

Decision maker:	Cabinet member Infrastructure and transport
Decision date:	Friday, 24 January 2020
Title of report:	Hereford Transport & South Wye Packages review
Report by:	Head of transport and access services

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards); with particular reference to Stoney Street, Wormside, Belmont Rural, Credenhill, Kings Acre, Queenswood, Holmer and Whitecross

Purpose and summary

This report seeks cabinet member approval to confirm the scope, outline programme and timescale for undertaking a review of Hereford and South Wye Transport packages following the decision made by cabinet 22 October 2019.

The review is essential to ensure that the council's decision making is fully informed by the latest information and best practice. We need to ensure any major scheme has a positive impact on the county to address travel issues, such as congestion and air quality, as these schemes have a permanent impact upon the environment which last for generations to come.

The current Local Transport Plan (2016-2031) describes the vision: A transport network that supports growth enabling the provision of new jobs and houses, whilst providing the conditions for safe and active travel, which reduces congestion and increases accessibility by less polluting and healthier forms of transport than the private car. The Cabinet is keen to understand how alternative options address emerging local and national policy such as those resulting from the declared climate emergency, considering new solutions and approaches which have developed over the last twenty years and which are now being implemented in other urban areas.

It is incumbent on the council to ensure that projects are consistent with the council's declaration of a climate emergency and will contribute to reducing the carbon output of the county whilst also addressing the transport problems of the city and supporting economic growth. Whilst the review is being carried out the council will continue to deliver agreed improvements to encourage a shift of travel mode and reduce congestion.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the review scope and outline programme for the Hereford Transport and South Wye Transport Package as set out in paragraphs 10-21 is confirmed, for completion by 31 July 2020; and**
- (b) the Acting Assistant Director for Highways and Transport be authorised to take all operational decisions to complete the review within a budget of £451,000 as set out in paragraphs 27 and 28.**

Alternative options

1. Not to conduct a review of the transport packages and wider transport strategy. This is not recommended as it will be contrary to the decision of 22 October 2019 taken by the cabinet member to progress a review and would not enable an assessment of whether the major road schemes and wider strategy are consistent with emerging policies regarding climate change.
2. Limit the review to a peer assessment of the current transport packages. This is not recommended as it will not identify if there are any viable alternative transport options for addressing the city's current and future transport issues. Such a limited approach would risk the council adopting a sub-optimal future strategy.
3. Adopt a different approach to undertaking the peer assessment and review of overall transport strategy. The recommended scope of the review incorporates both established major transport scheme development process as set out by the Department for Transport and a best practice approach to strategy development. Whilst there are different approaches which could be undertaken to review the current transport packages and overall transport strategy the approach set out in this report is recommended as it will help demonstrate transparency, objectivity and that it is evidence led.

Key considerations

4. The cabinet member for infrastructure and transport determined to pause and review the new road elements of Hereford and South Wye Transport packages in his decision of 22 October 2019 so that they could be reviewed to determine next steps.
5. Recommendation 'E' of that decision authorised the acting director for economy and place to scope the review work for both road schemes which would inform a further decision in the calendar year (2019). The decision required that the review:
 - Included a detailed technical review of the evidence base for the Hereford and South Wye transport packages (recommendations (a) and (b) and appendices 3 and 4);

