11. Public Transport

Objective 8 – To develop and increase the use of high quality, welcoming public transport

Oxfordshire has a successful public transport model, particularly for journeys into the centre of Oxford. Our core objective is to extend this model outwards to other parts of Oxfordshire, including new developments to provide the whole county with a real choice of attractive, frequent and welcoming public transport.

Policies

Policy PT1 **Oxfordshire County Council will define a three-tier hierarchy of services, consisting of:**

* ***Premium Routes* - operating at "turn up and go" frequencies;**
* ***Hourly Plus* - operating at frequencies of at least once an hour during weekdays; and**
* ***Local* - to help meet local accessibility needs.**

Policy PT2 **Oxfordshire County Council will help create the conditions for welcoming, effective and successful commercial bus services by working with operators and other partners to:**

i. **improve the reliability of bus services and reduce journey times, especially on Premium Route services;**

ii. **publish up to date, comprehensive public transport information that is publicly available in a range of appropriate formats;**

iii. **improve ticketing arrangements to make travel easier and reduce boarding times;**

iv. **encourage the use of buses that meet standards for low emissions, particularly those passing through designated Air Quality Management Areas or Low Emission Zones;**

v. **encourage social inclusion by ensuring that services use low floor buses, have drivers that are trained in customer care and disability awareness, and that wheelchair users have access to designated spaces on vehicles.**

Policy PT3 **Oxfordshire County Council will support the development of appropriate high quality public transport interchanges and infrastructure.**

Policy PT4 **Oxfordshire County Council will support proposals for strategic enhancement of the existing Oxfordshire rail network, and will work with the rail industry to facilitate these.**

Policy PT5 **Oxfordshire County Council will work with the rail industry and other partners to deliver new or improved stations, new rail services and greater integration of rail and buses.**

Policy PT6 **Oxfordshire County Council will only support the High Speed 2 rail proposals if their local economic benefits outweigh the environmental impact on the county.**

Policy PT7 **Oxfordshire County Council will support the development of Quality Bus Partnerships and Rail Partnerships, where appropriate.**

Strategy

11.1 Our strategy for increasing public transport use includes:

* Providing infrastructure to allow attractive and reliable bus services to run across the county;
* Working with bus companies to improve the experience of bus travel;
* Encouraging the development of rail use;
* Working with district councils to ensure that taxis are available to complement public transport
* Minimising the environmental impacts of air travel on the county.

11.2 The main challenges for public transport in Oxfordshire are considered to be:

* Meeting public expectations for increased quality and a

more welcoming service, including better ticketing systems;

* Encouraging and enabling more people to choose public transport for those journeys for which it provides an attractive alternative, to enable economic growth and reduce congestion and other environmental problems;
* Traffic congestion and road works impacting on service reliability and efficiency;
* New population, services and jobs located away from traditional bus routes;
* Reducing the air pollution and other environmental impacts of buses whilst maintaining accessibility;
* Reducing the time buses spend at bus stops, particularly in town centres; and
* Ensuring a high quality experience at all stages of a bus journey, including finding out about it, getting to the stop and waiting for the bus as well as the on-bus journey itself.

Buses

11.3 Oxfordshire County Council will help to ensure commercial viability of bus services by developing a programme which is specifically related to buses, such as:

* Tackling congestion and delay points along the major bus routes, ensuring that buses can operate reliably and at a commercially attractive speed.
* Effective penetration of bus services as close as possible to the heart of journey attractors such as town centres, employment areas and hospitals, with conveniently located bus stops located.
* Good facilities at stops, incorporating effective information and a safe waiting area for bus passengers, and well-signposted high quality walking routes to and from them.
* Good information to help people find out about the network of services available, and how to find them and use them.

Bus Service Hierarchy

11.4 At the top of the county's hierarchy of services are the Premium Routes. These are services running at "turn up and go" frequencies (i.e services with a maximum headway between services of about 12 minutes) throughout the daytime on

Mondays to Saturdays, and at least hourly in the evenings and on Sundays. They link the major existing and proposed areas of housing and employment across the county. They will have a high level of bus priority, including in some cases, segregated routes for buses, to protect them from congestion and delay. They will have a high standard of passenger facilities at bus stops and interchanges, often including real time information. As a result of this, Oxfordshire County Council expects that such services will, after any initial "pump-priming" funding, be able to operate without subsidy and be run using high quality, easy access, low emission vehicles with high levels of driver training and modern ticketing systems.

