

VISION, OBJECTIVES & PRIORITIES - 1





1 VISION, OBJECTIVES & PRIORITIES

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Our vision for transport in Somerset builds upon the overarching community strategy 'vision' of the Somerset Strategic Partnership for 2025:

Somerset Strategic Partnership Vision

"A dynamic, successful, modern economy that supports, respects and develops Somerset's distinctive communities and unique environments".

1.1 TRANSPORT OBJECTIVES

The National shared priorities for transport form the basis of our objectives for this LTP which are set out below. We have adopted environmental objectives to reflect Somerset's unique landscape, heritage and biodiversity, and have also adopted economic objectives to reflect the regional priority for investment in our larger growth centres as well as the community strategy vision for economic regeneration.

Improve safety for all who travel by meeting the following objectives:

- Reducing traffic accidents with a particular emphasis on killed and seriously injured casualties and rural main roads; and
- Reducing fear of crime in all aspects of the transport network.

Reduce social exclusion and improve access to everyday facilities by meeting the following objectives:

- Improving access to work, learning, healthcare, food-shops and other services;
- Improving access to the countryside and recreation; and
- Facilitating the better co-ordination of activities of other authorities to improve accessibility of services.

Reduce growth in congestion and pollution and improve health by meeting the following objectives:

- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport network;
- Ensuring that traffic is controlled and managed effectively;
- Influencing travel behaviour; and
- Widening travel choice.

Support sustainable economic growth in appropriate locations by meeting the following objectives:

- Delivering transport improvements to support the Land Use Strategy, with an emphasis on enabling Taunton and Yeovil to achieve significant economic growth;
- Ensuring recovery of the highway network to a steady state; and
- Delivering transport improvements to support the County's Economic Development Strategy.



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Protect and enhance the built and natural environment by meeting the following objectives:

- Seeking opportunities to increase species and habitat diversity through transport scheme implementation;
- Preserving and enhancing the character of the countryside; and
- Preserving and enhancing heritage centres and areas of historic interest.

This chapter shows how the development of this LTP and our objectives have been directly influenced by a range of national, regional and local policy initiatives that have led to a clear and exciting vision of the future, and sets out the important role that Somerset has in helping deliver those national and regional policies.

1.2 ROLE OF SOMERSET IN THE REGION

Regions play a significant role in promoting social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal, and regional prosperity.

In economic development terms the South West is lagging behind regions such as the South East, with a significant proportion of low skill and low wage jobs. Yet the area remains a very desirable place to live, with the result that house prices are being pushed up way beyond the means of many people to afford them.

In Somerset we recognise that as a relatively prosperous area we have an important role to play in the development of a successful and sustainable regional economy in the South West. However, it is also important to recognise that areas of deprivation exist which can result in social exclusion.

1.2.1 Somerset's Contribution to the Regional Spatial Strategy

The current Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10) is to be replaced by a new Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Developed by the South West Regional Assembly the RSS will set a regional framework until 2026 focusing on:

- "Where things go";
- What the scale of development should be; and
- The links between broad issues like healthcare, education and crime, as well as basic infrastructure such as transport.

The RSS is not simply a land-use plan but is being developed in the context of the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), "Just Connect", shown in the following diagram:

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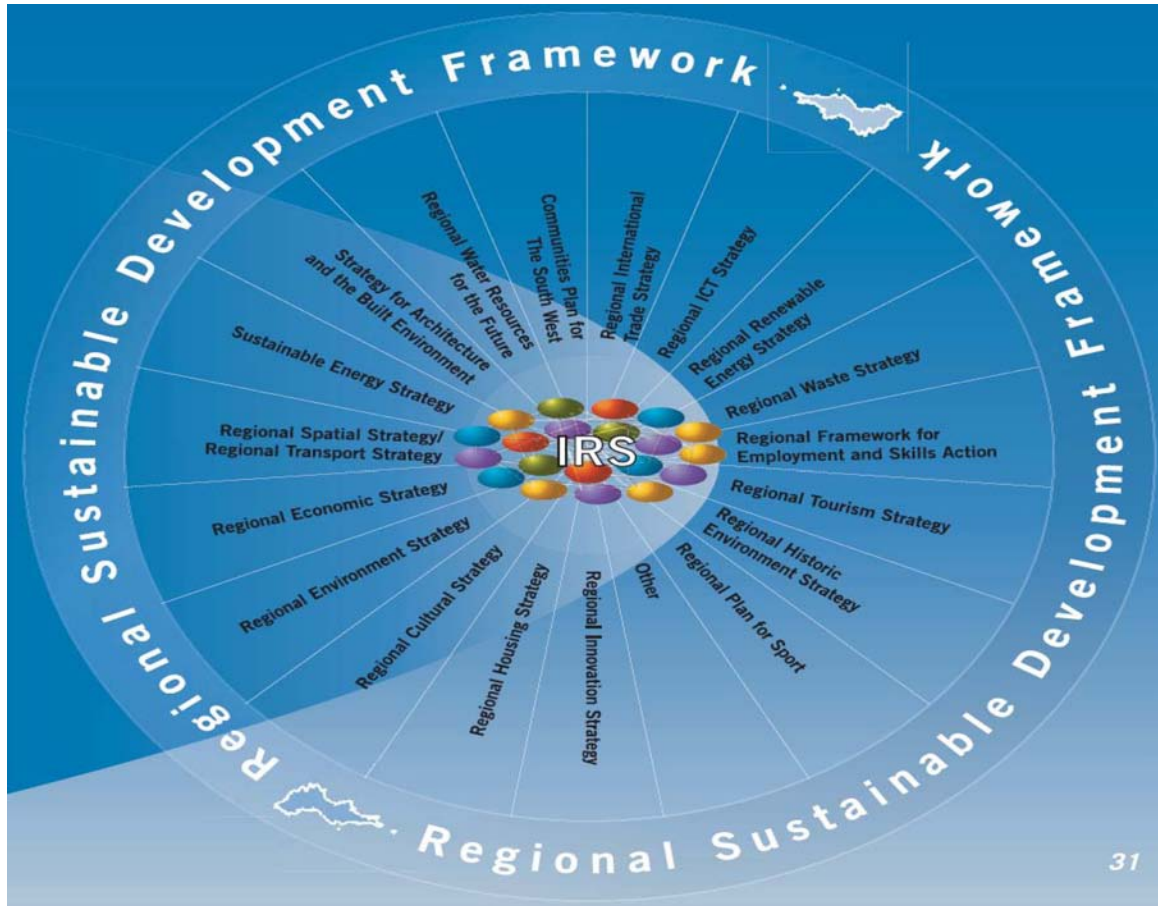


