ANNEX 3

Contents

ANNEX 3

Oxfordshire County Council

Equalities Impact Assessment

Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan

5 May 2026

ANNEX 3

Contents

ANNEX 3

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan – proposed investment of surplus congestion charge income into Park and Ride, bus, active travel and related supporting measures. It is acknowledged that the current version of the Investment Plan does not specify detailed schemes in all instances. Consequently, the assessment reflects the high-level detail provided. In addition, further scheme-specific assessments should be undertaken as the programme develops and individual measures are defined.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	An updated investment plan linked to the congestion charge, within an existing wider policy context of congestion reduction and support for sustainable travel in Oxford.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	The plan would use surplus congestion charge income to support a package of measures intended to reduce reliance on private car travel and improve access to Oxford by bus, Park and Ride and active travel. The package includes a recommended option for the Part 1 Park and Ride offer and a wider set of Part 2 measures covering staff travel support, hospital access, active travel and access to employment. Overall, the assessment indicates positive equalities impacts, particularly through supporting public transport use and active travel options, although the scale of impact will depend on uptake and detailed delivery.
Completed By	Steer
Authorised By	OCC

Date of Assessment	29 April 2026

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.	OCC has commissioned an EqIA and CIA to support the Cabinet decision on the Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan. The assessments cover both the recommended schemes and the alternative options within the investment plan, and consider both individual and cumulative impacts. The plan is structured in two parts, with Part 1 focused on the Park and Ride offer and Part 2 covering supporting measures, including staff travel support, hospital access, active travel and access to employment.
Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.	The Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan would use surplus congestion charge income to fund a package of transport interventions intended to reduce car trips into Oxford and support lower-carbon travel. and the recommended Part 1 option relates to the Park and Ride fare offer. **The recommended option is a discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product by 1 June 2026 (or as soon as practically possible thereafter).** The package includes four main types of intervention. Fare-based and access measures include the proposed free Park and Ride return bus offer, free weekday Park and Ride parking for NHS and school staff, free weekday bus travel for NHS and school staff, and free bus travel for Connect to Work participants. Service provision and network enhancements comprise the proposed hospital express Park and Ride services. Active travel and enabling infrastructure would fund small-scale measures such as cycle parking and minor infrastructure upgrades. A reserve is also included to manage income risk and provide flexibility to extend or rescope measures if required.
Evidence / Intelligence	The assessment is informed by discussion with Oxfordshire County Council officers during development of the Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan, including consideration of the different package options and the measures considered most appropriate for inclusion. This has included review of the proposed Park and Ride offer,

List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our equality commitments.	targeted staff travel support, hospital express Park and Ride services, active travel infrastructure, free bus travel for Connect to Work participants, and the alternative Part 1 options and reinvestment approach set out in the plan. At this stage, the EIA is therefore based primarily on the design and intended purpose of the proposed measures, and on officer input regarding how the package has been developed and refined. The assessment remains qualitative and proportionate to the current stage of development, recognising that some delivery details remain to be confirmed and that further scheme-specific assessment may be required as the programme progresses.
Alternatives considered / rejected Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.	The principal alternatives that have been considered relate to Part 1 of the investment plan, where four alternatives to the recommended free Park and Ride return bus offer have been identified. These options would generate different levels of savings, which could be reinvested in active travel, public transport infrastructure and additional fare discounts. A do-nothing approach would mean that surplus congestion charge income is not used to strengthen sustainable travel alternatives and would therefore not support the purpose of the investment plan. These options are discussed in the 7 April EqIA on the Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan[1] (Annex 4 of the 21 April Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan Report by Director for Environment and Highways[2])

[1] https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s81456/CC%20Investment%20plan%20Annex%204%20-%20EqIA.pdf

[2] https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s81553/CA210426R9%20FINAL%20Cabinet%20report%20CC%20investment%20plan%20April%202026.pdf

Section 3: Impact Assessment

Overview

This section presents a summary review of the Investment Plan on a 'package' basis – for assessments of each proposed scheme, please see Appendix A. The classification of impacts used for the assessment is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Impact scoring framework

Score	Impact
-3	Large adverse
-2	Moderate adverse
-1	Slight adverse
0	Neutral – no significant benefits or disbenefits
1	Slight beneficial
2	Moderate beneficial
3	Large beneficial

ANNEX 3

Summary Review - Protected Characteristics, Additional Community Impacts, Additional Wider Impacts

	Part 1 – a discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2 -** Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
Age	1	1	2	1	Part 1 presents a slight positive impact in comparison to the original P&R fare charging structure.	See Table 9, Appendix A
Disability	1	1	2	1	Part 1 Option B may present a negative adverse impact for older or younger lone car drivers in comparison to the original P&R fare charging structure.	See Table 9, Appendix A
Gender Reassignment	0	0	0	0		
Marriage & Civil Partnership	0	0	0	0		
Pregnancy and Maternity	1	1	1	1		
Race	1	0	1	0		

ANNEX 3

	Part 1 – a discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2 -** Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
Sex	1	1	1	1		
Sexual Orientation	0	0	0	0		
Religion or Belief	0	0	0	0		
Rural communities	1	1	1	1	Part 1 Option B may present a negative adverse impact for older or younger lone car drivers in comparison to the original P&R fare charging structure.	See Table 9, Appendix A
Armed Forces	0	0	0	0		
Carers	1	0	1	1	Part 1 Option B may present a negative adverse impact for older or younger lone car drivers in comparison to the original P&R fare charging structure. Though some carers may benefit from reduced journey times, or less complex journeys, some bus priority	See Table 9, Appendix A

ANNEX 3

	Part 1 – a discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2 -** Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
					measures may increase congestion and journey times for some car users, particularly where alternative capacity is limited.	
Areas of deprivation	1	1	1	1		
Refugees, Asylum seekers and Undocumented migrants (i.e. vulnerable migrants	0	0	1	0		
Socio-Economic Duty	1	1	1	1		
Staff	0	0	0	0		
Other Council Services	0	0	0	1		
Providers	0	0	0	0		

ANNEX 3

	Part 1 – a discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2 -** Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
Social Value [3]	2	2	2	2	Improved transport provision is expected to generate positive social value by enhancing access to employment, education, and essential services, particularly for underserved communities. It may also support wider economic inclusion, community wellbeing, and opportunities for local businesses and social enterprises. It is assumed all positive impacts will generate social value.	

[3] If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	

Appendix A – Assessment

Investment Plan - Part One: Overview

Part One of the recommended Investment Plan, as outlined in the 21 April Cabinet report, recommends a discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product (Option B in annex 3) by 1 June 2026 (or as soon as practically possible thereafter) as the preferred option for Part 1 of the Investment Plan.

Part 1: £3 combined parking and bus fare product

Table 2: Option A: Free P&R return bus offer

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
Discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product (Option B in annex 3) by 1 June 2026 (or as soon as practically possible thereafter)	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Race • Sex • Rural Communities • Areas of Deprivation • Carers	Provides a £1.50 discount on parking in comparison to the current £4.50 adult return fare for the Park & Ride, helping to reduce travel costs and improve access to Oxford city centre for users.

