

## **BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB)**

**REPORT TO:** BLTB

**DATE:** 15 March 2018

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Nigel Pallace, Interim Chief Executive Slough Borough Council, lead Chief Executive to the BLTB

### **PART I**

#### **Item 6: Major Roads Network - Proposed Consultation Response**

##### ***Purpose of Report***

1. To report on the Government's proposals to create a Major Roads Network (MRN) and to suggest a proposed response to the consultation. The deadline for responses is 19 March 2018.

##### ***Recommendation***

2. You are asked to endorse the draft response set out in the appendix to this report.

##### ***Other Implications***

##### **Financial**

3. There are no direct financial implications of this report for Berkshire Local Transport Body. In the event that the Government proceeds to designate a Major Roads Network, it is anticipated that the proposed National Roads Fund will support the capital costs of the MRN. Maintenance costs will remain with the relevant local highway authority.
4. The creation of the MRN intends to provide more long-term certainty of funding, with a portion of the capital funding available through the National Roads Fund being dedicated to the MRN. The National Roads Fund will be funded through Vehicle Excise Duty and is due to be implemented by 2020. However, it is expected that during initial years of the second Roads Period the majority of the National Roads Fund will be used to meet Highways England's funding requirements. TfSE is not expecting significant levels of funding for MRN schemes to become available until around 2022, although there is the potential for schemes already under development to gain early entry into the MRN investment programme.

##### **Risk Management**

5. There are limited risks for Berkshire Local Transport Body associated with the government's Major Roads Network consultation process. It is a public process, and it is open to anyone and everyone to respond. The responsibility for a final decision on the MRN rests with the government.

## Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

6. Slough Borough Council will provide legal support for the BLTB, should any questions arise.

### **Supporting Information**

7. On 23 December 2017, the government published "[Moving Britain Ahead](#)<sup>1</sup>", a proposal to designate approximately 5,000 route miles as "Major Roads" forming a network that would sit between the Strategic Road Network (approx. 4,400 miles) and the remainder of the Local Road Network.
8. Officers from the six local transport authorities in Berkshire have co-operated with each other, and with their colleagues across the Transport for the South East area to co-ordinate a response. This has included access to a jointly commissioned technical report which has formed the evidence base for our response.
9. The proposals in Moving Britain Ahead are based on [extensive work](#)<sup>2</sup> published by the [Rees Jeffreys Fund](#)<sup>3</sup> in October 2016. The consultation proposes that the following routes in Thames Valley Berkshire be included in the MRN:

Table 1: TVB Roads in the consultation proposal for inclusion in the MRN

<b>TVB LA</b>	<b>Road</b>	<b>Between</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>Other LA</b>
Slough	A4 (Colnbrook)	M4 J5	Heathrow Airport	TfL/Hillingdon
Slough	A355 (Farnham Road)	M4 J6	M40 J2	Bucks
Slough	A4/A412 (Uxbridge Road)	A355 (Three Tuns)	M40 J1	Bucks TfL/Hillingdon
Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest	A4/A3290/A329(M)/A322	Reading IDR	M3 J3	Surrey
Reading, Wokingham	A33 (Basingstoke Road)	Reading IDR	M3 J6	Hampshire
Reading, West Berkshire	A4	Reading IDR	A339	
Bracknell Forest	A3095/A331	Twin Bridges Roundabout	M3 J4	Surrey Hampshire
West Berkshire	A339	A34	M3 J6	Hampshire

10. There is widespread agreement that these roads should be included in the MRN.
11. Following consultation with colleagues through TfSE, and including the technical advice commissioned to form an evidence base for the response, we,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposals-for-the-creation-of-a-major-road-network>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reesjeffreys.co.uk/funding-policy/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.reesjeffreys.co.uk/>

together with TfSE, are recommending that the following roads also be included in the MRN:

