

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET – 29th NOVEMBER 2022

CENTRAL OXFORDSHIRE TRAVEL PLAN

Report by Corporate Director for Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to;**
 - a) **Approve the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan including recommended changes listed in this report.**
 - b) **Delegate the decision on the final Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan document, including graphical format, to the Corporate Director for Environment and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy.**

Executive Summary

2. Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), adopted July 2022, outlines a vision and a set of policies to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system by 2040. This document formed Part 1 of the LTCP process. Part 2 of the LTCP sets out how the Part 1 policies will be implemented in specific areas (area travel plans) and along specific transport corridors (corridor travel plans).
3. The Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan (COTP) is the first of these area travel plans to have been produced, (see annex 1). This report sets out the results of a public consultation on a draft COTP document and recommends the plans approval. In recommending approval this report also sets out a number of recommended amendments to be made to the plan following public consultation. Approval of the document would allow OCC officers and partners to develop and implement the actions outlined in the COTP.

Background

4. Since 2015, transport strategy across the wider Oxford area, has been guided by the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS). This strategy formed part of the county council's previous Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). The replacement of LTP4 with the new LTCP and its associated new targets, requires a review and replacement of the OTS.

Summary of COTP

5. Building on the policies of the adopted LTCP, the COTP sets out the transport strategy for the central Oxfordshire area (Oxford, Kidlington, Eynsham, Botley, Cumnor and Wheatley) from 2023 to 2040.
6. Working to a travel hierarchy that prioritises sustainable travel modes, the draft COTP sets out the following desired outcomes;
 - A flagship comprehensive zero emission bus network, able to travel at the speed limit 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - A comprehensive, safe, inclusive cycle network, to rival the best in Europe.
 - Beautifully designed streets and public spaces, with clean air.
 - A reduced impact of private vehicles, where roads are congestion-free for residents, visitors, and businesses to make essential journeys in zero emission vehicles.
 - Carbon neutral transport for a carbon neutral city. Prioritising measures and approaches that utilise minimal resources.
 - A travel hierarchy prioritising sustainable travel and promoting 20-minute neighbourhoods, where everything people need for their daily lives can be found within a 20-minute walk.
 - Improved safety realised through a Vision Zero approach to transport safety across the area.
 - An inclusive transport network that improves accessibility for all of our residents.
7. To deliver on these outcomes, the plan proposes an integrated package of 22 actions that are consistent with LTCP targets.

COTP consultation

8. Public consultation on the adopted Part 1 of the LTCP was undertaken between January and March 2022. A total of 1,078 responses were received through this process, which helped inform amendments to the LTCP.
9. Public consultation on the draft COTP (part 2) commenced on 22 August 2022. The consultation ran for 8 weeks closing on the 13 October 2022 and featured on the council's Let's Talk Oxfordshire webpage alongside a survey.
10. To ensure that all residents could take part in the consultation, an option was offered to request a hard copy of any documentation, return surveys by post or give comments over the phone by contacting the council's helpline. Written responses were also received by post, and via a dedicated email address.
11. A range of activities were undertaken to help promote the consultation, a summary of which is provided in annex 2.
12. The county council established a thorough and diverse stakeholder list of individuals and groups to notify of the consultation. This included all county,

district and city councillors across Oxfordshire; accessibility groups, environment groups, transport groups, business groups and resident groups.

13. The following activities were conducted for local councillors:
 - Presentation to the Oxford Locality County Councillor Group (7 September)
 - All member briefings undertaken alongside a briefing on the Oxford traffic filters proposals undertaken on 30 August and 1 September

Consultation Feedback

14. The full COTP consultation report can be found in Annex 2. In total 2,329 responses to the consultation were received.
15. 2,035 responses were received via the consultation survey (online and via post), whilst 294 responses were received by e-mail.
16. Beyond the formal responses received, the consultation was successful in raising awareness about the COTP. In total 43,000 people were reached using social media. There were also 17,300 visits to the consultation webpage. Of those 12,000 were classified as “aware” of the draft COTP as they viewed at least one page of the survey. Of the 17,300 visits to the consultation webpage, 7,700 were classified as “informed”, as they took an action such as viewing a video or downloading a document or reading the FAQs
17. There were responses from all age groups although there was a noticeable under representation from the under 16 age category.
18. Responses to the consultation were generally supportive of what was proposed in COTP however concerns were raised particularly in relation to vehicle demand management and car parking measures. Key comments received during the consultation are summarised below (in no particular order) along with a brief officer response.
 - **Support for the overall travel plan**
 - A significant number of e-mail responses were received stating overall support for the plan.
 - **Public transport needs to be cheaper, more frequent and more accessible**
 - The draft plan states an outcome for delivering an attractive public transport offer that combines all these features.
 - **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) have negatively affected accessibility and created severance in areas**
 - A number of LTN schemes have been implemented either as permanent or as an experimental trial in east Oxford. There is a separate live consultation, on those LTN's that are in a trial phase.
 - The travel plan does not propose additional LTN's for the central Oxfordshire area. It does propose that complementary traffic

