

MEETING:	ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	22 MARCH 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	PARK & RIDE (NORTH) HEREFORD SCHEME
PORTFOLIO AREA:	HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

Wards Affected

Three Elms, Burghill Holmer & Lyde

Purpose

To provide an update to the Committee regarding work to date on Park & Ride (North) Hereford scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Members note the contents of this report.

Background

1. The transport strategy for the County is set out in the Hereford Local Transport Plan 2006/7 to 2010/11. The strategy aims to develop an integrated and sustainable transport system for the County which meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. A number of key proposals in the strategy focus on improving transport in the City, alleviating congestion and its environmental impacts by encouraging modal shift and increasing public transport use.
2. Park and ride is identified as an important component of the sustainable transport strategy for Hereford City. The strategy states that:
“Permanent Park and Ride will help to **reduce congestion** and road traffic accidents in Hereford, **improve air quality** and provide the choice necessary for **encouraging a modal** shift from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, which will **improve the quality of life** for residents and visitors alike.
Whilst the Hereford Transport Review identified the need for four park and ride sites for the City serving north, south, south-west and north-eastern approaches it also identified that the northern and then the southern approaches would provide the greatest demand for park and ride.
- 3 In advance of permanent park and ride, the Council has introduced a Christmas park and ride scheme which operates on the Saturdays in the run up to Christmas (usually the 6 weekends before Christmas). This scheme has been operating for the

past 6 years from two sites, most recently, Hereford Racecourse and Grafton Depot. The scheme has established a solid level of usage but there has been some decline in patronage in recent years which has been attributed to adverse weather conditions and recent downturn in the economy.

The permanent Park and Ride Project

- 4 The Council has been following the strategy set out in the Local Transport Plan and has been progressing proposals for permanent park and ride. Work undertaken during the first Local Transport Plan period indicated that four park and ride sites would be required in the longer term which would pick up traffic entering the City from the north, south east and west. This initial work identified the corridors to the north and south (A49) as being the most appropriate for park and ride in the shorter term with the north corridor being the first priority due to it carrying the greatest volume of traffic. Having established this priority more detailed studies have been carried out with a view to progressing park and ride to the north of the City.
- 5 A site search was commissioned in 2007 which assessed a number of sites to the north of the City (see plan below). Several of the sites were discounted following early assessment of site constraints including land ownership, planning policy and suitability of access. The remaining sites were assessed against Department for Transport recommended criteria for major transport schemes. The results of the assessment are summarised as follows:

CRITERIA	WEIGHTING	SITE				
		3	4	5	11	12
ENVIRONMENT/ PLANNING	25%	15	17	8	15	17
SAFETY/SECURITY	15%	8	7	10	10	7
ECONOMICS						
ACQUISITION	15%	2	9	5	8	10
CONSTRUCTION	15%	9	5	3	9	6
ACCESSIBILITY	15%	8	10	6	8	10
TRANSPORT INTEGRATION	15%	7	0	5	5	0
TOTAL	100%	49	48	37	55	50

- 6 Although Site 3 (the Racecourse site) scored lower than sites 11 and 12 it was within the Unitary Development Plan Development Boundary. The sequential test which would need to be applied as part of a planning submission dictated that the site would need to be discounted on grounds of deliverability before sites 11 and 12 (located within 'open countryside') could be pursued.
- 7 Discussions with the Racecourse operators secured agreement in principle to the location of a Park & Ride facility within the extents of the race course land.
- 8 Design work therefore commenced to inform a possible planning application for the facility. The facility was designed to accommodate parking for a maximum of 700 vehicles in accordance with the long term capacity requirements for a park and ride facility to accommodate traffic from the A49 corridor. The design also incorporated a new signalised junction at the site entrance, at its junction with the A4103 Roman Road. A public exhibition was held in September 2008 to gain feedback from the local community on the proposal and to inform a potential subsequent planning application.

