

## **CABINET – 16 DECEMBER 2025**

### **UPDATES TO ‘IMPLEMENTING DECIDE & PROVIDE’**

#### **Report by Director of Economy and Place**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**

adopt the proposed updates to the ‘Implementing Decide & Provide: Requirements for Transport Assessments’ document.

#### **Executive Summary**

2. The Implementing Decide & Provide: Requirements for Transport Assessments document (referred to simply as Implementing Decide & Provide for the rest of this report) was adopted as a formal supplementary document to the council’s Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) in September 2022. This relates to Policy 36 of the LTCP, which states that the council will, “Require transport assessments accompanying planning applications for new development to follow the County Council’s ‘Implementing ‘Decide & Provide’: Requirements for Transport Assessments’ document.”
3. The Implementing Decide & Provide document stated that it would be reviewed every 12-18 months and updated when appropriate. These reviews have taken place and a need to update the document has been identified.
4. In December 2024 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated to include a requirement for developments to follow a vision-led approach to transport planning. Updates to the Implementing Decide & Provide document are required to reflect these changes. Opportunities to improve the document have also been identified, informed by the experiences gained from its use since its adoption.
5. These proposed updates are recommended to be adopted by Cabinet in order to allow the relevant Council officers to continue to require the approach to be followed in practice, in line with national policy, through planning applications for new developments.

#### **Background**

6. Implementing Decide & Provide was first adopted in September 2022 as a formal supplementary document to the council’s LTCP. It was the first example in England of a local highway authority requiring new developments to follow the decide and provide approach in transport assessments, making the council a leader of change in transport planning practice.

## **Understanding the term ‘Decide & Provide’**

7. As outlined in the LTCP, ‘predict and provide’ can be broadly described as an approach to transport planning that uses current or historical traffic patterns to identify the future need for infrastructure. However, this approach tends to simply reinforce dependence on the private car through provision of additional highway capacity for more private cars.
8. By contrast, the ‘decide and provide’ approach to transport planning decides on a preferred vision of the future and then provides the means to work towards that whilst also accommodating uncertainty about the future. This offers the opportunity for more positive transport planning and will help to make sure the LTCP transport user hierarchy is carried out by considering walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport upfront.

## **The document’s purpose**

9. The document details how the ‘decide and provide’ approach, as captured in Policy 36 of the council’s LTCP, is to be carried out through the transport assessments (or transport statements) and the different ways of securing infrastructure through planning applications for proposed development.
10. The document is about fundamentally changing the focus of transport assessments. Instead of measuring a development’s impact in terms of private vehicle trips and then providing additional highway capacity for those trips, a transport assessment’s primary focus must instead be about understanding how a development proposal can make sure that measures are in place to allow people to move to, from, and within a site by walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport, thus minimising the need to use private vehicles. This must be the founding principle of any transport assessment from which everything else then follows.

## **Proposed updates**

### **Drivers for the proposed updates**

11. Since the document’s adoption in 2022, significant changes were made to the NPPF in December 2024. The NPPF now includes the requirement for development proposals to follow a vision-led approach to transport planning. When these changes to the NPPF were first proposed it was stated in the supporting text for the accompanying consultation that (Chapter 8, paragraph 7, MHCLG), “To support the implementation of this updated policy, we will publish updated guidance alongside the policy coming into effect.” At the time of writing, this updated guidance has not yet been published.
12. As a result, with the above description of the vision-led approach in mind and without the updated guidance, Implementing Decide & Provide should be seen as the document that development proposals within Oxfordshire must follow in order to meet the requirement set out in paragraph 118 of the NPPF. However, it is expected that, once the updated guidance is made available, the Council’s

Implementing Decide & Provide document will sit alongside the national guidance and will remain necessary in setting out local requirements to make sure that a vision-led approach to transport planning has been followed.

13. Further to the need to reflect these changes to the NPPF in an updated version of the Implementing Decide & Provide document, opportunities were identified to improve the document, informed by the experiences gained from its use since its adoption.

