

6. RURAL HEREFORDSHIRE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

6.1 Introduction

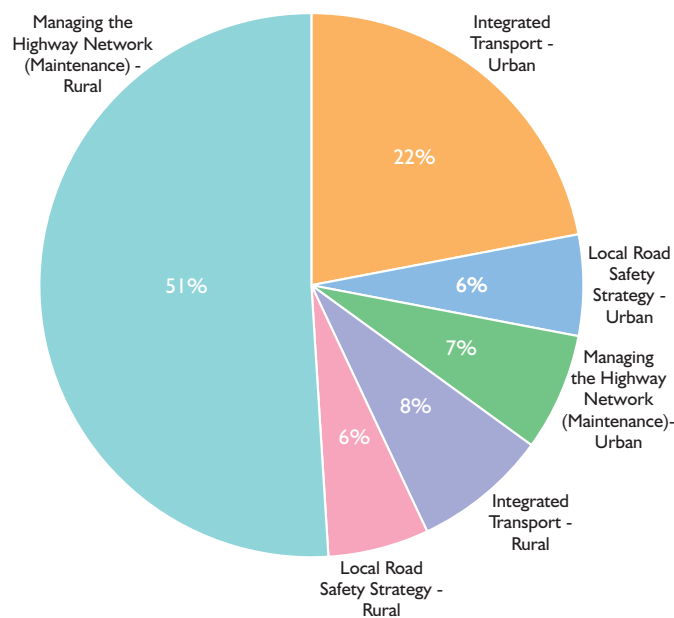
Herefordshire is a predominantly rural county in the south west of the West Midlands region bordering Wales. Rural isolation is a particular issue in Herefordshire - it is one of the most sparsely populated areas in England. In the Index of Multiple Deprivation, Herefordshire contains 76 areas that are in the 10% most deprived in England in terms of geographical access to services.

The settlements outside Hereford City itself are mainly rural in character and include the five attractive market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye, along with numerous smaller villages. A large number of visitors are attracted by Herefordshire's historic settlements and beautiful countryside, much of which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).

Almost half of the population live in a rural area, i.e. not in Hereford or any of the market towns, (Source: Census 2001). Consequently people in remote rural Herefordshire often need to travel further than people in the city in order to reach employment, retail, medical and leisure facilities.

If you add up the population of the rural area and market towns (those people living within the area covered by this rural transport strategy), it works out as being higher than the number of people living in the City of Hereford. This has influenced (and will continue to influence) the way in which Herefordshire Council prioritises its transport budgets. Over the 5 years of the first LTP, an estimated 65% of the capital transport budget was spent in the rural strategy area (see Figure 6A).

Figure 6A: Proportion of LTP Funding for the Rural Area During LTP1 Period



This indicates that high car ownership levels in the rural area are often a function of need rather than affluence, with high levels of dependence upon the car to access jobs and services. Work on the Accessibility Strategy indicates Herefordshire's rural area is becoming increasingly gentrified with young people from lower income backgrounds moving into the towns and people from high income groups (and in older age brackets) moving to the countryside. Herefordshire has a relatively high proportion of older people compared to the national average and in the rural area, this brings with it additional issues.

Despite high car ownership, a significant number of rural residents do not have access to a car and are therefore reliant on public transport where it is available; this often includes elderly and disabled people. Many people, however, are effectively isolated from essential facilities, services and employment opportunities.

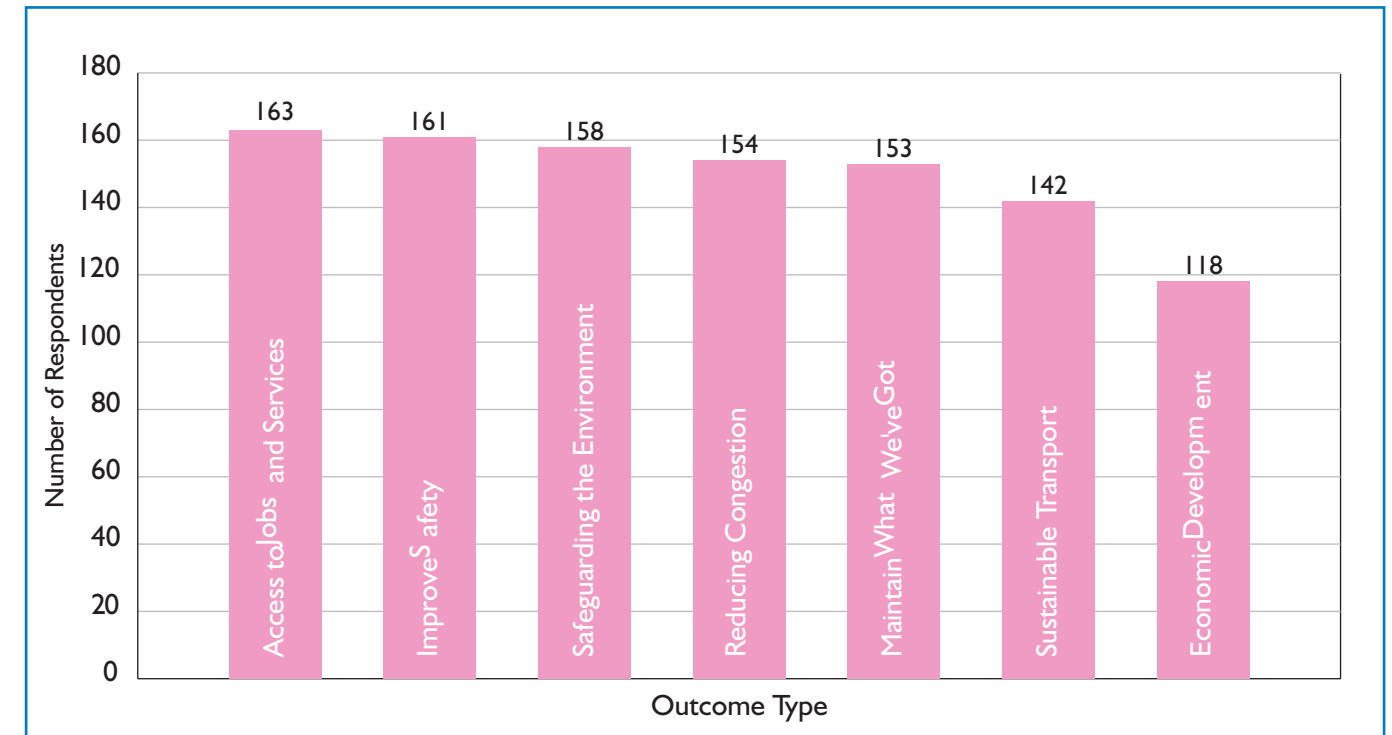
Whilst good progress was made on improving accessibility in the rural areas during the first LTP, it is recognised there is still a great deal of work to do. Therefore we have identified a comprehensive package of measures which build on this progress and fit within the longer term strategy for the area. Key measures we propose to implement over the next five years include:

- Targeted behavioural change initiatives to encourage the use of sustainable modes through initiatives that have particular relevance to rural residents, such as our 'Twoshare' car sharing system;
- Continued improvement of facilities for bus users at stops, including the provision of timetable information by means of SMS text messaging on an individual stop basis;
- Rural footway and public rights of way improvements to provide better access to local facilities in rural areas;
- Improved cycle facilities in the market towns to encourage further increases in cycling;
- Traffic management improvements in north west Herefordshire to reduce impacts of freight movements on sensitive rural communities; and
- Safer Routes to Schools projects to improve safety and reduce car use.

6.2 Consultation

The development of the Rural Strategy for Herefordshire has been guided by the priorities of local people. Consultation and involvement has established that whilst each of the Shared Priorities is important in rural Herefordshire, improving accessibility is regarded as the main priority followed by safety. Figure 6B illustrates which outcomes residents in the strategy area regard as the most important.

Figure 6B: Transport Priorities for Residents in Rural Herefordshire Transport Strategy Area



Our strategy reflects these priorities.

6.3 Strategy Context

The overall context within which we have planned transport improvements is set out in Section 2. This section highlights the context in which the strategy has been developed, identifies key problems and opportunities and other key strategies and policies which interrelate with to achieve better outcomes for everyone. It is important to note here that there is significant overlap between transport improvements carried out in Hereford City and the rural area.

Hereford is the largest centre for Herefordshire with a range of services that people from across the whole county access (the hospital, for example is in Hereford). Improvements to Hereford's transport infrastructure, therefore also benefit many rural residents.

Since the provisional LTP2 was produced, we have strengthened the rural transport strategy in line with the comments made by the Commission for Rural Communities in their review of our LTP. We have also finalised our Accessibility Strategy and this has been developed hand in hand with the Rural Strategy so that each complements the other.

In addition, work is ongoing corporately to implement the recommendations of the 'Herefordshire Thinks Rural' report. In 2005, the Council commissioned independent consultants to help it to develop a new approach to identifying and meeting the needs of its rural areas and its communities. The intention

was to build on the Council's own best practice and achieve a more systematic and effective consideration of the rural context when designing and delivering council services. The analysis helped to inform the development of the Accessibility Strategy.

Some of the 'Herefordshire Thinks Rural' report's findings were very promising:

- Herefordshire Council staff have a high level of understanding of the issues faced by rural communities;
- There is some evidence of 'rural proofing' already embedded in the Council's planning and decision making processes;
- The study found many examples of good practice in meeting the needs of the most scattered rural communities in the County; and
- There is a sophisticated understanding of the barrier to delivering services to the most rural areas and the gaps that result from these.

Further transport related developments of this project will be documented in Annual Progress Reports.

6.3.1 The Strategy Area

The area covered by this Strategy is shown on Map 6A. The main settlements in the area are the rural market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye.

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The County itself is relatively remote in terms of access to the national transport network. The M50 provides a link to the M5 in the south, and the A49(T) is the main north-south corridor linking the north-west of England and South Wales to the west of the overcrowded motorway network. A number of other routes cross the County providing routes to and from Wales for through traffic, eastward connections to and from Worcester and links to a number of settlements in Herefordshire; the A40(T), A44, A465, A4103 and A438.

The strategy area has limited access to rail services, with stations only at Hereford, Leominster, Ledbury and Colwall. A dual track route runs north/south through Hereford and Leominster providing services northwards to Shropshire and the North West Region, and southwards to Newport and Cardiff. A route also links Hereford to Worcester via Ledbury and Colwall, giving direct services to and from Birmingham, Oxford and London. The line is mainly single track, with a passing loop at Ledbury.



Leominster Rail Station

The rural bus network is outlined in more detail in the Bus and Community Transport Strategy. As you might expect, with increasing rurality, public transport frequencies decrease. Services within the area are generally focused on radial services feeding into Hereford and the market towns. Travelling between the market towns often requires passengers to change services in Hereford. Whilst increased levels of funding over the past LTP period have enabled additional services to be introduced, continued increases in contract prices for subsidised services have meant over recent years the extent and frequency of services is now beginning to decline. We recognise the importance of working with neighbouring authorities in relation to public transport provision. Many cross border bus services are jointly subsidised to ensure improved accessibility for people living on both sides of the relevant border to essentials service, whether they are located within one administrative area or another. The Accession work undertaken for the Accessibility Strategy has identified significant parts of the rural area who do not have access to a conventional bus service.

Demand responsive buses and other Community Transport services are becoming increasingly important in rural areas to plug the gaps left by the declining conventional bus network. The accessibility planning process has identified, however, that rural residents are, on the whole, less inclined to use Community Transport schemes than 'proper buses'. This is an issue that will need to be addressed, particularly in light of evidence from the Department for Transport that demand responsive services have the potential to deliver better value for money than timetabled services in rural areas.

The public transport review that is currently being undertaken will identify how effective the bus network is at serving the needs of people in Herefordshire and whether, within existing resources, improvements can be made to meet more peoples' travel needs.

