

# HEREFORDSHIRE'S SECOND LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

**Report By: Director of Environment**

## Wards Affected

County-wide

## Purpose

1. To consider the consultation draft Local Transport Plan Guidance (July 2004), prepared by the Department for Transport and its implications for the development of the second Herefordshire Local Transport Plan so that the Director of Environment can make a formal response on behalf of the Council.

## Financial Implications

2. None as a result of this report. The quality of the next LTP will have an impact on the future capital funding for Highways and Transportation.

## Background

3. The Transport Act 2000 sets out the statutory requirement for local highway authorities to produce and review local transport plans. The Council's first Local Transport Plan (LTP) was published in July 2000 and covers the period 2001/2 – 2005/6. The second LTP must be submitted to Government by 29 July 2005 and will cover the period 2006/7 to 2010/11
4. The LTP sets out the Council's transport objectives over its period of coverage, set in the context of a longer term vision for transport. The LTP strategy identifies how it can meet these objectives and includes a 5 year implementation programme. Monitoring the performance of the LTP is achieved through a set of national and local targets and performance indicators and is reported on each year through the Annual Progress Report.
5. The current LTP has secured over £40M for investment in transport improvements for the County in its first 4 years (up to 2004/5). This has enabled the Council to deliver important highways and transport improvements including:
  - (Capital) Highway maintenance;
  - Bridge repairs and replacement such as the new bridge at Bridge Sollers;
  - 40 new low floor buses improving quality and accessibility for bus users;
  - re-furbished bus stations in Hereford and Leominster,
  - new cycle routes and cycle parking;
  - better access for pedestrians; and

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from Steve Burgess, Team Leader (Transportation Planning) on 01432 260968

- road safety improvements that have significantly reduced the most serious accidents.

## Report

6. The Department for Transport issued consultation draft guidance on the preparation of the next LTP on 2 August 2004. Responses must be made by 8 October 2004. A copy of the guidance (as summarised by the DfT) is included at **Appendix 1**. The full guidance can be made available on request.
7. The key changes from the guidance provided for the current LTP are:
  - There will be a greater emphasis on the **Shared Priorities** for local government, particularly in respect of setting objectives and targets. The transport specific shared priorities are:
    - Tackling congestion;
    - Delivering accessibility;
    - Safer roads; and
    - Better air quality.
  - **LTP Funding and the 'Planning Guidelines'**. It is proposed to issue highway authorities with formula-derived spending guidelines indicating the approximate level of Integrated Transport Block funding that will be available for their LTP. Consultation is taking place separately on the criteria and weighting to be used in the formula. There will, however, remain an element of performance rated funding and this could result in an increase or reduction in funding (from the guideline) of up to 25%.
  - **Major Scheme Thresholds**. Currently, major schemes have to be at least £5M, however, it is acknowledged that smaller authorities that receive a smaller overall allocation often have difficulty funding individual schemes that cost from £2.5M -£5M. A list of eligible authorities and individual thresholds will be published alongside the planning guidelines (see above) in late 2004. The guidance goes on to state that 'only the smallest LTP areas – most of them unitary authorities developing their own plan – would be likely to gain support for schemes through this route.' Herefordshire Council may well fall into this category and be able to take advantage of this new opportunity for funding.
  - **Accessibility Strategies**. Accessibility can be defined as the extent to which someone living in a particular location is able to get to work, school, healthcare, food shops and other services. The Government has identified accessibility planning as a way of identifying how access to such services can be improved. The Council must develop an 'accessibility strategy' which will identify priorities for improving access and help inform the development of the LTP. In developing the accessibility strategy the Council will need to work closely with key partners and service providers to look at the issue of accessibility as widely as possible. DfT recognises that this leaves a short timescale for a significant area of work and has indicated that there will be a further opportunity to refine the accessibility strategy by the end of 2005 (after the LTP submission in July 2005).

- **Transport Asset Management Plans (TAMPs).** The guidance indicates that authorities should draw up Transport Asset Management Plans (TAMPs), which will help plan the maintenance of, and improvements to the highway network. The assessment of the LTP will take this into account.
- **Air Quality Action Plans and Rights of Way Improvement Plans.** These will be incorporated into the LTP process. The Council has designated an Air Quality Management Area based on the A49 in Hereford and is also developing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the County. Both will need to be properly integrated with the LTP.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment.** The LTP will also need to include an Environmental Report that identifies its environmental impacts. There is a requirement for this Report to be included as part of the consultation carried out with local stakeholders.

## Matters for Consideration

8. **Implications of the Proposed Changes to Funding.** It is unclear at present what impact the introduction of a formula based allocation for the integrated transport block funding will have on the level of funding for Herefordshire. However, there are concerns that the formula may favour urban authorities with more densely populated settlements. The Transport Planning Team is carrying out further assessment of the proposal as additional details emerge from DfT, however, it is important that concerns regarding the proposal are included in any response the Council makes to the consultation on the draft Guidance if the formula is not clarified in the meantime. The proposed changes to the Major Scheme thresholds presents a good opportunity for the Council to secure additional transport funding and should be welcomed. It will be important for the Council to seek to ensure that it will be amongst the highway authorities which would be eligible for the reduced threshold Major Scheme funding.
9. **Emphasis on Urban Issues.** There is a general emphasis throughout the draft Guidance on urban issues and solutions, such as road pricing, which might be more appropriate in densely populated urban settlements. This is also reflected in possible changes to the integrated transport block allocation referred to above. In responding to the draft Guidance it will be important to highlight this concern and ensure that the Government gives full consideration to rural issues.
10. **Significantly Increased Workload.** The draft Guidance has arrived at a relatively late stage in terms of the production of the next LTP, which must be completed by July 2005. It introduces a number of new requirements, outlined above, which will themselves generate new work. There are legitimate concerns that the timescale for completing the LTP and the additional supporting work, including the preparation of an accessibility strategy, strategic environmental assessment and transport asset management plan, may not be sufficient to enable thorough consideration of all matters. The Council's response to this consultation should clearly highlight this key area of concern.

## PROGRESS REPORT ON LTP2

### 11. Work so far includes:

- Considering Draft guidance on LTP and a range of related matters including Accessibility Planning and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

- Initial consultations have taken place including a Members Seminar, presentations to the Transport Wider Reference Group and other transport forums. Preparation of a consultation leaflet for wider based consultation is underway.
- LTP2 work is also being publicised through the Council's website which is also being used to help with consultation.
- Presentations to the Local Forums have been scheduled for September.
- The work programme for delivery of LTP2 is currently being refined in light of the guidance requirements.

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT;**

- (a) **Members note the content of this report and the draft LTP Guidance summary included at Appendix 1, and**
- (b) **the Committee consider whether it wishes to comment on the implications of the consultation draft Local Transport Plan Guidance prior to consideration and submission of a formal response by the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transport) and the Director of Environment.**

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.