

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This is the North Staffordshire LTP 2006/07 – 2010/11 which has been prepared jointly by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council. It will replace the 2001/02 – 2005/06 Stoke-on-Trent LTP and will also include areas of Staffordshire, namely urban Newcastle-under-Lyme and parts of the adjoining Staffordshire Moorlands. For simplicity, the highway maintenance strategy in the North Staffordshire LTP just covers Stoke-on-Trent and the areas within Staffordshire will continue to be covered by the Staffordshire LTP.

1.2 Structure of the document

The structure of this plan is based around the four shared transport priorities, agreed between Government and the Local Government Association, and the locally identified priority of regeneration. The plan identifies how these priorities will be delivered in North Staffordshire both within the five-year life of this plan and what is expected to be achieved over a longer timescale of 15 years.

This plan also focuses on how important it is to work with our partners both within our own local planning and highway authorities and with other agencies and transport providers, and the need to fully engage in consultation processes. This will help to ensure that:

- All views are taken into account.
- There is consistency between all local and sub-regional strategies.
- Value for money is achieved through the delivery of the right schemes.
- Maximum funding is received from non-LTP sources.

Table 1.1 sets out the structure of this plan and highlights the linkages between the chapters.

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Table 1.1: Structure of the plan

Chapters	Content
Chapter 1: Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the document is set out • Developing a new joint LTP • A description of the Plan area • Documents supporting the LTP
Chapter 2: Wider Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and regional perspective • Sub-regional and local strategies and plans • Supporting studies • Joint working • Achievement of first LTPs
Chapter 3: Strategy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence base (including NSITS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Census data ◦ Land use development ◦ Existing travel demand by mode ◦ Consultation overview • Key problems emerging from evidence base • Possible solutions identified by NSITS
Chapter 4: Vision and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, aims and objectives emerging from problems and opportunities identified in Chapters 2 and 3 • Clarification of the important linkages between Chapters 5 to 11 • Key measures required in the short and long term to meet aims and objectives
Chapter 5: Supporting Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights regeneration issues • How the LTP will support regeneration initiatives • How the LTP will support key economic regeneration sites • How land use and transport integration will help achieve the LTP objectives
Chapter 6: Improving Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed accessibility problems and opportunities building on evidence identified in the Strategy Development Chapter and identified through Accessibility Planning • How we will achieve accessibility objectives and targets through improvements to the transport network
Chapter 7: Tackling Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed congestion problems and opportunities building on evidence identified in the Strategy Development Chapter • How we will achieve congestion objectives and targets through making best use of existing assets, managing the network and travel demand, and encouraging sustainable travel
Chapter 8: Improving Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of how transport contributes to air quality problems • How we will tackle transport-related air quality problems in Air Quality Management Areas
Chapter 9: Improving Travel Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed travel safety and community safety problems and opportunities building on evidence identified in the Strategy Development Chapter • How we will achieve better road safety and community safety, especially for vulnerable road users, and meet relevant targets
Chapter 10: Improving Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights how achieving the shared priority key objectives will ultimately improve the quality of life for residents in North Staffordshire • Focuses on other issues that can be influenced through the delivery of LTP schemes, such as environmental quality and community health
Chapter 11: Looking after the Transport Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights issues concerning maintenance and its impact on shared priorities • Links with the Transport Asset Management Plan • Includes highway maintenance investment priorities
Chapter 12: Implementation – Making it Happen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 year implementation plan in line with 'planning guidelines' • Major schemes and TIF bid • Effective use of revenue budgets and non-LTP funding sources • Identifies priorities
Chapter 13: Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides trajectories for the mandatory and other local indicators • Describes how the indicators are monitored

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1.3 Developing a new joint LTP

Following discussions with the Government Office for the West Midlands, a new joint North Staffordshire LTP has been produced because it is considered that the urban area of Newcastle-under-Lyme and the parts of Staffordshire Moorlands that abut Stoke-on-Trent have greater adherence, in transport and regeneration terms, to Stoke-on-Trent compared to the rest of Staffordshire.