- Included consultation with parish councils, businesses and members of the public (recommendation (c)); and
 - enabled other options that could deliver transport and growth objectives to be considered noting that the two transport packages may not be compatible with climate change challenge, carbon reduction and emerging policy (outlined at paragraph 5 and 34).
6. The approach and scope of the review set out in this report has been developed over the past four months with professional transport planning expertise and informed by discussion with the cabinet member and the wider cabinet to ensure a robust approach to the review that captures the main aspirations of the administration/executive. This has been undertaken using in house resource and has not required the capital funding identified in the October 2019 report. Detailed work has been undertaken to develop the review programme, establish cost estimates and the approach to procuring this work (further details are set out in para 10-21 below). In summary, the review will comprise 3 key elements:
- a. **Element 1:** A peer assessment (undertaken by an independent technical consultant) of the two transport packages (HTP & SWTP) will consider the technical evidence relating to the following key stages of their development and progression comprising:
 - i. Option development and analysis;
 - ii. Analysis of impacts;
 - iii. Evidence informing the business case; and
 - iv. Decision making.
 - b. **Element 2:** An assessment of the overall transport strategy for Hereford and consideration of alternative options in the context of the declared climate emergency. This assessment will consider the current and future transport issues, refresh transport strategy objectives, appraisal and development of alternative transport options for Hereford. It is separate from a review of the local plan core strategy or local transport plan but findings could inform any such review. This would be the subject of a separate decision report. Alternative options will include:
 - i. An eastern link / river crossing
 - ii. Electric bus fleet
 - iii. Improved school bus services
 - iv. Improved cycle and pedestrian provision including safer routes to school
 - v. Traffic signal removal and emergency recovery on A49
 - vi. Traffic signal removal
 - vii. Demand management and behavioural change
 - viii. Ultra-light rail system
 - ix. Current major road schemes
 - c. **Element 3:** Public and stakeholder engagement and consultation to inform the assessment of transport strategy and alternative options.
7. Improving transport in Hereford is important for the future of the city and it is important that this review is carried out at pace. It is anticipated that the review will be completed

by 31 July 2020 at which stage the cabinet will consider the results and determine next steps and measures to be taken forward to address the city's transport problems.

8. The review will be led by the council's head of transportation and access and each element will require the commissioning of independent technical consultancy services.
9. The cabinet member decision of 22 October 2019 also confirmed that work would continue on active travel measures for the SWTP and HTP alongside the review which is the subject of this report. Specific elements of the HTP were also given approval to be progressed whilst the review is undertaken as it was considered reasonable to complete and publish the 2019 consultation report, complete various studies which were close to completion and continuation of traffic modelling work.

Element 1: Scope of Peer Assessment of the HTP and SWTP

10. The HTP and SWTP have been developed as major transport projects using the government's prescribed process (webtag – Web based Transport Analysis Guidance) for major schemes enabling the development of a major scheme business case. The key stages of this process are set out below and will provide the basis for the peer assessment
 - Option development and analysis
 - Analysis of impacts
 - Evidence informing the business case; and
 - Decision making
11. This approach will provide a clear and evidence based assessment of how each project has developed to determine that decisions at key stages were based on sound evidence and the preferred package options which recommended inclusion of the major road schemes of the southern link road and western bypass are justified and robust.
12. A sensitivity test will be included to consider how significant emerging policies, particularly in response to the declared climate emergency, might inform any of the key stages identified in the process above and if such considerations might result in different outcome/preferred option if the appraisal process were to be undertaken now. The peer assessment will be required to clarify what additional considerations have been taken into account, the weight they have been accorded and evidence for this approach.
13. This peer assessment will take place at the same time as the assessment of the overall transport strategy for Hereford and alternative options and will conclude such that the results of the two parts of the review can be jointly considered.
14. It is proposed that the peer assessment project will have the following characteristics:
 - Be transparent and objective
 - focus on the key decision making stages to assess the consistency between the evidence base, decision reports and recommendations and confirmed decisions

Element 2: Scope of transport strategy assessment and consideration of alternative options

15. Our existing transport strategy says: A transport network that supports growth enabling the provision of new jobs and houses, whilst providing the conditions for safe and active travel, which reduces congestion and increases accessibility by less polluting and healthier forms of transport than the private car. The Cabinet is keen to understand how the current approaches address the intended objectives, and how a refreshed transport strategy might inform alternative options that address emerging issues such as those resulting from the declared climate emergency, considering new solutions and approaches which have developed over the last twenty years which are now being implemented in other urban areas.
16. It is proposed that a review of the current adopted strategy should start from first principles and follow established process for strategy development. This would enable a clearer comparison with the adopted strategy and proposed interventions, provide an up to date strategy which responds to new and emerging issues and highlight approaches to addressing transport demands which may not have been available previously or are now better understood and tested.
17. A key component of this approach is to incorporate new public and stakeholder engagement and consultation so that the problem identification, objectives, option development and identification of preferred options are tested in respect of public acceptability to provide confidence in any final recommendations. This is referred to as Element 3 later in the report. Opportunities to compare current proposals against new approaches and transport interventions would help strengthen any future decisions in the event that there is significant change in the adopted strategy. The engagement and consultation programme will be an integral part of the process of review.
18. The following is the proposed scope of the review and it is structured around six key activities:

a. Understanding the problem

The review will begin with a thorough exploration of the transport problems in Hereford to understand the precise nature of congestion, network resilience and other transport problems and their causes. This process will be evidence led and where evidence already exists it will be analysed and summarised. We will identify the need and opportunity for new evidence and commission if necessary.

b. Setting objectives

Having concluded a review of the problems in Hereford this phase will enable a set of objectives to be developed. We will not be limited by the current objectives of the two transport projects. This review will enable objectives which are consistent with emerging policy and the climate emergency and will be an opportunity to ensure that an ambitious integrated strategy is developed for the city which guides the delivery of individual transport projects. We would seek to involve the public and stakeholders in contributing to this review of problems and also in the process of setting objectives for Hereford

c. Establishing a baseline

As well as setting clear objectives for Hereford as part of this review a clear and sound baseline needs to be established to enable possible options for the city to alleviate the problems identified to be assessed. This baseline will confirm the traffic situation both now and in the future. We will consider what could alter this position in the future for example, technology, changes to the way we travel and climate and population changes.

It is proposed that the current Local Plan land use allocations are taken as the basis for the development of the transport strategy. This should not be taken to imply that the current land-use allocations will not change in the future - they will be considered in the upcoming Local Plan Core Strategy Review. However, in order for the transport strategy review to understand the merits of different transport options, it is necessary to 'fix' the land-use assumptions so the transport options can be considered irrespective of any change in the land-use allocations. Sensitivity tests will be undertaken on the top two or three options to confirm that the choice of preferred option is not dependent on the land-use assumptions.

d. Identifying options

This phase of the review will enable a long list of potential measures to be developed which will contribute to the agreed objectives. This will include but not be limited to the measures considered in previous studies or those which form the current transport packages in the city. Information available from previous reports will be utilised. This will be an opportunity to look at other ambitious sustainable transport projects – options for all transport modes will be considered. Options which have been considered previously will not be excluded but will be assessed. Options will not be limited to transport measures but will need to contribute to the objectives agreed.

Long-list development will draw on best practice and will, as a minimum include feasibility and assessment of :

- innovative use of the traffic light system including removing a number of traffic-only signals on the A49
- shared use arrangements, potentially coupled with the above option
- additional highway capacity including
 - online improvement of the Roman Road rail bridge;
 - additional river crossing(s); and
 - highway links to the east of the city
- public transport including:
 - electric bus;
 - very light rail; and
 - local park and ride options
- demand management and behavioural change
- walking and cycling

For new alternative proposals, initial feasibility work will be undertaken to inform decisions as to whether they should be progressed further and included in the recommendations of the review. Sufficient information will be developed for each option to enable cost and feasibility to be considered and assessed.

e. Assessing options

The long list of measures will then be assessed on the basis of their impacts and their ability to meet the agreed objectives. All options will be assessed and tested for future years and scenarios. As there is likely to be overlap / interaction between measures it is likely that testing will include considering the impact of packages in addressing the objectives in different future scenarios. The review will use the recently updated Hereford transport model to understand future transport conditions and how those conditions could change in response to these measures individually and as packages.

f. Recommendations

The assessment process will enable a final report to be produced setting out clear and structured recommendations. These recommendations could inform any review of the local plan core strategy or local transport plan. This would be the subject of a further decision report. The review report will include details of initial feasibility work undertaken in relation to alternative options identified during the review. It is anticipated that packages of measures will be recommended which may be grouped into short, medium and long-term recommendations including an assessment of value for money. Overall we are seeking to recommend a set of measures which will address Hereford's transport problems in a sustainable way that supports the wider well-being of people who live, work and travel in the area.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

