Local Plans Committee

Northamptonshire County Council Transport Strategy for Growth

Synopsis Box
The Transport Strategy for Growth provides an examination in detail of the longer term transport impacts of the growth proposals for Northamptonshire. This report highlights the issues specific for the Corby Borough.

1. Relevant Background Details

The County Council has prepared the draft Transport Strategy for Growth. The documents for consultation were approved by the County Council Committee at the Cabinet meeting on 8th January, with the documents out for consultation running from the 15th February 2007 to the 20th April 2007. This report seeks to identify comments and to explore the issues raised in the documents out for consultation.

2. Report

Northamptonshire County Council Transport Strategy for Growth is now out for consultation and along with other Local Authorities, Public Bodies, Stakeholders and the general public; this is Corby’s opportunity to comment. A response is required by the 20th April 2007.

In general the following issues require consideration.

1) The Consultation process began in February, after the County Council Cabinet Committee endorsed the public consultation exercise on the 8th January 2007. It is questionable the amount of time given for consultees to comment on such detailed amount of information. It should be noted that the documents were not easily accessible from the County Council website and took considerable time to locate them for consultation.

2) The County Council’s Cabinet report (Transport Strategy for Growth, 8th January 2007) states that, “In developing the Transport Strategy for Growth, the County Council worked in close partnership with a range of key partners including Borough and District Councils and local representative bodies. These partners were fully involved in developing the prioritisation methodology used for the Transport Prioritisation Framework.” Officers have not been invited to work closely with the County Council in preparation of the report and regarding detailed proposals of the consultation documents. Officers consider there was a lack of participation in the preparation of the documents.

3) The Borough Council does not accept the proposed Strategy and given the content and level of detail of the consultation documents, and the lack of meaningful consultation prior to their publication in January 2007, it is requested that a further period of discussion and consultation be undertaken by the County Council with all Districts and Boroughs in the County before County Council Members consider the Strategy’s adoption.

The proposal includes the following documents:

- Schemes proposed by Transport Prioritisation Framework
- Transport Prioritisation Framework (full report)
- Guidance on creating lasting modal shift
- Town Transportation Strategy for Corby
- Town Transportation Strategy for Kettering
The following comments are in relation to those proposals which have specific relevance to the Corby situation and require Member consideration. Comments are required to be Corby specific due to the importance and nature of growth and regeneration proposed for the Borough.

3. Transport Strategy for Growth – Corby Town Strategy

A Town Strategy document has been prepared for Corby to provide an overview of transport requirements to facilitate growth. This expands on the Transportation Prioritisation Framework document; therefore, many of the comments regarding this document continue to apply.

3.1 Transport Model

The proposed Transport Strategy for Growth is based upon transport modelling work undertaken to develop an understanding of the likely transportation impacts of the Growth Agenda.

Comments

Development assumptions used to inform the North Northamptonshire Transportation Model correspond with the Corby Borough Site Specific Proposals Preferred Options Report (May 2006). However, more up to date information is presented in the Corby Borough Annual Monitoring Report 2005-2006 (December 2006) in terms of residential development, which indicates lower housing delivery at Priors Hall.

It is not clear where the floor space (GFA) assumptions for employment development in the transport model are derived.

Under paragraph 4.28 the report refers to Priors Hall as an option considered for urban extension within Corby. However, the Preferred Option report for Corby Borough Site Specific Proposals indicates that Priors Hall forms part of the area shown as the possible North East extension to the town. Therefore, if it specifically refers to Priors Hall in paragraph 4.28, it should also refer to other development proposals, for example, Weldon Park.

Under paragraph 4.30 the scale of development used in the modelling work for urban extensions to Corby is inconsistent with the development assumptions outlined in section 3. Moreover, more up to date information presented in Corby Borough Annual Monitoring Report 2005-2006.

3.2 Parking Strategy

In order for the proposed revisions for the Town Centre to be effective and to allow for the accommodation of a growth in traffic without the need for substantial additional road building, considerable changes to the function and form of parking within Corby will be needed.

