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Area Transport Strategy for Crawley

Spatial Context

- 7.59 Crawley town sits to the south of Gatwick Airport which is wholly included within the Borough boundary. Crawley developed slowly as a market town, serving the surrounding villages in the Weald. Crawley was designated as a new town in 1947. The town now contains 14 residential neighbourhoods radiating out from the core of the old market town and separated by main roads and railway lines.
- 7.60 Crawley Borough's population is estimated to grow by 6.4% to 119,600 by 2043 from 112,400 in 2018, when it accounted for 13.1% of the West Sussex population. Crawley Borough has a higher proportion of younger people compared to other West Sussex districts, with 21.9% of people aged up to 15, while 13.4% of the population are aged 65 or above. For the 65+ age group the forecast population is expected to increase from 15,000 in 2018 to 23,600 (57.0%) over the period 2018-2043²⁷. Whilst there are some affluent areas there are also areas which are among the most deprived in the County.
- 7.61 Economically, the town has developed into the main centre of industry and employment between London and the south coast and is at the centre of the 'Gatwick Diamond'. The Manor Royal Business District, with its space, proximity to Gatwick Airport and good transport links has airport-related services such as logistics, catering, distribution and warehousing. Crawley is also a major retail centre for the surrounding area with hundreds of shops on the high street in and around the Queens Square and over 75 shops in the County Mall shopping centre.
- 7.62 Crawley has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as the town relies on Gatwick Airport. The major collapse in Gatwick Airport passenger numbers - nearly four million per month (2019) to 850,000 per month (2020) has resulted in more than 7,000 redundancies at the airport

²⁷ WSCC: [West Sussex Life](#) (accessed May 2021)

(nearly 33 per cent of the workforce). As many as 25,800 Crawley residents have been furloughed during the pandemic (41% of the eligible local workforce). Unemployment in Crawley has more than trebled from 2.4 per cent to more than eight per cent during the pandemic.

- 7.63 The emerging Crawley Local Plan is proposing to allocate sites for 4,100 new homes in the adopted local plan with an additional 2,180 in the 2020 local plan review and commercial development that is expected to come forward in the period up to 2037 alongside infrastructure improvements. The emerging Local Plan proposes to allocate sites in the town centre and Three Bridges to increase housing allocations at existing developments which are expected to be delivered through densification. By 2037 around 5,320 new homes are expected to have been built with around 20 per cent of this provision in the form of the new neighbourhood known as Forge Wood.
- 7.64 Commercial development is proposed to be provided in the main through a strategic employment allocation known as Gatwick Green. The emerging Local Plan aims to make Crawley the place to do business in the South East by redeveloping and revitalising the Town Centre and further regeneration of the Manor Royal Business District.

Transport Context

- 7.65 The M23 motorway is the main north-south route that passes through the very east of the borough connecting the A23 in the south to the A27 and Brighton and the M25 and London to the north. The A23/A2011 provides a key relief to traffic in the town centre and provides a connection from the M23 / A264 / A23, Pease Pottage Interchange, junction 11 in the south at Pease Pottage to the M23 / A264 / A2011, Crawley Interchange, junction 10 in the north at Forge Wood.
- 7.66 The A23/A2011 is dual carriageway over its entire length between the two motorway junctions with a mix of junction types, some of which are signal controlled. Crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists on this section of A23/A2011 are mainly provided at grade.
- 7.67 The town has excellent rail links to Gatwick Airport and the capital and beyond to the north and south to destinations such as Brighton and Chichester. The Brighton Main Line (which is accessed via Three Bridge station, over 1 mile from the town centre) provides rail connections to the north (destinations such as London and Thameslink services such as Bedford and Peterborough) and the south (destinations such as Haywards Heath and Brighton). The Arun Valley line provides rail connections to the south (destinations such as Horsham, Chichester, Bognor Regis and Southampton).
- 7.68 There are four railway stations in Crawley Borough split evenly between the Arun Valley line and the Brighton main line. The stations have very good levels of service with Gatwick Airport having the best level of service in the south east outside of London. It has express services which take passengers to and from the airport in just over half an hour to central London and to Brighton in 25 minutes.
- 7.69 The local bus network is very comprehensive in Crawley with services being operated on a largely commercial basis by Metrobus. Metrobus

operates three (10, 20 & 100) bus rapid transit standard services branded 'Fastway' which operate 24 hours a day. The 10 service is very successful, carrying 3.8m passengers per annum and operates at 6 to 7-minute frequency at peak times.

