

Role of Spatial Planning in the development and delivery of the Strategic Transport Plan

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Contents

Context	4
Challenges	6
Role of Transport for the North	8
Links to other TfN workstreams	10
TfN's role in spatial planning	14
Next steps	22



Context

Transport for the North (TfN) is a statutory Sub-national Transport Body (STB) of elected leaders and a partnership of business leaders who collectively represent the region's 15 million people. As a partnership, TfN brings 20 Local Transport Authorities and 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships together with Network Rail, National Highways, HS2 Ltd, and UK Government.

Through its statutory powers, TfN provides a single voice for the North of England to support the development and implementation of transport strategies across the region, determining investment decisions and working with Government to enable Northern priorities to be included within national priorities. Operating within this strategic position, TfN and partners work collaboratively to identify the transport infrastructure and policy measures required to achieve the North's ambition. Our Strategic Transport Plan (STP) is a formally adopted plan, and this should be a key consideration for any spatial or transport plans within the North.

TfN currently has a remit to influence and promote strategic transport interventions across spatial development within the North. This regularly requires joint working with combined authorities and groups of co-operating authorities to develop Statements of Common Ground in line with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019), which maintains the importance of effective cooperation within spatial planning. Spatial planning is currently undertaken at the national level through the NPPF which also recognises the importance of collaboration with statutory and non-statutory consultees. This includes with regional consultees such as TfN.

In developing TfN's position on spatial planning, our objective is to support partners in adopting a place-based approach to the development of local plans and strategies, as well as informing the development planning process to consider TfN's pan-Northern ambitions and facilitate cross-boundary collaboration.

The importance of master planning and adopting a place-based approach to scheme development is essential to ensure effective spatial planning. Drawing on our experience through Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and related workstreams, we recognise the pan-Northern expertise and evidence base that we can provide partners to support their spatial plan development. Therefore, we will share data with partners where possible, utilising TfN's analytical capacity to support future development of local and regional economic and transport strategies.

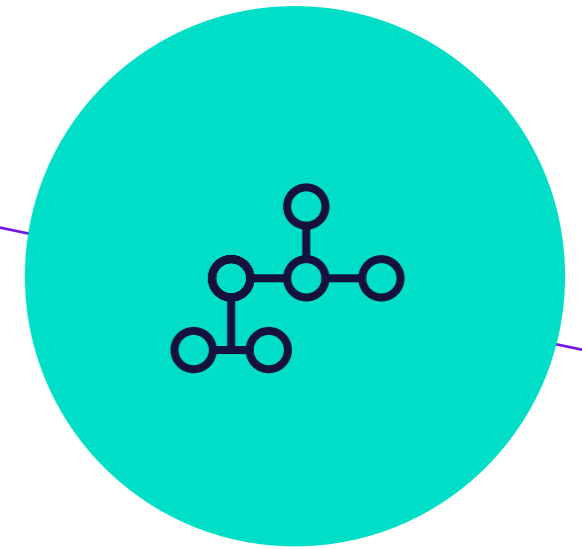
Our policy framework for spatial planning can add value to emerging local plans and economic strategies, utilising the strategic narrative and evidence base of the STP and its subsequent strategies and evidence including our Transport Decarbonisation Strategy¹ and Freight & Logistics Strategy². We will also ensure we align our own position with that of other key stakeholders such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), through their Great North Plan and the promotion of Green Growth Boards.



¹ Transport for the North, Transport Decarbonisation Strategy, December 2021, <https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/TfN-Transport-Decarbonisation-Strategy-TfNDEC2021.pdf>

² Transport for the North, Draft Freight & Logistics Strategy, December 2021, <https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Freight-Strategy-Master-Consultation-version-v0.1.pdf>

Challenges



For TfN, there are several challenges that have underpinned our development of this spatial planning policy, which are:

