



# **Local Plan Update**

Leeds Local Plan

## **Sustainable Infrastructure Background Paper**

Development Plan Document

September 2022

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# Mass Transit and Railway Infrastructure

## Background Paper

### Why is the policy needed?

Significant investment in transport infrastructure in Leeds is proposed over the coming years. The *Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy*<sup>1</sup> and *West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040*<sup>2</sup> provides the framework for many of these proposals, most of which lie outside of the remit of the planning system. They recognise how major investment in transport infrastructure has supported the development, growth and success of the city we have today. Leeds, however, like any successful city, is restricted in the amount that it can grow by a lack of transport capacity. To accommodate growth in travel and population, whilst simultaneously addressing the climate emergency and ensuring inclusivity, we need to deliver higher capacity modes of public transport that keep the city moving.

A series of rail construction and upgrade schemes, which will have an important role in enhancing our intercity connections, are being planned at a national level through the *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands*<sup>3</sup>. This includes proposals for Northern Powerhouse Rail and TransPennine upgrades which will directly affect Leeds, as well as a commitment to undertaking a study to look at how to bring HS2 trains from the East Midlands to Leeds. The *Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy* recognises the importance of the rail network to Leeds, and its 'Enhance public transport' big move includes a commitment to working with partners to secure the investment needed to deliver transformational improvements to the rail network. Improvements to railway infrastructure will help to increase their capacity and improve the speed and reliability of services, providing greater opportunity for people to travel by sustainable modes.

The *Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy* also recognises the importance of the development of mass transit in Leeds. Mass transit is a crucial missing element of our transport infrastructure and will fill the gap in public transport provision between bus services and heavy rail. It will add capacity to the key corridors within the city region, making it easier for more people to access more jobs, and get to where they need to go, by sustainable modes of transport. In doing this, it holds significant potential to boost productivity, enable inclusive growth and tackle the climate emergency.

Plans for a new West Yorkshire Mass Transit network are being developed by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Their draft *Connectivity Infrastructure Plan*<sup>4</sup> plans for a modern, integrated transport system for West Yorkshire, with the delivery of mass transit being one of four key priorities. The accompanying draft *Mass Transit Vision 2040*<sup>5</sup> sets out how mass transit has the potential to re-shape local transport networks around high-quality, high-capacity public transport. A national commitment to the West Yorkshire Mass Transit scheme, and to supporting WYCA in advancing these proposals, was provided by the Government through the *Integrated Rail Plan*.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/connecting-leeds-and-transforming-travel/transport-policy>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/improving-transport/transport-strategy/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/improving-transport/connectivity/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/improving-transport/connectivity/>

WYCA's draft *Mass Transit Vision 2040* establishes the potential for mass transit across nine corridors within West Yorkshire, of which five run through Leeds, and indicates the places that it may connect. Over the coming years, these plans will be refined into specific routes, and details of the technology to be used and the associated works that will take place on and around the line will be confirmed. Subject to the necessary approvals being granted, and funding being confirmed, construction is expected to take place in phases between 2025 and 2040.

