

# Chapter 11

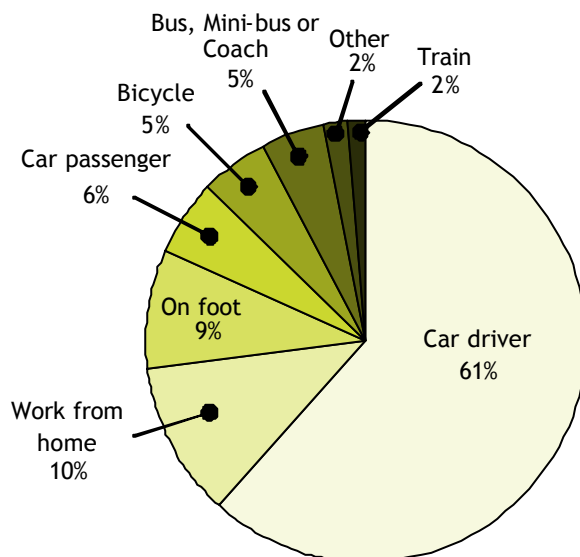
## West Oxfordshire

### Background

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West Oxfordshire is the most rural district in Oxfordshire. The town of Witney is the administrative centre and had a population of 23,000 in 2001. Only two other towns in West Oxfordshire exceed a population of 5,000: Carterton (12,000), the home of RAF Brize Norton, and Chipping Norton (6,000). The remainder of the population is dispersed over 80 Parishes with populations varying between 40 and 4,000.

According to the 2001 Census data there are 50,000 residents of West Oxfordshire in employment; their usual mode of travel to work has been broken down by mode as shown below:



### Development Challenges in West Oxfordshire

West Oxfordshire is a very attractive and mainly rural area where pressure for development is high. The approach adopted in West Oxfordshire is to locate new housing and jobs where there is (or can be provided) good access to a wide range of services and facilities. Development will be concentrated into a few locations and this approach provides the best opportunity of

securing the necessary supporting infrastructure and services at economic cost, funded wholly or in part by the development itself. Outside the areas specifically allocated for development, further new development will be strictly limited.

The main transport challenge in West Oxfordshire over the foreseeable future is the pressure placed on the A40 and A44, and the demands of new housing on the surrounding transport network. New housing developments in the Witney will particularly impact upon the A40.

### Oxfordshire Structure Plan

The proposed modification to the Deposit Draft Structure Plan 2016 proposes 6,750 additional dwellings should be located in West Oxfordshire to be built between April 1996 and March 2011.

The main locations for this housing will be about 2,700 dwellings in Witney and the remaining 4,050 across four of the largest towns and key service centres in the rural areas of the district.

### West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan details the specific locations of where future housing and employment developments should be located in the district.

The Local Plan has proposed that the housing development in Witney should largely be located in the North East Witney Development area, Burford Road (North), the West Witney Development Area, Newland, Cogges and the North Curbridge Development Area.

In terms of employment sites in West Oxfordshire, the Local Plan recommends that new employment is distributed in both rural and urban areas to ensure that both the urban and rural economies remain healthy.

The objectives for transport and movement in West Oxfordshire are to:

- > Guide new development to locations where the need to travel, particularly by private car, can be minimised, and where the opportunity exists for an increasing number of trips to be made on foot, by cycle and by public transport;
- > Protect and improve the infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport, and to ensure that new development include appropriate facilities to offer people an alternative to car travel;

- > Maintain access to a transport network for all people and goods without degradation of the environment recognising that within a rural area the car will remain a main means of transport for people.

In line with these objectives, the Plan states that development proposals which would generate significant levels of traffic will not be permitted in locations where travel by means other than the private car is not a realistic alternative.

The Local Plan identifies specific transport objectives for Witney to supplement the district-wide objectives:

- > To introduce measures to minimise the impact of traffic on the town;
- > To secure a network of roads which provides for the satisfactory and safe circulation of traffic within the town with effective links to the primary road network but which minimises any detrimental effect on the character and amenities of Witney; and
- > To reduce and/or slow traffic flows in environmentally sensitive parts of the town, particularly the town centre.

## Community Strategy for West Oxfordshire

Working Together for the Community - the Community Strategy for West Oxfordshire was prepared by the West Oxfordshire Partnership.

