Meeting:	**Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
Date:	**16 November 2010**
Subject:	**Access to Services Strategy (one of the Journey Purpose Strategies forming part of the Local Transport Plan 3)**
Report of:	**Cllr Tom Nicols , Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development**
Summary:	The report summarises the content of the Central Bedfordshire Access to Key Services Strategy which will form part of the third Local Transport Plan for Central Bedfordshire.

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Public/Exempt:	Public
Wards Affected:	All
Function of:	Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The Access to Key Services Strategy and the Local Transport Plan (LTP), of which it is part, will help contribute towards the creation of sustainable communities and the effective management of needed growth across the authority, as part of the development of Central Bedfordshire as an economic powerhouse. This will be achieved by providing the capacity to accommodate an increase in travel demand through the creation of more efficient use of transport networks and the provision, promotion and education about alternatives to car travel for journeys to schools.

Financial:

Will help inform the allocation of the Integrated Transport Budget received through the Local Transport Plan process and will enable developer contributions for new developments to help align for existing local aspirations.

Legal:

The LTP is a statutory document which the authority is legally required to produce.

Risk Management:

No direct implications

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

No direct implications

Equalities/Human Rights:

An Equalities Impact Assessment is being produced for the LTP, of which the Access to Key Services Strategy will form a key part.

Community Safety:

The Access to Key Services Strategy seeks to improve sustainable access solutions to key destinations and reduce the impact of car based trips on local communities including the number of road traffic accidents.

Sustainability:

The Strategy seeks to encourage more sustainable forms of travel for journeys and reduce the number of car journeys to key destinations.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. **That member's endorse the Vision & Objectives of the strategy.**

2. **That members endorse the proposed priorities and intervention methods.**

3 **Members provide comment to inform the final draft.**


Background

1. Enabling our citizens to be able to access key services is essential to achieving a sense of place within our communities and access to health, shopping and leisure activities is an integral element of ensuring we have thriving economic towns and districts.

   To reduce congestion and enable more opportunities for residents without access to a car we need to ensure that there are viable alternatives available to single occupancy car travel and that walking, cycling and public transport is seen as a reasonable choice.

2. The following figures demonstrate the Access to Key Services Strategy relationship within the LTP3 and other related strategies.

Figure 1: Structure of the Local transport Plan
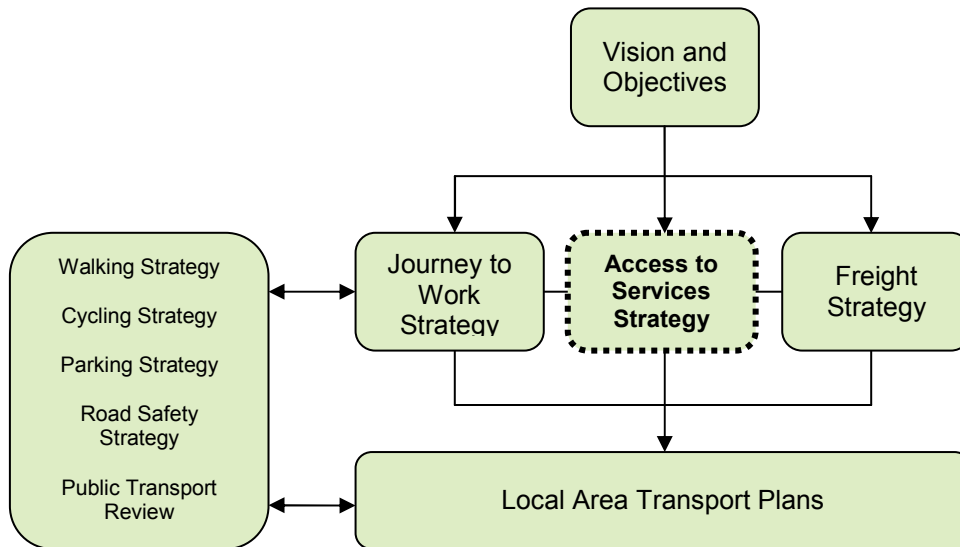
Figure 2: Composition of the Access to Services Strategy
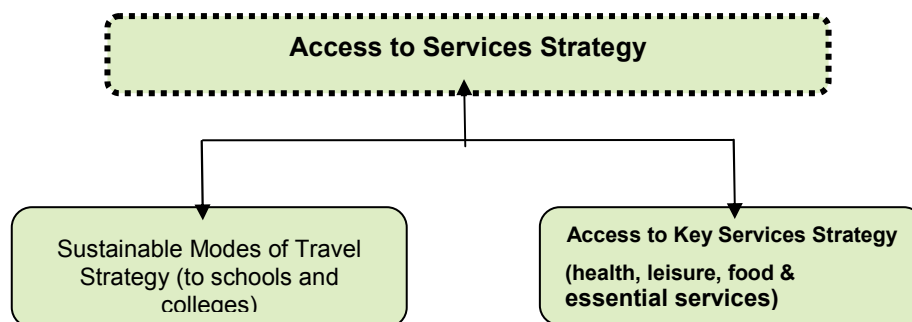
Introduction

3. Ensuring our residents can access key services is an integral element of ensuring a sense of place within our communities. Furthermore the economic viability of an area is partly judged on the facilities on offer and the opportunities for accessing those services in a quick and convenient manner.

