

Meeting: Executive
Date: 13 October 2009
Subject: Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3)
Report of: Councillor Tom Nicols, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development
Summary: This report sets out how the Council might go about producing a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Central Bedfordshire. It presents two options as to how the council could develop the LTP and seeks the views of Executive as to the best way forward.

Advising Officer: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Paul Cook, Head of Transport Strategy
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: ALL
Function of: Executive
Key Decision Yes
**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-
in
(if appropriate)** Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **that Executive decide the approach to be taken for the Council's Local Transport Plan and either:-**
 - a. **pursues a two-tier approach to LTP3 as described in the report, developing stronger partnerships with all neighbouring authorities covering strategy and issues over a broader area but documented in each authorities' own LTPs.**
 - Or**
 - b. **continues with the approach previously adopted by Bedfordshire County Council: that of producing two separate plans: the first covering an area appropriate for the Luton and South Bedfordshire conurbation, the second covering the remainder of Central Bedfordshire.**

Reason for Recommendations : *So that Central Bedfordshire can move forward in preparing LTP 3 for the area and can inform the Luton and South-Bedfordshire Joint Transport Committee its preferred approach.*

Background

1. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a statutory document which sets out the strategies and programmes of local transport authorities for transport in their areas. Currently Central Bedfordshire is covered by two LTPs which were previously prepared by Bedfordshire County Council: The Bedfordshire LTP2 and the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis LTP2.

A new Local Transport Plan (LTP 3), the first for Central Bedfordshire, is due to be in place by March 31st 2011.

In Summer 2009, DfT produced guidance for LTP3. This guidance allows local authorities to use the Local Transport Planning framework in a way that delivers an LTP that works best for them, taking clear account of local circumstances. This means authorities can develop their own strategy, targets and implementation programmes which fit 'hand in glove' with local circumstances, but which also clearly contributes toward government goals.

2. Under the amended Local Transport Act 2008 settlements for transport will be included as a part of the assessment of an authority's performance in the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

While the Department for Transport will still wish to review an authority's Local Transport Plan, this review will not form part of a stand-alone assessment in the calculation for LTP funding allocations.

With this in mind it will be important for authorities to develop their Local Transport Plans in an integrated fashion to their broader Sustainable Communities Strategy.

3. Central Bedfordshire needs to consider how best to produce a new Local Transport Plan consistent with the needs of the authority. Given the geographical position of the Central Bedfordshire and its travel patterns, it will be essential that such a plan promotes improved joint working arrangements with all neighbouring authorities.

LTP Guidance

4. LTP 3 provides the authority with the opportunity to develop a new Local Transport Plan with a new approach. Important to this approach is the need to comprehensively link transport strategy to other key areas affecting the council. This is strongly supported by the requirement within LTP guidance to demonstrate how transport will contribute to the five key transport goals of Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) of:

- Supporting economic growth
- Tackling climate change
- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Contributing to better safety, security and health
- Improving quality of life

An important element of the guidance is that Local Transport Plans should be used as “a vital tool to help each local authority work with its stakeholders to strengthen its place-shaping role and its delivery of services to the community.”

The guidance also recognises that “in a number of parts of the country, economic areas overlap and it may not be straightforward to decide on appropriate boundaries for LTP coverage.” This is a particularly important consideration for Central Bedfordshire, which has a strong economic and travel overlap with Luton Borough, Bedford Borough, Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire County Councils. Central Bedfordshire Council will need to develop strong cross boundary working relationships with these authorities as well as with Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire County Councils to deliver its strategic planning and access plans. In such circumstances, the guidance recommends that “authorities may wish to consider arrangements for partnership and collaboration which fall short of a fully Joint Plan.”

Central Bedfordshire - an intersection in the economy and the transport network

5. In Central Bedfordshire, the local economy is interlinked with a number of adjacent authorities. This is clearly apparent in the pattern of journeys to work, with around half these trips travelling to centres outside the authority boundary, including Milton Keynes, Bedford, Stevenage and Luton, and with three major main rail line corridors and two strategic national roads to London. One of the strongest travel relationships is between Central Bedfordshire and Luton

The strategic transport network in and through Central Bedfordshire supports both links between Central Bedfordshire and its neighbouring authorities, but supports links between the neighbouring authorities and links between neighbouring authorities (e.g. Bedford to Luton). This, in effect, positions Central Bedfordshire at the intersection of the local economy and transport network locally, regionally and nationally.

Central Bedfordshire also has a strong decentralised economy within its boundary with economic activity focussed around the towns and the larger villages. There are also a number of small specialised industries in aerospace, automotive, information technology, research and education.

