Traffic Management Strategy for Solihull

(2013 – 2018)

Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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The Vision:
Working in partnership to reduce delay and congestion on the road network in Solihull.

Contents

1. Foreword

A message from Solihull's Transport and Highways Cabinet Member
Councillor Ted Richards OBE

Whether you are a resident, visitor or someone simply passing through on its road network, you will in some way be affected by the way traffic is managed in Solihull.

Councillor Ted Richards

Following the introduction of the Traffic Management Act, the Council has been given a greater responsibility to reduce delay and congestion on the road network for all road users.

In developing this plan, it is important that the needs of all users of our roads and footways, including vulnerable groups such as cyclists and pedestrians are taken into account in order for the Council to fully discharge its duties and responsibilities.

It is well recognised that a good, safe and well maintained road network and its associated transport systems are key factors to the wellbeing of communities and businesses in terms of economic growth and regeneration. These in turn enable better social inclusion, employment opportunities, prosperity, and quality of life.

The Department for Transport has published advice and guidance on how we should tackle the causes of congestion and disruption on our roads, but stress the need to be flexible in meeting local priorities.

The pressures on our strategic and local road network are far ranging, with peak flows focused on the daily activity at our local schools, journeys to and from our town and retail centres and shift patterns at the major employment sites across the Borough.

Our Traffic Management Strategy sets out the Council's priorities and how we are working with our partners to deliver a safe, efficient and reliable road network for Solihull. It also identifies an Improvement Plan, which sets out some key areas and activities where changes are planned.

Thank you for taking an interest in how traffic is managed in Solihull. I hope you agree that the Strategy acts as a great source of information and helps you to understand the issues and opportunities faced on a daily basis, and the methods used to ensure you have a good journey.

If you would like to contact us about this document or the Traffic Management Service, please e-mail us at: trafficmanagement@solihull.gov.uk or write to the Traffic Manager, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, The Council House, Manor Square, Solihull, B91 3QB.

2. Executive Summary

2.1.1 The Traffic Management Act 2004, which came into force in January 2005, requires the Council, as the local traffic authority for the local road network in Solihull, to minimise delay and congestion on its road network and the network of any neighbouring authorities.

2.1.2 A key requirement of The Act was the appointment of a Traffic Manager to co-ordinate activities on the road network and to 'champion' the needs of all road users. This Strategy seeks to clarify how the statutory role will be delivered in Solihull. Part of this role will be to take a lead role in the delivery of this Strategy and the associated Traffic Management Improvement Plan.

2.1.3 The management of traffic in Solihull is being delivered in line with the requirements of the Act and this Strategy brings together the various roles and responsibilities, sets priorities for the service and the expected ways of working. It also seeks to identify issues and opportunities that the service may face in the future. In summary, the Plan sets out the techniques and approach to:

- Identifying and managing different road types;
- Monitoring and reviewing the road network;
- Identifying where regular congestion occurs, and potential solutions;
- Co-ordinating and directing works on the highway;
- Dealing with planned events and responding to incidents;
- Making the best use of technology;
- Managing and enforcing parking and other types of traffic regulation orders;
- Accommodating heavy goods vehicles and other service traffic;
- Regularly reviewing of the road network;
- Consulting and engaging with partners, key stakeholders, and road user groups; and
- Providing information to road users and the community.

2.1.4 The Strategy considers what the management of the road network means for Solihull in terms of congestion and providing reliable journey times, particularly on the strategic and classified road network. It also considers resource requirements, current use of technology and looks to the future for ways of improving service delivery in line with the Council's priorities.

2.1.5 When congestion occurs on the road network it can have a significant impact on communities and individuals' lives. This can also impact on the local economy and the reputation of the Council. This Strategy and associated Improvement Plan, therefore, sets out how important effective management of the road network is, in order to minimise as far as reasonably practicable congestion in Solihull.

3.   The Traffic Management Strategy

3.1   KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT

3.1.1   There are two key objectives of our Traffic Management Strategy (the Strategy), and these are derived from Part 2 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (the Act), Section 16 (1), which states:

- "It is the duty of a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:

   a) Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and,

   b) Facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority."

3.1.2   The term "expeditious" in this context is used to refer to an appropriate and consistent speed rather than proceeding as fast or quickly as possible. The overall aim is, therefore, to provide a road network that is working efficiently without unnecessary delay.

3.1.3   The need to be reasonable and practicable means that the duty is placed alongside all other things that the Council has to consider, and it does not take precedence. For example, ensuring expeditious movement of traffic on our roads should not be provided at the expense of our road safety objectives. But, it does reflect the importance that should be placed on making best use of our existing road space for the benefit of all road users, including cyclists and pedestrians.

3.1.4   Users of the road network do not generally see the divide between local authorities. So when using it, they use it as a whole, irrespective of who is responsible for managing it. The Act requires that our traffic management services are planned and delivered in a manner that not only takes into account the impact on our own road network, but also the effects of our actions on the network managed by our neighbouring authorities.

3.1.5   Section 17 of the Act sets out a number of additional duties with respect to the management of the road network management, which include:

- Appointment of a Traffic Manager;

- Development of plans for taking the actions it deems necessary for network management;

- Establishing the means of actioning these plans;

- Establishing processes for identification of the current causes of congestion and other forms of disruption to the movement of traffic; and