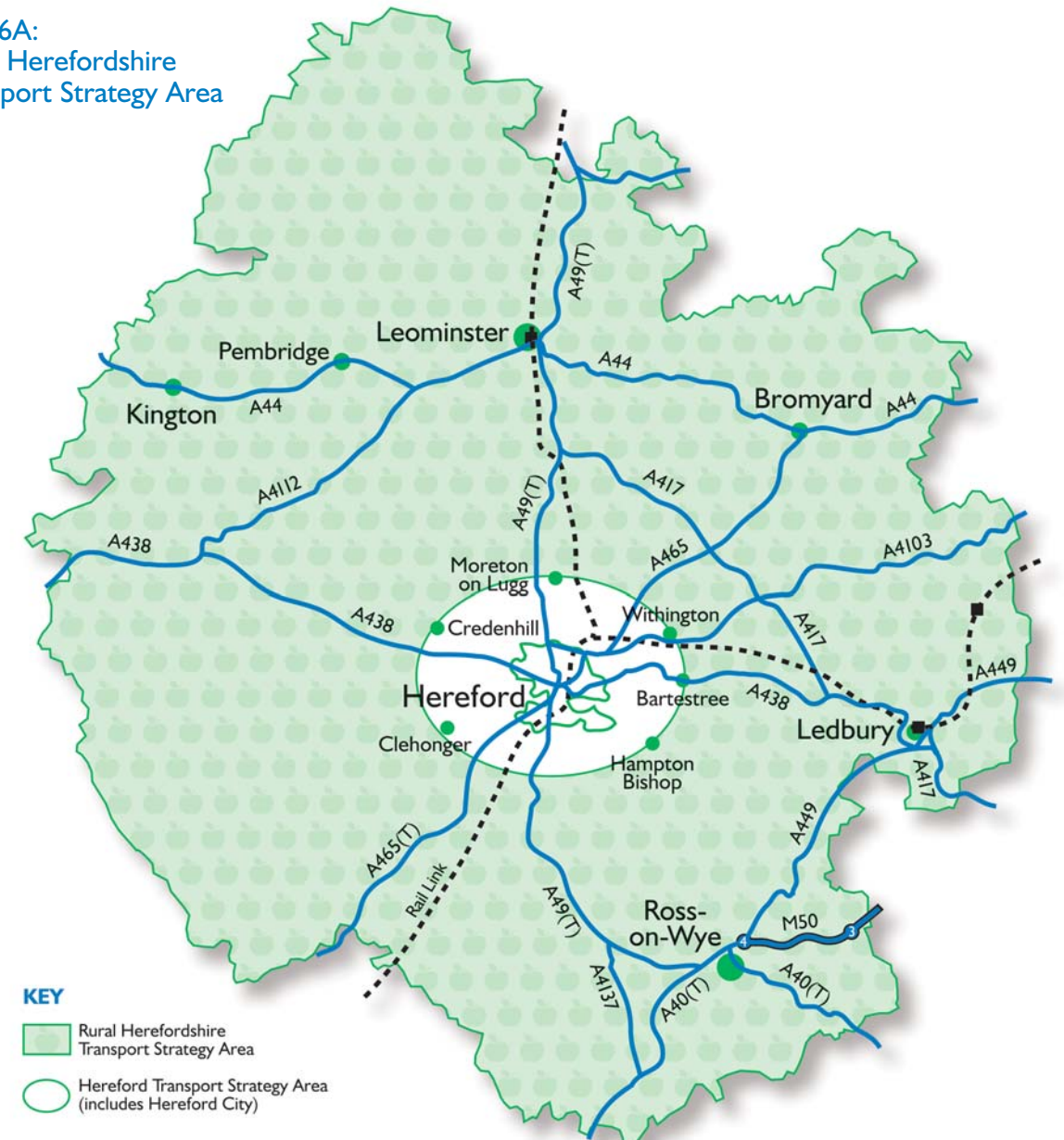
6.3.2 Problems and Opportunities

Rural Herefordshire experiences a diverse range of transport problems due to its geographical characteristics, and location of the main areas of population. Key problems have been identified through consultation, analysis of census and other data and through the accessibility planning process (Section 4). This has provided a robust basis for the development of the strategy. The main problems can be summarised as follows:

- Poor access to facilities and employment areas leading to social exclusion;
- High car dependency and usage;
- Increasing length of journeys to work, (see Figure 6C);
- Poor pedestrian and disabled access links;
- Reliability and frequency of bus services and lack of quality passenger waiting facilities;
- Intrusion of heavy lorries in rural areas, particularly in relation to the historic villages of North West Herefordshire;
- Localised air quality and congestion problems at Bargates in Leominster;
- Lack of facilities for cyclists, particularly in the market towns;
- Too much car use for journeys to school; and
- Road safety on rural roads, including trunk roads.

The range of transport problems are diverse and characteristic of a sparsely populated rural area with a limited number of significant settlements. However, we have identified some

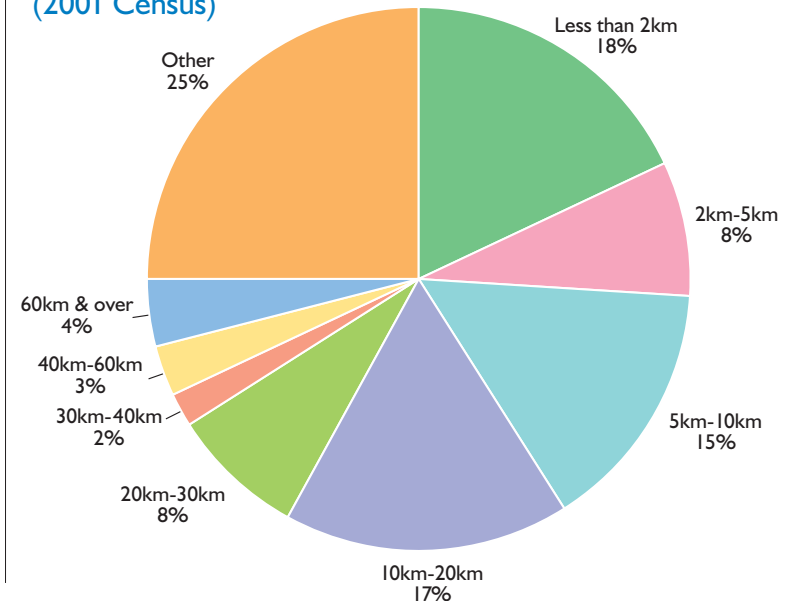
Map 6A: Rural Herefordshire Transport Strategy Area



opportunities upon which we can build to increase the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes of transport. These characteristics include:

- The compact urban form of the Market Towns. The centres of the Market Towns are within a relatively short distance of surrounding residential areas. This means for many local trips, cycling and walking are already viable alternatives to the private car;
- Attractive Market Town Centres well served by public transport. Town centre enhancement schemes in Ross-on-Wye and Leominster have improved the pedestrian environment in the main shopping areas. This has made them more attractive places for local residents, investors and tourists. These towns are also relatively well served by bus with the main boarding and alighting points located close to the central areas. This means promoting public transport use for journeys from many rural areas into the local market town is possible;

Figure 6C: Distance Travelled to Work by Herefordshire Residents (excluding Hereford City) (2001 Census)



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Ross has benefited from town centre enhancement

- High existing cycle usage. Cycling is already a relatively popular mode of transport in the market towns. It is therefore likely that, given the right facilities, even more people could be encouraged to cycle;
- There is potential for increasing use of rail links from Leominster, Ledbury and Colwall particularly to and from Hereford for journeys to work and education;
- Rail freight potential, particularly in relation to the transport of aggregates from the County;
- Strong local community involvement in transport through community transport schemes that provide transport for people living in rural areas without access to other forms of transport; and
- High quality rural bus fleet recently enhanced through our Low Floor Bus Project.



