



**CABINET – 12 DECEMBER 2017**

**MARKET HARBOROUGH TRANSPORT STUDY**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

**PART A**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet on the outcomes of an engagement and consultation exercise based on the Market Harborough Transport Study and to seek approval of the Transport Strategy for Market Harborough, which is attached to this report as Appendix D. The consultation document and a detailed summary of feedback are attached at Appendices A and B, and the updated Transport Study at Appendix C.

**Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that:
  - a) The feedback from the engagement and consultation exercise on the Market Harborough Transport Study be noted;
  - b) The revised recommendations of the Transport Study outlined in paragraphs 31 to 40 of the report be approved;
  - c) The Market Harborough Transport Strategy (Appendix D) be approved ;
  - d) That it be noted that as resources become available, the improvement schemes identified in the Market Harborough Transport Strategy will be developed further to ensure that advantage can be taken of any future funding opportunities.

**Reason for Recommendation**

3. The Market Harborough Transport Strategy will help to support the planned future growth of the town, and place the County Council in a strong position to secure public and private funding for the transport improvements necessary to support growth.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

4. This matter will be considered by the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 December 2017, and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

5. In March 2014, the Cabinet considered the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's (LLEP) Strategic Economic Plan. This prioritises the economy of market towns and rural Leicestershire.
6. In March 2015, the Cabinet approved the Enabling Growth Action Plan which supported the development of market towns as a priority activity for the County Council and included specific actions to work with Harborough District Council to plan for the future growth of Market Harborough and to undertake a transport study.
7. In March 2015, the Cabinet approved the LTP3 Implementation Plan 2015/16 which included a commitment to:
  - a) continue to work with District 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.
8. In September 2016, the Cabinet agreed to consult on the key emerging findings and recommendations from the draft Transport Study developed for Market Harborough.

### **Resource Implications**

9. To date, £390,000 has been spent on the development of the Transport Strategy, which includes an allocation of £310,000 from the County Council (from the Local Transport Plan capital budget) and an £80,000 contribution from Harborough District Council.
10. At present there is no further County Council funding identified for the delivery of the measures identified within the Strategy.
11. The County Council will seek opportunities to secure the necessary funding through the submission of bids to appropriate government funding pots and by working closely with Harborough District Council to secure developer contributions.
12. 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**

### **Background**

13. Market Harborough faces significant growth pressures with around 2,700 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 918 dwellings built over the last six years. It remains a pivotal centre of commerce within the Harborough district, a position that is vital to maintain and enhance.
14. Prior to 2015, no significant traffic study for Market Harborough had been carried out since the 1990's when the A6 bypass was completed and the bypass demonstration project was implemented in the town centre.
15. The Market Harborough Transport Study (the Study) identifies key transport issues and explores potential options to mitigate the impact of planned future growth in the town, supporting Harborough District Council's new Local Plan. It does not necessarily indicate whether any further growth of the town beyond that already planned would be acceptable in transport terms.
16. 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.
17. The recommendations of the Study included improvements to encourage walking and cycling, junction improvements to tackle congestion, and the possibility of more significant changes to traffic movement, including a south-eastern bypass; linking Northampton Road (A508) with Harborough Road (A6), increasing the height of the Rockingham Road rail bridge and the reclassification of Welland Park Road and Coventry Road.

### **Consultation**

18. A consultation exercise based on the Study took place from 16 January to 24 March 2017 with the public and key stakeholders such as neighbouring local authorities, and relevant government agencies.
19. The consultation consisted of a web-based consultation and a public exhibition. Hard copies of the consultation documents were also available. The public exhibition, which took place in January 2017, was attended by more than 600 people. Following this, over 150 responses were received, predominantly via the online questionnaire.
20. In addition to public respondents, responses were received from the following organisations:
  - Market Harborough Civic Society
  - Welland Park Academy
  - Harborough District Council
  - AdamSmile Trust

- Highways England
- Northamptonshire County Council.

21. The key consultation findings and officer responses to the main comments and issues raised are summarised below and detailed in full in Appendix B.

