

28 February 2023

ITEM: 6

Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Transport Vision and Issues and Opportunities Update

Wards and communities affected:

All

Key Decision:

Key

Report of: Mat Kiely, Transportation Services Strategic Lead

Accountable Assistant Director: Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection

Accountable Director: Mark Bradbury, Director, Place

This report is: Public

Executive Summary

Following the previous submission of the Thurrock interim Transport Strategy to the Planning, Transport & Regeneration committee and Local Plan Taskforce, this briefing paper updates members on further progress with the development of the Local Transport Plan.

The Local Transport Plan is in four parts:

- Issues and Opportunities
- Vision
- Strategy
- Action and Implementation

The briefing paper provides an update on the first two of these:

- Issues and Opportunities draft reports:
 - Borough-wide Issues and Opportunities report and appendices.
 - Thurrock Urban Area Issues and Opportunities- the first of five reports for different parts of the Borough.
- A consultation draft of the 'Vision 2050' report.

Several work-streams associated with the Transport Plan will be reported separately in the coming months including:

- Transport model.

- Issues and Opportunities reports for four sub-areas (following the pattern of the Thurrock Urban Area report above).

Together these documents provide an important insight into the existing situation within our transport network and identify the innovative ideas and measures that need to be considered and developed as Thurrock looks to accommodate significant housing and job growth through the Local Plan period and beyond and the impact this will have upon the transport network.

Accompanying appendices and plans provide members with detail of the work that has been progressed to date and provides an important and valuable role in aligning the wider transport work, infrastructure considerations and network improvements for the Local Plan period and beyond.

The report also identifies the next steps and broad timescales associated with stakeholder and member engagement. We will ensure that local communities, business and other key stakeholders are allowed to engage and shape the transport network.

1.0 Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee note progress on the Transport Issues and Opportunities and Transport Vision documents and accompanying appendices and provide comment that will help to shape this work.

1.2 That Committee note that these documents will used to inform stakeholder and member engagement before advancing to wider community engagement.

1.3 That Committee note the opportunity to discuss this work in greater detail as the draft documents are developed and engagement feedback is received.

1.4 That members note the requirement to further the develop the Transport Plan in response to member and stakeholder feedback.

2.0 Introduction and Background

2.1 The current adopted Transport Strategy sets out the Council's transport policies and priorities from 2013 to 2026.

2.2 This Strategy was developed in a very different context from the position today and it is clear that a revised strategy needs to be developed in response to significant new challenges and opportunities. These include national housing delivery targets and the Council's growth aspirations, planning reforms, new bodies such as 'Transport East' and new planned transport schemes such as the Lower Thames Crossing.

- 2.3 The Council has taken the decision to develop a long-term Transport Plan/Strategy that will set out the approach to ensure our transport network evolves in line with the Council's Local Plan growth aspirations.
- 2.4 The challenges facing the Council are well publicised and this report should be read in that context. Future service activity will need to reflect the intervention the Council finds itself in. Particularly difficult decisions will need to be made on levels of service and methods of service delivery during 2023 and beyond.
- 2.5 Background studies have been commissioned to support the development of the new Local Plan and update the Thurrock Transport Strategy 2013- 2026. Several studies have already been submitted and discussed with PTR O&S and Local Plan Task force including:
- Draft Vision (Latcham/Doyle) - reported to the Local Development Plan Task Force in 29 November 2021.
 - Interim Transport Strategy (Mott Macdonald) -reported to Local Plan Taskforce June 2022.
 - Transport Baseline (Stantec) Reported to PTR O&S and Taskforce 2021.
 - Thurrock Local Plan Infrastructure Baseline Report (Arup) - reported to the Local Development Task Force in July 2020.
- 2.6 This work is now being drawn together into a new 'Thurrock Local Transport Plan' to be produced in four parts.
- Issues and Opportunities
 - Vision.
 - Strategy
 - Action/Implementation plan.
- 2.7 This report focuses on the first two sections of the new Local Transport Plan: Issues and Opportunities and Vision.