11.5 Premium Route bus services cover the main corridors, where most passenger trips are made and where they can make the greatest potential contribution to the reduction in private car use and traffic congestion. They are mainly concentrated in and between Oxford and larger towns but will also, where possible, serve major employment, service/retail and residential areas elsewhere.

11.6 The second level in the hierarchy is *Hourly+* services. These serve lower density corridors which nevertheless have significant potential flows of passengers; including all smaller towns and many remaining rural areas. Hourly bus services generally operate between 7am and 7pm on Mondays to Saturdays. In making decisions on funding consideration will always be given to whether the funds can best be used to increase an extra service to hourly frequency, rather than increase frequency on existing hourly service above hourly. However, where usage of an hourly service appears to justify a further increase in frequency then funding will be considered for a service running at regular 20 or 30 minute intervals, at least on an experimental basis.

11.7 The final tier in the hierarchy is local services. These ensure essential links from more remote areas. They are provided in a variety of ways, as appropriate for local circumstances. These local services are considered more fully in Chapter 6 on Improving Accessibility.

Bus Infrastructure

11.8 The provision of high-quality infrastructure is fundamentally important to the successful operation of bus and coach services in Oxfordshire. Reliable and welcoming public transport services

can only be operated through an arrangement where vehicles operate congestion-free and arrive at high-quality stops where users can wait in comfort knowing their service will arrive on time.

11.9 The Premium Routes concept - A strategy of investment in a network of high-frequency, commercially self-sustaining bus routes, was adopted by Oxfordshire County Council in 2003. Since then, there has been considerable capital investment in measures to assist buses in congested areas, in improved conditions at bus stops and in an electronic real-time information system.

11.10 Park & Ride - The Oxford Park & Ride sites were primarily provided to reduce the amount of general traffic approaching Oxford city centre, and to provide real environmental benefits in sensitive city centre streets. Over time, this principle has been extended, to provide an edge-of-urban area facility for the main hospitals, reducing the amount of car traffic through the Headington and Marston areas. Increasing demand for parking spaces at Oxford's Park & Ride sites has resulted in a commitment to increase the number of available spaces, especially at Thornhill, where there are plans to increase the capacity by around 500 spaces by 2012.

11.11 There is an existing policy to develop a ring of 'remote' Park & Ride sites, further from Oxford along the A34 (north) corridor towards Bicester, along the A34 (south) corridor towards Abingdon/Milton and along the A40 (west) corridor towards Witney/Carterton. This concept has proved successful at some locations in Scotland, where a well-located site adjacent to a high-frequency commercial bus corridor can provide a cost-effective transfer point from car to bus. Some progress has been made in securing a site adjacent to the South West Bicester development and a study has looked at possible locations in West Oxfordshire. Viability would depend on many factors, such as the availability and cost of parking spaces, and the scope for bus priority measures.

11.12 At all Park & Ride sites our long term ambition is to have a high level of security and attractive terminal buildings with waiting and, possibly, ancillary facilities, easy access for drivers to the road network, and good design of walking routes from parking to bus stop areas.

11.13 Interchanges - Apart from the Park & Ride sites, Oxfordshire does not have many other purpose-built interchanges. Currently in

Oxford, most bus services leave from many different parts of the city centre and for some interchange journeys a substantial walk is required from one bus to another. The exception is that some country services leave from Gloucester Green, although this bus station is primarily used by long distance coaches and services to London and the airports.

11.14 Significant efforts have been made, as part of the *Transform Oxford* project and other initiatives, to improve signage and wayfinding information. Aspirations to enhance the pedestrian experience in Oxford city centre mean that key bus stops will naturally be clustered in hubs around the edges of the commercial centre. To improve interchange bus routes may need to be extended and turning facilities provided to reduce the requirement to walk extended distances between services, although this is difficulty in the highly constrained city centre.

11.15 Banbury rail station is located relatively close to the town centre, bus station and the Bridge Street bus 'hub', but there is significant severance by major roads between them. The Canalside development should deliver better integration between bus and rail by providing bus stops nearer to the station and by safeguarding a route for a busway from the station towards the Bankside area.

