

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report
Report of: Director of Planning & Regeneration
Author: Zac Ellwood, Major Projects Portfolio Manager
Tel: 01483 444617
Email: zac.ellwood@guildford.gov.uk
Date: 17 April 2018

MODAL SHIFT: ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Recommendation

1. That the Committee considers the contents of the report and notes the measures/actions either already underway or proposed to encourage a modal shift from the private car to more sustainable travel modes.
2. That the Committee suggests other reasonable avenues that could feasibly be explored by the Council towards achieving this goal, and how the success of such measures could be monitored and assessed.

Reason for Recommendation:

To assist the Council in identifying possible future measures and work streams geared towards encouraging and facilitating the shift of a meaningful number of journeys away from the private car to more sustainable travel modes, including walking, cycling and public transport.

1. Purpose of Report

This report has been prepared in response to a request by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a public discussion around the issue of modal shift from the private car to more sustainable travel modes, such as walking, cycling and public transport; what the Council is already doing to encourage more sustainable travel patterns; and what further measures/actions could be considered towards achieving this aim.

2. Key 'drivers' for encouraging modal shift

There are a number of key considerations behind the Council's desire to encourage more journeys to be made by sustainable travel modes other than the private car.

These include:

Improving accessibility and connectivity – Facilitating modal shift to cycling and walking and associated improvements would provide greater levels of connectivity between communities and areas of economic activity and could open up parts of the borough by making them more accessible to all (e.g. the riverside)

Sustainability benefits – Reducing the number of journeys made by car would contribute to reducing CO₂ levels and consequent impacts on the environment, such as climate change.

Air quality benefits – Air pollution has been described as the second-biggest public health threat after smoking. Car exhaust gases can include Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxide and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_x), Particulate Matter (PM) and Hydrocarbons (HC). Whilst dirty air does not directly kill people, it is estimated in the UK to contribute to the shortening of the lives of around 40,000 people a year, principally by undermining the health of people with heart or lung problems. It also compromises the health of people suffering from ailments like asthma and hay fever.

It is notable that Guildford has recently introduced its first Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at Compton and a national report in 2017 identified that Nitrogen Dioxide levels on a section of the A331 in the west of the borough were predicted to exceed European target levels. The Council has already responded positively to this through the publication and approval of a new Air Quality Strategy in November 2017. Facilitating the freer flow of traffic and encouraging people to use alternative, less polluting transport modes could have significant benefits in terms of air quality.

It is acknowledged that this may change over time, with the introduction and growth in more hybrid and wholly-electric vehicles that do not have the same polluting impacts.

Health benefits – Both from reduced air pollution (see above) and from encouraging greater levels of exercise (e.g. walking, cycling, and even walking to the bus/train).

Unlocking network capacity – There is currently very limited, if any, capacity within Guildford's road network. This means that it is difficult to support growth and development without suitable mitigation, in the form of enhanced modal shift measures, being delivered to assist in freeing up some of this capacity.

The Submission Local Plan (see section 4) identifies a number of strategic allocations for housing and employment, but specifically links these to the need for improved infrastructure to encourage sustainable travel modes – such as new railway stations close to the proposed residential allocations at Gosden Hill and Blackwell Farm, and proportionate contributions to the provision of a Sustainable Movement Corridor in the town (see section 5).

Reducing congestion – The level of traffic congestion in Guildford, particularly at peak times, is a well-known problem that leads to delays, frustration, lengthier journey times, increased pollution, and negative impacts on our economy – such as through dissuading visitors to the town centre. This is a very serious issue for the town and the 2016 INRIX Traffic Scorecard identified Guildford as 6th in a list of the UK's most congested cities or large urban areas (see Fig.1). This put it ahead of large conurbations such as Bournemouth, Hull and Bristol, with an average of 29 peak hours (and 8.6% of total drive time) spent in congestion – albeit Guildford did improve by one position (7th) in the 2017 INRIX assessment.

Encouraging a greater proportion of journeys to be made by other travel modes, especially via public transport, could make a meaningful contribution towards reducing congestion levels in the town, particularly at peak times.