Assessment

Age: There may be a disproportionately positive impact for older adults (45+) as they are more car-dependent than other age groups, with 62% of 45–59-year-olds in Oxfordshire using a car to travel to work (2011 Census). A discounted park & Ride offers a slightly more affordable alternative to using a car for the entire journey; improving access to Oxford city centre whilst reducing car trips.
There may also be a disproportionately positive impact for younger people (16–24) are more likely to walk or cycle (38% in Oxford, 2011 Census). Younger people may benefit from the indirect impact of fewer numbers of private vehicles which could improve the experience and/or perception of active travel.

Disability: Approximately 15% of Oxford study area residents report a long-term health problem or disability (2021 Census, Oxford). People with mobility difficulties nationally have slightly higher car usage (62% disabled vs 60% non-disabled) and lower walking/cycling rates (24% disabled vs 31% non-disabled) (National Travel Survey, 2022, England). A discounted Park & Ride product can offer an accessible alternative for those who are less able to walk or cycle for some or all of their journeys. In addition, disabled people with impairments that make longer

journeys less comfortable may experience more comfortable travel due to reduced congestion, as the scheme encourages alternatives to private vehicle use.

Pregnancy and Maternity: A discounted Park & Ride may provide more flexible, and cost-free travel for pregnant women, Women nationally are more likely to use public transport (22% women vs 15% for men). In addition, this may also provide a more flexible option for parents travelling with infants, supporting access to work and services.

Race / Ethnicity: National data shows ethnic minorities are slightly more likely to walk or cycle (36% ethnic minority groups vs 32% non ethnic minority groups) and slightly less likely to use a car (59% ethnic minority groups vs 63% non-ethnic minority) (National Travel Survey, 2022). Ethnic minority groups may benefit from the indirect impact of fewer numbers of private vehicles which could improve the experience and/or perception of active travel.

Sex: Women nationally are more likely to use public transport (22% vs 15% for men) (National Travel Survey, 2022, England) and women tend to make more complex trips involving caregiving or shopping. Therefore, A discounted Park & Ride product may support more convenient, lower-cost travel that reduces reliance on private car usage.

Rural Communities: One-third of Oxfordshire's population live in rural areas (DEFRA, 2021) where car dependence is higher. The scheme is likely to have a disproportionately positive impact by providing rural residents with affordable access to Oxford city centre and helping reduce overall car trips.

Carer: Oxfordshire has 61,100 unpaid carers, with 17,400 providing 20+ hours/week (Census 2011, Oxfordshire). Carers often face complex travel needs while balancing work and caring responsibilities. The scheme is likely to have a disproportionately positive impact by easing travel burdens by providing a lower cost form of travel, which may enable greater participation in employment, education, and social activities.

Socio Economic Duty: A discounted Park & Ride scheme is likely to have a disproportionately positive impact on residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Though households in deprived areas often have lower car ownership (ONS, 2021, Oxford), a discounted Park & Ride can reduce travel costs for more deprived households with car ownership, which may improve access to employment, education, and essential services.

Investment Plan - Part Two Overview:

Part Two includes four primary categories of intervention:

- Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements: including proposed improvements to public transport services
- Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure: This entails funding for small-scale initiatives, including cycle parking and minor infrastructure improvements.
- Fare-Based and Access Measures: This includes the proposed free Park and Ride return bus offer, complimentary weekday Park and Ride parking for NHS and school staff, free weekday bus travel for NHS and school staff, and free bus travel for Connect to Work participants.
- Contingency Reserve: A reserve is incorporated to manage income risks and provide flexibility to extend or rescope measures, if required (not assessed)

Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements

Table 3: Bus priority / infrastructure measures (2a)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
For example, Bus lanes; bus gates; signal priority; P&R site infrastructure	• Disability • Age • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities • Carers	• Improved public transport infrastructure leading to journey time benefits and more comfortable journeys

Assessment

Disability, Age, and Pregnancy and Maternity: Approximately 15% of Oxford residents report a long-term health problem or disability (2021 Census). Potential positive impacts of bus priority and infrastructure improvements include faster and more reliable journeys, improved Park & Ride infrastructure such as accessible boarding points, and signal priority. These measures are expected to increase the feasibility,

affordability, and comfort of using public transport, particularly for disabled people with physical, mental, or sensory impairments, older adults with age-related mobility limitations, and pregnant people who find longer journeys less comfortable.

Sex: Women may benefit from improvements to bus infrastructure, due to gendered differences in travel behaviour. On average, in Oxford, females use public transport to travel to work more than males, at 22 per cent vs 15 per cent (2011 Census). In addition, women are more likely to undertake 'trip-chained' journeys - linking multiple purposes such as escorting children, shopping and commuting[4]. As these journeys are more complex and time-constrained, improvements to bus routes, such as express services may disproportionately benefit women compared to men.

Rural Communities: Rural residents, who make up 33% of Oxfordshire's population (DEFRA, 2021), may experience positive impacts if bus priority measures and P&R enhancements improve connectivity to Oxford city. Faster and more reliable journeys can make public transport a viable alternative to private car usage, particularly where existing public transport options are limited.

Carers: Unpaid carers often travel with dependents or combine care duties with work or education[5]. Faster and more reliable bus services, along with accessible P&R infrastructure, can reduce the time and complexity of journeys, improving affordability and feasibility for carers. Bus priority measures such as dedicated lanes can improve bus reliability; however, they may reduce road capacity for general traffic, leading to increased total travel times across the network under high demand conditions. By reallocating road space, bus priority measures can increase congestion and journey times for some car users, particularly where alternative capacity is limited, which may present a minor negative impact for some carers making journeys by private vehicles.

Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation: Households in areas of higher deprivation are less likely to own a car and more reliant on public transport (ONS, 2021). Potential positive impacts include more reliable bus journeys and reduced travel time. This could improve access to employment, education, and services.

Table 4: New or improved bus services (2b)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
2b: New or improved bus services Contracted P&R or bus routes including proposed hospital express services or supported services	• Disability • Age • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities	• Improved public transport services may lead to journey time benefits and more comfortable journeys for some users.

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/nts-factsheets/trip-chaining-2024

[5] https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Compendium-of-Evidence-for-Oxfordshire-Community-Services-Strategy.pdf

	• Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation • Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Vulnerable Migrants • Carers	

Assessment

Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity: Disabled people, older adults (60+) and pregnant people may have related impairments that affect their ability to make longer or complex journeys. The introduction of new or improved bus services, including hospital-focused express routes, would increase the availability and choice of travel options. This could provide more feasible and reliable journeys, particularly for essential trips such as healthcare appointments, work, and daily errands. Express services may offer additional benefits to these individuals, as faster and more direct routes can improve journey comfort, reduce travel-related fatigue, and enhance overall accessibility.