The Issues and Opportunities work comprises a borough-wide description of issues and opportunities with five separate detailed reports focusing on issues and opportunities in sub areas of the Borough:

- Thurrock Urban Area
- Aveley and Ockendon
- The Fens

- Stanford-le-Hope Corringham, London Gateway/TEP
 - Chadwell St Mary, Tilbury, Tilbury East and Linford
- 2.8 The borough-wide and five sub-area studies form the basis of the transport planning evidence for the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.9 At this stage only the Thurrock Urban Area sub area report has been produced, which is offered as a template for the four further sub areas.
- 2.10 Parts three and four of the Transport Plan- Transport Strategy and Action/ Implementation Plans - will be developed in more detail and shared with members and stakeholders at a later date.

3.0 Borough-wide transport issues and opportunities

- 3.1 The Transport Issues and Opportunities Report condenses the findings of a Transport Baseline Evidence Study undertaken by consultants Stantec in 2020.
- 3.2 The Baseline Evidence Study is structured around the guidance within the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) “Transport Evidence Bases in Plan Making and Decision Taking”. PPG tells us that a transport evidence base should establish evidence for a range of key themes including, improving the sustainability of transport provision, enhancing accessibility, creating modal choices, improving health and wellbeing, supporting economic vitality, enabling other highway authorities and service providers to support and deliver the transport infrastructure and supporting local shops and the high street’. The Report is structured around the themes of Accessibility, Congestion, Mobility, Safety, Pollution and Affordability.
- 3.3 The Issues and Opportunities Report covers the whole borough and looks at the various issues and opportunities that must be considered and addressed as we develop a long-term Transport Plan for Thurrock. The Report provides a foundation for the exploration and justification for transport measures, modal change and infrastructure improvements set out in Vision.

Issues And Opportunities work are summarised below:

• *Accessibility is the extent to which individuals and households can access day-to-day services, such as employment, education, healthcare, food stores and town centres.*

The I&O work identifies that travel patterns in Thurrock are heavily focused on the private car. However, interestingly where opportunities to use other modes are convenient and available, people are willing to use them. The network of transport routes has severance issues caused by the busiest roads within Thurrock, particularly the M25 and A13. This notably causes difficulty in east-west travel and impedes residents’ travel options and opportunities. The rail network is in the process of being improved, and capacity increased. This process is essential, as the recent pattern of decreased rail patronage is expected to revert to growth in the longer term. To support non-car travel, the

rail sector believes stations must link with new residential developments and employment growth areas.

• Congestion is the degree to which travel demand is greater than the capacity of the network to accommodate within a given period.

The average congestion level in Thurrock is higher than the average for England on key routes (the M25 and A13). Overall, the average network delay appears stable under current conditions. Rail passenger capacity would have soon been reached had the COVID-19 pandemic not occurred. The rail operator and Network Rail should revisit the shorter-term plan to increase rail network capacity post-pandemic. However, additional capacity is still expected to be needed over the long term. The severance of east-west travel and the limited available routes increases network sensitivity. Modelling future traffic behaviour is needed to fully understand network sensitivity, especially if the Lower Thames Crossing is progressed. A Thurrock Strategic Transport Model is under development. (more info on this in section xxx)

• Mobility is the ability of people and goods to move efficiently and freely around an area and is a crucial factor in economic growth and wellbeing for the population. It primarily concerns the opportunity to travel and the network connections available.

Thurrock's transport network supports high levels of mobility in some areas with high-quality public transport connections, private and commercial vehicle road networks, and walking and cycling routes. However, in sharp contrast, there are limited public transport links across the river, to rural areas and to the north of the Borough. The Road Network is congested and often disrupted. Connections to London by all modes are essential for Thurrock residents. Bus and ferry services are essential for more local journeys. Maintaining connections and service levels will continue to be necessary. The most common travel mode in Thurrock is driving a private car, followed by a private car passenger, then walking, followed by a bus. These modes account for 96.5% of all journeys in Thurrock. Improving walking routes and more and better bus services are essential in encouraging non-car travel.