The main issues relevant to this Plan are highlighted below:

- > Crime - this includes an aim to make the roads of West Oxfordshire safer for all road users;
- > Education and employment - one of the five main aims of the district's Economic Strategy is 'Transport and communications';
- > Environmental issues - one of the eight headings in the Local Agenda 21 strategy is 'Transport and Traffic';
- > Health and social issues - one of the issues under the heading of information exchange and partnership working is 'Rural volunteers' transport to enable access to health and social care.'; and
- > Young people - one of the aims is to promote social inclusion and access to services and one mechanism to achieve this will be by improving transport links.

## Transport Network

West Oxfordshire is well served by the county road network with the A40 dominating the main east-west movements. However, there are significant

congestion problems caused by demand for travel along this route. The A44 is another important route for traffic heading to Evesham, Stratford-upon-Avon and beyond via the towns of Woodstock and Chipping Norton.

West Oxfordshire has only limited access to direct passenger train services. The Cotswold line crosses West Oxfordshire, providing services between Oxford and Worcester, Great Malvern and beyond, serving the stations of: Ascott-under-Wychwood, Charlbury, Combe, Finstock, Hanborough, Kingham and Shipton. At present the line suffers from capacity restraint and the County Council supports the further development of the line in partnership with the Cotswolds and Malvern Transport Partnership.

## Tackling Congestion

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Oxfordshire's worst congestion problem is located in West Oxfordshire, yet aside from this the district has just a few localised congestion problems which are largely on access to some of West Oxfordshire's main settlements.

### Actions for Tackling Congestion in West Oxfordshire

The actions for tackling congestion, as outlined in Chapter three, are:

- Action 1* > Manage, develop and maintain the county's road network to reduce the impact of bottlenecks (including roadworks) and make better use of existing road capacity to improve the flow of traffic
- Action 2* > Make public transport faster, more reliable and more user-friendly
- Action 3* > Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient
- Action 4* > Enable people to make better informed travel choices
- Action 5* > Manage parking to support transport improvements and initiatives
- Action 6* > Ensure that new development is planned in such a way as to minimise congestion problems from being created or exacerbated

The County Council intends to focus its efforts over the Plan period on the following congestion hotspots in West Oxfordshire (in order of severity of current problem, but not necessarily the order in which it will be possible to address them). Using the Problem Prioritisation Framework highlighted in Chapter 5, these problems have been highlighted as high, medium and low.

## High Level Congestion Problems in West Oxfordshire

### *A40 Witney to Oxford*

Problems on this route are likely to have an impact on the role of Oxford as a sub-regional centre. Therefore, this problem is being addressed as part of the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area (Chapter 6).

## Medium Level Congestion Problems in West Oxfordshire

### *Burford High Street*

Situated on the A361, between its junction with the A40 to the south and a narrow traffic-signalled single lane medieval bridge to the north, Burford High Street experiences traffic flows between 11,000 and 13,000 vehicles daily. These factors lead to congestion occurring frequently on the High Street, especially at the approaches to the bridge, which can extend the whole length of the road through the town.

To tackle the congestion problems on this route, Oxfordshire County Council believe that the following actions will address this problem:

- > Manage, develop and maintain the road network; and
- > Manage parking to support transport improvements and initiatives

## Low Level Congestion Problems in West Oxfordshire

### *Swinford Toll Bridge*

A narrow 17th century bridge that has a 5p toll to cross it, plus the high flows of daily traffic in the region of 10,000 vehicles per day, all lead to extensive queues throughout the day at Swinford.

### *Ducklington Lane, Witney*

The main access into Witney from the A40 and A415, with traffic flows in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day. Queues on Ducklington Lane also occur at junctions at each end.

### *Oxford Road, Witney Road, Acre Drive Eynsham*

This is the main through route in Eynsham for both traffic connecting to the A40 and the buses that serve the village. Narrow streets and parking on both sides of the road contribute to a congestion problem in the village and cause delay to buses that serve the village en-route between Witney and Oxford.

### *Bridge Street, Witney*

The main access point into the town centre from the west, Bridge Street carries over 25,000 vehicles per day. Bridge Street's congestion is continuous throughout the day, but is at its worst during both the morning and evening peak. Three mini-roundabouts in under a kilometre also add to the congestion problems faced on this stretch of road.

