

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **9 July 2019**

Title: **A386 Transport Corridor / Tavistock Rail update**

Portfolio Area: **Strategic Planning
Enterprise**

Wards Affected: **Tavistock, Bere Ferrers, Buckland Monachorum and Dartmoor**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **n/a**

Date next steps can be taken: ongoing and O&S of 3rd September 2019

Author: **Tom Jones** Role: **Head of Place Making**

Contact: **01803 861404** thomas.jones@swdevon.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes that the Council will:

- 1. Continue to work with partner organisations to lobby for funds to reinstate the railway;**
- 2. Pursue with partner organisations, as a priority, an alternative major public transport scheme between Tavistock and Plymouth;**
- 3. Continue to work with partner organisations and other stakeholders to deliver smaller scale interventions to improve safety and reduce congestion on the A386 and in Tavistock Town; and**
- 4. Continue to engage with the community with respect to highway and transport matters.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Traffic resulting from housing and other development, that is both underway and has been granted conditional planning

permission, will have a significant impact on the highway network in and around Tavistock. Additional commercial, leisure and other activity will result in greater demand on transport needs in and around Tavistock. Of particular note is the increase in journeys by all modes of transport between Tavistock and Plymouth and locations in between those two settlements.

- 1.2 The Joint Local Plan (see background papers at the end of this report) in its strategic, site specific and development management policies and the individual planning permissions that have been granted for development require interventions that will reduce and mitigate the impact of development and associated activity on road safety and congestion. There is also a requirement to improve opportunities for all to travel by modes of transport other than the private car.
- 1.3 Devon County Council (DCC) is the lead Authority with respect to highway and transport matters in West Devon. It sets out priorities in the Local Transport Plan (see background papers at the end of this report). West Devon Borough Council is one of several partner organisations that can support DCC in this roll.
- 1.4 One measure to ensure that significant interventions and other projects to meet the stated objectives are co-ordinated and delivered is the publication, by DCC, of the 'A386 Tavistock to Plymouth Corridor Study' ('the Study'). The Study is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.5 This report to O&S identifies the key implications for both Tavistock and for the Council of that Study. This report proposes a course of action to address those implications.
- 1.6 The Study summarises the options that have been and continue to be considered to both address the impact of development and to support economic growth in Tavistock. Of particular note the Study indicates that the viability and deliverability of the most significant proposed intervention, reinstating the rail link from Tavistock to Bere Alston, is not viable at this time and suggests that alternatives are identified and assessed.
- 1.7 WDBC Officers continue to liaise with partner organisations including DCC with a view to delivering measures that will improve accessibility to services and employment by public transport and active transport.
- 1.8 Officers will convene a series of meetings with local Ward Members and other interested parties and organising public engagement event(s) with the objective of collaborating and seeking consensus with respect to identifying and bringing forward the best options.

2. Background

- 2.1 DCC has published the 'A386 Tavistock to Plymouth Corridor Study'. It is currently open for comment as an informal consultation. Comments can be submitted to Hannah Clarke, Transport Officer at DCC (Hannah.Clark@devon.gov.uk).
- 2.2 The Study sets out options with a focus on providing alternatives to the private car as a means of transport between Tavistock and Plymouth (and the surrounding area) as the Town develops and expands and the A386, consequently, becomes more congested. The strategy advocated in the Study seeks to consolidate and improve existing bus and cycle provision along the A386 corridor; ease congestion; improve road safety; and considers the option, as an alternative to a heavy rail link, of a multi-modal link between Tavistock and Bere Alston.
- 2.3 The Study responds to general growth in Tavistock, but specifically the provisions in the legal agreement (the s106 Agreement) associated with the planning permission granted for mixed use development at Callington Road (WDBC planning reference 00554/2013). The s106 Agreement requires staged payments of up to £11m (this amount would accrue if 750 houses are built) towards the rail link. If the rail link is not delivered the s106 allows these payments to be put towards other public transport systems, highway improvements, and / or an increase in the provision of Affordable Housing. The s106 also requires up to £500k towards bus services and the provision of bus stops.
- 2.4 Other major developments will make contributions as set out below:

New Launceston Road, 148 dwellings (planning reference 2022/16/OPA)

- contribution of £135,000.00 (equivalent to two years of service) to the 89 bus service, payable on the 74th residential occupation
- payment to the reinstatement of the railway at a rate of £587.32 per dwelling. 50% is payable on the 74th residential occupation, 25% on the 99th and the balance on 111th occupation.

