The south-west Leicestershire transport study

Final report

Leicestershire County Council
11 July 2011
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Introduction and background

Purpose of the study

The south-west Leicestershire study is the culmination of work undertaken over a number of years, which looked at the environmental and traffic impacts of HGV movements throughout south-west Leicestershire. The study area is that bounded by the A47, M1 and A5, as shown in Figure 1 below.

This report sets out the background, methodology and findings from the study.

Figure 1: Study Area
Background

The south-west Leicestershire study was commissioned and developed:

- during a time of national policy change (i.e. the government’s DaSTS approach (*Developing a Sustainable Transport System*)
- during a change of government
- during a time of national deficit and public spending cuts
- during the development and adoption of Leicestershire’s third Local Transport Plan (LTP3).
- following the study of individual settlements within the south-west Leicestershire study area (i.e. Lutterworth and Sharnford)

The following sections give further detail of the influences and evidence that have contributed to the south-west Leicestershire report and its final conclusions.

National policies: Air Quality

The Environment Act was introduced by the government in 1995, and resulted in the declaration of over 20 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Leicestershire. In 2000 the government published a national strategy called “Working Together for Clean Air” highlighting the role that local authorities could play in tackling local pollution hotspots. These hotspots were areas where the government’s air quality objectives were not being met.

In two-tier authorities, with a County Council and District Councils, the District Councils were required to review and assess local air quality. Where pollutants were likely to exceed government recommended levels the District Council declared an AQMA. Action plans (Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs)) would then be prepared setting out proposals to tackle the problem.

In 2005 Defra issued guidance recommending that where road transport was a major source of pollution the Local Authority (the County Council) should integrate AQAPs into their Local Transport Plans.

National policies: Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS)

DaSTS (*Delivering a Sustainable Transport System*) was the previous government’s response to the challenges of delivering economic growth, whilst minimising the impacts of transport on climate change and people’s lives. Although the Coalition Government is adopting a different approach to dealing with such challenges, and DaSTS has been withdrawn, nevertheless the five DaSTS goals remain relevant. They are:

- To support national economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
- To reduce transport emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;
- To contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life-expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
• To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society;
• To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.

At the same time as the Lutterworth Traffic Study and Sharnford bypass study were being completed work was also being carried out by all regions to complete a series of DaSTS studies. These new DaSTS studies looked at identifying solutions to problems (rather than being scheme driven). It was intended that these studies would identify the major schemes that would be put forward for major transport investment in each region.

Change of government

In May 2010, during the south-west Leicestershire study period, the new Coalition Government was formed. In order to address the national deficit spending cuts, new policies and new approaches were introduced. This has impacted on the nature and scale of interventions (schemes, studies, campaigns, education etc) that local government can introduce.

As part of this change in approach DaSTS, and the DaSTS studies, were abandoned by the new government. However, the goals that DaSTS were trying to achieve continued to be reflected in the new guidance that was issued by government to guide the development of the third round of Local Transport Plans (LTP3).

Leicestershire’s Local Transport Plans (LTPs)

The second Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP2) ran from 2006 to 2011. The Lutterworth traffic study and the Sharnford bypass study were produced within the context of the transport policies set out in LTP2.

LTP2 indicated that traffic using the A426 through Lutterworth had a negative impact on the environment within the town centre and an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Lutterworth was included in LTP2. This AQAP suggested a number of proposals and options to improve air quality within the area.

LTP2 can be viewed at: http://website/index/highways/transport_plans_policies/ltp/ltp-4.htm

LTP2 was replaced by the third Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) on 1st April 2011. LTP3 is the transport policy document to which we will work until 2026, reflecting national, regional and local priorities. LTP3 consists of two parts:

• the long-term strategy, which sets out our policy and what we want to achieve in the long term (to 2026) and
• the short-term implementation plan, which sets out what we’ll do over a rolling 3 year period to help achieve the strategy.

