

Appendix D: Policy Context

Introduction

The primary purpose of the LTP is to set out how Staffordshire County Council and its partners will address and demonstrably contribute towards better outcomes in wider policy areas. Transport is not an end in itself but rather a way of accessing people, goods and services and because of this, it can impact upon, and be influenced by, a number of wider policy issues.

This Appendix summarises the main policy documents - published both before and after May 2010 when the new Coalition Government came to power - that have helped to shape the new LTP for Staffordshire. It is not an exhaustive list of policy documents and in some cases, it is still too early to say what the local implications of the more recent policies will be.

The Appendix is structured into three sections: a national, regional and local policy context.

National Context

The Coalition: Our Programme for Government (HM Government, May 2010)

Overview

This document sets out the Coalition Government's 31 policies, together with a series of actions to achieve the policies. Policies include:

- Promoting decentralisation and localism.
- Cutting carbon emissions.
- Decarbonising the economy and supporting the creation of new green jobs and technologies.
- Promoting public health and encouraging changes in behaviour to help people live healthier lives.
- Tackling educational inequality.
- Making the transport sector greener and more sustainable.

The Coalition Government's top priority is to reduce the country's deficit and restore economic growth.

Implications

Transport cuts across many of this document's policy areas and it is important to ensure the LTP supports the Coalition Government's policies. The LTP is a broad document, setting out how transport can contribute towards many national policy areas, including the economy, health, the environment, safety and security, and quality of life.

Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential (Department for Businesses, Innovation and Skills, October 2010)

Overview

This document sets out the Coalition Government's approach to empowering locally driven growth, encouraging business investment, and promoting economic development. It aims to ensure that local communities have access to opportunities that growth brings and everyone is able to fulfill their potential. The document's main points include:

- The establishment of 24 Government-approved Local Enterprise Partnerships and their role in stimulating economic growth.
- How different economic development functions will be delivered and at what spatial level, once Regional Development Agencies are abolished.
- A range of incentives for local authorities to promote economic growth.
- Details of the Regional Growth Fund.

Implications

The LTP will need to play a part in delivering locally driven growth. Areas that can be influenced by the LTP include:

- Stimulating areas of regeneration and deprivation.
- Facilitating tourist activity.
- Supporting rural communities.
- Maximising the reliable operation of the existing network.
- Minimising the impact of events on traffic movement.
- Managing network capacity.
- Keeping the highway safe and serviceable.
- Improving the efficiency of freight distribution.

The Localism Bill (HM Government, December 2010)

Overview

The Bill sets out the Coalition Government's plans to give greater powers to individuals, communities and councils. It includes changes to planning laws, housing policy and constitutional arrangements, and is the mechanism by which many of the Government's policy measures for local government will be implemented.

Implications

The Bill will have a large influence on how the County Council operates and makes decisions. However, until it is enacted it is not clear what impact it will have on transport planning and delivery. The promise of greater financial autonomy to local authorities and community groups means that the LTP and its delivery must demonstrate local support. Considerable efforts have been taken to ensure that the LTP was shaped by partners and local communities and this participation must continue during its delivery.

The Traffic Management Act 2004

Overview

The Act places a duty on all local traffic authorities to manage their road network. The objective of the network management duty is to ensure that all local authorities take action to reduce or minimise congestion while considering the needs of all road users. This implies a road network that is working efficiently without unnecessary delay.

Implications

In order to manage the road network, the County Council needs to identify current and future causes of congestion and disruption, and plan and take action accordingly. Areas where we, as the local transport authority, can influence this include:

- Maximising the reliable operation of the existing road network.
- Minimising the impact of events on traffic movement.
- Managing network capacity.
- Keeping the highway in good state of repair.
- Improving the efficiency of freight distribution.

The Local Transport Act 2008

Overview

The Act provides local authorities with the power to take decisions that are right for their local circumstances and needs, in partnership with bus operators. The Act sets out legal matters in relation to:

- Traffic Commissioners.
- Transport policies.
- Bus services.
- Passenger transport.
- Integrated transport authorities.
- Local charging schemes.
- Street works, goods vehicles, traffic contraventions and foreign registered vehicles.

In particular, the Act:

- Gives local authorities the right mix of powers to improve the quality of local bus services.
- Allows for the creation of an influential new bus passenger champion to represent the interests of bus passengers.
- Gives local authorities the power to review and propose their own arrangements for local transport governance to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport.
- Updates existing legal powers so that, where local areas wish to develop proposals for local road pricing schemes, they have the freedom and flexibility to do so in a way that best meets local needs, whilst ensuring schemes are consistent and interoperable.

