

Report to Planning Services Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 3rd March 2011

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Essex Local Transport Plan 3 Consultation

Officer contact for further information: Ian White (x4066)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (x4607)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To agree the officer comments that were sent on 10th February 2011 to meet the consultation deadline of 11th February.

Report:

1. Every local highway authority, in this case the County Council, must produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for its area. This will be the third such LTP for Essex, but will cover a period of 15 years rather than 5 years as was the case with the first two LTPs. It will also address revenue spending as well as capital schemes – another change from the earlier plans. The LTP is intended to identify what the highway authority wants to achieve by investing in transport over the next 15 years, and to explain how this will help to achieve sustainable economic growth in the county. The consultation document splits the County into four areas, in line with the Integrated County Strategy (ICS). Epping Forest District is therefore part of the West Essex area, along with Harlow and Uttlesford Districts.
2. The consultation document lists five outcomes that the plan must deliver:
 - Provide reliable connectivity for international gateways and Essex communities to support sustainable economic growth, regeneration and well-being;
 - Reduce carbon dioxide emissions and improve air quality through lifestyle changes, innovation and technology;
 - Improve safety on the transport network and enhance and promote a safe travelling environment;
 - Maintain all transport assets to an appropriate standard and maximise network availability and resilience;
 - Provide sustainable access and travel choice for Essex residents to help create sustainable communities.
3. The consultation ran from December 2010 to 11th February 2011 but it was not possible to report this to an earlier meeting of the Panel. Officer level comments were therefore sent to meet the deadline, on the understanding that further Member comments may follow. The consultation took the form of a questionnaire, which was designed to encourage responses from individual members of the public, as well as local authorities and other relevant organisations. There were 22 questions, several of which were aimed solely at individuals, and so not appropriate for the Council to respond to. Officers opted to respond to 5 of these, and details are given below.
4. The questionnaire included an additional 15 optional questions on policies for guiding the delivery of transport in Essex. Officers elected not to address these as rather

bland statements with the option of agreeing or disagreeing where it is almost impossible to disagree with what is being said.

5. Question 5

What approach should be taken to achieve the five outcomes – three options were given, but in each case there would be similar expenditure on safety and maintenance:

Option 1 – Investing in growth – spending would be focused on improving transport connections within and between the main towns where investment is likely to have the greatest benefit to the economy. This will focus on outcome 1 with less spent on outcomes 2 and 5;

Option 2 – A better place to live – spending would be spread more evenly across the county and all the outcomes with the aim of making Essex a better place to live and work by improving access to work, education and leisure activities. There would be a balanced spread of expenditure across outcomes 1, 2 and 5;

Option 3 – A low carbon future – spending would be focused on providing travel choice and encouraging less car use to reduce CO2 emissions. Expenditure would be prioritised for outcomes 2 and 5 with less directed towards outcome 1.

Officer response

Option 2 is preferred, but with reservations. As resources are going to be very restricted for the foreseeable future, there is the likelihood that, even under this approach, spending will veer towards the promotion of economic growth and away from environmental objectives and projects or carbon reduction. If this option is ultimately selected (as the “safe middle ground”) it will be important to monitor implementation to ensure it does not become Option 1 by the back door.

6. Question 8

What sections of the highway network maintained by the County Council should be the priority – 8 options were given (listed below) and the top 3 were requested using numbers 1 to 3; (a) main roads between towns; (b) minor roads between towns and villages; (c) local roads in residential areas; (d) pedestrian pavements (alongside roads); (e) public footpaths; (f) cycleways; (g) street lighting; (h) street furniture

Officer response

Priority 1 – main roads between towns

Priority 2 – minor roads between towns and villages

Priority 3 - pedestrian pavements (alongside roads)

7. Question 9

Are there any issues of concern about the rail or trunk road network (ie the transport networks in Essex operated by other agencies)

Officer response

Issues of concern:

