


Oxford Core Strategy Examination Statement of Oxford City Council		www.oxford.gov.uk  OXFORD CITY COUNCIL
C/M7/1	Matter 7 – Transport Issue 1 – Transport strategy	

i) What is the strategy to cope with high and rising rates of congestion?

The main responsibility for developing and delivering policies and measures to address traffic congestion lies with Oxfordshire County Council as the local transport authority. The City Council has worked closely with officers responsible for strategic transport planning in Oxford to ensure broad alignment with the County Council’s transport priorities, as described below in response to Question (ii).

Notwithstanding, the Core Strategy and LDF also play a crucial role in addressing congestion. Delivery of sustainable development that minimises the need to travel, especially by private car, underpins the whole strategy. Part of the Core Strategy Vision (Section 2.1) is that *“Oxford will continue to find innovative ways to reduce the impacts of traffic”*. The linked strategic objective (Section 2.2) is to *“promote a reduction in car use, minimise the impact of traffic, and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.”* One of the three ‘key planks’ of the Spatial Strategy (Sections 3.1 and 3.2) is ‘Reducing the need to travel’, the key to this being to apply a sequential approach to developments that attract a large number of people, whilst taking account of the opportunities and constraints faced by each centre. This cross-cutting theme underpins the ‘Hierarchy of centres’ approach and identification of ‘District areas’ surrounding the City and district centres.

The evidence presented in Background Paper D(ii) – Transport and Accessibility (CD5/10) shows how new development in Oxford is likely to result in generally shorter trips (evident from Oxford’s high self-containment), and fewer trips by private car (evident from travel-to-work statistics) than is generally the case in Oxfordshire and other non-metropolitan areas. The most up-to-date empirical modelling of the impacts of new development in Oxford on the road network tells a similar story; the vast majority of new trips in 2026 on the road network are likely to result from overall traffic growth irrespective of development promoted in Oxford (of 46% overall growth in trips, only 4% results directly from the strategic growth set out in the Core Strategy). Furthermore, there is little difference in additional distance travelled by road as a result of this growth (of a 55% increase in total distance travelled, only 4% arises from the Core Strategy). It is therefore clear that to address the problem of traffic growth and congestion in central Oxfordshire, whilst accommodating the level of growth set out in the South East Plan, a cross-border approach between all

relevant authorities will be needed, and indeed is happening now. This is being led by the Local Highway Authority (i.e. the County Council) in partnership with the Highways Agency, who jointly hold overall responsibility for ensuring an efficient road network is planned for.

Nevertheless, the Core Strategy has an important supporting role in helping to address the impact of residual trips arising from new development, and in parallel to promote sustainable transport choices generally across Oxford. To this end, Policy CS14 seeks to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport for all new development. The policy further includes a robust requirement for a transport assessment and comprehensive travel plan to accompany all major development proposals, and also seeks to capitalise on opportunities for low-parking development and car clubs. The policy also sets out an objective framework for mitigation measures at Northern Gateway and Barton, to be taken forward in detail through the respective AAP processes, and provides a 'hook' for measures to be taken jointly with partner local authorities to physically integrate the SDA with Oxford.

Policy CS15 sets out a number of complementary measures, developed in discussion with the County Council, bringing together ongoing and future projects aimed at promoting more sustainable travel choices and reducing the impacts of travel in Oxford. The measures listed reflect spatially the priorities of both the City and County Councils, and support the aims of the Local Transport Plan (CD8/5), the emerging Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy and, more locally, support the fundamental aims of the evolving Oxford Transport Strategy as identified through discussion with County Council officers.

ii) How does the transport strategy reflect and relate to the LTP?

The current LTP was published in 2006. The headline aims are to tackle congestion, deliver accessibility, improve road safety, improve air quality, and improve the street environment. For ease of reference, a summary table of capital allocations relating specifically to Oxford is at Appendix 1. Whilst this schedule is somewhat out-of-date due to a reduction in grant funding for the latter part of the LTP, it nevertheless demonstrates good general alignment with Policy CS15 (in focusing local transport investment on bus and cycle priority schemes, and demand management measures). This has been confirmed in discussions with the County Council.