LTP3 sets out 6 goals and main areas of activity. Everything that we do in the future should contribute to one, or more, of these:

• supporting the economy and population growth
• managing the condition and resilience of our transport system
• encouraging active and sustainable travel (which will help to reduce the carbon footprint of Leicestershire)
• improving the connectivity and accessibility of transport (which will help people to travel to key facilities e.g. employment, healthcare, shops)
• improving road safety
• managing the impact of our transport system on quality of life.

LTP3 takes place at a time of considerable uncertainty and is set in the context of a challenging financial situation. We must therefore ensure that any proposed measures:
• are based on robust evidence,
• are justified,
• provide value for money,
• contribute to one, or more, LTP3 goals and
• don’t unacceptably affect other LTP3 goals

To address these challenges and constraints LTP3 takes a new approach. As an example LTP3 states that we will make the best use of our existing transport system and manage and maintain our roads etc to the best standard that we can, rather than building major new pieces of transport infrastructure.

LTP3 also sets out the circumstances when major new transportation infrastructure may be considered i.e. where there are clear transport benefits, where it will facilitate economic and/or population growth or where it will minimise the potential transportation impacts of population growth on the transport system. Any scheme would also need to meet LTP3 goals, be financially viable and be affordable.

LTP3 indicates the important role that freight (HGVs) plays in supporting our economy but also recognises that transport can have a negative impact on the environment and individuals. LTP3 includes various goals, activities and outcomes relating to HGVs, including:

• our transport system to provide more consistent, predictable and reliable journey times for the movement of people and goods,
• to promote and support the efficient and safe movement of freight and,
• to reduce the impact of traffic and transport on individuals, communities and settlements.

Although the south-west Leicestershire study was started within the LTP2 period it was completed after LTP3 was adopted by the County Council. As such any options that are considered in the south-west Leicestershire study must be in line with policies set out in LTP3. The third Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) can be viewed at: www.leics.gov.uk/Ltp/current_transport_plans

The Lutterworth traffic study

In July 2001 Harborough District Council declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) on the A426 through Lutterworth. The worst pollution levels (nitrogen dioxide (NO2)) were recorded on the uphill section of road approaching the town centre from the south, with the problem largely being caused by lorries and buses. In June 2004 Harborough District Council produced a draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Lutterworth.
Leicestershire’s second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) indicated that traffic using the A426 through Lutterworth had a negative impact on the environment within the town centre. A number of proposals and options to improve air quality within the area were suggested. One of the options was to complete the western relief road to divert traffic from the town centre and preliminary investigations for the completion of this western relief road would be undertaken during the LTP2 plan period (2006 – 2011). If appropriate, the relief road would be considered for construction beyond the LTP2 period.

In 2008 Leicestershire County Council commissioned consultants Scott Wilson to complete a study looking at traffic patterns (particularly HGVs) within Lutterworth and investigate possible improvement measures. The study looked at the cost and feasibility of providing a new north-south route in Lutterworth. The options considered were:

- two western options, including the western relief road
- one eastern option.

The study used automatic number plate recognition to analyse HGV movements through the town. Figure 2 below shows the options considered.

Traffic analysis showed that around 50% of HGVs in the centre of the town had a destination within Lutterworth. Many HGVs travelled to/from junction 20 of the M1, via the town centre, to the industrial estate north of the town. If the town centre were to be weight restricted an alternative route would need to be provided for these HGVs. Three possible alternative routes were considered to the west and east of the town. Both western routes would create lengthy diversions whilst an eastern route, although providing greater transport benefit and potentially less diversion, would be very costly.
Croft Quarry traffic, and other traffic travelling south along the B4114, currently use two routes to get to the M1 and the A5. They either travel along the B4114 through Sharnford, or along the B581 through Broughton Astley and on to the A426 to Lutterworth.

The western and eastern alternative routes that were considered as part of the Lutterworth study all benefited Lutterworth town centre. However, they didn’t provide wider transport benefits to the area, they could have increased journey times for HGVs and could potentially have resulted in HGVs diverting from the A426 to the B4114 through Sharnford (to access the A5 or M1).

