Schematic Spatial Strategy plans do not show individual sites put forward for residential development. This consultation document does not make mention of the proposed Scheme nor how it may contribute towards the delivery of new homes in the District.
- 7.6.8 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (2019) also published as part of the consultation has been prepared to set out the infrastructure required to deliver growth within the district. Infrastructure provision and the effects of new development on existing services and facilities is recognised as a key issue by Councillors and residents and it is recognised that new housing and employment provision will need to be supported by suitable infrastructure. The IDP will be developed in parallel with the new Local Plan.
- 7.6.9 The IDP recognises in Chapter 4 that the existing routes between the M54 and M6 include the A449 and A5 and that a new M54 to M6 link road will help address congestion on the A460, which is currently at capacity. The Scheme is recognised in Chapter 4 and 5 of the IDP as a solution to the existing congestion and capacity issues along the A460.
- 7.6.10 Five sites that are located within or in very close proximity to the Order limits have been promoted for allocation over the last 13 years. Each site is considered below.

Site 651 - Hilton Park, Nurton Developments

- 7.6.11 This site was submitted to the LPR consultation in 2018. Located south west of the M6 Junction 11 and between the M6 and A460 this site covers an area of 88.9 hectares with a net developable area (according to their submission to the LPR) of up to 52.5 hectares. The site is being promoted as a SES. An extract from the representation made for the site showing the location and extent of the site is presented in Figure 7.2: Hilton Park Proposed SiteFigure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: Hilton Park Proposed Site

Hilton Park Site Plan



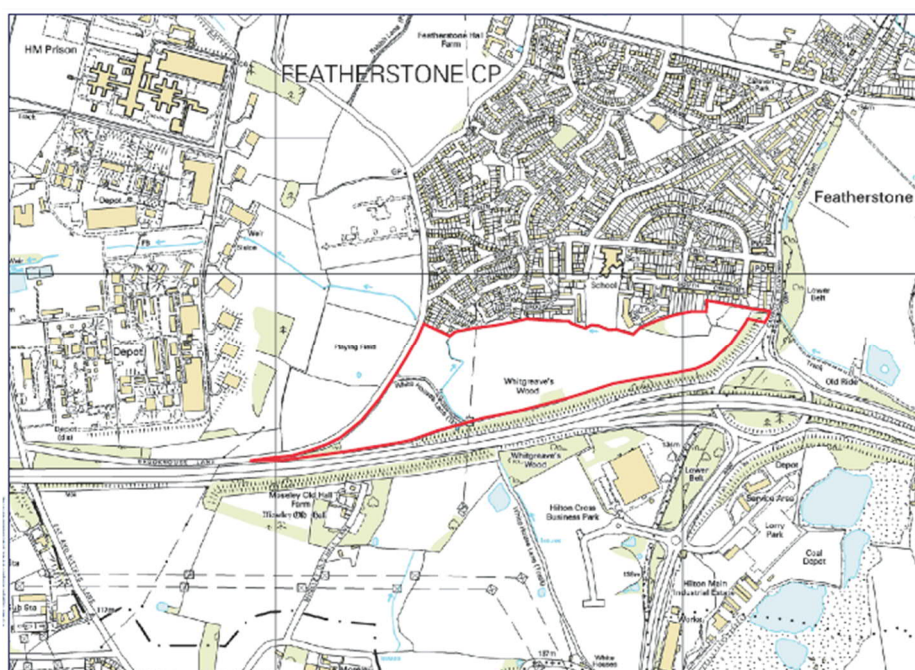
- 7.6.12 The land within the site boundary is in agricultural use and is located in the Green Belt. This site is not allocated in the SSSAD (2018) as an employment site or for any other use. There are already a number of employment and SESs in the area, including i54 and ROF Featherstone. Both sites have areas allocated for extensions to provide further land for employment development. The Hilton Main Industrial Estate and Hilton Cross SES provide additional employment land in the vicinity. Development of site 651 could slow down or detract from development of existing allocated sites. The existing employment sites comprise brownfield land and it would be more sustainable to remediate and develop these sites than develop on greenfield land.
- 7.6.13 The LPR Issues and Options consultation paper prepared by SSC states that:
- 'We need to think about our own local economic growth through our main employment sites, the smaller employment sites and business parks, and our small and medium businesses. We already meet some of the Black Country's high quality employment needs at i54 South Staffordshire and the forthcoming site at ROF Featherstone. As a district, we currently have more employment land than we need, so we will have to decide how to deal with this.'*
- 7.6.14 More detailed information is provided in the Economic Development Needs Assessment prepared by SSC dated August 2018, which concludes in paragraph 8.9 that there is sufficient employment land in South Staffordshire and that there is no need to allocate further land.
- 7.6.15 Given that site 651 is a greenfield site, in the Green Belt, in close proximity to allocated brownfield employment sites and there is no shortage of employment land in the district, we do not consider that this site has a realistic chance of gaining planning permission or being allocated for employment development in the near

future. However, in the event that the site was allocated for employment development in the future, it is considered that the aspirations for the site would be compatible with the site because the development could still take place with a suitable bridge constructed to facilitate connectivity over the site.

Site 170 – Persimmon Homes

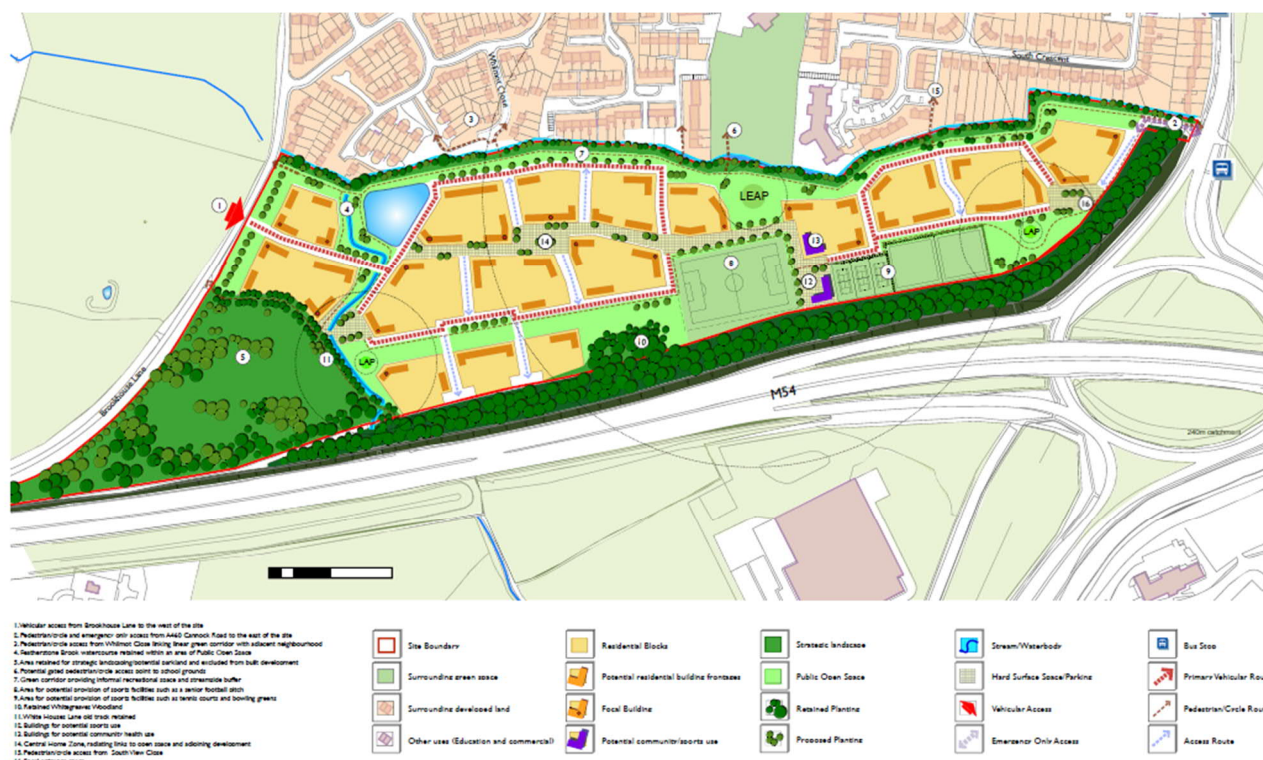
- 7.6.16 A site located north west of the M54 Junction 1 covering an area of 16 hectares of agricultural land within the Green Belt has been promoted for housing in the LPR. The parcel of land being promoted borders the northern extent of the M54, the M54 Junction 1 and Featherstone as shown in Figure 7.3. The information submitted during the LPR consultation in 2018 indicates that the site could be developed for approximately 350 houses.

Figure 7.3: Extract from the representations made for site 170



- 7.6.17 A masterplan drawing submitted with the representations made in 2018 shows that current proposals would be for the western part of the site to be used for amenity use comprising parkland. The Scheme includes an attenuation pond for highway drainage to be located in the western section of site 170. The design presented for the Scheme during statutory consultation in May-July 2019 showed this pond located to the east of White Houses Lane, but it has been moved to the west of Whites Houses Lane at the request of the landowner to better fit with their proposed masterplan. Figure 7.4 shows an extract from this representation. The attenuation pond for the M54 to M6 Link Road Scheme is now proposed in the area marked with a 5.

Figure 7.4: Site 170 masterplan



- 7.6.18 A planning application (06/00638/OUT) was submitted to SSC in June 2006 for residential development on this site for up to 360 dwellings and ancillary development. Application references are presented in Table 7.1 (site ID3). The applicant appealed to the Planning Inspectorate for the non-determination of the application and a public inquiry was held on the appeal in June and July 2007. The appeal was recovered for the SoS for determination.
- 7.6.19 The Planning Inspector recommended that the appeal be allowed and planning permission be granted but the SoS disagreed with the recommendation and dismissed the appeal in October 2008. The SoS concluded that the proposed development:
- did not comply with the development plan or with national policy;
 - would cause substantial harm as a result of it being inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - would cause harm to the Green Belt; and
 - while the proposal would make a significant contribution towards meeting affordable housing needs, this benefit would not outweigh the harm and does not amount to Very Special Circumstances to justify the release of the site from the Green Belt.
- 7.6.20 A separate planning application (reference 07/00547/OUT) was submitted to SSC for outline planning permission in May 2007 for up to 120 dwellings within the northern part of the site proposed for 360 dwellings. Planning application

07/00547/OUT was withdrawn in November 2018 shortly after the SoS's decision for planning application 06/00638/OUT.

- 7.6.21 No further planning applications have been submitted for development on this site following the refusal of planning application 06/00638/OUT in October 2008 and withdrawal of planning application 07/00547/OUT in November 2008.
- 7.6.22 Planning permission was refused by the SoS due largely to its location in the Green Belt. There have been no alterations to the Green Belt in this area and the site remains in the Green Belt. The site is not allocated in the SSSAD for residential development and planning permission has been refused for residential development on the site in the past. Therefore, there is currently no evidence to suggest that the site may be allocated or that planning permission would be granted if a planning application were submitted. However, in the event that site 170 was allocated for residential development in the future, it is considered that residential development on the site would be compatible with the Scheme because the land used for the drainage pond could be incorporated into the parkland area shown in the masterplan for Site 170.

Site 521 – Parcel of land promoted for an individual dwelling

- 7.6.23 Site 521 is located in a row of existing dwellings along the northern side of Hilton Lane and has been promoted for development of a single dwelling. The site is located outside the Order limits. A planning application was submitted to SSC in March 2006 (planning application reference 06/00354/OUT) for a single detached dwelling, and refused in May 2006. SSC would not allocate a site for development of this scale and as it is outside the Order limits so the Scheme would not directly affect development of the site even if it were to proceed.

Historic Site Suggestions

- 7.6.24 Two sites have been promoted for allocation in previous versions of the Local Plan and SSSAD. Site 172 located adjacent to the east side of the A460 was promoted in 2007. Site 398 located north of Hilton Lane currently occupied for the storage of vehicles was promoted in 2011. Neither site 172 or site 398 were allocated in the Local Plan or SSSAD at the time and neither were put forward for inclusion in the SSSAD adopted in 2018, nor have they been promoted during the Local Plan Review Issues and Options Consultation in October 2018. As a result neither site is likely to be allocated for development in the new Local Plan.

8. Conformity with Planning and Transport Policy

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This Chapter presents an assessment of the compliance of the Scheme with national and local planning and transport policy. A detailed table of compliance with the NPSNN is presented in Appendix A of this CftS, with a table on local policy compliance presented in Appendix B.

8.1.2 The PA 2008 requires that applications for development consent be decided in accordance with relevant National Policy Statement (Section 104(3)) except where the adverse impact of the proposed development would outweigh its benefits (Section 104(7)). Therefore, the NPSNN (2014) is the primary national policy document that should guide decision making on the application.

8.1.3 The PA 2008 (as amended) states that in deciding an DCO application the SoS must have regard to the following with relevance to the application:

‘(a) a relevant national policy statement...

(b) any local impact report (within the meaning given by Section 60(3)) submitted to the before the deadline specified in a notice under Section 60(2)...

(d) any other matters which the SoS thinks are both important and relevant to the SoS’s decision.’

8.1.4 Planning and transport policy documents are often considered important and relevant matters in decision making on DCO applications. In this case the key national policy documents considered important and relevant, and therefore material considerations in decision making, are explored in Section 8.2 of this CftS.

8.1.5 Local planning and transport policy documents can also be important and relevant to decision making, particularly where they are relatively up to date. The Inspectorate Advice note 1: Local Impact Reports (Ref 1.22) provides guidance for host authorities on the production of Local Impact Reports, which the SoS must have regard to when determining DCO applications. Advice note 1 (page 6) states that topics that may be of assistance in writing the report include:

‘Relevant development plan policies, supplementary planning guidance or documents, development briefs or approved master-plans and an appraisal of their relationship and relevance to the proposals.’

It goes on to state that:

‘It will also be very helpful to have the local authority’s appraisal of the proposed development’s compliance with local policy and guidance.’

8.1.6 The above further emphasises the view of the Inspectorate that local planning policies are important and relevant in decision making on DCO applications. Therefore, local planning policies were reviewed at an early stage, have informed route choice and Scheme development and compliance with these policies is assessed in this Section. Local policy documents considered relevant and important are described in Section 8.3.

8.1.7 The assessment of the Scheme against planning policy in Sections 8.4-8.19 is organised by topic.

8.2 National policy context

8.2.1 The national policies considered in this Chapter are described below.

National Policy Statement for National Networks

8.2.2 The NPSNN outlines the need for national networks, wider government policy on the National Networks, assessment principles and requirements for the consideration and assessment of generic impacts. It is the primary document that guides decision making on highway NSIPs.

National Planning Policy Framework

8.2.3 The revised NPPF was written to guide planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 rather than the PA 2008. The NPSNN acknowledges in paragraph 1.17 that the overall strategic aims of the NPPF and the NPSNN are consistent but that the two documents have differing but equally important roles to play. The NPPF makes clear that it is not intended to contain specific policies for NSIPs and that it is the role of the NPSNN to assume that function and provide transport policy which will guide individual development brought under it.

8.2.4 However, there are instances where the NPS directly references the NPPF and others where the NPPF may provide more detailed and/ or more up to date guidance than the NPS. The NPPF is therefore an important and relevant consideration in decision making on NSIPs, but only to the extent that it is relevant to the particular project and topic under consideration. The NPPF was published in February 2019, with its recency increasing the weight that can be applied to it in decision making as a material consideration.

Other policies and plans

8.2.5 The following other national plans and policies are considered important and relevant to the Scheme, particularly in terms of establishing the need for the Scheme:

- Road Investment Scheme (RIS1);
- Highways England Strategy Business Plan (HESBP);
- Highways England Delivery Plan (HEDP); and
- National Infrastructure Delivery Plan (NIDP).

8.3 Local planning policy

8.3.1 The key local planning policy documents relevant and important for this DCO application are:

- South Staffordshire Core Strategy (2012)
- South Staffordshire Allocations Document (SSSAD) (2018)

8.3.2 However, the following planning policy documents have also been reviewed and are referred to, where relevant, in specific sections below:

- South Staffordshire Green Belt and Open Countryside Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2014) (Ref 1.23)
- Historic Environment Character Assessment: South Staffordshire SPD January 2011 (Ref 1.24)
- Staffordshire County Council Minerals Local Plan (Ref 1.25)
- Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Waste Local Plan (Ref 1.26)
- Review of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (Ref 1.27)
- Black Country Core Strategy (Ref 1.28)
- Stafford Road Corridor Area Action Plan 2013-2026 (Ref 1.29)

8.3.3 Consideration has also been given to emerging and draft policy documents being prepared as part of the review of the SSC Local Plan. This includes:

- South Staffordshire Local Plan Issues and Options (2018)
- South Staffordshire Local Plan Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery (2019)

Other local plans and policy documents

8.3.4 The following local plans and policy documents are considered important and relevant to the Scheme, primarily in terms of establishing the need for the Scheme:

- West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study;
- Midlands Connect 'Our Routes to Growth' (Ref 1.30);
- Movement for Growth: The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan 2026 (Ref 1.31);
- West Midlands Freight Strategy (Ref 1.32);
- Staffordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (Ref 1.33); and
- South Staffordshire: District Integrated Transport Strategy (Ref 1.34).

8.4 Need for the Scheme

8.4.1 The following section assesses the need for the Scheme as assessed against planning and transport policies.

The National Policy Statement for National Networks

8.4.2 In accordance with Section 104 of the PA 2008, the DCO application must be determined in line with the NPSNN unless the adverse effects outweigh the benefits.

8.4.3 The NPSNN (page 9) sets out as a summary the Government's vision and strategic objectives for the national networks.

'The Government will deliver national networks that meet the country's long-term needs; supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving overall quality of life, as part of a wider transport system.'

- 8.4.4 The NPSNN goes on to state that this means delivery of networks that achieve a set of strategic objectives. The Scheme's achievement of these objectives is summarised in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: NPSNN objectives and the Scheme

NPSNN objective	Scheme compliance
Networks with the capacity and connectivity and resilience to support national and local economic activity and facilitate growth and create jobs.	The Scheme increases capacity on the network, enhances connectivity between the M54 West and the A5 East (and areas served by both) and will facilitate growth and development of strategic employment sites in South Staffordshire and beyond.
Networks which support and improve journey quality, reliability and safety.	Quality, reliability and safety will be improved for local and strategic journeys.
Networks which support the delivery of environmental goals and the move to a low carbon economy.	The Scheme does not directly contribute to this objective, although measures to enhance the environment and mitigate impacts have been incorporated where possible.
Networks which join up our communities and link effectively to each other.	The Scheme will reduce journey times between primary destinations, and reduce traffic flows through local villages, which will enhance the community feel of places alongside the A460.

- 8.4.5 The NPSNN therefore provides the Government's overarching support for improvements to the SRN, such as those proposed by the M54 to M6 Link Road.

- 8.4.6 Paragraph 2.2 of the NPSNN recognises the need for improvements to the strategic highway network stating that:

'There is a critical need to improve the national networks to address road congestion... to provide safe, expeditious and resilient networks that better support social and economic activity; and to provide a transport network that is capable of stimulating and supporting economic growth'.

- 8.4.7 Paragraphs 2.3-2.4 of the NPSNN estimate that in 2010 approximately 16% of all travel time was spent delayed in traffic and that road traffic is forecast to increase by 30% by 2030. Paragraph 2.9 also recognises that development of the national networks is necessary to address safety problems. Paragraph 2.10 states that the Government has concluded that:

'... at a strategic level there is a compelling need for development of the national networks – both as individual networks and as an integrated system. The Examining Authority and the SoS should therefore start their assessment of applications for infrastructure covered by the NPS on that basis'.

- 8.4.8 The NPSNN goes on to emphasise that roads are the most heavily used mode of transport in England, by volume accounting for 90% of passenger miles and two thirds of freight. In Paragraph 2.14 it goes on to state that the SRN, although only

making up 2% of roads in England, carries a third of all road traffic and two thirds of freight traffic.

- 8.4.9 The Scheme would be part of the national network, with the A5, M6 Toll, M6 and the M54 being strategically important to the region and beyond. The contribution of the Scheme to the development of and integration of national networks should be afforded significant weight. The need for the Scheme is established by the NPSNN and the compliance of the Scheme with the NPSNN strategic objectives.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 8.4.10 The NPPF does not contain specific policies for NSIPs, however Chapter 6 of the NPPF concerns building a strong and competitive economy. Paragraph 80 states that:

'Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.'

- 8.4.11 The Scheme would reduce congestion and journey times, providing confidence in the network for commuters and business users. The Scheme would therefore assist in creating the conditions in which businesses have the confidence to invest and expand. A number of SESs are located north and south of the M54 and the proposed Scheme will improve capacity and connectivity along the SRN running in close proximity to these sites.

Road Investment Strategy 2015-2020

- 8.4.12 The Government formally committed to the delivery of the Scheme in 2014 in the RIS1. The RIS1 sets out the long-term approach to maintain and improve England's SRN and provides the stable funding needed to plan for and deliver each Scheme. The RIS1 recognises that the SRN drives local economic activity by enabling housing and business developments, encourages trade and attracts investment to local areas. The M54 to M6 Link Road was included in the RIS1 as a committed Scheme subject to other contributions (Scheme number C25). Schemes are only included in the RIS1 following assessment of the benefits of the Scheme and the need for it to improve the SRN. Inclusion in the RIS1 shows that the government recognises the need and recognised benefits of the Scheme.
- 8.4.13 The Funding Statement [TR010054/APP/4.2] submitted as part of this application gives further detail on the security of funding for the Scheme.

Highways England Strategic Business Plan

- 8.4.14 The Highways England Strategic Business Plan (HESBP) (Ref 1.35) was published in response to the RIS. The Plan sets out Highways England's main activities and describes how the investment will be delivered. The M54 to M6 link road is included in the Plan as a committed scheme.

Highways England Delivery Plan

- 8.4.15 The Highways England Delivery Plan 2015 to 2020 (HEDP) (Ref 1.36) explains how the committed schemes included in the RIS1 will be delivered in the period up to

2020 and builds upon the HESBP. The Scheme is included in Chapter 3 as a Scheme to start construction by 2020, with the recognition that the Scheme will improve journey time reliability and reduce high levels of congestion in the area.

National Infrastructure Delivery Plan

- 8.4.16 The National Infrastructure Delivery Plan (NIDP) (Ref 1.37) published by the Infrastructure and Project Authority in March 2016 provides an integrated strategy to prioritise, finance and deliver critical projects and programmes in key economic infrastructure sectors. The NIDP is more strategic in nature and does not mention the M54 to M6 Link Road, however Chapter 3 of the NIDP covers roads and recognises that the SRN is vital to businesses and a functioning economy. The NIDP states in paragraph 3.4 that:

'The government is committed to addressing these challenges by building a better network with smarter roads that use technology and modern road building techniques. In this way it can ensure the country has a road network that drives, instead of constrains, growth.'

- 8.4.17 The NIDP recognises that the RIS1 has been adopted with the purpose of delivering improvements to the SRN and that stable and secure funding has been obtained to deliver the projects outlined in the RIS.

West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study

- 8.4.18 The West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study reviews long term travel demand in the region and establish a 30-year framework that would provide for an integrated transport system covering all modes of travel. The aim of the Study was to investigate and seek solutions to transport problems in the West Midlands.
- 8.4.19 The Study stated that the M6 Corridor should retain a role as the north-south strategic route for long distance traffic and that a link road between the M54 and M6 to improve access to and from the M54. The Study stated that the link should comprise a two-lane motorway standard link from the M54 to the M6 to improve access to the M54 and Telford and should be provided as major highway scheme by 2011.

Midlands Connect 'Our Routes to Growth'

- 8.4.20 Midlands Connect work with central government to ensure the infrastructure required by the economy is provided in order to deliver growth. 'Our Routes to Growth' states on page 26 that:

'Midlands Connect's bold 20-year strategy for the Midlands Motorway Hub is focused on improving motorway journeys in and around the Black Country, supporting jobs and enhancing connections... We are also calling for the earliest possible construction of the planned M54 to M6/M6 (Toll) Link Road to help traffic flow and boost the economy west of Birmingham.'

- 8.4.21 'Our Routes of Growth' goes on to state on page 38 that:

'Midlands Connect has supported Telford & Wrekin Council in championing the earliest possible delivery of the planned M54 to M6/M6 (Toll) Link Road. The link will

improve Shropshire's access to the rest of the country, stimulating economic growth. It is also an assumption underlying the Midlands Motorway Hub proposals.'

- 8.4.22 'Our Routes to Growth' page 40 recommends making better use of the M6 Toll by providing digital information during incidents and peak times, but states that further improvements to the motorway network:

'must be preceded by the confirmation and completion of the M54 to M6/M6 (Toll) Link Road.'

- 8.4.23 Therefore, Midlands Connect recognise the critical importance of delivering the M54 to M6 Link Road for economic growth west of Birmingham, improving access and delivering the Midlands Motorway Hub proposals.

Movement for Growth: The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan 2026

- 8.4.24 Prepared by the West Midlands Combined Authorities (WMCA) Strategic Transport Plan sets out the vision, approach, priorities and commitment to building world class infrastructure in the West Midlands. The Plan sets out the WMCA vision and objectives for the region to provide a range of new transport measures, reduce travel times, improve the environment and make better use of the existing transport infrastructure. The M54 to M6 Link Road scheme is recognised as a key transport priority in Chapter 4 of the document.

- 8.4.25 The WMCA has also published Movement for Growth: 2026 Delivery Plan for Transport which provides further detail on the delivery of the Transport Plan. The Delivery Plan recognises the M54 to M6 Link Road as a committed Scheme, subject to other contributions.

West Midlands Freight Strategy

- 8.4.26 Published by the WMCA, the Freight Strategy provides the tools to work with businesses and a programme for the delivery of infrastructure in the region to support urban logistics. The strategy aims to provide improved access by road and rail, while reducing emissions and good quality access to goods and services.

- 8.4.27 Paragraph 6.4.11 of the Strategy recognises that the UK's motorways and trunk road network carries the overwhelming proportion of road freight, therefore access to the motorway network is of key importance. The Strategy recognises the importance of improvements to the SRN and states in paragraph 6.4.15 that:

'...the metropolitan area believes that in order to ensure reliable and efficient road freight access to national and international markets, major infrastructure enhancements are required for the following motorway sections and junctions and need to be considered in the development of future Highways England investment programmes:

M5 Junction 1, 2 and 3; M6 Junction 8, 9 and 10;

M54/ M6/ M6 Toll Link Road'.

South Staffordshire: District Integrated Transport Strategy

- 8.4.28 SCC published the South Staffordshire: District Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) in October 2017 to assist in prioritising County Council expenditure on transport improvements.
- 8.4.29 Chapter 2 of the ITS recognises that traffic delays within South Staffordshire are concentrated on motorways and the A5, A460 and A449. Paragraph 2.12 states that the A460 carries approximately 26,500 vehicles each day, with HGVs making up about 10% of this traffic. The ITS goes on to state that congestion on the A460 is exacerbated by the fact that it carries high levels of traffic travelling between the M6 North, M54 and M6 Toll. It notes that the A449 and A5 are also congested routes suffering from journey time delays.
- 8.4.30 Paragraph 5.12 of the ITS sets out SCC's position on the M54 to M6 Link Road stating that:

'The County Council recognises the importance of the Scheme in terms of supporting economic growth and relieving congestion on the local highway network, in particular the A460 and A449 corridors. Future large-scale employment developments will significantly benefit from the completion of the Scheme, including i54 Western Extension, West Midlands Interchange and ROF Featherstone.'

South Staffordshire Core Strategy and Site Allocations Document

- 8.4.31 Policy 11: Sustainable Transport in the SSSC states that accessibility in the district will be improved for various modes of transport including the M54 to M6 Link Road.
- 8.4.32 The SSSAD states that the implications of the M54 to M6 Link Road on employment land would be considered in the LPR. The LPR is at an early stage in its preparation having undergone an Issues and Options Consultation in November 2018. The LPR acknowledges that the Scheme may be delivered during the plan period.
- 8.4.33 Whilst local policy does not explicitly mention the Scheme, SSC expressed support for the need for the Scheme in their consultation response submitted to the statutory consultation on the Scheme (dated 5th July), stating that:

'It is recognised that the link road has an important role in improving connectivity and in relieving traffic congestion in the local area, in particular on the A460 which is operating at capacity. It is also acknowledged that the new link road will bring economic benefits to the district and the wider sub region, including helping support the delivery of key strategic developments around the M54 corridor. Therefore the principle of a proposed new link road is supported.'

Black Country Core Strategy and Stafford Road Corridor Area Action Plan 2013-2026

- 8.4.34 The seventh Spatial Objective of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) states in paragraph 2.5 that by 2026 the BCCS would have helped to deliver:
- 'a first-class transport network providing rapid, convenient and sustainable links between the Strategic Centres, existing and new communities, and employment sites'.*

- 8.4.35 The BCCS states that this will include improvements to the national M5 and M6 motorway network, which will help deliver better connectivity to regional and national transport networks.
- 8.4.36 The Stafford Road Corridor Area Action Plan (AAP) covers the area surrounding Stafford Road from the M54 Junction 2 running south towards Wolverhampton. It also includes Wolverhampton Business Park to the south east of Junction 2. The Order limits include a very small part of this area for new signage on Stafford Road. The AAP recognises the value of i54 and ROF Featherstone located just on the other side of the City of Wolverhampton Council border.
- 8.4.37 Both the Black Country Core Strategy and the AAP seek to protect the Stafford Road Corridor to ensure it continues to develop into one of the highest quality employment areas in the Black Country, with rapid access to the motorway network being identified as one of the key factors in it being an excellent location for business. The Scheme will be of further benefit to this key employment area by improving links from the employment area to the motorway network.

Conclusion

- 8.4.38 The NPSNN identifies the 'critical' need for improvements to national networks, including projects like this Scheme that make a significant contribution to the objectives set out in the NPSNN. The need for the Scheme in general and this route in particular has been extensively studied through the processes needed to identify the Scheme as committed in the RIS1 and other Highways England documents and strategies. The requirement for the Scheme is identified in numerous policy documents and plans at the regional, county and local level, with widespread acknowledgement that the Scheme is needed and will deliver significant benefits for the area.

8.5 Employment and Economic Development

- 8.5.1 The Scheme will help build a strong and competitive economy in line with NPPF paragraph 80 and particularly support economic growth west of Birmingham as recognised in Midlands Connect's 'Our Routes to Growth'.
- 8.5.2 SSCS policy 7 states that SSC will support employment sites at i54, Hilton Cross, ROF Featherstone and Four Ashes, including extensions at all four sites. Three of these sites are located along the M54, with the fourth located less than 3 km from the Scheme along the M6. Improving the reliability and speed of connections from these sites to and from the M6 and beyond could encourage investment in these sites, with significant benefits for local employment and economic growth. When the Scheme is operational, it would directly support delivery of all four of South Staffordshire's SESs identified in the SSCS and allocated in the SSSAD.
- 8.5.3 Policy 7 goes on to state that:
- 'The Council will support measures which provide the infrastructure necessary to support economic development, supporting transport investment which will help sustain the local economy giving priority to schemes which improve local accessibility between homes and jobs across the District and in particular improve*

accessibility to and from the main service villages by sustainable forms of transport e.g. public transport, walking and cycling.'

- 8.5.4 The Scheme represents significant transport investment that will help sustain the local economy and is therefore a Scheme of the type supported by policy 7.
- 8.5.5 The Scheme could also support economic development and employment objectives set by local authorities in surrounding areas, including City of Wolverhampton Council, Telford and Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council, Cannock Chase District Council and Tamworth Borough Council. The economic benefits to the area are recognised in numerous consultation responses received on the Scheme, including the response from SSC (dated 5th July 2019).

8.6 Green Belt

Green Belt Policy

- 8.6.1 The Scheme is located within the West Midlands Green Belt. Paragraph 5.164 of the NPSNN states that the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 5.164 also states that further information on the protection of the Green Belt can be found within the NPPF. Paragraph 5.170 of the NPSNN recognises that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt and such development should only be approved in very special circumstances.
- 8.6.2 Paragraph 5.178 of the NPSNN goes on to state that:
- 'When located in the Green Belt national networks infrastructure projects may comprise inappropriate development. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and there is a presumption against it except in very special circumstances. The Secretary of State will need to assess whether there are very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In view of the presumption against inappropriate development, the Secretary of State will attach substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt, when considering any application for such development.'*
- 8.6.3 Notwithstanding this, Paragraph 5.171 acknowledges that:
- 'Linear infrastructure linking an area near a Green Belt with other locations will often have to pass through Green Belt land. The identification of a policy need for linear infrastructure will take account of the fact that there will be an impact on the Green Belt and as far as possible, of the need to contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts. '*
- 8.6.4 The Scheme has therefore been evaluated against NPSNN paragraphs 5.164 and 5.178, with reference to the NPPF where appropriate. This assessment considers:
- whether the Scheme conflicts with the essential characteristics and purposes of the Green Belt and the extent of harm to the Green Belt;

- whether the Scheme constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
- whether there are Very Special Circumstances (VSC) that support development within a Green Belt location; and
- whether the VSC outweigh any potential harm to the Green Belt after substantial weight has been attributed to that harm.

8.6.5 SSOS Core Policy 1 states:

'The South Staffordshire portion of the West Midlands Green Belt as defined on the Policies Map, will be protected from inappropriate development and proposals will be considered in the light of other local planning policies and the policy restrictions relating to Green Belt in the NPPF, however the Council will consider favourably sustainable development which accords with this Spatial Strategy.'

8.6.6 This policy echoes the NPPF in terms of protecting the Green Belt from inappropriate development and sets the context for Green Belt release necessary for SSC to deliver their employment and housing targets.

8.6.7 SSOS Policy GB1 'Development in the Green Belt' states that development in the Green Belt that is acceptable within the terms of national planning policy set out in the NPPF will normally be permitted where the proposed development is for one of four types of purpose, including:

'the carrying out of engineering or other operations, or the making of a material change of use of land, where the works or use proposed would have no material effect on the openness of the Green Belt, or the fulfilment of its purposes.'

8.6.8 The policy is silent on developments that do not fall into these categories, although this development is covered by Core Policy 1 (see above). When considered alongside Core Policy 1, the implication is that development would be restricted outside these categories. In suggesting that development within the Green Belt would need to meet NPPF policy and fall into one of the above categories, the policy would be more restrictive than the NPPF, which does allow for developments to have an impact on openness and still gain consent in Very Special Circumstances. Given that the policy predates both the NPSNN and the NPPF and provides a policy that could be interpreted as more restrictive than either, the Applicant considers that it should have limited weight in decision making on this DCO application (and is not a relevant and important matter). SSC adopted the Green Belt and Open Countryside Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) during April 2014. The SPD is linked to Policy GB1 in the SSOS but only covers the replacement of existing buildings, extension or alteration of existing buildings and limited infilling so is not relevant to the Scheme.

Harm to the Green Belt

8.6.9 Harm to the Green Belt is caused where there is a conflict with the essential characteristics of the Green Belt or the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Essential Characteristics: Openness and Permanence

- 8.6.10 The NPPF defines the essential characteristics of the Green Belt as being its openness and permanence. The meaning of the term 'openness' is not formally defined in policy and are in large part a matter for planning judgement. Openness has a visual and a spatial dimension.
- 8.6.11 The area of the Scheme between Junctions 2 and 1 of the M54 will have no material impact on the openness of the Green Belt given that the majority of works are within the existing highway boundary or comprise development of an attenuation pond, which is low lying and comprises a pond and access to the pond. At M54 Junction 1 there will be works to enlarge the junction resulting in 'loss' of the Green Belt, but these areas are small and heavily influenced by the convergence of the two motorways, limiting any additional impact on openness caused by the Scheme. Different options for the layout of Junction 1 are described in Chapter 3 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. The options presented show that there were no options considered that provided free-flow links at Junction 1 with a lesser impact on the Green Belt. This is because the location is limited by the location of the existing junction and there are limited opportunities for junctions with a lesser land take. The areas to the north east and north west of the Junction are in the Green Belt and the areas to the south east and south west are only outside the Green Belt because they are allocated for employment uses. Therefore, slight movements of the junction would also not reduce its impact on the Green Belt.
- 8.6.12 The new link road section of the Scheme between the M54 Junction 1 and the M6 Junction 11 passes through largely open countryside in the Green Belt. This is the case for all possible options and alignments for the Scheme given the location of the existing junctions (see ES Chapter 3 **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** for more detail).
- 8.6.13 The visual impact on openness has been reduced in the design by:
- placing the link in cutting where possible, including under Hilton Lane to the east of Brookfield Farm, limiting the visibility of the Scheme from the surrounding area;
 - moving the alignment further to the east compared to the PRA alignment to route the new link through the woodland and Lower Pool, where the road and the noise barrier will be largely screened from both sides by existing and replanted woodland;
 - not installing lighting columns on the majority of the link to minimise the impact of vertical lighting columns and light pollution;
 - limiting the height of new junctions where possible.
- 8.6.14 Therefore, whilst the Scheme would have an effect on the visual dimension of openness, the harm has been limited wherever possible within the confines of the Scheme objectives. Proposed woodland planting would also affect the openness of the Green Belt and landscaping has been carefully designed with this in mind. No woodland planting is proposed on the eastern side of Lower Pool to retain the openness of the historic parkland area of the Green Belt. Instead, landscaping has been designed in the optimum locations to promote screening, enhance landscape

character and deliver biodiversity mitigation. Where woodland planting is proposed, it is considered that the environmental benefits of the planting outweigh the impact to the openness of the Green Belt in that location.

