

Chapter 7

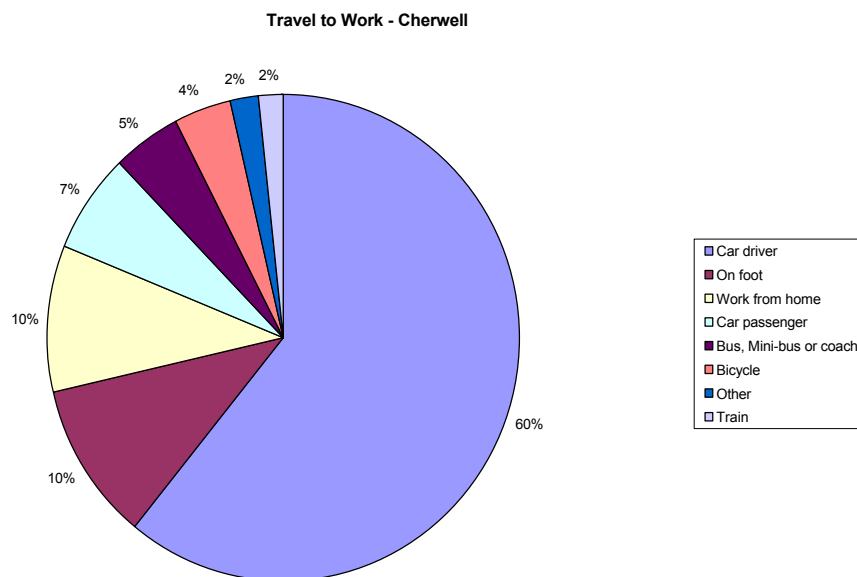
Cherwell

Background

Cherwell District, North Oxfordshire, lies astride the M40 motorway between London and Birmingham.

In population terms, Cherwell is the second largest district in Oxfordshire with a population of approximately 132,000. Over two-thirds of Cherwell's population live in the three main urban centres - Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington - with populations of 42,000, 29,000 and 17,000 respectively. 15% of Cherwell residents commute outside of Oxfordshire to work. Just over 48,000 remain in Oxfordshire to work with a further 7,000 working at home and 5,000 with no fixed workplace.

At the time of the 2001 census, approximately 72,000 residents of Cherwell were in employment. A breakdown of people's main mode for the journey to work is set out below:



Transport Network

The diversity of Cherwell's road and rail network means that it functions on local, regional and national scales of importance. The two main settlements in Cherwell - Banbury and Bicester - are both close to the M40 and have rail connections with Oxford and London.

Cherwell, despite being a rural district, is well served by a variety of bus routes, including dial-a-ride, subsidised and commercial services.

Car ownership in Cherwell is relatively high on a national level but average for Oxfordshire with over 80% of households in Cherwell having access to one car or more.

Local Plan policies

Cherwell, because of its location, is quickly becoming a prime location for many businesses to re-locate to. Although this is very good for local employment, it produces a challenge for the authorities to balance between desired economic development and the adverse impacts that this brings to the transport networks. The main transport challenge that Cherwell will face over the next five years is the demand that housing development at Bicester will place on the network of not only the town but major roads in Oxfordshire, such as the A34 and the M40.

Transport and Development: General transport policies require all traffic generating development to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Local Transport Plan. Major generators of travel demand should be:

- > Located in existing centres which are highly accessible by means other than the private car and should be accompanied by a transport assessment and travel plan.
- > Development should not compromise road safety.
- > Development that would prejudice pedestrian and cycle circulation or route provision will not be permitted and all new development shall provide cycle parking to the county council's standards.
- > Development will need to comply with adopted parking standards.
- > Roads to serve new residential areas shall give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and buses

The Cherwell Community Plan 2016

Vision 2016 - the Cherwell Community Plan - was prepared by the Cherwell Community Planning Partnership. The Plan is based around a series of ten objectives or themes to deliver a better quality of life in Cherwell.

