

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
10th JANUARY 2011

**Draft Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 3:
The Third Worcestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP3)**

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	A Better Environment
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	A Sustainable Environment
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APPENDICES:	<p>Appendix 1 – Draft Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 3: The Third Worcestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) incorporating the Wyre Forest Transport Strategy</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Submitted Officer Comments.</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Summary of Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Appendix 4 – The LTP3 Policy Compendium</p> <p><i>The appendices to this report have been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details.)</i></p>

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the Cabinet's retrospective approval of officer representations submitted to Worcestershire County Council on Draft Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 3, October 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE that:

- 2.1 **The comments and representations, as submitted, and set out in Appendix 2 of this report, be agreed as the District Council's formal response to the Draft Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 3 (October 2010).**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Worcestershire County Council has started to develop the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for the County to cover the fifteen year period to 2026. The County Council set out the objectives of the plan as focussing on supporting the Worcestershire economy, delivering transport infrastructure and services to tackle congestion, protecting and enhancing our environment and improving the quality of life. Whilst there is a strong emphasis placed on the economy, other topics include environmental, public health and safety, equality, quality of life and asset management objectives.
- 3.2 The LTP3 looks to provide the policy and strategy context for the County's major transport projects and enable bids for funding for investment in transport infrastructure and services over the next 15 years. It is intended to form the basis for securing funds from development and ensure these are properly used to improve the efficiency of our transport networks.
- 3.3 The County Council state that research has shown that a high quality transport network is important in sustaining economic success in modern economies. They recognise that the transport network secures connectivity between different parts of the country, as well as to the rest of the world: linking people to jobs; delivering products to markets; underpinning supply chains and logistics; and supporting domestic and international trade.
- 3.4 Amongst other things, the covering letter introducing the LTP3 states:
- “Historically, improvements in transport connectivity have been pivotal in supporting periods of economic growth.”
 - “In mature economies like Worcestershire, with well-established networks and strong connectivity between economic centres...evidence suggests that investment should be focussed on maintaining or enhancing the performance of the existing network, particularly where journey time reliability is deteriorating.”
 - “The efficiency with which existing transport networks are used is just as important as the underlying investment in new infrastructure.”
 - “Economic success often generates higher demand to travel, and where there is lack of adequate capacity, this can start to constrain that success. Where this is the case, investment in substantial new infrastructure and/or services may be justified.”
- 3.5 The above illustrates the emphasis placed on the link between economic performance and transport infrastructure. This is particularly relevant in the context of Kidderminster and the wider Wyre Forest District which, even before the 2008 downturn, was widely acknowledged as undergoing a major economic restructure. Regular feedback from local business leaders cites the inadequacies of transport infrastructure serving the area.

- 3.6 It is note worthy that there has been no significant new infrastructure investment in the District for over a decade. Recent schemes have emerged including the Kidderminster Rail Interchange project, but have subsequently stalled. Schemes including Hoo Brook Link Road and modification of the Town Centre Ring Road are at the preliminary planning stages, whilst the Stourport Relief Road has proved cost prohibitive. At the same time there has been little progress on tackling the challenges facing the two designated Air Quality Management Areas at Horsefair, Kidderminster and Welchgate, Bewdley.
- 3.7 The LTP3 does include a separate package for Wyre Forest District and this is considered to be a positive approach to recognising the unique challenges and potential solutions facing the District's transport network. However, the foreword to the document recognises that "in the short term, funding availability is likely to be limited" and "this will make planning and delivering transport particularly difficult". The Local Transport Plan has a major role to play in providing evidence and a delivery mechanism for the Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework and ReWyre Initiative.
- 3.8 Worcestershire County Council is seeking comments from Wyre Forest District Council. Following the close of consultation on the 31st December, a final version of the LTP3 will be prepared for consideration by Worcestershire County Council in February 2011 with a view to the document being adopted from the 1st April 2011.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The LTP3 documentation contains an extensive amount of information and policy ideas which it is not possible to summarise comprehensively in this report. The full extent of the consultation literature is available to download at <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/transport-and-streets/transport/local-transport-plan/consultation.aspx#Policies>. This section of the report aims to highlight the most significant aspects in the context of Wyre Forest District.
- 4.2 The **aims of objectives** of the LTP3 are summarised at Appendix 3 to this report. The first point under the aims of the Economic Objectives states that "interurban roads should be prioritised for freight and longer distance motorised traffic". This is no doubt welcome and would be supported by the business community. However, this statement together with the paragraph 3.4 above provides interesting context to the recent road works to the main routes to the M5 i.e. the A449 and A456. Members will be aware that the roads have both been reduced from dual-carriageway to single carriageway roads in recent months. This has clearly reduced the efficiency and capacity of these critical links. This has not been well received by the business leaders of Wyre Forest District and the works are sighted as further undermining the local economy. There was no recorded consultation with the District Council or local businesses on these schemes. Whilst there may have been safety concerns in relation to the sections of dual carriageway, it is unclear what other options may have been considered to address those concerns. The draft representations at Appendix 2 to this report include a suggestion to reintroduce the sections of dual-carriageway on both the A449 and A456 in order to enhance the economic potential of Kidderminster and Wyre Forest District.

