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## INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

### THE PLANNING ACT 2008

### THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (APPLICATIONS: PRESCRIBED FORMS AND PROCEDURE) REGULATIONS 2009

### THE NETWORK RAIL (NORTON BRIDGE AREA IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER

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## *Planning Statement*

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# 1 Introduction, Scope and Purpose

## *Introduction*

- 1.1 This Planning Statement (this Statement) relates to an application by Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (Network Rail) to the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008 (the Application) for the Network Rail (Norton Bridge Area Improvements) Order (the DCO) which would grant powers to construct, operate and maintain a new railway line (the Norton Bridge Grade Separated Junction) (hereafter referred to as the Project).
- 1.2 This Statement has been prepared for compliance with the requirements of Regulation 5(2)(q) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (the APFP Regulations). In the absence of a National Networks National Policy Statement (National Networks NPS) and taking into account the 'Advice note one: Local Impact Reports' issued by the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) this statement sets out the planning policy context at national, regional and local level. It sets out how the Project relates to those policies and impacts on other developments in the area through which the new section of railway line passes.
- 1.3 This Statement forms part of a suite of Application documents and should be read alongside and is informed by those documents.
- 1.4 Network Rail intends to construct the Project, a new 6.8km section of railway to the west of the existing West Coast Main Line railway (WCML). This will consist of a 4.8km section of railway linking with the existing line towards Crewe, and a 2km section of railway with a bridge flyover to link it with the Stone Branch line. The Project is centred on Grid Reference 386862 329506 and is located some 6.5 km north west of Stafford, Staffordshire. The village of Norton Bridge is located approximately 260 metres to the east with the M6 motorway running parallel to the Project (2 km to the east). The location of the project can be seen in the plan appended as appendix 1 to this document.
- 1.5 The proposed development is the construction of the railway and the other works detailed below. The proposed railway layout would comprise a new twin track section taking traffic travelling between Stafford and Stone over the existing WCML tracks on a flyover bridge and on to tie-in with the existing Stone Line alignment at Yarnfield Junction. In addition a new single line would fork off the flyover tracks and re-join the WCML further north at Heamies Bridge. The single line would take northbound traffic which currently uses the WCML slow line through Norton Bridge.

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The single down line track would be retained on the current track alignment between Norton Bridge and Yarnfield Junction, as a means to provide operational flexibility. Details of the numbered works are in Schedule 1 to the DCO and may be outlined as follows:

### **In the county of Staffordshire and the Borough of Stafford**

**Work No. 1** — A two track railway commencing at a junction with the existing West Coast Main Line railway at Little Bridgeford Junction, crossing over the diverted River Sow by means of Underbridge 1 (which is to be widened), continuing on embankment adjacent to a culvert proposed to be infilled under the existing West Coast Main Line (Underbridge 1A), then continuing on embankment over the diverted Meece Brook (Work No. 6) by means of Underbridge 2 and then passing into deep cutting to Searchlight Lane Junction, including cess and crest drainage outfalls into the diverted River Sow from the south and north (at Underbridge 1) and the diverted Meece Brook from the north (at Underbridge 2); an attenuation pond at Underbridge 2 including outfall headwall structure and parallel overflow spillway; passing under Work No. 7 at Overbridge 3; mitigation earthworks bunds; and diversion and alteration works to two distribution electricity services; then a single track railway running in cutting, passing under Work No. 11 at Overbridge 10A, then running onto embankment and crossing the diverted Meece Brook (Work No. 13) at Underbridge 11 (including cess and crest drainage from the south and outfalls into the diverted Meece Brook via an attenuation pond including outfall headwall structure and parallel overflow spillway) then in cutting past a further attenuation pool and outfalls into Meece Brook from the north, and terminating at a junction with the West Coast Main Line adjacent to Heamies Bridge at the northern end of the works including mitigation earthwork bunds along the alignment and all associated items that comprise a railway including track, cess drainage, combined troughing and walking route, overhead line electrification (new and alteration to existing), signalling, telecommunications and cutting or embankment earthworks, maintenance access track, crest drainage (where on sidelong ground) and boundary fencing;

**Work No. 8** — A two track railway commencing at a junction with Work No. 1 (Searchlight Lane junction) and terminating at the Yarnfield junction with the Norton Bridge to Stone branch railway line, initially in cutting, then on embankment, crossing the West Coast Main Line by means of Intersection Bridge 5 and the diverted Meece Brook (Work No. 15) by means of Underbridge 6, then in cutting passing under the diverted Meece Road (Work No. 12) by means of Overbridge 7, including a widening of existing Underbridge 8 the replacement of the existing foot crossing at Mid Norton (Chebsey footpath 10) with a new footbridge (FB9) including track, cess drainage, combined troughing and walking route, overhead line electrification (new and alteration to existing), signalling, telecommunications, cutting and embankment earthworks, a maintenance access track, crest drainage (where on sidelong ground) and boundary fencing; and cess drainage outfalls into the diverted Meece Brook from the east and west, via attenuation ponds including outfall headwall structure and parallel overflow spillways, adjacent to

the Underbridges 6 and 6A river diversion, with access tracks to both attenuation ponds from the existing B5026; and cess drainage outfalls into the unnamed watercourse at Underbridge 8, from the east.; and mitigation earthwork bunds along the alignment;

Associated development comprising—

**In the county of Staffordshire and the Borough of Stafford**

**Work No. 2** — The formation of a right hand turn lane on the A5013, north of Great Bridgeford, and the re-modelling of its junction with Chebsey Lane, including the diversion and protection of telecommunications cables;

**Work No. 3** — The remodelling of the junction of the A5013 with Chebsey Lane, including a widening of Chebsey Lane up to the bellmouth entrance to the temporary construction compound, a passing place and the diversion and protection of telecommunications cables, followed by a reinstatement to the existing width of the widened lane and remodelled junction;

**Work No. 4** — A compacted stone access track with passing places from Chebsey Lane to a fenced compound adjacent to the new railway (Work No. 1) at Little Bridgeford Junction, with parking facilities, including the diversion/protection of a water main in the area of the fenced compound;

**Work No. 5** — A diversion of the River Sow and a widening of the existing West Coast Main Line bridge (Underbridge 1), including earthworks on the southern side and cutting back the existing river cliff;

**Work No. 6** — A diversion of the Meece Brook to provide a perpendicular crossing of the proposed railway by means of Underbridge 2;

**Work No. 7** — A diversion of Searchlight Lane with the diverted road being carried over the proposed railway cutting. including new highway drainage, passing places and the diversion of existing telecommunications and water services along the new alignment, the stopping up of the old alignment where no longer required, the provision of access to adjacent land on both sides of the diverted road to the west of Overbridge 3 including parking facilities and the provision of access to adjacent land on the south side of the diverted road to the east of Overbridge 3;

**Work No. 9** — A surfaced access track commencing at a compound adjacent to the new railway (Work No. 1) at Searchlight Lane junction and terminating near the diverted B5026 (Work No. 11). The compound will include a new power supply/DNO, welfare facilities, parking facilities and water supply, a principal supply point and relocatable equipment building;

**Work No. 10** — A remodelling of the junction of Scannell Lane with the diverted B5026 (Work No. 11), including new highway drainage and diversion of an existing water main and a new field access on the east side of Scannell Lane;

**Work No. 11** — A diversion of the existing B5026 passing above existing ground level, in a false cutting formed by mitigation earthworks bunds, over Work No. 1 by means of Overbridge 10A, continuing east over the existing West Coast Main Line by means of railway Overbridge 5A, then running on embankment, shared with the railway, over the diverted Meece Brook (Work

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No. 15) by means of Underbridge 6A, then continuing on embankment, with mitigation earthwork bunds, again forming a cutting, and terminating at a new roundabout junction with the diverted Meece Road (Work No. 12), including access to adjacent land on the north side, to the west of bridge 10A, access to adjacent land on the north side of the road to the west of the West Coast Main Line Overbridge 5A (opposite the new access road junction to Searchlight Lane Junction compound (Work No. 9) and access to adjacent land in the south verge on the approach to Meece Road, the diversion to include new highway drainage and partial diversion of existing electricity, telecommunications and water services, and a stopping up of the old alignment where no longer required;

**Work No. 12** — A diversion of the existing Meece Road including Overbridge 7 carrying the new highway over the proposed cutting and new highway drainage and diversion of an existing telecommunications service along the new alignment and a stopping up of the old alignment where no longer required. Access to adjacent land will also be provided in the western verge between Overbridge 7 and the existing Meece Road roundabout;

**Work No. 13** — A diversion of the existing Meece Brook to provide a perpendicular crossing of the proposed railway (Work No. 1) at Underbridge 11 and to move the current channel away from the toe of the proposed railway embankment on the west side;

**Work No. 14** — A diversion of Chebsey Footpath 11 to follow the proposed boundary on the west side of Work No 1 to include a new pedestrian bridge over Meece Brook, passing onto Network Rail property continuing along the access track for the attenuation pond; then passing onto the proposed B5026 (Work No. 11), crossing bridge 10A before leaving the highway alignment turning down the Searchlight Lane maintenance compound access road and crossing over, running along the crest of a mitigation bund and then running parallel to the West Coast Main Line Intersection Bridge 5 before tying back into the existing alignment on the existing B5026 opposite the end of Station Road;

**Work No. 15** — A diversion of the existing Meece Brook to provide a perpendicular crossing of the proposed railway at Underbridges 6 and 6A;

**Work No. 16** — A compacted stone access track with passing places, running from the existing layby on the B5026 to a fenced compound adjacent to the new railway (Work No 8) at Yarnfield Junction, to include a new DNO supply;

**Work No. 17** — Diversion (approximately 600 metres in length) of high pressure gas pipe-line (1050NB Feeder No. 21), beneath the railway cutting to the south of Searchlight Lane;

**Work No. 18** — Diversion (approximately 250 metres in length) of high pressure gas pipe-line (1050NB Feeder No. 21), parallel to the railway cutting to the north of Searchlight Lane;

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**Work No. 19A** — Diversion (approximately 480 metres in length) of high pressure gas pipeline (900NB Feeder No. 4) by horizontal directional drilling beneath the railway in cutting in the vicinity of Searchlight Lane Junction;

**Work No. 19B** — Diversion (approximately 400 metres in length) of high pressure gas pipeline (900NB Feeder No.4) beneath the railway in cutting in the vicinity of Searchlight Lane junction;

**Work No. 20** — Diversion (approximately 680 metres in length) of fuel pipeline beneath the railway in cutting in the vicinity of Searchlight Lane junction,

and such further associated development within Order limits as may be necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with the construction of those works or any of them consisting of—

- (a) electrical equipment and signalling works;
- (b) ramps, means of access, footpaths and bridleways;
- (c) embankments, viaducts, aprons, abutments, shafts, foundations, retaining walls, drainage, wing walls, fencing and culverts;
- (d) works to alter the position of apparatus, including mains, sewers, drains and cables;
- (e) works to alter the course of, or that otherwise interfere with, a watercourse other than a navigable watercourse;
- (f) landscaping and habitat replacement (including replacement bat accommodation) and other works to mitigate any adverse effects of the construction, maintenance or operation of the authorised development;
- (g) works for the benefit or protection of land affected by the authorised development;
- (h) works required for the strengthening, improvement, maintenance, or reconstruction of any streets;
- (i) working sites and works of demolition;

and such other work as may be necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with the construction of those works and which falls within the scope of the environmental impact assessment recorded in the Environmental Statement.