The parking strategy expects long stay car parking to be re-allocated to the edge of town and tighter controls on short stay locations and off-street parking.
Comments
There is general support for the Parking Strategy in section 8, which reflects the specifications of both the Corby Town Centre Area Action Plan and Corby Borough Site Specific Proposals preferred option reports.

The Corby Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Option for parking is to locate parking at the periphery of the town. The Preferred Option for access and movement proposes tighter controls on parking through a mix of permit holders and pay and display on-street parking provision to be provided, particularly in residential areas.

The Corby Borough Site Specific Proposals Preferred Option TC7 and Town Centre Area Action Plan preferred option for parking both seek to maximise the potential for shared use of parking spaces.

Notwithstanding, the introduction of charged parking within the Town Centre cordon is a concern. Currently there are a number of town centres within North Northamptonshire that do not charge for parking, therefore shoppers and visitors may be deferred and could decide to visit other towns, which would undermine the regeneration aims of Corby as required by the Regional Spatial Strategy.

3.3 Infrastructure Requirements
It is recommended in the Schemes Proposed by Transport Prioritisation Framework that the following transport interventions are prioritised schemes, which will be included in an amended Local Transport Plan produced by the County Council:

- Improving the A6116 and A6003 and associated junctions;
- Dualling the A6014 between the A6003 and A427;
- Dualling of the Corby Link Road;
- Dualling of the A6086 between Lloyds Road and the A6116
- Additional link between the A427 and the Corby Link Road around Weldon

The Corby Town Strategy should be read together with the Northamptonshire Transport Prioritisation Framework that includes the following schemes:

- A43 Corby Link Road;
- A427 Weldon Bypass;
- Re-opening of Kettering to Corby Passenger Rail, through services to St Pancras, new station at Corby

Comments
The above interventions reflect the Preferred Option for transport included within the Corby Borough Site Specific Proposals document. However, improvements to the A6003 and A6116 are included in the Corby Town Strategy and not specifically in the Northamptonshire Transport Prioritisation Framework. Therefore, clarification is sought on whether schemes identified in the schedule of prioritised interventions have the same status and priority as schemes identified in the town strategies.

The Corby Northern Orbital Road has been excluded from this. Although it is shown in the diagrams of proposals in the Corby Town Strategy, it is missing from the Schemes Proposed by Transport Prioritisation Framework. This requires clarification and justification.

Overall, it is considered that there is a danger that relying too much on a road based approach will not support the desired objectives of accessible services by sustainable modes with, for example, commercial based office development favouring dispersed locations rather than town centre. If the modal shift strategy is to be successful it will lead to increased capacity on the existing road network without the need for new roads. This should be taken into consideration in the long term planning of the area.
• The approach to servicing key local areas is by improved provision of public transport in the Corby area and this is to be welcomed. However the promotion of road building as part of the strategy overall to deliver the needed growth levels in Corby, rather than promoting intensive investment in public transport is not in line with the achievement of sustainable development.

• The focus on road improvement may counteract the attempts made to achieve modal shift. For example, road improvements seem to be promoted under the guise of being needed for urban extensions, but are to achieve general capacity improvement in Corby.

• No new road building should occur unless there is proven need that would bring benefits which could not be achieved through more innovative transport planning.

• The various elements of the “connectivity strategy”: location of development strategy, design, mix and pattern of development, as well as “accessibility” overall is outlined. The provision for modal shift is also addressed but it is not clear how this will be achieved, particularly for existing areas.

• It is suggested that it may be suitable to highlight these issues in relation to the transport spatial strategy on the delivery of infrastructure and these matters are addressed in the relevant areas for developer contributions.

• There may be conflicts with the provision of the transport objectives relating to climate change and air quality. As road traffic can be expected to increase as a consequence of the planned levels of growth.

3.4 Modal Shift Principles

To accommodate growth on the scale envisaged for Northamptonshire, it is proposed that there should be a substantial reduction in the predicted proportion of trips made by the private motor car. The Corby Town Strategy document outlines how this can be achieved, including the following model shift targets:

• A reduction of 5% in single occupancy car journeys to work from the existing town

• A reduction of 20% in single occupancy car journeys to work from new developments

It suggests that the County Council will complete a study into the possibility of introducing road user charging and its effect on travel choices, in the future. Furthermore, it states “The sustainable community list: modal shift, increase in bus patronage reduction in car ownership, provides school transport…”

Comments

Clarification is required on what type of roads road user charging could be applied upon. Clarification and justification is also required on the sustainable community list, for example, it needs to be justified how can this be achieved and how this is practical.