## Delivering Accessibility

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Accessibility mapping has shown that much of Oxfordshire shares broadly similar accessibility characteristics, particularly with regard to rural bus accessibility. The notable exceptions in West Oxfordshire are:

- > By car, West Oxfordshire has the poorest access to a major centre of all the districts;
- > In the rural areas of West Oxfordshire, accessibility is poor especially for those reliant on public transport; and
- > In the area of access to work, West Oxfordshire suffers the longest journey times to selected places of work by car.

## Access

### *Supermarkets*

- > Accessibility to supermarkets by car is generally good, with half the district within 15 minutes of a supermarket; and
- > Depending upon the time of the day, roughly half the population of West Oxfordshire is with a 30 minute bus journey of a supermarket.

### *Major Centres*

- > By car, most of the district is within 40 minutes of a major centre; and
- > Less than 5% of the district is within 60 minutes of a major centres by bus. Remainder is either more than 60 minutes or is not served bus.

### *Town Centres*

- > Over half of district is within 10 minutes of a town centre by car and the remainder within 25 minutes; and
- > By bus roughly 30% of the district is within a 60 minute bus journey.

### *Further Education*

- > Like the rest of the county, nearly 100% of the district has access to further education by car within 25 minutes; and
- > About 60% of those living in the rural areas have no bus access under 60 minutes of higher education.

### *Primary and Secondary Schools*

- > Similarly, nearly 100% of the district's population has access to primary schools within a 15 minute period by car;
- > Access is less good by the conventional bus network from the villages, with about 50% being within a 40 minute bus journey;
- > Nearly 100% of the district's population has access to their nearest secondary school by car of under 25 minutes; and
- > About 60% of the district that have no access to secondary schools by conventional bus services, but these are filled in by the contracted school transport.

### *Employment*

- > About half of the population are within a 10 minutes car journey of selected places of employment and 50% of ward places of employment;
- > Nearly the entire population is within a 20 minute car journey of both ward based and their selected employment sites; and
- > About half of district's population have access to employment of under 60 minutes by bus.

### *Healthcare*

- > The entire district is within 25 minutes of a hospital by car, whereas by bus only about 10% have access of under 60 minutes by public transport;
- > In general, access to hospitals is poorer than to other facilities reflecting the concentration of provision in the Oxford and in Banbury;
- > Deprived areas which have poor access to hospitals include those in Charlbury and Chipping Norton;
- > In addition there is also poor access from other settlements including Woodstock;
- > Nearly everybody lives within 20 minutes of a GP surgery by car;
- > About 25% of the population is within 60 minutes of a GP surgery by bus;
- > Over 50% of the population lives within 10 minutes of a dentist with the remainder being within 25 minutes of a dentist by car; and
- > As regards by bus, roughly 50% of the District is within 60 minutes of a dentist by bus.

## **Social Exclusion**

Oxfordshire County Council Social Inclusion Group commissioned Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion to profile Oxfordshire to give a detailed picture of social exclusion across the county. The main results for West Oxfordshire were:

### *Health*

- > Many of the smaller settlements, but also including Witney, have areas with relatively high proportions of people with limiting long-term illness, relative to the rest of the county.
- > The rate of informal care provision stands at 9.2%, just below the England average of 9.9%.

### *Low Income*

- > The proportion of people living on a low income is 4.0% which is below the county average of 4.9%.
- > The proportion of people under 20 living on a low income is well below the England, regional and county averages.
- > However, of the ten wards in Oxfordshire with the highest proportions of people under 20 living on a low income four lie in the district.
- > Only one of the twenty wards in the County with the highest proportion of people aged over 60 and living on a low income is in the district.
- > Has the lowest number in the county of children eligible for free school meals, below half the England average and significantly below the south-east average.

### *Education*

- > Witney has a high proportion of full-time students.
- > Within Witney there are also areas with relatively high levels of adults with no qualifications.

### *Deprivation*

- > There are no areas that are in the most deprived 10% across the county.
- > However there are there are pockets in the district that are experiencing high levels of multiple deprivation including in Witney and Chipping Norton.

### *Work*

- > Has a worklessness rate of 3.3%, below the county level of 4.2%.
- > The areas with relatively high claim rates tend to be located in the more urbanised areas including parts of Chipping Norton.
- > West Oxfordshire has levels of people workless through unemployment that are below the England, regional and county averages.
- > Of the twenty wards in the county with the highest rates of people workless through sickness there is only one, Chipping Norton ward.

