Proposed Amendments to West Bromwich Area Action Plan following consultation with the Highways Agency.

Insert after para 2.20

It is envisaged that through this mechanism the level of future developer contributions will be arrived at, and the processes identified for how funds will be collated, managed and allocated towards specific infrastructure projects. In the interim, any identified requirement for mitigation measures (for example through a Travel Plan/Transport Assessment) will be the subject of appropriate planning conditions or through legal agreements in accordance with Sandwell’s adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance: Planning Obligations.

Transportation

Objective 4 - Improving accessibility and movement to and within the area.

3.71 Core Strategy Policy CSP5 sets out the wider transport strategy for the Black Country and the policy reflects strategic outcomes that include, amongst others:

- enabling expansion of Strategic Centres,
- providing communities with improved access to employment, residential services and other facilities and amenities, with travel choices that are attractive viable and sustainable
- improving accessibility of employment sites to residential areas and providing reliable access for freight to the national motorway network, and
- facilitating access to quality employment land.

3.72 The Black Country LEP has also identified its four transport priorities:

- access to Birmingham Airport;
- improvements to the motorways;
- reinstatement of Stourbridge to Walsall freight line;
- Black Country Network Improvements.

These are reflected in the proposals contained in this Area Action Plan.

3.73 The large scale development proposed within the town centre and across the AAP area will result in increased travel demands on infrastructure that has seen little major investment since it was originally put in place in the late 1960s/early 1970s. The capacity of the strategic and local road network is limited. Further investment is required in order to accommodate the additional travel demand from new development. This may take the form of improvements to the existing network or the provision of new infrastructure, particularly in the medium to long term. Developments within the town centre will be contributors to the generally increased levels of movement, and will add to the need for transport schemes within the town centre and further afield.

3.74 Black Country Core Strategy Policy TRAN2 sets out the requirements for new development to identify and demonstrate their travel and transportation impacts together with proposals for mitigation, with measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities being agreed through Travel Plans and similar measures such as individualised travel planning. Within Sandwell the preparation of Transport Assessments (TA) and Travel Plans (TP) should be in accordance with the Council’s adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Preparation of Transport Assessments and Travel Plans, Dft Circular 02/07, DfT ‘Guidance on Transport Assessment and DfT Guidance ‘Good Practice Guidelines: Delivering Travel Plans through the Planning Process’ (April 2009).
West Bromwich is a highly sustainable location for a wide range of uses. It has a very good public transport network, reducing the need to travel by car. In particular, the town is well served by bus, and also sits on the mid point of the Metro line between Birmingham and Wolverhampton. It is also well connected to the strategic highway network with the A41 linking it to the national motorway network within three minutes drive time, as well as the wider sub-region.

It is recognised that an increasingly attractive and vibrant town centre with an enhanced retail offer will encourage more trips by local residents and attract more visitor trips as the centre appeals to a wider catchment area. Unless carefully managed, this could conflict with the objective of creating a more pedestrian focused town centre, with a safe walking environment. Thus there is a very strong link to the public realm strategy. The maximisation of walking, cycling and public transport will be critical to this, however in order for it to compete with its rivals the town centre will need to cater for those arriving by car.

Traffic and car parking need to be managed in such a way that this does not act as a disincentive to those choosing to arrive by car, whilst ensuring the town is comfortable and attractive. It will be important to encourage through traffic to use other routes so that the appropriate road network is available for people coming into the town centre.

A number of transportation issues have been identified:

- The number and location of car parking spaces.
- The volume of traffic on the Ringway and High Street.
- The severance effect of highways, particularly the A41 and the Ringway.
- Congestion on the A41.
- Congestion at M5, Junction 1.
- The need to provide transport infrastructure to support the level of growth envisaged in the plan.
- The poor quality of the highway network in the south west part of the Town.
- Capacity and operational issues at West Bromwich Bus Station.

In addressing these issues the Strategy adopted in the AAP has been to look at a balanced approach to the provision of infrastructure to support the anticipated level of growth whilst at the same time seeking to promote modal shift from the private car. The major interventions required to support the role of West Bromwich as a strategic centre are set out in Core Strategy policy TRAN1.

Whilst it is not intended that an overall ‘predict and provide’ approach to transport is adopted, it must be recognised that the scale of growth envisaged, particularly in the medium/longer term, will require some improvements/additions to the Town’s highway infrastructure. This remains the case even if relatively challenging modal shift targets are achieved. It is therefore necessary to consider what improvements will be required to take the Town forward.