Sex: Women may benefit from improvements to bus infrastructure, due to gendered differences in travel behaviour. On average, in Oxford, females use public transport to travel to work more than males, at 22 per cent vs 15 per cent (2011 Census). In addition, women are more likely to undertake 'trip-chained' journeys - linking multiple purposes such as escorting children, shopping and commuting[6]. As these journeys are more complex and time-constrained, improvements to bus routes, such as express services may disproportionately benefit women compared to men.

Rural Communities: Approximately 33% of Oxfordshire's population live in rural areas (DEFRA, 2021). Residents in rural locations often have fewer transport options. Expanded bus services and express routes can disproportionately benefit these groups by improving connectivity to key destinations such as hospitals, workplaces, and urban centres. Conversely, if routes are concentrated on urban corridors, rural residents may see limited benefits.

Carers: Unpaid carers in Oxfordshire (Census 2011) may have limited flexibility to travel due to caring responsibilities. Improved bus services can disproportionately positively affect carers by offering more predictable and reliable routes for essential travel, including hospital visits for those they care for. Enhanced public transport can also enable the people they care for to travel more independently for medical appointments or daily activities, reducing the carers' travel burden and supporting greater autonomy for those in their care.

[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/nts-factsheets/trip-chaining-2024

Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation: Residents in more deprived areas of Oxford have lower car ownership (ONS, 2021). Expanded bus services, supported bus services, and hospital-focused express routes could disproportionately benefit these groups by improving affordable access to essential services

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Vulnerable Migrants: Refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants likely to rely on public transport due to limited access to private vehicles, however, public transport costs can remain prohibitive. Supported services could enhance travel feasibility, affordability, and comfort, particularly for essential trips to access services.

Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure

Table 5: Active travel infrastructure (2c)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
For example, Cycle lanes, cycle parking, e-scooter/e-bike solutions	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Race/ethnicity • Carers • Rural Communities	• Enhanced active travel infrastructure improves experience of active travel, increases road safety, supports active travel uptake and improves experience

Assessment

Age: Younger people (16–24) are more likely to make active trips for commuting, education, and leisure. Investment in safe and connected cycling, walking, and e-scooter infrastructure could disproportionately positively impact this group by improving journey safety, convenience, and reliability, reinforcing modal shift from private vehicles.

These improvements are also particularly important for younger children. According to the National Travel Survey (2024), 51% of trips made by children aged 5 to 10 to and from school are on foot, and these journeys are often accompanied by a parent or caregivers. This means that a large proportion of children are directly exposed to the quality and safety of the walking environment. Enhancing active travel infrastructure can therefore improve child safety, increase opportunities for independent mobility, and support physical activity and wellbeing. In addition, these journeys are often accompanied by parents or guardians, meaning improvements also reduce the time, stress and complexity associated with escorting children, while supporting a gradual transition to more independent travel as children grow older.

Disability: Approximately 15% of Oxford residents report a long-term health problem or disability, with 5% limited ‘a lot’ and 10% limited ‘a little’ in day-to-day activities (2021 Census, Oxford). Disabled people with mobility or sensory impairments are less likely to use active travel modes for longer or complex journeys (National Travel Survey, 2022, England). Investment in accessible cycling and walking infrastructure, including secure cycle parking and smooth surfaces, could disproportionately positively impact disabled people by making active travel safer, more feasible, and more comfortable.

Pregnancy and Maternity: Improvements in active travel infrastructure, alongside reduced motor traffic, could disproportionately benefit pregnant people and those with young children by making journeys safer and more comfortable, particularly for those who may find travel more physically demanding during pregnancy. This is relevant for essential trips such as attending healthcare appointments and running local errands.

Sex: Women are more likely than men to make complex, multi-purpose trips—including caregiving and shopping—which can affect their travel choices. Active travel infrastructure could disproportionately positively benefit women by enabling safer, flexible options for shorter trips that complement these responsibilities.

Race / Ethnicity: National data shows ethnic minorities are slightly more likely to walk or cycle (36% ethnic minority groups vs 32% non-ethnic minority groups) and slightly less likely to use a car (59% ethnic minority groups vs 63% non-ethnic minority) (National Travel Survey, 2022). Ethnic minority groups may benefit from improved active travel routes or infrastructure, thereby improving the experience and/or perception of active travel.

Carers: Carers often rely on private vehicles to perform caring duties, including transport to appointments, errands, and emergency trips. Safer active travel options and reduced traffic congestion could disproportionately positively impact carers, supporting them to make short journeys more efficiently and reducing reliance on private cars for some trips.

Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation: Residents in more deprived areas of Oxford have lower car ownership (ONS, 2021). Expanded active travel routes and enhanced infrastructure could disproportionately benefit these groups by improving affordable access to essential services.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Vulnerable Migrants: Refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants likely to rely on public transport due to limited access to private vehicles, however, public transport costs can remain prohibitive. Expanded active travel routes and enhanced infrastructure could enhance travel feasibility, affordability, and comfort, particularly for essential trips to access services

Rural Communities

Around 33% of Oxfordshire's population live in rural areas, with many settlements located further from urban centres (DEFRA, 2021). Residents in these areas are less likely to have frequent public transport access and may rely on cars. Investment in connected, safe active travel routes to Park & Ride sites or local hubs may disproportionately positively benefit rural residents for shorter trips, though overall impact may be limited due to longer travel distances.

Fare-Based and Access Measures

Table 6: Fare and/or parking discounts (P&R services) (2d)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
Fare and/or parking discounts (P&R services)	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities • Carers • Areas of Deprivation • Socio Economic Duty	• Targeted fare discounts for specific groups or employers deliver direct economic benefits to individuals, creating a financial incentive to utilise the services

Assessment

Age: In Oxfordshire, car use for commuting is highest among people aged 45–59 (62%) (2011 Census, Oxfordshire) and car use remains a significant proportion of mode share for those aged 60+. Therefore, older people who drive may benefit disproportionately from reduced costs for essential trips or commuting that involves P&R services, which could support increased access to employment and services.

Disability: Disabled people are slightly more likely to rely on cars for travel (62% disabled vs 60% non-disabled) (National Travel Survey, 2022, England), which may enable access to Park & Ride where a vehicle is available. This suggests a potential disproportionate positive impact for those who can access a car, although disabled people without access to a vehicle may not benefit.

Sex: Women, who are more likely to undertake complex multi-stage or multi-purpose trips including caregiving, may disproportionately benefit from cost savings.

Rural Communities: Residents in rural areas may benefit from reduced travel costs when accessing P&R sites as a gateway to Oxford city.

Carers: Carers may benefit from discounted fares for work- or care-related trips, supporting efficiency and affordability of caring duties.

Areas of Deprivation / Socio-Economic Duty: Households with lower incomes are more likely to rely on public transport. Discounts reduce barriers to travel and may disproportionately positively impact lower-income groups, supporting the public sector duty to reduce socio-economic disadvantage (ONS, 2021).

