Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2026

Executive Summary

The Council has a statutory duty to produce a new Local Transport Plan by 31 March 2011.

The draft Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 was subject to consultation during October and November 2010.

This report provides an initial and general analysis of the consultation responses.

Proposal

That the Committee:

Provides comments on the draft Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 and consultation responses.

Reason for Proposal

To enable the views of the Environment Select Committee to be taken into account prior to consideration of the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 by Cabinet and full Council on the 15 February and 22 February 2011 respectively.

MARK BODEN
Corporate Director
Department of Neighbourhood and Planning

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee
11 January 2011

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2026

Purpose of Report

1.   To enable the Committee to comment on the draft Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 (LTP3) and consultation responses prior to consideration by Cabinet and full Council on the 15 February and 22 February 2011 respectively.

Background

2.   The 1998 White Paper, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone', introduced the concept of LTPs to steer the implementation 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 current Wiltshire LTP runs from 2006/07 – 2020/11 (LTP2).

3.   The Local Transport Act 2008 has provided local authorities with greater flexibilities in how they develop and review their LTPs. These flexibilities have been reflected in the Department for Transport's (DfT's) guidance (July 2009), key elements of which include that LTPs should:

*   be reviewed as required by the local transport authority and not necessarily every five years as with the first two LTPs;
*   include a long-term strategy and a shorter duration implementation plan;
*   be based on five national transport goals;
*   reflect a number of other plans and duties;
*   be subject to a number of statutory assessments;
*   include consultation with statutory and other consultees; and
*   be developed in line with the process recommended by the Eddington Transport Study (2006).

4.   The coalition government has reiterated the statutory duty of local transport authorities to publish their LTPs by 31 March 2011 in accordance with the DfT's guidance.

5.   Following consultation on an LTP3 Issues Paper in early 2009, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agreed the LTP3's overall goals, strategic transport objectives and key challenges on 17 February 2010.

6.   The draft Wiltshire LTP3 (available from
      http://wiltshire.limehouse.co.uk/portal/ltp/ltp3 was subject to consultation from
      4 October to 26 November 2010. In response to the uncertainties created by
      the general election and subsequent planning and financial changes, the
      Council took the pragmatic decision to reduce the scale and scope of the draft
      LTP3 by:

      (i)   Only producing a one-year framework implementation plan;

      (ii)   Not including the area transport strategies for Chippenham, Devizes,
              Salisbury and Trowbridge; and

      (iii)   Reducing the number of theme strategies to four: parking (approved by
              Cabinet at its meeting on 21 December 2011), freight, public transport
              and road safety.

7.   Once clarity has been restored to the planning and funding picture, the
      Council will produce a detailed implementation plan, area transport strategies
      for Chippenham, Devizes, Salisbury and Trowbridge, and the remaining
      theme strategies. All of these documents will be subject to public consultation
      in 2011/12.

Main Considerations for the Committee

      Consultation Process

8.   The consultation on the draft LTP3 was publicised through a number of
      means:

      (i)   Parish Newsletter
      (ii)   Area Board Chairman's Announcement
      (iii)   Emails and letters to Area Board and LTP contacts

9.   All the consultation documents were made available on the Council's
      consultation portal (see paragraph 6) with the main document and summary
      available from libraries and main council offices.

10.   As a separate exercise, stakeholder representatives were invited to one of
      four LTP3 workshops:

      • 1 November 2010 – The Corn Exchange, Devizes
      • 3 November 2010 – County Hall, Trowbridge
      • 9 November 2010 – Town Hall, Chippenham
      • 16 November 2010 – City Hall, Salisbury.

      Consultation Responses

11.   In total, 741 comments were received on the draft LTP3 from 119
      respondents. All of these comments are available for viewing on the Council's
      consultation portal (see paragraph 6).

12. Some168 stakeholder representatives attended the four workshops. A report outlining the comments made at these events will be available from the Council's website in early January 2011 http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets/roadandtransportplans/transportplans.htm .

13. While the overall number of respondents to the LTP3 consultation is relatively low, the majority of respondents represent either town or parish councils, or other key stakeholders (e.g. Highways Agency, TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, Cotswold Conservation Board, Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership, Natural England, Sustrans, Stagecoach (West) Ltd, Campaign for Better Transport, Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network, etc.).

14. Paragraphs 15 to 28 set out an initial and general analysis of the responses to the questions posed on the overall LTP3 strategy, freight strategy, public transport strategy and road safety strategy. Further analysis of the consultation responses, including those made on the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment, will be undertaken to inform the development of the final LTP3.