## Safer Roads

There are a range of locations and routes in the Vale of White Horse where accidents occur with a higher than average frequency. The County Council routinely investigates all such sites and routes to establish whether or not measures could be implemented to improve safety. It is not possible to identify all such locations in this Plan, so only locations with a particularly high frequency and severity of accidents have been highlighted below.

### Actions for Safer Roads in West Oxfordshire

The actions for safer roads, as outlined in chapter three, are:

- Action 1* > Improve the design and layout of the highway where necessary to address known safety problems
- Action 2* > Better management of vehicle speeds
- Action 3* > Provide effective road safety education, training and publicity
- Action 4* > Ensure that new development is planned in such a way as to prevent road safety problems from being created or exacerbated

### Developing Solutions for Road Safety

By their nature, road safety problems and their causes vary enormously from one location to another. The actions above represent general approaches to reducing casualties, both at specific locations such as those listed below and more widely across the network.

In addressing the site and route problems identified below, the Council will investigate carefully all possible causes of incidents, and use this information to develop appropriate solutions.

### High Ranking Road Safety Problem Sites in West Oxfordshire

#### *A415 from Newbridge to the Standlake turn*

25 injury accidents (1 fatal, 6 serious, 18 slight) were reported on this stretch between 2000 and 2004. These primarily involved loss of control and "shunt-type" accidents, clustered at four distinct sites. Remedial measures were implemented at most of the sites between 2001 and 2003 and their effectiveness is now being monitored.

To improve road safety at this junction, the County Council will implement the following actions:

- > Improve the design and layout of the highway

A road safety improvement scheme at this location will be influenced by the essential replacement of the bridge at Newbridge

A recommendation of the Transport Networks Review is for improvements to the A415 between Witney and Abingdon; these would incorporate this section of the route

#### *A44 Salford Hill (North-west of Chipping Norton)*

24 injury accidents (1 fatal, 5 serious and 18 slight) were reported at this location between 2000 and 2004. The accidents primarily involved loss of control on the hill; planned remedial measures include new signing and a 50mph limit implemented in March 2005.

#### *Curbridge to Brize Norton Road*

16 injury accidents (6 serious and 10 slight) were reported at this location between 2000 and 2004. Loss of control accidents and others, possibly associated with excess speed, are common.

The County Council will implement the following actions to improve road safety at this junction:

- > Improve the design and layout of the highway

Investigation required into an appropriate local scheme to deal with the road safety problem at this location.

### **Low Ranking Road Safety Problem Sites in West Oxfordshire**

#### *A415 junction with B4449 (South-east of Ducklington)*

13 injury accidents (1 fatal, 2 serious and 10 slight) were reported at this location between 2000 and 2004. These were predominantly right-turning accidents from the A415 to the B4449. The junction was signalised in early 2005, and monitoring is being carried out.

#### *A44 junction with B4437 (Charlbury turn)*

10 injury accidents (2 fatal, 2 serious and 6 slight) were reported at this location between 2000 and 2004. These mainly involved vehicles making right turning movements to and from the B4437. Remedial measures were introduced in mid-2002 and the accident frequency appears to have reduced appreciably, but the site continues to be closely monitored.

#### *A40 at Cassington junction (East of Eynsham)*

22 injury accidents (1 fatal and 21 slight) were reported at this location between 2000 and 2004. The junction was signalised in 2000, and although in the 18 months following the signalisation the overall accident frequency

appears to have risen, the average severity fell significantly with only slight accidents being recorded at and near the junction.

### Routes with Excess Accident Rates

The County Council uses accident data to identify stretches of road in Oxfordshire which have higher than average accident rates, taking into account route lengths and traffic flows.

In addition to the accident sites identified above, the following routes in West Oxfordshire have been identified as having accident rates significantly higher than the national average for that class of road. The County Council's intention is to develop the problem prioritisation process (see Chapter 5) to include these routes. This will allow the Council to establish a more complete picture of road safety problems and priorities in the county. This analysis will be completed in time for the submission of the Full Local Transport Plan in March 2006.

Some of the stretches of road identified below include one or more *sites* which have also been identified separately as a particular problem. These locations therefore appear in both the route list below, and in the site list above. It is expected that schemes to resolve some or all of these problems will be included in the five year programme.