11.16 Bicester's Bure Place bus station will soon be replaced by a series of bus stops along Manorsfield Road. While these will be adjacent to the new retail area, the arrangement of stops on one side of the road may prove problematic for the routeing of through services. Significant new developments within the Bicester area are expected to generate demand for large numbers of additional buses, so some further modification to bus arrangements can be expected in the future.

11.17 Buses penetrate into central retail areas of other towns, and interchange 'hubs' generally allow connections from one route to another. There are real physical constraints on the capacity of these areas, so operators and planners need to take account of the actual number of bus stops available when planning timetables and layovers.

11.18 Oxford rail station provides a terminal, or hub, for some bus services, and it is proposed that a similar quantity of buses will serve the redesigned station forecourt area. It is intended that services from here will link to as many parts of the city and significant destinations beyond as possible within the physical

constraints of the site.

11.19 The integration of rail and bus services is important at Oxford and Didcot stations, and at both, there are current projects to improve the quality of the physical infrastructure and to make it easier for public transport users to transfer from one mode to another. At other stations, the scale of the interchange arrangements are more modest, but at the minimum, there should be the equivalent of an integrated Premium Routes flag, pole and information case unit, with directional signing as appropriate.

11.20 Coach facilities – Oxford is a hub for express coach services, with the A40/M40 corridor towards London and the airports supporting coach services which are among the most frequent in Europe. New dedicated coach stops are being provided near Brookes University and Headington shops, to reduce incidences of congestion and delays caused by coaches stopping for passengers. There is much less scope for making similar improvements in the city centre and in St Clements. The numbers of people using Thornhill to access these coach services has caused this Park & Ride site to fill up very early, on a daily basis, so the plans for an expanded Thornhill will include measures to manage this demand.

11.21 While Oxfordshire has some terminal facilities for scheduled coaches, there is a problem with accommodating the many 'tourist' coaches which bring visitors to Oxford. Planned city centre developments will place further pressure on the space available to accommodate visiting coaches, so a strategy is being developed to allocate some 'remote' spaces for layover purposes, along with recognised set-down and pick-up points on the edge of the city centre.

11.22 Beyond the Premium Routes - Beyond the 1,400 stops expected to be equipped with Premium Route standard pole and flag units, there are about 2,400 other bus stops around Oxfordshire and, although the majority of these stops now have a timetable information case, many do not have any hard-standing area or a suitable surface for disabled, frail and elderly passengers to board or alight from buses. These bus stops need to be assessed for low-cost improvements to access arrangements, including the provision of clearways where appropriate, preferably on a whole-route basis, starting with the hourly routes.

11.23 Significant new developments are planned in some parts of

Oxfordshire, so a limited number of routes will require appropriate bus stop infrastructure, and eventual inclusion in the Premium Route bus network map. For the Bicester eco-town, this infrastructure could take the form of a high-frequency busway, with high quality intermediate stops. In the Science Vale UK area future bus service levels may be less frequent but Premium Route standards of infrastructure should be considered, along with limited sections of segregated busway.

Information

11.24 Oxfordshire County Council's first Transport Information Strategy for Bus Services was published in January 2003. This strategy was reviewed and revised in 2006, and will be subject to further amendment in 2011. The strategy clarifies responsibility for the provision of information and who should meet the costs. Oxfordshire County Council generally provides bus stiop infrastructure, which includes the pole, bus stop flag and timetable case. Operators are expected to meet the cost of providing information relating to their own services.

11.25 Oxfordshire's Real Time Information is amongst the best-performing systems in the UK, primarily because the partners have focused on achieving quality, in terms of proportion of buses accurately predicted at stops. The Oxfordshire RTI system performs well because, unlike with many systems, the bus operators in Oxfordshire have themselves invested in the on-bus computers and so they have a vested interest in the performance of the system. Building on this, the issues which face the system include whether the geographic coverage should be extended or whether the functionality of the system should be developed.

11.26 The technology of electronic communications is rapidly changing, and it is difficult to predict the lifespan or the take-up of new devices. The basic system output, of predicted times of next buses at stops, can be displayed in various ways, on a variety of media. Work is proceeding on a project to re-design the *'Oxontime'* website, to make the information more accessible to a wider range of users. A new type of solar-energy sign will soon be delivered to a few locations for testing. This type of sign can also display other types of information, such as fares and upcoming disruptions.