Historically, Stoke-on-Trent consisted of six distinct towns: Tunstall, Burslem, Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton. Nearby was the market town of Newcastle-under-Lyme which was surrounded by dispersed settlements some of which were located around colliery sites. Due to the expansion of the manufacturing industry in the 18th, 19th and early part of the 20th century and residential expansion, these settlements, plus Kidsgrove, Blythe Bridge and Trentham, have grown and have now coalesced to form a substantial conurbation.

Both Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent have a common sustainable regeneration agenda which emphasises the need for this joint plan. Both authorities are working in partnership to achieve the vision and objectives of the North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Agenda, the Regeneration Zone and Renew's Intervention Strategy.

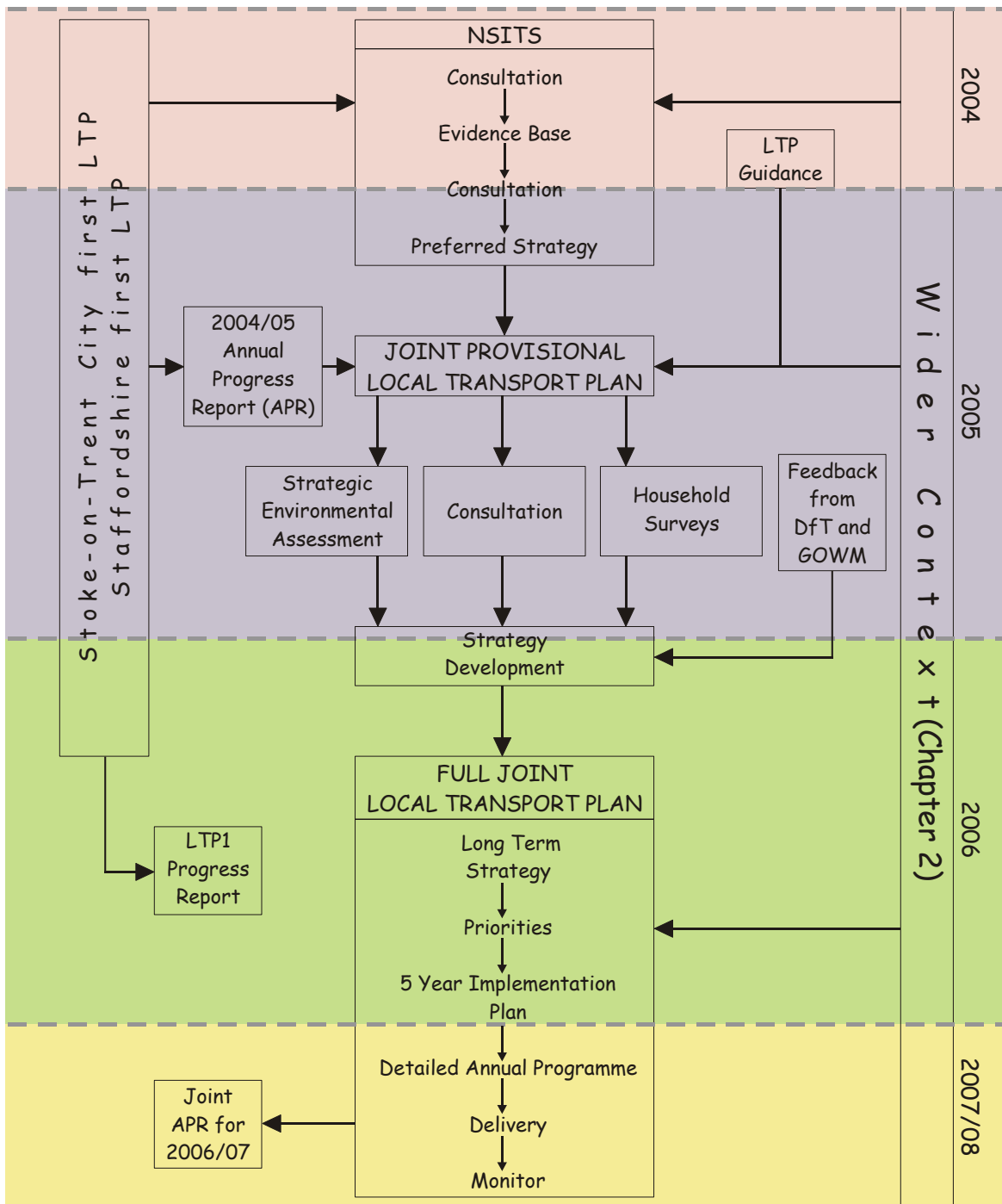
Geographically, the main centres of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle are only a few kilometres apart and the links between these two areas are continuously urban in nature and are served by the same strategic transport network which includes the M6, A500 and A50 trunk roads and the West Coast Main Line. In contrast, the surrounding parts of Staffordshire are very rural, but have clear links with the conurbation which serves a hinterland extending across parts of Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire.

