

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1. The ways in which we travel, and our ability to travel, are fundamental to modern life. Today's society relies upon efficient and flexible transport systems, and over the last few decades people have become increasingly mobile. Planning of the transportation system is therefore fundamental to the strategy of the Development Plan.
- 4.2. Most of the responsibilities for transportation and highways lie with the County Council. These responsibilities include maintaining and improving the transport infrastructure through schemes for traffic management, new or improved roads, improved public transport services, and cycle and pedestrian routes. West Oxfordshire District Council has only limited powers relating to the provision of transport infrastructure.
- 4.3. The District Council does however have responsibility for the management of public off-street parking, and can influence transport and travel patterns in a number of ways:
 - The location of development can influence the need for people to travel, and can affect how people travel – whether they can use public transport, walk or cycle, or whether they have no choice except to use their cars.
 - The design and layout of new development can encourage or discourage cycling, walking and the use of public transport. The Council can ensure that development is well designed to encourage these alternative modes of transport.
 - The Council can seek contributions from developers towards the cost of transport infrastructure.
 - Promotion of and participation in traffic management schemes such as town centre enhancement schemes in Chipping Norton and Woodstock or the transport strategy for Witney as set out in the Local Transport Plan.
 - Protection and promotion of new highway routes.

- Partnership working, for example the Rural Community Transport Partnership – a local initiative to bring together voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations concerned with rural transport; and with the County Council on various initiatives such as the improvements to transport infrastructure in Witney as set out in the Local Transport Plan.

National and Local Transport Policy

- 4.4. National planning policy regarding transport is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13. This is interpreted by the Regional Transport Strategy, the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan. These policy documents have common aims, which can be summed up as:-
 - Balancing economic growth with a sustainable transport system.
 - Increasing the choices available to people to meet their transport needs.
 - Reducing the overall need for people to travel, especially by car.
 - Reducing the number of accidents, pollution and noise associated with traffic.
- 4.5. These aims recognise that the car has given us the ability to travel greater distances, more quickly and at reduced cost. However, this freedom to travel has brought problems:-
 - Increased levels of car use have resulted in greater levels of pollution with local effects (poor air quality resulting in health problems) and global effects (exhaust gases contribute to the 'greenhouse effect').
 - The growth in car traffic leads to congestion on the existing road network. Congestion reduces the free movement of people and harms the efficiency of business.
 - Towns and villages are harmed both through actual damage to roads and buildings, and through the creation of environments in town centres and residential areas which are unpleasant and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Damage is caused to the environment in the countryside due to pollution, the amount of land taken for road building (which can also lead to habitat fragmentation and loss), and the conflict which occurs between traffic and other users of the countryside.
- These problems are forecast to become worse. The Government has estimated that traffic levels could grow by two thirds in the next 30 years.

4.6. It is not possible, however, to simply build our way out of this situation by constructing new roads. Research has shown that new roads generate additional traffic which soon rises to levels which again lead to congestion and pollution. Furthermore, the construction of one new road cannot address the problem of a road network which is at capacity. However, in some circumstances, construction of new roads (e.g. a bypass) and of directly associated traffic management measures on those existing roads being relieved can help to resolve particular local problems; such as reducing traffic through historic town centres and thus improving the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

4.7. The solution to help address the problems of traffic growth must therefore be a combination of measures:

- To persuade people to use their cars less. For example to walk or cycle rather than use their cars for shorter journeys, and to use public transport where practicable.
- To guide new development to locations where people have the opportunity to walk, cycle, take the bus or train, or use a combination of these types of transport.
- To construct new roads only where they will produce benefits which outweigh damage to the environment.

National and local policy aims to achieve these solutions.

Objectives for Transport and Movement in West Oxfordshire

- To guide new development to locations where the need to travel, particularly by private car can be minimised, and where the opportunity exists or can be provided for an increasing number of trips to be made on foot, by cycle and by public transport.
- To protect and improve the infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport, and to ensure that new development includes appropriate facilities to offer people a satisfactory alternative to car travel.
- To 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.