- Establishing parallel processes for identification of events and circumstances that have the potential to cause congestion and other forms of disruption to the movement of traffic, providing that the effect is likely to be significant.
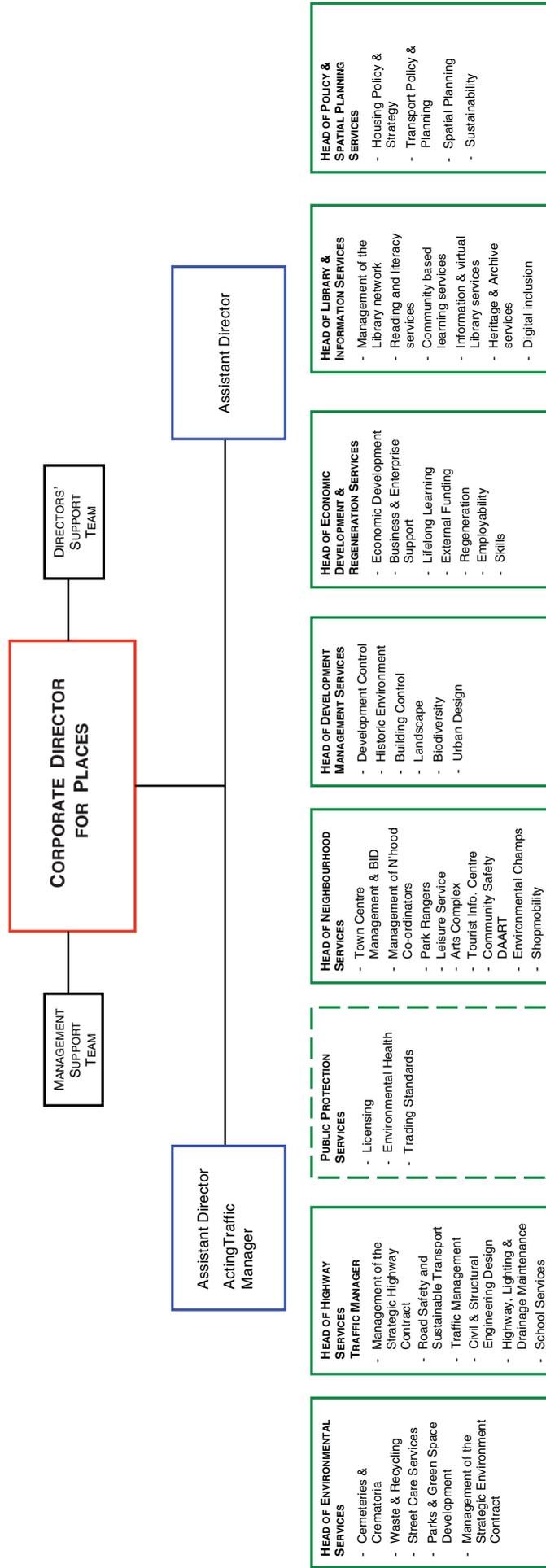
3.1.6   In discharging this duty it is implied that the Council should also bear in mind the need for monitoring its performance, processes and resources, with a view to continuous improvement and delivering a best value service.

3.1.7   The Act was introduced to help tackle congestion and disruption on the road network. It requires local traffic authorities to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage their network to keep traffic moving effectively. It extends and strengthens the Council's existing powers and duties to maintain, develop and improve their road network and manage activities taking place on it. It provides the Council with additional tools to better manage parking policies, moving traffic enforcement and the co-ordination of road work and street works.

3.1.8   It also recognises that Solihull's challenges will differ to other authorities, and therefore Solihull's Traffic Management Strategy needs to demonstrate that systems are in place to deal with:

- Managing the normal day-to-day running of the road network, particularly peak period increases in traffic flow;

- The management of road works and street works;

- The management of collisions and emergencies, taking into account the hierarchy of roads to the user; and

- One-off events such as carnivals, street markets, sports fixtures and adverse weather conditions.

3.1.9   For those incidents which are outside of the local traffic authority's direct control, such as road traffic collisions or road works on neighbouring networks, it is essential that all parties involved in making decisions are consulted during development of the management plans and that good systems of communication exist between all parties.

3.1.10   A key aspect for the Strategy's Traffic Management Plan will be to communicate effectively with its partners and stakeholders. At the forefront will be the relationship with the Police, who will possess crucial and early information about the condition of the road network, and identify the need to intervene, monitor and evaluate emergencies and other events as they occur on the road network.

3.1.11   The Highways Agency and other neighbouring local traffic authorities, together with such organisations as Centro, and local bus service operators also need to be part of the traffic management process in Solihull. Our key stakeholders and road users will, therefore, be made aware of all upcoming restrictions and events on the road network in a timely manner to help provide consistent journey times for all road users.

3.1.12   In this context "all roads users" means all forms of motorised vehicles, and non-motorised users, including cyclists and pedestrians. All types of road user groups will therefore be invited to help develop the Traffic Management Strategy for Solihull.

4.   The Traffic Manager

4.1.1   A requirement of the Act was the appointment of a Traffic Manager to co-ordinate activities on the road network and to 'champion' the needs of all road users. Initially in Solihull, this role was delivered by the Service Director for Transport, Highways and the Environment. Following a recent reshaping of Council services within the Places Directorate, a position of Head of Highway Services has been created. Part of this post's function will be to fulfil the statutory role of the Traffic Manager for Solihull. The Head of Highway Services is, therefore, responsible for the development and delivery of the Traffic Management Plan.

4.1.2   The key outcome for the Council is that the Traffic Manager will need to deliver a co-ordinated, planned and effective response to the duty placed on this role across the whole organisation and to ensure that agreed actions are implemented.

4.1.3   The Head of Highway Services directly oversees not only the traffic management function, carried out by the Council, but also the highway design, highway maintenance and road safety functions. This post also forms part of the Places Directorate's wider management team where other services related to the built and natural environment, including planning and environmental maintenance are managed. The Head of Highway Services is, therefore, well positioned to meet the requirements of the Act.

4.1.4   The structure beneath the Traffic Manager, in the wider role as Head of Highway Services, has been developed to address the challenges and pressures that local government will face in the coming years. With the majority of the four teams that make up Highway Services now being co-located at the Council House, the new structure is expected to bring significant improvement in terms of communication, demand management, programming and delivery.

Places Directorate Structure Chart
– from October 2012

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT TEAM

CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR PLACES

DIRECTORS' SUPPORT TEAM

Assistant Director
Acting Traffic Manager

Assistant Director

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
- Cemeteries & Crematoria
- Waste & Recycling
- Street Care Services
- Parks & Green Space Development
- Management of the Strategic Environment Contract

HEAD OF HIGHWAY SERVICES
TRAFFIC MANAGER
- Management of the Strategic Highway Contract
- Road Safety and Sustainable Transport
- Traffic Management
- Civil & Structural Engineering Design
- Highway, Lighting & Drainage Maintenance
- School Services

PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICES
- Licensing
- Environmental Health
- Trading Standards

HEAD OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
- Town Centre Management & BID
- Management of N'hood Co-ordinators
- Park Rangers
- Leisure Service
- Arts Complex
- Tourist Info. Centre
- Community Safety
- DAART
- Environmental Champs
- Shopmobility

HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES
- Development Control
- Historic Environment
- Building Control
- Landscape
- Biodiversity
- Urban Design

HEAD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION SERVICES
- Economic Development
- Business & Enterprise Support
- Lifelong Learning
- External Funding
- Regeneration
- Employability
- Skills