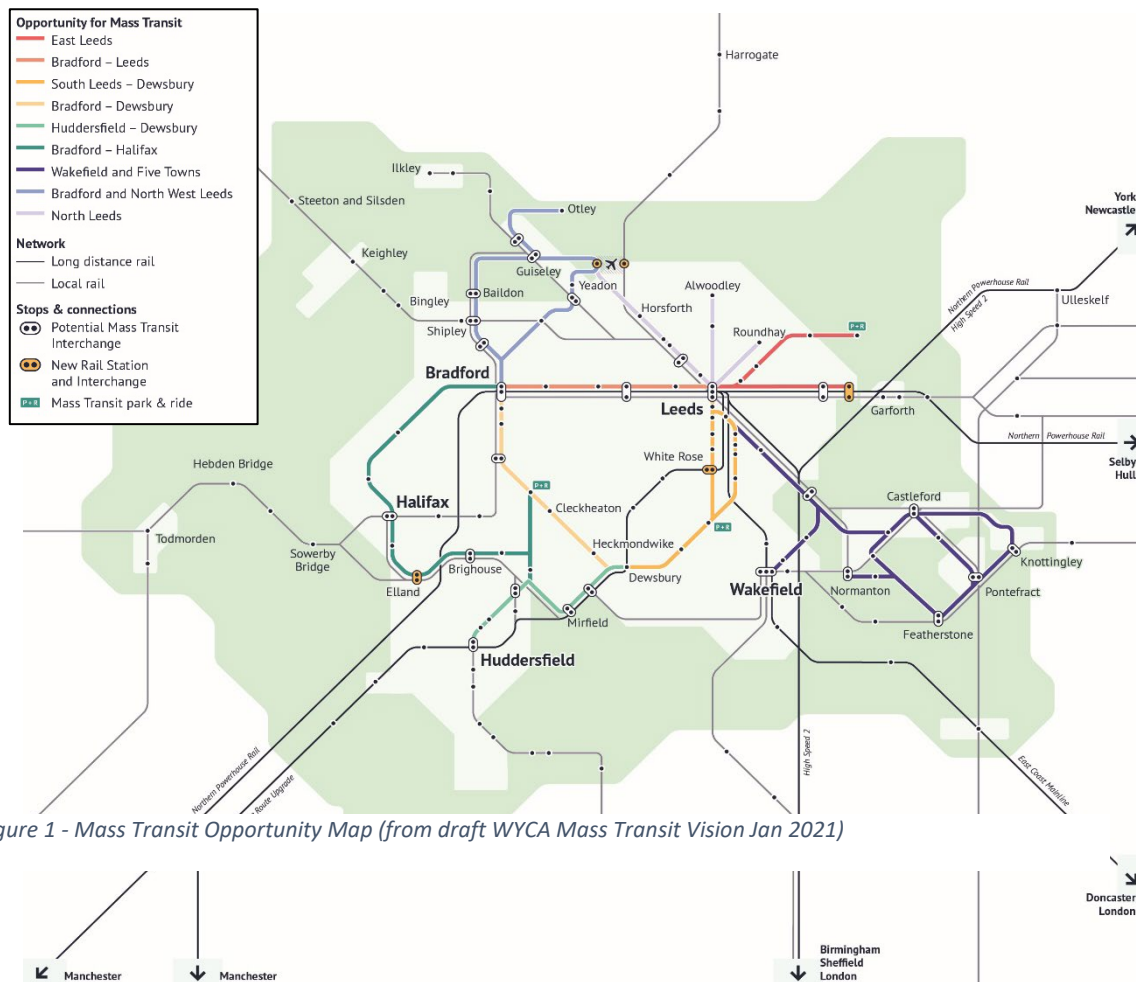


Figure 1 - Mass Transit Opportunity Map (from draft WYCA Mass Transit Vision Jan 2021)

It is vital that a joined-up approach is taken in planning for, and responding to, these significant transport investments. Whilst many aspects of these (and other) transport related proposals lie outside of the remit of the spatial planning system, it is essential that there is alignment between spatial and transport planning, and that wherever possible opportunities to support transport policy proposals through spatial planning (and vice versa) are taken.

At present, Spatial Policy 11 of the Core Strategy provides very high level support for mass transit and new railway infrastructure. It sets out 11 transport infrastructure investment priorities for Leeds, of which (i) includes “Public transport improvements for the bus and rail networks (including supporting the role of Leeds City Station, enhancing Leeds’ role as a regional transport hub, and new rail stations were appropriate) and investment in a rapid transit system to increase radial route capacity to the City and Town Centres and to improve reliability together with investment in the provision of Park and Ride Facilities”. The Key Diagram also shows the former NGT, High Speed Rail and proposed railway electrification routes.

A new policy on mass transit and rail infrastructure is needed to more specifically help support the delivery of the West Yorkshire Mass Transit network in Leeds, and ensure that proposals related to both Mass Transit and the upgrading of railway infrastructure realise the potential they hold to deliver a range of social, economic and environmental benefits. This will have an important role in helping to tackle the climate emergency, supporting the city's transition towards carbon neutrality and realising the 43% reduction in CO2 emissions from transport by 2030 sought by the *Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy*.

### **What is the policy seeking to achieve?**

The policy is seeking to create a framework that;

- Facilitates the development of mass transit network in Leeds; providing clarity that support should be given to related schemes, and ensure that emerging mass transit routes benefit from protection from any proposals that may prejudice its implementation;
- Ensures that mass transit and railway networks are positively integrated into existing and proposed development; and
- Establishes the key principles that Leeds City Council expects mass transit or rail infrastructure proposals to meet

This will help to support the delivery of these crucial elements of transport infrastructure, and ensure that they come forward in a manner which maximises the potential benefits they offer, and minimises or mitigates any potential adverse impacts (from a economic, environmental and social perspective).

