

OPEN

Highways and Transport Committee

18 September 2025

Local Transport Plan – Strategy and Investment Framework

Report of: Tom Moody, Director of Transport and Infrastructure

Report Reference No: HTC/14/25-26

Wards Affected: All wards

For Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 As a statutory Local Transport Authority, the council is required to maintain an up-to-date Local Transport Plan (LTP). This report provides an update on progress in developing a new LTP for Cheshire East, which will provide a policy framework for transport across the borough and guide investment in the local transport network.
- 2 The work completed since the last [report to committee in January 2025](#) includes a consultation on the LTP vision, aims and priorities, analysis of the feedback, and development of both the LTP strategy and strategic investment framework. This report seeks approval to undertake a second round of consultation on the draft LTP.

Executive Summary

- 3 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a statutory policy document of the Council. The LTP sets the policy framework to guide investment priorities to meet the transport and travel needs of the borough. The LTP shapes priorities within budget constraints.
- 4 The LTP needs to be relevant to national, regional and local priorities. It set out the role of transport in contributing to overall policy outcomes, including new housing and employment growth, environmental sustainability, and health and wellbeing.
- 5 The first round of consultation on the draft vision, aims and priorities took place between 24 February and 21 April 2025. Appendix 1 summarises the consultation results which demonstrates broad levels of agreement

with the vision, aims and priorities. The results have helped shape the strategy and have informed and influenced the development of the LTP. Appendix 1 sets out a “you said, we did” table to summarise the amendments as a result of the consultation.

- 6 Since the consultation, the LTP strategy has been drafted which develops the vision, aims and priorities into a strategic framework. Alongside this, an investment framework has been developed to guide the first 5-year investment plan.
- 7 Subject to approval by committee, a consultation is proposed in Autumn 2025 to seek the views of stakeholders and residents on the draft LTP strategy and investment framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the outcomes from the first round of public consultation on the Local Transport Plan (LTP) vision, aims and priorities (see Appendix 1).
2. Approve the proposed approach to a second round of public consultation on the LTP Strategy and Investment Framework, in line with the Consultation & Engagement Plan at Appendix 2 and Communications Plan at Appendix 3.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Transport and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, to finalise the consultation material and undertake the public consultation.

Background

- 8 The vision for the new LTP is:

A well-connected, safe and sustainable transport network, accessible to all, that supports a healthy, prosperous Cheshire East.

- 9 The four aims of the LTP are: 1) growing the economy, 2) improving the wellbeing of our community, 3) reducing environmental impacts, and 4) improving connections for all. The strategy has been developed around these core aims to ensure alignment with wider strategic priorities.
- 10 Alongside the strategy, an investment framework has been developed which enables potential schemes to be sifted, packaged and prioritised in line with a multi-criteria analysis to determine a set of priorities.

- 11 It is proposed that the draft LTP strategy and investment framework are published for consultation, to enable residents and stakeholders to continue to inform and influence the plans. The final documents are expected to be submitted to committee and full council in 2026.
- 12 It is important to note that any Cheshire and Warrington devolution agreement could have many opportunities for transport. Whilst the impacts of this are still to be worked through, there could be potential for a wider sub-regional approach to transport in future. The current LTP work will feed into any future Cheshire and Warrington transport plans and will place the borough in a strong position with a robust framework.

Consultation and Engagement

- 13 Between 24 February and 21 April 2025, a consultation was undertaken to seek views on the draft vision, aims and priorities for transport. In total, 720 consultation responses were received. The feedback has helped define the new LTP strategy and investment framework. The full consultation report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 14 The consultation was mainly hosted online, with paper versions available at libraries and leisure centres and on request. The consultation was promoted widely, for example: residents of Cheshire East and the public through press releases and social media promotion, the Cheshire East Digital Influence Panel, businesses, specialist transport user groups, equality groups, town and parish councils, elected members and neighbouring authorities.
- 15 Most respondents agreed with the draft vision, aims and priorities, as well as the key challenges and opportunities. Improving public transport within the borough and connections to other areas were mentioned as a key priority for many, as well as improvements to the road, walking and cycling network. The importance of considering accessibility of all modes for all users, including those within rural areas, when drafting detailed transport plans was raised. Respondents were keen to see more detail of how the plans will be achieved and mentioned the benefits of continued collaboration / joined up thinking.
- 16 A second round of consultation is proposed in Autumn 2025, and a consultation and engagement plan has been developed in conjunction with the council's Research & Consultation Team (see Appendix 2), as well as a communications plan (see Appendix 3).

Reasons for Recommendations

- 17 Consulting on the LTP strategy and investment framework will ensure that the council is giving due consideration to the public's views and therefore have a robust plan for the future of transport in the borough that

the public have fed into. Consulting at this stage will mean there is time for amendments to be made ahead of adoption (anticipated for 2026).

- 18 It is important that the consultation follows the ‘gunning principles’, and consulting on the LTP strategy and investment framework at this stage will ensure these are followed. The principles include ensuring adequate time is given for people to respond and for responses to be considered before a final decision is made.

Other Options Considered

- 19 As the LTP is a statutory document, there is a requirement to update the strategic policy framework, and consultation is an essential part of policy development. Without consultation on the draft LTP strategy and investment framework, this could hinder the robustness of the LTP and risk a lack of public support. Consulting now will ensure views are heard and can be incorporated ahead of adoption.

