

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

9th JULY 2024

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – COUNCILLOR PHIL LARRATT

Report Title	Local Transport Plan- Approval for public consultation on draft plan
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Report Author	James Povey, Transport Strategy and Development Manager, james.povey@westnorthants.gov.uk
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List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	12 th June 2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	12 th June 2024
Other Director	Stuart Timmiss	5 th June 2024
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	12 th June 2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft of Local Transport Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update Cabinet on the development of a new Local Transport Plan for West Northamptonshire and agree delegated authority for approval of the final draft plan for public consultation.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP) and this forms part of the Policy Framework. The current plan was adopted by Northamptonshire County

Council in 2012 and is now being replaced to provide a new direction on future transport service delivery and improvements. Work on the new plan commenced a year ago and has been overseen by an LTP Project Board.

- 2.2 The LTP development has been informed by an updated evidence base and policy context review. It has also been guided by an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which has been developed in parallel with the plan, as well as multiple rounds of stakeholder workshops comprising officers, a cross-party selection of members and wider transport stakeholders. We are now seeking approval to consult the public on the draft plan. Following the 12-week consultation the plan will be updated in response to feedback and is expected to be adopted by Full Council in early 2025.
- 2.3 The new LTP is led by a transport vision looking ahead to 2045. The draft plan details our objectives, policies and interventions that will support delivery of this vision. In summary the plan seeks to connect people better, shape healthier places and enable prosperity. The draft plan consulted on will be accompanied by the IIA as well as a carbon assessment to understand the plan's contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and hence our target to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet/Committee:
 - a) Note the work undertaken to develop the new Local Transport Plan, and the content of the draft plan for consultation included in Appendix A.
 - b) Agree for the public consultation on the draft LTP to proceed.
 - c) Agree to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to agree the final draft LTP for public consultation.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- To accord with legislation or the policy of the Council

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to have a Local Transport Plan (LTP) in accordance with the Transport Act 2000. The LTP forms part of the Council's Policy Framework. There is no fixed timeframe for the duration of an LTP, but earlier versions were required on a 5 yearly basis, and this remains the typical life span. Our current LTP was adopted in 2012 by Northamptonshire County Council, although a number of supporting strategies have been adopted more recently covering specific modes or themes. Nevertheless, our LTP is now overdue a significant refresh.
- 5.2 The new LTP will shape the short- and long-term delivery of highway and transport services by the council, and the transport improvements delivered to support growth and deliver our policy objectives. The plan will guide decision making including resource allocation.
- 5.3 Work to develop what will be the first LTP specific to West Northamptonshire commenced last summer. At this time the Department for Transport (DfT) were encouraging local authorities to

have new LTPs developed in 2024 and were due to produce updated LTP guidance which was expected to be accompanied by guidance on the carbon assessment of the plan. This new guidance is yet to be published, but enough of the expected content was trailed by the DfT to provide a good steer on the development of our LTP. This included an emphasis on being vision led and to move away from a predict and provide approach which in the past has led many strategic transport plans to be preoccupied with increasing highway capacity to meet traffic forecasts.

- 5.4 To develop the LTP a project board was established chaired by the Assistant Director for Highways and Transport, with representatives beyond the Highway's service from the Council's Planning, Public Health, Sustainability, Environmental, Regeneration and Economic Development teams. Consultant support has been utilised for the LTP development process and for the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) undertaken in parallel. The IIA encompasses the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulation Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment of the plan, which have informed the development of the plan content.
- 5.5 The foundation of the new LTP has been the development of an up-to-date evidence base including review of the current policy context at a national, regional and local level. This is summarised in the LTP and will be included in full as a separate annex to the plan. At a regional level the LTP has been developed to align with the Transport Strategy for England's Economic Heartland (EEH), but also the studies EEH have undertaken in recent years such as with respect to rail, bus, active travel and connectivity studies.
- 5.6 To guide the development of the plan separate officer, cross party member and wider transport stakeholder groups have been established. To date two rounds of workshops have been undertaken with all three groups, with a third round undertaken with the officer and member groups. We are now seeking to commence a public consultation on the draft Local Transport Plan. Following this the plan will be updated in response to feedback, ahead of its expected adoption by Full Council in early 2025.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 As per the steer from the DfT the new LTP is vision led, with a vision to 2045 reflecting the council's net zero carbon emissions target, as well as other policy goals concerning health, environment, inclusivity, economy and quality of place. Delivery of this vision is led by six objectives grouped under the three themes of:
- Connecting People Better
 - Shaping Healthier Places
 - Mobility Enabling Prosperity

The 16 LTP policy areas and associated short-, medium- and long-term interventions are subsequently presented under these three themes. There then follows more detail on the short-term implementation plan and how this will be funded, and final sections detailing how delivery will be monitored and evaluated, as well as summarising next steps.

