

TRANSITION TOWN LETCHWORTH RESPONSE TO NORTH CENTRAL HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH AND TRANSPORT PLAN

Transition Town Letchworth has reviewed the North Central Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan (NCHGTP) with a view to identifying whether:

- the interaction analysis produced a comprehensive list of existing and potential (if North Hertfordshire Local Plan is adopted) transport issues for Letchworth.
- the adequacies of the proposed packages to address these transport issues.
- the likelihood that the proposed changes will lead to a shift to sustainable travel modes through both provision of infrastructure and demand management to reduce reliance on private motor vehicles.

Completeness of Identified Transport Issues for Letchworth

NCHGTP identifies Letchworth Garden City as having many aspects of the healthy streets vision but despite this there is substantial reliance on the car as a travel mode. In particular:

- the car is the dominant mode for trips to the industrial area (approximately 70% of trips) even though there are multiple bus routes to the industrial area from residential areas.
- There are high levels of car commuting to the town centre (64%) from more affluent areas to the south of Letchworth, parts of which are also severed by the A505 Letchworth Gate.
- car commuting to the town centre is 55% from the northern part of Letchworth.

NCHGTP states “Letchworth has wide green streets, segregated paths and good lighting, factors that make cycling and walking feel safe...” Whilst this description may fit certain areas of Letchworth, it does not reflect the situations around some of the roads leading into the schools, nor parts of National Cycle Route 12 (NCR12). Letchworth has limited amounts of segregated cycle infrastructure, and the cycle infrastructure it has got is disjointed and not well maintained. Many of Letchworth’s roads are clogged with parked cars, making it hazardous to cycle even on the quieter roads. These factors, along with busy main roads, deter local residents from cycling and would need to be addressed properly, by setting up a town-wide cycle network, to support a shift to sustainable transport.

NCHGTP has been influenced by road congestion and road safety data. These are good indicators for motor vehicles journeys. They do not though fully identify roads where there are cycling and walking safety issues. Cyclists and walkers are vulnerable, and they will seek to avoid routes they consider unsafe through not taking the trip, taking a different route or switching to a different transport mode. Cycling on the pavements is common in Letchworth, particularly on roads which locals consider to be unsafe to cycle. The high number of car journeys to school is suggestive that aspects of school routes are considered unsafe.

Adequacy of Work Packages for Addressing Identified Transport Issues

Package 5: Stevenage to Hitchin, Luton and Luton Airport

PR57 - Stevenage- Luton/Luton Airport Bus (improving the quality of route 100/101)
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Although there is a train service between Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock, the train stations are not all situated in the town centre and the need to change transport modes at the station or have an extended walk at each end of a journey deters people from using public transport. In LTP4 the idea

was put forward of a Core Bus Network link between Luton, Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock (LTP4 p67). It is disappointing, therefore, to find NCHGTP has no plans for Letchworth and Baldock to have improved bus links through to Luton. [Provision of a bus service serving the southern side of both Letchworth and Baldock which links into Hitchin train station and onto Luton could make a number of journeys more accessible by public transport and should be included in the NCHGTP.](#)

Package 6: Stevenage to Letchworth

SM82: Letchworth to Stevenage Cycle Route

TTL fully support SM82, the upgrading of National Route 12 between Stevenage and Letchworth. Electric bike technology increases the viability of this commuting route and promotion of an upgraded route and the possibility of using electric bikes will hopefully encourage more people to opt to cycle to their place of work.

The improvements appear to focus around Graveley but there are issues with the routing into Letchworth Town Centre at Willian Village that need to be addressed under Package 6. NCR12 as it proceeds from Fouracres, in Letchworth, passes down a shared pedestrian / cycle lane which leads to Willian Village. This track is steep and easily eroded and the cycle and pedestrian sides are not clearly marked on the ground. At the end of this track Willian Road is a relatively thin road, with fast traffic and sharp bends. The footpath is very thin. There is no pavement or cycle lane on the first section of Wymondley Road from Baldock Lane and a thin pavement appears a short distance along the road.

