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1 Introduction

1.1 The Inspector has requested further information in respect of the Core Strategy (CS) and transport matters. His request is reproduced below:

1.2 “This is to confirm the Inspector's request at the PHM (pre hearing meeting) on 6th Sep 2011 for the Council to please prepare three further Keynote Papers (along the same lines as those already provided) on the following matters:

Transport - a keynote paper setting out how local transport issues, policies and proposals have been taken into account in formulating the CS and it's policies/proposals would be useful, notwithstanding the Council's Proposed Changes that add cross references to the Local Transport Plan. In particular, it should ideally address how the objectives of reducing both outcommuting from the Forest and the overall need to travel would be achieved and implemented over the plan period, including by reference to any particular capital projects, other transport improvement schemes or proposals. Some sort of vision as to how the transport situation in the district might be in 15 years time might also be useful. An example might be the planned improvements at Lydney Station, better services on that line, the link with the Dean Forest Railway and the what, where and when of implementation, including who pays ?”

1.3 This keynote therefore considers the following:

How local transport issues have been taken into account

How the LTP (Local Transport Plan) and the CS are related and share common aims and objectives and

How and what changes are likely in the transport network and in transport provision over the life of the CS.

2 Transport Issues and The Core Strategy

2.1 The availability of a suitable transport network and infrastructure is essential to the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy has a very important role in meeting the requirements of the area in a sustainable manner both generally and in terms of transport requirements. Much of the transport policy that is applied in Gloucestershire is expressed through the Local Transport Plan (LTP). It is now in its third iteration and has common aims with the CS. It takes account of some of the same documents as the Core Strategy, (for example the Community Plans) and seeks to match the available resources to the needs of the area. It is expected that LTP and LDFs complement one another and that is the case in the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire.

2.2 The latest LTP was approved in April 2011. It is a policy document which covers all aspects of transport and in the case of Gloucestershire, a two tier authority, is prepared by the County Council, with the involvement of the various Districts, and other interested parties.

2.3 The LTP is prepared on a fixed timetable and contains policies and provisions for highway maintenance as well as transport infrastructure. At its roots the LTP and the CS have goals or a vision that share themes expressed in the LTP (2.9.2.10, quoting DfT Guidance) as:

Tackle climate change;

Support economic growth;

Promote equality of opportunity

Contribute to better safety, security and health;

Improve quality of life.

Or at the local (County) level:

A greener, healthier Gloucestershire;

Sustainable economic growth;

A safer, securer transport system;

Good access to services.

The CS has the short objectives under the umbrella of “thriving and sustainable community”:

Providing quality environments

Develop the local economy including tourism

to provide housing including affordable homes

Facilitate the regeneration of the four towns

Create safer communities

2.4 At this general level it is not surprising that the two sets of objectives are similar. Their inclusion in both documents highlights that they are both seeking to achieve similar ends and as would be expected the policies to achieve them are complementary.

2.5 There is a degree of emphasis in both documents on the towns where the greatest changes are expected under the CS. LTP 3 refers to town initiatives (Town Centre improvements at all four towns). It also identifies programmes for investment that reflect the CS. More specifically, the LTP (6.11) summarises the approach and the main reasons for it.

“ The projects identified in the Forest of Dean aim to invigorate the local economy to redress a number of longstanding socio-economic challenges. These include a continuing trend towards net out-migration for employment, which currently stands at 25%; a notable disparity in local wage levels (which are 3-5% lower than the rest of the County); an estimated leakage of local retail spend to neighbouring towns and cities of up to £100 million a year; and the presence of deprived communities characterised by poor quality and overcrowded housing, limited local employment opportunities and enduring educational underperformance”

2.6 The CS identifies out commuting as a major issue to be addressed, and also the lack of employment within the district, together with the disparity between the number and range of jobs available and the occupations of the residents. It also identifies, mainly through the retail studies the large leakage of retail expenditure (and hence trips), and seeks to address this. In addition there remain pockets of relative deprivation and educational under achievement which the CS seeks to redress. The above summary analysis, drawing on the same evidence as the CS shows the source of the LTP priority actions and the following transport issues are identified in the Forest of Dean:

2 Transport Issues and The Core Strategy

“10.23 The transport issues for the Forest of Dean are:

New housing development, often dispersed in rural areas;

Regeneration in Cinderford and Newent;

Potential traffic congestion at peak times in Lydney due to new development;

Congestion on the A40 between Highnam and Over Roundabouts

Highway maintenance and resilience of the transport network;

Access to services, especially in rural areas;

Capacity issues at Lydney Station car park and the need to improve rail services.

