

Report to Councillor Joy Dennis, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

July 2021

Approval of the Draft West Sussex Transport Plan for consultation

Report by Director of Highways, Transport & Planning

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

The West Sussex Transport Plan (WSTP) is being reviewed because the strategic context for the Plan has evolved and progress has been made on delivery of the priorities since the current Plan was adopted.

The Draft WSTP 2022-36 (the 'Draft Plan') sets out a new vision for the transport network in West Sussex in 2036. This is supported by a set of objectives, strategies and priorities that will influence strategic partners and guide future investment and service planning decisions. The Draft Plan contains thematic strategies for active travel, shared transport, railways, roads and access to Gatwick Airport, and short, medium and long-term priorities for each theme. It also contains area transport strategies and priorities for each of the eight local plan areas in West Sussex.

The Draft Plan will be published for consultation between 16 July and 8 October 2021. Following the consultation any necessary amendments will be made before the Final Plan is recommended for approval by Full Council (scheduled for February 2022).

Recommendations

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change approves the Draft West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-36 for consultation.
-

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The Government expects Local Transport Plans to become the focus of transport funding discussions between central and local government. Local Transport Plans are expected to set out holistic place-based strategies for improving transport networks, proposed projects for investment, and explain how key objectives will be achieved.

- 1.2 The County Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Local Transport Plan. In West Sussex the Local Transport Plan is known as the West Sussex Transport Plan (WSTP).
- 1.3 The West Sussex Transport Plan (WSTP) 2011-26 (the current Plan) is being reviewed because the strategic context for the Plan has evolved and progress has been made on delivery of the priorities since it was adopted. There is now a need for a revised strategic approach to investment and intervention in the transport network that enables the County Council to respond to new policies and funding streams.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 Looking over the next fifteen years, a number of key issues have been identified that the new plan needs to address:
- Spatially variable economic performance which can be influenced by transport network performance;
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major negative impact on economic performance and on some business sectors;
 - Plans for development of over 70,000 new homes, commercial development and associated infrastructure at sites around the County;
 - The population of West Sussex is expected to grow by 6% and the number of people aged 70 and over is projected to rise by 20% by 2031;
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has reduced confidence in using public transport;
 - Some parts of West Sussex are very well-connected but others, particularly rural areas where there are fewer public transport options, are less so;
 - Travel choices can contribute to lower physical activity levels which can lead to health conditions such as obesity and poor mental health;
 - The impacts of transport-related air, noise and light pollution on public health;
 - The long-term trend of reducing road traffic accidents has not continued;
 - The Government has committed to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the transport sector is now the largest contributor;
 - West Sussex is a desirable place with attractive, protected areas so careful planning is needed to protect and where possible enhance the environment;
 - West Sussex has diverse range of habitats and nationally biodiversity has been declining; and
 - The County has a history of flooding which is likely to increase due to the effects of climate change.
- 2.2 In response to these pressures, challenges and opportunities, the Draft WSTP 2022-36 (the 'Draft Plan' – see Appendix A for Executive Summary) sets out a new vision for the transport network in West Sussex in 2036. This is supported

by a set of objectives, strategies and priorities that will influence strategic partners and guide future investment and service planning decisions.

2.3 The vision is for a transport network that helps to level up the coastal economy and allow residents to live healthy lifestyles in a high-quality environment. Also, we will be on a pathway to net zero carbon by 2050 through mass electrification, reduced use of fossil fuels and local living. Active travel modes, public or shared transport will be attractive options in built up areas and between towns, and rural communities will have access to the services they need. Transport impacts such as air pollution, noise and rat-running will be minimised to protect a quality of life that reflects the characteristics of the County.