Implications

The powers provided by the Act enable the County Council to take steps to meet the transport needs of residents and visitors. The LTP and its delivery will, therefore, need to take account of these powers. Areas which the LTP can influence include:

- Improving integration between transport and land-use planning.
- Improving bus services.
- Supporting residents with mobility difficulties and those without access to a private motor vehicle.
- Improving and integrating 'other' transport services.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Overview

The Act required local authorities to prepare and publish Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) within five years and to assess and review plans not more than ten years after publication and at intervals of not less than ten years thereafter. RoWIPs are required to set out how an authority proposes to improve the provision of public rights of way and service delivery for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and those with visual or mobility impairments.

Implications

Staffordshire has a network of over 4000km of public footpaths and bridleways. Its RoWIP has been developed to make the best use of Rights of Way throughout the county and proposes to provide better and easier public access in areas of scenic interest and growing population. With the passage of time, the needs of people using paths change. This Plan hopes to foresee many of the changes and adapt the Rights of Way Network to take these into account. Staffordshire RoWIP has been integrated into the LTP since 2005.

Active Travel Strategy (Department for Transport, February 2010)

Overview

This Strategy claims that levels of obesity in the UK are too high and more people need to participate in active travel. It also recognises climate change and congestion as important factors in promoting active travel.

The Strategy aims to use the 2012 Olympic Games as a catalyst to encourage more people to commit to active lifestyles and wants walking and cycling to be at the heart of LTPs.

Implications

Less than one quarter of adults in Staffordshire achieve the recommended level of physical activity; 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 5 children (Year 6) in the county are obese; and of the people living in Staffordshire who travel less than 2km to work, 53% make this journey by car, rising to 80% for journeys between 2km and 5km. These facts demonstrate that there is a need and scope to encourage more active travel within the county.

The LTP will need to create a physical and cultural environment in which people can feel confident to walk and cycle. However, promoting healthy lifestyles is not the sole responsibility of the County Council and it is essential that a more joined-up approach with the health sector is developed.

A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World (Department for Transport, April 2009)

Overview

This consultation document sought views on the vision, targets and measures for improving road safety in Britain beyond 2010. An analysis of evidence led to the identification of the following key challenges:

- Reducing the number of road deaths.
- Pedestrian and cyclist casualties in towns and cities, particularly in deprived communities.
- Protecting children, particularly in deprived areas, and young people.
- Protecting motorcyclists.
- Safety on rural roads.
- Variations in safety from area to area and road to road.
- Poor road user behaviour.
- Illegal and inappropriate speed.

Implications

As the local transport authority, we have a statutory duty to promote road safety. However, reducing the number and severity of road traffic collisions is a shared responsibility. There are a number of organisations that have a role to play, each bringing their own particular expertise. Collectively, these organisations have the ability to make significant reductions in casualty numbers, as well as to improving the overall security of the network. The Highways Agency is one such organisation; around 15% of all road traffic collisions in the county are on motorways and trunk roads, the responsibility for which falls to the Highways Agency.

Over the last ten years, the number and severity of road casualties on local roads has progressively fallen. In comparison with similar areas, Staffordshire's roads are amongst the safest. However, in the current financial climate, continuing to see further reductions in the number and severity of road casualties will be a challenge.

Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism (HM Government, 2009)

Overview

This Strategy aims to reduce the risk to the UK (and its interests overseas) from terrorism in order that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. To achieve this, four work streams have been identified, one of which is 'Protect'. The purpose of 'Protect' is to strengthen the UK's protection against terrorist attack thereby reducing its vulnerability. The protection of crowded places and the transport system falls under this category.

Implications

As an owner of crowded places and the local highway network, the County Council, and therefore the LTP, must consider terrorism and counter-terrorism measures. The County Council will assess, plan for and respond to, damage caused to the transport network where it poses a safety threat.

The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Volume 1 (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, July 2007)

Overview

This updated Strategy sets out air quality objectives and policy options to further improve air quality in the UK. Its primary objective is to 'ensure that all citizens should have access to outdoor air without significant risk to their health, where this is economically and technically feasible'.

Implications

Air pollution is not considered to be a widespread problem in Staffordshire.