• Safety considers the injuries and causal - ities that occur due to interactions be - tween users of the transport network.

Thurrock performs better for pedestrian and cyclist safety and has fewer fatalities than national and regional averages. It is vital to maintain existing trends of improving safety. The expansion of pedestrian and cycle routes and improved legibility of routes can support continual improvements in pedestrian and cycle safety. Creating safe environments in new development and new infrastructure in which vulnerable road users can safely mix with motor vehicles is essential to improve the trends towards safer travel networks.

• Pollution, carbon reduction and health examine the trends and impacts of the transport network in terms of the pollution impact, the trends in carbon production and how this interacts with public health.

Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) should be reviewed regularly, and consideration should be given to whether all the existing AQMAs are appropriate. Future reviews will be assisted by the new Air Quality Assessment Model. To provide information about the emissions associated with transport, Thurrock Council could introduce fleet monitoring for transport providers, such as taxis and bus operators, to understand progress towards less polluting drive systems. Information on fuel uses would allow consideration of incentives to promote transfer away from fossil fuel use. Coordinating disparate modernisation schedules would be easier if the information was held in one location. Monitoring transport's impact on pollution will require data collection from various operators.

- **Affordability looks at the demographic factors which shape travel behaviour by changing the needs and costs of travel.**

Thurrock performs well in terms of employment levels with fewer workless households. Port expansion is likely to drive strong employment growth in Thurrock. It is vital to ensure skills match employers' needs and it is equally important to ensure future infrastructure and developments serve and provide opportunities for all residents, including those with a range of health conditions and who are remote from good public transport connections. Educational attainment is a weakness at present. Opportunities to improve transport affordability for Thurrock residents seeking education and training need to be exploited.

The above points are summarised and presented below in Figure X.

	Key Statistics	Key Opportunities	Key Challenges
Accessibility	Inbound traffic – 80% car Outbound – 29% Rail Internal – 21% Pedestrian	Connections to London Stations via Rail Cycle network expanding NMU access Riverfront interchange opportunities, economic activity Enabling growth in locations with higher connectivity Planned increases in rail capacity	Connection of new development into existing networks and hubs Access to essential services by active travel, e.g. GPs/health, education, employment, food retail Deriving a comprehensive public transport strategy Coordination with rail and network operators
Congestion	A1089 congestion tracks national trends A13 congestion downward trend 2017-19 M25 congestion upward trend 2017-19 Higher than the national average shopping journeys Travel out of Thurrock into London make up 40% of AM peak journeys	Programme of improvement on A13, key junctions Modal shift/ home working Encourage active travel Data collection enables informed decision making Lower Thames Crossing increasing network capacity - if correctly configured. Increasing rail capacity	Severance of east-west travel in Thurrock by M25 and A1089 - and the prospect of the Lower Thames Crossing Bottlenecks on critical routes for freight Extremely tidal movements in and out of Thurrock
Mobility	Higher car ownership than the national average, 22% fewer households have no car Residents slightly (1%) less likely to drive than the national average Frequent rail services into London stations, 35-40 minute journey time	Frequent rail services to London stations Extensive bus network Interchange opportunities due to key destination location near multiple modes River traffic expansion Balancing car ownership with sustainable mode use	Severance of east-west travel in Thurrock by M25, A1089 and Lower Thames Crossing Developing a robust active travel network and prioritise public transport over the private car Improve cross-river and London-bound marine travel
Safety	A decline in accident rates between 2011 and 2019: 403 to 267, a 34% decrease Cycle and pedestrian injuries also declined by 59% and 13%, respectively	Improve on existing positive trends Expand non-car pedestrian and cycle routes, and legibility of routes	Encourage and provide for active travel in new developments and infrastructure to allow a safer mix between vulnerable road users and vehicles.
Pollution	Average year on year drop of NOx emissions in Thurrock of 2% Total NOx emission drop of 21% over the period 2008 to 2018	Introduce fleet monitoring for all modes Incentivise or promote transfer away from fossil fuel use Capitalise on initiatives to provide alternative fuel infrastructure.	Coordination of disparate fleet modernisation schedules Data collection from a range of operators Focus on congestion relief to reduce harmful emissions
Affordability	11.3% of Households are workless, in comparison to the 13.9% national average 15.6% of Thurrock residents have some limitations in their day-to-day activities due to poor health	Improve upon relatively high employment levels Ensure opportunities for a mix of skill sets and educational levels are available Encourage positive effects of port expansions	Ensuring future infrastructure and development