HEAD OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES
- Management of the Library network
- Reading and literacy services
- Community based learning services
- Information & virtual Library services
- Heritage & Archive services
- Digital inclusion

HEAD OF POLICY & SPATIAL PLANNING SERVICES
- Housing Policy & Strategy
- Transport Policy & Planning
- Spatial Planning
- Sustainability

5. The Traffic Management Plan

5.1 KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

5.1.1 The Plan sets out the services and systems currently used to avoid or reduce congestion and disruption and thereby manage traffic effectively on the road network in Solihull. This is being achieved by:

- Identifying and managing different road types;
- Monitoring and reviewing the road network;
- Identifying where regular congestion occurs, and potential solutions;
- Co-ordinating and directing works on the highway;
- Dealing with planned events and responding to incidents;
- Making the best use of technology;
- Managing and enforcing parking and other traffic regulation;
- Accommodating essential service traffic;
- Reviewing the road network;
- Consulting and engaging with partners, key stakeholders, and road user groups; and
- Providing information to road users and the community.

5.1.2 This document is also forward-looking and, through the Improvement Plan set out in Appendix A, identifies issues and opportunities to improve the service and to deliver objectives set out in the Traffic Management Strategy.

5.2 IDENTIFYING DIFFERENT ROAD TYPES

5.2.1 For the travelling public, the road network in Solihull is well-established and no major changes have taken place since the completion of the regional motorway network in the late 70s and early 80s. Generally, running north to south, are the M42 and M40 motorways and the M6 Motorway that abuts the north boundary of Solihull.

5.2.2 Through the M6 and M42 the motorway network is well-connected to the strategic road network which consists of the A34 Stratford Road, A41 Warwick Road, A45 Coventry Road and the A452 Chester Road / Kenilworth Road. At a lower level, there are a number of inter-connecting 'A' and 'B' classified routes linking our towns and village centres. This in turn then connects to an extensive network of residential streets, which is where most of the developments within the Borough has taken place in recent years.

5.2.3 The following plan shows the road network in Solihull in terms of its strategic and local transport corridors, together with some of Solihull's key traffic generators.
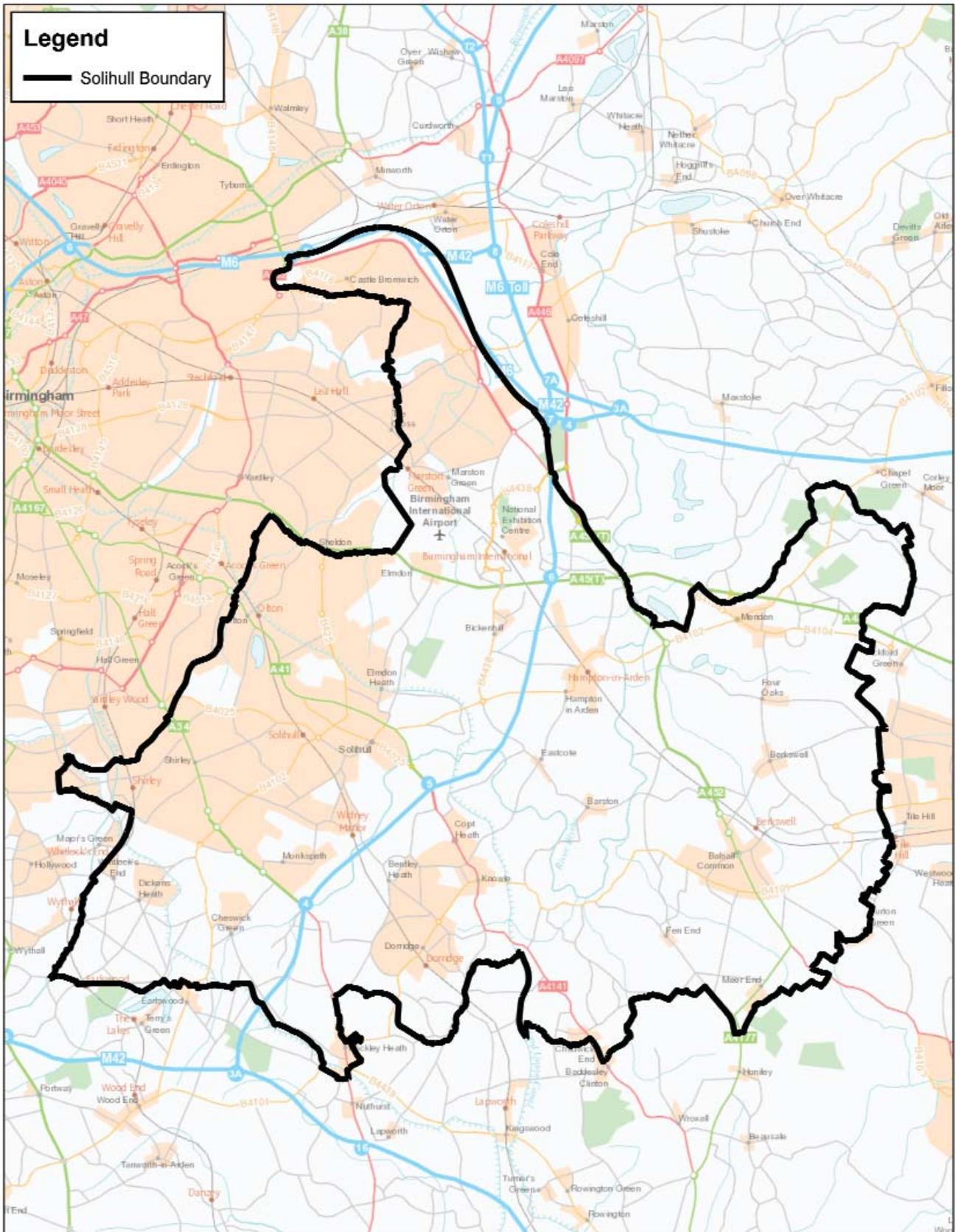
Strategic and Local Transport Corridors in Solihull

N

Scale: 1:75,000

Metropolitan Borough of Solihull
PO Box 18
Council House
Solihull
West Midlands
B91 9QS

Legend
— Solihull Boundary

5.3   STRATEGIC NATIONAL TRANSPORT CORRIDORS

5.3.1   There are five strategic transport corridors that pass through Solihull, which provide excellent connectivity to the rest of the West Midlands region and the rest of the United Kingdom by road and rail.