Table 7: Fare discounts (non-P&R services) (2e)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
For example, Free/discounted bus travel schemes, including targeted schemes for specific employment sectors/groups travelling together/people with disabilities	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities • Carers • Areas of Deprivation • Socio Economic Duty • Other Council Services	• Targeted fare discounts for specific groups or employers deliver direct economic benefits to individuals, creating a financial incentive to utilise the services

Assessment

Age: Younger people (16–24), who are more likely to use public transport and less likely to drive (National Travel Survey, 2022, England), may experience a disproportionate positive impact, as these discounts are not dependent on car access.

Disability: Disabled people, who are less likely to use active modes and may rely on public transport where available, may benefit from improved affordability, representing a positive impact, particularly where services are accessible.

Sex: Women's higher public transport use (22% for women in comparison to 15% of men in Oxford) suggests they may benefit more directly from these discounts, particularly for multi-purpose journeys.

Carers: Carers may benefit from reduced travel costs for regular or essential journeys, particularly where they do not have access to a car, representing a potentially positive impact.

Rural Communities: While service availability may limit overall impact, these discounts are not dependent on car ownership, making them more accessible than P&R discounts where services exist.

Areas of Deprivation / Socio-Economic Duty: Lower-income households are less likely to own a car and more reliant on bus travel (ONS, 2021) The proposed investment plan measure for free bus travel for participants in the Connect to Work employment support programme to improve access to employment could disproportionately positively impact individuals in these groups by facilitating access to employment opportunities.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Vulnerable Migrants: Individuals are less likely to have access to private vehicles and more reliant on public transport. Non-P&R fare discounts may therefore provide a more accessible and positive benefit compared to P&R-based schemes.

Other Council Services/Providers: Proposed measures to provide free weekday bus travel for school staff would provide a disproportionate economic benefit for staff employed by schools.

Cumulative impacts

Table 8: Scheme cumulative impacts

Impact	Summary
Resulting mode shift from Investment Plan measures results in reduced congestion from private vehicles	• Investments will likely encourage behaviour change and lead to some modal shift towards more sustainable methods of travel. • This behaviour change is likely to lead to a reduction in motor traffic on the highway network, in turn influencing air quality and safety outcomes, alongside improved journey times for people who continue to drive into the city centre.

Assessment

Air Quality and Health Outcomes (Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity): Investment Plan measures are likely to encourage modal shift towards more sustainable travel, reducing motor traffic and improving air quality. This may disproportionately positively impact older people (60+), who are more vulnerable to air pollution and associated conditions such as stroke and cognitive decline. It may also disproportionately benefit disabled people, noting that 15% of Oxford residents report a long-term health condition (2021 Census, Oxford), particularly those with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions. Pregnant people may also benefit from reduced exposure to air pollution, which is linked to risks such as premature birth and low birth weight. Younger people and children may additionally benefit from improved air quality, given increased susceptibility to long-term health impacts.

Road Safety (Age): Reduced traffic volumes are likely to improve road safety conditions. This may disproportionately positively impact younger people, who are more likely to walk or cycle (National Travel Survey, 2022, England) and are therefore more exposed to road collision risk.

Journey Time and Reliability (Carers, Rural Communities, Drivers): Reduced congestion may improve journey times and reliability for those who continue to travel by car. This may disproportionately positively impact carers, of whom there are 61,100 in Oxfordshire (Census 2011), who often rely on private vehicles to undertake time-sensitive and essential journeys. Rural residents, who are more likely to be car-dependent may also therefore benefit if they continue to make journeys via private vehicle.

Summary Assessment

The Investment Plan is expected to generate predominantly positive outcomes by supporting modal shift towards sustainable travel, improving accessibility, reducing congestion, and enhancing air quality and road safety. Targeted interventions, including Park & Ride (P&R) schemes, bus service improvements, active travel infrastructure, and discounted fares, are likely to disproportionately benefit specific groups, including older adults, younger people, disabled people, pregnant people, women, carers, rural residents, and socio-economically disadvantaged households.

Table 9: Potential Negative Impact

Scheme / Measure	Potential Negative Impact	Mitigation Measures
Part 2 – Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	• Though some carers may benefit from reduced journey times, or less complex journeys, some bus priority measures may increase congestion and journey times for some car users, particularly where alternative capacity is limited	• Roll out bus priority schemes in phases with ongoing monitoring of congestion impacts, and adjust measures based on real-world data

Additional Considerations

While not identified as direct negative impacts, the following factors should be monitored and considered during implementation to ensure equitable outcomes:

-
- Part 1 – Discounted £3 combined parking and bus fare product: Simplify the fare structure by combining parking and bus travel into a single, easy-to-understand payment, reducing cognitive burden for users and making the Park & Ride offer more intuitive to use. Establish ongoing monitoring of usage patterns and equity outcomes, with the flexibility to adjust fare structures or concessions if unintended barriers emerge. Communicate changes clearly to affected users to ensure awareness of available concessions and alternatives.
- Bus Services (2b: New or Improved Routes): Urban corridor focus may limit benefits for rural residents. Consideration should be given to rural connectivity and demand-responsive solutions.

- Active Travel Infrastructure (2c): Longer travel distances in rural areas may reduce uptake of walking, cycling, or e-scooter travel. Integration with public transport is recommended to support accessibility.
- Park & Ride / Parking Discounts (Option A & Discount Schemes): Benefits are dependent on car ownership; complementary public transport discounts should be promoted to ensure access for non-car users.
- Cumulative Impacts: Equity of access for individuals unable or unwilling to use alternative modes should be monitored, particularly for rural communities and those with mobility constraints.
- In addition, it is acknowledged that the Investment Plan does not specify detailed schemes in all instances. Further scheme-specific assessments should be undertaken as the programme develops and individual measures are defined.

Oxfordshire County Council

Equalities Impact Assessment

Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan

7 April 2026

ANNEX 3

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Is this a new or existing function or policy?	A new investment plan linked to the congestion charge, within an existing wider policy context of congestion reduction and support for sustainable travel in Oxford.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	The plan would use surplus congestion charge income to support a package of measures intended to reduce reliance on private car travel and improve access to Oxford by bus, Park and Ride and active travel. The package includes a proposed Part 1 Park and Ride offer and a wider set of Part 2 measures covering staff travel support, hospital access, active travel and access to employment. Overall, the assessment indicates positive equalities impacts, particularly through supporting public transport use and active travel options, although the scale of impact will depend on uptake, detailed delivery and the final decision on the Part 1 offer.
Completed By	Steer
Authorised By	OCC