Overall Strategy

15. The following responses were made to questions 1, 2 and 3 posed in the draft LTP3:

Table 1 – Responses to questions in Executive Summary

Question	Yes	No
Question 1 – Do you agree that if funding for transport is significantly cut as a result of the government's spending review, the Council's focus should be on maintaining and making best use of Wiltshire's existing transport infrastructure, and in fulfilling its statutory duties?	38	15
Question 2 – Do you support these preferred options?	29	17
Question 3 – Do you agree with these investment priorities?	17	31

16. Themes that emerge through the written responses associated with these questions include that:

(i) freight routing and management should be a higher investment priority;
(ii) more emphasis should be given to sustainable transport measures such as cycling, walking, passenger rail and smarter choices;
(iii) the lack of a comprehensive LTP3 will result in a lack of holistic planning; and
(iv) environmental, heritage and biodiversity impacts need to be adequately considered in the LTP3.

17. The responses to question 4 on the proposed approaches to the national transport goals include the following suggestions:

(i) Switch off street lights.
(ii) Support the take up of electric vehicles.
(iii) Achieve a better level of integration between transport modes.

(iv)   Increase the use of 20 mph zones in towns and residential areas.
(v)   Focus on the 'Vision' towns.
(vi)   Utilise the knowledge and skills of local communities.
(vii)   Re-prioritise the user hierarchy on many roads towards pedestrians and cyclists.
(viii)   Have higher ambitions for new rail infrastructure.

18.   The comments made at the workshops on the overall strategy included that:

(i)   Advisory freight routes are ineffective, particularly in an era of sat-navs.
(ii)   Cycle routes need to be implemented between towns and villages as well as in them.
(iii)   Walking does not require a separate strategy – people will just do it.
(iv)   Maintenance is important but should also include footways and cycle paths.
(v)   There needs to be a better level of integration between transport modes and with spatial planning.
(vi)   There is too much emphasis on the urban areas – more support is needed for rural bus services and community transport.
(vii)   New technologies (e.g. traffic control centre) and 'smarter choices' are not considered wholly relevant in a predominantly rural area.
(viii)   Transport strategies also need to be developed for the other market towns.

19.   In terms of investment priorities, a clear consensus emerged through the workshops on a number of options:

- High(er) priority: buses; carriageway maintenance; congestion management; cycle networks; freight routing; local safety/speed schemes; passenger rail; road safety education, training and publicity; and freight management.

- Low(er) priority: walking networks; freight information; rights of way; structures; and road/user hierarchy.

<u>Freight Strategy</u>

20.   The following responses were made to questions 5, 6 and 7 posed in the draft LTP3:

Table 2 – Responses to questions in Freight Strategy

Question	Yes	No
Question 5 – Should a third tier of freight routes, defined as 'Access Routes' be established to encourage the sustainable delivery of goods within towns and to industrial estates and other freight generators?	25	1
Question 6 – Do you agree with the proposal to identify, improve and/or maintain a 'basic' standard of lorry parking in Wiltshire?	21	4
Question 7 - Do you agree with the Council's pragmatic approach to rail freight?	14	10

21. Within the written responses, the clearest consensus to emerge is the view that the Council should do more to restrict lorry movements on what are deemed inappropriate routes. This feeling was reflected in the LTP3 workshop discussions.

22. In contrast to the relatively balanced response to question 7 shown in Table 1, the majority of stakeholders attending the workshops agreed with the Council's proposed approach to rail freight and considered that more central government action was required to see any significant mode shift to rail freight at a local level.

Public Transport Strategy

23. The following responses were made to questions 8 and 10 posed in the draft LTP3:

Question	Yes	No
Question 8 – Do you support the proposed long-term public transport strategy?	18	5
Question 10 – Do you agree with these funding priorities for public transport?	15	6

24. With regard to question 9, the most important implementation plan options identified were:

1st: Treat bus links to railway stations as part of the strategic network of bus services.
2nd: Fund bus services that meet priority needs not catered for by the commercial network.
3rd: Continue grant funding for community transport operators and Link schemes.
4th: Develop a new approach to secure developer funding.
5th: Work with any operator to develop the case for better services in Wiltshire.

25. There was a similar response to question 9 from the workshops:

1st: Treat bus links to railway stations as part of the strategic network of bus services.
2nd: Continue grant funding for community transport operators and Link schemes.
3rd: Work with any operator to develop the case for better services in Wiltshire.
4th: Fund bus services that meet priority needs not catered for by the commercial network.
5th: Produce a community transport development strategy to expand its role.