Figure 1.1 Regional Sustainable Development Framework

Somerset is located at the very centre of the region and is characterised by a number of towns serving a rural hinterland, with more remote rural areas in the west, including the Exmoor National Park.

The RSS sets out a hierarchical approach to development, which focuses growth on a limited number of 'strategically significant cities and towns' including the Taunton/Bridgwater/Wellington area and Yeovil.

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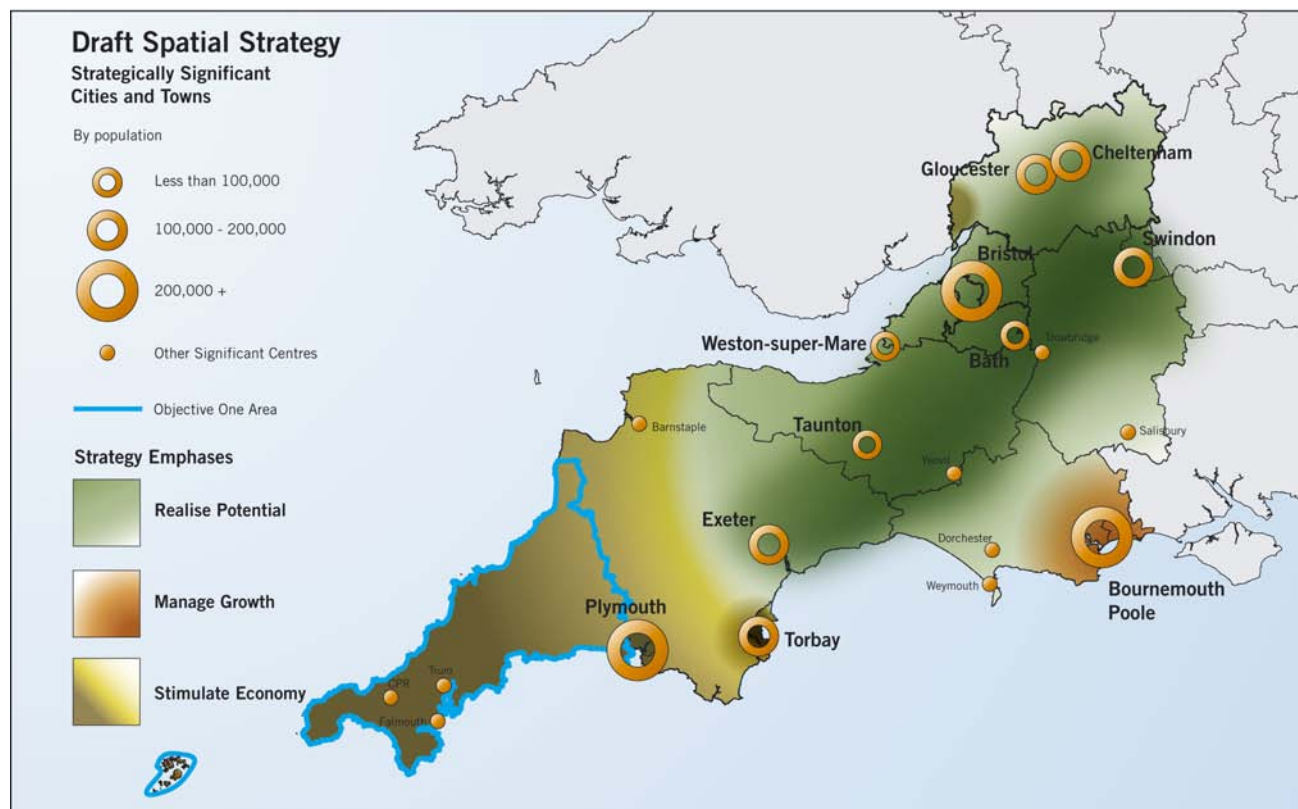


Figure 1.2 Draft Spatial Strategy

The Taunton, Bridgwater and Wellington Area

The RSS recognises the economic potential and service role of Taunton in enhancing regional prosperity and addressing regeneration, with sufficient housing provided, to meet the needs of a growing population. The RSS identifies functional links between Taunton and Bridgwater and recommends that the towns are planned for together as a sub-regional area.

In response to this we have developed a strategy for the Taunton/Bridgwater/Wellington area in partnership with the District Councils and the Regional Assembly, which aims to fulfil the considerable economic potential of these towns and recognise their complementary roles and functions.

It is envisaged that the Taunton urban area will accommodate around 15,100 new dwellings between 2001 and 2026 with an expected 7,400 in the Bridgwater urban area. The urban areas of the three towns are expected to accommodate over 25,000 new jobs in the period 2001 to 2026.