Date of Assessment	7 April 2026

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.	OCC has commissioned an EqIA and CIA to support the Cabinet decision on the Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan. The assessments cover both the recommended schemes and the alternative options within the investment plan, and consider both individual and cumulative impacts. The plan is structured in two parts, with Part 1 focused on the Park and Ride offer and Part 2 covering supporting measures, including staff travel support, hospital access, active travel and access to employment.
Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.	The Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan would use surplus congestion charge income to fund a package of transport interventions intended to reduce car trips into Oxford and support lower-carbon travel. Part 1 remains subject to Cabinet decision and relates to the Park and Ride fare offer. The recommended option is a free Park and Ride return bus offer, although alternative Park and Ride pricing options are also under consideration. The package includes four main types of intervention. Fare-based and access measures include the proposed free Park and Ride return bus offer, free weekday Park and Ride parking for NHS and school staff, free weekday bus travel for NHS and school staff, and free bus travel for Connect to Work participants. Service provision and network enhancements comprise the proposed hospital express Park and Ride services. Active travel and enabling infrastructure would fund small-scale measures such as cycle parking and minor infrastructure upgrades. A reserve is also included to manage income risk and provide flexibility to extend or rescope measures if required.
Evidence / Intelligence	The assessment is informed by discussion with Oxfordshire County Council officers during development of the Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan, including consideration of the different package options and the measures considered most appropriate for inclusion. This has included review of the proposed Park and Ride offer,

List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our equality commitments.	targeted staff travel support, hospital express Park and Ride services, active travel infrastructure, free bus travel for Connect to Work participants, and the alternative Part 1 options and reinvestment approach set out in the plan. At this stage, the EIA is therefore based primarily on the design and intended purpose of the proposed measures, and on officer input regarding how the package has been developed and refined. The assessment remains qualitative and proportionate to the current stage of development, recognising that some delivery details remain to be confirmed and that further scheme-specific assessment may be required as the programme progresses.
Alternatives considered / rejected Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.	The principal alternatives considered relate to Part 1 of the investment plan, where four alternatives to the recommended free Park and Ride return bus offer have been identified. These options would generate different levels of savings, which could be reinvested in active travel, public transport infrastructure and additional fare discounts. A do-nothing approach would mean that surplus congestion charge income is not used to strengthen sustainable travel alternatives and would therefore not support the purpose of the investment plan.

Section 3: Impact Assessment

Overview

This section presents a summary review of the Investment Plan on a 'package' basis – for assessments of each proposed scheme, please see Appendix A. The classification of impacts used for the assessment is outlined in Table 1.

Table 10: Impact scoring framework

Score	Impact
-3	Large adverse
-2	Moderate adverse
-1	Slight adverse
0	Neutral – no significant benefits or disbenefits
1	Slight beneficial
2	Moderate beneficial
3	Large beneficial

Summary Review - Protected Characteristics, Additional Community Impacts, Additional Wider Impacts

	Part 1 – Option A	**Part 1** – Option B	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2** - Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
Age	1	-1	1	2	1	Part 1 Option B may present a negative adverse impact for older or younger lone car drivers in comparison to the	See Table 9, Appendix A

	Part 1 – Option A	**Part 1** – Option B	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2 -** Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
						original P&R fare charging structure.	
Disability	1	-1	1	2	1	Part 1 Option B may present a negative adverse impact for older or younger lone car drivers in comparison to the original P&R fare charging structure.	See Table 9, Appendix A
Gender Reassignment	0	0	0	0	0		
Marriage & Civil Partnership	0	0	0	0	0		
Pregnancy and Maternity	1	0	1	1	1		
Race	1	0	0	1	0		
Sex	1	0	1	1	1		
Sexual Orientation	0	0	0	0	0		
Religion or Belief	0	0	0	0	0		

	Part 1 – Option A	**Part 1** – Option B	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2** - Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
Rural communities	1	-1	1	1	1	Part 1 Option B may present a negative adverse impact for older or younger lone car drivers in comparison to the original P&R fare charging structure.	See Table 9, Appendix A
Armed Forces	0	0	0	0	0		
Carers	1	-1	0	1	1	Part 1 Option B may present a negative adverse impact for older or younger lone car drivers in comparison to the original P&R fare charging structure. Though some carers may benefit from reduced journey times, or less complex journeys, some bus priority measures may increase congestion and journey times for some car users, particularly where alternative capacity is limited.	See Table 9, Appendix A
Areas of deprivation	1	0	1	1	1		

	Part 1 – Option A	**Part 1** – Option B	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2** - Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
Refugees, Asylum seekers and Undocumented migrants (i.e. vulnerable migrants	0	0	0	1	0		
Socio-Economic Duty	1	0	1	1	1		
Staff	0	0	0	0	0		
Other Council Services	0	0	0	0	1		
Providers	0	0	0	0	0		
Social Value [7]	2	0	2	2	2	Improved transport provision is expected to generate positive social value by enhancing access to employment, education, and essential services, particularly for underserved communities. It may also support wider economic inclusion, community	

[7] If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

	Part 1 – Option A	**Part 1** – Option B	**Part 2** - Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	**Part 2 -** Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure	**Part 2** Fare-Based and Access Measures	**Comment**	**Actions or mitigations, action owner and timescales and monitoring**
						wellbeing, and opportunities for local businesses and social enterprises. It is assumed all positive impacts will generate social value.	

ANNEX 3

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	

Appendix A – Assessment

Investment Plan - Part One: Overview

Part One of the recommended Investment Plan, as outlined in the Cabinet report, presents two options regarding Park & Ride charging structures. Option A, the recommended approach, proposes the continuation of the existing free Park & Ride return offer. Option B sets out alternative charging structures for the Park & Ride service, to be considered in the event that Cabinet does not approve the recommended option.

Option A: Free P&R return bus offer

Table 11: Option A: Free P&R return bus offer

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
Continuation of free return bus travel from all Park & Ride sites - 7 months from 1 June 2026	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Race • Sex • Rural Communities • Areas of Deprivation • Carers	• Reduces travel costs and improves access to Oxford city centre for Park & Ride users.

Assessment

Age: There may be a disproportionately positive impact for older adults (45+) as they are more car-dependent than other age groups, with 62% of 45–59-year-olds in Oxfordshire using a car to travel to work (2011 Census). Free Park & Ride offers an affordable alternative to using a car for the entire journey; improving access to Oxford city centre whilst reducing car trips.
There may also be a disproportionately positive impact for younger people (16–24) are more likely to walk or cycle (38% in Oxford, 2011 Census). Younger people may benefit from the indirect impact of fewer numbers of private vehicles which could improve the experience and/or perception of active travel.

Disability: Approximately 15% of Oxford study area residents report a long-term health problem or disability (2021 Census, Oxford). People with mobility difficulties nationally have slightly higher car usage (62% disabled vs 60% non-disabled) and lower walking/cycling rates (24%

disabled vs 31% non-disabled) (National Travel Survey, 2022, England). Free Park & Ride offers an accessible alternative for those who are less able to walk or cycle for some or all of their journeys. In addition, disabled people with impairments that make longer journeys less comfortable may experience more comfortable travel due to reduced congestion, as the scheme encourages alternatives to private vehicle use.

