

Meeting date: 9th March 2023

Report to: Solihull MBC Cabinet Meeting

Subject/report title: Solihull Connected Transport Strategy

Report from: Perry Wardle – Assistant Director, Growth and Development

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Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege
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Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of feedback received through public and stakeholder consultation on the Council's draft transport strategy, Solihull Connected 2023, and to seek Cabinet approval to adopt the Strategy and its accompanying Delivery Plan.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to:
- a) Consider feedback received as a result of public and stakeholder consultation on the draft Solihull Connected 2023 Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan, as summarised at Section 3 and detailed at Appendix A.
 - b) Adopt the subsequently amended draft Solihull Connected Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan, as provided at Appendix B.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 Initial drafts of the new Solihull Connected 2023 Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan

were considered by Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board on September 13th 2022, prior to further consideration by Full Cabinet on October 6th 2022, at which approval was granted to conduct public consultation. Amendments were made to the draft Strategy prior to public consultation commencing, in line with comments provided by the Scrutiny Board and Cabinet.

- 3.2 Three Solihull MBC Councillor drop-in sessions were held in December 2022, to provide information on the content of the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan, and accompanying documentation, prior to the commencement of public consultation. Each drop-in session was tailored to reflect the needs and varying demographics of distinct parts of the borough:
- (a) Tuesday December 13th – Solihull Civic Centre, North Solihull & UK Central Hub
 - (b) Wednesday December 14th – Solihull Civic Centre, Rural East & Southern Fringe.
 - (c) Thursday December 15th – Solihull Civic Centre, Solihull Town Centre & Urban Core.
- 3.3 Public consultation subsequently ran for six weeks from Monday 9th January to Monday 20th February 2023. Consultation closed at 5pm on Monday 20th February 2023.
- 3.4 The Council’s online platform, ‘Your Voice Solihull’, was used as the principal channel for conducting the consultation, supplemented by promotion via the Council’s social media channels. A dedicated website was created where the draft Strategy and Delivery Plan were published, alongside evidence reports. Feedback was predominantly captured through completion of an online survey, with an additional facility made available to enable the submission of questions / feedback directly.
- 3.5 In total, the website attracted a total of 1,900 visits. 71 of these visits were ‘engaged visits’ (people who filled in the survey or submitted a question), 845 were ‘informed visits’ (people that have downloaded the consultation material) and 1,333 were ‘aware visits’ (people who visited the website).
- 3.6 In addition to the consultation material being available online, Officers hosted five public drop-in sessions to enable face-to-face engagement, as summarised below:

AREA	VENUE	DATES	TIMES	VISITOR NUMBERS
North Solihull	Chelmsley Wood library	16 th January 2023	9:30am – 1pm	9
Southern Fringe	Knowle library	19 th January 2023	9:30am – 1pm	14
Solihull town centre	The Core library	27 th January 2023	11am – 3pm	15
Rural East	Balsall Common library	30 th January 2023	2pm – 5pm	15
Urban Core	Olton library	14 th February 2023	9:30am – 1pm	17

- 3.7 A summary of the consultation process, and the feedback received is provided at Appendix A, but key aspects include:
- Access to health care such as hospitals can be difficult especially for people in the rural east of the borough, where appointments may involve travelling to

University Hospital Coventry, which is in Walsgrave on the eastern side of Coventry.

- There are concerns across the borough about speeding traffic, the quantum of traffic and the lack of enforcement of both speed restrictions and other traffic regulations, in particular parking restrictions.
- Many roads in the south and east of the borough have limited footways, if any.
- The West Midlands Bus on Demand is now a real part of the transport mix in the east of the borough, but there are concerns about service availability, cost, and access. These are, in part, already being addressed by Transport for West Midlands.
- The availability of electric vehicle charging points. There is support for more charging points.
- There was support for growing the network of cycle routes across the borough and an understanding of the reasons why Solihull MBC and other authorities are promoting cycling.
- There were mixed views regarding the existing cycle routes in the borough and the proposals for Gate Lane, near Dorridge.
- There was support for improvements to canal towpaths in the borough to bring them up to the same quality as towpaths in Birmingham, Coventry and elsewhere in the conurbation.
- There needs to be additional safe parking for cycles, especially new generation electric bikes.
- There was support for improving car parking at railway stations, with Olton Station being specifically referenced.

3.8 In addition to the above, the issue raised most at the public drop-in sessions, related to the bus network and the changes to a variety of bus services that were introduced in early January 2023. Many people were not aware of the changes, with the issue exacerbated by bus stop timetables not having been updated. These comments have been collated and directed to both the bus operating companies and Transport for West Midlands for their consideration as the parties responsible for managing the bus network across the West Midlands.

3.9 Statutory Consultees and key stakeholders were also directly contacted, including those identified below:

Academies, Colleges, and Schools	Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership
Age UK (Solihull)	Guide Dogs for the Blind
Birmingham Airport	Jaguar Land Rover
Bus and rail passenger groups	Motorcycle Action Group
Bus operating companies	National Exhibition Centre
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England	Neighbouring Borough, City, County and District Councils
Canal & River Trust	Network Rail and train operators
Chamber of Commerce	Parish Councils
Emergency Services	Pushbikes and Sustrans
Federation of Small Businesses	The two members of Parliament for the area
Friends of the Earth	Transport for West Midlands

