

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	23 MARCH 2023	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	TRANSPORT FOR THE SOUTH EAST - STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN		
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress with development of Transport for the South East's (TfSE) Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and seeks endorsement of the final plan. The SIP will form the final part of TfSE's Transport Strategy, for which the overarching strategy document was published in July 2020.
- 1.2 The formal public consultation period on the draft SIP ran from 20 June to 12 September 2022, with over 600 responses received from a range of stakeholders. TfSE has reviewed the feedback and amended the plan and is now seeking the agreement of its constituent authorities (including Reading) prior to submitting the final SIP to Government in spring 2023.
- 1.3 **Appendix A - TfSE Strategic Investment Plan (November 2022)**

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the contents of the report and endorses the decision of the Council to agree for Transport for the South East to submit the Strategic Investment Plan to Government.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Transport for the South East (TfSE) is the sub-national transport body for the South East of England. Its purpose is to determine what investment is needed to transform the region's transport system and drive economic growth.

- 3.2 TfSE was established in 2017 and is a partnership of 16 local authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) plus representatives of district & borough authorities, protected landscapes and national delivery agencies. By speaking with one voice on our region's transport priorities, TfSE is able to make a strong case to government for investment in the South East needs.
- 3.3 TfSE published a 30 year Transport Strategy in June 2020. The strategy sets out an ambitious vision to 2050, setting out a framework that will support the development of a modern, integrated and sustainable transport network. A series of Area Studies and Thematic Studies have since been completed and they identify packages of multi-modal interventions that are needed to deliver the 2050 vision.
- 3.4 TfSE has subsequently worked with its constituent authorities, LEPs, protected landscapes and other stakeholders to develop a series of Areas Studies. These geographic studies have been based around the most important economic corridors in the region and have investigated the issues, challenges and opportunities identified in the transport strategy in more detail. This resulted in a number of multi-modal packages of interventions to make life better for people, for businesses and for the environment.
- 3.5 In addition to the Area Studies, further work has been undertaken on a Future Mobility Strategy and a Freight, Logistics and International Gateways Strategy. The evidence from all these studies has been used to inform development of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP).

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The SIP forms the final part of TfSE's Transport Strategy and is a blueprint for £45bn of investment in strategic transport infrastructure over the next 30 years. It makes a strong case for investment to HM Treasury and the Department for Transport (DfT) and has been designed in a way to be accessible to residents and communities across the region.
- 4.2 The SIP is the culmination of five years of technical work, stakeholder engagement and institutional development. It is underpinned by a credible, evidence based technical programme. The aim of the SIP is to identify the packages of interventions that will be needed to deliver the 2050 vision set out in the transport strategy. It is important that the SIP:
- Supports the aim of the transport strategy in delivering sustainable economic growth.
 - Sets out a clear sequence and timescales for the packages of interventions identified as part of the area studies.
 - Presents a compelling case (strategic, economic, social, environmental) to Government and other funders for the delivery of the packages of interventions identified in the SIP.
 - Identifies the potential cost of the proposed programme of investment.
- 4.3 The SIP is aligned with and supports wider policy and Government priorities at multiple levels and across multiple transport modes, including Local Transport

Plans, Transport Decarbonisation Plan, Bus Back Better and the Williams-Shapps Rail Review.