### **General Feedback**

22. The consultation invited feedback on the primary transport issues within Market Harborough. Overall, 73% of respondents agreed that the main transport issues had been identified. The key issues raised are referred to below in paragraphs 23 and 29.
23. The feedback predominately focused on the levels of congestion, the perceived inadequacies of the network to accommodate growth, the inappropriateness of traffic (HGVs) in the town centre, local pinch-points, and major infrastructure constraints such as the Rockingham Road rail bridge, areas which were central to the Study.
24. The consultation also invited feedback on a package of proposed transport recommendations, which were divided into three broad categories based on cost, complexity and potential impact on traffic;
- *Category 1*: improvements to the existing road network, with roads and traffic routing remaining broadly unaltered.
  - *Category 2*: improvements that result in changes to the way traffic would move around the town.
  - *Category 3*: introduction of a southern relief road in addition to Category 1 and 2 measures.
25. Opinion regarding the effectiveness of category 1 measures proposed in isolation, without category 2 or 3 measures, was split 50:50.
26. Opinion with regard to the effectiveness of category 2 solutions proposed in isolation was split 70:30, with the majority concurring with the effectiveness of those measures and recommendations to target the specific transportation issues.
27. Category 3 measures were supported, with public opinion 80:20 in support of the measures in addition to Category 1 and 2 measures.
28. The majority of respondents preferred a combination of all three categories rather than just one particular set of measures in isolation.
29. A number of additional issues and considerations were identified including concerns relating to air quality (AQ), local rat-running, the potential for pedestrianisation of the town centre, the provision of park-and-ride on the periphery of Market Harborough, the Kettering Road rail bridge, and the reintroduction of the right-turn at the A6/Kettering Road junction.

30. Additional investigatory work was carried out in respect of the possibility of creating more headroom at the Rockingham Road rail bridge and provision of a southern relief road. The findings of this work are set out below.

### **Rockingham Road Rail Bridge Structural Assessment**

31. The Study gave consideration to increasing the clearance (height) of the 'low' rail bridge on Rockingham Road, as part of the Network Rail led project of localised rail improvements at Little Bowden and Market Harborough Railway Station.
32. A feasibility report identified that the mandatory standard headroom at the bridge could be achieved but at considerable cost (approximately £3m), difficulty, disruption and risk. The risks pose a significant level of financial uncertainty. As there is little prospect of the work receiving national funding it has not been included in the Transport Strategy.
33. It is important to stress that these findings will not hinder measures to redirect HGVs to more suitable routes to tackle congestion and reduce the volume of traffic through the town centre. The County Council will continue to explore potential solutions to tackling congestion in the town centre.
34. Should alternative funding sources become available in the future, such as developer contributions, bridge alteration may be considered. Moreover, should further opportunities present themselves to link this proposal with a wider project, the County Council would continue to pursue the alteration of the rail bridge.

### **Southern Relief Road (SRR) Preliminary Economic Appraisal**

35. A broad-brush economic appraisal was commissioned to estimate the Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) of the SRR, to give an early indication of its viability. BCR is a key indicator used by Government to assess a transport project's value for money.
36. Early indications suggest the SRR would cost £35-45m. Based on current working assumptions this produces a BCR of 0.28, representing poor value for money. There is little prospect at present that it would attract government funding.
37. The SRR is included in the Transport Strategy as a potential long term aspiration. Should further growth take place in the town, developer contributions may provide a future source of funding, potentially improving the BCR and hence prospects of national funding.

### **Market Harborough Transport Strategy**

38. The Study has been updated as a result of the consultation feedback and forms the basis for the Transport Strategy. The Strategy is based on the four key objectives of;
1. Encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use;
  2. Improving key junctions and general traffic flow around the town;
  3. Public realm enhancements; and
  4. Changes to the way that traffic is routed through and around the town.

39. All 18 recommendations shown below provide the foundation for the Transport Strategy. They have been refined to address the issues identified in the Study work and validated during the consultation and each was evaluated on the basis of key desired transport outcomes.

