

Transport Strategy

1. Introduction and purpose of this paper

This background paper supplements the relevant background papers that were published at the Issues stage of consultation in 2016.

For clarity, the 2016 papers have not been reproduced here but should be read alongside the 2017 papers, particularly the background papers related to transport:

- Transport
- Air Quality

The purpose of the 2017 background paper is to set out the studies and further work being planned in order to lead to an update of the Oxford Transport Strategy so that it reflects the needs set out in the Local Plan 2036.

2. Background to the Oxford Transport Strategy

The current Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) is part of Oxfordshire County Council's fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4). The Local Transport Plan 4 was approved at Full Council meeting of Oxfordshire County Council on 12th July 2016. A link to LTP4 can be found online at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/connecting-oxfordshire>

It is important for the success of the proposals in the Oxford Local Plan 2036 that a transport strategy is in place that will successfully and sustainably accommodate and manage transport needs to support new developments. The County Council, in collaboration with the City Council, is undertaking a number of studies that when complete will feed in to the Oxford Transport Strategy, enabling it to be updated into a document that sets out how movement will be managed successfully in the city over the Local Plan period to 2036.

Over recent years, while Oxford's population has grown (13% increase between 2001 and 2011), traffic flows on key roads across the city have not increased. This has been achieved through a number of measures including the use of city centre access restrictions. The overarching aim of the transport strategy will be to ensure no further growth in traffic, or a reduction where this will improve the public realm and reliability and speed of public transport. The majority of travel around the city will need to take place by walking, cycling and public transport.

Improvements to air quality will be an important outcome of the transport strategy. The main contributor to air pollution in Oxford is transport. Air Pollution has a significant impact on the health of Oxford's residents and visitors. Air quality has significantly improved over the last 10 year in Oxford, but breaches of the European Union's objective of 40µg/m³ of

nitrogen dioxide were still at 32% in 2015. Facilitating low and zero emission travel is therefore key in solving Oxford's air pollution problems.

3. Access and traffic management

The County Council has commissioned a study to assess and appraise various access and traffic management measures, including congestion charging, in order to deliver objectives including the following:

- Congestion-free public transport routes across the city, consistent with those routes identified in the Oxford Transport Strategy;
- Segregated cycle route provision on key routes throughout the city consistent with those routes identified in the Oxford Transport Strategy;
- Excellent air quality; and
- A quality public realm and pedestrian environment that supports city centre and district centre vitality.

The reason traffic management measures need to be considered is that there are many parts of the city's road network where traffic congestion prevents the achievement of the above objectives, but where there is insufficient physical space to provide measures such as designated bus lanes to overcome the problem. The purpose of the commissioned study is to identify those constrained, congested locations and propose traffic management solutions to remove the congestion.

The study will identify and appraise a range of access and traffic management measures for Oxford, including road user charging (including but not limited to congestion charging) and traffic control points (restricting access to certain roads). This will include assessment of the suitability and potential impacts of implementing these measures and whether they could be delivered in conjunction with, or independently of, other access, traffic management measures including a Workplace Parking Levy.

4. Parking

Levels of car parking have a number of important impacts. Car parking uses land, and in a compact city such as Oxford where land is scarce and there are so many competing demands on the land, consideration should be given to minimising parking to ensure efficient use of that land. Different approaches will be needed for provision and management of different types of car parking. For example, private residential parking could be minimised through introduction of car-free development and car clubs, and a workplace parking levy could help in minimising private workplace parking.

The approaches taken in the Preferred Options document, or being investigated by the County Council, are outlined in this section.

Workplace Parking Levy (WPL)

The County Council is also currently undertaking a study into the feasibility and potential of introducing a Workplace Parking Levy. A similar overall approach to that used in Nottingham

is proposed. With minimal exceptions, it is proposed that a levy would apply to all employers with a provision of employee parking over a certain threshold. Whilst the OTS proposes that the whole city is subject to a WPL, the possibility of having differential rates across the city is being examined in the study– for example with a premium rate in the city centre and rates elsewhere which are dependent on the level of accessibility by sustainable modes.

Residential parking

The Local Plan proposes low levels of residential parking for new residential developments. The majority of the city has an excellent existing level of public transport provision, as well as good connectivity by walking and cycling, so car-free developments are feasible. A low standard for car parking provision means that a greater proportion of scarce land can be used for providing homes, and also avoids issues of parking creating poor urban design. Reduced car parking and therefore car ownership and car trips is likely to reduce air pollution and noise levels. Fewer cars using the roads improves the attraction of walking, cycling and play. The policy will need to allow or require some parking, for example for disabled and visitor parking, ensuring there are not negative consequences for accessibility for the elderly, disabled and vulnerable groups. This may not need to be allocated.

Controlled Parking Zones

Further expansion of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) is envisaged for the city to ensure that parking is not just displaced to residential streets. Large parts of the city are already covered by CPZs and where these have been implemented they have been extremely successful in removing commuter parking. Over time it is likely that the majority of streets in the city will be covered by parking restrictions.

Public car parks in city and district centres

With regards to public parking provision it is envisaged that in the city centre, levels of public parking will be maintained at approximately the same levels as currently, with a discouragement of arrivals during network peaks. Meanwhile within district centres it is proposed to maintain roughly current levels of public parking in all district centres.