Central Bedfordshire’s LTP must be prepared to reflect these diverse influences in a way which is consistent with LTP guidance.

A New Authority, a New Local Transport Plan and a New Approach

6. The preferred approach being suggested is for Central Bedfordshire Council to produce a plan covering the whole of Central Bedfordshire whilst at the same time ensuring improved joint working with neighbouring authorities. If agreed by Executive, the plan would be developed in two tiers;

First Tier: The strategic Network Plan – supporting the “intersection” in the economy and transport, providing access and services to major centres outside the authority boundary, as well as access through Central Bedfordshire. This is where Central Bedfordshire Council will focus the relationships with neighbouring authorities partnering on issues of strategic mutual and sub-

regional importance. Joint Partnering Opportunities are listed in **Appendix A**. Particularly important in this respect will be the partnership with Luton Borough Council.

Second Tier: Community Transport Plans – supporting the local economy and growth, ensuring access and services in and around the market towns and rural communities. This will also ensure Central Bedfordshire communities have a sense of Place.

The key features/advantages of this approach are;

- it allows the establishment of appropriate partnerships to jointly plan, document and manage the strategic network and transport issues of mutual interest,
- it provides for these outcomes to be documented and adopted by each authority in their own local transport plans,
- it is not a joint local transport plan defined by a spatial area,
- community-level transport policy, planning and issues are retained and managed by each respective authority for their own authority area,
- it reduces interface risk between Local Transport Plans (currently Central Bedfordshire carries the interface risk between the Joint LTP with Luton and the current Local Transport Plan inherited from Bedfordshire County Council),
- the flexible approach allows for effective change management responding to government policy and changes to the network,
- it can be covered by a variety of partnership models,
- It provides a clear and transparent approach to addressing community issues and needs through a series of Market Town and Rural Strategies,
- it will be the most efficient use of resources for Central Bedfordshire to prepare a single plan covering the whole of its geographic area. Preparation of two LTPs would require additional resource not currently budgeted for (see financial implications),
- Central Bedfordshire Council will need to only approve one plan instead of two plans,
- better integrates to the Sustainable Communities Strategy and strengthens Central Bedfordshire's ability to secure funding through the CAAs.

This approach has been informally consulted at officer level with key neighbouring authorities (Bedford Borough Council, Milton Keynes Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council) and Go-East. Discussions are also ongoing with Luton Borough Council.

The Spatial Area of the Local Transport Plan 3 and Joint Working with Luton

7. Earlier this year in March 2009, prior to Central Bedfordshire Council coming into operation the Joint Transport Committee considered the options for future preparation of LTP3 covering the Luton/Dunstable conurbation. The Joint Committee suggested that the preferred approach might be to continue joint transport planning for the conurbation, widening the spatial area of LTP2 to include any urban extensions planned for through the Local Development Framework. However, the Joint Committee caveated it's consideration to

ensure the new Central Bedfordshire Council had opportunity to take its own view before moving forward.

The current proposal by the Joint Transport Committee is to extend the spatial area of the Joint Local Transport Plan to include the urban extensions to the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis Conurbation. (See **Appendix B**, Figure A)

The flexibility of the amended legislation and the two tier approach to a new LTP presents the opportunity to consider joint working with Luton Borough Council differently. Under a two tier approach Central Bedfordshire would build on its working relationship with Luton to undertake joint transport planning and strategy work through the Joint Transport Committee. The outcomes of this work, however, would be documented within both authorities' own Local Transport Plans. This approach, unconstrained by any spatial boundary;

1. enables transport issues with their origins or impact beyond the Luton/Dunstable, Houghton Regis Growth Area to be fully considered in partnership and;
2. Retains the community level transport planning within each authority's area.

The proposed spatial area for the Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan would therefore be based on the authority boundary but would also include strategy and plans at the strategic level covering network and travel patterns to destinations outside of Central Bedfordshire including, to Luton, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Bedford Borough and Cambridgeshire.

Luton would also develop a local transport plan based on its authority area but would extend its coverage at a strategic level over a broader area of Central Bedfordshire than simply the conurbation, including key corridors, services and travel plans. (See **Appendix B**, Figure B)

8. Under the current arrangements for the LTP2 the financial settlement for each authority is based on local authority administrative boundaries, not the boundaries of the current LTP2. The new DfT guidance makes it clear that this would not change when preparing LTP3.
9. Informal discussions with Luton Borough Council officers have indicated that they currently prefer the approach originally suggested by the Joint Transport Committee prior to 1st April this year. The main advantage seen by Luton is that a joint plan would continue to illustrate joint transport planning for the conurbation. However, the two tiered approach being recommended will not in any way dilute the effectiveness of joint planning or implementation of transport policy and schemes in and around the conurbation. Indeed, by ensuring that joint transport planning is unconstrained by the conurbation boundary, it enables other partners (including Hertfordshire) to be more effectively engaged, and will deliver more comprehensive treatment of transport issues affecting the conurbation.