Pregnancy and Maternity: Free Park & Ride may provide more flexible, and cost-free travel for pregnant women, Women nationally are more likely to use public transport (22% women vs 15% for men). In addition, this may also provide a more flexible option for parents travelling with infants, supporting access to work and services.

Race / Ethnicity: National data shows ethnic minorities are slightly more likely to walk or cycle (36% ethnic minority groups vs 32% non ethnic minority groups) and slightly less likely to use a car (59% ethnic minority groups vs 63% non-ethnic minority) (National Travel Survey, 2022). Ethnic minority groups may benefit from the indirect impact of fewer numbers of private vehicles which could improve the experience and/or perception of active travel.

Sex: Women nationally are more likely to use public transport (22% vs 15% for men) (National Travel Survey, 2022, England) and women tend to make more complex trips involving caregiving or shopping. Therefore, free Park & Ride may support more convenient, lower-cost travel that reduces reliance on private car usage.

Rural Communities: One-third of Oxfordshire's population live in rural areas (DEFRA, 2021) where car dependence is higher. The scheme is likely to have a disproportionately positive impact by providing rural residents with affordable access to Oxford city centre and helping reduce overall car trips.

Carer: Oxfordshire has 61,100 unpaid carers, with 17,400 providing 20+ hours/week (Census 2011, Oxfordshire). Carers often face complex travel needs while balancing work and caring responsibilities. The scheme is likely to have a disproportionately positive impact by easing travel burdens by providing a lower cost form of travel, which may enable greater participation in employment, education, and social activities.

Socio Economic Duty: Continuing the free Park & Ride scheme is likely to have a disproportionately positive impact on residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Though households in deprived areas often have lower car ownership (ONS, 2021, Oxford), free Park & Ride can reduce travel costs for more deprived households with car ownership, which may improve access to employment, education, and essential services.

Option B: P&R charging structures

Table 12: Option B: P&R charging structures

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
Option B: P&R charging structures that could replace the free P&R return bus offer If an alternative P&R charging option is chosen, the resulting savings would be reinvested into transport improvements: 25% for active travel infrastructure, 25% for public transport infrastructure, and 50% for additional bus fare discounts (such as season ticket trials, youth fares, group tickets, or extended concessions for disabled users).	• Disability • Age • Pregnancy and maternity • Carers • Rural Communities	• Reintroduces/Introduces a Park & Ride offer requiring some user financial contribution • Potential reinvestment of savings into user discounts • Potential reallocation of savings into active travel and public transport improvements

Assessment

Changes from the baseline Park & Ride fare structure to simplified per-car tariffs (£3–£5 per car for up to five passengers) affect travel costs for different users depending on how many people share the trip. The price of P&R tickets provide a single adult return with parking included (£4), or up to two adults with children (£5), meaning the unit cost per traveller varies by household size (see **LINK**).

While there is no direct evidence on the proportion of people who travel unaccompanied in Oxford/Oxfordshire, baseline travel data shows that car travel is common and that travel modes vary by demographic group. Where travel is undertaken by car, a simplified per-car fare structure will have different disproportionate impacts depending on how many people share the vehicle, and the characteristics of the solo driver.

Groups that are identified as potentially affected by higher per-car fares are those for whom car travel is either a frequent mode or where typical trip patterns (e.g., commuting, caregiving) may involve solo travel or small household travel may include:

- Younger or older people travelling independently for work, education, or leisure
- Disabled people whose travel may require individualised arrangements
- Carers travelling alone with dependants
- Parents travelling alone with younger children
- People from rural communities who are more likely to be car dependent and therefore more likely to make solo car journeys

- People from lower income households who rely on car travel

Individuals with multiple overlapping characteristics, such as a disabled adult living in a rural area or a lone carer, may experience the highest cumulative negative impacts because they are more likely to travel alone and have limited alternatives.

However, the proposed reinvestment into public transport, fare concessions, and improved active travel infrastructure, could mitigate the effect of higher per-car fares by making alternative travel modes more accessible and convenient, while maintaining the affordability of using the Park & Ride service.

Investment Plan - Part Two Overview:

Part Two includes four primary categories of intervention:

- Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements: including proposed improvements to public transport services
- Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure: This entails funding for small-scale initiatives, including cycle parking and minor infrastructure improvements.
- Fare-Based and Access Measures: This includes the proposed free Park and Ride return bus offer, complimentary weekday Park and Ride parking for NHS and school staff, free weekday bus travel for NHS and school staff, and free bus travel for Connect to Work participants.
- Contingency Reserve: A reserve is incorporated to manage income risks and provide flexibility to extend or rescope measures, if required (not assessed)

Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements

Table 13: Bus priority / infrastructure measures (2a)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
For example, Bus lanes; bus gates; signal priority; P&R site infrastructure	• Disability • Age • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities • Carers	• Improved public transport infrastructure leading to journey time benefits and more comfortable journeys

Assessment

Disability, Age, and Pregnancy and Maternity: Approximately 15% of Oxford residents report a long-term health problem or disability (2021 Census). Potential positive impacts of bus priority and infrastructure improvements include faster and more reliable journeys, improved Park & Ride infrastructure such as accessible boarding points, and signal priority. These measures are expected to increase the feasibility,

affordability, and comfort of using public transport, particularly for disabled people with physical, mental, or sensory impairments, older adults with age-related mobility limitations, and pregnant people who find longer journeys less comfortable.

Sex: Women may benefit from improvements to bus infrastructure, due to gendered differences in travel behaviour. On average, in Oxford, females use public transport to travel to work more than males, at 22 per cent vs 15 per cent (2011 Census). In addition, women are more likely to undertake 'trip-chained' journeys - linking multiple purposes such as escorting children, shopping and commuting[8]. As these journeys are more complex and time-constrained, improvements to bus routes, such as express services may disproportionately benefit women compared to men.

Rural Communities: Rural residents, who make up 33% of Oxfordshire's population (DEFRA, 2021), may experience positive impacts if bus priority measures and P&R enhancements improve connectivity to Oxford city. Faster and more reliable journeys can make public transport a viable alternative to private car usage, particularly where existing public transport options are limited.

Carers: Unpaid carers often travel with dependents or combine care duties with work or education[9]. Faster and more reliable bus services, along with accessible P&R infrastructure, can reduce the time and complexity of journeys, improving affordability and feasibility for carers. Bus priority measures such as dedicated lanes can improve bus reliability; however, they may reduce road capacity for general traffic, leading to increased total travel times across the network under high demand conditions. By reallocating road space, bus priority measures can increase congestion and journey times for some car users, particularly where alternative capacity is limited, which may present a minor negative impact for some carers making journeys by private vehicles.

Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation: Households in areas of higher deprivation are less likely to own a car and more reliant on public transport (ONS, 2021). Potential positive impacts include more reliable bus journeys and reduced travel time. This could improve access to employment, education, and services.

Table 14: New or improved bus services (2b)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
2b: New or improved bus services Contracted P&R or bus routes including proposed hospital express services or supported services	• Disability • Age • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities	• Improved public transport services may lead to journey time benefits and more comfortable journeys for some users.

