

HCC

Transport Vision 2050 Survey

Questionnaire:

**1) Name, title and email address**

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**2) Company**

North Hertfordshire District Council, Strategic Planning and Enterprise team

**3. Are there any other challenges and opportunities we should take into account in our future transport strategy?**

Yes

~~No~~

Don't know

Please explain your answer (max. 2000 characters):

In general the Challenges and the Opportunities are supported.

There is mention of unprecedented housing growth and economic development as Challenge 1 but it fails to address or accommodate the housing growth in "North Hertfordshire's Proposed submission Local Plan"

It is clearly identified in the accompanying evidence documents that the future population projections and housing growth within North Hertfordshire will be the 4<sup>th</sup> Highest of all the 10 Hertfordshire Local authorities in 2021, 2031 and 2037. We cannot and should not underestimate the impact that this will have. The LTP sets a vision to 2050; however the plan ignores the impact of the districts growth and that of its surrounding neighbours, i.e. particularly growth within Central Bedfordshire and Luton and the likely impact on local transport networks running east to west from Luton through Hitchin to Stevenage, notably the A505 and A602 corridor.

NHDC proposed submission Local Plan identifies that 14,000 houses will be built for Hertfordshire's own needs by 2031. This will have a huge impact on the existing and future traffic network in North Herts. The LTP does not address this challenge and offer any mitigation as a solution.

Furthermore, the LEP / SEP identifies both the A10/M11 and A1(M) as key growth areas/ corridors. However there appears to be little focus on the challenges that this corridor will face. There needs to be a greater focus on combined population of the contiguous towns of Hitchin, Letchworth, and Baldock and the considerable flows between Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin and Stevenage and the pressure on road network at these locations.

The County Council as Highway Authority has raised substantive concerns against the local plans of both Stevenage and North Hertfordshire due to their highway impacts. However, in order to deliver the growth priorities of the LEP and ensure that the district authorities can deliver the "significant boost" in housing supply required by Government planning policy, HCC must give much greater proactive consideration to how it will address the issues arising.

In relation to Challenge 2: Existing transport deficiencies and a future network struggling to cope. In North Herts the 2011 Census average distance travelled to work shows that North Herts Residents travel the furthest (12.1 miles to work). Therefore these commuting patterns show there is a need for a rethink travel initiatives within the district as well as cross boundary movements into and from neighbouring authorities..

#### **4. Do you agree with the LTP Objectives and Principles identified?**

**Yes**

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer (max. 2000 characters):

In general, while the LTP objectives and principles are supported, it is suggested that the following objectives and principles could be improved as follows:

Under 'Prosperity' recognition needs to be made to working in partnership with adjoining boroughs/districts in terms of addressing increasing growth pressures and associated transport impacts across boundaries.

Under 'Place' in the Challenges section at fig 3 – reference is made to rural accessibility, this is not only in the east of the county but also to the north, particularly in terms of the rural areas within North Hertfordshire. Hence there should be some reference to the inclusion of improving rural accessibility to local centres as one of the objectives.

Under the principle 'Integration of Land Use & Transport Planning ' – reference needs to be made to addressing cross boundary transport issues with neighbouring authorities.

### **5. Do you support the adoption of a Transport User Hierarchy Policy?**

**Yes**

~~No~~

Don't know

Please explain your answer (max. 2000 characters):

Yes, this policy is supported as it will become increasingly important to prioritise modes which have a lower impact on their local environment. It is positive to see a step change in the focus away from "predict and provide" and a move in policies that will encourage sustainable modes of travelling and less reliance on the private car.

However, the policy should clearly evidence, the reasoning behind the logic of mode shift as forecasts show that traffic is set to increase. Furthermore the Government has been trying to drive users out of their cars for two decades yet the evidence points to increased car ownership. For example, The 2011 Census indicates that there is still increasing levels of car ownership in Hertfordshire with 42% of residents owning at least one car. North Herts has the joint 3rd highest of those owning one car in all the 10 Hertfordshire Local Authorities. Furthermore the census shows that at least 57% of Hertfordshire residents travel to work by car. The 2011 Census mentions that North Hertfordshire has the highest average distance of those commuting to work. This represents a challenge in how to cater for these journeys through the transport user hierarchy and by sustainable modes.

