



HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 7 MARCH 2024

QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 34

Question asked by Ms Rachael Wigginton (Better Biking for Blaby District)

“The progress made by the County Council in prioritising Active Travel is to be commended. We trust this will be reflected in an improved Local Authority Capability Rating when the results of the next assessment by Active Travel England are published. However there are elements of the approach taken in developing LCWIPs that are frustrating community groups and Active Travel campaigners, including:

1. Lack of external Governance forums and involvement of second tier authorities and their active travel officers. They are currently operating independently with limited discussions around more detailed aspects of the LCWIPs.
2. Limited face to face engagement or workshops held with key active travel community groups and stakeholders in order to build a small number of ‘trusted partners’ or ‘critical friends’ to engage with, as other local authorities do.
3. Clarity of vision and strategy e.g. should commuter corridor routes be prioritised over travel to schools and short journeys?
4. Missed opportunities for small schemes and quick wins.

As a result, it is difficult to see how the present approach will deliver the transformational change needed in the way our communities travel for short distances to schools, shops and local transport hubs.

Will the County Council commit to addressing the points above including a review of the approach taken in developing LCWIPs and bring the key small number of stakeholders and partners together to discuss and clarify the points above?”

Reply by the Chairman

The Council recognises the importance of community engagement and involvement as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). The development of those to date has been informed by engagement exercises, including with representatives from relevant local groups and from district councils. A report to the Cabinet in November 2023 outlined the considerable amount of engagement work undertaken to inform the development of the first two LCWIPs – for the Loughborough and the South of Leicester areas - and this approach will

continue as further LCWIPs are developed. Additionally, the Council is working with North West Leicestershire District Council and Blaby District Council to support work that they are undertaking to develop their own (equivalent) LCWIP documents.

In response to requests from, amongst others, Better Biking for Blaby, the Council established an Active Travel Forum to enable interested parties to participate in wider discussions around this agenda; this was welcomed and supported by those who attended its inaugural meeting in September 2023. The next forum is due to take place in spring 2024. The Council would like to ensure the meeting date corresponds with other announcements about schemes and the latest funding position. The Council aims for the forum attendees to be in a position to be informed about wider events and developments at the earliest opportunity. An update has been shared with forum attendees and also on the 'Choose How You Move' website. Following the next forum, the Council intends to work to engage with key active travel community groups and stakeholders building smaller groups to act as critical friends and delivery partners.

In addition, the LCWIP development team has begun engaging with other stakeholders such as Neighbourhood Forum groups and further consultation with stakeholders will take place when the Council is developing specific local schemes.

As schemes progress towards implementation, the Council will be engaging with local active travel groups.

The Council is also now in the process of updating its Local Transport Plan (LTP) which will set out a vision and strategy for movement and travel across the County for the future. Through the LTPs development, the Council will be undertaking a series of consultation exercises as the LTP progresses and develops.

With regard to priorities, each of the LCWIPs published to date set out a prioritised 10-year pipeline programme, and those in future will also do so. This is in accordance with guidance published by the Government for the development of LCWIPs and as informed by evidence and consultations to identify corridors where there are greatest opportunities to achieve uplifts in cycling and walking levels and achieve best value for money, again in accordance with Government requirements.

Question by Mr Bob Bellm (Harborough Transport Action)

““The County Council’s Cycling and Walking Strategy will unlock health benefits and is a key step towards the council’s commitment towards net zero emissions by 2030. In the forward to CAWS it says *“This Strategy will help the council secure vital government funding to support delivery of cycling and walking infrastructure and equally important encourage and enable programmes to help our communities walk and cycle more.”*”

Given the announcement on 26th February 2024 that £238m has been awarded to Leicestershire from the Government’s Local Transport Fund, available over a seven year period from 2025/26, will the County Council prioritise the Active Travel programme - improving our streets so they are safer for children to walk, wheel and

cycle to school with the aim of reducing school run traffic - over building new roads and improving junctions? This money could transform our way of life, making our streets safer and improving the health of our communities.”

Reply by the Chairman

The Council welcomes the Government’s announcement on the Local Transport Fund (LTF) and is now in the process of identifying its way forward. Further guidance from the Department for Transport on the profile of the funding and the criteria on projects and measures that can be used for is awaited although it is anticipated that active travel will be a key component of LTF delivery plans.

