

## **CABINET – 27 JANUARY 2015**

# **CONNECTING OXFORDSHIRE: LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2015-2031: DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

**Report by Director for Environment & Economy**

### **Introduction**

1. This Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been branded 'Connecting Oxfordshire' to reflect our vision for a thriving Oxfordshire supported by a 21st century transport system and set out how last year's Connecting Oxfordshire events have now been translated into an ambitious action plan. It takes into account the £800m of transport investment planned over the next 20-30 years and looks ahead to future challenges and opportunities facing the county.
2. The new plan sets out the Council's high level, county-wide policy and strategy for transport for the period up to 2031, in line with existing and emerging City / rural District Council Local Plans. Our Local Transport Plan has an important role in helping to secure the infrastructure necessary to support economic and housing growth in the county, by setting out clearly what we want to achieve, and why it is necessary. Because transport improvements are now funded via the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and the increasing importance of developer funding to mitigate the transport impacts of growth, we need an ambitious, up-to-date Local Transport Plan which will support us in the necessary negotiations and bidding processes.
3. The plan has been drafted following stakeholder and public consultation on goals and objectives last summer. The results of this consultation led to some changes to plan goals/objectives and presentation. This included more emphasis on encouraging greater levels of public transport, cycling and walking, and the need for the plan to consider the whole of Oxfordshire, rather than focus more narrowly on the Didcot-Oxford-Bicester 'Knowledge Spine'.
4. The Local Transport Plan reflects current Government policy and supports the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan, as well as the objectives of Oxfordshire 2030 and the Corporate Plan. It also takes into account the scale of growth indicated in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

### **Local Transport Plan Structure and Content**

5. The Local Transport Plan consists of a main document, which sets out the County Council's high level policies and strategic approach as well as our area and route strategies, supported by a number of supporting strategy documents, which are all combined in Annex 1. (a copy of which can be found

on our website at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)) The final version of document will also include a programme of Oxfordshire's priorities for investment in transport schemes.

6. Within the main document there is a series of policy statements, which support the 'Goals and Objectives', to form the basis of the plan. These statements have previously been considered by a wide range of internal stakeholders and the Transport Advisory Panel Local Transport Plan Member Working Group.
7. Building on the work done for the previous Local Transport Plan, updated area strategies have been produced for localities which are already experiencing significant growth and where further growth is planned: Oxford, Banbury, Science Vale UK, Bicester, Witney and Carterton. District Councils have been involved in drafting these area strategies, to support their emerging Local Plans.
8. Corridor strategies are also being developed for the main highway routes through Oxfordshire, starting with the A34, A40 and A420. A strategy for the A420 corridor is included in this draft Local Transport Plan. More detailed strategies for the A34 and A40 will follow once study work has been completed. For the A34, a case for investment in the national programme for Highways Agency Route Based Strategies has been drafted which has the support of the Local Enterprise Partnership. Further discussions will now be taking place with the Highways Agency, following the recent announcement on the proposed A34 traffic management measures and junction improvements.
9. The new Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) is a key strategy in the plan, fully embedded in the plan's main document. It sets out an overarching strategy for the transformation of the transport network within the city and on the key corridors to it, to support delivery of housing and employment growth programmed across the county over the next 20 years and beyond. Further detailed work into design and implementation of the elements within the strategy will be required.
10. There are six separate supporting strategies to the Local Transport Plan (listed below). These will be included in the public consultation alongside the main plan.

<b>Document</b>	<b>Status</b>
Science Transit Strategy	Published for consultation with main document.
Bus Strategy	Published for consultation with main document.
Cycling Strategy	Published for consultation with main document.
Freight Strategy	Published for consultation with main document.
Highways Asset Management Plan	Agreed by Cabinet September 2014 – to be adopted as part of Local Transport Plan
Rights of Way Management Plan	Agreed by Cabinet November 2014 – to be adopted as part of Local Transport Plan

11. The Science Transit Strategy is our innovative response to the congestion challenges and future growth in Oxfordshire. It defines both a high level vision and an outline roadmap for the development of better integrated, high quality mobility systems that both serve the Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine and connect it with the rest of the County. It links together our proposals for increasing bus and rail usage and cycling (set out in our updated Bus, Cycle and Rail Strategies). In line with the government's 'Door to Door' strategy, it sets out a vision for integrated, sustainable journeys and an increase in public transport and cycling provision that people can be confident in choosing.
12. A number of other strategies which will form part of the Plan are still being developed and will follow later, when the plan will subsequently be updated as necessary – it has been designed and structured to be easily updated whenever required. These strategies are listed below.

<b>Document</b>	<b>Status</b>
Network Capacity Management Strategy	In development – publication for consultation expected later in 2015.
Rail Strategy	Existing (2012) Strategy being revised and updated – publication for consultation expected later in 2015.
A40 Strategy	In development – publication for consultation expected later in 2015.
Green Infrastructure Strategy	In development – publication for consultation expected later in 2015.

## **Environmental Assessment**

13. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been carried out on the policies and strategies that form part of the plan. This assessment is set out in an Environmental report; a non-technical summary is attached as Annex 2 (a copy of which can be found on our website at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)). It will also be published in full for statutory consultation alongside the draft plan.
14. In summary, the conclusions of this work are that the plan demonstrates “significant positive effects, such as improvements to the vitality of town and city centres, air quality, the built environment and walking & cycling”. However it also identifies likely impacts on the environment, primarily ones which are construction related, namely land take, change in landscape, loss of habitats and impacts on the historic environment. The assessment recognises that, in planning for change, impacts may be reduced compared to an unplanned (as opposed to do-nothing) approach. The cumulative nature of impacts is also recognised, as well as the consequential effects, e.g. the overall health benefits of encouraging more walking/cycling would arise from greater physical activity as well as reduced air quality.
15. The main Strategic Environmental Assessment recommendation to improve environmental outcomes is in terms of ensuring that identified potential impacts, e.g. on heritage, landscape and habitats are considered and

mitigated at programme (or Area Strategy) level prior to scheme development, and subsequently at scheme level as part of a more detailed Environmental Impact Assessment.

### **Next Steps**

16. The draft plan is to be published, together with the Strategic Environmental Assessment report, for a statutory six-week public consultation period beginning in early February 2015, running until mid-March.
17. A significant amount of internal and external consultation has already taken place as part of the plan's development. In particular, plan content and direction has been informed by last summer's 'Connecting Oxfordshire' public road shows and local liaison at Member locality meetings. There has also been a successful series of discussions with the Council's Transport Advisory Panel Local Transport Plan Working Group (which has incorporated Cabinet Member engagement) throughout. In addition, work has taken place with the Local Enterprise Partnership on their business surveys and with their Transport Sub-Group.
18. The extensive engagement to date means that the forthcoming formal consultation stage will be necessarily more limited and direct, so it is proposed that this consultation will be largely web-based, supported by targeted events and engagement as appropriate.
19. Following consultation, the revised Local Transport Plan documents will be submitted to Cabinet for final approval in June 2015, and to Full Council for adoption in July 2015.

### **Financial and Staff Implications**

20. No specific implications are identified.

### **Equalities Implications**

21. A Service and Community Impact Assessment on the plan will also be prepared; this will need to be taken into account before the plan is approved, and reflect further engagement which is planned with different sections of the community as part of the consultation process.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

22. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the draft Local Transport Plan for Public Consultation.**

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Director for Environment & Economy

Background papers: None

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