ETL Public Transport inquiry: transport policy context

This note summarises the key documents that form Buckinghamshire County Council's policy on public transport. It explains the purpose of each document and its key objectives for public transport. It begins with current policies, moving from overarching policies to more specific ones. This is followed by a brief summary of relevant past and future policies. It finishes with a brief summary of links with the Local Enterprise Partnership's plans.

Current policies

Buckinghamshire's Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3):

LTP3 sets out the Council's overarching high level plan for transport, including priorities for public transport, between 2011 and 2016.

The LTP3 sets a number of objectives, designed to deliver the five themes of the Sustainable Communities Strategy. These are set out in Figure 1 below.

The strategy expands on the challenges we face in meeting these objectives and proposes measures to address them over the plan period (subject to funding). As a high-level plan it covers a wide range of issues, so key examples of measures related to public transport are listed in Appendix 1, to help you gain an overview.
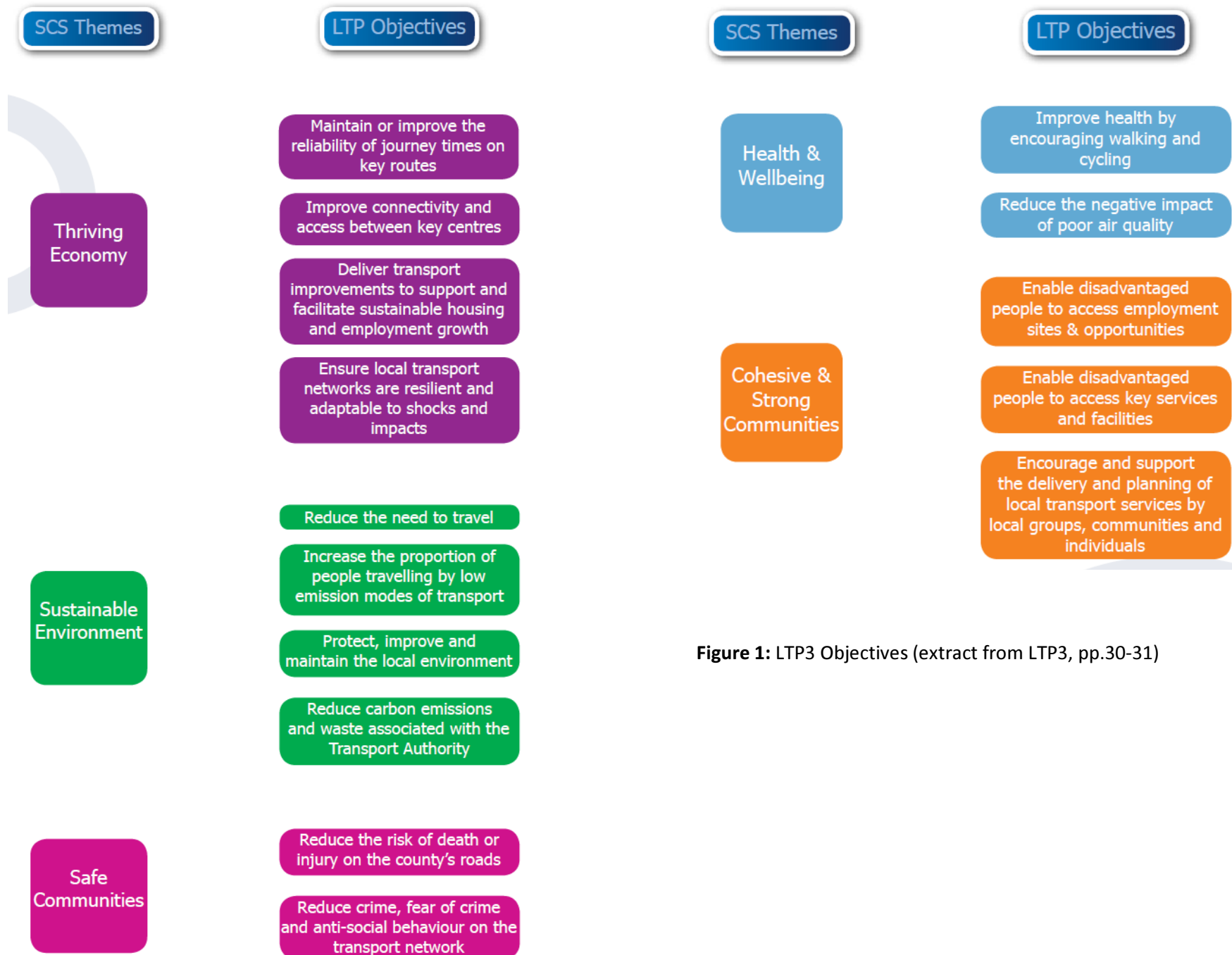
The full document is available from: http://www.transportforbucks.net/Strategy/LTP3/The-Plan-Strategy.aspx.

SCS Themes

LTP Objectives

Thriving Economy

- Maintain or improve the reliability of journey times on key routes
- Improve connectivity and access between key centres
- Deliver transport improvements to support and facilitate sustainable housing and employment growth
- Ensure local transport networks are resilient and adaptable to shocks and impacts

Sustainable Environment

- Reduce the need to travel
- Increase the proportion of people travelling by low emission modes of transport
- Protect, improve and maintain the local environment
- Reduce carbon emissions and waste associated with the Transport Authority

Safe Communities

- Reduce the risk of death or injury on the county's roads
- Reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour on the transport network

SCS Themes

LTP Objectives

Health & Wellbeing

- Improve health by encouraging walking and cycling
- Reduce the negative impact of poor air quality

Cohesive & Strong Communities

- Enable disadvantaged people to access employment sites & opportunities
- Enable disadvantaged people to access key services and facilities
- Encourage and support the delivery and planning of local transport services by local groups, communities and individuals

Figure 1: LTP3 Objectives (extract from LTP3, pp.30-31)

Travel Bucks Strategy:

The 'Travel Bucks Strategy' was developed in 2012 to set out the Council's approach to providing public transport services with the reducing budget available at that time.

