

PAPER NO.9

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF JUNE 15TH 2015

Meeting: Executive
Date: 15 June 2015
Subject: Market Harborough Transport Strategy
Report of: Stephen Pointer
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Philip King
Status: For recommendation
Relevant Ward(s): Logan; Welland; Little Bowden; Great Bowden and Arden

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval to fund and undertake a Transport Strategy for Market Harborough jointly with Leicestershire County Council.

2 Recommendations:

- 2.1 **Executive recommend to Council the proposal for a Transport Strategy for Market Harborough to be undertaken jointly with the County Council;**
- 2.2 **Executive recommend to Council funding of £100,000 be allocated to this project, to be funded from the Council's earmarked General Reserve Fund.**
- 2.3 **That the progress be reported to the Harborough Highways Partnership and the final Strategy be brought back to the Executive in April 2016.**

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

To provide a comprehensive transport framework for the town in order to

- a) renew long term priorities for future investment to aid movement of goods and people whilst maintaining the attractiveness of the town;
- b) establish solutions and schemes which are capable of attracting funding and implementation over the period 2011-2031,

- c) support the Local Plan and development of a potential Market Harborough town centre masterplan by providing a clear evidence of transport priorities and solutions.

4 Key Facts

- 4.1 Building on the work that was carried out to develop the Core Strategy, Leicestershire County Council is proposing to undertake work to develop a Transport Strategy for Market Harborough and wishes this to be undertaken jointly with the District Council. Officers support this approach as having an up to date Transport Strategy in place for Market Harborough will support the work the preparation of the up to date Local Plan and will make an important contribution to ensuring that the Local Plan is sound. It will also support other work the Council may wish to pursue in future such as the preparation of a master plan for Market Harborough town centre. Officers of each Council have met to discuss this proposal further and have developed a short brief for the project to outline the key stages, timescales and anticipated costs. This is attached at Appendix A for information.
- 4.2 The purpose of the Strategy is to investigate traffic conditions in the town, identify key issues and propose and test possible solutions to improve movement by different modes of transport.
- 4.3 The County Council has been undertaking similar exercises in other County towns – notably Hinckley and Melton as a basis for developing schemes and projects for implementation in future years linked into Local Plans. Aside from the Core Strategy work, Market Harborough has not had a significant traffic study completed since the 1990's when the A6 bypass was completed and the bypass demonstration project was implemented in the town centre.
- 4.4 The Core Strategy proposals for Market Harborough were tested by early use of the Leicester and Leicestershire Integrated Transport Model which helped identify impacts and a package of mitigation measures which included potential modifications to traffic management in the town centre. However these were not in sufficient detail and never considered to be the sole option available.
- 4.5 The Market Harborough Transport Strategy will enable all potential options for transport improvement within the town to be explored and agreement reached on the appropriate solutions, taking into account existing committed development proposals, future funding streams and the likely level of future growth which will be identified in the Local Plan during 2015/16.
- 4.6 In addition to the final report from the study it will provide the necessary evidence and bid documents for submission to the Leicestershire and Leicester Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) for any infrastructure funding that is required to deliver the recommendations from the report.

- 4.6 This study also has clear linkages to the delivery of the draft Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) Implementation Plan 2015/16 which was approved by the County Council Cabinet on 16 March and includes the following Key Action;

“Undertake a study of transport conditions in Market Harborough town centre, with the intention of being able to identify potential options for addressing issues by no later than end March 2016”

The commitment of the County Council within the LTP3 Action Plan is very welcomed.

- 4.7 Officers of both Councils have met several times to discuss the scope timescales and costings. Efforts have been made to condense the programme in order to ensure that it can report in time for its conclusions to be taken account of within the Local Plan Pre Submission Draft which is expected to be prepared by March 2016. This means a 12 month programme and this is considered achievable subject to the issues raised in paragraph 8 below. Appended to this document (Appendix A) is a project proposal which has been prepared by the County Council and agreed with the Strategic Planning Manager. This shows the project divided into two phases. Appendix C shows the proposed timetable which sees the study and strategy completed by the end of March 2016 which will enable its conclusions to inform the Local Plan, due for consideration by Advisory Panel and Council in April and May 2016.
- 4.8 This timetable has implications for the overall cost of the project and its scope. In order to achieve the timetable, it will be necessary for the County Council to utilise additional external consultancy advice during Phase 1 and also Phase 2. The indicative budgetary cost for Phase 1 is therefore £100,000, with a further £100,000 forecast for Phase 2. The County Council have currently committed £100,000 in their approved budget. These costs have been tested by officers of the District Council seeking high level costs from alternative providers and have been found to be good value for money.
- 4.9 It will be necessary for the District Council to allocate up to £100,000 towards this project and will require approval by Council since this level of expenditure has not been built into current budget estimates for 2015/16.
- 4.10 In addition the scope of the project will need to focus on Market Harborough. Members have indicated their desire for a study to include the A6 corridor between Market Harborough and Leicester and also a study relating to the Lutterworth area. These studies have been discussed further between officers of the two authorities.
- 4.11 In the case of Lutterworth, the County Council have transport data obtained when an assessment was made of the town in 2009 and the more recent South West Leicestershire work. Potential development proposals have recently been presented to the Council through the Local Plan process which may aid the provision of an A426 Relief Road to the east of Lutterworth. Unlike at Market Harborough, potential improvements for different modes of