Yeovil

The cultural, service and employment role of Yeovil is recognised in the RSS, balancing new housing and service provision with economic growth. It is envisaged that the urban area of Yeovil will accommodate around 6,400 new dwellings between 2001 and 2026.



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1.2.2 Somerset's Contribution to the Regional Economic Strategy

There is a clear focus in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) to improve the economic competitiveness of the region. This requires developing the role of strategically significant cities and towns as the main centres of economic, cultural and academic activity within the region.

The RES prioritises investment to those parts of the region facing the greatest urban disadvantage, such as Bristol, Plymouth, Torbay, Gloucester and Bournemouth, but also programmes tackling more dispersed rural poverty.

The need to address the major gap in economic performance between the west and the east of the region forms one of the three strategic objectives for the RES. It states the need for all parts of the region to be involved in improving productivity so that all communities can benefit from economic improvement.

The South West Regional Assembly has recently published a strategy document for discussion which notes that Taunton's location and connectivity into the transport network has facilitated the flow of economic growth south westwards along the M5 motorway and mainline railway from Bristol and the South East.

Taunton is a key economic driver for the eastern part of the Peninsula, benefiting from past levels of economic growth, investment and high economic activity rates. Current levels of job generation in Taunton and Bridgwater are projected to continue in the period up to 2026.

The promotion of Taunton in its central location in the South West therefore offers the potential to spread economic opportunity westwards which features as a high priority in all of the regional strategies. It is also a very rural county with many of its communities facing rural isolation and there is a need to continue to address the needs of rural communities, improving access to better paid employment and services in the market towns.

1.2.3 Somerset's Contribution to the Regional Transport Strategy

The latest draft Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) was published in January 2006 as part of the RSS outlining key policy objectives for the region.

Our strategies and investment priorities have been directly influenced by the priorities set within the RTS. The first LTP tended to spread levels of transport investment across the county, for example through its Maintenance and Market Towns programmes. The second LTP is much more focused on delivering investment in areas that will contribute to the RTS key objectives, which are set out below.

RTS Objectives and Policies

Transport policies to support development at strategically significant cities and towns, including:

- Demand management measures, accompanied by a step-change in public transport provision and better integration of development proposals and public transport provision.

LTP Contribution: Appropriate measures have been developed for our strategically significant settlements - Taunton/Wellington/Bridgwater area and Yeovil.



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Provide reliable connections to the UK, European and international markets, including:

- Manage and improve strategic transport corridors to the South West;
- Use demand management measures to avoid congestion on the inter-regional road network, to deliver its strategic function;
- Provide a second strategic road route into the region from London to dual carriageway standard utilising the A303/A358;
- Enhance rail infrastructure, signaling systems and stations on the strategic inter-regional rail routes;
- Enhance the inter-regional bus and coach network, providing for long distance bus and coach services and interchange infrastructure;
- Support proposals at ports (particularly Bristol) to develop markets for bulk and specialist freight where they include measures such as improved rail access, in order to reduce the use of road based haulage; and
- Airports within the region should meet an increasing proportion of regional demand for air travel to reduce 'leakage' to the South East.

LTP contribution: We are working with other authorities and agencies in the region to manage strategic routes and shape and inform the regional funding allocation process on transport, economic development and housing. We will continue to promote the delivery of the Second Strategic Route for the region of which the A358 improvement is a key element. We will also continue to work with rail operators to help improve rail station facilities, and with bus and coach operators to provide the required infrastructure and interchange facilities such as currently proposed in central Taunton.

Regional Connectivity – facilitate reliable movements of people, goods and services within the region, including:

- Corridor management on named corridors to make best use of the network, reduce the impact of long distance traffic on the built and natural environment and improve the quality of life of communities;
- Seek improved rail, bus and coach services to facilitate sustainable travel between settlements within the region, including the removal of infrastructure constraints, better quality trains and buses/coaches, enhanced station facilities, parking and passenger information;
- Actively encourage HGV vehicles to use the strategic network (national and regional routes) identified in the Regional Freight Map rather than local routes; and
- Identify and safeguard sites for rail freight 'interchange' facilities for East Devon, Plymouth and Cornwall subject to viability.

LTP Contribution: We will continue to work with Dorset County Council to manage the A37 from South East Dorset to Yeovil (A3088) -A303, and will work with the region to secure longer term improvements to this route. We have actively led the development of the regional freight map and will use this to manage and develop our strategic freight network.



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1.3 THE CENTRAL-LOCAL SHARED PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORT

In July 2002, the Government and Local Government Association (LGA) agreed upon a set of shared priorities covering all service areas. The transport shared priorities focus on meeting transport needs more effectively.

The Department for Transport's (DfT) Shared Priority Delivery Plan identifies four key outcomes that must be delivered by this LTP. These are:

- Safer roads;
- Delivering accessibility;
- Tackling congestion; and
- Better air quality.

The four shared priorities all have great relevance to Somerset and the objectives, strategies, schemes and targets within this LTP have been developed specifically to deliver real progress against these shared priority outcomes.

1.3.1 Safety

Progress on safety in LTP1 has been difficult, primarily as a result of previously successful treatment of more obvious accident clusters. We now have a dispersed pattern of accidents across our urban and rural networks and are currently developing a new road safety strategy which will take a fresh look at how we and our partners can deal with this. Safety is a clear investment priority in this LTP.