### **Is the policy justified by the evidence?**

Yes. The policy provides clear support for a new mass transit network, which has been identified as a key local, sub-regional and national priority (as outlined above). It specifically notes the opportunity this presents to deliver improved connections in the following locations; East Leeds, Leeds – Bradford, South Leeds – Dewsbury, Bradford & North West Leeds, and North Leeds. These are the five locations within Leeds that are identified as potential routes in the draft *WYCA Mass Transit Vision*.

The series of principles and expectations set out in parts 3 and 4 of the policy have drawn on national policy and guidance (particularly the NPPF, PPG and National Design Guide) and the lessons learned through work undertaken to plan for integration of the previously proposed HS2 line into the City, and through the former Supertram and NGT mass transit proposals. This enabled the key implications that such projects may have to be identified, and for policy to be written which clearly sets out the expectations in relations to these key issues.

### **How will the policy help deliver the Council's corporate strategy?**

Through its support for mass transit and improvements to railway infrastructure, this planning policy directly supports the zero carbon pillar of the Leeds Best City Ambition<sup>6</sup>. The Best City Ambition recognises that, as part of this, there is a need to focus on “*Delivering a low-carbon and affordable transport network which encourages people to be physically active and reduces reliance on the private car, helping people to get around the city easily and safely*”. Mass Transit and rail both offer an important (and lower carbon) alternative to the private car, particularly for longer journeys that cannot be made by walking or cycling. The policy also responds to the climate change challenge recognised through the Ambition, and the need to “*Ensure a public transport system that is safe, active, accessible, clear and energy-efficient to help people get around the city*”.

## How is the policy consistent with the NPPF?

The NPPF makes a number of references to the role that the planning system has relation to transport. Of particular relevance to this proposed policy, this includes:

- Para 20(b): *Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for...infrastructure for transport...*”
- Para 104: “*Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that...*
  - (b) *opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised...; and*
  - (d) *the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains*”
- Para 106: “*Planning policies should:*
  - (c) *identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development; and*
  - (e) *provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area [including public transport projects] and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy...*”

The policy directly responds to these elements of national planning policy, making provision for the new transport infrastructure that is anticipated over the coming years. The requirements of the policy seek to ensure that the benefits of these schemes are maximised, and any potential adverse impacts are minimised or mitigated as far as possible. The policy also seeks to provide protection from proposals that would prejudice the delivery of mass transit, whilst recognising that further work will be needed before specific sites and/or routes can be formally safeguarded through planning policy.

## How are we going to measure the impact of the policy?

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/plans-and-strategies/best-city-ambition>

Monitoring indicators used to measure the impact of this policy will be;

1. Progress made in planning / consenting / delivering mass transit and rail upgrades in Leeds: tracking the progress of these projects will enable consideration to be made of whether the policy remains still up-to-date and effective in light of more detailed proposals for mass transit and rail improvement schemes

### **How will it be implemented?**

The planning system will have an important role in helping to facilitate the delivery of mass transit and upgrades to the rail network. Where proposals require planning consent, and permission for this is sought through the 'usual' planning application process under the Town and Country Planning Act, the policy will be implemented through the Development Management process. Plans, projects or development proposals associated with the delivery of mass transit, rail infrastructure improvements, or which could have implications for the above (by virtue of them either presenting a threat to the implementation of mass transit, or there being an opportunity to design them in such a way so they are well integrated with the mass transit or rail networks) would need to satisfy the requirements set out in the policy. In accordance with planning law, applications will be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

It is necessary, however, to recognise that some elements of the works involved will be likely to follow different consenting processes. In particular, orders are likely to be made by the Secretary of State for Transport under the Transport and Works Act 1992 (the TWA) to authorise new railway or tramway schemes (such as mass transit). TWA Orders can authorise a wide range of matters, including the power to construct, alter, maintain and operate a transport system, compulsory powers to buy land, and the closure or alterations of roads and footpaths. As part of this process, applicants can also ask the Secretary of State for Transport to grant planning permission for the development described in the order. As part of this, consideration will be made of how the proposals align with strategic plans such as the Local Plan.

In the case of rail proposals, railway undertakers also benefit from deemed consent ('permitted development') for certain types of works to railway infrastructure. This means that they may not need to submit a planning application for certain types of works. In such cases, there would be no legal obligation to take the requirements of this policy into account.

