

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016

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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016  
**Subject:** Market Harborough Transport Study  
**Report of:** Strategic Planning Manager  
**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Jo Brodrick  
**Status:** For information and comment  
**Relevant Ward(s):** All

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1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise the Executive of the emerging recommendations arising from a transport study jointly funded by the County Council and the District Council. The study considers the current and future condition and performance of the transport network in Market Harborough taking into account planned and expected future growth.
- 1.2 To advise the Executive of the next stages of the study and note that County Council officers are seeking agreement from the Cabinet at its meeting on September 9<sup>th</sup> to undertake an engagement and consultation exercise on the outcomes of the Study in order to develop a preferred transport strategy for the town.

2 Recommendation:

- 2.1 **The emerging outcomes of the recent Study, with particular reference to the key findings and recommendations outlined in section 5 of this report be noted.**
- 2.2 **The outcomes of the Study be used as evidence to support the preparation of the Harborough Local Plan.**
- 2.3 **A proposed engagement and consultation exercise on the development of a transport strategy, based on the draft strategy identified in the study, by the County Council be noted.**

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that the Executive is aware of the outputs of the Market Harborough Transport Study which has been funded jointly by the District and

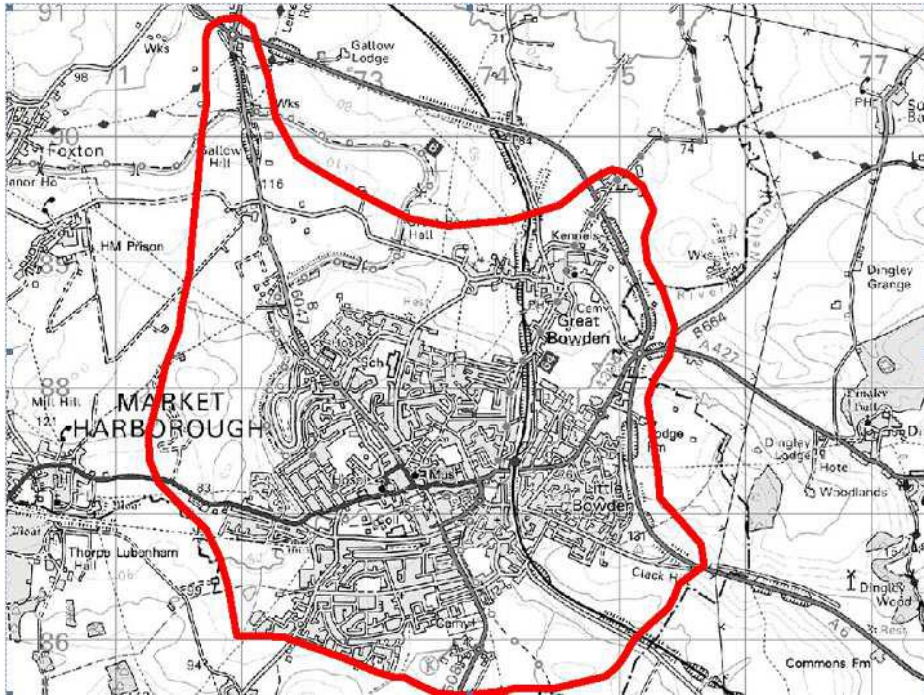
County Councils.. When complete it is intended that the Transport Strategy will not only assist with the implementation of Harborough District Council's new Local Plan, but it will also ensure that the County Council continues to deliver an efficient transport network and develop well planned infrastructure to support economic and population growth ambitions in the town.

- 3.2 To ensure that the Executive note that the outputs of the Study will be used as an evidence base document to support the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 3.3 Government funding for transport projects remains heavily focused on the delivery of economic growth. Government money for local schemes is generally now being awarded via Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's), which have to demonstrate how investments will support economic growth.
- 3.4 The development of the Study has provided a strong evidence base, bringing together existing known and future anticipated transport issues and providing the enhanced context and justification required to exploit future funding and delivery opportunities. The Strategy will be used to inform future bid opportunities, such as the Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF), and will also provide a basis for securing developer contributions.
- 3.5 Officers of the County Council have been invited to attend the Executive to present the emerging findings of the Study alongside District Council officers. The Study will be reported to County Council Cabinet on the 9<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **4 Key Facts**

- 4.1 The Executive at its meeting on 15 June 2015 agreed to support a Transport Study of Market Harborough to be undertaken jointly with Leicestershire County Council. The Council approved £100,000 for this study with the other £100,000 being funded by the County Council.
- 4.2 The Study has now been completed insofar as is required to support the preparation of the Local Plan to 2031. The report makes recommendations for the promotion of a medium to long term (up to 2031) transport improvement strategy for the study area, which will serve to:
  - Support economic regeneration and population growth in the context of future land allocations and development; ensuring the town is not adversely impacted by traffic growth, and remains a vibrant and prosperous place for people to live, work and visit; and
  - Form the necessary foundation on which the long term delivery of future highway/transport improvements in the study area can be based.