4.0 Issues and Opportunities for the Thurrock Urban Area.

As noted above, in addition to the borough-wide issues and opportunities work, the first of five sub-area Issues and Options Reports for the Thurrock Urban Area has also been prepared. This will act as a template for four further sub-area reports to be produced in early 2023:

5.0 Transport Vision

Connecting Thurrock Vision statement:

The Vision 2050

The Connecting Thurrock Vision 2050 sets the long-term vision and direction for the Thurrock Transport Strategy over nearly three decades.

The Vision

We have called this transport vision 'Connecting Thurrock' to highlight that Thurrock's strategic location does not currently translate into well-connected places at the local/district level. Local connections mean everything. Poor connectivity is a barrier to employment for existing communities that rely on public transport. It means economically disadvantaged groups cannot access a full range of local services.

The Vision is set out in three parts:

- **Vision statement and goals** - A concise statement of Thurrock's hopes and expectations and ten interconnected goals that apply to remodeling existing roads, bridges and other assets and providing new infrastructure to support growth and regeneration.
- **Strategic focus areas**- Eight strategic priorities – are foundations for developing the Transport Strategy. Each strategic focus has a background story and is a visioning exercise in its' own right.
- **Vision 2050 Diagrams** – Abstract diagrams illustrating potential transport connections, interchanges, development, and regeneration by 2050.

Vision statement and goals

“The Transport Vision is to create a transport system for Thurrock that improves quality of life for all people. Over the next 30 years we want to transform transport connections to help deliver zero-carbon economic growth.”

The Vision document imagines a future for Thurrock where people find it easier to get about using a transport network that is better connected, more integrated, and less congested. Our aim is to develop a transport system for Thurrock that:

- Is fully inclusive, meeting the needs of residents.
- Is integrated to provide seamless multi-modal journeys.
- Is accessible for everyone, safe and attractive to use.
- Delivers sustainable community regeneration and growth; and
- Responds to the exceptional circumstances of Thurrock as an international centre for logistics and commercial development.

It is important to note that the Vision is founded on a collaborative approach to coordinating future transport projects across south Essex, north Kent and outer east London.

Goals - Strategic focus areas

Goal 6: Modal shift to public transport- a significant shift from private car use to public transportation.

Goal 7: Safer roads – no deaths, fewer accidents, and a feeling of safety and security for all transport network users.

Goal 8: Facilitating development, growth, and regeneration – Transport infrastructure investment to facilitate growth and renewal.

Goal 9: Sustainable Development – coordinating land use and transport planning to avoid, minimise and mitigate negative social, environmental and climate change impacts.

Goal 10: Managing and maintaining – a better-managed and well-maintained network.

Strategic Priorities

From the work identified through the Issues and Opportunities baseline work, eight strategic priorities are identified to be at the heart of the transport vision:



Bus network –High-quality bus services offering faster, more reliable, accessible, comfortable, and affordable travel and closely integrated with rail, bus rapid transit, riverbus and ferry services.

Mass Rapid Transit – A fully integrated sub-regional Mass Rapid Transit System (MRT) will offer direct, high capacity and fast connections across the

Borough and serve outer East London, North Kent and South Essex. Thurrock's MRT will likely be developed as a high-speed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

Active Travel – reducing dependency on cars whilst increasing the number of people who choose to walk or ride bicycles for most of their journey and helping to improve physical fitness and health.