The main issues identified in the Community Plan which are relevant to this LTP are highlighted below:

- > Make roads safer and reduce speeding and a number of actions are set out to achieve this.
- > Improve health - Several actions to improve access and reduce inequality will have transport implications.
- > Promote prosperity and sound transport systems - there are a series of actions to achieve the aim of improved transport.

- > Protect and enhance the local environment - one of the aims is the promotion of environmentally sound transport options.
- > Rural perspective - the aim of ensuring accessible services and facilities involves several transport related actions.
- > Urban focus - this includes the aims of improving traffic flows and achieving better integration between the centres and their hinterlands.
- > Focus on Cherwell's people - to improve the quality of life for all there are actions to improve transport and access for groups including older people, young people and disabled people.

Tackling Congestion

Cherwell faces some of the biggest congestion problems in the county. This is largely due to the high demand placed on the network with residents accessing areas within Cherwell, Oxfordshire and main centres such as London and Birmingham.

Actions for Tackling Congestion in Cherwell

The actions for tackling congestion, as outlined in Chapter three, are:

<i>Action 1</i>	Develop and maintain the county's road network to reduce the impact of bottlenecks (including roadworks) and make better use of existing road capacity to improve the flow of traffic
<i>Action 2</i>	Make public transport faster, more reliable and more user-friendly
<i>Action 3</i>	Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient
<i>Action 4</i>	Enable people to make better informed travel choices
<i>Action 5</i>	Manage parking to support transport improvements and initiatives
<i>Action 6</i>	Ensure that new development is planned in such a way as to minimise congestion problems from being created or exacerbated

The County Council intends to focus its efforts over the Plan period on the following congestion hotspots in Cherwell (in order of severity of current problem, but not necessarily the order in which it will be possible to address them). Using the Problem Prioritisation Framework highlighted in Chapter Five these problems have been identified as high, medium and low problems.

High Ranking Congestion Problems in Cherwell

A34 - M40 to Oxford

Problems on this route are likely to have an impact on the role of Oxford as a sub-regional centre. Therefore, this problem is being addressed as part of the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area (chapter six)

A41 - Kings End, Bicester to M40

Problems on this route are likely to have an impact on the role of Oxford as a sub-regional centre. Therefore, this problem is being addressed as part of the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area (chapter six)

A4165 - Cutteslowe to Kidlington

In the morning peak traffic queues the entire length of this road (approximately two kilometres). This section of the A4165 has an approximate daily flow 20,500 vehicles. On the inbound journey (i.e. towards Oxford) there is a dedicated bus lane for local buses and taxis, despite this there can be delays to local services. At the Cutteslowe end

the A4165 meets the A40 Oxford Ring Road at a limited capacity roundabout leading to extensive queues, especially in the morning peak.

To tackle congestion along this route the County Council will be looking to implement the following actions and subsequent solutions:

- > Develop and maintain the road network
Deliver improvements to the Cutteslowe Roundabout in 2007/08 to improve the traffic flow
- > Improve public transport
Implement a premium bus route between Oxford and Kidlington in 2006/07 which will significantly improve bus reliability between the two settlements.
- > Better informed travel choices
Improve the signing at Water Eaton Park & Ride to inform drivers of its location; and services that are available; and introduce free parking at the site to attract passengers.
- > Manage parking
Implement Controlled Parking Zones in the North Oxford area in 2007/08, to encourage more use of the Park & Ride service and therefore improving the congestion along this route.

Medium Ranking Congestion Problems in Cherwell

Oxford Road, Kidlington

This is the primary route through the village and carries approximately 11,000 vehicles a day. The traffic delays experienced in the morning peak are generated by a number of junctions along the route and as a consequence of the congestion that builds between the Cutteslowe and Kidlington roundabouts.