If the rail link is not delivered the s106 allows these payments to be put towards other public transport systems.

Butcher Park Hill, 110 dwellings (planning reference 00610/2015)

- contribution of £195000.00 to the number 89 bus service (or other) (25% on 30th occupation, 50th, 70th and 90th [or 12 months after 3rd payment, whichever is earlier] occupations)
- bus shelter on 30th occupation.
- railway contribution of £526.72 per dwelling (nearly £58k) with 25% [£14,484.75] payable on each of the on 30th, 50th, 70th and 90th [or 12 months after 3rd payment, whichever is earlier] occupations.

The railway contribution can only be used for the railway.

Harewood House (planning reference 2232/17/FUL)

Prior to occupation junction improvements to the A390 northern arm of the Drakes roundabout adjacent to the site. The road will be widened to provide 2 lanes for traffic approaching the roundabout. The details and timing would be agreed through a s38/278 (legal) Agreement with DCC, the Highway Authority.

Plymouth Road (planning reference 3614/18/OPA)

Proposed development of 240 houses and 18,000 sq feet of commercial units. This is yet to be determined and the section 106 agreement has not been finalised.

- 2.5 The current programme of work to which DCC has committed is:
- A390 Callington Road roundabout with anticipated completion October 2019
 - A390 Callington Road / Ford St roundabout with anticipated completion October 2019
 - A390 Callington Road / A386 Plymouth Road Drakes Statue roundabout with anticipated completion December 2019
 - A386 Plymouth Road / Pixon Lane roundabout with anticipated completion October 2019
 - Callington Road speed restrictions
- 2.6 Butcher Park Hill is the only development listed above that has commenced.
- 2.7 The DCC Study sets out the current position with respect to four strands of related work.

A386 Corridor

- 2.8 DCC has carried out a pre-feasibility study that considers the potential for highway improvements to the A386 corridor. The objective is to identify and consider measures that will mitigate development impact on the highway and improve journey times between Tavistock and Plymouth.

- 2.9 A key factor is that a scheme(s) should complement the highway schemes that are being planned by Plymouth City Council. These include improvements to the A386 in the north of Plymouth between Woolwell Roundabout and the George Junction to two lanes in each direction; and widening between Derriford Roundabout and William Prance Road where Derriford Roundabout would be converted to signals.

Tavistock to Bere Alston Rail

- 2.10 DCC has been progressing the purchase of the disused rail corridor from the numerous land owners. The vast majority of the land is anticipated to soon (2019 / 2020) be under the ownership of the County Council.
- 2.11 The rail reinstatement project has been progressed on the basis of the Callington Road planning permission. It would link Tavistock to Bere Alston by rail with the primary aim of reducing private vehicle trips on the A386 between Tavistock and Plymouth. DCC advises that the benefit of rail reinstatement on the number of private car trips is only likely to be slight due to the limited geographical origin and destination of potential users.
- 2.12 Reinstating the rail link is, consequently, considered by DCC as a longer-term aspiration. In addition since there are numerous issues to overcome, not least that with an estimated cost of far in excess of £11m adequate funding is not currently available.
- 2.13 The possibility of a cycle route along the rail line has been considered. With the route passing through woods in a remote location it is, however, potentially unattractive. DCC concludes that this could be effective as a first phase to the provision of a public transport link along the route. A phase 2 open would then be to build a single track capable of accommodating both a cycle and a vehicle link from Tavistock to the rail station at Bere Alston. This could accommodate a form of shuttle bus or electric vehicle running within the cycle route. Such a phased approach would not preclude a long-term solution of heavy rail.