### **Summary of the proposed changes**

14. A list of the key updates to the document is provided below. A working draft of the document is provided as a separate PDF (see Annex 1), with the proposed new or updated text in green and text that has not been changed but just moved to a new section in blue.
  - Updated all references to the latest version of the NPPF (throughout)
  - Discussed how NPPF paragraph 116 should be understood in the context of vision-led planning (see section 1.5)
  - Discussed what vision-led planning is and how ID&P sets out how the Council expects vision-led planning to be undertaken (see section 1.6)
  - Added references to the emerging local plans (see section 1.7)
  - Incorporated the step-by-step guide from the appendices into the main body of the document (see throughout part 3)
  - Added a new first step on creating the vision (see section 3.1)
  - Added clarity about scenario scoping relative to the scale of development (see section 3.2)
  - Added more direct instructions on elements to be reported in a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement (see throughout part 3)
  - Added more supporting text on the justification for connectivity improvements in the context of AM/PM peak trips, and what 'access' means (see section 3.4)
  - Updated the bibliography
  - Updated the flow-diagram in Appendix 1
  - Updated the methodology checklist (in Appendix 3) and made the completion of this checklist a requirement rather than optional

### **Corporate Policies and Priorities**

15. The County Council's 'Strategic Plan: 2025-2028', sets out a vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. By helping to put into practice policy within the Oxfordshire LTCP, the 'Implementing Decide & Provide: Requirements for Transport Assessments' document helps to deliver all aspects of this vision.
16. By making sure that the 'decide and provide' approach to transport planning is carried out through proposed developments, and that they are prioritising active travel and public transport measures, the document contributes to realising the following wider objectives identified in the Strategic Plan:

“We will continue to roll out our Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which aims to cut carbon emissions from transport. This means encouraging people to use public transport, cycling and walking instead of driving.”

## **Financial Implications**

17. Although the use of this document’s requirements has had some impact on staff resource (see discussion below), any increase in resource pressure has so far been insignificant and has been accommodated within existing staff provision. As such, there have been no significant revenue or capital resource implications.
18. It is also important to note that the proposed updates that are the subject of this report are not expected to substantially increase the resourcing implications of the Implementing Decide & Provide document beyond those already associated with its ongoing use.

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## **Legal Implications**

19. The approach outlined in the document has in some cases resulted in more complex S106 legal agreements between developers, the relevant LPA, and the council, which can have some resource impacts in terms of drafting legal agreements. This is due to S106 agreements increasingly including the phasing of infrastructure requirements based on various trigger points (such as trip generation, dwelling occupation, etc.) and the greater emphasis on developers being required to monitor and manage the transport impacts of their proposals over time.
20. The proposed updates that are the subject of this report are not expected to substantially increase the staff resource implications of the Implementing Decide & Provide document beyond those already associated with its ongoing use.
21. The LTCP is the council’s statutory Local Transport Plan, which the council is required to produce under the Transport Act 2000 (as amended). The LTCP, and accordingly any supplementary documents, can be amended and replaced as the council sees fit.

Comments checked by: Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Environment),  
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## **Staff Implications**

22. When the Implementing Decide & Provide document was first proposed in September 2022, the associated Cabinet report acknowledged that there may

be greater demand on staff resource to discuss, agree, and review transport assessments as a result of the more involved process being required of developers through the approach identified in the document.

23. Further to this, developers are required to monitor and manage the multi-modal (i.e. cars, buses, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.) trip generation of their developments over time, meaning that these surveys need to be reviewed by officers. Finally, as referenced above in the section on legal implications, the potential for greater complexity in S106 legal agreements can result in additional demand on staff resources due to the additional time required to negotiate and draft said legal agreements.
24. Based on the experience of the document's use since its adoption, the scale of additional resource this has required has been accommodated within existing staff resource and it is anticipated that this increase in demand will reduce over time as council officers, developers, and district officers become increasingly familiar with the approach.
25. It is also important to note that the proposed updates that are the subject of this report are not expected to substantially increase the staff resource implications of the Implementing Decide & Provide document beyond those already associated with its ongoing use.
26. However, this situation will continue to be monitored to make sure that no significant issues arise from this additional demand. If issues do in fact arise it may be possible to fund additional staffing resource with the revenue generated by Planning Performance Agreements and paid-for pre-application advice.

