

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 6 DECEMBER 2016

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, TRANSPORT VISION 2050
CONSULTATION, AUTUMN 2016

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

The purpose of this report is:

- To detail the public consultation by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on its draft Transport Vision 2050 and to agree the Council's response to it.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: That Hertfordshire County Council be informed that, in respect of its Transport Vision 2050 consultation, East Herts Council:

(A)	supports the principle of developing the Vision as a rationale to underpin emerging Local Transport Plan 4; and
(B)	submits comments at Essential Reference Paper 'B' to this report as its response in respect of the questions within the consultation and other specific matters which it wishes to raise.

1.0 Background

1.1 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has published its draft Transport Vision 2050 for consultation purposes. The document is available to view at: <http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/your-council/consult/transportconsult/TV2050/>

1.2 The consultation on the draft Vision concludes on Wednesday 14th December 2016.

- 1.3 This report details the main issues raised within the Transport Vision 2050 consultation document, particularly in respect of how the measures contained within it could impact on East Herts.
- 2.0 Report
- 2.1 As detailed above, HCC has published a draft Transport Vision for consultation purposes. The final Vision is intended to underpin a full strategy, which will be achieved through the development of a successor to the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2031 (LTP3). Therefore, at this stage, the Vision does not contain full details of proposed transport measures for the future, but rather sets the scene in terms of headlining the potential strategies an emerging LTP4 could contain.
- 2.2 The subsequent full LTP4 will, when available, set out the County Council's objectives and approach for improving transport in Hertfordshire to 2050 and is expected to be the subject of separate consultation in 2017. However, the current consultation is concerned solely with the Vision.
- 2.3 The background to the development of both the Vision and subsequent LTP revision is that HCC is planning how the transport system should develop over the next 35 years. Instead of focussing on transport issues in isolation, it recognises that the transport network will need to adapt in the context of ensuring that the county is able to continue to prosper as the population and economy grows. In this respect, forecasts have predicted that by 2050 the population of Hertfordshire will have grown by a likely additional 400,000 people to over 1.5m, which will have a huge impact on congestion and journey times, particularly during peak travel periods.
- 2.4 Therefore, HCC is developing a new long-term transport strategy which will set out how this anticipated extra strain on the county's transport networks can be managed. The final strategy will serve to provide a framework to guide future transport planning and investment.
- 2.5 The full LTP4 will be required to highlight problems in the current transport network, identify major transport schemes required and consider a wide range of options to help support future growth. At this stage, proposals contained in the Vision include: enhancing walking and cycling provision; better public transport between towns; technology to better manage traffic on key routes; and

embracing modern technology to facilitate more shared transport schemes, such as lift-share and car clubs. Some additional highway capacity is proposed on the most congested parts of the network, where conditions would otherwise deteriorate due to the forecast population and traffic growth. However, it is recognised that building new road-space can only form an element of the new strategy and that ways of reducing the ever increasing demand for road space must be considered as a key part of an overall solution.

- 2.6 The consultation poses a number of questions, to which HCC is seeking responses. The consultation website suggests that the preferred method of response would be via its online survey. However, many of the consultation questions are of a ‘closed’ nature and, due to their framing, it would be difficult to answer anything other than “yes” in response and, furthermore, related text boxes limit contributions to a maximum of 2,000 characters. In order to bring out relevant nuances in reply and to submit a response less restricted in length, where appropriate, it is therefore proposed that the Council should not submit its formal response via this route, but rather should submit an extended response via email, which is the alternative mechanism offered. This will allow the Council to expand on the issues where a fuller response is appropriate. The suggested complete form of response to be submitted to HCC is therefore included at Appendix ‘A’ to this report, which is to be found at **Essential Reference Paper ‘B’**.
- 2.7 In considering the current consultation document, it should be noted that this is the third stage in the development of the Vision, which has been progressing since 2014. Previous work identified challenges, issues and opportunities for the county at Stage 1, while Stage 2 was concerned with a greater understanding of how transport can support local economic growth and outlined broad strategy options and the interaction of land use with transport planning considerations.
- 2.8 Members will appreciate that the Vision discusses many matters and contains schemes covering various areas which may be read in the consultation document that runs to 35 pages in length; however, this report concentrates on detailing issues where there would be likely implications for East Herts where it is considered appropriate that a specific response should be made to HCC in respect of the consultation. These issues are discussed further below. Where they do not relate to specific questions within the

consultation, they would be included under the general question 15.

