

Chapter 2

Wider Context

Chapter Overview

A good transport system is essential to supporting a wide range of economic, social and environmental objectives. This chapter explains how Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan influences, and has been influenced by, other plans and initiatives within and outside the County Council, and how the delivery of the LTP will contribute towards achieving their objectives.

The National Context

Transport has a role in the delivery of a number of national policies. It is not the intention within this document to provide a comprehensive list and summary of all these policies other than to recognise that connectivity is important if local, regional and national visions are to be realised within a framework which provides best value for money.

Detailed below, is a summary of the key national policies that have guided the development of this Plan and includes a statement of how Oxfordshire is taking forward and contributing to these national policy objectives at the local level.

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy

This new strategy sets out the Government's objectives for four key priority areas: sustainable consumption and production, climate change and energy, protecting natural resources and environmental enhancement and sustainable communities. Transport measures promoted in this Plan will have a positive impact on meeting these priority areas. In particular, cycling, walking, public transport, travel planning and travel information will help reduce air pollution, tackle congestion and improve access to services.

Most relevant to the development of this Plan is the priority to create sustainable communities - places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. The strategy particularly emphasises an aim to improve the lives of people in deprived communities and socially excluded groups who experience poor quality of life, including poor local environmental

quality and poor access to services such as education, healthcare and transport.

Transport has a key role to play in creating sustainable communities, in particular, through the principles and processes that the LTP's Accessibility Strategy is built upon. By shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, design and mix of land uses, planning can help to reduce the length of journeys and make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling. As part of the emerging Accessibility Strategy, areas of the county with communities that have difficulty accessing key services are being identified and a variety of schemes will be developed to ease these difficulties in a sustainable manner. Communities will be sustainable only if they are fully inclusive and basic minimum standards of public service are delivered.

As well as through the Accessibility Strategy, the LTP will aid the creation of sustainable communities in other ways. Transport measures promoted through this Plan will have a positive impact on contributing to the meeting the Government's UK Sustainable Development's four objectives and the creation of sustainable communities in Oxfordshire. Work in this will also support the work of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal by tackling the deprivation prevalent in some urban areas of the county. Working with partners will ensure that the essential requirements of sustainable communities, especially good quality, customer-focused public services, pride in the community and cohesion within it are addressed, in line with the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. They will also ensure clean, safe, healthy and attractive environments in which people can take pride.

For many years the County Council has, through its Structure Plan policies, sought to deliver coherent and sustainable communities by directing residential and commercial development to the Country Towns of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney. This has resulted in considerable sums becoming available for transport improvement through developer contributions which has enabled improvements such as the Banbury Inner Relief Road, the Milton Heights Link Road in Didcot and the Bicester Perimeter Road being provided to serve new developments and improve the overall infrastructure in the local areas.

Transport White Paper: The Future of Transport

This White Paper sets out the Government's overall transport strategy for the period to 2030. It takes forward the strategy originally set out by the Government in 2000 in 'The Ten Year Plan for Transport' and is built around three central themes:

- > sustained investment over the long term;
- > improvements in transport management to achieve better value for money;

- > planning ahead and considering alternatives to road building.

The White Paper promotes a number of key strategies that will help deliver its transport objectives. The following paragraphs provide an overview of how the LTP has been influenced by the White Paper and therefore how it contributes towards achieving its aims and objectives.

More road space for buses

Government has consistently highlighted the important role that the bus plays in our towns and cities. The summary of the Bus Strategy for Oxfordshire in Chapter 4 is evidence of the County Council's firm commitment to continue making the bus a more attractive travel option. Introducing measures which minimise delays and improve the reliability of bus services are a crucial part of achieving this. For example, through the Premium Routes Strategy major enhancements will be made to existing routes including bus priority measures, bus stop and interchange improvements and real time information systems - see Chapter 4 for more details.

Promoting the use of school travel plans

Travel Plans are a key part of the County Council's approach to delivering the Local Transport Plan objectives. Chapter 3 identifies a number of key actions which are supported by the Council's Travel Plans development strategy - including better public transport, walking and cycling strategies, and helping to make better informed travel choices.

Chapter 4 describes in detail Oxfordshire's approach to Travel Plans development which demonstrates how they will continue to play a prominent role in helping the County Council address its Local Transport Objectives.

Improving the quality of local environments

The County Council continues to place a high importance on improving the local environment. For example, the County Council recognises the role that transport planning can play in enhancing the quality of the street environment in particular: improving the street environment is a key objective of this Plan, as Chapter 3 explains.

The Council recognises that transport improvements can have both positive and negative environmental impacts, and the likely environmental effects of all of our proposed approaches and actions have been carefully assessed through a pre-scheme Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Demand Management

Congestion charging was considered as a policy measure in the County Council's Transport Networks Review. Only Oxford has the scale of traffic problems that might warrant the introduction of a cordon style charging system. However this was not considered an appropriate measure to pursue for the following reasons:

- > A cordon drawn tightly around the central area would have little effect as this area is already highly restricted to vehicles.
- > A cordon charge for entering inside the ring road would not affect residents of Oxford. Therefore, while it may discourage some traffic from entering Oxford, the freed up road-space would be likely to be used up by residents. This might be countered to a small extent by re-allocating road-space, but the scope for doing this would be limited.
- > Charging Oxford residents as part of a licence-type scheme (as in London) would not be reasonable at full rates, but applying a discount (again as in London) would have little effect on volumes of residents' traffic.

It is therefore considered that the present policies of pricing public parking in central Oxford to encourage the use of buses and park & ride services while having access controls to discourage through traffic in the central area are likely to be as effective, if not more, in reducing unnecessary traffic and improving conditions in the city centre than the introduction of a congestion charging scheme.

However, introduction of a workplace parking charge (WPC) is considered worth investigating further in the Oxfordshire context as it could target those with private non-residential spaces who are least likely to be deterred by existing travel constraints in Oxford. Particular benefits could be achieved in out-of-centre locations, where existing parking is often cheap or free and contributes to growing traffic levels on the periphery of the city. On the negative side, though, WPC schemes in individual towns may act to reduce their competitiveness for attracting new employment and the retention of existing businesses undermining the economic vitality of the area. The County Council intends to monitor developments elsewhere and learn lessons from these other schemes before making any decision on whether to consider introducing such measures.

