



campaigning
by the
Railway Development
Society Limited

Policy Group

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19th March 2013

Dear Ian,

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON “THE STRATEGIC ROAD NETWORK AND THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

Railfuture is pleased to submit this response to the DfT “Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development” consultation. The Railfuture Policy Group has prepared this response with comments from members.

Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation structured in England as twelve regional branches and two national branches for Scotland and Wales. We are Britain’s leading independent rail lobby organisation with a large number of affiliated Rail User Groups. Being funded entirely from membership subscriptions and donations, Railfuture enjoys non-partisan status and has no connections with political parties, trade unions or commercial interests.

Rather than answer the specific questions we have chosen to make general comments and in particular, where we feel rail issues may be involved.

Railfuture would express grave concern that any relaxation of planning regulations that would contribute to growth of car based developments would be detrimental to the environment and would inevitably generate traffic leading to increased road congestion and make realisation of Government carbon reduction targets less likely. Any new development access to which was made easier from the motorway and trunk road network, whether the access complied with the planning system or not, would by its very nature be car orientated and, as such, cannot be considered to be sustainable.

There is an urgent need to undo planning errors of the past that were designed to exploit use of the car and the removal of restrictions on retail space at motorway service areas for example, would not only exacerbate the problem but would damage town centre economies and we do not believe such policies would benefit to the economy as a whole. Railfuture strongly supports the view that motorway service areas should not become destinations in their own right and that the 12-mile minimum spacing between such service centres should be retained.

The **Town Centre First** policy MUST take precedence over any out of town developments. Hotels, conference centres, office developments and any other potential sources of employment should always be located within easy reach of railway stations and local bus services and this inevitably means close to town centres where social inclusion and agglomeration benefits can be more easily achieved as well.

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This is an issue of growing importance, as there is strong evidence that car ownership is now declining for a variety of reasons. Over one third of young people up to the age of 26 do not now hold a driving licence for example, the cost of insurance and fuel being contributory causes but the trend looks set to continue.

Railfuture would also express concern that relaxing control of new developments accessed from motorways could lead to urban sprawl and increased movement of heavy goods vehicles that would be needed to service them.

All things considered, it is difficult to see how these proposals could be described as “sustainable development”.

Yours sincerely,



Norman Bradbury
Railfuture
Head of Policy Group