19. A stakeholder reference panel will be established for the assessment of transport strategy and consideration of the options drawing together senior representatives of key organisations and stakeholder groups. This will oversee the assessment and receive progress reports. The panel will be invited representatives from government, regional and sub-regional bodies, local transport interest groups and business representatives. A Member reference group will also be formed with representation from ward members and parish councils.
20. Element 2 will be supported by an engagement and communications strategy that will have the following objectives:
 - Ensure the public and stakeholders understand the assessment project and are able to engage with it in a way that provides consultees with tangible evidence that their views are understood
 - Clearly articulates the process the assessment will follow, particularly the need for an evidence based approach
 - Encourages all stakeholders to consider their own transport choices and how they have a role in the delivering the strategy objectives
 - Uses a wide range of outlets and platforms to engage and communicate, including a transport seminar, traditional news media and social media and website based information likely to reach all social groups, particularly hard to reach groups

Outline Programme

21. Improving transport in Hereford is important for the future of the city and it is important that this review is carried out at pace to review the current major road schemes and develop a strategy for future implementation. The programme set out below provides a summary of the timescale for the review, identifying the key stages for each element (peer assessment

and transport strategy/alternative options assessment). A more detailed programme is being developed which will be used for programme control and to ensure that delivery remains on track to produce recommendations for cabinet member to consider next steps summer 2020.

Task	2020 Dates
Project management, governance	Throughout the review
Stakeholder engagement, key messages, public consultation, seminar (Element 3)	Throughout the review
Element 1: Peer assessment	
Scoping, commissioning.	January - February
Review of key documents and decision making	March – June
Reporting	July
Element 2: Strategy review and alternative options	
Agree scope and programme, commissioning	January - February
Establish existing and potential future conditions, identify problems, establish objectives	February - March
Agree options, scenarios and develop 'long list' for appraisal	February - March
Agree appraisal framework	April
Option/scenario appraisal and selection and strategy development	April - June
Reporting	June - July

Conclusion

22. It is incumbent on the council to ensure that projects are consistent with its overall response to climate emergency and will contribute to reducing the carbon output of the county whilst also addressing the transport problems of the city and supporting economic growth. Whilst the review is being carried out the council will continue to deliver improvements to encourage a shift of travel mode and reduce congestion.

Community impact

23. The refreshed transport strategy for Hereford will recommend how we should invest in the city's transport system to enable delivery of the environmental, economic and social

outcomes we seek, as set out in the Corporate Plan. These outcomes will directly affect all communities in Hereford and indirectly affect neighbouring communities.

24. The objectives employed in the appraisal framework which will identify the preferred option will be selected to reflect the aims set out in our Corporate Plan and other key policy documents.

Equality duty

25. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

26. Equality impacts will inform the development. An Equality Impact Assessment will be included when the preferred options are identified and will be included in the strategy review

Resource implications

Revenue & Capital cost of project	2019/20	2020/21	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>HTP Peer Assessment (Element 1)</i>	10	20	0	30
<i>SWTP Peer Assessment (Element 1)</i>	20	41	0	61
<i>Element 2 and 3</i>	112	248	0	360
TOTAL	142	309	0	451

Funding streams	2019/20	2020/21	Future Years	Total
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	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>LTP Capital Budget</i>	10	20	0	30
<i>HTP Capital Budget</i>	20	41	0	61
<i>Financial resilience reserve</i>	112	248	0	360
TOTAL	142	309	0	451