- As an STB, TfN has the remit to influence and promote strategic transport interventions, and our STP is a formal plan that should be a key consideration for any spatial or transport plans within the North. We are keen to work with partners to provide support where required and ensure we administer this function appropriately.
- With a remit across the entire North of England, TfN's resources have responsibility across a broad range of policy development and strategy implementation. This limits the extent to which TfN can review and engage in detail on partner's plans and strategies.
- Currently, many of the spatial planning ambitions of partners are localised based on local authority boundaries, and cross-boundary collaboration does take place, such as at a combined authority level, however ,partners feel there is a distinct role for TfN to play at the strategic pan-Northern level.
- Some of TfN's partners are not local planning authorities, for example combined authorities, reflecting that strategic transport and planning are often undertaken at different levels.
- There is current uncertainty for planning reform on a national level with future policy decisions for spatial planning yet to be defined.

Within the remainder of this document, we outline the role of spatial planning in developing and delivering our STP and how we will proactively work with partners to overcome these challenges.

Role of Transport for the North

As a STB, TfN's role is to set the overall transport vision and to provide statutory advice on planning and priorities for large scale transport investment. Within this context, **TfN will adopt a collaborative and open approach to engage with all local planning authorities across the North that is proportional to the resources available to TfN.**

STP policy position

In the Strategic Transport Plan, the following statements are made in relation to our role regarding spatial planning:

→ Continue to work with partners to develop and implement their local plans and strategies, ensuring they complement the policies and proposals set out in the Strategic Transport Plan, to deliver packages of improvements that support a more seamless, integrated end-to-end experience. Where possible, this should encourage modal shift and promote active transport, and further develop public transport networks as important sustainable modes of travel.

→ Work with partners to ensure that future strategic housing, commercial and industrial developments are well connected, and have high expectations on developers to provide access to public transport facilities, high levels of cycle parking and storage, and provide electric charging facilities to support a greener and cleaner road network.

→ Ensure that improvements to the strategic transport network align with local spatial plans and other key strategies and are in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

→ Ensure that necessary strategic transport interventions are delivered in the right place and at the right time to support the delivery of major development proposals, including Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project developments, Enterprise Zones and garden towns/villages.



This document aims to provide more detail on TfN's defined role to support spatial planning and to facilitate the delivery and implementation of the above STP statements. This will provide further clarity for partners across the North as well as for TfN's programmes.



Links to other TfN workstreams

Spatial Planning also sits across several other TfN workstreams:

- **Decarbonisation:** Policy measures to ensure local plans consider TfN's decarbonisation trajectories and pre-agreed targets. The evidence base generated by our activities in this area can be used to directly inform the development of partner's plans and development strategies.
- **Multimodal hubs:** Promoting opportunities for greater public transport use and car sharing opportunities embedded within new developments.
- **Freight and logistics:** Ensuring TfN is clearly communicating and supporting the development of key freight routes across the North to maximise the economic development opportunities for well-connected logistic warehousing sites and freight distribution networks as identified in the TfN Freight & Logistics Strategy.
- **Active travel:** Supporting more liveable and low-traffic neighbourhoods through enabling developments which promote walking and cycling.
- **Transport-Related Social Exclusion (TRSE) research:** Identifies the consequences of spatial planning decisions that lock residents into car dependency and forced car ownership, and those which facilitate local service and public transport access in mixed development contexts.
- **Health and wellbeing research:** TfN is undertaking research to expand evidence on the impacts of transport on health and wellbeing in the North, including the issues of severance, physical inactivity, and access to green space. This will enhance the evidence base on the consequences of different spatial planning decisions.

- **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI):** Application of the TfN modelling suite to build an EVCI model will enhance assessment of EVCI requirements and associated sustainability, spatial and social considerations. This includes assessment of optimum timing for implementation of various charging infrastructure across different spatial typologies. This also allows for the assessment of interactions with residential and commercial building stock and appropriate parking locations, planning, and policies.
- **Future Travel Scenarios:** Spatial planning is one of the key external factors which frames our scenario development. The external strategic factors used in our 2020 scenarios are based on the STP (2019) policy positions deemed as critical influencing strategic factors which the transport sector should consider. This results in different assumptions for spatial distributions, impacts, and considerations across our scenarios.