2.7 The CS addresses these in the way in which it seeks to concentrate most development into the main centres, though inevitably as a result of the settlement pattern there is a degree of dispersal over the larger villages in particular of smaller developments. There are cases made for the regeneration of the area and again this is focussed on the towns, and especially on the south forest. This focus leads to a proposed distribution of change which identifies (or confirms) that Lydney has the greatest capacity, partly due to the land itself being available and partly because of its better accessibility, including access to the railway. It follows that there is a need to address the consequences of this proposed development both in the LTP and in the CS. The major movement of commuters within the district that is of overall concern to the County Council is that to Gloucester and area, so it is appropriate to identify Over and the A 40 (T) in the LTP as an issue, with a possible Park and Ride scheme.

2.8 Arising from the above Issues, the LTP proposes certain actions which concentrate on Lydney and Cinderford. The changes which have long been identified for Lydney are required and can largely be delivered by the development that is planned (see keynotes Infrastructure and Section 106 Agreements). In the case of Cinderford it is a mixture of public and private money that will be required, with a major committed amount from the HCA which is currently being spent.

2.9 “Transport actions and policies

10.24 The following table identifies the main transport actions developed specifically for the Forest of Dean. Other policies and actions in the LTP that are Countywide, will also apply to the Forest of Dean but are not mentioned here.

We will implement the Lydney Highway Strategy when funding is available from development.”

The strategy is a series of necessary improvements that are funded to a large degree by developer contributions that are assigned to the various permissions which have been granted for the development of the land east of Lydney. They are all off site and most are in the town centre. The total strategy delivers the ability to divert traffic from Newerne Street and improve key junctions in the centre of the town.

“We will engage with Network Rail and the train operating companies to encourage them to improve rail services from the Forest of Dean to Gloucester, Cheltenham and stations to Cardiff.

We will engage with Network Rail and the train operating companies to help improve car parking and interchange facilities at Lydney Station.”

2.10 There is a long term aim to further improve the facilities at the station. There is a developer contribution to come from the east of Lydney development, though additional funding is likely to be needed. Presently there is an extended train service operating as an experiment and this may continue if patronage is sufficient. The improvements support the CS in its aims and will add to and be supported by the intended Area Action Plan for Lydney. Improved parking, service by public transport and general improvements to the facilities on offer have emerged as issues for the forthcoming AAP and are also aims of the CS expressed in its Lydney section.

“We will work with Forest of Dean District Council on the action plan to improve air quality in Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)”

2.11 There is an existing air quality issue (and a declared AQMA) in Lydney which centres on the Bream Rd junction in the High Street. Although this and its management group is not directly related to the CS, it may be that highway improvements which are to be funded from development will be designed or phased in such a way as to address the issue. Improvements to the junction concerned are part of the strategy and are understood to be a priority within it.

“We will work with Forest of Dean District Council, the Forestry Commission and other partners to promote and improve cycle links between the centres of the market towns and the National Cycle Network and Forest Cycle Networks.”

2.12 The policies of the CS are compatible with this aim.

2 Transport Issues and The Core Strategy

“We will work with Forest of Dean District Council and other partners to support regeneration proposals in Cinderford.”

Schemes referred to are :

Cinderford Northern Quarter

Improve Junction of A4151/A4136 Forest of Dean

Improvement of Cinderford Bridge Junction Forest of Dean

2.13 This is a major commitment which shows the LTP recognises and is committed to the principle of the regeneration plan for the town which in turn is a key major element of the strategy for the whole district. The County Council has long been a partner in the evolution of the regeneration plan for Cinderford and continues to support and be involved in it at a variety of levels. The transport improvements planned will benefit the town and its wider area as well as serving the Northern Quarter, and there will be a focus on public transport as part of the NQ development. Specific improvements will also be aided by the NQ and other development sites and contributions will assist in delivering improvements such as at the Cinderford Bridge junction.

