

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Rural Transport Strategy

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

March 2012

**Environment & Commercial Services
0300 123 4047
www.hertsdirect.org/ltp**



Contents	Page
1. Introduction To The SEA Process	2
2. Hertfordshire's Rural Transport Strategy; visions, goals and objectives	3
3. Baseline Information, Key Issues And Problems In Hertfordshire.	6
4. Assessment Methodology	8
5. The Effect Of The Rural Transport Strategy Action Plan	10
6. Cumulative, Secondary And Synergistic (Combined) Effects.	13
7. Monitoring	14
8. Conclusions	20
9. Next Steps	21
Appendices :	
Appendix 1: Appraisal Matrix	
Appendix 2: Baseline Data	

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Report

This report sets out the results of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Hertfordshire's draft Rural Transport Strategy, a daughter document of Hertfordshire's local transport plan. The plan will be subject to a consultation with stakeholders and the public in 2012. The purpose of this report is to:

- Give consultees information on the potential environmental and sustainability effects of the draft Rural Transport Strategy to aid them in their consideration during consultation; and
- Assist Hertfordshire County Council in improving the final Rural Transport Strategy by highlighting where there are potential environmental and sustainability effects of implementing the draft Rural Transport Strategy.

1.2 The SEA Process

The European Directive 2001/42/EC requires certain plans to be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This Directive is realised in the UK through SI 2004 No. 1633: The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (otherwise known as the SEA Regulations). These Regulations require an environmental assessment to be carried out on certain plans and programmes prepared by public authorities that are likely to have a significant effect upon the environment. Certain plans, including LTPs and their daughter documents, have been deemed by Government to automatically require an SEA.

The LTP3 underwent the screening and the scoping process in early 2010. A full SEA environmental report was produced that covered the description of the processes that the LTP3 underwent, this can be viewed at www.hertsdirect.org/ltp. As a number of the LTP3 daughter documents including the Rural Transport Strategy were not available for the assessment for the LTP3 September 2010 consultation period, it was decided that each of these documents would be screened separately to determine if they required an SEA assessment (i.e. did they contain information that had not already been covered by assessing the corresponding Policy or Intervention packages). As the Rural Transport Strategy is new and does contain updated information, it is subject to the scoping process.

1.3 What is the aim of the Rural Transport Strategy?

The aim of the strategy is to help deliver the rural policies of Hertfordshire's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) and any related transport policies of significance to rural areas. Rural residents often experience poor access to services, because they generally have further to travel, may not have access to a car and opportunities to use sustainable transport may be minimal. Sustainable transport incorporates rail and bus passenger transport, as well as walking and cycling. Urban transport issues are addressed by regularly updated urban transport plans (UTPs); the rural transport strategy recognises that specific rural transport issues are not addressed by UTPs, and explores the ways to mitigate the impacts of transport on the economic, social and environmental vibrancy of Hertfordshire.