Transport and Social Exclusion

Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion was published by the Social Exclusion Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2003, and explains how the Government will address transport and accessibility problems that affect social exclusion. It forms part of the Government's programme to build successful and sustainable communities and has therefore had a significant influence on the development of Oxfordshire's emerging Accessibility Strategy. The report highlights that there is a need to understand whether people can get to key services at a reasonable cost, in a reasonable time and with reasonable ease.

Five key barriers to accessing services are identified in the report:

- > the availability and physical accessibility of transport;
- > cost of transport;
- > services and activities located in inaccessible places;
- > safety and security; and
- > travel horizons.

Oxfordshire is already making progress to remove barriers to key facilities. The emerging Accessibility Strategy will provide the County Council's response to reducing social exclusion in the county, as do elements of the bus strategy and other supporting strategies detailed in Chapter 4.

National Road Safety Strategy

By 2010, the Government wishes to achieve, compared with the average for 1994-98:

- > a 40% reduction in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- > a 50% reduction in the numbers of children killed or seriously injured; and
- > a 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate, expressed as the number of people slightly injured per 100 million vehicle kilometres.

To aid the delivery of these targets, Oxfordshire has been ensuring that safety continues to be a main objective in all designs, building, operation and maintenance of its transport assets. Road safety training and education, accident monitoring and before and after studies are also key elements of the County's strategy to meet the 2010 targets.

More details of how Oxfordshire is working towards the 2010 targets and the guiding principles to deliver the government's objective of safer roads can be found in Chapters 3 and 4.

Trunk Roads

The M40, A34 and A43 are trunk roads administered by the Highways Agency on behalf of the Department for Transport. These routes serve a national function and also form an important part of the county's road network providing access to most of the county's main centres.

Draft Route Management Strategies (RMS) for the county's trunk roads were produced by Highways Agency in 2003/4 and will be finalised during 2005. These will form the basis of Route Management Plans which will set out ten year plans for the management and operation of individual trunk roads by

introducing short-term solutions to problems identified through the RMS process.

Proposals in the LTP are designed to take account of RMS commitments and ensure that schemes on other routes are complementary. The County Council will continue to ensure that the roads' local function is taken into account when decisions are made on improvements to these roads. The County Council's Transport Networks Review highlights a number of current and future issues arising from traffic growth on strategic roads which perform a local function and impact on local communities - see Long-term Local Transport Strategy (Chapter 1) for more information.

In addition, the County Council recognises, and has developed proposals to address, the particular problems facing a number of strategic roads in the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area - see Chapter 6 for more information.

The A34 north of Southampton had originally been identified for a multi-modal study. However, this did not proceed and in 2003 the Government Office (GOSE) and Regional Assembly (SEERA) jointly commissioned a scoping study. The scoping study reviewed the key issues affecting the A34 corridor and assessed the case for further study work as well as the appropriate scale of that work. It considered a wider corridor than the A34 RMS and took a longer-term, more strategic viewpoint. The study recommended that focused local studies of problems in and around the Oxford and South Hampshire areas should take place. The Secretary of State for Transport has recently decided to not press ahead with study work at the present time, but to consider how the corridor's potential needs rate against other projects in the region. However, the County Council maintains that a full study of the issues facing the A34 is essential, and is pressing for this to be done.

The County Council believes that a full study of the issues facing the A34 is essential, and looks forward to working with the Highways Agency and other partners to drive forward this important work. The A34 as well as being a major strategic route also forms the backbone of Oxfordshire's road network. The strategy for the A34 needs to take account of both of these roles in developing a plan for the future.

The County Council works with the Highways Agency on a range of projects, and is keen to continue and develop this partnership. Examples of recent partnership working include:

- > Co-ordination between major planned maintenance work on the Oxford Ring Road and A34 to minimise disruption;
- > Developing improvements to junction 9 of the M40 near Bicester; and
- > Implementing improvements to bridge structures on the A40.

Rail White Paper: The Future of Rail

This document, published in July 2004, sets out government proposals to develop the railway industry to overcome its identified structural problems. The White Paper acknowledges that railways are an important part of the UK transport system and reiterates that government priorities are to concentrate on increasing performance and reducing costs.

The White Paper proposed a new, streamlined structure with government taking direct charge of setting the strategy for the railways, including expenditure. The Strategic Rail Authority is to be abolished with its strategic role passing to a new Rail Directorate within the Department for Transport and its operational planning role moving to Network Rail (which is also to be given clear responsibility for operating the rail network). Regulation of the rail network will be brought together in the Office of Rail Regulation which will monitor performance and costs and take over the safety role from the Health and Safety Executive.

The County Council in principle welcomes the new structure for the rail industry that the White Paper has introduced and, in particular, the clarity it should bring on the role of the different organisations within the rail industry. However, for the restructuring to succeed these organisations must engage with stakeholders and recognise the needs of rail users in decisions on service provision and infrastructure needs.

The County Council recognises the role it can play in encouraging more use of the rail network in the county to contribute towards delivering the LTP objectives. A range of initiatives and approaches to making full use of the rail network are detailed in Chapter 4. Working with partners in the rail industry will be essential for the rail network in the County to be developed in a way which meets the needs of both local and longer-distance travellers. In recognition of this, the County Council works with the Strategic Rail Authority and Train Operating Companies on a range of projects and initiatives - for example:

- > The County Council has engaged with the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) on proposals for the relocation and/or expansion of Oxford Rail Station;
- > The Council is a founding member of the Cotswolds and Malverns Transport Partnership, which brings together train operating companies, local authorities, the SRA, and other organisations.
- > The Council has engaged with the SRA and other authorities on the development of options and a business case for East-West Rail.

The South East Plan (i): Region-wide Policies

This section sets out key objectives and policies from the South East Plan as they currently stand (they are in the process of being revised). It highlights the priorities and strategies in this LTP that have been designed to support the objectives of the South East Plan.

