Background

This section on transport will seek to update the Local Plan to make travel accessible for all, and to support the use of walking, cycling, and public transportation.

Herefordshire is a diverse county, incorporating both rural and urban communities. The A49 is a strategic trunk road, and the county also has a section of the M50 motorway within its boundary.

The county overall served by approximately 2,000 miles of road, 350 miles of pavement, four national railway stations, and a number of bus services operating within and across county boundaries.

The following sets out how transport issues are addressed through the County Plan and the Local Plan's draft vision and objectives.

Herefordshire County Plan

A key environmental ambition of Herefordshire Council's adopted County Plan (2020-2024) is to protect and enhance the county's environment and keep it a great place to live. Improving access to sustainable modes of transport will be key to achieving this.

The County Plan also aims to support an economy that builds on the county's strengths and resources. Appropriate maintenance of the county's road and footpath networks will contribute to this.

Local Plan Draft Vision

The Local Plan 2021-2041 has environmental and economic themed visions, which state respectively:

By 2041 Herefordshire will be a place where planning has helped to create an environment where all of its residents have an exceptional quality of life and are able to live and travel in a more sustainable way; and

Good quality housing and inclusive infrastructure will be provided to ensure that people are able to live active and healthy lives.

Planning policies that promote and improve access to sustainable modes of travel will clearly be central to realising this vision.

Local Plan Draft Objectives

Effective planning policies for transport will be key to delivering on the Local Plan's environmental, economic and social objectives, in particular:

- To significantly improve air quality;
- To enable net zero carbon goals to be at the heart of transport planning decisions, for environmental gains but also to allow people to make healthier more active travel choices;
- To provide connectivity and infrastructure that is designed for inclusion, with factors such as gender, age and disability fully considered;
- To provide transport infrastructure, which will support and prioritise active travel and public transport;
- To support good-health and wellbeing, through ensuring easy access to open space, sports facilities and active travel options.

National Guidance

The NPPF addresses transport within section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport. Transport '*should be considered from the earliest stage of plan-making*', and that planning policies should:

- Support an appropriate mix of uses across an area;
- Identify and protect sites and routes to widen transport choices and realise opportunities for large scale development;
- Provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area;
- Identify and protect sites and routes to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development.

Local Considerations

Herefordshire Council declared a climate emergency on the 8th March 2019. Transport policies will need to be consistent with the council's overall intent to minimise our impact on the environment.

There has been significant changes in national transport policy in the last 12 to 18 months. The Department for Transport recently published its Decarbonising Transport strategy for Britain. The government aims to fully decarbonise transport by 2050, and to end sales of all combustion vehicles to cut CO2 emissions to zero. Additionally, the government has also published the Bus Back Better paper which seeks to increase national bus use.

This has also been referenced in the Levelling Up White Paper on which one of the levelling up missions is that by 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.

A new executive agency, Active Travel England (ATE), has been launched this year. ATE will manage the national active transport budget, awarding funding for projects which meet the new national standards. ATE will help Local Authorities in spreading good practice, and will be a statutory consultee on major planning applications. The government has also recently announced that at least one electric vehicle charge point per dwelling will be required for new developments.

Great British Railways will be a planned state owned public body that is to replace Network Rail as the operator of rail infrastructure from 2023, as outlined within the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail.

The Government has also produced the National Design Code and the National Model Design Code. This is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities. The code has 10 ten characteristics to offer guidance to plan makers to create beautiful, enduring, and successful places. One of the characteristics is movement, of which is to ensure development to be accessible and easy to move around. In well-designed places, all modes of transport are positively designed into the built form.

Active travel should also be promoted, in which to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements ahead of private car use. Herefordshire Council is currently drafting a Hereford Design Guide to offer a bespoke guidance on design using the new national guidelines and to reflect Herefordshire's unique characteristics.

Evidence Base

- The current Local Transport Plan covers the period 2016-2031, with the vision to deliver a transport network that support growth enabling the provision of new jobs and houses. The plan also covered the major investment schemes within the Core Strategy, such as the city link road, a southern link road, and a Hereford relief road. The current transport plan is also supplemented by additional market town studies. The Local Transport Plan, to cover all of Herefordshire, will be updated within the next eighteen months. A study to investigate a potential new road bridge and a link to the east of the city will also be required.
- The council has recently published a Bus Service Improvement Plan in which to build, develop and improve bus service provision by establishing a coherent, consistent, and integrated bus network that is well understood and easy to use.