There are, however, likely to be opportunities, through any discussions that may take place between the City Council, WYCA and Network Rail (or any other involved parties) about intended proposals, and through the more formalised consenting process under the TWA, to signpost to this policy. In this way, it can be used to support any negotiations that may take place and help to influence proposals even where compliance with the policy may not strictly be required as a matter of law.

### **Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration**

The delivery of mass transit and rail infrastructure improvement projects offer potential benefits from an equality, cohesion and integration perspective, with the improved accessibility brought about by these schemes enabling people to more easily access a wider range of jobs, facilities

and services without the need for a car. This is likely to be of benefit to all people, including those with protected characteristics.

Whilst exact Mass Transit routes have not yet been agreed, it is proposed that they will travel through and connect some of the most deprived areas of Leeds. Recognising this, and the potential that this type of infrastructure investment can have, the policy also specifically seeks to ensure that schemes are holistically designed to ensure that their potential to stimulate investment and regeneration is maximised. This is important from an equality perspective, helping to ensure that the positive impacts of mass transit (in particular) extend beyond accessibility, and support investment in, and the wider regeneration of, the places along its routes.



# Leeds Station Background Paper

## Why is the policy needed?

The railway network is very important for Leeds' economy, and in the decarbonising of transport. Over the next two decades passenger numbers at Leeds Station are set to increase significantly as more people choose to travel by more sustainable forms of transport. In order to accommodate this, significant investment and development is going to be required.

The *Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy*<sup>7</sup> provides the framework for transport investment in Leeds. It sets a vision for Leeds to be a city where you don't need a car, and where everyone has an affordable and accessible zero carbon choice in how they travel. It establishes six 'big moves' that will help achieve this ambition, and the target of reducing CO2 emissions from transport by up to 43% by 2030. The 'Transform the City Centre' big move recognises the importance of Leeds station in providing a gateway to Leeds via the national rail network, and identifies the need to support Leeds City Station, enhancing its role as a regional transport hub and enabling the integration of high speed rail. The Strategy sets the target for 100% increase in rail travel by 2030.

An *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands*<sup>8</sup> (IRP) was published by the Government on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021. This commits funding to deliver a number of key rail programmes, as part of the TransPennine Route Upgrade and Northern Powerhouse Rail. Capacity improvements on the network at Leeds Station will be required to accommodate these, including platform extensions. These works will increase services into the station, and also enable it to be served by longer trains, and therefore increase passengers numbers.

In October 2020 planning permission was granted<sup>9</sup> for various improvements and alterations to the station forming delivery of the first phase of the Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan (LISM)<sup>10</sup>. This enables the creation of a fully accessible multi-modal transport hub, with free-flowing pedestrian movement out of the station to the city centre and wider city areas. It involves various improvements to the arrival space to the front of the station, which reduces the flow of vehicular traffic, improves connectivity and creates a safer and more welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists using the station and adjacent streets. It also includes the creation of a new purpose-built taxi shelter, and environmental enhancements to the area under the Neville Street Bridge, along Dark Neville Street and Little Neville Street to make these places feel safer and more attractive for users. Work has also recently been completed to remodel the track layout between platforms 4 and 6, and to create a new Platform Zero, to help reduce train congestion and disruption to services. A series of further applications and developments are expected over the coming years to deliver further improvements to the station and its infrastructure.

Leeds Station is currently mentioned a number of times across existing policy documents (including the Core Strategy, Site Allocations Plan and Aire Valley Leeds AAP, and the South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework SPD). In particular, Policy SP11 of the Core Strategy recognises its important role as a regional transport hub and provides support to proposals that would enhance this. However, there is no specific policy to guide the future development of the station.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/connecting-leeds-and-transforming-travel/transport-policy>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands>

<sup>9</sup> Application reference no. 20/02048/FU

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/leeds-railway-station>

The development of the station will be phased over a number of years to ensure that the station can continue to function throughout the construction work. As a result, it will be particularly important to ensure that all proposals work together to respond to the various opportunities and challenges that the redevelopment of Leeds Station presents. It is considered that a new policy is needed to bridge this gap, giving additional weight to the key design / planning principles that should underpin development proposals, and ensure the full potential that the redevelopment of the station presents is realised.

### **What is the policy seeking to achieve?**

The policy sets out requirements for development of, in and around Leeds Station. This will ensure that all proposals work to deliver the same vision, and address both the opportunities and challenges presented by the development of the station.