5.3.2   Of the three motorway corridors in and around Solihull, the M42 and M6 are part of the Highways Agency's Managed Motorway Initiative, which helps to provide reliable journey times for local, regional and national trips along these routes. Three motorway junctions are situated in Solihull that provide good accessibility to and from the motorway and strategic road network.

5.3.3   Two railway corridors also pass through Solihull, both carrying large quantities of freight and people into the Borough, which are well connected to the road network in Solihull. Both routes have good Park and Ride capabilities and connectivity to local bus services helping to support the Council's sustainable transport policies.

5.3.4   To enable a greater modal shift to rail for either long distance or local commuter purposes, the Council continues to work closely with Centro, to improve access to stations helping to reduce congestion and meet our sustainable transport targets.

5.4   LOCAL TRANSPORT CORRIDORS

5.4.1   The primary local transport corridors in Solihull, are aligned along the classified road network that provides excellent connectivity to the town and village centres in the Borough.

5.4.2   **A34 Stratford Road -** This primary route links the M42 motorway at Junction 4 through Shirley, and on into Birmingham City Centre. The route is predominantly a good standard two lane dual carriageway, subject to a 40mph speed limit between the motorway and its junction with the B4102 with a mix of low-density commercial and residential development. The route then reduces to 30mph for the remaining higher density urban section, which is of mixed land use.

5.4.3   **A41 Warwick Road -** This primary route links the M42 motorway at Junction 5, travels around the northern side of Solihull town centre, through Olton and again on into the centre of Birmingham. The route starts as dual carriageway and reduces to a single carriageway for the majority of its length. Land use is a mix of suburban edge development with residential, commercial retail and light industrial use, progressively becoming more dense as it reaches the boundary with Birmingham.

5.4.4   **A45 Coventry Road -** This primary route bisects Solihull, running from the Coventry boundary in the east to the Birmingham boundary in the west. It also provides excellent links to the M42 motorway at Junction 6, the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham Airport. This route is predominantly a high standard dual carriageway with speed limits ranging from 40mph to 60mph, semi-rural in character with occasional residential and commercial development.

5.4.5   **B4102 Blossomfield Road / B425 Lode Lane -** This route runs from the A45 Coventry Road in a southerly direction through Solihull town centre to the A34 Stratford Road and then south into the rural area of Solihull towards Earlswood and eventually crosses the Warwickshire boundary in the south of the Borough. Land use along this route is a largely a mix of residential, retail, commercial and light industrial, with the exception of the Jaguar Land Rover Plant which represents a significant employment site in the Borough.

5.4.6   **A452 Chester Road / Kenilworth Road -** This route runs from Balsall Common in the south eastern corner of the Borough, northwards by-passing the villages of Hampton-in-Arden and Meriden, and through to the northern centres at Chelmsley Wood and Castle Bromwich. It is a major feeder route with key intersections at the A45 Coventry Road and within the Council's northern regeneration area. Land use varies as the route progresses with sections of rural, residential and mixed commercial usage. The route is mixed single and dual carriageway with speed limits ranging between 30 and 50mph, depending on its local character.

5.5   MANAGING THE ROAD NETWORK

5.5.1   Whilst it should be stressed that management of the road network in Solihull is delivered through good partnership working with a number of agencies. This Plan focuses on the functions and services provided by Solihull Council as the local traffic authority.

5.5.2   Management of the road network cuts across the whole organisation, but overall responsibility lies with the authority's Traffic Manager and the functions provided within the Highway Services division. These functions include:

- Traffic management;
- New roads and streetworks co-ordination;
- Urban traffic control, and intelligent traffic systems;
- CCTV;
- Car parks and civil parking enforcement;
- Highway design, delivering new highways improvement projects predominately funded through the local transport plan;
- Highway and structural maintenance;
- Street lighting;
- Highway drainage;
- Asset management;
- Winter maintenance;
- Road safety engineering;
- Road safety education and sustainable transport, including Safer Routes to School projects.

5.6   MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE NETWORK

5.6.1   The monitoring and review of traffic movements on the road network is led by the Urban Traffic Control (UTC) Team. Located in Solihull town centre at a purpose-built control room, the system monitors through a network of 30 CCTV cameras and automated vehicle detectors located along the strategic and local transport corridors.

5.6.2   The UTC Centre, which is manned through the working day, provides a hub of technology for our traffic management and control systems to monitor traffic conditions on the network, review the effect of interventions and act as a communications facility to our traffic management partners, ensuring delivery of our vision of keeping traffic moving and reduce delay and congestion on the road network.

5.6.3   In addition, the Council also runs a traffic data collection team, who monitor traffic flows, vehicles types and speeds throughout the year using either automatic or manual survey

methods. In addition, surveys are also undertaken to determine pedestrian movements and the types of pedestrian crossing the road at a particular point.

5.6.4　Data gathered from the UTC systems and the data collection team is recorded and used for longer-term trend analysis, investment planning, project planning, road safety, congestion management and general highway improvement schemes.

5.6.5　The information collected is made available through the Spectrum Traffic Database, which is managed by Mott MacDonald on behalf of Solihull and the other West Midlands metropolitan authorities.

5.6.6　In 2010, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) launched a new Code of Practice on Transport Infrastructure Assets, which the Council has implemented as part of its network management practices.

5.7　IDENTIFYING CAUSES OF CONGESTION AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

5.7.1　**Causes of congestion -** Congestion imposes a real cost on many aspects of our daily lives. No specific figures are readily available for Solihull, but the CBI has estimated from their report Gridlock or Growth, that the annual cost to the West Midlands business community, due to lost time and additional fuel usage, amounts to £2.2bn a year. The increased fuel costs for road vehicles due to congestion alone have been estimated to be in the region of £0.9bn a year. This additional cost affects the prices paid for goods and services and could mean a loss of competitive advantage to the local business community.

5.7.2　The cause of congestion on the road network can generally be broken down into two main categories. Firstly, where congestion occurs on a regular basis at junctions, where demand exceeds the available capacity. Secondly, temporary congestion that occurs as a result of an event or incident on the network, such as road works or a road traffic collision.

5.7.3　In October 2008, the Council commissioned the study of delay on its road network. This provided information on the level and pattern of traffic congestion on the road network in Solihull based on data available from 2006/07. Changes in technology meant that this was the first time that this data was easily available over such a large network. The outputs from this study, provided a useful benchmark indicating the location of congestion hot spots across the Borough, where junction / link capacity may be exceeded on a frequent basis.