1.3.2 Accessibility

Somerset is a predominantly rural county with communities dispersed across the county resulting in large areas of relative inaccessibility. In addition there are pockets of social exclusion in both rural and urban situations. It is difficult to sustain a cost effective public transport system in this environment. New ways of providing better access to basic services for our communities is therefore a crucial element of our LTP.

1.3.3 Congestion and Air Quality

The urban area transport studies of Taunton and Yeovil have identified congestion and poor air quality as key features of the road network for both towns. Bridgwater also experiences congestion at a lower level. The designation of these settlements as regional growth centres will present new traffic pressures and investment through the LTP and regional strategies will be vital to ensure these become sustainable communities.

In Somerset our pollution hot-spots are all related to congestion, so within this LTP these issues are dealt with together.

1.3.4 Other Quality of Life Priorities

The DfT identifies other quality of life priorities that need to be addressed and integrated into transport policies. These are:

- Sustainable communities;
- Quality of public spaces and landscapes;
- Conservation of biodiversity;



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- Community safety;
- Public health;
- Noise; and
- Climate change.

Many of these issues are extremely important in Somerset. Much of our unique landscape is of national importance and many of our towns have a rich heritage and history in terms of layout, architecture and historical importance. Our county is also one of the richest for biodiversity in the UK.

Quality of life in or around rural villages is often affected by the impact of traffic noise, as houses are often close to busy roads, and communities in many of these villages feel that their environment is not safe due to the intimidating nature of the traffic.

1.4 COMMUNITY STRATEGY & CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

Our vision for transport in Somerset builds upon the overarching Community Strategy vision of the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) for 2025. The LTP plays a key role in delivering the following priorities which are identified in the Community Strategy - 'Somerset - A Landscape for the Future'.

Table 1.1 LTP Contribution to our Community Strategy Priorities

Community Strategy Priorities	LTP Contribution
Image and influence: building an image for the future.	A modern and attractive transport system that delivers fast and efficient access by a range of travel modes is the key to improving the image of Somerset as a modern and forward thinking place to live, work and play. The LTP will begin the process of delivering such a system through its investment in the major towns.
Business and industry: an enterprising environment.	The LTP's strategy to tackle congestion will aim to provide private travellers and freight users with reasonable and reliable journey times that will prove attractive for existing and future business investors.
Skills and training: investing in the future.	Access to education and training opportunities will be a cornerstone of the LTP Accessibility Strategy.
Culture and lifestyle: creating a lifestyle.	The LTP's strategy will help to deliver enhanced leisure and cultural opportunities in Taunton based on implementation of the Taunton Vision proposals for the cultural quarter. At a wider level, accessibility will be important in ensuring that access to leisure, tourism and cultural facilities is available to all.
Infrastructure, access and transport: creating sustainable foundations.	The LTP will continue to invest in securing major transport schemes, all modes of transport and public rights of way, in order to improve and better manage infrastructure as well as services in partnership with private operators. Our developing Transport Asset Management Plan will ensure existing and new assets will be managed by optimising our resources and taking into account whole life costs.
Our communities: sharing with each other a sense of belonging.	The LTP will deliver transport improvements at a local level that will remove barriers between communities and will contribute to wider quality of life issues such as health promotion and community safety.

The Community Strategy can be viewed at: www.somerset.org

1.4.1 The Local Area Agreement

A key delivery mechanism for the Community Strategy priorities is our Local Area Agreement (LAA), a three year agreement setting out the priorities agreed between the Government, the local area (in our case the geographic area of Somerset), and the SSP. The LAA sets out what extra could be achieved across a range of issues through closer partnership working, aligning budgets, or negotiating more 'freedoms and flexibilities' within Government guidance and legislation.

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LAA's are delivered through a number of themes: Children & Young People, Healthier Communities & Older People, Safer & Stronger Communities, and Economic Development & Enterprise. It is also knitted together through the identification of some specific major issues; affordable housing, transport, and reduction of the misuse of alcohol, which cut across the individual themes.

The following table shows the main objectives of the LAA, and the role that transport plays as a cross-cutting theme. Our LTP will be a key mechanism for delivering these aspects of the LAA.

Table 1.2 The Role of Transport in Delivering the LAA

LAA Outcomes	Key LTP link	Role of Transport in Delivery
Children & Young People		
1. Improve the emotional, physical and mental health of children and young people in Somerset to promote healthier and more enjoyable lifestyles.	✓	Promote physical activity such as walking and cycling through school travel plans.
2. Improve expectations, aspirations and life chances for the most vulnerable children and young people in Somerset including children looked after.	✓	Safer school transport. Improve access to schools. Improve access to further education, employment and training.
Healthier Communities		
3. To promote and Improve the Health and Lifestyles of Somerset People.	✓	Promote physical activity through walking and cycling and use of the public rights of way network.
4. To reduce health inequalities in Somerset.	✓	Improve access to healthy food. Improve access to health services for residents in disadvantaged communities.
5. Maximise public health benefits by ensuring 'Choosing Health' delivers the maximum potential.	✓	Build health promotion and better access to healthcare into our service delivery.
Older People		
6. To prevent dependency, promote social participation, and offer greater choice and control for Older People.	✓	Improve passenger transport access to healthcare and preventative services for older people. We also undertake more frequent footway inspections near hospitals and residential homes and improve condition through pro-active maintenance.
Economic Development & Regeneration		
7. Increase investment levels and business competitiveness in Somerset.	✓	Provide transport infrastructure and improved road surface condition to support economic regeneration.
8. Increase growth and sustainability of small businesses in Somerset.		
9. More sustainable rural economy.	✓	Improve rural Rights of Way network.
10. Reduce worklessness and increase skills levels across Somerset's population.	✓	Improve access to employment and skills training.
Safer Communities		
11. To build respect in communities and to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour.	✓	Reduce fear of crime through lighting, security on transport services and improving urban street design.
12. To reduce crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs and to reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime.	✓	Improve road safety and reduce traffic speeds.



