

**Durham**  
County Council



# Local Transport 3 Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment:  
Non-technical Summary

## **Non Technical Summary**

### **Introduction**

The County Durham Local Transport Plan (LTP) was prepared by Durham County Council to set out the strategic objectives, policies and targets for developing transport systems and services in the County from 2011. An accompanying delivery plan will present in more detail how the objectives, policies and targets will be delivered over the first three years. The delivery plan will be reviewed and updated at regular intervals.

An essential consideration when drawing up planning documents is their effect on the environment and people's quality of life, both now and in the future. To help address this, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is carried out alongside the preparation of the Local Transport Plan to make sure environmental issues are taken into account at every stage. Under European and National legislation, an SEA is required to be carried out on all plans and strategies that may have a significant impact on the environment.

### **SEA of LTP3**

The first stage of SEA is the Scoping Stage. This was carried out between March and May 2010. It involved setting out the context of the LTP by establishing the current situation in County Durham in relation to relevant social, environmental and economic concerns and also giving recognition to other key policies, strategies and plans which needed to be taken into account. From an investigation of this information a set of key issues for the County was developed along with a set of SEA Objectives to be used as a checklist to check against the draft objectives, policies and actions of the LTP.

The next stage of SEA is the Assessment Stage. It involved checking the SEA Objectives against different parts of the LTP (e.g. policies, interventions) to inform the development and refinement of alternatives for the LTP and enable the assessment of its effects. This stage produced the results of the SEA exercise in terms of recommendations for improvements to the draft LTP document and conclusions on the nature and significance of effects likely to arise from it. It focussed on the three-year Delivery Programme period of the LTP, as this is the period which has been set out in most detail and for which funding from Central Government is sought. The delivery programme beyond that time horizon is less clear, and may change before being submitted as part of a three-year programme, when it will need to be assessed (again) anyway.

The first part of the Assessment Stage was a compatibility test between the LTP objectives and the SEA objectives to be used in the assessment. This test is required under the SEA legislation and can highlight areas of conflict, or potential conflict, at a high level within the LTP. The next part is the main assessment stage, and this focused on the policies and interventions (actions) of the draft LTP. These were considered to be the key parts of the LTP which, in combination, will dictate the nature and scale of likely effects on the various aspects of the environment and community that need to be considered in SEA. As well as the identification of effects, recommendations for actions to reduce (mitigate) them were also developed and an assessment was made on their likely significance.

In addition to this main part of the assessment, various "cross-checks" were carried out between different parts of the LTP to check for consistency and comprehensiveness of coverage. Finally, consideration was given to possible cumulative effects of the LTP policies and interventions in

combination with each other. This is important in order to check whether impacts in combination are likely to be significant, even if individually they are unlikely to be so.

## **Findings**

### **Assessment of prioritisation of LTP3 Goals**

The LTP3 Strategy document refers to the possible need to prioritise LTP3 Goals in the case of severe funding restrictions. The proposed number one priorities are “Stronger Economy through Regeneration” together with “Maintenance of the Transport Asset”. The second priority is proposed to be “Carbon Reduction”. The other goals are proposed to be considered as a group, with no order of priority amongst them. The SEA assessment of this prioritisation is that “Maintenance of the Transport Asset” needs to be the main priority in a situation of severely restricted funding. The other Goals should be considered as a group, with “special” priority interventions being identified from the priority interventions already identified under each Goal in order to ensure a balanced programme of delivery across all the goals, albeit a reduced one.

### **Assessment of objectives and policies**

Various recommendations were generated out of the assessment with regard to amending LTP objectives, policies and supporting text. These recommendations are highlighted in yellow boxes in sections 5.1 – 5.37 of the main report.

Recommendations were made in relation to 32 of the 35 draft policies and two of the 15 draft objectives. Recommendations ranged from changes to policy / objective wording, to additions to the supporting text, to complementary measures that should be executed through the County Durham Plan which is being developed in parallel with the LTP, but over a longer timescale. Providing a link between the LTP development process and the County Durham Plan development process is considered to be an important role of the SEA.

### **Assessment of draft interventions**

Assessment of the draft interventions (actions) which were submitted to the SEA Team in July 2010 generated a range of recommendations. Some of these recommendations were for the inclusion of additional interventions against particular policies, and some were concerned with prioritisation of submitted interventions. The latter represented a pre-emptive move in the light of potential funding cuts which could restrict the range and / or number of interventions that could be resourced.