Furthermore, in looking at strategic corridors, the two-tier approach would assist in ensuring that the interests of those who live outside the conurbation but access it for jobs, health, services and leisure purposes are fully represented. This would be to the advantage of both Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

Joint working will also be cemented through the joint sign off of implementation plans reviewed annually by partners which will deliver on the actions set out in LTP3.

Conclusion

10. From the point of view of Central Bedfordshire, the advantages of a two tier approach to preparing LTP3 are considered to be greater than the advantages of seeking to maintain 2 LTPs.

Producing a single plan would enable the Council to reflect properly its status, promoting a sense of place for the area which is more in keeping with the spirit of government guidance for the LTP. A single plan would lead to strengthened joint working across all of the Council's boundaries and should also assist in ensuring that transport maximises its effectiveness in helping to deliver wider goals.

The concern that Luton Borough has expressed – that such a plan might lead to a dilution of the partnership with Central Bedfordshire – can be overcome, but in order to do so it is vital that care is taken properly to work with the Borough, ensuring that agreed strategies and programmes are documented in both authorities' LTPs.

The preparation of a single LTP3 for Central Bedfordshire can also be delivered within the confines of existing budgeted resources.

ORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

- **Supporting and caring for an ageing population**
The Local Transport Plan will improve access and mobility in and around our market towns and villages delivering a better level of social inclusion, including that for the ageing population
- **Managing growth effectively**
Preparation of a new high quality LTP will help to ensure appropriate transport infrastructure and projects are provided effectively to match growth proposals and improve travel for all of our County. Future updates of LTP3 and integrating the business across sustainable communities will enable Central Bedfordshire to actively manage and respond to growth.
- **Promoting healthier lifestyles**
The LTP will have an emphasis on sustainable transport including walking and cycling, promoting healthier lifestyles.

Financial:

The proposed approach is designed to position Central Bedfordshire and its partner authorities well in bidding for funding.

The change of approach in terms of joint working with Luton is not expected to have any negative funding implications for either Central Bedfordshire Council or Luton Borough Council.

The revenue costs of the proposals in this report are included in the Central Bedfordshire Approved Revenue Budget for 2009/10 (26 February 2009). However, should a decision be made to produce two Local Transport Plans, this will result in the need for additional staff or equivalent resources to complete the work. It is estimated that this would be in the region of 2 new principal transport planners. This is because, with two plans, there would be a need to write a number of strategies twice. In order to achieve this, a bid would need to be made for growth from 2010/11 onwards. This growth bid would be in the order of £106,000.00 (including on costs).

There are no other negative financial implications arising from this report.

Legal:

A legal review of the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Transport (Local Government Act section 101) Committee is required to identify any implications (if any) and what amendments (if any) are required to the Terms of Reference to facilitate this.

- Reference has been made within the Report to the Local Government Act 2008 and to draft (and expected final) statutory guidance on producing LTPs;
- The proposal relates to a statutory duty.

Risk Management:

The proposed approach is reliant on relationships and good governance: however, this is also the case with existing relationships.

The proposed approach removes an interface risk between the conurbation and the broader Central Bedfordshire authority area.

In terms of the relationship with Luton, a clear direction and leadership from Central Bedfordshire is required to manage the relationship with Luton Borough Council who at this stage are prefer the continuation of the existing Joint Local Transport Approach established with the Local Transport Plan principles and practices.

Luton are currently proceeding with developing the evidence base which will support joint working between the two authorities irrespective of the final documentation outcome.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

N/A

Equalities/Human Rights:

Retention of community level planning in the Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan will give a stronger focus on our communities through the Market Town and Rural Strategies.

The focus of relationships with neighbouring authorities on strategic policy, planning and strategy will improve planning in areas such as access to services, access to health care better service planning and integration.

Community Safety:

Retention of community level policy and planning within the Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan can improve community safety through better integration to the broader transport and sustainable community delivery programme.

Sustainability:

The LTP is an important element of Central Bedfordshire's response to Government Sustainability goals as expressed in "Delivering a Sustainable Transport System" (DaSTS). Integrated with the business of Sustainable Communities the LTP process will contribute to environmental and sustainability targets outside of DaSTS.

Appendices:

Appendix A - List of joint planning/partnering opportunities

Appendix B - Spatial Areal

Background Papers (open to public inspection): None