- 8.6.15 In terms of the spatial dimension of Green Belt, the area covered by the new link itself will be 'lost' in that it will no longer be open countryside. The 'harm' to the spatial dimension of openness is limited by the selection of a Scheme route that minimises the distance between the two junctions and by the fact that much of the development is very low lying, so has limited impact on three-dimensional space. In particular, the area of Green Belt lost for construction of the new link road is less than more convoluted routes following the existing M6 motorway corridor.
- 8.6.16 On permanence, the Scheme will result in the permanent loss of Green Belt where the new highway infrastructure is constructed, but incorporates plans to return all land used for temporary purposes to its previous condition or incorporate changes that improve its performance for biodiversity or landscape purposes.

Purposes of the Green Belt

- 8.6.17 NPPF paragraph 134 states that the purposes of the Green Belt are:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 8.6.18 It is considered that the Scheme would not enable or encourage the sprawl of large built up areas. The Scheme does not include new built development such as housing, employment or industrial land uses and does not provide any new access points directly into sites in the Green Belt to facilitate new built development. It would not remove any sites from the Green Belt so would not change the policy context for any future development in close proximity to the link, which would still be judged against the requirements of Green Belt policy.
- 8.6.19 The Scheme will not encourage towns to merge into each other as it presents a linear development largely through the countryside, rather than new built form reducing the gap between settlements. The Scheme would be encroachment into the countryside insofar as it would be development within it, but it would not result in the outward spread of development into the countryside, but rather a new linear corridor, providing a connection between two motorways.
- 8.6.20 The Scheme would also not have an effect on historic towns as it is not located in the vicinity of any historic towns and will not affect any Conservation Areas (see Chapter 6 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1])
- 8.6.21 The Scheme will not conflict with the purpose on urban regeneration and encouraging recycling of brownfield land as there is no alternative location for this development that would be on brownfield sites. It could, however, support recycling of brownfield land at ROF Featherstone through providing improved transport links

and potentially encourage urban regeneration by improving the attractiveness of sites in neighbouring urban areas through improved transport links.

- 8.6.22 Overall, the Scheme would not conflict with four of the NPPF defined purposes of Green Belt, but would have conflict with purpose c) by virtue of the majority of the development being in open countryside in the Green Belt.

Inappropriate Development

- 8.6.23 The NPSNN refers the reader to the NPPF for the definition of inappropriate development. The NPPF paragraph 146 sets out six categories of development that are *not* inappropriate in the Green Belt including:

‘Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it... b) engineering operations, c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location...’.

- 8.6.24 Highway schemes are generally considered to be engineering operations and the impact on openness and the purposes of the Green Belt have been minimised wherever possible. However, the construction of the new link road across the Green Belt and the traffic along that route would not fully ‘preserve its openness’ so would not fall into this category. Given that the Scheme comprises a new link road on the Strategic Highway Network and is, by definition, an NSIP, it would also not be considered ‘local transport infrastructure’, although it would have significant local benefits.

- 8.6.25 Therefore, the Scheme is likely to be considered as ‘inappropriate development’ in the Green Belt as defined in the NPPF. As recognised in NPSNN paragraphs 5.171 and 5.178, it is often necessary for linear national networks projects to require a Green Belt location and for projects to be considered inappropriate development.

Very Special Circumstances (VSC)

- 8.6.26 NPSNN paragraph 5.78 and NPPF paragraphs 143-144 state that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and there is a presumption against it except in VSC. The same paragraphs go on to state that VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

- 8.6.27 The VSC for the Scheme which outweigh any harm to the Green Belt are set out below, to include:

- **the need for the new link road:** The NPSNN (paragraph 2.2) is clear that there is a critical need to improve national networks to address road congestion and provide safe, expeditious and resilient networks that better supports social and economic activity. The need for the M54 to M6 Link Road project is set out in numerous national and local policies and plans, including the RIS1, HESBP, HEDP, West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study, Midland Connect’s Our Routes to Growth, The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan 2026, West Midlands Freight Strategy, South Staffordshire ITS and the SSCS;

- **the benefits of the Scheme:** the Scheme would support the integration and improvement of part of the SRN, whilst supporting economic growth in and around Staffordshire. It would support delivery and efficient operation of employment sites along the M54 corridor and surrounding areas such as i54, ROF Featherstone, Hilton Cross and Hilton Main. The Scheme would deliver significant benefits in respect of relieving of traffic congestion on local routes including the A449, A5 and A460; and
- **the lack of alternatives with a lesser impact on the Green Belt:** the Green Belt designation covers a wide area to the north, east, south and west of the Scheme. The purpose of the Scheme is to provide a link for strategic traffic travelling between the M54 Junction 1 and the M6 Junction 11. The location of the Scheme is therefore dictated by the location of these junctions and all possible routes for the new link road would pass through the Green Belt. The need to reduce the impact on the Green Belt has been considered throughout optioneering and Scheme design, resulting in a Scheme that minimises harm to the Green Belt where possible.

8.6.28 Given the location of the M54 Junction 1 and M6 Junction 11, it would not be possible to deliver a new link using land that is outside of the Green Belt. There are no alternative options to deliver the Scheme in a non-Green Belt location and a demonstrable need for the Scheme. The need for the Scheme and lack of alternatives present VSC strongly in favour of the Scheme.

Other Harm

8.6.29 The Scheme has been developed iteratively in consultation with local people and key stakeholders and being informed by the EIA process. As a result, 'other harm' has been limited as far as possible with measures to reduce the impacts and mitigate and compensate for impacts that cannot be designed out. Further detail on environmental effects and mitigation measures incorporated to reduce them is provided throughout this chapter of the CftS.

Planning Balance

- 8.6.30 Overall, whilst the Scheme will affect the key essential characteristics of the Green Belt and one of its purposes, this would be the case for any Scheme providing a new link between the M54 and the M6, and impacts have been limited wherever possible in the Scheme design. Whilst there is an impact on openness and permanence, and it will entail encroachment into the Green Belt by virtue of being within it, the harm is limited by: the low lying nature the Scheme including minimising lighting and using cuttings; a sensitive landscaping design; the route of the Scheme; and the fact that by the nature of the development, it will not encourage further development in the Green Belt. Indeed, the Scheme may encourage urban regeneration and use of brownfield land, for example at ROF Featherstone.
- 8.6.31 The VSC presented above and in the rest of this CftS are significant and clearly outweighs the harm to the Green Belt, when this harm is attributed substantial weight, and all other harm. Therefore, the Scheme complies with policy on the Green Belt presented in the NPSNN and the NPPF.

8.7 Sustainable Development

- 8.7.1 Paragraph 1.20 of the NPSNN states that both the NPSNN and NPPF seek to achieve sustainable development. Paragraph 5.163 of the NPSNN encourages the re-use of previously developed land but recognises that this may not be feasible for some forms of infrastructure such as roads. There are no opportunities to deliver the Scheme using previously developed land.
- 8.7.2 NPSNN paragraph 5.202 recognises that the impacts from transport infrastructure Schemes can be economic, social and environmental and that consideration and mitigation of these impacts is an essential part of the Governments wider policy objectives for sustainable development. NPPF Paragraph 8 states that there are three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development, all of which are interdependent, including the economic objective, the social objective and the environmental objective.
- 8.7.3 During the operational phase, the Scheme would fulfil the economic objective of sustainable development by providing the reliable infrastructure required to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy. It will support economic growth by reducing congestion and improving journey times and journey reliability along the route. This would assist the movement and transportation of goods and the workforce along the SRN.
- 8.7.4 The Scheme would fulfil the social objective of sustainable development by supporting strong vibrant and healthy communities. The junction improvements would separate local and strategic traffic to improve flow of traffic, reduce congestion along the A449, A5 and A460 and improve journey times. Landscaping to integrate the Scheme with the surrounding landscape along with areas of habitat creation are included in the Scheme. During the construction and operation phase of the Scheme, access to existing residential dwellings, farms and businesses will be maintained. The Scheme has been designed to make provision for the replacement and enhancement of existing routes used by pedestrians, equestrian users and cyclists. It is considered that the integration of these aspects to the design of the Scheme contribute towards the health, social and cultural well-being of the community and fulfil the social objective of sustainable development.
- 8.7.5 In terms of the environmental objective, the Scheme aims to achieve sustainable development. Measures incorporated to protect and mitigate environmental effects are extensive and across a large number of environmental disciplines. As a result, the Scheme is predicted to mitigate effects on biodiversity where possible, compensate for the small unavoidable loss of ancient woodland, avoid loss of veteran trees, minimise adverse noise and air quality impacts and deliver significant improvements for properties closest to the A460, utilise sustainable drainage system features and including measures to adapt to the changing climate and to accommodate increased rainfall patterns and flood events. The Scheme has sought to limit adverse effects on cultural heritage as far as possible, on balance with other local receptor effects.
- 8.7.6 When considered as a whole, the Scheme meets the requirements of the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development as set out in the NPSNN and the NPPF.

8.8 Traffic, transport and public rights of way

- 8.8.1 The Scheme will separate local and strategic traffic, which will in turn reduce congestion, improve journey times and improve journey reliability. The Scheme will reduce traffic along the existing A460 by 89%, with a reduction in vehicle numbers from 26,800 to 3,020 per day in the opening year. The Scheme is also predicted to reduce traffic by 39% along the A449 and 26% along the A5.
- 8.8.2 The NPSNN sets out the need to deliver NSIPs to improve the national road network and the Governments objectives to improve and maintain the SRN. The need for the Scheme and compliance with these objectives is clear and set out in Section 4.5 of this CftS.
- 8.8.3 This Scheme is identified as a committed Scheme and a priority for delivery in the RIS1, HESBP and HEDP. At the local level, the Scheme is supported by the West Midlands Area Multi Modal Study and the more recent Midlands Connect 'Our Routes to Growth'. The latter recognises one of the benefits as being that the Scheme will improve Shropshire's access to the rest of the country, stimulating economic growth and states on page 15 that:
- 'We are also calling for the earliest possible construction of the planned M54 to M6/M6 (Toll) Link Road to help traffic flow and boost the economy west of Birmingham.'*
- 8.8.4 The Scheme is also recognised as a key transport priority in the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan 2026 and the West Midlands Freight Strategy.
- 8.8.5 SCC adopted their latest Local Transport Plan (LTP) in 2011, setting out SCC's proposals for improving walking, cycling, public transport, car-based travel and freight in the County. The Scheme will support the objectives of LTP Policy 1.1 to stimulate regeneration and support areas of deprivation and LTP Policy 1.4, which aims to maximise the reliable operation of the existing road network.
- 8.8.6 SSCS Core Policy 11 'Sustainable Transport' and Policy EV11 'Sustainable Travel' aim to improve accessibility and widen transport choice by ensuring that development is served by an attractive choice of transport modes, including public transport, footpaths and cycle routes. Whilst the development comprises construction of a new link with restricted access for WCHs, a core aim is to separate strategic and local traffic. In removing strategic traffic from the A460, in particular, it may encourage increased use of local roads by pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed reclassification of the existing A460 to a 'C' road is a reflection of the very significant reduction in vehicles predicted to use the route and could support future measures to improve the environment and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.
- 8.8.7 A new shared footway and cycleway will be provided along Dark Lane. Existing PRoW will be retained with some limited temporary and permanent diversions to accommodate the Scheme. There will be no significant adverse effects on PRoW.

8.9 Air quality

- 8.9.1 The NPSNN paragraph 5.6 states that where the impacts of the project are likely to have significant air quality effects, the applicant should undertake an assessment of

the impacts of the proposed project as part of the ES. The NPSNN paragraphs 5.7 to 5.9 set out the methodological requirements for this assessment.

8.9.2 NPSNN paragraph 5.10 states that:

'Where a project is likely to lead to a breach of the air quality thresholds, the applicant should work with the relevant authorities to secure appropriate mitigation measures with a view to ensuring so far as possible that those thresholds are not breached.'

8.9.3 NPSNN paragraph 5.12 states that:

'The Secretary of State must give air quality considerations substantial weight where, after taking into account mitigation, a project would lead to a significant air quality impact in relation to EIA and / or where they lead to a deterioration in air quality in a zone/agglomeration.'

8.9.4 NPSNN paragraph 5.13 states that:

'The Secretary of State should refuse consent where, after taking into account mitigation, the air quality impacts of the scheme will:

- result in a zone/agglomeration which is currently reported as being compliant with the Air Quality Directive becoming non-compliant; or*
- affect the ability of a non-compliant area to achieve compliance within the most recent timescales reported to the European Commission at the time of the decision.'*

8.9.5 The NPPF paragraphs 170 and 181 state that planning decisions should prevent new development from contributing to unacceptable levels of air pollution and, where possible, new development should help to improve air quality.

8.9.6 The SSCS Core Policy 2 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment' states that development will generally be supported where it protects and improves air quality. Core Policy 11 'Sustainable Transport' states that development proposals will have to make appropriate provisions for improving air quality and reduce the impact of travel upon the environment.

Methodology

8.9.7 An air quality assessment has been undertaken in full compliance with the requirements of NPSNN paragraphs 5.7-5.9. The assessment methodology, baseline conditions and likely significant effects are reported in Chapter 5 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The assessment methodology and results demonstrate Scheme compliance with the air quality section of the NPSNN, the NPPF paragraphs 170 and 181 and SSCS Core Policies 2 and 11.

Construction Effects

8.9.8 During construction, dust can be created by construction activities and emissions produced by construction traffic and equipment. Measures to minimise air quality impacts during construction are contained in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11]. Adoption of mitigation measures in the OEMP would minimise the risk of significant adverse dust effects, such that no likely significant air quality effects would be expected from dust.

- 8.9.9 Other emissions associated with the construction phase such as mobile or stationary plant are also not expected to cause a significant air quality effect at receptors. This is because these emissions will be controlled through mitigation measures detailed in ES Appendix 5.4 [TR010054/APP/6.3] and secured in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11].
- 8.9.10 The effect of traffic management and additional vehicles associated with the construction of the Scheme on air quality has also been considered in detail in Section 5.9 of the ES. The assessment considered predicted changes in annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} along with the predicted number of days exceedance of the 24-hour PM₁₀ objective.
- 8.9.11 Annual mean concentrations of NO₂ are predicted to be below the 40 µg/m³ annual mean NO₂ objective at all receptors within the construction phase study area. The construction of the Scheme would not perceptibly worsen NO₂ concentrations that are already above the national air quality objective, nor does it create any new exceedances. There would be no worsening of more than 4 µg/m³ to the NO₂ annual mean concentrations experienced at any of the receptors in the construction phase study area. Three properties along the A460 Cannock Road would experience a worsening of between 2.1 and 4 µg/m³ during construction and 38 properties would experience a worsening of 0.5 to 2.4 µg/m³. These effects would be temporary as they would be limited to the construction period.
- 8.9.12 Annual mean concentrations of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are predicted to be below the air quality objective values for all receptors considered in the construction phase study area during the construction phase. PM₁₀ concentrations peak at around 17 µg/m³ at locations adjacent to the A460 Cannock Road, and PM_{2.5} peaks at around 11 µg/m³ at locations adjacent to the M6 at Junction 11A. These are far below objective levels.

Operational Effects

- 8.9.13 Predicted concentrations and changes in annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} along with the predicted number of days exceedance of the 24-hour PM₁₀ objective are presented in ES Appendix 5.3 [TR010054/APP/6.3] and summarised in ES Section 5.9 [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The Scheme will not result in any new exceedances of any of the above objectives.

NO₂

- 8.9.14 Of the sensitive receptors for human health that were modelled and are predicted to be within the 40 µg/m³ annual mean NO₂ objective, more than half (275 out of 521) are predicted to experience an imperceptible change in annual mean NO₂ concentrations (± 0.4 µg/m³).
- 8.9.15 In total, fourteen receptors located close to the A460 Cannock Road would experience an improvement in the NO₂ annual mean concentration of more than 4 µg/m³ (i.e. a reduction in NO₂). These receptors are all properties located closest to the A460 Cannock Road through Featherstone and Hilton. Ten receptors would experience an improvement of 2.1 to 4 µg/m³ including six properties further back from Cannock Road, one receptor on Church Road, Shareshill, one on Gailey Roundabout, one on Watling Street, Gailey and one of Stafford Road, Standeford.

113 receptors would experience an improvement of 0.5 to 2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in the annual mean concentration of NO_2 .

- 8.9.16 Conversely, no receptors would experience more than a 4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ worsening in annual mean NO_2 concentrations (i.e. an increase in NO_2). Six receptors would experience a worsening of 2.1 to 4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, namely two receptors on Dark Lane, one receptor adjacent to Junction 2 of the M54 and three receptors on the A460 to the south of the M54. 103 receptors would experience a worsening of between 0.5 and 2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in annual mean concentrations of NO_2 .
- 8.9.17 At the properties closest to the Scheme at Hilton and Shareshill, on Dark Lane, Hilton Lane and east of the A460, annual mean NO_2 concentrations are less than 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. An increase of +2.8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ is predicted at the nearest receptor on Dark Lane to the Scheme in operation, and increases of between +1.2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 1.4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ are predicted at the nearest receptors on Hilton Lane and east of the A460 nearest to the Scheme. This is due to the introduction of new traffic movements on the Scheme itself.
- 8.9.18 Adjacent to the A460 at Featherstone and Hilton, annual mean NO_2 concentrations are predicted to experience a decrease with the Scheme in operation, by as much as -13.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at locations near to the Dark Lane junction, and -7.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at locations adjacent to the southern section of the A460, on the current approach to and from Junction 1 of the M54. This is due to the decrease in traffic flow of -21,985 Annual Average Daily Traffic and the realignment of the A460 on the approach to and from Junction 1 of the M54. At locations adjacent to the A460 in Shareshill, annual mean NO_2 concentrations are predicted to experience a small to medium decrease (between 1 to 4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). These decreases are also due to the large reduction in traffic flow anticipated on the A460, with the Scheme in operation.
- 8.9.19 When the Scheme is operational, annual mean concentrations of NO_2 are predicted to be above the 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ annual mean NO_2 objective at six receptors located within 50 m of the existing M6 in the 2024 opening year. Two receptors are located on Lichfield Road, Willenhall and four are located on Darlaston Road, Walsall. These are all locations where the objectives are already exceeded. The Scheme will result in an imperceptible decrease (improvement) in the NO_2 annual mean objective at all six receptors, but the decrease is not sufficient to bring levels to below the annual mean objective.

PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}

- 8.9.20 Annual mean concentrations of PM_{10} are predicted to be below the 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ objective value at all sensitive receptors for human health that were modelled within the study area, both with and without the Scheme in the opening year of 2024. The maximum concentration with the Scheme in operation is 24.9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. For PM_{10} , the vast majority (515 out of 527) of sensitive receptors for human health that were modelled within the study area are predicted to experience an imperceptible change in annual mean PM_{10} concentrations with the Scheme in operation. This is because PM_{10} is less sensitive to changes in traffic movements and speed than NO_2 . There would be improvements (reductions) of between -0.5 and -2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ of the PM_{10} annual mean concentration at 12 receptors. There would be no perceptible

worsening (increase) in PM₁₀ annual mean concentrations as a result of the Scheme.

- 8.9.21 Additionally, all receptors within the study area are predicted to be below the objective for the number of days exceedance of the 24-hour PM₁₀ objective, both with and without the Scheme. Total concentrations of PM_{2.5} are also anticipated to be well below the objective value of 25 µg/m³ at all receptors within the study area. Significant air quality effects are therefore not predicted for PM_{2.5}.

Summary

- 8.9.22 Overall, therefore, when looking at all sensitive receptors in the area, more receptors will experience a perceptible improvement (reduction) in NO₂ annual mean concentrations than will experience a perceptible worsening (increase). There will be a small number of perceptible improvements (reduction) in the annual mean concentration of PM₁₀ at sensitive receptors and no perceptible deteriorations (increase). Improvements in air quality will therefore be achieved where possible. The Scheme will not result in any new exceedences of air quality objectives, nor will it worsen pollution levels for receptors that currently exceed objective levels. The proposed Scheme will therefore accord with policies in respect of air quality as set out in the NPSNN, NPPF and SSCS. NPSNN paragraph 5.13 is not applicable because the Scheme will not result in any new exceedences or reduce the ability of non-compliant areas to meet their timescales to reduce exceedences.
- 8.9.23 The Scheme has been designed as far as possible to avoid and minimise impacts and effects on air quality through sensitive design and planning for both the construction and operation phases. It will not affect the UK's ability to comply with the Air Quality Objective or lead to unacceptable levels of air pollution. Improvements to air quality will be secured for some receptors.

8.10 Noise and vibration

- 8.10.1 The nearest residential properties to the Scheme are concentrated in the built-up areas of Featherstone and Shareshill. Smaller areas of residential properties are located close to the Scheme in Hilton (at Dark Lane, Park Road, Hilton Lane) and Shareshill (Brookfield Farm). There are three Noise Important Areas (NIAs) (areas identified by the government as areas being most exposed to noise) located within 1 km of the Scheme.
- 8.10.2 Non-residential receptors that could be potentially sensitive to noise and vibration include educational buildings, medical buildings and community facilities concentrated in Featherstone and Shareshill. Moseley Old Hall, owned by the National Trust and open to the public, is located to the south of the M54 just beyond the western end of the Scheme. A number of PRoW cross the Order limits.
- 8.10.3 A combination of long-term and short-term noise monitoring was undertaken to provide information on the current noise levels in the area and modelling completed to assess the potential effects of the Scheme. The potential noise and vibration effects resulting from the construction and operation of the Scheme are assessed in Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

8.10.4 NPSNN 5.195 states that:

'The Secretary of State should not grant development consent unless satisfied that the proposals will meet the following aims, within the context of Government policy on sustainable development:

- Avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise as a result of the new development.
- Mitigate and minimise other adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise from the new development.
- Contribute to improvements to health and quality of life through the effective management and control of noise, where possible.'

8.10.5 Section 11.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes that the Scheme is in accordance with all three requirements, with a summary of this assessment presented below. Chapter 11 of the ES 'Noise and Vibration' [TR010054/APP/6.1], discusses the Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level (SOAEL), which is the level above which significant adverse effects on health and quality of life occur as a result of noise.

8.10.6 SSCS Core Policy EQ9 requires that all development proposals take into account the amenity of nearby residents with regard to privacy, security and noise. The policy goes on to state that development likely to generate harmful noise levels will be directed to appropriate locations away from noise sensitive locations and noise sensitive habitats unless measures to suppress noise can be provided for the life time of the development. The effect of noise on residential properties has been assessed throughout the Scheme development and has informed the design and alignment for the Scheme. During both construction and operation, the design of the Scheme has sought to locate noise generation away from noise sensitive locations in line with Core Policy EQ9.

Methodology

8.10.7 The noise and vibration assessment has been carried out in accordance with NPSNN paragraphs 5.189-5.192, which sets out requirements for noise assessments for national networks projects. The methodology for the noise and vibration assessment is set out in Section 11.3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. As required by NPSNN paragraph 5.192 the Applicant has consulted NE throughout the design and assessment process. The effects of noise on biodiversity have been taken into account in the biodiversity assessment presented in Chapter 8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

Construction Effects

8.10.8 The main construction activities that would take place during the Scheme construction phase are site clearance, earthworks, retaining wall construction, bridge construction and road construction (pavement) works, construction traffic (Heavy Goods Vehicles). These construction activities have the potential to result in temporary noise impacts at the receptors closest to the works.

8.10.9 The potential for temporary construction vibration impacts is dependent on the need for construction activities which are a potentially significant source of vibration, such

as earthworks and road construction (pavement) works using vibratory rollers. Piling would be required at the new bridges. Rotary bored piling is proposed for these works, noting that vibration associated with this type of piling is minimal. Impact or driven piling, which is a potentially significant source of vibration, is not proposed during the Scheme construction phase.

- 8.10.10 Mitigation measures set out in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11] would be developed into a CEMP, which will be delivered during construction. A number of measures to reduce noise and vibration disturbance are set out in Chapter 11 (Section 11.8) of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and included in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.1] during the construction phase for the proposed Scheme.
- 8.10.11 The first NPSNN aim states that schemes should avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise as a result of new development. Significant adverse noise and vibration effects during construction are anticipated at the closest properties to the construction works along the section of A460 that would be modified, at the proposed Dark Lane turning head, along Hilton Lane and at Brookfield Farm. However, these significant effects are predicted based on a conservative assessment. For example, any exceedances of the noise/vibration criteria are assumed to potentially exceed the duration criteria applied to identifying significant effects, and the potential benefit of site hoarding and enclosures for specific locations, activities and plant has not been included.
- 8.10.12 The assessment identifies a range of mitigation measures as detailed in ES Section 11.8 [TR010054/APP/6.1] including, for example, selection of quiet and low vibration equipment and methodologies; consideration of low noise and low vibration methods; optimal location of equipment on site to minimise noise disturbance; the provision of acoustic enclosures around static plant and site hoarding around specific locations/activities, where necessary, and use of less intrusive alarms. Compliance with the working hours as specified within the draft DCO [TR010054/APP/3.1] will also limit effects. These mitigation measures would be set out in the CEMP, as based upon the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11], and would aim to avoid significant noise and vibration effects.
- 8.10.13 The NPSNN paragraph 5.198 states that '*mitigation measures for the project should be proportionate and reasonable*' and in this context, factors including engineering practicality and consideration of cost versus the benefits must also be considered when determining mitigation measures to be implemented.
- 8.10.14 There is the potential for some significant temporary adverse noise and/or vibration effects to remain following mitigation measures. This is acceptable in the context of sustainable development as the construction of NSIPs will often generate unavoidable significant temporary noise effects during construction. It is considered that, with the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in the OEMP and in the context of sustainable development, the first aim of the NPSNN would be met during Scheme construction.
- 8.10.15 When considering compliance with the second NPSNN aim, adverse effects that fall below the SOAEL are predicted at a range of receptors. The mitigation measures outlined above would be applied throughout the construction works, including to mitigate and minimise effects even where they are not above the SOAEL. Therefore,

with the effective implementation of the defined mitigation and minimisation measures, it is considered that the second NPSNN aim would be met during Scheme construction.

- 8.10.16 When considering compliance with the third NPSNN aim, construction by its nature introduces a new noise or vibration source into the existing environment and is temporary in duration. Therefore, the opportunities to improve existing noise levels during the Scheme construction phase are very limited.

Operation Effects

- 8.10.17 Paragraph 5.200 of the NPSNN states that applicants should consider opportunities to address noise issues in NIAs. There are three NIAs within 1km of the Scheme, located at Wolverhampton Road, the A460 and the M54. The Scheme would reduce noise levels on the A460, increase noise levels at Wolverhampton Road and result in a negligible increase in noise levels at the M54 NIA.
- 8.10.18 No properties would experience a 'major' increase in noise levels as a result of the Scheme after construction. Two properties would experience a 'moderate' increase in noise levels from traffic on the new link road, namely one property on Hilton Lane and Brookfield Farm. The Scheme will result in an increase in noise levels on the stretch of the A460 south of the M54 due to an increase in traffic along this stretch and the existing high noise levels. This will result in a minor increase in noise levels for 197 properties. Conversely, 18 residential properties on the existing A460 will experience moderate/ major reductions in traffic noise due to the transfer of traffic off the existing A460. 11 residential properties along Old Stafford Road in Cross Green would also experience a moderate decrease in traffic noise levels. All other increases and decreases in noise levels are at a level considered not significant.

NPSNN paragraph 5.195 aim 1: Avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise as a result of the new development

- 8.10.19 When examining compliance with the first NPSNN aim, traffic noise levels are anticipated to be reduced from above the SOAEL (without the Scheme) to below the SOAEL (with the Scheme) at 71 residential buildings. These buildings are located predominantly on the existing A460 and New Road on the northern edge of Featherstone. The transfer of traffic from the existing A460 onto the Scheme, and local re-routing around Featherstone due to the large reduction in traffic on the A460 are the dominant source of the reductions below SOAEL, with a small number being due to the reduction in speed limit from 60 mph to 30 mph on the realigned Hilton Lane, and the combination of thin surfacing and a noise barrier adjacent to the A460 north of the M6 Junction 11. These improvements are a benefit of the Scheme.
- 8.10.20 A total of 33 residential buildings are anticipated to experience an increase in traffic noise level which takes them from below the SOAEL (without the Scheme) to above the SOAEL (with the Scheme). Four are located on Hilton Lane, with increases in noise due to the closure of the connection from Hilton Lane onto Dark Lane and related increase in traffic along Hilton Lane and noise generated by the Scheme itself. Mitigation is incorporated into the design of the Scheme in this location through locating the Scheme in a cutting of approximately 6 m, and through the reduction in speed limit from 60 mph to 30 mph on this section of Hilton Lane. The

speed limit reduction prevents a small number of properties that would otherwise be brought above the SOAEL by the Scheme from doing so. The remaining 29 residential buildings are predominantly located on The Avenue in Featherstone, and the A460 south of the M54. On the Avenue in Featherstone, only a negligible increase in traffic noise is anticipated but this is sufficient to take some properties from just under to just over the SOAEL. On the A460 south of the M54 a minor increase in traffic noise levels is anticipated as a result of traffic being attracted to the area due to the Scheme. The noise barriers incorporated into the Scheme design prevent ten residential buildings experiencing an increase in traffic noise to above the SOAEL, these are predominantly located on Dark Lane in Hilton, and The Avenue in Featherstone.

- 8.10.21 339 residential buildings are above the SOAEL both with and without the Scheme in operation, therefore the exceedance of the SOAEL is not due to the Scheme. Whilst experiencing a reduction in traffic noise due to the operation of the Scheme the very closest residential buildings to the existing A460 remain above the SOAEL. Other residential buildings which remain above the SOAEL are located on the Avenue in Featherstone, the eastern end of New Road in Featherstone, a small number of properties on Hilton Lane and on Church Road in Shareshill, Wolverhampton Road to the north east of M6 Junction 11, A460 Cannock Road south of the M54, and individual properties located close to roads such as the M54, M6, M6 Toll and the A462.
- 8.10.22 When considering existing roads, the purpose of the Scheme to improve traffic conditions on the A460 by providing a bypass route would result in small increases in traffic on roads connecting to the Scheme, and re-routing from Dark Lane to the western end of Hilton Lane and within Featherstone. The introduction of noise mitigation measures such as noise barriers along existing roads that already experience high noise levels to further increase the benefit from re-routing, would not be sustainable or proportionate. Such roads have residential buildings and other premises fronting onto the road, therefore mitigation measures such as barriers are not a practical engineering option and would have other adverse impacts (including visual impacts) whilst also causing significant access difficulties.
- 8.10.23 In conclusion, significantly more properties will experience a reduction in noise levels that removes them from the SOAEL than would experience an increase in noise levels to take them above the SOAEL.
- 8.10.24 In line with the NPSNN, the Scheme has avoided significant impacts wherever possible and delivers significant benefits. In the context of the Governments policy on sustainable development, it is therefore considered that the Scheme complies with the first NPSNN aim.

NPSNN paragraph 5.195 aim 2: Mitigate and minimise other adverse impacts

- 8.10.25 On the second aim, a range of mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design as outlined in ES Section 11.8 [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The inclusion of these measures is also in line with NPSNN paragraph 5.188. Measures include:
- maximising the depth of the cuttings, in particular at Hilton Lane;

- increasing the distance between the eastern end of Dark Lane and the Scheme by moving the mainline;
- use of a thin surfacing system that results in lower levels of noise generation than a standard hot rolled asphalt surface at speeds at and above 75 km/hr;
- extension at the eastern end of the existing earth bund on the north side of the M54 eastbound off slip; and
- inclusion of various noise barriers, further detail is provided below.

8.10.26 A 3 m high reflective noise barrier on the west side of the main line is incorporated into the Scheme between Dark Lane/ Park Road and the new link road where the link passes through Lower Pool woodland. This noise barrier would mean that no properties along Dark Lane/ Park Road would experience significant increases in noise levels as a result of the Scheme. There would be significant reductions in noise levels for properties along Dark Lane closest properties to the A460. The Scheme aims to retain sufficient trees to the west of the noise barrier to screen the new link and the barrier from properties so there would be no adverse visual impacts of the noise barrier.

8.10.27 Taking into account the analysis of consultation responses, and subsequent development of the traffic and noise models, the following noise barriers⁹ have also been included within the Scheme design:

- 3.0 m high reflective noise barrier on the west side of the main line as it passes close to Dark Lane.
- 1.5 m high reflective noise barrier on the east side of the existing A460 north of M6 Junction 11 in the vicinity of properties on Wolverhampton Road.
- 2.5 m high reflective noise barrier on the west side of the main line as it passes close to Brookfield Farm.
- 1.5 m high reflective noise barrier on the north side of the M54 eastbound off slip on top of the existing earth bund and the proposed eastern extension of this earth bund incorporated into the design.
- 3 m high reflective noise barrier east of the proposed earth bund on the north side of the M54 extending to the new western dumbbell roundabout.

8.10.28 Further details regarding the location of these noise barriers are provided in ES Figure 11.1 [TR010054/APP/6.2], the ES Environmental Masterplan presented in ES Figures 2.1 to 2.7 [TR010054/APP/6.2] and the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11].

8.10.29 The Scheme therefore incorporates measures to mitigate and minimise other adverse impacts in line with NPSNN paragraph 5.195 aim 2. No areas where additional mitigation would be appropriate, within the context of sustainable development, have been identified. All mitigation measures set out in NPSNN paragraph 5.198 have been considered and most incorporated into the Scheme.

⁹ Heights of noise barriers are subject to a 1 m limit of deviation from the heights discussed below.

NPSNN paragraph 5.195 aim 3: Contribute to improvements where possible

- 8.10.30 On the third aim, the Scheme will provide noise improvements in some areas as a result of a large reduction in traffic on the existing A460, the closure of Dark Lane as a through route, and inclusion of various noise barriers along the Scheme. Therefore, it is considered that the Scheme is in accordance with aim 3.

Summary

- 8.10.31 The Scheme location is dictated by the locations of the existing M54 Junction 1 and the M6 Junction 11. Consideration has been given to protecting the amenity of residents and reducing the noise emissions from the Scheme within the confines of this requirement and balancing noise effects with other environmental effects. Overall, the Scheme complies with all planning policy on noise through delivering significant noise reductions where possible and reducing and mitigating impacts where noise would otherwise increase.

8.11 Cultural heritage

- 8.11.1 Cultural heritage includes archaeology, historic buildings, structures and historic landscapes including parks and gardens. There are a number of designated cultural heritage assets within 1 km of the Scheme, including; two grade I listed buildings, three grade II* listed buildings and 21 grade II listed buildings. The two grade I listed buildings are Hilton Hall and its associated Conservatory, located approximately 470 m and 385 m to the east of the new link road respectively. The listed buildings are not publicly accessible. The two grade I listed buildings and three grade II listed buildings are located within Hilton Park, a HLA designated in the SSCS. The link road passes through the HLA. The location of these listed buildings and Hilton Park is shown in Figure 4.2.
- 8.11.2 In addition, there are 59 non-designated archaeological assets recorded from the Historic England and SCC's Historic Environment Records and a total of 13 historic buildings and structures, including seven locally listed buildings or structures within 1 km of the Scheme.
- 8.11.3 No World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments, registered battlefields, registered parks and gardens or conservation areas are present within 1 km of the Scheme.
- 8.11.4 The Scheme design has evolved through an iterative process and measures have been taken to limit the effect of the Scheme on the surrounding environment. Ongoing consultation with the County Archaeologist for SCC and Historic England has shaped the assessment of cultural heritage impacts, the Scheme design and mitigation measures.
- 8.11.5 An assessment of the potential effects of the Scheme on cultural heritage is presented in Chapter 6 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

Methodology

- 8.11.6 NPSNN paragraphs 5.120 to 5.142 consider the impacts on the historic environment. Paragraphs 5.120 and 5.121 recognise that both the construction and operation of national networks has the potential to result in adverse impacts on the historic environment.

8.11.7 Section 6.3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] presents the assessment methodology and follows the approach set out in the NPSNN (e.g. paragraphs 5.126 and 5.127). The methodology includes a desk-based review of available records, a ground investigation with archaeological monitoring and a geophysical survey. Details of the desk-based assessment and field evaluation are presented in Section 6.6 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1], with consideration of the potential impacts is presented in Section 6.7 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

8.11.8 Further archaeological investigation in the form of trial trenching is proposed after the application submission, with requirements placed on the DCO accordingly. This approach has been agreed with SCC County Archaeologist.

Designated Heritage Assets

8.11.9 NPSNN paragraph 5.133 states that where the proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, the SoS should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the harm is necessary to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm. Section 6.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes that the Scheme would not cause substantial harm to any designated heritage assets.