1.6 In connection with these works the DCO would authorise further associated development within order limits as may be necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with the construction of those works or any of them consisting of:

- electrical equipment and signalling works;
- ramps, means of access, footpaths and bridleways;
- embankments, viaducts, aprons, abutments, shafts, foundations, retaining walls, drainage, wing walls, fencing and culverts;

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- works to alter the position of apparatus, including mains, sewers, drains and cables;
  - works to alter the course of, or otherwise interfere with, a watercourse other than a navigable watercourse;
  - landscaping and other works to mitigate any adverse effects of the construction, maintenance or operation of the authorised project;
  - works for the benefit or protection of land affected by the authorised development;
  - works required for the strengthening, improvement, maintenance or reconstruction of any streets;
  - working sites and works of demolition; and
  - such other works as may be necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with the construction of the authorised development and which falls within the scope of the environmental impact assessment recorded in the Environmental Statement.
- 1.7 The development described above would be subject to specific requirements regarding the design drawings, Construction Environment Management Plan, landscaping, construction methodology and other matters set out Schedule 2 to the DCO.
- 1.8 The requirement for a DCO is set out in Section 31 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (PA 2008). Consent under the PA 2008 “is required for development to the extent that the development is or forms part of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)”. The construction of railways is included at section 14(1)(k) and section 25 of the PA 2008. Under section 25(1) construction of a railway is within section 14(1)(k) if in England, the railway will be operated by an approved operator and the construction of the railway is not permitted development.
- 1.9 The requirement for construction of a new railway requiring permanent land take on land in third party ownership means that works required are considered to amount to the construction and alteration of a railway that is not permitted development, and therefore a DCO is required for the Project.

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1.10 Where, as is the case here, there is no relevant NPS in place, in deciding an application for a DCO the Secretary of State must have regard to:

- (a) *any local impact report (within the meaning given by section 60(3)) submitted before the deadline specified in a notice under section 60(2),*
- (b) *any matters prescribed in relation to development of the description to which the application relates, and*
- (c) *any other matters which the Secretary of State thinks are both important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision.*

(Section 105 PA 2008)

1.11 At the time of preparation of this statement no NPS has been approved for National Networks nor has a draft been published for consultation. In the absence of a relevant NPS on National Networks, the purpose of this document is to set out National, Regional and Local planning policies, both in the Development Plan and other planning policy guidance and advice, relevant to the construction of the proposed Project. It will also explain how the proposed development accords with those policies and advice. In particular, whilst not a test specifically referred to in the PA2008, the proposed development is considered in light of the test applied to the determination of planning applications under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004):

*If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*

(Section 38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004)

1.12 In December 2010 the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published "Major Infrastructure Planning Reform, Work Plan" (MIPRWP), which set out the changes to the consideration and determination of DCOs as set out at paragraph 19 how it is proposed that DCO's will be determined:

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*The relevant Secretary of State will determine applications for development consent in accordance with designated national policy statements, following consideration of the report and recommendation from the Major Infrastructure Planning Unit. In the absence of a national policy statement, decisions will be based on established policy, the Major Infrastructure Planning Unit's recommendation and other matters the Secretary of State deems to be both important and relevant.*

- 1.13 Under the Localism Act 2011, the Infrastructure Planning Commission was abolished on 1 April 2012 and the Planning Inspectorate (National Infrastructure Directorate) has taken over its work. The relevant

Secretary of State is now the decision maker on all national infrastructure applications for development consents. At the end of the examination of an application, which will normally be completed within a maximum of six months, the Examining authority will have 3 months to make a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State who will then have a further 3 months to reach a decision.

- 1.14 At the time of writing there is no designated NPS relating to railways in place and it appears that there will not be a relevant NPS in place to inform the decision of the application. This means that the Secretary of State's decision on the application will be made having regard to section 105(2) of the PA 2008 as referred to above.

- 1.15 Section 60 of the PA 2008 requires the Secretary of State to invite relevant local authorities to submit a:

*Local impact report giving details of the likely impact of the proposed development on the authority's area.*

- 1.16 The Inspectorate has re-issued the advice notes previously issued by the Infrastructure Planning Commission including 'Advice note one: Local Impact Reports. It acknowledges that what is included in a Local Impact Report is a matter for the local authority concerned. It does then set out a list of topics which may be of assistance to a local authority in determining what to include as follows:-

- Site description and surroundings/location
- Details of the proposal
- Relevant planning history and any issues arising
- 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

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- Relevant development proposals under consideration or granted permission but not commenced or completed
  - Local area characteristics such as urban and landscape qualities and nature conservation sites
  - Local transport patterns and issues
  - Site and area constraints
  - Designated sites
  - Socio-economic and community matters
  - Consideration of the impact of the proposed provisions and requirements within the draft Order (such as the scheme) in respect of all the above
  - Development consent obligations and their impact on the local authority's area.
- 1.17 The topics listed above are in the main addressed in the Environmental Assessment submitted with this application for a Development Consent Order. However the second, third and fourth bullet points above referring to relevant planning history, development plan policies and other policy advice and other relevant development proposals are addressed in this planning statement.
- 1.18 Chapter 7 of the Assessment of Need (document reference 4.8) accompanying this application sets out the strategic transport case for the DCO as developed from the Government's policy for the railways. This was set out in 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' DfT July 2007, in particular Appendix A the 'High Level Output Statement' which detailed the outputs the government were seeking during Control Period 4. This high level output requirement is translated into physical requirements through the Route Utilisation Strategies that Network Rail produce as part of its licence requirements, having determined what is needed to deliver the governments policy for the railways.
- 1.19 The National Networks NPS is not expected to be approved before a decision is due on the DCO. This being the case, existing National, Regional and Local Planning Policy will be an important consideration in determining whether the proposed Project accords with planning policy or not.
- 1.20 In the absence of a National Networks NPS the national policy framework set out in the Assessment of Need provides the context in which the Project is being promoted and clearly establishes the transport case for it. This Planning Statement starts from the premise that the transport case is as made out in the Assessment of Need and relates that to planning policy.

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## **2 Summary**

- 2.1 The determination of this DCO must be made in accordance with the NPS on National Networks and any local impact report prepared by a local authority (paragraph 1.10).
- 2.2 Where there is no approved NPS the determination must be in accordance with the local impact report and any matters considered important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision (paragraphs 1.10 - 1.11).
- 2.3 Changes made in the Localism Act 2011 require a decision to be made in accordance with the relevant NPS and in its absence will be based on established policy (paragraph 1.11).
- 2.4 The National Networks NPS is not expected to be approved before a decision is due on this application (paragraph 1.14).
- 2.5 In the absence of an NPS the transport case is as set out in the Assessment of Need (document reference 4.8) and this Planning Statement sets out the planning policy context (paragraph 1.20).
- 2.6 The location of the new railway line is described at paragraph 1.4 and 3.3, with a brief description of the overall Project at paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2.
- 2.7 Section 4 sets out the general character of the area, its rural nature at paragraph 4.1, road access at paragraph 4.2, agriculture at paragraph 4.4 and watercourses, paragraph 4.5.
- 2.8 In section 5 the planning history of the site and surroundings is considered. In particular paragraph 5.7 notes the current application for remodelling works at the Golf Course and paragraph 5.6 the recently approved Electricity Generation Turbine at Park Farm. Paragraph 5.8 notes the application for the diversion of the UKOP pipeline needed to facilitate this project, and paragraph 5.9 the creation of a Great Crested Newt habitat as environmental mitigation for the Project.
- 2.9 National policy (National Planning Policy Framework) emphasises the importance of a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraphs 6.2 – 6.11). The importance of key international gateways and national transport corridors in delivering a sustainable transport system is set out at paragraphs 6.12 – 6.19.
- 2.10 The current position of the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) in the light of their intended abolition is set out in paragraph 7.2. In the

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absence of a National Networks NPS it is concluded that considerable weight can be afforded to RSS policies as the proposal - whilst having a mainly local impact - is important to regional and national policy as capacity and reliability on the WCML is a key element of the strategic rail network.

- 2.11 Paragraph 7.2 sets out the policies of the RSS, including the importance of national rail networks and the need to ensure that the region does not become a bottleneck undermining national economic growth, and promotion of capacity enhancements on key routes. It also discusses the international importance of the WCML and measures to deliver faster, more frequent services between London and the North West, and other key routes in between. The RSS policy T10 serves to support and encourage rail freight growth setting out measures to address these aims at Paragraph 7.6.
- 2.12 Paragraph 7.8 includes relevant policies of the Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Structure Plan.
- 2.13 Paragraph 7.9 sets out the priorities within the Local Transport Plan, acknowledging Network Rail's business plan to improve connectivity on the network.
- 2.14 Paragraphs 7.10 – 7.13 set out the relevant 'saved' policies of the Stafford Borough Local Plan. Policies E & D7 and E & D28 provide guidance on protection of the Countryside and Landscape, and Chapter 7 (Transport) supports the maintenance and enhancement of sustainable transport modes, noting in particular the potential for international European transport connections.
- 2.15 The Plan for Stafford Borough is currently in development, discussed at Paragraphs 7.14 and 7.15.
- 2.16 Whilst not forming part of the development plan, the Mid-West Stafford Market Towns Parish Plan is acknowledged in Paragraph 7.15.
- 2.17 Section 8 considers the proposed development against the development plan policies. Paragraph 8.1 onwards takes into account the Project's contribution in terms of sustainable development, and more specifically sustainable transport that is required to support the economy and future prosperity. Paragraph 8.9 onwards considers how the Project will contribute towards relevant transport and accessibility policy objectives. The impact on Landscape and Countryside is considered from Paragraph 8.13.
- 2.18 Paragraph 8.21 then deals with other development plan considerations in relation to the Project's impact on agricultural land.