- 4.4 The SIP sets out an ask for capital costs investment of £45 billion over the next thirty years. The transport interventions included in the SIP have the potential to generate 25,000 new jobs and to contribute an additional £4.5 billion growth in GVA per year against the business as usual scenario. The plan also has the potential to reduce the amount of CO2 emissions by 1.4 mega tonnes each year from the interventions alone and support a pathway to reach net zero. It will have an impact on daily journeys, supporting 500,000 more rail trips and 1.5 million more journeys by bus and ferry.
- 4.5 The SIP comprises six sections which set out the development of the ambitious programme. A summary of the content of each of the sections is set out below:
- The opening section of the document sets out the context for the development of the SIP. It provides an overview of the role of Transport for the South East, the vision and strategic goals from the Transport Strategy, the approach to the development of the document and its position in relation to national and local policy.
 - The SIP then sets out the eight investment priorities aligned with the vision and strategic goals of the Transport Strategy and the wider regional, national, and international policy context with which both are aligned. This includes broader issues where action is needed across sectors, including transport, such as decarbonisation and the environment and adapting to a new normal, and key factors with a direct relevance to transport in the south east, such as east-west connectivity and world class urban transit systems.
 - The next parts of the document set out the benefits of investing in the South East and that there will be economic, social, and environmental returns for residents, businesses, and visitors, supporting the UK economy and enabling Government to achieve its priorities.
 - The third section of the SIP details 30 coherent packages of complementary, multi-modal Interventions that aim to deliver on the vision and objectives for the South East as set out in the Transport Strategy. These packages have been developed through the Area Studies, including workshops, discussions, and careful analysis of results of the assessment of the long list of interventions. In essence, this reflects both a 'top down' vision led approach and a 'bottom up' individual intervention assessment approach.
 - The packages are broadly split into two groups as set out below. It is intended that this combination of strategic investments will allow TfSE to achieve its objectives and, in doing so, support wider local, regional, and national policy and priorities.
 - 6 Global Interventions consisting of national regulatory and policy activity.
 - 24 Place-Based Interventions: presented at a sub-regional level, with many being multi-modal or mode-agnostic.

- The schemes most relevant to Reading are included in the Wessex Thames packages of interventions, which covers the area including Berkshire, North Hampshire and West Surrey. They include the following:
 - Western and Southern Rail Links to Heathrow
 - Reading to Basingstoke Rail Enhancements
 - North Downs Line Rail Improvements and Reading to Waterloo Service Enhancements
 - Reading Mass Rapid Transit and Bus Enhancements (including the A33, A4, A329/B3408)
 - London Heathrow Airport Bus Access Enhancements
 - New Thames Crossing East of Reading (currently led by Wokingham)
 - Berkshire Active Travel Infrastructure Package
- The SIP sets out an ambitious and capital-intensive programme, seeking capital cost investment of £45bn over the next 30 years. The credibility of the plan therefore needs to be underpinned by a pragmatic consideration of how it will be paid for. The main financial challenge will relate to funding (i.e. how the projects are paid for over time). This will involve making best use of funds that can be directed from government and identifying new and innovative approaches. The funding and financing section of the SIP sets out more detail on this, including a number of case studies for schemes included in the plan.
- The final chapter of the SIP focuses on delivery and governance. It is clear that the document will require shared ownership. The document sets out the proposed role that TfSE will play in the implementation of the SIP, as well as the role and responsibility of key delivery partners. It sets out proposed key performance indicators that will be taken forward for further development by the TfSE team and a summary of the delivery plan from the Area Studies, including phasing and timing of the proposed packages and interventions.

Public consultation

- 4.6 The public consultation on the draft SIP commenced on 20 June 2022 and concluded on 12 September 2022. The main mechanism for obtaining feedback was via an online survey, accessed via a dedicated online engagement platform. Some email and postal responses were also received as well as a number of templated email responses via a campaign response platform developed by Transport Action Network (TAN).
- 4.7 The survey recorded responses about demographics, type of stakeholder, geographical area, comments on the SIP chapters and the ISA. It mirrored the structure of the SIP and included a combination of single selection answers (or 'tick all that apply'), response options as well as free-text responses.
- 4.8 During the twelve-week consultation period, TfSE engaged with multiple stakeholders through a variety of channels. The SIP was officially launched at TfSE's 'Connecting the South East' event at G-Live in Guildford on 5 July 2022. Two virtual webinars were held in July 2022, with nearly 300 attendees across

all events. A parliamentary reception was also held at Portcullis House on 22 June 2022 for MPs and their researchers.