2.14 A general aim of the LTP which will support the area is to establish “Quality bus routes” with the following general routes being referred to:

Lydney – Gloucester

Lydney-Coleford-Cinderford

Coleford-Cinderford-Gloucester

Newent-Gloucester

2.15 In addition the LTP has the long term intent:

“We will work to secure funding to introduce a new Park & Ride site near the A40 and A48 west of the River Severn.”

2.16 This, if developed will help to address the impacts of the current high level of commuting as well as benefiting Gloucester itself. The proposal was subject to consultation shortly before the LTP was finalised and this included possible sites neither of which is in the Forest of Dean. A reference to this scheme may be appropriate in the CS but at present details of implementation are unknown.

2.17 Finally the LTP is committed to consider:

Strategic Cycle Routes

A40 Churcham – Longhope

Maisemore- Hartpury

Highnam-Newent

2.18 In addition to the items referred to in the LTP, there will be further improvements to transport but these are at present expected to be limited and will be proportional to developments to which they will have a direct relationship. There are schemes to improve the town centres of Cinderford and Newent and proposals, including details of funding and implementation will be included within the Lydney AAP in relation to changes there. In Newent a scheme to improve the public realm is under way. It includes paving, improvements for buses and other minor environmental works.

3 Outcome at the end of the Core Strategy Period (2026).

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3.1 In 15 years time, the following major changes are likely to have occurred:

3.2 Lydney- highway strategy complete or substantially complete- with the major part of the funding from contributions from development east of Lydney which is expected to be complete by 2026. This development is now under way and is expected to continue until the end of the period.

3.3 Lydney station improvements- partially funded by Lydney East development, additional parking and facilities, using transport partly funded (initially) by developers, as required as part of the planning consents. Increased rail passenger usage will also contribute- probably in the longer term. Some changes are tied to the scale of development complete at Lydney east, but other influences like the changes in the franchises of the rail operators will also have an impact.

3.4 Lydney- As a consequence of the implementation of the highway strategy and the AAP there will be an improved environment in the town centre. Physical improvements to the pedestrian environment are possible once the major highway changes contained in the strategy are complete. These include the Newerne Link, Improvements at Bream Rd Junction (which will address the key air quality issue in the AQMA), and junction improvements at the foot of Highfield Hill. In the town centre, changes will be planned in the AAP and will in part be implemented by developer contribution.

3.5 Cinderford NQ and elsewhere- the Northern Quarter will be substantially completed and will include a new spine road which will offer an alternative access to Cinderford. Public transport will serve the NQ and in particular the college and will link to the wider area as well as the town centre. Improved cycling and walking connections will be in place. An improved junction at Cinderford bridge will be in place, part funded by public sources (the demolition of the former pub is already planned and funded). Infrastructure for the NQ is part funded by the HCA and will also include developer contributions. More detail including the degree of funding now committed and spent is contained in the material relating to the Cinderford AAP.

3.6 Cinderford Town Centre- physical improvements will have been introduced- present funding though constrained has enabled a programme of improvements to be commenced (eg 20mph zone, revised crossings).

3.7 Coleford- modest developer led improvements of a local nature .

3.8 Newent- modest additional development will be complete including changes in the town centre.

3.9 Overall commuting- The impact of the CS will be apparent in slowing or reducing the out commuting from the area. There will be some modal shift, in part due to the improvements at Lydney. A broader range of employment together with better shopping and other town centre facilities will also reduce the need to travel out of the district. There may be an increase in journeys to work within the district as it becomes more self- contained.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The CS and the LTP which is the major expression of transport policy are compatible in having common aims and in concentrating on the areas of major change within the district. Investment from developers will feature largely in bringing some physical improvements and in supporting services. In addition in Cinderford there is planned and committed public investment to improve the transport infrastructure.