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- 2.19 Other material considerations are discussed in 8.23 comprising the design of new structures, road and footpath diversions, and the diversion of footpath No.10 over a new footbridge on the Stone Branch line.
- 2.20 The reasoning and purpose of the requirements set out in Schedule 2 of the draft DCO are examined in section 9.
- 2.21 The conclusions are set out in section 10.

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### 3 Description of Development

3.1 The railway around Stafford, particularly Norton Bridge Junction, is a critical point on the WCML that needs to be upgraded. Trains travelling between Stafford and Stone/Manchester must cross two other tracks to switch between the WCML and the Stone branch. Services travelling between London and Glasgow are not able to pass through Norton Bridge Junction whilst this is happening, resulting in a major constraint on capacity and performance.

3.2 Replacing Norton Bridge Junction with a new section of track that takes Birmingham to Manchester trains up and over the WCML rather than across it, will increase capacity on the whole of the WCML – one of the busiest railway lines in the Country. Critically, when combined with the wider Stafford Area Improvement works (centred on Stafford Station) the scheme will enable the Department for Transport's new timetable to be implemented on the WCML in December 2017. Essentially, the work will:

- Create extra capacity to run more services, including:
  - Two extra fast trains per hour in each direction between London Euston and the North West,
  - One additional train per hour in each direction between Manchester and Birmingham,
  - One additional freight path per hour in each direction through Stafford via Trent Valley,
- Reduce congestion in the Stafford area, helping to make services on the railway more reliable and punctual,
- Support Network Rail's objective of keeping the railway open when essential maintenance works are required,
- Improve frequency and journey time of passenger services on the main line,
- Help take vehicles off congested roads such as the M6.

3.3 The Project is some 6.5km north west of Stafford, centred around Norton Bridge Junction. The description below summarises the proposed works.

#### ***Railway***

3.4 The proposed railway layout would comprise a new twin track section taking traffic travelling from Birmingham to Manchester between Stafford and Stone over the existing WCML tracks on a flyover bridge and on to tie-in with the existing Stone Line alignment at Yarnfield Junction. In addition, a new single line would diverge from the flyover tracks and re-join the WCML further north at Heamies Bridge. The

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existing twin track route between Norton Bridge and Yarnfield Junction will be retained as a single track, providing operational flexibility. The modifications to the existing track will be permitted under Network Rail's existing powers.

### ***Little Bridgeford Junction to Searchlight Lane Junction***

- 3.5 The new line would diverge to the west from the WCML at Little Bridgeford; this junction becoming the Little Bridgeford Junction. The track level would rise up from the Little Bridgeford Junction for 1.9km to a point where a single track forks off from the twin tracks at Searchlight Lane Junction. Both legs would then continue to a high point 300m further north.
- 3.6 As the tracks diverge from the WCML at Little Bridgeford Junction, they would cross the River Sow necessitating a 9m widening of the existing bridge (Underbridge 1) which carries the WCML. The widened section of the bridge would be constructed from concrete beams spanning between concrete abutments with piled foundations. The bridge would have a clear skew span of approximately 12m and would also have a stepped access route to track level for maintenance purposes. In order to accommodate the widened bridge at this location it would be necessary to divert the River Sow southwards so it would pass under the bridge perpendicular to the railway and thereby reduce the length of the bridge crossing.
- 3.7 North of Underbridge 1, the tracks would be constructed on embankment across the floodplain of the Meece Brook, requiring a maximum depth of fill material of approximately 4.4m. Approximately 300m to the north of Underbridge 1, the tracks would cross Meece Brook; necessitating the construction of a bridge. The bridge would be called Underbridge 2 and would comprise a concrete deck, supported on concrete pile caps with piled foundations. The bridge would have a clear span of 10m. Underbridge 2 would contain a mammal ledge built in to the bridge abutment to allow animals to pass underneath during flood events. As with Underbridge 1, there would be a requirement for a permanent diversion of the watercourse, in order to allow it to pass perpendicular to the track crossing. The watercourse would be diverted eastwards of its current alignment for a length of approximately 130m.
- 3.8 To the north of Underbridge 2, for approximately 80m, the tracks would be constructed on a shallow embankment which would then become cutting as the land rises up away from the Meece Brook floodplain. As the topography changes the depth of the cutting would vary, the maximum depth being approximately 14m below existing ground-level at a point 340m south of Searchlight Lane.

- 3.9 Where the new tracks pass under Searchlight Lane a new overbridge (Overbridge 3) would be constructed. Overbridge 3 would form part of an off-line realignment of Searchlight Lane. At present there is a sharp 'S' bend in the highway at this location; the realignment would remove the S-bend by constructing the highway south of the current alignment. The bridge would have a span of 40m and would be approximately 10m wide. The bridge would consist of a steel and concrete composite deck sat on a piled foundation. The services present in the existing section of highway would be diverted and incorporated into the realignment. The abandoned section of highway would be removed and the land restored.
- 3.10 Vehicle restraint barriers would be installed along the approach to Overbridge 3 and brick clad concrete parapets along the length of the overbridge. Two sets of steps would be installed on the north side of the bridge, either side of the cutting to allow access down to track level and the underside of the bridge. Two large parking spaces would be provided on Searchlight Lane for maintenance vehicles in the vicinity of the bridge.
- 3.11 The Searchlight Lane Junction would be constructed 320m north of the proposed Searchlight Lane crossing. At this junction the new track would split, with two lines going east to link to the existing Stone Lines at Yarnfield North Junction and a single line going west to re-join the WCML. This junction would be located in cutting at a depth of approximately 7m below existing ground level.

### ***Searchlight Lane Junction to WCML***

- 3.12 From a point 300m north of Searchlight Lane Junction, the single line connection to the WCML begins to drop in height towards the Meece Brook floodplain.
- 3.13 The track crosses beneath the realigned B5026 (Overbridge 10a) at a point slightly north of the highway's current alignment. Overbridge 10a would comprise a single span concrete bridge with piled abutments. The bridge would have a clear skew span of approximately 11m. A vehicular restraint system would be installed along the top of the bridge deck and for a distance either side to prevent motor vehicle incursion on to the railway. A stepped access route would be provided between the southeast corner of the bridge and the track for maintenance access.
- 3.14 The single line track would leave the cutting approximately 140m south of the proposed Underbridge 11 crossing of the Meece Brook. The track at this point would cross the floodplain on embankment, which

## Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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would require a fill depth of approximately 3.5m. Underbridge 11 would require a 90m diversion of Meece Brook to the south to allow for a perpendicular railway crossing of the watercourse. The bridge crossing would have a 10m span and be approximately 8.5m wide. The bridge deck would be a pre-stressed concrete structure supported on reinforced concrete pile caps with piled foundations. Two sets of access steps would be constructed to the south of the bridge on the embankment either side of the underbridge.

- 3.15 A public right of the way (Chebsey Footpath 11) crosses the proposed track alignment in the vicinity of the connection with the WCML. It is proposed that this footpath would be permanently realigned to cross the new track at Overbridge 10a alongside the B5026. The single line re-joins the WCML alignment without requirement for further switches or crossings.

### ***Searchlight Junction to Yarnfield Junction***

- 3.16 The section between Searchlight Junction and the Stone Line connection at Yarnfield North Junction would be double track railway. The track level falls away from a point 300m north of Searchlight Lane Junction towards the Meece Brook floodplain and then rises back up to meet the Stone Line.
- 3.17 This section of track would then cross over the top of the WCML, requiring the construction of Intersection Bridge 5. The bridge would be constructed of concrete beams, supported on concrete abutments with piled foundations. The bridge would have a 24m span and be approximately 12m wide. The track at this point would be on embankment approximately 7m above existing ground level. The track would continue on embankment crossing the Meece Brook floodplain and crossing the watercourse on Underbridge 6.
- 3.18 Underbridge 6 would comprise a concrete box structure with concrete wing walls and piled foundations. The Meece Brook would need to be diverted on both sides of the embankment for a total distance of approximately 300m in order to allow the watercourse to pass perpendicular to the track alignment at Underbridge 6.
- 3.19 The track would continue on embankment for a further 260m to the north of Underbridge 6. At this point the topography rises out of the Meece Brook floodplain and the track would return to cutting up to 5m deep for about 500m before continuing at grade to the Yarnfield North Junction.
- 3.20 Overbridge 7 would carry the realigned Meece Road over the new track which would be in cutting at this point. The bridge would comprise a reinforced concrete box with a 10.6m span. The bridge would have a solid pedestrian parapet and a vehicular restraint system on the highway approaches.

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- 3.21 As the track joins the Stone Line at Yarnfield North Junction there is an existing bridge which carries the Stone Line over a minor unnamed watercourse, which is a tributary of the Meece Brook. The bridge (Underbridge 8) would have a replacement extended steel plate deck on reinforced concrete piled abutments. A very minor diversion of the watercourse would be required on both sides of the bridge to accommodate the new abutments.
- 3.22 Footbridge 9 is proposed to be constructed approximately 130m north of Overbridge 8. The footbridge would replace an existing pedestrian level crossing in the same location, which is part of the Chebsey Footpath 10. The 17m span steel structure would be founded on reinforced concrete piles. The bridge would have stairs rising to a height of 6.5m.