A table showing all the recommendations made on the set of draft interventions is included in Section 5.77.1 of the SEA report

### **Assessment of priority interventions – first three years**

The LTP3 programme for the first three years is outlined in the Capital Programme on pages 18-20 of the final LTP3 Delivery Plan. This sets out “Budget Heads” which can effectively be considered as “Measures” or “Projects” of the LTP. They relate to one, or a number of the Priority Interventions identified for the first three years of the LTP which are set out under the relevant LTP3 Goal in the draft LTP Strategy Document. They are reproduced again below:

#### **Goal: Stronger Economy through Regeneration**

- Existing infrastructure on transport / economic corridors (priority corridors)
- Connectivity for people to workplace (reliable highway links and cycling, walking and public transport)

- Highway network capacity for housing growth (location of new housing in relation to transport connections and improvement of connections if necessary)

**Goal: Carbon Reduction**

- Targeted publicity campaigns (public transport, cycling, walking and other low carbon practices)
- Personal / workplace travel planning
- Improve perceptions of bus travel
- Promote car-sharing
- Electric vehicle charging points
- New rail halts

**Goal: Safer and Healthier Travel**

- Implement schemes and measures from the Road Safety Action Plan
- Target young drivers, motorcyclists and vulnerable road-users
- Walking and cycling, particularly daily journeys between home and work

**Goal: Better Accessibility to Services**

- Bus infrastructure development
- Promote and improve the Link 2 Service in response to demand
- Continue to support the community transport sector
- Bus priority measures
- Expand coverage of real-time information
- Increase awareness and use of travel-line
- Expand smart-ticketing
- Support use and redevelopment of existing railway assets (Leamside, Durham Coast, Bishop/Weardale lines)
- Improve congestion points on key transport corridors
- Expand UTMC initiative

**Goal: Improve Quality of Life and a Healthy Natural Environment**

- Carry out traffic modelling to develop the AQMA Action Plan
- Implement AQMA measures
- Improve on-street public transport facilities
- Encourage low emission bus use in problem areas
- Promote electric vehicles
- Limit speeds to suit road conditions and environment
- Keep HGVs to the DCC Freight Map routes
- Ensure locations and extent of improvements are assessed to minimise impact
- Ensure standard and condition of footways linking key centres and PT facilities enhance surroundings
- Introduction of further pedestrianised zones
- Improve accessibility of rights of way

Further information on each of the Budget Heads is included in Section 5 of the LTP3 Delivery Plan. The LTP3 Appendices document also presents information about individual budget heads and measures in the three year programme. All of these sources were used to establish a picture of the actual activity that will take place under each budget head in the three year LTP3 programme as a basis for identifying and evaluating potential impacts and generating

recommendations for mitigation measures. The results of this process are set out in Section 5.79 of the SEA Report.

If all mitigation measures set out are implemented it is considered that non of the listed Budget Heads in the three year programme are likely to have a significant negative impact. One exception to this is the proposed new Peterlee Rail Station, for which there was not enough information at the time of assessment to assess potential impacts, including any on the nearby Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest. Further information is now included in the final LTP3 Appendices document about a preferred, broad location for a new rail station on the Durham Coast Line. Based on the information collected to date, out of seven investigated sites, the Sea View site at Horden is now suggested as the preferred broad potential location. However, this is still in the process of further consultation after which further feasibility studies and assessment will be required. Assessment of the scheme under the Habitat Regulations 2010, and as part of Environmental Impact Assessment is being incorporated into this process

### **Assessment of Maintenance Programme**

There was very limited information in the Budget Table on likely maintenance schemes in the three year programme, so the assessment had to be made on the basis of very broad areas of activity: Road Maintenance, Bridge Maintenance and Street Lighting. The ability to make detailed recommendations was restricted by the lack of information and focused on the need for advance assessment of areas where maintenance schemes are proposed in order to inform working methods and design to avoid or mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive impacts. More information in LTP3 on major maintenance scheme proposals would be useful.

### **Assessment of Priority Interventions – After First Three Years**

The SEA has focussed on the schemes within the first three years as these are where significant effects can be evaluated with greater certainty. However, a looser assessment of the indicative longer term programme has been undertaken and includes consideration of potential schemes such as the Northern and Western Relief roads and a New Park and Ride Site. These are included at appendix J. Full assessments of these schemes will be needed if they appear in a future three-year programme.