South and north-east corridor

Policy CO7 of the South East Plan states that “the management and development of the transport networks in the corridor between the south and north-east (towards Milton Keynes) serving Didcot, Oxford and Bicester will be promoted to meet both strategic and important local movement requirements.”

This Local Transport Plan responds to this aim in a number ways, for example by:

- > Giving a particularly high priority to congestion and accessibility problems that affect access to Oxford - see Chapter 5 and 6
- > Giving high priority to investigating options for addressing problems of congestion on the A34 - see Chapter 6
- > Supporting the development of East-West Rail - see “Rail Strategy” in Chapter 4.

Development Focus

The South East Plan aims to “*maintain the focus of development on urban areas and achieve a less dispersed form of development (i.e. following that of RPG9)*”.

In response to this aim, this Plan gives particular priority to congestion and accessibility problems that affect access to Oxford, thereby supporting the development of the city - see Chapter 6. The Plan also identifies and prioritises a range of transport problems facing the county’s main urban areas, with a view to developing schemes and initiatives to tackle these problems in support of housing growth and economic development - see Chapters 7 -11.

'Manage and Invest' Approach

Section D4 of the South East Plan covers 'Communications and Transport' and cross-references to the Regional Transport Strategy, in particular the 'manage and invest' approach it promotes. The key components of this are:

- > seeking greater utilisation of capacity on the existing transport system;
- > managing demand on the transport system, particularly on the road network; and
- > influencing the pattern of activities and specifically new developments, so that more people have the opportunity to work and shop etc closer to their home location.

In line with these principles, this Plan proposes a range of approaches to transport improvements that will help make best use of existing transport infrastructure, including:

- > Proposals to address key bottlenecks - particularly junctions - that result in road link capacities being under-exploited - see Chapter 3 and "Network Strategy" in Chapter 4;
- > Improvements to Public Transport, which remain at the heart of the Council's approach to delivering the LTP objectives;
- > The strategic management of parking to help manage demand for travel - see Chapter 3 and "Parking" in Chapter 4; and
- > Ensuring the Council's development control and spatial planning policies help to reduce the need to travel and support the Plan's objectives - see Chapter 4.

Mobility Management

The inter-relationship between different transport modes is stressed in the South East Plan: policy T10 seeks a 'rebalancing' of the transport system, based on appropriate packages of measures. The policy encourages local authorities to recognise the significant contribution that travel plans can make to managing demand for travel.

The Council continues to value highly the role that travel plans can play in helping to reduce the number of car trips generated by employers and schools - see "Travel Plans Strategy" in Chapter 4 for details.

'Living Centre' Approach

In line with the Regional Transport Strategy, the South-East Plan endorses the 'hub-and-spoke' approach to movement. It also refers to the 'living-centre' approach at the hubs, and states that, "Proposals within LTPs for such facilities [railway stations and/or bus interchanges] should be

developed in co-ordination with the development of detailed spatial strategies for the urban areas”.

The County Council fully supports this principle, and will seek to co-ordinate the development of transport hubs as fully as possible with spatial strategies. For example, the Council is helping to develop proposals for an ‘urban renaissance’ in the West End of Oxford, which includes:

- > Options for major new mixed-use developments;
- > Options for the possible relocation and/or expansion of Oxford Rail Station;
- > Proposals for the redevelopment of the Westgate Shopping Centre; and
- > Options for bus, coach and rail interchanges fully integrated into the overall plan for the development.

Public Transport

Policy T9 of the South East Plan relates to public transport and recommends that LTPs include “policies and proposals that foster an improved and integrated network of public transport services that give priority to:

- > delivering better local bus services in partnership with operators by making more use of Bus Quality Partnerships;
- > increasing the opportunities for interchange between the public transport network and all other modes of transport; and
- > promoting demand responsive transport services to sectors and areas with low accessibility.”

The policy also promotes better coach and bus services along spokes and better inter and intra-regional rail connections.

The County Council has developed Bus and Rail strategies that set out how the Council will contribute towards delivering the aims of Policy T9 - see Chapter 4 for details.

Charging Initiatives

Charging initiatives are supported where “...these are required in order to support delivery of the regional spatial and transport policy frameworks.” (Policy T11).

Please refer to the relevant text in the ‘Demand Management’ section under ‘Transport White Paper’ earlier in this chapter.

The South East Plan (ii):

The Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region

This section sets out key themes and objectives from the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Regional Strategy and highlights the policies and strategies in this LTP that have been designed to support these sub-regional objectives.

The draft South East Plan includes ten sub-regional areas, including the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region (COSR). The COSR extends to Bicester in the north, Wallingford, Didcot and Wantage in the south, and Witney in the west.

The South-East Plan endorses a 'hub-and-spoke' approach to movement. Central Oxford is identified as a Regional Hub with spokes connecting it to West Midlands, Milton Keynes, London, Reading and Swindon. Maintaining access to central Oxford is seen in the Plan as crucial not just at the local level but on a regional level.

The County Council considers that transport poses a potential constraint to the sub-region's economy and to further growth. As the COSR recognises, access improvements are required (particularly by public transport), as are measures to reduce congestion, especially on the A34 and A40 corridors. There is also a need to improve rail links, particularly with other regional hubs, by for example East West Rail, and to provide sufficient future capacity for freight and passenger trains by the expansion or possible relocation of Oxford station. The COSR also states that Park & Ride schemes will be promoted where they form part of a wider transport strategy for the sub-region, with proposals for such schemes being developed through the Local Transport Plan.

The strategies and schemes contained in the Local Transport Plan reflect the need to enable continued economic growth in this part of the region. The identification in this Plan of a Central Oxfordshire Transport Area in which initiatives such as remote Park and Ride, Premium Routes Networks, and rail development are carefully planned and co-ordinated to maximise benefits demonstrates the Council's commitment to the regional objective of improving access to Oxford as a regional hub and will ensure that it continues to enjoy economic prosperity.

Spatial options for development

Two broad spatial options for development are presented in the draft South East Plan.