- 4.3 The first bullet point under the economic aims and linked policies (LTP3 Main Document, Table 1.3, p.11 (set out at Appendix 1 to this report)) also states that “urban streets should be prioritised for pedestrians and cyclists” and this is also consistent with the Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework Core Strategy aims and policies and is to be supported.
- 4.4 The first bullet point under the second economic aim includes proposals to “develop strategic traffic and parking management plans” which cover entire urban areas. These plans will involve a full parking capacity review, a parking pricing review, a network review and an infrastructure review. The holistic nature of this doesn’t seem totally consistent with the aim itself which, as written, relates only to town and city centres. Furthermore any review will need to be undertaken in partnership with car parking operators including District Council’s and private sector operators. That said, Wyre Forest District LDF Core Strategy is consistent with the broad requirements of the aim.
- 4.5 The environmental aims are to be broadly welcomed. However, the first bullet point around reducing the impact of transport noise may need a caveat in relation to the provision of new infrastructure. Such infrastructure should be designed to minimise any impact, but may itself inevitably introduce a new impact which doesn’t currently exist.
- 4.6 The overall thrust of this Public Health and Safety objective is to be welcomed and supported. However, there is understood to be no scientific link between applied design standards and road safety. The latest government design guidelines in the form of Manual for Streets illustrate a more creative design approach, which departs from standard, within urban areas can lead to better quality places and a refocus on pedestrians. Similarly, the safety argument needs to be balanced when considering inter-urban highways where there is a recognised need to maximise the efficiency of movement particularly in the context of strategic routes to markets e.g. the A456 and A449.
- 4.7 Importantly the aims and objectives of the LTP3 are in broad alignment with those set out in the Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework and particularly in respect of environment, design emphasis and economic regeneration.
- 4.8 The draft LTP3 highlights the core political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental **Issues and Challenges**. The plan proposes waiting until confirmation of funding before producing the first ‘Delivery Plan’ and this could introduce a significant element of uncertainty for the Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework and in particular could have an adverse impact on the preparation of the site specific Development Plan Documents. Uncertainties are an accepted by product of the current economic climate, however, there are a number of potential delivery mechanisms and funding opportunities. Therefore, it is considered that a draft, or indicative, delivery plan should be produced in order to illustrate how the LTP may be implemented. Otherwise the LTP3 seems to present a wish list without any robust foundation or initial assessment of delivery. This presents difficulties for forward planning purposes and provides insufficient certainty. In terms of environmental issues, the LTP3 makes a sweeping comment suggesting that urban areas are generally “becoming more attractive”.

This observation may apply to the more 'attractive' Worcestershire urban areas. However, the design of streets as spaces within Wyre Forest District urban areas often leaves much to be desired and serves to undermine the attractiveness of the urban areas. Other than the above comments the identified issues and options are broadly supported.