- 2.9 In the section detailing the current transport system and likely improvements on page 5, the final paragraph states that “it remains a priority for the county council to seek transport improvements which address traffic congestion on the A1(M) and A10 corridors”; however, apart from recognising growth concentrated on the A10/M11 in Fig 4 (p11) and a study currently being underway for the A10 at Broxbourne (p22), no specific initiatives are identified for the improvements to the A10 corridor as a whole, which actually runs to Royston, at the north of the county. This should be addressed by the Vision, in particular, at Buntingford, where the effects of committed and planned development in the county will impact on the A10 south of the town, and where it would have been expected that measures to alleviate constraints would be identified in this location.
- 2.10 In Fig.3 (p8), while the M25, M1, A602 and A10 are specifically identified as experiencing congestion, there is no reference to the A414 in this regard. As congestion along this route is referred to numerous times later in the document, it is considered that this route should likewise be flagged via the same box and arrow approach.
- 2.11 A question is posed at the foot of page 11: Are there any other challenges and opportunities we should take into account in our future transport strategy? In this respect, it is considered that the draft Vision is currently overly predicated on measures which would benefit the county’s largest conurbations, and enhancing links between them. While these aims are laudable, and would be likely to have high benefits in value for money terms, there is a significant gap in the strategy proposed, which is intended to encompass the county as a whole. This gap concerns areas lying outside of the major conurbations, and in this respect it should be noted that the word ‘rural’ does not appear even once throughout the whole document, despite the county having significant non-urban populations. In the absence of current sustainable options, rural originating trips have no option other than to contribute to the levels of congestion experienced in the larger settlements. Transport deprivation, experienced by those unable to access private motorised transport where public transport options are unavailable, can be particularly acute in rural areas and it seems a gross omission that the Vision for the county’s approach to transport to 2050 should totally ignore the needs of rural

communities. It is therefore considered essential that this should be identified as a challenge and measures included to address potential access solutions, whether by community transport schemes, hub-and-spoke principles, or other initiatives.

- 2.12 In respect of the LTP Vision Principles detailed at Fig.6, it is considered that these cover a range of issues and are broadly in line with promoting a more sustainable transport approach. However, in respect of Cost Effective Delivery & Maintenance, this section majors on cost effectiveness and future maintenance implications but does not currently recognise that historic environments are likely to require a higher quality approach than other less sensitive locations. It is therefore suggested that revised wording should be incorporated to address this issue.
- 2.13 The document then presents a series of policy options and the related questions seek to elicit views on such proposals. In respect of the proposal for the 'Adoption of a 'Transport User Hierarchy' Policy' (PO1), it is considered that the approach would comply with national and local policy to prioritise sustainable transport modes and should thus be supported. However, in lessening the priority of commuter traffic, HCC should be mindful that alternative sustainable travel options must be in place in order to achieve modal shift, in particular for rural commuters where there are currently significantly less opportunities to take advantage of such modes.
- 2.14 In respect of 'Delivering a Step Change in Cycling in Larger Urban Areas' (PO2), it is considered that the approach should be supported, subject to solutions being delivered that are appropriate to their environment. However, as no threshold has been provided, it is unclear which settlements would be defined as 'larger urban areas' in such proposals. This position should be clarified with wording that would enable larger market towns to be included for consideration along with major settlements.
- 2.15 It is considered that proposals that enable 'Greater Facilitation and Support for Shared Mobility (car clubs, lift share, bike share)' (PO3) should be strongly supported to aid a reduction in motorised journeys.
- 2.16 In relation to proposals for 'Enhanced Public Transport Connectivity Between Towns, Through Bus Priority Measures' (PO4), the principle of this approach is supported, subject to any potential congestion dis-benefits brought about by reallocation of

road space not causing significant detrimental displacement impact elsewhere on the network. Furthermore, it is considered that the Possible Priority Bus Network, illustrated at Fig. 7, should be extended to cover routes along the A10/A120 from Hertford to Bishop's Stortford/Stansted Airport.

