

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 28th February 2022

Report of: Sustainable Transport Officer and Group Head of Place Shaping

Title: Transforming Travel in Watford: the strategy for 2021-2041

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Watford Borough Council's Council Plan sets out a commitment to 'build on our new, greener ways to travel in and around Watford and promote the transition to a low-carbon economy' with a number of actions identified to achieve this ambition, including 'positioning Watford as a sustainable travel town'.
- 1.2 A draft of the new sustainable transport strategy, 'Transforming Travel in Watford: the strategy for 2021-41' was published for consultation over the summer. The overall response to the consultation was positive, with a significant majority supportive of the need for change, and the promotion of sustainable transport. Following review of the results of the consultation, which have led to some updates, Cabinet is now being asked to consider and adopt the modified strategy.
- 1.3 With the pressure of climate change, the need to reduce congestion in Watford, and the benefits resulting to health and wellbeing if transport choices change, all lead to the need to support active travel and public transport. With the large number of journeys made by Watford residents being of short duration, and seeing how other places have supported a change from the private motor car, the strategy although ambitious, has targets that it is believed can be met.
- 1.4 Alongside the strategy Cabinet is being asked to endorse the Local Cycling and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which has identified 5 key cycle and walking routes. Its adoption will place Watford in a better position to bid for government funding to implement provision. The next stage will be to assess these proposed routes in more detail to assess deliverability of individual routes.
- 1.5 Whilst, as a council, we are investing in various sustainable transport measures, for example, Beryl Bikes and improvement of walking and cycling routes, to deliver the

strategy, Watford is reliant on government funding. However, having a strategy, undertaking feasibility work and the creating of business cases puts Watford in a better place to bid and receive sustainable transport allocations.

2.0 Risks

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Not seeking to make travel in Watford more sustainable.	Failure to address the Climate Emergency. Transport network that doesn't meet the needs of Local Plan growth, resulting in worsening air pollution, congestion and public health.	Develop a Sustainable Transport Strategy. HCC and WBC working together to implement proposals.	Treat	Likelihood = 1 Severity = 4 Total risk = 4
Public and key stakeholders not supporting key principles of the strategy	Strategy unable to be delivered.	Extensive engagement throughout strategy development.	Treat	Likelihood = 2 Severity = 4 Total risk = 8

<p>Public and key stakeholders not supporting delivery of individual strategy actions</p>	<p>Strategy unable to be delivered in full, reducing effectiveness.</p>	<p>Extensive engagement to accompany all scheme development, with link made to wider strategy rationale. Strong stakeholder action plan and liaison especially with elected representatives. Commitment to involve residents throughout.</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>Likelihood = 3 Severity = 4 Total risk = 12</p>
<p>Non delivery</p>	<p>Failure to meet requirements of climate change emergency and a transport network that doesn't meet needs of Local Plan growth, resulting in worsening air pollution, congestion and public health.</p>	<p>Delivery plan developed, setting out key actions and identifying potential funding sources. Annual review of progress.</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>Likelihood = 2 Severity = 4 Total risk = 8</p>
<p>Lack of delivering sustainable transport measures due to funding</p>	<p>Measures are not able to be delivered leading to congestion, and lack of modal shift. Expectations built up in development of strategy not being met and lack of support for STS strategy and growth.</p>	<p>Delivery of major parts of the strategy is reliant on government funding. Having the strategy, and developing implementation plans places us in a better position to assess that funding. Communicating that implementation is</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>Likelihood = 3 Severity = 4 Total risk = 12</p>

		dependent in large part on external funding.		
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3.0 It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the new sustainable transport strategy, 'Transforming Travel in Watford: the strategy for 2021-41', and the High Level Delivery Plan.
2. Agree the LCWIP and endorses further work to undertake and validate proposed routes and develop detailed proposals.
3. Note that the strategy will be monitored through quarterly updates to Cabinet and annual reviews.