- 4.9 The consultation was widely promoted via the TfSE newsletter, press releases, social media (paid and unpaid) and through partner communications. All the region's MPs, LEPs and local authorities were sent a dedicated email containing a link to the consultation material.
- 4.10 There were 640 responses to the consultation. A total of 422 respondents completed the questionnaire, with a further 87 submitting individual letters or emails. In addition, 131 individual petition responses were received as a result of a campaign organised by Transport Action Network (TAN). All consultation responses have been considered and the following provides a summary of the overall key findings from the consultation:
- Support shown to investment proposals to improve public transport in the south east, for example, 34% of those that participated via email/letter explicitly stated they welcomed the investment into public transport.
 - Respondents welcomed the focus on Active Travel schemes, with between 51% and 79% of respondents who participated in the survey supporting the proposed Active Travel schemes across the four geographies.
 - Respondents welcomed the recognition of importance of the need to tackle climate change, with analysis showing that 76% of respondents to the survey stated 'Decarbonisation & Environment' is the most important investment priority for the Strategic Investment Plan to deliver.
 - Of those respondents that participated via the survey, 49% of respondents were in agreement that the Strategic Investment Plan makes the best case possible for investing in transport infrastructure in the south east, with 'Somewhat agreed' at 31% and 'Definitely agreed' at 18%.
- 4.11 Although 'decarbonisation and the environment' was selected as the most important overall investment priority for the SIP to deliver by respondents to the survey, qualitative responses to the same question showed that support for other investment priorities was also considered important. This highlighted that TfSE should prioritise improvements to public transport, in turn reducing car use and tackling climate change. The support for public transport fares was further evidenced when respondents to the online survey chose this above decarbonisation, as the most important global policy intervention (78% / 72%) and the most frequently received comment in email and postal responses was around support for investment in public transport (34%).
- 4.12 When asked to what extent they agreed that the packages of interventions for a geography delivered on the priorities of the SIP, the online survey submissions showed that 68% somewhat or definitely agreed for Wessex Thames (the TfSE area which includes Reading), with less than 1% definitely disagreeing.

4.13 The Council has worked closely with colleagues in TfSE throughout the development of the SIP, including attendance at many workshop sessions focused on key areas of the SIP development and the associated area and thematic studies. Our response to the draft SIP consultation included the following key points:

- Whilst we fully support all eight of the proposed investment priorities, we would suggest that the top priority is ‘decarbonisation and environment’. This would be followed by ‘adaptation to a new normal’ and ‘levelling up left behind communities’ weighted with a greater importance than the remaining five priorities.
- As part of the decarbonisation and environment priority we would like to see more prominence given to ‘Supporting Healthy Lifestyles’ which is also one of the core objectives of our draft LTP4, through encouraging active travel and lifestyles by improving accessibility to key destinations and increase personal safety.
- We would suggest that ‘Adapting to a New Normal’ also includes building in resilience to future changes and instability. The priority refers to the Covid Pandemic and Brexit, however there could be further challenges that are not currently foreseen over the next 30 years and it is important that we build in resilience to our transport systems to offset some of the issues that may arise.
- We have identified that the Rail, Mass Transit, Active Travel and Highways packages are all important, however we would like to reiterate that greater importance should be placed on the Rail, Mass Transit and Active Travel schemes as forms of sustainable travel rather than the Highway schemes.
- We would like to make clear that Reading is working towards a net zero target by 2030, rather than the target of 2050 as set out within the SIP. However, we do acknowledge that different areas of the south east region are working towards different targets due to their geographical nature and therefore we support the overall importance placed on decarbonisation within the document.

4.14 TfSE undertook an analysis of all of the responses received through the consultation and the following provides a summary of the changes made to the draft SIP following the public consultation:

- Provided more context on the purpose of the SIP and importantly, what the SIP won’t do.
- Provided clarity that the financial ask of the SIP is above and beyond the funding that Local Transport Authorities already receive.
- Asserted the need to ensure that public transport provision returns to the quality of provision prior to the covid pandemic.
- Updates to investment priorities section to reflect feedback on the priorities.
- Strengthened the focus on decarbonisation and the environment throughout the document, including making it clearer that addressing climate change is a main aim of the SIP.

