

Divisions Affected – Witney South & Central, Witney North & East, Witney West & Bampton, Hanborough & Minster Lovell, Eynsham, Burford & Carterton North.

**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT
23 MARCH 2023**

WITNEY LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

Report by Corporate Director of Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is **RECOMMENDED** to approve the Witney Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Executive Summary

2. A strategic Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan has been produced for Witney (see **Annex A**) in order to fulfil the County Council's adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) Policy 3a, which states that the County Council will "*[develop] Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for all main urban settlements (over 10,000 inhabitants) across the county by 2025, according to national guidance and best practice with the aim of increasing walking and cycling activity.*"
3. The LCWIP identifies a network of walking and cycling routes in and around Witney (including potential future routes) and sets out high level proposals for improvements to the walking and cycling infrastructure which makes up this network. These infrastructure improvements are intended for development over a ten year period to 2033 and will help to enable modal shift from private vehicle use to active and sustainable modes of travel.
4. Adopting the Witney LCWIP will help to provide local policy backing to maximise the County Council's ability to secure funding for development and delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure in the Witney area. Funding is likely to come from central government and through planning obligations from development sites within Witney and the surrounding villages.

Introduction

5. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks, ideally over a 10 year period, and form a vital part of the Government's strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle.
6. The Witney Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is the first LCWIP plan for the West Oxfordshire district area to be developed. Central Government are encouraging Local Authorities to adopt LCWIPs to assist in:
 - (a) demonstrating a prioritised list of active travel infrastructure schemes for an area
 - (b) demonstrating where funding is required, and the benefits investment will bring
 - (c) meeting targets to increase active travel which may also benefit health inequalities, air quality and climate change objectives
 - (d) guide developers and developer funding to invest in active travel measures.

Local Policy

7. Production of the Witney plan delivers Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Policy 3, which states:

We will:

- (a) Develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for all main urban settlements (over 10,000 inhabitants) across the county by 2025, according to national guidance and best practice with the aim of increasing walking and cycling activity.
 - (b) Implement local cycling and walking networks in line with LCWIP proposals as funding opportunities arise to achieve a step change in the use of cycling and walking in line with local and national targets.
 - (c) Support rural areas and smaller settlements to develop their own walking and cycling plans.
8. The approved LCWIP will inform the forthcoming Witney Area Travel Plan, as one of the area travel plans being developed to show how LTCP policy is to be delivered at the local level.
 9. Once schemes in the LCWIP begin being delivered this will contribute to the following LTCP targets:

By 2030 our targets are to:

 - Replace or remove 1 out of every 4 current car trips in Oxfordshire
 - Increase the number of cycle trips in Oxfordshire from 600,000 to 1 million cycle trips per week
 - Reduce road fatalities or life changing injuries by 50%

By 2040 our targets are to:

- Deliver a net-zero transport network
- Replace or remove an additional 1 out of 3 car trips in Oxfordshire

By 2050 our targets are to:

- Deliver a transport network that contributes to a climate positive future
- Have zero, or as close as possible, road fatalities or life-changing injuries.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

10. Of the 9 priorities in the Oxfordshire Strategic Plan 2022-2025 the LCWIP directly supports priority 5 and contributes to priorities 1, 2, 3, 6, 7. The 9 priorities are:
 1. Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
 2. Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.
 3. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.
 4. Support carers and the social care system.
 5. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.
 6. Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces.
 7. Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.
 8. Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy.
 9. Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.

Financial Implications

11. The LCWIP will help the County Council to negotiate with developers for funding and direct delivery of infrastructure for active travel. It will also help with preparation of bids for government funding, as demonstrated by the recent Active Travel Fund bid processes.
12. Development of any new schemes proposed in the LCWIP (except those to be directly delivered by developers) will need to be considered through the County Council's capital programme governance and budget setting process as funding becomes available.
13. Any new cycling and walking infrastructure will have revenue implications due to pressures on staff resources, which will be either funded within current base budgets or bid for through Active Travel Fund (or similar) bids. Ongoing maintenance for each scheme would be identified during the early stages of that scheme. Where possible, commuted sums to fund ongoing maintenance of new infrastructure related to new developments would also be identified and secured to minimise the revenue impact of the new infrastructure. Any revenue pressure after this would be considered as part of the Council's Budget Strategy process.

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Legal Implications

14. The LCWIP is a requirement of the County Council's adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which is a statutory document, required under the Transport Act 2000. Delivering the LCWIP is likely to require the County Council to exercise its powers to make traffic orders to regulate traffic in the Witney area. The appropriate statutory consultation will take place as and when any orders are promoted, together with compliance with any relevant statutory duty applicable at the time.

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Staff Implications

15. Individual schemes within the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will require development and delivery which will only take place once capital funding is awarded. Staff funded via the annual revenue budgets will be involved in progressing funding bids and staffing implications for scheme development and delivery will be included in the capital bid/award.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

16. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is available in **Annex B**.
17. Development and implementation of LCWIPs for all the main urban settlements in Oxfordshire (LTCP Policy 3a) is one of Oxfordshire County Council's commitments to move towards the vision set out in the LTCP for "*an inclusive and safe net-zero Oxfordshire transport system that enables all parts of the county to thrive*".¹
18. Whilst no negative equalities impacts have been identified which could arise as a direct result of approving the Witney LCWIP, there is a significant opportunity to tackle inequality.