### ***Other Railway Infrastructure***

- 3.23 The new sections of track would be fitted with Overhead Line Electrification (OLE) equipment. The infrastructure associated with OLE would consist of masts and gantries, each of which would be around 6m in height.
- 3.24 Eight signals and six location cases (which contain signalling equipment) would be installed along the new track. Each location case would be powered by an adjacent Functional Supply Point (FSP). At Searchlight Lane Junction a Relocatable Equipment Building (REB) and Principle Supply Point (PSP) would be installed at the southern point of the 'V' formed by the new line.
- 3.25 For the purposes of maintenance and track inspections low level Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights would be installed at each of the 3 new junctions created by the Scheme. This lighting will be approximately 1.5m high and would extend to cover the full extent of the junction. The use of the lighting would be for inspections and maintenance only.

### ***Permanent Track Access and Maintenance Compounds***

- 3.26 The Scheme, once operational, would have three permanent maintenance compounds with associated vehicle access and these would be located next to the three junctions (Little Bridgeford, Searchlight Lane and Yarnfield). The compounds would act as bases for periodic maintenance activities and as storage areas for strategic spares.

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- 3.27 The maintenance compounds would provide a lorry turning point and would have provision for 6 car parking spaces. Searchlight Lane compound would also have a staff welfare unit. The compounds would be secured with 1.8m high palisade fencing.
- 3.28 Little Bridgeford Compound would be accessed via a three metre wide track which would link to Chebsey Lane at a point approximately 350m north of the junction with the A5013.
- 3.29 Searchlight Lane Junction Compound would be located in the southern-most area of the 'V' of the new track alignment formed by the branches of the track joining the Stone Line and the WCML respectively. Access would be from the north via the realigned B5026 Stone Road on a 5m wide tarmac road. Beyond the compound the access track would continue southwards to the track and be constructed of compacted Type 1 material. A Distribution Network Operator (DNO) cubicle would be located at the access track junction with the B5026 in order to supply power to the welfare unit, points heating and junction lighting; this unit would be 2m high and wide and 1m deep.
- 3.30 The Yarnfield Junction Compound would be located approximately 170m north of Underbridge 8 on the east side of the Stone Line. The compound would be connected via a 6m wide access track to the B5026. The connection to the highway would be at the location of an existing lay by. A DNO cubicle for this compound would be located at the entrance to the access track off the B5026, this would be identical to that at Searchlight Lane and would supply power to the points heating and junction lighting.
- 3.31 A section of the proposed internal construction Site access road between Searchlight Lane and the confluence of Meece Brook and the River Sow would be retained on a permanent basis to allow maintenance access related to the attenuation pond located at this location. The access track would be access via Searchlight Lane adjacent west of Overbridge 3. To the north of Searchlight Lane there would be an access strip running on the crest of the cutting to allow vehicle access to this area. There would be non-vehicular access points located at Underbridges 1, 2, 6/6A and 11 and at Overbridge 3.

### ***Highway and Footpath Realignment***

- 3.32 The proposed track alignment crosses the B5026 Stone Road at two points. Due to the spatial constraints posed by the crossings of the railway in this area an on-line solution was found to be unfeasible. The proposed solution is an off-line alignment which diverts the B5026 to the north to join Meece Road (as shown in green in Figure 2.1, Volume 4 of the ES). The highway would diverge from its current alignment immediately west of the existing junction with Scannell Lane. The highway would then cross over the WCML branch of the new track alignment on Overbridge 5a and the Meece Brook floodplain on a shared embankment with the proposed new track alignment joining the Stone Line. Overbridge 5a would have a clear span of 23m. The highway would cross the Meece Brook on Underbridge 6a. Both bridges would have a clear square span of 10m. As the highway leaves the Meece Brook floodplain it would diverge northwards from the railway embankment to join the Meece Road at a roundabout junction. The section of the B5026 to the east of the Stone Line connection which leads to Rose Tree Farm and 10 Stone Road will be stopped up and will become an access only road. The Meece Road would also be realigned to the east in order to cross over the track and connect with the existing B5026.
- 3.33 The Chebsey Lane junction with the A5013 would be moved slightly to the west necessitating a minor realignment and widening on the approach to the junction from Chebsey Lane in order to improve access. The A5013 would also be subject to various temporary improvements for the construction phase; including a minor widening of the highway for a short section either side of the Chebsey Lane junction, temporary highway lighting and traffic signals. The existing 40mph speed limit at Great Bridgeford will be extended westwards to a point west of the Chebsey Lane junction.
- 3.34 Searchlight Lane would also be subject to a minor realignment which would improve the existing highway layout in the vicinity of the proposed Overbridge 3.
- 3.35 Two footpaths Chebsey 10 and 11 would require permanent diversion as a result of the proposed Scheme. Chebsey 10 currently crosses the Stone Line on a level crossing. This is to be replaced with a footbridge (Footbridge 9). Footpath 11 would be diverted southwards towards the new B5026 alignment to the west of the Scannell Lane junction. The footpath would run alongside the B5026 to the WCML and pass under the new section of track beneath Intersection Bridge 5 and continue alongside the WCML eastwards to meet the junction with Station Road.

### ***Pipeline Diversions***

- 3.36 The proposed new section of track would pass through the alignment of two high pressure gas transmission pipelines owned by National Grid and an oil pipeline owned by United Kingdom Oil Pipeline (UKOP) and managed by the British Pipeline Association (BPA) (This pipeline will be referred to as the BPA pipeline in this report). A total of 4 diversions of the 3 pipelines would be required in order to avoid any conflict with the new track infrastructure (these works are detailed in the ES at Figure 2.4, Volume 4). These works would be undertaken in advance of the commencement of the railway construction. The National Grid and BPA pipeline works are covered by supplementary reports (ES - Volume 2, Appendix 8 and 9), which contain a detailed description of these works.
- 3.37 The BPA pipeline diversion forms part of this DCO application but has also been submitted as a separate planning application to Stafford Borough Council as the local planning authority under Reference: 12/17771/FUL. The planning application for the BPA pipeline is supported by a separate ES.

### ***Other works***

- 3.38 As described previously the permanent compounds would have 1.8m high palisade fencing for security purposes. The permanent railway boundary would be demarcated with fencing. The type of fencing used would be subject to risk assessments in accordance with Network Rail Standards and would vary between 1.8m high palisade fencing and wire and wooden post fencing.
- 3.39 A number of utility diversions would be required, including water, electricity and telecommunications.
- 3.40 The Scheme would incorporate drainage attenuation ponds which would capture both track drainage and highway drainage for sections of the realigned B5026 and regulate its discharge to watercourse. The ponds would be constructed to be outside of the 1 in 100 year floodplain plus a 20% allowance for climate change, where practicable, to ensure they would continue to function during flood events. These ponds would then discharge into the Meece Brook or River Sow depending on their location.

3.41 The Scheme drainage for the Site has been separated into different units (called 'networks') based on topographical profiles and an attenuation pond has been created for each. The Scheme drainage has nine networks, which would be attenuated by five ponds. Networks 1, 2 and 9 would be attenuated using oversized pipes instead of a pond due to the relatively small volume of capacity required.

### **Structures**

3.42 The proposed railway alignment requires the construction and modification of the following structures:

- Underbridge 1: Widening of an existing railway structure over the River Sow
- Underbridge 2: Railway passing over Meece Brook
- Overbridge 3: Railway passing under Searchlight Lane
- Intersection Bridge 5: Railway (Stone branch) passing over existing WCML
- Overbridge 5a: Diverted B5026 passing over the WCML
- Underbridge 6: Railway (Stone branch) passing over Meece Brook
- Bridge 6a: Diverted B5026 passing over Meece Brook
- Overbridge 7: Railway (Stone branch) passing under diverted Meece Road
- Underbridge 8: Widening of an existing railway structure over a stream
- Footbridge 9: New footbridge over the railway (Stone branch)
- Overbridge 10a: Railway passing under the diverted B5026
- Underbridge 11: Railway passing over Meece Brook

3.43 The development is fully described in the ES (Volume 2) at section 2.5 (document reference 5.2) and the details are shown on the submitted design drawings (document reference 3.2).

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## **4 Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1 The site lies approximately 6.5 kilometres north west of Stafford in a mainly rural area. The nearest settlement to the proposed development is that of Norton Bridge approximately 250 metres to the east of the new railway line, and immediately adjacent to the existing WCML. The southern extent of the Project is in the vicinity of the village of Little Bridgeford. The village of Shallowford is located approximately 300m to the east, the village of Chebsey is located approximately 800m to the west and Yarnfield is located approximately 850m to the north.
- 4.2 The main access into the area by road is from the B5026 which connects to the A34 at Stone to the East of the site, and the A519 at Eccleshall to the West. The nearest motorway is the M6 (approximately 2km to the east of the site) which is accessed via the A5013 through Great Bridgeford. A number of unclassified roads and minor farm tracks are present within the site. A number of Public Rights of Way (PROW) cross the landscape.
- 4.3 The route alignment extends through a largely rural area of Chebsey Parish. It comprises a mixture of arable and pastoral grassland, and is situated within the valley of the Meece Brook. The undulating topography of the area ranges between 80m and 100m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 4.4 The surrounding agricultural land includes associated farming infrastructure across the site. In addition to the residential areas of Norton Bridge, Shallowford, Little Bridgeford, Yarnfield and Chebsey there are individual residential properties and farmsteads scattered throughout the area.
- 4.5 The site includes two watercourses; the River Sow flows north west to south east at the southern end of the site; and the Meece Brook flows east across the northern extent of the site, crossing beneath the WCML, before meandering south and joining the River Sow. The underlying geology of the site is Mercia Mudstone.