- 3.10 Stakeholder consultation responses have been received from Arden Cross Limited and Muse Developments, Balsall Parish Council, Birmingham Airport, Birmingham City Council, the Canals and Rivers Trust, Cycle Solihull, Enterprise Holdings, Jaguar Land Rover, Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Bus Action Group, the Motorcycle Action Group, the National Exhibition Centre, Natural England, Resorts World, Transport for West Midlands, the Urban Growth Company and Warwickshire County Council.
- 3.11 In addition, meetings were held with Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Bus Action Group (January 10th), the North Solihull Business Forum (January 17th), Meriden Parish Council (January 17th) and the Motorcycle Action Group (February 2nd).
- 3.12 Feedback received during the consultation has been considered, with minor amendments made to the draft Strategy accordingly, as summarised at Appendix A. A final version of the Solihull Connected 2023 Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan, including tracked changes to highlight amendments, is provided at Appendix B. Subject to Cabinet approval, the tracked changes will be accepted, and the final version of the documents published as the Council's adopted Strategy.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 In developing the draft Solihull Connected 2023 Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan, three options were considered to ensure that the Council has a transport strategy that fully reflects current policy:
- a) Do nothing. i.e. retain Solihull Connected in its current form;
 - b) Review the existing Solihull Connected transport strategy and update or refresh where applicable; and
 - c) Develop an entirely new strategy.
- 4.2 As set out in the report considered by Cabinet in October 2022, option B was adopted as the preferred approach – review, refresh and update the previous transport strategy. This report highlights that feedback received through consultation has vindicated this approach.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 The evidence from the consultation tells us that the 2016 strategy needs updating to do sufficient justice to priority topics such as active travel and public transport, and the specifics around day-to-day transport provision. The 2016 strategy introduced an approach whereby 6 area strategies were developed for different parts of the borough to take into account local characteristics, demographics and geography; that approach, along with extension to it in the form of the development of local centre access strategies, has been supported as part of the consultation on the 2023 strategy.
- 5.2 Similarly, the views from the consultation demonstrate that there are many long-standing issues regarding transport provision, such as congestion in areas close to schools at the start and end of the school day and concerns about excessive road traffic speeds that suggest that much of the 2016 strategy remains valid. This supported our approach to review the existing Solihull Connected transport strategy and update or refresh where applicable.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull. 2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it. 3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. 4. Enable communities to thrive. 	<p>The aim is a transport strategy that is responsive to people's needs and which will better serve our residents strengthening connectivity and accessibility in the Solihull Borough area and to surrounding areas. This will enable communities to thrive and allow people without cars or who are unable to drive to better access services and opportunities.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres. 6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2. 7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable. 	<p>The new transport strategy directly relates to supporting our towns and local centres by including policies that should contribute towards improving access to health, education, leisure, employment, retail and tourism sites within the borough. Bringing improved access will support steps to revive the economy from the pandemic. Supporting the benefits of HS2 and UK Central development plans through ensuring that people are able to travel reliably and efficiently to the new services and the new employment sites within UK</p>

Priority:	Contribution:
	Central. The new transport strategy also supports delivery of new homes for residents.
Environment: 8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.	Solihull Connected 2023 seeks to reduce carbon use and improve air quality through encouraging residents and visitors to access local facilities and to travel by public transport or active travel modes rather than private car. An improved network delivers greater choice to people and businesses in our borough.
9. Promote employee wellbeing	A good transport system is essential for a healthy society. The impact of air pollution on health is well-known, but transport affects the health of people across society, in multiple ways. Investing in transport is one way we can help address widening health inequalities and regional disparities in public health.

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

- 6.2.1 This report sets out the details of the consultation carried out on the proposed transport strategy, along with the results of the consultation. The report also explains how feedback received during the consultation period has been considered.
- 6.2.2 At its meeting on 13th September 2021, the Economic Development & Managed Growth Scrutiny Board considered, and provided initial feedback on, the intended approach to developing the Solihull Connected 2023 Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan. Initial drafts of these documents were then considered by the Scrutiny Board on 13th September 2022, with amendments made accordingly prior to the draft documents being published for consultation.

6.3 Financial implications:

- 6.3.1 There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report.

6.4 Legal implications:

- 6.4.1 There are no legal implications as a direct result of this report.

6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

- 6.5.1 The Corporate Risk Management approach has been complied with, to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision. For example, legislation, political and reputational risks.

- 6.5.2 There is a risk that not having a 'current' transport strategy leaves the Council in a weaker position when bidding for funding, lobbying decision makers, when working with developers or seeking to influence major players in the transport field, such as Highways England, Midlands Connect or Network Rail.
- 6.6 Equality implications:
- 6.6.1 None as a consequence of this report. Equality has been considered throughout development of the strategy, with a Fair Treatment Assessment carried out accordingly.
- 6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):
- 6.7.1 There are strong links between the draft transport strategy and the work of the West Midlands Combined Authority through Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE). Both of these have significant influence regarding transport policy and strategy and TfWM is the Local Transport Authority for the West Midlands.
- 6.7.2 TfWM is currently preparing a new Local Transport Plan for the West Midlands. Our transport strategy has detailed links to the Local Transport Plan, Chapter 2 of which describes the links and overall set up. Joint working will be required with TfWM and WMRE to deliver some of the objectives and outcomes set out in Solihull Connected 2023.

7. List of appendices referred to

- 7.1 Appendix A – Report of Consultation
- 7.2 Appendix B – Amended Final Version of Solihull Connected 2023 Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan

8. Background papers used to compile this report

- 8.1 Solihull Connected transport strategy, 2016 and Delivery Plan 2016.

9. List of other relevant documents

- 9.1 Not applicable.