- > B4477, Brize Norton to Carterton
- > B4022 A40 to Witney
- > B4022, Enstone to A361
- > A44, Chipping Norton to County Boundary
- > B4425, A40 to County Boundary
- > B4022, Finstock to Charlbury
- > A4095, Enslow
- > B4020, A40 to Carterton
- > B4026, Charlbury to Spelsbury
- > A361, Burford Rd Chipping Norton
- > B4437, A361 to Charlbury
- > B4449, Eynsham Eastern Bypass
- > B4437, Charlbury to A44
- > B4026, Spelsbury to Chipping Norton
- > B4449, Eynsham to Sutton
- > B4477, A40 to Brize Norton

### Better Air Quality

Air Quality in West Oxfordshire is generally very good. It is likely that all national Air Quality Objectives will be met across the district, with the exception of the 2005 objective for the annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide, of which exceedances are *likely* in two locations, and *possible* in one other.

## Actions for Better Air Quality in West Oxfordshire

The actions for better air quality, as outlined in Chapter 3, are:

- Action 1* > Develop and maintain the county's road network to reduce the impact of bottlenecks (including roadworks) and make better use of existing road capacity to improve the flow of traffic through polluted areas
- Action 2* > Make public transport faster, more reliable and more user-friendly
- Action 3* > Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient
- Action 4* > Enable people to make better informed travel choices
- Action 5* > Manage parking to support transport improvements and initiatives
- Action 6* > Find ways to encourage the use of vehicles with lower exhaust emissions
- Action 7* > Restrict vehicles from areas of poor air quality
- Action 8* > Provide alternative routes for traffic to avoid areas of poor air quality
- Action 9* > Ensure that new development is planned in such a way as to minimise air quality problems being created or exacerbated

## Developing Solutions for Air Quality

Where pollutant concentrations exceed national standards, local authorities are required to declare an Air Quality Management Area covering the affected streets. Authorities must then develop an Air Quality Action Plan which sets out how they reduce concentrations of the pollutants concerned to meet national air quality objectives.

All designated air quality problems in Oxfordshire are caused predominantly by road traffic emissions, so Air Quality Action Plans in Oxfordshire will focus on reducing pollution from traffic using the actions identified in the table above.

### *Nitrogen Dioxide*

The national objective for the annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide is likely to be exceeded in Bridge Street in Witney, and Horsefair in Chipping Norton. Air Quality Management Areas were declared for both in 2005, and an Air Quality Action Plan is being developed jointly by the County and District Councils, in the context of the County Council's wider transport strategies.

It is possible that the same objective will be exceeded at the junction of Witan Way and High Street in Witney. Further assessment of this location will be carried out to establish more accurately the likelihood that the

objective will be exceeded, and an Air Quality Management Area will be declared if necessary.

## Improving the Street Environment

### Actions for Improving the Street Environment in West Oxfordshire

The actions for Improving the Street Environment, as outlined in Chapter 3, are:

- Action 1* > Improve the design and layout of the streets with a poor quality environment, using high quality materials and street furniture wherever possible
- Action 2* > Restrict vehicles from areas of poor street environment
- Action 3* > Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient
- Action 4* > Enable people to make better informed travel choices
- Action 5* > Manage parking to support transport improvements and initiatives
- Action 6* > Provide alternative routes for traffic to avoid streets with a poor environment

### Developing Solutions to Street Environment Problems

By their nature, street environment problems and their causes vary enormously from one site to another. The actions above represent general approaches to improving the attractiveness and ambience of streets.

In addressing the street environment problems identified below, the Council will review the quality of the streets concerned, their transport function, and their current and potential usage as a public space. The Council will use this assessment to develop appropriate solutions based on the actions outlined in the table above.

The following areas have been identified as being where transport contributes to an overall problem in quality of public space.

#### *Witney High Street*

The central area of Witney is an area of outstanding environmental quality which has expanded considerably in recent years to meet the increasing demands from the growth of the town without losing the strong local architectural traditions. The High Street is still dominated by traffic, impairing both the attractiveness of the town centre and its economic and commercial vitality. The road proposals for the Cogges Link Road and West End Link should enable traffic management measures to be undertaken which can reduce or slow traffic on the historic town centre streets,

improving the environmental quality of the central area especially for shoppers and visitors.