- 7.70 There is extensive bus priority in Crawley including segregated busways that require specially adapted 'guided' buses to run on them. There are 1.5 km guided and 5.8 km unguided bus lanes, 40 traffic lights and 2 roundabouts including Tushmore roundabout which has a segregated bus lane through the centre of the roundabout.
- 7.71 The cycle network in Crawley is comprised of a mix of off-carriageway, typically shared use routes and signed routes on quieter roads. National Cycle Network route 20 provides a connection north to Horley and on to Redhill. Route 21, the Worth Way provides a connection east to East Grinstead and onwards towards Royal Tunbridge Wells. These two National Sustrans routes are primarily used for leisure purposes as part of their wider regional use but also provide some good local cycling provision in the east of Crawley connecting Three Bridges with Manor Royal and Gatwick Airport.

Key Issues

- 7.72 Travel behaviour in the borough is currently dominated by car travel but there is significant bus and rail use. Some areas in the south of Bewbush have over 20% bus mode share for travel to work (census 2011), the highest bus mode share in the south east outside of London. Rail mode share for travel to work (census 2011) tops 25% at Three Bridges, again one of the highest rail mode shares in the south east outside of London. Access improvements are required and due to be implemented at this station.
- 7.73 Active travel modes are not usually seen as viable options for many journeys which leads to a number of issues.
- 7.74 The current key transport issues in Crawley are:
- Congestion on the A23 / A2011 Crawley Avenue during peak periods;
 - Congestion on the A264 during peak periods;
 - Congestion on the M23 during peak periods;
 - Congestion at M23 junctions during peak periods;
 - Rat-running on less suitable routes to avoid congestion;
 - Cycle network is primarily on highway and discontinuous and does not meet user needs;
 - Traffic-related air quality management area at Hazelwick which is expected to be extended to Three Bridges; and
 - Congestion for buses using and exiting the bus station, which is at capacity.
- 7.75 In the future, once the Crawley Local Plan development takes place, it is anticipated that some of the current transport issues will worsen if background traffic also grows as forecast. Therefore, ambitious sustainable transport and demand management interventions are needed

in Crawley and the surrounding area that will reduce car travel, particularly at peak times. The Local Plan transport study includes 27 suggestions for bus lanes or other bus priority features. These will require further study and prioritisation to take forward. Over and above these interventions, the following locations on the highway network are likely to require capacity improvement in the future to mitigate the impacts of development:

- A23 / Ifield Avenue – Ifield Roundabout
- Mitigation needs at M23 junctions and merges are under discussion with Highways England

Transport Strategy for Crawley

- 7.76 Our transport strategy for the Crawley area is to ensure active travel modes and shared transport services are attractive options in all areas of the town. We will achieve this by; improving the efficiency of the network of shared transport services, building on the existing Fastway network by providing bus priority at signal controlled junctions; improving efficiency and giving greater priority to active travel and shared transport at three A2011 junctions; improving access to the railway through improved public transport interchange facilities at Crawley, Three Bridges and Gatwick Airport; prioritising active travel modes as development takes place and delivering priority cycle routes such as the Horsham to Crawley cycle route.
- 7.77 We will work with partners to ensure that shared transport modes are an attractive option for travel to Gatwick Airport and use on-street parking and traffic management techniques to discourage pick-ups and drop-offs.
- 7.78 In order to facilitate the shift to electric vehicles and address the current air quality issues, we will initially facilitate the introduction of on-street charging infrastructure in areas of Crawley where communities rely on on-street parking.
- 7.79 Our approach to managing the network will use on-street parking and traffic management techniques to manage demand in Crawley.
- 7.80 We will revisit this strategy in light of the Crawley Local Plan review and make changes, if necessary, in response to planning decisions.
- 7.81 In the long term we will work with strategic partners to provide an improved service on the Brighton main line to improve connections to Brighton and London and the Arun Valley line.

Short term (2022-27) priorities for the Crawley area

- Bus Priority at various signal-controlled junctions
- Crawley Rail Station upgrade
- Three Bridges Station Interchange improvements
- Gatwick Airport Station upgrade
- Horsham to Crawley cycle route
- On-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- A2011 Crawley Ave/Balcombe Rd Link