A386 Highway Improvements

- 2.14 DCC advises that even limited highway improvements, such as a bypass of the Yelverton roundabout or a bypass of the bends at Grenofen, are not likely to be deliverable due to environmental impacts and financial viability.

Bus Services and Park and Change

- 2.15 Existing bus services between Tavistock and Plymouth have a good fifteen-minute frequency on weekdays. There is limited potential for improvement. Peak hour congestion on the A386 in Plymouth means that buses would be unlikely to match rail or car journey times into central Plymouth.
- 2.16 Bus services could, however, benefit from a Park and Change site at Yelverton, where existing bus services could pick up motorists and cyclists who could then travel by bus into Plymouth. In addition, further measures to modernise and improve the service would benefit customers and enhance patronage.

Cycling and Park and Change

- 2.17 The Drakes Trail cycle route provides a segregated route between Tavistock and Yelverton. The opportunity exists to create a segregated cycle route towards Plymouth adjacent to the busy A386. This would link with existing cycle routes in Plymouth to provide cycle access to the George park and ride site, Derriford and the city centre.
- 2.18 The provision of a park and change site at Yelverton would enable motorists to park and then cycle into Plymouth along the new cycle route.

Joint Local Plan and the Plymouth Northern Corridor

- 2.19 In addition to the matters considered in the Study the Joint Local Plan (JLP) allocates land for development at Woolwell, which lies at the southern end of the A386 in South Hams and on the edge of Plymouth. Plymouth City Council (PCC) has secured funding through the Transforming Cities Fund to improve transport along what is described in the JLP as its 'Northern Corridor'. The Woolwell allocation lies at the northern end of this corridor. There are implications for highways, traffic and transport between Tavistock and Plymouth of this additional development.

Climate change emergency

- 2.20 West Devon Borough Council and Devon County Council have both declared a climate change emergency. A major contributor to greenhouse gases is emissions from motor vehicles. It is essential, therefore, that transport options that significantly reduce emissions are improved for everyone living in, working in and visiting Tavistock and the vicinity. This would include active transport (cycling and walking), which also has the benefit of

contributing to the health and well being objectives of the Council and in enhancing community resilience to climate change events where they disrupt transport.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of Devon County Council to lead on the delivery of highway and transport measures. The Study clarifies that the County will continue to do so. Discussion between Officers confirms that this includes seeking to identify, assess and seek to deliver public transport schemes.
- 3.2 The provisions of the planning permission that have been granted will, as each development comes forward, provide funds for specific bus routes and, in the case of Callington Road, a significant amount of money for the reinstatement of the railway.
- 3.3 It is also the case, however, that it is uncertain when the funds will be available since development has not yet started on three major sites; and that the staged timing of payment means a substantial amount of the money will not be available for several years.
- 3.4 In view of the findings of the Study and the uncertainty regarding commencement of development on all the major sites, Officers consider that it is necessary to work with greater urgency with partner organisations. The objective would be to identify how and when the identified interventions can be brought forward and whether further highway and transport interventions are necessary. Such joint working would include:
 - lobbying for funds to reinstate the railway;
 - scoping and assessing, as a priority, a major public transport scheme between Tavistock and Plymouth as an alternative to the railway;
 - identifying and assessing further options to deliver smaller scale interventions to improve safety and reduce congestion on the A386; and
 - continuing to engage with the community with respect to highway and transport matters
- 3.5 Possible sources of additional funding include Homes England, which is the Government organisation that funds investment in / loans to bring forward development sites that have significant problems preventing timely delivery; Network Rail, which would be the leading delivery body for a reinstated railway; the Local Enterprise Partnership (Heart of the South West LEP), which is a Community Interest Company representing the enterprise interests of all County, Borough and District Authorities in Devon and Somerset; s106 funds (agreed and to be agreed); the Department for Transport; and public / private finance where schemes would deliver a commercial return at low risk to the Councils.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 It is necessary to engage more urgently with the process of identifying and delivering schemes that will improve traffic safety, reduce congestion, reduce vehicle emissions and increase active transport.
- 4.2 Whilst highway and transport matters are central to the Council's Place Making role, this would entail Strategic Planning Officers engaging more proactively with key partners, notably DCC and PCC and utilising the existing strong relationships forged during the process of preparing and adopting the JLP.
- 4.3 Engagement with the Town Council and community would be achieved by a variety of means, including the forthcoming 'Town Centre' meeting.
- 4.4 The consequence of this focus for Strategic Planning Officers is that those Officers would have less time to support the JLP Team on matters including monitoring employment and policy responses to the Development Management Service.
- 4.5 The core tasks are to collaboratively:
 - secure early delivery of highway and transport interventions that are effective, viable and funded;
 - continue to identify and explore with lead organisations, partners and interested parties other effective measures; and
 - seek and bid for funding for the above.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 It is proposed that the work programme is taken forward in close collaboration with Ward and other Councillors, including the following steps:
 - meeting with the Leader; the Ward Councillors that are directly affected; and the Lead Members for Strategic Planning and for Enterprise;
 - meeting with the Joint Local Plan Leadership Board (a total of six Councillors representing WDBC, SHDC and PCC, with DCC a non voting partner);
 - meeting with Tavistock Town Council;
 - informal discussion and formal consultation with the community; and
 - regular updates to O&S, including a DCC led presentation to the meeting of 3rd September 2019.
- 5.2 With reference to the specific objectives identified in this report and in the Study, the proposed course of action is considered to be supportive of all the corporate objectives as well as the climate change agenda:

- Council – in that it represents good governance and open democracy;
- Communities – representing good strategic planning and place making;
- Well Being – better and continued access for all to services by public transport and active transport;
- Homes – improving the likelihood of early delivery of major development schemes;
- Enterprise – supporting economic development and the clean growth agenda; and
- Environment – to reduce and mitigate harmful emissions.

5.3 It is recognised, however, that the use of the former rail route would entail loss of habitat. This has and will continue to be a matter to be addressed in planning and delivery.

5.4 With respect to public engagement the Council can, through the network of Town and Parish Councils and through social media, encourage engagement in the informal consultation (see paragraph 2.1 of this report. Comments can be made until the end of July 2019.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal / Governance	Y	The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has requested an update on the progress of the viability of a rail link from Tavistock particularly in the light of the recent 'A386 Tavistock to Plymouth Corridor Study'. Collaboration with external partners; Borough, Town and Parish Councillors; and consultation with interested parties including local communities. Use of s106 money is determined by legal agreements and conditions regulate the way in which these funds can be used. The relevant parties (notably developers, landowners and DCC) would, therefore, be involved in scrutiny.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	Flexibility exists in use of s106 payments as described in the report. Collaborate with external partners to secure Government funding. Interventions would only be taken forward where they represent effective and cost effective interventions to meet the stated objectives of this report, the Study and the Joint Local Plan.
Risk	Y	Additional funding is necessary to effect significant modal shift. If this cannot be secured there may be a future adverse impact on economic and social interests. Potential for environmental harm to be

		addressed through the Development Management process.
Supporting corporate strategies	Y	Supports all corporate strategies as detailed in paragraph 5.2
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	Further and specific to the risk identified, improved public transport and improved active transport infrastructure would support equality of access to services and employment.
Safeguarding	Y	No significant matters identified.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	No significant matters identified.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	No significant matters identified.
Other implications	Y	Improved public transport and improved active transport infrastructure would support the objectives of reducing emissions of CO2 and would improve social and economic resilience.

Appendices

Appendix 1: A386 Tavistock to Plymouth Corridor Study, Devon County Council, September 2018

Background Papers:

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan:
<https://plymswdevonplan.co.uk/policy>

The Torbay and Devon Local Transport Plan
<https://plymswdevonplan.co.uk/policy>