Option A

Development of larger settlements beyond the green belt: Focusing growth at the towns of Bicester in the north of the sub-region and Didcot (and potentially at Wantage/Grove) in the south. These are relatively free of physical constraints and are well located and served for transport connections. Housing growth must be matched by employment growth to avoid increase in out-commuting, particularly by car.

Option B

Urban extensions to Oxford: Potential exists for extensions immediately to the south of the city and also to the north-west in the area west of Kidlington. Development would be close to the employment, transport and services in Oxford but it would involve development of green belt land and be likely to adversely impact on transport routes including the A34.

The County Council's preferred option is A. This reflects a continuation of the existing strategy of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, and would be supported by existing and emerging transport strategies in Bicester, the Didcot area, and Wantage and Grove Area. Work in the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area is concentrating on improving access to Oxford and would help to support both options.

Infrastructure

The Central Oxfordshire Sub-Regional Strategy (COSRS) recognises that transport poses a potential constraint to the sub-region's economy and to further growth. To address these issues, this LTP:

- > Gives the highest priority to tackling the problems of congestion on the A40 west of Oxford (see Chapters 6 and 11).
- > Proposes extensive development and enhancement of public transport and Park & Ride in Oxfordshire (see Bus Strategy, Chapter 4, Chapter 6, Chapter 8).
- > Fully supports the need for carefully considered expansion and/or relocation of Oxford Rail Station (see 'Rail Strategy' in Chapter 4, Chapter 8).

Other Sub-Regions in the South East

The Western Corridor/Blackwater Valley sub-region borders the COSR to the south and includes part of South Oxfordshire. The growth of Heathrow

Airport will have a major impact on transport within the sub-region and is likely to add to general congestion. The preferred spatial option for growth is (i) a focus on urban areas and re-use of existing sites; and (ii) greenfield releases on the periphery of urban areas identified as key transport hubs in the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), taking account of constraints imposed by environmental designations and green belt. Further growth in and around the Reading urban area could have implications for the transport network in southern Oxfordshire, particularly on routes leading to river crossings. The County Council has been working with the Berkshire transport authorities to develop a coherent strategy for cross-Thames movements in this area.

The Milton Keynes/Aylesbury sub-region adjoins the COSR to the north-east. A Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy has been prepared for the designated growth area up to 2021. Following an Examination in Public, the Secretary of State's proposed changes were published in October 2004. Within the South East region Milton Keynes would accommodate 44,900 dwellings and a further 15,000 in Aylesbury. The sub-regional study indicates that improved east-west links are needed and specifically identifies the western section of East West Rail (between Oxford and Bedford). A land use and transport study, funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister with support from the County Council, is underway for the Oxford to Milton Keynes/Bedford corridor.

Regional Transport Strategy

This section sets out key objectives from the South East Regional Transport Strategy and highlights the policies and strategies in this LTP that have been designed to support those regional objectives.

The South-East Regional Transport Strategy aims to develop “a high quality transport system to act as a catalyst for continued economic growth and provide for an improved quality of life for all in a sustainable and socially inclusive manner”.

Regional Hubs and links to the South East Plan

Oxford is identified as a regional 'hub', with 'spokes' linking the city with the West Midlands, Milton Keynes, London, Reading and Swindon. Transport plans should seek to support regional hubs by giving priority to measures to improve access.

In the LTP, this Council has:

- > Ensured that a comprehensive integrated approach to addressing the transport problems within the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area has been developed. The details of this are in Chapter 6.
- > Given particular priority to transport problems that specifically affect access to Oxford - see Chapters 4 and 6
- > Worked in partnership with adjoining local authorities to understand and address any cross boundary transport problems (for details see Chapters 8 to 10)

Key transport requirements at Hubs and links with the South East Plan

High quality interchange facilities within regional hubs are a priority in the South East Plan. To make hubs a reality in the south-east, three particular changes are promoted:

- > Improved quantity and quality of bus access to the hubs;
- > The provision of safe walking routes and signing of those routes within towns; and
- > More effective co-location of rail and bus stations where hubs are served by rail.

In this LTP, the County Council sets out how it will help to achieve these aims - for example:

- > The Council is working towards increasing the use of public transport as set out in the Council's Bus and Rail Strategies. This is an integral part of the LTP in helping the Council to deliver the transport objectives.
- > The Council will make walking and cycling safer and more convenient where such action will help to address identified transport problems. Chapter 4 gives details of the Walking and Cycling Strategies.

Links with South East Plan

Oxford is identified as part of the key north-south corridor from Southampton to the West Midlands.

With regards to transport improvements ... "Proposals within Local Transport Plans for such facilities should be developed in co-ordination with the development of detailed spatial strategies for the urban areas."

Proposals in the LTP have been developed to reflect the objectives and policies of the South East Plan - see the 'South East Plan' section, above.

Accident Reduction and links with National Policy

The RTS sets out the government's national targets and states that "Local Transport Plans should reflect the requirement to achieve these targets."

- > the reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents (40%)
- > the reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured (50%)
- > the reduction in the slight casualty rate (10%)

Improving road safety is one of the County Council's key priorities and as detailed in Chapters 3, 4 and 13 the County Council has developed targets, strategies and a monitoring framework to monitor progress towards these national targets.

Focus for transport plans

The RTS states that transport plans should seek to achieve a 'rebalancing' of the transport system in favour of non-car modes.

This LTP is clear in recognising the important role that non-car modes can play in tackling transport problems and so delivering the LTP objectives. The specific details of the role that such modes can play are set out in Chapters 3 and 4.

Public Transport

The RTS suggests that Quality Bus Partnerships should be promoted as a means of raising the standard of existing services and addressing the "seriously underdeveloped and neglected element" of the transport system in the region. It states that, "Local Transport Plans should set out proposals for working with the bus industry to develop the network of scheduled services, particularly within regional hubs, such that a higher level of transport accessibility might be achieved overall."

In this LTP, the County Council is committed to working towards increasing the use of public transport as set out in the Council's Bus and Rail Strategies. This is an integral part of the Council's strategy for delivering the five LTP objectives - see Chapter 3.

