

MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB) – THURSDAY 9 MARCH 2023

CONTACT OFFICER: Stephen Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Slough Borough Council

Item 8: Transport for the South East – Strategic Investment Plan.

Purpose of the Paper.

1. To provide formal approval of the Transport for the South East (TfSE) final draft of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP).

Recommendation.

2. BLTB members are recommended to agree support of TfSE's final draft SIP.

Background.

3. At the November 2022 meeting the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) approved our formal response to the consultation on the draft of the Transport for the South East Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and also agreed to receive a further report at this meeting to consider formal approval of the final draft version of the SIP.
4. TfSE published its Transport Strategy in July 2020. The strategy sets an ambitious vision for the region to 2050 and identifies a preferred scenario to help achieve that vision.
5. On 13 June 2022, the TfSE Partnership Board approved the draft SIP for public consultation. The SIP will form the final part of the transport strategy, bringing together the outputs from the area studies and thematic studies. It is a blueprint for transport infrastructure investment in the South East and together the interventions within the SIP should deliver an additional 25,000 jobs, 500,000 more rail trips and £4.5m in GVA. The SIP is underpinned by a robust evidence base and technical programme and addresses key priorities around decarbonisation, levelling up left behind communities, regeneration and growth and travel within the South East.
6. Together the TfSE Transport Strategy and SIP provide an opportunity to support and deliver growth across the south east through the development of a long-term strategic programme of multi-modal transport interventions to facilitate economic growth, improve quality of life and enhance the environment.
7. The Transport Strategy published in July 2020 supports and complements the work of the local authorities and LEAs. The SIP will further this and will offer a key route to influence the investment decisions by Government and by the major national delivery agencies such as National Highways and Network Rail in a way that has not been possible in the past.
8. The SIP places equal emphasis on economic growth, environmental protection and enhancement and social inclusion. It sets out global policy measures and interventions that will help to achieve net-zero by 2050 at the latest. The TfSE SIP looks to make a compelling case for investment in the South East. It is supported by a significant body of evidence taken from a series of area studies and thematic studies that have been carried out since the publication of the initial Transport Strategy to become the blueprint for investment in the South East for the next 30 years.

9. BLTB's response to the consultation, was fully supportive of the broad direction and ethos of the approach outlined in the SIP to shaping the economy and connectivity around the South East. We highlighted that the top priority for the SIP must be decarbonisation and that virtual access and reducing the need to travel through digital connectivity must be an integral part of the delivery of the SIP. We also supported the inclusion of a number of key interventions for Berkshire, notably Western Rail Link to Heathrow as a key priority, along with Southern Access. In the shorter-term we welcomed the inclusion of bus-based mass rapid transit and a range of sustainable transport measures as part of enhanced inter urban connectivity.
10. We also emphasised our belief that for the SIP to be successful will require an integrated approach to investment and delivery and working across institutional, sectoral, and spatial boundaries; something that the BLTB is well placed to deliver.
11. TfSE has now completed the formal consultation, analysis, and revisions on the draft SIP. It is now seeking the agreement of its constituent authorities and key partners such as the BLTB prior to submitting the final SIP to Government in Spring 2023. In addition to endorsement by the BLTB, the individual local authorities have also had the opportunity to indicate their formal approval of the SIP.
12. The public consultation on the draft SIP commenced on 20 June 2022 and concluded on 12 September 2022. There were 640 responses to the consultation, with all of them being considered and informing revisions to the plan. The key themes arising from the consultation were.
 - Support shown to investment proposals to improve public transport in the south east.
 - Respondents welcomed the focus on Active Travel schemes.
 - Respondents welcomed the recognition of importance of the need to tackle climate change.
 - Of those respondents that participated via the survey, 49% of respondents agreed that the SIP makes the best case possible for investing in transport infrastructure in the south east.
13. When asked to what extent they agreed that the packages of interventions for a geography delivered on the priorities of the SIP, the online survey submissions showed that 68% somewhat or definitely agreed for Wessex Thames, which is the area that includes Berkshire, with less than 1% definitely disagreeing. Rail, mass transit and active travel were also the most popular interventions in the Wessex Thames area, with highway interventions being the least supported. The most frequent comments were surrounding a desire for greater investment in public transport and a greater focus on active travel.
14. The main changes to the draft SIP following the public consultation were:
 - Provided more context on the purpose of the SIP and importantly, what the SIP won't do;
 - Provided clarity that the financial ask of the SIP is above and beyond the funding that Local Transport Authorities already receive;

- Asserted the need to ensure that public transport provision returns to the quality of provision prior to the covid pandemic;
- Updates to investment priorities section to reflect feedback on the priorities;
- Strengthened the focus on decarbonisation and the environment throughout the document, including making it clearer that addressing climate change is a main aim of the SIP;
- Greater recognition of the importance of strategic active travel and mass transit;
- Clarification that highways are multi-modal assets, supporting active travel and mass transit interventions as well as freight movements;
- Made amends to the narrative for coastal areas to reflect the challenges that transport can help address and the opportunities that it can unlock;
- Strengthening the narrative around key priorities that support health and wellbeing;
- In recognition of the current financial situation, the funding and finance section has been updated to reflect that the SIP is a live document and costs will need to be updated as individual schemes are taken forward;
- Clarification that transition of freight to rail will not be of detriment to passenger services;
- Changes and clarification to information on proposed interventions to reflect comments received; and
- Updates to the delivery stages and next steps of the SIP to set out how the SIP will be implemented, delivered and monitored.

15. Having reviewed the final draft of the SIP it is considered that the proposed revisions reflect the consultation responses and that the comments submitted by the BLTB have also been reasonably incorporated in the final draft of the Plan. Importantly the SIP continues to be aligned with and supports wider policy and government priorities at multiple levels and across multiple transport modes, including the Berkshire Recovery and Renewal Plan and Evidence Base developed to support Local Industrial Strategies which the Berkshire LEP has produced for the area. Officers are therefore happy to recommend to the BLTB that the final draft SIP is supported.

16. As indicated above, all constituent authorities and Partnership Board members have been offered the opportunity to take the draft final SIP through their governance processes. The Partnership Board will consider the final SIP at its meeting next week and subject to partner support will agree the process for submitting to Government.

17. TfSE will continue to work with BLTB and other delivery partners including the LEP to shape a delivery plan which will set out how the schemes and interventions in the SIP will be implemented.