Links to other TfN workstreams (continued)

→ **Updating our 2020-2050 Investment Programme:** Assumptions on future development and spatial planning policies are critical to shaping our work on recommending future transport investment in the North's rail and major road networks. This analysis is being informed by local development plans and long-term spatial planning assumptions within our Future Travel Scenarios.

→ **Through the Major Road Network (MRN) Regional Evidence Base:** With most passenger and freight travel via road, future planning decisions will have a major impact on future demand on our road networks. TfN is promoting the delivery of several improvement schemes, including schemes that may unlock wider development, as well as considering the first and last mile of journeys and how they can be sustainably embedded within development sites.

→ **TfN Strategic Rail and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR):** Suitable rail access is imperative to spatial planning as demand increases from new people and businesses in an area. This should also consider the impact of COVID-19 on rail travel with a likely increase in leisure travel and less demand for commuter trips. At a smaller scale, improvements to station buildings with more commercial and non-commercial facilities could transform and revitalise the communities which they are located. At a larger scale, increasing densities and mixed-use developments around public transport hubs will enhance the attractiveness of public transport across all parts of the North. Emerging spatial masterplans around proposed HS2 and stations aligned to the North's preferred NPR network are demonstrating how transport is a catalyst for growth such as at Manchester Airport, Manchester Piccadilly and the South Bank area of Leeds city centre.

→ **Technical Assurance, Modelling and Economics (TAME):** TfN's TAME team have developed a Development Log which visualises all live planning applications and allocated development sites across the North, this can provide assessments by different classes of housing at Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) level across the region. Further spatial planning policy development will support TAME in gathering new information that will enhance TAME's capabilities further.

→ **Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (NPIER):** The NPIER sets out a transformational future for the North's economy by 2050, including geographic breakdowns of economic growth, employment and population. These forecasts can help us to understand potential future housing and business demand for premises based on transformational growth.



TfN's role in spatial planning

TfN will encourage collaborative spatial planning across the North, to support partners proportionately in developing local plans and strategies which consider TfN's pan-Northern priorities outlined within the STP and wider TfN workstreams. TfN will share our evidence base to support plan development and work proactively with partners to encourage cross-boundary collaboration.

As an STB, TfN has a statutory responsibility to prepare, advise and coordinate transport strategies across the North of England, promoting the investment priorities of the region at a national scale. Our STP is a formal plan and therefore as part of our role within spatial planning, we aim to ensure the ambitions and priorities of our STP are included as a key consideration for any spatial or transport plan developed within the North by local partners. **Our position is not a spatial plan itself, instead providing a framework for partners to consider the transport objectives of the STP within their own spatial plans and development strategies.**

The transport objectives within the STP reflect key considerations for spatial planning such as creating more liveable communities, facilitating greater opportunities for decarbonisation, and improving health and wellbeing for all. TfN can help promote key concepts to achieve these ambitions such as 20-minute neighbourhoods and low-traffic urban centres. This is demonstrated within our evidence base and wider workstreams such as our Transport Decarbonisation Strategy, Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) and Future Travel Scenarios (FTS), which can support local partners in providing a strong framework for local areas to employ in their own spatial planning and development priorities.

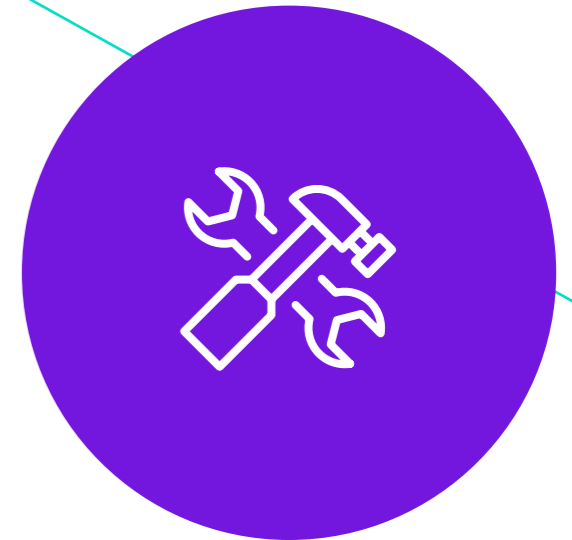


Local plan development

TfN recognises the importance of statutory local plan development undertaken by partners in delivering inclusive spatial planning across the entire North and ensuring strategies reflect the pan-Northern priorities as illustrated by TfN's STP. This facilitates the opportunity to realise development which encourages sustainable travel while reducing private car trips, provides liveable and safe neighbourhoods, and enables access to opportunities for all.