The Study Area is shown below:



4.3 A copy of the Study report prepared by the County Council is attached as Appendix J to this report. The document is accompanied by a number of appendices which are numbered A-I. The report provides an evidence based package of preferred transport solutions/ outputs. In turn these outputs will:

- provide an outline transport strategy for the study area which will inform the Local Plan in terms of the required nature, location and means of implementation of transport improvements necessary to facilitate development; and
- provide the opportunity and basis upon which funding via S.106/CIL contributions are sought and enable the improvements to be delivered to support the Local Plan.

4.4 The Study provides recommendations, for an evidence led package of strategic transport measures/outputs to take forward for the town over the Local Plan period 2016-2031 and will address the issues highlighted in the Study. The County Council's Cabinet will receive a report on these recommendations on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016 and it is intended that they will then be subject to public consultation during Winter 2016.

## 5. **Summary of Study and Outcomes**

### *Purpose*

5.1 Market Harborough is a thriving market town but faces significant growth pressures. In order to ensure that the town's economy is not adversely impacted by traffic growth, Leicestershire County Council (LCC) and Harborough District Council (HDC) have jointly funded a transport study in order to develop a transport strategy that will support HDC's new Local Plan

and to support the town's future growth. Whilst the study provides useful evidence in respect of traffic conditions in the town, its purpose is not necessarily to indicate whether any further future growth of the town (i.e. beyond that already known) would be capable in transport terms.

- 5.2 Similar exercises have been carried out in other County towns, notably Hinckley, providing an evidence base to support future funding bids and inform the content of future transportation programmes. 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.
- 5.3 The Study has been aimed at developing an understanding of current and future transport issues in Market Harborough and potential measures required to address them, taking into account all planned and currently known future growth. Its outcomes will feed into Harborough District Council's Local Plan and ensure LCC continues to support and deliver transport measures that are compatible with future growth. It will build on work carried out for the development of the District's Core Strategy and the proposed SDA site, to the north-west of the town.
- 5.4 The Study sets out a range of transport improvements to ensure that the town's transport system continues to function as effectively as is possible and the town can continue to thrive economically, despite the impacts of growth.

#### *Overview*

- 5.5 An important part of this study was the use of robust evidence on which to base recommendations. Data collection has been undertaken, identifying the volume and type of traffic at key strategic locations, with the movements of over 500,000 vehicles recorded across the town. This evidence has helped to identify:
  - a) how the network is currently being used;
  - b) current transport issues; and
  - c) the most appropriate measures to address the issues.
- 5.6 LCC and HDC held workshops in July 2015 to seek key stakeholder views on transport issues in the town centre. This information was used to inform the evidence base and provide a starting point for investigation.
- 5.7 The Leicester & Leicestershire Integrated Transport Model (LLITM) has been updated and revalidated for the study area. This has enabled officers to track any forecast change in demand on the network and identify where the greatest levels of stress could occur on the network in the future.
- 5.8 The model has also been used to make a high level assessment of the viability of a south-eastern bypass; linking Northampton Road (A508) with Harborough Road (A6).

- 5.9 Further to this robust evidence base being established, a set of draft recommendations has been put forward. These recommendations include further improvements to encourage walking and cycling, junction improvements to tackle congestion and the possibility of more significant changes to the way that traffic moves around the town.
- 5.10 It is important to stress that at this stage these are emerging recommendations and that they do not represent any commitment to further County Council funding.

### *Findings*

- 5.11 Traffic volume in the town is forecast to increase by 24% between 2011 (base year for the study) and 2031. Transport modelling work indicates increased queues and travel time on the network as a result.
- 5.12 It is evident from transport modelling and site observations that there are a number of junctions within the study area that currently, and in the future perform more poorly than others. Those junctions are:
- A6 / B6047 (aka McDonalds Roundabout)
  - The Square / St Mary's Road / Coventry Road
  - Northampton Road / Springfield Street
  - Northampton Road / Welland Park Road
  - Springfield Street / Kettering Road
  - St Mary's Road / Kettering Road / Clarence Street
  - Rockingham Road / Gores Lane
  - A6 / Harborough Road / Dingley Road / A4304
  - Sainsbury's store entrance / Springfield Street
- 5.13 Traffic modelling work suggests that during the peak traffic periods:
- a) the greatest proportion of trips on the network are those going from within the study area to outside of the area, or vice versa.
  - b) around a third of the trips using the study area over the peak hours in 2011 were making internal trips.
  - c) 'through' traffic (traffic using the roads in the town to get to/from destinations outside the town) accounts for approximately 10% of trips.
- 5.14 Two of the three 'A' and 'B' classified routes (the B6047 and the A4304) within the study area both converge on The Square and therefore much of the traffic in the study area is reliant upon using the very heart of the town centre; in excess of 13,000 vehicles per day. Feedback from local residents and stakeholders suggests that this results in an unwelcome mix of vehicular traffic in an area which local residents and stakeholders feel ought to be primarily dominated by pedestrians.
- 5.15 The classification of roads in the study area is not wholly representative to the amount of traffic they currently carry and are forecast to carry in the future. The control and management of HGV and high sided vehicles (typically