8.11.10 NPSNN paragraph 5.131 and NPPF paragraph 193 stated that the decision maker should give great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets, and that the more important the asset, the greater the weight. Therefore, the greatest weight should be given to the conservation of Hilton Hall and the Conservatory, followed by grade II* listed buildings, followed by grade II listed buildings. There are no other designated assets with the potential to be affected by the Scheme.

8.11.11 NPPF paragraph 194 states that any harm to a designated heritage asset resulting from its alteration or development in its setting should require clear and convincing justification. NPSNN paragraph 5.134 and NPPF paragraph 196 state that where the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

8.11.12 The two grade I listed properties within Hilton Park are within 500 m of the Scheme. The setting of Hilton Hall is defined by its location within Hilton Park and therefore part of the Scheme would be within the setting of the grade I listed building. However, the original Hall entrance was to the south of the building and the current Hall entrance is to the east of the building, on the opposite side of the Hall to the Scheme. The Scheme would therefore not be visible from either elevation. It is also unlikely that there would be any views from the Hall to the Scheme at ground floor or first floor level due to established vegetation both around the Hall and to the east of the Scheme, refer to ES Figure 6.5 and 6.6 [TR010054/APP/6.2]. The retained, extant woodland around the Lower Pool, as well as proposed trees and hedges, would continue to provide screening to the Scheme in views from the Hall. Therefore, the Scheme would be mostly screened from the Hall with only a few glimpses during the winter months.

8.11.13 Although there would be no lighting columns directly west of the Hall, some of the lighting columns that would be installed as part of the works to the M54 Junction 1

would potentially be visible from the second floor of Hilton Hall. The Scheme, including the lighting columns and signage would not be visible in any views from the ground and first floors of the Hall.

- 8.11.14 As a result, the ES predicts in Section 6.9 that the construction of the Scheme would have a minor adverse magnitude of impact on the Hall due to the impact on its setting, resulting in a slight adverse effect. The significance of the asset, resulting from its architectural and historic interest would still be appreciated and experienced and the building itself would be unaffected. The part of the setting affected is located almost 500 m from the property, is not in any 'important views' from the Hall or within the parkland and would be largely screened from view from the property in all but the highest floors.
- 8.11.15 The grade I listed Conservatory was built as an ornamental feature within Hilton Park, which defines its setting. The Conservatory is also surrounded by existing trees and planting, providing screening between the asset and the Scheme. The Scheme would introduce a modern infrastructure element within its parkland setting. However, the Conservatory would continue to be understood and appreciated as a key ornamental feature within the park and its relationship with Hilton Hall and the rest of the buildings on the park would be retained. The construction of the Scheme would therefore have a negligible adverse magnitude of impact on this asset of high value. This would result in a significance of effect of slight adverse. In NPPF terms, the setting would change in a way that would have minimal effect on the ability to appreciate the asset.
- 8.11.16 The grade II* listed buildings include Moseley Old Hall and Moseley Hall located to the south of the M54 and the Church of St Mary and St Luke in Shreshill.
- 8.11.17 The grade II* Moseley Old Hall is located within extensive grounds to the south of the M54 between Junctions 1 and 2. There is an ancient woodland parcel, known as Whitgreaves Wood, located to the north-east of the Old Hall. The construction of the M54 to the north has eroded this extensive rural setting. A small part of Whitgreaves Wood, to the south of the existing M54 and west of the A460 would be subject to temporary works to enable biodiversity enhancements as part of the Scheme, no other works would be undertaken within the boundary of the woodland. The Scheme would have no impact on the significance of this asset. The grade II* Moseley Hall is located approximately 540 m to the south of the M54 and approximately 1.2 km to the south west of the M54 Junction 1. There would be no impact on the significance of Moseley Hall.
- 8.11.18 The Scheme will have a neutral significance of effect on all other listed buildings as a result of the Scheme construction.
- 8.11.19 Some of the listed buildings in the study area would experience a change in traffic noise level during the operation of the Scheme, though none are expected to experience a significant change (a change in noise level of less than 3 dB in the opening year (2024) is not normally considered to be significant). The highest increases in noise would be experienced at Hilton Hall (+1.7 dB) and the Conservatory (+2.1 dB) at the worst affected facade. The Scheme would use more energy efficient lighting in the form of Light Emitting Diodes, which also reduce light spill into adjacent areas. Therefore, changes in lighting overspill would not have any

adverse effects on the historic environment. Vehicles using the Scheme would not be visible from the listed buildings within Hilton Park, apart from the Portobello Tower which already experiences views towards the existing motorways and roads that surround the park (refer to Figure 7.1B [TR010054/APP/6.2]). Therefore, all designated heritage assets would experience a neutral significance of effect as a result of Scheme operation.

Hilton Park

8.11.20 Hilton Park is a landscape park thought to be established in the mid-late 18th century around the early 18th century Hilton Hall, a grade I listed country house. Hilton Park is not designated as a Registered Park and Garden but is locally designated in the SSCS as a HLA.

8.11.21 There are no policies in the NPSNN or NPPF specifically on historic landscapes, but the NPSNN states in paragraph 5.156 that:

'Outside nationally designated areas, there are local landscapes that may be highly valued locally and protected by local designation. Where a local development document in England has policies based on landscape character assessment, these should be given particular consideration. However, local landscape designations should not be used in themselves as reasons to refuse consent, as this may unduly restrict acceptable development.'

8.11.22 NPPF paragraph 197 states that:

'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

8.11.23 SSCS Policy EQ4 states that:

'Proposals within the Historic Landscape Areas (HLA) defined on the Policies Map should have special regard to the desirability of conserving and enhancing the historic landscape character, important landscape features and the setting of the HLA. The County Council's Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation will provide an informed framework for the decision making process.'

8.11.24 SSC published a Historic Environment Character Assessment: South Staffordshire SPD in January 2011. Section 6.1 assesses the historic landscape and states that the conservation of the fabric of the historic landscape of South Staffordshire including field boundaries, settlement patterns and winding lanes is desirable. The Scheme design has sought to retain these features where possible in the area around the Scheme.

8.11.25 In Section 6.5 the SPD recommends early consultation with historic environment advisors at SSC and SCC. Ongoing consultation has been undertaken with the County Archaeologist for SCC and Historic England as described in Section 6.3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. Map 13 in the SPD shows the Historic Environment Character Zone around Featherstone. The map is centred on Featherstone but does

show that the land east of Featherstone and the A460 (labelled FSHECA1) and within the Scheme boundary includes areas of 'Plantation' and 'Historic Park and Garden'. The supporting text in Section 7 of the SPD and Appendix 2 identifies that Featherstone is a modern village and that area FSHECA1 includes the surviving components of the historic landscape park associated with Hilton Park include Shelter belts, woodland, an ornamental lake and parkland trees and provides the background and history to the historic landscape. This information has been taken into account when forming the baseline for the cultural heritage assessment.

- 8.11.26 The Scheme would affect the south-western corner of Hilton Park HLA, which would be severed from the rest of the park to the east. The Scheme would affect a number of elements of the park including the Lower Belt, The Shrubbery, the Lower Pool and surrounding woodland. However, although they would be affected by the Scheme, they would not be lost completely. The remaining woodland around the Lower Pool would be retained along with the open parkland between the Hall and the Shrubbery. The remaining trees would continue to provide screening to the Scheme from the eastern part of the park, as well as from Hilton Hall and its associated buildings and structures.
- 8.11.27 The magnitude of impact on Hilton Park is assessed as being moderate adverse as the parkland would be significantly modified and key elements of the landscape would be partially lost. The remaining part of the park would continue to be understood and appreciated and it would continue to provide an attractive setting for Hilton Hall and its associated buildings and structures. On an asset of medium value the resulting significance of effect would be moderate adverse. In NPPF terms, the Scheme would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the asset, as the remaining park would continue to be understood and appreciated and provide an attractive setting for Hilton Hall and associated buildings. There would also be minor, temporary construction impacts on the park.
- 8.11.28 The Hilton Park HLA has been given particular consideration in the design of the Scheme in line with paragraph 5.156. The HLA was a key consideration when the Applicant was considering whether to move the alignment further to the east as requested by SSC during the statutory consultation period on the Scheme in May-July 2019. Moving the alignment would have increased the impact of the Scheme on the HLA as it would have moved the alignment out of Lower Pool woodland, significantly increasing the visibility of the Scheme within the parkland, as well as severing more of the HLA from the core part of the HLA around Hilton Hall and the Conservatory. The impact on the HLA has also been taken into consideration in the design of mitigation measures, including the landscaping strategy and whether to install noise barriers on certain parts of the Scheme. The Scheme has taken into account the framework provided in SSC's Historic Environment Character Assessment in assessing the impact of the Scheme on the HLA and in designing the Scheme to minimise the impact.
- 8.11.29 The significance of effect on Hilton Park is an effect that should be weighed in the planning balance, but in line with NPSNN paragraph 5.156 should not be used in itself to refuse consent.

Other Undesignated Heritage Assets

- 8.11.30 The Scheme would have a major and moderate adverse magnitude of impact respectively on a Cropmark (A23) and Cropmark complex (A36). As these assets have negligible heritage value, the significance of effect would be slight adverse.
- 8.11.31 Paragraph 5.140 in the NPSNN and paragraph 199 of the NPPF both include a requirement to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets significance before it is lost.
- 8.11.32 It has been agreed with the County Archaeologist that evaluation trenching will be undertaken after the submission of the DCO once the detailed design has prepared. Trenching would be undertaken early in the programme to allow the development and implementation of mitigation measures, particularly where any additional archaeological features are identified. Following the programme of archaeological evaluation trenching an appropriate methodology shall be identified for mitigation, as required. Mitigation may take the form of, but not be limited to: the recording of landscape features; strip, map and record; open area excavation; watching briefs (involving the monitoring of construction works); and paleoenvironmental sampling. This shall be recorded in an archaeological management plan, with any requirement for archaeological fieldwork and recording being proportionate to the level of impact and the value of archaeological assets affected. Delivery of the mitigation strategy within the archaeological management plan would be within the Order limits and secured in requirement 9 of the draft DCO **[TR010054/APP/3.1]**.
- 8.11.33 The NPSNN paragraph 5.142 encourages applicants to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place for the identification and treatment of yet undiscovered heritage assets with archaeological interest discovered during construction. A Section 6.8 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** confirms that a draft Archaeological Mitigation Strategy will be produced as an Annex to the OEMP to include measures to be implemented during construction such as raising the awareness of construction workers and operatives to any control and reporting procedures to be followed, should archaeological deposits be encountered during the works, for example through toolbox talks and regular briefings; the protection of built heritage assets and archaeological sites during construction; and the control of light spillage, noise and dust within construction compounds and working areas.
- 8.11.34 Paragraph 5.125 in the NPSNN and paragraph 197 of the NPPF state that the SoS should also consider the impacts on other non-designated heritage assets. The assessment of the effects of the Scheme on non-designated heritage assets is reported in Section 6.9 in Chapter 6 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**.

Summary

- 8.11.35 It is considered that the national need for the Scheme outweighs the less than substantial harm to designated and undesignated heritage assets. Measures have been incorporated into the Scheme to minimise impacts wherever possible.

8.12 Landscape and visual effects

- 8.12.1 The Scheme would be located in a largely rural area on the urban-fringe. The land use is predominantly agricultural, with a number of residential areas including the villages of Shareshill, Featherstone and Hilton. The area is heavily influenced by

existing roads, with the presence of the M6, M54 and M6 Toll detracting from the surrounding landscape.

- 8.12.2 There are no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the vicinity of the Scheme. The nearest national landscape designation is the Cannock Chase AONB located approximately 3.5 km to the north of M6 Junction 11. The Scheme would not affect the AONB. HLAs were selected for the strong historic landscape character and the desirability of conserving and restoring it. There are no other local landscape designations within the study area.
- 8.12.3 The entirety of the study area is also contained within the Forest of Mercia Community Forest. Community Forests are areas where regeneration is encouraged through landscape-scale improvements to the environment. Whilst not a landscape designation, it indicates the intention to improve the environment within the Community Forest, thus supporting the reasoning for any mitigation enhancements.
- 8.12.4 An assessment of the potential landscape and visual impacts associated with the construction and operation of the Scheme has been carried out and is presented in Chapter 7 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] in line with the requirements of NPSNN paragraphs 5.144 - 5.146. This includes an assessment of any likely significant effects on amenity from emissions of artificial light as required by NPSNN paragraph 5.84, which is presented in Section 7.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

Landscape Effects

- 8.12.5 The majority of the Scheme lies within a triangle of land formed by the M6 in the east, the M54 in the south and the A460 Cannock Road in the west. It crosses several undulating fields, which are bounded by hedgerows, as well as running through woodland associated with Hilton Park, and through riparian vegetation where it crosses existing watercourses.
- 8.12.6 The land within the Scheme boundary is slightly undulating across its length, with ground levels typically between 130-145m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) as indicated on ES Figure 7.2 [TR010054/APP/6.2], which shows the topographical context within the study area. Ground levels in the wider study area include localised variations such as the hill on which the grade II listed Portobello Tower stands (at 183m AOD); along with lower land to the east of Shareshill and immediately south-west of the M6 Junction 11, which stands at 124m AOD. Latherford Brook (Watercourse 5 - refer to Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]) forms the main drainage feature within the study area, running broadly south-west to north-east through its northern half. There are also several other watercourses which cross the Order limits. There are a number of ponds present, which are mostly man-made features and used for activities such as fishing (both historically and at present).
- 8.12.7 Land use is influenced by transport infrastructure and residential uses, with areas of arable farmland, occasional pasture and parkland. Tree cover comprises woodland blocks and shelterbelts, particularly present in and around Hilton Park, as well as adjacent to existing transport infrastructure and along watercourses.
- 8.12.8 Transport and infrastructure elements influence the study area, particularly at its northern and southern extremities. These elements include the M6 the M54, which divide the landscape and reduce any sense of tranquillity. This effect is compounded

by the busy A460 Cannock Road, which carries many cars and HGVs as they move between the M6 Junction 11 and the M54 Junction 1.

- 8.12.9 The land within the Order limits is generally representative of the surrounding land use, largely comprising agricultural land, with parkland and highways infrastructure also present. Overall, based on the factors contributing to landscape value, the land within the Order limits is assessed as being of low landscape value through the lack of scenic quality, rarity, conservation interest and perceptual aspects. The character is typical of the modified and human-influenced landscape of the Black Country, with few rare elements or conservational interests; and the presence of multiple detractors.
- 8.12.10 NPPF paragraph 170 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by:
- 'a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.'*
- 8.12.11 SSCS Policy EQ4 'Protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the landscape' states that the intrinsic rural character and local distinctiveness of the South Staffordshire landscape should be maintained and enhanced where possible. The HLA is considered a valued landscape given its designation in the SSCS.
- 8.12.12 Policy SQ4 also includes policies on trees but to avoid repetition, the impact of the Scheme on trees, including ancient woodland and veteran trees, is explored in the biodiversity Section in section 8.13 of this CftS.
- 8.12.13 In accordance with NPSNN paragraphs 5.149 and 5.157, the Scheme has been the subject of an iterative design process, informed by analysis of landscape and visual constraints, iterative impact assessments and mitigation proposals. Design, mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated into the Scheme design and planned construction are described in detail in Section 7.8 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. The Scheme design includes landform modelling such as cuttings and planting of woodland, trees and shrub along the route corridor to filter views and integrate the Scheme with the landscape. This includes gently profiled screening bunds and cuttings. Landscape planting including woodland, tree and shrub planting along the route corridor will also enhance the visual attractiveness of the Scheme and integrate it with the existing landscape and reinforce existing vegetation. Particular care has been taken with the design for landscape planting in the vicinity of Hilton Park to integrate the Scheme and its associated landscape planting into the parkland setting. For example, the siting of the Scheme within the woodland and avoiding significant planting in designed open areas of Hilton Park will help assimilate the Scheme into the landscape.
- 8.12.14 The Scheme therefore accords with paragraph 5.160 of the NPSNN in that adverse landscape and visual effects will be minimised through appropriate siting of infrastructure, sympathetic design and proposed landscaping.
- 8.12.15 Essential mitigation measures during construction are included in the OEMP **[TR010054/APP/6.11]** and relate primarily to the management of the construction site compounds.
- 8.12.16 Paragraph 5.156 of the NPSNN states that local landscape designations should not be used in themselves as reasons to refuse consent. The HLA has been taken into

account as part of the landscape and visual impact assessment and is set out in Section 7.6 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The impact of the Scheme on the landscape designation should be given 'particular consideration' in line with the NPSNN paragraph 5.1.56, and potentially 'special regard' in accordance with SSCS Policy EQ4.

Visual Effects

- 8.12.17 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility in Chapter 7 Chapter of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes in Section 7.6 that visibility of the Scheme is relatively extensive to the north and west but is contained to within around 500m-1km of the Scheme boundary to the south and east. It states that although views are theoretically possible from long range vantage points, the Scheme is likely to form only a minor element of views beyond 1km of the Scheme boundary due to viewing distance. Areas of theoretical visibility within and beyond Featherstone are screened by built form, and vegetation filters views throughout.
- 8.12.18 NPSNN paragraph 5.158 states that the SoS should judge whether the visual effects on sensitive receptors, such as local residents and other receptors, outweigh the benefits of the development. The views of the Scheme from a number of viewpoints have been taken into account in the landscape and visual impact assessment. This includes views from the A460 and other roads in the surrounding area, residential properties and PRoW. The detailed assessment of views is presented in Section 7.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].
- 8.12.19 The scale of effect for each viewpoint ranges from slight adverse to very large adverse during construction, although it is anticipated that this phase of the development will be of a relatively short duration and will affect only a limited number of receptors. During the operational phase for the Scheme the residual effects reduce with the maturation of vegetation and gradual integration and assimilation of the Scheme with the surrounding area. The residual effects of the Scheme are presented in Section 7.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. and a large adverse effect is anticipated at only one receptor, which is the viewpoint from the PRoW north of Hilton Lane. The residual effect at other receptors would be moderate, slight adverse or neutral.
- 8.12.20 In accordance with SSCS Policy EQ4, the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment presented in Chapter 7 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] would not result in detrimental effect on the immediate environment and any important views during the construction or operation phases. Given the limited number of receptors that would be affected by the Scheme, the benefits of the Scheme clearly outweigh the effects.

8.13 Biodiversity

- 8.13.1 Paragraph 5.26 of the NPSNN states that in taking decisions, the SoS should ensure that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance, protected species, habitats and other species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity, and to biodiversity and geological interests within the wider environment. All these considerations are explored in depth in the ES Chapter 8 [TR010054/APP/6.1] and its extensive associated

appendices **[TR010054/APP/6.3]**. A brief summary of impacts and the compliance of the Scheme with policy on biodiversity is provided below.

Designated Sites

- 8.13.2 Consideration has been given to the potential effects of the Scheme on sites of nature conservation interest in Chapter 8 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. This includes consideration of international, national and local nature conservation sites, areas of ancient woodland and habitats of principle importance.

International Designations

- 8.13.3 There are no statutory international nature conservation designations within 2 km of the Scheme, no international sites designated for bats within 30 km of the Scheme and no such sites located within 200 m of the Affected Road Network (ARN) for the Scheme.
- 8.13.4 The Habitats Regulations Assessment: No Significant Effects Report (HRA report), is provided with the DCO application **[TR010054/APP/6.9]**. The HRA report concludes that the Scheme would not result in a likely significant effect on European Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. NE has confirmed their agreement with this conclusion. As no potential for likely significant effects was recorded for the identified European Sites at Stage 1 screening, it was concluded that an appropriate assessment would not need to be undertaken by the SoS for any European Sites.

National Designations

- 8.13.5 There are four national conservation designations within 2 km of the Scheme, all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). These sites are set out in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Statutory national conservation designations within 2 km of the Scheme Boundary

Designation	Reason(s) for designation	Relationship to the Scheme
Stowe Pool and Walk Mill Clay Pit SSSI	Two waterbodies that have historically supported large and healthy populations of white-clawed crayfish.	The site is 1.5 km north-east from the Scheme boundary. The northern edge of the Scheme just falls within the 2 km impact risk zone that requires road Schemes to consult with NE. Located to the north of the M6 Toll and east of the M6, there are significant major barriers between the site and the Scheme.
Four Ashes Pit SSSI	Designated for its geological interest a sequence of sands and gravels, overlain by till lying on top of Triassic Sandstone bed rock	The site is approximately 4.1 km north west of the Scheme boundary and is located at its closest point approximately 7 m from the Affected Road Network (ARN).
Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI	Wet and dry lowland heath, fens and oligotrophic (nutrient-poor) standing open water habitats. Also supports two nationally scarce vascular plant species: floating water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i> and round-leaved wintergreen <i>Pyrola rotundifolia</i>	The site is approximately 7.5 km east of the Scheme boundary and is located at its closest point approximately 38 m from the ARN.
Belvide Reservoir SSSI	Large reservoir located within agricultural land particularly important as a wintering site for shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> . It also supports large numbers of moulting and wintering water-birds and is noted for its breeding birds and ability to attract a great variety of migrants and rare Vagrants.	The site is approximately 9.5 km north west of the Scheme boundary and is located at its closest point approximately 1 m from the ARN.

- 8.13.6 Section 8.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes that the Scheme would have no direct or indirect impacts on SSSIs during construction due to the distance between the sites and the Scheme and the lack of impact pathways identified. Similarly, during the operation phase, Section 8.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes that the Scheme would have a neutral effect on all the above sites.

Local Designations

- 8.13.7 There are no Local Nature Reserves within 2 km of the Scheme. There are six non-statutory nature conservation designations within 2 km of the Scheme, including two SBIs within the Order limits, namely Brookfield Farm SBI and Lower Pool SBI. Both SBIs are also Local Wildlife Sites. The SBIs within the Order limits are shown in Figure 4.2 in this CftS.
- 8.13.8 Paragraph 5.31 of the NPSNN recognises that sites of local biodiversity interest have a fundamental role to play in meeting overall national biodiversity targets, in contributing to the quality of life and the well-being of the community, and in supporting research and education. The NPSNN states that the SoS should give due consideration to such regional or local designations but that:
- 'given the need for new infrastructure, these designations should not be used in themselves to refuse development consent.'*

- 8.13.9 Construction of the Scheme would result in the loss of woodland and standing water habitats within Lower Pool SBI. The woodland is not ancient and although it is designated as part of the SBI is characterised as broadleaved/ mixed plantation with a variable species-poor ground layer which is absent in places (see ES Appendix 8.4 **[TR010054/APP/6.3]**). The standing water comprises an ornamental fishing lake shaded by surrounding woodland. It is not considered suitable to support Great Crested Newt and no field signs for water vole/ otter were recorded. The surveys undertaken (details provided in ES Appendix 8.4 **[TR010054/APP/6.3]**) confirmed that although the site is designated as an Local Wildlife Site and SBI, it is not currently meeting the criteria for this selection for woodland, ponds or habitat mosaic.
- 8.13.10 Nevertheless, Lower Pool SBI is an important ecological feature within the Order limits and the Scheme would have an adverse impact on the ecological function and integrity of the habitats. Therefore, habitat losses would be mitigated by planting new woodland, standing water, marshy and wet grassland and species rich grassland to the west of the new link road. As set out in Section 8.9 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**, these measures are considered suitable to mitigate the loss given the current condition of the habitat. As it would take some time for the new habitat to become established, the Scheme is considered to have an adverse impact on the SBI in the short-term, however this would reduce to a negligible impact (neutral significance) in the long term.
- 8.13.11 Brookfield Farm SBI would also be affected by the construction of the proposed Scheme. The construction of the junction linking the Scheme and the M6 would result in the direct loss of woodland at the SBI. The Scheme will also cross Latherford Brook, which supports both otters and water vole, by means of a 10 m wide single span structure. Construction of the structure would result in a temporary loss of some of the existing channel. The loss of woodland habitat and temporary loss of Latherford Brook has the potential to adversely impact upon the integrity of the SBI habitats and cause habitat fragmentation. The majority of the SBI habitats would be retained and unaffected by the Scheme. To mitigate for the loss of habitat, additional woodland habitat is proposed surrounding the SBI to the east of the Scheme and connecting to the SBI to the west of the Scheme as well as an area of standing water immediately to the south. Species rich grassland and hedgerows are also proposed on the Scheme embankments.
- 8.13.12 As it would take some time for the new habitat to become established, the Scheme is considered to have an adverse impact on the SBI, however this would reduce to a negligible impact (neutral significance) in the long term. The biodiversity assessment included in Section 8.9 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** concludes that given the majority of the SBI habitats are being retained, the habitat creation proposed is considered to mitigate the habitat loss.
- 8.13.13 As outlined in Section 8.8 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** mitigation measures will be put in place to minimise the potential effects of the Scheme on designated and non-designated ecological sites during construction. These measures are included in the OEMP **[TR010054/APP/6.11]** for the Scheme and would include measures to protect, for example, habitats related to watercourses during works to those watercourses.

Protected Species and Principle Habitats of Importance

- 8.13.14 Vegetation and habitat surveys have been undertaken to understand the existing ecological conditions. A desk study and further ecological surveys have been undertaken to gather baseline information on protected and notable species in the vicinity of the Scheme including surveys for badger; barn owl; bats; breeding birds; wintering birds; otter, water vole; great crested newt; reptiles; terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates and fish. Protected Species identified on site have been taken into account in the assessment of biodiversity effects presented in the ES Section 8.9 **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**.
- 8.13.15 A Consents and Agreements Position Statement **[TR010054/APP/3.3]** has been prepared which sets out the consents, licenses and permits that will be sought outside the DCO. This includes NE licences for Protected Species. Draft licences were shared with NE in advance of the submission of the application and letters of no impediment are provided in Appendix 8.3 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.3]**.
- 8.13.16 Paragraph 5.35 of the NPSNN states that other species and habitats have been identified as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales and therefore require conservation action. The NPSNN goes on the state that the SoS should ensure that applicants have taken measures to ensure these species and habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development. Where appropriate, requirements or planning obligations may be used in order to deliver this protection. The SoS should refuse consent where harm to the habitats or species and their habitats would result, unless the benefits of the development (including need) clearly outweigh that harm. The Scheme complies with these requirements through protecting species and habitats from adverse effects where possible and mitigating or compensating for effects where they are unavoidable.

Ancient Woodland, Veteran Trees, Trees and Hedgerows

- 8.13.17 SSCS Policy EQ4 states that trees, veteran trees, woodland, ancient woodland and hedgerows should be protected from damage and retained unless it can be demonstrated that removal is necessary and appropriate mitigation can be achieved.

Ancient Woodland

- 8.13.18 A number of areas of ancient woodland are listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory around the Scheme, including:
- Whitgreaves Wood (also known as Oxden Leasow): located between the M54 and Moseley Old Hall; and
 - three areas of ancient woodland located south of Hilton Park Services and to the west of the M6 known as Keepers Wood, Burns Wood and Spring Coppice.
- 8.13.19 The Scheme has been carefully designed to minimise the impact on these areas of ancient woodland through the optioneering process, the design of the Scheme and consideration of construction methods. Measures have been incorporated into the Scheme to ensure that no land within Whitgreaves Wood is required for the construction of the Scheme and no trees within the wood would be directly affected by the construction of the road. Whitgreaves Wood has been included in the Order

limits solely for the purposes of biodiversity improvements within the ancient woodland as part of the compensation strategy described below. There would be no impact on any other areas of ancient woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory.

- 8.13.20 The Ancient Woodland Inventory is mostly limited to areas of woodland over two hectares, with many small areas of woodland in the area within and around the Order limits being under this size. Therefore, assessments were carried out by the Applicant to assess whether any of the smaller pockets of woodland qualified as ancient woodland. The only area of woodland affected by the Scheme that qualified was a small area at Brookfield Farm SBI, all other woodland affected by the Scheme does not qualify as ancient woodland.
- 8.13.21 At Whitgreaves Wood the Scheme construction would not encroach onto the area covered by the ancient woodland itself. However, the realignment of the M54 westbound slip road will require development directly adjacent to 0.32 ha of land within the standard 15 m buffer zone around the woodland. This impact is unavoidable because the existing M54 is in the 15 m buffer zone so any works to the existing corridor would also be in the buffer zone. This is assumed to result in indirect loss of the ancient woodland. It should be noted that the Scheme design presented at statutory consultation for the Scheme in May-July 2019 included an embankment at this location that would have led to the direct loss of the edge of the woodland. This area has been redesigned to include a retaining structure and avoid the direct impact. Therefore, this loss has been reduced as far as possible by construction methods.
- 8.13.22 Within the Brookfield Farm LWS and SBI Woodland, 0.0015 ha would be directly lost and there is an assumed indirect loss of 0.042 ha as a result of work being required within 15 m buffer zone of the ancient woodland. The alignment of the link road between Brookfield Farm and M6 Junction 11 is governed by a number of constraints including Brookfield Farm business, residential property, fishing pools and the ancient woodland. In order to reduce land severance the alignment has been designed to pass immediately to the east of Brookfield Farm on a long curve before heading north-east towards M6 Junction 11. The alignment has been designed to pass approximately half way between the ancient woodland and the fishing pond at Brookfield Farm, this is in order to achieve a suitable alignment into M6 Junction 11. Due to the embankment height of the alignment in the vicinity of the fishing ponds and ancient woodland this does result in the loss of an area of the ancient woodland. Any changes to the horizontal alignment to remove the loss of ancient woodland by moving the link road to the north would result in a sharp alignment into the M6 Junction 11, resulting in vehicles having to enter the roundabout at a more acute angle increasing the risk of collisions at this location. Furthermore relocation of the link road to the north would result in significant impacts on Brookfield Farm. For this reason, whilst the loss of ancient woodland has been minimised as far as possible, the residual impact is unavoidable.
- 8.13.23 The direct loss and assumed indirect loss of woodland at Brookfield Farm ancient woodland and assumed indirect loss at Whitgreaves Wood would be compensated for by replacement planting on a ratio of 7:1 within the immediate vicinity of the

Brookfields Farm SBI. This strategy has been agreed with NE (see draft Statement of Common Ground with NE **[TR010054/APP/7.3]**).

- 8.13.24 Paragraph 5.32 of the NPSNN states that ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for its diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland. Once lost it cannot be recreated. This part of the NPSNN provides that the SoS should not grant development consent for any development that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland unless the national need for and benefits of the development, in that location, clearly outweigh the loss.
- 8.13.25 NPPF paragraph 170 states that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. The wholly exceptional reasons include the national need for the infrastructure, the fact that as far as possible the Scheme has been sited and designed to minimise the impact exploring all of the alternatives, and the limited nature of the area affected. The compensation strategy has been agreed with NE **[TR010054/APP/7.3]** and includes compensation for development within the ancient woodland buffer zone as well as direct tree loss.
- 8.13.26 The SSCS Policy EQ1 states that permission will be granted for development that will not cause harm to sites or habitats of nature conservation including ancient woodland.
- 8.13.27 In combination with the compensatory planting, conservation led management of both ancient woodlands would seek to develop and improve upon the woodland structure. During construction, measures will be put in place to avoid accidental damage of the retained habitats, increased dust levels and hydrological change. Protective measures for trees will be put in place as part of the OEMP **[TR010054/APP/6.11]**. Such measures will include identifying and protecting retained habitat and adopting appropriate stand offs.
- 8.13.28 Overall, the Scheme alignment has been designed to avoid the large areas of ancient woodland in the vicinity of the Scheme, particularly those close to the M6 corridor. The Scheme design and construction methods have sought to avoid direct impacts on Whitgreaves Wood. The remaining impacts are unavoidable and clearly outweighed by the benefits of the Scheme.

Veteran Trees

- 8.13.29 Surveys were carried out of trees within and outside the Order limits to identify any veteran trees that may be affected by the development. The results of this assessment are presented in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report (AIA) provided in ES Appendix 7.1 **[TR010054/APP/6.3]**. This assessment concludes that no veteran trees will be affected by the Scheme, although there are veteran trees in the area, particularly to the east of the alignment in the area near Dark Lane.
- 8.13.30 Paragraph 5.32 of the NPSNN states that aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Where such trees would be affected by development proposals, the applicant should set out proposals for their conservation or, where their loss is unavoidable, the reasons for this. The strong policy protection for veteran trees,

coupled with the value placed on them by NE informed decision making around the alignment in the vicinity of Dark Lane, where moving the alignment further east would have placed veteran trees at risk. The loss of veteran trees has been avoided in line with NPSNN paragraph 5.32.

Other Trees and Hedgerows

- 8.13.31 A full AIA has been undertaken and presented in ES Appendix 7.1 [TR010054/APP/6.3]. The AIA identifies the impact on trees and hedgerows, which has informed development of mitigation measures in the form of replacement planting. The AIA also provides recommendations on tree protection measures for retained trees to minimise potential impacts during the construction period. Retained trees would also be protected during the construction phase as described in Section 8.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and as set out in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11].

Net Loss and Net Gain in Biodiversity

NPSNN

- 8.13.32 The NPSNN paragraph 5.20 states that:

'The [Natural Environment White Paper] sets out a vision of moving progressively from net biodiversity loss to net gain, by supporting healthy, well-functioning ecosystems and establishing more coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'

- 8.13.33 The NPSNN, like all policy documents, is prepared through an extensive process of consultation and scrutiny and the mention of this policy demonstrates that the Government wish developers of NSIPs to be aware that policy is moving away from net biodiversity loss.

- 8.13.34 The NPSNN (paragraph 5.23) goes on to state that:

'The applicant should show how the project has taken advantage of opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geological conservation interests.'

- 8.13.35 The NPSNN (paragraphs 5.25-5.26) recognises that:

'As a general principle, and subject to the specific policies below, development should avoid significant harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests, including through mitigation and consideration of reasonable alternatives. The applicant may also wish to make use of biodiversity offsetting¹⁰ in devising compensation proposals to counteract any impacts on biodiversity which cannot be avoided or mitigated. Where significant harm cannot be avoided or mitigated, as a last resort, appropriate compensation measures should be sought.'

- 8.13.36 Paragraph 5.33 of the NPSNN states that:

¹⁰ Biodiversity offsets as defined in the NPSNN are measurable conservation outcomes resulting from actions designed to compensate for residual adverse biodiversity impacts arising from a development after mitigating measures have been taken. The goal of biodiversity offsets is to achieve no net loss and preferably a net gain of biodiversity.

‘Development proposals potentially provide many opportunities for building in beneficial biodiversity or geological features as part of good design.¹¹ When considering proposals, the SoS should consider whether the applicant has maximised such opportunities in and around developments. The SoS may use requirements or planning obligations where appropriate in Order to ensure that such beneficial features are delivered.’

- 8.13.37 Similarly, Paragraph 5.36 of the NPSNN states that applicants should include appropriate mitigation measures as an integral part of their proposed development, including identifying where and how these will be secured. In particular, the applicant should demonstrate that:
- during construction, they will seek to ensure that activities will be confined to the minimum areas required for the works;
 - during construction and operation, best practice will be followed to ensure that risk of disturbance or damage to species or habitats is minimised (including as a consequence of transport access arrangements);
 - habitats will, where practicable, be restored after construction works have finished;
 - developments will be designed and landscaped to provide green corridors and minimise habitat fragmentation where reasonable; and
 - opportunities will be taken to enhance existing habitats and, where practicable, to create new habitats of value within the site landscaping proposals.
- 8.13.38 The NPSNN, therefore, states that applicants should avoid significant harm to biodiversity, including through mitigation, and ‘as a last resort’ compensate for significant harm that cannot be mitigated. The Scheme design includes numerous measures to avoid or reduce significant harm, such as providing an open span structure to provide a crossing over Latherford Brook to retain a natural channel and habitats and routing the mainline to avoid veteran trees.
- 8.13.39 The NPSNN (paragraph 5.23) also encourages applicants to show how the project has taken advantage of opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity interests and in paragraph 5.26 suggests that applicants may wish to use biodiversity offsetting to compensate for ‘any impacts on biodiversity’ that cannot be mitigated. Paragraph 5.33 goes on to state that the SoS should consider whether the applicant has ‘maximised’ opportunities for building in beneficial biodiversity features. These statements reference conservation of biodiversity more widely and are not limited to the mitigation of significant effects. The Scheme meets these requirements through delivering mitigation measures for all impacts on biodiversity, where possible, delivering enhancements to some habitats in the process. The strategy implemented on biodiversity mitigation ensures the Scheme complies with NPSNN paragraphs 5.23, 5.25 and 5.26.

¹¹ The NPSNN footnote 80 states that The Natural Environment White Paper 2011 identifies opportunities for transport to contribute to the creation of coherent and resilient ecological networks.

8.13.40 The Environmental Masterplan (ES Figures 2.1 to 2.7 [TR010054/APP/6.2]) for the spatial distribution of environmental mitigation measures. The following measures have been incorporated into the Scheme to mitigate and compensate for the impact of the Scheme on biodiversity:

- replacement woodland habitat provided at a ratio of 7:1 as agreed with NE to compensate for the loss of ancient woodland¹²;
- new woodland planting, along with new standing water habitats, new marshy and wet grassland and species-rich grassland will be created to mitigate impacts to Lower Pool SBI and Brookfield Farm SBI sites;
- mitigation measures to avoid harm and losses of species such as badgers, roosting bats, breeding birds, otter and water vole, great crested newts, terrestrial invertebrates and aquatic invertebrates and fish would be adopted and are set out in detail in Section 8.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]: (including new/ improved habitats where relevant); and
- soft landscaping to replace priority habitat lost during the Scheme construction and this specifically includes broadleaved woodland, species rich semi improved neutral grassland and species rich grassland. Timber from felled trees would be used to provide dead wood habitats for saproxylic (dead wood loving) species.