- 4.9 Whilst there is a section entitled "delivering the plan and prioritising schemes", there is concern at the lack of a more specific (short to medium term) delivery plan. The challenges of developing such a plan are recognised i.e. the uncertainties of funding. It is considered that the delivery planning elements of the LTP3 should look to be more detailed where possible. At present there is only a strategic context to delivery. However, Worcestershire County Council can provide varying degrees of certainty on particular schemes through prioritisation and indicating likely funding sources and options for specific schemes. The authority can also explain its intentions and timeframes for developing specific proposals. The section sets out objectives and weightings for prioritisation which are generally supported. It is understandable that the maximum weighting is given to costs and funding which places the emphasis on schemes which can be funded from sources other than Worcestershire County Council. Whilst this is understood, it may be appropriate to put the emphasis on partnership schemes which bring in significant match funding i.e. schemes that can make the limited amount of Worcestershire County Council funding go further. There is specific mention of a sample scheme to introduce kerbs in order to reduce edge of carriageway pot holes which sounds expensive.
- 4.10 The LTP3 Policy Compendium set out at Appendix 4 of this report, highlights the difficulty in summarising the consultation documentation. In addition to the main document (Appendix 1 to this report), the Worcestershire LTP3 is effectively a package and consists of 12 separate 'policy' documents, four 'plan' documents, an 'essential references' document, and 3 separate 'assessment documents'. The full list of documents is set out at Appendix 4 and includes a 'Development Control (Transport) Policy' document setting out how Worcestershire County Council will work with developers.
- 4.11 The '**Delivery Programme**' (from page 45) is presented in a series of packages. This approach is supported. However, as mentioned above the approach outlined is purely strategic. The argument for this is the current uncertainty over funding. However, there are known funding sources emerging including Tax Incremental Funding and Regional Growth Fund. It would also be helpful for Worcestershire County Council to highlight priority schemes and consider a range of delivery mechanism and likely scenarios for scheme delivery. The lack of any greater levels of certainty in respect of commitment to specific schemes could serve to undermine the Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework. Having said that, Members will no doubt wish to support the suggested inclusion of a 'Kidderminster Town Package (Phased Approach Details to be defined)' within LTP3. This sits alongside the following schemes major scheme proposals:
- Evesham Abbey Bridge & Viaduct Replacement
 - Worcester Transport Strategy – Phase 1
 - Worcestershire Parkway Interchange
 - Redditch Town Centre Package (Phased Approach Details to be defined)

- 4.12 At this stage these schemes are only identified as “being considered for inclusion within the LTP3”. It is, therefore, not a forgone conclusion that they will make it into the final Plan. The suggested representations at Appendix 2 to this report recommend strong support for the suggested Kidderminster Package which would be consistent with the Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework Core Strategy and the Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus and ReWyre Initiative. However, in the context of limited resources and with a number of major schemes highlighted it is unclear where schemes are in terms of priorities or possible routes to delivery and further clarification could usefully be sought in this regard.
- 4.13 The document sets out the rationale for a package approach which aims to avoid a piecemeal approach and instead seek to group transport schemes together as packages of investment. This approach is strongly supported as a means of maximising the return on investment. The packages are themselves contained within separate strategies for different parts of Worcestershire and specifically a strategy for North East Worcestershire (Redditch and Bromsgrove); South Worcestershire and a separate strategy for Wyre Forest which includes the proposed Kidderminster Urban Package (including a Major Scheme Bid). The Wyre Forest Transport Strategy is set out at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.14 The problem of confused priorities highlighted in Paragraph 4.11 above is heightened by the number of separate packages within each individual strategy. For example the North East Worcestershire Strategy includes 3 packages i.e. Redditch Urban; Bromsgrove Urban; and a Rural Package. The South Worcestershire Strategy contains 6 separate packages i.e. Worcester Urban; Upton Urban; Droitwich Urban; Great Malvern Urban; Tenbury Wells; and a Rural Package. Finally, Wyre Forest Strategy contains 4 packages i.e. Kidderminster Urban (including major scheme bid); Stourport Urban; Bewdley Urban; and a Rural Package. Therefore, in total there are 13 packages proposed for Worcestershire. Implementing all of these packages will prove costly and there is no indication of likely priorities, delivery strategy, phasing or timeframes. The draft LTP3 looks to cover all areas and as such perhaps fails to make the big decisions on prioritisation.
- 4.15 The schedule of proposed representations at Appendix 2 summarises the various elements of the Wyre Forest Transportation Strategy and sets out proposed responses to them. As an overall comment there could be greater alignment between the District LDF Core Strategy and the LTP3 in this area. Specifically, there is no mention of the Stourport Relief Road. There is indeed only very limited reference to the statutory Local Development Framework and given the status of the document more weight should be afforded to its content. Likewise it should be recognised within the LTP3 that the document will provide a key means of delivering aspects of the statutory Development Plans for the six districts through providing the essential transport infrastructure.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to the Council arising out of this report.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The recommended policy responses are in accordance with the Council’s established priorities.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 It is important that the District Council makes representations to this consultation which could potentially have significant implications for economic development and statutory planning functions.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The report relates to a Worcestershire County Council Policy initiative.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The thrust of the Worcestershire LTP3 is to be welcomed and supported. The package approach and specifically the inclusion of Kidderminster as a suggested major scheme bid is to be strongly supported. However, the document currently reads like a very big wish list and provides little in the way of certainty or prioritisation. Greater links could be made with District LDF's and in the context of Wyre Forest District there is no mention of the Stourport Relief Road which remains identified in the Wyre Forest District LDF Core Strategy. The schedule of officer comments set out at Appendix 2 has been submitted to Worcestershire County Council for their consideration as they develop the final LTP3 as the closing date for consultation responses was 31st December 2010.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 None.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.