Local Transport Plan

Draft Strategy (2011-2026)

Cheshire East
Council

Executive Summary

1   Cheshire East has excellent national and international transport links via the motorway network, rail connections and proximity to Manchester airport, which support Cheshire East's ambition to be a premier location for business growth. This level of connectivity also helps make Cheshire East an attractive place to live, along with its diversity of unique natural and built environment, and a strong sense of community.

2   Cheshire East's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) - 'Ambition for All' - sets out the vision for the area and priorities for action. Cohesive, empowered and active communities in which people can influence the decisions that affect their locality is at the heart of the SCS for Cheshire East. Local communities are often best placed to identify their own transport needs and to develop local transport solutions. Achieving a high level of community engagement is seen to be a vital component of how the Council will seek to deliver this transport strategy.

3   Cheshire East's draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) relates directly to the seven priorities of the SCS to illustrate how transport contributes to the achievement of wider aspirations and ambitions for the area over the next 15 years (2011-2026). The SCS thematic areas are:

- Ensure a sustainable future
- Create conditions for business growth
- Drive out the sources of poor health
- Nurture strong communities
- Support our children and young people
- Prepare for an increasingly older population
- Unlock the potential of our towns

4   In developing the draft strategy, consideration has been given to the relative priorities across the thematic areas and an understanding of where transport interventions can achieve the greatest results. Following consultation with stakeholders and Member, the proposed priorities for the LTP are "**ensure a sustainable future**" and "**create conditions for business growth**".

5   It is proposed that future investment in transport will be directed towards the policies and interventions which support these priority areas to help grow the economy and tackle carbon emissions. This does not mean that the needs of the other thematic areas will be neglected – rather they will be supported by targeted aspects of the adopted policy solutions, which have a wide sphere of influence in other areas (e.g. needs of young and older people).

6   In addition, within each thematic area indicative priority policies have been identified for public consultation and are set out below. The policies within the sustainability and business growth themes are 'core' policies – others are 'complementary' and will be taken forward where resources allow, where they reflect community priorities and/or development aspirations.

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7   The challenges for "unlocking the potential of towns" are unique to each place and will be addressed within a series of transport frameworks for principal towns and key service centres (as defined by the Local Development Framework) to be developed post-April 2011. Working with the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), town & parish councils and community & voluntary groups will facilitate a better understanding of transport and accessibility needs at a local level. The aim will be to enable local communities to determine local interpretation of the LTP, and enable detailed exploration of tailored localised solutions.

8   The LTP has been subject to wide ranging community engagement, including integrated public consultation with the SCS, stakeholder and Member workshops, LAP questionnaire and analysis of existing town and parish plans.

9   The LTP strategy will be supported by rolling three year implementation plans, translating the strategy into deliverable actions. The first implementation plan will be released for public consultation in January / February 2011 and will include a criteria for prioritisation against which potential initiatives will be judged, as well as performance indicators. The LTP will remain a live document supporting continuous improvement in the planning and delivery of services with a focus on achieving greater outcomes more efficiently, with fully engaged communities.

Thematic Areas – Key Transport Links

10   To ensure a sustainable future, the SCS identifies the key transport role as: improving transport connections and accessible services, but also in supporting provision of appropriate housing, while protecting the countryside and encouraging more sustainable living. This will include ensuring that Cheshire East's ambitious plans for growth in the spatial priority areas of Crewe and Macclesfield encourage sustainable living.

11   Hence, the key issues revolve around management of transport impacts through the spatial planning system, and especially minimising the need to travel, and ensuring that there are attractive and available sustainable alternatives for the trips people make. This means walking and cycling for shorter journeys and efficient public transport for longer journeys.

12   The scale of the challenge in this area is evidenced by the past and projected growth in CO_2 emissions from road transport, which is 37% of the total and is expected to grow by 2020 – whereas other sources of carbon are being reduced. Macclesfield, Knutsford and Wilmslow have the highest emissions from road transport in the borough. This is indicative of a very car dominated area and low public transport use relative to other areas.