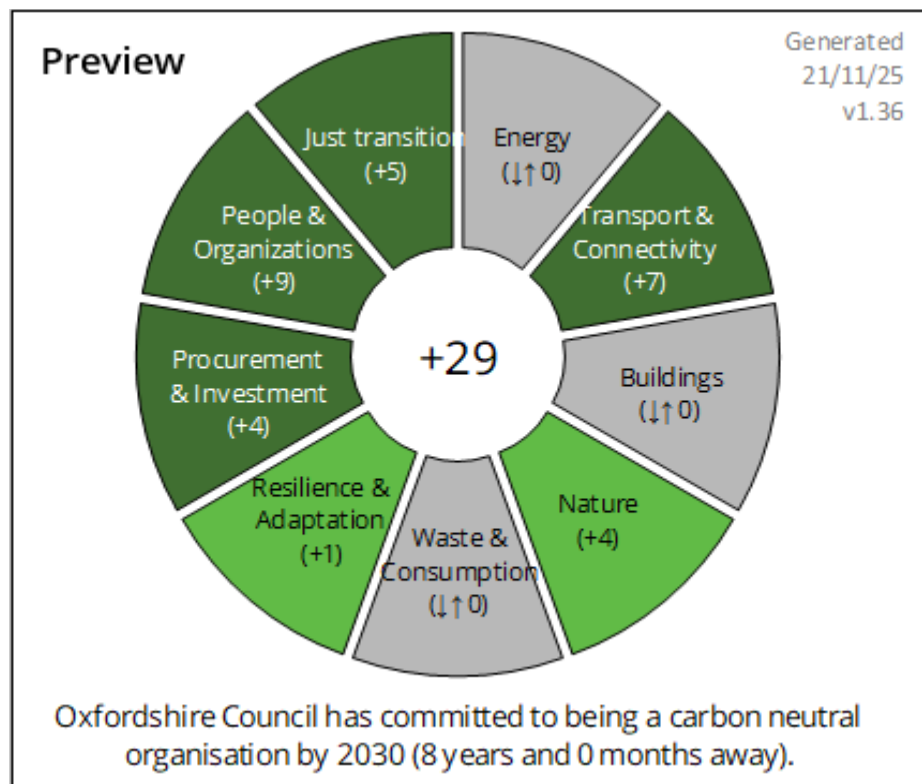
## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

27. The Implementing 'Decide & Provide' document helps to make sure that new developments suitably mitigate the transport impacts of their development by making improvements to the transport and travel system in line with the Oxfordshire LTCP transport user hierarchy.
28. The Equalities Impact Assessment, which can be found at Annex 2, shows that there is likely to be a benefit to various individuals, groups, and communities as a result of this document being used as it helps to make sure that a wider range of travel choices are available to all.

## **Sustainability Implications**

29. As one of the key ways of putting the aims of the Oxfordshire LTCP into practice, the Implementing Decide & Provide document plays a very important role in helping to deliver the aims of OCC's Climate Action Framework and realising the goal of decarbonising the transport and travel system.
30. A Climate Impact Assessment has been undertaken, and the report can be found in Annex 3. As illustrated in the scoring summary wheel below, the

document has been identified as making a positive contribution to climate action across various categories.



## Risk Management

31. When the Implementing Decide & Provide document was first proposed in September 2022, the related Cabinet report acknowledged potential risks associated with its use and identified actions required to address these.
32. The first was that because at that time the document identified a new way for developers to undertake the transport assessments required in support of planning applications there may be unexpected issues arising from the required methodology and its use in practice.
33. This was acknowledged as being somewhat unavoidable with a new way of working and to mitigate the issue a need for a periodic review process was identified so that any elements that required refinement could be identified. Since its adoption and its use in practice no significant issues have arisen. However, the proposed updates that are the subject of this report are the result of this review process.
34. The other potential risk that was identified was related to the possibility of the Local Planning Authorities within Oxfordshire deciding not to embed the requirements of this document appropriately in their respective Local Plans. It was noted that this may cause issues with the use of the document as it may hold less weight in planning decisions if it remains only a requirement of the Oxfordshire LTCP.

35. Firstly, it is very positive to note that the emerging local plans all make specific reference to decide and provide or vision-led planning thus lending further support for the aims of this document. Secondly, as discussed in paragraphs 11 and 12 of this report, a vision-led approach to transport planning in transport assessments is now required in the NPPF, so there is strong support for the Implementing Decide & Provide document in national policy.

## Consultations

36. Implementing Decide & Provide is a technical document used to apply in practice the policy in the Oxfordshire LTCP. As such the comprehensive consultation exercise for the LTCP encompasses the intent of this document.
37. However, as part of the process of developing the original version of the document (adopted in September 2022), significant engagement took place with internal colleagues, officers at the district and city councils, industry professionals, relevant OCC cabinet members (i.e. those with transport-related portfolios), National Highways, and the authors of the guidance upon which the document is based. The comments derived from that engagement process were then used to inform the final version of the document.
38. To inform the proposed updates to the Implementing Decide & Provide document, further engagement has been undertaken with the same parties listed above (and others in addition to those previously contacted) in order to refine and enhance this document, resulting in valuable input from those who have had direct experience of using this document and those with related experiences from similar approaches elsewhere.

ROBIN ROGERS

Director of Economy and Place

Annex:

- Annex 1:** Implementing Decide & Provide: Requirements for Transport Assessments' document (final draft)
- Annex 2:** Equalities Impact Assessment
- Annex 3:** Climate Impact Assessment

Background papers: Nil

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