As a proactive partner supporting local partners in spatial planning, TfN is committed to:

- **Early engagement with partners in their development of spatial plans** and working openly to support appropriate development of infrastructure options where required.
- **Share our evidence base** to support the development of consistent and robust analysis of the likely relationship between proposed developments and TfN's strategic transport vision for the North. This includes our transport decarbonisation trajectories, Northern Evidence Hub, and TAME capabilities.
- **Share knowledge and experience of how TfN's strategic transport vision aligns with the proposed development**, to ensure future spatial plans are aligned with the delivery of future transport infrastructure.
- **Work collaboratively to support partners** to prepare strong policies and proposals that are sustainable, practical and well designed. This will ensure key proposals are aligned with Government priorities and funding objectives to progress through to scheme delivery.



TfN's role in spatial planning (continued)



TfN is keen to actively work with local planning authorities throughout the plan-making process to advise on the suitable location and scale of development, while maximising connectivity to new developments. We can also support partners in developing other statutory plans where appropriate such as Local Development Orders and Strategic Regeneration Frameworks, as well as working with stakeholders such as Network Rail to support various applications.

Our evidence base and research is available to support local planning authorities to set their strategic context as they develop their local plans and strategies. This includes through various channels such as TfN's Northern Evidence Academic Forum and the Northern Evidence Hub. Additionally, our NPIER refresh will also offer partners the opportunity to engage on future growth forecasts which will help to understand potential future housing and business demand and inform future spatial planning decisions across the North.

TfN's evidence base can also enable local partners to strengthen the case for investment in strategic transport infrastructure and wider land use planning within their areas. Our evidence can support the case for land value uplift to

enhance the viability of schemes, while also demonstrating how sustainable modal shift can be realised through new schemes. Our evidence recognises the spatial implications of new development to enhance connectivity between urban centres, support regeneration initiatives and create more liveable places for people to live, work and visit.

Furthermore, our work on Future Travel Scenarios ensures our planning is adaptive and resilient to a range of different plausible futures. They outline four potential future transport and growth scenarios to understand the current and emerging complexity of the future of transport. These scenarios are available to support partners in their own local plans and growth strategies and can be used to ensure future development proposals align with future travel demand and associated transport solutions.

To achieve this, we can work with partners to provide some opportunities for more bespoke support using our analytical capacity and modelling tools in proportion with resource availability. TfN is currently liaising with the Department for Transport (DfT), Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) and Homes England on workstreams such as our Development and Intervention Logs, as

well as collaborating and exchanging knowledge with Transport for Scotland and other STBs.

Through sharing our expertise with partners, we can support the development of inclusive and sustainable strategies which represent a place-based approach to consider transport demand, economic growth and decarbonisation. This will build on the workstreams supporting our Transport Decarbonisation Strategy, such as our Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Framework, and work on transport-related social exclusion (TRSE), which are becoming increasingly critical in securing funding from Government. Our recent Transport Decarbonisation Strategy references the importance of ensuring that funding is justified in carbon reduction terms to which TfN can support partners through sharing our evidence base across these workstreams.

Through sharing our expertise with partners and utilising our analytical capacity, this will also enhance TfN's own business case development for future transport infrastructure with our pan-Northern focus on regional connectivity. This collaboration will further enrich our cohesive vision for spatial planning and the North's transport infrastructure.

Action: Build links with local planning partners to showcase the added value TfN can provide to support local plan development. This includes showcasing our modelling capabilities, FTS work and wider evidence base to gain feedback and potential future extensions of key TfN workstreams.