measures (for example traffic calming, local traffic filters, active travel infrastructure enhancements) could be implemented as part of a wider 20-minute neighbourhood initiative.

- **The plan would compromise accessibility to essential locations and create severance between communities**
 - These concerns were raised frequently in relation to proposed traffic filter and zero emission zone measures.
 - Current traffic congestion levels mean accessibility to key destinations (hospitals, schools, employment etc) are severely compromised, especially during peak hours. Left unchecked, accessibility would further deteriorate. The plan proposes an integrated set of measures that could improve journey times and accessibility to key locations, whilst also allowing opportunities to reallocate road space for other means including community focused measures (i.e seating/ parklets).
 - COTP proposals would not result in vehicle access being removed from any part of the plan area, for some vehicle journeys, alternative routes may be required.

- **There should be greater content and priority to support walking**
 - This is accepted. The travel plan proposes that walking is at the top of the transport user hierarchy. The recommendations section of this report sets out further details on this.

- **Particular amenities (i.e schools, hospitals) should be exempted from particular schemes (i.e WPL)**
 - Exemptions from particular schemes will be considered as those schemes are developed. It is not appropriate for COTP to determine this.

- **The plan should commit to greater restrictions on large vehicles and HGV's in Oxford**
 - The plan proposes development of a safer lorry scheme similar to that implemented by TfL in London.
 - Whilst a request for restrictions on larger vehicles is understood, practical measures to deliver the servicing these vehicles currently provide needs to be carefully considered. This will include;
 - Delivering a freight transfer / consolidation feasibility study and first / last mile delivery pilot.
 - Improving accessibility to all of the wider city area for e-cargo bike use
 - Measures considering the functioning of the city's important scheduled coaches, will be considered as part of a separate City Centre Access and Movement Framework.

- **Cycling/ public transport are not viable options for all**
 - The plans 'avoid, shift and improve' approach makes clear that a 'shift' to sustainable travel is only part of the package of measures. Whilst a step reduction in overall car use is sought, it is recognised

that the use of private cars will remain vitally important in certain circumstances. The plan promotes measures (i.e. car share/ car clubs/ wider-spread EV charging) which can ensure that those who require a car can do so whilst also delivering on the plan's targets.

- **The plan is too city focussed and is not clear on the benefits for those outside of the Oxford city area**
 - The COTP is the first of a number of area travel plans and corridor travel plans that will come forward across the county. Some of these plans will overlap with the COTP area, providing a separate level of detail on planned measures. The COTP will be updated to reflect any additional measures.
 - Oxford is the only authority area in Oxfordshire where the levels of people commuting into the area are higher than those commuting out of the area. Transport measures within the city could be expected to have a benefit for those travelling to/ through the city as well as those who live within the immediate proximity.

- **Proposals are unworkable and not realistic**
 - Domestically and internationally, integrated transport measures similar to those proposed within the plan have already been implemented in other settings. As mentioned within the draft plan, implementation of experimental trials can also be considered where it is deemed beneficial to carefully monitor the impact of any proposed measure prior to a decision on permanent implementation.

- **Measures would not be beneficial for local businesses**
 - It is recognised measures proposed in the plan could require adjustments to existing business practises for some. Exact details would be determined at an individual scheme level.
 - Delivery of enhanced public space, for example through a reallocation of highway space could also attract greater footfall and subsequent spending within certain areas.

- **The plan should set some clear goals and ambitions for the city centre**
 - There is significant opportunity to enhance the city centre consistent with the plans stated targets and outcomes. It will however be the role of a City Centre Access and Movement Strategy, developed in partnership with others, to set out specific goals and objectives for this area.