In order to both inform the preparation of the AAP and test the various land use and transport scenarios being considered, a computer-based traffic model has been developed covering the whole of the AAP area. The model has been run for the preferred options in both 2011, 2016 and 2026 traffic conditions. The results have informed the proposed Transport Strategy as set out below.
3.82 The model will continue to be refined and the results re-assessed as development proposals become clearer, particularly following receipt of agreed Transport Assessments and Travel Plans. Post construction surveys will also be undertaken to ensure that the model remains a robust tool for evaluating the impact of the plan in future years. Further details regarding the traffic model are contained in Appendix 4.

3.83 New items of transport infrastructure are proposed as part of the regeneration of West Bromwich town centre although, combined with the existing infrastructure, it is unlikely that it will be able to accommodate all the extra journeys that are likely to be generated as a result of the intensification of land use in the town centre area.

3.84 The main aspects of the Transport Strategy will therefore be:

- Reconfigured road network and changes in use of some roads.
- The provision of improved passenger information systems for public transport users.
- Provision of new or improved highway infrastructure where current provision is either inadequate or non-existent.
- Variable message signing to make best use of the Town Centre infrastructure and car parking provision.
- Lower traffic speeds in town centre area within existing and proposed ring roads.
- Changes in amount and location of car parking provision and revised parking policy.
- Additional cycle routes and cycle parking.
- Extension of Metro station platforms (combined with the introduction of new, higher capacity trams).
- Identify how to maximise capacity and use of West Bromwich bus station.
- An Area Wide Travel Plan with a target to reduce the number of work related single occupancy vehicle trips to 55% for new developments.

The following sections provide further detail on the policy approach to transport within the AAP area.

**Walking & Cycling.**

**Policy WBP10: Walking and Cycling.**

The Council will promote pedestrian and cycling accessibility in the AAP area through requiring new major development to incorporate a series of measures which will reduce the dominance of the car such as:

- Giving priority to pedestrian movement between key uses and public transport provision through appropriate design, location and access arrangements.
- Creating more direct, safe and secure pedestrian and cycle links through improved lighting, the use of surface level crossings and wider pavements.
• Using opportunities provided by development to redesign the roadspace to provide a greater focus on pedestrian and cycle movement.
• Ensuring that new development, particularly within the town centre core, provides activity at street level through active frontages.
• Ensuring that new development addresses the needs for all population groups to be able to access and use facilities.
• Ensuring new development makes provision for cycle facilities such as cycle parking; kit lockers; changing facilities and showers.

3.85 There are significant residential areas within easy walking and cycling distance of the Town Centre and this is a considerable advantage in developing a cohesive, integrated centre. However, at present access to and from these areas is not always safe or convenient. With its part-pedestrianised High Street and two covered shopping centres the heart of the town is easy to walk around, beyond this, getting to where you want to easily and safely becomes more of a challenge.

3.86 Access from the residential areas to the north is severely hindered by the presence of the Expressway dual carriageway. Between Carters Green and Trinity Way there are six crossing points. Given that much of the Expressway is either in cut or on embankment, none of the existing crossings are ‘at-grade’. The existing pedestrian subways beneath the junction of the Expressway with All Saints Way will be replaced with at-grade pedestrian/cycle facilities as part of the A41 underpass major scheme. This will significantly improve access at this important ‘Gateway’ to the Town. A further improvement is planned to the existing bridge at Reform Street which, in association with the pedestrian and cycle facilities included in the Tesco scheme, will provide a high quality link between the retail core and Dartmouth Park.

3.87 The existing Ringway provides a major barrier in certain locations to pedestrian movement and the ability to provide the necessary priority that should be given to pedestrians and cyclists within the town centre. In addition access from residential areas to the north is severely hindered by the presence of the Expressway dual carriageway and to a lesser degree the Metro Line to the south, with much of it being in cutting, has a similar severing effect.

3.88 The town caters for elderly and disabled people, as well as families with small children and babies, for which good well designed access can make the experience of using facilities far more pleasurable. Whilst some facilities are currently provided for these groups, it is important that as new development and improvement to public realm takes place, access and facilities for these less mobile groups is taken into account and improved, so that they may continue to use the town centre with ease in the future. This applies not just to mobility, but also measures to overcome other disabilities for example sight or hearing. Facilities to cater for the needs of families with young children will also be an essential element of new development, if they are to have full access to the range of facilities that the town centre offers in the future.

