

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

**March 2022**

### **West Sussex Transport Plan**

#### **Report by Assistant Director (Highways, Transport & Planning)**

**Electoral division(s): All**

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#### **Summary**

The West Sussex Transport Plan (WSTP) has been reviewed because the strategic context for the Plan has evolved and progress has been made on the delivery of priorities since the current Plan was adopted in 2011. The review is identified as an area of focus in Our Council Plan.

The WSTP 2022-36 (the '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 Plan contains thematic strategies for active travel, shared transport, railways, roads and access to Gatwick Airport, and short, medium and long-term priorities for most themes. It also contains area transport strategies and priorities for each of the eight local plan areas in West Sussex.

The Draft Plan was published for consultation between 16 July and 8 October 2021. Following the consultation, the feedback has been analysed and appropriate changes made to the Plan. The changes, which are summarised in paragraphs 4.3 to 4.5, include: clarifying the approach to decarbonisation; committing to set a carbon reduction target in 2022; and aligning the objectives of the Plan to the new duties identified in the Environment Act 2021.

#### **Recommendation**

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport recommends the West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-36 for adoption at County Council on 1 April 2022.
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#### **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. The WSTP will support the delivery of the priorities in Our Council Plan 2021-25.

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 – the 'Plan').

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 the delivery of 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. Notably, this includes the Government's recently published Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which will guide decisions in the coming years to reduce emissions from the transport sector.

## **2 Proposal details**

2.1 Looking over the next fifteen years, a number of key issues were identified that the new Plan needed 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 biodiversity has been declining nationally; 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 WSTP 2022-36 (see Appendix A) 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 achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 through increased use of electric vehicles, reduced use of fossil fuels, and local living. Active travel modes and 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 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;
- Avoid and minimise air, noise and light pollution arising from the transport network;
- Ensure the transport network allows residents and visitors to live healthy lifestyles with good access to green and blue spaces;
- Ensure rural communities can live locally by accessing services or nearby towns;
- Enable the transport network to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050;
- Avoid and minimise the impacts of the transport network on the natural environment;
- Improve the transport network whilst enhancing biodiversity;
- 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 and give priority to active travel and shared transport on non-strategic roads whilst improving road safety and resilience;
- 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 and integration by reducing the effects of congestion into and within West Sussex towns;
- Ensure the bus network is integrated and 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 Plan contains thematic strategies for active travel, shared transport, railways, roads and access to Gatwick Airport, and short, medium and long-

term priorities for all themes (except access to Gatwick Airport). It also contains area transport strategies and priorities for each of the eight local plan areas in West Sussex.

- 2.6 The 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.

### **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 The Draft Plan was published for consultation for 12 weeks between 16 July 2021 and 8 October 2021. All published material was published on the corporate consultation portal and hard copies were made available in public libraries. The consultation feedback is summarised in Appendix B; the majority of respondents were in full or partial support of the key issues, vision and objectives and thematic and area transport strategies. Many comments were also submitted requesting greater ambition on decarbonisation, active travel and shared transport, with less focus on roads. There were also concerns about the impacts of new development and mixed views on support for electric vehicles.
- 4.2 A shorter targeted consultation survey in a small number of schools indicated that the most important objectives to the young people responding were: reducing pollution from the transport system (1st), protecting transport infrastructure from the impacts of climate change (2nd), improving active travel infrastructure (3rd), and improving main road routes (4th).
- 4.3 The changes that have been made to the Plan following the consultation include amendments to the objectives to: clarify the approach to decarbonisation; include avoidance of environmental impacts as a priority before minimising and mitigating; incorporate integration between modes where appropriate; include provision of local services alongside providing access to towns; include a commitment to deliver biodiversity net gain. The changes also include a commitment to set a carbon emission reduction target in 2022 and amendments to the objectives so that they are consistent with the new duties identified in the Environment Act 2021.
- 4.4 Various amendments have been made to the thematic strategies to: provide flexibility to identify active travel priorities with Local Planning Authorities and state the importance of good design; incorporate the strategic interventions and approaches identified in the Bus Service Improvement Plan. The road network strategy has been amended to: plan to reduce the impacts of car use; align with the Road Safety Framework; include strategic approaches to various initiatives in line with the vision and objectives. Various minor amendments

have been made to the area transport strategies to ensure they are consistent, particularly on issues that cross boundaries, and reflect the latest local plans.

- 4.5 An Executive Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to oversee development of the Plan. The TFG has considered the consultation feedback and changes that have been incorporated into the Plan. The TFG also made a number of suggestions on how to improve the objectives and ensure the Plan meets the needs of all users, including people with disabilities; the suggestions have also been considered and, in many cases, resulted in amendments to the Plan.
- 4.6 The Plan was considered by the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 24 February 2022. The Committee requested that the following concerns and comments are taken into account:
- Raises concerns around the cycling network, which has sections of cycling route which do not connect, and as such does not constitute a coherent network.
  - Acknowledges the vision of the Plan, and the importance of applying for grants and working with stakeholders to ensuring successful delivery of the Plan.
  - Suggests that that the impact of bus guideways on other road users should be taken into account.
  - Questions whether the Plan takes sufficient account of settlements which will become towns or villages once planned development has taken place, and resilience in the face of climate change and flooding.
  - Suggests that road-based vehicular transport is likely to remain the primary mode of transport throughout the term of the Plan, and questions whether the Plan will achieve the right balance between the different modes of transport.
- 4.7 In response, the following changes have been made to the Plan:
- Inclusion of 'network function' as one the criteria to take into account in selecting and prioritising cycle routes.
  - Amendments to the Executive Summary to state that road network improvements are expected to improve road safety and resilience to climate change.
  - To refer to the issue of settlements increasing in size due to planned development.
  - To clarify that the balance of investment will be dependent on third party decisions about where and which modes of transport to invest in.
  - Amendments to the monitoring framework to ensure that it aligns with corporate performance indicators, for example the target to deliver 7.5km of new cycle track per annum.

## **5 Finance**

- 5.1 There are no financial consequences associated with publishing the Plan.

5.2 The Plan will 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.

(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**

Approving the Plan 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**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
<p>The Department for Transport has indicated its intention to publish updated guidance on preparing Local Transport Plans in the near future. As this has not informed the preparation of the WSTP, there is a risk that the WSTP will not conform to latest guidance once this is published.</p>	<p>The WSTP has been prepared in line with current guidance (published in 2009). Liaison is taking place with the Department for Transport to mitigate this risk. As the WSTP has been informed by a policy review, evidence, analysis and a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment, the impact of this risk is considered to be low.</p>

**7 Policy alignment and compliance**

7.1 Reviewing the WSTP is identified as an area of focus in the Our Council Plan 2021-25 to deliver a sustainable and prosperous economy. The WSTP will also support the delivery of other priorities in Our Council Plan.

7.2 The 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.

7.3 The Plan also aligns with the key principles identified by Transport for the South East in their Transport Strategy.

- 7.4 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating the requirements of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been conducted as part of the process of developing the Plan. The recommendations have been incorporated into the Plan to ensure the Plan meets the identified sustainability objectives and relevant statutory duties.
- 7.5 There are no Crime and Disorder, Public Health or Social Value implications.

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### **Appendices**

A: West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-36 Final Draft for Adoption

B: Draft West Sussex Transport Plan Consultation Summary

### **Background papers**

None