The Low Floor Bus Project has encouraged more rural passengers to use public transport

6.3.3 Land Use Proposals

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out a number of proposals to guide development in the Strategy area up to 2011. Land use planning has a fundamental role to play in ensuring development is sustainable in transport terms. This Strategy therefore seeks to improve accessibility to facilities and reduce the need to travel in the longer term by the co-ordination of land use planning with transport. The focus for new development in the UDP has been identified in relation to existing transport facilities. This means the majority of development will be focused upon Hereford and the market towns, as these are currently the most accessible locations and will therefore help to strengthen their role as important service centres for the surrounding rural areas. We will seek to bring forward investment in sustainable transport improvements in the market towns through seeking contributions from developers.

In relation to the market town of Ledbury, the UDP identifies a possible extension to the town's bypass, primarily to enable the development of land allocated for employment development north of the railway viaduct and extend the existing industrial estate. This scheme would bring employment benefits to the town and may come forward during the LTP period funded as part of the development process. Any progress with this scheme will be reported in future Annual Progress Reports.

In relation to Leominster, the UDP has indicated that land to the south west of Leominster town centre appears most suited to accommodate longer term future growth beyond the current plan period. It is considered this would be dependent on the construction of a new road from the B4361 Hereford Road to the A44 south west of Barons Cross. Land that could be subject of this route is referred to as a zone of interest in the UDP. The development of any proposals for such a scheme would be beyond the current UDP and LTP periods and will be considered in relation to future land allocations. The purpose of the zone of interest is to protect the potential for the scheme and assist longer term planning.

6.4 Rural Strategy Objectives

Our Rural Herefordshire Transport Strategy illustrates how we propose to deliver the Shared Priorities for transport in Rural Herefordshire through: improving accessibility, reducing congestion, safer roads, better air quality and a range of other quality of life improvements. It is recognised that many measures will support more than one of these priorities and this is highlighted and cross-referenced where applicable to avoid repetition.

Objectives

Table 6A summarises how we intend to meet national and local objectives through the implementation of a range of transport improvements in the Rural Herefordshire Strategy area. The measures have been grouped in terms of the Shared Priorities and local outcomes towards which they will make the greatest contribution.

Table 6A: Rural Herefordshire Transport Strategy Measures

Shared Priorities	Key LTP Outcomes for Herefordshire	Rural Herefordshire Transport Strategy - Measures
Delivering Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better access to jobs and services ■ Increased use of sustainable modes of travel ■ Assets maintained well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Travel Awareness Campaign ■ Rural footway improvements ■ Rural pedestrian and disabled access improvements ■ Network of cycle routes and cycle parking in rural areas and market towns ■ Public transport minor improvements ■ Rural rail station access improvements ■ Accessibility Partnership development and implementation of the Bus and Community Transport Strategy ■ PROW Improvement Plan
Safer Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved safety ■ Assets maintained well ■ Increased use of sustainable modes of travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rural footway improvements ■ Delivering the Safety Strategy, including Safer Routes to School ■ Review of speed limits
Tackling Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduced congestion ■ Assets maintained well ■ Supported and enabled economic development ■ Increased use of sustainable modes of travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Travel Awareness Campaign ■ Rural footway improvements ■ Network of cycle routes and cycle parking in rural areas and market towns ■ Public transport minor improvements ■ Rural rail station access improvements ■ Northwest Herefordshire HGV freight quality partnership improvements
Better Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safeguarding the environment ■ Reducing congestion ■ Increased use of sustainable modes of travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Measures highlighted above to promote use of sustainable modes of transport ■ Traffic management improvements and sustainable transport improvements to improve air quality at Bargates, Leominster

6.5 Delivering Accessibility

Delivering better accessibility has been identified as the highest priority for rural residents in Herefordshire. Analysis for the Accessibility Planning strategy has identified that accessibility problems are keenest in the rural area.

The Accessibility Strategy can be found in Section 4 of this LTP. It sets out in detail, rural accessibility problems and opportunities together with an action plan which should result in accessibility improvements.

6.5.1 Accessibility Partnership Development

The role of all forms of public and community transport within the rural area is key to addressing problems of accessibility. The Bus and Community Transport Strategy contained in section 9 highlights the key ways in which we will continue to strengthen our approach to providing high quality and



Community transport provides access for people with mobility difficulties

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Table 6B: Core Rural Transport Partnership Projects in Herefordshire

