

GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2011

GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY OF LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3

REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP

Introduction

1. In July 2009 the Growth & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee commissioned a working group of its members to take a closer look at the Council's Local Transport Plan₁ (LTP3) as it was being developed. The group, made up of Councillors Nimmo-Smith, Greene, Gibbard, Mathew, Purse and Tanner, supported by officers from Transport and corporate Policy, has met regularly since September 2009.

Purpose

2. Scrutiny has an important role in influencing the shape of LTP3, and the remit of the LTP3 working group has been to scrutinise the Plan as it progresses. As such, the group's focus has been on contributing their comments at all major stages of LTP3's development. Many of the working group's suggestions have been taken into consideration and the outcomes of meetings during the formative stages of the Plan were reported to this Committee in March 2010.
3. Since then, the Working Group has helped guide the subsequent stages of the Plan, notably finalisation of Policies, development and consultation on Scenarios and preparation of the draft Plan for public consultation. It had been intended that it would take a lead role in planning 'roadshows' as part of public consultation and engagement with the Plan, but the changing financial circumstances at the Council meant that these did not take place. Most recently, the Group reviewed the outcomes of the consultation to inform the finalisation of the Plan. This report focuses on these outcomes.

Outcomes of the Consultation Process

4. Consultation with stakeholders and the public on the draft LTP has now finished. Over 600 comments were received from around 250 consultees. The main points raised, and the proposed Council response to them, are outlined in the table below and were discussed by the Group at a meeting last month. The Working Group also requested that a more extensive summary of the main comments on each chapter of the LTP be produced and these are set out in Annex 1.

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Comment	Response
Opposition to Cogges Link Road, Witney	OCC to maintain support as previously agreed, in the context of the significant amount of developer funding available which meets most of the cost of this scheme.
Impact of HGVs on rural roads & villages	Each problem to be considered in terms of its value for money in meeting LTP objectives. Context is countywide HGV routing map which provides principles, with further work needed to agree and deliver priorities.
Park & Ride expansion (comments in favour and against)	OCC to look for opportunities to expand in Oxford and investigate possibilities for remote sites
A40 congestion issues	Still a high priority but withdrawal of funding for Access to Oxford scheme means there is unlikely to be an early solution. Oxford City LDF Core Strategy and the proposed 'Northern Gateway' development site provides a potential for external funding for priority schemes
Cross boundary issues	Text to be added in final draft especially re proposals for development at Reading and Swindon
Need for new river crossing north of Didcot	Scheme would be highly expensive and currently no funding route available so not included for delivery in LTP3, but retained as a possible longer term scheme
Need to deal with Bicester village traffic	Although problems have arisen mainly as a result of the planning process, OCC to continue to work with Bicester Village to develop solutions; some relief may come from other schemes planned for town (e.g. Bicester SW Link Road). Investigating possibility of P&R
Lack of Implementation Programme	See comments below
Support for A34 Lodge Hill south-facing slip roads	No strong technical justification or (development) funding to pay for this scheme. Any decision on this lies with Highways Agency who has historically opposed proposals for additional accesses onto A34.
Support for Grove & Wantage Station	Remains in LTP3 as part of longer term strategy for rail development and transport in Science Vale
Retain Kidlington Station proposal	Has proved difficult to attract required interest from railway industry. Water Eaton would have more services and better connections to Oxford and London. Proposed to retain Kidlington station as a possible longer term scheme, in the context of prioritizing work on the Water Eaton proposal and investigating better connections to it, e.g. from Kidlington.

5. The main points raised by the Working Group on these were:

- Routing of HGVs, including updating the Council's lorry routing map, needed to be more prominent in the Plan, so that this policy area carries greater weight;
- The possibility of a railway station at Kidlington needed to be kept open, in the context of the station at Water Eaton being the Council's priority;
- There is a need to investigate value for money, low cost solutions where possible, e.g. using existing private car parks for Park & Ride, rather than develop new.

Any observations or comments from this Committee on the consultation responses are invited, so that these can be reported to Cabinet next month.

Next Steps

6. The final stage of the project is completing the Plan, for submission to Cabinet for approval on 15th March. The main elements of this work will be:

- (i) Finalising a capital delivery programme, with detailed proposals for years 1 and 2, outline proposals for years 3 to 5 and indicative schemes for beyond 2015/16;
- (ii) Developing a monitoring framework, including setting any targets;
- (iii) Updating the Plan to take account of any changes since the draft Plan was published in October (for example the publication of the Transport White Paper), as well as those arising through the consultation process;
- (iv) Completing the Equality Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment work.

7. On point (i), the Council has committed to key schemes which it is funding or is the lead authority on, including Didcot Station Forecourt, Witney Cogges Link Road and the A40/Downs Road junction. In addition, some of the funding previously identified for developing the "Access to Oxford" scheme has now been reallocated to deliver junction upgrades at the three key ring road junctions on the southern approaches to Oxford: Hinksey Hill Interchange, Kennington Roundabout and Heyford Hill Roundabout. However, the financial position remains very tight and, although the transport capital settlement outlined by central Government before Christmas was slightly better than expected, the significant pressures on capital across the Council as a whole means that capital funding for other, more local transport schemes will remain very limited over the first 5 years of the Plan. Currently less than £1m per annum is identified for these measures, although this will be supported by a programme of schemes to be funded from developer contributions. In addition, we are exploring ways of leveraging in external funding where possible - opportunities include the Regional Growth Fund (where we are progressing bids for East West Rail, Oxford Station/Frideswide Square and Science Vale UK) and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. We are also prioritising how developer funding is used to support LTP3 priorities where it is specifically for these schemes or is flexible enough to be used for those purposes.

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8. Following the consultation, further changes will be made to the Plan, including a greater emphasis in the summary document on setting the overall Oxfordshire context and planning for strategic development.
9. Beyond approval of the Plan by Cabinet (and its proposed adoption by Full Council in April), LTP3 will be a living document that will be reviewed and updated, probably at least annually initially. In addition, because the implementation Plan is not yet fully developed, work on this will need to take place over the next few months. Given this, and the value that the Working Group has brought to the LTP3 development process, it is proposed that the Group continues to meet on a quarterly basis, to help guide this work.

RECOMMENDATION.

10. The Growth & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (a) note the work conducted by the working group over the past year;**
- (b) consider the comments received on the Plan following the consultation process, including adding any further views it may have;**
- (c) agree to the Working group continuing to meet for the next year.**

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