The Lutterworth traffic study also suggested that a bypass of Sharnford could potentially reduce the number of HGVs travelling through Lutterworth, by enabling southbound quarry traffic to be routed along the B4114. As a result further work was commissioned to look at the cost and feasibility of a bypass of Sharnford.

As the options for Lutterworth would not provide value for money the Lutterworth traffic study concluded that securing funding for a scheme would be difficult. The Lutterworth Traffic Study Final Report can be found at:

http://website/index/highways/transport_plans_policies/ltp/what_are_we_doing_.htm

The Sharnford bypass study

The second Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP2) identified Sharnford as a settlement where HGVs were having a negative environmental impact.

The Sharnford Bypass initial feasibility study was commissioned and identified that a bypass could potentially remove HGVs from the centre of Sharnford, as well as reducing the total number of HGVs in Lutterworth.

As the options for a Sharnford bypass would not provide value for money the Sharnford Bypass study concluded that securing funding for a scheme would be difficult. The Sharnford Bypass initial feasibility study can be found at:

http://website/index/highways/transport_plans_policies/ltp/what_are_we_doing_.htm

The south-west Leicestershire transport study

Following the Lutterworth traffic study and Sharnford bypass study it was decided to undertake a wider study, rather than continue with a settlement by settlement assessment. This would ensure that wider issues were considered, including the impact that measures in one settlement may have on other settlements in the area. This new study would:

- take account of the DaSTS approach
- widen the geographical area of the study to cover the whole of south-west Leicestershire
- look at the environmental impacts of traffic throughout south-west Leicestershire.

In March 2009 Leicestershire County Council began work on area wide south-west Leicestershire transport study. The methodology and findings from this study are shown on the following pages.
South-west Leicestershire study findings

The south-west Leicestershire study collated and analysed evidence and information for settlements in the area. This included lorry routes, weight restrictions, accident data, air quality, noise/vibration, planned schemes, origins of HGVs and employment / shopping areas. Data for the following 13 settlements was examined:

- Barwell
- Broughton Astley
- Burbage
- Cosby
- Croft
- Dunton Bassett
- Earl Shilton
- Enderby
- Hinckley
- Lutterworth
- Sapcote
- Sharnford
- Stoney Stanton

This analysis has given a comprehensive picture of the whole study area, which enabled a wide range of potential options to be explored.

HGVs - lorry routes, weight restrictions, origins and destinations

Lorry routes and weight restricted areas have been reviewed as part of the study. This review included identifying where HGVs are currently permitted, and assessing whether these routes could be adjusted to provide an overall improvement within the area.

The majority of the area wide routes are subject to weight restrictions, with the most suitable routes for lorries identified and signposted. These recommended routes are along the main routes of the M1, A426, B4114, A5, M69 and A47.

The A426 through Lutterworth is not weight restricted, as this route is part of the lorry route network. Data collected for the Lutterworth traffic study indicated that 32% of HGV movements on the A426, north of Bill Crane Way, originated from Croft Quarry. This suggests that HGVs are travelling through Broughton Astley (B581) to access the A426 through Lutterworth. This is also the route that HGVs with a destination in Lutterworth are likely to use.

The origins of HGVs throughout the area have also been looked at to understand why HGVs are currently using the routes that they do, and to consider other possible routes that they could take. Within the area there are 15 lorry operators and one quarry. Of these Lutterworth has 4 lorry operators based in the town and a number of businesses that require deliveries. As a consequence there is significant HGV activity within the town.
HGVs – Lutterworth
Traffic analysis carried out for the Lutterworth traffic study showed that around 50% of HGVs travelling in the centre of the town had a destination within Lutterworth. If a weight restriction were introduced in the town centre the 50% of HGVs which have a destination in the town would still require access.

Those HGVs without a destination within Lutterworth would have to take alternative routes, which could increase congestion in surrounding areas. Some of these areas, such as the B4114 through Narborough, already experience congestion and air quality problems. As there would be a risk of transferring environmental problems to other areas of the County, and the route change could increase traffic on junction 21 (which the Highways Agency would resist), this option is unlikely to be deliverable.