8.13.41 The OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11] also includes methods to reduce significant construction impacts, such as requiring that construction works are supervised by an Ecological Clerk of Works where the potential to impact on species or designated sites exists.

NPPF

8.13.42 NPPF Paragraph 170 includes more explicit support for providing net gains in biodiversity as part of development projects than the NPSNN by stating that planning decisions should:

‘contribute to and enhance the local environment by:... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures’.

8.13.43 Paragraph 175 of the NPPF states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply a number of principles in respect of biodiversity.

- a) ‘if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;... and*
- d) Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity*

¹² This habitat creation does not count towards the no net loss target because ancient woodland is irreplaceable and so its loss cannot be mitigated.

improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.'

- 8.13.44 When considering compliance with part a), the potential for the Scheme to result in significant adverse effects to biodiversity has been assessed and reported in Chapter 8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. Significant harm to biodiversity has been avoided through the careful design for the Scheme. The design for the Scheme has evolved through an iterative process and mitigation implemented to reduce the scale of effect of the Scheme. The Scheme therefore complies with the requirements of a).
- 8.13.45 When considering compliance with part d), the purpose of the Scheme includes landscaping and planting to replace habitat that would be lost during construction and seeks to maximise biodiversity opportunities and results in no net loss in biodiversity. As explored below, opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments have been incorporated into the Scheme and the Scheme is therefore compliant with part d).

Highways England Strategies and Plans

- 8.13.46 In accordance with the Infrastructure Act 2015 the Secretary of State may give a strategic highway company directions or guidance in exercising its functions. In exercising its functions a strategic highways company must comply with a direction and have regard to guidance. The Highways England Licence (HEL) contains directions and guidance from the SoS to the strategic highways company. Minimising environmental impacts and protecting and enhancing the quality of the surrounding environment are written into the terms of the HEL and must be complied with. The guidance section of the licence indicates that Highways England should, where appropriate, work with others to develop solutions that can provide increased environmental benefits over those that can be delivered alone, where this delivers value for money.
- 8.13.47 Protecting biodiversity is entrenched within the RIS1 Government's Road Investment Strategy and HESBP. The RIS1 states that the company must achieve no net loss of biodiversity during the second road period and deliver net gain in the longer term. The first road period runs for five years until 2019/20, with the second starting in 2020/21.

Other

- 8.13.48 In December 2018, Defra launched a consultation on the objectives of an effective net gain policy. The consultation requested feedback on definitions of biodiversity and environmental net gain and how to mandate biodiversity net gain. In the Spring Statement in 2019, the Government announced it would mandate net gains for biodiversity in the Environment Bill.
- 8.13.49 In July 2019, Defra published Net Gain: Summary of responses and government response to this consultation (Ref 1.38). This document states on page 5 that:

'Consultation proposals for a mandatory requirement did not include nationally significant infrastructure or marine projects. Whilst many respondents told us that these types of development should be in scope of the mandatory requirement, following careful consideration the government believes that further work and

engagement with industry and conservation bodies is required to establish approaches to biodiversity net gain for both marine and nationally significant infrastructure projects, which can have fundamentally different characteristics to other development types. Government will continue to work on exploring potential net gain approaches for these types of development, but nationally significant infrastructure and net gain for marine development will remain out of scope of the mandatory requirement in the Environment Bill.'

- 8.13.50 This clearly indicates that whilst the Government intention is to make net gain mandatory, this requirement is currently not applicable to NSIPs due to the Government's view that these Schemes have '*fundamentally different characteristics to other development types*'. Therefore, whilst delivering net gains in biodiversity may be desirable, there is no requirement for NSIPs to deliver overall net gains in the NPSNN and no indication that it will be mandatory in the near future. This reduces the weight applied to policies in the NPPF on net gain as relevant and important matters in decision making on NSIPs.

Consultation Responses

- 8.13.51 A number of prescribed consultees provided comments on the approach taken in the Scheme to assessing the biodiversity mitigation and enhancements that should be provided in their responses to the statutory consultation on the Scheme in May-July 2019. Relevant text from these responses is provided below, with detailed responses to all consultation comments received provided in Annex P of the Consultation Report [TR010054/APP/5.2].

- 8.13.52 The Environment Agency consultation response stated that:

'Development should focus on enhancing the natural environment, beyond simply protecting it. Schemes should look to provide net gains for biodiversity, based on evidence which identifies ecological networks, designated sites, green infrastructure, wildlife rich habitats and opportunities for securing measurable net gains. Please note, BNG is in addition to, and does not replace, the mitigation hierarchy at paragraph 175. There is the potential for additional environmental gains on the back of this via improved ecosystem service function, with specific reference to NPPF paragraph 102 relating to the potential for large scale transport schemes such as this to realise environmental net gain (ENG).'

- 8.13.53 The NE consultation response stated that:

'Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat. Its loss cannot be mitigated, and it cannot be counted in calculations towards net gain...'

'We expect to see the application demonstrate net gain in biodiversity, and note the Highways Agency commitment to deliver no net loss to biodiversity by 2020 and net gain in biodiversity by 2040 (Our plan to protect and increase biodiversity). Natural England therefore recommends that the applicants follow the net gain approach and take the opportunity within this proposal to be an exemplar development which delivers a net gain in biodiversity.'

Metrics exist for calculating the amount of biodiversity required to achieve net gain. The most commonly used are variants of the Defra metric which calculates the biodiversity units required to achieve biodiversity net gain. The advantage of using

a recognised metric to deliver net gain is that it provides a clear, transparent and evidence-based approach to assessing a project's biodiversity impacts that can assist with "de-risking" a development through the planning process and contribute to wider place-making.'

8.13.54 SCC's consultation response stated that

'As regards mitigation (Section 8.7) we welcome the intention to comply with the avoid – mitigate - compensate hierarchy, but find it disappointing that aspirations to achieve net gain will not be in place until 2040.'

'A biodiversity metric should be employed to demonstrate that the scheme achieves at least no net loss. This should use realistic timescales and target conditions for any compensation habitat, for example the target time for new woodland to achieve reasonable condition should be 30+ years.'

Summary of Biodiversity Net Loss and Gains

8.13.55 The Scheme incorporates mitigation measures and maximises biodiversity opportunities that results in the delivery of no net loss in biodiversity as calculated using a biodiversity metric.

8.13.56 The Applicant has taken on board comments from NE and SCC that a biodiversity metric should be used to calculate the level of biodiversity net loss or net gains and inform the approach to mitigation and enhancement. The methodology followed is presented in the ES Appendix 8.2: Biodiversity Metric Calculations [TR010054/APP/6.3], and follows standard guidance produced by Defra as supported by NE. In line with SCC's request, the Scheme achieves no net loss in biodiversity and uses realistic timescales for target conditions to be achieved.

8.13.57 The Scheme maximises opportunities for building in beneficial biological features in line with NPSNN paragraph 5.33 through delivery of enhancements to habitats and creation of new habitats. The achievement of no net loss in biodiversity conserves biodiversity as required by NPSNN paragraph 5.23 and enhances particular habitats as a part of the strategy also in line with paragraph 5.23. The strategy for mitigation complies with the mitigation hierarchy set out in NPPF paragraph 175.

8.13.58 It should be noted that Highways England is seeking to acquire land required for the Scheme through compulsory acquisition. In order to secure those powers, Highways England must demonstrate that the land subject to compulsory acquisition is required for the Scheme or is required to facilitate or is incidental to the Scheme (section 122 of the Planning Act 2008). This means that, land required to mitigate the impact of the Scheme can be secured through compulsory acquisition, but such powers do not extend to the acquisition of land for enhancement or gain.

Summary of compliance with policy on biodiversity

8.13.59 The Scheme has been designed, as far as possible, to avoid and minimise impacts and effects on ecological features through the process of design-development (Refer to ES Chapter 3 Assessment of Alternatives [TR010054/APP/6.1]). The Scheme would deliver no net loss in biodiversity and has carefully considered mitigation and compensation measures to ensure they are effective and themselves do not lead to significant adverse effects (e.g. through planting that is not appropriate to the landscape character). In line with NPSNN requirements, the benefits of the Scheme clearly outweigh the harm to biodiversity.

8.14 Geology and soils

8.14.1 Section 5 of the NPSNN considers the impact of national networks on land stability, geotechnics, geology and soils.

8.14.2 NPSNN paragraph 5.117 states that:

'if land stability could be an issue, applicants should seek appropriate technical and environmental expert advice to assess the likely consequences of proposed developments on sites where subsidence, landslides and ground compression is known or suspected.'

8.14.3 NPSNN paragraph 5.118 requires applicants to carry out preliminary assessment of ground instability at the earliest possible stage and undertake any necessary investigations to ascertain that the site will remain stable or can be made so as part of the development. It also requires applicants to complete a land stability or slope stability risk assessment report, taking into account the surrounding areas where subsidence, landslides and land compression could threaten the development / neighbouring land or property. This is also in line with NPPF paragraphs:

- 170: which states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing new development from contributing to unacceptable levels of soil pollution or land stability;
- 178: which states that planning decisions should ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land stability including risks from mining; and
- 179 which requires that where a site is affected by land stability the responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer.

8.14.4 Land stability has been considered as part of the EIA and is included in Chapter 9 of the ES (Section 9.6) [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The slope stability has been assessed for the Scheme design, a ground investigation has been undertaken and a stability risk assessment has been carried out using data from the investigation.

8.14.5 NPSNN paragraph 5.168 requires applicants to consider the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land and, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, to seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. Chapter 9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] considers the soil resources within the Scheme boundary. Section 9.6 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] outlines that through a desk-

based review the land within the Scheme boundary is a mixture of Agricultural Land Classification grade 2 (very good quality) with some areas of grade 3a (good quality) and grade 3b (moderate quality).

- 8.14.6 Additionally, paragraph 5.168 requires that applicants identify any effects, and seek to minimise impacts, on soil quality and, for developments on previously developed (brownfield) sites, ensure that they have considered the risk posed by land contamination and how it is proposed to address this. Section 9.7 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** specifically considers the design, mitigation and enhancement measures for the Scheme in respect of soil resources.
- 8.14.7 The current land use along the alignment of the Scheme is primarily fields and farm land with some small wooded areas. The underlying geology across the Scheme consists of sandstone and mudstone. The Scheme has been designed, as far as possible, to avoid and minimise impacts and effects on the geology and soils environment through the process of design-development and considering good design principles. The loss of agricultural land and soil resources has been minimised through the Scheme design. Construction of the Scheme would be subject to measures and procedures as defined within the OEMP **[TR010054/APP/6.11]**. During the construction of the Scheme, mitigation measures will be adopted to minimise the potential for the contamination of soil resources as outlined in Section 9.7 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. The Scheme has been designed to provide suitable surface water drainage and management to prevent the pollution of controlled waters and soil resources during the operational stage for the Scheme. Any spillages on the Scheme following road accidents would be routinely managed by Highways England who is responsible for the maintenance of trunk road assets with the Area 9 West Midlands Region.
- 8.14.8 There are no policies within the SSOS that specifically concern geology, soils, agricultural land and stability. Core Policy 2 states that the Council will support development where they protect and enhance the districts natural assets. It is considered that the Scheme design and mitigation measures that would be put in place would protect the natural assets in the district.
- 8.14.9 Overall, the Scheme complies with all policies on geology and soils, assessments have followed the methodology required in the NPPS and NPPF and use of agricultural land is necessary (given the location of the Scheme) and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land where possible.

8.15 Material assets and waste

Waste

- 8.15.1 Section 5 of the NPSNN considers the generic impacts associated with National Networks and includes waste management. Paragraphs 5.42 and 5.43 address waste management and state that the applicant should set out the arrangements that are proposed for managing any waste produced.
- 8.15.2 The material assets and waste aspects of the Scheme are considered in Chapter 10 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. Section 10.8 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** states that the Scheme aims to prioritise waste prevention, followed by preparing for re-use, recycling and recovery and lastly disposal to landfill as per the internationally

recognised waste hierarchy. Paragraph 204 of the NPPF states that planning policies should, so far as is practicable, take account of the secondary and recycled materials and minerals waste supply before considering the extraction and use of primary materials.

8.15.3 During the detailed design and construction phases for the Scheme a range of mitigation measures will be adopted which will include:

- designing for the reuse and recovery by identifying, securing and using materials that already exist on site, or can be sourced from other projects;
- design for materials optimisation: simplifying layout and form to minimise material use, using standard design parameters, balancing cut and fill, maximising the use of renewable materials and materials with recycled content;
- design for off-site construction: maximising the use of pre-fabricated structure and components, encouraging a process of assembly rather than construction;
- design for the future (deconstruction and flexibility): identify how materials can be designed to be more easily adapted over an asset lifetime and how deconstructability and demountability of elements can be maximised at end of first life;
- design for waste efficient procurement: identify and specify materials that can be acquired responsibly, in accordance with a recognised industry standard; and
- engineering plan configurations and layouts that show how the most effective use of materials and arisings can be achieved.

8.15.4 The Scheme includes a borrow pit to the north west of the mainline of the new link. This borrow pit will enable the contractors to access excavated materials for construction and replace them with excavated materials extracted from elsewhere on the Scheme that are not suitable for construction use. In the event that a borrow pit is used for this purpose, this will potentially reduce extraction of materials outside the Scheme, reduce the amount of materials that may otherwise become waste and reduce traffic associated with taking materials to and from the construction site. The site of the borrow pit would be restored after use and used to create habitats to mitigate the impact of the Scheme on biodiversity

8.15.5 During the construction of the Scheme a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be adopted. The SWMP would set out a recording process for the management of waste, including the storage and transport of waste on-site and a recording mechanism for required waste documentation such as Waste Transfer or Consignment Notes (dependent on the waste stream) in order to confirm the assessment of the waste impact and to implement the embedded mitigation measures. The SWMP would include procedures for monitoring the overall construction waste recovery rate and the proportion of secondary and recycled aggregate used in the Scheme, in order to confirm the assessment of materials impacts.

- 8.15.6 In addition, a CEMP will be adopted requiring contractors to adopt good practice in construction waste management which would reduce the quantity of waste generated. Section 10.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] describes the provisions for the reduction and reuse of waste that will be included in the CEMP. These provisions are included in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11].
- 8.15.7 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (JWLP) was adopted March 2013 and provides the vision and policies for the management of waste in the County and the determination of planning applications for development involving waste. The Scheme accords with the vision and objectives set out in Section 4 of the JWLP to minimise waste and where possible maximise the use of waste as resource. Section 5 of the JWLP provides the policies in respect of waste development. Many of the policies relate to the development of new facilities for the sustainable management of waste.
- 8.15.8 In accordance with Policy 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 of the JWLP the Scheme will make use of waste (e.g. earthworks arisings and secondary aggregates) as a resource in the construction of the highway and to form screening bunds where suitable to minimise waste arisings. These waste streams would be managed onsite where feasible in accordance with the provisions of the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11]. The Scheme will not conflict with the location of existing waste management facilities.

Minerals

- 8.15.9 Paragraph 5.169 of the NPSNN states that:
'applicants should safeguard any mineral resources on the proposed site as far as possible'.
- 8.15.10 Paragraph 5.182 goes on to state that:
'Where a proposed development has an impact on a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA), the SoS should ensure that the applicant has put forward appropriate mitigation measures to safeguard mineral resources.'
- 8.15.11 NPPF paragraphs 203 and 204 recognise that it is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure that the Country needs and that mineral resources should be safeguarded from sterilisation. Paragraph 204 states that where planning policies should safeguard mineral resources by defining MSA's and adopt appropriate policies so that known locations of specific mineral resources are not sterilised by non-mineral development, where this can be avoided.
- 8.15.12 Practical and environmentally feasible prior extraction of minerals should take place if it is necessary for non-minerals development to take place. Paragraph 206 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities should not normally permit development proposals in MSA's if it might constrain potential future use for mineral working.
- 8.15.13 The Policies and Proposals Map of the Staffordshire County Council Minerals Local Plan shows that the Scheme falls within the MSA for sand and gravel and brick clay. There are currently no active or allocated mineral extraction sites within the Order limits. Consideration has been given to the presence of these minerals and the

possible requirement for prior extraction in the ES Appendix 10.1 **[TR010054/APP/6.3]** entitled the Minerals Safeguarding Report.

- 8.15.14 SCC Minerals Local Plan Policy 3 requires that a land bank equivalent to 7 years of supply of sand and gravel, and 25 years brick clay should be maintained. The most recent Annual Monitoring Report (2017) demonstrates that the current land bank is in excess of both with 12.6 years sand and gravel, and excess of 25 years brick clay.
- 8.15.15 There is insufficient information regarding the quantity, quality and value of the sand and gravel resource. Prior extraction would significantly delay the commencement and completion of the Scheme. It is concluded that prior extraction of sand and gravel or brick clay is not required for this Scheme.

8.16 Population and health

- 8.16.1 Paragraph 3.17 of the NPSNN states that there is a direct role for the national road network to play in helping pedestrians and cyclists. The Government expects applicants to use reasonable endeavours to address the needs of cyclists and pedestrians in the design of new schemes. The Government also expects applicants to identify opportunities to invest in infrastructure in locations where the national road network serves communities and acts as a barrier to cycling and walking, by correcting historic problems, retrofitting the latest solutions and ensuring that it is easy and safe for cyclists to use junctions.
- 8.16.2 Paragraph 91 of the NPPF refers to the importance of the planning system in helping to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, paragraph 98 seeks to ensure the protection and enhancement of public rights of way and access, and paragraph 102 (c) encourages opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport.
- 8.16.3 The purpose of the Scheme is to provide a new link road between the M54 Junction 1 and M6 Junction 11 for use by motorised vehicles travelling along the SRN. There are a number of WCH facilities located in the Order limits and surrounding area. The Scheme has been designed to retain existing public rights of way with some minor temporary diversions. These routes will remain open, safe and accessible during the construction and operation of the Scheme. This will allow pedestrians and cyclists to continue to make use of the existing routes and will support aspirations for a healthy lifestyle and provide opportunities for social interaction while out walking and cycling.
- 8.16.4 The Scheme will result in the northern end of Dark Lane being closed during construction, reducing traffic along Dark Lane. A new shared footway and cycleway would be built to the west of the mainline to maintain the WCH route between the A460 and Hilton Lane. The Scheme will result in a reduction in traffic travelling along the A460 and this will improve amenity for pedestrians and cyclists using this route.
- 8.16.5 The Scheme will result in the permanent realignment, diversion and improvements of some WCH facilities. The Scheme will not result in the loss of any routes, rather existing routes will be the subject of temporary or permanent diversion or re-routing to retain the route. The change in distance and approximate change in travel time has been assessed as part of the population and health assessment in Chapter 12 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. The level of effect varies for each route assessed.

The Scheme is not anticipated to result in a significant adverse effect on WCHs. Some slight beneficial effects would be experienced however.

- 8.16.6 In line with paragraph 92 and 96 of the NPPF the Scheme will not result in the loss of facilities or access to facilities such as shops, sports venues, open space or places of worship. The Scheme will retain existing rights of way and will not increase community severance.
- 8.16.7 The SSCS includes a number of policies relating to sustainable transport, population, health and wellbeing. Core Policy EQ4, Promoting High Quality Design requires that development proposals meet a number of requirements, including:
- Providing an attractive, functional, accessible, safe, healthy and secure environment.
 - To facilitate and encourage physical activity through outdoor sport, recreation, walking and cycling.
- 8.16.8 The Scheme has been designed to integrate with the surrounding landscape and this includes constructing the Scheme in a cutting with new landscape planting along the Scheme corridor and strengthening of existing vegetation in the area. The Scheme will retain the existing public rights of way in the area, rights of way will remain open during the construction and operational phases of the development to facilitate physical activity such as walking, cycling and horse riding.
- 8.16.9 Core Policy 11 'Sustainable Transport' seeks to ensure that accessibility will be improved and transport choice widened. Policy EV11 'Sustainable Travel' requires that proposals include provision for sustainable forms of transport and should include footpaths and cycleways. The Scheme aims to move traffic from the local road network to the SRN. The Scheme will reduce the volume of traffic using existing routes such as the A460, A449 and A5. The reduction in traffic using existing routes will improve amenity and will encourage pedestrians and cyclists to use routes such as the A460 more frequently. The Scheme will also introduce a new shared cycleway and footway along Dark Lane. PRoW will be retained with some diversions to accommodate the Scheme. These measures could help to encourage travel using alternatives to cars.

8.17 Road drainage and water environment

- 8.17.1 Section 5 of the NPSNN considers the generic impacts of national networks on flood risk and water quality and resources. A number of the paragraphs in the NPPF follow the same approach and objectives to the NPSNN.

Flood Risk

- 8.17.2 The Scheme is primarily located in Flood Zone 1¹³, with areas within Flood Risk Zones 2¹⁴ and 3¹⁵ in the area around Latherford Brook.
- 8.17.3 NPSNN paragraphs 5.90 to 5.115 set out the requirement for an FRA to be submitted with the application and provides guidance on the methodology to be

¹³ Defined as less than 0.1% (1 in 1000-year) annual exceedance probability in any given year.

¹⁴ Defined as between 1% and 3.33% (1 in 100-year to 1 in 30-year) annual exceedance probability in any given year.

¹⁵ Defined as greater than a 3.33% (1 in 30-year) annual exceedance probability in any given year.

used. An FRA has been carried out in accordance with these requirements and is included in Appendix 13.1 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.3]**. A summary of the methodology and findings of the FRA are also presented in Chapter 13 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**.

- 8.17.4 In line with NPSNN paragraph 5.96 the FRA methodology was informed by consultation with the EA, SSC, SCC and the LLFA and the draft FRA shared with the same parties prior to submission of the application.
- 8.17.5 In accordance with paragraph 5.98 of the NPSNN and the NPPF paragraphs 157 to 159, the FRA includes a sequential test as part of the assessment and is reported in Appendix 13.1 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.3]**.
- 8.17.6 Paragraph 5.99 of the NPSNN and the NPPF paragraph 163 require that when determining an application, the SoS should be satisfied that flood risk will not increase elsewhere and will only consider development appropriate in areas at risk of flooding where it can be demonstrated that:
- the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location; and
 - development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant and any residual risk can be safely managed.
- 8.17.7 NPSNN paragraph 5.105 states that preference should be given to locating development in Flood Zone 1 but acknowledges that if there is no reasonably available site then projects can be located in Flood Zone 2, or if no suitable land is available in Flood Zone 2 the land in Flood Zone 3 can be used subject to the exception test.
- 8.17.8 The NPPF paragraph 155 states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided and that development should be directed away from areas at highest risk. Where development is necessary in areas of flood risk, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 8.17.9 The location for the Scheme is dictated by the need to provide a link road that is of a suitable standard to form part of the SRN. A very small area of the Scheme would be located in an area at risk of flooding and the FRA concludes that the flood risk to the Scheme from fluvial, tidal, surface water, artificial sources, drainage infrastructure and groundwater is low.
- 8.17.10 Hydraulic modelling has shown a localised increase of flood levels immediately upstream of the proposed crossing at Latherford Brook, no properties are in the affected area, and there is no risk to the Scheme. The only receptor which will experience a minor impact is the existing woodland which already experiences flooding during storm events. Model results show that the Scheme does not significantly increase the flood risk to any properties.
- 8.17.11 The FRA concludes that there will be no significant increase in fluvial flood risk to the neighboring land uses, or an increase in surface water runoff as a result of the Scheme based on application of identified mitigation measures. As a result, it is

considered that the Scheme design meets the requirements of paragraph 5.99 of the NPSNN.

- 8.17.12 In accordance with paragraph 5.100 of the NPSNN, consideration has been given to the Floods and Water Management Act 2010. Further consideration will be given to conformance with this Act during the detailed design stage for the Scheme.
- 8.17.13 In accordance with paragraphs 5.110 to 5.115 the drainage for the Scheme has been designed to accommodate a range of storm events. Surface water storage and attenuation has been incorporated into the Scheme design and this includes a number of ponds, swales and ditches. These features have been designed to mimic natural drainage as far as practicable, and to provide a number of other benefits to ecological habitat creation. Attenuation has been incorporated into the Scheme design to control any increase in the rate of flow towards watercourses resulting from increased impermeable road areas. A greenfield runoff rate of 5 l/s/ha has been agreed with consultees.

Water Quality

- 8.17.14 Paragraphs 5.219 to 5.231 of the NPSNN provides guidance on the assessment, decision making and mitigation for water quality and resources. Paragraph 5.219 acknowledges that infrastructure development can have an adverse effect on the water environment through an increased demand for water, discharges to water and the effects on ecology resulting from physical modifications to the water environment. The NPSNN recognises that this can lead to pollutants entering watercourses and can affect health, habitats or protected species. Consideration has been given to the potential effect of the Scheme on water quality in Chapter 13 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**.
- 8.17.15 Paragraph 5.220 of the NPSNN requires that applicants provide a plan identifying water bodies in a River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). Chapter 13 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** identifies that the Scheme is located within the Humber River Basin District (HRBD) and the waterbodies within.
- 8.17.16 In accordance with paragraph 5.221 of the NPSNN, early consultation has taken place with regulators including the EA and LLFA. In line with NPSNN paragraph 5.221 the baseline conditions in respect of the water environment are outlined in Section 13.6 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**, while the potential impacts of the Scheme are considered in Section 13.7. The design, mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated into the Scheme are also considered before determining the likely significant effects associated with the Scheme.
- 8.17.17 Paragraphs 5.225 and 5.226 of the NPSNN consider the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and River Basin Management Plans. An assessment of the effect of the Scheme effect on WFD objectives has been carried out and concluded that the Scheme would have a negligible impact on the WFD waterbodies within the Scheme study area. More detailed information in respect of the WFD assessment is presented in Section 13.9 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**.
- 8.17.18 Paragraph 170(e) in the NPPF outlines that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing new development contributing to unacceptable levels of water pollution and where possible help to

improve local environmental conditions such as water quality taking into account relevant information such as River Basin Management Plans. SSCS Policy EQ7; Water Quality, suggests development proposals will be permitted where proposals do not have a negative impact on water quality either through pollution of surface water or groundwater.

- 8.17.19 In accordance with the NPPF and the SSCS Policy EQ1 and EQ7 measures to mitigate and enhance water quality have been incorporated into the Scheme where possible. The Scheme has been designed, as far as possible, to avoid and minimise impacts and effects on the road drainage and the water environment through the process of design-development considering good design principles.
- 8.17.20 A number of essential mitigation measures have been identified for the construction and operation phase to reduce, remediate or compensate likely significant adverse environmental effects on the water environment. The OEMP **[TR010054/APP/6.11]** includes these measures to ensure they are adopted, including measures such as managing the risk of spills and pollution to surface and ground waters. The OEMP **[TR010054/APP/6.11]** includes specific measures where construction works are to be carried out in particularly sensitive locations. During the operational phase, maintenance of the drainage network and assets is required as part of the operation of the Scheme. The Scheme design includes a series of drains and swales to mimic natural drainage and provide ecological benefits. Penstocks would also be installed upstream of all wet ponds to allow cut off in the event of a spillage. The design for the drainage system includes discharge rate equivalent to a greenfield run off and to accommodate peak discharge rates of 1 in 100 year return period rates +40% for climate change.
- 8.17.21 SSCS Policy EQ7; Water Quality, requires site specific analysis of any development proposals located in proximity or upstream of environmentally significant sites such as SSSIs or SACs. An assessment of the impact of the Scheme on biodiversity is reported in Chapters 8 and 13 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**. Two locally designated sites of ecological importance have been identified in the vicinity of the Scheme. The pond within the Lower Pool SBI and the wet woodland at Brookfield Farm SBI. All other water dependent ecological sites are located within 1-2km of the Scheme boundary and were scoped out of the assessment due to distance and lack of hydraulic connectivity.
- 8.17.22 The Scheme will result in the partial loss of the pond at the Lower Pool SBI and the temporary loss of 70 m of existing channel at Latherford Brook during construction as some construction works to the margins of the primary channel will be required to install the new bridge abutments. The Scheme has been designed to minimise the loss of these habitats. The methodology for works within Lower Pool would be developed during the detailed design stage of the Scheme and fish will be removed from the ponds before construction work begins. The methodology for any dewatering necessary would be agreed with the EA in advance and the potential for sediment plumes would be assessed and monitored.

8.18 Climate

- 8.18.1 NPSNN paragraph 4.40 states that new national networks infrastructure will typically be long term investments which will need to remain operational over many decades

in the face of a changing climate. This paragraph of the NPSNN requires that climate change is considered when planning the location, design, build and operation of a new project and any accompanying ES should set out how the proposal would take account of the projected impacts of climate change.

- 8.18.2 The NPPF paragraph 150 states that new development should be planned for in ways that avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and also to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions through its design.
- 8.18.3 Chapter 14 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** provides the assessment of the impact of the Scheme on climate change and adaptation measures incorporated into the Scheme design.
- 8.18.4 The SSCS Core Policy 3 states that the Council will require development to be designed to cater for the effects of climate change by making prudent use of natural resources, enabling opportunities for energy efficiency and helping to minimise any environmental impacts. It is considered that the project fulfils these three roles.
- 8.18.5 During the design development for the Scheme consideration has been given to climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and how they would be implemented during the construction and operation phases of the Scheme (see Section 14.8 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]**). The CEMP will include measures to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions and will be developed with the construction contractor. Where practicable, measures will be implemented to use materials with lower embodied GHG emissions, use sustainably sourced materials and use secondary and recycled products. Trees, shrubs and hedgerows planted as part of the landscape design would offset some of the emissions associated with the change in land use.
- 8.18.6 Chapter 14 of the ES **[TR010054/APP/6.1]** presents the methodology and findings of the assessment of any likely significant climate factors in accordance with the requirements in the EIA Directive, including the carbon impact of the project and an assessment against the Government's carbon budgets. During the operation phase of the Scheme, lighting will be energy efficient to minimise energy consumption and lighting is confined to locations where road safety is a priority.
- 8.18.7 A number of mitigation and adaptation measures will be implemented to address any potential impacts associated with future climate change events, many of which have been identified during the assessment of the various environmental topics. Flood alleviation measures have been included as part of the drainage design to improve the resilience of the Scheme to potential flooding resulting from climate change. This includes the use of SuDS with filter drains and balancing ponds. The Scheme has been designed to accommodate a 1 in 100-year flood event (with a climate change allowance of 50% added) without flooding the carriageway.
- 8.18.8 The Scheme has been designed to improve its resilience to climate change through a range of design and material specification measures including where practicable: the use of construction materials with superior properties (such as increased tolerance to fluctuating temperatures), and incorporation of current road design standards and future climate change allowances. Further information on the climate

change resilience measures is provided in Section 14.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

- 8.18.9 In accordance with paragraph 4.41 of the NPSNN, the UK Climate Projections 2009 (UKCP09) high emissions scenario (high impact, low likelihood) against the 2080 projections at the 50% probability level has been applied in the assessment of climate change in the Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] as the Scheme comprises transport infrastructure with a design life of 60 years or greater.
- 8.18.10 The Scheme assessment and design conforms with paragraph 4.42 of the NPSNN in that the assessments included in the ES have taken into account the potential impacts of climate change using the latest UK Climate Projections. Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] identifies appropriate mitigation or adaptation measures for the estimated lifetime of the new infrastructure.
- 8.18.11 The Scheme design and mitigation includes measures such as SuDS, balancing ponds and managed discharge rate to ensure that the new link road will not increase the risk of flooding at sensitive receptors.

8.19 Cumulative Assessment

- 8.19.1 NPSNN paragraph 4.3 states that when considering any proposed development, the examining authority should consider the potential adverse impacts including any cumulative adverse impacts. Paragraph 4.16 of the NPSNN states that when considering significant cumulative effects, the ES should provide information on how the effects of the applicant's proposal would combine and interact with the effects of other development (including projects for which consent has been granted, as well as those already in existence). Paragraph 4.17 states that the examining authority should consider how significant cumulative effects and the interrelationship between effects might, as a whole, affect the environment, even though they may be acceptable when considered on an individual basis with mitigation measures in place. In addition, paragraph 180 and 181 of the NPPF state that planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects including cumulative effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment.
- 8.19.2 An assessment of the cumulative effects of the Scheme has been undertaken and is reported within Chapter 15 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The assessment considers the combined effects, which are defined as the effect resulting from several different impacts from the Scheme on a single receptor e.g. a single receptor being subject to noise, air quality and visual impacts associated with the Scheme.
- 8.19.3 The assessment also considers the cumulative effects of the Scheme, which are defined as the effect resulting from impacts of the Scheme acting together with an impact or impacts associated with other proposed development schemes on a single receptor.
- 8.19.4 The assessment has been undertaken for the construction and operation phases of the development with the effects being considered for residential properties. The assessment of combined effects takes into account the combined effects of air quality, dust, noise, vibration and visual along with any mitigation. The assessment indicates that the operation of the Scheme is likely to result in significant adverse

combined effects for two groups of receptors, those at Dark Lane and Park Road, and Hilton Lane (east of the Scheme). Properties on Hilton Lane (east of the Scheme) are anticipated to experience moderate adverse (significant) combined effects as a result of noise and visual impacts at Year 1.

- 8.19.5 Properties on Dark Lane and Park Road are anticipated to experience moderate adverse (significant) combined effects as a result in increased emissions to air and visual effects at Year 1. The visual effects will reduce as landscape planting becomes established and reduce the visual effects of the Scheme. The Scheme would provide some significant noise beneficial effects would occur at properties located off the A460 Cannock Road, Featherstone.
- 8.19.6 As set out earlier in this Chapter, design and mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Scheme design to minimise the potential for adverse effects to result during Scheme construction and operation.
- 8.19.7 The assessment concluded that following a review of the environmental information for the Scheme and other developments in the area, there are not likely to be any significant cumulative effects.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1.1 The NPSNN, NIDP and RIS1 strongly support the delivery of national networks that meet the country's long-term needs, whilst supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving the quality of life for all. The NPSNN states that there is a *critical* need to improve national networks. The M54 to M6 Link Road is also explicitly supported by local policy documents and plans. For example, the Midlands Connect Routes to Growth Strategy calls on the '*earliest possible*' construction of the Scheme.
- 9.1.2 The M54 eastbound currently merges into the M6 southbound at Junction 10a in Staffordshire. Currently there is no direct motorway link from the M54 to the M6 northbound or M6 Toll and as a result traffic uses the regional/ local road network to make these journeys, including the A449, A5 and A460. The routes used are heavily congested, particularly during peak periods, and exhibit above average accident rates. The use of the A460 by long-distance traffic affects the noise and air quality for residents closest to the route and makes it less attractive to pedestrians and cyclists.
- 9.1.3 The Scheme would reduce congestion on local and regional routes, particularly the A460 and A449, improve journey times and reliability and reduce accident rates on the existing network. The Scheme will also support the development of the surrounding area, including improving links to proposed and existing employment sites allocated in the SSCS and SSSAD. The Scheme will provide social and economic benefits for the West Midlands region.
- 9.1.4 The need for a new link road is recognised by South Staffordshire Council, Staffordshire Council, City of Wolverhampton Council and key stakeholders.
- 9.1.5 The economic assessment of the Scheme is summarised in Section 5 and demonstrates that the Scheme would provide good value for money.
- 9.1.6 This CftS has considered the compliance of the Scheme with relevant planning policy. There is significant policy support for the scheme in the NPSNN, which forms the primary basis against which the M54 to M6 Link Road scheme must be assessed. The NPSNN places a strong emphasis on the need to improve and integrate the strategic highway network and the Scheme would deliver against this national objective.
- 9.1.7 Highways England has sought to limit any adverse impacts of the scheme where possible, as demonstrated when it is considered against the 'assessment principles' and 'generic impacts' from the NPSNN. The NPSNN Accordance Table provided in Appendix A to this report provides a detailed assessment of Scheme compliance with the document and demonstrates compliance.
- 9.1.8 The Scheme fulfils the economic, environmental and social roles of sustainable development set out in the NPPF, which is a material consideration in decision making. Whilst the NPPF does not contain any policies specific to NSIPs, the overall objective for the scheme would support the aims of section 6 of the NPPF: 'Building a strong, competitive economy'. This places significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity through the planning system, and states

that this approach should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter weaknesses and address future challenges.

