Introduction and Summary

The proposed Local Transport Plan offers a lot of positives, indicating a new direction for Warwickshire – one that begins to steer away from driving as the first-choice transport option, regardless of journey type, and that starts to embrace other transport options.

I am very supportive of the plan in general, with its four Key Themes, six Key Strategies, and a Transport Hierarchy (noting suggested improvements, as discussed in the Core Strategy evaluation).

However, there are a number of inconsistencies throughout the document which means, at present, it doesn't fully embrace the concept of modal shift. Such inconsistencies and weaknesses should be addressed to ensure that the plan is fully compatible with the urgent need to address the problems inherent to a dependency on car-based transport, and excessive and unsustainable vehicle and mileage growth.

This document looks at each part of the draft Local Transport Plan and provides notes on some things that stand out as positive, parts that are perceived to be negative, and others that perhaps lie somewhere in between – not quite negative, but need some improvement before they can be truly classed as positive.

A few key elements and common themes can be identified from the notes, some of which are summarised here for convenience (provided in no particular order):

- The environment does not always come first. In any list of objectives or priorities (regardless of whether or not the intent is to list them in order of importance), the environment must be listed first in order to communicate that this is the primary concern, after which all other concerns follow.

  For example, this statement is ordered incorrectly: *"support economic growth, reduce environmental impact, connect people with services and promote use of other travel options"* *(Motor Vehicles Strategy, page six).* Environment must be positioned at the start of this list.

  Even if the intent is not to list in order of importance, there's always an inference that can be made by the reader with such lists that suggests the leading item is what the Council will consider first. The Council must not be seen to be favouring priorities other than the environment given the scale of the Climate Crisis, and that the Authority declared a Climate Emergency in 2019.

- Weak language risks softening commitments to the point where they may be considered meaningless. For example, the use of phrases like *"the Council will seek to…"* or *"our aim will be…"* etc., instead of simply saying *"the Council will…"*. The weaker language allows the Council to avoid actually doing anything beyond maybe a paper exercise that says something was considered, or attempted, but a decision was then taken to actually do nothing.

  Language must be simple, strong, and to the point to ensure that commitments and policies are meaningful and will have a real, on the ground impact.

- Continuing with language, there is repeated use of the term "encourage" when speaking about shifting journeys from car-first to active and public transport; freight from lorries and

vans to other options. It is important to instead focus on "enabling" that shift.

"Enablement" means that active or public transport becomes easy, convenient, friction-free, and affordable to the point that it becomes the natural first-choice over driving. It means travelling by car for personal transport, or transporting freight by lorry or van is seen as more difficult than the alternatives and therefore is naturally discouraged. For active travel, this means friction-free routes that are safe, direct, comfortable, attractive, coherent and accessible, while friction may be added to motor vehicle journeys to make them less direct and longer.

"Encouragement" on its own suggests asking people to do something they don't necessarily want to do, such as walking or cycling where the routes are poor or where taking the car is easier or perceived to be safer.

It is therefore important to "enable" first, and "encourage" or "promote" second. The language throughout the documents should reflect this.

- There are contradictions around the provision of a Transport Hierarchy. This concept (though in need of its own improvements) is introduced in the Core Strategy, but the notion of providing for active travel and public transport first, ahead of motor vehicles, does not always carry through – especially in the objectives listed in the Motor Vehicle Strategy.

  Whenever the plan talks about car transport and "alternatives" together, there must be a strong commitment to active and public transport first, and only then should the provision for motor vehicles for those who still need to drive be included. This may be a fairly subtle change in the wording in some cases, but carrying forward a clear prioritisation for active and sustainable travel throughout the document is essential in ensuring that the transport hierarchy is properly adopted.

- There remains a element of motor-centric thought. The Motor Vehicle Strategy talks about roads being for people less able to use alternatives to the car, ignoring that roads are used by a multitude of transport options and that a significant proportion of people are not able to use cars. There is also the allowance for increasing motor vehicle capacity, in direct contrast to stated issues with the unsustainable growth in motor vehicles and vehicle miles that has been enabled by the very same principle.

- There is a misunderstanding over what "car dependency" means, as highlighted in the notes for the Managing Space Strategy document. Reducing and eliminating car dependency is always a positive for everyone, where it gives at least one other viable travel option beyond the car. As a result, reducing and eliminating car dependency cannot adversely affect people's lives. Reducing car dependency does not mean (by itself) reducing driving or the ability for someone to drive for a particular journey.

- With regard to presentation, certain aspects of image choice should be reviewed. Cyclists should not be routinely depicted wearing helmets, infrastructure must be shown to be accessible to all, and roads must not be dominated by motor traffic. The images should

reflect the environment that we wish to see – one where people are safe to cycle without protective equipment (as per the Netherlands), where cycling and wheeling is not seen in the same view as sport, where people wheeling are not hindered by inaccessible infrastructure such as steps, and where road space is shared equitably between different users including high quality footpaths and cycle routes in addition to general traffic lanes.