Table 1: INRIX 2016 Traffic Scorecard – UK's 10 Most Congested Cities / Large Urban Areas

Rank	City / Large Urban Area	2016 Peak Hours Spent in Congestion	Percentage of Total Drive Time in Congestion (peak and non-peak hours)	Total Cost Per Driver in 2016	Total Cost to the City in 2016 (based on population size)
1	London	73	12.7%	£1,911	£6.2bn
2	Manchester	39	9.9%	£1,136	£233m
3	Aberdeen	35	12.3%	£1,331	£138m
4	Birmingham	34	8.5%	£990	£407m
5	Edinburgh	31	9.8%	£1,009	£225m
6	Guildford	29	8.6%	£812	£44m
7	Luton	29	10.7%	£964	£72m
8	Bournemouth	27	10.8%	£1,019	£84m
9	Hull	27	9.4%	£970	£109m
10	Bristol	27	8.8%	£845	£154m

Fig.1 2016 INRIX Traffic Scorecard

Economic benefits – The 2016 INRIX study indicated that the cost of congestion per driver was £812 and that the total cost of this to Guildford was around £44million (estimated at £67m in 2017). Offering or facilitating realistic alternative travel mode options would help to reduce negative economic impacts on the town.

Social benefits – Whilst Guildford's demographic means that car ownership levels in the borough are relatively high, the cost of owning and running a car (insurance, tax, rising fuel prices, etc.) means that this option is still out of reach for some residents. It is therefore important that other realistic modes of travel, such as good and reliable public transport and safe and convenient routes and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are available.

3. Council ambition and vision

The Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (shortly to be updated) sets out a number of fundamental themes to support the Council's overall vision under the themes of:

- Our Borough
- Our Economy
- Our Infrastructure
- Our Environment
- Our Society

Current strategic priorities related to the topic of modal shift include such measures as: improved accessibility and pedestrian environment; sustainable transport – urban and rural; high quality cycling and walking network; improved rail connectivity with new halts; improved resilience through sustainability; and improving public health and wellbeing.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that Guildford Borough Council is a second tier authority and is not the local highway authority. Our ability to act in this area is therefore somewhat limited and we are, to a certain extent, reliant on placing pressure on both Surrey County Council (SCC), which has responsibility for the vast majority of Guildford's Roads, and Highways England (HE), who manage the main strategic spine route through the town, the A3. The A3 can, in itself, be a source of congestion in the town centre. Similarly, rail infrastructure and services are the responsibility, respectively, of Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Freight Operating Companies (FOCs), and the frequency, timetabling and routes for buses rests with various bus operating companies trading in the town.

It is therefore crucial that this Council's ambitions for encouraging the shift to more sustainable modes of travel are shared by our key partners and that our efforts and projects are supported by the authorities who are ultimately responsible for transport.

4. Current and emerging policy

National policy – Central government recognises the value of encouraging modal shift and the role this can play in meeting the various objectives identified above. The 'National Policy Statement for National Networks' (December 2014) notes that across Government, policies are being implemented and considered which encourage sustainable transport modes including public transport, significant improvements to rail capacity and quality, cycling and walking.

However, there is a note of caution in that the government believes: *"...it is not realistic for public transport, walking or cycling to represent a viable alternative to the private car for all journeys, particularly in rural areas and for some longer or multi-leg journeys."*

The Statement goes on to note that *"...the nature of some journeys on the Strategic Road Network means that there will tend to be less scope for the use of alternative transport modes. If rail use was to increase by 50% (in terms of passenger kilometres) this would only be equivalent to a reduction of 5% in all road use. If freight carried by rail was to increase by 50% (in terms of tonne kilometres) this would only be equivalent to a reduction of around 7% in goods carried by road."*

This is not to say we should not be actively pursuing modal shift towards more sustainable journeys, simply that the Council must take a realistic view of what can be achieved through its own interventions in this area.

Surrey Local Transport Plan (LTP3) – Surrey County Council has produced the LTP3 that includes a specific Passenger Transport Strategy (local buses/passenger

information) and Surrey Cycling Strategy, both of which are geared towards promoting greater use of means of travel other than the private car.

Emerging Local Plan – The Guildford borough Submission Local Plan: strategy and sites document and supporting evidence base was formally submitted to the Secretary of State on 13 December 2017. An Inspector has been appointed and the Examination in Public (EiP) is scheduled to commence on Tuesday 5 June 2018. Amongst other policies, the Submission Local Plan notes that: *“New development will be required to contribute to the delivery of an integrated, accessible and safe transport system, maximising the use of the sustainable transport modes of walking, cycling and the use of public and community transport.”* (Policy ID3)

The emerging Local Plan also includes a requirement for new development that will generate significant amounts of movement to provide a proportionate Travel Plan. It gives support, through specific proposed allocations, to the concept of delivering a Sustainable Movement Corridor for key routes into and out of the town centre and for the provision of new rail stations east and west of the town and a new Park & Ride facility off the A3 at Merrow.

Guildford Borough Transport Strategy 2017 (LP evidence base) This Strategy supports the overall aims for encouraging sustainable travel movements and modal shift as set out in the emerging Local Plan.