Ticketing

11.27 Attractiveness to passengers is recognised as important throughout the county. Speeding up boarding is a particular issue on the more frequent and heavily used services, especially those serving more congested locations. There is also a particular issue of dwell times at stops in Oxford city centre and other town centres and focal points, which improved ticketing systems could do much to help. Bus priority and other measures to speed up buses need to be complemented by ticketing systems which contribute to the same objectives. The development of off-bus ticketing is supported, as a means of reducing bus journey times, and also providing public transport users with a range of travel options. Long dwell times for on-bus ticket sales can also erode any time savings gained from increased bus priority.

11.28 Oxfordshire County Council will encourage operators jointly to develop improved ticketing schemes which on a commercial basis to address the current shortcomings. It is recognised that schemes which address all of these shortcomings are unlikely to be practicable save at prohibitive cost and with a high risk of serious difficulty and delay in implementation due to "over-complication".

Commercial Services

11.29 Although Oxfordshire County Council has no control over the commercial services that bus operators choose to run without subsidy there are a number of levers which it can use to influence services.

11.30 *Quality partnerships* - Partnerships with bus operators will have an essential role in delivering service improvements. Bus operators share with Oxfordshire County Council the common goal of increasing the number of passengers and improving punctuality. When investing in infrastructure to benefit buses, Oxfordshire County Council needs to be assured that the infrastructure will be used in a way which benefits passengers and minimises impact on the environment. When investing in new vehicles, improved training and enhanced services, the bus operator needs to be assured that they will be able to use them in an efficient and cost effective way to produce a return on the investment. Partnerships will be developed which give all parties confidence to develop services in an efficient and co-ordinated way.

11.31 *Quality contracts* - land use and transportation policies pursued over many years have generally created conditions in which commercial bus services can thrive on the main corridors. Bus companies in Oxfordshire have responded to this opportunity by providing attractive, well marketed and high quality services which have been successful in attracting significant numbers of passengers and achieving a high modal split in favour of buses. Formal and informal partnership arrangements have contributed to these successes and to minimising the impact of the high levels of bus service on other road users and the environment.

11.32 Oxfordshire County Council plans to build upon this success through further developing Partnerships, within the commercial bus operating environment. However, our transport policies rely heavily upon provision of effective bus services. We greatly value the willingness which existing operators have shown in developing services, but recognise that such attitudes could change. An operator of commercial services who is unwilling either to develop the services himself or co-operate with us in the development of services, could frustrate and prevent satisfactory development of the Premium Routes network or the network of hourly services.

11.33 Whilst Oxfordshire County Council views Quality Contracts as a last resort, we may therefore consider seeking powers to introduce a Quality Contract on any corridor, or throughout any area of the county where commercial services exist, and the operator has neither effectively managed the frequency of the services on their own initiative within the last 5 years nor been willing to enter into a Partnership or to co-operate with us in managing the services appropriately at reasonable extra subsidy cost.

11.34 The County Council is working in Partnership with the City's two main bus operators, Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach Oxford, to develop a Bus Qualifying Agreement for the specification and operation of city centre bus services (focusing on the four main radial routes into the city). This agreement, which has been agreed in principle, would cover services from Kidlington to Oxford (along Banbury Road); Barton to Oxford (London Road) Blackbird Leys to Oxford (Cowley Road) and Rose Hill to Oxford (Iffley Road).

11.35 The aim of the Agreement is to bring bus user and environmental benefits to Oxford, by securing a service pattern between operators on these routes, which would include a substantial

reduction in the number of buses operating on them. It would also see the introduction of shared ticketing across the Oxford zone (allowing passengers to use either operator regardless of which one sold them the ticket), with new smartcard ticketing technology also to be introduced. The agreement also includes the replacement of buses used on these services by new vehicles meeting Euro V emissions standards, including a large fleet of hybrid buses, which will also support the Low Emission Zone proposed for the city. The Qualifying agreement is expected to become finalized and operational in the Autumn of 2010, and is predicted to lead to a 10% overall reduction in city centre bus numbers, with a 17% reduction on the busiest corridor (High Street) and a 30% reduction in Queen Street (which would further enhance the recent pedestrian improvement scheme).

11.36 The County Council will also be investigating whether there are other opportunities to use this sort of agreement to bring about benefits to bus operation elsewhere in Oxfordshire.

Other bus services

11.37 In addition to this hierarchy of scheduled bus services available to the general public, there are a number of specialised services designed particularly to meet the needs of particular groups.