Importantly, the modal shift targets have been incorporated into the Joint Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire. Corby’s subsidiary Local Development Plan Documents will be expected to incorporate a package of measures to reduce car usage and achieve a modal shift away form car use.

The local context is significant considering the variation in car driver mode share across North Northamptonshire. According to the 2001 Census, Corby has a much lower car use rate than the rest of Northamptonshire, at 73.4% car use for journeys to work. Based on the target of 20% reduction the Corby car driver mode share would be 53.4%. Thus, the effect of the proposed target – if it was achieved – would be to ensure that any new development in the Sustainable Urban Extensions was considerably above the national average. This is clearly challenging and places additional demands on developers.

A ‘one solution’ approach across all areas of North Northamptonshire in respect to a modal shift is considered too simplistic. It fails to take into account important local differences,
such as existing levels of public transport usages, which are very high in the Corby Borough. Therefore a lower figure, i.e. less than 20% will be appropriate for developments in Corby.

3.5 Design Guidance

A radical approach for all new major residential developments is presented by the County’s documents. This includes the following:

- Developments designed to provide segregated car parking from residential units. Provision of secure car parking located separately from dwellings;
- Total number of car parking spaces at the development to be a maximum of 1 space for 80% of dwellings plus 0.5 spaces per dwelling for visitors / additional parking;
- Car parking spaces should be sold separately from the residential units;
- The 20% of dwellings not eligible for a parking space could park in a visitor space which would incur a cost;
- Support for shared surface frontages to design for access only at the dwellings e.g. ‘Home Zones’; and
- Sufficient land should be set aside to accommodate a secure parking area for vehicles to be provided for a “Vehicle Club”.

Comments

Officers have concerns with effectively reducing car parking levels below the current 1.5 / dwelling, along with concerns about segregating car parking for the houses. The rationale behind the approach, i.e. to make access to the car less convenient, however this has been shown within Corby not to work. It seems likely that residents will still try and park on the road or on verges etc. close to homes.

Revised approach to car parking impacts on the layouts of roads in housing areas, i.e. ‘Home Zones’. There is concern that these proposals will have implications for access for vehicles including emergency vehicles and refuse collection.

Parking standards for the ‘Vehicle Club’ should be expressed as a maximum in the spirit of PPG13.

Reference should also be made to major developments such as Priors Hall, Oakley Vale and Land West of Stanion, which have lengthy build out periods and would not be subject to this approach as it would only apply to newer developments. As referred to above there are potential significant implications for the regeneration of Corby as these new developments if the guidelines are adopted could be less attractive to the market.

It is believed that County Council proposals for Northamptonshire are to be a pilot for this approach in the United Kingdom. Given the importance of regeneration for Corby in particular, it is considered that piloting such schemes here should not be encouraged or supported.

3.6 Public Transport Strategy

The need for lasting modal shift is acknowledged for environmental reasons and to reduce the land take and costs associated with road building. The County Council advises that without a 20% modal shift for single occupancies in new developments and 5% for existing developments, together with the transport infrastructure projects identified the growth proposed for Corby cannot be accommodated.

However, as identified, this is detailed within the transport document and summarised above. The means of achieving this modal shift promotes a significant change with regard to the importance given to cars and parking, together with public transport.
The guidance principle is to make public transport easier or as easy to access as the private motor car. To achieve this, significant improvements to bus services are promoted. In the case of large Urban Extensions, the provision of strong public transport only corridors connecting development to existing town centres should be considered (however this is not considered appropriate in the context of Corby). New developments must provide a permeable network of walking and cycling routes, both within the development and providing connections to existing local facilities, travel hubs and local centres including enhancements to current links.

The requirements for a high quality bus service are:

- Must be within 300 metres of a dwelling
- Easy access or easier than car parking spaces
- High frequency initially subsidised bus travel
- Free public transport for new residents
- Provisions for Smart Card chargeable bus services
- Within 600 metres of a dwelling if high frequency bus service

**Comments**

All the above measures are to be included within S106 Agreements.