| <b>Capacity / Congestion Improvements</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| R1   | With the assistance of microsimulation traffic modelling undertake option appraisals for capacity improvements at the following key junctions:<br><br>(i) A6 / B6047 (aka McDonalds Roundabout)<br>(ii) The Square / St Mary's Road / Coventry Road<br>(iii) Northampton Road / Springfield Street / Welland Park Road<br>(iv) A4304 St Mary's Road / Kettering Road / Clarence Street<br>(v) A4304 Rockingham Road / Gores Lane<br>(vi) A6 / Harborough Road / Dingley Road / A4304<br>(vii) Sainsbury's store entrance / Springfield Street |
| R2   | As part of the refinement of the analysis so far undertaken, the Authority will analyse the extent of the problem of blocking at local junctions which could be mitigated by the provision of yellow box markings.  |
| <b>Recommendations that result in changes to the network and traffic routing</b> |   |
| R3   | With the assistance of microsimulation traffic modelling consider the upgrade of Welland Park Road to become the A4304, with a respective downgrading of Coventry Road. Determine the associated engineering, accommodation and complementary works to facilitate this work.  |
| R4   | Consider the principle of providing a relief road between the A508 and A6 to the south-east of the town as a long term aspiration.  |
| <b>Sustainable transport infrastructure / behaviour change initiatives</b>       |   |
| R5   | Extend and enhance the walking and cycling network.   |
| R6   | Make localised public transport infrastructure improvements.  |
| R7   | Identify a suite of tailored behaviour change initiatives to encourage modal shift in travel choice towards active and sustainable travel.  |
| R8   | Investigate walk/ cycle routes connecting Market Harborough and Lubenham, in combination with measures to improve the existing walking and cycling infrastructure.  |
| R9   | Analysis to determine the suitability of additional pedestrian crossings within the Town Centre.  |
| R10  | Enhancement of the supporting infrastructure to encompass the nearby rail and bus terminals thereby increasing the attractiveness of such assets for those on foot or cycle.  |

| <b>Safety Improvements</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| R11   | 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.   |
| <b>Traffic Management Improvements and Emergency Diversion Routes</b> |  |
| R12   | Devise and implement a new strategy for traffic signing across the study area  |
| R13   | 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.  |
| R14   | Sites with recorded speeds in excess of the Association of Chief Police Officers enforcement threshold should be reviewed with a view that, where viable and cost effective, measures will be developed to improve compliance with the stipulated speed limit.   |
| R15   | Identify opportunities to divert Highways England emergency diversion routes away from the town centre.  |
| <b>HGV controls</b>   |  |
| R16   | 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:<br>(i) Ashley Road /Kettering Road between the A4304 and the A6<br>(ii) Bath Street/Western Avenue between the A508 and Farndon Road. |
| R17   | Send updated map to 'sat-nav' contacts, advising of HGV controls following on from recommendation R16.   |
| <b>Highway Maintenance</b>  |  |
| R18   | In light of the size and scope of the study, incorporate / consider maintenance activities in relation to improvement proposals.   |

40. Two issues identified during the consultation will be included within future analysis-
- Where possible, specific consideration of Logan Street/Gardiner Street/Knoll Street, East Street, Nelson Street, Connaught Road, Kettering Road, Walcot Road car parking will be included as part of the traffic management improvements which seek to reduce traffic movements in the town centre; and
  - The micro-simulation analysis will model/test the impact of removing traffic signals, restricting certain traffic movements and turning off sets of signals during off peak periods.



41. It should be noted that the Market Harborough Strategy does not commit the County Council to funding or delivering the measures included in the Strategy. Nevertheless, opportunities will continue to be taken forward where these will assist development work, securing of funding or scheme delivery.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

42. Whilst there is currently no County Council funding source to deliver the desired improvements, the Strategy and the preparatory work that has gone into its development means that the County Council is in a good position to secure funding in the future.
43. On the basis of work already completed, £2m of developer funding has been secured and further such contributions may be forthcoming via planning applications currently being processed. Officers will continue to pursue funding opportunities from other sources, such as the National Productivity Investment Fund. This money will be used to implement the measures based on their necessity and priority.
44. The next steps will be to refine the options and recommendations in the Strategy. This will include using microsimulation traffic modelling which enables detailed lane-by-lane replication of the traffic network.
45. Any development of individual schemes within the Strategy would be the subject of further consultation and engagement, and reports to Members as appropriate.
46. The Strategy is a key supporting transport document for Harborough District Council's new Local Plan, which aims to deliver sustainable development, meet development needs and reflects local aspirations.

### **Relevant Impact Assessments**

#### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

47. The equalities and human rights implications are considered in the Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment provided as Appendix E. The recommendations set out in the Strategy have been assessed as providing an overall positive impact.

#### **Environmental Impact**

48. 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 (LTP3) (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](http://www.leics.gov.uk/ltp3_implementation_plan_2015-16_n0954-3.pdf)

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Consultation Document

Appendix B – Consultation Feedback - Detailed summary of consultation feedback, officer responses and updated recommendations

Appendix C – Market Harborough Transport Study

Appendix D – Market Harborough Transport Strategy

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