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Report approved by: Tom Dobrashian, Group Head of Place Shaping

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The Transforming Travel in Watford (TTIW) strategy aims to guide future decision making on transport within Watford, reflecting the key role transport plays with respect to climate change, public health, air quality, economic growth and community vitality, all of which are priority issues for both the council and the County Council.
- 4.2 Everyone benefits when there is a greater choice of greener ways to travel, and we know that, just by making a few changes to some of our journeys in and around Watford, we can all have a big impact. The TTIW set outs how, by making it easier for people to make green travel choices, we can cut congestion, enjoy cleaner air, reduce our carbon footprint and feel healthier.
- 4.3 Watford is relatively compact, has few hills, is densely populated and the majority of all trips by residents are short, with nearly 60% being less than three miles. There is, therefore, a significant opportunity for more trips to be made by active modes, as the

places people visit on a day-to-day basis are often within easy walking or cycling distance.

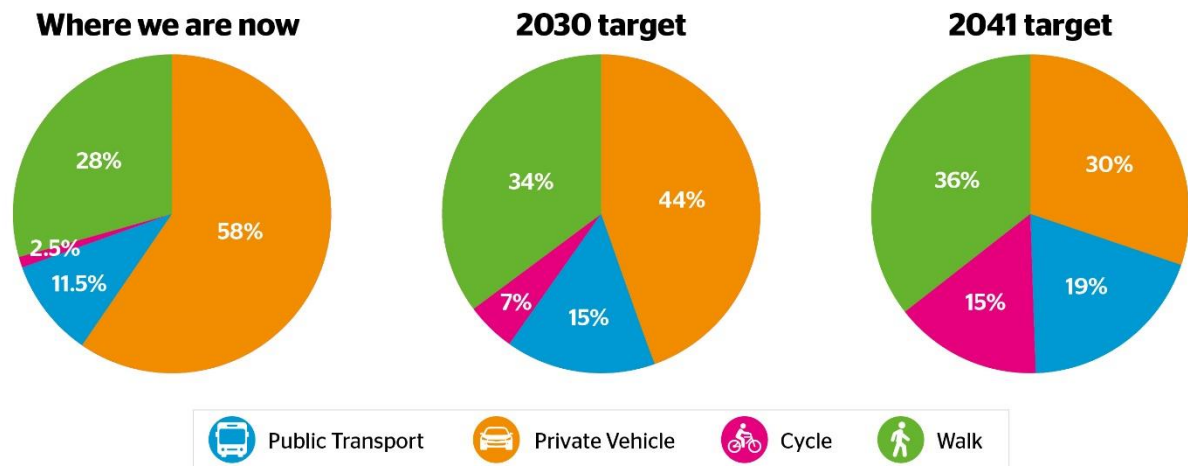
- 4.4 A team comprising officers from both the council and the County Council has developed TTIW, with oversight from a joint officer Project Board. A Member Steering Group, chaired by the Elected Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Transport and the County's Executive Member, Highways & Transport have helped shape the strategy. Local members have had the opportunity to feedback on the draft strategy through two workshop sessions in June and September 2021 and through the formal consultation exercise.
- 4.5 An engagement exercise was completed at the start of the project to understand the views of residents and businesses on transport in Watford during December 2020. A full consultation on the draft strategy in the summer of 2021 included a feedback questionnaire, a dedicated email account for more detailed responses, engagement with key organisations such as Watford BID, Atria and West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, plus workshops with a variety of user and interest groups.
- 4.6 Further the strategy has been subject to an Overview & Scrutiny Task Force, who are supportive of the strategy and approach, emphasising the need to focus on securing a modal change for shorter journeys.

5.0 Objectives, targets and themes for delivery of the strategy

- 5.1 There are six objectives of the strategy:
 - **Cutting congestion:** Reducing the number of car journeys by making cycling, walking or public transport the natural first choice for local trips.
 - **Providing for future journeys:** Investing in efficient and green ways to travel for both current and future residents and businesses.
 - **Boosting health and wellbeing:** Encouraging healthier travel choices that keep people physically fit and active, promote positive mental health, improve air quality, and make our streets safer.
 - **Ensuring all our community benefits:** Offering equality of access to transport for all.
 - **Making best use of new technology:** Providing green and environmentally friendly travel solutions.
 - **Delivering a great customer experience:** Promoting high quality, easy-to-use travel options.
- 5.2 Linked to these are targets for the change in mode of travel within Watford, as illustrated below, for example, reducing trips by car from 58% of all journeys to 44% by 2030 and 30% by 2041.

