

CABINET – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

BICESTER LOCAL AND CYCLING AND WALKING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (LCWIP)

Report by Director for Planning and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the Bicester Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), including the Bicester cycle network plans.**

Executive Summary

2. The Bicester Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is the second LCWIP to be completed in Oxfordshire following Oxford LCWIP approval in March 2020. Bicester LCWIP sets out a walking and cycling network plan for the town including links to the nearby villages and measures to improve the network over a 15-year timescale to 2035. At a base level, it is expected that development of this network could triple levels of cycling in the town over this period, but the LCWIP also sets out options for greater interventions in the transport network that are forecast to increase cycling and walking trips further. Bicester LCWIP supports the expansion of Bicester's population from around 30,000 to 55,000 by 2035, is very much aligned to its Garden Town and Healthy New Town designations, and fits in with wider transport, environment, place shaping and health policy.

Introduction

3. The Bicester LCWIP is the second LCWIP to be developed in Oxfordshire, with the first one for Oxford approved by County Council Cabinet in March 2020. The LCWIP programme is a key part of our strategy for transforming Active & Healthy Travel and helping to meet Council aims and objectives on Climate Action, Air Quality and Healthy Place Shaping. Further LCWIPs are now proposed to be developed for Abingdon and Didcot, with the programme planned to be extended to other towns such as Witney and Banbury, as soon as possible depending on budgets and priorities.
4. Bicester LCWIP is based on existing County and District policy, particularly the *Local Transport Plan 4* (Bicester Area Study), *Bicester Local Plan* and *Bicester Garden Town Masterplan*. Its delivery will also meet Council aims and objectives on Climate Action, Air Quality and Healthy Place Shaping. Bicester LCWIP will also become a subsidiary document of the forthcoming *Local Transport and Connectivity Plan* (LTCP).

5. The Plan sets out clear proposals for how to encourage walking and cycling in Bicester. It sets out the evidence for increasing cycling and walking, including policies and programmes to achieve this, along with outline plans for each proposed new walking and cycling route. It will also be important in the context of post-Covid recovery planning, with the role of active and healthy travel a key national priority in this work.

National Policy

6. The LCWIP is an output of national Government policy. It forms an essential element of the national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) in which there is an ambition to double cycling nationally by 2025. The CWIS obliges Government to identify funding to achieve those ambitions. Government has given indications that the LCWIP will be a key document in the allocation of funding to local authorities and LCWIP guidance emphasises the importance of an evidence review of walking and cycling, explicitly stating that “evidence of the benefits of schemes will also strengthen the case for further investment”.
7. The Bicester LCWIP has two functions: firstly, it sets out evidence-backed plans of how the Council could achieve a measurable and step-change increase in cycling and walking in Bicester. Secondly, for the Government, it sets out the scale of our ambition to achieve this change. It includes a detailed analysis of the challenges and potential impact of cycling and walking schemes, and a base target to increase cycle journeys in Bicester by 200% in line with delivery of a comprehensive cycle network.
8. The Government has indicated that LCWIPs will be a key document in the allocation of CWIS funding to local authorities. LCWIPs also feature strongly in recent Government advice to local authorities in response to the Covid 19 crisis. Reallocating Road Space statutory guidance and the DfT letter (27 May 2020) allocating emergency active travel funding both include a statement that it will “*enable local authorities to implement schemes already planned in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)*”. It also very much fits with the ‘Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking’ document published by central government on 28th July which recognises the importance of LCWIPs in planning for cycle improvements

Key issues and proposals

9. Bicester LCWIP supports the planned growth of Bicester population from around 30,000 to 55,000 by 2035. It is predicted that this expansion will result in an increase from 50,000 to 90,000 in internal trips per day by Bicester residents, namely trips from one part of Bicester to another.
10. Over the next 15 years as Bicester expands, the challenge is to what extent these local trips will be by car, which will determine whether the town faces significant congestion along its main roads. Additionally, there is already an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) declared for the Central Corridor which

would be exacerbated by more traffic. Detailed data analysis shows that many, if not most of these short trips within Bicester could be made on foot or by cycle.