TTL would like SM82 to include:

- [resurfacing of the loose shingle on the cycle lane through from Fouracres to Willian and re-routing the track at the end so it meets the road at the Wymondley Road junction.](#)
- [A pedestrian / cycle crossing to cross Baldock Lane \(Willian\) by Wymondley Road.](#)
- [Road speed reduced to 20Mph throughout Willian Village.](#)
- [Wymondley Road \(Willian\) widened to have shared pedestrian/ cycle lane on the east side up until NCR12 branches off.](#)
- [Changing the junction between Baldock Lane and Wymondley Road to a simple T junction to improve visibility and create space for a shared pedestrian / cycle lane.](#)

SM85: B197/A505 Junction Improvement

TTL support SM85 to improve the B197/A505 junction to support cycle, walking and bus journeys.

There is a high level of car commuting between Stevenage and Letchworth. The NCHGTP states that “*despite excellent connectivity the vast majority of trips are made by private vehicle, leading to poor reliability with congestion and delays along the A602 between Stevenage and the A1(M) Junction 8, and delays along the A505 Letchworth Gate*”. Cycling was identified as having poor connectivity because of the quality and safety of the cycle routes and this is rightly being addressed. A minor change on the bus routing is also proposed to give a slight efficiency gain. However, connectivity is regarded as good because there are bus and train links on this key commuting route. Despite what looks like good connectivity with plenty of transport options, taking the train to Stevenage from Letchworth or Baldock is a much longer journey (in both time and distance) than a car journey between these towns and bus journeys are often indirect and slow. [Package 6 would](#)

therefore benefit from additional interventions aimed at increasing the attractiveness of a bus journey compared to a car. For example, a mix of a rapid bus service and some demand management interventions, perhaps, utilising the third lane/ hard shoulder as a bus only or bus and multi-occupancy car lane.

This intervention would be a good start for addressing the following identified issues:

- A high number of fatal or serious collisions occurring over the past 2 years on the A505 Letchworth Gate central gyratory and A505/B656 junction.
- Congestion and moderate delays along the A505/Baldock Rd and Letchworth Gate in the morning peak, and severe delays in the evening peak on the A505 heading towards the A1(M) junction 9.
- High levels of roadside NOx along the A505/Baldock Road and A505/Letchworth Gate.

Package 10: Hitchin to Letchworth / Baldock

SM59 continuous cycle route along the A505 Sustainable Spine with new and improved junction/crossing facilities for cyclists

TTL are pleased to see it has been recognised that there are poor cycle links between Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock and so we support **SM59**. Given the traffic levels on this major road our expectation is that there will be a **segregated** cycle track which has junction priorities, though we accept that this may be difficult at some locations where there is insufficient public realm.

The B656 is the main connection between Letchworth and Baldock but it is possible to reach Baldock by some less direct routes including the A505 / B197, which can add to the congestion on these roads at peak commuting times.

Whilst the evidence reports that there is a pedestrian underpass under the motorway between Coachman's Lane and the Letchworth employment area, this is actually a bridge. However, there is an A1(M) underpass on the south side of the B656 which forms part of the Letchworth Greenway. This section is a rather unpleasant part of the Greenway (boggy and littered) which is reached by a non direct route from Letchworth. However, there is the potential to improve connectivity between key destinations in Baldock and Letchworth by making a link from this A1(M) underpass through to the Leisure Centre and the Jubilee Road crossing of the B656.

Package 11: Letchworth Centre and Industrial Estate

PR63: Cycle network signage

Review cycle network signage on routes to Letchworth train station and town centre. Provide signage on key routes where this is not already provided.

TTL support the idea of clearly signing a cycle network in Letchworth but before there can be signage Letchworth first needs to have a cycle network. NCHGTP identifies that there is no east-west cycling infrastructure from LETr1 to the town centre and that the eastern halves of residential areas are not served by NCR12, impacting accessibility. Letchworth cycle infrastructure currently consists of NCR12 passing through from north to south, the Greenway which is a leisure cycling facility around the periphery of the town, a thin disjointed cycle route from Hitchin and isolated short sections of cycle tracks which we presume were installed to address local issues. NCR12 is not segregated along its route through the town and cyclists are expected to navigate some of the

busiest junctions on the route on the road (e.g. the mini-roundabouts by the station).