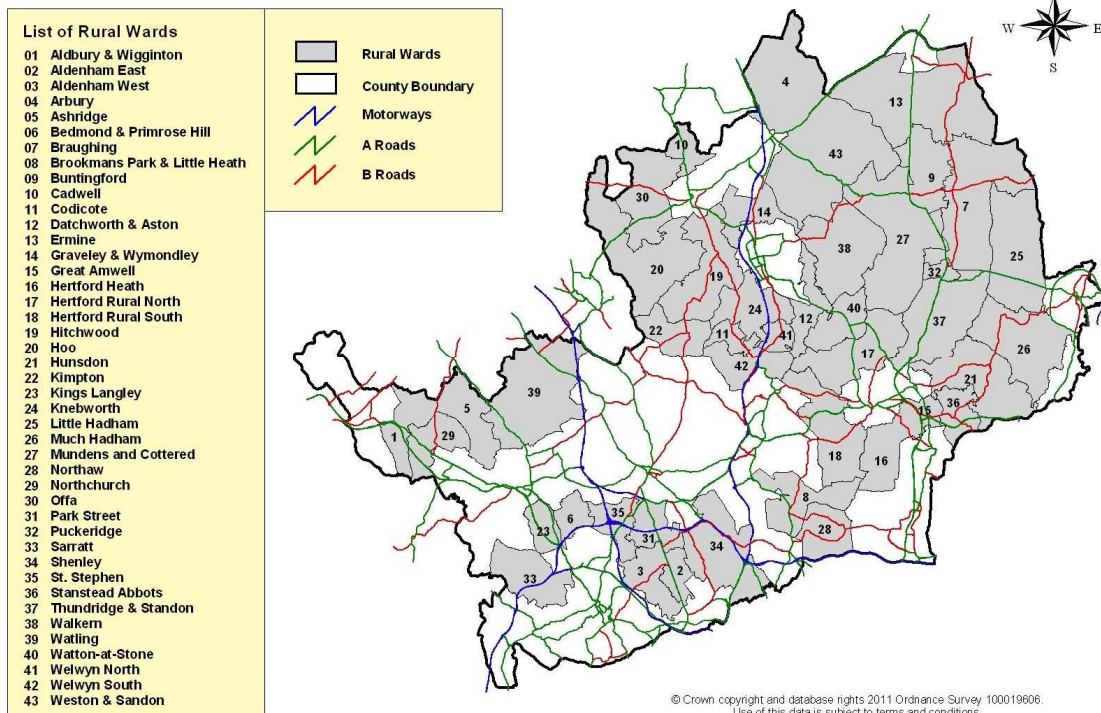
2. HERTFORDSHIRE'S RURAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

2.1 Transport and Rural areas in Hertfordshire

Evidence in the Rural Transport Strategy shows that traffic levels are particularly high in the county, with a complex movement pattern due to the fact that the major roads and railways run north-south through the county linking London to the rest of the country. As mentioned in paragraph 1.3, urban transport issues are documented with solutions to mitigate them, in a number of regularly updated urban transport plans (UTPs). However there are 43 wards in the county which do not have any areas within them covered by UTPs, and hence up to now, there has not been a generic transport strategy that describes and offers practical transport solutions to the social, economic and environmental issues that the rural wards experience.

The figure below shows the location of the rural wards to which the Rural Transport Strategy applies.

Rural Wards with Strategic Road Networks



2.2 The Vision and Goals of Local Transport Plan 2011-2031 (LTP3)

The promotion of sustainable transport and road safety is achieved through the LTP, which sets out the vision and strategy for the long term development of transport in the County. The vision of the LTP is:

To provide a safe, efficient and resilient transport system that serves the needs of business and residents across Hertfordshire and minimises its impact on the environment.

This will be achieved this by:

- Making best use of the existing network and introducing targeted schemes where improvements are required so as to deliver a reliable and readily usable transport network to benefit local business, encourage further economic growth and allow access for all to everyday facilities.
- Promoting and supporting sustainable travel to reduce growth in car traffic and contribute to improved health and quality of life for residents with a positive impact on the environment and on the wider challenge of reducing transport's contribution to climate change.

Five Goals support the Vision, the transport strategy will:

- Support economic development and planned dwelling growth
- Improve transport opportunities for all and achieve behavioural change in mode choice
- Enhance quality of life, health and the natural, built and historic environment for all Hertfordshire residents
- Improve the safety and security of residents and other road users
- Reduce transport's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and improve its resilience.

2.3. The objectives of the Rural Transport Strategy.

Whilst the strategy is a daughter document of the Local Transport Plan (LTP3) and contributes to delivering the vision and goals of LTP3. It also has its own set of objectives:

- **Integrated Transport Programme (ITP) Schemes:**
 - With the support of partners, work with Parishes and Villages to develop and deliver schemes which meet the overall LTP3 indicators. Potential schemes and measures which meet the indicators will be considered on an annual basis for selection through the prioritised Traffic and Environment List.
 - Support a stronger role for local communities in identifying local needs in rural areas and deciding how these needs can be met.

- **Help Deliver the Rights of Way Improvement Plan:**
 - o Facilitate cycling and walking and seek to increase the use of the Rights of Way Network for journeys to work, school, facilities and services through Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs).