HGVs) routing through the town is constrained by low underpass height on a number of bridges, often necessitating passage to sites in the south of the town from the north via the town centre.

- 5.16 Whilst a localised scheme to reduce sign clutter in The Square was carried out recently, traffic signing across the area lacks a coherent strategy and is in need of review. Infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport is generally quite good. However, there are clear gaps in the existing elements, which would benefit from improving.
- 5.17 Both on-street and off-street parking is generally well catered for in the study area. However, it is essential that one coherent parking strategy is developed for the town, incorporating a range of measures/parking controls which take account of the parking requirements of local residents, shoppers, visitors, disabled motorists, local business and workers.
- 5.18 All but a small minority of recorded vehicle speeds are generally in line with the posted speed limits and do not cause undue concern for highway safety.
- 5.19 Market Harborough consistently records a comparatively low level of road traffic collisions, compared to other similar areas (towns) in the county. Furthermore the frequency of accidents on the 4 main routes across the town, the A4304 (west), A4304 (east), A508 and B6047, fall below that which might be expected on similar roads nationally.
- 5.20 Feedback from early stakeholder workshops suggests that the town centre's public realm is perceived to be in need of updating.

*Emerging outline recommendations*

- 5.21 The study makes sixteen recommendations (as detailed below), broadly based around the following proposals:
  - a) encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use
  - b) improving key junctions and general traffic flow around the town
  - c) possible public realm enhancements
  - d) changes to the way that traffic is routed through and around the town.

The recommendations are shown in the table below.

<b>Emerging outline recommendations</b>	
<b>Capacity / Congestion Improvements</b>	
R1	Undertake option appraisals for capacity improvements at the following key junctions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) A6 / B6047 (aka McDonalds Roundabout)</li> <li>(ii) The Square / St Mary's Road / Coventry Road</li> <li>(iii) Northampton Road / Springfield Street / Welland Park Road</li> <li>(iv) A4304 St Mary's Road / Kettering Road / Clarence Street</li> <li>(v) A4304 Rockingham Road / Gores Lane</li> <li>(vi) A6 / Harborough Road / Dingley Road / A4304</li> <li>(vii) Sainsbury's store entrance / Springfield Street</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendations that result in changes to the network and traffic routing</b>	
R2	Consider the upgrade of Welland Park Road to become the A4304, with a respective downgrading of Coventry Road. Determine the associated engineering, accommodation & complementary works to facilitate this work
R3	Identify opportunities to divert Highways England emergency diversion routes away from the town centre
R4	Determine the viability of increasing underpass height on Rockingham Road Rail Bridge
R5	Consider the principle of providing a relief road between the A508 & A6 to the south-east of the town
<b>Sustainable transport infrastructure / behaviour change initiatives</b>	
R6	Extend and enhance the walking and cycling network
R7	Make localised public transport infrastructure improvements
R8	Identify a suite of tailored behaviour change initiatives to encourage modal shift in travel choice towards active and sustainable travel.
<b>Safety Improvements</b>	
R9	Continue to monitor Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) within the study area. If an RTC occurs within, or adjacent to, a proposed improvement scheme proportionate efforts should be made where appropriate to include complementary measures that could reduce further RTCs.
<b>Traffic Management Improvements</b>	
R10	Devise and implement a new strategy for traffic signing across the study area
R11	Review parking controls in the vicinity of the town centre and train station, with particular regard to the need/benefit of further permit parking zones
R12	Sites with recorded speeds in excess of the Association of Chief Police Officers enforcement threshold should be reviewed
<b>HGV controls</b>	
R13	Identify undesirable routes for HGVs and impose suitable prohibitions. Whilst the promotion of a town wide environmental weight restriction would be preferable, two key routes are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by inappropriate HGV traffic and should be adopted as a minimum: (i) Ashley Road /Kettering Road between the A4304 and the A6 (ii) Bath Street/Western Avenue between the A508 and Farndon Road
R14	Send updated map to 'sat-nav' contacts, advising of HGV controls
<b>Public Realm / Highway Maintenance</b>	
R15	Extend the public realm to encompass the nearby rail and bus terminals. Make general aesthetic upgrades to existing materials and arrangement
R16	In light of the size and scope of the study, incorporate / consider maintenance activities in relation to improvement proposals