‘Letchworth Cyclists’ have conducted a series of rides around the town and used learning from this exercise to produce a proposal for a comprehensive cycle network, utilising ‘shared’ paths and quiet road opportunities when these give a relatively direct route but recognising that sometimes the network will require the installation of a segregated cycle track on busier roads. TTL would like to see this proposal developed and adopted as Letchworth’s cycle network. ‘Letchworth Cyclists’ have identified five schemes which are part of the network plan which would be beneficial if delivered in advance of a complete network. These schemes are:

- First Garden City Roundabout – Implement a dutch style roundabout and make the NCR12 section of Spring Road a no through road.
- Gernon Road – Introduce a 20 Mph speed limit and contraflow cycle lane to this one way street.
- Jackman’s Cycle Paths – Convert some of the underused footpaths to shared cycle / pedestrian tracks.
- Bedford Road Crossing - Introduce a pedestrian / cycle crossing from the west side of Valley Road to the south side of Bedford Road and extend the existing Bedford Road cycle lane.
- Leisure Centre - Introduce a shared pedestrian / cycle lane to run parallel to the south side of the B656 between the planned Dunham’s Lane crossing and the Jubilee Road crossing.

PR65: Letchworth town centre cycle parking

Ensure appropriate on-street cycle parking provision in Letchworth town centre, at neighbourhood retail centres and other key service locations.

TTL support the idea of additional cycle parking and identified locations for bike stands, by means of a survey of cyclists.

- 1) Town centre locations which would benefit from additional parking are at the top of Leys Avenue, lower half of Leys Avenue, Eastcheap (by Cinema), Station Road (near Premier Inn), Broadway Hotel, Howard Park / Mrs Howard Hall (increase provision to encourage youth cycling), Norton Common tennis courts, outdoor pool, Garden Cities Exhibition/Institute (museum), The Settlement, Standalone Farm, Nevells Road, Birchwood and Garden City GP Surgeries.
- 2) Neighbourhood retail centres that would benefit from additional parking are Willian Village and Southfields shopping centre (Grange Estate).

PR71: A505 Pedestrian Crossings

Investigate options to provide pedestrian crossings to reduce severance effect of the A505 at linking local schools on either side of the road.

TTL supports additional pedestrian crossing points on the A505 which should benefit many residents, not just school children. When introducing crossings, toucan crossings should be provided at any crossing which is part of the existing, or proposed, ‘Letchworth Cycle Network’. A505 crossing locations which should be introduced or improved are:

- a) The existing crossing of the A505 between Spring Lane and Muddy Lane (part of NCR 12). In particular, Spring Road should be converted to a ‘quiet road’ with bollards (retractable if necessary for emergency vehicles) part way up the road, leaving the nursing home accessible from the A505 entrance, to prevent through traffic. The A505 toucan crossing lights need to be staggered so that the lights stopping traffic from the west are moved to the west side of Spring Lane. A cycle lane can then be marked across the A505 allowing cyclists to pass into

- Muddy Lane, avoiding navigating on the thin footpath to reach the existing crossing.
- b) St Pauls Roundabout is a major junction, but it is also on walking routes from both the Jackman's and Lordship estates. Suitable pedestrian and cycle crossings need to be put into place from both Lordship and Jackman's estates in the vicinity of this roundabout to access Pixmore Way.
 - c) Dunham's Lane to Leisure Centre - The current B656 crossing by the Petrol Station may be better relocated to the football club side of Radburn Way and changed to a toucan crossing so it forms a more effective connection between the Jackman's, Leisure Centre, Baldock Recreation Ground and the Industrial Area.
 - d) If Letchworth and Baldock Urban Transport Plan March 2012, Hertfordshire Highways scheme NM2 is still taking place then a crossing should be installed at the top of Dunham's Lane linking the NCR12 route.

SM62: Baldock to Letchworth Cycle Route

Cycle route from industrial estate to Letchworth rail station and Broadway.

TTL support the introduction of a cycle route from Letchworth town centre to the industrial estate. However, there will need to be segregated cycle tracks as the roads are particularly hazardous with lots of commercial vehicles manoeuvring round busy entrances to industrial units. Roads identified in Letchworth Cyclists network plan which would benefit from the addition of shared cycle / pedestrian footpaths are Dunhams Lane, Avenue One, Sixth Avenue, Second Avenue, Works Road, Birds Hill, Green Lane and Blackhorse Road.