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LAA Outcomes	Key LTP link	Role of Transport in Delivery
Stronger Communities		
13. A more thriving and vibrant voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Somerset which is in a stronger position to represent and support our communities.	✓	Better co-ordinated voluntary and community transport sector.
14. To empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services.		
15. Helping reduce poverty by maximising take-up of specific welfare benefits.		
16. Maximising opportunities to meet affordable housing needs of communities in Somerset.		

It is clear that the LTP has a strong role to play in helping deliver the LAA. The existence of a binding agreement between us, our partners in the area, and the SSP will ensure that key transport issues, such as planning for better access to services, are considered a high priority by a wide range of organisations.

1.4.2 LTP Contribution to County Council Services

The production of the Community Strategy has resulted in our Corporate Plan being closely aligned with the aspirations of local people and businesses as well as addressing key national policy priorities. A process of prioritisation is necessary to achieve good value for money.

The LTP will continue to influence the shape of future council decision making and policy formulation through revisions to the Corporate Plan, development of new and updated service based strategies, and development of key corporate performance indicators.

The Corporate Plan can be viewed at: www.somerset.gov.uk under 'Council & Democracy'.

Delivery of Corporate Plan Aims

Aim 1: To work with our partners and communities to improve Somerset and to ensure that it has a powerful voice regionally and nationally.



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Delivery of National Policy: Sustainable Communities – Homes for All

A five year plan aiming to provide affordable housing in communities where people want to live and work. This will reduce the trend of people living further from their place of employment – which has led to a large increase in traffic.

The South West region is projected to have an additional 20,000 households per year between 2001 and 2021. The emerging RSS is examining location options for these households and associated jobs.

LTP Delivery Contribution

Working with the region to prioritise transport packages for our regionally significant settlements to deliver significant levels of housing and employment growth in a sustainable manner and provide the focus for leveraging in substantial developer contributions to bridge gaps in public funds.

Aim 2: To champion Somerset's economy whilst maintaining and enhancing the character and diversity of its environment.

Delivery of National Policy: The Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England'

This envisages the delivery of a prosperous and diverse economy giving high and stable levels of employment. At the same time the aim is to develop the tourist economy whilst mitigating negative impacts on the lives of residents and farmers.

The Council aims to pro-actively market Somerset as a place to invest whilst promoting development of local businesses through our Economic Development Strategy. We work in partnership with Somerset's District Councils, Business Link, the Learning and Skills Council, and the business community through Somerset Business Forum, to help develop future Council economic policies and initiatives.

Our Economic Strategy has six core objectives:

- Develop the effectiveness of Somerset's partnerships and delivery capacity;
- Maximise long-term investment attractiveness and dynamism of the local economy;
- Increase competitiveness and productivity of Somerset businesses;
- Realise the economic growth potential of Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater;
- Revitalise our market towns and communities; and
- Increase access to economic opportunities for all Somerset residents.

We have identified that the new focus in LTP guidance on specific targets presents us with challenges in addressing economic regeneration in our smaller towns and rural areas through the LTP process. We will explore other funding sources and mechanisms with our partners to address these issues which are so important in Somerset.



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LTP Delivery Contribution

- Reducing growth of traffic congestion and pollution in main urban areas leading to economic benefits through a package of demand management, positive priority measures for non-car modes and extensive marketing and information campaigns;
- Helping strengthen the role of our market towns as service centres through our accessibility planning processes;
- Prioritising improved access to skills training and employment within our Accessibility Strategy;
- Managing freight through development of the regional freight map, partnership work and supporting measures at local level; and
- Helping strengthen our 'rural infrastructure' through improvement of our Rights of Way network.

Aim 3: To provide highway networks and transport services which meet the needs of Somerset's economy and communities whilst respecting Somerset's built and natural environment.

Delivery of National Policy: The Traffic Management Act 2004

This aims to provide the basis for more consistent travel times for all road users through the proactive management of the national and local road network. Local authorities are responsible for keeping traffic flowing through a variety of regulatory powers such as on-street parking and measures to control and co-ordinate County and statutory undertakers works.

The Corporate Plan makes investment in traffic management and safety measures a key priority with important outcomes being set in relation to road casualty reduction and better highway maintenance. Our developing Transport Asset Management Plan will ensure amongst other things that we manage our assets taking into account our environment and our Biodiversity Action Plan.

LTP Delivery Contribution

- Making best use of the existing network through network management;
- Delivering agreed levels of service through better transport asset management; and
- Delivering highway and safety schemes.

Aim 4: To recognise and respond to the learning and cultural needs of individuals and communities.

Delivery of National Policy: The No. 10 Policy Unit Report 'Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion'

This clearly demonstrates how poor access to services results in a denial of life chances for people and less effective services. As part of its five year plan 'Living Life to the Full' The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has a Public Service Agreement with the Treasury to significantly increase the take-up of cultural and sporting opportunities by new users aged 20 and above from priority groups.

Meeting the learning and cultural needs of people in Somerset is a key means of delivering sustainable communities – where people want to live, work and play.



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The Council has an 'Equalities Vision and Community Cohesion Strategy 2004-2014', which addresses cultural and community isolation, negative media press and low but persistent levels of harassment and prejudice that exist in Somerset.