HGVs - Sharnford
Within the Sharnford area there are no weight restrictions on the B4114. HGV traffic is therefore permitted to travel through Sharnford to / from Leicester.

HGV summary
It is important that any changes to our network, which are proposed as a result of this study, are aligned with our LTP3 policy.

A key driver for LTP3 is to facilitate an improvement in the performance of the economy. The efficient movement of freight supports the economy and, in order to achieve this, HGVs need to be able to reasonably access their destinations.

Therefore any changes, such as new infrastructure, that are proposed as a result of this study must facilitate this process, align with our LTP3 policy and provide benefits over and above those that are already provided. Our study shows that, without new infrastructure, the existing lorry route network is the most suitable within the constraints of the existing network.

Accidents

Accident Investigations
Leicestershire County Council uses location specific information to identify sites on county council managed roads (local roads) with higher than average personal injury accident (PIA) rates or numbers.

Once site data is available the recorded accident details are examined, the sites are inspected and, where appropriate, a scheme is submitted for inclusion on an ongoing programme of local safety schemes.

Accident investigation locations are generally identified based on accidents involving all types of vehicles. If, on examining the accident data for a specific site, high levels of accidents involve a specific vehicle type are identified (i.e. HGV’s), a targeted approach to addressing those types of accidents could be taken.
**Accidents within the study area**

A preliminary breakdown of numbers of road traffic accidents involving personal injury was undertaken as part of the study. The accident data that we reviewed covered a 6 year period, between 2004 and 2009.

This breakdown provided data on the total number of PIAs within the study area, the county, and for neighbouring county authorities. Evidence produced included the total number of PIAs, the total number of PIAs involving HGVs (7.5 tonnes and over) and HGV accidents per kilometre of road length.

Within the study area comparable data was available for 11 out of 13 settlements during the study period (Barwell is included as part of Hinckley for part of this time). On local roads, which exclude motorways and trunk roads, there were a total of 885 PIAs, of which 52 (5.9%) involved HGVs.

**Accident conclusion**

The 5.9% HGV accidents within the study area is higher than the 3.8% county average for all local roads. However, HGV accidents within the study area still makes up less than 6% of the total local road accidents and evidence indicates that the number of accidents involving HGVs is broadly comparable to that experienced by neighbouring counties.

Given the current availability of data, the relative number of HGV PIAs required to make sound statistical analysis and the complex nature of settlement analysis the available data can not be used to draw robust conclusions between individual settlements.

However, our evidence does indicate that:

- the number of accidents involving HGVs, and the HGV accident rate per kilometre, is broadly comparable to that experienced by neighbouring counties.
- Whilst the percentage of HGV accidents on both all and local roads within the study area is higher than the comparable county averages the values are not such as to justify searching for sites by HGV accidents only.

**Air quality**

A number of settlements within the study area continue to experience air quality levels that exceed the government’s standards. Existing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have been declared:

- on the M1 corridor between Enderby and Narborough *(declared by Blaby District Council)*,
- on the B4114 Leicester Road, Enderby and B582 Enderby Road, Whetstone (St.Johns) *(declared by Blaby District Council)*
- and in Lutterworth Town Centre *(declared by Harborough District Council)*

There are also emerging air quality issues in Sharnford.
The M1 corridor AQMA is related to air quality issues on the M1, which is a strategic route managed by the Highways Agency. As such it is outside the direct control of the local authority. However, the Highways Agency works with both County and District Councils to mitigate the impact of strategic routes.

The B4114 / B582 AQMA has two parts. These AQMAs were originally declared on the basis of air quality modelling alone and further assessment is being undertaken to identify the extent of the actual problem.

Options to address the Lutterworth Town Centre AQMA were included in LTP2, and investigated as one of the options in the Lutterworth Traffic Study. However, none of the possible options provided overall transport benefits, or were financially viable. LTP3 states that the existing Lutterworth Air Quality Action Plan, which was developed during LTP2, is no longer viable. Significant new road-building is part of the solution to the air quality problem in Lutterworth and LTP3 advises that there is no prospect of a road scheme being delivered within the foreseeable future.