Letchworth and Baldock Urban Transport Plan March 2012, (Hertfordshire Highways), included scheme NM2 Cycle Corridor 2, Jackmans Estate to Grange Estate, which was to pass through the industrial area from north to south. It would be helpful to know if this scheme is still planned to proceed. This scheme involved upgrading the pedestrian railway crossing by providing a wheel ramp for bicycles which would make it easier for cyclists to walk up the steps. Reconfiguring the proposal to provide a ramp in place of steps would improve accessibility for mobility vehicles and pushchairs, as well as bicycles, from North Letchworth to the industrial area. There is, for example, a nursery on the industrial area that could then be more easily accessed by foot.

Letchworth Cyclists' five 'advance' schemes for delivering a cycle network included a build on existing scheme NM2. This would involve introducing a shared pedestrian / cycle lane to run parallel to the south side of the B656 between the planned Dunham's Lane Toucan Crossing to the Jubilee Road crossing point. Ideally this shared pedestrian / cycle lane would be extended beyond the Jubilee crossing to Weston Way (and Knights Templar school) forming part of a sustainable spine to Baldock. This cycle route could connect into the Letchworth Greenway via the Jubilee Road / B656 crossing (which should be converted to a toucan crossing) with clearer signing of the cycle path on the north side of the B656 from Jubilee Road to the motorway underpass. The Greenway and NCR12 could then be rerouted to utilise the Jubilee Road/B656 crossing, (avoiding the busy roads and poorly maintained paths on the existing detour via Weston Way, Baldock).

The industrial area is split into sections which are often fenced off. The possibility of providing walking / cycling paths through the industrial estate should be explored to facilitate safer and more direct routing to business premises.

There are some original workers' paths through to the industrial estate which could, with some minor improvements, be converted to shared pedestrian / cycle routes. For example:

- The path from Pixmore Avenue through to Dunham's Lane would benefit from cutting back the

vegetation and providing a ramp rather than steps at the Dunham's Lane end.

- The paths from Pascal Way to Norton Road and Cromwell Road route to Cashio Lane would benefit from becoming shared cycle / pedestrian tracks with appropriate signage. Glebe Road, Common View and North Avenue are all crossed and sinusoidal humps should be placed at each of the crossing points to slow traffic and raise awareness that the cycle network crosses.

Letchworth Public Transport Interchange

There is scope for improving Letchworth's public transport connections. Bus stops are located at various locations round the town centre, with limited cover and seating for passengers waiting for a bus. TTL would like the NCHGTP to include the redesign of the area outside the train station into a comprehensive public transport interchange with a bus station outside the train station main entrance (relocating the war memorial to Broadway Gardens where it would be much more visible and accessible). This would bring considerable benefit, reducing interchange times and making it easier for people to find the right service.

Package 12: North Letchworth

PR68: Letchworth rail station cycle parking

Work with partners to provide additional cycle parking at Letchworth station in line with demand.

TTL support the provision of additional cycle parking at the station.

Currently the station can only be accessed from south of the train line, and train passengers from the north of the town either have to cross over Neville's Bridge on Bridge Road or pass under the railway on Norton Way and then reach the station via Station Road. Provision of a north side entrance to the station would reduce the time it takes to reach the station providing a daily benefit to commuters from the north side of the town. This time saving could help encourage people to switch to sustainable transport as they would have a shorter walk / cycle ride to the station.

A flyover for walkers / cyclists from Station Place to Nevells Road, which would provide improved access to the town centre and to the station, would be the optimum addition to the town. However, we recognise this would involve a significant spend. There is though, a lower cost option that could be explored. A rear entrance and exit to the station could be provided from the north side platform (trains to Cambridge) by providing a path from the west end of the platform to link with the existing footpath that runs from Bridge Road to Spring Road along the side of the railway. The stairs from Bridge Road could be changed to an accessible ramp. There appears to be sufficient land for provision of ticket barriers and possibly some bike parking.

This idea was submitted to the 'Passenger Benefit Fund' and money from this fund has been allocated for a feasibility study of Letchworth station entrance area.

SM66: Bus Access to Development - Letchworth North

Work with partners to improve bus services to the development sites.

TTL support improved bus services and would expect any new buses resulting from increasing services to be electric buses.

SM67: Connections for site LG1

Link existing routes and sustainable spine through the Grange estate and the Garden City cycle route from Norton common eastwards to the main employment area.

TTL presume that this is about linking in to NCR12. [To link to the employment areas will require a more extensive cycle network as is proposed in 'Letchworth Cyclists' Cycle Network Plan.](#)

SM69: North Letchworth cycling connections

Improve cycling routes through north Letchworth, considering off-road cycle tracks and junction treatments.

TTL support this and have put forward a number of proposals on this in the ['Letchworth Cyclists' Cycle Network Plan.](#)

The strategy paper recognises that large numbers of trips are made between Letchworth and Hitchin, Baldock and particularly Stevenage, with its many employment locations. It also recognises that residential and commercial development on the edge of these towns will increase demand for travel between the towns and from the periphery to the centre of each town. It states that if the existing modal split is maintained, with the majority of trips made in private cars, this will place increasing pressure on:

- the A1(M) as a spine route connecting the urban areas,
- the A505 connecting to Luton and Royston,
- the A602 between Hitchin and Stevenage,
- Junction 7 and Junction 8 of the A1(M),
- routes between the A602 and A505 in the east of Hitchin,
- the local road network which is already congested.

On train capacity the evidence paper report states that “There is likely to be little capacity to add any more services, despite station and operator observations suggesting that peak hour services already operate at or above capacity.” It is suggested that the planned introduction of HS2 will shift services and reduce the number of East Coast Main Line trains leaving more capacity for local train services, but this will not be delivered in the timescales of North Hertfordshire’s Local Plan 2011-2031.

Whilst we support the ambition in the NCHGTP to invest to facilitate people switching to sustainable transport many of the planned sites for new housing in North Hertfordshire are not ideally sited for using sustainable transport to access employment areas or schools. Distances will be challenging for many ‘new’ cyclists, plans to improve bus services are ‘vague’ and there are no short term fixes to rail capacity issues. Detailed transport plans to support the Baldock and Letchworth strategic sites in North Herts Local Plan have yet to be shared with the public, but given their location it seems likely that any solutions proposed will increase traffic utilising J9 and J10 of the A1(M) and their associated connecting local roads.

The NCHGTP does not contain evidence that it has fully considered and planned for all the transport implications from the new housing growth in Letchworth.

Package 14 - Shefford, Arlesey and Stotfold to Hitchin and Letchworth Garden City

NCHGTP identifies the interaction between Hitchin and Letchworth Garden City and the Central Bedfordshire towns along the Shefford/Arlesey/Stotfold corridor as well connected, with “a rail line running through the centre of the interaction and bus connection between most towns.” and National Cycle Route 12 serving the interaction to Letchworth Garden City. Despite good

connectivity, poor public transport frequencies result in poor accessibility on the interaction, and the vast majority of commuting trips (more than 90%) being made by private vehicle. [The results of traffic modelling for planned new developments in North Herts on the roads adjoining the A507 corridor need to be shared and if these show potential issues, solutions need to be found.](#)

PR76: Sustainable access to Hitchin, Letchworth and Stevenage from eastern A507 corridor.

TTL support encouraging use of Arlesey station to reduce car trips on roads linking North Herts to the A507, though the benefits to Letchworth may be less as Arlesey and Letchworth are on different train lines and to get between the two requires a change at Hitchin.

SM95: Cycle Routes to Henlow Camp and Stotfold

TTL support upgrade of existing footpaths to provide cycle connections in Central Bedfordshire. [The cycle route between Letchworth and Fairfield Park along Stotfold Road needs improvement. Currently there is an inadequate shared cycle path that runs along the pavement on the north of Stotfold Road switching over at the Two Chimneys Pub to the top of Bedford Road. A segregated cycle lane should be introduced along Stotfold Road which follows the path of the road linking Fairfield Park with Bedford Road.](#)

Likelihood of Work Packages Leading to Greater Use of Sustainable Transport

School Trips

The Evidence Paper identifies that for school commuting:

- avoidable car trips increase local highway congestion and picking up and dropping off pupils creates safety risks around schools
- in North Central Herts Letchworth was identified as the town with the highest percentage of children whose school travel mode is car (31%) and the percentage where the car represents at least part of their school journey is 51%.
- understanding the reasons for the variations in school travel modes will be important for scheme development.

Private, Single Sex, Special Needs and Faith Schools have wider catchments due to their admission criteria as is recognised in the Interventions Paper. For older children public transport can and is likely to be used (and this probably explains many of the train and bus journeys to Hitchin schools) but for primary age children, where the children are escorted to school, it seems likely that this will lead to car journeys. Letchworth's has two faith schools and a special needs primary school. [TTL would like HCC transport and school admissions teams to work together to identify the relationship between school admission criteria and sustainable school journeys to see if changes to admission criteria for schools could lead to more sustainable journeys.](#)

In most towns in the area the secondary schools are located near the town centre or distributed across the town. In Letchworth, however, the two secondary schools are located close together on the western periphery of the town. This makes for long journeys for many children and is one explanation for the higher percentage of children whose journey to school is by car. [TTL would suggest that Secondary Schools should be identified as a key destination for Letchworth because of the particular location issues and a supporting work package developed.](#)

[TTL worked with local cycling groups and Sustrans to develop a proposal to explore how Sustrans Street Kit could be used to identify and test potential improvements to the road network around](#)

some of the town's schools and TTL would like to work with HCC to find a way forward for this project.

Congestion on Bedford Road and Icknield Way

NCHGTP identifies low to moderate congestion and delays along Bedford Road and Icknield Way and moderate congestion and delays at the access to the town centre; Station Place junctions with Broadway and Bridge Road; and in Broadway, affecting reliability from the north west areas of LETr1. None of the proposed work packages address this issue.

TTL would like to see a Project to tackle on-street parking which could include:

- One way system through roads where parking has already made streets single lane (e.g. Cowslip Hill, Ridge Avenue).
- Inset parking bays on core routes or elements of cycle network (with no parking on the road). Core roads are the A505, Pixmore Way, Norton Way, Bedford Road, Icknield Way and Green Lane.
- Parking restrictions to encourage use of driveways and garages (this may require a review of Heritage Foundation planning restrictions for terraced housing and support for Housing Associations to install driveways).

The mini-roundabouts on Icknield Way have been identified as locations where cyclists feel particularly unsafe. TTL would like different road layouts to be considered that favour cyclists, in line with policy 1 of LTP4.

Walking in Letchworth

NCHGTP identifies that the town centre could be improved by more frequent formal crossings and street furniture. None of the proposed work packages address this issue.

There are a number of roads in Letchworth which can be hazardous for pedestrians or take a significant time to cross at peak traffic times. Many of these roads are on popular walking routes, including school routes. To ensure walking is a pleasant and safe experience Letchworth's Transport Plan should include the identification of problem pedestrian road crossing points along with the most appropriate remedial action. Remedial action may take a number of forms, including, but not limited to, the introduction of a pedestrian crossing or preventing on-road parking where it forces pedestrians into the road to check for traffic.

Some examples of areas where road crossing issues need addressing are:

- Onto Broadway Gardens,
- Across Pixmore Way near the Nexus Building,
- Pixmore Way where it links to Gernon Way,
- Across Bridge Road,
- Across Norton Way South (at Station Road end of Howard Gardens),
- Across Icknield Way by Quadrant,
- Across Broadway linking to the south side of Spring Road,
- Across A505 at Greenway Crossings,
- Southfields on the Grange,
- From Jackman's to Pixmore Way by St Paul's Roundabout,
- Norton Road to St Nicholas School,
- Under A1(M).

Letchworth's Transport Plan should include improving the quality of footpaths. Improvements that may be necessary are:

- Widening paths so they can be used by those with pushchairs or wheelchairs (e.g. Lytton Avenue, Souberie Avenue and A505 near Highfield).
- Ensuring street lighting illuminates paths (not just roads).
- Fixing uneven pavements.

Letchworth's Transport Plan should address barriers which prevent direct walking routes, in particular:

- the closure of the Garden Square Shopping Centre and the Arcade in the evening.
- the limited number of railway crossing points.
- the lack of an east-west surfaced path through Norton Common to access the outdoor pool and industrial area.
- The lack of footpath connectivity within the industrial area.