26. The following sets out an overall summary of the responses to the draft public transport strategy:

(i) A majority of respondents supported the long term strategy, but a significant number of comments stated that it lacks vision, is too process-oriented, and lacks specific commitments to services that will provided or improvements that will be made

(ii) There are many comments about the importance of maintaining and improving the level and quality of public transport – suggestion that existing services are not adequate to provide an attractive alternative to the car to encourage mode shift and help to achieve sustainable transport objectives. Several respondents considered that the 'radical' option should have been adopted.

(iii) Many respondents considered that rail should have a higher prominence in the LTP3, and that the Council should be more proactive in working with neighbouring authorities and lobbying for improvements. However, some expressed a counter view that if the Council is unable to influence the rail industry, it is a waste of resource to pursue this.

(iv) There is particular support for improving services on the Trans Wilts rail route and for re-opening Corsham station – suggestion that the TransWilts route should be included in the 'strategic network' and funded by the Council on the same basis as bus services. Much support for better bus-rail integration – but a counter view from a bus operator who points out that this is often difficult to achieve in practice and should only be pursued where it is possible without undue cost or inconvenience to other passengers.

(v) General support for the proposed review of the bus network, and for local communities and Area Boards being involved in helping to plan local services. A view is expressed that the strategic network should include rail as well as bus services.

(vi) A majority of respondents agreed with the priorities for funding supported bus services, although others expressed concern that the proposed criteria are too rigid and open the way to a systematic paring down of services and a 'spiral of decline' that will undermine the ability to achieve wider transport objectives. Several believed that the target minimum service levels are too low, and in particular, that funding should be available for higher than hourly services on main routes, and that higher priority should be given to evening and Sunday services, and services to hospitals and other health facilities.

(vii) There are conflicting views expressed about rural services. Many considered that it is important to provide good levels of rural access, but others suggested that priority for funding should be to maintain good services on the core routes and use 'innovative alternatives' to provide access in other areas – for example, community transport, Link schemes, Connect 2 Wiltshire and taxibuses.

(viii) Mixed views on proposal to expand the role of community transport – considerable support for this in principle as a more effective way of meeting local access needs, but concern that community transport operators and Link schemes may not have the capacity or desire to provide new services in this way, and may not be able to provide journeys to work or levels of service similar to existing bus services.

(xi)   Several respondents suggested that operators should be required to introduce vehicles fuelled by renewable energy sources.

Road Safety Strategy

27.   The following responses were made to the questions posed in the draft LTP3:

Question	Yes	No
Question 11 – Do you support the proposed approach to road safety education?	22	0
Question 12 – Do you support the proposed approach to road safety enforcement?	15	8
Question 13 - Do you support the proposed approach to road safety engineering?	19	2

28.   The road safety themes raised through the consultation process include the following:

(i)   General agreement with the three 'E's' approach. However, it needs to be flexible enough to acknowledge and deal with perceived road safety issues and community concerns – the perception of unsafe roads can put people off walking and cycling.

(ii)   The loss of safety cameras is identified as a concern - they should form part of the overall approach to road safety.

(iii)   More widespread use should be made of 20 mph speed limits.

(iv)   Generally considered that vulnerable users should be prioritised, although not at the expense of the safety of all other road users.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

29.   There is no immediate environmental impact of the proposal. The LTP3 is subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

30.   There is no immediate equalities impact of the proposal. The LTP3 is subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Risk Assessment

31.   A risk register has been set-up to inform the LTP3 Project Board. In addition, the risk 'Failure to deliver the LTP3 on time and at the required quality' has been added to the Council's corporate risk register.

Financial Implications

32.   There are no financial implications arising directly from the proposal.

Legal Implications

33.   There are no legal implications arising directly from the proposal.

Options Considered

34.   The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a LTP3 which needs to be developed in accordance with the DfT's guidance.

Conclusion

35.   While the LTP3 is being developed in accordance with the DfT's guidance, a pragmatic stance has been taken in terms of its scale and scope in light of ongoing planning and funding uncertainties. The remaining parts of the LTP3 will be subject to consultation in 2011/12.

36.   The consultation on the draft LTP3 was publicised through a number of means. As a separate exercise, stakeholder representatives were invited to four LTP3 workshops.

37.   While the overall number of respondents to the LTP3 consultation is relatively low, the majority of respondents represent either town or parish councils, or other key stakeholders.

38.   An initial and general analysis of the consultation responses has been set-out in the report. Further analysis of the responses, including those comments made by the Committee, will be undertaken to inform the development of the final LTP3.

MARK BODEN
Corporate Director
Department of Neighbourhood and Planning

Report Author:
Robert Murphy
Principal Transport Planner – Transport Policy

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

    Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026: Consultation Workshops