LTP Delivery Contribution

- Raising individual aspirations through promoting healthy lifestyles in our strategies for walking and cycling;
- Improving access to local services such as employment, colleges, adult education centres and libraries, as well as improving accessibility and ease of use of information, through accessibility planning;
- Specifying public transport contracts which address safety for passengers and responses to potential (racial, gender, sexuality) harassment issues; and
- Delivery of a cultural centre in Taunton through development of the Third Way Major Scheme.

Aim 5: To enable all children and young people to achieve their full potential.

Delivery of National Policy: The Green Paper 'Every Child Matters'

This sets some key outcomes for children and young people:

- Being healthy – enjoying good physical and mental health, and living a healthy lifestyle;
- Staying safe – being protected from harm and neglect; and
- Economic well-being – not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

A youth green paper 'Youth Matters' was published in July 2005 stating that the Government will legislate to place a duty on councils to 'secure positive activities for young people'.

A schools white paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All' was published in October 2005 and has significant implications for the way we intend to deliver school transport in the future.

The Corporate Plan makes a clear link between educational attainment and the need for better access to skills and training at a local level.

LTP Delivery Contribution

- Making travel to educational establishments physically possible, affordable and convenient (compared with driving or being driven), allow more students to stay in further post 16 education;
- School Travel Plans and Safe Routes to School to deliver healthier and safer forms of transport for younger children;
- Increasing physical activity through walking, cycling and use of the public rights of way network; and
- Provide a safe and well-lit environment in which to live and play.



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Aim 6: To work to make our communities safer.

Delivery of National Policy: The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

This was passed to tackle crime and disorder and to create safer communities. We have produced a Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy in partnership with District Councils and other partners, with an emphasis on reducing anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime on the streets.

LTP Delivery Contribution

- Considering safety from a wider community perspective in addition to the main focus of reducing numbers of casualties;
- Designing transport projects to reduce crime and the fear of crime if possible; and
- Providing a well-lit environment in which to live and play.

Aim 7: To enable vulnerable adults to live as independently as possible.

Delivery of National Policy: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) annual report 'Opportunity for All'

This aims to increase support for vulnerable adults and their carers.

The council has a good track record of delivering services to vulnerable adults. The Corporate Plan now emphasises how services will be developed in line with the Valuing People's Framework (for people with disabilities) and National Service Framework (for users of mental health services).

LTP Delivery Contribution

- Considering the needs of vulnerable adults through accessibility planning (e.g. better co-ordination of community transport, social services and NHS patient transport);
- Improving information and better access at bus stops/interchanges;
- Community car schemes which help deliver transport objectives as well as other priorities such as public health and stronger communities.

Aim 8: To improve the corporate capacity and service performance of Somerset County Council.

Delivery of National Policy: The Audit Commission's 'Comprehensive Performance Assessment for Local Authorities' - CPA - The harder test

This identifies key targets for authorities to meet and demonstrate they are continually improving services.

The Council has recently invested in a new performance management system 'Performance +' and is developing a performance management framework that will enable an enhanced focus on the key outcome targets and how various measures are helping to deliver them, as part of a process of continuous improvement.



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The Council has also identified better customer access as a cornerstone for improved service performance and has developed a Customer Access Strategy.

LTP Delivery Contribution

Our transport service has been chosen as an early pilot area for implementation of the new 'Performance +' management system due to the importance of transport in influencing the overall CPA. This tool will be used alongside a programme of procedural and cultural changes to better embed performance management within service delivery.

Access standards to Council services will be developed for our Customer Access Strategy using accessibility planning.

1.4.3 LTP Influence on Future Council Policy and Delivery

It is important to emphasise that as well as being a delivery mechanism, our LTP is already having a significant influence on how policies in other parts of the Council are being planned and delivered.

Corporate re-structuring: The Council has recently re-structured, creating a new Community Directorate with a portfolio of adult services including learning difficulties, primary care, cultural and economic development, whilst our new Children & Young People Directorate includes education, raising achievements, social care and partnerships. This will enable us to better respond to key issues, including access to services.

Accessibility planning will make an important contribution throughout the Council. Improving accessibility is seen as the backbone of the Council's corporate delivery of services to our customers. The Accessibility chapter demonstrates how the LTP is resulting in our departments working more effectively together and how accessibility planning is being mainstreamed into service delivery.

Some examples of LTP integrating with wider Council policy are set out below.

- Our **Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (IPTU)** co-ordinates the delivery of transport for social services, education, voluntary, community and socially necessary conventional services. Budgets from previously separate directorates have been combined to fund this initiative which arose following a corporate best value review of passenger transport.
- **Land use planning** - aiding in the delivery of Planning Policy Guidance 13 and sustainable and fully accessible developments through the emerging Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) in each District and through advice on planning applications.
- Influencing **external service delivery** - aiding in corporate and external agency delivery of services to our customers, through cross-sectoral and joint working on access to employment, skills training, health and other key services.
- Our **Corporate Property Review** is also being informed by accessibility planning as part of the asset management process – so that decisions on the future upkeep of Council facilities fully reflect the access needs of local communities.
- **Equality of Opportunity** is a key part of the entire Somerset County Council operation and transport has a vital contribution to make by improving access to people who are demonstrably missing out on key services that will improve their life chances. The LTP has been drawn up in line with our 'guidance on assessing services, policies and functions for equalities implications', and this has led to further consultation with specific groups identified in the assessment.



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- Our **Community Safety Strategy** aims to tackle actual crime and the negative perceptions which often prevent people from living life as fully as they should. The LTP has a vital role to play by delivering well designed transport improvements that reduce the fear of crime through, for instance, better lighting and visibility or CCTV on school buses.
- Following a successful **rural mentoring** pilot in 2004/05 we will be participating in a second DEFRA and ODPM funded mentoring scheme to enhance and further develop best practice in rural delivery. Building on an existing 'learning network' created by the mentoring pilot, best practice will be disseminated from the eight rural delivery pathfinder areas.