Table 2: Proposed additions to the MRN

<b>TVB LA</b>	<b>Road</b>	<b>Between</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>Other LA</b>
Wokingham, RBWM, Buckinghamshire, Slough	A4	A3290 (Suttons Seeds)	A355 (Three Tuns)	Includes Bucks section between Maidenhead and Slough
Slough	A4 (Langley High Street)	A412 (Uxbridge Road)	M4 J5	
West Berkshire	A4/A338	A339 (Robin Hood, Newbury)	M4 J14	Possible extension west into Wiltshire
RBWM	A332 Royal Windsor Way	A308 Clarence Road	M4 J6	
RBWM	A308	Maidenhead	Staines-upon-Thames	Surrey
Bracknell Forest and RBWM	A30	Bagshot	Staines-upon-Thames	Surrey

12. The consultation also asks for views on what types of intervention should be supported by funds the government may make available for investment in the MRN.
13. The consultation report contains a presumption against public transport interventions. The proposed response attached to this report suggests that, especially for heavily trafficked urban sections of the MRN, local highway authorities need to have the flexibility to consider a wide range of interventions to improve traffic flow and reliability.
14. The Rapid Transit schemes that BLTB has recently supported in both Reading/Wokingham and Slough are excellent examples of situations where public transport investment can benefit not only all sections of road user, but also benefit non-users by tackling air quality and community severance issues.
15. We suggest that the classification of roads within the MRN put forward in the Rees Jeffreys report could usefully be employed to reflect the differences between urban and rural settings and between limited- and multi-access road design.
16. We suggest that the proposals be further refined to acknowledge that different interventions are appropriate for different types of road. The sections of MRN that are within urban areas should be differentiated from longer distance sections that connect centres of population.
17. We suggest this distinction will be useful in accommodating our comments about widening the scope of appropriate interventions on the busiest urban sections of MRN to include a fuller consideration of the needs of public transport and non-motorised users.

18. The proposed response also points out that the proposals lack detail on how the promised improvements in standards and performance might be judged. We suggest that the proposal could be improved by identifying metrics that might be used to measure standards and performance.

### ***Conclusion***

19. The work to prepare a response to this consultation is an early example of the benefits of our membership of TfSE.

### ***Background Papers***

20. The TfSE Shadow Board papers for their meeting on 5 March 2018 include a report and a technical appendix prepared by Atkins for TfSE. These documents are available on request from TfSE.

# Proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network

## 1. Introduction

As part of the Transport Investment Strategy, the government announced that it would take forward proposals to create the Major Road Network (MRN).

This middle-tier of economically and strategically important local authority 'A' roads will sit between the nationally-managed Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the rest of the Local Road Network. These roads will benefit from targeted funding available through a share of the National Roads Fund, with the aim to improve productivity and connectivity in our towns and cities.

In creating this network, the government has 5 central policy objectives. These are:

- **Reduce congestion** – alleviating local and regional congestion, reducing traffic jams and bottlenecks.
- **Support economic growth and rebalancing** – support the delivery of the industrial strategy, contributing to a positive economic impact that is felt across the regions.
- **Support housing delivery** – unlocking land for new housing developments.
- **Support all road users** – recognising the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people.
- **Support the SRN** – complementing and supporting the existing SRN by creating a more resilient road network in England.

This consultation seeks views on the government's proposals for how the MRN will achieve these policy objectives across 3 themes. These are:

- **defining the network**
- **investment planning**
- **eligibility and investment assessment criteria**

The proposals in this consultation outline how the MRN will:

- form a consistent, coherent network alongside the SRN that brings about the opportunity to better co-ordinate roads investment
- provide funding certainty to roads in the network, through use of the National Roads Fund, and raise standards and performance across the new network
- provide clear roles for local and regional partners, who will support the government to deliver and develop MRN schemes

### Confidentiality

We thank all respondents for taking the time to read the consultation document and to respond to the consultation questions. Your views on the programme's core objectives and principles, as well as the major themes set out in the consultation, will contribute to the formulation of MRN policy.

## 2. Respondent details

**Your contact details. We will only contact you if we need to clarify any of the answers you give us.**

Your name

Your email

**In what capacity are you responding?**

Other

**In which region are you based?**

South East

## 3&4. MRN core principles

Questions in this section relate to pages 20 to 21 of the consultation document, 'MRN Core Principles'.