Action: Collate evidence from partners in collaboration with our NPIER workstream to understand partners' current spatial planning policy and future local plan refresh and adoption timescales. Explore opportunities to collate this information centrally for the North and to quantify the scale of development proposed across each area of the North.

TfN's role in spatial planning (continued)



Development planning

TfN has established a Development Log (D-Log) and Intervention Log (I-Log) to visualise all significant new development applications across the North. This can support partners to identify locations where potential mitigation measures may be required for the transport network. These logs can also support cross-boundary collaboration, identifying sites which will require collaboration between local planning authorities to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on neighbouring authorities.

These logs are updated annually through TfN's TAME team requesting relevant data from local planning authorities. TfN is engaging with Government on future opportunities to apply our D-Log/I-Log and add value to spatial planning across national and regional levels. TfN cannot legally publish the data publicly but there are opportunities to work with partners and utilise the D-Log and I-Log to inform spatial planning and decision-making on development applications across the North.

Action: Continue to maintain the D-Log/I-Log through TAME's annual data collection process and engage with partners on the capabilities and added value these modelling tools can provide for spatial planning across the North.

When partners are reviewing a specific development proposal or planning application which they view as being of significant regional importance, TfN can support in assessing the development impacts of the application where necessary. We can undertake a 'bottom-up' assessment of the development impacts on neighbouring local planning authorities and the level of accessibility of the proposed development via all transport modes.

Through utilising our modelling logs, TfN can support local partners on major transport infrastructure schemes across the North, working across local boundaries to help align strategic outcomes and integration opportunities. This may include supporting local partners with positions in defining common approaches to station improvements, land value change, and

the integration of active travel and public transport. Through providing support to partners, we want to strengthen local partners' ability to proactively shape transport projects, engage effectively with key stakeholders and maximise local opportunities.

We define proposals of significant regional importance as developments which fall into at least one of the following:

- Will create more than 1,000 new homes.
- Will create more than 700 new jobs.
- Is located within 2km of the Major Road Network and is expected to have a direct impact on the network in the area.
- Is located within 2km of a rail station and is expected to significantly increase demand at the station.
- Is located within 2km of a boundary with a neighbouring local authority and is of significant scope that it will require cross-boundary collaboration to realise the development.

This assessment will draw upon the evidence base of our D-Log with potential opportunities to utilise our modelling capabilities. Through this, we will support local planning partners to ensure developments embed the pan-Northern priorities outlined in the STP and are designed with suitable transport mitigation measures where necessary.

Through consulting with local planning partners on these proposals, we can maintain an up-to-date evidence base which is critical to our modelling, forecasting and appraisal work, to ensure models provide a more accurate level of outputs reflective of real-world scenarios. This also ensures TfN's business cases are more accurate and reflective of current and forecasted future demand.

Action: In collaboration with our TAME and Economics & Research teams, formalise the forum in which TfN can engage with partners on all elements of spatial planning.

TfN's role in spatial planning (continued)

Engagement with stakeholders

TfN recognises that central to supporting partners within spatial planning is the need for robust engagement throughout the process, which must be underpinned by effective communication channels. To achieve this, we will work to formalise the process for partners to engage regularly and openly with TfN on their spatial planning proposals.

We will also engage wider stakeholders to support partners further where appropriate, including but not limited to DfT, DLUHC, Homes England, and the RTPI.

Action: Continue to engage with wider stakeholders to consider their perspectives on spatial planning and how this aligns with TfN and local planning partner ambitions.



Next steps

The next steps for TfN's work regarding spatial planning are to progress engagement with partners and wider stakeholders to ensure that the policy actions are achieved and will add real value to partners' spatial plans across the North. We will establish a suitable forum of engagement for partners to communicate on spatial planning priorities and to access our evidence base.

We will continue to develop our evidence base, progressing key workstreams that support our spatial planning policy. This includes our work on the D-Log/I-Log and TAME's modelling capabilities, as well as ensuring wider TfN workstreams align with the ambitions set out in this document such as the NPIER, our Transport Decarbonisation Strategy, and our research on TRSE and health and wellbeing.



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