To date four local planning authorities have declared a total of eight Air Quality Management Areas. The County Council, working through the Staffordshire Air Quality Forum, is not complacent; it seeks to identify cost-effective measures that can be implemented to reduce levels of pollutants in order to ensure no further exceedences occur.

Taking action to improve air quality provides an excellent opportunity to reduce other transport emissions that are said to cause climate change. It is also an opportunity to deliver improvements around health, housing and the economy.

Strategic Framework and Policy Statement on Improving the Resilience of Critical Infrastructure to Disruption from Natural Hazards (Cabinet Office, March 2010)

Overview

This document sets out proposals for a cross-sector programme to improve the resilience of critical infrastructure and essential services to severe disruption by natural hazards (such as flooding, strong winds, snow and ice, extreme temperatures and dry spells). The aims of the programme include:

- Reducing the most substantial risks to the continuity of infrastructure and essential services.
- Providing a shared framework to support cross-sector activity to assess, enhance and sustain the resilience of infrastructure and services.
- Enhancing the collective capacity of critical infrastructure to absorb shock and act quickly when faced with unexpected events.
- Ensuring an effective emergency response at the local level through improved information sharing and engagement before, during and after emergencies.

It also highlights that under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), responders, such as utility companies, are required to share information with local authorities to enable them to undertake community risk assessments and contingency planning.

Implications

Scientific analysis of evidence suggests that as a consequence of climate change, Staffordshire will progressively experience higher summer and winter temperatures, lower summer and higher (more intense) winter rainfall, and earlier springs and later autumns. This is likely to impact on the highway network and already we have identified over 300 sites on the local highway network that are susceptible to flooding. The LTP recognises that this, together with secondary consequences, such as an increased incidence of ground instability and movement and periods of poor air quality in summer. Highway infrastructure such as embankments, cuttings and bridges will be particularly vulnerable and infrastructure on or near the highway such as street lights, trees and road signs may also be affected by extreme weather conditions.

Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon: Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen (Department for Transport, January 2011)

Overview

This White Paper sets out the Coalition Government's vision for a sustainable local transport system that supports the economy and reduces carbon emissions. It explains how the Government is placing localism at the heart of the transport agenda, taking measures to empower local authorities when it comes to tackling local issues. It seeks to encourage partnerships between communities and the voluntary sector that facilitate initiatives that meet local transport needs.

Implications

Whilst the LTP has regard for the White Paper's principles such as supporting the economy and reducing carbon emissions, the LTP's priorities have been developed locally. They have been informed and shaped through extensive consultation which included the 'Long-Term Transport Strategy for Staffordshire' and by the 'Staffordshire Local Transport Plan Issues and Implications' paper published in March 2010.

It will be important to ensure that transport priorities remain locally relevant during the LTP period, and to do this, the County Council will need to engage regularly with its partners, residents and visitors. This is particularly important in the development of the district transport strategies.

Regional Context

In July 2010 the Secretary of State announced the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs), although this decision was subject to a successful High Court Challenge in November 2010 and the RSS was reinstated. Whilst the status of the RSS is subject to change following the publication of the Localism Bill in December 2010, the evidence base for these strategies is still relevant for informing local decision making. A copy of the West Midlands RSS's evidence base can be found at www.wmra.gov.uk.

Local Context

Our County, Our Vision: A Sustainable Community Strategy for Staffordshire 2008-2023 (Staffordshire Strategic Partnership, 2008)

Overview

Partners across Staffordshire have come together under the umbrella of the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership to develop this Strategy. It expresses the priorities for the county and identifies the issues that will be addressed in order to improve quality of life and contribute to sustainable development. The four overarching priorities of the Strategy are:

- A vibrant, prosperous and sustainable economy.
- Strong, safe and cohesive communities.
- A protected, enhanced and respected environment.
- Improved health and sense of well-being.

The existing Strategy is currently being reviewed.

Implications

The LTP can support some of the Strategy's priorities by including policies and measures that:

- Reduce health inequalities and promote healthier living.
- Improve the quality of and access to services for those in excluded communities.
- Reduce obesity across the population.
- Promote and supporting healthier choices.
- Encourage more sustainable construction, securing high levels of resource and energy efficiency and a reduction in carbon emissions contributing to sustainable transport, enhancing biodiversity and helping to tackle climate change.
- Improve access to everyday facilities for all but particularly for those without access to a car.
- Respond to the threat of climate change and environmental deterioration, reducing our carbon emissions and making a commitment to live more sustainable lives.