- **Improve the quality of Rural Passenger Transport:**
 - o Seek to make passenger transport responsive to people's real needs, being flexible, well marketed, well integrated, stable and reliable, in accordance with Hertfordshire's Bus Strategy and Intalink Partnership.
 - o Co-ordinate services to make best use of what is available. Working with bus and train operators and where necessary investing with the community and voluntary transport sector in the provision of services in areas not adequately served by scheduled bus services.
 - o Work with partners to investigate the provision of more responsive passenger transport, improved information and passenger transport facilities and co-ordinate service provision.

- **Improve Rural Accessibility:**
 - o Seek the provision where feasible, of locally accessible services that people can reach thus reducing the need to travel.
 - o Integrate transport modes across the network with the provision of relevant user friendly route and service information.
 - o Address rural access issues which occur across the boundaries of different Districts/Boroughs and other Counties.
 - o Seek opportunities for Green Tourism and Leisure in Rural Hertfordshire that can play a supporting role for the rural economy and contribute to providing healthy exercise.

3 BASELINE INFORMATION AND KEY ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN HERTFORDSHIRE.

3.1 Baseline Information

The SEA Directive requires environmental baseline data to be assembled. Collection of such information allows environmental problems to be established, but this information gathering exercise is not to be a snapshot of the current situation, but should show trends and be kept updated for future plans. The Directive is required to consider the evolution of the environment without the plan, and Appendix 2 includes a column to describe what might happen to each of the baseline issues if the Rural Transport Strategy was not implemented.

Baseline data for the LTP3 environmental report was collected for each of the SEA objectives, this can be seen in Appendix 3 of the LTP3 Environmental Report and this was mainly in the form of performance indicators (www.hertsdirect.org/ltp). The data was then grouped under the 8 SEA topics as set out in the SEA Directive. Some of the data had a direct relationship with the Rural Transport Strategy, some of it had an indirect relationship for example: '% of area that is woodland' however the main thrust of LTP3 is about sustainable transport and the baseline data reflects this. The indicators that have a direct relationship are as follows:

- % of total length of footpaths and other Rights of Way that were easy to use by members of the public.
- % of all journeys by walking under 1 mile in length.
- % of all journeys by cycling under 3 miles in length.

Appendix 2 shows all the baseline indicators that relate directly or indirectly to the Rural Transport Strategy.

Although there are no specific LTP3 targets attributed to rural transport, this Strategy will help to deliver other County-wide targets for LTP3 indicators, including those aiming to:

- Reduce congestion
- Enhance accessibility
- Increase the number of walking and cycling trips
- Improve passenger transport (reliability and passenger satisfaction)
- Monitor speed limit compliance
- Improve road safety
- Reduce transport related CO₂ emissions
- Make the Rights of Way network more accessible
- Increase the number of sustainable school journeys
- Improve air quality

3.2 Key Issues and Problems in Hertfordshire

From analysis of the baseline data in the LTP3 scoping report published in April 2011, a number of key issues emerged; the Rural Transport Strategy toolbox of interventions (see section 3.2), go some way to address these issues below:

These are:

- Access issues to some key services for sections of the community and poor access to services for those living in rural services.
- The need to limit carbon dioxide emissions;
- Air quality and the declaration of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs);
- Noise pollution;
- Road congestion – specifically urban traffic in peak hours;

4 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Details on the full SEA assessment process can be seen in sections 6 to 8 of the LTP3 SEA environmental report (www.hertsdirect.org/ltp).

The SEA Regulations do not specifically require the use of a framework of objectives in SEA, but it is a recognised way in which environmental effects can be described, analysed and compared. The SEA objectives for Hertfordshire's Rural Transport Strategy and LTP3 SEA have been chosen after a review of the important issues and policies (including the national (DaSTS) Transport Goals) to reflect the influence that transport can have on meeting objectives and resolving issues.

The County Council's Forward Planning Unit had previously developed a master set of sustainability appraisal objectives in response to sustainability appraisals and the new SEA Directive. This master set was based on the objectives of relevant national, regional and local plans. To create a set of objectives for the SEA of the Local Transport Plan and its daughter documents, this master set of objectives was taken and adapted to reflect the SEA topics and local circumstances. Further detail around how the more recent SEA objectives were developed can be found in Section 5.2 of the LTP3 SEA Environmental Report.

