

CABINET – 21 SEPTEMBER 2010

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3: DRAFT PLAN FOR CONSULTATION

Report by Head of Highways & Transport

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to undertake public consultation on the draft third Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2030 (LTP3).
2. Oxfordshire County Council has a statutory requirement to produce a new LTP by April 2011. LTP3 will be a document that will help shape Oxfordshire for the long term, with a 20 year horizon rather than five years as in previous LTPs. This will bring it in line with the Sustainable Community Strategy, 'Oxfordshire 2030', and extend beyond the 2026 planning horizon that the district councils have been working to in developing their Local Development Frameworks and their infrastructure delivery plans, which it will complement. It is therefore a blueprint for all transport development across the county and not just the publicly funded elements as in the previous Plans.
3. The background against which this Plan is being developed is changing fast. It is important for the Plan to reflect the difficult current economic climate whilst not losing sight of the longer term aspirations for Oxfordshire. With uncertainty over the future of the planning process and the availability of funding, it will be important that the County Council has an agreed LTP and the clear policy framework it will provide. Together with the priorities identified in the Local Investment Plan, this will place Oxfordshire in a strong position to facilitate the delivery of development and respond effectively to the planning process through its key role in the agreement of a 'Countywide Strategic Infrastructure Framework'. This will help the County Council and its partners plan and deliver the infrastructure (including priority transport schemes) essential to enable development and secure funding towards this.
4. In September 2009, Cabinet approved the goals and objectives for LTP3. The first of the objectives covers highway maintenance and, in the context of potentially large cuts in capital funding (possibly as much as 40-50%) an approach which seeks to protect the county's highway asset and minimise the need for additional future maintenance liabilities is necessary. This will reduce, and for the early years of the Plan probably virtually eliminate, the ability to deliver new transport improvement schemes through traditional funding routes.

Draft Local Transport Plan

5. Transport issues are important for each of the county's ambitions set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, *Oxfordshire 2030*: congestion can act against economic prosperity; air quality and road safety impact on local communities; traffic is a major local source of greenhouse gases; lack of access to education, jobs and other services can re-enforce local deprivation.
6. This LTP3 needs to play a major role in meeting these overall ambitions. The main aims of this Plan (which are directly linked to the approved objectives) are that by 2030:
 - The county has well designed and maintained transport networks that meet its growing needs;
 - Congestion is reduced from current levels, and major hotspots have been tackled;
 - Road casualties are substantially lower than present numbers;
 - No-one is excluded from taking part in activities through lack of transport;
 - New developments have been integrated into the county without causing significant traffic or environmental problems;
 - The contribution made by transport in the county to increased carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere is reduced;
 - The county's transport networks contribute to an improved environmental quality;
 - Use of public transport is increased both within and between the major towns & Oxford;
 - Walking and cycling levels across the county are increased.
7. There are some significant opportunities (as well as challenges) in developing and managing the growth and infrastructure in Oxfordshire over the next two decades, which this Plan is positioned to meet – these include the development of Science Vale UK, Eco Bicester and the regeneration of Oxford's West End. For this Plan to be successful it will be essential that all of those with a stake in the future of the county work closely together to make Oxfordshire more attractive for existing residents and new businesses, as well as for new development. Local communities and businesses must work with us to find realistic solutions to help respond to the transport related impacts.
8. An Executive Summary of the draft LTP is included at Annex 1 and the draft LTP3 at Annex 2. The draft LTP is a short headline document which can be easily read and understood by the public. Two supporting documents have also been produced. These are a Policy Document which contains more detailed background to the policies included in the draft LTP and an Implementation Plan that gives more detail on the scenarios, local area strategies and the priorities for infrastructure delivery within each area. In order to comply with the legal requirements these two documents, along with Annex 2, should be taken to comprise the county's Local Transport Plan. The Policy Document and Implementation Plan are available in the Members' Resource Centre, Members Lounge, each of the group rooms and at both County Hall and Speedwell House receptions.

9. An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is being developed for LTP3 and the consideration of equality and diversity issues are being built into every stage of the development process.
10. A detailed programme of schemes will be developed and reviewed on an annual basis. Owing to the significant likely reduction in capital funding available for new transport schemes, the shape and extent of the delivery programme will be largely determined in the short term by the availability of developer funding and working with other partners on funding sources.
11. Cabinet approved a set of policies as the basis for further development of the LTP in March 2010, with some amendments approved in July 2010. Cabinet also agreed preferred scenarios for each of the Plan's four settlement types (Oxford, larger towns, smaller towns and rural Oxfordshire, with a separate scenario agreed for Eco Bicester), in July. Through the further development of the Plan the policies have been consolidated, with a significant reduction in number to make them more succinct and in line with the overall approach to the Plan. Relevant policies from the now obsolete South East Plan have also been added. The revised set of policies is included in the draft LTP.
12. At each stage in the development of LTP3 there has been an accompanying stage in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Plan and this has been available to the Cabinet when it has made its previous decisions. A draft Environmental Report has been prepared to accompany the draft Plan which includes a compatibility assessment of both the Plan's policies and the area strategies against the SEA objectives; this is available in the Members' Resource Centre, Members Lounge, each of the group rooms and at both County Hall and Speedwell House receptions. The draft Environmental Report also includes an assessment of the mitigation processes that would be required if the area strategies were pursued. A Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) will also be undertaken.

Next Steps

13. Subject to Cabinet approval, public consultation on the draft Plan will be undertaken from 4 October 2010 to 9 January 2011. The main focus of this will be web-based using the County Council's corporate consultation platform, supported by materials and access points in libraries, making best use of Council resources. It is not intended that the consultation is accompanied by public exhibitions or meetings, although officers can be available to attend existing events if requested. Cabinet approval of the final Plan following this consultation will be sought in March 2011, ahead of seeking Council adoption of the Plan in April 2011.

Financial and Staff Implications

14. A team has been established to oversee the development of LTP3, drawn from within the Highways & Transport Service. In addition staff from across the Council have been contributing to the development of the Plan.

15. Halcrow, using our existing framework contract, have been commissioned to undertake the work required for the SEA and the HRA. Their costs are being met from within existing budgets.
16. There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

Risks

17. There is a risk of raising expectations of how much can be achieved through the LTP in terms of short/medium term capital investment schemes, particularly in the current economic climate. It is highly likely that transport infrastructure investment will be significantly hit by reduced funding levels, reducing the Council's ability to deliver against LTP priorities, at least in the short term. The long-term nature of this Plan will mitigate against this risk.
18. There is a risk associated with current uncertainties with the Local Development Framework process, the loss of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the emerging priorities of the coalition Government. By providing a strong policy framework and aligning closely with the Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan, the approach to LTP3 will help to minimise this risk.
19. Constraints in available funding could put the county's economic prosperity at risk if the ability to provide sufficient investment in existing transport networks and public transport is limited. This could impact on journey time reliability and the choice available for communities to access goods, services and employment.

RECOMMENDATION

20. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the draft Local Transport Plan for consultation, noting the information contained in the draft SEA Environmental Report.**

STEVE HOWELL
Head of Transport

Background papers: Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2030: Policy Document, October 2010
 Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2030: Implementation Plan, October 2010
 Strategic Environmental Assessment, Draft Environmental Report; September 2010, Halcrow Group Limited

Contact Officer: Joanne Fellows, Tel: 01865 815546
 Roger O'Neill, Tel: 01865 815659

September 2010

Executive Summary

Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2030