3.89 As part of the Public Realm Strategy it is intended to create strong pedestrian links within and between new developments such as those at All Saints, Eastern Gateway and the new Sandwell College.

3.90 In addition to these general improvements, more specific proposals have been identified:

• Dartmouth Street/Sandwell Road between the Metro stop and the proposed All Saints office development.
• Lodge Road between the proposed multi-storey car park, Metro stop and High Street.
• Clearly defined high quality pedestrian links between the proposed new multi-storey car parks at George Street and the Lyng and the retail core.

3.91 These routes will form an integral part of the overall public realm strategy outlined in Policy WBP3. Specific proposals relating to the provision of walking and cycling facilities are set out in Appendix 5.

3.92 The Council has identified a cycle network in its Cycle Strategy: Cycling In Sandwell. The routes within the AAP area are shown at Figure 6. As with the highway network provision is relatively poor to the south of the Town Centre in comparison with the north. The introduction of the 20 mph zone will mean that the majority of the town centre highway network will be ‘cycle friendly’. All new or improved highway infrastructure will incorporate appropriate cycle facilities within their design. However this needs to be considered within the context of a network of safer routes as identified in the cycle strategy. A number of potential new routes have been identified which will complement the existing network and can be brought forward through the AAP Transport Strategy. These routes are designed to link areas of new development with both the Town Centre and the wider cycle network. The following new routes are proposed:

• Spon Lane corridor.
• The Lyng ‘spine’.
• Albion Road/Oak Lane corridor.
• Greets Green Road/Woods Lane corridor.
• Turner Street/Dartmouth Street corridor.

Figure 6 shows the proposed cycle route network in the AAP area, identifying proposed new or improved facilities which are detailed in Appendix 5.

Sustainable Transport & Travel Plans.

Policy WBP11: Travel Plans

In order to promote modal shift and limit and manage the amount of traffic generated by development, the Council will require all major new development proposals to be supported by a Travel Plan in accordance with the targets and measures identified in the Area Wide Travel Plan, for the AAP area.

Whilst the Travel Plan will primarily apply to new developments, many of the measures included in it could be applied to existing town centre users and the Council will encourage their take-up through such initiatives as Company Travel Wise and Car Share Sandwell.

3.93 The Plan promotes significant new development and it will be important to limit and manage the amount of traffic generated by this new development. An Area Wide Travel Plan has been developed for the AAP area with the objective of establishing a broad framework for how individual travel plans related to specific development proposals should be prepared in order to ensure a consistent approach. The aims of the travel plan are:

• To reduce congestion, car parking difficulties and other transport related problems in and around West Bromwich that are likely to arise from increased retail and employment activity in town centre.
To widen travel choice and perceptions of travel choice for employees and shoppers travelling to West Bromwich.

To bring about an improvement in air quality.

To bring about the use of a more sustainable mix of transport methods.

To achieve a target for work related single occupancy trips to new developments of 55% of all person trips.

To move towards achieving this target for all work related trips into the AAP area.

3.94 The Area Wide Travel Plan will include the following measures. These will need to be prioritised and in some cases specific budgets identified:

- Travel Plans for all existing businesses in the area.
- Companies to join Sandwell Company TravelWise – further subsidise travel cards, e.g. match 5% TravelWise discount, i.e. 10% in total.
- Set up public area on carsharesandwell.com – subsidise companies to join.
- Promote homeworking, video-conferencing and use of satellite offices to reduce the need to commute.
- Extensive use of home delivery services to be promoted.
- Regular events to promote sustainable modes, especially showcase routes, Metro and TWM/Centro Partnership services.
- Other events: competitions for participating companies, free one-day Centro cards for Public Transport try-out, Dr Bike sessions at companies and in public areas, information sessions and displays for car sharing, routes, timetables, info cards, other giveaways.
- Special Website for West Bromwich Area Wide Travel Plan.
- Set up a Transport Management Association – companies to bring travel issues to attention of Highway Authority and act upon them swiftly, i.e. a partnership but the companies have to actively promote sustainable travel in return and prove that people are changing to sustainable modes.
- Contingency plans for highway problems to be devised and backed up by installation of VMS.
- Review car parking policy to enable parking spaces to be dedicated for people who car share as part of an incentive package.
- Incentivise take up of recommendations of Sandwell bus network review as carried out by Centro.