The final SEA objectives chosen to make up the framework for LTP3 and the Rural Strategy are:

SEA Topic	SEA Local Objective
Biodiversity, fauna and flora	1. To protect and enhance biodiversity
Population and human health	2. To maximise the opportunities for leisure and a healthy lifestyle for all, and to improve the physical and mental health of the population, and reduce health inequalities 3. To reduce crime and create safe environments
Water and soil	4. To improve the sustainable use of resources 5. To move away from waste disposal to minimisation, reuse, recycling and recovery 6. To ensure the efficient use of water, and safeguard water resources
Air	7. To protect and enhance air quality and minimise noise pollution 8. To improve the choice of sustainable transport modes, encourage their use, and reduce the need to travel by car
Climatic factors	9. To adapt to the impacts of climate change such as flooding

SEA Topic	SEA Local Objective
	10. To reduce greenhouse gases including carbon dioxide, emitted by vehicular transport 11. To ensure the sustainable supply and use of energy
Cultural heritage and landscape	12. To protect and enhance the character of landscape, townscape and green spaces 13. To protect the cultural heritage of Hertfordshire
Social inclusiveness	14. To tackle the causes of poverty and social exclusion by improving access to services and community facilities for all 15. To empower all sections of the community to participate in decision making and local action
Economic development	16. To maintain employment, improve economic competitiveness (consistent with environmental constraints) and create a vibrant economy 17. To spread economic growth more evenly to benefit deprived areas 18. To maintain the vitality and viability of existing centres

These objectives relate directly to SEA topics of the Directive as set out in the Scoping Report. The LTP3 SEA scoping report and objectives were consulted on in May 2010.

The assessment matrix that was used to assess the Rural Transport Strategy interventions against the SEA objectives can be found in Appendix 1.

5 THE EFFECT OF THE RURAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

5.1 Introduction

The Rural Transport Strategy SEA assesses the interventions of the Strategy which seek to address the following challenges:

Challenge 1:

“Enable people to maintain their independence for longer by developing/providing a wide choice of safe and easily accessible transport modes and services”

Challenge 2:

“Provide more opportunities for younger people through a range of services and easy but safe and sustainable access to services in nearby areas”

Challenge 3:

“Reduce the overall need to travel and provide viable alternatives to the car in rural areas including horse-riding”

Challenge 4:

“Aim to tackle the high level of road transport per capita emissions especially in East Herts and North Herts and create a more resilient transport network which can withstand the impacts of climate change”

Challenge 5:

“Maintain rural areas as attractive places to live, work and visit”

Challenge 6:

“Use publicity and travel planning to inform people living and working in the rural wards of the opportunities available to them with regards transport choice and the benefits associated with their use”

The interventions are assessed to:

- Identify their effects, which involves recognising changes to conditions in the future baseline scenario predicted to arise from the strategy / intervention; and
- Assessing the significance of these effects with regards the nature and magnitude of the impact and the existing condition/vulnerability of the receiving environment.

5.2 Assessment of the interventions.

Overall summary:

Significant Positive Effects: The effects of the rural transport strategy are potentially positive, but they depend on implementation and funding opportunities.

- With the Localism Act coming into force in April 2012, there are opportunities for individual rural communities to identify transport issues in their areas in their neighbourhood plans.
- Opportunities need to be identified which take advantage of the ruralness of the areas, for example increase tourism, walking, cycling, horse riding and build on opportunities for services to come to the rural areas. Sustainable transport opportunities also arise because of the location of many of the rural wards, for example the Rights of Way network can be promoted and used by many to reach neighbouring towns. Community Transport models holds the key to some rural connectivity issues.
- Rural areas are particularly fragile at the moment as the economic downturn affects the transport disadvantaged disproportionately. Unemployment is currently above previous levels and if vulnerable and people on low income become excluded due to lack of transport then a downward spiral takes place, (As identified in SEU, 2003, Making the Connections)

Significant Negative Effects:

There are no significant negative effects, although there are some uncertain effects which are dependent on implementation.