13   To ensure a sustainable future, the following 'core' policies have been identified as indicative priorities:

- Public Transport (Service Levels & Reliability) – Work with passenger transport operators (bus, rail, community transport & taxis) to explore improvements to service levels and reliability.

- Public Transport (Integration & Facilities) – Work with passenger transport providers (bus, rail and community transport) to improve public transport integration and facilities.
- Spatial Planning – Seek to minimise the future need to travel through a strategy in the Local Development Framework that focuses most new developments in larger settlements where there is a good range of housing, jobs, shops and services already accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.

14　The issues in relation to **business growth** focus on creating the conditions for greater prosperity, and in transport terms centre on the removal of barriers to doing business, such as congestion. Current congestion 'hotspots' occur on the inter-urban network including Crewe Green Roundabout and the A500 Barthomley Link in Crewe, as well as the A34 around Congleton and the A6 through Disley. Schemes such as the Crewe Green Link Road will unlock the potential of towns, enable development and make Cheshire East an increasingly attractive location for business growth.

15　There are important links to the sustainability chapter above, in that the locations of new commercial activity will create destinations which people will wish to access from both existing and new housing sites. Hence, the two will need to be planned together, particularly where edge of centre sites need improved access provision.

16　Further location and access issues are raised by the existence of pockets of deprivation and worklessness in parts of the borough, particularly in Crewe, with a need for jobs at suitable skill levels and which can be reached affordably without the need to run a private car. These issues will be accounted for further in transport frameworks developed locally.

17　Attracting investment and fostering growth in the commercial sector will need transport to be reliable and predictable – especially by road, where most goods movement and much business travel takes place. Hence, it will be vital to more effectively maintain and manage this network to ensure delays are minimised and journey quality is acceptable.

18　To create conditions for business growth, the following 'core' policies have been identified as indicative priorities:

- Maintenance – Adopt a robust and efficient approach to maintenance to minimise deterioration in the highway network and associated infrastructure assets (e.g. lighting, street furniture etc.)
- Network Management – Effectively manage the highway network to reduce the level of delay and provide for the needs of all road users including pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.
- Enabling Development – Seek to enable appropriate new development by supporting transport infrastructure, regeneration and/or behaviour change initiatives that will mitigate the potential impact of development proposals.

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19 The action to drive out the **sources of poor health** highlights two obvious challenges: the first is to reduce loss of life and injury in transport-related accidents; and the other to ensure people do more walking and cycling, which will help reduce obesity levels and the related health problems of diabetes, heart disease and cancer targeted by the SCS.

20 Alongside this, a less obvious positive contribution to health can be made by ensuring that all people have good access to nature and the countryside, which is proven to have a beneficial effect on mental health and well-being, as well as the active travel benefits.

21 Although big improvements in road safety have been made in recent years, there are still significant numbers of accidents, with over 68% of residents reporting having been involved in a road traffic collision. The roads remain disproportionately higher risk for motorcyclists, cyclists and people on foot – so creating a further barrier to active travel.

22 Within the health thematic area, a number of 'complementary' policies have been identified as indicative priorities and will be taken forward where resources allow. These are:

- Public Rights of Way & Green Infrastructure – Protect and enhance public rights of way and transport related green infrastructure and endeavour to create new links where beneficial for health or access to green spaces.
- Promotion of Active Travel and Healthy Activities – Work in partnership to promote walking, cycling and horse riding as active travel options and healthy activities.
- Road Safety (Engineering) – Improve road safety through highway design improvements at collision blackspots.

23 A Road Safety Strategy is currently being developed for Cheshire East. This will identify the key road safety challenges in the borough and will examine the most effective measures to reduce casualties on the road network. This may result in re-assessment of policies in relation to this evidence. Road safety issues were a key issue of concern within town and parish plans across the borough.

24 In nurturing **strong communities**, the key transport issues will be primarily local, so that engagement and consideration of their views prior to determining any course of action will be crucial in achieving the SCS priority to 'support the community to support itself'.

