

Leicestershire County Council Local Transport Plan 4 Core Document
Strategic Environmental Assessment
Environmental Report – Non-Technical Summary
October 2024



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Non-Technical Summary

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report prepared for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process to assess the environmental effects of Phase 1 of the fourth Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP4). Phase 1 of LTP4 consists of the 'Core Document', containing the Strategic Vision, Core Policies, and Core Themes which will underpin LTP4 and its supporting strategies for the development, operation, and maintenance of new and existing transport systems across Leicestershire. The purpose of the SEA is to provide a high-level review of the environmental effects of the plan.

1.2 Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) Core Document

1.2.1 As required by the Local Transport Act 2008, Leicestershire County Council (LCC) is required to update their Local Transport Plan (LTP) periodically. While previous iterations of the LTP have included Leicester and Leicestershire, with LCC working in collaboration with Leicester City Council, the fourth local transport plan (LTP4) accounts for the LCC administrative boundary only. The area the plan covers includes the seven districts of Blaby, Charnwood, Dalby and Wigston, Harborough, Hinckley and Bosworth, Melton, and North West Leicestershire. LTP4 began development in 2021 when the current iteration was identified as being no longer fit for purpose.

1.2.2 LCC has identified five key themes from which to form the structure and direction of LTP4 which will need to be fully considered while establishing transport solutions across the County. The Core Themes are as follows:

- Enabling Health and Wellbeing
- Protecting the Environment
- Delivering Economic Growth
- Enhancing our Transport Network's Resilience
- Embracing Innovation

1.2.3 During early development, the decision was made for LTP4 to be produced across three phases. Phase 1 of LTP4, the LTP Core Document is the subject of this SEA. Future stages of LTP4 will require further separate assessment as they progress in development.

1.2.4 The LTP4 Core Document identifies those key challenges faced across Leicestershire in relation to transport. It provides an overarching Strategic Vision, Core Themes and Core Policies while outlining how these will be implemented. It

provides the strategic case and narrative to aid the development and implementation of the overall programme.

- 1.2.5 The following Strategic Vision for Transport across Leicestershire has been developed as part of LTP4 Phase 1:

“Delivering a safe and connected transport network which is resilient and well-maintained to support the ambitions and health of our communities, deliver economic prosperity whilst safeguarding our environment”

- 1.2.6 The delivery of this strategic visions will be supporting by the following six Core Policies as outlined below, as assessed in the SEA:

Core Policy 1: Delivering the Vision

“Ensure that all our transport solutions accord with the five core themes to deliver our vision for transport with regard to government policy for the benefit of our communities.”

Core Policy 2: Meeting Demand

“Delivering a safe, accessible, connected and resilient transport network that is well managed and enables communities to access jobs, education and services. The network will also enable efficient movement and delivery of goods to support the local, regional and international markets.”

Core Policy 3: Enabling Travel Choice

“Enabling travel choice in all of our communities that reflects their unique needs which ensures their safety whilst promoting health & wellbeing and protecting the environment.”

Core Policy 4: Delivering Solutions

“Work collaboratively to identify and develop innovative transport related solutions which provide good value for money and enable travel choice, improve our transport network users’ experiences, and benefit the environment and the health and wellbeing of our communities.”

Core Policy 5: Embracing Innovation

“Embrace innovation and collaboration, which enables us to decarbonise transport and adapt to climate change to ensure a resilient transport network, while benefiting the environment and promoting the health and wellbeing of our communities.”

Core Policy 6: Evaluating Progress

“Utilise data, monitoring and evaluation of our transport solutions to enable evidence-based programmes, provide a flexible approach to policy development,

technology, and innovation to address changes and challenges which impact our communities.”