In addition, the Council is now in the process of updating its LTP which will incorporate active travel and set a vision and strategy ensuring safe travel by all modes of transport.

Question by Mr John Marriott

“Traffic modelling carried out in connection with the Charnwood Local Plan showed that vehicle delay on the road network in Charnwood in the evening peak would increase from 1593 vehicle hours (vh) to 2880vh by 2037. These figures appeared in Table 3.3 of the Interim Traffic Forecasting Report which was submitted to the Charnwood Local Plan Inquiry where it is referred to as EXAM 4.

The two Charnwood Local Plan development Options that were considered both showed a further increase to around 3300vh. That represents over a doubling of vehicle delay and a substantial increase in vehicle miles travelled from the 2014 baseline reflecting the increased congestion.

Given the above:-

1. Does the County Council consider these forecasts for vehicle delay to more than double to be valid?
2. Do the forecasts include walking, cycling and public transport initiatives?
3. If so, what is their effect on the forecast vehicle delay?
4. What would be the impact in terms of reducing the vehicle delay increase of each of the ten junction projects that have been put forward as part of the transport infrastructure for Charnwood Local Plan both individually & cumulatively?
5. What consideration has there been with regard to reconciling the conflict of altering junctions to increase traffic capacity & making walking, cycling and public transport more attractive?”

Reply by the Chairman

Note: Exam 4 is Schedule of Main Modifications. For the purposes of this response, it has been presumed that it is in fact Evidence Base Document EB/TR4 Charnwood Local Plan Interim Forecasting Report, AECOM, October 2020 (TR4) that is being referred to.

- 1, 2 & 3. The evidence work contained in TR4 was prepared using Leicestershire County Council’s Pan Regional Traffic Modal (as was other Local Plan transport evidence), which has been developed fully in accordance with

prevailing Department for Transport guidance. This work was prepared at an early stage of the Local Plan's preparation and has since been supplanted by later evidence, including as referenced in response to point 4. The purpose of the work encapsulated in TR4 was to assess two possible alternative growth scenarios for the Borough, without any transport mitigation measures (see response to point 4 below) and their comparative forecast transport impacts. In that regard, and accepting that any transport modelling results are only representative of a scenario being modelled and not a definitive portent of the future, the results are valid in terms of informing decision making and no questions have been raised by the Inspectors regarding the transport evidence base.

4. The outcomes of the evidence work to test, inter-alia, walking, cycling and passenger transport measures is encapsulated in Exam 31 Charnwood Local Plan Transport Evidence Options Assessment Report. Whilst the document should be read as a whole to ensure a clear and comprehensive understanding of the work and its context, nevertheless the following extract summarises the sequential approach to the testing of transport mitigation measures and the broad conclusions reached:

Summary of findings

In all cases the total delay and kilometres travelled increased, and speed reduced when comparing the **Do Nothing to the Do Minimum**. This was to be expected as the trip demand increased due to development, because no mitigation was applied.

The **sustainable transport measures** (Scenario 1) had the greatest impact in Loughborough and Shepshed, increasing both bus and rail patronage in the AM and PM peak periods. Public transport measures had less of an impact in more rural areas of Charnwood. This is due to the distance from large service centres and the greater reliance on private car travel. Scenario 1 showed an increase in take-up of active modes across the borough in 2036.

The combined impact of **sustainable transport measures and MRN mitigation** (Scenario 2) almost entirely mitigated the impact of 2026 development, reducing delay, kilometres travelled, and link congestion.

Scenario 3 (**Sustainable transport measures, MRN mitigation, and SRN mitigation**) did not wholly mitigate the impact of 2036 development. There was a residual impact on delays, kilometres travelled, and link congestion in the AM peak, although PM peak was close to being fully mitigated.

The approach to the development of the overall transport mitigation package has also previously been set out, inter-alia, in the County Council's, as the Local Highway Authority, Hearing Statement relating to Matter 8 Issues 1 and 2.

The level of testing undertaken has been proportionate to that required to underpin a Local Plan and the Inspectors have raised no questions about the Plan's evidence base in this regard.

5. Such considerations have not been undertaken at this time, and it would have been disproportionate to do so for the purposes of a Local Plan's evidence base. Such matters will be considered through the ongoing development of the three area transport strategies proposed to underpin the Local Plan's delivery, as set out in Exam 75 Transport Strategies to Enable Growth in the Borough of Charnwood.