

18. Witney Area Strategy

- 1 Witney is the largest town in West Oxfordshire, containing the main commercial, leisure, health and other services for the district. It has a diverse economy and is home to some of Oxfordshire's most successful high technology manufacturing and engineering firms. The historic Market Square, High Street, Woolgate Centre and Marriott's Walk make Witney an outstanding retail and leisure attraction. This makes Witney one of the best locations for new development in the district in terms of services and facilities.
- 2 West Oxfordshire District Council's draft Local Plan (2012) includes proposals for 1,900 new homes in the Witney sub area by 2029, with Strategic Development Areas identified of 1,000 homes at West Witney and 300 at East Witney. Twenty hectares of land has been identified for employment to enable Witney to attract inward investment and new jobs. The draft Local Plan also contains policies to maintain and enhance Witney's town centre shopping, leisure and cultural attractions.

Transport Strategy Objectives

- 3 The key transport objectives for Witney are to:
 - establish a transport network that supports future growth and attracts economic investment
 - enable people to access jobs and services by all modes of transport
 - support town centre vitality, by providing a transport network that enables easy access to services
- 4 The County Council supports West Oxfordshire District Council's approach for Witney and has identified a transport infrastructure investment package required to support the town's development potential which includes capacity improvements at the Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction, a new all movement junction on the A40 at Down's Road and the provision of west facing slip roads at Shores Green together with associated improvements.
- 5 As well as these schemes, we will also seek developer funding to improve access between homes, the town centre, employment sites and other key destinations for the benefit of car drivers, bus users, pedestrians and cyclists.

- 6 Witney's transport strategy will be progressed by the county council and the district council using developer funding and with input from local partners and businesses. This strategy identifies a series of improvements to increase the overall capacity of transport networks and systems within the locality, enabling them to accommodate the additional trips generated by development; to adapt to their cumulative impact and to mitigate the local environmental impact of increased travel. Where schemes are needed to mitigate one particular development, the developer will be expected to either construct or provide funding for the scheme; where a scheme is required due to the impact of more than one development, each developer will be expected to make a contribution proportional to the scale of their impact. Additional funding may also be sought via the Local Transport Board to the Local Growth Fund and other sources.
- 7 Oxfordshire County Council is working towards a strategic transport contribution rate for developer funding, which will be adopted in a future update of this strategy.
- 8 Congestion exists at the Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction, which is the main access for journeys to and from the A40. Witney's other main bottleneck is at Bridge Street. With an average of 29,000 vehicles a day, it is the only vehicular crossing of the River Windrush for local journeys. This results in delays to cars and buses and air pollution (it is an Air Quality Management Area), deterring cyclists and pedestrians and causing problems for local vehicular traffic if Bridge Street has to be closed. Proposals WIT1 and WIT2 identify a sequence of schemes to overcome these issues.

Proposal WIT1 – To support the growth proposed for Witney, we will work closely with the District Council and local partners to deliver:

- **Capacity improvements at the Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction in 2014/15** to bring early improvements for access to and from the A40;
- **An all-movement at-grade junction on the A40 at Downs Road related to the West Witney strategic housing and employment site** to provide a new access to the A40 for businesses and residents to the west of the town;
- **West-facing slips at Shores Green and improvements to the B4022 Oxford Hill junction with Jubilee Way and Cogges Hill Road related to housing development to the east of the town.** This will provide an all-movement junction east of Witney, and a second river crossing for local journeys.

- 9 Following the opening of the Shores Green slip roads, a series of further improvements can be realised to support sustainable travel choices:

Proposal WIT2 – We will work with the District Council, Town Council, bus operators, local businesses and residents as well as local transport interest groups to promote more attractive access to Witney’s central areas by:

- **Re-designating the A4095 via Jubilee Way, Oxford Hill, A40, Ducklington Lane and Thorney Leys** so through traffic travels around the edge of the town rather than through it;
- **Implementing schemes to deter through traffic from using Bridge Street and the Woodstock Road** to improve the environment and safety and encourage through traffic to use the re-designated A4095;
- **Improving the environment in the town centre by reducing congestion, and enhancing the Air Quality Management and Conservation Areas.**
- **Discouraging undesirable routing of traffic by** improving directional signs