¹ Oxfordshire County Council, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, July 2022, p5, available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf>

19. Investment in cycling and walking measures improves travel choice and encourages active, healthy lifestyles. Once implemented, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will make a positive contribution to improving connectivity throughout the Witney area by improving access to cycling and walking infrastructure for all socio-economic groups and those with protected characteristics. Having the right infrastructure for cycling and walking in the right places, will enable greater take up of active travel and could help to reduce inequalities in health. Improved cycle and walking routes will help accessibility between the more deprived areas in Witney and the rest of the town.
20. All individual highways schemes may result in unintended negative equalities impacts. This risk will be considered in detail on a scheme-by-scheme basis (using scheme-specific EIAs as appropriate) when the individual schemes promoted in the LCWIP are developed.

Sustainability Implications

21. Development and implementation of LCWIPs for all the main urban settlements in Oxfordshire (LTCP Policy 3a) is one of Oxfordshire County Council's commitments to move towards the vision set out in the LTCP for "an inclusive and safe net-zero Oxfordshire transport system that enables all parts of the county to thrive".
22. A Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) is available in **Annex C**. The CIA for the plan is overwhelmingly positive, recognising the significant potential for improvements across the following climate impact categories:
 - a) Transport and Connectivity (by supporting a shift to active travel)
 - b) Buildings (by promoting sustainable development)
 - c) Procurement and Investment (by investing in climate action)
 - d) People and Organization (by driving behaviour change with enabling infrastructure)
 - e) Just Transition (by promoting health and wellbeing through active travel, promoting engagement and coproduction, and reducing inequality).

Risk Management

23. No significant risks have been identified which will arise as a direct result of approving the LCWIP.
24. Risks of negative side effects associated with individual schemes which are promoted in the LCWIP may arise in future as and when those schemes are funded and progressed.
25. These scheme-specific risks will be identified in the relevant scheme's risk register during the early stages of that scheme's development, in order to ensure that an informed decision can be made on each scheme.

26. There are several risks associated with a decision not to approve the LCWIP:
- (a) Risk of failure to achieve the goal set out in LTCP Policy 3a due both to the resulting delay to the Witney LCWIP programme and to the potential knock-on delays to the development of other LCWIPs
 - (b) Risk of failure to secure future funding for active travel infrastructure in the Witney area from central government (due to the Department for Transport and Active Travel England's stated preferences for funding schemes which are identified in LCWIPs)
 - (c) Risk of failure to secure adequate provision of active travel infrastructure from local developments (for which the LCWIP provides additional local policy backing), notably including the nearby local plan allocations at:
 - (1) East Witney Strategic Development Area (450 dwellings allocated in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031²)
 - (2) North Witney Strategic Development Area (1400 dwellings allocated in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031³).

Consultation and Engagement

27. The Witney LCWIP was developed with the guidance of a Steering Group which was formed from Local councillors from County, District and Town councils, local interest groups in walking and cycling, and key local stakeholder organisations.
28. The role of the steering group was to:
- (a) Work with OCC officers with the tasks and stages of developing the Witney LCWIP, including reviewing completed tasks and provide refinement where necessary throughout the development of the LCWIP
 - (b) Provide local and/or specialist knowledge in the development of the Witney LCWIP
 - (c) Consider, and represent, the needs of all walking and cycling users in development of the Witney LCWIP.
29. The Draft Witney Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan was consulted on from 5th December 2022 to 20th January 2023. A consultation report is available in **Annex D**.
30. A total of 67 people completed the online questionnaire and a further 9 responded in writing (by email), these were mainly from organisations.
31. Of those who completed the questionnaire 56% thought the proposed cycling improvements were 'ambitious' or 'adequate' and 64% thought the proposed walking improvements were 'ambitious' or 'adequate'.
32. The plan is supported by West Oxfordshire District Council, welcomed by Witney Town Council, and Windrush Bike Project is 'delighted' Witney will have

² <https://westoxon.gov.uk/media/fejmpen/local-plan.pdf>

³ <https://westoxon.gov.uk/media/fejmpen/local-plan.pdf>

an LCWIP. The North Witney Strategic Development Area Consortium is in agreement with an approach that seeks to prioritise sustainable modes and in this regard is in approval to the vision and general approach as put forward within the LCWIP.

33. A number of detailed comments were received. The Witney LCWIP Consultation Report (Annex D) responds to many of these and the LCWIP has been amended, where possible, to reflect the comments received to ensure the LCWIP meets the needs of local residents. The changes include an update to the Vision, clarity over a number of proposals, and changes to the figures where proposals were incorrectly shown.
34. A further set of suggestions has been taken on board for consideration through the LCWIP review process and these are listed in the LCWIP. These are suggestions which require substantial further investigation and auditing before inclusion in the LCWIP list of prioritised improvements.

Bill Cotton
Corporate Director of Environment and Place

Annex: Annex A. Witney LCWIP
 Annex B. Equalities Impact Assessment
 Annex C. Climate Impact Assessment
 Annex D. Witney LCWIP Consultation Report

Background papers: Nil

Other Documents: Nil

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March 2023