The Area Wide Travel Plan is contained at Appendix 6.

Public Transport
Policy WBP12: Public Transport

The Council will work to implement the agreed recommendations of the Bus Network Review are implemented and also that further local reviews are carried out in response to new development.

The Council will seek to implement measures to increase capacity at West Bromwich Bus Station.

New development will be required to make appropriate provision for public transport access, either through on-site facilities or via contributions to off-site works.

3.95 West Bromwich has no railway station, the nearest being Sandwell and Dudley some 1.5 km to the south. Strategic public transport links are provided by Line 1 of the Midland Metro tram system and by high frequency bus services. The cities of Birmingham and Wolverhampton and the majority of towns in the Black Country are connected by either metro or by a single bus journey.

3.96 An initial examination of the bus route map for the AAP area (see Figure 7) indicates that the area is well served in terms of network coverage. However, some areas are poorly served in the evenings and/or weekends. For example, the large industrial area to the south and west of Brandon Way is particularly poorly served both in terms of route coverage and, frequency and period of service. Whilst this is not surprising given the nature of the existing land use, the future shift towards residential development in this area proposed in the Plan will result in changed demand.

3.97 Centro intend to carry out a Network Review in Sandwell early in 2012. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the Council. Whilst this review will primarily concentrate on ensuring that the network meets the needs of the Borough as of ‘today’, it will clearly be necessary to have a mechanism to ensure that future needs resulting from redevelopment can be met. This is particularly important for the AAP area where significant land use changes are envisaged such as the redevelopment of industrial areas in the south west of West Bromwich for housing. The Council will therefore work to ensure that the recommendations of the Network Review are implemented and also that further local reviews are carried out in response to new development.

3.98 Whilst of relatively recent construction, it is apparent that the bus station is operating at or beyond capacity. This will, in future years, act as a constraint on improving bus patronage and service provision. The proposed down-grading of the southern section of the Ringway will provide the opportunity to consider locating some stands on the public highway thus increasing the overall capacity of the facility. The operation of the signalised access to the bus station on the Ringway will also be reviewed with the aim of reducing the level of congestion experienced by buses exiting the station. This will contribute to service reliability, especially for none terminating services.

3.99 Line 1 of Midland Metro has now been in operation for around a decade. The existing trams, and some stops, experience overcrowding at peak periods. The granting of DfT ‘Full Approval’ status to the Birmingham City Centre Extension and Enhancement Package in February 2011 will result in the introduction of new higher capacity trams and associated modifications to existing stops to help alleviate these capacity problems.
Highway Infrastructure

Policy WBP13: Highway Infrastructure

New or improved highway infrastructure will be provided to support the planned levels of growth within the AAP area.

Major projects (those over £5m) will be subject of bids for Department for Transport major scheme funding with the required local contributions being drawn from the CIL and other sources. Schemes under £5m will be funded through a combination of CIL, Local Transport Plan funding and other DfT grants where appropriate.

Key transport priorities are;

- Junction improvements on the A41
- Extended Town Centre Ringway
- Modifications to the Ringway south of High Street
- South-West bypass

Site specific transport measures, such as access or road safety improvements, required as part of new developments and identified through their respective transport assessments/travel plans should continue to be funded directly by the development.

3.100 The AAP area enjoys good strategic highway links both to the rest of the region and nationally. The A41 runs west - east through the area linking it Wolverhampton, Dudley (via the A461), Smethwick and Birmingham. It also provides the link to the national network at junction 1 of the M5 motorway which lies on the extreme eastern edge of the AAP area. The A4031/A4034 runs north - south through the town providing links to Walsall and Sutton Coldfield to the north, and the south west of the conurbation. The junction of these two routes lies immediately north of the Town Centre and is one of the major ‘Gateways’ to the town.

3.101 The combination of the A41 (The Expressway), the A4031 (Trinity Way) and A4182 (Kenrick Way/Kelvin Way) provides a partial ring of bypasses around the Town. At the time of their construction in the late 1960s/early 1970s, it was intended that the unclassified Brandon Way would ultimately complete the south west section of the ring via Claypit Lane. However, this never actually came to fruition.