The policy therefore needs to recognise this challenge to manage the increased traffic growth and congestion otherwise there will be negative impacts for travellers, and the environment.

This policy should be integral to any future Growth and Transport Plans and scheme design of transport schemes. Once this policy is adopted it will provide a good benchmark / hierarchy in which to set options for reducing the need to travel by car.

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**6. Do you support the adoption of a policy to deliver a step change in cycling in larger urban areas?**

**Yes**

~~No~~

Don't know

Please explain your answer (max. 2000 characters):

This is welcomed, but there needs to be greater emphasis in this policy for the more urban/rural districts such as North Hertfordshire. North Hertfordshire Mode share for intra –urban Journey to Work journeys within Hertfordshire, (2011 Census) highlights that Letchworth had the joint highest cycling mode share alongside larger conurbations such as Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. Furthermore, 1.9% of North Herts journeys for travelling to work are made by bicycle. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest of all the Hertfordshire Local Authorities. There is potential for shorter journeys to be made by bike and North Hertfordshire would want the opportunity to enter into dialogue with the Highway authority to improve opportunities for better cycle links between our towns.

It is encouraging to see that a new quality inter-urban cycle linking Stevenage/Hitchin / Letchworth /Baldock is included in the short listed options. Any scheme should be in consultation with the District and in conjunction with key stakeholders.

The concentration on mode shift is evidenced in the “Government’s draft Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy” and encourages travel by sustainable modes.

It is positive to see steps to reduce levels of car use and congestion by making cycling a more attractive choice.

It is imperative that we see cycle hire opportunities expanded to include North Herts towns as well. NHDC is supportive of cycling schemes to encourage a step change in cycling levels.

**7. Do you support the adoption of a policy to do more to facilitate and support shared mobility?**

**Yes**

~~No~~

Don't Know

Please explain your answer (max. 2000 characters)

Yes, but any new initiative/strategy should also consider other more integrated urban areas, not just cities. High demand for road travel means that Car clubs, lift share, and bike share are positive incentives. The District Council would welcome engagement with the County Council on such measures, given the location of its railway stations in relation to its town centres and employment areas, and in particular with the proposed increased growth of employment land at Baldock.. The potential for reducing congestion and increasing existing road capacity is positive.

**8. Do you support the adoption of a policy to enhance public transport connectivity between towns with bus priority measures?**

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer (max.2000 characters):

This policy is welcomed. The policy should take into account new bus routes and priority bus network with adjoining authorities, Fig 7 is inward looking. There needs to be stronger emphasis on cross boundary issues and opportunities in working with neighbouring authorities to improve priority bus networks, and how peripheral towns like Royston and others to the east of the county are integrated into such networks. Any policy should include a bus priority network/ routes in Royston.

**9. Do you support the adoption if a policy to implement a Priority Traffic Management Network?**

Yes

No

**Don't know**

Please explain your answer (max. 2000 characters):

While this policy is supported in general, there appears to be no recognition of the current east/west congestion issues through Hitchin from Luton to Stevenage, as indicated in Fig 3 under challenges. North Herts would have expected to see this route included in Fig 8 as part of the Traffic Management Network needing to be addressed within the next 15 years, particularly with the known increase growth of Luton Airport and proposed housing development within and around Luton.

In particular it is noted that a south-western Hitchin A602 / A505 bypass, which was included on the long-listed options, is not being pursued. The Council has recently designated a second Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within Hitchin at Paynes Park. Having designated these areas, the Council has a statutory duty to develop an Action Plan that will address air quality issues. Both AQMAs in the town are located at junctions used by traffic routing through the town on these roads.

**10. Do you support the policy to develop a series of local Growth and Transport Plans?**

**Yes**

**No**

**Don't know**

Please explain your answer (max.2000 characters):

Yes, this policy is fully supported.

The Development of a Growth and Transport Plan in our district is crucial and should be focused on northern Hertfordshire thereby linking with Stevenage. Developing and implementing local level schemes is crucial. These plans should enable districts and boroughs to work closely with HCC and stakeholders to identify schemes at a local level.

This Council however expresses great concern at the apparent lack of a policy in considering growth beyond the next 15 years. At the strategic level there are currently no policies or transport schemes that address current or future levels of population and housing growth.