To tackle the congestion problems along this route, Oxfordshire County Council believe that the following actions will address the problem:

- > Improve public transport (Premium Route, as above)
- > Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient
- > Enable people to make better informed travel choices

High Street/George Street, Banbury

This is the link road that connects the town centre with the inner relief road. Carrying a daily flow of just under 10,000 vehicles, congestion is regularly experienced on this route in the morning peak.

To tackle the congestion problems at this location the County Council will investigate ways to:

- > Improve public transport

A44 - Yarnton to Oxford

Problems on this route are likely to have an impact on the role of Oxford as a sub-regional centre. Therefore, this problem is being addressed as part of the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area (Chapter six)

B4100 - Warwick Road/Southam Road, Banbury

Queues are experienced at this junction as traffic merges with the main through route in Banbury. Traffic levels are also high along this road as traffic from the west accesses the town centre.

The required action to tackle the congestion problems at this location, which the County Council will be looking to address during the Plan period are:

- > Improve public transport
- > Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient.

Low Ranking Congestion Problems in Cherwell

B430 - Weston-on-the-Green to Middleton Stoney

Traffic levels have increased significantly along this route, from 4,500 vehicles per day in 1999 to 6,400 in 2004. This is largely due to the fact that this route is used as a 'rat-run' from the A34 to the M40 junction 10, especially when there are congestion problems at junction 9 of the M40.

A4260 - Oxford Road/Upper Windsor Street, Banbury

This is the main route into Banbury from the south, with access to one of the town's large supermarkets and the Horton Hospital (which serves the north of the county and many parts of southern Northamptonshire and Warwickshire). Congestion is experienced as there are three signalised junctions within a short stretch of road, especially during the peak hours and weekends.

Middleton Road, Banbury

The average daily flow along this route is approximately 14,000 vehicles. This is due to people accessing the town centre from the east through a limited capacity junction with the town's inner relief road. Banbury railway station is located on this road and contributes to the congestion problems in this part of the town.

A41/London Road, Bicester

This junction is where the A41 Bypass, one of the town's main radial routes and the eastern ring road merge (an accumulation of 25,000 vehicles on a daily basis). Congestion also occurs here because at this junction there is also the main access point to the Ministry of Defence Distribution Centre.

Delivering Accessibility

Overview

Evidence, through the Accession mapping process, shows that:

- > Overall accessibility in Cherwell is good, especially in the urban centres of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.
- > In many parts of Cherwell, accessibility is poor especially for those in rural areas.
- > Conversely, social exclusion is at its worst in the urban areas, especially in many of the wards in Banbury and a few of the wards in Bicester.

Access

Supermarkets:

- > Accessibility is generally good to supermarkets by car, within 15 minutes, depending upon the time of the day in line with the rest of the County.
- > Roughly half the population of Cherwell is with a 15 minute bus journey of a supermarket.

Major Centres:

- > By car, accessibility of less than 15 minutes is relatively good to Banbury and Kidlington but not so good to the third major centre of Bicester.
- > In the south of the District accessibility of less than 15 minutes into Oxford covers a significant area.
- > Conversely, by public transport, accessibility into the major centres is poor, large areas having no bus access of less than 60 minutes.

Town Centres:

- > Access to town centres is a little better than to Major Centres by bus but a lot better by car.

Further Education:

- > In further education almost 100% of the population have access by car whereas between 70% and 75% has access by bus.
- > Like the rest of the county, nearly 100% of the District has access to further education by car of under 25 minutes.
- > The majority of those living in the rural areas have no bus access of under 60 minutes of higher education.

- > There are also areas of limited access in both Banbury and Bicester. These correspond to identified deprivation 'hot-spots'.

Primary and Secondary Schools:

- > Nearly 100% of the Districts population has access to primary schools within a 15 minute period by car but access is less good by the conventional bus network from the villages of Cherwell.
- > The analysis shows that nearly 100% of the Districts population has access to their nearest secondary school by car of under 20 minutes.
- > There are large areas of the District that have no access to secondary schools by conventional bus services, but these are filled in by the contracted school transport.
- > Access to secondary schools is poor from the periphery of urban areas of Banbury and Bicester.

Employment:

- > The analysis shows that about half of the population are within a 10 minute car journey of some form of employment
- > Nearly the entire population is within a 20 minute car journey of both ward based and their selected employment site.
- > About half of the population have access to employment of under 60 minutes by bus.
- > Accessibility of under 30 minutes by bus tends to be into the main settlements of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

Healthcare:

- > All of the District is within 25 minutes of a hospital by car, whereas by bus only about 10% have access of under 60 minutes by public transport.
- > In general access to hospitals is poorer than to other facilities reflecting the concentration of provision in the Oxford, outside Cherwell, and in Banbury.
- > Deprived areas which have poor access to hospitals include those in Bicester.
- > Nearly everybody in Cherwell has access to GP surgery of less than 20 minutes by car.
- > About a quarter of the population of Cherwell is within 60 minutes of a GP surgery by bus.
- > About 25% are within 10 minutes of a dentist with the remainder being within 25 minutes of a dentist by car.
- > As regards by bus, roughly 50% of the District is within 60 minutes of a dentist by bus.

Social Exclusion

While generally Cherwell is a relatively affluent area there are areas of deprivation within it. These are concentrated within Banbury and, to a

lesser extent Bicester. The findings of a study commissioned by the County Council from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion included, in relation to Cherwell, the following:

Work

- > Total worklessness approximate equal to the county average (4.2%).
- > Areas with relatively high claim rates tend to be located in parts of Banbury and Bicester.
- > The rate of people workless through unemployment is well below the England, regional and county averages.
- > Rate of workless through sickness (3.5%) is slightly higher than the county average, but still well below the regional and English average, approximately half that of England.
- > Banbury Ruscote is among the five wards with the highest proportions of people workless through sickness in the county.
- > Cherwell has five of the twenty wards with the highest rates of people workless through sickness.
- > The majority of wards with relatively high rates of people workless through sickness in relation to the county as a whole tend to be located in the more urbanised areas.

Education

- > In the lowest twenty wards in the county with the lowest educational attainment performance, four are in Banbury and two are in Bicester.
- > Only six of the wards in Oxfordshire have post-16 staying on at school rates below 50%, with one in Banbury and one in Bicester.
- > As a whole, has a proportion of students higher than the south-east average.
- > In Banbury Ruscote ward more than two in five adults have no qualifications and in Banbury Neithrop, more than one in three adults have no qualifications.

Low Income:

- > Has a proportion of people on low income approximately equal to the Oxfordshire average (4.8% compared to Oxfordshire's 4.9%).
- > Has four of the ten wards with the highest proportion of people living on a low income
- > Has the highest rate in Oxfordshire of people under 20 living on a low income, equal to the average for the South-East region as a whole.
- > The worst ranked ward in Oxfordshire lies in the district, Banbury Grimsbury and Castle, with a proportion of people under 20 living on a low income of 10.3% over four and a half times higher than the county average.
- > Of the ten wards in Oxfordshire with the highest proportions of people under 20 living on a low income, three wards lie within Cherwell.

Health:

- > Two out of the nine wards in the county with higher proportions of their population defined as unhealthy than the England average are in Banbury.
- > Majority of wards with the highest proportion of people needing higher rates of care are located in Banbury and Bicester.

Safer Roads

In a countywide context, Cherwell suffers from relatively few major road safety problems. There is, however, one site at which accident rates are higher than average, and the County Council plans to investigate solutions to this problem as an urgent priority.