Guildford Air Quality Strategy 2017 to 2022 – The Action Plan associated with the AQ Strategy mentioned earlier in this report includes various measures to improve sustainable transport opportunities in line with the Guildford Borough Transport Strategy and encouraging employers to introduce Travel Plans.

Guildford Town Centre Regeneration Strategy 2017 – The Regeneration Strategy outlines a positive approach to sustainable transport and the associated Action Plan includes a number of measures aimed at encouraging greater use of public transport, walking and cycling.

Sustainable Parking Strategy for Guildford 2016 - This promotes a ‘Drive to, not through’ approach in the town to seek to reduce congestion in the centre. The Strategy also identifies that one of the three key strands is ‘Restraint’ – i.e. using parking controls as a means of restraining/managing traffic to reduce congestion, improving environmental quality (e.g. air pollution) and/or to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes (e.g. cycling and buses). It also provides support for the increased role that Park & Ride can play towards this aim.

The Sustainable Parking Strategy offers a balanced approach to the issue of modal shift noting that there is still a strong demand for parking in the town, but that there are a number of complementary measures to reduce overall car journeys.

5. Current or completed projects

The Council has recently undertaken or is currently in the process of implementing a number of varied measures with the specific aim of encouraging greater use of public transport and/or walking and cycling and modal shift away from the private motor vehicle. These measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Riverside route improvements – With grant assistance from the EM3 LEP, working closely with the National Trust we upgraded a section of towpath alongside the River Wey from Ladymead Retail Park in the west to Woking Road in the east. Usage surveys undertaken ‘before’ and ‘after’ the upgrading works already indicate a meaningful overall increase in patronage by pedestrians and cyclists
- Sustainable Movement Corridor Phase I (West) – The Council has recently secured £2,725,000 from the EM3 LEP under round 3 of the Local Growth Fund (LGF3) to undertake the first phase of the western section of the Sustainable Movement Corridor (SMC) that will deliver bus priority improvements to make journey times to this part of the town (including the University, Hospital, Research Park and Sports Centre) more predictable and reliable, together with enhanced and safer cycling routes. Work is due to commence in the current financial year with completion by March 2021.
- ‘Unlocking Guildford’ LEP package – This is a ~£20million package of measures being promoted by GBC with SCC and other partners aimed at making it easier to get around the town and to improve linkages between communities. The package includes phase 1 of the SMC as referred to in the bullet point above, together with improved town centre approaches, quality bus corridors and bus improvements, and flood resilience measures for the road and pedestrian network in the town centre. £12.5m of funding from LGF3 has provisionally been secured from the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Guildford Station Capacity Study – In March 2018, the Council commissioned Network Rail (NR) to produce a Station Capacity Study for Guildford mainline station that will look at, amongst other matters, platform capacity, customer experience, and pedestrian and cyclist accessibility. The ultimate aim is to provide an improved station and facilities to encourage further rail patronage and a move away from the private car as the preferred means of travel. The need for such a study was initially identified in the ‘Wessex Route Study 2015’ (Network Rail) but this was not slated to be progressed by NR until their next Control Period (i.e. from 2024). As a proactive measure to speed things along, the Council is funding the Station Capacity Study, the findings of which are due towards the end of 2018.
- Guildford West (Park Barn) Station – The Council is actively progressing a scheme to deliver a new rail halt/station to the west of Guildford on the North Downs Line. A detailed feasibility report and outline business case have been produced and discussed with Network Rail and indicate that there is a strong business justification for locating a new station in this area and that it would likely generate approximately 500,000 passenger journeys per annum – mostly associated with the Royal Surrey County Hospital and the University of Surrey. We have already completed Stage 2 of Network Rail’s eight-stage Governance for Rail Investment Projects (GRIP) process and will imminently be commencing the GRIP3 (Option Selection) and GRIP4 (Single Option Development) stages of the project – revenue and capital funding for both of which have been identified in our 2018/19 budget. The anticipated target date for a new station to be open here is 2024.