Such a policy would link with the major schemes section and the longer term objectives of the Plan. It could also acknowledge the need to review the LTP in light of the emerging growth in northern and eastern sectors of Hertfordshire, including impacts from neighbouring authorities and how potential transport issues could be addressed and appropriate transport schemes identified and taken forward. It is our view that HCC need to be giving consideration to other potential schemes as part of this LTP associated with the proposed growth to the north of the county and therefore need to be actively working with the districts, neighbouring authorities, Highways England, key stakeholders and other service providers

It is imperative to have continuing dialogue and consultation to discuss a range transport schemes and to look at potential funding sources. Any evidence gathering for scheme development should be in conjunction with the District Councils.

**11. For each of the major schemes please state whether you agree or disagree with their inclusion in the new strategy in principle**

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree  
or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly  
Disagree**

**Sustainable  
Travel  
Towns  
(Watford,  
Stevenage,  
St Albans,  
Hemel H)**

Agree

**Access  
Improvements to East  
Hemel  
Hempstead**

Neither Agree or  
disagree

**Hertford  
Bypass &  
Sustainable  
Travel Town**

Agree

**A414  
Corridor  
Junction  
Capacity  
Upgrades**

Agree

**Hertfordshire  
Bus Rapid  
Transit  
Network**

Agree

**12. Please let us know any comments you have on the major scheme options: (max. 2000 characters)**

It is disappointing to see no major road schemes for this plan period that is applied to North Hertfordshire. This is particularly given the context to our growth planned in the County.

A Sustainable Travel Town should also be considered for Hitchin / Letchworth / Baldock as the combined population is more than 75,000, similar to Stevenage, Hemel and Harlow. This will be critical based on the planned growth. The District would be keen to engage with HCC on any future considered proposals.

An A505 Corridor / Hitchin bypass should be considered for North Hertfordshire particularly given that there is now a second AQMA at Paynes Park and there are known congestion issues in this area.

NHDC agrees in principle to the concept of corridor based improvements but the A505 should be considered on an equal basis.

**13. Limiting future levels of traffic growth and improving walking, cycling and public transport provision will be very hard to achieve without policies which encourage less car use and help to enhance provision of and investment in more sustainable modes. What policies should Hertfordshire consider adopting to achieve this? (max. 2000 characters)**

See comments provided above at questions 5, 7 and 8.

**14. Have you any other general comments you wish to make on the new Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire? (max. 2000 characters)**

Overall the policies within the strategy are supported as is the move away from a road building programme.

However, the transport vision needs greater emphasis on the implications of growth in North Hertfordshire. The combined population of the contiguous towns of Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock with the planned expansions are at least equal to Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage, Harlow. However, there is nothing happening to cater for this growth.

It is very disappointing that no major schemes made it through the shortlist for North Hertfordshire. It is imperative that consideration is given to a major scheme along the east-west route through Hitchin, i.e. along A505/A602, be this a Southern Bypass and also to a scheme at the A10 south of Royston.

In addition to facilitating planned growth over current plan periods to 2031, major schemes could be critical to unlocking new directions of growth and or new settlement options in the north of the County were schemes such as the A120 continuation to Stevenage, A507 Buntingford –Baldock upgrade and /or the A505 link pursued.



Our own proposed submission Local Plan recognises that, in the longer term, continual incremental additions to existing settlements may not be the best solution. This Council is committed to fully exploring new settlement options in the District. This work is at an early stage. However we are already aware that:

- There is significant further housing growth projected in northern Hertfordshire for the period beyond 2031;
- Any new settlement(s) will have a substantial lead time;
- Authorities adjoining North Hertfordshire, including Stevenage and Luton, are physically constrained to accommodate future growth; while
- Other authorities in the county as well as London have identified significant constraints in meeting future housing needs.

In this context, more radical interventions in terms of transport initiatives may be required. Some of the road schemes previously identified in the earlier long-list of the LTP Vision (e.g. the A120 extension to Stevenage, the Hitchin Bypass, the A507 Buntingford – Baldock upgrade) and some that are not (e.g. a broader scheme of A505 corridor as mentioned above, or improvements from M1 to the M11 (appreciating this would go into Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire respectively) could be critical to 'unlocking' new directions of growth and / or new settlement options and therefore some consideration should be given to this in the LTP.

Funds have been committed by the LEP to the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway to invest in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford growth corridor. When this comes to fruition it will have a significant impact on journeys in and around North Herts.