

Appendix G: Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement

1. Introduction

The County Council has a duty to produce and regularly review a county-wide Local Transport Plan (LTP). It sets out the authority's proposals for transport provision in the county, including walking, cycling, public transport, car based travel and freight together with the management and maintenance of roads.

During the development of the LTP a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken to ensure the integration of environmental considerations into the planning and decision-making process. The main output of the SEA has been an Environmental Report, which was published in October 2010.

The SEA Regulations require that a 'statement' be made available to accompany the adopted Plan which must contain information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
- How the Environmental Report has been taken into account;
- How opinions expressed in relation to the consultations on the plan/programme and Environmental Report have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

This document is the 'statement' that has been produced for the SEA of the LTP following its adoption. In line with the requirements of the SEA regulations, it provides the information listed above.

2. Staffordshire's Third Local Transport Plan

The County Council, as the local transport authority, has a statutory duty to produce and regularly review an LTP. The LTP comprises two elements, a Strategy Plan and a detailed delivery document, known as an Implementation Plan.

This is the third round of LTP and the first to be prepared within the context of the more flexible arrangements introduced by the 2008 Local Transport Act. The County Council has taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Act to divide the main elements of the Plan into two separate documents. This report relates to the LTP Strategy Plan.

Plan Objectives and Challenges

The Strategy Plan establishes the vision, objectives and challenges which will guide the future development, operation and maintenance of the transport network within Staffordshire.

The vision aims for:

A transport system that supports Staffordshire’s economy, and safely and conveniently connects people and services within Staffordshire and beyond; it provides opportunities for services and jobs to be accessed in a sustainable way, and makes sure that any adverse effect of transport on Staffordshire’s rich environment and on residents’ quality of life is minimised.

The Strategy Plan has built upon this vision by identifying a number of objectives and challenges which have informed the development of the LTP policies and proposed measures.

Table 1: Countywide Objectives and Challenges

Objectives	Challenges
Supporting Growth and Regeneration	Provide opportunities for residents to access jobs, training and education.
	Help businesses access suppliers, markets and a workforce.
	Enable economic growth without causing congestion.
Maintaining the Highway Network	Maintain the current condition of the highway network and its infrastructure.
	Keep the highway safe and serviceable whilst achieving value for money.
Making Transport Easier to Use and Places Easier to Get to	Reduce social exclusion faced by residents.
	Make ‘access for all’ a key consideration when planning new housing and employment sites, services and facilities.
Improving Safety and Security	Improve the skills of all road users.
	Maintain the current road safety record.
	Tackle crime, fear of crime, and anti-social behaviour on the highway network.
	Improve the resilience of the highway network to events that pose safety threats to highway users.
Reducing Road Transport Emissions and Their Effects on the Highway Network	Reduce emissions from road transport.
	Respond to current and future climatic conditions.
Improving Health and Quality of Life	Encourage active travel.
	Maximise opportunities for transport to positively contribute towards people’s quality of life.
Respecting the Environment	Minimise the impact of transport on the environment.
	Enhance the environment through the management and maintenance of the highway network.

How Environmental Considerations have been Integrated into the LTP

The integration of environmental considerations has occurred through the detailed consideration of issues during the early stages of LTP formulation and through close engagement with the process of producing a SEA.

The vision for the LTP includes a commitment that:

‘...the adverse effects of transport on Staffordshire’s rich environment and on residents’ quality of life is minimised.’

This commitment was reflected through the inclusion of environmental concerns in the objectives and proposed measures in the draft document (see Table 2).

Table 2: Details of measures taken to prevent, reduce and as fully possible offset the adverse environmental effects identified in the assessment

Sustainability Issues	Measures Proposed in the LTP
Pollution risks associated with increase in traffic levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigating the negative impacts associated with increased capacity • Promoting sustainable land-use planning policies • Supporting smarter travel • Discouraging the use of private motor vehicle use • Promoting low-emitting vehicles • Minimising risks of soil and water contamination
Habitat fragmentation risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigating the negative impacts associated with increased capacity • Promoting opportunities to enhance biodiversity
Nutrient enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting smarter travel • Discouraging the use of private motor vehicle use • Promoting low-emitting vehicles • Minimising risks of soil and water contamination
Visitor pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating sustainable access to tourist attractions • Amendments proposed to the LTP as a result of SEA and HRA (see Policy 7.8)
Impact of lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting sustainable management of street lighting • Reducing the negative impact of artificial light
Climate change impacts on the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the resilience of the transport network
Impact on townscapes, the historic environment and cultural assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving townscapes and heritage assets on the highway • Enhancing the quality of rural landscapes and the biodiversity associated with them
Impact on landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving townscapes and heritage assets on the highway • Enhancing the quality of rural landscapes and the biodiversity associated with them • Amendments proposed to the LTP as a result of SEA and HRA (see Policy 7.8)
Noise pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the negative impact of traffic-related noise • Preparing and delivering noise action plans

