

CABINET – 16TH SEPTEMBER 2016**MARKET HARBOROUGH TRANSPORT STUDY****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the findings of a transport study jointly funded by the County Council and Harborough District Council into the current and expected future condition and performance of the transport network in Market Harborough and seeks agreement to undertake an engagement and consultation exercise on the outcomes in order to finalise a preferred transport strategy for the town.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that:
 - a) The emerging outcomes of the recent study work, with particular reference to the key findings and recommendations outlined in paragraphs 31 to 45 of the report be noted;
 - b) A consultation exercise be commenced later in 2016 on the draft Market Harborough Transport strategy identified within the Transport Study;
 - c) A further report be submitted to the Cabinet detailing the outcome of the consultation and engagement exercise, and identifying how the refinement and implementation of the Transport Strategy will be progressed.

Reason for Recommendations

3. It is intended that the transport strategy will not only assist with the implementation of Harborough District Council's new Local Plan, but it will also ensure that the County Council continues to deliver an efficient transport network and develop well planned infrastructure to support economic and population growth ambitions in the town.
4. Government funding for transport projects remains heavily focused on the delivery of economic growth. Government money for local schemes is generally now being awarded via Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which have to demonstrate how investments will support economic growth.
5. The strategy will provide a strong evidence base, bringing together existing known and future anticipated transport issues and providing the enhanced context and justification required to exploit future funding and delivery opportunities. The strategy will be used to inform future bid opportunities, such as the Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF), and will also provide a basis for securing developer contributions.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

6. In order to determine how the transport strategy will be progressed it is proposed to report the outcomes of the consultation to the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet for consideration in the New Year. This will follow on from the anticipated announcement of the next round of Local Growth Funding (LGF) in the Government's 2016 Autumn Statement, enabling officers to provide Members with greater clarity about future funding opportunities.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

7. Supporting the economy of Market Towns and rural Leicestershire is a priority of the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's (LLEP) Strategic Economic Plan, which was considered by the Cabinet in March 2014.
8. The Enabling Growth Action Plan, approved by the Cabinet in March 2015, identifies supporting the development of Market Towns as a priority activity for the County Council. It included specific actions to work with Harborough District Council to plan for the future growth of the town and to undertake a transport study.
9. The Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) Implementation Plan 2015/16, which was approved by the Cabinet on 16 March 2015, included actions to:
 - a) continue to work with districts councils and other parties to plan for and support the future population and economic needs of Leicester and Leicestershire, including to support the development of new Local Plans (and other Development Plan documents), including for the district of Harborough, in accordance with districts' timetables; and
 - b) undertake a study of transport conditions in Market Harborough, with the intention of being able to identify potential options for addressing current and future transport issues.
10. The key findings and recommendations from the study, and the proposal to undertake a consultation exercise has been reported to Harborough District Council Executive on 5 September 2016.

Resource Implications

11. The study work has been jointly funded by the County Council (from Local Transport Plan capital budgets) and Harborough District Council, at a total cost of £190,000. As a result an outline package of transport measures, totalling £14.9m (excluding a potential relief road between the A508 and A6) have been identified.
12. In March 2016 Leicestershire County Council submitted a number of Single Local Growth Fund bids to the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). Amongst these was the £10.5m bid for Market Harborough. In July 2016 the LLEP submitted its Growth Deal 3 Bid to government outlining a range of projects (transport and otherwise) for which it is seeking funding. Whilst Market Harborough was not put forward as part of this bid it remains on the LLEP Pipeline for consideration for other funding.

