

Divisions Affected - All

CABINET

21 February 2023

Oxfordshire Network Management Plan

Report by Corporate Director of Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) Approve the adoption the 'Oxfordshire Network Management Plan 2023-2028' at Annex 1
 - b) Approve the Oxfordshire Network Management Plan Summary document at Annex 2
 - c) Approve the delegation of authority to amend the Network Management Plan to the Corporate Director of Environment and Place in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Highway Management for the life of the Plan to ensure it is kept up to date with related Council policies and any government guidance or legislative changes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Whilst not a statutory document the Department for Transport encourages the production of a Network Management Plan to assist those working on the network, developers, utilities and the highway service, to plan, coordinate and implement works. In addition, the plan provides information for users of the network on the strategies deployed to manage the network.
3. The Plan for the period 2023-28 is a challenging one with the scale of works taking place on Oxfordshire's network as a result of new infrastructure projects and developments taking place across the county.
4. It is an operational document that supports delivery of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, as well as helping to deliver and provide a framework to ensure alignment of decisions and actions in line with the corporate plan and Council priorities. The Plan provides for a hierarchy of transport methods, a hierarchy of works (taking into account statutory duties), how the Network will be managed.

Key elements of the Plan

5. The next five years sees considerable activity on the network across the county, from the provision of new highway & transport infrastructure as well as the considerable investment in housing development, projects of national importance (such as HS2 and East/West Rail), investment in digital infrastructure as well as the activity from routine maintenance of utility and highway infrastructure.
6. The plan explains how these will be managed against the vision, objectives and priorities of the County Council.
7. Key elements of the Plan include:
 - Legislative and Policy framework
 - Hierarchy of road users: Pedestrians, cyclists, buses, freight, others
 - Hierarchy of works: Emergencies, Works of National Importance, Active Travel, major new highway infrastructure, Broadband infrastructure, major utility works, major maintenance works, small scale utility works and general highway maintenance activity.
 - Decision making framework
 - Implementation planning for works
 - Communications
 - Team synergies
 - Ambitions

Corporate Policies and Priorities

8. The Network Management Plan will help to support the delivery of the County Council priorities to create and manage an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network. It also supports and takes forward principles and policies set out in the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

Financial Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of Network Management Plan.

Comments checked by: Rob Finlayson, Finance Business Partner
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Legal Implications

10. The Traffic Management Act 2004 (Part 16) places a duty on the Local Traffic Authority (Oxfordshire County Council) as follows:

(1) It is the duty of a local traffic authority or a strategic highways company (“the network management authority”) to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as is reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:

- (a) Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority’s network; and
- (b) Facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority

(2) The action that an authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action that they consider will contribute to securing –

- a) The more efficient use of their network; or
- b) The avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion and or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority.

11. The Network Management Plan details how the statutory duty will be achieved.

Comments checked by: Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Legal Services)
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Staff Implications

12. There are no direct staffing implications arising from the adoption Network Management Plan.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

13. The Network Management Plan, and the activities associated with it, looks to safeguard all users of the highway network whilst incorporating local policies and objectives, whilst maintaining the ability for utilities, developers and highway maintenance activities to take place. The Traffic Management Act allows for the provision of local policies as identified by the Fair Deal Alliance for a hierarchy of users of the network.

Sustainability Implications

14. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to action to tackle climate change and the Network Management Plan will support these objectives by supporting work promoters with new methods of working to reduce emissions, assisting communities introduce EV charging points, managing the parking asset to support greater use of public transport and active travel, mitigating works to support public transport and active travel and supporting initiatives to

maximise traffic reduction. We are working with a wide range of partners to deliver projects at the cutting edge of their field. The use of innovative technology within the county will significantly reduce local emissions and improve air quality, boosting the quality of life for residents and benefiting businesses. The Network Management Plan provides for clear hierarchies in terms of users and works to support the climate change agenda.

Risk Management

15. With increasing growth and associated development in the County, there is a clear risk that the existing infrastructure will be unable to cope with the increasing demand for road space to travel and the requirement for new utility work, development and maintenance (currently we have 600+ live sites on the network each day).
16. The Network Management Plan identifies clear priorities for the use of the network and a hierarchy for development and maintenance over the next 5-year period. Whilst the booking of road space for works is based on a first come first served principal, the Plan allows for the prioritisation and coordination of works to reduce clashes. Promoting a common-sense approach to works, on the basis of the 'deepest dig' goes first, ensures that reinstatement works meet the specifications and reduces the need for additional maintenance activity. The Plan allows for emphasis on community-based parking requirements, supports activity travel as an alternative and supports innovation in traffic control to prioritise active travel projects and public transport.

Consultations

17. The Oxfordshire Network Management Plan was subject to a public consultation during November and December 2022, aimed at key stakeholders, including utilities and bus companies. Prior to this, informal consultation was undertaken, and their responses used to help develop the draft Network Management Plan.
18. Two responses were received to the consultation: one from Oxfordshire Cycling Network and one from a statutory undertaker. Both responses supported the content of the plan. The statutory undertaker email provided additional technical information and references to relevant codes of practice which needed to be adjusted in the Network Management Plan. These technical point references have been included into the draft plan.
19. Whilst the plan covers a fixed period, it will be subject to annual review (in April) to consider the evolution of the network, changing travel behaviours, government policy developments, local policy initiatives and new opportunities for innovation. As adjustments and amendments are made to the relevant Codes of Practice, these will immediately replace those in the plan by default.

Corporate Director of Environment and Place

Annex 1 Oxfordshire Network Management Plan 2022-27
Annex 2 Network Management Plan – Executive Summary

Background papers: Nil

[Other Documents:] Web link to: [Traffic Management Act 2004 Network Management Duty Guidance \(DfT\)](#)

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