Sustaining economic growth and environmental improvements

The RTS recommends that Local Transport Plans seek to give priority to:

- > the maintenance of the existing transport system;
- > improved safety;

- > improved access for all;
- > reducing the environmental impact of movement; and
- > ensuring that new transport infrastructure enhanced the environment and communities it affects.

In delivering the objectives of this LTP, the Council will directly support these priority aims - see Chapter 3 for more details.

Rural issues

The RTS suggests that local authorities consider innovative approaches to rural issues including the promotion of demand responsive services in areas of poor accessibility.

The emerging Accessibility Strategy of this LTP, as summarised in Chapter 4 and outlined in full in the Framework Assessment, will help the Council to target improvements to bus services in areas of poor accessibility - many of which are likely to be in rural areas. In implementing its Bus Strategy (see Chapter 4) the Council will take into account the conclusions of the Accessibility Strategy to address any identified accessibility problems where public transport can help to provide a solution.

Balance of measures

The RTS recommends that Local Transport Plans should be based on a package of measures that includes travel planning advice, charging initiatives, intelligent transport systems, incentives for car sharing, changing working patterns, improved walking and cycling routes and the appropriate management of car parking.

Chapter 3 of this Plan sets out the wide range of approaches and actions that the Council will pursue in order to address identified transport problems and deliver the Council's LTP objectives.

Charging Initiatives

The RTS states that local authorities should make use of the powers available under the Transport Act 2000 to introduce new charging initiatives where these support the delivery of the regional spatial and transport policy frameworks. Please refer to the relevant text in the 'Demand Management' section under 'Transport White Paper' earlier in this chapter.

Value for Money

The RTS gives the LTP a mandate to focus on making best use of the existing transport network and providing new infrastructure only where this helps to improve the environments and communities affected.

Achieving value for money is a core principle of this LTP. In considering approaches to addressing transport problems, this Council will always ensure that all approaches represent good value for money in relation to the level of benefits that might be achieved. Please refer to Chapters 3 and 5 for specific details of how the Council has incorporated value for money assessments and prioritised investment to deliver the greatest benefits per pound.

Regional Economic Strategy

This section sets out selected key objectives from the South East Regional Economic Strategy and highlights the policies and strategies in this LTP that have been designed to support those regional objectives.

The Regional Economic Strategy comprises five overarching objectives: competitive businesses, successful people, vibrant communities, effective infrastructure and sustainable use of natural resources. Congestion is identified as one of the three main problems which could affect the continued success of the region.

National and international transport links

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) stresses that the role of the South East region as a 'gateway' should be promoted and developed.

This LTP responds to this aspiration in a number of ways, for example by:

- > Giving a particularly high priority to congestion and accessibility problems that affect access to Oxford - see Chapter 5 and 6;
- > Giving high priority to investigating options for addressing problems of congestion on the A34 and supporting the need for a further study to be carried out to assess the problems facing this route - see Chapter 6;
- > Ensuring that a comprehensive integrated approach to addressing the transport problems within the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area is developed. The details of this are in Chapter 6.

Cross regional transport

The RES recognises the role that East-West rail will play in encouraging economic development in the Oxford to Cambridge arc.

The County Council fully supports the further development of options for an East-West Rail link - please see Rail Strategy in Chapter 4.

Economic development and regeneration

Many transport projects have identified economic development or regeneration objectives. Of specific relevance to Oxfordshire is the A34, which is recognised as a major arterial route of European importance. In addition there is also a continuing requirement for rural transport across the region along with a particular focus on ensuring access to market towns and the centres of rural services.

This LTP gives a high priority to investigating options for addressing problems of congestion on the A34 and supports the need for a further study to be carried out to assess the problems facing this route - see Chapter 6 for more details.

Local Government Context

The implementation of the Local Transport Plan can support a range of other economic, social and environmental plans produced by the County Council and the District Councils in Oxfordshire. This section outlines the main non-transport plans and strategies that the LTP, as part of the Council's long-term local transport strategy, have been designed to support, and explains what steps the County Council has taken to ensure that the aims and objectives of these plans are supported by LTP strategies and actions wherever possible.

The County Council recognises that the links between transport planning and other local government functions only *begin* with the preparation of an LTP that is consistent with a range of other objectives. The County Council therefore intends to ensure that links between transport planning and other County and District Council activities are maintained over the next five years and beyond. For example, many County and District Council plans were written in advance of this document but will be reviewed over the coming years. Opportunities will arise to ensure these plans help to support the objectives of this LTP wherever possible and the County Council will endeavour to take advantage of such opportunities.

The Oxfordshire Plan sets out the County Council's aim and objectives as set out in Chapter 1. Each year the Council agrees a list of priority actions. The County Council's current priorities are listed below.

- > Educational attainment;
- > Foundation stage learning;
- > Child protection;
- > Delayed discharges from hospital;
- > Support for older people;

- > Public transport;
- > Improve maintenance of local roads and pavements;
- > Waste minimisation and re-cycling;
- > Youth crime reduction;
- > Better use of our property.

Over the last year the County Council has been leading a project on behalf of the Oxfordshire Community Partnership to produce a longer-term vision for Oxfordshire. This will have a 15-year horizon and will act as a successor to the existing Oxfordshire Community Strategy.

The second stage of this process, *Oxfordshire 20:20*, will provide the overall context for a fresh vision and medium-term plan for the County Council for 2006-07 onwards. The new Council elected in May 2005 has already indicated that its longer-term vision for Oxfordshire will focus on the following elements:

- > Preserving the historic sites of the city of Oxford and the county's market towns and villages;
- > Protecting Oxfordshire's countryside and farming industry;
- > Ensuring that the city and towns are welcoming and friendly to all;
- > Providing a real choice of transport;
- > Ensuring that the local economy can thrive;
- > Encouraging shoppers and visitors to explore Oxfordshire's unique;
- > Heritage and to visit its shops, restaurants, theatres and other attractions with easy access;
- > Ensuring that the streets are attractive, the air is clean and people feel secure;
- > Ensuring sufficient affordable housing for Oxfordshire's residents.