4.8. West Oxfordshire's towns, villages, and countryside are already experiencing problems:

- A combination of local and through traffic on the A40, A4095 and A44 causing congestion and environmental damage particularly in settlements on these routes.
- Worsening levels of congestion in town centres such as Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton.
- A need to improve levels of public transport away from the principal transport corridors (i.e. A40, A44). Over the last few years the provision of bus services has improved to the extent that 83% of the District's population now have access to at least an hourly bus service. However, for that proportion of the population not living along the A40 and A44 corridors, services are not frequent enough, do not start early enough

or finish late enough, do not run seven days a week, and do not use large enough buses to provide a realistic alternative to the private car for the majority of journeys. This means that a significant proportion of West Oxfordshire's population has little realistic alternative to the car, and hence is dependent on the car for day to day travel.

- Significant numbers of West Oxfordshire residents travel to Oxford to work and for leisure and recreation. The Oxford Park and Ride system, whilst successful in reducing City Centre traffic, facilitates trips by car to the park and ride sites. Many of these journeys are through West Oxfordshire along the A44 or A40 corridors.

- 4.9. The challenges in West Oxfordshire are, therefore, to increase the opportunities for people to use public transport, to walk and to cycle for those journeys where this is possible, but to be aware that at the present time, the car is the only way for many people to carry out the majority of their journeys.

TRANSPORT AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

- 4.10. One of the main strands of the Local Plan strategy is to locate new development in places which maximise the ability of people to travel by cycle, foot or public transport and which minimise the overall need to travel. The Built Environment policies set out the standards for all new development. Inclusion of transport and movement requirements ensures that these issues are taken into account at the early stages of assessing any new development in West Oxfordshire.

Policy T1 - Traffic Generation

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.

- 4.11. Development in the rural areas, including new uses of existing buildings, will be strictly controlled. The specific location of the proposed development, the likely level of

traffic generation by car and the availability of alternative means of transport will be key factors in determining appropriate levels and types of development.

- 4.12. At the same time the Council recognises that for a large part of the District there is little alternative but to use the car. When applying Policy T1 to new development proposals any associated significant social and economic benefits for the rural areas will be taken into account alongside the need to minimise the impact of car travel and to promote more sustainable transport choice.
- 4.13. This approach is reinforced by policies for specific land uses such as housing and employment which steer proposals to locations which are most accessible by alternative modes of transport, and which minimise the overall need to travel.
- 4.14. Policy BE1 in the Environment Chapter requires that development is either located where there is a sufficient level of transport infrastructure or that the development itself secures the necessary improvements to enable it to go ahead. Policy BE1 therefore provides the basis for requiring developers to contribute towards necessary transport infrastructure. The policies in this Transport Chapter detail the kinds of measures which may be required.
- 4.15. Development must meet the locational criteria, and must also be designed so that walking, cycling and public transport can be easily and safely used. Policy BE3 is the key policy in this respect. This policy also ensures that all new development must take into account the needs for people with impaired sensory or movement abilities.

Transport & Movement

THE TRANSPORT NETWORK

- 4.16. The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan contains a number of initiatives relating to the transport infrastructure in West Oxfordshire which the District Council will support, protect and promote. Detailed proposals, as they emerge, will be facilitated, including any necessary planning permissions, provided they do not conflict with policies and objectives of this plan.

Policy T2 - Pedestrian and Cycle Facilities

Measures will be sought to protect, improve and extend facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, and particularly to extend the cycle and pedestrian route networks within and between settlements, within and through new development areas and through the countryside generally.

- 4.17. The existing facilities for cyclists and pedestrians will be protected, and improvements to these facilities and to the cycle and pedestrian route networks will be pursued through the Local Transport Plan. In those instances where new development produces a need for new pedestrian and cycle facilities such as new routes, cycle parking, information or signing, funding will be sought under Policy BE1.
- 4.18. The County Cycling and Walking Strategies are supporting documents to the Local Transport Plan, and contain commitments to identify, extend and improve Core Pedestrian Route Networks and cycle route networks in all the County's main settlements, including Witney. These networks take account of existing routes, major generators of journeys (e.g. residential areas) and major attractors of journeys (e.g. town centres and employment areas). Details of these proposals can be found in these Strategy documents.
- 4.19. The cycle network in Witney is well developed and well used in the newer residential areas of West Witney (Deer Park) and Cogges, but elsewhere in the town there is an absence of designated cycle routes, parking facilities or information. Pedestrians are better served since pavements alongside roads can become part of the pedestrian route network. Some

specific proposals are shown on the Witney Inset Maps, others will emerge through the Local Transport Plan.

