

TITLE	Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 October 2023
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Giorgio Framalicco – Director of Place and Growth

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The planned implementation of transport schemes and promotions as part of a considered strategic plan for transport reflecting changing travel trends and a greater focus on the climate emergency, which the borough council declared in 2019.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the draft LTP4 and offer comment and recommendations where appropriate.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Local Transport Plan is a statutory requirement of the Council deriving from the Transport Act 2000. The current Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026 has provided many improvements like the Wokingham Greenways, enhancements to Wokingham town centre, the Arborfield Cross Relief Road, the North Wokingham Distributor Road, upgrades to railway stations and more.

Most of the schemes included in the current LTP are complete. With changing travel trends and a greater focus on the climate emergency, which the borough council declared in 2019, the Plan is being refreshed to better reflect the community's needs.

The updated LTP will be an important part of the authority's goal of making Wokingham borough a net-zero carbon producer. With a significant part of the current LTP having been delivered, changing technology and government policy, a better understanding of travel habits and with climate change, there is a need to refresh the transport strategy to address current priorities and the needs of our communities.

The Council is seeking approval to put the draft LTP out to public consultation. The LTP will support our local priorities, including a prosperous economy, improving the quality of life for residents, reducing the environmental impact of transport, and the first stages in the transition of the transport sector towards lower carbon emissions and Net Zero.

Work to understand travel patterns, trends and emerging opportunities, and engagement with local and regional stakeholders has been undertaken in the development of this new LTP. The draft document provides a summary of the evidence informing the Plan, including engagement completed in spring 2023, and details several objectives under three themes: reduce environmental impacts; grow the economy; and create healthy and safe places. The LTP concludes with an action plan.

Background

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a statutory requirement of the council deriving from the Transport Act 2000.

Most of the schemes included in the current LTP 2011-2026 are complete. With changing travel trends and a greater focus on the climate emergency, which the borough council declared in 2019, the Plan is being refreshed to better reflect the community's needs.

The last LTP was produced in 2011 and a lot has changed. New transport infrastructure has been delivered and the borough's population has grown. With the growing influence of digital services and further shifts in travel behaviour since the COVID-19 pandemic, the way we access services and amenities has also changed.

Wokingham is one of the fastest growing local authorities in the UK and our population has increased by 15% over the last decade, from 157,000 in 2011 to 177,500 in 2021. Over the next 10-20 years the population of the Borough is expected to increase to 200,000.

A growing population can increase demand on the transport system. However, the way people access services has also been changing, notably through a growing use of digital services. Consequently, the average number of trips made per person has been reducing, with the National Travel Survey showing that each individual now makes 12% fewer trips in 2019 than they did in 2000.

The number of cars owned in the Borough has increased over the last decade and Wokingham has one of the highest levels of car ownership in the country, yet each car is being used less than before and this growing car ownership has not led to additional travel.

Future transport investment will need to deliver on local priorities and development, and be adaptable to changing climate, technology and economy. The impacts of climate change are already starting to be felt. This will impact on future travel and the operation and maintenance of our transport networks. The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has committed to doing as much as possible to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Local transport accounts for a third of the carbon emissions in the borough. In addition, there are similar levels of carbon emissions arising from major transport links through our area, such as the rail network and the M4. To get to Net Zero in line with local or national targets, we will need to make significant changes and at a faster rate of change than that observed to date. Although the transition to zero emission vehicles will help to reduce our emissions, their impact is relatively small in the short term but the benefits will become more noticeable as their use becomes more widespread.

The updated LTP will accommodate changing technology and government policy, our changing travel habits (especially post-pandemic) and include measures to address climate change, current priorities and the needs of our communities.

The LTP sets out a pipeline of schemes to support a changing borough to provide an overarching transport strategy and action plan for Wokingham Borough. It will support our local priorities, including a prosperous economy, improving the quality of life for residents, reducing the environmental impact of transport, and the first stages in the transition of the transport sector towards lower carbon emissions and Net Zero.

Analysis of Issues

Work to understand travel patterns, trends and emerging opportunities in the development of the new LTP has included a review of data specific to Wokingham borough and engagement with local and regional stakeholders. The draft document provides a summary of the evidence informing the Plan, including ‘principles’ engagement completed in spring 2023.

The LTP lists its objectives under three themes: create healthy and safe places; reduce environmental impacts; and grow the economy. It also brings together complementary transport strategies, such as the Bus Service Improvements Plan (BSIP) and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The LTP concludes with an action plan.

The LTP aligns with other plans and strategies that the Council has produced, such as the Local Plan and Council Plan, and National and Regional strategies such as the Transport for South East sub-national transport body (STB).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	See below	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	See below	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	See below	Yes	Revenue and Capital

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The LTP development has been funded using existing revenue budgets. The LTP will be delivered from several funding sources including LTP integrated block, developer/ Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and external grant funding. The speed of delivery is dependent on funding, and our only currently guaranteed source of funding is from the LTP integrated block.

The Council has a good record in securing external funding and central to this has been developing infrastructure schemes and integrating infrastructure plans with new development. An updated LTP will enable the council to be opportunistic when funding becomes available.

Recent government announcements for bus services and walking and cycling improvements are well aligned with priorities set out in the LTP. Opportunities to align the delivery of the plan with planned maintenance and/or renewals will also be identified. Such integration will ensure better value for money and reduce disruption for users of the transport network.

Proposed annual programmes for LTP promoted measures will be included in the capital programme.

Public Sector Equality Duty

An initial impact assessment has been completed. This identified that draft LTP4 strategy themes were expected to have a neutral or positive impact overall on those with a protected characteristic. When schemes are taken forward, there may be a requirement for full scheme-specific Equalities Impact Assessment to be completed.

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

National guidance on quantifying carbon impacts from transport strategies, that was originally expected in Summer 2022, is still awaited. However, the LTP has been developed mindful of, and in line with, the anticipated guidance and has reducing environmental impacts as one of its three themes supported by several objectives. The LTP acknowledges the importance of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and includes measures throughout to address climate change to help reduce the impact of road transport on carbon emissions.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

Enc 1 - LTP4 Draft Strategy and Action Plan

The main document which is the subject of the consultation, and schemes which are proposed to be delivered in the plan period.

Enc 2 – LTP4 Sustainability Report and EQIA

The Sustainability Appraisal Report ensures that sustainability aspects are incorporated into the LTP4. It combines the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). This document will form part of the LTP4 consultation in autumn 2023.

Enc 3 – Proposed questions for consultation

Enc 4 - LTP4 Background paper: Evidence Base

Details of evidence used in the development of the strategy.

Enc 5 - LTP4 Background Paper: Spring 2023 Engagement Report

An overview of the initial engagement exercise carried out in March 2023.

Contact Robert Curtis

Service Place

Telephone No 0118 974 6489

Email robert.curtis@wokingham.gov.uk