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## 5 Relevant planning history of site and surroundings

- 5.1 In respect of the railways at Stafford and Stone, they were authorised under various private Acts of Parliament. The West Coast Main Line section north of Stafford is authorised by the Grand Junction Railway Act 1833. This Act was subsequently repealed but consolidated within the London & North Western Railway Amalgamation Act 1846.
- 5.2 The Stone Branch Line was originally authorised by the North Staffordshire Railway (Pottery Line) Act 1846, but was later repealed by the North Staffordshire Railway Act 1847 which gave powers to complete the railways authorised.
- 5.3 There have been numerous planning applications in the vicinity of the proposed works, mostly comprising small-scale commercial, residential and agricultural development and minor operations. Within the last five years the following applications have been submitted and approved within the surrounding area:

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Description of Development</i>	<i>Location</i>
<b>Applications to Stafford Borough Council</b>		
07/09408/FUL	Demolition and replacement of extension (approved)	Hammer House Farm, Norton Bridge
08/09967/FUL	Erection of new dwelling (approved)	Adjacent number 9 New Street, Norton Bridge
08/10304/FUL	Conversion of outbuilding to single storey dwelling (approved)	Lower Heamies Farm, Eccleshall
08/11052/FUL	Erection of agricultural building (approved)	Land opposite White House Farm Industrial Estate, Eccleshall Road, Stone
08/11394/FUL	Erection of agricultural barn (approved)	Land off Station Road, Norton Bridge
10/13172/FUL	Alterations and extensions to form new chapel and new entrance concourse (approved)	Shallowford House, Shallowford
10/13876/FUL	Permission to continue use of site for temporary agricultural workers dwelling (approved)	Park Farm, Shallowford Road, Chebsey
10/13950/FUL	Amended access and horse exerciser (approved)	Land off the B5026 at Cold Norton

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10/14121/FUL	Signal storey extension (approved)	1 New Street, Norton Bridge
10/14717/FUL	One 11 Kilowatt electricity generation wind turbine (approved)	Land at Park Farm, Shallowford Road, Chebsey
11/16462/FUL	Swimming pool and ancillary accommodation (approved)	Hill Crest, Shallowford Road, Chebsey
12/16592/FUL	Extension and alterations (approved)	The Mill at Worston
12/16608/FUL	11 Self-contained accommodation units with parking (refused)	The Mill at Worston
12/17029/FUL	Proposed Remodelling of golf course practice ground and 1 <sup>st</sup> green complex with associated planting (pending decision)	Izaak Walton Golf Club, Eccleshall Road, Norton Bridge
12/17771/FUL	Diversion of UKOP pipe-line (pending decision)	Land to West of Norton Bridge
12/17832/FUL	Creation of six new ponds to provide a Great Crested Newt habitat (pending decision)	The Retreat, Shallowford House, Shallowford
<b>Applications to Staffordshire County Council</b>		
S.11/03/467W	Construction of Anaerobic Digester Building (approved)	Mill Farm, Stone Road, Chebsey

5.4 Given that the area is rural in nature, there is no significant development in the area surrounding the site of the proposed new railway. Much of the relevant planning history in the vicinity relates to small-scale domestic alterations/extensions and agricultural development within existing farmsteads.

5.5 There are four noteworthy applications that should be appraised in connection with the proposed Project: the erection of an electricity generation turbine at Park Farm, Chebsey (10/14717/FUL), the proposed remodelling of the golf course at Izaak Walton Golf Club (12/17029/FUL); the diversion of the UKOP oil pipe-line (12/17771/FUL) and the creation of six new ponds to provide a habitat for Great Crested Newts (12/17832/FUL).

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- 5.6 Firstly, the proposed turbine received planning permission on 2 February 2012 to supply energy to the egg production business in operation at Park Farm. The proposed position of the turbine will have no direct impact on the alignment of the new railway, although the business as a whole is likely to be affected. Planning permission for the turbine was granted conditionally such that if the egg production business use ceased, the turbine would have to be removed. To date, no work has commenced in relation to the construction of the turbine.
- 5.7 Secondly, an application for the proposed remodelling of the practice course at Izaak Walton Golf Club is currently being considered by Stafford Borough Council. Whilst in principle the completed development is thought to be acceptable, the application has been deferred at Committee pending consideration of further information submitted regarding access routes for construction. It is likely that the application will be considered at a special Committee in December 2012/January 2013. If approved, it is likely to be conditioned such that works must commence within a 3 year period. The effects of this application – if approved – will be assessed in relation the Norton Bridge (Area Improvements) Order in the Cumulative Effects chapter of the final version of the Environmental Statement. In particular, the golf course proposal will require importation of material therefore attention will focus on traffic impact on the B5026 and the roundabout in Stone where the road meets the A34.
- 5.8 Thirdly, the UKOP application to diver its fuel pipe-line which, should this be approved, would allow the work to proceed at an earlier stage which would be beneficial to the delivery timescales of the railway construction works in the Project.
- 5.9 Finally, in order to mitigate the loss of Great Crested Newt habitat likely to result from the Project, an application has been submitted to Stafford Borough Council for the creation of new ponds to provide a replacement habitat (reference: 12/17832/FUL) on land at the Retreat, Shallowford. Should the application be permitted, the replacement habitat will be created in advance of the Project allowing time for the ponds to settle and provide the optimum habitat.

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## **6 Relevant National Policies**

- 6.1 This section sets out planning policy and guidance. It begins by explaining the government's planning guidance on key issues, before setting out the adopted and emerging development plan policy which together provide an overview of the planning policy framework relevant to the area of works.

### ***National Planning Policy Framework***

- 6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and the policies laid out within it apply with immediate effect. With this the NPPF replaces (and cancels) all Planning Policy Statements (PPS's) Guidance Notes (PPG's) and some circulars to form a single consolidated document.
- 6.3 Local planning authorities with up to date local plans (adopted post 2004) will be able to continue using their plans as a basis for decision making for a period of 12 months, even where there is a degree of conflict, although policies in the NPPF will be material considerations.
- 6.4 For those authorities with local plans adopted prior to 2004, greater weight will be given to the NPPF, especially where there is conflict. Stafford Borough Council's local plan falls into this latter category, in that it was adopted in 2001. Although the majority of the local plan policies have been saved, the NPPF will form a strong decision-making tool, with the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' coming into force.
- 6.5 With regards NSIPs, the NPPF does not contain specific policies. These are to be determined in accordance with the decision-making framework set out in the PAct 2008 and relevant NPS for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that may be important and relevant; which may include NPPF policies.
- 6.6 As yet, there has been no NPS published for National Networks rail infrastructure therefore this Project will need to be assessed against all other relevant criteria and policies, including the relevant sections of the NPPF. The NPPF requires that all local planning authorities take account of the need for strategic infrastructure including NSIPs within their area in preparing their local plans.

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- 6.7 Paragraph 14 states that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-making. For decision making this means:
- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- 6.8 Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless:
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.
- 6.9 Paragraph 17 states that within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of 12 core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. A number of these are relevant to the proposed Project:
- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.
  - take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
  - support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
  - contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;
  - actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

- 6.10 The NPPF provides further policy on 'Delivering Sustainable Development' from paragraph 18 to 219, which taken as a whole constitutes the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.
- 6.11 Chapter 4 (Promoting Sustainable Transport) states that encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion.

***Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DfT. Nov 2008)***

- 6.12 This document sets out the Government's response to The Eddington Transport Study and the Stern Review. The document explains the strategy that both tackles immediate problems and also shapes the transport system to meet the much longer-term transport challenges that are critical for future prosperity and way of life.
- 6.13 The document provides five goals which are aimed at and to help guide decision makers in their roles. These are:
- to support national economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
  - to reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;
  - to contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life-expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
  - to promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society;
  - to improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.
- 6.14 Paragraph 1.21 to 1.26 sets out the Government's aims for fitting these goals together with there being an expectation that the development of the transport system collectively to support all five goals, is a fundamental principle underpinning the approach to appraising transport schemes.
- 6.15 Strategic National Corridor 8, covering London to the West Midlands, North Wales, the North West and Scotland, is recognised as facing a number of challenges if it is to continue to support the goal of economic growth and productivity. It is a key artery for freight, with growing

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pressure on the roads and railways. Improvements are planned including further rail capacity enhancements to facilitate a higher frequency of service and longer trains.

- 6.16 Annex 1, paragraph A1.37 confirms support to capacity improvements to remove the bottleneck at Stafford and upgrading of the West Coast Main Line power supply.

### ***Delivering a Sustainable Railway – DfT (July 2007)***

- 6.17 The executive summary to this White Paper provides the principle of delivering a sustainable railway as set out below:

*Sustainability demands a broader look at priorities for the railway alongside other modes, to find the best balance between the needs of the economy, society and the environment. Safety, reliability and cost are permanent priorities for the railway. But increasing capacity is the most urgent investment need – to accommodate record passenger numbers, allow rail to contribute to low-carbon economic growth, and move towards the service quality that more exacting consumers increasingly demand.*

*Delivering such a railway involves ensuring that investments are targeted and sustained, to deliver steady and efficient improvement against a long-term sense of direction, based on the best evidence available today. This will provide a rail industry with the flexibility to react to longer-term challenges, while not getting ahead of the realistic ability to predict.”*

- 6.18 Chapter 3 discusses the ‘Reliability’ of the railway. In the Summary, it notes that there will be a need for capacity enhancements, and investment in the resilience of the network.
- 6.19 Chapter 4 also considers the ‘Capacity Challenge’ for the railway. It notes that capacity needs to increase so that rail can continue to contribute to sustainable economic growth.

### **National Railway Planning: Route Utilisation Strategies (RUS)**

- 6.20 It is the responsibility of Network Rail under Condition 7 of its Network License to translate these high level requirements into a practical delivery plan through the preparation of Route Utilisation Strategies (RUS) for the railway network. The RUS is the product of a dialogue between rail industry partners, the train operating and freight operating companies, and the DfT. It looks both at the medium term generally coinciding with Control Period 4 (CP4) and the longer term beyond the end of CP4 and into Control Period 5.

#### **West Coast Main Line RUS (2011)**

- 6.21 The West Coast Main Line RUS (July 2011) recognises that Norton Bridge Junction limits capacity on the network as trains to Manchester cross the junction. Realising the Stafford Area Improvement Project is a committed scheme and forms a key element of the delivery plan, stating:

*“These include a new grade separated junction at Norton Bridge, a new freight loop at Stafford, speed enhancements at Trent Valley Junction and speed improvements on the slow lines between Doxey Junction and Crewe. The new grade separated junction at Norton Bridge will allow services travelling between Stafford and Stone to cross the fast lines of the West Coast Main Line without conflicting with other services.”*

- 6.22 This work, when combined, will:

*“...create space for additional passenger and freight train paths through the Stafford area, reduce congestion on the line and make services more reliable and punctual whilst improving frequency and journey times for passengers.”*

#### **Freight RUS (2007)**

- 6.23 The Freight RUS (2007) seeks to identify capacity and capability gaps in the rail network and takes into consideration passenger growth forecasts. In assessing key gaps and demand, it proposes solutions to meet future rail freight requirements.
- 6.24 Between 2004 and 2014/15 it is forecast that freight demand will grow by 30 per cent; the equivalent of an additional 240 trains per day on the national network.