1.3 The SEA Process

- 1.3.1 SEA is a legal requirement set out in The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004¹ (the SEA Regulations). SEA is a systematic process designed to:
- 1.3.2 *‘Provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.’*
- 1.3.3 SEA provides an iterative process which will help LCC with achieving sustainable development through their production of the LTP4 Core Document. The SEA predicts and evaluates the likely environmental impacts of implementing the LTP4 Core Document and its alternative options, so LCC can make informed choices over what policies and development to pursue in their Plan. The SEA also provides recommendations to LCC which, if adopted, would help to avoid or mitigate any likely adverse impacts of options or alternatively would help to enhance the likely positive impacts. The SEA seeks to make a meaningful contribution towards ensuring that the LTP4 Core Document delivers sustainable development through its transport network.
- 1.3.4 The definition of ‘environment’ includes not only the natural environment and built/historic environment, but also effects such as human health and material assets. It also requires a thorough analysis of a plan’s effects including secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects. Mitigation and monitoring measures are recommended to address significant effects.

1.4 Determining the Scope of the SEA

- 1.4.1 To determine the scope of the SEA, a desk-based study was completed to assemble information on the baseline from which the assessment of the LTP4 Core Document would be completed. This first comprised of a review of other plans, programmes, and objectives. This helped to identify key issues, and identify any inconsistencies, constraints or any potential major sources of tension that could hinder the achievement of the objectives of the LTP4 Core Document. Baseline information, along with the identification of environmental issues was then collected in relation to a series of SEA Topics. Seven Topics were refined from those provided within the SEA Regulations in consideration of their relevance to the LTP4 Core Document. These were: Biodiversity, Population and Human Health,

¹ Available online at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/made/data.pdf> [Accessed 08.05.24]

Geology and Soils, the Water Environment, Air Quality, Climate Change, Waste and Material Assets, Cultural Heritage, and Landscape, Townscape, and Visual Amenity.

- 1.4.2 The baseline, in combination with a suite of SEA Objectives developed from the seven Topics, was then used to define the scope of the assessment. This was formally presented in a Scoping Report which also included the assessment methodology. The Scoping Report was published in April 2024 for a five-week consultation period with Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency.

1.5 SEA Objectives

- 1.5.1 From those SEA Topics used to determine the Scope of the SEA, a series of 14 Objectives were developed to measure the performance of the LTP4 Core Document against the existing environmental and social baseline and other relevant plans, programmes, and environmental protection objectives. SEA Objectives in relation to each Topic are as follows:

- 1) To protect and enhance biodiversity
- 2) To protect and enhance human health and wellbeing
- 3) To reduce levels of crime and fear of crime associated with the transport network
- 4) To protect and enhance accessibility and connectivity
- 5) To promote alternative modes of travel, including active travel
- 6) To protect and enhance geodiversity and soil quality
- 7) To protect and enhance the water environment and reduce risk of flooding
- 8) To protect and enhance air quality
- 9) To minimise carbon emissions associated with the transport network
- 10) To ensure resilience to climate change
- 11) To minimise waste generation and support re-use and recycling
- 12) To protect function and usage of material assets
- 13) To conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment
- 14) To protect and enhance landscape, townscape, and visual amenity

- 1.5.2 For each SEA Objective, a series of Guide Questions was developed to assist the assessment.

1.6 Assessment Findings

- 1.6.1 It should be noted that due to the LTP4 Core Document undergoing continued development during the completion of the Environmental Report, there is variation between the Vision and Core Policies assessed, and the latest iterations available. The LTP4 Core Document and Environmental Report will be subject to a consultation period. Following the results of this, those changes made since assessment was completed, along with any further amendments informed by the consultation period, will be subject to reassessment.
- 1.6.2 The performance of the LTP4 Core Document was evaluated against the SEA Objectives using an assessment matrix. Each of the six Core Policies and the Vision was assessed in this way. For each, a score between significant positive, minor positive, neutral, minor negative, significant negative alignment was assigned in relation to how they accorded with each SEA Objective. The certainty of this scoring between low, medium, and high was also provided.
- 1.6.3 For those SEA Topics and associated Objectives that relate to the natural and built environment, the version of the LTP Core Document assessed generally aligned positively. The Vision addressed the safeguarding of the environment while the Core Policies sought to protect and reduce impact while using innovation and collaboration to provide benefit. There could, however, be improvement through reference to supporting enhancement where possible to ensure improved delivery in relation to the SEA Guide Questions and therefore greater improvement in the long term. This recognises the role that the transport network has in helping deliver environmental enhancements as well as avoiding adverse effects.
- 1.6.4 There was also positive alignment to Population and Human Health, the Vision supporting, and Core Policies ensuring safety and promoting health and wellbeing. For further improvement, there could be greater consistency in relation to providing for *all* of Leicestershire's communities and more reference to actively supporting enhancement.
- 1.6.5 There was generally positive alignment to the SEA Objectives in relation to Climate Change through those indirect benefits associated with environmental protection and safeguarding, and direct reference to decarbonisation. There was also indirect benefit through the mention of delivery of a well-maintained, efficient network. This could be further improved by making, explicit reference to climate resilience.
- 1.6.6 The measures proposed in the SA to improve the Core Document wording will now be considered by LCC when finalising the LTP4.