- 9 Taking into account the feedback received from the public consultation, it was essential that the decision to proceed or not was based on a sound business case. In view of the time that had elapsed from the original identification of the requirement for park and ride and the selection of a preferred site, it was considered necessary to update the business case and clarify the costs of establishing and maintaining a park and ride operation at the site.
- 10 This Business Case, completed July 2009, considered a number of factors including:
- a. an assessment of existing car parking strategy and associated charging within the City Centre;
 - b. forecasted user uptake figures derived from a Gravity Model; and
 - c. consideration of other factors such as the loss of parking spaces anticipated from the redevelopment of Edgar Street Grid.
- 11 The Gravity Model results suggested that just over 356 daily trips into the City centre would transfer to the site in its first year of operation. Of these only 125 trips would be commuters, which would be the key target group as commuting has the greatest impact on traffic congestion. The costs of operating the service including the provision of two buses, income from the users and maintaining the site was estimated at approximately £180,000 per annum.
- 12 A further review was undertaken in December 2009 in the light of a number of issues which had emerged from the business case and consultations with members and the public. The key issues of concern were as follows:
- a. the predicted high costs of operation and modest transfer of trips to park and ride at the racecourse site;
 - b. increasing pressures on the Council's revenue budgets and ability to sustain the proposed scheme;
 - c. the relationship with city centre parking charges to encourage greater use of the facility and provide a funding stream in the context of the current economic downturn and the need to support the viability of the city centre; and
- concerns over the suitability of the racecourse site for the longer term provision of park and ride in the context of the Hereford Relief Road proposals being developed through the LDF process and lack of bus priority.
- 13 The key conclusions of this review are currently informing the next stages in taking forward Park and Ride and are as follows:
- a Hereford is of sufficient size for Park and Ride to be workable. Many towns and cities of similar 'size' have successfully introduced Park and Ride;
 - b Park and Ride is not easy to deliver in Hereford since it has no bypass and it is very difficult to provide bus priority on radial routes;
 - c The cost of parking in Hereford City Centre is cheaper than in other comparable cities making delivery of successful Park and Ride problematic;
 - d The most appropriate site for the first major permanent Park and Ride site would be directly adjacent to the A49 to the north of the city;

- d. Park and Ride (north) should be implemented in conjunction with Park and Ride (south);
 - e. The optimum long term location for a Park and Ride car park in the north would be at the junction of the relief road with the A49 to the north of Starting Gate Island;
 - f. Smaller scale alternative sites for Park and Ride to the Racecourse site should be considered, in advance of the delivery of the relief road associated with the development of the LDF.
- 14 The review re-affirms the importance of park and ride and its validity in the Council's transport strategy. It provides confidence that Hereford is a suitable location for park and ride compared with other similar sized settlements and settlements whose retailing functions are comparable to Hereford.
- 15 However, the review has indicated that in the longer term, park and ride needs to be closely aligned to the emerging proposals for the Hereford Relief Road. The Council will need to address such longer term proposals through the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework and subsequent development of the Hereford Action Plan.
- 16 The review provides a re-focussing of the opportunities for short to medium term provision of park and ride and recommends that the racecourse does not provide the best solution. Work is underway to identify opportunities for the delivery of smaller, lower cost sites that are capable of delivery with minimal infrastructure requirements in the short term. The short to medium term provision of park and ride will need to take account of:
- a changing parking demand and supply resulting from Edgar Street Grid development.
 - b establish stronger linkages with the travel plans of the City's larger employers including the Council and PCT so that promotion of its use can be specifically targeted;
 - c opportunities for utilising existing bus services, reducing operational costs; and
 - d city centre parking charges.

It will be essential that the project identifies a clear and sustainable funding package which ensures the establishment and financial sustainability of the park and ride service in the context of increasing revenue budget pressures.

- 17 Funding for the capital elements of the project will be available from the Local Transport Plan programme and Growth Fund contributions which have been received by the Council. A project programme for the coming year is currently being developed to take forward short term proposals.

Financial Implications

18 None as a result of this report.

Risk Management

19 Detailed reviews have been undertaken to identify the best course of action for delivering Park and Ride in the short, medium and longer terms taking into account current economic conditions and the need to dovetail proposals with land use planning policy.

Appendices

- Location of sites considered for Hereford Park & Ride

Background Papers

- None