Recommended changes to COTP

19. Based on the feedback received from the consultation and developments since the original publication of the draft plan, a number of changes to the plan are proposed. The most significant of these are listed below;

- **Further detail on how the plan will support walking and wheeling**
 - That aspirations and measures for walking and wheeling will be reviewed to reflect its prominence in the transport user hierarchy.
 - That this could include measures such as;
 - greater commitment to grade separation measures across heavy trafficked routes/ greater pedestrian crossing time/ priority at junctions/ crossings.
 - Identifying a requirement to upgrade pavements across the area in-line with the DfT's inclusive mobility guidance.
 - Prioritising pedestrian infrastructure on approach to/ in proximity of bus stops.

- **Amend details on the delivery of a zero emission bus fleets**
 - The draft plan set out an action to deliver a fully zero emission bus fleet by 2030. It is recognised that whilst desirable current technology does not support this timescale, particularly for buses which operate on longer, inter-urban services. It is recommended that the COTP action is therefore amended to;
 - *“Alongside partners, deliver a zero emission local bus fleet across the Oxford Smartzone area by 2024/25 and seek delivery of a fully zero emission bus fleet by 2035*”, *acknowledging that fuel technology may require this date to be brought forward or put further back*

- **More ambitious aspirations for public transport and transport hubs including improving the affordability of public transport**
 - That the updated plan will include;
 - Latest content from the county council's emerging transport hub strategy.
 - Working with bus operators, content and commitments to public transport will be reviewed and levelled up to ensure it is consistent in aspiration to what is proposed for active travel, whilst acknowledging that the county council's bus strategy is still in development.

- **Greater appreciation that for some use of a private car will continue to remain important**
 - Terminology will be reviewed and content to be added where necessary, including within the forward of the plan in recognition of this point

- **Greater recognition that a balanced approach to transport provision is needed**
 - That a recognition is needed in the plan that the transport user hierarchy is a simplification and that different modes will be more appropriate in certain contexts. That implementing measures requires a considered balance which considers all users and appropriately responds to a context where certain features (i.e trees/ utilities/ special designations) require compromise to be found.

- **Wider commitment to/ a better balance on 20mph speed limits**
 - Consultation feedback requested greater commitment to lower speed limits, especially within urban areas. It was however also noted that widespread speed reduction could have a disbenefit on other provisions i.e. public transport and that a considered balance in policy approach was therefore needed.
 - Insertion of the following text into COTP is therefore recommended;
 - “20mph limits may be introduced on any 30mph roads within the Central Oxfordshire area, following local assessments, stakeholder engagement, consultation and local parish/town council support. Any introduction of 20mph limits on sections of the highway network that form part of the strategic bus network (and/or support bus infrastructure) will be carefully considered to take into account impact on bus journey times or service provision that may result”*
 - 20 mph limits may be introduced on A and B roads in both urban and rural areas (such as town, village and district centres) or on narrow sections of road in rural & built-up areas, where opportunities for segregated cycling provision/vulnerable road users are limited. Each scheme/road will be assessed on case by case basis to assess/minimise the impact on the local transport services and infrastructure whilst delivering the additional road safety that lower speeds afford local communities”*
- **Further detail on how the plan will support disability and accessibility groups, the elderly and younger generations**
- **Further detail on how the plan will support taxis and private hire**
- **Greater commitment to measures to enhance resident cycle parking provision**
 - The plan will be updated to set out opportunities for the delivery of measures including on-street cycle hanger storage. Complementary documents like the LCWIP, Oxfordshire Cycle Design Guidance and Council’s Street Design Guide are expected to provide more specific details on measures like this
- **Minor factual, presentational amends and greater clarification on terminology throughout the document**
 - Numerous minor suggestions were made. These are considered to extensive to individually list.
 - These will include clarifying details around enforcement and management of schemes – for example a public hire e-scooter scheme.

- **Greater detail and commitment on designing for and integrating significant planned development on the edge of existing urban areas**
 - Content and commitments in the draft plan will be enhanced to ensure that planned developments – particularly those on the edge of Oxford – are connected to high-quality walking, cycling, and public transport networks.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