Road traffic collisions and casualties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering engineering measures • Delivering road safety education, training and publicity • Supporting road safety enforcement
Physical fitness and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting more people walking and cycling • Supporting access to services
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting smarter travel • Improving integration between transport and land-use planning • Improving bus services • Supporting residents with mobility impairments and those without access to a private motor vehicle • Improving and integrating 'other' transport services
Crime and fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting measures designed to reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour on the highway network • Designing schemes to minimise opportunities for crime and disorder to occur • Planning for, and responding to, damage caused to transport infrastructure • Promoting Staffordshire's good road safety and security record, as well as crime and disorder initiatives
Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising the reliable operation of the existing road network • Minimising the impact of events on traffic movement • Managing network capacity

3. The SEA Process

The purpose of undertaking a SEA is to promote the integration of environmental considerations into the process of LTP preparation and decision-making.

The SEA process was undertaken in parallel with the development of the LTP. The publication of the draft LTP for consultation was accompanied by an Environmental Report which recorded an assessment of potential environmental effects and included recommendations on how the LTP could be amended to reduce or offset adverse environmental effects and enhance positive effects.

How the Environmental Report has been taken into Account?

The Environmental Report included a number of recommendations for mitigation and enhancement measures which have been addressed as follows:

Recommendation 1: A separate Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) will take account of the impact of the LTP on all relevant European habitat designations. Any amendments to the draft LTP proposed by the HRA will need to be incorporated into the LTP before it is adopted.

How was it addressed? The HRA identified a number of amendments to enhance the protection for sites of international importance. These amendments have been incorporated into the LTP (see Policy 7.8).

Recommendation 2: The LTP should state that proposals for new road schemes and enhancements should be considered as one element of a package of measures with the stated intention of mitigating or reducing the overall level of traffic growth and greenhouse gas emissions.

How was it addressed? No change. It is considered that Policy 1.6 addresses the concerns in the Environmental Report.

Recommendation 3: Take account of environmental sensitivities when deciding on alternative diversionary routes.

How was it addressed? Policy 1.5 has been amended and now states that diversionary routes will be established as soon as possible whilst taking into account the needs of local communities, road users and the environment.

Recommendation 4: In co-operation with the relevant agencies, consider the introduction of pollution monitoring in those areas which could be negatively affected by the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders.

How was it addressed? Pollution monitoring is undertaken by local planning authorities. It is considered unlikely that measures would be introduced in those areas that could exacerbate this problem. However, monitoring would highlight any potential issues.

Recommendation 5: Amend the wording of the Staffordshire Freight Strategy (Appendix L) to ensure a consistent approach in terms of the requirements of private and publicly provided parking facilities.

How was it addressed? Priority 18 has been amended to include reference to “environmental and residential amenity constraints.”

Recommendation 6: Amend the Staffordshire Freight Strategy (Appendix L) to include reference to environmental constraints in respect of the expansion of rail freight terminals.

How was it addressed? Priority 20 has been amended to include reference to “environmental and residential amenity constraints and local criteria-based policies.”

Recommendation 7: Recognition within the Staffordshire Walking Strategy (Appendix N) that particular consideration may be required of impacts before 20mph zones and traffic calming measures are introduced, in areas experiencing poor levels of air quality particularly Air Quality Management Areas.

How was it addressed? Text amended accordingly.

Recommendation 8: Amend the Staffordshire Freight Strategy (Appendix L) to take account of the potential impact on the receiving environment and air quality where freight routes are altered to ensure there is no negative impact on significant habitats.

How was it addressed? Priority 1 has been amended to include “environmental, air quality, impact on significant habitats and social impacts.”