Many of the requirements identified in the policy are based on principles, opportunities or expectations that were established through the Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan (LISM), which was developed alongside the South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework SPD and HS2 Growth Strategy. It is intended that incorporating them into planning policy will give them additional weight in the decision making process and ensure that all proposals are assessed against the same requirements.

### **Is the policy justified by the evidence?**

Yes. As noted above, many of the requirements set out within the policy stem from the *Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan (LISM)* and the *South Bank Leeds Regeneration SPD*. LISM was developed to help ensure that all of the different phases of development work together to respond to all the various opportunities and challenges that the redevelopment of Leeds Station presents. This sets out a holistic and phased development strategy for the station and the surrounding roads, places and spaces. It aims to improve the experience of everyone using the station by increasing pedestrian capacity, supporting the regeneration of the South Bank, and incorporating future rail upgrades. The *South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework SPD* builds upon this masterplan, providing future guidance on its principles and how it relates to the wider regeneration plans for the South Bank.

Both *LISM* and the *South Bank Leeds Regeneration Framework SPD* were prepared on the expectation that Phase 2 of HS2 would extend into Leeds. A new station, which would lie to the south of the existing station, was planned to accommodate this, and *LISM* (and consequently the *South Bank SPD*) considered how the two elements of the station would be integrated and respond to their surroundings. Whilst the Government's *Integrated Rail Plan* no longer proposes that Phase 2 of HS2 will include a link to Leeds, it does commit to further work being undertaken to look at the most effective way to run HS2 trains to Leeds and it confirms that the safeguarding of land for rail use including the HS2 station will not be lifted while this further work is undertaken. Whilst this may have implications for the timing and delivery of the southern extension to the station that had been proposed, the headline principles on which the masterplan and SPD are based (and which have fed into the policy) remain central to our ambitions for the station and continue to provide a sound basis for this planning policy.

## How will the policy help deliver the Council's corporate strategy?

Through its support for the development of Leeds Station, this planning policy directly supports the zero carbon and inclusive growth pillars of the Leeds Best City Ambition<sup>11</sup>. The Best City Ambition recognises that as part of the zero carbon pillar there is a need to focus on *“Delivering a low-carbon and affordable transport network which encourages people to be physically active and reduces reliance on the private car, helping people to get around the city easily and safely”*. Our railways offer an important (and lower carbon) alternative to the private car, particularly for longer journeys that cannot be made by walking or cycling. Similarly, in relation to the ‘Inclusive Growth’ pillar, it is acknowledged that *“place matters and positive identity, culture, heritage and pride in our communities are vital assets in a sustainable future for the City and its local centres”*. In seeking to ensure that development at the station is of the highest design quality, and that the Station provides a welcoming (and fitting) entrance to the City, the policy will help support this pillar.

The policy also responds to the climate change challenge recognised through the Ambition, and in particular the need to *“Ensure a public transport system that is safe, active, accessible, clear and energy-efficient to help people get around the city”*.

## How is the policy consistent with the NPPF?

The NPPF makes a number of references to the role that the planning system has in relation to transport infrastructure. Of particular relevance to this proposed policy, this includes:

- Para 104: *“Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that...  
(b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised...; and*
- Para 106: *“Planning policies should:  
(e) provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy...”*

This policy directly responds to these elements of national policy, recognising the need for development at Leeds Station and supporting its continued operation and (potential) future expansion.

The detailed requirements set out within the policy also relates very well to other elements of national policy, including;

- High quality design: aligns with the expectations in section 12 of the NPPF (Achieving well-designed places), particularly paragraphs 127 re. plans setting clear design vision and expectations and 130 (a-f) re. policies ensuring that developments function well, are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, maintain a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of a site and create safe, inclusive and accessible places.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/plans-and-strategies/best-city-ambition>

- Improvements to pedestrian access / improved interchange with other modes: aligns with various elements of national policy, but particularly paragraphs 92 re. achieving health, inclusive and safe spaces with clear and legible pedestrian routes, and 110 re. ensuring that opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes are taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.
- Complementing wider city centre / enhancing the Dark Arches and Neville Street; aligns with section 7 of the NPPF (Ensuring the vitality of town centres).
- Listed Buildings / Conservation Area: aligns with section 16 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

## How are we going to measure the impact of the policy?

Monitoring indicators used to measure the impact of this policy will be;