In order to deliver our objectives for the MRN, we believe there are a number of fundamental principles that must be at the heart of our plans for a MRN and its programme of investment. These are:

- **increased certainty of funding**
- **a consistent network**
- **a coordinated investment programme**
- **a focus on enhancement and major renewals**
- **clear local, regional and national roles**
- **strengthening links with the Strategic Road Network**

**Q1. Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in the consultation document?**

No

**If you answered no, which core principle(s) do you disagree with? Provide an explanation why.**

*At page 6, in the Executive Summary, the document announces, "the Government has five central policy objectives [including to] support all road users." However, in the foreword (page 5) the document talks about "... raising the performance standards which motorists experience ..." but makes no reference to potential benefits for other categories of road user.*

*The 6 Core Principles set out on pages 20 and 21 make no reference to meeting the needs of all categories of road user. They can be improved by adding specific references to meeting the needs of public transport and non-motorised users.*

*The whole document could be improved by more consistently acknowledging that the MRN should raise the standards and performance for public transport and non-motorised users as well as for motorists and freight movements.*

*There are references throughout the document to "improving the standards and performance of the network" (see Core Principles: Increased Certainty of Funding, A Consistent Network and A Focus on Enhancement and Major Renewals), yet nowhere in the document is there an indication of how improvements in standards and performance might be judged.*

*The document could be further improved by identifying the metrics that might be used to measure standards and performance.*

## 5&6. Defining the network

Questions in this section relate to pages 22 to 27 of the consultation document, 'Defining the Network'.

The extent of the network must strike a balance between capturing the most economically important regional roads and ensuring that its size is appropriate, enabling investments that can drive an improvement to the level of funding available.

Any definition must make the best use of local and regional knowledge to ensure that the most economically important roads are captured. To strike this balance appropriately, we are proposing the use of both quantitative and qualitative criteria to define the network. This approach ensures:

- the network is coherent, i.e. more than just a set of fragmented sections of road
- the network has a sound, objective analytical basis, yet also has the flexibility to factor in local knowledge and requirements

**Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined in the consultation document and their proposed application?**

Agree

## 7&8. Defining the network – qualitative criteria

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined in the consultation document and their application?

X Agree

## 9. Defining the network

Q4. Have both the quantitative and qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified all sections of road you feel should be included in the MRN?

X No

If no, explain how the criteria are failing to identify a section of road you feel should be included.

We have participated in the TfSE approach to responding to this question, and we fully support the regional response. We have no proposed additions or deletions that are not identified in the TfSE response.

The table below summarises the proposed additions in Thames Valley Berkshire. There are no proposed deletions.

Addition		Local Authority	Flow Level	Connects Existing Economic Hubs	Connects Economic Growth Locations	Connects Adjacent Population Centres	SRN Resilience during Incidents
A4/A338 between A339 (Robin Hood, Newbury) and M4 J14		West Berkshire	partial				Y
A4 between Reading East and Slough Colnbrook	A3290 Suttons Seeds to A404 Maidenhead Thicket	Wokingham and RBWM	Y	Y			Y
	A404 Maidenhead Thicket to Maidenhead Bridge	RBWM	Y			Y	Y
	(Section in Bucks)	(Bucks)	(Y)			(Y)	(Y)
	Slough/Bucks Border to A355 Three Tuns	Slough	Y		Y	Y	Y
	A355 Three Tuns to A412 Uxbridge Road	Slough	This section in the DfT's MRN base proposal				
	A 412 Uxbridge Road to M4 J5	Slough	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	M4 J5 to Slough/Hillingdon border	Slough	This section in the DfT's MRN base proposal				
	A332 Royal Windsor Way, A308 Clarence Road to M4 J6	RBWM	Y			Y	Y
A308 between Maidenhead and Staines-upon-Thames	RBWM and (Surrey)	partial			Y	Y	
A30 between Bagshot and Staines-upon-Thames	RBWM and (Surrey)	partial			Y	Y	

Q5. Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

X No

## 10. Defining the network – refreshing the MRN

It will be important for the MRN to remain relevant and reflect the latest data and changes to economic centres and road use. However, this must be balanced against the need to provide a stable platform on which the MRN investment programme can be delivered.