5.7.4　With the continued improvements in obtaining reliable journey time information it should mean that repeating this type of survey in future years becomes a more affordable solution to identifying locations where congestion occurs. The collection and analysis of traffic congestion data and the identification of the most congested parts of the road network is considered to be an essential step in tackling congestion.

5.7.5　The management of temporary events or incidents on the road network is considered later in this Plan (see sections 5.9 and 5.10).

5.7.6　**Potential solutions -** In 2008, the Council commissioned a report into the level of congestion on its network that provided detailed analysis of the current levels of congestion on the road network in Solihull. This in turn then led to detailed assessments being undertaken at congestion hot-spots, which in recent years resulted in improvement schemes taking place at the following locations:

- A34 Stratford Road / Monkspath Hall Road roundabout – Increased capacity and new pedestrian crossing;

- Streetsbrook Road / St. Bernard's Road / Prospect Lane roundabout – New lane markings improved capacity;

- Solihull By-Pass / Yew Tree Lane / Hampton Lane double signal controlled junction – Introduced MOVA control;

- Blossomfield Road / Widney Lane / Longmore Road/Marshall Lake Road signal controlled junction – Introduced MOVA control;

- Warwick Road / Richmond Road / St. Margaret's Road / Ulverley Green Road / St. Bernards Road signal controlled junction – Introduced MOVA control;

- Station Approach / Ashleigh Road / Streetsbrook Road signal controlled junction - Introduced MOVA control;

- Kenilworth Road / Kelsey Lane / Alder Lane signal controlled junction – Introduced MOVA control; and

- Hurst Lane North / Chester Road signal controlled junction – Introduced MOVA control.

5.7.7   Some of these schemes involved the construction of additional road space to gain extra capacity for the network. However, the majority of the schemes involved the use of the Department for Transport's MOVA traffic signal control system, which by varying traffic green times increases capacity. This is particularly useful during the daily peak periods.

5.7.8   In addition to the work carried out by Solihull in tackling congestion at specific locations, at a regional level, various routes across the West Midlands area have also been identified as being of concern in terms of reducing congestion. As a result, the West Midland's Congestion Target Delivery Plan and the Smarter Routes Programme have brought additional improvements to the road network in Solihull, including non-engineering measures such as work force travel planning, new CCTV monitoring equipment and sustainable transport training programmes all aimed at helping reducing and managing congestion along this key corridor.

5.8   CO-ORDINATION AND DIRECTION OF WORKS

5.8.1   The Council's New Roads and Street Works team ensures the principles used to manage works promoted by statutory undertakers and private developers are also applied to the management of works promoted by the Council. Regular co-ordination meetings are held at both a regional and local level with statutory undertakers to ensure this process is being carried out consistently and to ensure minimal disruption occurs to road users.

5.8.2   The Council's co-ordination function serves to:

- Ensure everyone's safety whilst either using or working on the road network;

- Minimise inconvenience to people using a street, including a specific reference to people with a disability; and

- Protect the structure of the street and the apparatus that lies in it.

5.8.3   The local traffic authority and the statutory undertakers must also adhere to three key principles:

- The need to balance the potentially conflicting interests of road users and undertakers' customers;

- The importance of co-operation and regular communication; and

- An acknowledgement that works programmes and practices may have to be adjusted to meet the statutory objectives of the co-ordination provisions.

5.8.4   In order for these co-ordination functions to be carried out, Solihull uses a software package called Symology. This enables an efficient means of notifying and controlling works on the road network and minimising disruption, as well as forming the basis of a public information service. A key feature of Symology is the ease of producing regular statistical analyses of works promoter's performance over a specified time periods.

5.8.5   Under powers within the Act, the Council sets out to ensure that:

- Temporary traffic control, especially temporary traffic signals be used only where and when necessary. Temporary signals should be vehicle-activated or, at appropriate times, be operated manually.

- Information is provided on a local website informing of works that are anticipated to cause disruption to traffic.

5.8.6   In addition, the Council maintains a local street gazetteer with records of all streets contained within Solihull. Every street is then designated as being either traffic sensitive, having engineering difficulty, being a red route or having other such sensitivities. A list of such locations is available via the Symolgy system or upon request to the Street Works Manager.

5.8.7   Designating a street as traffic sensitive gives the authority greater control over how works within these streets take place to avoid disruption. The normal hours of working on a traffic sensitive route allow works between 09:30 and 15:30hrs and only through agreement are these hours extended. A greater or lesser restriction may apply at weekends depending on the nature of the work.

5.8.8   The Council also process notices from third parties, such as private developers, which are added to the street works register manually to ensure that co-ordination is adhered to and all works are captured and co-ordinated consistently.

5.8.9   The Council believes that good communication is the key to its role as the co-ordinating authority for all works on the public highway. Quarterly meetings are held with all utility companies to plan and co-ordinate future works, which enable works to be brought forward or moved back to minimise disruption and ensure that new surfaces are not disturbed within their restriction period.

5.8.10   The Street Works Manager attends quarterly West Midland Highway Authorities and Undertakers Co-ordination (WMHAUC) and West Midlands Joint Authorities Group (WMJAG) meetings, in addition the officer also attends local HAUC meetings.

5.8.11   The Traffic Manager meets with other metropolitan and shire authority Traffic Managers, and the Highways Agency for a quarterly Traffic Managers' Liaison meeting covering the M6 central area, and the Midlands motorway box.

5.8.12   A weekly programme of known works is also shared with all stakeholders within the Borough, which includes the NEC, Airport, major shopping centres and the emergency services.

5.9   PLANNED EVENTS

5.9.1   In addition to planning for road works and street works, the Act requires the Council to co-ordinate special events that will cause disruption to traffic, including such events as;

- Street parties;

- Sporting events;
- Parades, including Remembrance Day;
- Demonstrations; and
- Street markets.

5.9.2 The Traffic Manager appoints a member of the Traffic Management team to help co- ordinate these events and to work with other departments and external agencies, such as the Police, to ensure there is no conflict between planned works and these special events. The Council's Emergency Planning Team now generally lead on the associated Special Event Safety Advisory Group process, to ensure what is happening on the road network at any particular time can be planned and communicated effectively.

5.9.3 The Council works closely with event organisers and other stakeholders to co-ordinate events and minimise disruption to traffic, businesses and residents. To ensure the safety of competitors and spectators, many of these events require Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders to close streets on a short-term basis. Part of this process requires that alternative routes are available and signed where appropriate.