Option	Impact	Risk
Progress without consultation (do nothing)	LTP strategy and investment framework progress without public input/review.	Public views not fully considered and potential lack of support for the future adopted LTP.
Progress with a consultation	Public given a chance to feedback and shape final versions.	Limited risk – public given an opportunity to input.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 20 As the statutory Local Transport Authority, the council must maintain an up-to-date Local Transport Plan (LTP) to provide a framework for local transport improvements.
- 21 The new LTP must comply with Part II of the Transport Act 2000 and meet requirements for Community Engagement, Equality Impact Assessment, and Strategic Environmental Appraisal.
- 22 Members must fully consider the equalities implications of their decisions to meet obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. This includes reviewing any Equality Impact Assessments.

- 23 While there is no statutory duty to consult on changes to service delivery, case law requires that decisions affecting the public be made fairly and without abuse of power.
- 24 To ensure fairness, the Council should consult on any changes that remove existing benefits. This includes engaging affected individuals and representative groups, and giving due weight to consultation responses in decision-making.
- 25 Failure to consult properly may lead to legal challenge. Any consultation must:
- a) take place at a time when the proposals are still at a formative stage;
 - b) give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response;
 - c) give adequate time for consideration and response;
 - d) ensure the product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the proposals.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 26 The LTP development work is funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) Local Transport Resource Fund 2025/26 and the council's rail and transport integration budget. The estimated cost during 2025/26 is £350,000. This programme of work has been built into the service plan for 2025/26 and will be delivered within existing revenue budgets and the LTP capital programme with no impact on the MTFS.
- 27 Upon completion and adoption by the council, the next LTP will provide a policy framework to inform the annual capital programme for transport. The LTP will be implemented utilising applicable funding from a range of sources including: LTP Integrated Transport Block funding; Section 106 & 278; the council's capital and revenue programmes, one-off funding programmes and external funding.
- 28 The Council will also receive a DfT Local Transport Grant totalling £47.150 million between 2026/27 and 2029/30. There is also the opportunity for the LTP to inform and influence other investment programmes across the council, including public health, regeneration, carbon reduction etc.
- 29 The council's capital programme remains under review with any schemes requiring council resources being challenged in order to reduce the call on prudential borrowing.

Human Resources

- 30 There are no direct implications for Human Resources.

Risk Management

- 31 In terms of governance and corporate oversight, a steering group has been established including cross service representation. A member reference group has also been established to guide development of the LTP. The above will ensure that the process of undertaking the LTP is robust, as well as providing oversight of the LTP process.
- 32 A risk register for the project has been developed and will be maintained throughout the life of the project. The risk of not developing a new LTP is poor investment decisions which are not aligned with wider strategic priorities and missed opportunities for funding.

Impact on other Committees

- 33 No impact anticipated.

Policy

- 34 The adopted LTP (2019-2024) outlines the role transport plays in supporting the goals to improve the economy, protect the environment, improve health and wellbeing and the quality of place. However, as this expired at the end of 2024, production of a new LTP is required.
- 35 The Cheshire East Plan recognises the importance of transport for the borough within the three commitments – the LTP vision aligns with this document. Having an up-to-date LTP will ensure that the council maintains a robust transport policy framework.

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The LTP contributes to all sub-commitments in the Cheshire East Plan through the 4 aims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the LTP aims is 'improving the wellbeing of our community' which aligns with commitment 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The LTP strategy sets out our approach to transport and methodology for prioritisation.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 36 The council will fully evaluate the equality implications of the proposed LTP through an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA). The draft EqIA has been developed and is included at Appendix 4.
- 37 Impacts of the proposed LTP strategy and investment framework at this stage are anticipated to be positive for all. Feedback from the first round of consultation in relation to the protected characteristics are outlined in Section 3 and 4 within Appendix 4. Specific feedback was mostly observations in relation to age and disability, and how lack of public transport (mostly bus) impacts access to services.
- 38 The EqIA will be updated again following the LTP strategy and investment framework consultation in Autumn 2025 when there will be further understanding of any impacts/required mitigations.

Other Implications

- 39 The Council's Rural Action Plan (2022) highlights the importance of public transport links to support small businesses access markets and skilled workforce and the contribution to the visitor economy.
- 40 The LTP strategy considers home to school transport, including the current transformation programme that is working to optimise travel to and from schools and colleges.
- 41 There are pockets of deprivation in Cheshire East related to income, health and life chances. Transport enables a greater proportion of residents to access important services and reduce inequalities.
- 42 The LTP takes account of the council's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2027 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough in order to become a carbon neutral borough by 2045.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	02/09/25	02/09/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Interim Director of Law and Governance	02/09/25	05/09/25

	(Monitoring Officer)		
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Andrew Poynton	Senior Lawyer (Place)	08/07/25	11/07/25
Steve Reading	Finance Manager (Place)	08/07/25	10/07/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>			
Phil Cresswell	Executive Director, Place	02/09/25	02/09/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Richard Hibbert, Head of Strategic Transport and Parking Service Richard.Hibbert@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	1 – Consultation Report 2 – Consultation and Engagement Plan 3 – Communications Plan 4 – Equality Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	None