It set out the challenges the Council faced: changes in central government bus subsidy; changes in rural demand for public transport; and concerns over the sustainability of client transport services. It proposed a core network of bus services - supported by assistance for community transport, integration of client transport and information hubs to encourage the use of these services.

This document has played a key part in shaping Buckinghamshire's current bus services, which will be described in information provided to explain the current situation. Therefore, this paper does not expand on the proposals made in the Travel Bucks Strategy. However, the strategy does provide some baseline information which may of interest to this inquiry:

- Section 2 summarises evidence of public opinions on bus travel.
- Sections 3 and 4 introduce some of the challenges in providing public transport identified at that time.

The full document is available from: http://www.transportforbucks.net/Strategy/Travel-Bucks-Strategy.aspx

Area specific strategies:

The Council also produces area specific strategies to set out the Council's approach to transport challenges in particular areas.

These generally identify specific challenges and propose relatively defined well solutions. These tend to include a range of public transport measures. However, historically they have often tended focus more on infrastructure (bus priority measures, interchanges etc) than services (timetabling, support etc).

The most recently adopted example being the Southern Quadrant Transport Strategy, covering an area of southern High Wycombe. This includes a range of public transport measures but, again, these tend to focus on infrastructure rather than services. The full document is available from: http://www.transportforbucks.net/Strategy/LTP3/Local-Area-Strategies.aspx

Previous and future strategies

Previous strategies

The strategies above form the current body of relevant BCC transport policy. A range of previous strategies will have considered public transport and may be remembered by the committee. In many cases these have been superseded by the abovementioned documents.

However, the Bus Strategy that formed an appendix to Buckinghamshire's Second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) may be of interest to the inquiry. This Bus Strategy played an important part in shaping the bus services currently provided. Therefore, it may offer a helpful insight into the objectives and

policies that helped to form the services provided today. Section 5 of the Bus Strategy (pp7-8) provides an overview of its vision and key elements of the strategy.

It is important to remember that the Bus Strategy reflects the challenges and opportunities of 2006. Whilst some elements of the strategy have been delivered or remain relevant aspirations, the problems we face have changed and we have developed our understanding of some of the improvements proposed (through their implementation here and elsewhere). Therefore, some elements of the strategy may be less relevant now; the Travel Bucks Strategy described above details some specific areas of change.

The full document is available from:
https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/Published/IssueDocs/0/1/5/4/I00024510/CS210d.pdf (first 76 pages of the PDF).

Future strategies – Local Transport Plan 4
LTP3 expires in 2016, so preparations have begun for the development of a Fourth Local Transport Plan for Buckinghamshire (LTP4).

Whilst this work is at an early stage, it is anticipated that it will capitalise on the greater freedom afforded to local authorities, to prepare a more useable LTP that links effectively to other policies and funding mechanisms where possible (rather than duplicating them). It will consider the results of this inquiry and the related 'Bus Subsidy Policy Review' in developing its aims and objectives, and cross-reference the resulting policy, which will provide the Council's more detailed strategy on public transport issues (alongside other supporting policies, like any area based strategies prepared subsequently).

Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan
Adopted in 2014, the Strategic Economic Plan sets out the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP's) proposals for investment in the area - including a range of transport measures. These are focused on capital infrastructure measures, rather than support for services. However, a number of these are designed to encourage public transport use:

- Projects designed explicitly to improve public transport , such as Project 5 'Delivering modal shift by improving sustainable transport links to CrossRail Stations in Taplow (linking Slough & Maidenhead) & Iver (Cross LEP Project)'; and
- Wider transport or town centre improvements that would assist buses, such as Project 2.

Section 7 of the plan considers the challenges faced in the area, which include a number of issues with the bus network (especially longer distance 'express' routes).

The full document is available from: http://www.buckstvlep.co.uk/uploads/downloads%5CBTVLEP-SEP-FINAL-02-04-14.pdf.

Appendix 1: Buckinghamshire Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) - key bus issues

This appendix summarises key elements of LTP3 which are related to bus travel. It aims to provide a summary of as much of the relevant information as possible: so it includes a mixture of high level aims and relatively specific proposals.

Thriving Economy
- Encouraging more sustainable travel
- Support for a reliable core bus network
- The High Wycombe Regional Coachway
- Working with partners to make public transport accessible and attractive

Sustainable Environment
- Increasing low emission travel by supporting and encouraging walking, cycling and public transport

Safer Communities,
- Ensuring people feel safe when using the public highway and public transport

Health and Wellbeing

Cohesive and Strong Communities
- To tackle local accessibility barriers
- Encourage greater levels of local involvement in planning and prioritising transport improvements
- Supporting local communities, voluntary and charity groups, local businesses, and individuals in delivering transport services.
- A key element of our approach will be working with partners to deliver our bus and passenger transport strategy acknowledging that a one size fits all approach to constrained accessibility, particularly in rural areas, is no longer appropriate. In order to provide a holistic approach, it is important to integrate the non-core bus services, dial-a-rides, community transport and other innovative solutions to provide accessibility solutions that are tailored to local needs.