- Capacity of J7 of the M11;
- Need for new junction (7A) on M11 between Harlow and Sawbridgeworth;
- Impact on local road network (especially the A414) when either or both motorways are affected by accidents or other delays;
- Linked issue of frequency of messaging signs on the local road network (advising of motorway problems);
- Timetable/feasibility of Network Rail’s plans to remove all level crossing facilities on the Liverpool Street line – in particular, what this will mean for Roydon. Abridge over the railway line is probably impossible, and the only alternative would appear to be a bypass with significant implications for impact on the Green Belt, and long-term adverse effects on Roydon village services, and even the future of the station itself;

- Implications of increased frequency of Stansted Express trains on frequency of local services which serve local and easily accessible stations – Roydon, Sawbridgeworth, Broxbourne etc;
- Capacity of rail network at rush hour;
- Capacity of the Central Line and its associated car parks;
- Very final decision on the future of the Epping to Ongar section of the Central Line;
- Distant possibility of extension of Central Line to Harlow

8. Question 12

Priorities for West Essex – to select three from the following seven: (a) Improving the attractiveness (of) bus services to and within Harlow through packages of improvements to facilities for buses at the busiest sites (including the bus station, railway station and hospital); (b) Improving bus and rail public transport links to and between the West Essex centres – particularly from surrounding rural areas; (c) Supporting regeneration initiatives within Harlow and local centres by improving the attractiveness of streets and public spaces; (d) Supporting housing and employment growth and regeneration initiatives in Harlow and the local centres by providing transport access to development sites which encourages low carbon and low congestion travel choices (including bus, walking and cycling facilities); (e) Improving access to Harlow from the M11, particularly to improve journey time reliability; (f) Improving access to Stansted Airport by low carbon forms of transport – particularly from Saffron Walden; (g) Upgrading and improving cycling and walking networks in Harlow to encourage greater use.

Are there other priorities for this area.

Officer response

Priority 1 (with addition as noted) - (b) above adding "and key public facilities such as hospitals" after "centres"

Priority 2 – (d)

Priority 3 – (e)

In general, there is concern about the emphasis on Harlow's issues (specific mentions in 5 out of the 7 listed priorities). Yes it is by far the biggest settlement in the West Essex area, and yes it does have severe infrastructure deficit issues, but the districts of Epping Forest (50% more population than Harlow) and Uttlesford also demand more detailed analysis and understanding. As a simple example, Loughton has had 3 out of 4 phases of town centre enhancements completed so the comments under 'Local Centres' appear, at best, to be out of date. (The comment in the consultation document is "Loughton – Town Centre improvements are required to support local businesses") No mention is made of other centres, such as Waltham Abbey, which have much poorer public transport services. Parking issues are a key problem affecting all the Central Line stations and associated centres in the district. (The consultation document only names Loughton and Epping)

Other priorities (not in any specific order)

- Freight strategy for the County (HGV traffic is a particular problem in the Lea Valley area because of the glasshouse/packhouse industry and the local road connection to the M25 at Waltham Abbey;
- Car parking in the towns/villages served by the Central Line – conflict between residents and commuters;
- Congestion in the south of the district (Loughton/Buckhurst Hill);
- Traffic issues associated with two regeneration schemes – The Broadway, Loughton and St John's Road, Epping;
- NOx pollution of Epping Forest;
- Lack of easily accessible information about community transport – particular

- problem for the elderly;
- Future for business aviation at North Weald Airfield;
- Lack of bridleway networks

Reason for decision:

To agree the officer comments to try to ensure that this district's traffic and transport issues are reflected in the final version of the Local Transport Plan 3.

Options considered and rejected:

Not to respond to the consultation.

Consultation undertaken:

Director of Planning and Economic Development

Director of Environment and Street Scene

Attendance at workshop on the LTP organised by the County Council on 2nd February.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: From existing resources

Personnel: From existing resources

Land: Nil

Community Plan/BVPP reference: GU1, GU4, HN7, FL2, FL3, EP3

Relevant statutory powers: Planning and Highways Acts

Background papers: The Essex Local Transport Plan Consultation (December 2010)

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: A wide range of environmental and social issues are involved – road junction capacity, traffic congestion, capacity of overground rail and Central Line at rush hour, road traffic pollution of Epping Forest, HGV traffic on unsuitable rural roads, car parking in centres served by Central Line, poor public transport connections and frequencies in the rural areas.

Key Decision reference: (if required)