transportation within Lutterworth will be highly dependent on what approach is taken to the issue of strategic development and infrastructure provision. It is proposed therefore that the study of Lutterworth will need to be developed further as part of the transport evidence required in order to assess such development options further and also to inform the development of the Local Plan.

- 4.12 A similar issue presents itself regarding the A6 Corridor between the A6 Market Harborough bypass and Oadby. The issue of this transport strategy is influenced to a great degree by the response to potential development pressures arising along the A6 corridor. Transport consultants have been appointed by promoters of development within the A6 Corridor at the Kibworths which is also being considered through the Local Plan. It is proposed therefore that studies the A6 corridor continue as part of the transport evidence which will be required in order to assess this development option further and also to inform the development of the Local Plan.

5. Project Management

- 5.1 A possible management framework for the project, outlining roles and responsibilities is attached as Appendix B.

The Project Board will include senior officers from both Councils and will be held quarterly to coincide with study key milestones.

1. July 2014 Officer and Wider Panel workshops
 2. Oct 2014 End of Phase 1 (Investigation of current and future conditions: Identification of potential transport solutions to issues identified by the Study to this point)
 3. Jan 2015 Mid-point of Phase 2 (Assessment of solutions and recommendations and associated revisions and improvements to them in the light of the later findings of the ongoing study)
 4. Apr 2015 End of Phase 2 and final suite of solutions and recommendations to be presented to both Leicestershire County Council Highways and Harborough District Council.
- 5.2 On a more regular basis, project progress/ checkpoint meetings between the Project Manager and District Council officers will be incorporated into the work programme where the Project Manager would provide a summary of progress and outline planned work for the coming period.
- 5.3 With regards to member engagement, it is proposed to report progress on this project via the existing Harborough Highway Forum meetings (28th July and 3rd Nov). Members will also be able to feed into the project at a proposed stakeholder workshop. As traffic surveys are carried out a local member briefing will also be undertaken, An engagement and consultation plan, which

would include scheduled communication with ward councillors will be prepared as part of the Project Initiation documentation.

6 Legal Issues

6.1 None

7 Resource Issues

7.1 Provision for a Market Harborough Transport Study was not included as a separate growth bid for the 2015/16 Budget. The current Local Development Fund Reserve (estimated value £228K at the end of 2014/15) is fully committed. If recommended by Executive to Council to undertake the joint study with Leicestershire County Council there will be the need for an additional drawdown from Reserves to fund the study, It is recommended that this is funded from the Earmarked General Reserve Fund.

8 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

8.1 The Strategy will be subject to equality analysis as it progresses and implications/outcomes reported through the project management arrangements.

9. Risk Management Implications

9.1 The County Council have already built this programme of work into their capital programme for 2015/16. If the District Council does not participate in this project, only part of the work will be able to complete and the project will not benefit from the District Councils engagement and it is likely the work will not be available to support the preparation of a sound Local Plan for the District, and to support other work streams such as the potential Market Harborough Master Plan work. It will also have less significance and this may contribute to less than effective transport management of the town.

10 Consultation

10.1 Discussion has taken place with the Portfolio Holder about this proposal and Ward Members have been notified as this report has been prepared.

11. Options

11.1 Not to support the invitation from Leicestershire County Council to jointly fund and manage the project. The Study and Strategy would be limited by the lack of additional funding which the District Council would bring. It would provide evidence and assessment of highway issues and options but the Strategy would not develop those further into costed projects and without the involvement of the District Council, the work by fail to be aligned with the Local Plan and Development Management may be impaired by failing to

arrive at costed projects which planning obligations can be sought resulting in a lack of important information to help assess future planning applications.

- 11.2 To carry out a study and strategy independently of the County Council. The Council could partner with an independent consultant but this option would bring reduced benefits. The study would not be fully aligned with LCC as Highway Authority. There is a clear and overriding benefit of working in close, seamless partnership with LCC on this matter to produce a joint study and combine resources.

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 None

Previous report(s):

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Y/N

Ward Members Notified: Y

Appendices:

A: Project Brief

B: Project Governance

C: Project Timeline