It is nevertheless recognised that since the preparation of the current LTP, spatial strategic priorities have moved on. The draft South East Plan was published by the former SEERA at around the same time as LTP publication, and has since undergone significant amendment by Government prior to adoption, increasing the overall level of growth in Central Oxfordshire, introducing the South Oxford SDA, and

confirming Oxford as both a regional hub and as the focus of a Diamond for Investment and Growth. In addition, the Regional Transport Board has endorsed a £62 million Regional Funding Allocation for Access to Oxford, to address significant sub-regional housing and employment growth. This had been strongly supported by central Government.

The third Local Transport Plan 2011-16 (LTP3) is in the preliminary stages of development, and will clearly need to respond to these challenges and opportunities. Discussions between the City Council and County Council officers have confirmed, however, that LTP3 will build on the successes of the past, which have focused on managing travel demand and providing real opportunity for using sustainable modes to and within Oxford.

iii) Is the Core Strategy over-reliant upon schemes that have yet to have their funding confirmed?

It is assumed that this question relates primarily to the status of funding for Access to Oxford. This has attracted a Regional Funding Allocation of £62 million, which has received the full support of the then Secretary of State for Transport, Douglas Alexander MP (see CD10/8). Much of this allocation is aimed at addressing the challenge of ensuring the A34 trunk road continues to operate effectively as Central Oxfordshire continues to grow. The County Council have identified a potential further £26 million, and are working towards submitting major scheme bids to DfT in 2011. As stated in Council Statement C/M6/1 relating to infrastructure, the Council fully recognises the importance of the Access to Oxford project in supporting substantial growth in Central Oxfordshire, including the Oxford Core Strategy.

However the Access to Oxford project has been developed very much in the context of supporting growth throughout the sub-region. In particular, the focus on the A34 anticipates the impact of other major growth areas on its corridor, such as the Didcot New Growth Point, Science Vale UK and growth at Bicester, as well as growth at Oxford. The South East Plan sets a housing target of 40,680 for the period 2006-26, and a minimum of 18,000 additional jobs for the period 2006-2016 is also suggested. Policy CO5 of the South East Plan states: *"Access to Oxford from major towns in the sub-region and from neighbouring sub-regions will be a priority. Priority schemes to aid the delivery of the Central Oxfordshire sub-regional strategy will be set out in the Implementation Plan and in local transport plans."* The reasoned justification further states, *"At the regional/sub-regional level, the County, Highways Agency and relevant local authorities will work together to bring forward local solutions to enable the A34, and the network in its vicinity, to fulfil its various local to international roles. This may involve measures or concepts such as active traffic management, intelligent transport systems, real-time information and access management."*

Given the degree of support in principle from Government for Access to Oxford, reflected both in the response of DfT to the Regional Funding Advice, and in the South East Plan, there is no reason to believe that these strategically important schemes will not come forward. It is clear that effective partnership working will be needed between Oxfordshire County Council and the Highways Agency, in consultation with the City Council and other stakeholders, to ensure a successful major scheme bid towards mitigating the impacts of growth across the sub-region set out in the South East Plan. This would be the case *irrespective* of whether the strategic growth proposed in the Core Strategy were located in Oxford, or in alternative locations in the sub-region.

We would argue, however, that the inherent sustainability of Oxford, combined with a number of substantial mitigating schemes that are independent of Access to Oxford, make the City less vulnerable to any possibility of Access to Oxford not coming forward. These schemes include the Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 project, for which commercial funding is already secured; East-West Rail, which has significant cross-regional and Government support; the ongoing Premium Bus Routes project, and continuing investment in Park and Ride, and Oxford's cycle and pedestrian networks, highly likely through the LTP3 process.