Recommendation 9: Investigate the potential for conditions to be applied to promote the sourcing of green electricity when making proposals for new charging infrastructure.

How was it addressed? The priority at present is promoting uptake of low emission vehicles. Please see Policy 5.2 for more information.

Recommendation 10: Awareness raising of emissions emanating from the canal network.

How was it addressed? No change. It is not considered that the level of emissions from the canal network is significant in the context of overall emission levels.

Recommendation 11: Clearer commitment to respecting the character and setting of heritage assets when considering the design of schemes and features to support enhancements to the transport network.

How was it addressed? No change. It is considered that the existing measures within Chapter 7 ‘Respecting the Environment’, especially Policy 7.6, provide sufficient commitments on this issue.

Recommendation 12: Additional reference should be made to minimising the loss of soil resources associated with the implementation of new transport scheme proposals.

How was it addressed? No change. It is considered that the existing measures within Chapter 7 ‘Respecting the Environment’, especially Policy 7.5, provide sufficient commitments on this issue.

Recommendation 13: The use of herbicides which reduce the risks of polluting water resources should be promoted.

How was it addressed? No change. It is considered that the existing measures within Chapter 7 'Respecting the Environment', especially Policies 7.4 and 7.5, provide sufficient commitments on this issue.

Recommendation 14: Tranquillity could be included as one of the issues to be considered when assessing the impact of new transport schemes.

How was it addressed? Policy 7.2 states that the authority will reduce the negative impact of traffic-related noise by working with partners (such as local planning authorities, bus and rail operators, airport operators, Defra and the Highways Agency) to prepare and deliver noise action plans when required. It also states that the authority will work with local planning authorities and developers through the Local Development Framework process to minimise the impact new developments may have on local noise levels.

Recommendation 15: Give greater consideration to new leisure routes which may bring wider social benefits, capitalise on developer contributions or constitute an initial new leisure route which may eventually form part of the broader network.

How was it addressed? The Staffordshire Cycling Strategy (Appendix M) is primarily focused on developing urban cycle networks as a means to encourage more people to make cycling a realistic choice for daily travel. Work will continue to seek alternative forms of external funding to provide additional leisure routes.

Recommendation 16: Give greater consideration to the impact of accessibility when promoting the closure of subway facilities.

How was it addressed? Policy 4.4 states that the authority will adopt measures designed to reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour on the highway network. A number of measures are highlighted, including working with the Crime Reduction Partnership and local communities to identify locations where subway closure would benefit the perceived and actual level of crime and anti-social behaviour without negatively impacting upon accessibility and road safety considerations.

Recommendation 17: Traffic Regulation Orders should take account of the potential impacts on business of imposing restrictions on movement.

How was it addressed? The County Council will consult with all those likely to be affected by a new Traffic Regulation Order. Policy 4.1 states that Traffic Regulation Orders will be considered on safety grounds, where commerce is seriously affected by parked vehicles or where the restriction is essential to provide the maximum benefit from capital investment.

4. Consultation

The SEA Statement should explain how the opinions expressed through consultation on the draft LTP and the Environmental Report have been considered.

SEA Consultation

Consultation at the Scoping Stage

Consultation with the relevant environmental protection agencies, other stakeholders and interested parties, was undertaken during February and March 2010. A summary of submitted comments and the authority's response is included within the SEA Environmental Report, which can be downloaded from the LTP Portal (www.staffordshire.gov.uk/ltp).

Consultation on the Draft LTP and Environmental Report

Consultation of the draft LTP and Environmental Report was undertaken between October and December 2010. The Environmental Report generated some comments as summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Environmental Report Consultation Comments and Response

Summary of Submitted Comments	Staffordshire Response
Peak District National Park Authority	
The Spatial Scope - this section refers to the 'Peak Park Authority' - the correct title is the 'Peak District National Park Authority'	Noted.
Sustainability Issues and Opportunities for LTP3 - with regard to the introduction of noise barriers, consideration needs to be given to the visual impact of such measures.	Noted. LTP policy acknowledges the need to take account of visual intrusion when considering the introduction of noise barriers.
Other Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Measures - the suggestion that tranquillity be included is strongly welcomed.	Issues surrounding the perception and measurement of tranquillity. Noise issues are addressed within the LTP's policies including a commitment to prepare and deliver noise action plans. Such measures can make a positive contribution towards promoting lower incidences of noise pollution.
SEA Objective 7 - as a designated landscape of national importance, some reference to the Peak District National Park would be welcomed under this objective.	Noted.
SEA Objective 7 (Freight Strategy) - consistent approach should be applied to freight routeing, public sector parking facilities and expansion of freight terminals.	Noted. Amendments have been proposed and accepted to address this issue.
Annex 5 - we would welcome reference to the Peak District National Park Climate Change Action Plan 2009-2011.	Noted.
Annex 5 - we would welcome reference to "Active in the Outdoors: A Recreation Strategy and Action Plan for the Peak District National Park 2010-2020".	Noted.
English Heritage	
Statement of support.	Noted.

