

# Cheshire West and Chester Local Transport Plan

## 1. The policy context

1.1 It is important to consider the policy context which has influenced the preparation of this new transport strategy and its planned delivery. The following section provides an outline of the often inter-related national, sub-regional and local policy frameworks which have been taken into account when preparing this document.

## 2. National Policy

2.1 **Local Transport Plan Guidance (July 2009)** - This guidance sets out the framework for the development of the next round of Local Transport Plans. The preparation of these plans remains a statutory duty for local highway authorities. The new plans need to be closely integrated with the Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework.

2.2 **DfT White Paper Creating Growth - Cutting Carbon (January 2011)** – The new White Paper was published in January 2011 and sets out the Government's aspirations for local transport and confirms the policy framework for taking this work forward. Many of the themes are continuations of the direction set out in the DaSTS approach – see below.

2.3 **Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (November 2008)** - Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) sets out the Department for Transport's long-term strategic direction for transport. It builds on the recommendations set out in Sir Rod Eddington's study on the impact of transport decisions on the economy and the environment and Nicholas Stern's report on the economics of climate change. It sets out five broad goals for transport focussing particularly on the overarching need to deliver economic growth while, at the same time, reducing greenhouse emissions. The goals are:

- To support national economic competitiveness and growth by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
- To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;
- To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society;
- To contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health; and
- To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.

2.4 The new Coalition Government have highlighted that their top priorities are those which support the economy and help address climate change. Nevertheless, they are clear that the other national goals should not be neglected. The Council's response to the national goals is set out in Section Three of this document.

2.5 **Traffic Management Act 2004** - The Traffic Management Act (2004) imposes a network management duty on all local transport authorities to manage their road network to secure the expeditious movement of traffic on the local highway network. Statutory duties are used to avoid, reduce and minimise congestion and disruption caused, for example, by maintenance activities, the work of public utilities, planned events or incidents.

2.6 **Local Transport Act (2008)** - In addition to new powers to improve local bus services, the Local Transport Act (2008) retains the statutory requirement for local authorities to produce and review Local Transport Plans and policies. It also gives authorities the flexibility to move their LTPs from a fixed, five year period of activity to a longer-term integrated transport strategy and a shorter-term implementation plan. This will help better align the LTP with other longer-term strategy documents such as the Local Development Framework (LDF).

2.7 **A Safer Way consultation (2009)** - This builds on the DaSTS goal to contribute to better safety by seeking views on the vision, targets and measures for improving road safety for the period beyond 2010. Based on the outcome of this consultation exercise, the Government's new strategy for road safety is expected to be published towards the end of 2010 and will be incorporated into this document.

2.8 **Low Carbon Transport – A Carbon Reduction Strategy for Transport (July 2009)** - This document provides a key component of the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan which has been developed to respond to the requirements of the Climate Change Act (2008). This includes a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% on 1990 levels by 2050 and by 34% by 2020. It is estimated that 41% of carbon emission arise from commuter and business travel. Transport has an important role to play in meeting this goal. Examples include supporting a shift to new technologies and fuels; promoting lower carbon travel choices; and using market mechanisms to encourage a shift to lower carbon transport.

2.9 **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** – All local highway authorities have a duty to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Where possible, it is expected that these are integrated with the LTP.

2.10 **Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (2007)** – This sets out a duty for local authorities to review and assess local air quality and declare Air Quality Management Areas to improve air quality where this falls below national standards. Where poor air quality is considered to be a result of traffic there is a need to integrate Air Quality Action Plans with the LTP.

2.11 **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) / Town and Country Planning (Local Development – England) Regulations (2004 as amended in 2008 and 2009)** – This gives local planning authorities the responsibility to produce a Local Development Plan for their area. This is a series of documents which combine

to form the basis of future planning decisions. There is strong relationship between the LDF and LTP to ensure that land use and transport planning are closely integrated and support shared objectives.

### **3. Local policy**

**3.1 Making it Happen – Cheshire West and Chester Council Corporate Plan -** Making it Happen sets out the Authority's visions and priorities for the period 2009 to 2011. Key pledges include recognition of the importance of improving the standard and maintenance of the local highway network. The plan also highlights the importance of the LTP, LDF and Sustainable Community Strategy as key policy documents to support the delivery of the wider aims and objectives of the Authority.

**3.2 Together we can aim high – West Cheshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2026 -** The new Local Strategic Partnership published a new Sustainable Community Strategy for West Cheshire in April 2010. Priorities include addressing inequalities, improving local health and well being, responding to the challenge of climate change, improving road safety, and maintaining an efficient transport network.

### **4. Additional local issues**

**4.1 Vision 2050 – A sustainable future for Cheshire West and Chester –** This is an independently prepared vision for West Cheshire which is intended to be used to help guide the Council in taking decisions about the future of the area. Its premise is that to achieve a fully sustainable community by 2050, the direction of travel set now must be right.

**4.2** This requires the need for a wholesale reduction in the use of resources to reduce the impact of climate change and in response to the depletion of natural resources, especially oil. Aspirations include improved health through increased levels of walking and cycling, more local employment and businesses with shorter supply lines, reducing the length of commuter trips and increasing levels of passenger transport trips and freight carried by rail and water.

### **5. Sub-regional issues**

**5.1 Mersey Dee Alliance –** The Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) helps support the shared economic, social and environmental interests across West Cheshire, Wirral and North Wales. The partnership recognises that the area represents a single economic sub-region with a population close to 1 million, but which is divided by a national boundary. In response, the MDA seeks to address strategic cross-boundary issues that affect the area. Transport is considered to be a priority area for joint action. Key objectives include:

- To ensure an effective and sustainable transport system to support the economic success of the sub-region;
- To ensure cross border co-operation on transport and accessibility opportunities to enhance travel options; and
- To assist in connecting people with jobs and skills and tackling worklessness.

**5.2 The Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership** - This is the newly created sub-regional partnership for economic development in Cheshire and Warrington. Working in partnership with leaders from both the public and private sectors, the LEP's remit will be to develop strategies and action plans that will improve the economy of the sub region by attracting and developing businesses, creating jobs, developing the skills needed for business and ensuring a dynamic, high quality environment for businesses, residents and visitors. The former Local Enterprise Commission considered that the sub-region has the potential to increase its GVA by 60% by 2030. To achieve this, it is considered to be essential to improve accessibility between the places where people live and where they work.