Proposal WIT3 – We will work with West Oxfordshire District Council to safeguard land for future transport infrastructure by:

- Continuing to **safeguard land for the proposed West End Link stage 2 for the longer term.**
- **Protecting the line of the Shores Green Slip Roads and promoting its safeguarding in the Local Plan**

- 10 Although the A40 Witney by-pass is generally free flowing, congestion on the A40 to the east of the town causes very lengthy delays for journeys to and from Oxford at peak times. This impacts on the ability of local businesses to achieve growth, and makes Witney a potentially less desirable place for new businesses to locate.

Proposal WIT4 - We will improve access between local centres and new development in West Oxfordshire, and employment in Oxford, in particular new employment at Oxford’s ‘Northern Gateway’, and to connect with rail services to London from Oxford Parkway (Water Eaton) station by:

- Developing a transport improvements strategy to facilitate trips along the A40 corridor, including the existing proposal for an Eynsham Park & Ride Site.

- 11 By reducing congestion and improving accessibility across Witney, journeys by non-car modes will become more attractive. In the case of public transport, congestion currently delays buses on the key Oxford-Witney routes via Newland and Bridge Street. Buses are significantly delayed in the morning peak due to the way the double-mini roundabouts favour traffic from West End and from Woodgreen, despite Newland being the more important route for buses.
- 12 Witney benefits from high quality, high capacity frequent bus services to Oxford, including Oxford rail station. The two proposed Strategic Development Areas in Witney benefit from being adjacent to the S1 and S2 Premium Routes (Carterton / Witney to Oxford). With appropriate design, it is anticipated the existing services will serve these sites, linking them to town centre facilities and employment areas, and enable sustainable out-commuting to Oxford by bus to take place.
- 13 Proposal WIT5 identifies how access to public transport and service enhancements will be achieved:

Proposal WIT5 – We will work with the District Council, bus operators and developers to make improvements to public transport and encourage its use by:

- **Improving the frequency of bus services to Oxford and between Woodstock and Burford via Hanborough rail station and Witney’s main residential and employment areas** by using funding from new developments;
- **Implementing measures to reduce delays to bus services** through Witney particularly along Corn Street, Market Place, Bridge Street and Newland;
- **Improving the location and quality of bus stops along these routes, pedestrian and cycle paths to them and the facilities available such as cycle parking.**

- 14 Witney has good foot and cycle paths, but signing to and along them could be improved. There is scope to join up existing foot and cycle paths to improve the overall network and to link through to Rights of Way in the countryside. In some locations high levels of traffic, poor quality surfaces and on-street parking deter walking and cycling. Cycle networks between Witney and nearby settlements, specifically Carterton, could be improved, as highlighted in Proposal WIT6.

Proposal WIT6 – the County Council will improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists focusing on enhancing links between homes, employment and the town

centre. Improvements will include:

- Enhancing links from Witney's existing and future residential and employment areas to the town centre;
- Improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists in Bridge Street and the town centre;
- Providing a cycle route between Witney and Carterton

- 15 This Transport Strategy replaces the Witney Integrated Transport Strategy (WITS) 2003. The new Area Strategy accommodates the measures of the previous strategy. Planning obligation contributions, secured in order to mitigate the impacts of development, towards WITS will be able to be used on the updated LTP3 Witney Strategy and be in accordance with the planning obligations.

References

West Oxfordshire's Draft Local Plan

2012 <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/CoreStrategy.cfm?frmAlias=/corestrategy/?frmAlias=/draftlocalplan/>



WITNEY AREA STRATEGY

New Housing

A West Witney – Houses: 1000, New Primary School

B East Witney – Houses: 300

Employment

C West Witney – Employment Area: 10ha

Bridge Street area

Road Improvements

1 Shores Green west facing slips

2 Land for West End Link 2 safeguarded

3 Downs Road at grade junction

4 Ducklington Lane junction