[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/nts-factsheets/trip-chaining-2024

[9] https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Compendium-of-Evidence-for-Oxfordshire-Community-Services-Strategy.pdf

	• Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation • Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Vulnerable Migrants • Carers	

Assessment

Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity: Disabled people, older adults (60+) and pregnant people may have related impairments that affect their ability to make longer or complex journeys. The introduction of new or improved bus services, including hospital-focused express routes, would increase the availability and choice of travel options. This could provide more feasible and reliable journeys, particularly for essential trips such as healthcare appointments, work, and daily errands. Express services may offer additional benefits to these individuals, as faster and more direct routes can improve journey comfort, reduce travel-related fatigue, and enhance overall accessibility.

Sex: Women may benefit from improvements to bus infrastructure, due to gendered differences in travel behaviour. On average, in Oxford, females use public transport to travel to work more than males, at 22 per cent vs 15 per cent (2011 Census). In addition, women are more likely to undertake 'trip-chained' journeys - linking multiple purposes such as escorting children, shopping and commuting[10]. As these journeys are more complex and time-constrained, improvements to bus routes, such as express services may disproportionately benefit women compared to men.

Rural Communities: Approximately 33% of Oxfordshire's population live in rural areas (DEFRA, 2021). Residents in rural locations often have fewer transport options. Expanded bus services and express routes can disproportionately benefit these groups by improving connectivity to key destinations such as hospitals, workplaces, and urban centres. Conversely, if routes are concentrated on urban corridors, rural residents may see limited benefits.

Carers: Unpaid carers in Oxfordshire (Census 2011) may have limited flexibility to travel due to caring responsibilities. Improved bus services can disproportionately positively affect carers by offering more predictable and reliable routes for essential travel, including hospital visits for those they care for. Enhanced public transport can also enable the people they care for to travel more independently for medical appointments or daily activities, reducing the carers' travel burden and supporting greater autonomy for those in their care.

[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/nts-factsheets/trip-chaining-2024

Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation: Residents in more deprived areas of Oxford have lower car ownership (ONS, 2021). Expanded bus services, supported bus services, and hospital-focused express routes could disproportionately benefit these groups by improving affordable access to essential services

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Vulnerable Migrants: Refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants likely to rely on public transport due to limited access to private vehicles, however, public transport costs can remain prohibitive. Supported services could enhance travel feasibility, affordability, and comfort, particularly for essential trips to access services.

Active Travel and Enabling Infrastructure

Table 15: Active travel infrastructure (2c)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
For example, Cycle lanes, cycle parking, e-scooter/e-bike solutions	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Race/ethnicity • Carers • Rural Communities	• Enhanced active travel infrastructure improves experience of active travel, increases road safety, supports active travel uptake and improves experience

Assessment

Age: Younger people (16–24) are more likely to make active trips for commuting, education, and leisure. Investment in safe and connected cycling, walking, and e-scooter infrastructure could disproportionately positively impact this group by improving journey safety, convenience, and reliability, reinforcing modal shift from private vehicles.

These improvements are also particularly important for younger children. According to the National Travel Survey (2024), 51% of trips made by children aged 5 to 10 to and from school are on foot, and these journeys are often accompanied by a parent or caregivers. This means that a large proportion of children are directly exposed to the quality and safety of the walking environment. Enhancing active travel infrastructure can therefore improve child safety, increase opportunities for independent mobility, and support physical activity and wellbeing. In addition, these journeys are often accompanied by parents or guardians, meaning improvements also reduce the time, stress and complexity associated with escorting children, while supporting a gradual transition to more independent travel as children grow older.

Disability: Approximately 15% of Oxford residents report a long-term health problem or disability, with 5% limited 'a lot' and 10% limited 'a little' in day-to-day activities (2021 Census, Oxford). Disabled people with mobility or sensory impairments are less likely to use active travel modes for longer or complex journeys (National Travel Survey, 2022, England). Investment in accessible cycling and walking infrastructure, including secure cycle parking and smooth surfaces, could disproportionately positively impact disabled people by making active travel safer, more feasible, and more comfortable.

Pregnancy and Maternity: Improvements in active travel infrastructure, alongside reduced motor traffic, could disproportionately benefit pregnant people and those with young children by making journeys safer and more comfortable, particularly for those who may find travel more physically demanding during pregnancy. This is relevant for essential trips such as attending healthcare appointments and running local errands.

Sex: Women are more likely than men to make complex, multi-purpose trips—including caregiving and shopping—which can affect their travel choices. Active travel infrastructure could disproportionately positively benefit women by enabling safer, flexible options for shorter trips that complement these responsibilities.

Race / Ethnicity: National data shows ethnic minorities are slightly more likely to walk or cycle (36% ethnic minority groups vs 32% non-ethnic minority groups) and slightly less likely to use a car (59% ethnic minority groups vs 63% non-ethnic minority) (National Travel Survey, 2022). Ethnic minority groups may benefit from improved active travel routes or infrastructure, thereby improving the experience and/or perception of active travel.

Carers: Carers often rely on private vehicles to perform caring duties, including transport to appointments, errands, and emergency trips. Safer active travel options and reduced traffic congestion could disproportionately positively impact carers, supporting them to make short journeys more efficiently and reducing reliance on private cars for some trips.

Socio-Economic Duty / Areas of Deprivation: Residents in more deprived areas of Oxford have lower car ownership (ONS, 2021). Expanded active travel routes and enhanced infrastructure could disproportionately benefit these groups by improving affordable access to essential services.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Vulnerable Migrants: Refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants likely to rely on public transport due to limited access to private vehicles, however, public transport costs can remain prohibitive. Expanded active travel routes and enhanced infrastructure could enhance travel feasibility, affordability, and comfort, particularly for essential trips to access services

Rural Communities

Around 33% of Oxfordshire's population live in rural areas, with many settlements located further from urban centres (DEFRA, 2021). Residents in these areas are less likely to have frequent public transport access and may rely on cars. Investment in connected, safe active travel routes to Park & Ride sites or local hubs may disproportionately positively benefit rural residents for shorter trips, though overall impact may be limited due to longer travel distances.

Fare-Based and Access Measures

Table 16: Fare and/or parking discounts (P&R services) (2d)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
Fare and/or parking discounts (P&R services)	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities • Carers • Areas of Deprivation • Socio Economic Duty	• Targeted fare discounts for specific groups or employers deliver direct economic benefits to individuals, creating a financial incentive to utilise the services

Assessment

Age: In Oxfordshire, car use for commuting is highest among people aged 45–59 (62%) (2011 Census, Oxfordshire) and car use remains a significant proportion of mode share for those aged 60+. Therefore, older people who drive may benefit disproportionately from reduced costs for essential trips or commuting that involves P&R services, which could support increased access to employment and services.