3.102 Locally, vehicular traffic is distributed around the Town via series of secondary routes which radiate from the Ringway that encircles the current retail core. The majority of these routes are narrow with high levels of frontage development and on-street parking.

3.103 Congestion on the Strategic Highway Network continues to be a problem in the AAP area. The SHN plays two important but, to a degree, competing roles; i) It carries large volumes of through traffic, particularly trips to and from Birmingham and ii) The junctions at Carters Green and All Saints Way on the A41, Junction 1 of the M5 the Trinity Way/High Street Junction all serve as gateways to the town centre for both car and public transport trips. Problems resulting from the latter will only increase as the Town experiences the growth resulting from its role as one of the Black Country’s four strategic centres. In addressing the problems at these junctions, the requirement to serve both functions needs to be considered. In the case of Junction 1, the impact on the operation of the motorway itself is also of major importance.

3.104 The existing highway network is shown on Figure 8. The lack of strategic provision in the south west corner of the Town is readily apparent. This results in vehicles travelling south
to north west having to journey east and then utilise the A41 or travel through the Town Centre, picking up the A41 at Carters Green. There is a particular issue with vehicles travelling to and from Smethwick which currently use Junction 1 to access the A41.

3.105 The highway network has a significant severance effect. The A41 Expressway runs in a segregated corridor which effectively forms the northern boundary of the Town Centre. There are relatively few points at which this dual carriageway can be crossed and thus it deters pedestrian movement from the large residential areas immediately north of the Town Centre. In considering improvements to the A41, the need to provide high quality safe pedestrian and cycle routes across it must be a priority.

3.106 The Ringway around the existing retail core also has a major severing effect. Both the design of the road and the amount of traffic which continues to use it, contribute to its impact. This was lessened to some degree, as a result of the conversion of the Ringway from one-way to two-way working in 2001. The works included the infilling of most of the pedestrian subways and their replacement with at-grade crossing facilities.

3.107 The traffic modelling work undertaken to support the AAP shows that much of the traffic using the Ringway is not through traffic but ‘destination’ traffic. This is particularly true of the Bull Street/Reform Street section which serves a multi-storey car park and will also serve one of the two new car parks which form part of the Tesco development. This area also provides the key access points to Dartmouth Park and Sandwell Valley beyond so pedestrian movement is also particularly important in this location.

3.108 As stated above, improvements and additions to the highway network within the AAP area will be required to support the scale of growth envisaged in the plan even if the modal shift levels anticipated in the Area Wide Travel Plan are achieved. These changes to the highway network will consist of the following:

- Junction improvements on the A41 Expressway at All Saints Way and Carters Green.
- An extended Ringway to the north of the retail core to enable the expanded shopping area to be fully integrated.
- Modifications to the Ringway south of High Street to discourage through traffic, improve integration with sites to the south and improve public transport and pedestrian safety.
- A south west bypass to complete the route between Kenrick Way (A4182) and the A41 at Swan Village.
- Possible additional junction improvements to the south and east of the centre.

These proposals are detailed in Appendix 5 below and are illustrated on Figure 9.

3.109 The Black Country Core Strategy identifies requirements for improvements at Junctions 9 and 10 of the M6 and Junctions 1 and 2 of the M5, The Highways Agency has highlighted particular concerns in relation to the M5 junctions where detailed modelling work has identified they are likely to reach operational capacity during the early part of the plan period. This requirement has subsequently been carried forward into the draft West Midlands Local Transport Plan 3 which came into affect in April 2011. The final nature of the improvements at Junction 1 has yet to be determined but LTP3 identifies the proposal as a priority for the period 2016-26.

3.110 In the short term, the Council will work with the Highways Agency to minimise any impact either through the Area Wide Travel Plan (see above) or through traffic management proposals. In addition, the proposed new South West Bypass will re-route some traffic away
from this key junction. However there will remain a requirement to carry out improvements at this location and the Council will work with the Highways Agency to develop proposals and produce a major scheme business case to support a bid for Department for Transport funding.

3.111 The successful achievement of the proposals outlined above will be dependent upon the identification of appropriate funding and delivery mechanisms. It will also be dependent on joint working between all stakeholders, including the Highways Agency, Centro, neighbouring authorities and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership in order to ensure the timely and effective delivery of the mitigation identified, linked to appropriate phases of development.