

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member - Environment
Date:	14 October 2010
Title:	Ringwood Town Access Plan – Consultation Draft
Reference:	1946
Report From:	Director of Environment

Contact name: Hannah Baker

Tel: 023 8042 7601

Email: hannah.baker@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1.1. This report presents the draft Ringwood Town Access Plan (TAP) which sets out a shared vision for how access to facilities and services within the town will be improved. It provides an update on the progress being made on the preparation of the Ringwood TAP and seeks approval for a public consultation of its draft document.

1.2. The Ringwood TAP has been developed jointly by Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council, assisted by Ringwood Town Council. It is an important element in defining what kind of place Ringwood is and it connects directly with the Local Transport Plan. It is intended that the Ringwood TAP will have the status of a 'Supplementary Planning Document' within the New Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF).

1.3. This report seeks to:

- provide contextual information on the emerging Ringwood TAP and summarise the current stage of the project;
- set out the way the Ringwood TAP will improve accessibility to, from and within Ringwood for utility and leisure trips;
- summarise the work already completed in terms of Member and community involvement as well as a number of relevant strategies; and
- provide information on available funding for taking the Ringwood TAP forward.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. The Local Transport Plan 2006-11 sets out the role of Access Plans and how they will guide the longer term vision and strategies covering all modes of transport within larger settlements in Hampshire such as Ringwood.
- 2.2. The Action Plans that form the main focus of the Ringwood TAP set out the way forward in terms of projects to implement, in the short and longer terms. Funding will be sought for the schemes that form the Action Plans through the Transport Contributions Policy which defines transport improvement schemes that will help justify contributions from local developers.
- 2.3. Schemes that appear in the Action Plans have been prioritised through stakeholder engagement. The categories of improvements considered were roads and traffic, parking control and management measures, walking and cycling, public and community transport, and smarter choices.
- 2.4. The Ringwood TAP reflects and supports other strategies, transport plans and policies already in place regarding the town and access, including the Ringwood Walking and Cycling Strategy (2003) and the Ringwood Town Plan (2009).
- 2.5. The broad aims of the Ringwood TAP are to:
 - improve accessibility throughout Ringwood by all sustainable modes of transport, notably walking, cycles and public transport;
 - enhance Ringwood as an important centre to live, work and visit;
 - support the local economy by providing improved transport infrastructure;
 - promote social inclusion and access for all;
 - integrate transport proposals with land use development; and
 - reduce the adverse impact of traffic.
- 2.6. The objectives of the Ringwood TAP are as follows:
 - enhance the quality of the town centre public realm and to underpin its function as an important retail centre;
 - enhance the streetscape and ease of movement in and around the town centre;
 - ensure the town centre remains an important location for retail, employment and leisure by creating good access to and within it;
 - develop the transportation network to accommodate future development requirements;

- enhance access to important community facilities outside the town centre core (schools, health and leisure centre, medical facilities) and employment sites;
- improve personal safety, especially for pedestrians and cyclists;
- reduce the effects of severance caused by the A31;
- recognise and respond to the needs of those with impaired mobility;
- promote improvements in the quality and sustainability of transport infrastructure;
- encourage greater use of more sustainable means of transport, particularly walking and cycling;
- further develop the high quality network of walking and cycling routes; and
- encourage healthier and more active lifestyles through better access to leisure facilities.

2.7. The TAP covers the built-up area of Ringwood Town and immediate surrounds (see Figure 1 in background document). To allow the plan to focus on localised issues and improving access to key destinations within the town, it does not extend to the surrounding villages.

2.8. Ringwood has a range of services and facilities for local residents. The majority of these are within the town centre with some local shops, schools and employment areas spread around the town. There is a bus/coach interchange in the town centre which provides transport services to the nearest main centres such as Southampton, Verwood and Christchurch and also a Ringwood circular service. There is also a National Express coach service to London, Weymouth, Bournemouth and destinations in the north such as Liverpool, Bradford and Edinburgh. There are destinations such as Salisbury, Southampton and Winchester for higher order services.

3. Member and community involvement

3.1. The development of the Ringwood TAP has been informed through consultation and evidence gathering and has been governed by a steering group consisting of the local Member and Hampshire County Council officers, New Forest District Council and Ringwood Town Council. Between 2002 and 2004 a series of Community Street Audits (CSA) were undertaken in Ringwood, at the time for the development of the Walking and Cycling Strategy, and these were refreshed in 2009.