- 2.17 'A Priority Traffic Management Network' (PO5) is suggested as a mechanism to improved management of the flow of traffic through the county, making HCC better equipped to respond to unplanned events or incidents, thus improving journey reliability. This approach should be supported; however, the accompanying Fig. 8 which illustrates a possible Traffic Management Network, should be amended to show where Highways England Diversion Routes overlap the Primary Distributor Network, as currently, for example, it would appear that the A414 is not utilised by Highways England as a diversionary route when, in actuality, it is.
- 2.18 'Growth and Transport Plans' (PO6) are proposed as a mechanism for delivering LTP objectives, covering areas of the county, rather than specific towns (i.e. the previous approach of Urban Transport Plans (UTPs)). These are likely to cover groups of towns connected by transport corridors. While this approach is seen as sensible in delivering coherent transport solutions for interconnected areas, rather than delivering specific town-based schemes, there is no recognition through this approach of what measures would be introduced to enhance rural connectivity. In much the same way as UTPs did little or nothing for areas outside of urban settlements, it is feared that the new approach could likewise leave rural areas unprovided for and that a suitable mechanism should be introduced to ensure rural connectivity and sustainable transport provision is improved.
- 2.19 The section on Major schemes discusses a variety of proposed measures of significance throughout the county. This outlines the process by which these were selected and proposes their implementation in the short, medium and long term. Comments on the proposed schemes are discussed further below; however, while the document relates that further schemes will be identified over coming years to address other areas and issues facing Hertfordshire, it is considered unfortunate that a bypass for Standon/Puckeridge is not currently included and it is suggested this should be added as an additional scheme to be linked as a continuation of the Little Hadham bypass, which is currently at an advanced stage of preparation (and shown on Fig. 2). Indeed, the two schemes, which have long been supported by both HCC and

East Herts Councils, were originally proposed for concurrent delivery, and were split largely to increase funding potential. As the Vision considers schemes to 2050 and there will be a significant rise in traffic along this route caused by development proposals in the county and elsewhere in addition to Stansted Airport proposing an almost doubling of current passenger levels by the mid-2020's to up to 45 mppa, this proposal should be included to ensure that the A120 has long-term resilience to cope with these impacts. Consultation has already been undertaken on the principle of such provision and has benefitted from long-held support of both HCC and East Herts Council.

2.20 In terms of the currently proposed schemes, Fig. 10 provides a map which sets the context of the Major Schemes Options across Hertfordshire. It is evident from this illustration that schemes are 'west-heavy', which corresponds with the location of the county's largest settlements. The reasoning behind schemes being focussed on the larger settlements and the east-west corridor in the centre of the county are given as including:

- scale of future growth planned in and around these locations;
- size and proximity to each other of the settlements and their potential to encourage more sustainable transport use; and
- scale of transport challenges faced in these locations and their strategic and economic importance to the county.

2.21 Scheme MS1: Sustainable Travel Towns, is intended for implementation in Hemel Hempstead, Watford, Stevenage and the City of St. Albans. This initiative would largely involve 'soft' measures intended to provide the right conditions to reduce the need to travel overall and increase the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes. Schemes would be individually tailored to each town and would be, *inter alia*, intended to encourage modal shift to help reduce congestion. While it is considered appropriate that such measures feature within the overall Vision, flexibility should be included as part of the proposals to allow for potential roll-out to further suitable settlements in due course e.g. Bishop's Stortford. N.B. While Hertford is not included within Scheme MS1, Scheme MS3 would provide for similar implementation, to be jointly linked to the provision of a bypass scheme.