Evidence from past Transport Policies and Programmes (TPPs) and the first LTPs emphasises the need to deal with transport issues in North Staffordshire as a whole. In the first round of LTPs, extensive partnership working took place between the two authorities and a joint North Staffordshire Integrated Transport Strategy was included in both LTPs building on the Transport Package for the area that was developed as part of the TPP process in 1996.

The process and timescale of developing the new Joint LTP and the key elements that have influenced the production of the plan are summarised in Figure 1.1. All elements of the flow diagram will be discussed and explained further on in the plan.

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Figure 1.1: Development of new joint Local Transport Plan

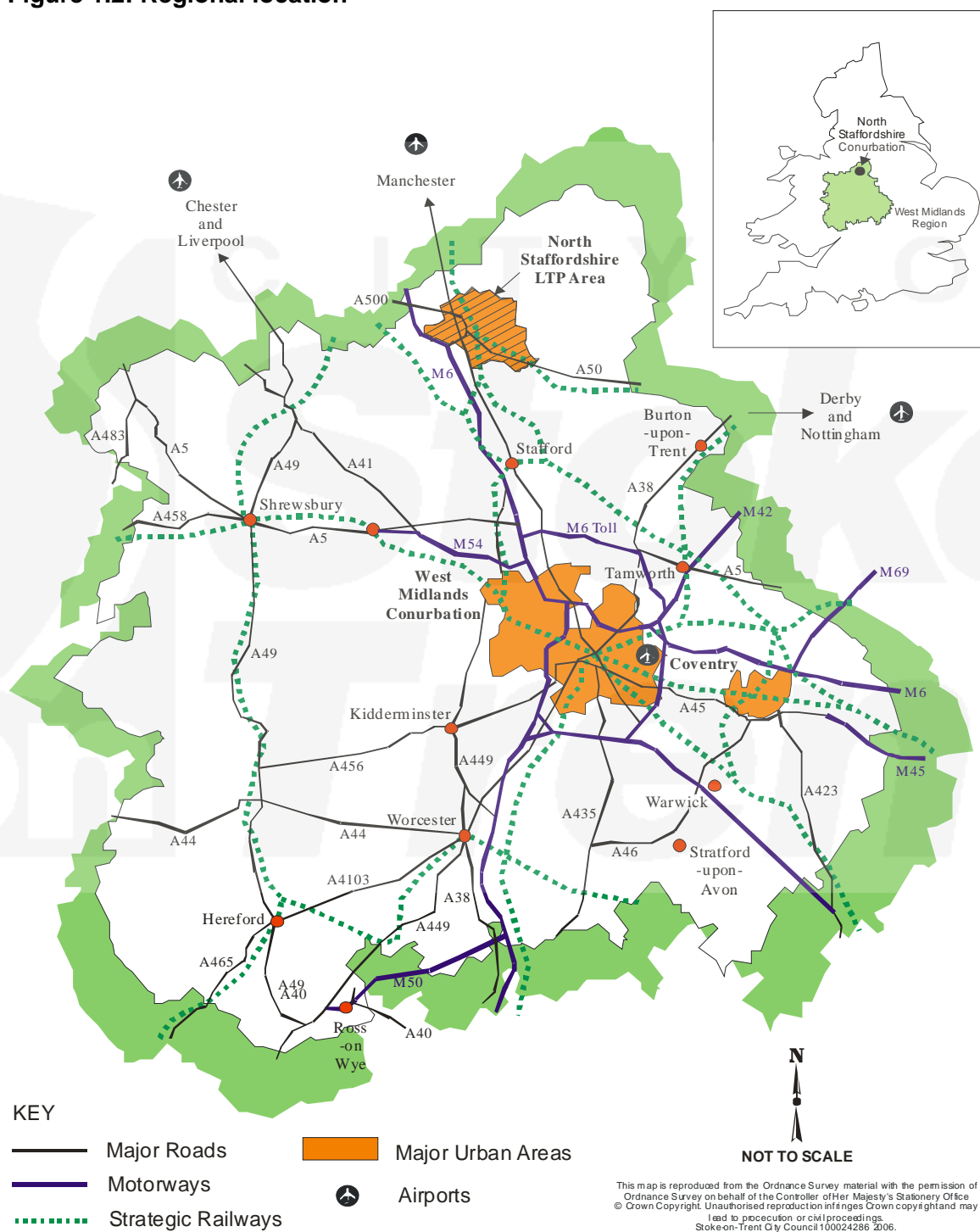


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1.4 The plan area

The North Staffordshire conurbation is like a smaller version of the West Midlands conurbation. It is home to over 360,000 people in 150,000 households and there are 145,000 jobs. It has an excellent strategic location being at the edge of both the West Midlands and the North West region, as shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Regional location



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The North Staffordshire LTP area is shown on Figure 1.3 which highlights the multi-centred or poly-centric structure of the area. It also highlights the key strategic transport routes, Areas of Major Intervention, and the spread of major key trip generators and proposed regeneration sites which are located outside the town centres.

At the heart of North Staffordshire we have a City Centre with massive potential surrounded by attractive historic towns including Newcastle under Lyme. There are two universities (one with a medical school) and the abundance of parks and open spaces make the North Staffordshire urban area one of the greenest in the UK. North Staffordshire also has much to offer as a tourist destination. There is a wealth of industrial heritage including ceramics and two magnificent canals, the Trent and Mersey and the Caldon. Alton Towers and the Peak District, both destinations of national importance, are in close proximity and enhance the attractiveness of North Staffordshire to visitors and residents.

Plate 1.1: Aerial Photograph of City Centre



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1.5 The transport network

Highway Network