The first Leicestershire LTP3 implementation plan advises that we will review and reconsider the Air Quality Action Plan that is in place for Lutterworth (see LTP3 Implementation Plan page 30, 53).

We will also continue to work with district councils on modelling tools which can examine future scenarios. This will enable us to take a more evidenced led approach to identifying possible solutions to existing air quality problems.
**Noise and vibration**

Road surfaces can be affected by a number of factors, including the number of HGVs using the road. Where there are a considerable number of HGVs, particularly where the road surface has deteriorated, noise and vibration can affect residents.

Concerns about noise and vibration had been raised over a number of years within settlements such as Stoney Stanton, Lutterworth and Sharnford. Where appropriate we have taken action to address these concerns, including by resurfacing with Hot Rolled Asphalt (HRA) material, which is resistant to cracking and deformation. In addition we have an ongoing programme of road surfacing works which maintain our road surfaces.

As part of the study we undertook further analysis of communications from residents, to ascertain what impact HGVs were having within the study area. No further quantifiable data was available within the study area for noise or vibration.

In terms of the effects of HGVs considerable work has already been undertaken in Leicestershire, through the development of our Lorry Route Network. This concentrates goods vehicles on the most suitable roads within the county. Our LTP3 focus will therefore be to continue to invest in our Lorry Route Network.

**Housing growth and its impact on providing new infrastructure**

There is a significant amount of housing growth proposed for Leicestershire and, at present, we are uncertain of the overall impact that this will have on the road network.

LTP3 advises that:

- we will seek to ensure that district council proposals for new development set out in their Development Plan documents, and proposals put forward by others, are underpinned by credible and robust transportation evidence.
- we will work through the planning system to minimise the potential transportation impacts of population growth on the efficient and reliable operation of our transport system

Where appropriate we will seek to secure the delivery of new infrastructure that is required to provide access to, and mitigate the transport impact of, development proposals.

**Options for new highway infrastructure**

To achieve our transport goals and objectives we must either maintain the existing lorry route network (which our study shows is considered to be the most suitable within the constraints of the existing network) or, if appropriate, consider alternative options. These alternative options would require new infrastructure. The options that we’ve considered are:

- those identified in the Lutterworth traffic study
- those identified in the Sharnford bypass study
- a further option that provides south-facing slip roads on the M69, to divert traffic away from other settlements i.e. Lutterworth and Sharnford.

These options are summarised in the following table (*Table 1: “Summary of options to improve the environment in the south-west of Leicestershire”*).
The table below summarises the measures (options) considered, which could provide new infrastructure, and the positive and negative aspects of each option and the reasons for not being viable.