Actions for Safer Roads in Cherwell

The actions for safer roads, as outlined in Chapter three, are:

<i>Action 1</i>	Improve the design and layout of the highway where necessary to address known safety problems
<i>Action 2</i>	Better management of vehicle speeds
<i>Action 3</i>	Provide effective road safety education, training and publicity
<i>Action 4</i>	Ensure that new development is located in such a way as to prevent road safety problems from being created or exacerbated

Developing Solutions to Road Safety Problems

By their nature, road safety problems and their causes vary enormously from one site to another. The actions above represent general approaches to reducing casualties, both at specific sites such as those listed below and more widely across the network.

In addressing the site-specific problems identified below, the Council will investigate carefully all possible causes of incidents, and use this information to develop appropriate solutions.

High Ranking Road Safety Problems in Cherwell

A44 Peartree Interchange

32 injury accidents (0 fatal, 4 serious and 29 slight) reported 2000-2004. The main cluster of accidents are shunt type collisions on the A44 northbound approach to the roundabout.

To deal with the safety problems that occur at this junction, the County Council will implement the following actions to solve the problem:

- > Improve the design and layout of the junction
- > Better management of vehicle speeds

If traffic levels in the district continue to grow, however, new road safety problems and issues are likely to arise. The nature of road safety is such that it is virtually impossible to meaningfully predict where these will occur. Accident reports will be continually monitored and assessed to ensure developing problems are tackled as swiftly as possible.

Better Air Quality

Air Quality in Cherwell is generally very good, and it is likely that all national Air Quality Objectives will be met across the district.

Actions for Better Air Quality in Cherwell

Cherwell currently has no Air Quality Management Areas designated. In order to prevent any area in Cherwell reaching levels where a designation is required the following actions for better air quality, as outlined in Chapter three, are:

<i>Action 1</i>	Develop and maintain the county's road network to reduce the impact of bottlenecks (including roadworks) and make better use of existing road capacity to improve the flow of traffic through polluted areas
<i>Action 2</i>	Make public transport faster, more reliable and more user-friendly
<i>Action 3</i>	Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient
<i>Action 4</i>	Enable people to make better informed travel choices
<i>Action 5</i>	Manage parking to support transport improvements and initiatives
<i>Action 6</i>	Find ways to encourage the use of vehicles with lower exhaust emissions
<i>Action 7</i>	Restrict vehicles from areas of poor air quality
<i>Action 8</i>	Provide alternative routes for traffic to avoid areas of poor air quality
<i>Action 9</i>	Ensure that new development is planned in such a way as to minimise air quality problems being created or exacerbated

Developing Solutions for Air Quality Problems

Where pollutant concentrations exceed national standards, local authorities are required to declare an Air Quality Management Area covering the affected streets. Authorities must then develop an Air Quality Action Plan which sets out how they reduce concentrations of the pollutants concerned to meet national air quality objectives.

All designated air quality problems in Oxfordshire are caused predominantly by road traffic emissions, so Air Quality Action Plans in Oxfordshire will focus on reducing pollution from traffic using the actions identified in the table above.

Improving the Street Environment

Actions for Improving the Street Environment in Cherwell

The actions for improving the street environment, as outlined in Chapter three, are:

<i>Action 1</i>	Improve the design and layout of the streets with a poor quality environment, using high quality materials and street furniture wherever possible
<i>Action 2</i>	Restrict vehicles from areas of poor street environment
<i>Action 3</i>	Make walking and cycling safer and more convenient
<i>Action 4</i>	Enable people to make better informed travel choices
<i>Action 5</i>	Manage parking to support transport improvements and initiatives
<i>Action 6</i>	Provide alternative routes for traffic to avoid streets with a poor environment

Developing Solutions to Street Environment Problems

By their nature, street environment problems and their causes vary enormously from one site to another. The actions above represent general approaches to improving the attractiveness and ambience of streets.

In addressing the street environment problems identified below, the Council will review the quality of the streets concerned, their transport function, and their current and potential usage as a public space. The Council will use this assessment to develop appropriate solutions based on the actions outlined in the table above.