Spatial Planning & Housing

Oxfordshire County Council's Structure Plan

The current Structure Plan was adopted in August 1998. A review of the Plan to 2016 and beyond, is now under way; the revised Plan is expected to be adopted in autumn 2005. The revised Structure Plan has the following overall objectives:

- > to protect and enhance the environment and character of Oxfordshire;
- > to encourage the efficient use of land, energy and natural resources;
- > to support progress towards a better quality of life for all Oxfordshire's people; and
- > to sustain prosperity by supporting sustainable and appropriate economic development.

Provision will be made for about 37,300 additional dwellings between 1 April 2001 and 31 March 2016. The revised Structure Plan states that the focus for development in the county will be on the existing larger urban areas, where most existing homes, jobs and services are located. A large number of homes and other development are planned already at Oxford, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney under the adopted Structure Plan. In addition the revised Plan proposes significant housing development at Grove.

To ensure consistency between the Structure Plan and the Local Transport Plan, the County Council has:

- > Incorporated land use planning considerations in the early stages of LTP policy and strategy development, and consulted colleagues on every published draft of the document.
- > Incorporated specific actions related to land use planning into our approaches to tackling congestion, delivering accessibility, and improving road safety and air quality - see Chapter 3 for details.

District Council Local Plans

Details of District Council Local Plans, along with an explanation of how the County Council will ensure transport improvements support them, can be found in Chapters 7 to 11. To ensure consistency between these Plans and the Local Transport Plan, the County Council has taken a number of general steps:

- > Consulted land use planners at each district during the early stages of LTP policy and strategy development, as well as on all published drafts of the document;
- > Considered Local Plan policies when developing transport strategies and actions for each district; and
- > Identified specific pressures on the road network in each district that might arise from Local Plan policies and, in some cases, identified measures to address those pressures.

Chapters 7 to 11 also identify key objectives from District Councils' Corporate Plans and Community Strategies which are of particular relevance to transport.

Economy

One of the most important functions of transport is to support economic activity by facilitating the reliable and efficient movement of goods and people. The County Council's approach to economic development is set out in two main documents - the 'Economic Strategy for Oxfordshire' and the 'Economic Development Action Plan'. The objectives of these plans and the

steps the Council has taken to ensure the LTP is consistent with and supports them are outlined below.

Economic Strategy for Oxfordshire - Objectives

Oxfordshire is globally acknowledged as an educational, scientific and technological centre for excellence, hosting some of the world's finest academic institutions alongside major research and development organisations.

The Economic Development Strategy for Oxfordshire 2001-2005 has been drafted by the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership (OEP) - of which Oxfordshire County Council is a key member. Its aims are to:

- > Improve the competitiveness of the Oxfordshire economy to achieve a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita that ranks among the top ten sub-regions in Europe;
- > Achieve growth in productivity, whilst sustaining the county's environmental assets; and
- > Fulfil the employment potential of all the citizens in Oxfordshire by increasing participation in the labour market and matching skills to job opportunities.

The strategy deals with three main issues: Competitiveness and Innovation, Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion.

Economic Development Action Plan - Objectives

The County Council's Economic Development Action Plan sets its goal of sustaining prosperity through three broad policy areas which expand on the issues outlined in the Economic Strategy:

- > Competitiveness and innovation;
- > Environmental quality; and
- > Social inclusion.

Transport has a part to play in all these policy areas and therefore in developing this LTP, consideration has been given to what part transport plays in promoting prosperity in the county and the region as a whole.

The Local Transport Plan objectives will help to support these economic objectives in a number of ways - details can be found in Chapter 3.

One particular way in which the LTP has been influenced by the county's economic aspirations is the County Council's approach to prioritising transport investment. This has been informed partly by a desire to ensure that centres of economic activity are supported by good transport links.

With this in mind, certain transport problems have been given a particularly high priority:

- > Congestion and accessibility problems affecting Oxford;
- > Street Environment problems that reduce the attractiveness of key shopping or tourist areas; and
- > Accessibility problems that hamper access to Oxford and other key employment centres by non-car modes.

In addition, work undertaken as part of the County Council's Transport Networks Review has identified a number of freight routeing measures that help to ensure goods are able to move easily and reliably, whilst minimising their impact on the environment.

Education

Publicly-funded education services in Oxfordshire are provided and co-ordinated by the Learning & Culture directorate of the County Council. The key objectives of the directorate, as set out in the Learning & Culture Directorate Plan are:

- > Providing access to opportunities that will give people in Oxfordshire the chance to enrich their lives and so promote the well being of individuals, families and communities in the county;
- > Engaging with and promoting understanding of wide cultural diversity and ensuring that those whose voices may not usually be heard can participate on equal terms with pride and confidence; and
- > Enabling people in Oxfordshire to fulfil their personal potential through access to learning and participation.

Access to education is clearly a key theme in the County Council's approach to the provision of education services, and well-planned transport can contribute significantly to ensuring as many people as possible have access to learning opportunities.

In preparing its Local Transport Plan, the County Council has considered access to education to be an essential part of its transport strategy, and this is reflected in a number of ways:

- > Considerable work has been undertaken as part of the accessibility planning process to engage with schools and other education providers to find ways to meet the transport needs of their users;

- > The County Council will continue to develop its school travel plan programme to ensure safe, sustainable and inclusive access is provided to schools.

As part of the County Council's response to the government's School Travel Action Plan initiative, the County Council is undertaking a Best Value Review of Funded Transport Services to determine how different service areas contribute across the broad range of OCC policy to all aspects of how children travel to school. This includes Council aspirations for children and young people to be healthy and enjoy a healthy lifestyle, to attend and enjoy school, and to make a positive contribution to the community through their relationships with others. This Review will identify the full range of OCC policies and legal requirements bearing on funded transport, and consider options for addressing and/or prioritising them. It is a joint initiative between the Environment & Economy (for transport planning), Learning & Culture (education services including dedicated school transport) and Social & Health Care (special transport services) Directorates.

The Review will:

- > Contain a current state review for each area of funded transport in scope. This would involve Special Transport Service, Schools Transport & Public Transport.
- > Identify OCC and governmental policies and objectives which are relevant to the provision of transport, highlight gaps or points of conflict between them, assess the extent to which each area currently complies, and include policies under consideration for the future.
- > Present a range of costed strategic options for the future direction and performance of each area examined, with recommendations.
- > Identify fast track improvement opportunities.
- > Identify the potential for greater integration in providing funded transport services, including with other OCC partners.
- > Contribute to OCC's efficiency target.