1. The number of users of the train station: this will tell us whether the number of users of the station is increasing as planned, and the potential for modal shift is being realised. Whilst a number of the factors influencing this lie outside of the control of the planning system, significant under / over performance against this objective will prompt consideration being made of whether the policy (and the specific station improvements identified within it) remains effective.
2. Consent and/or delivery of key station improvement works identified in the policy:
  - i. *A second southern access into the station*
  - ii. *A vertical connection into the Dark Arches*
  - iii. *Pedestrianisation of New Station Street*
  - iv. *Redesigned access to Bishopgate Street*
  - v. *Transformation of City Square*
  - vi. *Transformation of Princes Square*
  - vii. *Improved interchange with other transport modes*
  - viii. *New development floorspace*
  - ix. *Improvements to Trevelyan Square*

This will enable progress in delivering these works to be tracked. This will enable consideration to be made (where necessary) of why elements have not come forward and if the planning policy needs to be revised or updated to address this.

## How will it be implemented?

The policy will be implemented through the Development Management process, and used in the determination of planning applications affecting Leeds Station. This includes proposals for the development of the station itself, as well as schemes around the station that may have implications for the requirements set out in the policy (i.e. proposals for places such as City Square and Princes Square that may impact on the setting of the station, or access to it, where consideration will also be need of how they may affect the delivery of the vision for the station itself).

Network Rail (as a railway undertaker) also benefits from deemed consent ('permitted development') for certain types of works to railway infrastructure, including railway stations. This means that they may not need to submit a planning application for certain types of works. In such cases, there would be no legal obligation to take the requirements of this policy into

account. However, it is expected that this policy will have an important role in clearly setting out what the expectations of Leeds City Council are for proposals related to Leeds Station. This can be taken into account when schemes are developed, and can be signposted to and used to support any negotiations that may take place, and help to influence proposals even where compliance with the policy may not strictly be required as a matter of law.

## **Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration**

When developing detailed proposals for development in and around the station it will be vital that accessibility for all users is ensured. This is consistent with all other forms of development. Existing policies and legislation (including through building regulations) will apply and ensure that the particular access requirements of some of those with protected characteristics – including those with disabilities or older persons – are addressed. Therefore, it is likely that the works to the station supported through the Policy (particularly those relating to improved access) will have positive outcomes from an equality perspective.

In addition, the policy seeks improvements to some of the key public spaces around the station, including the Dark Arches and the railway arches to the south of Trevelyan Square. It is recognised that the lighting and low levels of activity in these areas currently means that they may not be perceived as welcoming spaces, particularly at night-time. Whilst this is an issue for all, the perception of risk may be particularly felt by those who are (or feel) more vulnerable as a result of their age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief. As a result, improvements to these spaces may also deliver positive outcomes from an equality perspective.

# Digital Connectivity Background Paper

## Why is the policy needed?

Improving the digital infrastructure position of the city is an important area of work for the Council. Aligning with the 'Inclusive Growth Strategy', Leeds City Council has set out an ambition to have the best connectivity in the UK and for all premises across the district both residential and commercial, to be able to access gigabit capable services.

This proposed policy supports Leeds as a city in terms of digital connectivity setting out a requirement to provide gigabit-capable infrastructure for both residential and commercial development to enable connectivity from the outset as part of site development. This will ensure that new development is of a sufficient standard to meet the modern needs of our lives.

Good digital connectivity is an expected and important element of our everyday life and has become an increasingly essential part of our ordinary activities such as working, education and running of the household. Our services such as health, shopping and utilities have increasingly become more reliant on digital provision. Enhancing digital capability will allow Leeds to continue to move forward and develop as a city.

## What is the policy seeking to achieve?

The policy is seeking to enhance Leeds as a city in terms of digital connectivity to ensure that all new development has the capability to be digitally connected from the outset. This will ensure that new development is of a sufficient standard to meet the modern needs of our lives. Such a policy will also help to reduce digital poverty so that all new development provides an equality of connectivity for all and to meet Leeds' ambitions.

A single policy (DC1) is proposed around gigabit capable services for all development. The proposed policy focuses on providing digital connectivity for new sites and new developments only, the focus being gigabit connection. A digital connectivity statement submitted as part of a planning application is required to avoid the need for future retro-fitting to provide gigabit connectivity. The rationale for the policy is to improve inclusive digital connectivity.