25 Local delivery of services and enabling solutions to emerge from within communities is vital to success – often finding innovative ways to retain service provision more locally, so reducing the need to travel to larger towns to access the facilities that people want. This capacity can be improved by devolving responsibility for delivery and maintenance of some current Council transport-related activity down to town, parish and local level.

26   Accessibility to services such as education, employment, shopping and leisure can be challenging for the 39% of Cheshire East's population living in rural areas. Areas within the Nantwich LAP have the greatest distance to travel to reach key services. Accessibility within towns can also be challenging, particularly in areas of deprivation where cost can be a barrier. Improvements in this area can emerge through technology, as well as transport services.

27   The best solutions to providing for disabled people, and those who experience difficulty with making longer trips, may also often be found within their local communities. This should however complement measures to ease physical access to public transport and the availability of flexible, on-demand door-to-door services for those who need them.

28   Many of the transport issues affecting **children and young people** are closely related to accessibility by modes other than the car, since most will be too young to drive. Here, there are particular challenges associated with ensuring access to education at all stages.

29   Additionally, issues remain with younger people's exposure to risk on the roads – with over 10% of those killed or seriously injured being under 16, along with unusually high risks of involvement in an accident for car occupants and motorcyclists under 25. This sits alongside the growing threat to young people's health from rising obesity rates.

30   The overall health and accessibility issues identified above are often exacerbated for young people; however, outside of the education sector, better targeting of solutions – rather than additional measures – may be the best way to ease the transition to adulthood.

31   Transport issues faced by **older people** are in many ways a subset of the challenges outlined in the community and health thematic areas. Retaining good health longer through life is important, and active travel and access to a range of facilities and services helps older people retain a higher quality of life for longer, postponing the time when availability of specialist transport and access to healthcare services become the primary transport issues affecting them.

32   Cheshire East has a large (19%) and growing – but also a largely healthy and prosperous – population of older people, with increasing numbers continuing to drive for longer as well as a high take-up of free concessionary bus travel. However, as people live longer, they eventually require more specialist support and the issues of transport to facilities versus at-home service provision will become acute. Older people have expressed more difficulty accessing hospitals than other facilities, and need for better targeted services.

33   Inevitably, physical mobility declines with age, and it is important to ensure that day-to-day use of transport systems and streets is not compromised by unnecessary barriers to older people's mobility such as high kerbs or steps,

lack of seating, or poor information, as well as minimising the risk of slips, trips and falls on streets and in transport systems. The Poynton shared space scheme is a positive example of where this approach has been implemented.

34   Within the stronger communities, young people and older people thematic areas, a number of 'complementary' policies have been identified as indicative priorities and will be taken forward where resources allow. These are:

- Community – Work in partnership with local communities to support community led solutions that improve accessibility to key services (employment, education, health, shopping and leisure).
- Accessibility of Services – Work with partner organisations and local communities to make key services easier to access with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups and areas, including people living in rural areas, older people, young people and those without access to a car.
- Access for all – Consider the diverse range of needs concerning disabled people and other groups who experience difficulties using the transport system.

What Happens Next?

35   The draft LTP strategy will be released for public consultation on **Tuesday 19th October** to ensure that the strategy reflects the views of local communities and key stakeholders as far as possible.

36   Following public consultation, the transport priorities will be finalised and reflected in rolling three-year implementation plans to allocate resources, as well as in each of the LTP daughter documents (e.g. Transport Asset Management Plan, Network Management Plan, Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Passenger Transport Strategy, Road Safety Strategy and Transport Frameworks for Towns).

37 The key dates in the development of the LTP are as follows:

Key Dates	Key Event
20th Oct 2010	Results of Government "Comprehensive Spending Review"
19th Oct – 21st Nov 2010	Draft Strategy Document: Public Consultation
17th Jan 2011	Final Strategy Document and Draft Implementation Plan: Cabinet
Jan – Feb 2011	Draft Implementation Plan: Public & Member Consultation
Feb 2011	Final Strategy Document: Full Council
Mar 2011	Final Implementation Plan: Cabinet

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