6.2 Annex B of the LTP includes a comparison of 2012 policy areas to the new LTP, and most have been consolidated into the updated policy statements where they have been deemed to continue to contribute to our objectives. Key areas of updated policy include:

- Adoption of a Sustainable Transport Hierarchy coupled with a People-Place-Movement Framework which will shape scheme designs and wider decision making.
- A shift in approach to a more integrated and vision-led planning across West Northamptonshire, with this particularly reflected in how we assess the transport impacts of planning applications.
- Addressing the climate challenge by supporting the rapid decarbonisation of all modes, with a particular focus on supporting the transition to electric vehicles such as cars, vans and bicycles.
- Supporting a sustainable future for the freight and logistics sector as both a major local employer and significant contributor to road safety issues and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Work with operators to review coverage, connectivity, reliability and accessibility and of the public transport networks to better serve communities.
- Improve road safety across West Northamptonshire for all road users, with the LTP adopting the principles of a Vision Zero ambition supported by the application of a more preventative safe systems approach.
- A stronger emphasis on the need for local communities to shape transport proposals in their area and be better engaged on the travel choices available.
- Align operations and maintenance practices with the People-Place-Movement Framework, ensuring the transport system and public realm are well maintained.

It should also be noted that within the closing 'Next Steps' section there is a commitment that following the adoption of this new LTP we will update it again by at least 2030.

6.3 With respect to the transport interventions detailed under each of the three theme sections and also for the short term in the Implementation Plan section, notable schemes and interventions include:

- Maximising the benefits from High Speed 2 – Phase 1 and the released capacity on the West Coast Main Line, such as with additional services.
- Assess the case for new railway stations and capacity on the West Coast Main Line.
- Delivery of strategic mobility hubs that bring modes together and support more frictionless transfer with more sustainable options for all or part of journeys.
- Deliver significant improvements in the active travel and public transport networks.
- Bus priority corridor programme in Northampton
- Reduced local bus fares.
- Study to recommend preferred options for Northampton-Brackmills former rail alignment, and scheme progression.
- Northampton Bus and Coach Station Upgrade
- A45 junction upgrades at Queen Eleanor, Brackmills, Great Billing interchanges
- A43 dualling phase 3 from Moulton Bypass to the Holcot/Sywell junction
- Measures to support decarbonisation of the transport network. This would include delivery of the ZEBRA project in Northampton, but then further investment to support electrification of the entire bus network, and delivery of public EV charging as part of our Electric Vehicle Strategy.

- Support to the development of car clubs, community transport and demand responsive transport services.

- 6.4 It should be noted that the LTP has also provided updated positions on a number of other schemes which reflect on further work undertaken on these or their alignment with the LTP objectives. These include proposals for a Northampton Northern Orbital Road and Farthinghoe Bypass. A study is currently underway assessing the need, deliverability and options for the Northampton Northern Orbital and there will be an opportunity post consultation to update our position on this scheme in light of the study findings before we adopt the LTP.
- 6.5 Chapter 8 of the LTP provides a short-term implementation plan up to 2030. This includes a consideration of potential funding sources and references the Local Transport Fund which West Northamptonshire is set to receive £162m from over the seven-year period from 2025/26. Appendix C of the Plan is an Options Assessment Report which includes broad costings for the interventions included in the plan.
- 6.6 In addition to the IIA referred to above, we are also undertaking a carbon impact assessment of our LTP. We have done this in view of the direction the DfT were taking on this when drafting their updated LTP guidance, the DfT's Decarbonising Transport Plan (2021) and our net zero carbon commitments. This assessment will use the Carbon Assessment Playbook Tool which EEH have led the development of, and which the DfT have supported. The assessment will illustrate our baseline transport carbon reduction trajectory and show the contribution our LTP proposals are expected to make. This assessment will be published in time to accompany the public consultation on the draft LTP.
- 6.7 The public consultation is planned to commence during the week of 22 July and will run for 12 weeks. Consultation material and the online survey will be accessible on the council's online consultation portal. A full draft of the LTP will be available for review, but the survey will provide enough background to cater for people who just want to review or comment on some or all of the key content, namely the vision, objectives, interventions and policies.
- 6.8 The consultation will be promoted in the summer edition of the West Northants Life resident's magazine and pre consultation updates will be given in both the WNC Member briefing and Town and Parish Council briefing newsletters. The Council's corporate communications team will communicate the objectives of the consultation prior to the survey launching.
- 6.9 Once the consultation launches, the communications team will promote the opportunity for people to have their say by working with the local media and promoting this on the Council's channels. Notifications will be circulated when the consultation commences to groups and individuals on stakeholder lists held by the transport service and will also be cascaded via the Local Area Partnership's networks. This will be further supported by articles being featured in newsletters issued by local voluntary sector organisations and the Community Safety Team.
- 6.10 Members of the Transport Policy Team will be able to answer questions on the LTP at virtual drop-in sessions to be arranged during the consultation period which people can register to attend. They are also available to attend briefing sessions with stakeholder groups on request, and such sessions have already been arranged with the West Northamptonshire Youth Forum