5.9.4 With the National Exhibition Centre located in the north of the Borough holding major events which generate significant numbers of visitors to the Borough, quarterly liaison and co-ordination meetings are held with stakeholders, agencies and neighbouring authorities to ensure that events putting the largest stress on the network are adequately planned and communicated to reduce the risk of significant levels of congestion occurring on the network in Solihull.

5.10 INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

5.10.1 There will always be unforeseen or unplanned incidents that can affect the traffic flow and result in unforeseen congestion on the road network. These can include:

- Traffic collisions or vehicle breakdowns;
- Fires or other emergency situations on or adjacent to the public highway; and
- Severe weather conditions, such as snow, flooding or high winds.

5.10.2 Although the Council has no direct control over the location or frequency of these incidents, it does have management plans that can be introduced to help minimise the resulting delay and congestion to road users. The Council coordinates its response to incidents in consultation with the Police and other key stakeholders, providing information to road users to minimise the effects of any disruption.

5.10.3 The UTC system also works to minimise disruption through the management of timings at key signal junctions across the Borough. The planned development of a West Midlands Regional Control Strategy by its Traffic Managers Group will also improve the Council's incident management capability across adjoining authorities and onto the Highways Agency's strategic network.

5.10.4 The Council has winter maintenance plans to deal with severe weather conditions which are focused around the precautionary salting programme, where such interventions help to minimise congestion, disruption and address safety concerns during adverse weather conditions.

5.11 USE OF TECHNOLOGY

5.11.1 Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) have become an increasingly important tool for the management of traffic. In recent years, Solihull has invested in these technological advances in order to help better manage its road network. The Council's ITS system currently includes the following key elements:

- **A SCOOT based Urban Traffic Control (UTC) System -** The Department for Transport Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique (SCOOT) traffic signal control platform works by optimising traffic signal timings in real time to minimise stops and delays to traffic. It enables the traffic signal system to automatically detect delays and congestion and implement timing strategies to optimise dispersal of traffic. Solihull currently has around 60 traffic signals and pedestrian crossings running under UTC control.

- **Remote Monitoring Systems -** RMS enables UTC personnel to monitor traffic signals and pedestrian crossings that are not under UTC control. There are currently around 60 sites linked to the RMS which mainly consist of isolated sites in more remote locations where UTC would have limited benefit.

- **Mobile phone-based GSM communications -** These are used to communicate with the traffic signal sites under this system and it provides a cost effective way of monitoring the status of the traffic signals, allowing them to 'dial in' to the UTC centre and report equipment faults when necessary.

- **Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Systems -** Solihull has a comprehensive network of CCTV cameras, both as part of the UTC system and also via a link to the Council's wider detection and prevention of crime CCTV system. The cameras enable UTC staff to monitor key parts of Solihull's network in order to react to changing traffic situations; better manage congestion and keep traffic moving.

- **A West Midlands Regional Control Strategy -** The Traffic Managers Group is developing a strategy to facilitate an exchange of important CCTV images to ensure congestion on neighbouring parts of the road network - including the motorway network - are detected at an early stage, which can support early intervention.

- **Car Park Guidance System (CPGS) -** The CPGS consists of 45 LED variable message signs, which direct drivers to the most appropriate of the 9 town centre car parks. The signs are controlled from the UTC centre and gather information from the amount of vehicles entering/leaving the car parks in order provide information on the status and capacity of the car parks.

  Some of these signs also include variable congestion diversion routes, on rotating prism sign faces that suggest alternative routes where main routes through the town centre are congested.

- **Variable Message Signs (VMS) -** Under the West Midlands UTC Major Scheme, there are six 'free text' electronic variable message signs that provide drivers with information on congestion, road works, collisions etc. They are situated on the key routes where they meet motorway junctions within Solihull.

  In addition to these signs there are additional VMS on the strategic highways network, which are located around the Birmingham Airport / National Exhibition Centre / Birmingham International Station area as part of Project ANITA.

These consist of:

- Three free text VMS;

- Four variable rotating prism advanced direction signs; and

- Eight variable rotating prism direction signs

The signs help to provide improved management of traffic during busy periods, such as events and concerts at the NEC or incidents on the local network.

5.11.2 **Mattisse -** The Midlands Area Transportation Telemetric Information System for Strategy in Europe is the traffic information database used by all West Midlands local authorities, the Police and radio stations in order that the latest incidents and future planned events are recorded and can be used to plan proactive strategies for network traffic control.

5.11.3 Events such as traffic signal faults, road works, road closures and motorway collisions are recorded and show up to date information on the West Midlands network status. There is also a public interface to this database via the website www.help2travel.co.uk.

Common Database (CDB)

5.11.4 A Common Database connects all of the above systems together in order to enable a single point of access to the various systems which will become the main interface between these various systems.

5.11.5 This CDB will link into the database situated in the West Midlands Urban Traffic Control Centre at Quinton or host authority (currently being considered by the Traffic Managers Group), which in turn will be linked into other West Midlands local authorities' control systems to enable inter-authority working and allow more strategic control of the wider West Midlands network.

5.12 MANAGING AND ENFORCING PARKING AND TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

5.12.1 The Council has introduced civil parking enforcement (CPE) across the whole Borough, which enables the local traffic authority to carry out enforcement of parking restrictions. The associated special parking area and statutory instrument which provides the Council with the appropriate enforcement powers, however, does contain some specific exemptions relating to the motorway and high-speed dual carriageway network in Solihull. In these situations, the Police have retained the power of enforcement for all moving and parking regulations.

5.12.2 The CPE service is provided by a specialist third party contractor, with management support and direction provided by the Council's own parking services team.

5.12.3 In recent years, the Council has introduced a number of red route parking restrictions along its key classified routes. This type of restriction has helped reduce the risk of indiscriminate parking and stopping of vehicles and ensured the maximum amount of road space and capacity is available.

5.12.4 An extensive network and system of other parking restrictions exists in and around many of our town and village centres in Solihull, which are all support by the CPE service.

5.12.5 The Parking Services team also manage the Council's multi-storey and other off-street parking facilities. This service is currently looking to move towards more innovative and effective ways of paying for parking that would provide increased flexibility and choices for drivers using the car parking facilities, including the use of credit / debit card for payment, pay-by-phone and top-up cards.

5.12.6 The Council recently undertook a review into the processes around delivery of Traffic Regulation Orders. This review resulted in a number of process changes that reduced both the overall cost and timescales to introduce restrictions on the road network.