Disability: Disabled people are slightly more likely to rely on cars for travel (62% disabled vs 60% non-disabled) (National Travel Survey, 2022, England), which may enable access to Park & Ride where a vehicle is available. This suggests a potential disproportionate positive impact for those who can access a car, although disabled people without access to a vehicle may not benefit.

Sex: Women, who are more likely to undertake complex multi-stage or multi-purpose trips including caregiving, may disproportionately benefit from cost savings.

Rural Communities: Residents in rural areas may benefit from reduced travel costs when accessing P&R sites as a gateway to Oxford city.

Carers: Carers may benefit from discounted fares for work- or care-related trips, supporting efficiency and affordability of caring duties.

Areas of Deprivation / Socio-Economic Duty: Households with lower incomes are more likely to rely on public transport. Discounts reduce barriers to travel and may disproportionately positively impact lower-income groups, supporting the public sector duty to reduce socio-economic disadvantage (ONS, 2021).

Table 17: Fare discounts (non-P&R services) (2e)

Scheme Description	User Impact	Impact Overview
For example, Free/discounted bus travel schemes, including targeted schemes for specific employment sectors/groups travelling together/people with disabilities	• Age • Disability • Pregnancy and Maternity • Sex • Rural Communities • Carers • Areas of Deprivation • Socio Economic Duty • Other Council Services	• Targeted fare discounts for specific groups or employers deliver direct economic benefits to individuals, creating a financial incentive to utilise the services

Assessment

Age: Younger people (16–24), who are more likely to use public transport and less likely to drive (National Travel Survey, 2022, England), may experience a disproportionate positive impact, as these discounts are not dependent on car access.

Disability: Disabled people, who are less likely to use active modes and may rely on public transport where available, may benefit from improved affordability, representing a positive impact, particularly where services are accessible.

Sex: Women's higher public transport use (22% for women in comparison to 15% of men in Oxford) suggests they may benefit more directly from these discounts, particularly for multi-purpose journeys.

Carers: Carers may benefit from reduced travel costs for regular or essential journeys, particularly where they do not have access to a car, representing a potentially positive impact.

Rural Communities: While service availability may limit overall impact, these discounts are not dependent on car ownership, making them more accessible than P&R discounts where services exist.

Areas of Deprivation / Socio-Economic Duty: Lower-income households are less likely to own a car and more reliant on bus travel (ONS, 2021) The proposed investment plan measure for free bus travel for participants in the Connect to Work employment support programme to improve access to employment could disproportionately positively impact individuals in these groups by facilitating access to employment opportunities.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Vulnerable Migrants: Individuals are less likely to have access to private vehicles and more reliant on public transport. Non-P&R fare discounts may therefore provide a more accessible and positive benefit compared to P&R-based schemes.

Other Council Services/Providers: Proposed measures to provide free weekday bus travel for school staff would provide a disproportionate economic benefit for staff employed by schools.

Cumulative impacts

Table 18: Scheme cumulative impacts

Impact	Summary
Resulting mode shift from Investment Plan measures results in reduced congestion from private vehicles	• Investments will likely encourage behaviour change and lead to some modal shift towards more sustainable methods of travel. • This behaviour change is likely to lead to a reduction in motor traffic on the highway network, in turn influencing air quality and safety outcomes, alongside improved journey times for people who continue to drive into the city centre.

Assessment

Air Quality and Health Outcomes (Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity): Investment Plan measures are likely to encourage modal shift towards more sustainable travel, reducing motor traffic and improving air quality. This may disproportionately positively impact older people (60+), who are more vulnerable to air pollution and associated conditions such as stroke and cognitive decline. It may also disproportionately benefit disabled people, noting that 15% of Oxford residents report a long-term health condition (2021 Census, Oxford), particularly those with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions. Pregnant people may also benefit from reduced exposure to air pollution, which is linked to risks such as premature birth and low birth weight. Younger people and children may additionally benefit from improved air quality, given increased susceptibility to long-term health impacts.

Road Safety (Age): Reduced traffic volumes are likely to improve road safety conditions. This may disproportionately positively impact younger people, who are more likely to walk or cycle (National Travel Survey, 2022, England) and are therefore more exposed to road collision risk.

Journey Time and Reliability (Carers, Rural Communities, Drivers): Reduced congestion may improve journey times and reliability for those who continue to travel by car. This may disproportionately positively impact carers, of whom there are 61,100 in Oxfordshire (Census 2011), who often rely on private vehicles to undertake time-sensitive and essential journeys. Rural residents, who are more likely to be car-dependent may also therefore benefit if they continue to make journeys via private vehicle.

Summary Assessment

The Investment Plan is expected to generate predominantly positive outcomes by supporting modal shift towards sustainable travel, improving accessibility, reducing congestion, and enhancing air quality and road safety. Targeted interventions, including Park & Ride (P&R) schemes, bus service improvements, active travel infrastructure, and discounted fares, are likely to disproportionately benefit specific groups, including older adults, younger people, disabled people, pregnant people, women, carers, rural residents, and socio-economically disadvantaged households.

Table 19: Potential Negative Impact

Scheme / Measure	Potential Negative Impact	Mitigation Measures
Part 1, Option B: Park & Ride Charging Structures	Introduction of per-car charges may increase travel costs for solo drivers or small household trips, potentially limiting access to P&R services for those reliant on private vehicles. Individuals affected may include: • Younger or older adults travelling independently • Disabled individuals requiring individualised travel arrangements- Carers travelling alone with dependents • Rural residents with high car dependency • Low-income, car-dependent households	• Establish ongoing monitoring of usage patterns and equity outcomes, with the flexibility to adjust fare structures or concessions if unintended barriers emerge. • Communicate changes clearly to affected users to ensure awareness of available concessions and alternatives.
Part 2 – Public Transport Service Provision and Network Enhancements	• Though some carers may benefit from reduced journey times, or less complex journeys, some bus priority measures may increase congestion and journey times for some car users, particularly where alternative capacity is limited	• Roll out bus priority schemes in phases with ongoing monitoring of congestion impacts, and adjust measures based on real-world data

Additional Considerations

While not identified as direct negative impacts, the following factors should be monitored and considered during implementation to ensure equitable outcomes:

- Bus Services (2b: New or Improved Routes): Urban corridor focus may limit benefits for rural residents. Consideration should be given to rural connectivity and demand-responsive solutions.
- Active Travel Infrastructure (2c): Longer travel distances in rural areas may reduce uptake of walking, cycling, or e-scooter travel. Integration with public transport is recommended to support accessibility.
- Park & Ride / Parking Discounts (Option A & Discount Schemes): Benefits are dependent on car ownership; complementary public transport discounts should be promoted to ensure access for non-car users.
- Cumulative Impacts: Equity of access for individuals unable or unwilling to use alternative modes should be monitored, particularly for rural communities and those with mobility constraints.
- In addition, it is acknowledged that the Investment Plan does not specify detailed schemes in all instances. Further scheme-specific assessments should be undertaken as the programme develops and individual measures are defined.