

Division(s):

## **CABINET – 28 JUNE 2016**

### **CONNECTING OXFORDSHIRE – LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2015-31 (LTP4) UPDATE**

**Report by Director for Environment & Economy**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report sets out the main changes to Connecting Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4), which was adopted in September 2015, following full public and Stakeholder consultation. This report outlines the first update to LTP4, which is required to reflect the changed policy context and new and updated strategies, set out below:
  - (a) Update on Policy Context, including:
    - i. The refreshed Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)
    - ii. The England's Economic Heartland Alliance and its Strategic Transport Forum
    - iii. Changes to reflect this year's Council decision to cut bus subsidies
    - iv. Changes to reflect last year's Council Motion on air quality
  - (b) New Rail Strategy
  - (c) New Active and Healthy Travel Strategy
  - (d) New A40 and updated A420 Route Strategies
  - (e) Updated Oxford Transport Strategy
  - (f) Amendments to other Area Strategies
2. Annex 1 summarises the main changes to LTP4.
3. LTP4 has been updated in 2016 in response to the rapidly changing national and local growth, economic development, infrastructure planning and funding agendas. Last year the county council resolved that LTP4 should be strengthened in its aims to reduce air pollution. Annex 2 sets out how the LTP has been updated to reflect this in more detail.
4. The Plan has been designed as a living transport policy and strategy framework document, to be kept under review and regularly updated as significant changes take place which affect transport in Oxfordshire, across the region and nationally. It will also directly inform this year's update of the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan.

## Update on Policy Context

5. The revised Policy Context for LTP4 is:

i. Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

The revised LTP takes account of the plans and ambitions of the Oxfordshire LEP in its refreshed Strategic Economic Plan as well as the aspirations of the England's Economic Heartland Alliance. It therefore focuses on schemes that will support growth in Oxfordshire, including the 'Knowledge Spine' corridor linking Science Vale, Oxford and Bicester. It prioritises peak time travel to work as this presents the greatest challenge to transport networks and is vital for the economy.

ii. England's Economic Heartland Alliance

The Alliance has formed a Strategic Transport Forum to co-ordinate Strategy, Major Projects and their links to shared economic planning across the area. Work is also progressing on developing a sub-national Transport Body. Our LTP sits increasingly in this context.

iii. Council decision on Bus subsidies

The main policy section has also been amended to reflect this year's Council budget. The relevant policy on supporting non-commercial bus services has been deleted. More emphasis has been placed on partnership working with bus operators and on using developer contributions to pump prime services that have the potential to become fully commercial when development is complete. The updated Bus Strategy also reflects this.

iv. Council Resolution on Air Quality

Last year the county council resolved that our Local Transport Plan (LTP) should be strengthened in its aims to reduce air pollution by more positively:

- Encouraging walking and cycling
- Restricting diesel vehicles in town centres
- Working more proactively with the city and District Councils to develop and enact Air Quality Action Plans
- Introducing low or zero emission mass transit vehicles

Annex 2 sets out in more detail how the LTP has been updated to reflect this.

## New Rail Strategy

6. The new Rail Strategy updates the Council's 2012 document and takes account of recent developments such as the Hendy Review of Network Rail's investment programme and the latest position on important projects such as electrification and East West Rail. It seeks opportunities to align rail industry

plans with Oxfordshire's growth areas and our strategic rail priorities which include:

- (a) Supporting the East West Rail Consortium and Network Rail in the design and delivery of East West Rail Phase 2, with Phase 1 now almost complete
- (b) Promotion of a major upgrade to Oxford station, including additional platforms, through lines, new station building and transport interchange
- (c) Development of the next stage of upgrades to Didcot Parkway, including new multi-storey car park, northern entrance and new station building
- (d) Opening of the Cowley rail line to passenger services, with new stations serving the Oxford Science and Business parks
- (e) Developing a business case for increased freight and passenger capacity between Didcot and Oxford
- (f) Development of a business case for a new rail service linking Bristol and Swindon to Oxford and beyond, including a proposed new station in the Grove/Wantage area
- (g) Supporting provision of enhanced and direct rail services from Oxfordshire to Heathrow Airport
- (h) Supporting, through a consortium approach with partner authorities and LEPs, further capacity and service enhancements on the Cotswold Line, including upgrades to stations, bus and cycle connections
- (i) Better Integration of rail and strategic bus/rapid transit networks

## **New Active & Healthy Travel Strategy**

7. The new Active and Healthy Travel Strategy, developed alongside Public Health, builds on the previous cycling strategy by including walking and door-to-door travel, i.e. the use of walking and cycling to access bus and rail services, as an alternative to car travel for longer journeys. It emphasises the health benefits of these modes, both in terms of fitness and air quality. This comprehensive strategy also directly addresses the Council resolution on Air Quality. A Working Group of relevant stakeholders is being set up to oversee the development and implementation of the Strategy.