## Integrated Delivery

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The County Council recognises the importance of tackling transport problems of all kinds in a strategic and integrated way to ensure the full impacts of proposed schemes and initiatives are fully understood. The Council has put in place two main mechanisms - the Transport Networks Review and Integrated Transport Strategies - for ensuring schemes and initiatives developed in response to the problems above are considered as strategic elements of a package wherever appropriate, rather than measures implemented in isolation from one another.

### Intra-urban Networks: Integrated Transport Strategies (ITS)

ITSs have been developed for many of Oxfordshire's larger towns and for Oxford. In West Oxfordshire, Witney has an Integrated Transport Strategy. The role of the ITSs in the second Local Transport Plan period will be to help the Council deliver the five objectives of the Plan in an integrated, efficient and cost-effective way. To this end, the ITSs will have three key functions:

- > Ensuring transport problems in larger urban areas are addressed in an integrated way, recognising the complex inter-relationships that often exist between different parts of an urban transport network;
- > Providing an established structure for consultation with local communities, stakeholders and local government partners; and
- > Providing a framework for integration between transport and land use planning.

### Inter-urban Networks: Transport Networks Review (TNR)

The TNR study was completed in October 2004, and has helped to guide the County Council's longer-term transport objectives and strategy, as set out in Chapter 1. The study has also provided a strategic framework for the development of schemes which are likely to impact significantly on the operation of the County's strategic transport network. In developing solutions to the problems outlined above, the methods and conclusions of the TNR will be referred to as necessary to ensure any wider network considerations are taken fully into account.

The Transport Networks Review recommended that measures be taken on a number of roads in West Oxfordshire to protect them from excessive traffic, particularly where traffic is using them to bypass congestion locations on the major road network. These were

- > A424 (Burford to Stow on the Wold) - downgrade to B road with weight limit (proposal will need to be co-ordinated with Gloucestershire County Council)
- > B4027 (A44 to A40) - downgrade to unclassified with weight limit
- > B4030 (A44 to A4260) - weight limit
- > A4095 (A40 to A420) - downgrade to B road.

The B4477 links Carterton with the A40. Consideration will be given to upgrading this road to an A class road to reflect the increase in size and importance of the town and the improvements that have been made to this route in association with recent housing developments.

New Bridge is one of the oldest bridges in the county, dating from the 12th Century and with no modification it is still carrying modern traffic across the Thames. It has been assessed as substandard and recent inspections show that it is deteriorating fast. The bridge is classified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument; this, combined with the narrow road and poor vertical alignment, means the bridge cannot be strengthened and that a new alignment for the road bypassing Newbridge is required. Construction for this is proposed for 2009/10.

## Cross Boundary Issues

### *Gloucestershire*

The routing of the major road connections between Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, particularly for HGVs, has been subject of discussions for the last 10 years. The A44 is currently the Primary Route between Oxford and Evesham, passing through Gloucestershire, but there are significant problems caused by traffic in settlements along this route. There are difficulties in resolving these problems due to the problems on the alternative routes, especially the A40, onto which this traffic will be diverted. The County Council will continue to work with Gloucestershire to develop short and long term strategies for reducing these problems.

West Oxfordshire shares a long border with Gloucestershire and has a number of accessibility issues in common. Many people in West Oxfordshire look towards the centres in Gloucestershire to provide goods and services that they need, particularly higher value goods and services rather than those in Oxfordshire. Similarly many in Cotswold district in Gloucestershire look towards services in Oxfordshire. However, any movement between the two counties is solely reliant on the private car as there are only minimal public transport services operating between the two counties.

Many people living in West Oxfordshire work in Gloucestershire and it is becoming common for people to live in and around Witney and commute to the main employment centres of Cheltenham and Gloucester. The A40 is the main route for commuters heading out of Oxfordshire to Cheltenham and Gloucester and so this growing trend is putting increased pressure on this

route. For those without access to a car, they are excluded from taking up employment in these two centres

Many people in the western parts of West Oxfordshire look to the medical facilities in Gloucestershire to provide them with their healthcare needs as this is closer to equivalent facilities provided in Oxford. Depending upon their proximity to Cheltenham or Gloucester, those travelling in from Oxfordshire may be hindered in making this journey because of their lack of access to a privately owned car in order to make a hospital appointment on time or at all, contributing to the not inconsiderable cost borne by the NHS by late or missed attendances of hospital appointments.

This is an issue which the County Council's of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire will investigate jointly over the lifetime of the LTP.