5.12.8 Details of all the Traffic Regulation Orders relating to on-street parking restrictions are not currently available on the Council's website, but details are available upon request.

5.13 ACCOMMODATING HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES AND SERVICE TRAFFIC

5.13.1 Centro are currently developing a freight management strategy for the West Midlands and Solihull are both supporting and contributing to its development. This strategy will help to determine how heavy goods and service traffic will be managed, monitored and accommodated on the road network in the future. In the meantime, commercial vehicles will continue to be encouraged to use the classified road network and only use local roads as they near the end of their journeys.

5.13.2 Whilst essential to the economy, the movement of freight on our local road network can also be the source of concern in the local community. Some consider the size and weight to be too large for any residential streets. Where necessary, therefore, the Council has introduced Traffic Regulation Orders to restrict the weight of vehicles being able to travel through certain residential zones. These orders have generally proven to be successful and will need to be reviewed to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the local community, particularly where development has changed potential access routes.

5.14 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

5.14.1 Over the years, the Council has developed a wide range of consultation and engagement techniques that are adapted to reflect the requirements and diverse nature of the individual projects that are delivered by the Traffic Management service areas.

5.14.2 With the continued support of the Council's communications team, all traffic management service changes and improvement schemes will continue to develop communication plans to ensure as many of our customers as possible are given the opportunity to comment on and help shape the services delivered or improvements that are carried out to the highway network.

5.14.3 In recent years, in addition to the more traditional methods of written consultation sent out to customers in the post, the Council now also uses the Internet and social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to inform and engage with as wide a spectrum of the community as possible.

5.14.4 A wide range of travel and traffic information is also communicated to road users on a regular basis via local radio stations, and through specialist traffic management services such as Traffic Master and Mattisse.

5.14.5 Some key questions in the future for our customer may be:

- How satisfied are you with the way the Council manages the highway network?

- Do you consider congestion and delays within the Borough of Solihull to be a problem?

- What do you consider to be the major contributor to congestion on the local highway network?

- What measures would you support to reduce congestion and delay?

- Which highway users do you think should be given priority when taking measures to reduce congestion and delays?

- What local issues relating to the highway network causes you the greatest concerns?

- How well does the Council keep you informed of problems on the network and how the Council is taking steps to reduce congestion?

5.14.6 There are regular meetings with a variety of stakeholders to liaise and co-ordinate proposed works on the network. Council representatives liaise and co-ordinate with adjoining local authorities and other key stakeholders at the West Midlands Traffic Managers Group (WMTMG) and the West Midlands Highways Authorities and Utilities Committee (WMHAUC). These meetings are held quarterly with the mandate to set the framework for implementation of the network management function across the region, seek agreements over any cross boundary problems and provide an overview of the co-ordination with the utility companies. These bodies report respectively to the National Traffic Managers Forum and HAUC UK, both of which are involved in government feedback.

5.14.7 The West Midlands Traffic Managers Group was established in February 2005, with terms of reference requiring the group to address the following principal aims:

- Seek to maximise the traffic management benefits, and to achieving contributions to congestion, accessibility, air quality and safety targets, in line with LTP objectives, which the Traffic Management Act 2004 aims to deliver across the Metropolitan Area;

- Establish consistent procedures and policies in so far as these are possible across authorities;

- Monitor the effects of the Act;

- Share good practice between members;

- Provide support and advice to all participating bodies, and others as appropriate;

- Establish mechanisms and policies for cross boundary working; and

- Carry out any other duties as may be found necessary and relevant, where these are not already the responsibility of any other group which reports to the Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group (CEPOG).
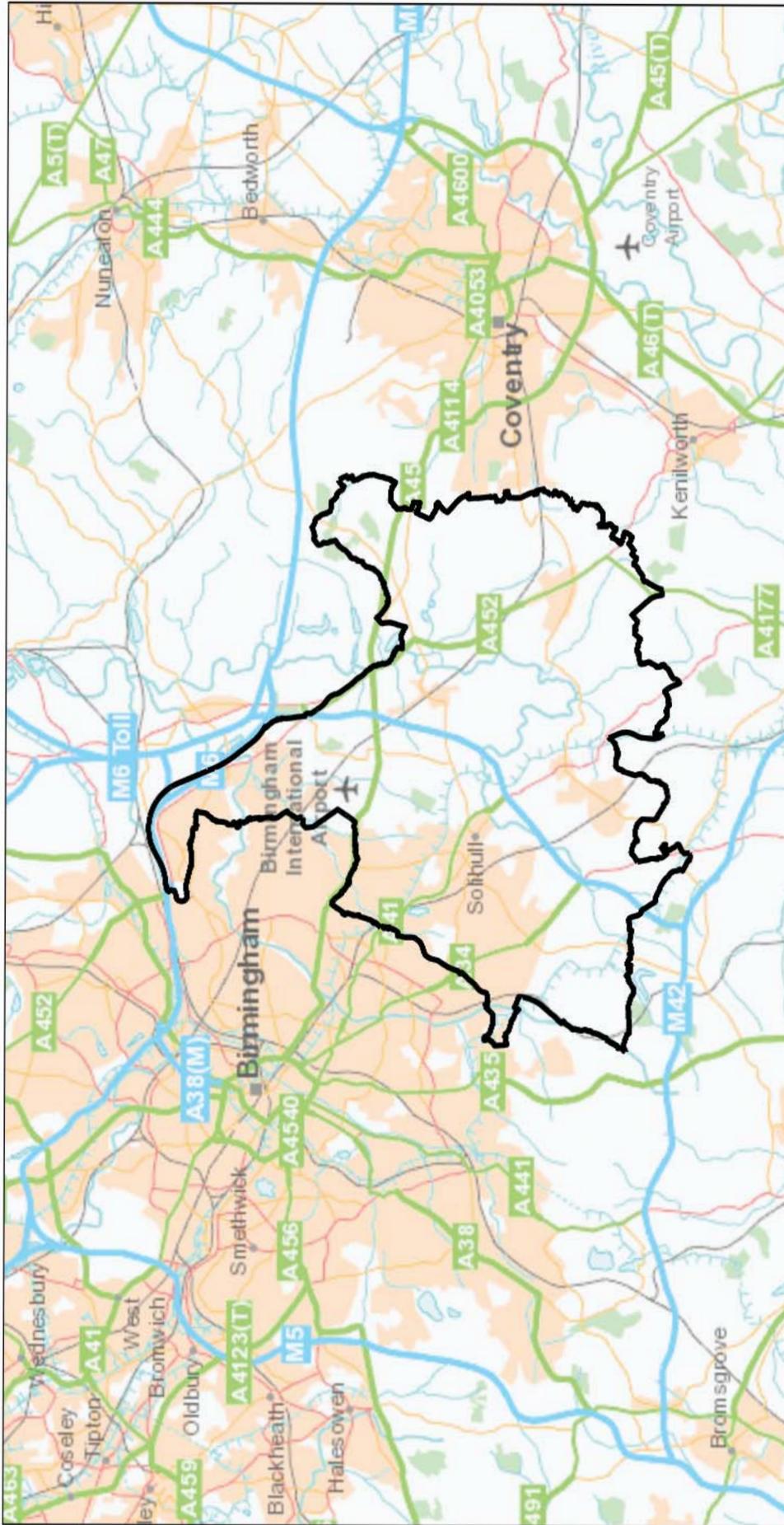
Solihull and the West Midlands Network