## **New A40 and updated A420 Route Strategies**

8. The new A40 and updated A420 Route Strategies provide more detail on options for these two important corridors.
9. The A40 Strategy sets out short term measures including bus priority, park & ride and junction improvements. These have an estimated cost of £36.2m, with £35m of provisional Local Growth Funding. Consultation is planned for next winter with construction beginning in summer 2018 and scheme opening in autumn 2020. A longer term strategy has been developed following public consultation, which was approved by Cabinet in May; the focus of which is on improving travel time and reliability, supporting growth and environmental objectives. The Cabinet report is available on the county council's website.

10. The A420 Strategy sets out short to medium term schemes, including junction improvements aimed at maintaining the role of the A420 as a major through traffic and bus route, with better access to/from nearby towns for motorists and for pedestrians and cyclists wanting access to the bus route.

### **Updated Oxford Transport Strategy**

11. There has been significant progress and changes made to the Oxford Strategy, including:
  - (a) A stronger emphasis on expediting work on the workplace parking levy to reflect the recent all-party position on the Budget.
  - (b) Studies have been completed for Park & Ride and the Botley, Banbury and Woodstock Road corridors and the strategy has been updated in line with these. These studies are available on the county council's website.
  - (c) Integrating work with spatial options planning being led by the Oxfordshire Growth Board, including the new Oxford Local Plan which Oxford City Council is now working on.
  - (d) Strengthened parking policies in response to some development control issues that have arisen in the last six months.

### **Amendments to Other Area Strategies**

12. These have all been updated, to reflect evolving Local Plans and progress on scheme development/implementation.
13. **In Bicester**, the strategy has been updated to reflect the latest position on the strategic network for the town, and the significant new emphasis on cycling, in line with the District Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy for Bicester.
14. **In Science Vale** the following changes are significant:
  - (a) Didcot will become a Garden Town and a second Enterprise Zone, which is anticipated to provide funding to help with the delivery of housing, high-tech jobs and transport infrastructure. Officers will work with the District Councils on schemes that come out of this i.e. Green Corridors.
  - (b) The potential need to safeguard land for additional transport schemes, should significant development come forward, possibly beyond the plan period - for example new north facing slips linking Milton Park directly to the A34 or a Marcham bypass, which may be required to help mitigate Marcham's Air Quality Management Area. Work will take place with District Councils through the local plan process to progress this.
  - (c) Further consideration has been given to the requirement for complementary schemes to increase capacity linked to the Culham river crossing scheme e.g. capacity improvements on the B4015.

## Financial and Staff Implications

15. Capital scheme proposals in the Plan will create future capital commitments, albeit that these will be subject to funding being available from Government and other sources. Capital commitments would also lead to revenue budget pressures and when developing projects/schemes for approval, their full costs including revenue funding required to support them will need to be made explicit as part of business case submissions.
16. Some changes to the Plan have been made to reduce the commitment of the Council to revenue funded interventions, to ensure that the Council does not overcommit resources and manages expectations on what it can afford in the increasingly challenging financial climate. Progress of proposals will be dependent on the availability of funding and form part of the annual service & resource planning process.
17. Resource implications would also be associated with progressing the proposal for Clean Air Zones across Oxfordshire, but the details of this cannot be quantified without more evidence and further study work.

## Equalities Implications

18. A Service & Community Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of LTP4 which was published in 2015 and is available on the council's website. Whilst this did not raise any significant concerns, it referred to the need for more bespoke assessments of individual programmes and proposals. There are no further equalities implications identified at this time.

## RECOMMENDATION

19. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - (a) **approve the Connecting Oxfordshire update, and to RECOMMEND it for adoption by Full Council at its meeting in July 2016; and**
  - (b) **note the contents of Annex 2 and to instruct officers to undertake work to progress proposals for Clean Air Zones in parallel with proposals for an Oxford city centre zero-emission zone**

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Director for Environment & Economy

Background papers: Updated LTP4 Document. This is available on the City Council's website for the meeting and is available in paper format in the Members Resource Room and for Cabinet Members.

Annexes:                   Annex 1: Summary of changes to LTP4  
                                  Annex 2: Air Quality overview

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