3.2. The information obtained on the CSAs along the main routes into the town centre has been used in the preparation of the TAP. It has helped to identify the main barriers to access and movement within the town, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians. Identifying and understanding the problems

encountered on the ground in detail is crucial and the CSA plays an important role in this. The results of these street audits have already led to some changes taking place, such as a permanent road closure of the Quomp to through-traffic (a popular route to the town centre and schools which was affected by rat-running traffic) and the provision of the majority of the Southampton Road–Town Centre cycle route.

- 3.3. A stakeholder workshop was held in summer 2009 to help inform the preparation of the Town Access Plan. Stakeholders were representatives of County, District and Town Councillors, the Chamber of Trade, students and the New Forest Access for All Forum. Members of the former Ringwood Town Plan group also attended and provided invaluable support as many of the access issues inter-relate between the Town Plan and the TAP.
- 3.4. More recently, New Forest District Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation approved the draft Ringwood TAP for consultation.

4. Finance

- 4.1. A contribution towards funding for the printing of the draft report will be made by Hampshire County Council to New Forest District Council, although only a limited run will be produced in the interest of sustainability and to minimise cost. Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and Ringwood Town Council have jointly supported the workshops and the community street audits.
- 4.2. Implementation of the schemes will be mainly through developer contributions, either already held or forthcoming. Other funding mechanisms such as grants or County, District or Town Council funds will also be sought where possible. It is noted, however, that the current economic climate and uncertainty as to the future of the planning system means that there are likely to be substantial delays in commencing some schemes that are reliant upon developer or other funding.
- 4.3. The Ringwood TAP will have a coordinating role for the financing of schemes.

5. Consultation Arrangements

- 5.1. The public will be consulted on the draft Ringwood TAP starting in October 2010. The consultation on the joint draft document will be managed by New Forest District Council and coordinated with Hampshire County Council's dedicated consultation web pages. It will adhere to the statutory timescales associated with advertising a draft Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.2. Following the public consultation, it is anticipated that the Ringwood TAP will be adopted by both authorities and will be used to inform decisions on developer contributions, as well as the associated mitigation measures required to necessitate developments. Each scheme will also be subject to the appropriate scale of local consultation prior to implementation.

- 5.3. The document will be used to determine the allocation of funds sought from developers by Development Control officers as well as Highway officers from both authorities. Developers will also use the document when assessing the amount of financial contribution likely to be sought for the Ringwood area and what those funds seek to provide.
- 5.4. The document will help to guide future development of the town in terms of improving accessibility and providing better traffic management to better integrate the town.
- 5.5. The Ringwood TAP will be monitored by Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council on a regular basis. The progress of the Ringwood TAP and those schemes implemented as a result will be reported to Council Members. Outstanding issues will be reviewed and new priorities added as necessary.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1. That the draft Ringwood Town Access Plan be approved as a basis for consultation, to be undertaken jointly with New Forest District Council.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Draft Ringwood Town Access Plan	Hampshire Highways West, Totton

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. Statement one: The short-term minimum required to meet this action:

The Ringwood TAP has a duty to ensure that its recommendations provide fair and equal access to the town centre regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, mobility and social and geographic inclusion (eg people on low income and those living in areas of the town with the poorest transport links). Preparing the recommendations involved assessing the local population and understanding the varied access needs.

Statement two: Longer term minimum required to meet this action:

The Ringwood TAP has a duty to ensure that it reflects the access needs of the local community. Developing the plan involved carrying out community street audits with local members and residents to identify its varied access needs. The results from these audits and information form a range of strategies (roads and traffic, parking control and management, walking and cycling, public and community transport, and smarter choices) and helped to produce recommendations for the schemes included in the Ringwood TAP. These aim to provide fair and equal access to the town centre regardless of age, race, ethnicity, Religion, disability, gender sexual orientation, mobility and social and geographic inclusion (eg people on low income and those living in areas of the town with the poorest transport links).

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. Schemes that provide enhanced or new lighting could have a beneficial impact on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour owing to fewer areas with secluded outlooks.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

The Ringwood TAP will seek to improve accessibility and therefore increase the opportunities for use of more sustainable modes of transport than the motorised vehicle.

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The Ringwood TAP supports the need to adapt to climate change by looking to promote and support a move towards more sustainable modes of transport. In particular by improving walking and cycle routes within the town centre and looking to further improve public transport facilities such as the bus interchange.