1.7 Consideration of Alternatives

- 1.7.1 The SEA is required to include the consideration of *“any reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme”*. As part of the development of the LTP4 Core Document, a series of alternatives were considered by LCC for the Vision and Core Policies. In each instance, these alternatives were assessed within the Environmental Report alongside the preferred choice, considering how overall finding may have differed had they been adopted instead.
- 1.7.2 Also required is an outline of the reasoning for selection between each alternative and preferred option. This ensures there is transparency in relation to the decision-making process undertaken by LCC during the development of the LTP4 Core Document, providing an audit trail in relation to the selection of those elements being assessed by the SEA. Appraisal findings for each alternative are provided within the Environmental Report, alongside justifications given by LCC as to why each element was either selected or discounted.

1.8 Post Consultation Changes and Assessment Findings

- 1.8.1 A key aspect of the SEA process is consultation. A draft version of the LTP4 Core Document and Environmental Report were subject to a six-week consultation period between 12th August and 23rd September 2024. Following the receipt of feedback, changes were made to the LTP4 Core Document incorporating comments received from respondents and recommendations as a result of the SEA. Sections of the LTP4 Core Document considered to have changed significantly were subject to assessment, with key changes to findings presented within the Environmental Report.
- 1.8.2 For the Vision and Core Policy 1, neutral alignment with the SEA Objective in relation to the promotion of alternative modes of travel has improved to minor positive alignment through reference to the delivery of an ‘integrated’ transport network.
- 1.8.3 Core Policy 2 was similarly amended and despite no change to assigned alignments, additional benefits associated with SEA Objectives in relation to human health and wellbeing, accessibility and connectivity and the promotion of alternative modes of transport were observed.
- 1.8.4 Through reframing Core Policy 3 to ‘actively’ promote health and wellbeing, significant positive alignment in the long term, albeit in most cases indirectly, is now assigned to the four SEA Objectives in relation to the reduction of crime and fear of crime, accessibility and connectivity, the promotion of alternative modes of travel and the protection and enhancement of air quality.

- 1.8.5 An emphasis on the promotion of health and wellbeing of Leicestershire's communities was added to Core Policy 4. As a result, significant positive alignment is now assigned in the long term, albeit indirectly, to the two SEA Objectives in relation to the protection and enhancement of accessibility and connectivity, and the promotion of alternative modes of transport.
- 1.8.6 Core Policy 5 was amended to include the provision for the delivery of travel choice. Though the assigned alignment to SEA Objectives in relation to the protection and enhancement of accessibility and connectivity and the promotion of alternative modes of travel are already assigned significant positive alignment in the long term, changes to the Core Policy further support associated benefits.
- 1.8.7 There were no changes made to Core Policy 6 following the consultation period.

1.9 Monitoring

- 1.9.1 A Monitoring Framework has been developed to negate the risk of the effects of the LTP4 Core Document differing from those anticipated, such as due to unforeseen circumstances. This will enable LCC to make relevant changes to the Core Document should any unexpected negative effects arise or expected positive effects do not occur. Similarly, indicators within the Monitoring Framework may be revised or replaced where they are not informing long term outcomes for the LTP4.
- 1.9.2 It should be noted that the Core Document is the first phase of LTP4 development and relates to the overarching Vision, Core Policies and Core Themes. It is, therefore, recognised that determining the exact impact of implementing these policies at this level will involve a significant amount of uncertainty and therefore successful monitoring will pose challenges. Future phases of LTP4 will include more specific and detailed proposals which will be simpler to monitor. The outline monitoring framework is provided within the Environmental Report.

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