

Thurrock Transport Vision and Strategy update

Recommendation:

For Members to note the update.

Introduction

Following the paper presented to O&S Members in January 2020, significant progress has been made in developing the 'Connecting Thurrock Vision' document and the emerging Thurrock Transport Strategy (TTS).

This paper sets out the steps taken to progress the long term Vision which informs the emerging TTS. Focusing on the Vision document has enabled a robust approach to be taken when developing the TTS, ensuring that key goals and themes are identified in order to inform the strategy as it evolves and to inform the delivery of infrastructure and transport measures across the Local Plan period and beyond.

The paper also identifies the additional areas of work and supporting studies / strategies which will need to be developed as the TTS and the Local Plan work evolve.

A new Transport Strategy

The Thurrock Transport Strategy 2021/22 to 2036/37 will establish a new strategic approach, policies and guidelines and detail how we will plan for and deliver improvements across the transport network. The Strategy will play an influential role in delivering the Council's overall vision and the priorities set out in the new Local Plan.

The Transport Strategy is in three main parts:

- i. Vision
- ii. Strategy
- iii. Action/Implementation Plan

The Vision has been developed to identify a long term aspirational yet achievable view of what should be considered and what can be delivered to enhance the transport network. The Connecting Thurrock Vision has been developed with input and from colleagues and lead members to ensure a holistic approach.

We have called our 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 accessing employment for existing communities that rely on public transport. It means economically disadvantaged groups cannot access a full range of local services. Moving people, safely and sustainably is at the forefront of our Vision. How we make new places and how we move people, vehicles and freight, now and in the future, will determine how our road network operates and how we will accommodate our Local Plan growth aspirations.

The Connecting Thurrock Vision 2050 extract document is available as an attachment to this briefing note.

The Vision has evolved by identifying ten goals and strategic themes. These are set out below:

- Goal 1: An **accessible and inclusive network** - a transport network that is accessible for all.
- Goal 2: **Reducing emissions and improving air quality** - reducing all transport emissions, including CO₂, nitrous oxide, noise, and particulates.
- Goal 3: **Climate change resilience and responsibility** – a transport network more adaptable to climate change effects, whilst promoting development travel patterns to minimise and mitigate climate change impacts.
- Goal 4: **Health and wellbeing** - promoting good physical and mental health and community wellbeing.
- Goal 5: **Active travel choices** - encouraging more people to walk and cycle.
- Goal 6: **Modal shift to public transport** - a significant shift from private car use to public transportation for most journeys.
- Goal 7: **Safer roads** - a feeling of safety and security for all transport network users with no deaths and fewer accidents.
- 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 economic, social, environmental and climate impacts.
- Goal 10: **Managing and maintaining** – a well-managed and well maintained network that is reliable, giving people confidence in journey times.

The above goals translate into the following range of accompanying themes which will provide strategic direction and focus for the TTS and how the Council improves and manages network improvements for the future.



- **Growth and regeneration** - Connecting and integrating growth and regeneration opportunity areas.
- **Modes** - Multi-modal and modal shift.
- **Rail** - Sub-regional rail connectivity for rail passengers and freight.
- **Mass Rapid Transit** - A fully integrated sub-regional Mass Rapid Transit System.
- **River** - River Thames connectivity and breaking down the barrier of the river.
- **Walking and cycling** – walking, cycling and access for mobility impaired.
- **Buses** - An efficient, integrated, and high-quality bus network.
- **Roads** - Planning for multi-modal roads.
- **Lower Thames Crossing** - Securing local benefits and opportunities offered by the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Vision will guide the second and third parts of the Strategy – the Transport Strategy and Action/Implementation Plans. These will set out how the council will coordinate transport investment with growth and regeneration plans, priority capital programmes and projects, and detail operating and capital budgets. It is envisioned that Implementation Plans will cover 5-year intervals once the TTS is adopted in Spring of next year. Action Plans will be developed in line with the suggested timetable.

Growth

The Transport Vision and Strategy will play a vital role in identifying the transport measures and key infrastructure projects that need to be delivered to support the Council's growth aspirations for new sites for residential development and employment opportunities. A sound transport system is critical to the success of new housing and jobs and avoids putting additional strain on local transport networks.