Even if Access to Oxford itself were to not come forward, the Highways Agency and County Council would in any case be required by the South East Plan to find alternative means of improving the operation of transport networks to meet sub-regional growth objectives. Failure to do so would contravene the South East Plan, and make sustainable growth across the sub-region, and especially in the shire areas, enormously challenging.

iv) How will the road network, including the A34, cope with increasing housing and employment development?

Background Paper D(ii) – Transport sets out in Sections 8 and 9 how the impacts of housing and employment growth set out in the Core Strategy have been assessed, and the policies and strategies that are being developed to address this. Further transport modelling work has been undertaken since the background paper was published, to refine the information on traffic growth, the results of which are reported in the addendum to the background paper CD5/11. This updated information assumes no significant change in people's travel habits, and confirms that most traffic growth in the area will arise irrespective of the growth specific to Oxford, but does not alter the overall outcome, which shows many parts of the strategic and local road networks experiencing delays by 2016, which would worsen by 2026.

All parties acknowledge that there is no easy fix to address this challenge, which the modelling demonstrates applies equally to all areas of growth within the Central Oxfordshire sub-region. However the investment coming forward for Access to Oxford will be used to find the most appropriate 'hard measure' solutions to both manage demand and accommodate residual traffic growth. In terms of the road network, this will focus on smart traffic management on the A34, and improving bus priority and improving traffic flow at the northern and southern approaches on the Oxford Ring Road. Improvements to the northern approaches will be complemented by further mitigation measures to be implemented by the Northern Gateway Consortium, with local improvements to public transport and cycling networks in association with this development also being delivered. Similarly, strategic housing development at Barton and the South Oxford SDA will be accompanied by appropriate access infrastructure improvements, as required by Policies CS7, CS8 and CS14. Complementary local transport management measures will be developed for LTP3 and the Oxford Transport Strategy, which are likely to focus on further improvements to Oxford's main radial routes, and further developing orbital bus services to improve connectivity between non-central areas of Oxford. In parallel, Policies CS14 and CS15 of the Core Strategy seek to build on Oxford's past successes in promoting sustainable travel choices.

It is also considered that significant improvements to the rail network, including the new Evergreen 3 link via Bicester and capacity enhancements at Oxford Station, should relieve some of the pressure on the A34 between M40 Junction 9 and Didcot. The new parkway station proposed north of Oxford as part of Evergreen 3, to include a bus interchange, will provide further opportunities for workers travelling from the north to travel by public transport.

It should be noted that detailed transport modelling work continues to be taken forward in respect of Northern Gateway and the SDA to inform future LDF documents, and to help identify the most effective mitigation measures for reducing the traffic impact of these developments. Detailed analysis of the impacts of the Barton proposal using the County Council's Central Oxfordshire Transport Model is also underway. This further work will contribute to detailed mitigation strategies for each of these sites.

Appendix 1 - Extract from Local Transport Plan 2006-11 (figures are in '000s)

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Dev'r contributions	3 rd Party funding	Parking surpluses	Total
Oxford	1110	1814	2823	2145	224	1712	0	0	9828
Banbury Road	33	233	621						887
Woodstock Road					149				149
London Road Corridor		493	1120	1768		340			3720
Controlled Parking Zones*	258	93	26	228		744			1349
Central Area Air Quality Action Plan	110	175	186						471
Bus Gate Enforcement	165								165
High Street enhancements	55	582	621						1258
Cowley Road	220								220
Cycle network improvements	55	58	62	68	75				318
Fairfax Avenue/Purcell Road cycle link	5	6	186	82					279
Marston Road cycle improvements.	22	58							80
Marston Road Bus Gate						338			338
Ring Road Signing	110								110
Thames Towpath improvements - Folly Bridge. - Donnington Bridge.	22	116							138
The Plain pedestrian/cycle improvements.	55								55
Headington Pedestrian/Cycle Improvements						290			290

*CPZ programme: 2006: Headington Girdlestone Road ; Headington North East ; Headington Quarry; Lakes; Northway. 2007: Marston South; North Summertown