Section 1. Context

1. How does your proposal demonstrate delivery of the 2050 Ambition?

By adopting a suite of Local Plan policies which support the delivery of an increased range of travel options for people the Council makes such provision a normal part of the development consent process in future and decreases the burden of delivering such change on public finances. Policies would include requirements on the delivery of electric vehicle charging points, cycling infrastructure, wheelchair accessible parking spaces and the use of travel plan measures for major trip generating development. Policies can also be put in place supporting requirements for Section 106 Agreements (legal agreements) with new development related to the enhancement of the pedestrian environment, public transport facilities and travel plan monitoring costs.

It is suggested that this proposal be merged with the outcome related to the delivery of a new Local Plan (Opportunity and Prosperity outcome 1), which has been identified for immediate progression. Although not proposed for an actual merger, this proposal is also clearly heavily related to Connected and Smart outcome 3, smart, clean and green travel. Other links are outlined further below.

No additional budget is sought for the proposed merger. A budget has already been approved to deliver the Local Plan and other staff involved in the work are funded through existing revenue budgets.

Adopting Local Plan policies which support people having a wide choice of travel options contributes to delivering a range of 2050 themes. Requiring the delivery of transport infrastructure (of the nature outlined above), use of travel planning measures and funding for transport related facilities has positive impacts on vehicular congestion and traffic, neighbourhood cohesion, air quality and physical activity levels. This stems from the enhancement of non-car modes of transport, moves towards electric powered vehicles and the discouragement (in relation to travel planning) of single occupant car journeys.

The use of strong transport policies on widening travel options in the new Local Plan is also a key part of a broader journey on this outcome, in which the Council moves from delivering a wider choice of travel options in isolation itself under other outcomes (for example through implementing cycle parking facilities and electric vehicle charging points) to doing this collaboratively with partner stakeholders (for example through active travel planning). Finally, by adopting Local Plan policies requiring the provision of various measures (such as cycle parking, electric vehicle charging and travel planning) which provide a wider range of travel options for people as part of new development the delivery of this simply becomes the norm for those carrying out development.

2. What evidence have you got that this approach will deliver of the outcome?

The use of transport related planning policies of the nature envisaged is a well established mechanism for incrementally increasing the range of travel options available to people as new developments are delivered. It is an approach broadly supported by national planning policy and it has a good track record of successfully delivering positive change in Council’s nationally where such policies have been adopted and become embedded.
3. What are the measures of impact, success and how will you embed learning?

A key measure of success would be the successful adoption of strong, but suitably balanced (see below), Local Plan policies which support people having a wide choice of travel options. The success and impact of the individual policies in delivering wider transport option choices (for example the existence of additional electric vehicle charging points in the borough or the number of travel plans adopted by new developments) could then also be measured over time if this was found to be beneficial.

Section 2. Aims, Objectives & Collaboration

4. What are the key aims and objectives of the proposal?

The fundamental objective of the proposal is to enhance the transport options available to people in a whole range of regards where new development is consented. Wider related objectives are to reduce the number of journeys by car to and from destinations within the borough, reduced vehicular congestion and traffic, increased neighbourhood cohesion, reduced road traffic accident risk, improved air quality, the provision of better facilities for people with mobility challenges and greater physical activity levels (with the associated health benefits).

5. Who else have you involved in discussions and how have the helped to shape the proposal?

To date primary engagement has been with Neil Hoskins, Davinia Farthing and Mark Sheppard. These members of the Council’s Major Projects & Strategic Transport and Planning & Building Control Groups have experience and expertise in transport matters and delivering transport policy and planning policy. They have provided feedback that has helped to shape the approach proposed.

As Outcome Leads for the heavily interrelated Connected and Smart outcome of ‘We are leading the way in making public and private travel smart, clean and green’ Neil Hoskins and Mark Churchill have been part of discussions about how these two outcomes can be best considered and delivered together in this context. Nick Constantine has also provided broader feedback, particularly as to how the approach fits into the wider 2050 agenda.

6. What are the links and dependencies with the other outcome proposals?

Beyond the direct proposed merge with the outcome related to the delivery of the Local Plan, the proposal links to and will impact upon a wide range of other outcomes to varying degrees. There are particular links to the two other transport outcomes in Connected and Smart (Getting into and around the borough and smart, clean and green travel). Other outcomes where there are levels of linkage include Safe and Well (Borough feels safe and secure; Southenders remain well enough to have fulfilling lives; protecting and improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable; and we act as a green city); Active and Involved (Community connection; co-design, co-creation, co-production; active lifestyles); and Opportunity and Prosperity (Children and adult skills ready).

7. Who are the partners (or potential partners) and how to you envisage their role(s) in collaborating to delivering the proposal to achieve the outcome?

The adoption of Local Plan policies which support people having a wide choice of travel options will require close work between members of the Major Projects & Strategic Transport Group, Traffic and Highways Group and the Planning Policy Team to deliver a robust evidence based which allows strong policies to proceed past their independent review by the Planning Inspectorate (the Local Plan Examination in Public).

Collaboration with public transport operators and local groups with interests in transport related matters is likely to be needed or useful both in terms of developing a suitable evidence base for supporting policies adoption and in implementing many of the changes sought to actually deliver wider transport options. There will also need to be engagement with partners in the development industry to ensure that the policies adopted are understood, reasonable and suitably challenging without preventing acceptable development coming forward (see details below).
8. What potential challenges do you anticipate in respect of a) implementing this proposal, b) caused by this proposal once implemented?

The adoption of planning policies such as those proposed is often perceived as an additional burden and cost by those carrying out development. As a result developers frequently challenge them both during the adoption process (to try and prevent them becoming formal adopted policy) and when individual planning applications are being determined in accordance with the policies (post their adoption). In terms of determining individual applications this is particularly the case when policies are newly adopted and are still bedding in.

New transport policies of the nature envisaged would result in additional costs for developers. However, this is a common situation for a whole range of planning requirements. It is ultimately the cost of progress towards more sustainable forms of development and the delivery of a wider range of transport options for people. This situation means that the Council needs to ensure it is reasonable and proportionate when looking to apply any new standards or requirements (as it does with any policy change), so as not to make developments unviable or to discourage development in Southend. Policies or those which are seen as unduly burdensome for development are unlikely to be accepted by the Inspector at the independent Local Plan Examination in Public stage.

When considering the degree of ‘challenge’ this proposal represents it is worth noting that the types of transport policies envisaged would be a significant change from the current Southend requirements in many regards, but also that they would not be especially radical when considered against the requirements of many other Council’s existing transport related planning policies. This is helpful as to be able to adopt planning policies the Council will need to demonstrate to central government (a Planning Inspector) that they do not make development unviable and are generally reasonable and proportionate.

Section 3. Social Value

9. How could the proposal deliver social value - in terms of the local community, businesses, economy and environment and what will the specific impact and benefits be?

Beyond positive effects on vehicular congestion and traffic, broader impacts of the new policy requirements include increased neighbourhood cohesion, improved air quality, greater levels of physical activity and the delivery of facilities which are suitable for all members of the community.

10. What is the perceived impact the proposal will have on groups with ‘protected characteristics’?

This proposal would support groups with protected characteristics, as it will fundamentally require developments to take appropriate account of their needs and increase the range of transport options available to them. Groups with protected characteristics related to age, disability and maternity are particularly likely to benefit (for example from policies on matters such as requiring the provision of wheelchair accessible car parking spaces), but it is also likely to apply more widely to those with other protected characteristics.

11. What is the proposal’s potential direct or indirect impact on the wider community?

These are explored above.