13. The transport strategy will need to be developed and, where appropriate, amended as a result of the key stakeholder and wider public feedback received during the consultation. To enable this to happen, provision has been made for up to £150,000 of LTP money, which was previously allocated for scheme development/advanced design. This is subject to the Cabinet's approval of the above recommendations.
14. Currently, developer contributions are being sought as match funding for the SLGF bid. This includes a £1.4m contribution from the Strategic Development Area site (SDA) to the north-west of the town. However, at present it is difficult to forecast exactly when these contributions will be triggered and made available.
15. Building on the work already completed the County Council will continue to work closely with Harborough District Council to explore other funding opportunities.
16. Whilst funding may be available in the future from a variety of sources, including developers and/or successful SLGF bids, the County Council currently does not have sufficient funding identified in its budgets to continue to refine the transport strategy beyond March 2017 and to provide SLGF match funding for implementation. The County Council will therefore continue to work closely with Harborough District Council to secure funding to progress this work.
17. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

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PART B

Study Purpose

18. Market Harborough is a thriving market town in the south-east of Leicestershire. However, the town faces significant growth pressures with around 2,200 new dwellings proposed before 2031 (including a total of 1,500 dwellings in a Strategic Development Area (SDA) to the west of the town), in addition to 825 dwelling built over the last five years. In order to ensure that the town's economy is not adversely impacted by traffic growth, Leicestershire County Council (LCC) and Harborough District Council (HDC) have jointly funded a transport study in order to develop a transport strategy that will mitigate the impact of planned future growth in the town and support HDC's new Local Plan. Whilst the study provides useful evidence in respect of traffic conditions in the town, its purpose is not necessarily to indicate whether any further future growth of the town (i.e. beyond that already known) would be acceptable in transport terms.
19. Similar exercises have been carried out in other County towns, notably Hinckley, providing an evidence base to support future funding bids and inform the content of future transportation programmes.
20. Market Harborough has not had a significant traffic study completed since the 1990's, when the A6 bypass was completed and the bypass demonstration project was implemented in the town centre.

Study Overview

21. The study area is shown in the main study report in **Appendix A**, covering the Great Bowden & Arden, Little Bowden, Welland and Logan district wards.
22. The study is aimed at developing an understanding of current and future transport issues in Market Harborough and potential measures required to address them, taking into account all planned and currently known future growth.
23. The study outcomes will feed into Harborough District Council's Local Plan and ensure LCC continues to support and deliver transport measures that are compatible with, and enable, future growth.
24. It will build on work carried out for the development of the District's Core Strategy and the proposed SDA site, to the north-west of the town.
25. Once finalised, the study will set out a range of transport improvements to ensure that the town's transport system continues to function as effectively as is possible and the town can continue to thrive economically, including the impact of known (planned) growth.

Study Progress

26. An important part of this study was the use of robust evidence on which to base recommendations. Traffic surveys were carried out in May 2015 with data collection undertaken at 40 junctions across the town. This evidence has helped to identify:
 - a) how the network is currently being used;
 - b) current transport issues; and
 - c) the most appropriate measures to address these issues.
27. LCC and HDC held workshops in July 2015 to seek key stakeholder views on transport issues in the town centre. This information was used to inform the evidence base and provide a starting point for investigations.
28. The Leicester and Leicestershire Integrated Transport Model (LLITM) has been updated and revalidated for the study area. This has enabled officers to track any forecast change in demand on the network and identify where the greatest levels of stress could occur on the network in the future.
29. Further to this robust evidence base being established, a set of draft recommendations have been put forward. These recommendations include further improvements to encourage walking and cycling, junction improvements to tackle congestion and the possibility of more significant changes to the way that traffic moves around the town including a south-eastern bypass; linking Northampton Road (A508) with Harborough Road (A6).
30. It is important to stress that at this stage these are emerging recommendations and that they do not represent any commitment to further County Council funding.

Study Key Findings

31. The key findings below are based on various sources of information; whilst in some cases they appear to be obvious and well known, the study provides the evidence necessary to support bidding opportunities. They are derived from the study and relate to the current and future condition and performance of the transport network.
32. The detailed study is available in **Appendix C** along with the study appendices.