- 4.20. There are also existing and potential cycle routes from Witney to some of the nearby villages such as Curbridge, Crawley, North Leigh and South Leigh. Limited routes are available in Carterton and Chipping Norton. A cycle route has been recently added to the A40 into Oxford, and another along the A4095 from North Leigh to Hanborough is being extended to serve Hanborough Railway Station, Bladon and to connect with the National Cycle Network route alongside the A44.
- 4.21. The District Council will work closely with the County Council to identify gaps in the existing networks, and to identify facilities such as pedestrian crossings, cycle parking routes, and information and signing which are needed to improve the environment for cycling and walking. These improvements will help to encourage more people to walk and cycle to meet some of their travel needs, and will assist in locating new development in areas accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. Policy TLC8 in the Tourism and Leisure Chapter aims to improve rights of way used for leisure walking and cycling in the countryside.

Policy T3 - Public Transport Infrastructure

Measures which will protect and improve the number, frequency and quality of bus and rail services in West Oxfordshire, and which will improve facilities for users of public transport, will be permitted.

- 4.22. For longer distance journeys, walking and cycling are not realistic options for the majority of the population. For this reason it is essential that people have the opportunity to use bus or rail services. To provide this opportunity, public transport must be convenient, reliable, frequent and reasonably priced. It is important to increase both numbers of public transport services and their frequency, to ensure that a good level of service is maintained throughout the day. Bus and rail services can be used for daily trips such as commuting, as long as

people are certain that the bus or train will arrive on time, at a location convenient for their destination. However, West Oxfordshire's rail services are rural routes which do not directly serve the main towns and villages of West Oxfordshire. The main Cotswold Line stations in West Oxfordshire are at Kingham, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Charlbury and Long Hanborough, with halts at Combe, Finstock and Ascott-under-Wychood. There is also a station at Tackley on the Oxford to Banbury line. The main opportunities for improvement of public transport lie with the bus network.

- 4.23. The Council will seek to protect existing services and permit proposals which will improve and extend existing bus and rail services and facilities, provided that there are no unacceptable environmental impacts. The Local Transport Plan includes several initiatives to improve and expand local services:
- Premium Routes and Interchanges Study – a County funded study to identify a network of key public transport corridors and their feeder routes across the County, and to base planning policy and improvement schemes around this network. The Study identified the Witney to Oxford corridor (via the A40) and the Oxford to Woodstock corridor (via the A44) as Premium Routes.
 - Improved cycle routes to Hanborough and Charlbury Stations, feeder taxi-buses to Charlbury Station, and improved and expanded car parking facilities at these stations.
 - Support for Network Rail's programmed improvements to the Cotswold Line. Services on this line could be improved by increasing the frequency of trains and overall speeds. In order to achieve this some sections of the line need to be twin tracked, and Network Rail have estimated that £100 million is needed to fund the work. Network Rail are in the process of bidding for these funds from the Strategic Rail Authority.

4.24. Oxfordshire County Council is seeking to address the significant problems of traffic congestion on the A40 between Witney and Oxford through a staged approach to implement the following actions and potential solutions during the plan period:

- Introduce junction capacity improvements at Cutteslowe Roundabout, followed by improvements (including a possible gyratory system) at Wolvercote Roundabout;
- Improve Public Transport by introducing a Premium Bus Route from Oxford to Witney via Eynsham and investigate remote Park & Ride in the Witney area;
- Provide better-informed travel choices, for example by extending the real Time Bus Information System to the A40 corridor.

Further schemes, such as dualling the A40, will be investigated for the future (beyond the plan period) should the above improvements not provide demonstrable benefits.

- 4.25. The Local Transport Plan includes proposals to improve the transport infrastructure in Witney, such as the Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy for Witney, and funding for improvements to cycling and pedestrian networks, and other transport schemes, for example road safety improvements and Travelwise Initiatives.
- 4.26. In addition to these measures, where new development produces a need for improvements to public transport facilities such as additional services, provision will be sought under Policy BE1.