The national trunk road network (M6, A50 and A500) and other 'A' roads such as the A53 and A34 cater for longer distance movements in to and out of the conurbation. However, these roads also cater for a significant number of short distance journeys made within the conurbation, which can lead to significant levels of congestion on these roads during peak periods.

The primary routes help to distribute traffic between the national road network and the main centres of North Staffordshire. These roads are generally single carriageway links and also perform a more local function.

Bus Network

There is an extensive network of bus services operating in the North Staffordshire conurbation. The existing services are heavily focused on serving the City Centre and Newcastle, which both benefit from good, high frequency connections to a wide range of destinations. The range of destinations that can be accessed by direct bus services from the other main settlements is more limited. There are limited bus connections between the north and east of the conurbation and from the far south to northern, eastern and western areas. Also, bus links to surrounding rural areas are often infrequent.

'First' operates around 85%-90% of services in the area and both authorities provide subsidy for local bus services as necessary and as resources permit.

There are three main bus interchanges within the plan area, located at Hanley, Newcastle and Longton. Newcastle and Longton stations have recently been improved and there are proposals to improve the bus interchange in the City Centre.

The Rail Network

North Staffordshire has two railway lines passing through it – the Manchester branch of the West Coast Mainline with services to London, Glasgow, Birmingham and Manchester, and also the Crewe to Derby line. There is one mainline station (Stoke) served by Virgin Train services and four smaller stations (Kidsgrove, Longton, Blythe Bridge and Longport) served by Central Train services. A mothballed line from Stoke to near Leek still exists and is currently protected in development plans in the event that the line is re-opened for passenger or freight services. Etruria station was closed in 2005 with national publicity and the local authorities will be working with Network Rail and the DfT to ensure that none of the other stations will be affected.

Walking and Cycling Network

Cyclists have the choice of using the main highway network or a number of dedicated off-road routes which utilise greenways, disused railway lines and canal towpaths. The off-road routes are also available for pedestrian use and often for equestrian use also. There is an extensive Rights of Way network and the National Cycle Network in the plan area was completed during the first LTP period. A comprehensive cycling map is available covering the plan area.