2.4 To deliver the Vision, the key objectives of the Draft Plan are as follows:

- Support sustainable economic prosperity across the County by levelling-up underperforming areas and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Support development and regeneration plans by enabling local living and infrastructure investments at the right time and place;
- Accommodate the needs of an ageing population;
- Minimise air, noise and light pollution from use of the transport network;
- Ensure the transport network allows residents to live healthy lifestyles with good access to green and blue spaces;
- Ensure rural communities can live locally by accessing nearby towns;
- Enable the transport network to be on a pathway to net zero carbon by 2050;
- Minimise the impacts of the transport network on protected areas;
- Improve the transport network whilst protecting or enhancing the environment;
- To monitor and adapt infrastructure to the effects of climate change;
- Reduce the need to travel by car by enabling local living;
- Improve the efficiency of the County Strategic Road Network;
- Minimise the impacts on the transport network of surface access to Gatwick Airport by passengers and employees;
- Ensure the rail network is an attractive option for travel between West Sussex towns and to surrounding cities;
- Improve bus network efficiency by reducing the effects of congestion into and within West Sussex towns;
- Ensure the bus network is customer focussed to provide an attractive option for journeys to nearby towns; and
- Extend and improve the network of active travel facilities.

- 2.5 The Draft Plan contains thematic strategies for active travel, shared transport, railways, roads and access to Gatwick Airport, and short, medium and long-term priorities for each theme. It also contains area transport strategies and priorities for each of the eight local plan areas in West Sussex. The Draft Plan includes an Action Plan for the 2022-27 period, which will be reviewed annually. A fundamental review of the strategies and priorities will be conducted at five yearly intervals.
- 2.6 The Draft Plan will be published for consultation for 12 weeks between 16 July 2021 and 8 October 2021. All published material will be published on the corporate consultation portal and hard copies will be available in public libraries, help points and County Council offices, which are expected to be open to the public during this period. Following the consultation and analysis of feedback, any necessary amendments will be made before the Final Plan is recommended for approval by Full Council (scheduled for February 2022).

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 The other option considered was to continue operating using the current Plan. However, progress has been made on the delivering the current Plan and it does not set out how the County Council will work towards the Government's legally binding commitment to achieve net zero carbon by 2050 or recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, as identified in paragraph 1.3, the Government expects Local Transport Plans to become the focus of transport funding discussions and the County Council is unlikely to secure funding for an out-of-date plan that does not deliver the Government's agenda for transport.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 An Executive Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure to oversee development of the Draft Plan. The TFG has considered the evidence base for the review, the vision and objectives and the strategic approach to achieving these.
- 4.2 The Draft Plan will be scrutinised by the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee in early 2022 before it is recommended to Full Council for adoption.

5 Finance

- 5.1 There are no financial consequences associated with publishing the Draft Plan for consultation.
- 5.2 Once the Final Plan is approved, this may influence future investment decisions. However, the financial implications of these decisions will be addressed in future budget decisions and/or further Key Decisions.
- 5.3 The effect of the proposal:

(a) How the proposal represents good value

Updating the County Council's strategic approach to the transport network will ensure investment decisions deliver an up-to-date vision and objectives, potentially avoiding investment in initiatives that are not good value for money. Publishing the Draft Plan for consultation will generate feedback that will be used to refine the Plan and ensure there is buy-in from stakeholders.

(b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

Updating the County Council’s strategic approach to the transport network will enable the service to consider whether any current or planned activities are no longer required, which could potentially achieve savings/efficiencies.

(c) **Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact**

Publishing the Draft Plan for consultation has no impact on human resources, IT or assets. Any impacts associated with the strategies and priorities identified in the Final Plan will be addressed in future budget decisions and/or further Key Decisions.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
None	

7 Policy alignment and compliance

7.1 Reviewing the WSTP is identified as an area of focus in the West Sussex Reset Plan 2021-25 to deliver a sustainable and prosperous economy.

7.2 The Draft Plan has been influenced by, and complies with, all relevant transport, economic, social and environmental policies at the national, regional and local level. This includes delivery of aspects of the Economy Reset Plan and Climate Change Strategy through strategic approaches to improving the transport network that reflect the key issues, challenges and opportunities identified in these separate plans.

Matt Davy

Director Highways, Transport and Planning

Contact Officer: Darryl Hemmings, Transport Planning & Policy Manager, 0330 222 6437, Darryl.hemmings@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendices

A: Draft West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-36

Background papers

None