- 9.1.9 It is also clear that (although there are no explicit policies which reference the scheme) the Scheme is broadly consistent with the objectives of local plan policies. In particular, the Scheme will contribute towards achieving Strategic Objective 11, to support the growth of a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable local economy, and Strategic Objectives 9 and 10 on meeting local employment needs. The Scheme would support the delivery and efficient operation of a number of SESs in the surrounding area including i54 and ROF Featherstone.
- 9.1.10 The PA 2008 requires that applications for development consent must be decided in accordance with NPSNN, unless the adverse impact of the Scheme would outweigh its benefits. This CftS demonstrates that the Scheme is in accordance with the NPSNN and provides significant benefits in terms of relieving traffic congestion on existing A roads, keeping the right traffic on the right roads, improving safety, reducing volumes of through-traffic in villages and supporting economic growth in the area.
- 9.1.11 The Scheme design includes measures to reduce the potential effects of the Scheme on the receiving environment. Design measures include compensatory planting for ancient woodland affected by the Scheme, acoustic barriers, landscape planting and provision of suitable surface water management and areas for floodwater storage and floodplain compensation. These measures have been developed through extensive consultation with Statutory Environmental Bodies, host local authorities, landowners and other key stakeholders. Where possible, requests from landowners on Scheme design and environmental mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Scheme to minimise impact on landholdings and local businesses. Land is only proposed to be obtained where necessary to deliver the Scheme.
- 9.1.12 The Scheme is located in the Green Belt. Consideration has been given to the conformity of the Scheme with Green Belt policy set out in the NPSNN, NPPF and SSCS. The Scheme would be inappropriate development as it would affect the openness of the Green Belt, but VSC exist for the Scheme that mean the Scheme complies with Green Belt policy. The VSCs include the need for new infrastructure, the benefits of the Scheme and lack of alternatives that do not pass through the Green Belt. It is considered that these VSC outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The harm to the Green Belt has also been reduced wherever possible through Scheme location and design.
- 9.1.13 The Scheme would result in a very small loss of ancient woodland at Brookfield Farm and some development within 15 m of the ancient woodland at Whitgreaves Wood. Replacement planting would be provided on a ratio of 7:1 as agreed with NE, including to compensate for development within the buffer zone. The Scheme also includes measures to improve the biodiversity value of ancient woodland at Whitgreaves Wood. The Scheme as a whole aims to achieve no net loss in biodiversity, conserving biodiversity over the Scheme as a whole with enhancements to specific habitats.

- 9.1.14 The majority of the Scheme is in Flood Zone 1, with small areas in Flood Zone 2 and 3 when crossing watercourses. The Scheme design incorporates a range of measures to manage surface water and ensure that the discharge rate from the Scheme is no greater than the existing rate or the green field run off rate. As a result, no significant adverse effects are predicted in respect of flood risk and thus the Scheme is considered to accord with policy in this respect.
- 9.1.15 Taking into account the conclusions of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1], the principal significant residual effects during construction relate to cultural heritage; landscape and visual impacts; biodiversity; geology and soils; noise and vibration; and population and health. During operation, the principal significant residual effects relate to visual impacts; biodiversity; noise impacts; and the water environment. These effects have been minimised and benefits secured wherever possible. The mitigation designed into the Scheme is considered to be proportionate and appropriate to the level and range of environmental effects predicted.
- 9.1.16 The PA 2008 requires that applications for development consent be decided in accordance with relevant National Policy Statement (Section 104(3)) except to the extent that the adverse impact of the Scheme would outweigh its benefits (Section 104(7)). It is not considered that there are any adverse effects that would outweigh the benefits of the Scheme and none of the other exceptions in this Section apply. Therefore, it is considered that development consent should be granted for the Scheme.

10. References, Glossary and Acronyms

10.1 References

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10.2 Glossary

Term	Description
Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)	Above the mean sea level at Newlyn in Cornwall calculated between 1915 and 1921, taken as a reference point for the height data on Ordnance Survey maps.
Affected Road Network (ARN)	Parts of the road network which are identified as likely to be affected by changes in air quality as a result of a development project.
Agricultural Land Classification (ALC)	The system devised and introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to classify agricultural land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. Land is graded between 1 (excellent quality) to 5 (very poor quality), with grade 3 subdivided into agricultural subgrades 3a and 3b.
Ancient woodland	Land that has been continually wooded since at least the year 1600AD.
Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)	A measure used in transportation engineering and is the number of vehicles that will use a new or improved road on an average day.
Annual Average Weekday Traffic	The average 24-hour traffic volume occurring on weekdays throughout a full year.
Amenity	The relative pleasantness of a journey, or the ability of communities to achieve enjoyment and/ or quality of life.
Attenuation pond	A pond designed to hold back water and release it at a controlled flow rate.
At-grade junction	An intersection of highways where the crossing is at the same level.
Baseline conditions	The environment as it appears (or would appear) immediately prior to the implementation of the project together with any known or foreseeable future changes that will take place before completion of the project.
Best and most versatile land	Land defined as grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. This land is considered the most flexible, productive and efficient and is most capable of delivering crops for food and non-food uses.
Biodiversity	The biological diversity of the earth's living resources. The total range of variability among systems and organisms at the following levels of organisation: bioregional, landscape, ecosystem, habitat, communities, species, populations, individuals, genes and the structural and functional relationships within and between these different levels.
Built heritage	A structure or building of historic value. These structures are visible above ground level.
Bund	An embankment structure.
Carriageway	The width of a highway that can be used by motorised vehicles and walkers, cyclists and horse riders, formed by a number of lanes.
Climate change	This refers to a change in the state of the climate, which can be identified by changes in average climate characteristics which persist for an extended period, typically decades or longer.
Committed development	A development that has full or outline planning permission, or is allocated in an adopted development plan.
Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	A plan prepared by a contractor which sets out how a construction project will avoid, minimise or mitigate effects on the environment and surrounding area and the protocols to be followed in implementing these measures, in accordance with environmental commitments.
Cumulative effects (or impact)	Effects upon the environment that result from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions. Each

Term	Description
	impact by itself may not be significant but can become a significant effect when combined with other impacts.
Cutting	An earthwork to establish the road foundations (along with embankments), where the road is cut into the landscape, providing potential for visual screening and noise attenuation.
Department for Transport (DfT)	Government department responsible for the transport network in England, and for aspects of the transport network in the devolved administrations.
Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)	A series of 15 volumes that provide standards, advice notes and other published documents relating to the design, assessment and operation of trunk roads, including motorways in the United Kingdom, and, with some amendments, the Republic of Ireland.
Detailed assessment	Method applied to gain an in-depth appreciation of the beneficial and adverse consequences of the project and to inform project decisions. Detailed Assessments are likely to require detailed field surveys and/or quantified modelling techniques.
Embedded mitigation	Mitigation measures incorporated (embedded) into the design of a development project, for example earthworks to visually screen traffic movements in available views.
Enhancement	A measure that is over and above what is required to mitigate the adverse effects of a project.
Environmental assessment	A method and process by which information about environmental effects is collected, assessed and used to inform decision-making.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A process by which information about environmental effects of a proposed development is collected, assessed and used to inform decision making. For certain projects, EIA is a statutory requirement.
Environmental effect	The consequence of an action (impact) upon the environment such as the decline of a breeding bird population as a result of the removal of hedgerows and trees.
Environmental impact	The change in the environment from a development such as the removal of a hedgerow.
Environmental masterplan	Plan which illustrates the mitigation measures integrated into the design of the Scheme.
Environmental Statement (ES)	A document produced in accordance with the EIA Directive as transposed into UK law by the EIA Regulations to report the results of an EIA.
European Protected Species	Species of plants and animals (not birds) which are protected by European law.
Examining Authority	A panel of inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State who are responsible for examining Development Consent Order applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects.
Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)	The process of assessing potential flood risk to a site and identifying whether there are any flooding or surface water management issues that may warrant further consideration or may affect the feasibility of a development.
Flood Zone	Flood Zone definitions are set out in the National Planning Policy Guidance. Used to create a flood map for planning risk. There are 3 flood zones which refer to the probability of river and sea flooding, ignoring the presence of defences.
Flood Zone 1	Flood Zone 1: land outside the floodplain. There is little or no risk of flooding in this zone;

Term	Description
Flood Zone 2	Flood Zone 2: the area of the floodplain where there is a low to medium flood risk; and
Flood Zone 3	Flood Zone 3: the area of the floodplain where there is a high risk of flooding.
Floodplain	Land adjacent to a watercourse over which water flows or would flow in times of flood, but for defences in place.
Green belt	A designation for land around certain cities and large built-up areas, which aims to keep this land permanently open or largely undeveloped.
Greenhouse gases	Atmospheric gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons, nitrous oxide, ozone, and water vapour that absorb and emit infrared radiation emitted by the Earth's surface, the atmosphere and clouds.
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
Habitat of principal importance	Habitats in England identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and which are regarded as having biodiversity conservation priorities.
Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)	A Habitat Regulations Assessment is required where a project may have significant effects on a site by affecting its function to support protected habitats or species. Its purpose is to assess the implications of the proposal in respect of the site's ' <i>conservation objectives</i> '. The assessment is undertaken by the competent authority, in this case the Secretary of State.
Local planning authority	The local authority or council that is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.
Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Non-statutory sites of nature conservation value that have been designated 'locally'. These sites are referred to differently between counties with common terms including site of importance for nature conservation, county wildlife site, site of biological importance, site of local importance and sites of metropolitan importance.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	A planning framework which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
National Policy Statement (NPS) for England	Statements prepared and designated by the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008, which establish national policy for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, including energy, transport and water, waste water and waste and against which applications for Development Consent Orders are assessed.
National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN)	A statement setting out the need for, and Government's policies to deliver, the development of nationally significant infrastructure projects on the national road and rail networks in England.
Noise barrier	A solid construction that reduces unwanted sound. It may take many forms including: engineering cutting; retaining wall; noise fence barrier; landscape earthworks; a 'low level' barrier on a viaduct; a parapet barrier on a viaduct; or any combination of these measures. Also called an attenuation barrier.
Outline Environmental Management Plan (OEMP)	The OEMP identifies environmental mitigation measures and has been used to inform the EIA. It defines those environmental commitments and actions which will be implemented (within the REAC). It includes a brief Scheme description, identifies the roles and responsibilities of those who will be responsible for managing and reporting the construction phase environmental aspects. The OEMP will be used as a basis for the contractor's development of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Handover Environmental Management Plan (HEMP).

Term	Description
Planning Inspectorate	An executive agency with responsibilities for planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, local plan examinations and other planning-related casework in England and Wales.
Protected species	Species of wild plants, birds and animals which are afforded protection through legislative provisions.
Public right of way (PRoW)	A highway where the public has the right to walk. It can be a footpath (used for walking), a bridleway (used for walking, riding a horse and cycling), or a byway that is open to all traffic (including motor vehicles).
Road Investment Strategy (RIS1)	A document which sets out a long-term vision for England's motorways and major roads, outlining how smooth, smart and sustainable roads will be achieved through investment over a five year period (2015 - 2020).
Scheme	All works associated with the M54 to M6 Link Road Scheme.
Scoping Opinion	The written opinion of the relevant authority, following a request from the applicant for planning permission, as to the information to be provided in an Environmental Statement.
Scoping Report	A report which records the outcomes of the scoping process and is typically submitted as part of a formal request for a Scoping Opinion.
Strategic road network (SRN)	The network of motorways and trunk roads in England.

10.3 Acronyms

Abbreviation	Description
AAP	Area Action Plan
AIA	Arboricultural Impact Assessment
AMCB	Analysis of Monetised Costs and Benefits
AOD	Above Ordinance Datum
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ATC	Automatic Traffic Counters
BCCS	Black Country Core Strategy
BCR	Benefit Cost Ratio
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CftS	Case for the Scheme
COBALT	Cost and Benefit to Accidents- Light Touch
CWC	City of Wolverhampton Council
DCO	Development Consent Order
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfT	Department for Transport
EA	Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
FRA	Flood Risk Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HEES	Highways England Environment Strategy
HEL	Highways England License
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HLA	Historic Landscape Area
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IDP	Infrastructure Delivery Plan
ITR	Indirect Taxation Revenue
ITS	Integrated Transport Strategy (South Staffordshire)
JT	Journey Time
JWLP	Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan
LLFA	Lead Local Flood Authority
LPR	Local Plan Review
MCC	Manual Classified Counts
MSA	Mineral Safeguarding Area
NE	Natural England
NIA	Noise Important Areas
NIDP	National Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Abbreviation	Description
NO _x	Nitrogen Oxide
NO ₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPS	National Policy Statement
NPSNN	National Policy Statement for National Networks
NPV	Net Present Value
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
OEMP	Outline Environmental Management Plan
O-D	Origin-Destination
PA 2008	Planning Act 2008
PM	Particulate Matter
PRA	Preferred Route Announcement
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
PVB	Present Value of Benefits
PVC	Present Value of Costs
RIS1	Road Investment Strategy: 2015 to 2020
ROF	Royal Ordnance Factory
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SBI	Site of Biological Importance
SCC	Staffordshire County Council
SES	Strategic Employment Site
SOAEL	Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level
SoS	Secretary of State
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SRN	Strategic Road Network
SSC	South Staffordshire Council
SSCS	South Staffordshire Core Strategy
SSSAD	South Staffordshire Site Allocations Document
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
SWMP	Site Waste Management Plan
TEE	Transport Economic Efficiency
TMP	Traffic Management Plan
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
TUBA	Transport Users Benefit Analysis
VSC	Very Special Circumstances
WCH	Walkers, cyclists and horse riders
WFD	Water Framework Directive

Abbreviation	Description
WMCA	West Midlands Combined Authority
WMI	West Midlands Interchange

Appendix A: NPSNN Accordance Table

M54 to M6 Link Road

TR010054

Volume 7

**7.2 Appendix A: National Policy
Statement for National Networks
Accordance Table**

Regulation 5(2)(q)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

January 2020

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms and
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

M54 to M6 Link Road
Development Consent Order 202[]

**7.2 Appendix A: National Policy Statement for National Networks
Accordance Table**

Regulation Number	Regulation 5(2)(q)
Planning Inspectorate Scheme Reference	TR010054
Application Document Reference	TR010054/APP/7.2
Author	M54 to M6 Link Road Project Team and Highways England

Version	Date	Status of Version
P02	20/01/20	DCO Application

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1 Table 1: National Policy Statement for National Networks Chapter 3

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
3	WIDER GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE NATIONAL NETWORKS	
3.2 (Environment and social impacts)	The Government recognises that for development of the national road and rail networks to be sustainable these should be designed to minimize social and environmental impacts and improve quality of life.	<p>The Scheme design incorporates a number of design measures to minimise the adverse social and environmental effects. Chapter 2 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] describes the design and mitigation measures incorporated into the Scheme to minimise adverse effects. This includes locating the highway in a cutting (where possible) and using embankment and landscaping to provide visual and acoustic screening.</p> <p>The Scheme will reduce traffic including HGV traffic along the A460, the A449 and A5 and so will improve amenity and quality of life for residents living closest to these routes. The Scheme will retain connectivity between residential areas, community and education facilities and retail areas. The Scheme will also retain existing public rights of way following some minor diversions.</p> <p>As outlined in Chapter 8 of the Case for the Scheme (CfS) [TR010054/APP/7.2] the proposed development fulfils the economic, social and environmental roles of sustainable development.</p>

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
3	WIDER GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE NATIONAL NETWORKS	
3.3 (Environment and social impacts)	In delivering new schemes, the Government expects applicants to avoid and mitigate environmental and social impacts in line with the principles set out in the NPPF and the Government's planning guidance. Applicants should also provide evidence that they have considered reasonable opportunities to deliver environmental and social benefits as part of schemes.	<p>The applicant has sought to avoid environmental and social impacts through careful and considerate Scheme design. Where it has not been possible to avoid such impacts, mitigation measures would be implemented to minimise the potential adverse effects of the Scheme.</p> <p>The Scheme design incorporates a number of design measures to minimise the adverse social and environmental effects. Chapter 2 of the ES [TR010054/APP /6.1] describes the design and mitigation measures incorporated into the Scheme to minimise adverse effects. This includes locating the highway in a cutting (where possible) and using embankment and landscaping to provide visual and acoustic screening.</p>
3.17 (Sustainable transport)	There is a direct role for the national road network to play in helping pedestrians and cyclists. The Government expects applicants to use reasonable endeavours to address the needs of cyclists and pedestrians in the design of new schemes. The Government also expects applicants to identify opportunities to invest in infrastructure in locations where the national road network severs communities and acts as a barrier to cycling and walking, by correcting historic problems, retrofitting the latest solutions and ensuring that it is easy and safe for cyclists to use junctions.	<p>Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] reports the outcomes of an assessment to identify the likely significant effects on walkers, cyclists and horse riders (WCH) who travel on parts of the road and public rights of way networks that would be altered as a consequence of the Scheme.</p> <p>The requirements of WCH have been identified and appropriate provisions have been incorporated into the design of the Scheme to: enhance accessibility through the provision of new and altered cycleways and footways; reduce traffic-related severance by providing bridge crossings; and maintain connectivity by modifying and diverting existing routes.</p>

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
3	WIDER GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE NATIONAL NETWORKS	
3.21 (Accessibility)	Applicants are reminded of their duty to promote equality and to consider the needs of disabled people as part of their normal practice. Applicants are expected to comply with any obligations under the Equalities Act 2010.	The Scheme will provide a new link road running north and south between the M54 and M6. An Equalities Impact Assessment [TR010054/APP/6.7] has been carried out in respect of the Scheme and demonstrates that the Applicant is compliant with obligations under the Equalities Act 2010.

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
3	WIDER GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE NATIONAL NETWORKS	
3.22	Severance can be a problem in some locations. Where appropriate applicants should seek to deliver improvements that reduce community severance and improve accessibility.	<p>Chapter 12 Population and Health of the Environmental Statement [TR010054/APP/6.1] reports the outcomes of an assessment that considers the likely significant effects of traffic-related severance on non-motorised users and the journeys they currently undertake between communities and their facilities and information on measures take to reduce community severance and improve accessibility.</p> <p>Planning of the Scheme construction works would be undertaken in order to minimise the need to close and divert footways, PRoW and cycle facilities, and minimise closures and diversion durations. Where the closure of WCH routes would be required, safe and appropriate alternative means of access would be provided to ensure access would be maintained at all times and minimise temporary severance. The construction contractor would agree temporary diversion routes in advance with the host local authorities as applicable. Appropriate signage for all closures and diversion of footpaths and cycleways would be used to inform WCH with sufficient notice of such closures and diversions being provided. Measures have been incorporated into the design of the Scheme to enable non-motorised users to make journeys between communities that would be affected by the Scheme once operational.</p> <p>Measures have also been incorporated into the design of the Scheme to enable non-motorised users to make journeys between communities that would be affected by the Scheme once operational. Within the Scheme, such provisions would include: footway diversions; footpath diversions; bridleway diversions; proposed footways; proposed footpaths; proposed bridleways; proposed shared footway/cycleway; and a WCH overbridge near Brookfield Farm. The Scheme will also relocate bus stops.</p> <p>The Scheme will provide wider benefits by enabling greater access between the communities of Shareshill and Featherstone through the reduction of traffic along the A460 thus providing a better environment for users.</p>

2 Table 2: National Policy Statement for National Networks Chapter 4

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
4.5 (General principles of assessment – Business Case)	Applications for road and rail projects... will normally be supported by a business case prepared in accordance with Treasury Green Book principles. This business case provides the basis for investment decisions on road and rail projects. The business case will normally be developed based on the Department's Transport Business Case guidance and WebTAG guidance. The economic case prepared for a transport business case will assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of a development. The information provided will be proportionate to the development. This information will be important for the Examining Authority and the Secretary of State's consideration of the adverse impacts and benefits of a proposed development. It is expected that NSIP schemes brought forward through the development consent order process by virtue of Section 35 of the Planning Act 2008, should also meet this requirement.	<p>An Economic Assessment Report and a Transport Assessment Report have been carried out for the Scheme and a summary of the findings is presented in Chapters 5 and 6 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2]. The Transport Assessment Report is also provided with the application [TR010054/APP/7.4]</p> <p>The economic assessment for the Scheme was undertaken using outputs from the proposed Scheme's traffic model, the TUBA economic appraisal program and the COBALT accident assessment program. A 60-year appraisal period of 2024 to 2083 has been adopted. The traffic flows, times and distances have been extracted from the forecasting traffic model and have been used in the economic appraisal to produce a monetised cost benefit analysis in accordance with TAG guidance and HM Treasury Green Book principles.</p> <p>The impacts of the Scheme have been monetised for various environmental aspects associated with the Scheme, along with the impact on accidents, business transport users, commuting, taxes, local government funding and journey reliability. The economic assessment determined that the Scheme will have a Benefit Cost Ratio of 3.0 and as a result it is considered that the Scheme will provide very good value for money.</p>
4.6 (local transport model)	Applications for road and rail projects should usually be supported by a local transport model to provide sufficiently accurate detail of the impacts of a project. The modelling will usually include national level factors around the key drivers of transport demand such as economic growth, demographic change, travel costs and labour	A local transport model has been developed for the Scheme and is proportionate to the scale of the Scheme. The transport model includes consideration of key drivers of transport demand. The assessment of the benefits of the Scheme have been based on a forecast Core Growth scenario with sensitivity tests using Low Growth and High Growth assumptions. Further detail is presented in Chapters 5 and 6 of the Case for the Scheme.

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
	market participation, as well as local factors. The Examining Authority and the Secretary of State do not need to be concerned with the national methodology and national assumptions around the key drivers of transport demand. We do encourage an assessment of the benefits and costs of schemes under high and low growth scenarios, in addition to the core case. The modelling should be proportionate to the scale of the scheme and include appropriate sensitivity analysis to consider the impact of uncertainty on project impacts.	
4.15 (Environmental Impact Assessment)	All proposals for projects that are subject to the European Union's Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and are likely to have significant effects on the environment, must be accompanied by an environmental statement (ES), describing the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project. The Directive specifically requires an environmental impact assessment to identify, describe and assess effects on human beings, fauna and flora, soil, water, air, climate, the landscape, material assets and cultural heritage, and the interaction between them. Schedule 4 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2009 sets out the information that should be included in the environmental statement including a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed project on the environment, covering the	<p>The proposed Scheme is an 'EIA development' as it is a type listed within Schedule 2 Regulation 3(1) Part 10 (f) (construction of roads) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (herein referred to as 'the EIA Regulations'), and it has the potential to generate significant environmental effects by virtue of its nature, scale and location.</p> <p>In accordance with Regulation 8(1) (b) of the EIA Regulations, Highways England notified the Secretary of State for Transport (Secretary of State) in a letter to the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) dated 11 January 2019 that an ES presenting the findings of the EIA will be submitted with the DCO application. The Inspectorate reviewed and consulted on the EIA Scoping Report and published a Scoping Opinion on 21st February 2019.</p> <p>In accordance with paragraph 4.15 of the NPSNN an EIA has been undertaken and identifies, describes and assesses the effects of the Scheme on humans, fauna and flora, soil, water, air, climate, the landscape, material assets and cultural heritage, and the interaction between them in dedicated chapters of the ES which also describe the magnitude of the effect, mitigation and any residual effects.</p>

M54 to M6 Link Road
National Policy Statement for National Networks Accordance Table

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
	direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the project, and also the measures envisaged for avoiding or mitigating significant adverse effects. Further guidance can be found in the online planning portal... In this NPS, the terms 'effects', 'impacts' or 'benefits' should accordingly be understood to mean likely significant effects, impacts or benefits.	
4.16	When considering significant cumulative effects, any environmental statement should provide information on how the effects of the applicant's proposal would combine and interact with the effects of other development (including projects for which consent has been granted, as well as those already in existence).	<p>An assessment of the cumulative effects has been carried out and is reported in Chapter 15 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The assessment considers both cumulative effects and combined effects.</p> <p>The assessment of cumulative effects considers the effect of the Scheme activities together with the effects of other development projects in the area or region. For example, impacts caused by the Scheme may be exacerbated by the activities from other major projects nearby or non-significant individual impacts at different sites collectively may give rise to an overall significant effect in the region.</p> <p>In-combination effects could arise from the accumulation of different impacts due to the Scheme at a specific location. For example, construction noise and visual intrusion affecting a single receptor – individually may not be significant, but the accumulation of different effects may give rise to an overall significant effect.</p> <p>The assessment has been carried out for both the construction and operation phases of the Scheme.</p>
4.18	In some instances it may not be possible at the	Section 2.5 in Chapter 2 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] provides the limits of deviation

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National Policy Statement for National Networks Accordance Table

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
	time of the application for development consent for all aspects of the proposal to have been settled in precise detail. Where this is the case, the applicant should explain in its application which elements of the proposal have yet to be finalised, and the reasons why this is the case.	for the construction of the Scheme. These limits have been incorporated into the Scheme boundary to allow minor modifications to be made during the detailed design and construction stages for example due to unforeseen ground conditions during the construction phase. These limits of deviation have been taken into consideration during the technical assessments of the Scheme.
4.19	Where some details are still to be finalised, applicants are advised to set out in the environmental statement, to the best of their knowledge, what the maximum extent of the proposed development may be (for example in terms of site area) and assess the potential adverse effects which the project could have to ensure that the impacts of the project as it may be constructed have been properly assessed.	As stated in the response to NPSNN paragraph 4.18, the EIA has taken into account the maximum limits of deviation when assessing the environmental effects of the Scheme.
4.21	In cases where the EIA Directive does not apply to a project, and an environmental statement is not therefore required, the applicant should instead provide information proportionate to the project on the likely environmental, social and economic effects	Not applicable as an ES is required for the Scheme.
4.22 (Habitats Regulations Assessment)	...The applicant should seek the advice of Natural England and, where appropriate, for cross-boundary impacts, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage to ensure that impacts on European sites in Wales and Scotland are adequately considered.	The applicant has engaged with and consulted Natural England with regard to the proposed Scheme, with a draft Statement of Common Ground provided with this application [TR010054/APP/7.3] . Due to the location of the Scheme it has not been necessary to consider cross boundary impacts or consult with Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage.
4.23	Applicants are required to provide sufficient information with their applications for development	A Habitat Regulations Assessment No Significant Effects Report (HRA) [TR010054/APP/6.9] is provided with the application and considers whether the

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
	consent to enable the Secretary of State to carry out an Appropriate Assessment if required. This information should include details of any measures that are proposed to minimise or avoid any likely significant effects on a European site. The information provided may also assist the Secretary of State in concluding that an appropriate assessment is not required because significant effects on European sites are sufficiently unlikely that they can be excluded.	proposed Scheme has the potential to result in significant effects on European Sites of biodiversity interest. The HRA report concludes that the Scheme would not result in a likely significant effect on European Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and as such an Appropriate Assessment is not required.
4.26 (Alternatives)	Applicants should comply with all legal requirements and any policy requirements set out in this NPS on the assessment of alternatives. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EIA Directive requires projects with significant environmental effects to include an outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant and an indication of the main reasons for the applicant's choice, taking into account the environmental effects. - There may also be other specific legal requirements for the consideration of alternatives, for example, under the Habitats and Water Framework Directives. - There may also be policy requirements in this NPS, for example the flood risk sequential test and the assessment of alternatives for developments in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). 	Consideration has been given to the alternative design options that may be available. Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] provides a detailed account of how the Scheme has been developed over a number of years. Chapter 3 of the Case for the Scheme [TR010054/APP/7.2] also provides a summary of the options considered.

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National Policy Statement for National Networks Accordance Table

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
4.27	All projects should be subject to an options appraisal. The appraisal should consider viable modal alternatives and may also consider other options (in light of the paragraphs 3.23 to 3.27 of this NPS). Where projects have been subject to full options appraisal in achieving their status within Road or Rail Investment Strategies or other appropriate policies or investment plans, option testing need not be considered by the examining authority or the decision maker. For national road and rail schemes, proportionate option consideration of alternatives will have been undertaken as part of the investment decision making process. It is not necessary for the Examining Authority and the decision maker to reconsider this process, but they should be satisfied that this assessment has been undertaken.	<p>The Scheme is identified in the Roads Investment Strategy 2015 to 2020 and, therefore, in accordance with paragraph 4.27 of the NPSNN, option testing need not be considered by the examining authority or the decision maker as long as they are satisfied that appropriate testing has been undertaken.</p> <p>A large number of design options have been considered throughout the option selection and design process, with a summary of alternative options considered and the reason for their rejection being presented in Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and Chapter 3 of the Case for the Scheme [TR010054/APP/7.2].</p>
4.28 - 4.29 (Criteria for “good design” for national network Infrastructure)	Applicants should include design as an integral consideration from the outset of a proposal. Visual appearance should be a key factor in considering the design of new infrastructure, as well as functionality, fitness for purpose, sustainability and cost. Applying “good design” to national network projects should therefore produce sustainable infrastructure sensitive to place, efficient in the use of natural resources and energy used in their construction, matched by an appearance that demonstrates good aesthetics as	<p>As set out in Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and summarised in Chapter 3 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2] a number of design iterations have been developed and assessed to avoid visual/aesthetic and noise effects before selecting a preferred option.</p> <p>The Scheme design has been developed through an iterative process, informed by the environmental assessment. The development of the Scheme design has been informed by knowledge of environmental constraints, the environmental assessment of emerging design proposals and engagement with stakeholders (including the responses received during statutory consultation). The design has sought to minimise adverse environmental impacts.</p>

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National Policy Statement for National Networks Accordance Table

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
	far as possible.	<p>The Scheme design includes measures to assimilate the proposed Scheme with the surrounding landscape. This includes locating the route within a cutting and providing landscaping along the route corridor. The design, location and use of acoustic barriers has been developed with consideration of the environmental benefits and impacts of the barriers on sensitive areas.</p> <p>Compliance with Highways England's safety governance procedures including consultation with Operations Technical Leadership Group and production of Operational Safety documents was a mandatory aspect of the Scheme design management process to ensure operational risks were identified and mitigated.</p>
4.33	The applicant should therefore take into account, as far as possible, both functionality (including fitness for purpose and sustainability) and aesthetics (including the scheme's contribution to the quality of the area in which it would be located). Applicants will want to consider the role of technology in delivering new national networks projects. The use of professional, independent advice on the design aspects of a proposal should be considered, to ensure good design principles are embedded into infrastructure proposals.	<p>Functional requirements of the Scheme as highways infrastructure project is led by technical documents setting out parameters for new road design such as the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) and supporting Highway Design Standards for infrastructure. Compliance with these requirements will ensure the Scheme is fit for purpose.</p> <p>The aesthetics of the new link road are dictated by the purpose of the Scheme to provide a functional link road. The Scheme will be located within a cutting where possible and landscaping and planting will be carried out to blend the route with the surrounding landscape and existing field boundary vegetation.</p> <p>The Scheme features technological equipment to enable operational monitoring and control of traffic during incidents and maintenance. This would include CCTV cameras and variable message signs to provide information to drivers.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement was undertaken early in the design process and has formed an integral part of the design development process. The design has been developed with input from stakeholders (both external to Highways England and internal through safety audits of design features and rationale log auditing).</p>

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
		A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) has been carried out and has informed the Scheme design, with results presented in Chapter 5 of the Transport Assessment Report [TR010054/APP/7.4] . The design process has been carried out in partnership with Highways England specialists on, for example, the environment, highways design and operation. The stakeholder engagement process has also contributed to ensuring that good design principles have been embedded into the proposals.
4.34	Whilst the applicant may only have limited choice in the physical appearance of some national networks infrastructure, there may be opportunities for the applicant to demonstrate good design in terms of siting and design measures relative to existing landscape and historical character and function, landscape permeability, landform and vegetation.	<p>The ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] identifies and describes key features of the design that mitigate adverse environmental effects within close proximity of the Scheme.</p> <p>The alignment of the Scheme has been chosen to avoid and minimise effects on sensitive receptors including residential properties, the listed buildings at Hilton Hall, and to minimise the loss of ancient woodland and veteran trees.</p> <p>Where possible, the Scheme has been designed to be in a cutting in order to minimise the visual intrusion to the surrounding landscape. The alignment has also been designed to as to retain existing planting wherever possible.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Consultation Report [TR010054/APP/5.1] identifies how the design process has been influenced by key stakeholders and local people.</p>
4.35	Applicants should be able to demonstrate in their application how the design process was conducted and how the proposed design evolved. Where a number of different designs were considered, applicants should set out the reasons why the favoured choice has been selected....	<p>Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and Chapter 3 of the Case for the Scheme both outline how the design for the Scheme the options that have been considered and discounted before selecting the preferred option</p> <p>The Scheme has been designed in accordance with the technical standards specified in the DMRB at the time of assessment were produced to ensure that the new infrastructure can operate safely and effectively.</p>

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
4	ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES	
4.40 (Climate change adaptation)	New national networks infrastructure will be typically long-term investments which will need to remain operational over many decades, in the face of a changing climate. Consequently, applicants must consider the impacts of climate change when planning location, design, build and operation. Any accompanying environment statement should set out how the proposal will take account of the projected impacts of climate change.	<p>The potential climate impacts associated with the construction and operation of the Scheme have been assessed, with the methodology and findings presented in Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>The climate assessment outlines that the location for the Scheme is dictated by the requirement to provide a suitable link road between the M54 and M6. Consideration has been given to climate change adaptation and mitigation during the design development.</p> <p>The assessment considers the construction and operation phases of the Scheme and recognises that that key sources of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions are construction activities and carbon embedded in construction materials and that an Outline Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) [TR010054/APP/6.11] for the Scheme will include measures to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions and will be developed with the construction contractor.</p> <p>During the operation phase the Scheme measures such as energy efficient lighting will be implemented.</p> <p>A number of mitigation and adaptation measures will be implemented to address any potential impacts associated with future climate change events including flood alleviation measures.</p>
4.41	Where transport infrastructure has safety-critical elements and the design life of the asset is 60 years or greater, the applicant should apply the UK Climate Projections 2009 (UKCP09) high emissions scenario (high impact, low likelihood) against the 2080 projections at the 50% probability level.	The UK Climate Projections 2009 (UKCP09) high emissions scenario (high impact, low likelihood) against the 2080 projections at the 50% probability level has been applied in the assessment of climate change in the Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] as the Scheme comprises transport infrastructure with a design life of 60 years or greater.

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4.42	The applicant should take into account the potential impacts of climate change using the latest UK Climate Projections available at the time and ensure any environment statement that is prepared identifies appropriate mitigation or adaptation measures. This should cover the estimated lifetime of the new infrastructure...	The assessments included in the ES have taken into account the potential impacts of climate change using the latest UK Climate Projections time and Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] identifies appropriate mitigation or adaptation measures for the estimated lifetime of the new infrastructure.
4.43	The applicant should demonstrate that there are no critical features of the design of new national networks infrastructure which may be seriously affected by more radical changes to the climate beyond that projected in the latest set of UK climate projections. Any potential critical features should be assessed taking account of the latest credible scientific evidence on, for example, sea level rise (e.g. by referring to additional maximum credible scenarios such as from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or Environment Agency) and on the basis that necessary action can be taken to ensure the operation of the infrastructure over its estimated lifetime through potential further mitigation or adaptation.	The effects of climate change have been assessed and reported in Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] . The assessment that there are no critical features of the design which may be seriously affected by the more radical changes to the climate beyond that projected in the latest set of UK climate projections with the implementation of mitigation measures.
4.44	Any adaptation measures should be based on the latest set of UK Climate Projections, the Government's national Climate Change Risk	Adaptation measures included in the Scheme design are based on the latest set of UK Climate Projections, the Government's national Climate Change Risk Assessment and consultation with statutory consultation bodies. The mitigation measures included in the

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	Assessment and consultation with statutory consultation bodies. Any adaptation measures must themselves also be assessed as part of any environmental impact assessment and included in the environment statement, which should set out how and where such measures are proposed to be secured.	Scheme design, such as SuDS for example have been considered in the various assessments in the ES such as the assessment of road drainage, the flood risk assessment and the biodiversity and nature conservation assessment.
4.52 (Pollution control and other environmental protection Regimes)	There is a statutory duty on applicants to consult the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) on nationally significant projects which would affect, or would be likely to affect, any relevant marine areas as defined in the Planning Act (as amended by section 23 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009)...	The Scheme would not be likely to affect any relevant marine areas and it is therefore not necessary to consult the Marine Management Organisation.
4.53	When an applicant applies for an Environmental Permit, the relevant regulator (the Environment Agency) requires that the application demonstrates that processes are in place to meet all relevant Environmental Permit requirements...	Discussions will take place with the regulators and stakeholders regarding the consenting and licensing of activities. This process is set out in the Consents and Agreements Position Statement [TR010054/APP/3.3] .
4.54	Applicants are encouraged to begin pre-application discussions with the Environment Agency as early as possible. It is however expected that an	Discussions have taken place with the regulators and stakeholders regarding the consenting and licensing of activities. This process is set out in the Consents and Agreements Position Statement [TR010054/APP/3.3] .