11.38 The most numerous of these are services to take young people to school. Oxfordshire County Council provides many bespoke services for those living over three miles from state-maintained schools, which (by law) are available free to those users. These run only during school terms, have an inward journey too early for shoppers whilst the outward journey is too early for returning workers - they are thus rarely attractive to non-school travellers and are run largely as an independent network not available to the general public. Some independent schools also provide bespoke services for their own students. Higher and further education establishments provide a range of services; some of these – notably the *Brookesbus* network provided by Oxford Brookes University and the bus service funded by Abingdon & Witney College to link its two sites – run also as scheduled local bus services which contribute to the local network.

11.39 Some major employment sites fund bus services to serve their sites, notably Harwell Science & Innovation Campus and Oxford Science Park. These are generally combined with local bus services. Some retail sites, such as some Tesco Extra stores and

the Tuesday market at Moreton-in-Marsh, also fund bespoke shoppers' services to their sites; these generally run free to users and as such are not registered as local bus services and are completely separate from the local bus network. Oxfordshire County Council expects the operators of such sites to ensure that they are accessible by public transport without funding from the council but, where they might be conveniently combined with a local bus service which is also useful for other journeys, will consider joint funding arrangements.

Rail

11.40 Oxfordshire is strategically located on the national rail network. There are four principal corridors: the Great Western Main Line from Paddington to Bristol and South Wales, the Chiltern Line from Marylebone to Birmingham, the north-south line from the south coast to Birmingham and the Cotswold Line heading west from Oxford to Worcester and Hereford. There are also branch lines to Bicester (from Oxford) and Henley-on-Thames (from Twyford).

Current Situation

11.41 Rail services are an important element in the provision of local transport. Almost all rail services operate under contract to the government. The Department for Transport decides what train services are operated on each line and the allocation of rolling stock, and awards franchises to the private companies who operate the services in accordance with the franchise specification. The specification includes details of the number of trains to be operated at specific times of the day and days of the week, the maximum journey time and station stopping patterns. Oxfordshire County Council has limited but clear opportunities to work with the rail industry to influence rail use to, from and within Oxfordshire.

11.42 All infrastructure (stations, track, bridges, tunnels and signalling) is owned, operated and maintained by Network Rail. There are 22 stations in the county, 20 of these are leased to the Greater Western franchise and two are leased to the Chiltern franchise. The station operator manages the day-to-day running of the station, customer care, cleaning and routine maintenance. The stations range from regional hubs, such as Oxford, to small unstaffed halts, such as Combe and Appleford.

11.43 Oxfordshire's railways cope with a diverse mix of local passenger

services and longer distance freight and passenger trains, and most lines are currently operating between 70% and 90% of their capacity as more trains are being provided on the same infrastructure to meet the demand for travel.

Future demand

11.44 The Department for Transport forecast in May 2007 that peak arrivals into Reading will increase by 31 per cent by 2026 and growth on long distance high speed services from Bristol to London (which serve Didcot Parkway) will exceed seating capacity by as much as 18 percent. The draft *Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy* (September 2009) also indicated growth of up to 42 percent in arrivals at London Paddington by 2019. It is evident that the railway is increasingly popular and that various interventions will be needed to achieve a reliable railway with adequate capacity to support housing and economic growth in Oxfordshire.

Rail freight

11.45 Significant volumes of freight pass through the county to and from elsewhere in the country. The route between the Port of Southampton and the Midlands and North of England is the key route for deep sea container services and carries a significant volume of freight traffic. A £70 million project to improve structure clearances is underway so higher sided containers can be transported by train instead of lorry.

11.46 Although inter-modal container traffic accounts for the majority of freight activity on the county's railways various other commodities are also conveyed. Aggregates for the construction industry are transported from the Mendips to various distribution sites in the London area and also to Oxford (Banbury Road). Didcot Power station currently receives frequent trains of imported coal from Avonmouth Docks each day. Didcot is also a key hub for the Ministry of Defence and trains from there serve various supply and ordnance depots in southern England, including one of the largest depots at Bicester. The Cowley BMW plant in Oxford uses rail to transport completed Mini cars to Purfleet Docks for export abroad, and household waste is carried by train through the county to landfill sites at Appleford (from west London) and Calvert in Buckinghamshire (from Bath and Bristol). Network Rail has a materials supply depot at Hinksey near Oxford supplying.