Timescale: This is a medium to long term strategy which will not consist of many 'quick wins', and it depends on engaging the hearts and minds of the rural inhabitants and any funding allocations from Central and Local Government.

Likelihood of effects or impacts identified occurring: Medium to high depending on how well funded the interventions can be and how engaged people become.

Recommendation for mitigation for adverse effects and/or enhancement or positive effects:

- Wherever possible sustainable transport solutions should be sought, rather than implementing schemes solely for car owners, this exacerbates congestion, air pollution and noise pollution.
- Thought should be given to sustainable transport solutions, which will encourage people to travel together to reduce fear of crime and create holistic safer environments.
- There needs to be as much use of recycled surfacing materials as possible, which is the direction that Herts Highways is moving towards. Decisions are made through due processes as to where new walking or cycling routes are necessary and best situated.

- New schemes need to be built and maintained using recycled material wherever possible.
- Highways teams should be aware of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) guidance so as to mitigate surface flooding issues on roads. County Councils and Unitary Local Authorities have certain responsibilities as laid out in the Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and Flood and Water Management Act.
- Motivating people to change behaviour and creating infrastructure to encourage more sustainable travel is one of the main objectives of LTP3 and its daughter documents including the rural transport strategy.
- The rural transport strategy should consider how electric vehicles will be charged in rural areas and be able to manage with longer travelling distances.
- More services can be virtual with ICT, for example internet shopping, real time passenger information (RTPI). Communities may aid this transition if broadband becomes more widely available to all generations in the near future.
- One of the key objectives of LTP3 is to reduce greenhouse gases including carbon dioxide emitted by vehicular transport. Sustainable transport solutions can have an impact here, for example more walking, cycling, car sharing and use of public transport.
- Avoid inappropriate street furniture and ensure signage conforms to any policies and design codes (e.g. Chilterns AONB code) Rights of Way and new / existing cycle / walking routes should be promoted through appropriate channels, not necessarily incurring great expenditure.
- Community transport links enable older and disabled people to access essential services. It is recognised that funding for this is not guaranteed, although the Government has helped groups through the Community Transport Fund.
- Ensure that parish councils and other groups are aware of the opportunities created by the Localism Act 2011.
- Problems and solutions for economic growth should be identified for deprived rural wards, and identified in Neighbourhood Plans, which can be derived from Parish Plans. Only by identifying solutions can opportunities for funding occur at a later date.
- The setting up of community led shops, libraries and pubs are encouraged by the Localism Act 2011. The Government recognises the fragility of rural centres and neighbourhood plans could include solutions such as a self-sustaining community transport model.

Data Issues: The Strategy shows no data issues apart from the fact that key data from the census in 2011 is not yet available and some social evidence is reliant on some data that is 10 years old which must be used with caution in some instances. However the County Travel Survey data and traffic flow modelling data is fairly current.

6. CUMULATIVE, SECONDARY AND SYNERGISTIC (COMBINED) EFFECTS.

6.1 Introduction.

It is a requirement of Annex 1 of the SEA Directive that cumulative, synergistic (combined) and secondary effects are identified and addressed in the assessment. It is one of the advantages of carrying out a Strategic Assessment that the combined effects of different measures can be more effectively identified. These effects are explained below:

Cumulative effects occur when individual developments that, on their own, have an insignificant effect, combine to produce a detrimental environmental impact.

Secondary effects are indirect effects which occur away from the original effect or through a complex pathway and not as an obvious result of the Local Transport Plan.

Synergistic effects arise when a combined effect (cumulative and secondary) is greater than the sum of the individual effects.

Table 9.1 of the LTP3 environmental report (www.hertsdirect.org/ltp) shows the overall results of the cumulative effect assessment process on the strategic options, policies and interventions of the LTP3. It was not necessary to undertake a separate cumulative effect assessment of the Rural Transport Strategy as the overall LTP3 process included the rural policy statement and there were no significant negative impacts from the assessment of this.

7. MONITORING

7.1 Introduction

Article 10(1) of the SEA Directive requires the significant environmental effects of plans and programmes to be monitored, in order to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to take appropriate remedial action. It goes on to state that “The Environmental Report should provide information on ‘a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring’” (Annex 1 (i)). Full information on the monitoring process is available in the LTP3 environmental report at www.hertscc.gov.uk/ltp.