Strategic Roads – An upgraded and extended Strategic Road Network fit for the 21st-century offering increased reliability for local journeys, reduced journey times, and improved local connectivity to drive economic growth and provide opportunities for people and businesses. The priority is securing benefits and opportunities from new strategic road proposals such as the Lower Thames Crossing.

Rail – Rail connectivity encompasses new and improved rail connections between Essex, Kent, the City and West End, north, south, and west London and Thurrock's existing and new communities, employment areas and urban centres.

River – Cross-river connections across all transport modes and strengthening the river as a major transport artery to break down the barrier of the river.

Streets – Local roads will continue to play an essential role in our future transport network to accommodate many modes, including private cars, public transport, commercial vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians and new micro-mobility transports.

New Technologies and Modes – The vision is based on a rapid transition towards low-emission vehicles whilst establishing Thurrock as a testbed for urban transport innovation. Potential new mobility innovations include increased shared use, micro-mobility, automated driving, connected transport systems and networks, significant shifts to electric and hydrogen vehicles, and new fuel supply/charging infrastructure.

The above priorities have been further explored and presented in terms of transport measures, modal change and infrastructure enhancements that need to be considered and explored in greater detail to understand what needs to be delivered to improve Thurrock's transport network and growth aspirations.

Vision 2050 Framework Diagrams

The Vision includes a series of 'Framework Diagrams' visualising a future transport network and how the different transport modes can be fully integrated with one another and serve and existing and future residents and businesses.