2.22 Scheme MS2: Access Improvements to East Hemel Hempstead, proposes a major upgrade of the A414 junction with Green Lane, which will improve connectivity, access to employment and

journey time reliability by alleviating forecast peak hour congestion and adding capacity to cater for forecast traffic generation by Maylands and East Hemel Hempstead growth. This, however, will only provide limited capacity for further growth beyond 2031, after which other junction upgrades (including M1 junction 8) will be required. Although this scheme would not directly affect East Herts, it is considered appropriate that it be supported as a way of mitigating impacts in the area and as part of A414 corridor improvements.

- 2.23 Scheme MS3: Hertford Bypass and Sustainable Travel Town, proposes the construction of a new dual carriageway bypass of Hertford which would link a junction on the A414 west of the town with the A10 to the east. At the present time no specific route has been identified and options to both the north and south would be investigated.
- 2.24 Currently, the A414 through Hertford experiences considerable peak time congestion, which is the cause of air quality problems in the area and a denigration of the local environment. A large proportion of the traffic contributing to the congestion in peak periods is caused by vehicles which are passing through the area and not using Hertford as a specific destination (in the AM peak around 40% of westbound and 36% of eastbound traffic). This situation is compounded when incidents occur on the M25 which result in rerouting of traffic via the A414 – known colloquially as ‘M25 lite’. The potential for online alleviation schemes (e.g. junction improvements, lane widening, etc along the route of the existing carriageway) has been fully investigated and no scheme/s have been identified that would successfully address either existing conditions or forecast levels of traffic growth.
- 2.25 Therefore it is proposed that a bypass be constructed to address all of the above issues, with specific benefits identified including:
- Alleviation of peak hour traffic congestion, with moderate improvements to journey times (5-10 minutes compared to the route through Hertford) and journey time reliability;
 - Provision of additional capacity to cater for forecast growth in travel demand;
 - More shorter trips made on foot, by bicycle or by public transport, with associated benefits to public health through increased levels of physical activity;

- Significant traffic removed from the A414 through Hertford, a reduction in private vehicle use for shorter trips with sustainable mode improvements, and improvements in local air quality; and
- Enhanced public realm in the town.

2.26 It is anticipated that a scheme could be implemented between 2021-2031, at a cost of between £155m-£175m. Following provision of the bypass, significant opportunities would result for reassigning a lane of carriageway space in each direction to sustainable transport modes. The reduction in traffic on the existing route would also open up opportunities for improvements to the public realm generally, and particularly in the centre of town (e.g. initiatives contained within the Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy). While the principle of this scheme should be strongly supported to enable growth identified in the emerging District Plan to occur, as a route has yet to be identified support for detailed proposals should be deferred until such time as these are known and have been fully considered. In this respect, every effort should be made to ensure that the environmental cost of its provision is minimised, irrespective of whether this would result in a more expensive scheme.

2.27 Scheme MS4: A414 Corridor Junction Capacity Upgrades is intended to address junctions along the A414 where there are currently no planned improvements, but which traffic modelling (COMET) indicates major improvements will be required in the next 15 years. This scheme, covering the route from Hemel Hempstead in the west to Harlow in the east, is considered to be of particular importance given that of the 80,000 new dwellings which the draft Vision states are being planned for Hertfordshire to 2031, some 50,000 are expected to be provided in locations within five miles of the A414 corridor. Additional employment provision along the corridor will also combine with the residential element to impact on the A414.

2.28 While the implementation of this scheme should be strongly supported to facilitate planned growth, it is considered that 'Fig 11: A414 future corridor improvements' should be amended to illustrate both the need for junction improvements at the Amwell roundabout and the likely need for a northern link road from the A414 to the yet to be constructed new junction 7a on the M11 to the north of Harlow. The potential for this additional link has featured in Essex County Council's consultations on the new junction and the need for this would be likely to be generated by the construction of up to 10,000 new homes in the Gilston area

(3,000 by 2033 and the remainder beyond that timeframe). While much of the link road would lie outside of Hertfordshire, part of it would originate in the county and it is important that the document should recognise the effects of existing and planned connections beyond the immediate borders, in this location and elsewhere.