These targets were developed through benchmarking localities who have developed and implemented a similar strategy. Journeys made by Watford residents are mostly short, with 18% being less than a mile, and 54% being less than three miles. With the recommended strategy having a particular focus on creating a mode shift on short journeys, there is confidence that a modal shift can be achieved.

5.3 Watford Mode Shift Targets



5.4 TTIW is underpinned by ‘actions’ that set out what the council and the County Council plan to do to make transport more sustainable. These have been grouped in six themes, which are summarised below.

- **Active Travel:** create a town where people will walk and cycle more, particularly for short trips, and parents will feel comfortable allowing their children to walk, cycle or scoot to school.
- **Longer Journeys:** provide better alternatives to driving in and out of Watford, encouraging people to use public transport for journeys that can’t be walked or cycled.
- **Alternatives to Car Ownership:** provide alternatives to driving a private car for many trips in the borough, offering a variety of travel choices, for example a new car club, working with public transport providers to improve punctuality, and making sure remaining cars on the road are as green as possible.
- **Town centre:** make the town centre to Bushey Station an area that is easy to travel in using green transport options (bus, cycle and walk).
- **Supporting change:** make sure that everyone has a chance to have their say on the sustainable travel improvements, alongside communicating clearly the need to change and rewarding people who switch to greener travel.
- **Moving goods:** help businesses make and receive the deliveries they need more efficiently, whilst contributing to making our transport network more sustainable.

5.5 The strategy is summarised in the document 'Transforming Travel in Watford: the strategy for 2021-2041', which forms Appendix A to this report. A full supporting document which provides a detailed review of the context and the strategy is in Appendix B entitled 'Transforming Travel in Watford Supporting Document'.

6.0 Results of the consultation

6.1 A public consultation on the draft strategy was undertaken between August 2021 and October 2021. A total of 1,099 people and organisations responded. Overall, the response to the consultation was positive, with a strong (84%) agreement with the importance of changing the transport network to tackle climate change. Over 60% of survey respondents agreed with the concept of re-allocating road-space to walking, cycling and public transport.

6.2 Nearly all of the proposed actions had at least 50% support, with three quarters gaining 60% or more agreement from respondents (note, there was in each survey question a percentage of respondents not expressing a view). Actions that were less popular included: comprehensive re-figuration of the Ring Road and Dalton Way, and re-allocating on-street car parking to other uses.

6.3 Feedback from organisations and workshops was mainly positive, with broad support for TTIW. A few issues were raised via the questionnaire and workshops, particularly around the impacts on people with disabilities, the need for the council itself to set an example, the merits of Park and Ride, and the need for better and cheaper public transport.

6.4 The consultation demonstrated that the councils should continue to engage with residents to fully understand concerns and illustrates the need for a coherent strategy where individual initiatives can be explained and understood as part of a wider programme. Publicising evidence from elsewhere is recommended as the strategy is implemented as communicating where successful delivered strategy proposals would help people understand the challenges and opportunities Watford faces, and disprove common misconceptions around implementing sustainable transport projects.

6.5 The consultation response has highlighted some key areas where stakeholders, neighbouring authorities, or residents are likely to have strong opinions, and some opposition is likely, such as the proposal for Park & Ride facilities. The strategy is clear that this proposal and a number of others are reliant on feasibility studies and positive business cases. Further, there is a clear commitment in the strategy and in undertaking each initiative that residents and communities will be engaged for them to help shape proposals.