Project	Brief Description	Area served	Target group
Ledbury Market Towns Bus Service	An accessible bus service linking areas of medium density housing with the town centre and other rail and bus services	Ledbury Town	General public
Low Floor Buses Project	The provision of new, low floor buses on all Herefordshire Council subsidised rural services, to make the services accessible to many more people, reducing social exclusion, and to attract more people on to the network by improving service quality	Rural Herefordshire	General public
North and South Herefordshire rural bus service enhancements	Improved levels of rural bus service provision across the County in terms of increased frequency, combined with extensions to the operating day. Route extensions were also introduced, bringing public transport to additional communities in line with LTP targets	Rural Herefordshire	General public
Wheels to Work	This project offers a range of transport options to people seeking access to employment and training opportunities including travel advice, moped and bicycle loads and car repair grants	Herefordshire	People wanting to access employment and training
Green Transport Promotions	A project designed to increase awareness and promote the use of public and community transport, cycling, walking and other green forms of transport	Herefordshire	General public
Community Transport Development	This project has introduced a range of measures to boost the capacity of the County's Community Transport Services and raise service quality, including providing paid coordinators for all schemes, staff training, some new vehicles and improved publicity	Most of Herefordshire	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
Community Wheels	The capacity of the Community Wheels volunteer car scheme has been boosted in the north west of the County, in an area very poorly served by public transport. Volunteer recruitment has been improved, additional staff hours provided and better office systems	North West Herefordshire	People without access to conventional transport or private transport
Car Free Tourism	A range of measures designed to promote alternatives to the private car for people wanting to explore the countryside and local tourist attractions including workshops for local hoteliers, events supported by public transport, walking festivals and mini-fleet cycle hire	Herefordshire	Tourists
Ross Transport	A one-stop shop for travel advice and assistance with a project worker who provides advice, identifies gaps in services, recruits volunteers and provides training for local organisations	Ross and surrounding parishes	People without access to private transport or conventional public transport or private transport
Jumpstart	Through the provision of a new vehicle this project is now able to deliver preschool play facilities in village halls in the Ross area more effectively. The number of people and venues served has increased and new play assistant posts have been created. Staff retention has also been improved	Ross and surrounding parishes	Parents and toddlers
Out and About	This enables service users of Herefordshire Mind to access a range of support and educational opportunities. A new project was set up offering advice and support for using public and community transport, in-house transport provision for clients unable to use mainstream services and discretionary travel tokens for those on low incomes	Herefordshire	People with mental health problems
Mobile Day Centre	Age Concern Hereford offers a range of services through its mobile day centre projects, which take the services out to users in rural areas. Services include lunch clubs, craft activities, foot care, hairdressing and trips out to local attractions	South of Hereford	Older people
Lifeline Social Car Scheme	Following an increasing number of enquiries from people living in the villages and parishes surrounding the City of Hereford for assistance with transport, a new social car scheme was set up to provide access to local businesses and services. The Scheme is hosted by an established community transport provider based in the City and is aiming to cover all 39 parishes in its catchment area within 2 years of operation	Parishes surrounding Hereford	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
Kidz First	Provision of a new minibus has enabled this project to offer its after school activities to children living in more rural areas. Children with disabilities are picked up from school and taken to an after school club offering inclusive play and social activities, together with an invited sibling or friend. The project then drops them off at home afterwards, enabling a number of parents to pursue full time jobs. Saturday and holiday clubs are also provided	Hereford and surrounding area	Children with disabilities
Completing the Jigsaw	In order to assess the place of Demand Responsive Transport Schemes, as part of the current range of provision, 4 pilot services have been established to look at different models for this type of service. The first to be set up was the Mortimer Link service in the north west of the County, using 3 accessible minibuses with paid drivers, operating under a Section 19 permit, to provide a mixture of fixed route, contract and fully demand responsive services. The project is hosted by an experienced CT operator who is able to combine this service with a range of established ones to offer better coverage of the area	Four pilot areas	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
Volunteer Driver Development Project	To help boost the capacity of the County's Community Transport Schemes, this initiative was set up to: try out innovative ways of recruiting volunteers; promoting good practice in recruitment, training, support and retention of volunteers and raises the profile of Community Transport in the County	Herefordshire	People without access to conventional public transport or private transport
Transport Coordination Project	A new vehicle sharing scheme was developed in the south of the County to complement the one already established in the north. A pool of vehicles already operating in the area, in the statutory, commercial and community sectors, was built up which could be made available in their downtime to local not-for-profit organisations needing affordable transport. In practice both schemes have struggled to get the concept off the ground and the level of usage did not justify the continued employment of 2 coordinators. Both services are continuing as a part of other CT services in the area and informal vehicle sharing is also beginning to take place.	Herefordshire	Support for Community Transport Schemes

innovative transport provision and information within the rural areas of the County. We have made considerable progress on improving public transport in rural areas over the past few years and are keen to develop this further. In recognition of the important role that public and community transport will play in tackling social exclusion, we intend to undertake a comprehensive review of the subsidised bus network, utilising the information provided through the accessibility planning process to ensure the network remains focused on delivering services to meet local needs. This will also consider opportunities to extend the provision of more flexible services where this would offer better value for money and improve the travel choices for local people.

The Herefordshire Rural Transport Partnership has, over the first LTP period, brought forward a range of innovative and community based transport solutions within rural areas of the County. A summary of the core Rural Transport Partnership projects are included in the table left. These projects were developed in response to identified local needs.

Significant additional revenue funding from a wide range of sources has been secured through the Rural Transport Partnership over recent years for Herefordshire, particularly through the Countryside Agency.

It is essential that ongoing revenue funding sources be identified to enable successful projects to continue and new projects to be developed. We are now working with partners, including the regional development agency Advantage West Midlands, to identify future funding sources for these essential types of project. Advantage West Midlands is in the process of establishing six sub-regional 'Rural Access to Services Partnerships' in the West Midlands and Herefordshire Council has successfully bid for money through this process. The decision was taken by Advantage West Midlands too late for us to incorporate the implications fully into this LTP, but further developments will be reported in subsequent Annual Progress Reports. The funding application was drawn up at the same time as our Accessibility Strategy was being finalised so they complement each other both in objectives and actions.

Advantage West Midlands' decision letter stresses that prioritisation and selection of project activity will be left up to local authorities, which means we will be able to continue with Rural Transport Partnership projects and other actions that come through the Accessibility Action Plan. The one exception is 'Wheels to Work' which Advantage West Midlands are keen to see - this fits with our strategy. We are expecting funding arrangements to be in place by August 2006. Due to Advantage West Midlands being the Regional Development Agency, they are particularly interested in economic outcomes. This suits our strategy well because we have identified access to employment in the rural area as a key priority of our Accessibility Strategy.

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Proposal:

Accessibility Strategy Implementation

- Resource - LTP, Partner contributions, revenue budgets
- Timescale - Throughout LTP period

In addition to the development of the Accessibility Partnership, a number of other projects will benefit the rural area. These are set out in the following sections.

6.5.2 Countywide Travel Awareness Campaign

Raising travel awareness and encouraging behavioural change will be carried out as part of a Countywide campaign designed to raise public awareness of the main transport issues affecting the County. Improving awareness of alternative travel options can help support accessibility and also seeks to reduce car use and resulting congestion in Hereford and the market towns.