## 6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Subject to approval of the County Council, LCC plan to consult the public and key stakeholders on the Study later this year. The intention of the exercise will be to act as a sense-check on the findings; seek views on specific recommendations; and to help to identify any priority order for implementation.
- 6.2 The outcomes of the consultations will be reported to the Executive prior to continuing with any further work to develop and implement the strategy.

- 6.3 Where appropriate individual schemes developed by the County Council will continue to be subject to consultations with local members and the public. Reports will be made available to members, as appropriate.
- 6.4 The County Council will continue to work closely with Harborough District Council to try to secure funding to progress this work. This is likely to include the refinement and development of business cases for future bids to central government through the LLEP or the use of developer contributions. In light of the recommendations contained in the study potentially affecting residents, businesses and organisations in the town, approval will be sought for further engagement and consultation regarding the recommendations.
- 6.5 This will not affect the use of the present Study to inform the Local Plan process, nor impact upon the Local Plan timetable. The Study as it is, is sufficient to help evidence the Local Plan. Any modification to the recommendations of the Study will not affect the programme for the Local Plan.

## 7 Legal Issues

- 7.1 None arising from this report other than the Transport Study will support the objective and robust approach to evidence based decisions on the Local Plan to ensure the Local Plan is capable of being found sound at Examination.

## 8 Resource Issues

- 8.1 The Market Harborough Transport Study was jointly funded by the County Council and District Council with the District Council contribution being £100K. The study is now complete and costs to pay for it are contained within the available budget and that no additional resources are anticipated.

## 9 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

- 9.1 The Transport Study will support the Local Plan and the sustainable provision of new homes and jobs and assist the Council in meeting its duties under the relevant Planning, Equality and Housing Acts.

## 10. Risk Management Implications

- 10.1 Acceptance of the outcomes of this Study will help evidence the Local Plan preparation/adoption process with consequent beneficial effect on the following Corporate Risks:
- 10.2 CR 08 Risk of challengeable planning decisions being taken relating to planning applications for residential development / Risk of planning appeals being upheld relating to residential planning applications.
- 10.3 CR 10 Local Plan Risks: lack of a sound Local Plan may lead to sporadic development and the inability to defend appeals.

## 11 Consultation

- 11.1 Key stakeholder workshops were held as part of early evidence gathering for the Study



- 11.2 The progression of the Study has been reported to the Harborough Highways Forum and Local Plan Advisory Panel
- 11.3 Subject to approval of the County Council, LCC plan to consult the public and key stakeholders on the Study later this year. The intention of the exercise will be to act as a sense-check on the findings; seek views on specific recommendations; and to help to identify any priority order for implementation. The outcomes of the consultations will be reported to the Executive, so that the District Council is able to continue to participate with any further work to develop and implement the strategy.
- 11.4 The County Council will continue to work closely with Harborough District Council to try to secure funding to progress this work. This is likely to include the refinement and development of business cases for future bids to central government through the LLEP or the use of developer contributions

## 12. Options

### Not to accept the outputs of the Study

- 12.1 This option is not appropriate. The County and District Council have invested considerable time and funding into this work over the past year and the Study is making some highly researched and clear recommendations which provide important evidential support to the preparation of the Local Plan and the future management of traffic in Market Harborough.

## 13 Background Papers

**Previous report(s):** Report to 15 June 2015 Executive and 18 July 2016 Local Planning Advisory Committee

### **Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: N**

**Ward Members Notified:** Ward members for Market Harborough and surrounding parishes will be notified when the report is published

<b>Appendix A –</b>	<b>LLEP Single Local Growth Fund bid application</b>
<b>Appendix B –</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Transport Model Local Validation report</b>
<b>Appendix C –</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Highways Maintenance</b>
<b>Appendix D –</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Walking and Cycling</b>
<b>Appendix E –</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Public Transport</b>
<b>Appendix F–</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Junction Capacity</b>
<b>Appendix G –</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Traffic Signing</b>
<b>Appendix H –</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Travel behaviour change</b>
<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>Strategy Supplementary report: Southern Relief Road evaluation</b>
<b>Appendix J</b>	<b>Market Harborough Transport Strategy (Main Study document)</b>