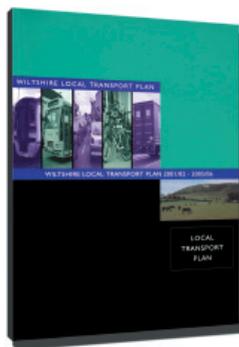


CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Role of Local Transport Plan

The Government's 1998 White Paper on Transport, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone', introduced the concept of Local Transport Plans (LTP) to steer the development of national transport policies at the local level. The Transport Act 2000 then made it a statutory requirement for local transport authorities to produce LTPs.



The first Wiltshire LTP set out the County Council's objectives, implementation programme and targets for transport in Wiltshire over a five-year period. Furthermore, as a document developed through partnership working and extensive consultation, the LTP also provides the framework for all other organisations with a direct or indirect involvement in transport in Wiltshire.

Wiltshire's first full LTP (LTP1), published in July 2000, covered the period 2001/02-2005/06. In each of these years the County Council produced an LTP Annual Progress Report (APR) which detailed delivery and spending on schemes, and measured progress towards targets. A detailed review of the whole LTP1 period will be produced in July 2006.

This second Wiltshire LTP (LTP2) covers the period 2006/07-2010/11. A provisional LTP2 was produced in July 2005 and was assessed as 'promising' by the Government. The County Council has sought to build on this position in developing this final LTP2. The first of the progress reports dealing with the LTP2 will be required in July 2008.

The Department for Transport's (DfT) guidance emphasises that LTP2s should:

- be set within the longer-term and wider policy and planning context.
- set challenging but realistic targets and indicators.
- identify the best value for money solutions.

As with the first LTPs, local transport authorities need to consider a wide variety of transport modes and policy options, and reflect other areas of social, environmental and economic activity at national, regional and local levels. Furthermore, authorities now need to ensure that the LTP2 more clearly defines the longer-term transport strategy for the area and that the agreed Government/Local Government Association (LGA) transport 'shared priorities' are at the heart of LTP2 development:

- Tackling Congestion
- Delivering Accessibility
- Safer Roads
- Better Air Quality

Although not a shared priority, maintenance also plays a crucial role in the management of the transport network.

In addition, there are other quality of life issues, such as the quality of public spaces, biodiversity, crime, healthy communities, noise and climate change that are related to the sustainable communities shared priority and that need to be considered in LTP2s.

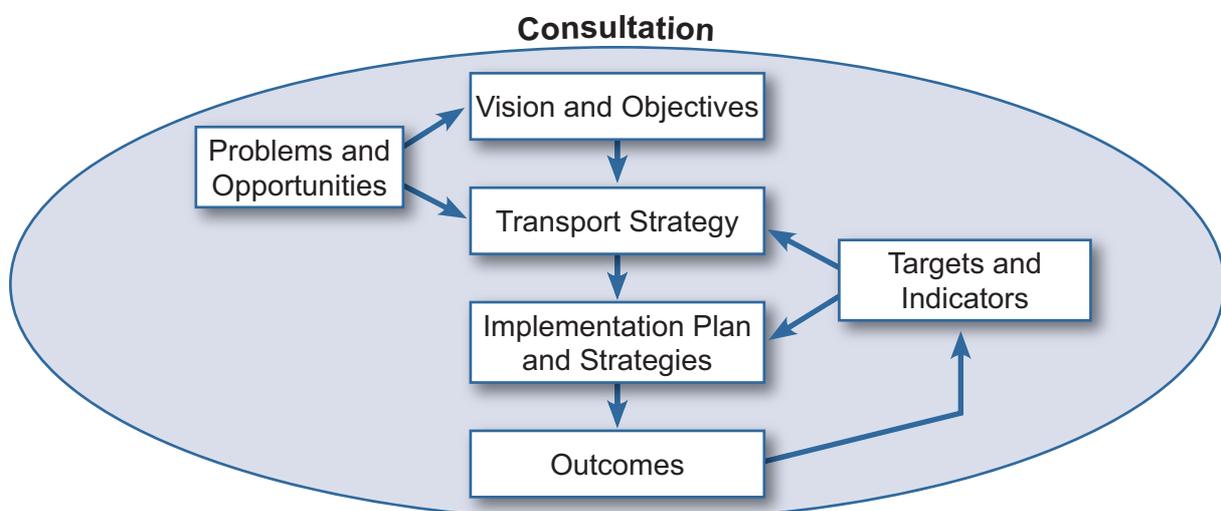
In order to support the longer-term and wider objectives of their area, local transport authorities need to set realistic but challenging targets. These should be a mixture of mandatory 'core targets' proposed by Government and a number of locally relevant targets and indicators which are expected to focus on the shared priorities and other important quality of life issues.

