

AUTHOR	Joint Report of the Strategic Director (Environment), Bedfordshire County Council and the Director of Environment and Regeneration, Luton Borough Council
SUBJECT:	LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN
PURPOSE:	To inform Members of the progress being made for producing the second LTP for the Luton Dunstable area.

RECOMMENDATION: That members note the report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The first Luton Dunstable Local Transport Plan (LTP) was submitted to the Government in July 2000, and covers the period between April 2001 and the end of March 2006. In the July of each intervening year, Luton Borough Council has submitted an Annual Progress Report, together with various strategies for buses, walking, parking and cycling.
- 1.2 The Government requires local authorities to produce a new LTP by the end of July 2005 covering the period 2006-2011. A report to the last meeting of this Committee summarised the scope and nature of the second LTP based on draft guidance issued by the Department for Transport (DfT) in mid August 2004.
- 1.3 The report to the last meeting of this Committee suggested that joint working on this year's LTP should include the whole of the Milton Keynes/South Midlands Growth Area in Luton and southern Bedfordshire. However, the Government's response of 25 October to the Milton Keynes/South Midlands panel report did not provide details of individual sites and their capacity to accommodate growth in households or employment.
- 1.4 The suggested approach is therefore that the second LTP continues to be based on Luton Dunstable and Houghton Regis, but also sets down sustainable transport principles to be applied to future growth of the area. The County Council endorsed this approach at a meeting of their Board on 30 September 2004.

2 Summary of progress on the four shared priority areas

2.1 Local Authorities must direct their efforts to making progress in four priority areas which have been agreed between the Local Government Association and Central Government. These are: reducing congestion, improving access to key facilities for all groups of people, improving safety, and improving air quality. The two new areas which the second LTP is expected to cover include Accessibility planning and Strategic Environmental Assessment, which fall within the context of the second and fourth of these shared priority areas.

Congestion

2.2 The population of the three towns of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis currently falls below the 250,000 population threshold at which the Government considers congestion targets and indicators need to be monitored. However, with the expected growth of the area as part of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan, it is expected that a strategy for demand management and other measures to deal with congestion will need to be outlined in the second LTP.

Accessibility.

2.3 A key aspect of the vision for both Councils is to reduce social deprivation. The latest available Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) from the 2001 census has been aggregated from seven indicators (known as domains), and includes families:

- entitled to income support,
- in receipt of unemployment benefit or participating in the Government's New Deal programme,
- suffering health deprivation or disability,
- with low or no educational qualifications,
- experiencing difficulty in accessing housing and other key local services,
- subject to burglary, criminal damage or violence, and
- with poor housing conditions or local environment

The Councils have used this information to highlight different wards or parts thereof, where individual domain issues are a particular problem.

2.4 The Borough Council has also been chosen to take part in a pilot of rolling out Accessibility planning to other Local Authorities, and will use the knowledge from this pilot approach to take the lead on accessibility planning throughout the whole conurbation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.5 The County Council have an internal resource within their Environmental Strategy group capable of carrying out the scoping work for the SEA. Consultants Halcrow, who are also carrying out the appraisal of options for Luton Northern Bypass, which by its very nature includes a significant amount of work on Environmental appraisal of the options, have been appointed to carry out the SEA for the Local Transport Plan.

- 2.6 The five key stages defined in the Government guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment are:
- setting the context & objectives, and collecting baseline data
 - carrying out a scoping exercise and development of options
 - assessment and identification of mitigation measures
 - consultation on Environmental Report
 - monitoring of environmental impacts
- 2.7 The County and Borough Council specialists will provide inputs to the scope of the SEA during the first two of these stages, although they will be shadowed by the consultants. Halcrow will then carry out the assessment, produce the Environmental Report, carry out the consultation, and identify indicators to be monitored. Further details on the overall approach to each of these stages are contained at Appendix A.

Improving safety

- 2.8 Given the broader approach to transportation matters engendered by the requirement to include SEA and Accessibility planning in the second LTP, it is considered that the scope of coverage of road safety can also be thought of as an aspect of community safety. To that end the LBC's Community Safety Officer is included in the Safety Working Party set up to provide an integrated input to the second LTP.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 Many of the four shared priority areas identified above will require consultation and engagement with key stakeholders, for example Job Centre Plus, the Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts to advise on what they are doing in relation to particular Domain areas such as employment and health; and environmental Organisations such as English Nature, English Heritage and other local interest groups to provide inputs to the SEA process.
- 3.2 During September and October, the Borough Council made presentations to the Area Committees, carrying out surveys of the residents attending these meetings about what they considered the key issues were in their areas. At the same time the County Council carried out a similar survey of a sample of its Citizens Panel.
- 3.3 Key issues that came out of questionnaires circulated at the Borough Council Area Committees were:
- Congestion on key radial routes
 - Congestion in residential areas caused by rat running/travel to school
 - Lorries on inappropriate roads
 - Difficult to access local services (e.g. Doctor/Dentist/Hospital)

Some residents identified further strategic matters in various areas of the town (e.g. need for Luton Northern Bypass mentioned in Luton

North Area), but many of the other issues they identified were very localised ones, such as parking problems in particular roads.