The Staffordshire Strategic Plan: Our Strategic Plan 2010-2015 (Staffordshire County Council, 2010)

Overview

The Strategic Plan outlines how the County Council wants to work and what it wants to achieve. It is part of a wider, longer-term vision for Staffordshire and links to the Sustainable Community Strategy. The core values of the County Council are set out as:

- Customer and citizen focus.
- Listening and responding to local needs.
- Encouraging personal responsibility while protecting those who need us.
- Preparing to be bold and to show leadership.
- Providing efficiency and economy through innovation.

Implications

The LTP will help ensure that the County Council achieves a number of the key outcomes including:

- Ensuring that Staffordshire's communities are increasingly safe, free from crime and the fear of crime.
- Ensuring Staffordshire's communities can easily access formal and informal learning opportunities and enjoy a wide spectrum of cultural activities.
- Ensuring that Staffordshire's communities are being healthy.
- Ensuring that Staffordshire's communities are staying safe.
- Achieving economic well-being.
- Tackling the challenge of climate change and ensuring communities can access our natural environment.
- Ensuring that Staffordshire's communities can access everyday facilities via the transport network.

Making a Difference: Improving Health and Well-being in Staffordshire: People and Places (South Staffordshire NHS Primary Care Trust, NHS North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust and Staffordshire County Council, September 2010)

Overview

This document sets out a vision for improving health and well-being and reducing health inequalities within Staffordshire. The long-term strategic policy objectives include:

- Raising aspirations and empowering individuals and communities to achieve their full potential.
- Encouraging and empowering individuals and communities to influence their own health and well-being through improved awareness and access to lifestyle and behaviour support services.
- Promoting a healthy standard of living for all, fair employment and positive work.
- Promoting and strengthening healthy and environmentally sustainable places and communities.

Short-term priorities (to 2013) focus on improving the health and well-being of vulnerable individuals, families and communities. Mental health, older people, alcohol misuse, smoking, housing and listening to our communities are also seen as key areas.

Implications

Improving public health and well-being is not the sole responsibility of one agency and the wide range of social and economic factors that have an influence on health requires a partnership approach in order to achieve improvements. The LTP can help make a positive influence on health and, by undertaking a Health Impact Assessment in respect of the LTP, will ensure that the LTP's policies deliver maximum health benefits to residents.

The Staffordshire Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2011 (Staffordshire Children's Trust, 2010)

Overview

The Plan identifies five strategic objectives:

- Improve everyone's understanding of their roles and responsibility in keeping children safe and healthy.
- Re-focus investment in services focused on early intervention and prevention.
- Provide integrated services that are accessible, equitable and effective.
- Reduce inequalities in health, well-being and attainment associated with child poverty.
- Reduce adverse risk taking behaviour by young people.

The Plan also states that child well-being in part depends on factors such as road traffic pollution and noise, provision of green and natural spaces and healthy and safe walking and cycling routes.

Implications

It is important to invest in children as they are the key to Staffordshire's success in the future. Due to transport's cross-cutting nature, the LTP will need to play a role, to a greater or lesser extent, in all of the above objectives.

A Hard Rain: Staffordshire County Council's Corporate Climate Change Strategy, Second Edition (Staffordshire County Council, 2006)

Overview

'A Hard Rain' sets out the County Council's response to climate change, acknowledging the need to take a proactive position to combat this, through reductions in our own energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Implications

We have committed to the Staffordshire Declaration and signed up to an 80% reduction in emissions relating to the County Council's operations by 2050. The LTP will need to play a key role in ensuring that this long-term target is achieved.

Staffordshire Local Economic Assessment 2010, Consultation Draft (Staffordshire County Council, September 2010)

Overview

The Paper provides an evidence base for Staffordshire's local economy that can help business and the public sector make investment decisions. In transport terms, it identifies a number of issues that could hamper the delivery of economic prosperity and suggests that linking areas of employment opportunity with social and economic need is a key part of the planning, economic development and transport processes and, therefore, needs to be included in the policy and strategy processes of all local partners.

Implications

Economic growth and regeneration are key priorities in Staffordshire, especially in the current financial climate. The LTP has a part to play by:

- Stimulating areas of regeneration and deprivation.
- Facilitating tourist activity.
- Supporting rural communities.
- Maximising the reliable operation of the existing road network.
- Minimising the impact of events on traffic movement.
- Managing network capacity.
- Keeping the highway in good state of repair.
- Improving the efficiency of freight distribution.