6.6 The strategy was reviewed and to address feedback received as follows:

- clarifying that any changes to on-street parking will not be targeted in crowded residential streets;

- strengthening the councils' commitment to ensure schemes will not impair those with disability, and where possible will offer increased opportunities for those whose mobility is limited;
- emphasise the feasibility stage of Park and Ride, and the council and County Council commitment to work with neighbouring authorities on any scheme;
- integrate aspects of the recently submitted County Council Bus Strategy Improvement Plan (BSIP) to strengthen commitment to lobbying for better public transport;
- emphasising the longer term and staged nature some features of the strategy such as plans to significantly re-configure space on Dalton Way and the Ring Road to prioritise sustainable modes; and
- adding a commitment from both councils to lead the way in encouraging sustainable travel behaviour from their own staff.

6.7 A report of the consultation responses is in Appendix C.

7.0 Delivery

7.1 There is a delivery plan to accompany the strategy which addresses the key actions and highlights key tasks that could be undertaken in the next two years, where it is understood there is the required funding and resources. The delivery plan is in Appendix D.

7.2 Officers recognise that partnership working with the County Council will continue to be key, and it is proposed to retain the joint officer working relations and Member Steering Group, and consult with members regularly as projects are developed and delivered.

7.3 As part of the budget setting we have established a Transport Planning Manager post within the Planning & Development section of the council, and the council has an existing small delivery team within its Transport & Infrastructure Section. As Transport Authority, the County has more delivery programmes and larger resources to call upon. It is recognised that Watford is one of ten districts and, therefore, there are competing demands across the county for this resource. However, having an adopted a strategy, resident and member support and the Watford Borough Council's financial contributions to support, where appropriate, puts Watford in a strong position to compete for funding and programme entry opportunities.

8.0 LCWIP

8.1 The LCWIP has been developed in parallel to TTIW by external consultants. They have followed guidance set out by the Department for Transport (DfT), using a data and evidence driven approach, alongside engagement and consultation to identify a preferred network of future walking and cycling routes in the borough.

8.2 The LCWIP process enables the identification of cycling and walking improvements at the local level and enables an evidenced long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks. The process identifies key priority routes where there is likely to be the greatest demand for cycling and walking and therefore where investment in infrastructure is likely to yield the greatest return. The output of the process is a network plan showing these routes and a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment. The DfT are now specifying that the development of an LCWIP is a pre-requisite for funding.

8.3 Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council and Hertfordshire County Council started to develop a joint LCWIP in 2020. Following evidence gathering and stakeholder and members engagement sessions priority cycle routes for the borough, and a core walking zone based on Watford Town Centre were agreed for further audit. These were as follows:

Prioritised cycle routes

- Route 1: Green Loop east
- Route 2: Whippendell Road
- Route 3: St Albans Road
- Route 6 Watford to Carpenders Park (via Wiggshall Road)
- Route 18 Hempstead Road

Core Walking Zone connecting Routes

- Route 1: Watford Town Centre to Bushey Station (Lower High St & Eastbury Rd)
- Route 2: Watford Town Centre to hospital (Vicarage Rd)
- Route 3: Watford Town Centre to Watford Met station (Rickmansworth Rd & Cassiobury Park Road)
- Route 4: Watford Town Centre to West Watford (Whippendell Rd)
- Route 5: Station Rd / Woodford Rd.

Maps showing the location of these routes are in Appendix F.

8.4 The details of these routes were consulted upon alongside TTIW, being shared on the same web platform. Recognising that the LCWIP is a largely desk-based exercise, which identifies schemes at a concept level, further work is programmed to assess the deliverability of the schemes and to develop them in more detail.

8.5 In early 2022, Hertfordshire County Council will be undertaking a project validation exercise on two of the cycle routes (Green Loop East and part of Hempstead Road). The councils will look at the deliverability of the suggested measures on St Albans Road and how these link with the ongoing public realm works and how these could link in with Hertfordshire County Council led work on bus prioritisation, and Watford Borough Council capital programme to improve the carriageways and pavements.