We propose to review the MRN every 5 years to coincide with the existing Road Investment Strategy (RIS) timetable. This will involve updating and reviewing the data that are used and engagement with all bodies involved in the delivery of the MRN programme.

**Q6. Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?**

X Yes

## 11 Investment planning

Questions in this section relate to pages 28 to 31 of the consultation document, 'Investment Planning'.

The creation of the MRN should support long-term strategic consideration of investment needs in order to make best use of the targeted funding that will be made available from the National Roads Fund and deliver the best possible result for the user. The important national and regional role played by roads included in the MRN means that individual local authorities cannot plan investments in isolation, nor can decisions be completely centralised at either a regional or national level.

As set out in the core principles section of the consultation document we propose that, alongside the local role of highways authorities, there needs to be a strong regional focus for investment planning within a consistent national network. The consultation document sets out roles for:

- **local bodies (such as local authorities and local highways authorities)**
- **regional bodies (such as sub-national transport bodies)**
- **national bodies (such as the department)**

**Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined in the consultation document for:**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Local bodies	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional bodies	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National bodies	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 12. Additional roles and responsibilities

**Q8. What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? State at which level these roles should be allocated.**

*The MRN should be meeting the needs of all categories of user, including public transport and non-motorised users.*

*There should be a specific role for local and regional authorities to ensure that the standards and performance of the MRN are improved for all categories of user.*

*This role should be to collect and monitor relevant performance information, and to ensure that where enhancement or renewal schemes are brought forward they take account of all categories of road user.*

**Q9. Do you agree with our proposals to agree regional groupings to support the investment planning of the MRN in areas where no sub-national transport bodies (STBs) exist?**

X Not applicable – we are in TfSE area



## 13. Investment planning – regional evidence base

We propose that STBs or regional groups would be responsible for developing a regional evidence base which would be the basis for the development of the MRN investment programme. Where STBs exist we expect that the regional evidence base would be developed from the existing statutory transport strategies for which STBs are responsible.

The regional evidence base would be evidence-based and should not be limited to performing a mechanical sifting exercise. As a minimum, the department would expect them to comprise the following:

- an assessment of the overall condition of the existing network and its performance.
- the identification of network-wide issues and priority corridors.
- analysis of potential region-wide solutions and the development of specific interventions to tackle the issues identified over at least a 5 year period, although we expect and encourage STBs or regions to look beyond this in their strategic planning.
- an assessment of the potential sequencing of the schemes identified.

**Q10. Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the regional evidence bases?**

X Yes

If you answered yes, describe the additional factors or evidence you feel should be within the scope of the regional evidence bases.

*The “performance” of the existing network should include specific metrics relating to public transport and non-motorised users.*

*The “identification of [...] priority corridors” should include the needs of public transport and non-motorised users in the priority corridor and include the possibility of parallel or off-line investments from MRN funds that bring performance benefits to all categories of road user.*

## 14. Investment planning – the role of Highways England

A core principle of the MRN programme is to bring more coordinated planning to these important roads. Given Highways England’s experience in road investment planning, and the need to ensure a seamless transition between the SRN and MRN, we propose that Highways England, the body responsible for running the SRN, should also have a role in the MRN Programme. This role could include:

- **programme support** - Highways England could have a role in the governance of the MRN investment programme advising the department on the development of the MRN pipeline and its interactions with the SRN, and providing wider support as needed.
- **analytical support** - Highways England could support the department in analysing the regional evidence bases in order to prepare advice to ministers on the MRN investment programme.
- **cost estimate support** - Highways England could support the department in assessing scheme cost estimates.
- **delivery support** - Highways England could support, if required, LAs in the delivery of agreed MRN schemes. This could include advising LAs on design and development as well as supporting access to the supply chain to enable LAs to take advantage of economies of scale that may be available.

**Q11. Do you agree with the role that has been outlined in the consultation document for Highways England?**

X Yes

## 15. Eligibility criteria

Questions in this section relate to pages 32 to 35 of the consultation document, ‘Eligibility and investment assessment criteria’.