A Proposal for a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire September 2010

Overview

This proposal sets out how local businesses and residents will gain from the joining of the public and private sectors in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP. Focus will be on enterprise and innovation initiatives which unlock the potential of the private sector to create employment and bring about a sustainable local economy. The LEP will be built around the reality of the economic linkages that take place across this boundary.

The current and emerging strategies for the LEP highlight the need to:

- Develop much greater numbers of private sector jobs in sustainable knowledge based companies with long-term growth potential.
- Develop jobs in growing sectors such as health and low carbon and advanced manufacturing and facilitate diversification and stimulate supply chains.
- Move away from the reliance on public sector jobs.
- Remove the barriers to growth being experienced by private businesses, including unnecessary red tape.
- Develop an entrepreneurial economy, with high levels of new business formation and survival.
- Build on the strengths of the manufacturing industries like ceramics.
- Develop the workforce skills needed for the new economy.

Implications

See implications for the Staffordshire Local Economic Assessment 2010, Consultation Draft.

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Management Plan 2009-14

Overview

The Plan sets out the strategic direction of the conservation and enhancement of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It has seven objectives:

1. Develop the sense of Cannock Chase AONB as a special place for everyone who lives in, works within or visits the area.
2. Conserve and enhance the distinctive and nationally important landscape of Cannock Chase AONB and the locally, nationally and internationally important biodiversity it supports.
3. Develop a place valued and understood by everyone who comes into contact with Cannock Chase AONB, so that they can contribute positively to the shaping of its future.
4. Ensure a safe, clean and tranquil environment that can contribute to a high and sustainable quality of life.
5. Support a working landscape where prosperity and opportunity increase, natural life flourishes and pressure upon natural resources is diminished.
6. Create a place of enjoyment for everyone, providing opportunities for quiet recreation that contributes positively to physical and mental well-being.
7. Maintain and develop a successful partnership, working together to manage Cannock Chase AONB effectively.

Implications

The Plan states a number of key issues and the following have a direct significance to the LTP:

- The volume and speed of cars and HGVs in and around the area has a potential to damage environmental quality.
- Car parking within the AONB.
- The visual impact of highway design in the area.

- National policy directs that people are increasingly encouraged to access the countryside and that may conflict with the need to conserve and enhance the AONB.
- There is a lack of directional and interpretation signs. Existing signs are not well maintained.

Areas that can be influenced by the LTP include:

- Facilitating tourist activity.
- Supporting rural communities.
- Reducing road transport emissions.
- Reducing the negative impact of traffic noise.
- Reducing the negative impact of artificial light.
- Minimising flooding, soil erosion and pollutants entering watercourses.
- Minimising the risk of soil contamination.
- Enhancing the quality of rural landscapes and the biodiversity associated with them.
- Protecting the network of internationally significant nature conservation sites.

Active in the Outdoors: A Recreation Strategy and Action Plan for the Peak District National Park 2010-2020 (Peak National Park Authority, April 2010)

Overview

With recreation identified as being a strategic priority in the National Park Management Plan, this Strategy reviews the provision of recreational activities, identifies gaps in existing provision and proposes future practices. Defined in the Strategy is the need for more specific focus upon recreation in the Park, as well as the importance of addressing current issues such as traffic congestion and broadening participation in the recreational activities available. In addressing these issues, the Strategy further considers how the varying recreational demands can be met by the National Park without impacting on its preservation.

The Strategy places particular focus upon the accessibility, quality and choice of experiences/facilities in the development of new activities.

Implications

Despite efforts on the part of the National Park and its partners to increase accessibility by sustainable means, the majority of users still visit the Park by private car. With some of the National Park falling within Staffordshire's county boundary, the LTP will seek to facilitate sustainable access (including public transport, walking and cycling) to tourist attractions by influencing visitors' choices and travel behaviour, supporting visitor attractions that want to develop travel plans, and working with the tourist industry to manage visitor traffic.

Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)

Overview

LDFs are a suite of documents that replace Local Plans. Each LDF contains a vision and strategic objectives for each district and borough as well as a number of core policies to set the basis for directing long-term change. In Staffordshire the LDFs are under development, with only two strategies being adopted so far – Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) and Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy.

Implications

It will be necessary to work in partnership with our district and borough councils to achieve common goals. To facilitate this, the LTP will need to reflect the emerging LDF policies and vice versa. The development and delivery of the district transport strategies will play a crucial role.