4. This Strategy sets out the Councils approach for delivering those priorities by focussing on access to the following key services:

- Health care
- Food shopping & essential services
- Leisure, culture and tourism

Barriers that can prevent people from accessing essential services include:

- The availability and suitability of transport options
- Services and activities located in appropriate places

- Cost of transport options
- Safety and security
- Limited or the perception of a lack of information

5. Priority action areas have been identified for each of the strategic objectives of the strategy using information gathered in the accessibility assessment which then focuses on a five point plan based on the following principles:

- Land use planning
- Smarter choices
- Infrastructure & Service provision / enhancing the network
- Network management
- Demand management

The five work areas are complementary to each other and will be used to deliver integrated transport solutions.

Vision & Objectives

6. The vision for the Access to Services Strategy is:

To achieve a Sense of Place for residents by enabling sustainable, accessible & integrated links to key services.

We aim to achieve this vision by:

- Working in partnership to ensure strategies and programmes are working cohesively to offer the most effective services, in the right places, to those who need them most.
- Sustaining and enabling a vibrant economy to ensure communities in Central Bedfordshire have quality of life
- Creating sustainable local communities where a range of quality services are accessible to all

In order to achieve this vision three strategic objectives have been derived:

1	**Health**	Improve access to healthcare provision by core health services (hospitals, NHS Direct, GP Services)
2	**Food shopping & Essential Services**	Ensure access to food shops and essential services by maintaining and enhancing the viability of local and district centres
3	**Leisure & Countryside**	Enable access to our Countryside sites by promoting healthier lifestyles
4	**Leisure, Culture & Tourism**	Enable access to a range of leisure, culture and tourism facilities for residents and visitors in order to enhance economic growth.

Accessibility Assessment

7.   The core source of assessment was by mapping which has been produced using Accession including recalculations of the DfT's core accessibility indicator sets. Other sources of data sources and information include the 2001 Census, the indices of Deprivation data, the 2010 householder survey, Local Development Framework as well as information gathered from partners and stakeholders.

The following gives a brief summary of the results:

(a)   Health (Hospitals) - Because of the fact that there are relatively few hospitals, it will take longer for a significant proportion of the Central Bedfordshire area to access them, accession showed not surprisingly many rural areas had over 30 minute travel time.   However this distance is mitigated against NHS provision for specialist care within the community, NHS Direct and Patient Transport provision.

Health (Doctors) – The householder travel survey revealed that encouragingly 94% of respondents cited that they had not experienced a problem when trying to access healthcare, although for the social group D/E[1] told us they were more likely to experience more difficulty with 11% saying they found it fairly or very difficult to access healthcare.

(b)   Food & Essential Services – Accession illustrated that some areas of Central Bedfordshire offered an 18 minute journey time to their nearest food outlet. The analysis includes grocery shops, supermarkets and convenience stores; however what the information is not able to tell us whether the food is either healthy or affordable and it is important to remember that these areas are more sparsely populated and levels of car ownership is higher.

Local Government - In the north of the authority area, access to Local Government is generally more difficult than in the southern area. The 4 main towns in the area, Ampthill, Flitwick, Sandy, and Biggleswade, are all within 30 minutes journey time of Local Government, as is Shefford due to the close proximity of Chicksands. Some of the larger rural villages which are on key public transport routes such as Arlesey, Houghton Conquest, and Potton can also access Local Government relatively quickly. Notable exceptions to this are Cranfield and Marston Moretaine, where the lack of direct public transport links to Local Government means that they are inaccessible.

Libraries – There is generally a good level of access to libraries within Central Bedfordshire, with on average a 25 minute journey time. The rural areas also currently benefit from a mobile service.

(c)   Leisure, culture & tourism - The importance of leisure and tourism activities for the local economy and the importance of local leisure facilities such as parks, open spaces, leisure and sports centres provide local opportunities for more active lifestyles.

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[1] D/E – Working Class (unemployed and dependants, semi and unskilled manual workers, pensioners, state dependant, trainees, apprentices and unemployed)

In terms of retail spend for leisure recent research[2] shows that 74% of retail spend leaks out of Central Bedfordshire; 34% to Milton Keynes, 12% to Luton and 7% to Bedford and 8% to Central London. In the reverse direction Dunstable imports 36% of its trade from outside Central Bedfordshire mainly Luton.