## Is the policy justified by the evidence?

Yes, the importance of widely available, good quality connectivity has come into sharp focus in particular in the coronavirus pandemic. In August 2020, the government asked Which? (the UK's consumer champion), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to convene the Gigabit Take-up Advisory Group (GigaTAG). The GigaTAG set out to develop a set of recommendations to help support consumer and business migration to gigabit-capable networks and the services they deliver, including those which are gigabit-capable, as soon as possible. It aims to help ensure that the wide ranging benefits of these networks are realised. The final report ([gigatag\\_report\\_v5.pdf \(cbi.org.uk\)](#)) sets out that almost half (45%) of consumers say they are working from home a lot more (Which (2021)) and the majority (68%) have increased their broadband use since the first lockdown in March 2020.

The same final report [gigatag\\_report\\_v5.pdf \(cbi.org.uk\)](#) ([Gigabit Take-up Advisory Group - Which? Consumer Insight](#)) also states that alongside supporting the ability to work from home,

people have relied on their broadband connection throughout the pandemic to access medical appointments and other public services, online shopping and entertainment, as well as to stay in touch with family and friends. Research suggests that some of this increased use of home broadband is here to stay, for example, it has been suggested that many businesses are likely to maintain the increase in homeworking.

The Government's 'Project Gigabit Delivery Plan (summer update 2022) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-gigabit-delivery-plan-summer-update-2022>), sets out the Government's ambition of wanting the UK to become a world leader in connectivity, increasing productivity and competitiveness, boosting the economy in the wake of Covid-19, and meeting the future demands of people and businesses. The £5 billion investment in Project Gigabit is the cornerstone for upgrading the UK's broadband infrastructure. It aims to level up the UK, enhancing people's life chances, boosting education and job prospects, connecting disparate communities and future-proofing the UK country for many decades to come.

### **How will the policy help deliver the Council's Best City Ambition?**

The Best City Ambition sets out the Council's overall vision for the future of Leeds focussed on improving outcomes across the 3 Pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and zero carbon. The 'Inclusive Growth' ambition sets out that by 2030 Leeds will have an economy that works for everyone, to tackle poverty and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are distributed fairly across the city, creating opportunities for all.

Policy DC1 also aligns with the Council's inclusive growth ambitions to bring a choice of connectivity types and providers to residents in Leeds. The pandemic has highlighted the essential need for digital infrastructure, with increasing reliance on remote working, remote communication to include home schooling, online shopping and other services. Digital Connectivity in terms of gigabit connection is now seen as essential infrastructure to facilitate the services and facilities which are now an integral part of our lives.

'The Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2018-2023' sets out the 12 'Big Ideas' that act as an action plan to encourage Inclusive Growth in the city. One of these 12 priorities is the creation of Leeds as a digital city and as part of this ambition digital connectivity is recognised as an essential part of the modern economy especially as increasingly people are working in more flexible ways, and as a smart digital city providing one solution to congestion and other challenges. As part of the digital Leeds idea in the 'Inclusive Growth Strategy' a number of objectives are set out. These include making every business a digital business, developing a workforce that can be resilient in the context of technological change, and increasing digital inclusion, so all people can access services, education and training.

In addition, Leeds City Council is committed to the provision of digital connectivity. Executive Board in December 2019 agreed the Full Fibre Network Programme for Leeds to go through a procurement process for a partner to build and deliver full fibre connectivity to ensure the provision of the greatest amount of coverage. The Executive Board report also sets out that the strategic context for this ambition is that encouraging the widespread deployment of digital connectivity has a number of benefits these include improving social inclusion and reducing the number of car journeys and improve air quality making it easier for businesses to explore greater use of remote and home working.

## How is the policy consistent with the NPPF?

Paragraph 114 of the NPPF 'Supporting high quality communications', sets out that 'advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.' Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments.

The National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) (November 2020), also sets out a plan for long-term investment in the UK's infrastructure. The Government is working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit capable coverage by 2025 but will seek to accelerate roll-out further to get as close to 100% as possible. Proposed policy DC1 helps to achieve that target.