Transport & Movement

Policy T4 - Major highway schemes

Land will be safeguarded for the following highway schemes, as shown on the Proposals Map and Inset Maps:

- Witney – Cogges Link
- Witney – West End Link (northern section)
- Witney - A40 Downs Road Junction.
- Carterton A40 Access Road (section between Minster Road and Curbridge Road, Brize Norton)
- Sutton Bypass (B4449)

- 4.27. Oxfordshire County Council has requested that land required for the schemes listed in Policy T4 continues to be safeguarded in this Plan.

Witney

- 4.28. New highway schemes in the Witney area remain to be built from proposals in the adopted 1997 Local Plan (see the Witney Chapter for details of the A40 Downs Road junction):
- Cogges Link Road – this road will provide a second river crossing and enable traffic to be removed from the central area, especially Bridge Street. Detailed planning permission for the road was granted by Oxfordshire County Council in January 1997. An application to renew consent was subsequently submitted. On going work in relation to the associated Environmental Impact Assessment and Witney Traffic Model will inform the County Council decision on the planning application.
 - West End Link Road – this road was added to the Development Plan following a local plan inquiry in 1991. The possibility of major redevelopment on land to the west of High Street and on surplus industrial land off Burford Road/Mill Street had led the Council to commission a transport study to investigate how increases in Witney's traffic could be accommodated. A third river crossing was the outcome.

More recent studies show that whilst a third river crossing would provide traffic relief on some existing roads the provision of a direct road into the town centre from the north would draw additional traffic into town. Although this Plan continues to safeguard land for the river crossing, the need for the northern section of the West End Link will be kept under review in the light of monitoring of the effect of the Cogges Link and associated measures upon the town's traffic.

Carterton

- 4.29. A road linking Carterton directly to the A40/Minster Road has been built in association with the North East Carterton Development Area. A short section of road lying to the north east of Brize Norton remains unfunded but continues to be safeguarded.

Sutton Bypass

- 4.30. This bypass would be a short extension of the existing Stanton Harcourt (Blackditch) Bypass and would remove through traffic, particularly heavy gravel lorries, from the existing B4449 at Sutton. Construction of this bypass is dependent upon funding from gravel operations and any other sizeable developments in the area.

Policy T5 - Interchange Facilities

Public transport interchange facilities will be permitted.

- 4.31. Transport interchanges combine all modes of transport. Almost all journeys involve some form of interchange, such as walking to a bus stop, or changing from car to bus at a park and ride site. They are crucial to a journey, since a bad interchange can cancel out the benefits of a good bus service or a high quality cycle route. Interchanges also improve the level of integration between modes of transport, and ensure that connections can be made conveniently.

- 4.32. Good interchanges ensure that a journey using several modes is as seamless as possible. County Council proposals set out in the Local Transport Plan include integrating the services of different bus companies, integrating bus and rail services, through ticketing, and measures to be carried out through Integrated Transport Strategies. The Premium Routes and Interchanges Study being undertaken by the County Council aims to identify interchange locations across Oxfordshire.
- 4.33. The Local Transport Plan includes support for park and ride facilities which are distant from Oxford and which intercept car journeys closer to their origin. The Cotswold rail line also provides the opportunity for rail-based park and ride into Oxford. The improvement and extension of car parks, and the provision of facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and buses at key Cotswold Line stations will be supported.

- 4.34. The severe impact of an ever-increasing volume of vehicles upon the environment is becoming apparent to all. Traffic management measures to restrict vehicular access, divert traffic to more appropriate roads and/or reduce traffic speeds in vulnerable areas such as near schools, residential and shopping areas, will be increasingly necessary.
- 4.35. In new development the District Council will require appropriate traffic management measures to be incorporated from the beginning, especially in large housing developments, and will seek appropriate financial contributions from developers to secure off-site improvements for reducing the impact of traffic created by their development elsewhere on the road system.
- 4.36. Measures will be particularly needed in town centres in the larger settlements, Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton especially, to ameliorate the impact of cars and lorries, to provide a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists and to encourage additional use of public transport.