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	<p>applicant will have first thought through the requirements as a starting point for discussion.</p> <p>Some consents require a significant amount of preparation; as an example, the Environment Agency suggests that applicants should start work towards submitting the permit application at least 6 months prior to the submission of an application for a Development Consent Order, where they wish to parallel track the applications. This will help ensure that applications take account of all relevant environmental considerations and that the relevant regulators are able to provide timely advice and assurance to the Examining Authority.</p>	<p>The Applicant has engaged with the Environment Agency throughout the preparation of the DCO application, including providing draft documents for review and meetings to discuss assessment, design of the Scheme and consents to be sought outside the DCO process.</p>
4.61 (Safety)	<p>The applicant should undertake an objective assessment of the impact of the proposed development on safety including the impact of any mitigation measures. This should use the methodology outlined in the guidance from DfT (WebTAG) and from the Highways Agency.</p>	<p>The Scheme has been designed in the accordance with the DMRB to provide a Scheme which will be safe for users of the Strategic Road Network.</p> <p>An assessment of accident impacts has been completed using COBALT (Cost and Benefit to Accidents – Light Touch) version 2013_02 and a separate safety assessment was also undertaken.</p> <p>Observed accident records for 2011 to 2015 (inclusive) were used on modelled links within the study area. A base year of 2016, opening year 2023 and design year 2038 were modelled for the COBALT assessment. The assessment followed DfT WebTAG guidance. Chapter 5 of the Transport Assessment Report [TR010054/APP/7.4] describes the Scheme's road safety assessment.</p>

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4.62	They should also put in place arrangements for undertaking the road safety audit process. Road safety audits are a mandatory requirement for all trunk road highway improvement schemes in the UK (including motorways).	A Stage 1 RSA has been carried out for the Scheme. Additional Road Safety Audits will be conducted in accordance with DfT and Highways England guidance as the design progresses.
4.64	<p>The applicant should be able to demonstrate that their scheme is consistent with the Highways Agency's Safety Framework for the Strategic Road Network and with the national Strategic Framework for Road Safety. Applicants will wish to show that they have taken all steps that are reasonably required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minimise the risk of death and injury arising from their development; - contribute to an overall reduction in road casualties; - contribute to an overall reduction in the number of unplanned incidents; and - contribute to improvements in road safety for walkers and cyclists. 	<p>The Construction, Design and Management (CDM) Regulations 2015 require due consideration for health and safety of all stakeholders through the project life.</p> <p>An assessment of accident impacts has been completed using COBALT, the assessment forecasted a reduction in accidents across the extent of the Scheme.</p> <p>The Scheme was designed in accordance with technical documents produced by the DfT and Highways England which include the DMRB and Manual of Contract documents for Highway Works (MCHW). Compliance with Highways England's safety governance procedures including consultation with Operations Technical Leadership Group and production of Operational Safety documents was a mandatory aspect of the Scheme design management process to ensure operational risks were identified and mitigated.</p> <p>A Stage 1 RSA has been carried out. Further RSAs will be carried out as the design progresses in compliance with Highways England and DfT requirements.</p>
4.65	<p>They will also wish to demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they have considered the safety implications of their project from the outset; and 	The Scheme development process is required to comply with the CDM Regulations 2015. This requires due consideration for health and safety of all stakeholders through the project life cycle.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they are putting in place rigorous processes for monitoring and evaluating safety. 	A Stage 1 RSA has been carried out. Further RSAs will be carried out as the design progresses in compliance with Highways England and DfT requirements.
4.76 - 4.77 (Security considerations)	<p>Where national security implications have been identified, the applicant should consult with relevant security experts from CPNI [Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure] and the Department for Transport, to ensure that physical, procedural and personnel security measures have been adequately considered in the design process and that adequate consideration has been given to the management of security risks. If CPNI and the Department for Transport (as appropriate) are satisfied that security issues have been adequately addressed in the project when the application is submitted, they will provide confirmation of this to the Secretary of State, and the Examining Authority should not need to give any further consideration to the details of the security measures during the examination.</p> <p>The applicant should only include such information in the application as is necessary to enable the Examining Authority to examine the development consent issues and make a properly informed recommendation on the application.</p>	No national security implications have been identified for the Scheme. However the detailed design of the Scheme would incorporate safety and security standards that meet the requirements of the CPNI as appropriate. Should any issues with the Scheme arise resulting in its temporary closure, the A460 would remain as a diversionary route.
4.81 - 4.82 (Health)	As described in the relevant sections of this NPS, where the proposed project has likely significant environmental impacts that would have an effect	An assessment of the Schemes impact on population and health has been carried out and is reported in Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The assessment considers the potential impacts on human health, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. The

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	<p>on human beings, any environmental statement should identify and set out the assessment of any likely significant adverse health impacts.</p> <p>The applicant should identify measures to avoid, reduce or compensate for adverse health impacts as appropriate. These impacts may affect people simultaneously, so the applicant, and the Secretary of State (in determining an application for development consent) should consider the cumulative impact on health.</p>	<p>assessment also considers the potential impacts on motorised vehicle users, community severance, agricultural holdings and development land.</p> <p>The assessment methodology follows the guidance in the DMRB Volume 11 Section 3 and the HUDU (London Health Urban Development Unit) Planning for Health Rapid Health Impact Assessment Tool.</p> <p>The Scheme has been designed, as far as possible, to avoid and minimise impacts and effects on population and human health through the process of design-development and considering good design principles.</p> <p>Mitigation has also been identified in the assessment to further reduce potential adverse effects. During construction such measures include implementing Environmental Management Plans and Traffic Management Plans along with careful scheduling and programming of construction works to minimise the need to close and divert rights of way.</p>

3 Table 3: National Policy Statement for National Networks Chapter 5

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
5	GENERIC IMPACTS	
5.6 - 5.9 (Air quality)	Where the impacts of the project (both on and off-scheme) are likely to have significant air quality effects in relation to meeting EIA requirements and / or affect the UKs ability to comply with the Air Quality Directive, the applicant should undertake	An air quality assessment has been undertaken in respect of the construction and operation phases of the Scheme. The assessment methodology, baseline conditions and likely significant effects are reported in Chapter 5 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

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	<p>an assessment of the impacts of the proposed project as part of the environmental statement.</p> <p>The environmental statement should describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - existing air quality levels; - forecasts of air quality at the time of opening, assuming that the scheme is not built (the future baseline) and taking account of the impact of the scheme; and - any significant air quality effects, their mitigation and any residual effects, distinguishing between the construction and operation stages and taking account of the impact of road traffic generated by the project. <p>Defra publishes future national projections of air quality based on evidence of future emissions, traffic and vehicle fleet. Projections are updated as the evidence base changes. Applicant's assessment should be consistent with this but may include more detailed modelling to demonstrate local impacts.</p> <p>In addition to information on the likely significant effects of a project in relation to EIA, the Secretary of State must be provided with a judgement on the risk as to whether the project would affect the UK's ability to comply with the Air Quality Directive.</p>	<p>The assessment describes the existing air quality levels, forecasts the air quality when the Scheme becomes operational and the effects of the Scheme, along with mitigation and residual effects.</p> <p>In accordance with the NPSNN the air quality assessment has been carried out to be consistent data published by Defra. The assessment outlines the predicted changes to air quality and pollution and set out where significance of effect to air quality.</p>

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5.13	<p>The Secretary of State should refuse consent where, after taking into account mitigation, the air quality impacts of the scheme will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - result in a zone/agglomeration which is currently reported as being compliant with the Air Quality Directive becoming non-compliant; or - affect the ability of a non-compliant area to achieve compliance within the most recent timescales reported to the European Commission at the time of the decision. 	<p>The air quality assessment presented in Chapter 5 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] states in Section 5.9 that a compliance risk assessment has been carried out for air quality in the study area which found that there are no links reported by Defra that would be non compliant in the first year of the Scheme operation. The assessment concluded that this indicates there would be no compliance risk for this Scheme.</p>
5.14 - 5.15	<p>The Secretary of State should consider whether mitigation measures put forward by the applicant are acceptable. A management plan may help codify mitigation at this stage. The proposed mitigation measures should ensure that the net impact of a project does not delay the point at which a zone will meet compliance timescales.</p> <p>Mitigation measures may affect the project design, layout, construction, operation and/or may comprise measures to improve air quality in pollution hotspots beyond the immediate locality of the scheme. Measures could include, but are not limited to, changes to the route of the new scheme, changes to the proximity of vehicles to local receptors in the existing route, physical means</p>	<p>The air quality assessment presented in Chapter 5 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes that there will be no compliance risk for this Scheme and as such specific mitigation is not required for this matter.</p> <p>The Scheme alignment has been influenced by the iterative assessment of air quality impacts, including moving the alignment further from properties on Dark Lane to reduce impacts.</p> <p>The air quality assessment in section 5.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] outlines design mitigation and enhancement measures to minimise the effect of the Scheme to air quality. Such measures include adopting a Construction Environmental Management Plan which will include a range of best practice construction phase dust mitigation measures required for all works undertaken where there is potential for adverse effects on sensitive receptors along with standard mitigation to manage and reduce dust in accordance with industry best practice.</p>

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	including barriers to trap or better disperse emissions, and speed control. The implementation of mitigation measures may require working with partners to support their delivery.	No essential mitigation measures are considered necessary during the operational phase of the Scheme as the pollutant concentrations and impacts in the Section 5.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] demonstrate that the operation of the Scheme would not have a significant effect on local air quality that would require essential mitigation.
5.17 (Carbon emissions)	Carbon impacts will be considered as part of the appraisal of scheme options (in the business case), prior to the submission of an application for DCO. Where the development is subject to EIA, any Environmental Statement will need to describe an assessment of any likely significant climate factors in accordance with the requirements in the EIA Directive. It is very unlikely that the impact of a road project will, in isolation, affect the ability of Government to meet its carbon reduction plan targets. However, for road projects applicants should provide evidence of the carbon impact of the project and an assessment against the Government's carbon budgets.	In accordance with Paragraph 5.17 carbon impacts have been considered as part of the economic appraisal of the Scheme options in the business case prior to the submission of the application for the DCO. A range of monetised and non monetised impacts have been considered in the economic assessment and business case for the Scheme including carbon emissions, with the assessment summarised in the Case for the Scheme Chapter 6 [TR010054/APP/7.2] . Carbon emissions are also considered in Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] presents the methodology and findings for the assessment of effects on Climate. This includes a GHG impact assessment. The assessment concludes that the GHG impact of the Scheme would not have a material impact on carbon reduction targets as set by the UK Government.
5.19	Evidence of appropriate mitigation measures (incorporating engineering plans on configuration and layout, and use of materials) in both design and construction should be presented. The Secretary of State will consider the effectiveness of such mitigation measures in order to ensure that, in relation to design and construction, the carbon	The design, mitigation and enhancement measures in respect of carbon and GHG impact and climate change resilience are presented in Section 14.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] . The mitigation outlined includes measures to reduce emissions during the lifecycle of the Scheme including construction and operation. Highways England is committed to reducing carbon emissions from activity on its network by implementing the following hierarchy:

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	<p>footprint is not unnecessarily high. The Secretary of State's view of the adequacy of the mitigation measures relating to design and construction will be a material factor in the decision making process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoidance and prevention – to maximise potential for reusing and/or refurbishing existing assets. - Reduction – through the application of low carbon solutions including technologies, materials and products to minimise resource consumption. - Remediation – applied to further reduce carbon through on or off-site offsetting or sequestrations. <p>Section 14.8 of the ES outlines specific measures to reduce emissions during construction and operation of the Scheme.</p> <p>Climate Change Resilience measures are also outlined in Section 14.8 of the ES. The resilience measures included in the design are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flood alleviation measures, - Use of modern materials (such as increased tolerance to fluctuating temperatures), - Improved drainage strategy - Implementation of emergency systems and response plans.

<p>5.22 - 5.23 (Biodiversity and ecological conservation)</p>	<p>Where the project is subject to EIA the applicant should ensure that the environmental statement clearly sets out any likely significant effects on internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of ecological or geological conservation importance (including those outside England) on protected species and on habitats and other species identified as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity and that the statement considers the full range of potential impacts on ecosystems.</p> <p>The applicant should show how the project has taken advantage of opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geological conservation interests.</p>	<p>Chapter 8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] sets out any likely significant effects on internationally, nationally and locally designated sites, protected and notable species and habitats (including Habitats and Species of Principle Importance as listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006). In Chapter 8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] the full range of potential impacts on ecosystems through the construction and operation of the Scheme are considered. Opportunities have been sought to conserve and enhance biodiversity where possible through the inclusion of planting and landscaping to create habitat for terrestrial species and new waterbodies for aquatic ecology.</p>
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NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
5	GENERIC IMPACTS	
5.25	<p>As a general principle, and subject to the specific policies below, development should avoid significant harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests, including through mitigation and consideration of reasonable alternatives. The applicant may also wish to make use of biodiversity offsetting in devising compensation proposals to counteract any impacts on biodiversity which cannot be avoided or mitigated. Where significant harm cannot be avoided or mitigated, as a last resort, appropriate compensation measures should be sought.</p>	<p>Chapter 8: Biodiversity in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] considers impact avoidance measures (i.e. design measures that have been incorporated into the Scheme to avoid or reduce (or 'design-out') impacts) and standard mitigation and management activities and additional mitigation measures to eliminate significant harm to biodiversity where possible. It demonstrates full compliance with this policy.</p> <p>The Scheme design aims to achieve no net loss in biodiversity within the Order limits..</p> <p>A biodiversity losses and gains assessment has been included within Chapter 8 in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1], which has contributed to the defined mitigation approach and demonstrates that the Scheme achieves no net loss with the measures proposed.</p>

5.26	<p>In taking decisions, the Secretary of State should ensure that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance, protected species, habitats and other species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity, and to biodiversity and geological interests within the wider environment.</p>	<p>The importance (sensitivity) of ecological features within the study areas has been assessed in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] in accordance with professional guidance (including DMRB and CIEEM). Ecological importance is assigned based on the geographical approach (International or European, UK or National, Regional, County or Unitary Authority, Local and Site). The importance of any feature that would be significantly affected has been used to assist in determining the geographical scale at which effects are significant.</p> <p>Due to the distance separating the Scheme from the identified designated sites of international importance, the assessment has concluded that there will be no direct or indirect impact pathways during the construction phase. Natural England have confirmed their agreement with this conclusion. See HRA report provided with the application [TR010054/APP/6.9].</p> <p>Similarly, there would be no direct impacts on any SSSIs, with the nearest SSSI being Stowe Pool and Walk Clay Mill SSSI located 1.5 km from the Scheme, with no hydrological connectivity between the two.</p> <p>There would be no direct impacts on sites with county importance, with the nearest being Wyrley and Essington Canal LNR located approximately 1.4 km from the Scheme.</p> <p>The Scheme would have direct impact on two Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) (Local Wildlife Sites), namely Lower Pool SBI and Brookfield Farm SBI. The new link road passes through both sites leading to a loss of woodland and standing water habitats. A very small amount of direct woodland lost at Brookfield Farm SBI (0.0015 ha) is ancient woodland, with an additional impact due to development within the buffer zone of the ancient woodland.</p> <p>Habitat losses in the two SBIs would be mitigated as part of the Scheme.</p> <p>Overall, there are no significant effects as a result of the Scheme on international, national and county level designated sites. The effects at SBIs will be mitigated by new planting, designed to deliver the maximum ecological benefit with connectivity to existing habitats. The weight applied to the impact on locally designated sites is less than would be applied for sites designated at a national or international level.</p>
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		Effects on protected species, habitats and other species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity, and to biodiversity and geological interests within the wider environment are explored further below.
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5	GENERIC IMPACTS	
5.29 (Biodiversity-SSSIs)	Where a proposed development on land within or outside a SSSI is likely to have an adverse effect on an SSSI (either individually or in combination with other developments), development consent should not normally be granted. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely, an exception should be made only where the benefits of the development at this site clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSIs. The Secretary of State should ensure that the applicant's proposals to mitigate the harmful aspects of the development and, where possible, to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the site's biodiversity or geological interest, are acceptable. Where necessary, requirements and/or planning obligations should be used to ensure these proposals are delivered.	<p>The Scheme is not likely to have an adverse effect on any SSSIs, either individually or in combination with other developments.</p> <p>The only SSSI that is within the study area is Stowe Pool and Walk Mill Clay Pit, situated 1.5km north east from the Scheme boundary. Located to the north of the M6 Toll and east of the M6, there are significant major barriers between the SSSI and the Scheme, therefore no impacts to the SSSI are expected to occur during construction or operation.</p>
5.32 (Biodiversity - Irreplaceable habitats)	Ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for its diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland. Once lost it cannot be recreated. The Secretary of State should not grant development consent for any development that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland	The Scheme has been designed to avoid any direct loss of ancient woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and to avoid the loss of veteran trees. The need to avoid these valuable biodiversity resources affected the selection of the broad route option (B or C), the routing of the Scheme around Dark Lane and the construction methods proposed for the Scheme near Whitgreaves Wood ancient woodland.

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including ancient woodland and veteran trees)	and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the national need for and benefits of the development, in that location, clearly outweigh the loss. Aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Where such trees would be affected by development proposals, the applicant should set out proposals for their conservation or, where their loss is unavoidable, the reasons for this.	<p>However, following tree surveys, it was identified that part of the woodland at Brookfield Farm SBI could be classified as ancient woodland, with the Scheme resulting in a very small area of tree loss in this area. The Scheme will also involve some indirect loss of ancient woodland at Brookfield Farm and Whitgreaves Wood through development in the 15 buffer areas around the woods. This loss is unavoidable, as demonstrated in Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1], which examines the alternatives considered for the Scheme delivery.</p> <p>The Scheme will therefore result in the loss of ancient woodland which is an irreplaceable habitat and therefore the loss of ancient woodland cannot be mitigated. Compensation for this unavoidable loss of ancient woodland has been agreed between Natural England and Highways England in the form of woodland planting, at a 7:1 ratio for gains to losses.</p> <p>The effect of the Scheme on ancient woodland is considered in Section 8.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.2]. The location of the land identified for these compensation measures is illustrated on the Environmental Masterplan on Figures 2.1 to 2.7 in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.2]. The reason that the residual impact on ancient woodland is unavoidable is explained in Section 8.13 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2].</p> <p>The national need for the development, as set out in Section 8.4 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2], clearly outweighs the small direct and indirect loss of ancient woodland when considered in isolation and alongside all other effects.</p>

NPSNN Paragraph Number	Requirement of the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPSNN)	Compliance with the NPSNN
5	GENERIC IMPACTS	
5.35 (Biodiversity - Protection of other habitats and species)	Other species and habitats have been identified as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales and therefore requiring conservation action. The Secretary of State should ensure that applicants have taken measures to ensure these species and habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development. Where appropriate, requirements or planning obligations may be used in order to deliver this protection. The Secretary of State should refuse consent where harm to the habitats or species and their habitats would result, unless the benefits of the development (including need) clearly outweigh that harm.	Chapter 8 in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1], provides an assessment of the potential effects on species and habitats of principal importance and explains measures taken to ensure species and habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development. Proposed mitigation measures are outlined in Chapter 8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and measures to be taken during construction are set out in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11], that will be developed into a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) secured by Requirement 4 in Schedule 2 of the draft DCO [TR010054/APP/3.1]. Requirement 7 on the draft DCO [TR010054/APP/3.1] requires pre-construction surveys for protected species.
5.36 (Biodiversity - Mitigation)	Applicants should include appropriate mitigation measures as an integral part of their proposed development, including identifying where and how that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - during construction, they will seek to ensure that activities will be confined to the minimum areas required for the works; - during construction and operation, best practice will be followed to ensure that risk of disturbance or damage to species or 	Chapter 8 in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1], provides information relating to the best practice measures proposed to avoid or otherwise minimise risk of damage or disturbance to habitats and species during construction and operation of the Scheme. The requirements for the restoration, protection and enhancement of habitats within the Scheme would be developed into a CEMP by the selected construction contractor that would be implemented for the duration of the Scheme construction phase. Protected species and habitat surveys have been conducted to inform associated mitigation requirements, such that potential impacts from Scheme construction and operation on these species and habitats is avoided or appropriately mitigated.

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	<p>habitats is minimised (including as a consequence of transport access arrangements);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - habitats will, where practicable, be restored after construction works have finished; - developments will be designed and landscaped to provide green corridors and minimise habitat fragmentation where reasonable; - opportunities will be taken to enhance existing habitats and, where practicable, to create new habitats of value within the site landscaping proposals, for example through techniques such as the 'greening' of existing network crossing points, the use of green bridges and the habitat improvement of the network verge. 	<p>In line with these requirements, opportunities have been taken to enhance existing habitats and, where practicable, to create new habitats of value within the site landscaping proposals. These proposals aim to achieve no net loss in biodiversity.</p>
5.42 (Waste management)	<p>The applicant should set out the arrangements that are proposed for managing any waste produced. The arrangements described should include information on the proposed waste recovery and disposal system for all waste generated by the development. The applicant should seek to minimise the volume of waste produced and the volume of waste sent for disposal unless it can be demonstrated that the alternative is the best overall environmental outcome.</p>	<p>The material assets and waste aspects of the Scheme are considered in Chapter 10 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. Specifically, Section 10.8 provides that the Scheme aims will prioritise waste prevention followed by preparing for re-use, recycling and recovery and lastly disposal to landfill as per the internationally recognised waste hierarchy.</p> <p>During the detailed design and construction phases for the Scheme a range of mitigation measures will be adopted which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing for the reuse and recovery of materials already on site • design for materials optimisation • design for off-site construction

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design for the future (deconstruction and flexibility) • design for waste efficient procurement: • engineering plan configurations and layouts that show how the most effective use of materials and arisings can be achieved. <p>During the construction of the Scheme a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be produced by the contractor, which will set out processes for the management of waste. The SWMP would include procedures for monitoring the overall construction waste recovery rate and the proportion of secondary and recycled aggregate used in the Scheme, in order to confirm the assessment of materials impacts.</p> <p>In addition, a CEMP will be adopted requiring contractors to adopt good practice in construction waste management which would reduce the quantity of waste generated</p>
5.55 - 5.58 (Civil and military aviation and defence interests)	<p>Where the proposed development may have an effect on civil or military aviation and/or other defence assets, an assessment of potential effects should be carried out.</p> <p>The applicant should consult the MoD, CAA, National Air Traffic Services (NATS) and any aerodrome – licensed or otherwise – likely to be affected by the proposed development in preparing an assessment of the proposal on aviation or other defence interests.</p> <p>Any assessment on aviation or other defence interests should include potential impacts during construction and operation of the project upon the operation of CNS infrastructure, flight patterns</p>	<p>NATS were contacted by the Inspectorate regarding the Scoping Opinion and consulted by Highways England during statutory consultation on the Scheme (May-July 2019). CAA were consulted by Highways England during statutory consultation. Neither organisation raised any issues. There are no civil airports within 10 km of the Scheme.</p> <p>The MoD was not consulted by the Inspectorate or Highways England as there are no known MoD assets in the area. The Scheme is not of a type likely to affect MoD radar. The Scheme is therefore not likely to affect their interests.</p> <p>The Scheme does not relate to airports and is not likely to affect an airport or its current or future operation given that there are no airports or airfields in close proximity to the Scheme. The nearest airfield is the unlicensed airfield at Otherton, 6 km from the Scheme. Therefore, no further assessments on aviation are necessary and no specific airports or airfields were consulted.</p>

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	(both civil and military), other defence assets and aerodrome operational procedures. If any relevant changes are made to proposals for an NSIP during the pre-application period or before the end of the examination of an application , it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the relevant aviation and defence consultees are informed as soon as reasonably possible.	
5.62	Where, after reasonable mitigation, operational changes and planning obligations and requirements have been proposed, development consent should not be granted if the Secretary of State considers that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a development would prevent a licensed aerodrome from maintaining its licence; - the benefits of the proposed development are outweighed by the harm to aerodromes serving business, training or emergency service needs; or - the development would significantly impede or compromise the safe and effective use of defence assets or significantly limit military training. 	The Scheme is not located in close proximity to licensed aerodromes or known defence assets so no mitigation measures are necessary.
5.71- 5.75 (Coastal change)	When assessing applications in a CCMA, the Secretary of State should not grant development consent unless it is demonstrated that the development:	The Scheme is not located near the coast so is not within a Coastal Change Management Area and paragraphs 5.71 to 5.75 are not relevant to the Scheme.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - will be safe over its planned lifetime and will not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change; - will not compromise the character of the coast covered by designations; - provides wider sustainability benefits; and does not hinder the creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast. 	
5.79	Applicants should propose appropriate mitigation measures to address adverse physical changes to the coast in consultation with the MMO, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Natural Resource Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, Local Planning Authorities, other statutory consultees, Coastal Partnerships and other coastal groups, as it considers appropriate. The Secretary of State should consider whether the mitigation requirements put forward by an applicant are acceptable and will be delivered and whether requirements should be attached to any grant of development consent in order to secure their delivery.	<p>The Scheme is located in the Midlands and will not result in adverse physical changes to the coast.</p> <p>Paragraph 5.79 of the NPSNN is therefore not relevant to the Scheme and consultation has not been carried out in respect of this matter.</p>
5.84 - 5.86 (Dust, odour, artificial light, smoke, steam)	Where the development is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, the applicant should assess any likely significant effects on amenity from emissions of odour, dust, steam, smoke and artificial light and describe these in the Environmental Statement.	<p>An assessment of the potential effects of the Scheme on air quality has been carried out as part of an EIA and is reported in Chapter 5 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The air quality assessment considers the likely significant effects on amenity from emissions of odour, dust, steam, smoke and artificial light.</p> <p>The assessment considers the type and quantity of emissions arising from the Scheme during construction as particulate matter less than 10 µm (PM₁₀) and dust (i.e. larger</p>

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	<p>In particular, the assessment provided by the applicant should describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the type and quantity of emissions; - aspects of the development which may give rise to emissions during construction, operation and decommissioning; - premises or locations that may be affected by the emissions; - effects of the emission on identified premises or locations; and - measures to be employed in preventing or mitigating the emissions. <p>The applicant is advised to consult the relevant local planning authority and, where appropriate, the Environment Agency about the scope and methodology of the assessment.</p>	<p>particles) with the potential to settle around construction sites and cause soiling/deposition effects on surfaces.</p> <p>During the operational phase nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter with diameters of less than 10 µm and 2.5 µm (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) were identified as the key emissions.</p> <p>The assessment identifies the sensitive receptors along the Scheme corridor and study area. The assessment identifies the key receptors as being predominantly residential properties and some sites of biodiversity value.</p> <p>The effect of the Scheme is identified in the air quality assessment in Section 5.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] following the implementation of good design, management and mitigation measures.</p> <p>As outlined in Section 5.3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1], consultation has taken place with local authority Environmental Health Officers.</p>
5.89	<p>The Secretary of State should ensure the applicant has provided sufficient information to show that any necessary mitigation will be put into place. In particular, the Secretary of State should consider whether to require the applicant to abide by a scheme of management and mitigation concerning emissions of odour, dust, steam, smoke, artificial light from the development to reduce any loss to amenity which might arise during the construction and operation of the development. A construction management plan may help codify mitigation.</p>	<p>A number of good design measures to minimise the effect of the project are included in the Scheme design as outlined in Chapter 3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] including moving the alignment of the Scheme further from properties along Dark Lane.</p> <p>The air quality assessment in Chapter 5 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] outlines the design, mitigation and enhancement measures included in the Scheme to reduce the significance of any adverse effects on air quality.</p> <p>A CEMP would be adopted during the construction phase. The CEMP will outline measures to reduce dust arising from excavation works, material movement and the movement of plant and machinery. Further mitigation measures to be adopted during the construction phase are outlined in Appendix 5.4 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3]. The air</p>

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		quality assessment in Chapter 5 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concluded that essential mitigation measures would not be necessary during the operational phase of the Scheme.
5.91 (Flood risk)	The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 100 to 104) makes clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. But where development is necessary, it should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The guidance supporting the National Planning Policy Framework explains that essential transport infrastructure (including mass evacuation routes), which has to cross the area at risk, is permissible in areas of high flood risk, subject to the requirements of the Exception Test.	<p>The location of the Scheme is dictated by the need to provide the new link road between the existing M54 Junction 1 and the M6 Junction 11. The Scheme is included in the Roads Investment Strategy (2015 to 2020) published by the Government as a committed project to provide a link for strategic transport travelling north and south between the M54 and M6.</p> <p>A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) [TR010054/APP/7.1] has been carried out in respect of the Scheme. The methodology and findings of the FRA are also presented in Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>The Scheme is considered by the Applicant to be a “necessary” development and subject to the Exception Test. The Scheme therefore needs to ensure that flood risk to people and property would be managed satisfactorily. Flood modelling and flood risk assessments have been undertaken for each of the watercourses affected to demonstrate the potential impacts of the Scheme and identify and design appropriate mitigation measures.</p>
5.92 - 5.93	<p>Applications for projects in the following locations should be accompanied by a flood risk assessment (FRA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flood Zones 2 and 3, medium and high probability of river and sea flooding; - Flood Zone 1 (low probability of river and sea flooding) for projects of 1 hectare or greater, projects which may be subject to 	A FRA [TR010054/APP/7.1] has been carried out for the Scheme and included with the application. The FRA incorporated existing baseline data, topographic data and hydraulic modelling where necessary (taking into consideration climate change). As part of the assessments, mitigation options in the form of design amendments and flood compensation have been investigated.

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	<p>other sources of flooding (local watercourses, surface water, groundwater or reservoirs), or where the Environment Agency has notified the local planning authority that there are critical drainage problems.</p> <p>This should identify and assess the risks of all forms of flooding to and from the project and demonstrate how these flood risks will be managed, taking climate change into account.</p>	
5.94	<p>In preparing an FRA the applicant should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider the risk of all forms of flooding arising from the project (including in adjacent parts of the United Kingdom), in addition to the risk of flooding to the project, and demonstrate how these risks will be managed and, where relevant, mitigated, so that the development remains safe throughout its lifetime; - take the impacts of climate change into account, clearly stating the development lifetime over which the assessment has been made; - consider the vulnerability of those using the infrastructure including arrangements for safe access and exit; - include the assessment of the remaining 	<p>The FRA [TR010054/APP/7.1] has been developed for the Scheme and details the risk of flooding from all sources, climate change impacts, residual risk management and operation of the highway during flood events.</p> <p>Parts of the Scheme cross Flood Zones 2 and 3 adjacent to the Latherford Brook, near to Junction 11 of the M6. The rest of the Scheme is within Flood Zone 1.</p> <p>The Sequential Test has been applied to the Scheme. The development cannot be directed to an area with lowest probability of flooding and is classed as 'Critical Infrastructure'. The Scheme is therefore subject to the Exception Test. The Scheme ensures that flood risk to people and property is not increased. Flood risk mitigation measures have been developed as part of the EIA and are described within Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and in the FRA.</p>

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	<p>(known as 'residual') risk after risk reduction measures have been taken into account and demonstrate that this is acceptable for the particular project;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider if there is a need to remain operational during a worst case flood event over the development's lifetime; - provide the evidence for the Secretary of State to apply the Sequential Test and Exception Test, as appropriate. 	
5.96	<p>Applicants for projects which may be affected by, or may add to, flood risk are advised to seek sufficiently early pre-application discussions with the Environment Agency, and, where relevant, other flood risk management bodies such as lead local flood authorities, Internal Drainage Boards, sewerage undertakers, highways authorities and reservoir owners and operators. Such discussions can be used to identify the likelihood and possible extent and nature of the flood risk, to help scope the FRA, and identify the information that will be required by the Secretary of State to reach a decision on the application once it has been submitted and examined. If the Environment Agency has concerns about the proposal on flood risk grounds, the applicant is encouraged to discuss these concerns with the Environment Agency and look to agree ways in which the</p>	<p>Throughout the pre-application stage, the Applicant has been in discussions with the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water and local authorities, including the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the majority of the Scheme, Staffordshire County Council (SCC).</p> <p>Discussions have been used to carry out further river modelling, to inform mitigation measures for the Scheme and influence the sustainable highway drainage systems.</p>

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	proposal might be amended, or additional information provided, which would satisfy the Environment Agency's concerns, preferably before the application for development consent is submitted.	
5.97	For local flood risk (surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourse flooding), local flood risk management strategies and surface water management plans provide useful sources of information for consideration in Flood Risk Assessments. Surface water flood issues need to be understood and then account of these issues can be taken, for example flow routes should be clearly identified and managed.	<p>Local flood risks from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses have been considered as part of the EIA. A Drainage Strategy is provided as Appendix 13.2 to the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3]. The Drainage Strategy has been produced to inform the design of the Scheme. This report outlines plans that would be put in place to manage surface water. Hydraulic modelling has also been undertaken to investigate flood risks from Ordinary Watercourses crossing the Scheme.</p> <p>The hydraulic modelling has been submitted to the SCC for review. Flood risk mitigation measures have also been developed and are described within Chapter 13: Road Drainage and the Water Environment of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p>
5.100	For construction work which has drainage implications, approval for the project's drainage system will form part of any development consent issued by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will therefore need to be satisfied that the proposed drainage system complies with any National Standards published by Ministers under Paragraph 5(1) of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.93 In addition, the development consent order, or any associated planning obligations, will need to make provision for the adoption and maintenance of any Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), including any	<p>Consultation with SCC has been undertaken. A Drainage Strategy has been produced and SCC (as LLFA) has been consulted (contained within ES Appendix 13.2 [TR010054/APP/6.3]).</p> <p>Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) have been incorporated into the Scheme. Attenuation within SuDS features have been provided to ensure no flooding in a 1 in 100 year return period event + climate change.</p> <p>Highways England, Area 9 is the maintaining authority for all SuDS features within the proposed Scheme, although there is the potential for these maintenance responsibilities to be taken on by other bodies post consent (e.g. SCC may be the most appropriate authority to maintain features located on the local highway network).</p>

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	<p>necessary access rights to property. The Secretary of State, should be satisfied that the most appropriate body is being given the responsibility for maintaining any SuDS, taking into account the nature and security of the infrastructure on the proposed site. The responsible body could include, for example, the applicant, the landowner, the relevant local authority, or another body such as the Internal Drainage Board.</p>	<p>The Drainage Strategy complies with the National Standards published by Ministers under Paragraph 5(1) of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.</p>
5.112 - 5.115 (Flood risk - mitigation)	<p>Site layout and surface water drainage systems should cope with events that exceed the design capacity of the system, so that excess water can be safely stored on or conveyed from the site without adverse impacts.</p> <p>The surface water drainage arrangements for any project should be such that the volumes and peak flow rates of surface water leaving the site are no greater than the rates prior to the proposed project, unless specific off-site arrangements are made and result in the same net effect.</p> <p>It may be necessary to provide surface water storage and infiltration to limit and reduce both the peak rate of discharge from the site and the total volume discharged from the site. There may be circumstances where it is appropriate for infiltration attenuation storage to be provided outside the project site, if necessary through the use of a planning obligation.</p> <p>The sequential approach should be applied to the</p>	<p>Where space allows attenuation has been provided through SuDS and attenuated back to greenfield runoff rate. Where space is limited and connections to the existing drainage network are required, the existing runoff rates would be retained.</p> <p>Where it has been possible, the opportunity has been taken to use open space within the drainage provisions for other purposes such as amenity and wildlife habitat enhancements.</p>

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	layout and design of the project. Vulnerable uses should be located on parts of the site at lower probability and residual risk of flooding. Applicants should seek opportunities to use open space for multiple purposes such as amenity, wildlife habitat and flood storage uses. Opportunities can be taken to lower flood risk by improving flow routes, flood storage capacity and using SuDS.	
5.117 - 5.118 (Land instability)	Where necessary, land stability should be considered in respect of new development, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and supporting planning guidance. Specifically, proposals should be appropriate for the location, including preventing unacceptable risks from land instability. If land stability could be an issue, applicants should seek appropriate technical and environmental expert advice to assess the likely consequences of proposed developments on sites where subsidence, landslides and ground compression is known or suspected. Applicants should liaise with the Coal Authority if necessary. A preliminary assessment of ground instability should be carried out at the earliest possible stage before a detailed application for development consent is prepared. Applicants should ensure that any necessary investigations are undertaken to ascertain that their sites are and will remain stable or can be made so as part of the development. The site needs to be assessed in context of surrounding	<p>A Preliminary Sources Study and a comprehensive ground investigation were completed during the pre-application stages of the Scheme and have informed the preliminary design for the Scheme. Ground conditions along with the potential for land stability issues have been identified and are presented in the Ground Investigation Report in Appendix 9.1 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3] and summarised in Chapter 9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>It is proposed to mitigate against and provide solutions for land stability issues during the detailed design stage of the Scheme. This would include the management of embankment and structure settlement due to compressible ground, the provision of stable earthwork slopes and the design of ground retaining structures.</p> <p>Section 9.6 'Baseline conditions' of the ES summarises the results of the ground investigation, with full details available in the Ground Investigation Report, in ES Appendix 9.1 [TR010054/APP/6.3].</p> <p>The Coal Authority was consulted as part of the statutory consultation on the Scheme in May-July 2019.</p>

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	areas where subsidence, landslides and land compression could threaten the development during its anticipated life or damage neighbouring land or property. This could be in the form of a land stability or slope stability risk assessment report.	
5.126 - 5.127 (The historic environment)	<p>Where the development is subject to EIA the applicant should undertake an assessment of any likely significant heritage impacts of the proposed project as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment and describe these in the environmental statement.</p> <p>The applicant should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant Historic Environment Record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, the applicant should include an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.</p>	<p>An assessment of any likely significant heritage impacts heritage has been carried out and is reported in Chapter 6 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>The assessment includes consideration of the potential of the Scheme to impact on archaeological remains, historic buildings and the historic landscape, carried out by competent experts with relevant and appropriate experience in the field of cultural heritage and archaeology.</p> <p>The assessment describes the nature, location and significance of heritage assets.</p> <p>The assessment includes a desk based study incorporating a review of the Historic Environment Record, published heritage data, historic maps and aerial images and soil / geological data. The assessment incorporated fieldwork, including an archaeological walkover survey and a non-intrusive geophysical survey.</p>
5.131	When considering the impact of a proposed	The value and significance of heritage assets is considered in the Chapter 6 of the ES

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	development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should give great weight to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Once lost, heritage assets cannot be replaced and their loss has a cultural, environmental, economic and social impact. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Given that heritage assets are irreplaceable, harm or loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II Listed Building or a grade II Registered Park or Garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated assets of the highest significance, including World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, grade I and II* Listed Buildings, Registered Battlefields, and grade I and II* Registered Parks and Gardens should be wholly exceptional.	<p>[TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>The impact of the Scheme on heritage assets shaped the option selection and design of the Scheme and has resulted in a Scheme that minimises the impact on heritage assets where possible.</p> <p>There would be no substantial harm to designated assets of the highest significance. The CftS (Section 8.4) sets out the need for the Scheme, setting out the clear and convincing justification for the harm to heritage assets as a result of the Scheme.</p> <p>There are two grade I listed buildings in the proximity of the Scheme, namely Hilton Hall and the Conservatory, both located over 400 m from the mainline of the Scheme. The ES concludes that there would be a 'slight adverse' significance of effect on both Hilton Hall and the Conservatory.</p>
5.133	Where the proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss of significance is necessary in order to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh that loss or harm, or alternatively that all of the following apply:	As reported in Chapter 6 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] , the Scheme will not result in substantial harm to or total loss of any statutory designated heritage assets.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and - no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and - conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and - the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use. 	
5.144 - 5.146 (Landscape and visual impacts)	<p>Where the development is subject to EIA the applicant should undertake an assessment of any likely significant landscape and visual impacts in the environmental impact assessment and describe these in the environmental assessment. A number of guides have been produced to assist in addressing landscape issues. The landscape and visual assessment should include reference to any landscape character assessment and associated studies, as a means of assessing landscape impacts relevant to the proposed project. The applicant's assessment should also take account of any relevant policies based on these assessments in local development documents in England.</p> <p>The applicant's assessment should include any significant effects during construction of the project and/or the significant effects of the completed</p>	<p>A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) has been carried out in respect of the proposed Scheme and is presented in Chapter 7 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The LVIA draws upon guidance as specified in the methodology for the chapter.</p> <p>The assessment takes into account landscape character assessments and associated studies for the study area. The LVIA includes a brief assessment of the relevant policy in the NPS and other national and local policy documents.</p> <p>The LVIA considers the effects on landscape character and visual receptors during construction and operation phases.</p> <p>The LVIA concludes that the Scheme will result in some significant adverse effects on the landscape character during construction and at certain view points along the A460, Saredon Road, PRoWs east of Brookfield Farm and Hilton Lane and from the properties along Dark Lane Hilton Lane and Whitgreaves Wood.</p> <p>During the operation of the Scheme the effect on the landscape character type reduce to slight adverse (not significant) and some significant effects at visual receptors remain.</p>

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	<p>development and its operation on landscape components and landscape character (including historic landscape characterisation).</p> <p>The assessment should include the visibility and conspicuousness of the project during construction and of the presence and operation of the project and potential impacts on views and visual amenity. This should include any noise and light pollution effects, including on local amenity, tranquillity and nature conservation.</p>	<p>ES Chapter 7 [TR010054/APP/6.1] considers the combined effects of the Scheme on views and visual amenity, including the visibility and conspicuous of the project during construction and operation. The assessment has considered the combined effects of noise and light pollution effects on local visual amenity and tranquillity (Section 7.9, ES Chapter 7). ES Chapter 8 [TR010054/APP/6.1] has considered the combined effects of noise and light pollution effects on nature conservation (Section 8.9, ES Chapter 8).</p>
5.147- 5.148	Any statutory undertaker commissioning or undertaking works in relation to, or so as to affect land in a National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, would need to comply with the respective duties in section 11A of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949 and section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000...	The Scheme is not located within a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as such this part of the NPSNN is not relevant to the Scheme.
5.150 - 5.151	Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in nationally designated areas. National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Each of these designated areas has specific statutory purposes which help ensure their continued protection and which the Secretary of State has a statutory duty to have regard to in decisions.	The land within the Scheme boundary and study area for the LVIA is not located within a National Park, the Broads or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There would be no impact on these designations.