1.5 DEVELOPING THE LTP

Our approach to developing the LTP followed a number of key stages set out below:

- Establishing the evidence base;
- Analysis of the problems;
- Development and appraisal of options;
- Selection of the best strategy; and
- Consultation and involvement at every stage.

A summary of our evidence base is set out in Chapter 2 - Challenges, Issues and Opportunities, together with a summary analysis of the problems. More detailed evidence and analysis and options appraisals are included within our suite of town and modal transport studies, Air Quality Action Plans and Accessibility Planning work discussed in Chapter 3 which sets out our long term strategy. The relevant detailed evidence is set out at the start of each LTP chapter.

The LTP is required to be assessed for its environmental impact at a strategic level, following the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) which came into force in July 2004 to ensure that the 'significant environmental effects' of a plan or programme be taken into account before adoption. Somerset County Council was chosen as a pilot authority for the DfT in establishing how LTPs should respond to the new directive.

The SEA process required us to consider alternative strategic approaches to tackling transport problems and was therefore an integral part of our approach to developing the plan from a very early stage. The guidelines and methods developed in Somerset have been widely used by other authorities in developing their LTP SEAs.



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1.5.1 Involvement

Our LTP has been developed with the involvement of a wide range of organisations and individuals (listed in Annex Table 11) summarised briefly below:

- Working closely with all tiers of government, for example:
 - Involving the Government Office for the South West in developing the LTP and agreeing targets and trajectories;
 - Involving National agencies such as the Highways Agency who had a place on our Taunton Strategy Project Group, and who jointly own our Taunton area traffic model;
 - Workshops with statutory environmental agencies such as the Environment Agency; Countryside Agency, English Nature and English Heritage to help develop our initial objectives for the LTP at the outset of the process, followed up by consultation on our environmental scoping report and the environmental report itself;
 - Working closely with the Regional Assembly and other authorities in the region to develop the Regional Freight Map;
 - Working closely with the Regional Assembly and the RDA on a sub-regional study to inform the development of the Regional Spatial Strategy, and to inform the Regional Funding Allocation process;
 - 'Somerset Strategic Planning Conference', a sub-group of the Somerset Strategic Partnership (including County and District Council Members, business leaders and regional bodies) tasked with strategic planning, transport and economic development matters, and overseeing the whole LTP development process;
 - District Council involvement and workshops to identify the objectives and priorities for the LTP and for consultation on the implementation programme.
- Close involvement of other departments and divisions within Somerset County Council such adult and childrens services sitting on our accessibility planning project group and main urban area transport strategy project groups;
- Stakeholder involvement and public consultation in the development of our main urban area and modal transport studies;
- 'Policy Commissions' with panel hearings and public consultation to review our strategies for speed management and passenger transport;
- 'Freight Quality Partnership' including hauliers and their regulatory bodies overseeing development of our Freight Strategy;
- Regular 'Public Transport Forum' involving public transport operators and other interested parties to discuss delivery of public transport in the County;
- 'Citizen's Panel' focus groups in each District and stakeholder workshops to identify the broad objectives for LTP2;
- Stakeholder workshops and public consultation on our provisional LTP2 strategy;
- Theme-based workshops with a variety of partners and agencies to develop our Accessibility Strategy;
- Stakeholder workshops and public consultation to give a final opportunity to influence our strategy and investment priorities;
- Events specifically targeted at younger people such as a web-based transport discussion; and
- A variety of one to one discussions with key partners.

More detail on involvement activity undertaken in developing our strategies is included within each chapter within the LTP.



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1.5.2 Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunity initiatives and regulations such as Opportunity 2000, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Disability Act 2005 etc, has ensured that delivering equalities is a priority for Somerset County Council.

As part of the work being undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the LTP document. The impact assessment is a tool that allows a service to thoroughly assess the impact of its policies on the customers it serves (and the staff that it employs) using data, consultation and any other information available. Findings from the process are translated into equality action plans and service plans, which are monitored and have named responsibilities for action and identified resources if appropriate. The impact assessment is a public document and will be available on our website from June 2006.

As a result of the Equality Impact Assessment for the LTP, the following key points were noted and recommendations made.

- The main clients for the LTP document are the DfT and the GOSW and there is no evidence that these specific groups or individuals are disadvantaged in accessing the LTP. However, since the document is available to the public it has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's Equality Guidance, which includes:
 - Inclusion of an equalities statement within the document (see inside cover);
 - Availability in a sans serif font (Arial) minimum font size 12; and
 - Availability in other formats (i.e Braille, other languages etc) on request.
- There has been a great deal of statutory and non-statutory consultation throughout the LTP development process. In terms of access to facilities (in accordance with the Council's Customer Access Strategy), all locations have been wheelchair accessible, and have had hearing loops systems available – although these facilities have not been requested or used. Any additional consultation will also have these facilities available. It has been recommended that all members of staff involved in consultation are trained in the use of assistance technology.
- As part of the consultation process there may have been opportunities for inequalities arising from the method of consultation where certain groups may be unaware of or unable to access the consultation material. In particular Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, single parent families, and carers were identified as not specifically targeted. Methods were put into place that ensured that these groups were included as part of the January 2006 consultation, and will continue to be included in any further consultation. The Accessibility Strategy will also continue to consult on a more localised basis and some of these groups will be specifically consulted during this process where appropriate.
- When comparing consultation reply statistics with general Somerset statistics for gender and age the groups were not equally represented. More men and people over 50 years of age responded than would be expected against the Somerset profile, and there were fewer responses from younger people. It has been recommended that more equalities information is collected (such as ethnicity, disability etc) as part of consultation and that this information is monitored carefully and analysed against the Somerset profile. Where areas are statistically different, action will be undertaken to further target groups that are not fully represented.