11. The Bicester LCWIP recognises the difficult challenges of achieving such a modal shift towards cycling as the normal mode of travel for short journeys across Bicester, including opportunities for Active Travel connections to the town's two railway stations (which will be particularly important at Bicester Village with East West Rail Phase 2) and the Park & Ride site.
12. At the heart of Bicester LCWIP, we have developed 3 levels of schemes from category C to A, measured by the "Commitment to Active Travel Scale" (or CAT scale for short). The CAT scale helps to articulate the consequences of the different choices in planning and transport schemes.
13. At the minimum the LCWIP recommends implementing category C which sees the creation of a comprehensive walking and cycling network in line with its Eco-town, Healthy New Town and Garden Town aspirations. The measures will also support both the County Council and District Council developing policy on Healthy Place Shaping to help address inequalities and the health and well-being of residents to make Bicester a healthier, inclusive and happier place.
14. Category B is where the Council makes bold decisions to restrict car use through the centre, including traffic filtering along the Central Corridor and in Market Square in the town centre. Category A is the most ambitious and aspirational. It proposes traffic cells throughout the town. It is based on the traffic layout of a very similar new town in the Netherlands called Houten.
15. For each category, there is a predicted balance as to whether internal trips will be by car or by sustainable travel modes (walking, cycling and bus):
 - Category C: 60% car vs. 40% sustainable
 - Category B: 50% car vs. 50% sustainable
 - Category A: 40% car vs 60% sustainable
16. Bicester LCWIP includes a target for category C of increasing cycling from 3000 to 9000 trips (200%) and walking from 18,000 to 24,000 trips (50%) a day. However, this only caters for the overall increase in trips due to the population increase and maintains the same balance between car (60%) and sustainable trips (40%). To avoid severe congestion and improve access and liveability, it is calculated that category B schemes are needed as a minimum.
17. There is also currently a gap in the quality and consistency of data and information on travel patterns in the Bicester area, affecting our ability to reliably monitor these changes. A system of monitoring trips within Bicester to assess the impact of the Bicester LCWIP will need to be agreed and established. This will build on work being undertaken by the Oxfordshire Innovation Hub on better ways to monitor transport movements.

Engagement and communications

18. Development of the LCWIP has been informed by:
 - a) Engagement with the Bicester cycling and walking contacts in 2019, followed by further discussions with the newly formed Bicycle Users Group on draft LCWIP proposals
 - b) Engagement with Bicester Transport Advisory Group in early 2019, followed by presentations to local County members on progress in 2020
 - c) Engagement with Cherwell District Council Active Travel Officers
 - d) Feedback received as part of the Oxfordshire-wide cycle survey in 2019, which included 213 responses related to Bicester matters
19. Bicester LCWIP builds on current policy in LTP 4 for the Bicester Area Strategy, but the more significant interventions proposed, particularly under Category B and C, will need to be tested and developed as part of the revised Bicester area strategy for the Council's new LTCP. This updated strategy will be subject to public consultation as part of the wider LTCP work.

Risk Management

20. There are challenges involved in ensuring alignment of policies and strategies within the Council involving the LCWIP, LTCP, and others such as the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS). In particular, there is a need to ensure timescales align and there is a clear and consistent message which supports funding bids. There is also a need to work closely with Cherwell District Council and Bicester Town Council to ensure that LCWIP policies are taken into consideration, for example in relation to planning matters, and where possible adopted and/or included in other policy documents.
21. There may be reputational and practical risks with the development and delivery of specific LCWIP schemes and these will need to be managed through the relevant risk management and project management processes. There may also be legal processes such as Traffic Regulation Orders that will need to be undertaken, depending on specific measures progressed. These will be subject to separate assessment and consideration as specific scheme proposals are developed.

Financial and Staff Implications

22. There are no immediate revenue budget implications, with the review of policies and practice able to be accommodated through existing staff resources within the Growth and Place Directorate. The LCWIP will assist in the implementation of the current and future capital programme of the Bicester Area Strategy and help prioritise funding from new developments. Development of any new

LCWIP schemes will need to be considered through the County Council capital programme setting process.

23. Having the Bicester LCWIP puts the Council in a good position to identify measures for funding bids to central government, as demonstrated by the recent Emergency Active Travel Fund bid process.

Equalities Implications

24. Investment in walking and cycling measures improves travel choice and encourages active, healthy lifestyles. The LCWIP can make a positive contribution to improving connectivity across the town through improved access to walking and cycling infrastructure for all socio-economic groups and through encouraging active travel could help to reduce inequalities in health. Improved cycle and walking routes will also help accessibility between the more deprived areas in Bicester and the rest of the town.

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Background papers:

Bicester Draft LCWIP
Bicester Cycle and Walking Network Map- Town and Villages
Bicester Cycle and Walking Network Map- Town only

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