Future Challenges

11.47 The rail network in Oxfordshire faces a number of challenges over the course of the Local Transport Plan, including:

* Road congestion
* Rail freight growth including deep sea container traffic for which there are gauge clearance issues
* Climate change
* Housing development and population growth
* Economic growth and maximising benefit, especially for Science Vale UK and Central Oxfordshire sub-region
* Improved transport links with adjoining regional and sub-regional centres
* Importance of international gateways
* Network capacity (track and train) including consideration of long distance high speed vs. local stopping services
* Sustaining desirable level of train service all day (encouraging off-peak use)
* Journey time/frequency aspirations
* Getting to the station – walking, cycling, bus, taxi, car
* Interchange between public transport (facilities, timetabling, ticketing)
* Improving accessibility for disabled people

Rail Initiatives

11.48 The delivery of rail initiatives involves a wide range of stakeholders and timescales for developing and implementing schemes and measures. We will need to be flexible in the future so that we can grasp opportunities as they arise in franchise agreements and rail-industry planning. These will include, but not necessarily be limited to:

* Improving regional and inter-regional rail links - Oxfordshire County Council will continue to support, and where appropriate will promote, proposals for new rail services that increase accessibility to the rail network for existing and potential passengers.
* Supporting improved rail links to international gateways - The prosperity of the Science Vale UK and the Oxfordshire economy as a whole could be improved with better rail links to Heathrow and Gatwick served by direct trains to make Oxfordshire internationally accessible.
* New stations and services to serve growth areas, such as

Science Vale UK - Conventional rail, such as tram-train, should be considered as a means of improving connectivity with major growth areas. The potential of new services and changes to existing services needs to be investigated at Didcot and Grove & Wantage.

* Better access for disabled people - When funding work at railway stations, we will take account of the Code of Practice on accessible trains and stations wherever possible.
* Improve and expand station car parking - A review of car parking is required at all stations, possibly as part of the station travel plan initiative. Where investment is made to improve provision the opportunity exists to secure an ongoing revenue income for Oxfordshire County Council from parking charges.
* Station interchanges - The larger stations in Oxfordshire serve important town and city centres and serve as a railhead for a wider hinterland. The provision of high quality interchange between rail and other transport modes is a crucial part of encouraging people to use sustainable modes of travel for their journeys.

11.49 Many of the actions which Oxfordshire County Council is intending to carry out to meet other objectives could also help to promote greater use of the railways. These include:

* Cycle access and parking - Cycle routes to the station need to be planned and implemented to provide a fast and safe means of getting to the station from towns and villages and the Sustrans National Cycle Network.
* Pedestrian access – the routes for walking to and from railway stations needs to be considered and where appropriate improved, including the need to provide for disabled access.
* Station Travel Plans - A station travel plan is a strategy for managing the travel generated by a station, with the aim of reducing its environmental impact. This typically involves the promotion of sustainable modes of travel (such as walking, cycling, public transport, car clubs and car sharing) as alternatives to single occupancy car use.
* Bus and train information - In 2008, Oxfordshire County Council introduced local transport information posters at rail stations along the Cotswold Line and having collected valuable feedback has since rolled them out to every station in Oxfordshire. The continued provision of this information is important in promoting services.

* Through ticketing - There are already a number of add-on tickets available at some stations. *PlusBus*, the national bus-rail ticket, has seen sales grow steadily, selling 250,000 tickets in 2008-09. It allows rail users to purchase an unlimited travel bus ticket for the start or end of their rail journey, and Oxford is one of the most successful schemes. However, notable omissions to the national network are Bicester and Didcot.
* Marketing and promotion - Oxfordshire County Council has been successful in forming effective partnerships that have increased rail use since 2002. Publicity should be produced that provides good quality rail and bus information, local community, leisure and tourist information and seeks to promote rail use, especially off-peak. New sources of funding, such as sponsorship, may need to be explored.
* Smarter choices – We will work with the rail industry to tp promote car sharing to rail stations throughout the county where this will reduce congestion.

11.50 The currently proposed route for the HS2 line from London to Birmingham crosses a small part of Oxfordshire. With no intermediate stations proposed the line offers few direct benefits to Oxfordshire, although there may be some indirect benefits if the development of this line frees up existing capacity for better local train services or freight traffic. Until more information is available on the proposals Oxfordshire County Council reserves its position and will only support them if the benefits are shown to outweigh the environmental costs to the county.