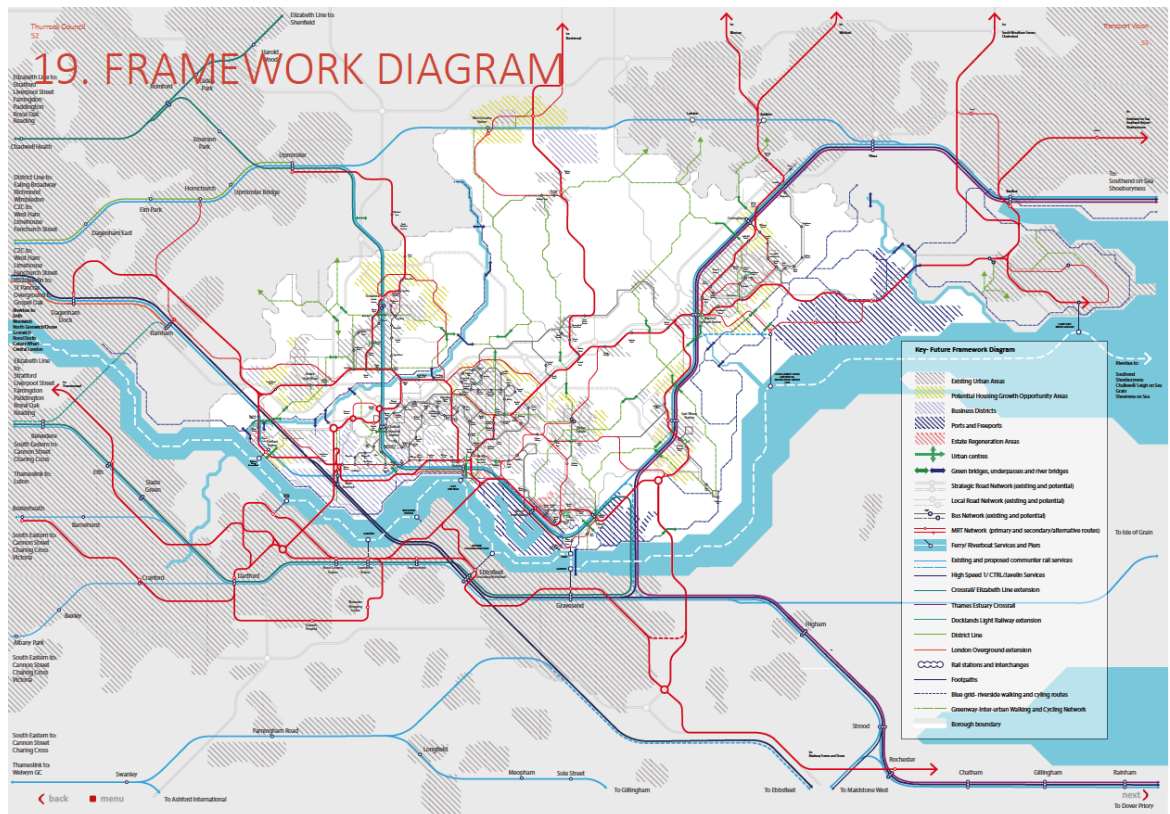


Figure 2 – Framework Plan provides a high-level view of the wider network issues and enhancements that need to be considered

It should be noted that this diagram is to be used to inform the Transport Plan and to facilitate future engagement with stakeholders and communities.

A diagram entitled ‘projects’ describes a possible range of future projects. This will act as a ‘pool’ from which individual projects can be selected and further developed through the action and implementation plan whilst fully understanding how individual project influence and are influenced by others.

The identified projects are not intended to be a set of measures that the council ‘must’ deliver. Instead, they are to be used to inform future discussion and planning for network improvements as the council’s emerging growth aspirations take shape.

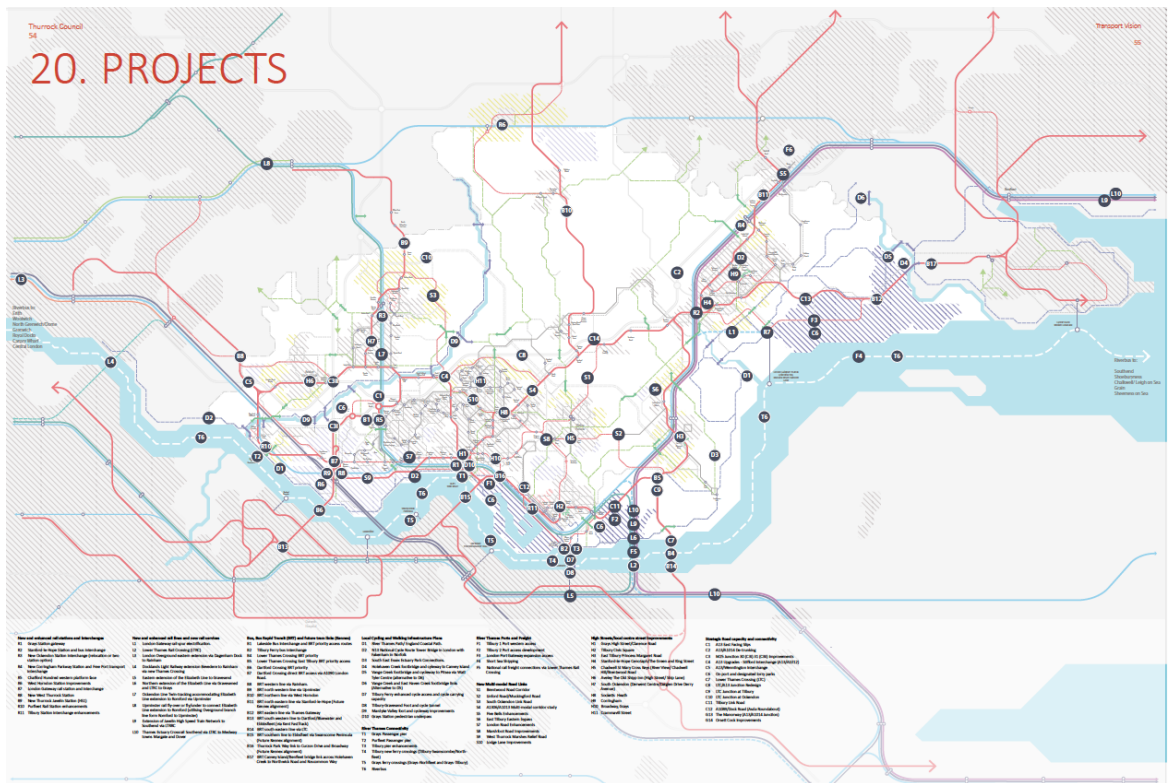


Figure 1 Project Plan provides a helpful view of the projects and measures that need to be considered as we develop the Transport Plan and Vision.