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6. Performance

6.1 PROVIDING EVIDENCE AND DEMONSTRATING OUTCOMES

6.1.1 Section 5 sets out the main service areas that help the Council and its partners meet the requirements of the Traffic Management Act. Each service area has key objectives and performance priorities that determine their daily activity. However, the development of this Strategy has identified the need to provide evidence of the service areas working more closely together to reduce delay and congestion overall on the road network in and around Solihull.

6.1.2 Developing a culture, of working together, sharing resource and expertise will therefore be key if the individual services are going to continue to provide an excellent and best value service.

6.1.3 Throughout this Strategy, new ways of working and continued use of improvements in technology have been identified to ensure the traffic management service continues to deliver best value. However, the outcome of the Government's 2010 Autumn Spending Review has led to an overall reduction in the amount of funding made available across the traffic management service area. Consequently, there is a need to make significant savings over the next few years, which will be very demanding to achieve. Reductions in funding are therefore being considered across all areas of the highway services group and the traffic management services will not be exempt.

6.1.4 Nevertheless, there are already changes on-going in the new roads and street works team where excavations in the road network are co-ordinated and programmed. This service is introducing national performance indicators to demonstrate how works are being managed, co-ordinated and treated fairly and consistently.

6.1.5 The UTC systems are currently reviewing a number of their maintenance contracts. This will provide an opportunity to not only seek out efficiency savings but also introduce more consistent performance targets to ensure equipment faults affecting network performance are rectified as quickly as possible. The Car Parks Management and Enforcement Contract has recently been retendered to deliver improved cost effective services.

6.1.6 However, overall there is no current means of collating the available evidence across the traffic management service to bring together a performance report that provide a holistic view of the service and one that can be used to benchmark performance in future years.

7. Contact Information

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David Hanger	Principal Engineer Highway Design	dhanger@solihull.gov.uk	0121 704 8039

Note : All Council services can be contacted via the Council's Connect Service by calling 0121 704 6000; e-mailing cconnect@solihull.gov.uk or fax 0121 704 6929.

Out of normal office hours – Please dial 0121 704 8004 and select the appropriate service area.

The Traffic Management Improvement Plan

The following section sets out the proposed improvement plan to ensure Solihull Council continues to deliver an excellent traffic management service to its customers and those of our neighbouring authorities.

Item No.	Section Reference	Action Points	Timeline
1	2.1.3	Involve partners and key stakeholders in the process to produce the final version of the Council's Traffic Management Strategy and Action Plan.	October 2012 Complete
2	4.1.1	Appoint the Council's Head of Highway Services to the statutory role of the Traffic Manager for Solihull.	August 2012 No appointment
3	5.2	Carry out a review of the road types in Solihull, on annual basis in January, to ensure the network is being managed in accordance with the requirements of the Traffic Management Act 2004.	June 2013
4	5.7	Update the Council's Congestion Study carried out in 2008, every five years, to ensure data is available to identify causes and locations of congestion in Solihull.	October 2013
5	5.7	Produce a prioritised list of location that have been identified as being congestion "hot spots" in need of further investigation to identify potential cost effectively congestion reducing solutions.	June 2013
6	5.8	Develop a sustainable business plan to ensure that the Council's road works co-ordination system, Symology, is maintained as one of the key systems used to discharge the requirements of the Traffic Management Act.	March 2013
7	5.8	Identify and implement a technical solution to update the handheld communication devices used by officers to remotely connect to the Symology system to deliver a more efficient and sustainable service.	September 2012 Complete
8	5.8	Produce an annual report demonstrating how road and streets works have been co-ordinated.	April 2013
9	5.9	Through the Council's Safety Advisory Group process, ensure all special events are planned for and any impact on the road network is well managed.	On-going
10	5.10	As part of the Council's retendering process for the Strategic Highways Contract ensure adequate resources are available to enable the Council to respond effectively to un-planned incidents on the road network.	March 2013

Item No.	Section Reference	Action Points	Timeline
11	5.10	Following recent changes in on both the Council's and road policing teams, carry out a review of the Incident Management Communication Protocols to ensure these contain up-to-date contact information and process charts.	On-going
12	5.11	Develop a sustainable business plan to ensure that the Council's Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS) are funded, maintained and work effectively to help discharge the requirements of the Traffic Management Act.	August 2013
13	5.12	Monitor the impact of the Council's new Civil Parking Enforcement Contact to ensure resources are being used effectively.	On-going
14	5.12	Review annually the Traffic Regulation Orders on the road network and feed any required changes into the Council's new lean Traffic Regulation Order prioritisation system.	On-going
15	5.12	Update the Council's website to ensure Parking Enforcement and Management policies and processes are customer-focused and accurately reflect recent changes in this service area.	On-going
16	5.12	Investigate the implementation of Bus Lane enforcement associated with the ANITA bus priority project.	December 2012 Complete
17	5.13	Provide support to Centro in the development of the West Midlands Freight Transport Strategy.	September 2012 Complete
18	5.14	Develop a new website for the recently formed highway services group, ensuring all aspects of the Traffic Management Service Area are included	June 2013
19	5.15	Raise awareness of traffic management key issues through the use of social media and networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.	June 2013
20	6	Prepare an annual Traffic Management Performance report to demonstrate how Solihull is meeting its traffic management duty.	July 2013
21	7	Establish a project management team to deliver the recommendations of the strategy and the individual action points set out in the improvement plan.	April 2012 Complete