The objectives of the campaign in the rural context will seek:

- To raise public awareness of current and predicted problems associated with the growth in car use, particularly in terms of the impact of traffic on the rural environment, and to promote the benefits of using healthier forms of travel;
- To generate public acceptance of the need to change their travel behaviour;
- To reduce demand for travel by car in the longer term; and
- To inform and consult the public regarding specific measures and initiatives proposed for implementation in the Market Towns and rural areas.

It is however recognised that encouraging people to use their cars less in rural areas is a difficult task, due to the constraints imposed by lower levels of rural public transport provision and the lengths of journeys involved. Therefore, when targeting rural residents the campaign will concentrate on promoting measures of particular relevance to the travel choices available such as encouraging car sharing for journeys to work and shopping trips. It will also seek to raise awareness of how community and flexible transport solutions may be part of the answer for solving rural transport problems. A strategy detailing our overall approach to changing travel behaviour in the County is outlined in the policy statement on Increasing Sustainable Travel in section 9.1.

Proposal:

Countywide Travel Awareness Campaign

- Resource - LTP
- Timescale - Throughout LTP period

6.5.3 Rural Footway Improvements

It is proposed to continue to undertake a programme of rural footway improvement schemes. Schemes of this nature bring particular benefits for improving accessibility for pedestrians, and help to make the local walking environment safer and more attractive. Requests for schemes will be ranked on a demand/cost basis taking into account potential for accident savings which may contribute to achieving our targets in relation to road safety.

Proposal:

Rural Footway Improvements

- Resource - LTP
- Timescale - Throughout LTP period

6.5.4 Pedestrian and Disabled Access Improvements

If more people are to be encouraged to undertake short trips on foot, it will be necessary to provide safe, coherent and comprehensive pedestrian networks in the Market Towns. Improvements to the pedestrian environment bring particular benefits to people who are mobility impaired in some way, either by virtue of a disability, old age or even when carrying heavy shopping. A safe walking environment is particularly important for people who do not have access to a car. However, consideration will also be given to the need to improve pedestrian access from car parks to the main shopping areas in Market Town centres, to reduce the amount of circulating traffic and encourage park and walk.

Using access audit procedures to identify locations in most need of improvement, proposals for enhancing pedestrian routes will be developed in the Market Towns. This may include footways, signing, street furniture and pedestrian crossings.

Proposal:

Rural Pedestrian and Disabled Access Improvements

- Resource - LTP
- Timescale - Throughout LTP period



Ledbury Town Trail is accessible to all

6.5.5 Network of Cycle Routes and Cycle Parking in Rural Areas and Market Towns

Over recent years, we have been working towards the implementation of a comprehensive cycle network for the County guided by a detailed appraisal of network requirements carried out in 1998. Good progress has been made in relation to this strategy and this is having a positive effect upon cycle usage. We believe it is important to ensure value for money and ensure we remain focused upon delivering the schemes that are most beneficial. To this end, in 2004 a review of individual cycle schemes was carried out and a prioritised list produced. This used a robust procedure taking into account accidents to cyclists, current and potential usage, scheme cost and technical feasibility. This process was developed by reference to Best Practice and in consultation with the Herefordshire Cycle Forum. Key schemes have been identified within the market towns to work towards a safe and comprehensive network and these will be implemented as part of our annual investment programme. We will also continue to work with partners such as Sustrans to extend the network of cycle routes in the County. In addition to route improvements, we will continue to provide cycle parking at key locations. Sites are identified in consultation with user groups and the provision of new facilities has been shown to be very successful in encouraging cycle use. Further details regarding our overall approach to providing for cyclists is contained in the Cycling Strategy in section 9.2.

Proposal:

Network of Cycle Routes and Cycle Parking in Rural Areas and Market Towns

- Resource - LTP
- Timescale - Throughout LTP period

6.5.6 Public Transport Information Systems and Passenger Waiting Facilities

As outlined in the Bus and Community Transport Strategy and the Bus Information Strategy contained within, the Council produces a comprehensive range of timetable publicity to promote the use of public and community transport services. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement in this area, we aim to further improve this provision and extend the ways in which information can be accessed. This will include the provision of timetable information at an individual stop level via SMS text messaging and improvements to the provision of information over the web linked to Transport Direct initiatives.

The provision of an attractive waiting environment is an important element in promoting increased usage of public transport. Well-designed bus shelters can help to make the overall journey a more pleasant experience, and it is proposed to continue our programme of providing high quality passenger waiting facilities in the market towns and along major routes linking main centres.

Tourism provides an essential source of income for Herefordshire's rural economy, and provides important employment opportunities for local people. It is recognised that a significant number of tourists visit the County by coach, and the Council will therefore consider the need to improve the provision of coach parking and dropping off points in the five Market Towns.

Proposal:

Public Transport Minor Improvements (to include bus stop improvements and development of information systems)

- Resource - LTP
- Timescale - Throughout LTP period

6.5.7 Rural Rail Station Access Improvements

The Council will seek to secure access improvements at rail stations in Leominster and Ledbury. Services from these stations provide for journeys to work, education, health and leisure facilities on a daily basis and hence we are keen to ensure that rail is fully accessible to all users. In order to achieve this a Rail Station Disabled Access Feasibility Study is being commissioned. Upon completion of the feasibility assessment, we will consider the options identified and select a preferred option(s) to take forward to detailed design, with a view to developing a scheme(s) to be constructed during LTP2 period 2006/07 to 2010/11, subject to funding being available and working in partnership with the rail industry. Further details on the proposed improvements at these stations is contained in the Rail Strategy in section 9.4.

Proposal:

Leominster and Ledbury Rail Station - provide full access to all platforms

- Resource - LTP, Network Rail
- Timescale - 2007/8 (subject to cost of preferred option and funding contributions)

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6.5.8 PROW Improvement Plan Access Improvements

It is proposed to undertake improvements to the Rights of Way network to support access to the countryside, particularly for people with mobility difficulties, promote the network as an economic resource for the tourist industry and support the use of routes for utility purposes such as short journeys to school in the rural area. The strategy for maintaining the transport network also recognises that the Rights of Way network is a significant asset for the County and includes proposals for investment to improve maintenance of key routes.

Proposal:

■ PROW Improvement Plan Access Improvements

- ◆ Resource - LTP, revenue budgets
- ◆ Timescale - Throughout LTP period

6.6 Improving Safety

Improving safety on rural roads is a key priority for the Council. In Herefordshire 61% of all personal injury accidents occur on rural roads with speed limits over 40mph. A comprehensive Safety Strategy has been developed to guide our work in this area as set out in Section 7.