Social and Health Care

The social and health care services provided by the County Council aim to work with individuals, families, groups and communities to:

- > maximise independence;
- > minimise dependence; and
- > intervene where appropriate.

This aim is supported by a series of objectives:

- > promote independence;
- > prevent dependence;
- > protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and harming others;

- > understand what local people want and need;
- > manage our affairs well; and
- > promote partnerships to deliver better outcomes for service users and carers.

The County Council recognises that transport planning, and effective accessibility planning in particular, are an essential part of maximising individuals' independence and freedom. In preparing the Local Transport Plan, the Council has taken specific steps to ensure that the objective of promoting independence has influenced our approaches and strategies - for example:

- > The Council's Accessibility Strategy has been prepared in close consultation with colleagues in Social & Health Care - primarily through workshops held in autumn 2004.
- > The Council is undertaking a Best Value Review of Funded Transport Services, as described above.

Tourism and Leisure

Transport can impact positively on tourism and leisure by improving access to tourist destinations and leisure facilities, and negatively by reducing the attractiveness of urban and rural areas. Effective transport planning can therefore present a range of opportunities to develop tourism and leisure in Oxfordshire. The County Council has developed these opportunities in a number of ways in this document - for example:

- > The Council has made 'Improving the Street Environment' a key objective of this Plan. We have identified a number of areas, primarily in Oxfordshire's town centres, where enhancements have great potential to add to the vibrancy of streets. For further detail on this objective, please refer to Chapter 3.
- > The Council has given particular priority to congestion and accessibility problems that affect access to Oxford, which is by far the largest provider of leisure attractions in the county.

Social Inclusion

According to the most up to date measure, the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, Oxfordshire has 15 areas in the most deprived 20% of all areas in England. This means that nearly 4% of Oxfordshire's local areas can be described as 'pockets' of deprivation. People living within these areas may experience a number of disadvantages such as low income, unemployment, poor health or disability, poor educational attainment, barriers to services, poor housing and crime.

The County Council has recently completed a review of social inclusion in Oxfordshire, and the conclusions of this review have influenced the

development of the Council's Framework Accessibility Strategy. Priority will be given to developing accessibility action plans to reduce any identified accessibility problems in areas where there are also identified problems of social deprivation. For more information, please refer to the Framework Accessibility Strategy.

Oxford's ethnic minority communities have needs that must be met by local transport. This information can be used as a starting point to see if transport needs of ethnic minority communities are being met. Religious buildings may have specific times of day or year when a high volume of people want to travel to them. Community centres, and faith schools need to be appropriately linked to the communities they serve.

Women form a significant number of the 'hidden unemployed' which includes those who are seeking work but are not formally registered as unemployed; those who have taken early retirement; and those who are carers. Mothers with small children often face some of the same barriers to physical access faced by some disabled people when using local transport. Transport services need to support those who manage the home during the day.

Health and Accessibility

Providing health services that are of a consistently high quality and responsive to the needs of the patient lies at the heart of the Government's vision of a modern and dependable health service. The location or provision of health services can affect how or whether people access the healthcare that they need, and reinforce social exclusion affecting disadvantaged groups disproportionately. On the whole, general health is good across the county, although there are some 'hotspots' of poor health in the main urban areas. Ensuring that people can access health services when they need to is crucial to good health.

The County Council recognises that transport planning, and effective accessibility planning in particular, are an essential part of maximising individuals' independence and freedom. In preparing the Local Transport Plan, the County Council has taken specific steps to ensure that the objective of promoting independence has influenced our approaches and strategies. For example, the County Council's Accessibility Strategy has been prepared in close consultation with colleagues in Social & Healthcare - primarily through workshops held in autumn 2004.

Health and well-being has been identified as one of the top eight issues for the Oxfordshire Community Strategy. In addition, the 2002 MORI Residents' opinion survey identified 'Care for the Elderly' as a priority in Oxfordshire. The priority also reflects the national agenda of supporting people at home wherever possible.

Like other areas of the country, the county has an ageing population which creates increasing challenges for health provision. In recent years there has been a centralisation of hospitals in the county, in particular to sites in the Headington and Marston areas. At the same time there have also been initiatives to make the health service locally accessible including drop-in centres and NHS direct, a telephone helpline. Engaging successfully with partners in the health sector will be key to ensuring that issues relating to access to health facilities are addressed through the development of this Strategy.

Countryside & Rights of Way

The County Council's Countryside Service is responsible for maintaining and developing the rights of way network in Oxfordshire, and promoting access to the county's extensive countryside.

The Countryside Service is committed to:

- > safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oxfordshire's countryside; and
- > enhancing enjoyment and understanding of the countryside through management and improvement of public access and information.

The Local Transport Plan has been developed to support these objectives through joint schemes and initiatives. In particular:

- > The Council's Walking and Cycling Strategies will be designed to take advantage of existing rights of way wherever possible, as improvements to such routes can represent a cost-effective way of developing pedestrian and cycle links in rural areas.
- > The Council's Accessibility Strategy will take into account the potential for improvements to the rural rights of way network to provide new or improved links to key services or to public transport for communities whose access is limited.
- > All approaches, actions and strategies in the Local Transport Plan have been subject to a pre-scheme Strategic Environmental Assessment, which assesses the positive and negative impacts of various approaches to tackling transport problems on landscape and biodiversity. This assessment process is on-going, and will allow the County Council to systematically ensure that transport schemes do not cause undue harm to the county's countryside and enhance it wherever possible.

Equestrians

With the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Government has set out its aim of better provision for equestrians, especially in light of the contribution that better rights of way can make to sustainable transport, tourism, recreation and health. Under s60 of this Act, the County Council is required to set out its plans for improvements of the rights of way network through the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). The Council's Countryside Service intends using the newly completed Definitive Map of the county to undertake an assessment of the whole network to include access for equestrians.