3.4 Given that, particularly in the case of Luton, residents who attend the Area Committees tend to be those who show a greater interest in community matters, it was considered appropriate to carry out a more structured survey. Consultants JMP have been appointed to carry out further consultation in late November/early December as part of a first round of consultation on issues, together with a second round of consultation in March/April 2005. The key elements of their work will include:

- Surveys of local residents views about local transport issues
- facilitated workshops to discuss transport issues with key stakeholders in early December in Luton, and Dunstable/Houghton Regis
- Public exhibitions in March/April 2005 to discuss the emerging LTP and the Environmental Report
- Further workshops in March/April 2005 to enable key stakeholders to comment on the draft LTP

4. Management and Programme for production of the 2nd LTP

4.1 Since early October, the Borough and County Councils have been working closely to engage Consultants to assist them with key aspects of the LTP, as described in sections 2 and 3 above. Consultants ITP, who assisted the Councils with the production of last years Annual Progress Report for the Luton Dunstable area have also been retained to provide overall advice and management. They have developed an overall structure for the second LTP, a draft of which is included at Appendix B.

4.2 An officer working groups meets every fortnight to discuss key inputs to the LTP and progress on particular aspects. Recent meetings have included presentations and discussion on the relationship with the planning framework, objectives of the LTP, key issues identified in initial surveys, and the scope of the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

4.3 The key aspects of the various strands of work being carried out, together with key dates for completion of reports on these aspects, are summarised in Table 1 overleaf. The intention would be to report key aspects to JAC and the LTP Steering Group as work progresses.

Period	LTP	SEA	Accessibility Planning	Consultation
Sept/Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping of outline strategy/ draft objectives (Plan objectives) • Review LTP1 performance • Consider resource requirements and appoint consultants to assist LTP team • Commence first round of consultation on LTP2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the Baseline • Identify problems and opportunities • Identify and develop objectives and indicators (Environmental objectives as opposed to Plan objectives) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Index of Multiple Deprivation Domain areas to identify areas of greatest deprivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBC Area Committee & BCC Citizens Panel sample consulted on issues
Nov/Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue first round of consultation on LTP2 • Prepare draft Objectives for LTP2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping and consultation with environmental organisations • Identification of alternatives • Prepare Scoping Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Course on Accession software • First Action Learning Plan (ALP) workshop about identifying partners & areas to be included in accessibility strategy • Stakeholder workshop on accessibility planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Surveys and Stakeholder workshops held • Participation workshops on Luton Northern Bypass
Jan/Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to Steering Committee/JAC on outcome of first round of consultation • Model available for Strategy testing. • Technical work on LTP continues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an evaluation framework to appraise the LTP against the main criteria, indicators and targets; • Appraisal of LTP alternatives' effect on the SEA objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second ALP workshop about use of accessibility planning guidance to develop proposals for inclusion in the strategy • Commence accessibility planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of Stage 1 consultation reported to Steering Group and JAC in January 2005

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence work on APR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying mitigation of significant adverse effects and selection of the preferred alternative 		
March/ April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second round of consultation on LTP2 • Luton Northern Bypass options workshops • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on the draft Environmental Report • Revision of the SEA, taking into account changes to the LTP and the results of consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third ALP workshop about developing accessibility strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second round consultation commences on draft LTP
May/ June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of second LTP to Steering Committee/JAC • Endorsement of LTP by Steering Committee/JAC • Finalise LTP/APR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing aims and methods for monitoring • Finalise SEA Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Draft Accessibility Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of Stage 1 consultation reported to Steering Group/ JAC in May 2005

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT AT EACH STAGE OF SEA

Stages A and B will be undertaken by Bedfordshire County Council/ Luton Borough Council, although Halcrow will have an involvement during these stages since the objectives, indicators and targets will effectively provide the questions that the SEA will answer and the scope of work for the following SEA stages. A familiarisation /brainstorming session with the client took place on 3 December in order to clarify the scope of work and additional tasks that may be needed during these stages.

During Stage C Halcrow will develop an evaluation framework, seeking advice from relevant environmental specialists in our team where necessary. The evaluation framework will be discussed and agreed with the client, but will include relevant aspects of the NATA Appraisal Framework where appropriate as well as the topics identified in the SEA Directive (e.g human health, material assets). The framework will allow the appraisal of LTP alternatives' (alternative strategies) effect on the SEA objectives. The alternative strategies will include an assessment of the LTP with and without major schemes as a minimum. However, at this stage Halcrow have not provided a cost for testing each individual subcomponent of the LTP (other than major schemes), rather we have assumed that we will look at combinations of LTP components. This stage will also include identifying mitigation measures for significant adverse effects and select a preferred alternative.

During Stage D Halcrow will produce the first draft of the SEA report, which will be developed in close collaboration with the client to ensure there are no 'surprises'. It is proposed to undertake consultation on the draft SEA report with statutory environmental bodies, via a roundtable discussion. Further consultation with the stakeholders and public will be possible during the consultation for the draft LTP2. There are benefits in a combined approach to stakeholder and public consultation and therefore have not provided costs for it under this proposal but have assumed that the resources have been included in the separately prepared LTP2 consultation proposal. The results of a joint SEA /LTP2 consultation exercise (workshops, exhibitions and leaflets) could be fed through into the final draft of the SEA report.

Stage E will involve developing aims and methods for monitoring the significant environmental effects of the preferred LTP alternative. This will involve ensuring that during stage A, practical indicators are chosen, that are appropriate to the needs of the plan and that the information would be available in a time and cost effective manner. Halcrow have not provided a cost for undertaking monitoring as it is difficult to estimate at this stage, therefore we propose to review this with the client at a later date.