The statement “Walking distances to bus stops must be no greater than 300m, and no greater than 600m when accessing an Express Service” requires further justification, and needs to consider accessibility practicalities, for example the disabled and parents with young children. It is also important to note that public transport only corridors to the town centre are not currently considered to be in demand.

4. **Options to be Considered**

The consultation requires comments from Corby Borough Council. The only realistic option is to comment on the document from the Corby position. This is set out in Section 5 (Conclusions) to be modified by Members at the meeting as necessary.

5. **Issues to be taken into account:**

**Policy Priorities**

The Council is working towards the adoption of the North Northamptonshire Local Development Framework of which the Corby Local Development Documents form a major part. The adoption of the North Northamptonshire LDF and Corby’s constituent LDDs is and will remain a CBC priority.

**Financial**

As commented on in the report the requirements of policies in the Transport Strategy for Growth may require extra resources to be expended by the Local Authorities concerned.

**Legal**

It is a requirement that Corby Local Development Framework is in conformity with the Core Spatial Strategy, and that the Transport Strategy for Growth documents, as prepared by Northamptonshire County Council should be considered in relation to the requirements of Corby specific documents.

**Performance Information**

The proposed Transport Strategy for Growth contributes to the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy which forms part of the Development Plan part of the policy framework.

**Sustainability, Best Value, Community Safety, Human Rights, Equalities**
These are basic requirements in a sustainable community. The Local Development Framework and Transport Strategy for Growth see these as essential elements of any strategy.

6. Conclusions

The Local Transport Plan highlighted the need to develop a Transport Strategy for Growth to examine in more detail the longer term transport impacts of the growth proposals. There are however issues raised by the Transport Strategy for Growth that have implications for Corby. In general terms the following key responses are proposed:

1) The Borough Council does not accept the proposed Strategy and given the content and level of detail of the consultation documents, and the lack of meaningful consultation prior to their publication in January 2007, it is requested that a further period of discussion and consultation be undertaken by the County Council with all Districts and Boroughs in the County before County Council Members consider the Strategy’s adoption.

2) In addition to the promotion of sustainability and modal shift proposals, quality targets for transport, including road layouts, accesses, manoeuvring and parking details should also be developed including close liaison with District and Boroughs in the County regarding different mechanisms across all venues for commercial and residential areas.

3) The Strategy should ensure to develop positive relationships between the Growth Agenda and transport, especially investment in infrastructure for both commercial and residential areas as an economic activity that could improve employment opportunities and investment in Corby.

4) A ‘one solution’ approach across all areas of North Northamptonshire in respect to a modal shift is considered too simplistic and a lower figure, i.e. less than 20% will be more appropriate for developments in Corby.

5) Object not only a reduction in parking, but to the segregation of parking from housing, raising issues surrounding security and how / who would enforce against parking on verges and road sides.

6) The set of principles proposed by the Transport Strategy for Growth documents cannot necessarily be applied for Corby, for example, bus lanes are not required for Corby and pay for parking schemes in the Town Centre would discourage people from shopping in the Primary Shopping Area, which contradicts the proposals set out in the Corby Town Centre Area Action Plan.

7. Recommendations

That the comments, as amended by Members set out in the report form the basis of response to be forwarded to Northamptonshire County Council as a representation of Corby’s response to the Consultation on the Transport Strategy for Growth.

Background Papers

- Northamptonshire County Council Cabinet Report – 8th January 2007
- Schemes proposed by Transport Prioritisation Framework
- Transport Prioritisation Framework (full report)
- Guidance on creating lasting modal shift
- Town Transportation Strategy for Corby
- Town Transportation Strategy for Kettering
- Town Transportation Strategy for Wellingborough
- Transportation Design Guide for Residential Developments
- Public Transport Guidelines for New Developments
- Town Transportation Strategy for Daventry – Position Statement
- Town Transportation Strategy for Towcester – Position Statement
• Transport Vision for Northampton

**External Consultation**
None – full consultation carried out by Northamptonshire County Council

**List of Appendices**
None

**Wards**
All

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