The department does not intend to replace existing funding streams such as formula funding for Highway Maintenance or Integrated Transport Block funding which may be directed to any LA roads including the MRN network. For that reason, we propose that funding to improve and enhance the MRN should be targeted towards significant interventions that will transform important stretches of the network.

We propose that only proposals for contributions of £20 million or over will be considered for MRN funding. As we want this fund to benefit all areas of the country and produce an improvement for users across the network we would expect that most funding requests would not exceed £50 million, where there is a strong case we would be willing to consider scheme proposals requiring higher contributions, up to a maximum of £100 million.

To get the best value for money, regions and local authority promoters should work to minimise scheme costs through scheme optimisation and the securing of third party contributions, alongside local contributions. We are proposing the following schemes would be eligible for MRN funding:

- **bypasses**
- **missing road links**
- **widening of existing MRN roads**
- **major structural renewals**
- **major junction improvements**
- **variable message signs**
- **traffic management and the use of smart technology and data**
- **packages of improvements**

**Q12. Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined in the consultation document?**

*Yes*

**Q13. Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined in the consultation document?**

*No*

If you answered no, what should the eligibility criteria be?

*The criteria should be extended to include the possibility of public transport and non-motorised user interventions on priority corridors.*

*We have found that these enhancements are appropriate investments for heavily trafficked urban sections of road (for example in Reading on the A33 between the M4 and the town centre; and again on the A4 between the A3290 and the town centre; and in Slough on the A4)*

## **16. Investment assessment criteria**

To support the development of regional evidence bases and a national investment programme we are proposing that a clear set of criteria be developed. These support the government's overarching objectives for the MRN programme whilst providing local and regional bodies the flexibility to develop proposals that support the delivery of local and regional objectives.

We propose that these criteria should be as follows:

Objective	Criteria
<b>Reduce Congestion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Alleviate Congestion</li> <li>○ Environmental Impacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve air quality and biodiversity</li> <li>○ Reduce noise and risk of flooding</li> <li>○ Protect water quality, landscape and cultural heritage sites</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Support Economic Growth &amp; Rebalancing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Industrial Strategy: Supports regional strategic goals to boost economic growth</li> <li>○ Economic Impact: Improve ability to access new or existing employment sites</li> <li>○ Trade &amp; Gateways Impact: Improve international connectivity, e.g. access to ports &amp; airports</li> </ul>
<b>Support Housing Delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support the creation of new housing developments by improving access to future development sites and boosting suitable land capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting All Road Users</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Deliver benefits for non-motorised users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people</li> <li>○ Safety Benefits: Reduce the risk of deaths/serious injuries for all users of the MRN</li> </ul>
<b>Support the SRN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve end to end journey times across both networks.</li> <li>○ Improve journey time reliability</li> <li>○ Improve SRN resilience</li> </ul>

**Q14. Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined in the consultation document?**

X No

If you answered no, what should the investment assessment criteria be?

*Under the sub-heading "Supporting All Road Users", we welcome the specific reference to non-motorised users: we suggest this should also mention the possibility of using public transport interventions to improve the standard and performance of the MRN. We support the other criteria.*

**Q15. In addition to the eligibility and assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.**

*There should be some acknowledgement of the potential role of rail, light-rail, tram and busways in addressing the standards and performance of the MRN.*

*We make this suggestion because of the interim findings of the M25 SWQ Strategic Study currently being conducted on behalf of the DfT by Highways England. This project has reached the conclusion that to achieve further improvement in the performance of the M25, the government must consider the widest range of possible solutions for further investment.*