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- 6.25 The WCML is identified as a key freight route and thus one of the main strategies for future improvements is identified as *major enhancements in the Stafford area*. The DfT WCML Progress Report (2006) highlights at paragraph 16.4 that enhancements at Stafford are required in order to fully realise the route's potential. The report highlights the most frequent conflicts to occur between the growing freight traffic travelling from the Rugby and Colwich directions towards the slow lines to Crewe and the Birmingham to Manchester and to Crewe flows on the fast lines. These flows conflict in both directions, and as each route is typically traversed five times each hour each way, there is a total of 20 potential conflicts between these flows alone. The DfT concluded the report recommending that a scheme be developed to represent the best value to progress forward in terms of outputs, funding, development and obtaining the necessary consents.

## 7 Development Plan Policies

7.1 The following documents are relevant to this application:

- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (2008)
- Stafford and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan (2001)
- Staffordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (2011)
- Stafford Borough Local Plan (2001) - *Saved Policies*
- Stafford Borough Local Development Framework (LDF)
- Town and Village Design Statements & Parish Plans: Mid-West Stafford Market Towns Parish Plan (2004)

### ***West Midlands RSS***

7.2 The Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010. RSS's were revoked under S79(6) of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and no longer form part of the development plan for the purposes of S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A successful High Court challenge was then undertaken against the decision to revoke RSS's. As a result, the RSS still forms part of the Statutory Development Plan for the District. The RSS was expected to be abolished through the Localism Act 2011, however ongoing Strategy Environmental Assessment (SEA) consultations mean that the status has yet to be revoked at the time of writing. The RSS therefore is part of the development plan although the Secretary of State's intention to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### *Transport*

7.3 Policy T1 (Developing Accessibility and Mobility) states that within the Region to support the Spatial Strategy:

*A. Access within and across the Region will be improved in a way that supports the RPG's Spatial Strategy, reduces the need for travel, expands travel choice, tackles congestion, improves safety and protects the environment.*

*B. This will be achieved by:*

- iii) measures to improve national road and rail networks to ensure that strategic links to external markets are maintained and the Region does not become a transport bottleneck undermining national economic growth;*

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- iv) measures to encourage behavioural change across the entire Region; and*
- v) measures to improve the safety and security of the transport system.'*

### 7.4 Policy T5 (Public Transport) states that:

- A. The development of an integrated public transport network where all people have access to high quality and affordable public transport services across the Region is a key element of the Regional vision.*
- B. Local authorities, transport operators and other agencies, including the Strategic Rail Authority, should work together towards achieving this vision thereby providing attractive and reliable alternatives to the use of the private car.*
- C. An integrated hierarchy of public transport services will be developed with the highest priority being given to investment in infrastructure and services to support the regeneration of the MUAs [Major Urban Areas]. This will include investment in:
  - ii) improved rail services on key routes, including new rolling stock and capacity enhancements;**
- D. Outside the MUAs, an integrated hierarchy of public transport services should be developed with priority given to the improvement of services and interchanges within urban areas, and the development of links with catchment areas. In rural areas, priority should be given to the development of community and public transport services, particularly those providing links from rural hinterlands to key local service centres.*
- E. In all cases, the aim will be to achieve a frequent, reliable, affordable, secure and attractive public transport service which takes into account the needs of all users, including disabled people and others with reduced mobility. Local authorities, the PTE and transport providers should work towards the provision of integrated public transport services.*

### 7.5 Paragraph 9.58 recognises the international importance of the West Coast Mainline, and upgrading of the route is discussed further in paragraph 9.64 as being desirable to deliver faster and more frequent services between London and Birmingham, Coventry and other key intercity stations in the region, and connections in the North West.

## Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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7.6 Policy T10 (Freight) supports and encourages the growth of rail freight and recognises that the efficient movement of freight is a key component of a successful regional economy, particularly where a significant proportion of employment is based on manufacturing.

7.7 This will be supported by:

*A. The reliable movement of goods and services is the lifeblood of the West Midlands economy. Development plans, local transport plans and the economic strategy should aim to improve the efficiency of freight movement and support the development of Regional Logistics Sites (PA9), by:*

- i) addressing problems for freight vehicles on the Primary Route Network to improve reliability of journeys;*
- ii) addressing delivery and servicing problems through traffic management;*
- iii) encouraging the development of local and Regional Freight Quality Partnerships;*
- iv) encouraging the use of rail and inland waterways for freight;*
- v) safeguarding existing and disused railway lines and sidings which could be used for rail traffic in the future;*
- vi) encouraging the development of new rail freight terminals and improving access to existing terminals;*
- vii) encouraging developments that generate significant amounts of freight in locations that have good access to the rail network;*
- and*
- viii) encouraging local sourcing.*

*B. Local authorities and other agencies should co-operate to develop a Regional Freight Strategy covering all forms of freight transport, i.e. road, rail, water and air taking into account the Regional Rail Freight Strategy.*

### **Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Structure Plan (2001)**

7.8 Policy T8A (Improving the Rail Network) promotes the protection and improvement of the rail network to increase passenger journeys and freight movement by the modernisation and enhancement of inter-regional and local services. It will achieve this through:

*The protection and improvement of the rail network will be sought, following consultation with the rail industry, in order to increase passenger journeys and movement of freight by rail, by:*

- (a) *safeguarding existing rail infrastructure;*
- (b) *protecting redundant rail routes and facilities and actively promoting their restoration where it is considered that the demand and resources permit;*
- (c) *developing the local rail network and facilities to help divert commuters and other users from private vehicles, including the development of additional parking at railway stations;*
- (d) *encouraging the development of inter-regional and local services, the upgrading of the West Coast Main Line and the modernisation and enhancement of other lines.*

Proposals for development in the countryside need to take into account the protection of landscape and natural habitats, set out in Chapter 9. Advice includes mitigation measures as and when necessary, and should take into account further guidance covered in Supplementary Planning Guidance: Planning for Landscape Change.

### ***Staffordshire County Council Local Transport Plan 2011***

- 7.9 Although largely highway focused, the Local Transport Plan acknowledges and is supportive of Network Rail's aims and aspirations to improve and enhance the rail network, including the frequency and speed of services. Chapter 1: Supporting Growth and Regeneration states that:

*Network Rail has a business plan in place to further improve connectivity on the network....*

*Transport is an enabler of economic activity, it can improve productivity, support extensive labour markets and allow businesses to benefit from agglomeration. However, if left unmanaged it can hamper economic activity. Any unreliability of the transport network represents a significant cost to the economy....*

**Stafford Borough Local Plan (2001): Saved Policies**

*Countryside*

7.10 Policy E & D7 Development in the Countryside states that:

*The need to protect the countryside for its own sake from unnecessary and incongruous development will be an important consideration in the assessment of proposals for development in the countryside.*

*Any development proposed in the countryside will only be permitted where it is well designed and if appropriate screened to reduce its impact on the landscape. Development will be permitted unless the proposal would demonstrably harm:*

- (i) an area of special control such as the Green Belt, AONB, SLA or other designation of special value;*
- (ii) the rural economy;*
- (iii) the landscape, wildlife habitats and historic features;*
- (iv) the quality of land for use in agriculture, forestry and other rural enterprises;*
- (v) the need to protect other non renewable resources such as minerals;*
- (vi) other considerations such as traffic, water, sewerage and sewage disposal, noise and pollution.*

*Landscape*

7.11 Policy E&D28 Landscape Conservation seeks to prevent detrimental impacts on the landscape:

*Planning permission will not be granted for development that will have detrimental effect on the landscape unless adequate mitigating measures are undertaken. The impact assessment of new development proposals on the landscape will be based on the following factors;*

- (a) physical factors e.g. relief/landform, land use, vegetation, ecological habitats, archaeology, buildings and structures;*
- (b) visual factors, but also including the other senses;*
- (c) the significance of the landscape with respect to the historical and cultural associations of the area;*
- (d) the area's value relative to other areas i.e. nationally rare, regionally rare or typical to an area;*
- (e) evaluation of the area's character.*
- (f) the degree of public accessibility to the site and surrounding the site, either directly i.e. by vehicle, bicycle, horse or foot, or indirectly i.e. visual.*

## Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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- 7.12 Policy E & D30 Mitigation of Impact on the Landscape and Policy E & D36 Nature Conservation stipulate that proposals that will have an adverse impact on landscape or affect sites of acknowledged importance for nature conservation be required to carry out appropriate landscape assessments and ecological surveys. Policy E & D44 Development Affecting Trees and Hedgerows are also relevant to the Project. These aspects are covered within the Environmental Statement.

### *Transport*

- 7.13 Chapter 7 of the Local Plan recognises that Stafford is a key node on the West Coast Main Line and seeks to increase its strategic importance, attraction and potential for attracting new employment and other economic benefits. The Plan's aims and policy objectives support the maintenance and expansion of sustainable transport modes:

*(a) Support the maintenance and expansion of means of travel which are more energy efficient, minimise pollution, make more effective use of road space, reduce congestion and cause less environmental damage than the private car through the promotion of public transport, cycling and walking.*

*(g) Make the best use of the Borough's communications advantages including the trunk road network and in particular the potential for international European rail connections.*

### ***The Plan for Stafford Borough (Draft)***

- 7.14 Stafford Borough Council is currently preparing a new local plan called the Plan for Stafford Borough. This document will take the place of the draft Local Development Framework and comprise a suite of documents that will eventually replace the policies contained within the existing local plan adopted in 2001. The next phase of consultation will be the Publication in early December 2012.
- 7.15 There is no direct policy on rail infrastructure enhancements in the draft material released thus far, however an increase in rail patronage is encouraged, together with associated passenger car parking at Stafford and Stone stations.