Unlike the first LTPs, the second round of LTPs will not act as bidding documents for Government funds. Instead, the level of funding that the County Council will receive is determined primarily by a financial 'planning guideline' determined by the DfT and partly on the quality of the LTP2 (see Chapter 13 for further details). In addition, the DfT has indicated that in setting LTP targets, local transport authorities should assume no new major schemes (above £5 million in cost), beyond those already provisionally or fully approved. In view of this, the second Wiltshire LTP does not contain any major scheme proposals beyond those currently submitted - this decision was endorsed by the County Council's Cabinet on 19th November 2004.

To make best use of available funding, LTPs need to be based on an understanding of local problems and opportunities, maximising the use of existing infrastructure. LTPs should also draw upon best practice and avoid focussing on building new infrastructure at the expense of other complementary or innovative measures that could address transport demand and supply.

As the LTP is a strategy document, it does not contain comprehensive details of individual transport schemes. Rather, it outlines an implementation programme and demonstrates the types of measures that could be implemented.

Figure 1.1: LTP Framework



A number of new or revised strategies and plans are either required or recommended to be included in LTP2s:

- Accessibility Strategy (Chapter 6)
- Air Quality Action Plans (Chapter 8)
- Bus Strategy (Annex – Appendix 4)
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan (Chapter 11)
- Road Safety Strategy (Chapter 7)
- Transport Asset Management Plan (Chapter 11)

In addition, the LTP1 Parking Plan, County Cycle Action Plan, County Walking Action Plan and Travel Awareness Action Plan will be reviewed with relevant partners during the LTP2 period.

In accordance with a European Directive, the LTP2 is subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This aims to assess the significant environmental impacts of the LTP2 and highlights areas where improvements could be made. Further information on the SEA is provided in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 10 and Appendix 1.

1.2 Relationship Between LTP1 and LTP2

The 1998 White Paper and the subsequent first LTPs ushered in a new approach to addressing transport problems and improvements. LTP1s provided local authorities with the mechanism for setting out their transport strategies and targets to help achieve the Government's environmental, safety, economic, accessibility and integration objectives. Although LTP2s must now focus on the shared priorities and other quality of life issues, these LTP1 objectives are still largely relevant.

As reported in the Council's APRs, although there have been successes on a number of fronts during the LTP1 period, there are still transport problems to be addressed (see Chapter 3). Clearly, while it was unrealistic to expect all of Wiltshire's transport problems to be dealt with within a five-year period, the fact that a number of LTP1 measures and schemes were not implemented has not helped matters. One of the reasons for this was that the annual capital funding settlements for local transport, announced each year by the Government, did not match our original LTP1 bid. Consequently, the Council's LTP1 proposals had to be scaled down to match the allocated funding. Other issues that affected the implementation of measures and schemes included the changed focus in the rail industry, the difficulties with scheme consultations, the temporary withdrawal of funding for the Salisbury Transport Plan (STP) and the understandable but nevertheless general difficulty in persuading largely rural and car dependent communities to change their travel patterns and behaviour. Given this situation, unimplemented LTP1 measures and schemes have been taken into account in the formulation of the LTP2.

In addition, the LTP1 area based strategies of the STP, Western Wiltshire Sustainable Transport Strategy (WWSTS) and Devizes Community Area Transport Strategy (DCATS) - formerly the Devizes Community Area Transport Plan - were

originally developed as ten year plans and have therefore been incorporated into the LTP2. However, the major scheme funding for the STP will not continue as part of LTP2 and therefore funding for measures in the STP area will now have to come from the County's integrated transport allocation from Government (see Chapter 13).

1.3 LTP1 Major Schemes

The County Council is carrying forward two major schemes during the second LTP period.

Regional prioritisation has placed Westbury Bypass in a list of schemes which could potentially be added to the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) programme to 2016. Brunel Link and Harnham Relief Road in Salisbury has been included in a list of schemes which may well prove to be longer term priorities, but which at present are too under developed or not sufficiently focussed on top level priorities to be included in the RFA programme.