## 17. Other considerations

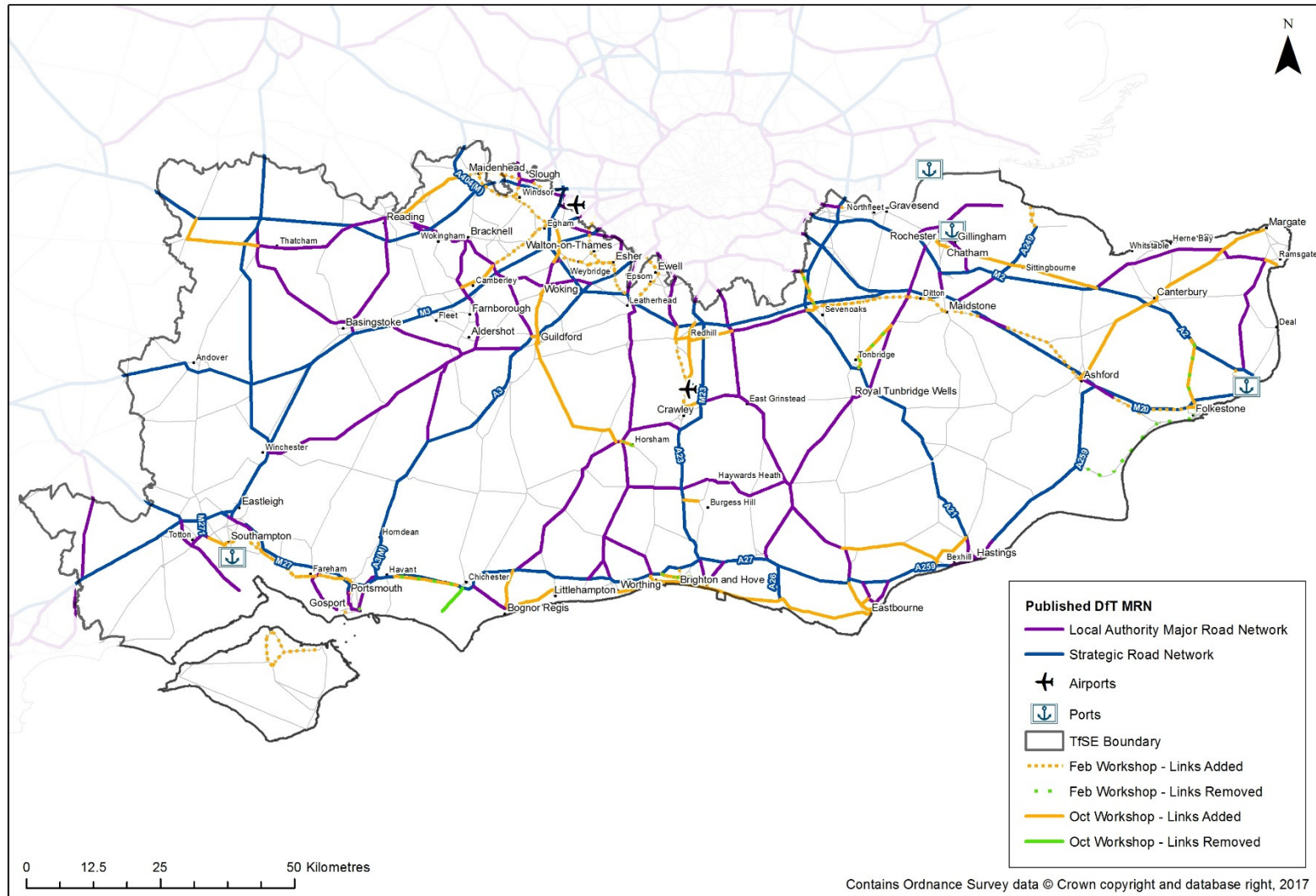
**Q16. Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposal?**

*The Rees Jeffreys report suggested a classification of roads within the MRN reflecting the differences between urban and rural settings and between limited or multi-access road design. This attempt to differentiate the “standard and performance” of the sections of the proposed MRN has been lost.*

*We suggest that the proposals be further refined to acknowledge that different interventions are appropriate in different parts of the country. In particular the sections of MRN that are within urban areas should be differentiated from longer distance sections that connect centres of population.*

*We suggest this distinction will be useful in accommodating our earlier comments about widening the scope of appropriate interventions on the busiest urban sections of MRN to include a fuller consideration of public transport and non-motorised users.*

Appendix



Appendix to Item x: BLTB 15 March 2018 Major Roads Network - Consultation Response