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- Actions resulting from LTP2 (and particularly the Accessibility Strategy) will have a positive impact on the following objectives (ref: IAT3 and IAT4) and related targets of the Council's Equalities Vision and Community Cohesion Strategy:
 - Information about public and community transport needs to be made more accessible and simple to understand;
 - Use of alternative formats including language support (with reference to transport)
 - Promoting concessionary rates to older people
 - Develop a more consistent and standardised approach as an authority and with partners to enable access to transport and the wider environment.

Further information on the Council's Equal Opportunity policies and access to the Equalities Vision and Community Cohesion Strategy and Equality Impact Assessments are available on our website at: www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/resources/equalopportunities.

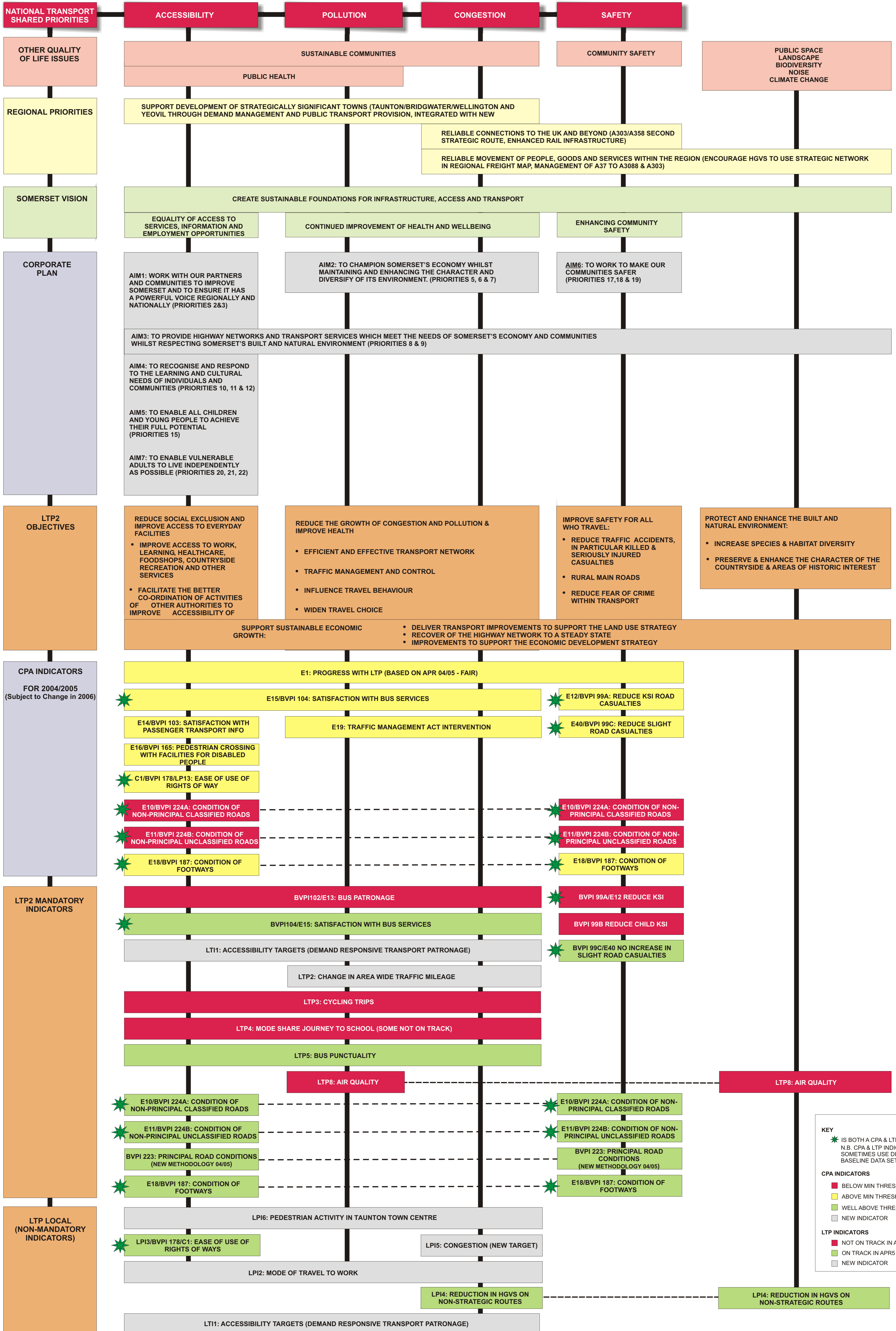
1.6 SUMMARY

This chapter clearly shows that our LTP has a valuable contribution to a range of national and regional priorities as well as helping deliver wider Council policy and local community priorities.

The chart overleaf draws together all of the national, regional and local community priorities and clearly shows how our chosen objectives for the second Local Transport Plan align with these. The chart also shows how delivery of the various objectives and priorities will be measured. Performance measures include those used by the Audit Commission through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process as well as those used by the Department for Transport to measure our performance through the LTP process.

Larger copies of this chart are available on request as it has been reduced in size to fit into this document.

TRANSPORT OBJECTIVES & TARGETS





1 VISION, OBJECTIVES & PRIORITIES

Notes:

