**Growth and Transport Plans – evidence packs suggested exec summary (to go at front of report and on the internet)**

**Introduction**

A series of town based evidence packs have been developed to support the emerging Growth and Transport plans. These include analysis of a range of socioeconomic, land use, demographic factors, and consideration of current transport provision and usage to identify issues and constraints in relation to travel to / from and within the towns.

An assessment is also included of likely future transport pressures taking into account proposed growth and predictions from modelling work using the countywide transport model COMET.

The key findings from the Hitchin evidence pack are outlined below.

**Community Characteristics**

This section looks at the current land use, employment, education and social characteristics of the study area drawing on a variety of information sources including; Address Base Premium, ONS census 2011, Business Registrations and Employment Survey, DCLG Indices of Deprivation, Experian Mosaic profile and the Hertfordshire County Travel Survey.

Hitchin has two main employment centres (the town centre and Cadwell Lane business area), 3 secondary schools (the Priory and Hitchin Boys and Girls schools) and a variety of sports and leisure facilities.

Overall it is generally affluent with below average unemployment rates, high levels of life expectancy and good levels of health compared to national averages and other towns in Hertfordshire. There are however pockets of deprivation in the north west and south east areas of town and there is one declared AQMA (Hitchin Hill) and a number of congestion hotspots with dwellings in close proximity to them.

**Economic Portrait**

This section investigates the current economic climate in the study area drawing on information sources such as the East of England Forecasting Model, ONS Census 2011 and the Business Registrations and Employment Survey.

North Hertfordshire district has around 132,000 inhabitants and around 59,000 jobs with key employment sectors identified as Wholesale and Retail, Manufacturing and Accommodation, food and services.

Within the Hitchin study area, businesses tend to be small / medium sized with the largest employer having around 430 jobs. There does appear to be a disparity between residents job skills and the type of jobs provided by local businesses. Parts of the study area are dominated by residents working in Professional, Scientific and Technical Sectors which do not appear to be available locally in the Hitchin area, indicating high levels of out commuting.

**Transport Network**

This section summarises existing transport infrastructure in the study area drawing on a variety of map based information sources held by HCC.

The A1m corridor runs around 3 miles to the east with connections to the study area provided by junctions 8 & 9. Other strategic routes (A602, A505 and A600) converge in the centre of the town. There are several car parks in Hitchin offering in total over 1000 parking spaces. Most are controlled by the district council although there are also some large supermarket car parks. Free parking is available in some of the smaller car parks.

Hitchin is located on the Great Northern Rail line with services to Kings Cross and Cambridge / Peterborough. The station is however located away from the town centre and main employment area.

Bus services connect Hitchin with Luton and Stevenage. Less frequent links are also provided to St Albans, Bedford and Hatfield.

There are few cycle facilities and those that do exist are limited and disjointed. There are no specific cycle facilities serving the town centre.

**Network Analysis**

This section summarises current transport performance in the Study area drawing heavily on census journey to work data as well as Trafficmaster journey time analysis, Tracc analysis and collision data.

Hitchin is a commuter town with 41% of all work trips classified as out commute. Conversely the numbers living and working in the area (internal trips) or working from home are lower than in other Hertfordshire towns.

Most commuting into the area is from other areas of North Herts (particularly Letchworth, Baldock Ickleford) and Stevenage. There are also a significant number of trips from surrounding areas in Central Beds (especially Henlow and Stotfold). Over three quarters of trips are by private car compared with sustainable travel which is low considering the relatively short distances involved.

Out commuting is dominated by travel to London and 12% of out commuter trips are by rail. There are also significant numbers of trips to Stevenage, rest of North Herts and Welwyn Hatfield, areas which are also served by the same rail line. Despite this 61% of out commuting trips are still by car.

A relatively high proportion of internal trips (44%) (especially to the town centre) are made by foot which is high compared to other Hertfordshire towns. However 41% of these short distance trips are still by car and bus and cycle use is low for these short journeys.

This dominance of car use along with the presence of strategic A roads running through the town results in a number of congestion hotspots at key junctions.

Analysis of individual journey time routes indicates that large delays are particularly evident at the Paynes Park, A600 / A505 and Hitchin Hill junctions. A number of these key junctions are also defined as hazardous sites where clusters of collisions are evident.

Bus service provision is relatively poor. There are no frequent services (defined as having 5 or more buses between 8-10am) and there are a number of residential areas which are over 400m from the nearest bus stop. TRACC accessibility analysis indicates that although areas along the A600 and A505 are within 10 minutes bus journey time of the town centre / station area, for most of the town these journeys take up to 20 minutes.

As previously noted Hitchin station is isolated from the town centre and large areas of the town are over 20 minutes walk away. The Cadwell Lane Industrial area is also particularly isolated with a limited residential catchment within 20 minutes walk and journeys to the station and southern Hitchin taking 30 minutes and more by bus. The Cadwell Lane industrial area is particularly dominated by car trips

Most areas of the town however are able to access the town centre, Station and Cadwell Lane area within 15 minutes by bike.

**Future Transport**

This section draws comparisons between 2014 and 2031, using data from the COMET strategic transport model as well as data from the local council regarding development and growth statistics.

North Herts borough is set to experience a 14% growth in population over the next 15 years and a 9% growth in employment with main growth seen in construction and accommodation & food services sectors.

Within the study area the main development site identified by the district as part of their local plan is Highover Farm to the north east of Hitchin. There also a number of smaller sites which have been granted permission.

Growth in flows between 2014 and 2031 can be observed on Stevenage Road (A602) and Moormead Hill (A505) during the AM & PM peak hour (8-9AM & 17-18PM).

Journey time comparisons between the AM & PM peak area shows increases in journey times are found to destinations towards Luton to the west; Welwyn Garden City to the south and Stevenage to the east.