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	<p>The Secretary of State should refuse development consent in these areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that it is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include as assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of consenting, or not consenting it, upon the local economy; - the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere, outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and - any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated. 	
5.153	<p>Where consent is given in these areas, the Secretary of State should be satisfied that the applicant has ensured that the project will be carried out to high environmental standards and where possible includes measures to enhance other aspects of the environment. Where necessary, the Secretary of State should consider the imposition of appropriate requirements to ensure these standards are delivered.</p>	<p>The Scheme is not located within a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as such this part of the NPSNN is not of relevance to the Scheme.</p>
5.154 - 5.155	<p>The duty to have regard to the purposes of nationally designated areas also applies when</p>	<p>The Scheme is not located within a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as such this part of the NPSNN is not of relevance to the Scheme.</p>

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	<p>considering applications for projects outside the boundaries of these areas which may have impacts within them. The aim should be to avoid compromising the purposes of designation and such projects should be designed sensitively given the various siting, operational, and other relevant constraints. This should include projects in England which may have impacts on designated areas in Wales or on National Scenic Areas in Scotland. The fact that a proposed project will be visible from within a designated area should not in itself be a reason for refusing consent.</p>	
5.165 - 5.167 (Land use including open space, green infrastructure and Green Belt)	<p>The applicant should identify existing and proposed land uses near the project, any effects of replacing an existing development or use of the site with the proposed project or preventing a development or use on a neighbouring site from continuing.</p> <p>Applicants should also assess any effects of precluding a new development or use proposed in the development plan. The assessment should be proportionate.</p> <p>Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be developed unless the land is surplus to requirements or the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. Applicants considering proposals which</p>	<p>Chapter 4 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2] considers the existing land uses and Chapter 7 considers future land uses through consideration of the planning history within the Order limits and current and potential future allocations within and adjacent to the Order limits.</p> <p><u>Existing Uses</u></p> <p>The Scheme will affect a number of agricultural holdings and fishing ponds. An assessment of the future viability of agricultural land holdings and the ponds has been carried out and is presented in Section 12.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>While the Scheme will result in the loss of some agricultural land and vegetation, the Scheme will not preclude the adjoining land from being used for grazing and crop cultivation during the operation of the Scheme.</p> <p>The closure of the existing A460 onto the existing M54 Junction 1 and realignment of the A460 to the new M54 Junction 1 would not require any land from businesses near the junction but would result in a change of access for the public house and petrol station.</p>

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	<p>would involve developing such land should have regard to any local authority's assessment of need for such types of land and buildings.</p> <p>During any pre-application discussions with the applicant, the local planning authority should identify any concerns it has about the impacts of the application on land-use, having regard to the development plan and relevant applications, and including, where relevant, whether it agrees with any independent assessment that the land is surplus to requirements. These are also matters that local authorities may wish to include in their Local Impact Report which can be submitted after an application for development consent has been accepted.</p>	<p>New access would be provided off the realigned A460. Access to these businesses would be maintained throughout the construction period. Therefore, the construction of the Scheme would not result in a change in characteristics or features of the businesses or impact on the operation and viability. Temporary increases in traffic flows and the number of HGVs using the existing A460 during construction are anticipated to result in a minor increase in severance resulting in a slight adverse impact on these businesses which is not significant.</p> <p>There are also a number of fields within the Order limits used on a temporary basis for car boot sales, with the impact on these explored in Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p><u>Future Land Use</u></p> <p>A small area of land within the Order limits is within the allocated Hilton Cross Business Park (0.2 ha, 1% of the site) and would be required to accommodate the realignment of the M54 Junction 1 westbound on-slip. The Scheme has been designed to minimise loss of the employment site and it is not anticipated that the small loss will prevent employment uses continuing on the site. A small area used for HGV access by an existing business was required for construction, but following engagement with businesses in November/ December 2019, the design has been amended to remove the requirement for this area to minimise the impact on the business.</p> <p>Two sites have been promoted in the past for development within the Order limits worthy of mention here, including a site promoted for housing to the north of the M54 and a large area of land to the east of the A460 promoted for employment.</p> <p>The area promoted for housing was subject to a planning application for 360 houses in 2006 and was dismissed at appeal in 2008. No applications have been made since, the site is not allocated in the Local Plan and the site is in the Green Belt. The site therefore has no status as a housing site and there is no indication it would gain planning</p>

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		<p>permission for that use.</p> <p>The area promoted for employment development is similarly not allocated in the Local Plan or subject to a planning application. This site is also in the Green Belt and given that South Staffordshire have an excess of employment land, there is also no indication that this site would gain planning permission for the proposed use.</p> <p><u>Open space and recreation</u></p> <p>The Scheme would not include development on existing open space or sport and recreation buildings.</p>

5.168	<p>Applicants should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification). Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, applicants should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. Applicants should also identify any effects, and seek to minimise impacts, on soil quality, taking into account any mitigation measures proposed. Where possible, developments should be on previously developed (brownfield) sites provided that it is not of high environmental value. For developments on previously developed land, applicants should ensure that they have considered the risk posed by land contamination and how it is proposed to address this.</p>	<p>An assessment of the potential effect of the Scheme on soil resources, geology, agricultural land and land contamination is presented in Chapter 9: Geology and Soils of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>The area between the M54 and the M6 in this location is agricultural land and there are no potential routes that would have avoided affecting agricultural land. The Scheme results in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, but the applicant has sought to use areas of poorer quality land where possible.</p>
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5.169	Applicants should safeguard any mineral resources on the proposed site as far as possible.	<p>The Scheme is located in an area designated by SCC as a Mineral Safeguard Area (MSA) due to the presence of Sand and Brick Clay mineral reserves.</p> <p>An assessment of the effect of the Scheme on the MSA has been carried out and is reported in Appendix 10.1 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3].</p> <p>The assessment considers the existing mineral land bank and concludes that the mineral land bank for sand and brick clay both currently exceed the minimum requirements. There is currently insufficient information on the quantity and quality and the value of the bedrock sand and gravel resource and the prior extraction of the mineral would significantly delay the construction of the Scheme. The need to provide the proposed infrastructure outweighs the need for the mineral reserves in the Order limits.</p>
5.170 - 5.171	<p>The general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in Green Belts but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. Such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Applicants should therefore determine whether their proposal, or any part of it, is within an established Green Belt and, if so, whether their proposal may be considered inappropriate development within the meaning of Green Belt policy. Metropolitan Open Land, and land designated as Local Green Space in a local or neighbourhood plan, are subject to the same policies of protection as Green Belt, and inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.</p> <p>Linear infrastructure linking an area near a Green</p>	<p>The Scheme is located within the Green Belt and an assessment of the Schemes conformity with Green Belt policy is presented in Chapter 8 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2]. Consideration has been given to whether the Scheme is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and whether Very Special Circumstances for the development exist.</p> <p>The Green Belt assessment considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. whether the Scheme contravenes the fundamental aims and objectives of the Green Belt; 2. whether the Scheme constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt; 3. whether there are very special circumstances that support development within a Green Belt location; and 4. whether the very special circumstances outweigh any potential harm to the Green Belt. <p>In summary, it has been concluded that the Scheme would harm the openness of the Green Belt and would be encroachment. The Scheme would therefore constitute</p>

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	Belt with other locations will often have to pass through Green Belt land. The identification of a policy need for linear infrastructure will take account of the fact that there will be an impact on the Green Belt and as far as possible, of the need to contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts.	<p>'inappropriate development' as set out in Green Belt policy.</p> <p>The Very Special Circumstances include that there is overriding national policy support in the NPSNN for the improvement and enhancement of infrastructure, and the economic benefits of the Scheme for regeneration and employment. The Green Belt covers 80% of South Staffordshire including the land in the corridor east and west of the Scheme. The location for the Scheme is dictated by the need to provide a link road between the existing junctions of the M54 and the M6, and it would not be possible to design a link road without passing through the Green Belt.</p> <p>It is concluded in Chapter 8 of the CftS that while the Scheme does constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the Very Special Circumstances outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm.</p>
5.174	The Secretary of State should not grant consent for development on existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, unless an assessment has been undertaken either by the local authority or independently, which has shown the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements, or the Secretary of State determines that the benefits of the project (including need) outweigh the potential loss of such facilities, taking into account any positive proposals made by the applicant to provide new, improved or compensatory land or facilities.	The Scheme does not involve the use of land currently used for the purposes of open space, sports and recreation or playing fields and as such this part of the NPSNN is not relevant to this Scheme.
5.177	In considering the impact on maintaining coastal recreation sites and features, the Secretary of State should expect applicants to have taken advantage	The Scheme is located in the Midlands and is not near any coastal recreation sites. This part of the NPSNN is therefore not relevant to this Scheme.

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	of opportunities to maintain and enhance access to the coast. In doing so the Secretary of State should consider the implications for development of the creation of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast, as proposed in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.	
5.180	Where green infrastructure is affected, applicants should aim to ensure the functionality and connectivity of the green infrastructure network is maintained and any necessary works are undertaken, where possible, to mitigate any adverse impact and, where appropriate, to improve that network and other areas of open space, including appropriate access to new coastal access routes, National Trails and other public rights of way.	<p>The construction of the Scheme will not result in the loss of Green Infrastructure. There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in the Order limits. It will be necessary to temporarily divert some PRoW during the construction phase and others permanently during the operational phase to accommodate the Scheme.</p> <p>The change in the distance and travel time for each route has been considered in Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The length and travel time along some routes will be increased while others will be reduced. The assessment concludes that the Scheme is not anticipated to result in a significant adverse or beneficial effect on users of the affected Rights of Way.</p>
5.182	Where a proposed development has an impact on a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA), the Secretary of State should ensure that the applicant has put forward appropriate mitigation measures to safeguard mineral resources.	<p>The Scheme is located in an area designated by Staffordshire County Council as a Mineral Safeguard Area (MSA) due to the presence of Sand and Brick Clay mineral reserves.</p> <p>An assessment of the effect of the Scheme on the MSA has been carried out and is reported in Appendix 10.1 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3].</p> <p>The assessment considers the existing mineral land bank and concludes that the mineral land bank for sand and brick clay both currently exceed the minimum requirements. There is currently insufficient information on the quantity and quality and the value of the bedrock sand and gravel resource and the prior extraction of the mineral would significantly delay the construction of the Scheme. It is considered that the need to provide the proposed infrastructure outweighs the need for the mineral reserves in the</p>

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		Order limits.
5.184	Public rights of way, National Trails, and other rights of access to land (e.g. open access land) are important recreational facilities for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. Applicants are expected to take appropriate mitigation measures to address adverse effects on coastal access, National Trails, other public rights of way and open access land and, where appropriate, to consider what opportunities there may be to improve access. In considering revisions to an existing right of way consideration needs to be given to the use, character, attractiveness and convenience of the right of way. The Secretary of State should consider whether the mitigation measures put forward by an applicant are acceptable and whether requirements in respect of these measures might be attached to any grant of development consent.	<p>The Scheme will not affect any National Trails.</p> <p>There are a number of PRoW in the Order limits and it will be necessary to temporarily divert some PRoW during the construction phase and others permanently during the operational phase to accommodate the Scheme.</p> <p>The change in the distance and travel time for each route has been considered in Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The length and travel time along some routes will be increased while others will be reduced. The assessment concludes that the Scheme is not anticipated to result in a significant adverse or beneficial effect on users of affected PRoW.</p>
5.189 (Noise and vibration)	<p>Where a development is subject to EIA and significant noise impacts are likely to arise from the proposed development, the applicant should include the following in the noise assessment, which should form part of the environment statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a description of the noise sources including likely usage in terms of number of movements, fleet mix and diurnal pattern. For any associated fixed structures, such as ventilation fans for tunnels, information 	<p>Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of and a description of noise and vibration sources. • Details of identified noise and vibration sensitive receptors. • Details and characteristics of the existing ambient noise environment, including the results of a baseline survey. • A detailed level assessment based on the DMRB methodology at the time of assessment, reporting the predicted changes in operational traffic noise levels due to the Scheme during the day and night. • A quantitative assessment of construction noise and vibration impacts and

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	<p>about the noise sources including the identification of any distinctive tonal, impulsive or low frequency characteristics of the noise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identification of noise sensitive premises and noise sensitive areas that may be affected. - the characteristics of the existing noise environment. - a prediction on how the noise environment will change with the proposed development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in the shorter term such as during the construction period; - in the longer term during the operating life of the infrastructure; - at particular times of the day, evening and night as appropriate. - an assessment of the effect of predicted changes in the noise environment on any noise sensitive premises and noise sensitive areas. - measures to be employed in mitigating the effects of noise. Applicants should consider using best available techniques to reduce noise impacts. - the nature and extent of the noise assessment should be proportionate to the likely noise impact. 	<p>construction traffic noise impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment of the significance of the effect of the predicted construction and operational impacts on noise and vibration sensitive receptors. • Mitigation measures proposed during the construction phase. • Mitigation measures incorporated into the Scheme design - including low noise surfacing and noise barriers. <p>The OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11] sets out measures to be implemented to minimise effects during the construction and operation phases of the Scheme.</p>
5.190	The potential noise impact elsewhere that is directly associated with the development, such as	Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] identifies 'affected routes', including those which are remote from the Scheme (>1km) which would experience a potentially

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	changes in road and rail traffic movements elsewhere on the national networks, should be considered as appropriate.	significant change in traffic noise in the short or long term due to the Scheme. The magnitude of the impact and the significance of the effect along these affected routes are reported.
5.191	Operational noise, with respect to human receptors, should be assessed using the principles of the relevant British Standards and other guidance. The prediction of road traffic noise should be based on the method described in Calculation of Road Traffic Noise. For the prediction, assessment and management of construction noise, reference should be made to any relevant British Standards and other guidance which also give examples of mitigation strategies.	Operational traffic noise impacts have been assessed in accordance with the DMRB methodology adopted at the time of assessment and are reported in Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The DMRB methodology requires the use of the CRTN prediction method for traffic noise. The assessment methodology and criteria for construction impacts is based predominantly on BS 5228.
5.192	The applicant should consult Natural England with regard to assessment of noise on designated nature conservation sites, protected landscapes, protected species or other wildlife. The results of any noise surveys and predictions may inform the ecological assessment. The seasonality of potentially affected species in nearby sites may also need to be taken into account.	The results of the noise impact assessment have been discussed with the ecology team and are incorporated into the Chapter 8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. Chapter 8 also details the consultation undertaken with statutory and non-statutory nature conservation organisations, in particular Natural England, in respect of potential effects on designated sites and protected species.
5.195	The Secretary of State should not grant development consent unless satisfied that the proposals will meet, the following aims, within the context of Government policy on sustainable development: - avoid significant adverse impacts on health	Section 11.9 in Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and Section 8.10 in Chapter 8 of the CftS specifically addresses the three aspects of this key policy in respect of the construction and operation phase of the Scheme.

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	<p>and quality of life from noise as a result of the new development;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mitigate and minimise other adverse impacts on health and quality of life from noise from the new development; and - contribute to improvements to health and quality of life through the effective management and control of noise, where possible. 	
5.199	<p>For most national network projects, the relevant Noise Insulation Regulations will apply. These place a duty on and provide powers to the relevant authority to offer noise mitigation through improved sound insulation to dwellings, with associated ventilation to deal with both construction and operational noise. An indication of the likely eligibility for such compensation should be included in the assessment. In extreme cases, the applicant may consider it appropriate to provide noise mitigation through the compulsory acquisition of affected properties in order to gain consent for what might otherwise be unacceptable development. Where mitigation is proposed to be dealt with through compulsory acquisition, such properties would have to be included within the development consent order land in relation to which compulsory acquisition powers are being sought.</p>	<p>A preliminary assessment of the potential for properties to qualify under the Noise Insulation Regulations has been completed and the results reported in Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. No compulsory acquisition of properties is proposed in respect of noise.</p> <p>A Noise Insulation Regulations assessment will be completed after the DCO decision when the detailed Scheme design is finalised and in accordance with the timescales set out in the Regulations.</p>
5.200	<p>Applicants should consider opportunities to address the noise issues associated with the Important</p>	<p>The Noise Important Areas within the study area are identified in Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The impacts of the Scheme on Noise Important Areas are</p>

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	Areas as identified through the noise action planning process.	reported. Through traffic on the existing A460 in Noise Important Area 11490 would transfer onto the Scheme.
5.203 - 5.205 (Impacts on transport networks)	<p>Applicants should have regard to the policies set out in local plans, for example, policies on demand management being undertaken at the local level. Applicants should consult the relevant highway authority, and local planning authority, as appropriate, on the assessment of transport impacts.</p> <p>Applicants should consider reasonable opportunities to support other transport modes in developing infrastructure. As part of this, consistent with paragraph 3.19-3.22 above, the applicant should provide evidence that as part of the project they have used reasonable endeavours to address any existing severance issues that act as a barrier to non motorised users.</p>	<p>South Staffordshire Council, Staffordshire County Council and City of Wolverhampton Council have been consulted at various stages through the design development and assessment of transport impacts.</p> <p>The Scheme has been designed to accommodate a suitable mix of transport modes that can use the strategic highway network.</p> <p>While the new link road will not be suitable for use by WCHs, the Scheme will reduce traffic on local routes. As a result, it is anticipated that local routes such as the A460, A449 and A5 may become more appealing to WCHs.</p> <p>Please see Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] for further detail on the Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Assessment carried out and the Streets, Rights of Way and Access Plans [TR010054/APP/2.7] for how severance is being avoided as part of the Scheme.</p>
5.206	For road and rail developments, if a development is subject to EIA and is likely to have significant environmental impacts arising from impacts on transport networks, the applicant's environmental statement should describe those impacts and mitigating commitments. In all other cases the applicant's assessment should include a proportionate assessment of the transport impacts on other networks as part of the application.	<p>The nature of the Scheme is such that it has been necessary to undertake an EIA. The methodology for the assessments and description of the environmental impacts arising from traffic impacts are reported in the various topic chapters of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>The design for the Scheme incorporates mitigation measures to reduce and minimise the extent of any potential environmental effects. These measures are described in detail in each topic-based chapter of the ES and illustrated on the Environmental Masterplans provided in Figures 2.1 to 2.7 in the ES [TR010054/APP/6.2].</p>

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		Mitigation measures to be implemented during the construction of the Scheme are set out in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11] and would be developed further by the construction contractor during the preparation of their CEMP. Mitigation measures would be implemented in respect of air quality, cultural heritage, landscape and visual impact, biodiversity, noise and vibration, geology and soils, material assets and waste, people and communities, road drainage and water and climate.
5.208	Where appropriate, the applicant should prepare a travel plan including management measures to mitigate transport impacts. The applicant should also provide details of proposed measures to improve access by public transport and sustainable modes where relevant, to reduce the need for any parking associated with the proposal and to mitigate transport impacts.	A Transport Assessment Report has been prepared for the Scheme [TR010054/APP/7.4]. A Travel Plan is not appropriate for this type of development and has not been carried out.
5.209	For schemes impacting on the Strategic Road Network, applicants should have regard to DfT Circular 02/2013 The Strategic Road Network and the delivery of sustainable development (or prevailing policy) which sets out the way in which the highway authority for the Strategic Road Network, will engage with communities and the development industry to deliver sustainable development and, thus, economic growth, whilst safeguarding the primary function and purpose of the Strategic Road Network.	Highways England has had regard to Circular 02/2013 in the development of the Scheme. The DfT set out the objectives for the Strategic Road Network in the Road Investment Strategy 2015 - 2020. In keeping with these objectives, the Scheme is designed to improve connectivity, increase network capacity, smooth traffic flows, reduce delays and foster economic growth. Stakeholder and public consultation has also been carried out during the development of the Scheme design, see Consultation Report [TR010054/APP/5.1]. During the consultation events comments in respect the Scheme designs were received and reviewed by the design team. A summary of the information presented, and comments received during the consultation events is presented in the Consultation Report [TR010054/APP/5.1].
5.210	If new transport infrastructure is proposed,	The construction of an M54 to M6 Link Road will be wholly funded by the Government.

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	applicants should discuss with network providers the possibility of co-funding by Government for any third-party benefits. Guidance has been issued in England which explains the circumstances where this may be possible. The Government cannot guarantee in advance that funding will be available for any given uncommitted scheme at any specified time, and cannot provide financial support to a scheme that solely mitigates the impacts of a specific development. Any decisions on co-funded transport infrastructure will need to be taken in the context of the Government's wider policy of transport improvements.	The Government formally committed to the delivery of the Scheme in 2014 in the Road Investment Strategy: 2015 to 2020 (RIS1), which sets out the long-term approach to improve England's motorways and major roads. Construction is scheduled to start during the RIS 2 period (2020 to 2025). Funding is secured for the Scheme, as set out in the Funding Statement [TR010054/APP/4.2].
5.216	Where development would worsen accessibility such impacts should be mitigated so far as reasonably possible. There is a very strong expectation that impacts on accessibility for non-motorised users should be mitigated.	<p>The Scheme would potentially improve the safety and attractiveness of the A460 for non-motorised users (described in the application documents as WCHs) through the significant reduction in traffic along the route. The re-classification of the A460 to a 'c' road and the traffic reduction could also facilitate future measures to improve the attractiveness of the road for non-motorised users that would not be possible with current traffic levels.</p> <p>The Scheme design provides the equivalent provision for pedestrians and cyclists as the existing arrangements at the junctions. Consideration is given to the potential impact of the Scheme on accessibility and impacts on PRoW in Chapter 12 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p>
5.220 (Water quality and resources)	... Where applicable, an application for a development consent order has to contain a plan with accompanying information identifying water bodies in a River Basin Management Plan.	An assessment of the road drainage, water environment and flood risk assessment has been carried out and reported in Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] and associated appendices [TR010054/APP/6.3].

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		Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] identifies that the Scheme is located within the Humber River Basin District.
5.221	Applicants should make early contact with the relevant regulators, including the Environment Agency, for abstraction licensing and with water supply companies likely to supply the water. Where a development is subject to EIA and the development is likely to have significant adverse effects on the water environment, the applicant should ascertain the existing status of, and carry out an assessment of the impacts of the proposed project on water quality, water resources and physical characteristics as part of the environmental statement.	<p>During the design development consultation has been carried out with Environment Agency, South Staffordshire Council and Staffordshire County Council to obtain baseline information and to discuss the approach to the assessment for the water environment.</p> <p>The proposed approach to obtaining licences and permits for water related activities and the discussions held on these consents to date is provided in the Consents and Agreements Position Statement [TR010054/APP/3.3].</p>
5.222	For those projects that are improvements to the existing infrastructure, such as road widening, opportunities should be taken, where feasible, to improve upon the quality of existing discharges where these are identified and shown to contribute towards Water Framework Directive commitments.	<p>The Scheme comprises the construction of a new link road and so does not constitute 'improvements' to existing infrastructure.</p> <p>Appendix 13.4 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3] presents the preliminary Water Framework Directive report assessing overall compliance with the Directive.</p>
5.223	Any environmental statement should describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the existing quality of waters affected by the proposed project; - existing water resources affected by the proposed project and the impacts of the 	Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] provides a description of the existing water quality and resources, the physical characteristics of the water environment and the impact of the Scheme. The assessment includes a summary of the mitigation and enhancements included in the design for the surface water drainage scheme.

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	<p>proposed project on water resources;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - existing physical characteristics of the water environment (including quantity and dynamics of flow) affected by the proposed project, and any impact of physical modifications to these characteristics; - any impacts of the proposed project on water bodies or protected areas under the Water Framework Directive and source protection zones (SPZs) around potable groundwater abstractions; and - any cumulative effects. 	
5.226	<p>The Secretary of State should be satisfied that a proposal has had regard to the River Basin Management Plans and the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (including Article 4.7) and its daughter directives, including those on priority substances and groundwater. The specific objectives for particular river basins are set out in River Basin Management Plans. In terms of Water Framework Directive compliance, the overall aim of projects should be no deterioration of ecological status in watercourses, ensuring that Article 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive Regulations does not need to be applied. ...</p>	<p>The assessment of Road Drainage and the Water Environment in Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] has given consideration to the River Basin Management Plans. A preliminary Water Framework Directive assessment has been carried out and is included in Appendix 13.4 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.3].</p>
5.227	<p>The Examining Authority and the Secretary of State should consider proposals put forward by the applicant to mitigate adverse effects on the water environment and whether appropriate requirements</p>	<p>Good design and mitigation measures have been included to reduce the significance of adverse effects on the water environment as outlined in Section 13.8, Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. Mitigation measures include construction of Sustainable Drainage Systems, swales and attenuation ponds, limiting discharges to green field run</p>

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5	GENERIC IMPACTS	
	should be attached to any development consent and/or planning obligations. If the Environment Agency continues to have concerns and objects to the grant of development consent on the grounds of impacts on water quality/resources, the Secretary of State can grant consent, but will need to be satisfied before deciding whether or not to do so that all reasonable steps have been taken by the applicant and the Environment Agency to try to resolve the concerns, and that the Environment Agency is satisfied with the outcome.	off rates and installing traps to contain surface water run off in the event of spillages.
5.229	The Secretary of State should consider whether the mitigation measures put forward by the applicant which are needed for operation and construction (and which are over and above any which may form part of the project application) are acceptable. A construction management plan may help codify mitigation.	<p>Mitigation measures are provided in each topic chapter of the ES. The measures are outlined for both the construction and operation phases and are additional to the good design measures embedded into the Scheme design.</p> <p>A CEMP, based on the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11], will be prepared in collaboration with the construction contractor to ensure that good management practices along with the prescribed design and mitigation measures are implemented during the Scheme Construction.</p>

Appendix B: Local Policy Accordance Table

M54 to M6 Link Road

TR010054

Volume 7

**7.2 Appendix B: Local Policy
Accordance Table**

Regulation 5(2)(q)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

January 2020

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms and
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

**M54 to M6 Link Road
Development Consent Order 202[]**

7.2 Appendix B: Local Policy Accordance Table

Regulation Number	Regulation 5(2)(q)
Planning Inspectorate Scheme Reference	TR010054
Application Document Reference	TR010054/APP/7.2
Author	M54 to M6 Link Road Project Team and Highways England

Version	Date	Status of Version
P01	30/01/20	DCO Application

Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Core Policy 1	<p>Core Policy 1 – The Spatial Strategy for South Staffordshire</p> <p>The rural regeneration of South Staffordshire will be delivered through the implementation of the following Spatial Strategy. The principal aim will be to meet local needs, whilst recognising the constraints that impact upon the District, and support and improve infrastructure and service delivery in the District.</p> <p>Throughout the District, growth will be located at the most accessible and sustainable locations in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy set out below and the Council will work with partners to deliver the infrastructure, facilities and services required to support this growth. An integral part of the Strategy will be to protect, maintain and enhance the natural and historic environment and the local distinctiveness of the District and retain and reinforce the current settlement pattern.</p> <p>In relation to the District's existing communities and settlements, appropriate proposals which contribute to their improved sustainability, cohesion and community wellbeing, will be supported.</p> <p>Development proposals will be expected to make efficient use of land and prioritise the use of Previously Developed Land (brownfield land) in sustainable locations, provided it is not of high environmental value, whilst safeguarding the character of existing residential areas.</p> <p><i>Main Service Villages</i> Bilbrook, Brewood, Cheslyn Hay, Codsall, Great Wyrley, Kinver, Penkridge, Perton and Wombourne are defined as Main Service Villages and will be the main focus for housing growth, employment development and service provision. Village centres will be the focus for new shopping and small scale office development to maintain their vitality and viability.</p> <p><i>Local Service Villages</i> Coven, Essington, Featherstone, Huntington, Pattingham, Swindon and Wheaton Aston are defined as Local Service Villages where limited development will be supported where it meets local needs, whilst recognising the constraints that impact upon the District. Employment development will be limited to that which meets local business and community needs and maintains the vitality and viability of these communities. Shopping and office development will be located in the village centres.</p> <p><i>Small Service Villages</i> Bednall, Bobbington, Bishops Wood, Dunston, Shareshill, and Trysull are defined as Small Service Villages where very limited development may be acceptable for the provision of rural affordable housing where it clearly supports a local need and contributes to the sustainability of those local communities. Employment development will be limited to rural employment and diversification which meets local business and community needs.</p> <p><i>Other Villages and Hamlets</i> The villages defined as Other Villages and Hamlets are not identified for growth, and development will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances for the provision of rural affordable housing to meet identified local needs. New development in these locations will therefore be limited to rural affordable housing schemes provided through rural exception sites and the conversion and re-use of redundant rural buildings to appropriate uses.</p> <p><i>Outside the Service Villages</i> Outside the service villages, the objective of the Spatial Strategy is to protect the attractive rural character of the countryside where new development will be restricted to particular types of development to meet affordable housing needs, support tourism, provide for sport and recreation and support the local rural economy and rural diversification.</p> <p>As part of the strategy for employment and economic development, support will continue to be given to the four existing freestanding strategic employment sites (i54, Hilton Cross, ROF Featherstone/Brinsford and Four Ashes).</p> <p><i>The Green Belt and Open Countryside</i> The South Staffordshire portion of the West Midlands Green Belt as defined on the Policies Map, will be protected from inappropriate development and proposals will be considered in the light of other local planning policies and the policy restrictions relating to Green Belt in the NPPF, however the Council will consider favourably sustainable development which accords with this Spatial Strategy.</p>	<p>The Scheme will support the Spatial Strategy for South Staffordshire by supporting development at South Staffordshire's allocated employment sites, including ROF Featherstone, which is brownfield land. By supporting development of allocated sites, the district can provide sufficient employment land without development of less sustainable sites.</p> <p>The Green Belt and Open Countryside element of this policy that aims to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development is of relevance.</p> <p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 146 sets out six categories of development that are <i>not</i> inappropriate in the Green Belt:</p> <p><i>'Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it... b) engineering operations, c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location...'</i></p> <p>Whilst highway schemes are generally considered to be engineering operations, the construction of the new link road across the Green Belt and the traffic along that route would not 'preserve its openness' so would not fall into this category. Given that the Scheme comprises the construction of a new section of the Strategic Highway Network and is, by definition, an NSIP, it would also not be considered 'local transport infrastructure', although it would have significant local benefits.</p> <p>Therefore, the Scheme would be 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt as defined in the NPPF. As recognised in National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) paragraphs 5.171 and 5.178, it is often necessary for linear national networks projects to require a Green Belt location and for projects to be considered inappropriate development and still compliant with policy where 'very special circumstances' exist to support the construction of the Scheme.</p> <p>The text in Core Policy 1 states that the Green Belt will be protected from inappropriate development but adds that <i>'proposals will be considered in the light of other local policies and the policy restrictions relating to Green Belt in the NPPF'</i>. As explored in Section 8.6, Chapter 8 of the Case for the Scheme and National Policy Accordance document (CftS) [TR010054/APP/7.2], the NPPF allows for inappropriate development in the Green Belt in very special circumstances. These very special circumstances are set out and evidenced throughout the CftS, particularly in Section 8.6. Therefore, the development complies with this policy.</p>

Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
		<p>The general extent of the Green Belt and the area defined as Open Countryside will be protected and maintained for the Plan period but some land will need to be released from the Green Belt and Open Countryside in some locations at the Main and Local Service Villages to deliver the proposed development strategy and enable the sustainable growth of these villages. A partial review of Green Belt boundaries and a review of Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt will be carried out through the Site Allocations DPD.</p> <p><i>Delivering the Strategy</i> The Spatial Strategy will be delivered through the Core Policies and Development Policies. In all cases development should not conflict with the local planning policies, particularly the environmental policies. Development should be designed to be sustainable, seek to enhance the environment, and should provide any necessary mitigating or compensatory measures to address harmful implications.</p>	
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Core Policy 2	<p>Core Policy 2: Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment</p> <p>The Council will support development or other initiatives where they protect, conserve and enhance the District's natural and heritage assets including ecological networks internationally, nationally and locally important designations. Particular support will be given to initiatives to improve the natural environment where it is poor and increase the overall biodiversity of the District including the development of green infrastructure links and to improve the historic environment where it is identified as at risk.</p> <p>Development or initiatives will generally be supported which:</p> <p>a) will not have a detrimental impact upon the interests and significance of a natural or heritage asset;</p> <p>b) are not contrary to the control of development within internationally, nationally or locally designated areas including the Green Belt and Open Countryside, Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Motte Meadows Special Area of Conservation, and contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the character of the landscape and local distinctiveness;</p> <p>c) are consistent with the sustainable management of the asset including the repair and reuse of historic buildings;</p> <p>d) protect and improve water and air quality;</p> <p>e) provide mitigation or compensatory measures to address any potential harmful implications and supporting enhancement measures.</p> <p>Development proposals should be consistent with the NPPF, the Supplementary Planning Documents on the Historic Environment and Biodiversity and other local planning policies.</p> <p>Development proposals should have regard to and support the actions and objectives of the Severn and Humber River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and also have regard to the River Severn and River Trent Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs).</p>	<p>The Scheme is considered to comply with Core Policy 2, in the context of a major infrastructure development where it is not possible to avoid any impacts.</p> <p>A) The Scheme has been designed to minimise detrimental impacts on natural and heritage assets where possible and mitigate/ compensate for effects where it has not been possible to avoid impacts.</p> <p>B) The Scheme will not have a significant impact on any internationally or nationally designated sites. The Scheme will lead to the partial loss of two locally designated sites, but these losses will be mitigated as part of the development through provision of adjacent replacement habitats, with the Scheme overall seeking to deliver no net loss in biodiversity. The Scheme will not affect the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the Motte Meadows Special Area of Conservation. The Scheme will, by necessity, be located in the Green Belt, but harm has been limited in the design and very special circumstances demonstrably outweigh the harm. The Scheme is therefore not contrary to the control of development within any areas listed in this policy. The reduction of traffic along the A460 could contribute to local distinctiveness and the landscape will be conserved and enhanced as part of the Scheme where possible.</p> <p>C) Not relevant to the Scheme</p> <p>D) The Air Quality and Road Drainage and the Water Environment chapters of the Environmental Statement (ES) (Chapter 5 and Chapter 13 respectively [TR010054/APP/6.1]) demonstrate how the Scheme has been designed to protect and improve water and air quality where possible.</p> <p>E) The ES sets out the mitigation and compensatory measures taken to address any potential harmful implications and supporting enhancement measures.</p> <p>Chapter 8 of the CftS provides further detail on all the above [TR010054/APP/7.2].</p>
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Core Policy 3	<p>Core Policy 3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change</p> <p>The Council will require development to be designed to cater for the effects of climate change, making prudent use of natural resources, enabling opportunities for renewable energy and energy efficiency and helping to minimise any environmental impacts. This will be achieved by:</p> <p>a) giving preference to development on previously developed land (brownfield land) in sustainable locations, provided it is not of high environmental value; and supporting and encouraging the reuse of buildings as a sustainable option;</p> <p>b) supporting and encouraging development which facilitates sustainable modes of transport, including the transport of materials and recycling products, by requiring travel plans for developments which would have significant transport implications;</p> <p>c) ensuring that development on brownfield land affected by contamination or land instability is remediated in accordance with the NPPF;</p>	<p>The Scheme has been designed to cater for the effects of climate change, make prudent use of natural resources, enable energy efficiency and minimise any environmental impacts in line with this policy. No opportunities have yet been identified for renewable energy as part of the Scheme given the nature of the development.</p> <p>The design of the Scheme has sought to incorporate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures (see Section 14.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]). The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) required by Requirement 4 of the draft Development Consent Order (DCO) [TR010054/APP/3.1] will include measures to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions and will be developed by the construction contractor. Trees, shrubs and hedgerows planted as part of the landscape design would offset some of the emissions associated with the change in land use.</p> <p>Compliance with each criterion is explored below:</p> <p>a) Given that the location of the Scheme is dictated by the location of existing motorway junctions there are no opportunities to use previously developed land to a greater degree than proposed.</p>

Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
		<p>d) ensuring that all new development and conversion schemes, are located and designed to maximise energy efficiency, and incorporate the best environmental practice and sustainable construction techniques appropriate to the size and type of development; and minimises the consumption and extraction of minerals by making the greatest possible reuse and recycling of materials in new construction;</p> <p>e) ensuring that building design is flexible to future needs and users, and reduces energy consumption by appropriate methods, such as high standards of insulation, layout, orientation, using natural lighting and ventilation, and capturing the sun's heat where appropriate;</p> <p>f) minimising and managing waste in a sustainable way, particularly through re-use and recycling;</p> <p>g) protecting and enhancing South Staffordshire's natural and historic assets including natural habitats, the character and quality of the landscape and valued historic landscapes and the wider countryside, mitigation against the worst effects of climate change and pursuing biodiversity enhancement schemes and historic environment management proposals;</p> <p>h) protecting and enhancing the character, local distinctiveness and setting of villages;</p> <p>i) protecting and enhancing essential community facilities and services including sole facilities, buildings and open spaces, primary care and healthcare facilities;</p> <p>j) guiding development away from known areas of flood risk as identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Surface Water Management Plan and consistent with NPPF;</p> <p>k) ensuring the use of sustainable drainage (Sustainable Drainage Systems) in all new development and promoting the retrofitting of SuDS where possible;</p> <p>l) ensuring that all development includes pollution prevention measures where appropriate to prevent risk of pollution to controlled waters;</p> <p>m) protecting the amenities of our residents and seeking to improve their overall quality of life through the provision of appropriate infrastructure, facilities and services.</p> <p>n) consideration of the impact that development will have on the sterilisation of mineral resources and the potential for future extraction of these minerals</p> <p>Development proposals should be consistent with the adopted Village Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (or subsequent revisions), the Supplementary Planning Document on Sustainable Development and other local planning policies.</p>	<p>b) The Scheme could encourage WCH use of the A460 by reducing traffic on the route. Travel plans are not appropriate for this type of development.</p> <p>c) During the operation phase of the Scheme, lighting will be energy efficient to minimise energy consumption and lighting is confined to locations where road safety is a priority (see Chapter 14 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] for more details on climate change mitigation measures).</p> <p>d) N/A</p> <p>e) N/A</p> <p>f) Where practicable, measures will be implemented to use materials with lower embodied GHG emissions, use sustainably sourced materials and use secondary and recycled products. These measures will be set out in the CEMP, informed by the Outline Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) [TR010054/APP/6.11].</p> <p>g) The Scheme protects and enhances South Staffordshire's natural and historic assets wherever possible. See the following ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] chapters for further detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual; Chapter 14: Climate; Chapter 8: Biodiversity; and Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage. <p>h) The Scheme passes mostly through open countryside so limiting adverse effects on local villages. There may be some positive impacts on local distinctiveness and the setting of villages through the reduction of traffic along the A460, as well as adverse effects on properties closest to the Scheme.</p> <p>i) N/A</p> <p>j) The Scheme is almost wholly located in Flood Zone 1 and the Flood Risk Assessment [TR010054/APP/7.1] and Chapter 13 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] set out how the Scheme design minimises flood risk to the Scheme and elsewhere.</p> <p>k) Sustainable drainage systems have been incorporated into the Scheme wherever possible. The Scheme drainage design includes an allowance for the effects of climate change (refer to ES Appendix 13.2 [TR010054/APP/6.3]). Attenuation has been provided for up to and including 100 years plus 40% climate change allowance, through sustainable drainage system features.</p> <p>l) Consideration of the need to prevent risk of pollution to controlled waters has been taken into account throughout the design and consideration of the impacts of the Scheme during construction and operation. The CEMP (which is informed by the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11]) would include measures to mitigate potential adverse effects on surface watercourses during construction. This would include measures to tackle emergency spillages, and appropriate procedures for managing storage areas and material stockpiles. Potential effects on groundwater would also be mitigated through adherence to the CEMP.</p> <p>m) The Scheme will have a positive impact on residents' quality of life as the quality, reliability and safety will be improved for local and strategic journeys, journey times between primary destinations will be reduced and traffic flows through local villages will be reduced which will enhance the community feel of places alongside the A460. As with any new national network project, there will be adverse effects for properties closest to the Scheme but these have been minimised wherever possible.</p> <p>n) The Scheme passes through a Mineral Safeguard Area for bedrock and superficial sand and gravel and also crosses safeguarded mineral infrastructure at Hilton Park Quarry. The Scheme does not cross active, permitted or allocated extensions to mineral sites. Hilton Park Quarry, east of the Scheme, is a non-operational mineral infrastructure site for which permitted reserves remain. Discussion between Highways England, Hanson and Staffordshire County Council (SCC) have taken place regarding a replacement access of a new roundabout/junction so that operations at the Hilton Park site would not be prohibited by the Scheme should it become operational in the future. Therefore, the Scheme would not unduly restrict the mineral operations at the Hilton Park site should operations recommence in the future. This matter is considered in more detail in the Minerals Safeguarding Report in Appendix 10.1 of the ES</p>

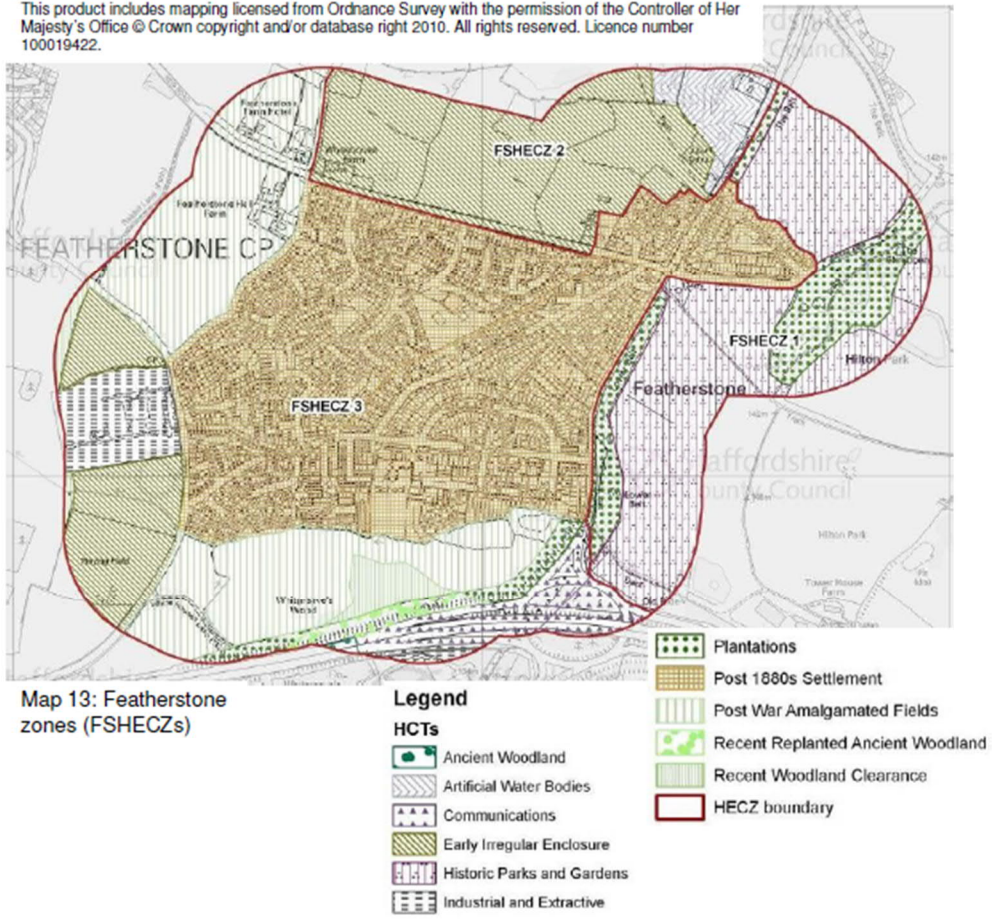
Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
			[TR010054/APP/6.3]. Further, the Scheme once implemented will provide improved links between Saredon Quarry (where there are existing mineral extraction consents) and the motorway network.
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Core Policy 11	<p>Core Policy 11: Sustainable Transport</p> <p>The Council will seek to ensure that accessibility will be improved and transport choice widened, by ensuring that new development is well served by an attractive choice of transport modes, including public transport, footpaths and cycle routes to provide alternatives to the use of the private car and promote healthier lifestyles. The strategic transport network and core public transport network for South Staffordshire are shown on the Key Diagram.</p> <p>Development proposals will, either individually or collectively, have to make appropriate provisions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the need to travel; • Widening travel choices and making travel by sustainable means of transport more attractive than the private car; • Improving road safety; • Improving air quality and reducing the impact of travel upon the environment, in particular reducing carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. <p>The Council will work with its partners to improve accessibility by enhancing sustainable transport opportunities in the District and encouraging development that reduces the need to travel. The Council will also work with its partners outside the District to support and improve cross boundary public transport services. Future growth and development in South Staffordshire will be focused on the Main Service Villages and in sustainable locations to reduce the need to travel.</p> <p>The Council will support initiatives related to the improvement of accessibility within the District including proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving rural transport and rural accessibility in the District particularly for vulnerable people without access to a car and develop projects through the South Staffordshire Rural Transport Partnership; • The retention and improvement of bus services and the extension of services to serve new development; • Infrastructure improvements to railway stations including the provision of transport information, parking provision, and secure covered cycle parking; • Improved walking and cycling facilities within existing villages and by providing safe and secure walking and cycling connections to and from new development and to the surrounding public transport network and access into the countryside. Encouragement will also be given for developing cycle and ride and cycle carriage on public transport. <p>Improvements to the local road and cycle network will be delivered through the transport strategy set out in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and these include priority measures to improve accessibility, create safer roads, and reduce the impact of traffic. Support will also be given for the national cycle network. Highway infrastructure improvements will be required in connection with the development of the i54 strategic employment site at Wobaston Road.</p> <p>The following national and regional transport infrastructure schemes may be delivered in the plan period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M54/M6/M6 Toll Link Road • Brinsford Strategic Park and Ride Site <p>Travel behaviour change towards sustainable modes will be encouraged through the development of Travel Plans. Major developments, including employers and educational institutions should develop Travel Plans to promote sustainable means of travel.</p>	<p>The SSCS Core Policy 11 'Sustainable Transport' seeks to ensure that accessibility will be improved and transport choice widened. The Scheme will reduce the volume of traffic using existing routes such as the A460, A449 and A5. The reduction in traffic using existing routes will improve amenity and could encourage pedestrians and cyclists to use routes such as the A460 more frequently. The Scheme will also introduce a new shared cycleway and footway along Dark Lane. PRow will be retained with some diversions to accommodate the Scheme. These measures could help to encourage travel using alternatives to cars.</p> <p>More detailed information in respect of compliance with this policy is presented in Section 8.16, Chapter 8 of the CftS.</p>
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	GB1	<p>Policy GB1: Development in the Green Belt</p> <p>Within the South Staffordshire portion of the West Midlands Green Belt as defined on the Policies Map, development acceptable within the terms of national planning policy set out in the NPPF will normally be permitted where the proposed development is for either:</p> <p>A. A new or extended building, provided it is for:</p> <p>a) purposes directly related to agriculture or forestry; or</p>	<p>SSCS Policy GB1 seeks to ensure only development that is considered acceptable within the NPPF is permitted in the Green Belt. Acceptable development includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. A new or extended building B. The re-use of a building C. Changes of use of land

Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
		<p>b) appropriate small-scale facilities for outdoor sport or recreation, nature conservation, cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with its purposes; or</p> <p>c) affordable housing where there is a proven local need in accordance with Policy H2; or</p> <p>d) limited infilling* and limited extension(s), alteration or replacement of an existing building where the extension(s) or alterations are not disproportionate to the size of the original building, and in the case of a replacement building the new building is not materially larger than the building it replaces. Guidance in these matters will be contained in the Green Belt and Open Countryside Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</p> <p>B. The re-use of a building provided that:</p> <p>e) the proposed use of any building (taking into account the size of any extensions, rebuilding or required alterations), would not harm the openness of the Green Belt or the fulfilment of its purposes.</p> <p>C. Changes of Use of Land:</p> <p>f) the carrying out of engineering or other operations, or the making of a material change of use of land, where the works or use proposed would have no material effect on the openness of the Green Belt, or the fulfilment of its purposes.</p> <p>D. Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order. Development proposals should be consistent with other local planning policies. <i>*Footnote: Limited infilling is defined as the filling of small gaps (1 or 2 buildings) within a built up frontage of development which would not exceed the height of the existing buildings, not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site, or have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it.</i></p>	<p>D. Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order.</p> <p>The Scheme would not fall into any of the categories listed in Policy GB1 because although the Scheme could be defined as engineering operations under category C (f), it cannot be said to have no material effect on the openness of the Green Belt, or the fulfilment of its purposes.</p> <p>However, the Scheme would be acceptable within the terms of national policy as set out in the NPPF because although the effect on openness would mean the Scheme is considered 'inappropriate development', very special circumstances exist for the Scheme that mean the Scheme complies with Green Belt policy. These very special circumstances include the need for new infrastructure, the benefits of the Scheme and lack of alternatives that do not pass through the Green Belt. It is considered that the very special circumstances outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm. The harm to the Green Belt has also been reduced wherever possible through Scheme location and design.</p> <p>Policy GB1 seems to imply that development needs to be both acceptable within the policy set out in the NPPF and fall into one of the categories listed above. If taken literally, this would exclude any development with a material impact on openness of the Green Belt, producing a policy stance that would be more restrictive than, and inconsistent with, the more recent NPPF. However, whilst it is implied that development outside these categories should be restricted, the policy does not state this, and indeed is silent on developments that do not fall into these categories (although development outside these categories is guided by Core Policy 1 (see above)). When considered alongside Core Policy 1, the implication is that development would be restricted outside these categories. In suggesting that development within the Green Belt would need to meet NPPF policy and fall into one of the above categories, the policy would be more restrictive than the NPPF, which does allow for developments to have an impact on openness and still gain consent in very special circumstances. Given that the policy predates both the NPSNN and the NPPF and provides a policy that could be interpreted as more restrictive than either, the Applicant considers that it should have limited weight in decision making on this DCO application (and as a relevant and important matter).</p> <p>More detailed information in respect of compliance with Green Belt policy is presented in Section 8.6, Chapter 8 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2].</p>
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	EV 11	<p>Policy EV11: Sustainable Travel All proposals for development must include provision for sustainable forms of transport to access the site, and within the development. Measures commensurate with the development proposed must be incorporated as an integral part of the design of all development proposals, and could include where appropriate:</p> <p>a) footpaths, cycleways, safe and secure cycle parking, shelters, changing facilities and storage lockers;</p> <p>b) bus stops/shelters and transport information;</p> <p>c) support for sustainable forms of transport (e.g. community transport schemes, workforce buses, and share-a-lift schemes);</p> <p>d) development, adoption, monitoring and promotion of Travel Plans;</p> <p>e) levels of car parking, commensurate with road safety, the reduction of congestion, and the availability of alternative means of transport; and</p> <p>f) facilities for charging plug-in and other low emission vehicles.</p> <p>Development proposals should be consistent with other local planning policies.</p>	<p>Policy EV11 'Sustainable Travel' requires that proposals include provision for sustainable forms of transport to access the site and within the development. Compliance with the example measures provided within the policy is explored below:</p> <p>a) The Scheme mainline itself has restricted access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders(WCH). However, a primary objective of the Scheme is to separate strategic and local traffic. In removing strategic traffic from the A460, in particular, it may encourage increased use of local roads by WCH. The proposed reclassification of the existing A460 to a 'C' road is a reflection of the very significant reduction in vehicles predicted to use the route and could support future measures to improve the environment and facilities for WCH. A new shared footway and cycleway will be provided along Dark Lane. Existing PRoW will be retained with some limited temporary and permanent diversions to accommodate the Scheme. There will be no significant adverse effects on PRoW.</p> <p>b) N/A</p> <p>c) N/A</p> <p>d) Given that the Scheme is a new highway, it would not be appropriate to produce a Travel Plan for the development.</p> <p>e) The Scheme would reduce congestion on local and regional routes, particularly the A460 and A449, improve journey times and reliability and reduce accident rates on the existing network.</p> <p>f) N/A</p> <p>More detailed information in respect of compliance with this policy is presented in Section 8.16 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2] and Chapter 12 of the Environmental Statement [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p>

Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Policy EQ1	<p>Policy EQ1: Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets</p> <p>Permission will be granted for development (alone or in combination) which would not cause significant harm to sites and/or habitats of nature conservation, geological or geomorphological value, including ancient woodlands and hedgerows, together with species that are protected or under threat. Support will be given to proposals which enhance and increase the number of sites and habitats of nature conservation value, and to meeting the objectives of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP).</p> <p>In line with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), development proposals must not adversely affect the ecological status of a water body and wherever possible take measures to improve ecological value in order to help meet the required status.</p> <p><i>International Sites</i></p> <p>Any proposed development that could have an adverse affect on the integrity of an international wildlife, geodiversity or landscape site (e.g. Natura 2000 or Ramsar site, Special Area of Conservation) or on ground water flows to those sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites can be fully met.</p> <p><i>National Sites</i></p> <p>Protected wildlife, geodiversity and landscape sites designated under national legislation are shown on the Policies Map [e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs)] and will be protected under the terms of that legislation.</p> <p><i>Local Sites</i></p> <p>Locally important sites are also identified [e.g. Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)] and will be protected and enhanced. Outside the areas designated, the interests of nature conservation must be taken into account in accordance with national guidance.</p> <p>The restoration or creation of new habitats and the expansion of habitats in South Staffordshire will be supported where these contribute to priorities in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan including priority habitats such as native woodland, hedgerows, and lowland heathland. Areas or sites for the restoration or creation of biodiversity priority habitats will be identified through Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping working in partnership with Natural England, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Staffordshire County Council. Wherever possible, development proposals should build in biodiversity by incorporating ecologically sensitive design and features for biodiversity within the development scheme.</p> <p>Development proposals should be consistent with the Supplementary Planning Documents on Biodiversity and Landscape Character and other local planning policies.</p>	<p>The SSCS Policy EQ1 states that permission will be granted for development that will not cause harm to sites or habitats of nature conservation including ancient woodland. Consideration has been given to the potential effects of the Scheme on sites of nature conservation interest in Chapter 8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. This includes consideration of international, national and local nature conservation sites, areas of ancient woodland and habitats of principle importance.</p> <p>The Scheme design includes measures to reduce the potential effects of the Scheme on the receiving environment. Design measures include compensatory planting for ancient woodland affected by the Scheme, acoustic barriers, landscape planting and provision of suitable surface water management and areas for floodwater storage and floodplain compensation. These measures have been developed through extensive consultation with Statutory Environmental Bodies, host local authorities, landowners and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>The Scheme would result in a very small loss of ancient woodland at Brookfield Farm and some development within the 15 m buffer area around the ancient woodland at Whitgreaves Wood. Replacement planting would be provided on a ratio of 7:1 as agreed with NE, including to compensate for development within the buffer zone. The Scheme also includes measures to improve the biodiversity value of ancient woodland at Whitgreaves Wood.</p> <p>It is recognised that ancient woodland with its long history and complexity of habitat cannot be replicated, and certainly not within 15 years. Even when the measures incorporated into the Scheme are taken together (comprising minimising loss of ancient woodland, increased (non-ancient) woodland area through new planting and improvements in management of retained woodland) the losses of ancient woodland represent a reduction in the overall extent of this irreplaceable habitat.</p> <p>There are no statutory international nature conservation designations within 2 km of the Scheme. There are four national conservation designations within 2 km of the Scheme, all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Section 8.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes that the Scheme would have no direct or indirect impacts on SSSIs during construction due to the distance between the sites and the Scheme and the lack of impact pathways identified.</p> <p>During the operation phase, Section 8.9 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] concludes that the Scheme would result in a significant positive effect on Belvide Reservoir SSSI due a reduction in NO_x.</p> <p>There are no Local Nature Reserves within 2 km of the Scheme. There are six non-statutory nature conservation designations within 2 km of the Scheme, including two Sites of Biological Importance within the Order limits. As outlined in Section 8.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1] mitigation measures will be put in place to minimise the potential effects of the Scheme on designated and non-designated ecological sites during construction. These measures are included in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11] for the Scheme and would include measures to protect, for example, habitats related to watercourses during works to those watercourses.</p>
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Policy EQ4	<p>Policy EQ4: Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape</p> <p>The intrinsic rural character and local distinctiveness of the South Staffordshire landscape should be maintained and where possible enhanced. Trees, veteran trees, woodland, ancient woodland and hedgerows should be protected from damage and retained unless it can be demonstrated that removal is necessary and appropriate mitigation can be achieved. For visual and ecological reasons, new and replacement planting should be of locally native species.</p> <p>The Council will encourage and support the creation of new woodlands and the management of existing woodlands particularly where they contribute to community forestry. Reference should be made to the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy.</p> <p>Throughout the District, the design and location of new development should take account of the characteristics and sensitivity of the landscape and its surroundings, and not have a detrimental effect on the immediate environment and on any important medium and long distance views.</p> <p>The siting, scale, and design of new development will need to take full account of the nature and distinctive qualities of the local landscape. The use of techniques, such as landscape character analysis, to establish the local importance and the key features that should be protected and enhanced, will be supported.</p>	<p>SSCS Policy EQ4 seeks to protect and enhance the local distinctiveness of the South Staffordshire landscape. The Historic Landscape Area (HLA) is considered a valued landscape given its designation in the SSCS.</p> <p>The Scheme has been the subject of an iterative design process, informed by analysis of landscape and visual constraints, iterative impact assessments and mitigation proposals. Design, mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated into the Scheme design and planned construction are described in detail in Section 7.8 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The Scheme has been designed to integrate with the surrounding landscape, including incorporating landform modelling such as cuttings and planting of woodland, trees and shrub along the route corridor to filter views and integrate the Scheme with the landscape. The Scheme includes gently profiled screening bunds and cuttings. Landscape planting including woodland, tree and shrub planting along the route corridor will also enhance the visual attractiveness of the Scheme and integrate it with the existing landscape and reinforce existing vegetation. Particular care has been taken with the design for landscape planting in the vicinity of Hilton Park HLA to integrate the Scheme and its associated landscape planting into the parkland setting. For example, the siting of the Scheme within the woodland and avoiding significant planting in designed open areas of Hilton Park will help assimilate the Scheme into the landscape.</p> <p>The policy stresses the importance of the AONB and its setting. The Scheme does not lie within and would not affect the Cannock Chase AONB.</p>

Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
		<p>Proposals should retain and strengthen the components of landscape character and local distinctiveness, with particular attention to the detailing of any proposal and its relationship with existing buildings, features and vegetation. Proposals within the Historic Landscape Areas (HLA) defined on the Policies Map should have special regard to the desirability of conserving and enhancing the historic landscape character, important landscape features and the setting of the HLA. The County Council's Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation will provide an informed framework for the decision making process.</p> <p>Where possible, opportunities should be taken to add character and distinctiveness through the contribution of new landscape features, particularly to landscapes which have been degraded.</p> <p>Development within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and its setting as shown on the Policies Map will be subject to special scrutiny, in accordance with national policy and any additional guidance, in order to conserve and enhance the landscape, nature conservation and recreation interests of the area.</p> <p>Proposals that contribute to the objectives of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan, the Forest of Mercia and other local initiatives that will contribute to enhancing landscape character will be supported.</p> <p>Development proposals should be consistent with the adopted Village Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (or subsequent revisions), the Supplementary Planning Documents on Landscape Character and Biodiversity and other local planning policies.</p>	
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Policy EQ7	<p>Policy EQ7: Water Quality</p> <p>Development will be permitted where proposals do not have a negative impact on water quality, either directly through pollution of surface or groundwater or indirectly through overloading of Wastewater Treatment Works. Consultation must be held with Severn Trent Water ahead of the progression of any potential development to ensure appropriate wastewater infrastructure is in place in sufficient time, particularly where potential development will depend on Codsall, Penkridge and Wombourne Wastewater Treatment Works where there is a known capacity restriction.</p> <p>Further site specific analysis of any development proposals located in proximity or upstream of environmentally significant sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and European Sites including Motte Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) will be required in order to validate any relevant planning application to demonstrate that the development will have no adverse effect on environmentally significant sites. Non mains drainage will not be permitted where it is likely to cause adverse effects at sensitive ecological sites. In line with objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), development proposals must not adversely affect the water quality of waterbodies in the District and wherever possible take measures to improve it.</p> <p>All planning applications must include a suitable Sustainable Drainage (SUDs) scheme, and greater detail will be considered in a Sustainable Development Supplementary Planning Document. Developers are advised to refer to the guidance on SUDs contained in section 4.3 of the Southern Staffordshire Outline Water Cycle Study.</p> <p>Development proposals should be consistent with other local planning policies.</p>	<p>SSCS Policy EQ7 states development will be permitted where proposals do not have a negative impact on water quality.</p> <p>A number of essential mitigation measures have been identified for the construction and operation phase to reduce, remediate or compensate likely significant adverse environmental effects on the water environment. The OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11] includes these measures to ensure they are adopted, including measures such as managing the risk of spills and pollution to surface and ground waters. The OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.11] includes specific measures where construction works are to be carried out in particularly sensitive locations. During the operational phase, maintenance of the drainage network and assets is required as part of the operation of the Scheme. The Scheme design includes a series of drains and swales to mimic natural drainage and provide ecological benefits. Penstocks would also be installed upstream of all wet ponds to allow cut off in the event of a spillage. The design for the drainage system includes discharge rate equivalent to a greenfield run off and to accommodate peak discharge rates of 1 in 100 year return period rates +40% for climate change.</p> <p>An assessment of the impact of the Scheme on biodiversity and water quality is reported in Chapters 8 and 13 of the ES respectively [TR010054/APP/6.1]. The pond within the Lower Pool SBI and the wet woodland at Brookfield Farm SBI would be affected by the Scheme. All other water dependent ecological sites are located within 1-2km of the Scheme boundary and were scoped out of the assessment due to distance and lack of hydraulic connectivity.</p> <p>The Scheme will result in the partial loss of the pond at the Lower Pool SBI and the temporary loss of 70 m of existing channel at Latherford Brook during construction as some construction works to the margins of the primary channel will be required to install the new bridge abutments. The Scheme has been designed to minimise the loss of these habitats. The methodology for works within Lower Pool would be developed during the detailed design stage of the Scheme and fish will be removed from the ponds before construction work begins. The methodology for any dewatering necessary would be agreed with the EA in advance and the potential for sediment plumes would be assessed and monitored.</p>
South Staffordshire Core Strategy (SSCS)	Policy EQ9	<p>Policy EQ9: Protecting Residential Amenity</p> <p>All development proposals should take into account the amenity of any nearby residents, particularly with regard to privacy, security, noise and disturbance, pollution (including light pollution), odours and daylight. Noise sensitive developments such as housing development will not be permitted in the vicinity of established noise generating uses where potential for harmful noise levels is known to exist unless measures to suppress noise sources can be provided through condition or legal agreement.</p> <p>Development likely to generate harmful noise levels will be directed to appropriate locations away from known noise sensitive locations and noise sensitive habitats unless measures to suppress noise can be provided for the life of the development through legal agreement.</p>	<p>SSCS Core Policy EQ9 requires that all development proposals take into account the amenity of nearby residents with regard to privacy, security, noise and disturbance, pollution, odours and daylight.</p> <p>The nearest residential properties to the Scheme are concentrated in the built-up areas of Featherstone and Shareshill. Smaller areas of residential properties are located close to the Scheme in Hilton (at Dark Lane, Park Road, Hilton Lane) and Shareshill (Brookfield Farm). There are three Noise Important Areas (NIAs) (areas identified by the government as areas being most exposed to noise) located within 1 km of the Scheme.</p> <p>A combination of long-term and short-term noise monitoring was undertaken to provide information on the current noise levels in the area and modelling completed to assess the potential effects of the Scheme. The potential noise and vibration effects resulting from the construction and operation of the Scheme are assessed in Chapter 11 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p>

Local Policy Document	Policy reference	Policy Text	Assessment of compliance with policy
		<p>Sensitive developments such as housing will not be permitted in the vicinity of established sources of pollution which may give rise to harm to the amenity of occupants. Proposals involving the reuse and conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to residential use should not take place where agricultural use involving the keeping of animals or associated waste is to be retained in adjacent buildings. Development likely to harm the amenity of neighbouring residents will be directed to appropriate locations away from known sensitive locations.</p> <p>Development must not unacceptably reduce the existing level of amenity space about buildings, particularly dwellings, and not unacceptably affect the amenity of residents or occupants. Development proposals should be consistent with other local planning policies.</p>	<p>Mitigation measures to be implemented during construction are set out in the OEMP [TR010054/APP/6.1] and will be developed into a CEMP, which will be delivered during the construction phase. A number of measures to reduce noise and vibration disturbance are set out in Chapter 11 (Section 11.8) of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].</p> <p>Detailed consideration of compliance with this policy is set out in Section 8.10 of the CftS.</p>
Historic Environment Character Assessment: South Staffordshire, SCC, January 2011.	Section 6.1	6.1.1 The conservation of the fabric of the historic landscape of South Staffordshire, including field boundaries, the settlement pattern and the winding lanes between settlements is desirable. The integrity of the historic landscape character and distinctiveness of the zone should be considered when planning the scale and relative density of any potential new development. This approach is supported by PPS5 Policy HE3 which emphasises the influence of the historic environment upon the landscape and sense of place and upon its mixed and flexible patterns of land use.	Section 6.1 assesses the historic landscape and states that the conservation of the fabric of the historic landscape of South Staffordshire including field boundaries, settlement patterns and winding lanes is desirable. The Scheme design has sought to retain these features where possible in the area around the Scheme.
	Section 6.5	6.5.1 Early consultation with historic environment advisors at South Staffordshire Council and at Staffordshire County Council is advised to address any requirements for mitigation in line with PPS 5 policies HE 8 and HE 12. The contact details can be found in section 8.	Section 6.5 recommends early consultation with historic environment advisors at SSC and SCC. Ongoing consultation has been undertaken with the County Archaeologist for SCC and Historic England as described in Section 6.3 of the ES [TR010054/APP/6.1].

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	Map 13	<p>7.5 Featherstone</p> <p>This product includes mapping licensed from Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Office © Crown copyright and/or database right 2010. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019422.</p>  <p>Map 13: Featherstone zones (FSHECZs)</p> <p>Legend</p> <p>HCTs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient Woodland Artificial Water Bodies Communications Early Irregular Enclosure Historic Parks and Gardens Industrial and Extractive <p>Other features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plantations Post 1880s Settlement Post War Amalgamated Fields Recent Replanted Ancient Woodland Recent Woodland Clearance HECZ boundary 	<p>Map 13 in the SPD shows the Historic Environment Character Zone around Featherstone. The map is centred on Featherstone but does show that the land east of Featherstone and the A460 (labelled FSHECA1) and within the Scheme boundary includes areas of 'Plantation' and 'Historic Park and Garden'. The supporting text in Section 7 of the SPD and Appendix 2 identifies that Featherstone is a modern village and that area FSHECA1 includes the surviving components of the historic landscape park associated with Hilton Park include Shelter belts, woodland, an ornamental lake and parkland trees and provides the background and history to the historic landscape. This information has been taken into account when forming the baseline for the cultural heritage assessment.</p>
SCC Local Transport Plan (2011)	Policy 1.1	<p>We stimulate regeneration and support areas of deprivation.</p> <p>This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with the business community to identify transport issues which are hampering the economy. Ensuring the transport network – its management, maintenance and development – contributes to the attractiveness and vibrancy of town and villages. Supporting new development that includes or is located in areas with good public transport links, well connected to walking and cycling networks and facilities, and where the demand of 'place' and 'movement' is considered together. Ensuring that opportunities are maximised for transport investment to be used to lever external investment, especially where is attracts new knowledge-based, service led, industries. Supporting schemes that 'add value' to the transport network, particularly those that promote its 'place' role. Continuing to provide tailored transport services and travel incentives to those for whom access is a barrier to jobs and education. Maintaining and where appropriate, expanding Staffordshire's public transport network where it is deemed socially important or where it provides access to employment and/or training. Lobbying Government, network Rail and train operating companies for signalling upgrades and route electrification. 	<p>The Scheme will support the objectives of LTP Policy 1.1 to stimulate regeneration and support areas of deprivation through supporting economic development within South Staffordshire and the surrounding area, reducing the adverse impact of the local highway network on the attractiveness and vibrancy of towns and villages (e.g. those along the A460 Cannock Road) and harnessing national investment in transport infrastructure. Further detail on the economic benefits of the Scheme is provided in Chapter 6 and Section 8.5, Chapter 8 of the CftS [TR010054/APP/7.2].</p>

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	Policy 1.4	<p>We will maximise the reliable operation of the existing road network.</p> <p>This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a Road Hierarchy Review to ensure the county's roads reflect their existing function, which will provide a coherent and consistent framework for the management of the road network, including and appropriate speed management policy (Appendix K). • Using Urban Traffic Control to balance the need of, and maximise delays to, road users including pedestrians and cyclists. Where appropriate, it will be used to encourage the use of the primary road network and to benefit public transport movements. • Proactively tackling illegal parking (see Box 1.10). • Using and enforcing Traffic Regulation Orders to maintain traffic flows including where delays may be otherwise caused. These will be considered on safety grounds, where commerce is seriously affected by parked vehicles or where the restriction is essential to provide the maximum benefit from capital movement. • Returning the network top a normal and safe state of operation as soon as possible after an event, especially on traffic sensitive roads. • Enforcing moving traffic offenses where it causes congestion, environmental intrusion or it is detrimental to road safety. • Promoting the delivery and further development or travel plans. • Encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use, particularly on congested corridors. <p>For further measure on how we plan to maximise the reliable operation of the existing road network, please see Chapter 2 'Maintaining the Highway Network' Chapter 4, 'Improving Safety and Security', Chapter 5 'Reducing Road Transport Emissions and Their Effects on the highway Network' and Appendix X.</p>	<p>The scheme will support the objective of LTP Policy 1.4 which aims to maximise the reliable operation of the existing road network. See Transport Assessment Report [TR010054/APP/7.4] for further details.</p>
	Policy 1.8	<p>We will improve the efficiency of freight distribution. This will be achieved through the actions set out in the Staffordshire Freight Strategy (Appendix L).</p>	<p>The Scheme will improve the efficiency of freight travel and distribution through separating long-distance freight from local traffic, providing shorter, more reliable journey times.</p>