- Guildford East (Merrow) Station – We are working closely with SCC and Martin Grant Homes to assist in the delivery of a new rail station to the east of the town at Merrow. This would predominantly serve new residents in the strategic housing location at Gosden Hill Farm envisaged in the Submission Local Plan (Policy A25).
- Replacement Walnut Tree Bridge – The Council is currently actively progressing a project for the replacement of the existing bridge over the river with a new, iconic, and much wider bridge and associated ramps/steps to encourage greater pedestrian and cycle movements between the railway station and the town centre. The total cost of this is circa £3million (comprising £1,535,000 of grant funding from EM3 LEP under Local Growth Fund 2 (LGF2) and around £1,400,000 of capital funding from Guildford Borough Council) and delivery is scheduled in 2019/20.
- Walnut Tree Close temporary closure/one-way – In the Summer of 2018, a trial closure/one-way route will commence in terms of cars to discourage rat-running and improved public safety, but cyclists, pedestrians and buses will not be impacted by the restrictions. This project is being led by SCC but with close working with GBC officers and Councillors.
- A25 and Stoke Crossroads – In conjunction with SCC we will be delivering at-grade pedestrian and cycle crossings on all arms of this junction and adding bus priority. The works are being part-funded by EM3 LEP under Local Growth Fund 2 (LGF2), and are due to be commenced in Summer 2018.
- Guildford College Link Plus and A3100 cycleway improvements – Again part-funded by the EM3 LEP under LGF2, these works include providing a new cycle route from Walnut Bridge to Guildford College and on-carriageway improvements along the A3100. Delivery is expected within the 2018/19 financial year.
- Road safety improvements at the junction of Bridge Street and Onslow Street in Guildford town centre – The intention is to make it easier and safer for pedestrians/cyclists to cross the busy Onslow Street facilitating better connectivity between the railway station and the main retail area in the town centre. The road safety works are being undertaken by Surrey County Council in cooperation with GBC and are anticipated to be implemented in 2018.

6. Potential and emerging projects

As well as those schemes which already have funding, the Council is also actively pursuing a number of other projects or measures aimed at encouraging sustainable modal shift:

- Public Bike Share scheme – Approximately £500k has been reserved in the 2018/19 Capital budget to deliver a scheme for around 150 bikes that can be hired for public use. This is likely to include a significant proportion of electric bicycles and would need to be compatible with the scheme for 60 public-use bikes that is being promoted by the University of Surrey. The scheme would encourage modal shift by offering a genuine alternative to the private car, particularly for shorter journeys.

- Sustainable Movement Corridor (Phases II to VI) – as identified in the emerging Local Plan, linking other parts of the town to the centre sustainably.
- Future phases of riverside route/cycleway upgrades – Further riverside improvements between Millmead and Artington Park and Ride, and the A320 Woking Road to Bowers Lane/Clay Lane are to be considered subject to funding
- Cycleway improvements between Shalford and Guildford Town Centre (Dagley Lane) – A feasibility study is being commissioned by GBC for this potential scheme.
- GBC Cycle/Pedestrian Strategy – to be considered/advanced in conjunction with the County Council's associated cycling and walking strategies.
- New Park & Ride facility accessed off the A3 at Merrow (see Policy A25 of the Submission Local Plan) – this would be delivered in conjunction with the proposed strategic housing allocation.
- Wholesale rollout of electric charging points in public areas to support the growth in electric vehicles and consequent health benefits.
- Outstanding schemes in Guildford Borough Transport Strategy 2017.

7. Partnership working

Guildford Borough Council cannot hope to deliver all of the above alone and we are therefore ensuring/will ensure close working with our key partners, who include:

- Enterprise M3 LEP
- Highways England
- Surrey County Council
- Network Rail
- TOCs – SW Railway, GWR
- North Downs Line Community Rail Partnership
- Arriva
- Stagecoach
- Safeguard Coaches
- Other bus operators
- University of Surrey
- Royal Surrey County Hospital (NB MOU in place)
- G-Bug
- Guildford Society
- Local Access Groups
- Guildford Town Centre Stakeholder Group

8. Consultation

This report itself has not been the subject of public consultation, but many of the projects and measures identified either have already been, or will be, consulted on widely.

9. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report, although it should be recognised that the Council is already making significant investment in this area and further investment will inevitably be necessary to take forward the various measures and projects identified to further encourage modal shift.

10. Human Resource Implications

There are no specific human resources implications. It is envisaged that the various actions and projects identified could be delivered within existing resources – the majority of the existing and proposed measures will be taken forward by the Council's established Major Projects Team.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no direct equalities implications contained in the recommendations of this report. Future reviews will consider equality implications on a case-by-case basis.

12. Legal Implications

No specific legal implications have been identified in respect of this report.

13. Conclusion

The Committee is therefore requested to note the work that the Council is already implementing, or has committed to undertake, with the specific aim of encouraging modal shift from the private car to more sustainable means of travel (particularly walking, cycling and public transport).

The Committee is also invited to suggest other reasonable avenues that could feasibly be explored by the Council towards achieving this goal, and how the success of such measures could be monitored and assessed.

14. Background papers

MS PowerPoint presentation to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (17 April 2018)

15. Appendices

None.