Draft LTP Consultation

A total of 43 responses were received during the consultation on the draft LTP. Comments were generally supportive; however, a number of alterations to the LTP

were requested. These requests and the response of the County Council can be found in Appendix C.

5. Consideration of Alternatives

The SEA Regulations require that ‘reasonable alternatives’ be identified, described and evaluated.

Alternative Strategies

During the development of the LTP a number of strategic alternatives were considered and assessed. In addition to a ‘no plan’ scenario, the alternatives were as follows:

- Network enhancements, focused on increasing network capacity through improvements to network capacity.
- Promotion of smarter travel.
- Traffic management measures aimed at getting the most out of the existing network.

6. Monitoring

The SEA regulations require the monitoring of ‘significant effects’ of the LTP. Following the publication of the Environmental Report, a more detailed examination has been undertaken of future monitoring. In addition to the significant effects identified in the assessment, a number of areas of uncertainty were identified which it

The preferred strategy has sought to cost-effectively deliver the greatest benefits. There is a strong focus on supporting the economy and ensuring a good standard of maintenance within a general framework of supporting measures aimed at promoting a reduction in car travel.

Staffordshire’s third LTP has adopted a balanced approach, supporting actions to manage demand, promoting smarter travel whilst recognising that network enhancements may be required where certain criteria are met.

is also considered appropriate to include where possible within the monitoring framework (see Table 4). The framework has identified a number of gaps in the data available. The collection of additional information to address these matters would be supported.

Table 4. Monitoring Framework

Effect to be monitored	Indicator	Source	Baseline Situation	SEA Topic
Air quality issues	Number of AQMAs related directly to the transport network	UK National Air Quality Archive; District Council Air Quality Monitoring Reports	Eight AQMAs identified (2011). Two on the local network, three on the strategic network and three joint	Air; Human Health
Impact of transport on the integrity of important nature conservation sites	Levels of air pollution at impacted sites	No regular system of monitoring currently in place	Survey information suggests increase at some sites of invasive species associated with atmospheric deposition of nutrients (air pollution)	Air; Biodiversity
	Number of sites where atmospheric pollution has been identified as an issue	Natural England surveys of SSSIs		Air; Biodiversity
	Status of the Cannock Chase Extension Canal SAC priority species	Natural England surveys of SSSIs	Survey information indicates that the priority species is sensitive to changes in water quality and levels of boat traffic	Biodiversity
Impact of network enhancements	Change in baseline situation arising from scheme implementation	Project level monitoring	To be determined prior to assessment	Air; Biodiversity; Cultural Heritage; Landscape and Townscape; Soil; Water; Human Health; Noise; Material Assets

Impacts arising from maintenance of the transport network	Number of maintenance regime agreements supportive of nature conservation objectives	Staffordshire County Council	Agreements in place to cover the north and east of the county (2011)	Biodiversity
	Use of secondary and recycled aggregates (percentages)	Staffordshire County Council	To be determined	Material Assets
Levels of greenhouse gas emissions arising from the transport sector	Greenhouse gas inventories for the transport sector	Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)	Staffordshire road transport contribution = 3100t per person (34%) of county total (2008)	Climatic Factors
Status of transport related heritage assets	Number of assets considered 'at risk'	Staffordshire County Council	At risk (2008): Mile markers = 46 Listed Bridges = 4	Cultural Assets; Material Assets
Noise levels associated with the transport network	Number of targeted noise action plans related to transport	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	To be determined. Noise mapping ongoing	Noise

A number of other issues identified within the SEA regarding human health, accessibility, road traffic growth and congestion will be monitored separately as part of the monitoring framework for the delivery of the LTP strategy.