MANAGING THE TRANSPORT NETWORK

Policy T6 - Traffic Management

Traffic management schemes will be sought which:

- a) promote and give priority to the safe and convenient movement of pedestrians and cyclists, particularly on roads with significant or potentially significant pedestrian and cycle flows;
- b) promote safe and convenient movement of buses, particularly on routes into town centres, within town centres and on radial routes;
- c) reduce traffic conflicts, the potential for accidents and alleviate congestion;
- d) reduce environmental damage caused by traffic.

- 4.37. Within existing built-up areas, where it is not possible to reduce traffic movement in environmentally sensitive areas, traffic calming will be sought to reduce the dominance of the motor vehicle through reduction of traffic flows and speeds, for the benefit of residents, pedestrians, cyclists and the overall environment, and to improve safety. A variety of measures can be used, for example, carriageway narrowing, changes in road surfaces and speed cushions, use of the recently authorised 20 mph speed limits, combined with additional provision for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport. Traffic management measures giving priority to non-vehicular movement however are rarely appropriate outside built-up areas on primary distributor routes.

Pedestrian Priority Areas

4.38. Policy T6 not only enables schemes which will reduce the impact of traffic, but also enables schemes which reverse priorities so that pedestrians and cyclists have priority over car traffic. There are two types of initiative where this kind of scheme can work particularly well:

- **Town Centre Schemes**

The presence of traffic in main shopping streets can be dangerous to pedestrians and cyclists and may produce an unattractive environment for shoppers and other town centre users. Schemes such as Town Centre Enhancement Schemes (see Town Centres Chapter) and initiatives in Witney and Carterton (see Witney and Carterton Chapters), include elements of traffic management which act to give pedestrians and cyclists priority over motorised vehicles, in order to improve the environment in shopping streets for people.

- **Home Zones**

Home Zones are residential areas designed to the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists. They send out a message to drivers that they must give way to other users of the home zone.

Home zones can be introduced into existing areas where the local community supports the initiative. The County Council is pursuing home zones in new developments and in established residential areas.

The District Council will support the County Council, town and parish councils and other community groups in producing home zones in West Oxfordshire.

Travel Plans

Policy T7 - Travel Plans

Proposals for major new development that will potentially attract large numbers of traffic movements will be required to include a Travel Plan for that development.

4.39. Travel Plans, also known as Green Travel Plans, are sets of commitments and targets adopted by a developer, employer, retailer, or other activity which attracts large numbers of journeys. Travel Plans are supported by the County Council's Better Ways to Work initiative, and aim to reduce numbers of journeys by car, and generally to encourage people to make use of other forms of transport. School Travel Plans are separate but similar, applying to all journeys to the school, and are dealt with by the County Council's Better Ways to School initiative.

4.40. Government guidance (PPG13) expands on the benefits of Travel Plans. They can:

- lead to a reduction in car journeys (particularly by single occupancy journeys)
- increase use of walking, cycling and public transport
- reduce traffic speeds and improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians

4.41. A Travel Plan will only be a requirement in certain circumstances. Major development which would have a significant effect on transport patterns in the area will be required to have a Travel Plan in place, through the use of a planning obligation. Applicants for smaller scale development which would have less of an impact will be encouraged to produce Travel Plans. In any case the existence of a Travel Plan should not be used as justification for development which is unsuitable on other grounds.

4.42. Guidelines on the use of Travel Plans are included in the Local Transport Plan, and in Government Guidance ("A Travel Plan Resource Pack for Employers"). The County Council Travelwise initiative encourages the development of travel plans by major employers and schools. It also provides advice and publications to support these plans.

Car Parks

Policy T8 - New off-street public car parks

Proposals for new off-street public car parking areas will only be permitted where:

- a) they would ensure the continued vitality and viability of a town centre or of other facilities attracting visitors; or
- b) the local environment is being seriously damaged by on-street parking and alternative parking provision is essential.

- 4.43. This policy does not apply to car parks provided as part of an interchange facility, as set out in Policy T5 and the Local Transport Plan. On-street parking may damage a sensitive local environment such as a town centre or Conservation Area. In such circumstances it may be possible to provide off-street parking areas, but only if non-essential use of the motor car will not be encouraged. Where additional public car parking areas are proposed in town centres, they should be sited, designed and subsequently managed so use of the facility strengthens the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole.

Transport & Movement