6.0 Next steps and timescale

6.1 The following timescales set out a broad process and dates for engagement review and re-submission of the documents covered in this report.

PTR submission – Feb 2023

Stakeholder engagement – Spring 2023

Public engagement – Spring / Summer 2023

Action and Implementation Plans developed – Spring / Summer 2023

PTR O&S submission and Cabinet approval - end of Summer 23

7.0 Reasons for Recommendation

7.1 It is important that Members are updated on the progress that has been made in developing the Transport Vision and Issues and Opportunities baseline work which supports and underpins the emerging Transport Plan and Local Plan growth ambitions.

7.2 The information and updates provide a useful high-level summary of the work undertaken to date. Input from this Committee will help to ensure there is

ongoing momentum and support for the Vision, Issues and Opportunities and emerging Transport Plan.

8.0 Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

8.1 The next step will be to develop an engagement plan to ensure we discuss this work and gain insight and input from stakeholders and communities. Engagement will allow local residents, business and other interested parties to comment. Engagement will also be promoted to local residents and key stakeholders through established meetings, forums and interest groups.

9.0 Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

9.1 This work will have an impact upon all communities within Thurrock. Developing a long term Vision and Transport Plan which aligns with the Council's emerging Local Plan is vital to making Thurrock a place where people of all ages can work, play, live and stay in a clean environment that everyone has reason to take pride in.

10.0 Implications

10.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**

Senior Management Accountant

Local Plan Funding has been used (£71,000) to fund an operational and staffing budget in order to deliver the revised Vision and Transport Plan. In addition, there is a Section 31 grant funding award of £178,571.43 primarily for the preparation for the launch of the new Local Transport Plan (LTP) guidance (not yet circulated by DfT) and to encourage your LTA to update their LTPs.

If any further funding is needed then either further Local Plan funding or the Transportation Services team budget will be used. The Council continues to experience significant revenue budget pressures and exceptional wider financial risks, and as a result, spending will be kept to a minimum.

10.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Caroline Robins**

Locum Principal Solicitor

Since this report is essentially an update to Members on progress to date and likely next steps, rather than one recommending any decision, there are no direct legal implications as such. By way of background to the key statutory provisions, the Council, as local transport authority, is required, under the Transport Act 2000, to develop policies, for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within its area and carry out its functions so as to implement those policies. These

policies and proposals for their implementation must be set out in a Local Transport Plan, in one or more documents, to be prepared by the authority. The authority is required to keep this Plan under review and they may alter or replace it if they consider it appropriate to do so. There are detailed consultation requirements when preparing and reviewing a Plan. The Plan or any alterations to it must take into account relevant Government policy and have regard to Government guidance on climate change mitigation or adaptation and on protection of or improvement to the environment. In due course, as soon as practicable after a new Plan has been prepared or the Plan has been altered, the authority will, amongst other things, need to publish it and send a copy of it to the Secretary of State for Transport.

10.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

Team Manager Community Development and Equalities -

Many people across Thurrock use the local transport infrastructure daily to access employment, education and a range of essential services and leisure activities. The network is open to all; however, individuals and groups have their own specific transport requirements. The vision for transport incorporates five core aims that champion inclusivity, integration, accessibility, sustainability and the exceptional circumstances of Thurrock. The plan recognises the importance of connectivity and that poor connections can present barriers to employment with an impact for economically disadvantaged groups and communities. An engagement plan will be developed to inform a Community Equality Impact Assessment is completed involving a wide range of residents, stakeholders and interest groups.

10.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

- None.

11. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Local Plan transport background studies

12. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Borough Wide Issues and Opportunities and appendices
- Appendix 2 – Vision 2050
- Appendix 3 - Thurrock Urban Area Issues and Opportunities

Report Author:

Mat Kiely, Transportation Services Strategic Lead