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Water-based Network

The Trent and Mersey and Caldon Canals provide an important leisure facility for the area, attracting tourists and generating income. A number of rivers and minor tributaries run through the plan area, but none are navigable by freight so the focus is to promote them as green corridors for use by cyclists and pedestrians.

1.6 Supporting documents

In addition to the contents of this plan, the following supporting documents are also available.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

An SEA was conducted as part of the development of the final LTP. The environmental and sustainability objectives of existing plans and programmes, together with baseline information on the current state of the environment, were used to develop a framework of 14 SEA objectives. These were developed in consultation with environmental authorities through the scoping stage of the SEA. The 14 SEA objectives provide a structure for the assessment of the environmental and sustainability effects arising from the LTP, and include objectives relating to air and water quality, biodiversity, historic environments, health, crime and regeneration. The compatibility of the SEA objectives with the aims of the LTP were tested. This showed broad compatibility but in many cases was dependent on the nature of the implementation measures.

The baseline and what is likely to happen without the LTP has been set out against each SEA objective in the Environmental Report. The Environmental Report sets out the assessment of realistic transport strategies developed as part of the North Staffordshire Integrated Transport Strategy (NSITS 2005) and the detailed assessment of the environmental effect components of the LTP by each SEA objective.

The SEA process has allowed both authorities to identify any adverse environmental impacts resulting from the implementation of the LTP and consider any necessary mitigation measures. The SEA identifies generic mitigation measures at scheme level where applicable such as scheme level Environmental Impact Assessments, the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, and use of design guidance in historically sensitive environments. In addition it identifies component specific mitigation measures such as the recommendations of the National Salt Spreading Research Group and percentage based targets for the use of recycled materials for the 'Looking after the transport network' component.

Appendix C contains an outline of the process of the SEA and a summary of how environmental considerations have been integrated into the LTP.

Bus Strategy

A Bus Strategy has been produced for North Staffordshire in line with the requirements of the Transport Act 2000 and DfT guidance. It is reproduced in Appendix D. Its implementation will play a key part in the delivery of the shared priority targets and

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objectives, in particular, improving accessibility and quality of life, and reducing congestion. The potential contribution of buses to improving air quality is also recognised.

The Bus Strategy sets out how Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council will influence bus travel in North Staffordshire and address the needs and expectations of both current and future bus passengers. It is a five-year strategy that will be reviewed and updated and it is acknowledged that in order to achieve some of its objectives, a longer term approach may be required – stretching beyond the initial five-year period. The North Staffordshire Bus Strategy complements the Staffordshire Countywide Bus Strategy.

Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP)

The effective maintenance of all transport infrastructure is a key element of the LTP. Stoke-on-Trent City Council are developing a TAMP and Staffordshire County Council have a 1st Edition TAMP. These will enable funding for maintenance to be better targeted to areas of greatest need and enable proper integration with associated shared priority strategies in the LTP. A well planned maintenance programme will enable maintenance work to be co-ordinated with traffic management and improvement works on the network, in line with the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Right of Way Improvement Plan

Rights of Ways are defined within the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as including footways, cycle tracks, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. The Act requires Local Highway Authorities to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) by November 2007. The outputs of this RoWIP will be progressively incorporated into the LTP in terms of securing better provision for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and people with mobility difficulties and delivering LTP shared priorities and objectives. Prioritised rights of way improvements that help meet LTP objectives, will be funded through the LTP as resources permit

A key objective identified through the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Local Access Forum is: “to ensure greater use of and accessibility to the public path network by people of all ages and abilities in order to increase enjoyment of open air recreation and exercise, and as a means of promoting sustainable transport”.

Greater use of the path network will be encouraged by promoting a range of well-signposted and way marked routes for use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders to encourage modal shift away from car usage, thereby reducing congestion, improving air quality and improving safety.

Further details on the following are included in Appendix F:

- The work that has been carried out to date.
- Interim Rights of Way policies.
- The types of Rights of Way improvements that will be implemented.