The consultation by the Department of Digital, Culture, media and Sports 'New Build Developments: delivering gigabit-capable connections' [New build developments: delivering gigabit-capable connections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-build-developments-delivering-gigabit-capable-connections) outlined the Governments policy proposals to mandate gigabit-capable connections in all new build homes. The consultation opened on 29 October 2018 and closed on 21 December 2018. The government response to the consultation was published on 17 March 2020 and announced proposals to use existing powers in the Building Act 1984 to amend the Building Regulations 2010. The move will mean developers will be legally required to install high-quality digital infrastructure from the outset, make it a priority as part of the build, and ensure broadband companies are on board. It is anticipated that the government will amend building regulations to support gigabit broadband and housing developers to work with network operators. Once the outcome of the consultation is known then there may be implications for this proposed policy. Adopting a digital connectivity policy in the Local Plan allows Leeds to set out its own aspirations and ensure that the level of provision provided is fit for the City and its ambitions.

## Local Policy

The Leeds Core Strategy (amended 2019) forms part of the Local Plan and includes policies related to this topic. Core Strategy Spatial Policy 8 (SP8): 'Economic Development Priorities' provides general support for high quality communications as below;

*SP8(ix) Support the advancement of high quality communications infrastructure to foster sustainable economic growth and to enhance business links subject to landscape, townscape and amenity considerations.*

Policy SP8 (ix) is supportive of high quality communications infrastructure at a general level, however a new single policy which sets out a more detailed requirement for new developments is required to ensure that digital infrastructure is considered, designed and provided sympathetically and early as part of site development.

## How are we going to measure the impact of the policy?

The policy seeks to improve the quality of development by ensuring that new development is fit for our modern lives. The number of new homes and commercial properties that benefit from the policy will be monitored to assess the impact of the policy.



## **How will it be implemented?**

The policy will be implemented by developers as part of site development and the Development Management process. Developers will need to ensure that network providers are engaged early in the process so that digital connectivity forms an integral part of site development. The 'digital connectivity statement' must support planning applications by providing evidence that matters related to digital connectivity have been considered as an integral part of site development and design. The policy sets out that applicants must:

Provide a 'digital connectivity statement' to support planning applications which must provide evidence that issues related to digital connectivity have been considered as an integral part of site development and design. In particular as part of this;

- i. Demonstrate that the proposed development will be supported by infrastructure at commencement (occupation) and that gigabit-ready physical infrastructure necessary for connections (consisting of infrastructure including ducts, chambers and termination points) is provided.
- ii. Provide information in the form of a layout plan of the site showing digital connectivity plans/strategy for each building in the development.
- iii. evidence that the developer has partnered with infrastructure providers to have gigabit capable networks designed into the development as part of site development. It is encouraged that network providers are engaged as early as possible (minimum of two network operators), this is to ensure that end users have as much choice as possible in terms of network providers.

## **Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration**

The policy has a positive impact on equality diversity, cohesion and integration as it improves access to digital connectivity for all. Digital connectivity is a very essential part of our modern lives allowing us greater opportunity for what are now becoming normal patterns in our everyday lives. The policy benefits all for example those working and in employment can work online remotely. Those running commercial businesses need connectivity for the running of businesses. Young people in school and in education need connectivity for homework and for online working.

The Covid 19 pandemic in particular has highlighted the importance of digital connectivity, without it the experience of the pandemic would have been socially isolating, increasing loneliness for many and the economy would have been hit much harder. Older people need the same access to services and opportunities as younger people. Digital poverty is an important consideration, digital connectivity is essential for all and not only those who can afford it, the policy seeks to address this by requiring that all new development has provision benefiting in particular for those on lower incomes. An approach which promotes access to all is supported. There is a disparity between the connection quality of high value and lower value homes, where more expensive homes are more likely to receive full fibre connections.

[Leeds-Inclusive-Growth-Strategy-FINAL.pdf \(leedsgrowthstrategy.co.uk\)](#)

Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy (2018-2023)

[Gigabit Take-up Advisory Group - Which? Consumer Insight](#) Which Consumer Insight- about the Gigabit Take up Advisory Group

[gigatag\\_report\\_v5.pdf \(cbi.org.uk\)](#)

Leeds Gigabit Take-up Advisory Group Final Report (June 2021)

Executive Board Report -13<sup>th</sup> February 2019- Full Fibre Network Programme for

[Full Fibre Network Programme for Leeds](#)

DCMS Consultation outcome; New build developments: delivering gigabit-capable connections

(Updated 22 September 2022)

[New build developments: delivering gigabit-capable connections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-gigabit-delivery-plan-summer-update-2022>

Project Gigabit Delivery Plan - summer update 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The National Infrastructure Plan (2020)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938049/NIS\\_final\\_web\\_single\\_page.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938049/NIS_final_web_single_page.pdf)