- Greater recognition of the importance of strategic active travel and mass transit.
 - Clarification that highways are multi-modal assets, supporting active travel and mass transit interventions as well as freight movements.
 - Made amends to the narrative for coastal areas to reflect the challenges that transport can help address and the opportunities that it can unlock.
 - Strengthening the narrative around key priorities that support health and wellbeing.
 - In recognition of the current financial situation, the funding and finance section has been updated to reflect that the SIP is a live document and costs will need to be updated as individual schemes are taken forward.
 - Clarification that transition of freight to rail will not be of detriment to passenger services.
 - Changes and clarification to information on proposed interventions to reflect comments received.
 - Updates to the delivery stages and next steps of the SIP to set out how the SIP will be implemented, delivered and monitored.
- 4.15 Some comments received in response to the consultation related to the evidence base documentation, i.e. thematic plans or Strategic Programme Outline Cases (SPOC). These documents will be updated to reflect key comments and included on the TfSE website alongside the publication of the final SIP in March 2023.
- 4.16 At its meeting on 14 November 2022, the TfSE Partnership Board agreed the final SIP, which is attached as **Appendix A** to this report. On 9th March 2023, the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) agreed that the final version of the SIP should be endorsed collectively by the 6 local authorities.

Next steps

- 4.17 The TfSE Partnership Board will consider the final SIP and agree the process for submitting to Government in spring 2023, subject to receiving approval from all constituent authorities prior to the Board meeting.
- 4.18 TfSE will continue to work with constituent authorities and other delivery partners to shape a delivery plan which will set out how the schemes and interventions in the SIP will be implemented.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The future delivery of the policies and schemes contained within the SIP will help to deliver the following priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan:
- Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25, this figure is lower in Reading with transport

accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions. However, significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

- 6.2 The TfSE vision specifically refers to becoming a net-zero carbon region by 2050: “By 2050, the South East of England will be a leading global region for net-zero carbon, sustainable economic growth where integrated transport, digital and energy networks have delivered a step change in connectivity and environmental quality. A high-quality, reliable, safe and accessible transport network will offer seamless door-to-door journeys enabling our businesses to compete and trade more effectively in the global marketplace and giving our residents and visitors the highest quality of life”. The SIP reflects this vision and has given consideration to decarbonisation measures through the global policies included in the plan.
- 6.3 As highlighted in the report, the Council has made it clear to TfSE that Reading is working towards a net zero target by 2030, rather than the target of 2050 as set out within the SIP. However, we do acknowledge that different areas of the south east region are working towards different targets due to their geographical nature and therefore we support the overall importance placed on decarbonisation within the document.
- 6.4 The Council has used the Climate Impact Assessment tool to assess the proposals as set out within TfSE’s SIP, resulting in an overall net low climate impact. This assessment is independent of TfSE’s assessment which concluded that the interventions as set out within the SEP will deliver very significant reductions in carbon emissions, through a mixture of reducing overall demand (virtual working), managing demand (road pricing), and making lower carbon transport options more attractive (new mobility options and public transport fares that are more integrated and seen as better value for money). The SIP contains a wide range of schemes and interventions, therefore it is acknowledged that individual schemes will have different climate impacts, but on balance the overall package should make a net positive contribution. As individual schemes are developed further, more detailed climate assessments will be a critical part of business case development and ultimately the decision making process on which schemes will be taken forward for delivery. Any major capital project will result in construction impacts and generate short-term emissions, therefore whilst the cumulative impact of construction of the overall package of schemes included within the SIP would be significant, it is considered that the longer-term impacts resulting from changing travel behaviours to more sustainable modes will help to achieve the carbon objectives contained within the strategy.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Public consultation on the draft SIP was undertaken during summer 2022 as set out within the report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act,
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2 Consideration has been given to the potential for any adverse equality impacts arising from the SIP by TfSE throughout the development of the plan. It is considered that the overall objectives and content of the SIP does not have an adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Reading Borough Council is a constituent member of TfSE (jointly with all 6 local authorities in Berkshire). TfSE is seeking the agreement of its constituent authorities for the plan prior to submitting the final SIP to Government in spring 2023.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None directly resulting from this report. The Council shares the annual subscription of £58,000 for membership of TfSE jointly with the other 5 Local Authorities in Berkshire and this is managed through the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB).
- 10.2 The DfT has awarded grant funding to TfSE of over £3m the last two financial years, which has been used to support the development of the technical programme and, more recently, for staffing costs. DfT has provided an indicative funding allocation for the next two financial years, which will support the implementation of the SIP.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None