***Town & Village Design Statements & Parish Plans: Mid West Stafford Market Towns Parish Plan (2004)***

- 7.16 The Parish Plan is not a formal document, but sets out the key priorities, actions and aims for the parish area and local communities, based on the views of local people. It covers the parish areas of Chebsey, Eccleshall, Gnosall, Stone and Swynnerton. The main priority is traffic management, including speed, heavy goods vehicles on narrow road and through villages, and increasing volumes of traffic in general. Traffic and access associated with the Project is discussed in detail in Chapter 13 of the ES, with measures to mitigate the impact on the local road network including agreed routes for construction traffic.

Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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## **8 Analysis in accordance with the Development Plan and Other Material Considerations**

### ***Sustainable Development***

- 8.1 The policy of a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF, it emphasises that it should be seen as a golden thread running through plan making and decision taking. It suggests that patterns of growth should make the best use of public transport and focus development in locations that are, or can be made sustainable. The objectives are to reduce the need to travel and secondly to encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport. Sustainability is also about creating the right environment for economic growth. The railway is recognised as being a more sustainable transport system than the private car, and to achieve modal shift from cars to trains, the railway system needs to be made more attractive to users both in terms of reliability and capacity. The same is true of rail freight.
- 8.2 The Government's strategic transport policy as set out in the White Paper 'Delivering A Sustainable Transport System', explains transport strategy to tackle immediate problems as well as the longer term transport challenges that are critical for future prosperity and way of life. The document provides five goals of which the Project will assist in the support of growth and economic competitiveness in the delivery of reliable and efficient transport networks; reduction in transport emissions; contribute towards better safety, security and health; promotion of greater equality of opportunity for all citizens; and improvement in the quality of life for transport users.
- 8.3 The Government's transport policy is further refined in the White Paper: 'Sustainable Railway'. This seeks both to increase the capacity of the network to accommodate record passenger numbers allowing railway to contribute to low-carbon economic growth and move towards the service quality that exacting customers increasingly demand.
- 8.4 The West Coast Main Line RUS (2011) is Network Rail's response to these requirements. It identifies the Norton Bridge (Area Improvements) Project as a planned change to infrastructure to increase train paths, reduce congestion, increase frequency and reliability of services and improve journey times.

## Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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- 8.5 Where a capacity gap is identified on the rail network a solution is sought initially using the existing infrastructure, e.g. re-routing trains, changes to the timetable, or longer trains. It is only when these potential solutions have been exhausted without obtaining the outputs required that alterations and/or additions to the infrastructure are considered.
- 8.6 A number of different options were considered but these are limited due to the overall aim of removing the conflict between the Stone Branch line and the WCML in the Norton Bridge area. Whilst slight variations of the alignment of the new grade separated junction were considered, the nature and purpose of the new junction, and its general location mean that there are no practicable alternative locations.
- 8.7 Three different route alignments were considered and subject to public consultation in 2010. A preferred option was identified in 2011 as a result of the consultation and design process, and development of the preferred alignment was subject to further rounds of public consultation in 2011 and 2012. In addition to the railway alignment, consideration has been given to a number of alternatives concerning the diversion of roads and public rights of way, and temporary site access routes and construction compounds.
- 8.8 The type of bridge structures to be used, the cut/fill balance between new cuttings and embankments and environmental mitigation measures have also been considered, guided by the results of the consultation process and the environmental surveys that have been carried out.

### ***Transport and Accessibility***

- 8.9 The DCO contributes to achieving the policies and aims of the RSS by developing improvements to national rail networks. This will support the objectives of Policy T1 and T5 in maintaining links to external markets, supporting economic growth, and providing attractive, reliable rail services together with capacity enhancements. The overall aim of providing frequent, reliable, affordable, secure and attractive public transport will be assisted greatly by the Project.
- 8.10 Delivering additional capacity for rail freight is a key objective of RSS Policy T10, and the Project will achieve one additional freight path per hour in each direction on the WCML. Each freight train carries the approximate equivalent of 40 lorry loads, thus providing the ability to significantly reduce road-based traffic.

- 8.11 In the absence of a National Networks NPS it is considered that the policies of the RSS which set out the need for a strategic improvement in the regional rail network to support the regional economy and improve strategic links within the region must carry considerable weight in reaching a decision on the DCO. The WCML route is seeing a continued increase in demand for long distance, commuter and regional passenger markets, as well as freight tonnages. Providing the infrastructure to accommodate this increase in demand is key to meeting policy objectives that promote measures to improve the national rail network and ensure that the region doesn't become a transport bottleneck undermining economic growth.
- 8.12 The strategic importance of Stafford on the WCML is also recognised in the Stafford Borough Local Plan. Providing additional capacity and improving the reliability of train services on the WCML will fully support the Council's objectives of maximising the potential for international European rail connections. Additional capacity will make the WCML route more attractive to international intermodal container traffic that usually joins/leaves the WCML at either Willesden or Nuneaton to serve maritime ports such as Southampton, Felixstowe or Tilbury.

### ***Landscape and the Environment***

- 8.13 The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to, and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- *Preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability, and*
  - *Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*
- 8.14 The Project comprises new development in open countryside, therefore a full and comprehensive assessment of the likely impacts has been undertaken. Mitigating these impacts will form an important part of the Project, with measures described in full within the Environmental Statement. None of the land in question is protected or designated as a site of importance.

- 8.15 There is a comprehensive landscape scheme associated with the development. This is not only on the railway and road embankment itself but more importantly on land in and around the railway embankment and flyover. The landscaping is designed to integrate the new railway infrastructure into the landscape. The planting around the earthworks adds to the existing character and will break up views of the engineered earthworks and structures.
- 8.16 Much of the new railway alignment as it branches from the main line at Little Bridgeford will be situated in a cutting, thus minimising any visual impact. Landscaping therefore is largely concentrated to the north of the proposed development site to mitigate visual impact arising from the railway flyovers and road diversions.
- 8.17 It is not unusual for railways to bisect areas of open countryside; by their very nature this is unavoidable if they are to successfully connect the Country's cities and urban areas. Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer land in preference to that of a higher quality.
- 8.18 It is clearly demonstrated within the Assessment of Need that the new railway is required to alleviate the bottleneck at Norton Bridge Junction, and therefore deemed necessary in accordance with the NPPF. It is not possible to amend the alignment of the new railway to use poorer land (see chapter 3 of the main Environmental Statement (document reference 5.2) for a full consideration of the alternative alignments that were considered). The land strategy will be to minimise the impact of severance by providing alternative accesses wherever possible such that the land owners can continue to farm their land. Where this does not work, Network Rail will seek, wherever possible, to acquire severed land and re-distribute it to adjoining owners affected by the Project. It is also likely that some of the affected land will be purchased by agreement in advance of the DCO.
- 8.19 Guidance set out in the Stafford Borough Local Plan seeks to protect the countryside from unnecessary development and harm. The following benefits demonstrate that the development is both necessary and capable of mitigation to minimise potential harm:
1. The Project is essential railway infrastructure that is supported by and supports Government policy on sustainable transport by contributing to the improvement of rail services and to the promotion of a modal shift from private car to rail,

2. The new NPPF states there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development of which a project proposed to improve capacity on the network will go some way towards helping the Government in delivering its goals,
  3. The Project will make a significant contribution to increasing capacity and reliability on both the WCML and the Stone Branch Line,
  4. The capacity improvements created by the DCO provides for both additional passenger services and freight paths,
  5. In the absence of an NPS, the Development Plan and in particular the RSS policies support the strategic improvement of the railway,
  6. The alignment of the DCO route does not encroach on protected landscape,
  7. The landscaping and habitat replacement works will mitigate much of the Project's impact, and the land strategy will ensure that agricultural land severed by the Project is not wasted and is capable of effective reuse.
- 8.20 The preferred Project option and design has been developed to ensure that adverse environmental effects during the construction and operation of the Project are avoided. Further additional mitigation measures have been developed (as described in the Environmental Statement) to reduce any adverse effects identified as being created by the Project. Other considerations such as noise and traffic will be subject to controls that are detailed in the Environmental Statement.

## **Other Development Plan considerations**

- 8.21 Whilst the Project is assessed against regional and local policies specific to Stafford, benefits will be gained on a far wider scale. Improvements in rail capacity and reliability on the WCML will support sustainable transport objectives in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Preston too, including other cross country services connecting the South West, and regional services between Birmingham, Crewe and Liverpool. It is important to consider the Project therefore not simply against local policies but to acknowledge the wider benefits.

- 8.22 Policy E & D8 of the adopted Local Plan aims to prevent the loss of high quality agricultural land, and states that development that involves the permanent loss to agricultural use of land of Agricultural Grade 1, 2, or 3a will not normally be granted planning permission. As discussed above in section 8.18 the linear nature of the development will not permanently affect large swathes of agricultural land, and the land strategy will ensure that severed fields are not wasted by reorganising field boundaries in co-ordination with local farmer's requirements.

## **Other Material Considerations**

- 8.23 The design and materials to be used in constructing the new railway and road diversions have been carefully considered and discussed with both the County Council and Local Planning Authority. The new bridges will be brick clad where the structures are visible to mitigate visual impact and maintain continuity with existing railway structures in the area.
- 8.24 Alterations to the highway network required to accommodate the Project have been carefully considered, with various options for the Roads and Public Rights of Way affected by the scheme taken through public consultation.

### ***Road Diversions***

- 8.25 The Project will require three principal alterations to the local road network: The B5026, Meece Road and Searchlight Lane. The B5026 will be diverted onto an embankment between Scannell Lane/B5026 junction and a proposed new roundabout on the diverted section of Meece Road. The road will pass over the new railway, the WCML and Meece Brook on new bridge structures. Meece Road itself will be diverted from the B5026 roundabout where a new bridge will take traffic over the new railway, rejoining the existing Meece Road in the vicinity of upper Heamies Cottages. Searchlight Lane will require only a minor alteration comprising a new bridge over the proposed railway.

### ***Footpath Diversions***

- 8.26 The Project requires the diversion of two public footpaths that form part of the PROW network. Footpath No.11 currently runs alongside the west of the existing railway between Heamies Bridge and the B5026, emerging opposite Station Road. At the northern end of the footpath, the proposed new railway line intersects the footpath; the southern end of the footpath is crossed by the new flyover to Stone. The option

selected will divert the footpath completely away from its existing route to the west of the new railway and onto the realigned B5026. The footpath will then continue along the B5026 to where the new road bridge crosses the WCML and will head south to where the footpath is crossed by the rail bridge over the WCML. It then passes alongside the railway and is diverted under the proposed new bridge near the junction of the B5026 and Station Road.