Providing high-quality public transport connections and safe and attractive Active Travel walking and cycling routes will enable people to choose active and healthy ways to travel while supporting higher-density development. Active Travel options and a Mass Rapid Transit solution are just two examples of vital components which will ensure that the transport network remains free-flowing and offers real sustainable alternatives as the council delivers its growth targets.

Key pieces of infrastructure will also be needed. The Vision and Transport Strategy will help to identify and prioritise what is needed in terms of infrastructure and major projects. Some will be delivered by the Council, some will be delivered by National Highways or developers. The Transport Vision work has already started to identify what the key pieces of infrastructure are. More work is needed to understand how all of this will be delivered.

Progress to date

Previously we reported on a number of key work areas and documents that would need to be progressed in order to inform the TTS work. A summary update is provided below.

- **Transport Baseline Study** – a baseline study has been completed to document the existing transport and travel situation in Thurrock. The study will inform the transport planning evidence for the emerging Local Plan. This study focused on accessibility, congestion, safety, pollution & health and affordability.
- **Strategic Model** – a brief has been developed to support appropriate procurement of a strategic transport model. The Model will inform the preparation of a new Local Plan as well as the TTS and it will present opportunities to support future business case development and the submission of bids for the funding and delivery of new transport infrastructure. The model will also help to assess the transport impacts of specified strategic development locations and to support the preparation of Transport Access Strategies for major housing and economic proposals and site allocations.
- **Transport Area / Site Assessments** – a brief has been developed to support the procurement of suitable resource and progress a ‘pilot’ example of what is needed for each of the LP areas.
- **Mass Rapid Transit study** – a brief is being developed to enable an MRT study to be progressed.
- **AQ Assessment and Model** – procurement exercise undertaken to gain AQ model support. Appropriate support identified to develop AQ & Health Strategy.
- **Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP)** – enhanced partnership option identified and submitted to DfT. The Council has developed a Bus Service Improvement Plan (to be endorsed by O&S/Cabinet mid-Oct) which will be submitted to DfT by the end of October 2021. The BSIP will identify prioritisation of enhancements to bus service provision within the borough.
- **Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan** – DfT funding has been identified to produce an LCWIP for the borough. This will identify where cycling and walking infrastructure is needed and will support future funding bids.
- **Flood Risk Management Plan** – the authority has a duty to produce a Flood Risk Management Plan. Thurrock’s FRMP identifies the key areas and measures that need to be addressed.

- **Flood and Coast Resilience** – the Council has worked collaboratively with Southend to submit a funding bid for flood resilience. £6m is to be shared across the authorities to address resilience issues.

Parking Strategy & Standards – Parking documents submitted to O&S and Cabinet for endorsement and approval.

Next steps and timescale

The following timescales set out the likely process and dates, which are in part related to the delivery of closely aligned spatial planning and economic growth studies.

The Vision and Transport Strategy documents will be updated and developed further in the coming weeks and months, allowing sufficient time for changes to be applied and for draft versions to be shared to align with the timescales set out below:

Transport Vision

- Draft Transport Vision – Oct/Nov 2021
- Consultation – Jan/March 22
- Approved and adopted – Summer 2022

Transport Strategy

- Draft Interim Transport Strategy - November 2021
- Consultation – Jan/March 2022
- Transport Strategy Approved and Adopted - Summer 2022

Action/Implementation Plan

- Draft Action/ Implementation Plan - Spring 2022
- Stakeholder engagement (engagement throughout the process)
- Draft Action/ Implementation Plan Approved and adopted – Summer 2022

Consultation

A draft of the Transport Strategy which will be submitted to the Council's consultation portal in due course. Consultation will run for a minimum of 6 weeks, allowing local residents, business and other interested parties to comment. The consultation document will also be promoted to local residents, interest groups and key stakeholders through established meetings, forums and interest groups.

For any questions regarding this paper, please contact:

Name: Mat Kiely

Email: mkiely@thurrock.gov.uk