20. The County Council's strategic plan, 2022-25, sets out a vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. The COTP will help to deliver all aspects of this vision.
21. Consistent with Part 1 of the LTCP, COTP is grounded in the strategic priorities set out in the County Council's strategic plan, 2022-25. There is specific relevance to delivering on the following four priority areas:
 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. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.
22. The COTP will help to make central Oxfordshire greener, fairer and healthier due the relationship between transport, quality of life, health and the environment. Set within the wider LTCP framework, the COTP seeks to reduce carbon emissions and aims for a net-zero transport system by 2040. It also has a strong focus on healthy place shaping and encouraging active lives. This will help to improve health and wellbeing by providing safer walking and cycling routes to school and improving air quality.
23. The COTP will also help to tackle inequalities and improve health and wellbeing because transport can play a significant role in enabling older and disabled people to live independently. The COTP seeks to improve connectivity for all residents and there are policies that will specifically help to achieve this.
24. The COTP aims to reduce private car use and encourage modal shift to walking, cycling, public and shared transport. This will be central to addressing the climate emergency and improving health and wellbeing.

Financial Implications

25. The COTP would provide the basis of a strategic case for any future funding bids or future transport investment made across the central Oxfordshire area. Implementing the measures outlined within the COTP would be expected to require further resource and incur financial implications.
26. The COTP has been produced by staff from across the council's Environment and Place directorate. It has subsequently been financially resourced by

staffing budgets within this area. In addition, the following revenue costs were attributed to the production and consultation of the document;

- *External marketing and graphic design costs – £9,783.50.*
- *External video animation - £2,500.*
- *External data research and analysis - £17,043.*
- *Consultation event - £2,370.60*

Comments checked by: Rob Finlayson,
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Legal Implications

27. The COTP will form part of the county's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan which itself is a statutory document.
28. Whilst there is a statutory requirement for the county's local transport plan to be consulted upon, there is no such requirement for the subsequent area plans to be consulted upon.
29. It should be noted that the consultation on this framework policy document is not intended to constitute the statutory or other necessary consultation that is required or is otherwise carried out at time that any of the actions in this report actions are proposed to be implemented.

Comments checked by: Jennifer Crouch
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Staff Implications

30. Development of the COTP has been undertaken by officer resource from within the Environment and Place teams, with input from officers across the Environment and Place and Public Health directorates.
31. Once adopted, delivery of the COTP will be undertaken by officers from across the Environment and Place directorate, as well as indirectly through external stakeholders such as the city and district councils. Officers from the central locality team will oversee coordination of this process. Implementing the measures outlined within the COTP would be expected to require further resource and incur financial implications.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

32. To ensure that we have assessed equalities implications in a fair and thorough manner an Equalities Impact Assessment was conducted (see annex 3). This has ensured that any equality matters have been identified and acted upon during development of the COTP.

Sustainability Implications

33. A Climate Impact Assessment has been undertaken (see annex 4) to ensure that matters with climate implications are identified and where required acted upon during development of the COTP.
34. Transport produces the majority of emissions in the county. Both COTP and the broader LTCP recognises this and sets out the target for a net-zero transport network by 2040. The COTP outlines the policies which will help to achieve this, focusing on reducing the need to travel, reducing journeys by car and the promotion of walking, cycling, public and shared transport.
35. The COTP also recognises the need to improve biodiversity and protect the natural environment. Policies in the COTP will help contribute to this, by seeking to reduce private car use.

Risk Management

36. A comprehensive risk register has been kept as part of the COTP project. Key risks associated with the COTP moving forward are summarised below.

Risk - That the COTP does not deliver on its targets or intended outcomes

Mitigation – That the COTP should be monitored on an annual basis as part of a wider LTCP monitoring programme and that it should be reviewed within 5 years of approval as a minimum to ensure that the plan is fit for purpose.

Risk - That subsequent strategies and/or area plans will minor amend some of the details of COTP

Mitigation - Work is ongoing to develop a programme for wider area plan development including an understanding of resource requirements. Once overlapping area and supporting strategies have been prepared and approved it is expected that COTP will be updated as necessary to reflect any updated context.

Risk – That upon further development and engagement on individual key components of the plan, measures are either delayed or cancelled.

Mitigation - That there should be early engagement with key stakeholders and partners on components of the plan. That a review of the plan within its first 5

years of approval (as a minimum), should be undertaken to ensure that proposed measures remain relevant and suitable towards addressing plan targets.

Consultations

Public consultation

37. Public consultation on the draft COTP was undertaken between August and October 2022. The outcomes from this process have directly informed this report.

County councillor engagement

38. Engagement activities conducted during the COTP consultation are outlined in paragraph 13 of this report.
39. The draft plan was considered by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 November.

Bill Cotton, Corporate Director for Environment and Place

Background papers: Nil

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