Findings

33. Traffic volume in the town is forecast to increase by 24% between 2011 (base year for the study) and 2031. Transport modelling work indicates increased queues and travel time on the network as a result.
34. It is evident from transport modelling and site observations that there are a number of junctions within the study area that currently, and in the future perform more poorly than others. Those junctions are:
 - A6 / B6047 (aka McDonalds Roundabout)
 - The Square / St Mary's Road / Coventry Road
 - Northampton Road / Springfield Street

- Northampton Road / Welland Park Road
- Springfield Street / Kettering Road
- St Mary's Road / Kettering Road / Clarence Street
- Rockingham Road / Gores Lane
- A6 / Harborough Road / Dingley Road / A4304
- Sainsbury's store entrance / Springfield Street

35. Traffic modelling work suggests that during the peak traffic periods:
 - a) the greatest proportion of trips on the network are those going from within the study area to outside of the area, or vice versa.
 - b) around a third of the trips using the study area over the peak hours in 2011 were making internal trips.
 - c) 'through' traffic (traffic using the roads in the town to get to/from destinations outside the town) accounts for approximately 10% of trips.
36. Two of the three 'A' and 'B' classified routes (the B6047 and the A4304) within the study area both converge on The Square and therefore much of the traffic in the study area is reliant upon using the very heart of the town centre; in excess of 13,000 vehicles per day.
37. Feedback from local residents and stakeholders suggests that this results in an unwelcome mix of vehicular traffic in an area which local residents and stakeholders feel ought to be primarily dominated by pedestrians.
38. The classification of roads in the study area is not wholly representative of the amount of traffic they currently carry and are forecast to carry in the future.
39. The control and management of HGV and high sided vehicles (typically HGVs) routing through the town is constrained by low underpass height on a number of bridges, often necessitating passage to sites in the south of the town from the north via the town centre.
40. Whilst a localised scheme to reduce sign clutter in The Square was carried out in the town recently, traffic signing across the area lacks a coherent strategy and is in need of review.
41. Infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport is generally quite good. However, there are clear gaps in the existing elements, which would benefit from improving.
42. Both on-street and off-street parking is generally well catered for in the study area. However, it is essential that one coherent parking strategy is developed for the town, incorporating a range of measures/parking controls which take account of the parking requirements of local residents, shoppers, visitors, disabled motorists, local business and workers.
43. All but a small minority of recorded vehicle speeds are generally in line with the posted speed limits and do not cause undue concern for highway safety.
44. Market Harborough consistently records a comparatively low level of road traffic collisions, compared to other similar areas (towns) in the county. Furthermore the

frequency of accidents on the 4 main routes across the town, the A4304 (west), A4304 (east), A508 and B6047, fall below that which might be expected on similar roads nationally.

45. Feedback from early stakeholder workshops suggests that the town centre's public realm is perceived to be in need of updating.

Emerging outline recommendations (The Strategy)

46. The study makes 16 recommendations, which form the basis of the transport strategy. These are broadly based around the following proposals:

- a) encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use
- b) improving key junctions and general traffic flow around the town
- c) possible public realm enhancements
- d) changes to the way that traffic is routed through and around the town.

47. The 16 recommendations are set out in the table below.

Emerging outline recommendations	
Capacity / Congestion Improvements	
R1	Undertake option appraisals for capacity improvements at the following key junctions: (i) A6 / B6047 (aka McDonalds Roundabout) (ii) The Square / St Mary's Road / Coventry Road (iii) Northampton Road / Springfield Street / Welland Park Road (iv) A4304 St Mary's Road / Kettering Road / Clarence Street (v) A4304 Rockingham Road / Gores Lane (vi) A6 / Harborough Road / Dingley Road / A4304 (vii) Sainsbury's store entrance / Springfield Street
Recommendations that result in changes to the network and traffic routing	
R2	Consider the upgrade of Welland Park Road to become the A4304, with a respective downgrading of Coventry Road. Determine the associated engineering, accommodation & complementary works to facilitate this work
R3	Identify opportunities to divert Highways England emergency diversion routes away from the town centre
R4	Determine the viability of increasing underpass height on Rockingham Road Rail Bridge
R5	Consider the principle of providing a relief road between the A508 & A6 to the south-east of the town
Sustainable transport infrastructure / behaviour change initiatives	
R6	Extend and enhance the walking and cycling network
R7	Make localised public transport infrastructure improvements
R8	Identify a suite of tailored behaviour change initiatives to encourage modal shift in travel choice towards active and sustainable travel.