Updates to come

Following the council's decision to stop the progress of the southern link road and Hereford relief road, the evidence base will need to be updated to reflect a new strategy in the Local Plan.

The Hereford Masterplan was commissioned in February 2020, to assess the best options to provide a modern transport system for the city, which would address the declared climate emergency, support the local economy, protect the environment and generate wider societal benefits.

A Transport Scoping Report is to be commissioned. This will compromise of two stages. Stage 1 will consist of a high level scoping assessment of likely transport scenarios, as outlined within the Spatial Options Consultation, which ran from January to February 2022. Stage 2 will consist of a more detailed transport assessment once full site dwelling capacities are known. The scoping report is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2022.

Herefordshire Council will also actively engage with organisations such as National Highways, Active Travel England, and neighbouring councils. This will be consistent with national policy, to ensure that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned.

Also consistent with national policy is that the preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence, which all of the above should provide.

Existing Policy

There are two policies in the existing Core Strategy which deal with the management of transport issues, SS4 and MT1.

Policy SS4 - Movement and transportation states that '*new developments should be designed and located to minimise the impacts on the transport network; ensuring that journey times and the efficient and safe operation of the network are not detrimentally impacted*'

Developments with high journey numbers should be in sustainable locations, and accessible by means other than private car and to promote travel by walking, cycling, and public transport. A list of major transport schemes is also listed. Policy SS4 is classed as a strategic policy, as it addresses strategic priorities within the Core Strategy. The policy sets out for the provision of infrastructure for transport county-wide, which is consistent with national policy.

Policy MT1 - This addresses traffic management, highway safety and promoting active travel. Development proposals should include principle requirements such as to encourage active travel behaviour, promote integrated transport connections, and to demonstrate that the strategic and local highway network can absorb the traffic impacts of the development. Additionally, it is likely that there will be specific transport policies and proposals within the place based policies of the Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) have a role to play in addressing local transport issues, such as footpaths and cycleways in which to promote sustainable travel. In identifying sites for development, issues such as access, road safety, distance to public transport facilities and the capacity of transport networks, are key considerations.

There is a need for NDPs to be in general conformity with strategic local policies. NDPs should be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators, and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned.

Transport Policy Options

Option TR1- Continue with existing policy, but update to reference new government organisations and updated transport priorities

The current policies would be amended to update references to the Highways Agency, which is now the National Highways, and additionally Great British Railways now replacing Network Rail, as well reviewing all other relevant bodies.

Also, major schemes in Herefordshire following the completion of the Hereford Masterplan, the transport scoping report, and updated local transport plan, will need to be updated. Additionally the council will actively engage with ATE as they now are a statutory consultee on major planning consultations.

Option TR2- Add additional policy to specifically address the climate emergency through transport

Additional policy requirements would also be added to transport policies, reflecting national and local policy changes and comments from the Spatial Options consultation, and the move towards zero carbon emissions during the updated local plan period.

An additional policy could also detail how all developments would need to accommodate carbon reduction. This could take a view on the merits of locations for new developments, with the aim being to consider carbon impacts. New developments will need to be designed to reduce the need to travel, to support active travel modes and access to public transport.

The requirement for electric car charging points for new development proposals could be added to the transport policy, which will reflect the recent national and local policy changes.

Sustainable transport within the rural areas of the county could be further encouraged by the introduction of providing rural cycle highways in policy if possible. This could be adjacent to the major A roads in Herefordshire.

Option TR3- Greater emphasis on design guidance in relation to transport

An additional policy could be developed to reflect the national Design Code in relation to transport. This could create a greater synergy with the other Local Plan policies on design, and also emphasise the importance of active travel and accessibility.

A hierarchy of transport could also be referenced within this policy for development proposals. This would be to have an aspiration to prioritise walking, cycling, and public transportation over the use of private cars. This also would be consistent to the council's climate emergency aims. It is expected that further national guidance will be published in regards to transport and design guidance policy.