- 8.6 In addition, officers are drawing together a programme of 'quick win' measures for implementation and are looking at elements of the cycle and walking proposals which can be introduced in the short term along the prioritised routes (e.g., signage, dropped kerb installation and removal of barriers).
- 8.7 The implementation of the more complex measures (particularly new cycle infrastructure such as dedicated cycle tracks) will require additional capital funding. The DfT has earmarked specific funding for Cycling Schemes over the next 4 years through the Active Travel Fund programme. This is a competitive bidding process undertaken each summer. Having an adopted LCWIP in Watford and further development of the scheme concepts will put Hertfordshire County Council in a strong position to include Watford schemes in the next bid (Summer 2022).
- 8.8 It is proposed that the remaining prioritised cycle routes are included in the next set of Hertfordshire County Council project validations (for the financial year 22/23) to enable the development of the scheme designs for future rounds of bidding. Note that the County Council's validation process looking at the deliverability of measures has member engagement built in, and it is proposed the council supports the engagement with local stakeholders and members during the development of proposals.

9.0 Implications

Financial

- 9.1 The TTIW strategy and recommended actions are not fully funded. Delivery will be largely dependent on successfully securing external funding, for example, from Central Government streams. Having a sustainable transport strategy and an LCWIP in place will strengthen both the council and County Councils' position in being successful in any funding bids for the borough.
- 9.2 Funding for some schemes will be able to be met via Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy, whilst others may attract private sector funding, for example, the Watford to Croxley Link.
- 9.3 The council has already allocated funding within capital and revenue budgets to support some of the measures, for example, cycling and walking improvement measures identified through the LCWIP process. Funding has also been earmarked to progress some of the shorter term elements of the strategy such as the expansion of the car club network.
- 9.4 The County Council will incorporate appropriate elements of the transport strategy into pre-existing ranking processes for potential County Council capital funding, additional 'Integrated Plan' funding which may be available, such as the '20mph fund' as well as funding requested through the Bus Strategy Improvement Plan process that guides central government funding for bus services. It will be important that Watford links into specific County Council programmes of activity, for example,

School Travel Plan programmes. This will need to be incorporated within work activities.

- 9.5 The councils will also need to work with partner organisations such as Network Rail to ensure that identified improvements to railway stations and rail infrastructure are considered for their future bidding processes.
- 9.6 The Shared Director of Finance comments that where individual projects have additional funding requirements, these will be brought forward for approval as part of the normal budget process.

Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 9.7 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are not expected to be any specific legal implications as a result of endorsing and approving the transport strategy or LCWIP. As schemes are developed normal legal processes will be followed.

Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

- 9.8 Under s149 (1) of the Equality Act the council must have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to –
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them; and
 - foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them.
- 9.9 During the development of the strategy, officers were cognizant of their duties under the Act, and officers recognise the need to balance the needs of protected groups, the transport requirements of which do not always align. Discussions took place with a number of organisations, for example, the disability forum on the strategy, where their views have been incorporated where possible into the revised strategy.
- 9.10 An equalities impact analysis has been undertaken. At the heart of the policies is the aim to improve accessibility of key locations for all members of the community. Examples include:
- improve communication, accessibility regarding public transport;
 - train stations to improve accessibility and legibility for disabled customers; and
 - continued support for cars where necessary, if individual circumstances dictate the need to retain the use of cars.

9.11 The delivery of the strategy will be via development of individual projects and there is the commitment to then prepare and consider Equalities Impact Assessments for each project Officers will engage with those impacted to help share the proposals and any mitigations – and that commitment is embedded in the strategy.

Staffing

9.12 Council has approved the appointment of a Transport Planning Manager post within Development & Planning. This post holder will support the TTIW and work closely with the County. The small Transport & Infrastructure section has responsibility to deliver individual transport schemes and will continue to do so.

9.13 Individual projects may well need resourcing, which will be scoped as a scheme is developed.

Appendices

Appendix A – Transforming Travel in Watford: the strategy for 2021-2041

Appendix B – Transforming Travel in Watford Supporting Document

Appendix C – Transforming Travel in Watford Consultation Report

Appendix D – Transforming Travel in Watford Delivery Plan

Appendix E – Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix F – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan#

Appendix F1 Cycling Interventions

Appendix F2 Walking Interventions Appendix F3 Prioritisation Tables