- 2.29 MS5: Hertfordshire Bus Rapid Transit Network proposes the introduction of a scheme to address some of the east-west connectivity deficiencies in the county via a bus rapid transit network of two lines. One route would link Hemel Hempstead to Hertford, serving St Albans, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, while the other would connect Watford town centre with St Albans.
- 2.30 Comprising sections of dedicated segregated bus lane augmented by bus priority measures elsewhere, the scheme would result in improved journey times and greater reliability of service for users. Specific benefits identified include:
- Improved east-west connectivity between towns;
 - Improved connectivity between Watford town centre and St Albans city centre and St Albans stations;
 - A new connection between five rail lines (West Coast Main Line at Watford Junction and Hemel Hempstead, Midland Main Line at St Albans City, East Coast Main Line including the Hertford Loop at Welwyn Hatfield and Hertford North, and West Anglia Mainline at Hertford East) meaning users can interchange without the need to travel into central London;
 - Reduction in private car use for trips within towns and between destinations on these corridors; and
 - Improved local air quality through reductions in private car use.
- 2.31 While the implementation of this scheme should be strongly supported, it is considered that, as proposed, it does not extend far enough in respect of provision in the east of the county. Given the projected level of growth in both Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport and current paucity of sustainable east-west transport provision, it is considered that the scheme from Hemel Hempstead should be extended beyond Hertford to link via the A10 and A120 to these locations.
- 2.32 Furthermore, although identified within Policy Option 4 'Enhanced Public Transport Connectivity Between Towns, Through Bus Priority Measures' and shown in Fig. 7: Possible Priority Bus Network, it is considered that given the substantial growth expected to occur in the Gilston Area (some 10,000 dwellings)

and existing and anticipated stresses on the A414, the Bus Rapid Transit Network should also be extended to include this route between Hertford and Gilston Area/Harlow.

- 2.33 Delivering the Strategy and Achieving Modal Shift – this final section of the draft Vision discusses potential measures to limit traffic growth and promoting sustainable transport in the context of the provision of policies to restrain car usage while enhancing sustainable modes. Congestion charging and workplace parking levies are cited as city-based examples of where such initiatives have been applied. In this respect, it is considered that better promoted and supported countywide car sharing schemes; car-clubs; workplace charging for non-car-share/eco vehicle parking; focus on behavioural change projects, etc are some of the types of initiatives which could be appropriate for policy development.
- 2.34 However, in this context, it is important to distinguish between environments – the cities quoted already have in place significant sustainable transport options as an alternative to the car to allow for user choice. However, Hertfordshire is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern, in which its easterly side, in particular, has a substantial rural population and small market towns currently unable to offer significant sustainable transport options as alternatives to car usage. Penalising access to locations for those with no practicable choice is not considered to be an equitable approach. Therefore, while it is recognised that some of the Hertfordshire’s largest towns may be capable of supporting ‘carrot’ initiatives that would enable ‘stick’ measures to be introduced, this cannot be seen as a ‘one size fits all’ approach across the county. A flexible approach should therefore be adopted in respect of any measures proposed to be introduced.
- 2.35 Furthermore, the importance of achieving sustainable transport solutions in new developments should be recognised in the Vision and wording included to reflect the position that HCC has in the planning process in respect of both supporting such measures and seeking their early implementation through on and/or off site delivery, as appropriate.

Other Issues

- 2.36 The above sections have concentrated on the contents of the draft Vision which is currently the subject of consultation. However, it is important to note that this consultation follows on from a previous consultation on the emerging Vision, held between September and 26th November 2015. This earlier

consultation was the subject of a Non-Key Report (15/20), and led to a response from East Herts Council on a number of matters contained in the document at that time. While some of these issues have now been accommodated in the current consultation, it is considered that the following key elements which were previously raised have not been successfully addressed; namely, that East Herts Council:

- (B) Considers that current proposals contained in the draft Hertfordshire 2050 Transport Vision would not result in an effective transport strategy for East Herts to support the necessary economic growth and housing development required in the A10/M11 corridor. Without the inclusion of appropriate initiatives to serve the eastern side of the county and which responds to its dispersed settlement pattern, transport will remain a significant constraint and serve as an impediment to growth. This issue should therefore be addressed in the Vision as a matter of priority;
- (F) Considers that, as Hertfordshire County Council has already publicly announced that it is due to commence investigative works into a bypass for Standon and Puckeridge as a follow on to the A120 Little Hadham Bypass to link with the A10, there is a further omission in the document of the inclusion of this major offline improvement within any of the four package schemes intended to be delivered in the period to 2031 or, indeed, beyond;
- (G) Considers that, as Hertfordshire County Council's currently proposed scheme for the A602 between Ware and Stevenage is intended to provide short-term improvements, the Vision should seek to address the outstanding major issues along this corridor, including the need to mitigate the highway conditions at Hooks Cross;
- (H) Considers that the need for mitigation measures on the A10 to facilitate growth at Buntingford should feature as part of future highway measures within the Vision;
- (I) Considers that greater consideration needs to be given to the servicing of rural communities by public transport as a strategic policy investment choice (potentially around hub and spoke principles) within the strategy so as to offer sustainable journey choices and reduce the amount of

journeys to urban areas in the county from their hinterland, especially at peak times;

- (K) Considers that the Vision should pay due recognition to the existing and potential future impact that Stansted Airport has on Hertfordshire's transport infrastructure and should plan to accommodate for significantly increased related traffic movements as part of the overall strategy.
- (L) Urges Hertfordshire County Council to consider more creative solutions in the longer term to reduce private vehicular movements and that such considerations could potentially include such initiatives as a north-south rail or guided bus link for settlements in the northeast of the county (e.g. Buntingford, Standon/Puckeridge etc) that could link to previously used infrastructure e.g. by partly utilising previous track-beds along lines discontinued by the Beeching cuts, etc.

2.37 It is therefore considered appropriate that HCC be reminded of these response areas in order to ensure that it is aware that East Herts Council still considers it important that they be addressed in the final version of the document.

2.38 In respect of criterion (K) regarding Stansted Airport, it is considered appropriate that an expanded response is made; for despite recognising airport expansion as a challenge in Fig.4, nothing further is said in the document about this important matter. While Stansted Airport is located outside Hertfordshire, just beyond its borders, it is a major employer for many Hertfordshire residents and connections generate growth for both national and local businesses in the area as well as providing access to air travel for the county's population. The airport is growing at a rapid pace (with 5.7m more passengers per annum (mppa) at the end of March 2016, than when MAG acquired the airport in early 2013, an increase of 32.6%) and it is likely that 25 mppa will be reached in 2017. MAG has stated aspirations to grow beyond the current permission for 35 mppa towards 45 mppa by the early 2030s, utilising the existing single runway. Even with Stansted's excellent credentials in terms of the utilisation of public transport to access the airport, with over 50% of passengers currently travelling by such means, the level of passenger growth proposed is certain to have a considerable impact on the county's road network in coming decades.

2.39 The Vision should therefore explicitly recognise the importance of both of the county's neighbouring airports to help capitalise on their economic potential for Hertfordshire residents and businesses. In terms of Stansted the Vision should specifically help to promote sustainable surface access to this location. Ideally, the Hertfordshire Bus Rapid Transit Network should be extended to include Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport. At the very least, the Vision should contain measures to improve surface access to Stansted through the county's road network generally, and, specifically, by improvements on the A120, including the bypassing of Standon/Puckeridge, which is a scheme that HCC has already committed to investigating and consultation has already been undertaken earlier this year.

2.40 A typographical error has also been identified which it is recommended also be communicated as part of the Council's response.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Transport Vision 2050 Consultation, Autumn 2016.

Non-Key Decision (15/20) 'Hertfordshire County Council: Hertfordshire 2050 Transport Vision Consultation, September 2015'

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s31612/HCC%20Transport%20Vision%202050%20Consultation%20-%20decision.pdf>

Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Strategy

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/HertfordTCUDS>

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