### **Summary and Conclusion from SEA Report**

In addition to the general findings referred to under each sub-heading above, the SEA report concludes with the following key points:

SEA of policies recommended strengthening of policies 1,2,3,4,5,12,13,17,19,20,23 and 35 to enhance positive effects. SEA also recommended inclusion of policies pertaining to driver information, demand management, priority corridors/whole town approach. It was also recognised that the development of a transport strategy for each sub County in line with the production of the County Durham Plan would be beneficial for prioritisation of policies to each area. The cumulative effects of the policies were assessed and can be mitigated providing that:

- A demand management policy is implemented
- New road infrastructure is only considered when all other options or combination of options have been examined and found not to be capable of meeting intended objectives
- LTP3 adopts carbon targets and implements adaptation measures on the highways network

- Transport developments to ensure no net loss of biodiversity
- Infrastructure to be in keeping with locality and schemes that contribute toward traffic calming/speed management that avoid creating additional highways clutter are prioritised.

SEA made a number of recommendations regarding the prioritisation of draft intervention measures and the development of additional interventions where none were supplied against a policy area. On the whole the recommendations were reflected by the prioritised interventions in the Delivery Plan. However, in section 5.110 which undertook a cross check of interventions against the policies, the following further interventions were recommended for consideration for inclusion in LTP along with a number of suggestions as to how LTP should clarify its' approach toward for example encouraging active and sustainable school travel:

- Compliance with Disability Discrimination Act measures
- Funding of replacement or new buses for community transport organisations
- Renewal of older, noisier bus fleets
- Quieter road surfaces
- Climate Change adaptation risk assessments
- Security enhancement measures
- Car/coach parking
- Contribution to bringing services to people in rural areas
- Broadband provision (Digital Dale project)
- Subsidising Type 2 bus services
- Concessionary fare alternatives for those unable to access bus services
- Sustainable urban drainage infrastructure
- Measures to improve access to biodiversity/heritage
- Improving green infrastructure related to transport networks
- Environmental assessments

SEA recommended a number of mitigation measures in relation to LTP3 policies and the priority interventions. Given that the mitigation measures are implemented LTP3 should not have any significant adverse effects in its first three years, and should contribute positively to improving the sustainability of County Durham's transport system. However, to eliminate any areas of uncertainty identified by SEA it is advised that potential impacts associated with the construction, maintenance and improvement of transport networks and infrastructure upon the environment, health, community safety etc are examined on a site specific / project level in advance of proposed schemes being planned in detail. In the first three-year programme, this applies in particular to the proposed Peterlee Rail Station.

This SEA project included a Health Impact Screening exercise. On the whole policies and interventions in the first three years of LTP3 are considered to contribute positively to the health of residents in County Durham. Early integration of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan into the LTP would strengthen the likelihood of progress in this area through raising its profile and linking it with funding and transport schemes.

### **Changes made to LTP3 as a result of SEA and Consultation**

Substantial changes to goals, objectives and policies within the LTP3 Strategy Document were made as a result of SEA. A summary of changes made are highlighted in the bullets below:

- Strengthening of the objective on minimising environmental impact by including the wording “and seek solutions that deliver long term environmental benefit” so it reads; “Minimise impact of transport on the natural environment, heritage and landscape and seek solutions that deliver long term environmental benefit”.
- Guarding against a narrowing of focus onto three overarching goals (maintenance, economic development and carbon reduction) in a situation of severely restricted funding, in order to maintain a balance of priority across all six goals
- Improving integration between different policy areas by modifying wording of policies and / or contextual information
- Including a new policy on Demand Management to recognise its importance in the development of sustainable transport systems
- Including wording at the end of the policy on protecting the natural and historic environment to recognise the legal requirement for Habitat Regulations Assessment of projects emerging over the LTP plan period

However, changes made to the Delivery Plan were not all made as a result of the SEA and there is a possibility that some may have significant adverse impacts. The SEA Directive requires that any significant changes made to the LTP are subject to assessment to identify whether any significant effects are likely and recommend appropriate mitigation measures.

The SEA focuses on the three-year programme of the LTP. In terms of possible impacts caused by changes to the document, it is clear that additional measures added to the original draft three-year programme are more important than removals from the programme.

#### **Additions to the three-year programme in the Delivery Plan**

<b>Economic / Transport Corridors</b>	
A693 Corridor – C11 Oxhill Junction	Improvement of traffic signals to relieve congestion on A693 into Stanley
A693 Corridor – C5 Pelton / Ouston Junction	Signalisation of junction to relieve congestion on the A693
A691 Corridor – Sniperley Roundabout	£500,000 earmarked in year 1 for roundabout improvements
A690 Corridor – C13 Belmont Business Park Junction	£175,000 earmarked in year 1 and £300,000 in year 2 for junction improvements
<b>Whole Town Approach</b>	
Durham City – Bus Station	£30,000 earmarked in year 1 for small-scale improvements
Durham City – North Road	No specific details of schemes are set out (see page 67 of LTP3 Appendices) but £40,000 is earmarked for year 3.
Bishop Auckland – Accessibility Improvements	£20,000 earmarked in years 2 and 3 for small scale improvements
Consett – Bus Station	£25,000 earmarked in year 1 and £200,000 in year 2 for major refurbishment
Consett – Traffic Management	£30,000 earmarked in year 1 for small scale improvements
Stanley – Bus Station	£30,000 earmarked in year 1 for small scale improvements