27. Element 1, the independent peer review of the HTP and SWTP as outlined in paragraphs 10 to 14 above will be delivered within a budget of £91,000. This will be funded from the LTP and HTP capital budgets as set out above.
28. We see Element 2 and 3 as transformational activity, the transport strategy review and supporting consultation and engagement as outlined in paragraphs 15 to 21 above will be delivered within a budget of £360,000. This cost will be funded from financial resilience reserves which funds this type of transformational activity.
29. Professional services will be required to undertake the peer review (Element 1). The work which will be reviewed has been undertaken over a period of many years and has informed the development of the HTP and SWTP. It has been undertaken by a number of consultants including; Amey, Transport Planning International, JMP, Parsons Brinkerhoff (now part of WSP), and WSP. The peer review will utilise an independent consultant to deliver an independent, objective and transparent review of works done to date.
30. In order to ensure an impartial and independent review (Element 1) a consultant to undertake the peer review work will be procured directly by the council through an open market tendering process. This will be undertaken in accordance with the council's procurement rules and with the support of corporate services.
31. The required consultant professional services to undertake the transport strategy review and consultation (Elements 2 and 3) will be delivered through the previously procured Balfour Beatty Living Places Public Realm contract. The majority of this work will be delivered by their consultants WSP given they have led the development of the transport model which will be required for this review work. Their knowledge of the transport model will have positive programme and technical benefits and will avoid time delays and costs associated with a new provider getting up to speed with the model. Other specialist consultants may be required during the review and these will be delivered through the Public Realm contract.

Legal implications

32. This is an executive function which is a non-key decision which will be taken by a cabinet member
33. The review on both the Hereford and South Wye Transport packages does not result in the council incurring expenditure which is significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.
34. This report seeks cabinet member approval to confirm the scope, outline programme and timescale for undertaking a review of the HTP and SWTP following the decision to continue

the pause and review of both schemes made by the cabinet member for infrastructure and transport on 22 October 2019.

35. The review of both schemes as referred to in paragraph 6 above is in accordance with, and progression of, the cabinet member decision. There are no other legal considerations or risks with the cabinet member doing what is proposed.

Risk management

36. Risks associated with the review as outlined in this decision and their mitigation have been outlined in the table below

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Financial</p> <p>External funding which has been pursued to implement the SWTP and HTP will be at risk.</p> <p>Not commencing the construction of the southern link road and waiting for the outcome of further reviews is likely to result in the withdrawal of the £27m grant from the LEP. This is because the terms of the grant required the spend to be incurred by March 2021.</p>	<p>Seek to conclude the review as soon as possible having regard to the need for a robust, evidenced outcome thus reducing uncertainty over funding priorities.</p> <p>Maintain contact with the primary funding bodies to ensure clarity on any actions required to maintain funding options.</p> <p>The capital programme is clear that the funding is from third parties, alternative funding would need to be sought to enable the project to continue at a later date.</p>
<p>Programme</p> <p>Completion of the review by the 31 July 2020.</p>	<p>The approach to commissioning and procuring the consultancy support set out in this report will minimise the mobilisation required for Element 2 and 3 (strategy and alternative option assessment and consultation). This will ensure that work on Element 2, which is considered to be most resource intensive and will incorporate Element 3 which covers consultation and engagement, will commence quickly once a decision has been taken.</p> <p>Element 1 of the review will be subject to an open market procurement as this will require the appointment of an independent consultant. Whilst this will add 6-8 weeks to the delivery process it is considered that this element of the review will be less resource intensive and additional mobilisation time will not impact the overall delivery of the review.</p>

Financial If the review costs exceed approved budget this will result in a budget pressure.	Monitoring of costs will form part of the project management of the review. Spend against budget will be monitored using the council's project management system Verto and will be reported regularly to the Major Infrastructure Delivery Board.
Reputation In progressing this review stakeholders directly affected by the current road schemes may feel disadvantaged.	A clear communications strategy has been developed to communicate review timescales and opportunities to engage.
Project risks There are a number of project specific risks which will be detailed in a project risk register.	These will be managed in the context of a project risk register, regularly reviewed and updated.

Consultees

37. Following this decision, residents, landowners and stakeholders included on the council's database of those potentially affected by this decision or who have previously been identified in having an interest or asked to be kept updated regarding the schemes will be informed. This will include key funding bodies of DfT, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Homes England, Highways England, Midlands Connect and the Marches LEP.
38. In progressing the review, the council will engage in further public consultation which will enable local stakeholders, ward and parish councils, interest groups and statutory bodies to comment on transport issues and solutions. Consultation will help inform final recommendations to assist the cabinet member in considering next steps.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None

A glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

HTP – Hereford Transport Package

SWTP – South Wye Transport Package

DfT – Department for Transport

WebTAG – Web based transport analysis guidance