and Northamptonshire Logistics Forum. Following feedback from EPB and Place Scrutiny Committee the team will be undertaking in person consultation activities at towns within the district during the summer. During the consultation period the responses to date will be reviewed and consideration given to additional paid for social media advertising if certain socio demographic groups are underrepresented.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 Development of the LTP has been assisted with a capability and capacity grant of £179k from the Department for Transport for this purpose. The proposals within the LTP are all subject to funding. The policy areas serve as a guide to decision making and activity and will be mostly delivered within existing budgets or enabled by new income streams. Where they cannot be, and in the case of most schemes, they will require funding from new development and/or Government grant. The LTP is therefore considered not to have any financial implications for the council's base budget.

7.1.2 Financial implications

There are no resources or financial implications arising from the proposals.

7.2 Legal

7.3 The LTP is a core strategic and statutory document for the Council, required under the Transport Act 2000 (as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008). The LTP contains objectives which outline what the strategy will do to address identified problems or areas for improvement. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been developed in parallel. The IIA encompasses the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulation Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment of the plan, which have informed the development of the plan content.

7.4 Risk

7.4.1 The LTP project board have maintained a risk register throughout the development of the draft plan. Key risks that informed the project delivery to date have been to ensure effective commissioning of consultant support with the project and ensuring satisfactory member and stakeholder engagement throughout the process to ensure the LTP enjoys wide support and buy-in. Another risk we have tried to effectively mitigate is to ensure LTP alignment with the emerging Local Plan. A risk which is out of our control is any change in National Government and updates to the transport policy context. Regardless of this we consider the vision, objectives, policy and interventions within the draft LTP to be robust to this. We may update some of the policy context when we finalise the LTP following the public consultation depending on the results of the general election on 4 July, however the rest of the document is unlikely to require significant update due to this.

7.5 Consultation and Communications

7.5.1 A communications plan has been developed for the LTP project which has directed our stakeholder engagement to date and the public consultation. The stakeholder engagement has notably informed the LTP vision, objectives, policies and interventions.

7.6 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.6.1 The draft LTP and our public consultation proposals were considered by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 June. Our consultation plan has been reviewed in light of Committee feedback.

7.7 Climate Impact

7.7.1 The aforementioned Carbon Impact Assessment will provide a robust assessment of the impact of the draft LTP on carbon emissions. The IIA which has been developed alongside the LTP, incorporates the requirement to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment on the plan. This has influenced the LTP objectives, policies and interventions. On this basis the LTP is considered to have a beneficial impact on climate change and the environment. In summary this beneficial impact comes from positive action to increase travel by more sustainable and zero emission modes of transport, improve public realm, increase biodiversity and overall reduce the negative impacts of transport on the environment.

7.8 Community Impact

7.8.1 The IIA will include an Equalities and Poverty Impact Assessment which will provide more detail on how the LTP will impact our communities and protected groups. Overall, the LTP seeks to provide benefit to all local communities. This includes improving accessibility by active and public transport modes, reducing the costs of public transport, reducing injury and death on transport network, improving air quality and reducing pollution from transport. Many of these improvements will support improvements in overall wellbeing, which will also be supported by improved public realm and reduced environmental impact from transport. In supporting connectivity and network reliability the LTP also seeks to support economic growth.

8. Background Papers

8.1 None.