Comparison with the most recent national averages reveals that, although Herefordshire's statistics are below average for vulnerable road users, they are above average for car occupant casualties. These points reinforce the justification for the ranking system used in the prioritisation of schemes to be treated. Our current practice of increased weighting for rural sites, allows us to target the greatest number of accidents and resultant casualties, and relates directly to the most serious road safety issues exhibited within Herefordshire. There is more information about this approach in the Safety strategy.

In addition to measures outlined in the Safety Strategy specifically designed to reduce casualties, many of the measures to improve accessibility and tackle congestion will also contribute to improving safety. For example, rural footway improvements and the provision of improved cycle routes will help to improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists in rural areas. In addition, measures such as Safer Routes to School and School Travel Plans, outlined in the Safety Strategy, will contribute to encouraging modal shift towards sustainable modes and this should help to increase the visibility of cycling and walking and hence foster safer driving.

6.7 Tackling Congestion and other Traffic Issues

Problems associated with traffic congestion within the area are generally confined to the larger market towns, such as Leominster. However, increases in car use for journeys into Hereford can have an adverse effect upon traffic congestion in

the city. This strategy therefore includes measures to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes where this is possible whilst also promoting improved accessibility. Many of the measures highlighted in relation to accessibility will fulfil this role. They include the Travel Awareness Campaign, rural footway improvements, network of cycle routes and cycle parking in rural areas and market towns, public transport minor improvements and rural rail station access improvements. In addition to capital improvements, our continued commitment to revenue funding for rural bus services, community transport and development of innovative projects to address rural accessibility will also help to provide greater travel choices for rural residents.

In addition, one significant cause for concern from rural residents often relates to heavy goods vehicles using unsuitable and very often narrow roads. This can cause problems of congestion, pollution, noise and safety. Heavy goods vehicles on rural roads can be both intrusive, and a danger to other road users and pedestrians. Consequently requests are frequently received from members of the public for lorries to be banned from particular roads, most often in relation to minor roads in rural areas. However it is often forgotten that in rural areas, lorries are necessary for the transportation of fuel, building materials, farm produce and refuse. It is necessary to develop a balance between provision and control to ensure access for HGV traffic and mitigate the negative effects that can be experienced.

6.7.1 Impact of HGV Movements in North West Herefordshire

The impact of HGV traffic on a number of historic villages in the north west of the County has been highlighted over a number of years. In particular, the first LTP highlighted the problems experienced in Pembridge, an attractive 'Black and White' village protected by conservation area status. The majority of properties fronting the A44 that runs through the centre of the village are of 16th Century timber construction and are within two metres of the carriageway. It lies between

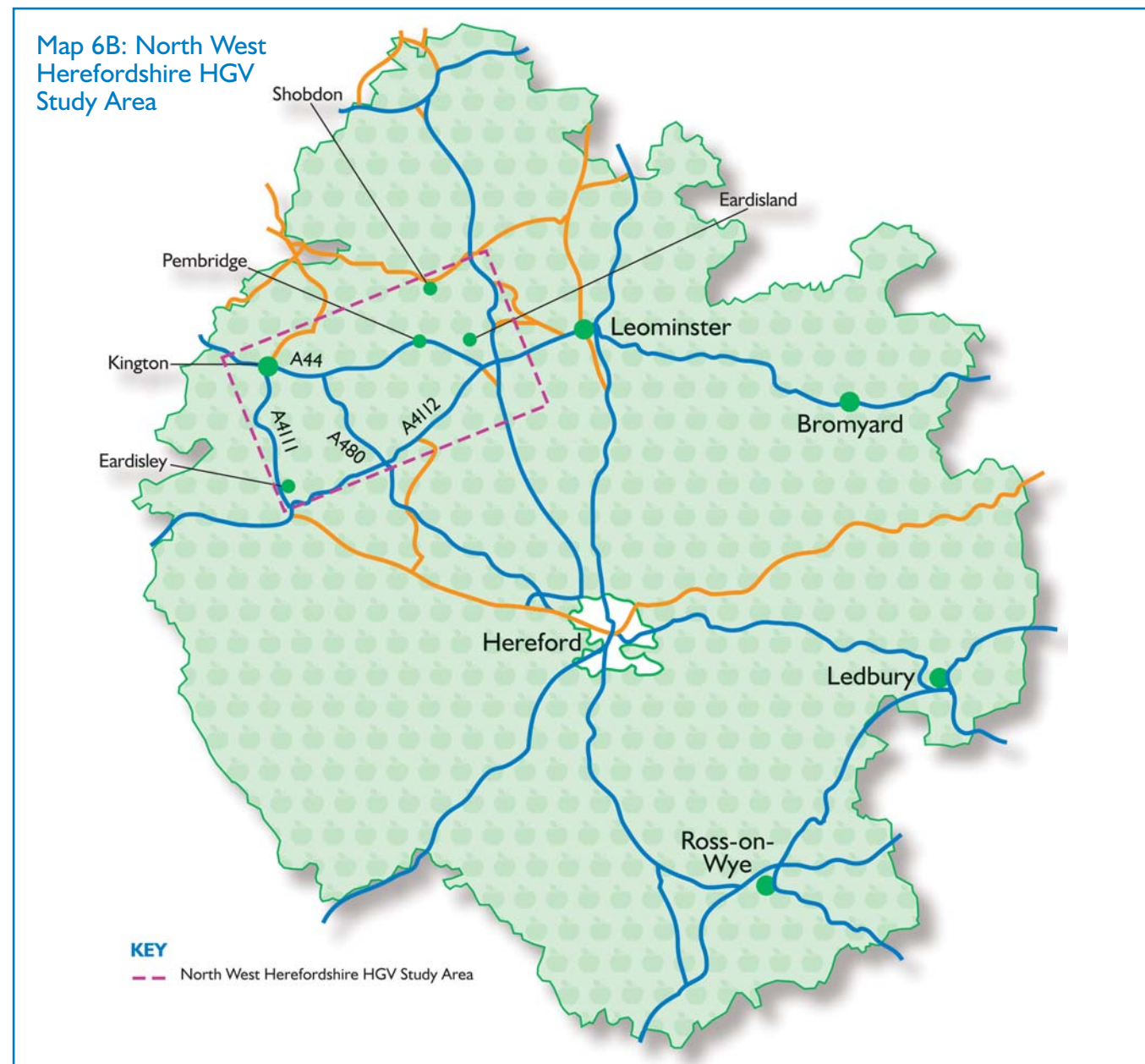


Leominster and Kington and suffers from the intrusion of considerable levels of through traffic on this major link between the West Midlands and Wales. The possibility of a future rural bypass scheme for the village was highlighted and it was indicated that further consideration of how to tackle this problem would be undertaken towards the end of the first LTP period.