7.2 Monitoring Hertfordshire’s Rural Transport Strategy

Volume 1 of Hertfordshire’s Local Transport Plan 3 includes a list of targets and indicators for monitoring transportation issues and implementation across Hertfordshire. These comprise a combination of targets and indicators related to policy and programme implementation related to the plan. Although there were no requirements to include mandatory indicators and targets in the LTP3 it was decided this was still the best way to monitor the effectiveness of the plan and the indicators (and targets) were chosen because of their local significance. Full details of these indicators and targets can be found in Section 5 of Local Transport Plan 3. There is not a singular Rural Transport Strategy performance indicator, but the indicators listed in section 3.1 are included in the baseline data in the full environmental report and in Appendix 2, they will be monitored annually along with the other data and will give an indication as to whether the mitigation measures in the strategy have succeeded in mitigating any significant adverse effects.

7.3 What needs to be monitored for the Rural Transport Strategy?

As mentioned above, the indicators indirectly relevant to the Rural Transport Strategy are:

- % of the total length of footpaths and other Rights of Way that were easy to use by members of the public.
- % of all journeys by walking under 1 mile in length.
- % of all journeys by cycling under 3 miles in length.

However note that there is not a specific new indicator for this strategy.

Features of the Environmental baseline that will have an indirect effect on the Rural Transport Strategy.

The Scoping Report of the LTP3 contains evidence which helped to identify the main areas that have been recommended for monitoring in the Environmental baseline to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive impacts.

Table 7.1 Key Issues and Problems in Hertfordshire (as identified in LTP3) and how they relate to the Rural Transport Strategy

Key Issue	Evidence – relationship to Rural Transport Strategy
Congestion – urban traffic in peak hours	<p>Participants of the 2009 Hertfordshire County Travel Survey ranked congestion as the third most important traffic related issue in the county requiring action.</p> <p>By putting in place the Rural Transport Strategy – some people may use sustainable modes rather than drive sole occupant vehicles.</p>
Poor access to key services for sections of the community, and for those living in rural areas.	<p>60% of all journeys in the county are by car but 10% (2009 figure) of Hertfordshire households have no access to a car. Some people have issues in accessing services, facilities and transport services. Accessibility planning mapping highlight the areas which have poor access to key services.</p> <p>Lower frequencies or lack of public transport in rural areas means residents see the car as the only means of travel.</p> <p>Improving access by sustainable transport and community transport to and from rural areas helps improve access to key services for those people who do not have access to a car.</p>
Air Quality and the declaration of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)	<p>At local level, air quality standards are being exceeded on some local authority controlled roads in Hertfordshire. Ten AQMAs have been declared as of 2011/12.</p> <p>Improving the rural network can have a positive impact on lowering air pollution because more people may walk, cycle or ride horses rather than use their vehicles.</p>
Noise pollution	<p>Total noise complaints received by Hertfordshire Councils per 1000 population were 6.1 in 2009/10. This compares to a national average of 7.5 for the</p>

Key Issue	Evidence – relationship to Rural Transport Strategy
	<p>same year. In addition there are complaints about aircraft noise. In 2008; there were 2,125 complaints about noise regarding Stansted and 648 regarding Luton airports. These figures have dropped since the previous year.</p> <p>Implementing the Rural Transport Strategy will have a potentially positive effect on reducing noise pollution because more people may be encouraged to walk, cycle or horse ride rather than use their vehicles which contributes to the road noise in the county. As electric vehicles become more commonplace, noise pollution may also lessen over time.</p>
Need to limit carbon dioxide emissions	<p>In the East of England, road transport emissions accounted for 32.7% of local CO₂ emissions in 2007 (source EEDA (2009) Transport and Carbon Study). This compares to the national figure of 24%. There is an aim to reduce emissions across all sectors by 34% by 2022 (on 1990 levels).</p> <p>Implementing the Rural Transport Strategy will have a potentially positive impact on reducing carbon dioxide emissions as it could result in encouraging more people to use sustainable modes of transport rather than use their vehicles.</p>
Childhood obesity exacerbated by lack of active travel.	<p>NI 56 measures obesity among primary school age children in Year 6. Without targeted intervention childhood obesity is expected to increase by 0.5% each year. In Hertfordshire the total percentage of obese and overweight year 6 children are 16.7 (2009/10 figures)</p> <p>These figures are rising year on year. By implementing the Rural Transport Strategy, childhood obesity percentages could be lowered if children were to walk and cycle more.</p>