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<th>Option</th>
<th>Positives of option</th>
<th>Negatives of option</th>
<th>Reason(s) for not being viable</th>
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<td>Improvements to the existing western route, as considered in the</td>
<td>• Potential to reduce annual mean concentrations of pollutants within the AQMA by</td>
<td>• Doesn’t provide overall transport benefits to the town</td>
<td>• Only provides localised benefits (i.e. to Lutterworth town centre), rather than benefits to</td>
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<td>Lutterworth traffic study</td>
<td>diverting traffic from Market Street to the exiting western alignment.</td>
<td>• Could potentially increase the number of HGVs in surrounding areas</td>
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<td>• Would remove through traffic from Lutterworth town centre</td>
<td>• Would provide a longer HGV route to the existing route</td>
<td>• Could potentially increase the number of HGVs using surrounding settlements as through</td>
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<td>• Would not improve the overall area environmental situation</td>
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<td>• Has low value for money</td>
<td>• Would increase journey times</td>
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<td>• Is unaffordable at the present time</td>
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<td>• Unlikely that a sufficiently strong case could be made for public funding.</td>
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<td>Construction of a new western route in Lutterworth, as considered in</td>
<td>• Would remove through traffic from Lutterworth town centre</td>
<td>• Unlikely to reduce annual mean concentrations of pollutants within the AQMA (NO₂</td>
<td>• Only provides localised benefits (i.e. to Lutterworth town centre), rather than benefits to</td>
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<td>the Lutterworth traffic study</td>
<td>• Could remove traffic from other parts of Lutterworth</td>
<td>and PM10)</td>
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<td>• Could potentially increase the number of HGVs in surrounding areas</td>
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<td>• Would not improve the overall area environmental situation</td>
<td>• Unlikely that a case could be made for it to be a public funding priority, even in improved</td>
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<td>• Has a high scheme cost</td>
<td>financial circumstances.</td>
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<td>Option</td>
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| Construction of a new eastern route in Lutterworth, as considered in the Lutterworth traffic study | • Would remove HGV traffic from the town centre  
• Potentially would improve air quality within Lutterworth town centre  
• Might be the best of the options, in terms of supporting the economic growth of Lutterworth (improved access to junction 20) | • Has a high scheme cost  
• Would be difficult to implement due to modifications required to the motorway junction | • Only provides localised benefits (i.e. to Lutterworth town centre), rather than benefits to the wider area  
• Could potentially increase the number of HGVs using surrounding settlements as through routes  
• Unlikely that a case could be made for it to be a public funding priority, even in improved financial circumstances. |
| Southern bypass of Sharnford, as considered in the Sharnford bypass study | • Could potentially improve the number of HGVs travelling from Croft Quarry through Broughton Astley and Lutterworth  
• Remove HGVs from the centre of Sharnford  
• Potentially would improve air quality within Lutterworth town centre | • Has a high scheme cost | • Is unaffordable at the present time  
• Unlikely that a case could be made for it to be a public funding priority, even in improved financial circumstances. |
| Construction of south-facing slip roads on Junction 2 of the M69 and a Sapcote bypass | • Could potentially reduce the impact of HGVs on other settlements (i.e. Lutterworth and Sharnford)  
• May have benefit in removing some traffic from M1 junction 21 | • Would be difficult to implement due to modifications required to the motorway junction  
• Has a high scheme cost | • Is the most expensive option  
• Is unaffordable at the present time |
The aim of the south-west Leicestershire transport study was to consider the environmental impact of traffic in South West Leicestershire, and in particular the impact of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), and to identify potential solutions that could provide overall area-wide improvements.

The conclusions that were reached were based on the need to:

- identify effective measures
- identify measures that do not detrimentally affect other settlements
- provide benefits for the wider area
- provide value for money
- be deliverable
- conform to LTP3 policy

The outcomes of the study indicate that Lutterworth and Sharnford are the two settlements where HGVs currently have the biggest environmental impact.

We have currently got an effective lorry network which is based on the existing infrastructure. Therefore to provide further improvements additional infrastructure would be required. All of the possible new infrastructure options are shown in Table 1. To be viable the options would need to be effective, rather than simply moving problems from one settlement to another, provide wider benefits, provide value for money and conform to LTP3 policy.

Our focus for the foreseeable future will be to make the best use of our existing transport system and to continue to invest in our Lorry Route Network, which directs HGVs along the most appropriate routes.

No further work to look at new infrastructure provision will be progressed as part of the south-west Leicestershire study, until there is a realistic prospect of securing funding. When the funding situation does improve any new infrastructure must be in line with Leicestershire’s Local Transport Plan (LTP3) policies.

Where appropriate smaller environmental improvements to address issues could be considered, providing that they are in line with LTP3 policies. Where there are new development proposals we will assess the highway implications of the proposals and, where necessary, seek to secure appropriate mitigation measures.

With regard to air quality LTP3 states that in 2011/2012 we will review and re-consider the Air Quality Action Plan that is in place for Lutterworth. We will also continue to work with district councils on modelling tools to examine future scenarios that will enable us to take a more evidenced led approach to identifying possible solutions to existing air quality problems.

In the current economic climate, and within the context of LTP3, the infrastructure options identified are not currently viable. Table 1 sets out the reasons why the options that were considered as part of the study are not viable.
Should you require this document in an alternative format please contact us on the telephone number below.

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