During the daytime most journey times were on average 30 minutes, however many leisure activities take place in the evening and during the weekends, when public transport is restricted or not available. This is a particular problem for segments of our community living in deprived areas, rural areas and who are elderly.

Priorities

9. The Strategy is reflective of the wider policy context both nationally and locally. The Accessibility assessment and continuing discussion with partners has enabled us to filter the number of priority actions detailed under each of the Access to Services objectives.

The rationale used to select these priorities is as follows:

> **Contribution to wider policies** – ensuring that the policies are key in enabling the wider objectives of both Central Bedfordshire Council and partner organisations.

> **Need** – need for action evidenced from accessibility assessments (mapping and other data sources), discussions with partners, feedback from the wider public and community.

> **Opportunity & Integration** – in the current economic climate it is essential to be able to maximise and integrate with existing programmed schemes/interventions and development opportunities as well as the other Journey Purpose Strategies.

> **Deliverability** – the actions need to be feasible, affordable, practical and achievable.

> **Partner support –** essential in terms of expert input.

There will need to be a short-medium-long term focus in terms of implementing potential intervention measures.

Accessibility depends on the inter-relationship between three components:

- Population/User groups (Origin)
- Services (Destination)
- Links between the two (Physical and communication)

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[2] CACI Balance of trade reports 2010

The programmes of interventions will also need to focus on the priority area programme agreed within the LTP3 for the creation of Local Area Transport Plans, the programme being:

Table 6.4: LTP3 Local Area Transport Plan

Local Area Transport Plan	LTP3 program year
Dunstable & Houghton Regis Leighton-Linslade Stotfold & Arlesey Sandy & Biggleswade	2011-2012
Flitwick & Ampthill Shefford & Surrounds South Bedfordshire Rural Areas Marston Vale	2012-2013
Chiltern Downs Toddington North Bedfordshire Rural Area East Bedfordshire Rural Area Wixam	2013-2014

10. The following gives proposals for areas in which we should focus intervention measures:

Objective 1: Health
"Improve access to healthcare provision by core health services (hospitals, NHS Direct, GP Services)"

Priority H1   Work with the NHS and neighbouring authorities to improve access to the hospital sites used by Central Bedfordshire's residents specifically the Dunstable & Luton Hospital which has the most effect on our local roads and has the potential for local walking & cycling improvements.

Priority H2   Support the NHS and neighbouring authorities with the aim of introducing Travel Plans

Priority H3   Help improve access to NHS direct

Priority H4   Improve access to GP services within the main district centres

Priority H5   Work with the NHS to promote the use of local services and locations which support healthy lifestyles i.e. leisure centres, parks, open spaces.

Objective 2: Food & Essential Services
"Ensure access to food stores and essential public services by maintaining and enhancing the viability of local and district centres"

Priority FES1   Within the LATP's include integrated sustainable schemes linking key communities (inc priority neighbourhoods) to local shopping facilities and district centres.

Priority FES2	Support the Masterplans for the district centres and optimise the opportunities to improve access.
Priority FES3	Improve access to council services.

Objective 3: Leisure & Countryside
Enable access to our Countryside sites by promoting healthier lifestyles

Priority LC1	Implement targeted public transport information
Priority LC2	Use the Rights of Way improvement plans to promote the use the of local services and locations which support healthy lifestyles
Priority LC3	Improve facilities for cyclists at existing sites within district centres

Objective 4: Leisure, Culture & Tourism
Enable Access to a range of leisure, culture and tourism facilities for residents and visitors in order to enhance economic growth.

Priority LCT 1	Ensure that all new leisure and tourist facilities take into consideration access from local communities as well as visitors

Access to Services, Journey to work & SMOTS:
Cross themed priorities

Priority CT1	Improve access for Older people
Priority CT2	Enable more Younger people to use public transport, walking and cycling
Priority CT3	Improve connections through and across district centres critically to incorporate access from key communities to key services
Priority CT4	Integration of accessibility planning in new developments with the expectation that measures would contribute to a minimum mode shift of 20% (based upon neighbouring ward census data)
Priority CT5	Develop a programme of Smarter Choices interventions including travel plans
Priority CT6	Improve inter-regional transport connections
Priority CT7	Develop and implement a program of public transport information improvements
Priority CT8	Develop and implement a program of public transport infrastructure improvements at key origin and destination points.
Priority CT9	Explore the potential for incorporating existing CBC services with other key services in order to improve access and service provision within the rural areas i.e. mobile library

Priority CT10   Help develop community rural networks i.e. car sharing 'for reward' schemes, rural car clubs, lift-giving etc.

Priority CT11   Incorporate shared space concepts into local areas, particularly when tackling speeding and road safety concerns.

Priority CT12   Explore the opportunities for the creation of a singular or joint UTCC

Appendices:
Appendix A – Access to Key Services Strategy