7.4 Environmental Baseline Data Gaps

The main gap in the Rural Transport Strategy is that as yet there are no indicators/baseline data around the issue of *adaptation* to climate change for example dealing with greater flooding incidences. However commencement of provisions in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 will lead to Hertfordshire County Council, as the lead local flood authority, having access to better monitoring of surface flood incidents. How the council is adapting to climate change with regard road surface maintenance (i.e too cold, too wet, too

hot) is also a long term consideration and is closely linked to budgetary constraints.

7.5 Monitoring Recommendations

With respect to monitoring LTP3, six key areas were identified as needing work on the availability and quality of data, plus the consideration of potential impact of the key areas on the approaches, policies and interventions within the Local Transport Plan. These areas are described in Table 7.1.

The following sections include more detail on how the Rural Transport Strategy could help improve some of these problem areas.

7.5.1 Congestion

Congestion is an issue in the county occurring both in urban areas and on the major routes particularly in the peak hours. The 2009 Hertfordshire County Travel Survey has shown that congestion is considered to be the third most important transport related issue in the county. By implementing the Rural Transport Strategy, some people may use sustainable modes rather than use their vehicles

HCC Response

The LTP fully understands the consequences of congestion and its impact in the county, especially as people travelling from rural areas contribute to urban congestion as they feel they have no option but to get in their vehicles. A significant aim of the Rural Transport Strategy is to encourage people to walk and cycle more where appropriate, or otherwise use more sustainable modes such as car sharing, car clubs and community transport if passenger transport is not an option.

7.5.2 Effects on Climate Change

Greenhouse gases emitted from vehicles contribute to around a quarter of the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK. Although scientific data allows us to roughly estimate how many tonnes of carbon dioxide are emitted from vehicles, this is not exact and depends on a number of factors.

It is not just the most direct impacts which need to be considered, but also those which are not always as obvious, such as how climate change will affect the rural road network. Such changes could increase the rate of deterioration of routes, from the effects of freezing water as well as flooding. Recent winters have seen colder weather with temperatures frequently fluctuating below zero.

Although there is recognition of the potential impacts of climate change on rural routes and the general transport network, Hertfordshire currently does not currently have a direct indicator or data set to monitor how the transport network is being made resilient to the potential impacts of climate change.

HCC Response

National Indicators for measuring carbon emissions have been set up and are monitored by the council and districts/boroughs. These are contained within the LTP3 and are monitored accordingly. The Department of Energy and Climate Change annually release CO₂ emission data from all sources including road transport. The county council will continue to use such data sets to help identify trends and particular issues.

7.5.3 Effective Monitoring of Air Pollution

Another area of concern is that of ensuring a sufficient monitoring mechanism is in place for air pollution monitoring. Air pollution is particularly difficult to assess, as once the data is collected it takes specialist knowledge to analyse and interpret the data appropriately for the purpose required.

HCC Response

Air pollution and its cumulative impacts are considered in the development of any substantive scheme and mitigation measures will be put in to place to ensure minimum impact. If more people use sustainable transport in rural areas as well as urban areas, it is feasible that air pollution from road transport can be lessened. With the growth in electric car usage, air pollution on roads may also lessen; it is hoped that as green energy technology improves over time, more electricity will be generated sustainably.

7.5.4 Effective Monitoring of Noise Pollution

Noise from traffic and aircraft is an element of transport's impact on the environment. While complaints about traffic noise are relatively few there are locations where residents are subject to high levels of general noise or to occasional or frequent high levels as a result of particularly noisy vehicles, sometimes associated with anti social behaviour.

Noise pollution including that from vehicles on roads should start to be monitored by local government every five years using strategic noise maps, no later than from March 2012 onwards under the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006.