Safety Improvements	
R9	Continue to monitor Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) within the study area. If an RTC occurs within, or adjacent to, a proposed improvement scheme proportionate efforts should be made where appropriate to include complementary measures that could reduce further RTCs.
Traffic Management Improvements	
R10	Devise and implement a new strategy for traffic signing across the study area
R11	Review parking controls in the vicinity of the town centre and train station, with particular regard to the need/benefit of further permit parking zones
R12	Sites with recorded speeds in excess of the Association of Chief Police Officers enforcement threshold should be reviewed
HGV controls	
R13	Identify undesirable routes for HGVs and impose suitable prohibitions. Whilst the promotion of a town wide environmental weight restriction would be preferable, two key routes are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by inappropriate HGV traffic and should be adopted as a minimum: (i) Ashley Road /Kettering Road between the A4304 and the A6 (ii) Bath Street/Western Avenue between the A508 and Farndon Road
R14	Send updated map to 'sat-nav' contacts, advising of HGV controls
Public Realm / Highway Maintenance	
R15	Extend the public realm to encompass the nearby rail and bus terminals. Make general aesthetic upgrades to existing materials and arrangement
R16	In light of the size and scope of the study, incorporate / consider maintenance activities in relation to improvement proposals

Consultations

48. Key stakeholder workshops have been held as part of early evidence gathering.
49. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, it is proposed that a consultation with the public and key stakeholders is undertaken on the draft strategy identified in the study later this year. The consultation exercise will be coordinated with next stage of Harborough District Council's Local Plan consultation period.
50. The intention of the exercise will be to act as a sense-check on the findings; seek views on specific recommendations; and to help to identify any priority order for implementation.
51. The consultation exercise will focus primarily on key stakeholder feedback / workshop sessions, but will be opened up to wider public consultation via a web based consultation feedback page.
52. The outcomes of the consultations will be reported to the Cabinet prior to continuing with any further work to refine and implement the strategy (subject to funding).
53. Where appropriate, individual schemes will continue to be subject to consultations

with local members and the public. Reports will be made available to members, as appropriate.

54. Leicestershire County Council will continue to work closely with Harborough District Council to try to secure funding to progress this work. This is likely to include the refinement and development of business cases for future bids to central government through the LLEP/SLGF or the use of developer contributions.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

55. The equalities and human rights implications are considered in the Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment provided as **Appendix B**. The schemes have been assessed as providing a positive overall impact.

Environmental Impact

56. The emerging transport strategy for Market Harborough is aimed at encouraging sustainable travel. This will help to boost the local economy, reduce congestion and cut carbon emissions.

Background Papers

Third Local Transport Plan (LPT3) (2011-2026)

<http://www.leics.gov.uk/ltp3v1-3.pdf>

LTP3 Implementation Plan (2015-2016)

http://www.leics.gov.uk/ltp3_implementation_plan_2015-16_n0954-3.pdf

Appendices

Appendix A – Study area map

Appendix B – Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA)

Appendix C – Market Harborough (Draft) Transport Strategy (Main Study document) with its appendices:

Appendix A – LLEP Single Local Growth Fund bid application

Appendix B – Supplementary report: Transport Model Local Validation report

Appendix C – Supplementary report: Highways Maintenance

Appendix D – Supplementary report: Walking and Cycling

Appendix E – Supplementary report: Public Transport

Appendix F – Supplementary report: Junction Capacity

Appendix G – Supplementary report: Traffic Signing

Appendix H – Supplementary report: Travel behaviour change

Appendix I – Supplementary report: Southern Relief Road evaluation

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