Through the work being carried out by the County Council's Road Safety Team road conditions for equestrians are being improved. By improving the quality of the air along road corridors, riders will experience a much more pleasant ride and improves the public space. Fumes, noise and the intrusion of motorised traffic makes a genuinely poor public space.

Involving Local Partners in Strategy Development

The County Council has made considerable efforts to ensure that as wide a range of local partners - including other authorities, businesses, the public, and stakeholders - have been involved in the development of the Local Transport Plan. This section outlines the main ways in which the County Council has engaged local partners during the preparation of the provisional plan. Further consultation is planned - with a particular focus on engaging local people and stakeholder groups - for autumn 2005.

Local People

The Council has made consultation with members of the public a high priority during the development of the Local Transport Plan. Our public engagement 'strategy' has been underpinned by a desire to reach as many people as possible, but particularly those who do not usually get involved with local government consultations. The boxes below show the main methods the Council has used to engage members of the public.

Focus Groups

In October 2004, the County Council commissioned a local market research company to conduct in-depth focus groups to probe local public opinion on a range of transport issues. Membership of the groups was randomly selected, and the sessions themselves lead by independent facilitators. The discussions focused on the four aspects of the transport shared priority, and have helped to inform the development of priorities, policies and strategies for the Local Transport Plan.

Transaction

In September 2004, the County Council commissioned a local marketing company to produce a brand name and image for consultation materials associated with the Local Transport Plan. The same company produced a transport issues brochure, website, and press and bus advertisements to publicise both. The brochure (which was distributed to schools, doctors' surgeries, and a range of other public places) and website were focused on the four aspects of the transport shared priority - congestion, accessibility, road safety and air quality.

This campaign was designed to encourage as many people as possible to get involved in the Local Transport Plan and influence its development. Over 600 responses were received in total in response to the brochure and website, which have helped to guide the development of the Plan.

Full public consultation on a complete draft of the Local Transport Plan will be carried out in autumn 2005, once the document itself and accompanying programme are sufficiently detailed and the document has been produced in a form appropriate for public consultation. This consultation is likely to include:

- > Making a full, attractively designed and illustrated version of the Plan available in print and online;
- > Producing a consultation summary of the Plan that identifies key issues and questions for public comment; and
- > Building on the Transaction campaign to reach as many people as possible using advertisements, road shows and other similar techniques.

Local Businesses

The County Council has consulted with local businesses on the Local Transport Plan in a number of ways - for example:

- > *Transaction* brochures were distributed to a number of local employers and business groups to inform the early stages of strategy development.
- > A consultation draft of the Local Transport Plan was sent to representatives of key local business organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, as well to the Oxfordshire Community Partnership Steering Group, which includes a number of local business representatives.
- > Meetings of the Oxfordshire Transport Ambition Group, made up of representatives of local business organisations, Councillors, County

Council Officers and a range of other stakeholders have been used to discuss the transport issues dealt with in the LTP and have helped to inform the Council's strategies - particularly for promoting public transport and tackling congestion problems in and around Oxford.

Stakeholders and Other Service Providers

The County Council has made particular efforts to engage stakeholders on the Local Transport Plan - for example:

- > Stakeholders have been consulted on every published document associated with the Local Transport Plan. A full Stakeholder Draft of the Plan was published in April 2005, and around 100 responses to it were received from Parish, Town and District Councils, local interest groups, businesses and others. These responses have helped to guide the development of this version of the Plan.
- > The county's Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) have been involved in the development of the Plan - in particular the Oxfordshire Community Partnership. The Transport Ambition Group (a sub-group of the Oxfordshire Community Partnership) has discussed the development of the Local Transport Plan in detail at several meetings between September 2004 and May 2005, and input from the group has been extremely valuable in the development of LTP strategies and policies - in particular the Council's approach to the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area.
- > For certain policy areas, specific meetings and seminars have been held with interest groups to inform them about the LTP process and discuss particular policy areas in more detail. Examples of this include workshops held as part of the Council's accessibility audit process, and an LTP 'seminar' with representatives of local cycling groups.

The following table shows the consultation processes that have been undertaken to finalise the Transport Networks Review (for the Local Transport Strategy) and the Local Transport Plan. A further public consultation is proposed for autumn 2005 to finalise both of these.

Consultation Activities

Transport Networks Review	Date	Local Transport Plan
Stage 1 Workshops (5) - <i>Identifying Problems</i> with neighbouring transport authorities, District & Parish Councils plus other stakeholders	Oct 2002	
Freight workshop - with freight operators, business organisations etc	Jan 2003	
Stage 2 Workshops (5) - <i>Identifying Potential Solutions</i> with neighbouring transport authorities, District & Parish Councils plus other stakeholders	May 2003	
Establishment of Freight Quality Partnership - organisation of transport professionals and local interest groups to investigate freight and delivery issues (met at least quarterly since)	July 2003	
Stage 3 Exhibitions (5) - <i>Towards a Draft Strategy</i> public exhibitions with leaflet distributed at libraries, council offices etc	Feb 2004	
	Apr - July 2004	Transport Strategy Group- 5 seminars on selected issues with invited stakeholders Transport Reference Groups - identify problems and issues with invited stakeholders
	July 2004	Liaison with district planning officers on LTP related issues
Consideration of draft strategy by County Council Executive	Sept 04	Transport Ambition Group - quarterly liaison on transport policy development with Community Partnership Focus Groups (10) - discussion groups of residents from across the county to establish transport issues and priorities "transaction" leaflet distributed through libraries/council offices
	Oct 2004	Workshops on accessibility issues (food, health, education, employment) with relevant stakeholders "transaction" website launched with publicity in local press, inside and outside of buses
	Nov 2004	Consultation with statutory bodies on Scoping Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment
Consultation leaflet on TNR strategy with local councils	Jan 2005	
	April 2005	Draft Plan to neighbouring transport authorities, District & Parish Councils plus other stakeholders 2 nd Health Accessibility workshop
	May 2005	MORI survey of 1000 households on transport issues including relative importance of priority objectives.
Public consultation on final strategy	Oct 2005	Public consultation on final Plan