HCC Response

Traffic noise will be addressed where feasible but there is no easy cost-effective solution for most problems. Road traffic noise in rural areas emanating from unclassified roads is not generally considered a source of noise pollution, but if more people were encouraged to use sustainable transport there would be fewer vehicles using the road network. As above in 7.5.3 with the growth in electric car usage, noise pollution on roads may also lessen.

The county council will work with the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on Action Plans as a result of the noise maps when required.

7.5.5 Poor Access for the Disadvantaged, and Rural Residents.

Disadvantaged and rural residents in Hertfordshire feel isolated in the face of a limited choice of transport services. Although many families have two or more cars in Hertfordshire, around 10% of households have no car at all, and in this particular county with no central 'hub' town this makes for great difficulty in accessing services for some of the most vulnerable members of the community. There needs to be a focus on providing adequate reliable transport options for the transport disadvantaged in rural areas. The impact of development proposals on the disadvantaged and within rural areas of the county also needs to take into account the same access issues mention above.

HCC Response

Passenger transport service frequency ideally could be improved in rural areas, however this is going to be difficult to achieve with budgetary constraints and the fact that many rural services are not commercially viable because of lack of use. If they were to become commercially viable, (i.e more people used buses) bus operators could then be tempted to provide more services. New models for providing community transport could be the solution, for example the Sawbo bus in Sawbridgeworth demonstrates that community transport can be viable and sustainable.

7.5.6 Childhood Obesity

Regular monitoring is undertaken on children's weight in Year 6 and the numbers of children who are obese or overweight is continuing to rise in some areas. The problem is that this issue is not only linked with lack of exercise, e.g. numbers of children walking and cycling, but also with food intake. However the LTP3 can still monitor this even though reducing obesity levels must be a partnership exercise, combining efforts with the health and education authorities.

HCC Response

By encouraging children to walk and cycle on the rural road and Rights of Way network, perhaps with their parents, growing obesity levels can possibly start to be lowered.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the analysis of the Rural Transport Strategy Core Actions has concluded that there would be no significant negative impacts on the environment in Hertfordshire as a result of its delivery. Sustainable modes such as walking, cycling, horse riding, car sharing, car clubs and community transport models play an important part of the Strategy, which support the delivery of the LTP3 goals, and have minimal impacts on the environment and social/economic aspects.

The government's recent spending cuts will have a significant impact on the level of delivery in the first few years of the plan. If this carries on in the long term then this could have 2 main implications:

- a reduction in the maintenance and development of the Rural road network could result in the general public's safety being compromised, particularly where walking and cycling routes meet busy road networks.
-
- Bus services that are not commercially viable and are heavily subsidised by local authorities tend to be rural routes; there may a need to replace them with a different model of transport
-

The collection of the baseline data and the assessments themselves, have highlighted that there are a few gaps in the baseline data that will need further investigation and research.

The assessments in particular have highlighted;

- With the Localism Act coming into force in April 2012, there are opportunities for individual rural communities to identify transport issues in their areas in their neighbourhood plans.
- Opportunities need to be identified which take advantage of the ruralness of the areas, for example increase tourism, walking, cycling, horse riding and build on opportunities for services to come to the rural areas. Sustainable transport opportunities also arise because of the location of many of the rural wards, for example the Rights of Way network can be promoted and used by many to reach neighbouring towns. Community Transport models may also hold the key to some rural connectivity issues.
- Rural areas are particularly fragile at the moment as the economic downturn affects the transport disadvantaged disproportionately. Unemployment is currently above previous levels and if vulnerable and people on low income become excluded due to lack of transport then a downward spiral takes place, (As identified in SEU, 2003, Making the Connections)

Recommendations for monitoring include tackling the issues listed above and filling the baseline gaps. It is also recommended that the impact of the Rural Transport Strategy on the 6 key issues/problems (as laid out in Table 7.1) is monitored.

9. NEXT STEPS

The primary role of this Environmental Report is to facilitate consultation with interested parties. The SEA Environmental Report is published alongside the Rural Transport Strategy, with the aim of providing stakeholders with sufficient information on the likely significant environmental effects of the plan.