

Hitchin Forum

HCC Transport Vision 2050 Survey

Replies entered online 14th December 2016. Question numbers are taken from the online survey.

Q1: Who are you submitting this response on behalf of?

Myself (Member of the Public), A Company / Organisation

Q2: Please state the company / organisation you are responding on behalf of.

Hitchin Forum

<http://www.hitchinforum.org.uk/>

(David Borner, Vice-Chairman)

Q3: Are there any other challenges and opportunities we should take into account in our future transport strategy?

Yes/No/Don't Know

The Transport Vision deals largely with the south of the county, and needs to cover the north as well. Hitchin is not mentioned at all in the consultation report, despite having recognised road congestion problems and needing two Air Quality Management Areas to deal with unsafe and illegal levels of pollution caused by road traffic.

The problem of poor air quality in the county gets only a brief mention. Our first Air Quality Management Area in Hitchin has not resulted in any effective action to bring pollution down to safe and legal levels, and it is doubtful whether our second AQMA will be more successful. Air quality improvement should be given high priority for urgent action and not be allowed to continue to drift.

Q4: Do you agree with the LTP Objectives and Principles identified?

Yes/No/Don't Know

An addition is needed. Air quality improvement should be included as an objective alongside reducing carbon emissions.

It is encouraging to see greater priority being given to active modes of transport after many years of transport planning aimed mainly at car use.

Q5: Do you support the adoption of a Transport User Hierarchy Policy?

Yes/No/Don't Know

This featured in HCC's 2007 Cycling Strategy, so it is surprising that it has not been adopted already.

Q6: Do you support the adoption of a policy to deliver a step change in cycling in larger urban areas?

Yes/No/Don't Know

Rather than being limited to larger urban areas, the policy should be extended to include all urban areas and journeys between and outside urban areas. The policy is good but needs to be much more ambitious and needs to be implemented quickly to make up for years of neglect.

Q7: Do you support the adoption of a policy to do more to facilitate and support shared mobility?

Yes/No/Don't Know

The policy is a good idea and should be applied to the whole of the county.

Q8: Do you support the adoption of a policy to enhance public transport connectivity between towns with bus priority measures?

Yes/No/Don't Know

However, a much more extensive network of reliable bus services would be necessary to provide a viable alternative to car travel.

There is little here to address the poor bus service in Hitchin. This is under-utilised for a variety of reasons, such as lack of coordination between bus and train times, highly circuitous routes catering for the very small minority of people who currently use them.

Q9: Do you support the adoption of a policy to implement a Priority Traffic Management Network?

Yes/No/Don't Know

We are uncertain whether this would be of benefit. We would like to see a proper assessment of the costs and benefits before money is spent. There is little to suggest that the electronic roadside signs already installed have been of much use, other than to display general road safety messages. It may be that these measures would only duplicate information and facilities already available via car radio, satnav and smartphone systems.

Q10: Do you support the policy to develop a series of local Growth and Transport Plans?

Yes/No/Don't Know

We agree in principle, provided that there is adequate consultation, and the consultation results are actually used to formulate the plans.

Q11: For each of the major schemes please state whether you agree or disagree with their inclusion in the new strategy in principle

We agree with the bus rapid transport network. We neither agree nor disagree with the others, located outside our area in the south of the county.

Q12: Please let us know any comments you have on the major scheme options: (max: 2000 characters)

Other than the bus rapid transport network the schemes are all located in the south of the county. They are not relevant to the problems of Hitchin which remain to be recognised and addressed.

Q13: Limiting future levels of traffic growth and improving walking, cycling and public transport provision will be very hard to achieve without policies which encourage less car use and help to enhance provision of and investment in more sustainable modes: What policies should Hertfordshire consider adopting to achieve this? (max: 2000 characters)

Improving provision for walking, cycling and public transport needs a change in culture at HCC rather than new policies. There has been plenty of consultation on these issues in the past but negligible progress in implementation. This needs to change. For example, a North Hertfordshire

cycle route network was planned in 1998 and never implemented. Action is needed, not more strategies and policies.

Many areas of the country have successfully introduced 20 mph speed limits in residential areas, while Hertfordshire has tended to lag behind. It is time to catch up.

Poor road schemes which discourage active modes of travel, e.g. the Paynes Park Gyratory in Hitchin, need to be rectified.

The fragmented, privatised nature of public transport is extremely unhelpful, but improvements could be made e.g. liaison between HCC, bus companies and train operators to ensure buses coincide with train arrivals.

Discouraging car use will be difficult and unpopular, but we agree that it will almost certainly be necessary. It is however difficult to reconcile this with the proposals in the transport vision to keep adding to road capacity via various schemes. This sounds like business as usual, with the difficult task of restraining traffic growth left for the future, probably never to happen.

It would be good for HCC for work up some realistic options for traffic restraint for public consultation rather than asking the public, who do not have the relevant technical expertise, to suggest ideas.

Q14: Have you any other general comments you wish to make on the new Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire? (max. 2000 characters)

Planning such a long way ahead is difficult, particularly as new technologies, such as driverless vehicles, are likely to disrupt transport usage in ways which are difficult to foresee. There are however, short to medium term issues to be dealt with which do not receive enough attention from HCC, mainly relating to environmental matters and sustainable transport.

Urgent measures to reduce vehicle-generated air pollution need to be included e.g. low emission zones and restrictions on the use of diesel vehicles when levels of pollution are high.

Looking at Hitchin, there are long-standing issues which need to be resolved. Amongst them are:

- The lack of cycling provision.
- Tackling of the air pollution in the two Air Quality Management Areas and elsewhere.
- Calming the Paynes Park gyratory, or, preferably, removing it completely.
- Providing pedestrian access into the east side of the railway station.
- Creating a new pedestrian/cycle tunnel on the A505 beneath the east coast main line to separate the footway from the road in this dangerous location.
- Creating an access road to the Hitchin industrial area from Stotfold Road and/or other measures to reduce the HGV problem in the town.
- Increasing car parking capacity at the station and/or improving bus services to provide a viable alternative.