Seaham – B1404 / B1285 Junction	Improvement of traffic signals to relieve congestion at this junction in Seaham
Chester-le Street – Rail Station	£20,000 earmarked in year 2 for small scale improvements
Chester le Street – Parking Control	£30,000 earmarked in year 1 for parking controls
Chester le Street – DDP Scheme	£10,000 earmarked in year 1 and £10,000 in year 2 for small scale improvements
Spennymoor – Accessibility Improvements	£20,000 earmarked in year 1 and £30,000 in year 2 for accessibility improvements

Given the details included in LTP3 about transport interchanges (bus and rail stations), and specifically that improvements will be focused on achieving good accessibility for all users and improving comfort and facilities within interchanges, it is considered that the improvements to Durham City Bus Station, Stanley Bus Station and Chester-le-Street Rail Station are unlikely to cause significant negative effects, providing other policies in the LTP are adhered to in the course of their planning and implementation. Similarly, improvements to signalisation at junctions at Oxhill (A693), Pelton / Ouston junction (A693) and B1404 / B1285 junction at Seaham are small scale measures to manage traffic flow at existing junctions and are considered unlikely to have significant negative effects. Traffic management in Consett, Parking Control and DDP schemes in Chester le Street and Accessibility Improvements in Bishop Auckland and Spennymoor fall into the same category. Ensuring cumulative impacts due to increased highway clutter on the townscape will be particularly important from the latter group of schemes.

This leaves the A691 Sniperley Roundabout improvements, the A690 Belmont Business Park junction improvements and proposals for North Road in Durham City as larger schemes where significant impact may be possible. Out of these, the scheme for North Road in Durham City is currently undefined (see page 67 of the LTP3 Appendices document) and is therefore not possible to appraise. It is likely that transport measures funded through the LTP will be only one part of a larger scheme, and assessment of the scheme as a whole will be important, especially given the proximity of North Road to the World Heritage Site and other heritage assets.

Potential improvements to the Sniperley roundabout, in particular, are bound up with wider plans to deliver new housing and transport improvements to the area around Durham City and need to be modelled and assessed as part of a suite of potential scenarios for housing and transport infrastructure. The modelling process will progress during March and April 2011 and assessment will be possible when that is complete. This will be conducted as part of the Sustainability Appraisal of the County Durham Plan Core Strategy, which will make decisions on the numbers and location of new housing and associated infrastructure, and which is being produced after LTP3.

Improvements to the Belmont Business Park Junction will include signalling the slip road junction off the A690 with the road into Belmont, widening the junction at Belmont Business Park entrance and improving capacity at the mini-roundabout forming the junction into Belmont. Following assessment it is concluded that no significant environmental impacts are likely from Belmont Business Park Junction improvements.

## Monitoring



The indicators proposed for monitoring aspects of LTP3 pertaining to the SEA, and for which a report should be compiled and appended to the LTP3 progress report at the end of each three-year rolling programme are:

- Number of rights of way improved and changes in usage on stretches of public rights of way that have been subject to improvements
- Total length of and change in usage of the cycle network
- Transport schemes under LTP3 that improve priority economic corridors
- Number of business travel plans
- Number of flooding incidents seriously affecting transport networks
- Length of new / widened road constructed and area of land take involved
- Transport schemes under LTP3 adversely affecting SSSIs
- Transport schemes under LTP3 adversely affecting Local Wildlife / Geological Sites
- Transport schemes under LTP3 leading to creation or positive management of BAP habitat
- Transport schemes under LTP3 adversely affecting Landscape Conservation Priority areas
- Transport schemes under LTP3 positively affecting Landscape Improvement Priority areas
- Transport schemes under LTP3 adversely affecting listed / registered / scheduled heritage assets:
  - Listed buildings
  - Conservation areas
  - Historic Parks and Gardens
  - Historic Battlefields
  - Scheduled Monuments
- Transport schemes under LTP3 contributing to positive measures / management of listed / registered / scheduled heritage assets:
  - Listed buildings
  - Conservation areas
  - Historic Parks and Gardens
  - Historic Battlefields
  - Scheduled Monuments
- Use of reclaimed materials in road construction / maintenance under LTP3