- 8.27 As part of the proposed Project, an existing level crossing carrying a public right of way over the Stone Branch line at Mid Norton (forming part of the PROW network No.10) will be diverted over a new footbridge, thus providing a direct benefit to the safety of pedestrians and the railway, and contributing towards Network Rail's national policy to reduce the number of level crossings on the railway.
- 8.28 Decisions have been guided by SWOT analysis taking into account Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the options considered, with decisions on preferred options based on business requirements, the environment, consents requirements and public consultation.

Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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## **9 Requirements**

- 9.1 Set out in Schedule 2, Article 4 of the draft Development Consent Order are the requirements proposed to be attached to the DCO. This section sets out the reasoning behind each of the requirements.
- 9.2 Requirement 2 ensures that the development will be carried out in accordance with the design drawings, unless otherwise approved by the relevant planning authority.
- 9.3 Requirement 3 provides that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) be submitted to and approved by the relevant planning authority before the authorised development commences. This requirement will ensure that all the findings and recommendations of the ES are incorporated into the delivery of the Project.
- 9.4 Requirement 4 provides that a landscaping and habitat replacement scheme be submitted to and approved by the relevant authority before any stage of the authorised development is commenced. This requirement includes the submission of a timetable for implementation.
- 9.5 Requirement 5 ensures that all landscaping and habitat replacement works are carried out in accordance with the implementation timetable approved under Requirement 4. It also provides that any planting that dies, fails to establish or becomes damaged be replaced within a five year period.
- 9.6 Requirement 6 provides for any future alteration, reconstruction or replacement of a building or bridge forming part of the Project, to be first approved by the relevant planning authority.
- 9.7 Requirement 7 applies to any requirement which requires the authorised development to be carried out in accordance with the details approved by the relevant planning authority; the approved details shall be taken to include any amendments that may subsequently be approved in writing by the relevant planning authority.

Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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## 10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The Project, whilst of local impact, provides a key element in a nationally strategic rail link between London, the North West and Scotland. It will provide for additional long distance high speed passenger services and freight paths in line with the government's requirements for the delivery of improved capacity as approved by the Office of the Rail Regulator.
- 10.2 Delivering the infrastructure needed to support sustainable economic development is a key aim of the NPPF, and one of the core principles of the planning system set out in the Framework is to proactively drive the provision of infrastructure needed to support the Country in achieving sustainable economic growth. Rail infrastructure in this respect plays a significant role in providing sustainable transport, both for passengers and freight required to support the economy and help businesses to grow.
- 10.3 The proposed development accords with the policies contained in the RSS which, in the absence of a National Networks NPS, is a material consideration that carries considerable weight as it sets out the need for strategic transport improvements, both intra-regional and inter-regional.
- 10.4 The Project will help to achieve the aims of policies laid out in the Structure Plan by improving the rail network to increase passenger journeys and freight movement, together with the enhancement of inter-regional services.
- 10.5 The Project accords with the saved policies of the Local Plan in respect of seeking to increase the strategic importance of Stafford as a key node on the WCML, the maintenance and expansion of sustainable transport, and making the best use of the potential for international European rail connections.
- 10.6 The Project will impact on open countryside, and in particular, agricultural land. It has been demonstrated in this statement that benefits in terms of sustainable transport outweigh potential harm; these include that the proposal is a key improvement on the WCML that will provide extra capacity for passenger services and freight paths, as well as improved reliability and journey time improvements. It is supported by the Government's policy of presumption in favour of sustainable development and the promotion of a modal shift from private car to rail.

## Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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- 10.7 A land strategy has been developed that will minimise the potential impact on severed farmland. Further, a landscaping scheme and environmental measures will mitigate the effect of the new railway. The detailed scheme of requirements is set out in the Environmental Statement.
- 10.8 The design of the new railway and the associated new structures have been carefully considered through consultation to mitigate the Project in the context of its setting. The proposed materials will be in keeping with the existing railway vocabulary in order to maintain local identity.
- 10.9 The replacement of a pedestrian level crossing at Mid Norton on the PROW network with a footbridge will be a benefit to local residents and ramblers by removing a safety obstacle to users of the PROW.

## Abbreviations

CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DCO	Development Consent Order
DfT	Department for Transport
DNO	Distribution Network Operator
ES	Environmental Statement
FSP	Functional Supply Unit
HLOS	High Level Output Statement
LA	Localism Act 2011
LB	Localism Bill
LDHS	Long Distance High Speed
LED	Light Emitting Diode
MIPRWP	“Major infrastructure planning reform, Work Plan”, Department of Communities and Local Government Dec 2010
MUA	Major Urban Area
NPS	National Policy Statement
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework 2012
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
PA2008	Planning Act 2008
PTE	Passenger Transport Executive
REB	Relocatable Equipment Building
RUS	Route Utilisation Strategy
SBC	Stafford Borough Council
SCC	Staffordshire County Council
WCML	West Coast Main Line

Norton Bridge Area Improvements

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## **Glossary**

### **Chord**

A short section of railway connecting one railway line to another railway line.

### **Control Period**

Government funding for the rail industry is settled in five year periods. Control Period 4 is the fourth such funding settlement which covers the period April 2009 to March 2014. Control Period 5 covers the period April 2014 to March 2019.

### **High Level Output Statement**

The Government's statement of the improvements to the rail industry to be delivered during Control Period 4.

### **National Policy Statement**

Under the provisions of the Planning Act 2008 a series of planning policies for nationally important infrastructure projects, such as railways, are being prepared. To date the policy for railways has not been published.

### **Overbridge**

A road passing over the railway.

### **Route Utilisation Strategy**

Network Rail's proposals for translating the High Level Output Statement into practice by examining the 'bottlenecks' in capacity and proposals for eliminating those bottlenecks.

### **Underbridge**

A road passing underneath the railway.

Norton Bridge Area Improvements

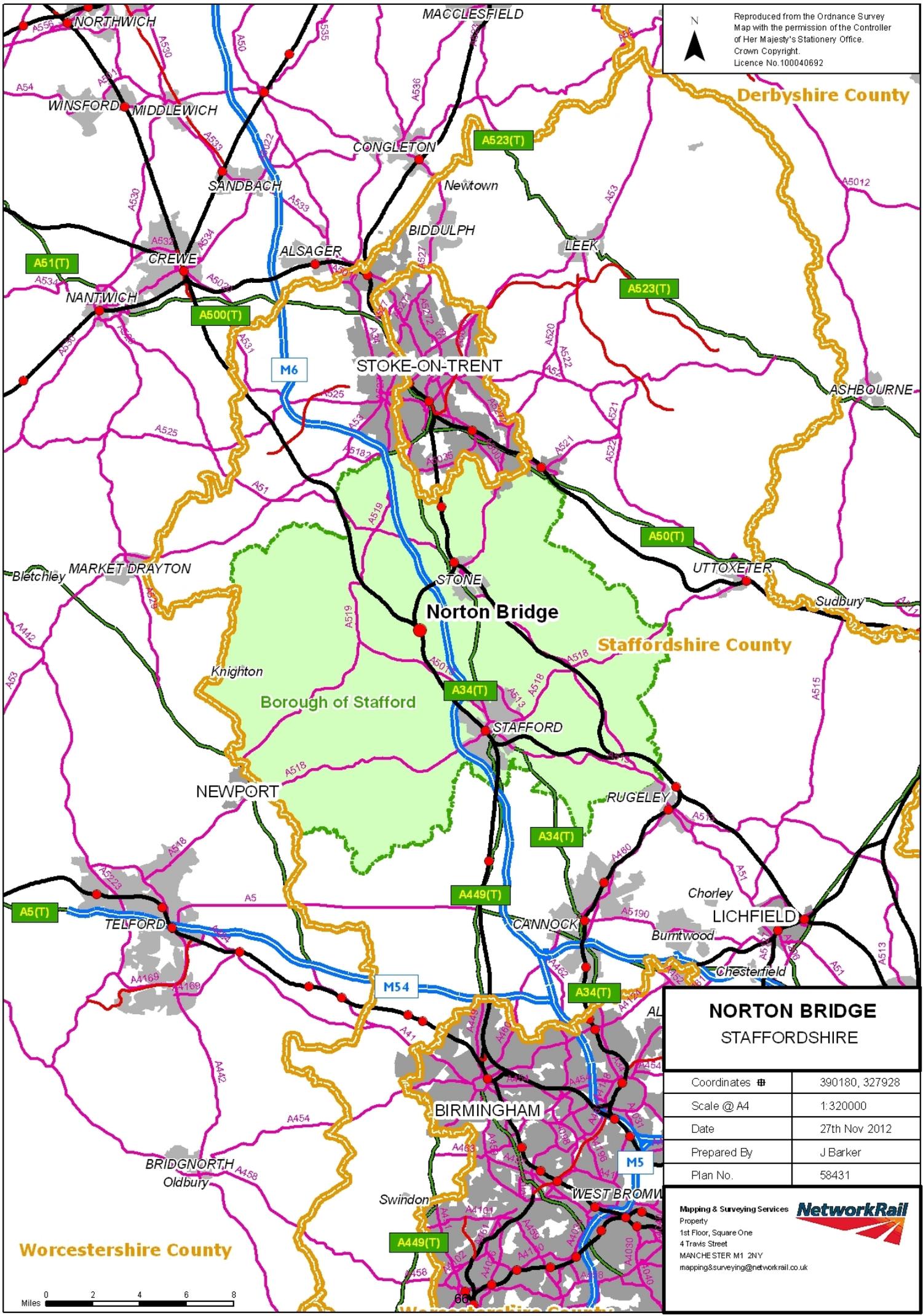
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## **APPENDIX 1**

Location Plan


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**NORTON BRIDGE**  
**STAFFORDSHIRE**

Coordinates	390180, 327928
Scale @ A4	1:320000
Date	27th Nov 2012
Prepared By	J Barker
Plan No.	58431

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