In order to develop our strategy for the second LTP, a North West Herefordshire HGV Study was undertaken during 2004 to examine the impact of HGVs on Pembridge and other settlements in the North West of the County including Eardisley, Lyonshall and Shobdon. This provided an opportunity to consult with local people and HGV operators, examine traffic movements in the area and identify a package of short and longer term measures to address the identified problems. The area of study is highlighted on the map below.

This study identified the principal lorry movements in the area which are through Eardisley, Pembridge and to and from the Shobdon Industrial Estate. Following the recommendations of the study, during the current LTP period, it is proposed that a Freight Quality Partnership covering the area be established to enable partnership working with HGV operators and the local community. In addition, further traffic management measures would be implemented in the settlements of Pembridge, Eardisley, Lyonshall and Shobdon to minimise the impact of HGV traffic.

The study indicated that Eardisley is currently subject to higher traffic and HGV volumes than Pembridge, Lyonshall or Shobdon. Based on present movement patterns, a bypass of Eardisley re-routing A44 traffic via A4112/A4111 would appear to offer the greatest benefits. In the longer term such a road scheme could enable a strategic route to be designated that



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would further reduce traffic intrusion in the other communities. However, ongoing assessment during the current LTP period will be required to monitor any changes in movement patterns. In the light of this monitoring information a full and detailed assessment will be carried out of all reasonable alternative options to ensure the most appropriate solution is selected that will offer the best value for money. This will also take into account the effect of lower cost traffic management measures recommended by the HGV study. Subject to the above, a suitable scheme may come forward for delivery in the third LTP period.

Proposal

■ North West Herefordshire Freight Quality Partnership Improvements

- ◆ Establishment of Freight Quality Partnership, implementation of traffic management measures in affected communities and ongoing monitoring of effects to inform development of possible schemes for third LTP period.
- ◆ Resource - LTP, partner contributions
- ◆ Timescale - Throughout LTP period

6.8 Better Air Quality

Many of the measures outlined above to address accessibility issues and reduce congestion by promoting the use of alternative modes will contribute to improving air quality and reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. However, within the strategy area, a particular problem with air quality has been identified in the Bargates area to the west of the centre of Leominster, the market town in the north of the County. As such it will be necessary to develop specific measures to address this during the LTP period.

In early 1999 the Government published proposals for a review of the National Air Quality Strategy, which included revised objectives for many of the regulated pollutants. The outcome of the updating and screening report of July 2003 predicted the risk of an exceedance of the 2005 UK objective for annual mean nitrogen dioxide, as a result of an elevated diffusion tube reading in 2002. Therefore a Detailed Assessment for nitrogen dioxide was carried out at the Bengry Lights crossroad of the A44 and the B4361 in the centre of Leominster.

In 2003, the Government introduced new guidance requiring all local authorities to re-examine their air quality and to review the work undertaken from 1999 to 2002. In fulfilment of this, Herefordshire Council published in 2003 its 'Updating and Screening Assessment Report' (USA) which investigated the air quality across the entire county. This assessment found the nitrogen dioxide air quality objective was likely to fail at the Bargates area of Leominster, as well as in Hereford.

In order to investigate the air quality at Bargates the Council has followed government guidance and published in 2004 a 'Detailed Assessment Report' (D.A.) for the Bargates area, in accordance with the relevant technical guidance. This report confirmed that the nitrogen dioxide annual mean objective of 40µg/m3 (21ppb) for the year 2005 is unlikely to be met, primarily due to the traffic congestion and high HGV percentage on the Bargates Road/Dishley Road junction in Leominster. DEFRA has been consulted on the conclusions of this document and has agreed that an 'Air Quality Management Area' (AQMA) in Bargates should be declared. Public and stakeholder consultation has now been concluded and the Council declared an AQMA for the annual nitrogen dioxide mean on 1st March 2006. The Environmental Health and Trading Standards service will now consider what options exist to include in an Air Quality Action Plan for Bargates.

In advance of the declaration of an AQMA, we have already been investigating opportunities for addressing the transport problems in this area to improve the air quality situation. This could include improving the junction at Bargates to reduce congestion and a package of measures to support sustainable modes of transport along the A44 corridor to reduce the need to travel by car for people living on the western side of Leominster. Land for housing development at Barons Cross on



A44 Bargates Junction, Leominster

the western side of the town is proposed for allocation in the UDP and it is hoped that contributions towards improvements along this corridor to improve transport facilities and address the air quality problems will be secured.

Proposal:

■ Bargates junction improvement and sustainable transport improvements along A44 corridor in Leominster

- ◆ Resource - Developer contributions
- ◆ Timescale - During LTP period, subject to the development process

6.9 Summary of Rural Herefordshire Transport Strategy Action Programme

A realistic five year programme of measures, taking into account the likely availability of funding, has been identified which will significantly improve transport facilities in rural areas and Market Towns across the County.

This programme has been based on the need to begin improving facilities for public transport, cycling and walking at an early stage. Proposals within the programme will remain under continuous review during the five-year strategy period and it may be necessary to vary the relative programming of schemes or add new schemes to help achieve the objectives of the strategy.

Table 6C: Rural Herefordshire Transport Strategy Programme Summary

	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
Countywide Travel Awareness Campaign	See Table at Section 10 for costings				
Monitoring					
Rural footway improvements	95	60	60	60	60
Pedestrian and disabled access improvements	20	20	20	20	20
Network of cycle routes and cycle parking in rural areas and market towns	200	200	200	150	150
Public transport minor improvements	60	55	55	45	45
Rural rail station access improvements	50	100	0	0	0
Accessibility Partnership Development	30	30	30	30	30
Public Rights of Way Access Improvements	25	25	25	25	25
NW Herefordshire Freight Quality Partnership Improvements	50	50	50	0	0
Total	530	540	440	325	325

All figures £000s