Park and Ride

The OTS acknowledges that future housing and employment growth across Oxfordshire, is set to further exacerbate congestion upon key radial and orbital transport corridors that feed into the city. Remote Park and Ride sites were proposed by the County Council as replacements for the existing edge-of-city Park and Ride sites. However, it is likely that edge-of-city Park and Ride sites will still be required throughout the Local Plan period. This will help support the intention to have no increase in public parking within the city centre and district centres, despite an anticipated increase in visitors to these centres. It is also unlikely that the required level of remote park and ride spaces will be provided during the Plan period, and a need for sites near to the city will remain, as these are most attractive for many visitors, and also ensure length of car journeys is not increased for those living near to these sites. A combination of edge-of-city and remote Park and Rides is likely to best support the aims of the transport strategy.

5. Sustainable Transport Improvements

Cycling

Although Oxford already has the second highest proportion of cycle commutes in the country, successful delivery of the Oxford Transport Strategy in the most sustainable manner will require an increase in the overall amount and in the share of journeys by bike. Cycling has many advantages in that it does not worsen air quality and it can promote health and wellbeing. Because the mode share of cycling is already so high in Oxford, to further increase it will require those less confident at cycling or those who feel they are not well enough connected to their place of work by bike to feel able to begin cycling to work and for other journeys. This will mean that routes will need to feel safe from end to end, with a variety of connections, allowing wide accessibility by safe cycle routes.

The OTS shows cycle super highways and premium routes and sets out how they should be designed to optimise cycling conditions. The City and County Councils have also identified other 'connector' cycle routes, which in some cases exist or are used informally, but which could be improved or formalised. Identification of routes has focussed on considering where new development could help deliver improved connections. Public parks have also been considered for potential to deliver sensitively designed cycle routes, which might encourage less confident cyclists. These 'connector' routes are mapped in the Local Plan Preferred Options document.

Walking

Walking is an important transport mode. Nearly all journeys involve an element of walking. In a compact city such as Oxford, walking is an obvious choice of travel mode for many people for many journeys. It is important that the public realm is designed in a way that makes walking attractive and feeling safe. It is also important that facilities are located so that journeys can be easily made on foot, with facilities that attract a lot of people located in clusters in accessible locations. The preferred options document sets out a spatial strategy to help achieve this. There is also a preferred option that developers will be required to demonstrate how their street design ensures a good walking environment.

Rapid transit

The OTS proposes a network of Rapid Transit (RT) corridors that would provide a congestion-free route for public transport, linking existing and proposed Park & Ride sites at and beyond the city edge. In the short and medium term the RT network will be bus-based, but in the longer term there may be scope for trams to play a role, depending on the level of growth.

As well as carrying a greater number of people, RT will also improve the speed, reliability, comfort and image of buses, with key features typically including:

- a high level of road priority, delivered through a combination of physical segregation and traffic management, larger, modern-looking, higher quality buses
- off-board ticket purchasing systems
- faster methods of passenger boarding and fare collection
- high quality passenger waiting facilities

- real-time information systems
- the extensive use of 'Intelligent Transportation Systems' in the operating control system; and
- a unique and attractive public image and identity.

Rail

Recent improvements to the rail network around Oxford have seen a new station opened at Oxford Parkway, offering a second route to London and improved service from Oxford to Bicester and a connection to High Wycombe. The Oxford Station SPD, being consulted on at the same time as the Local Plan, aims to set a framework for urban design around Oxford Station that integrates it better with the city centre and that enables easy access to the station by foot and bike.

Over the Local Plan period it is hoped that the Cowley branch line will be opened for passenger use. It is intended that there would be new stations in the Littlemore area. This would greatly improve accessibility to the city's main employment areas including the Oxford Business Park, the Oxford Science Park and BMW. It is proposed in the Preferred Options that the Local Plan will safeguard the route and proposed station sites to help delivery. The City Council and County Council are committed to continuing discussions with Network Rail to help facilitate the opening of the Cowley branch line for passengers.

6. Zero Emission Zone

Oxford's Transport Strategy published by Oxfordshire County Council in 2015 set out the aspiration for a Zero Emission Zone in Oxford to be introduced in the period 2020-2035. The City Council and County Council have jointly commissioned a study to investigate the feasibility of introducing a Zero Emission Zone in Oxford. The study is looking at a range of options on how such a zone can be implemented in Oxford in the period from 2020-2035. It is envisaged that the zone will start small and expand as technology develops. The use of electric vans, buses and cars are some of the ways to achieve zero emission travel. Cycling and walking are naturally emission free and help avoid air pollution.

7. Design to improve highway capacity and public realm

City centre

The City Council and County Council will be jointly commissioning an Oxford city centre movement and public strategy study. The intention of this study will be to develop and assess options to deliver increased movement capacity in the city centre within the context of the need to deliver a high quality public realm. This will involve considering the route of bus and coach journeys through the centre, locations for layover and pick-up and drop-off, whether and where streets should be pedestrianized, traffic management measures and location of parking.

Corridor studies

The County Council has already worked on an A420 Botley Road corridor study and a Banbury Road corridor study. These show how the corridors could be designed to provide a high quality routes that prioritises cycle, pedestrian and rapid transit measures. Further

corridor design studies will be undertaken once the updated Oxford Transport Strategy is in place. They will then be able to take into account decisions on matters such as traffic management and city centre traffic flows. Other aspects of the strategy could affect how the corridors should be designed. The corridor design studies will be the end product of the overarching transport strategy.