1.3.1 A350 Westbury Bypass

Proposals for a bypass around Westbury have been developed as part of the Western Wiltshire Sustainable Transport Strategy (see Chapter 12). The funding bid for Westbury Bypass was submitted as part of the 2001 APR, but a decision was deferred pending the outcome of the Government's own Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study (BB2SC).

The BB2SC Study identified the scheme as one that should be pursued on the A350 route that fulfils:

"an important intra-regional function...It is therefore recommended that a Westbury Bypass be approved as a local improvement measure for the town with complementary traffic calming in order to improve the town centre, improve the local commercial and town centre environment and encourage use of the bypass."

The Government's 2004 LTP settlement letter noted the acceptance by the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) of the Study conclusions:

"This scheme was first submitted in your LTP Annual Progress Report in July 2001 but was deferred to the Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study for further consideration. We note that the Study report recommended that the scheme should proceed and this was endorsed by the South West Regional Assembly. We also recognise that the scheme is a priority for your authority by reducing traffic congestion and noise and helping to improve air quality and safety within Westbury. Whilst recognising the benefits of this proposal, Ministers have decided that it does not present a sufficiently high priority for approval at this stage."

Westbury Bypass remains a corporate priority for the County Council, and is also supported by the Town and District Councils. A planning application was submitted in 2005, and a decision is anticipated in 2006.

The County Council is very encouraged by the position of the scheme in the list of the region's funding priorities. The Council notes the headroom that exists in the Regional programme, and furthermore, anticipates that there may well be slippage on some of the schemes that predict early expenditure in the list "*...where the region has concluded that there is a strong case for inclusion within an RFA programme to 2016*". In that event, Westbury is expressly identified as a scheme which could be added to the programme, and therefore the Council will seek to develop the detail of the scheme to the maximum possible state of readiness. The statutory orders are being prepared and could be published during 2006, followed by a public inquiry. A start on site in 2007/08 may be possible subject to the outcome of the public inquiry and the availability of funding.

The scheme has implications for the proposals emerging from the Greater Bristol sub-region, and following discussions with Bath and North East Somerset Council, the following stated position has been agreed:

Discussions between Bath and North East Somerset Council and Wiltshire County Council have considered the cross-boundary movement of long distance freight, particularly along the A36, A46 and A350 routes. The Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study acknowledged the detrimental environmental impact caused in Bath, particularly in the London Road/Bathwick Street Air Quality Management Area. The solution recommended by that Study - an A36/A46 Link Road east of Bath - has also been supported in the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study. However, further analysis of the environmental impact is needed before Bath and North East Somerset Council will decide to promote the scheme, and inevitably it is a long term project.

In the shorter term, the two authorities will work with the Highways Agency to implement other recommendations, including a review of long-distance signing to encourage use of the motorway and strategic trunk road network for these trips. Bath and North East Somerset Council have aspirations to promote the prohibition of long distance lorry movements through the city through the Bath Package major scheme bid. This will displace some traffic onto the A350 in Wiltshire. Wiltshire County Council will object to these proposals until traffic management and environmental improvements along the A350 route, and in particular the A350 Westbury By-pass, have been implemented in order to mitigate the diversion of lorries from the A36 through Bath as well as relieving environmental impact of existing through traffic in the town.

1.3.2 Brunel Link and Harnham Relief Road

Following early promotion through the Government's own 'Salisbury Transport Study', a revised planning application for the scheme was submitted in April 2005 – clarification of aspects of the application is ongoing, and the Council will continue to develop the scheme to a sufficient extent to secure a planning decision.

The scheme has been 'provisionally accepted' for funding by Government.

The region's advice for priorities for transport in the context of the RFA have been submitted to Government, and the Harnham Relief Road and Brunel Link has been categorised as follows:

“...where the degree of work done at present does not allow a confident judgement on the value of the schemes or whether they could be delivered within the RFA period but which the region would want to include in the later part of the RFA programme in the light of further work.”

Despite the scheme having been 'provisionally accepted' by the DfT for funding, the Region's advice appears to be more equivocal and places the Council in a difficult position. The scheme remains a corporate priority for the County Council, and urgent clarification will be sought from Government as to their continuing support for the scheme.