The following areas have been identified as being where transport contributes to an overall problem in quality of public space:

Bicester Market Square

The Market Square is part of the main through route of the town centre. There is both a high vehicle and pedestrian flow through the square, which leads to conflicts and safety issues between the two modes. A car park in the centre of the Square also adds to the safety problems of the area. The footways are unattractive and in some places are narrow in width.

Kidlington High Street

Most of Kidlington High Street has already been transformed into an area of pedestrian priority with a high quality surface and street furniture. A short section of the road remains as a traffic route with a noticeably lower standard of surface materials.

Banbury Market Place

Banbury Market Place is one of the main focal points of the town centre as the market is held there twice a week. Currently the square functions as a car park on non-market days, with deliveries made to shops around the square on a daily basis. With such competing uses conflicts frequently arise, however plans to pedestrianise the square and provide a one-way system around the edge of the square for delivery vehicles, would aim to address this and create a better quality of environment for pedestrians. Further consultation work is currently being undertaken in an effort to take these plans forward.

Banbury Rail Station

The Banbury Station building has already undergone a facelift to create a modern entrance to the ticket office, waiting area and platforms. It has been recognised that in addition to these improvements there is scope to provide a viable transport interchange to the front of the station in the existing forecourt area. Few buses currently stop at the station as it lacks the facilities to make this possible, whereas it is believed that if such amenities could be provided there could be potential for some modal shift amongst commuters to the station. The forecourt area could be rationalised to include enhanced interchange facilities for buses, including a new link from the south of the town, better walking and cycling links/facilities, a separate area for taxis and kiss and ride, and more disabled parking.

Integrated Delivery

The County Council recognises the importance of tackling transport problems of all kinds in a strategic and integrated way to ensure the full impacts of proposed schemes and initiatives are fully understood. The Council has put in place two main mechanisms - the Transport Networks Review and Integrated Transport Strategies - for ensuring schemes and initiatives developed in response to the problems above are considered as strategic elements of a package wherever appropriate, rather than measures implemented in isolation from one another.

Intra-urban Networks: Integrated Transport Strategies (ITS)

ITSs have been developed for many of Oxfordshire's larger towns and for Oxford. In Cherwell, Banbury and Bicester have Integrated Transport Strategies. The role of the ITSs in the second Local Transport Plan period will be to help the Council deliver the five objectives of the Plan in an integrated, efficient and cost-effective way. To this end, the ITSs will have three key functions:

- > Ensuring transport problems in larger urban areas are addressed in an integrated way, recognising the complex inter-relationships that often exist between different parts of an urban transport network;
- > Providing an established structure for consultation with local communities, stakeholders and local government partners;
- > Providing a framework for integration between transport and land use planning.

Inter-urban Networks: Transport Networks Review (TNR)

The TNR study was completed in October 2004, and has helped to guide the County Council's longer-term transport objectives and strategy, as set out in Chapter 1. The study has also provided a strategic framework for the development of schemes which are likely to impact significantly on the operation of the County's strategic transport network. In developing solutions to the problems outlined above, the methods and conclusions of the TNR will be referred to as necessary to ensure any wider network considerations are taken fully into account.

A number of the problems identified in Cherwell are part of the access to Oxford problems that are the reason that the County Council has developed the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area.

A major part of the strategy for Cherwell will be the protection of more minor roads from excessive traffic, particularly where traffic is using these roads to bypass congestion locations on the major road network. The Transport Networks Review recommended measures on the following roads:

- > B430 (A34 to M40) - Downgrade to unclassified with weight limit
- > A4095 (Bicester to A4260) - downgrade to B road with weight limit
- > B4030 (A44 to A4260) - weight limit
- > B4027 (A44 to A40) - downgrade to unclassified road with weight limit
- > A4260 (A4095 to A40) - downgrade to B road.

Heavy goods vehicle traffic will be directed away from using the A44 between Oxford and Evesham. This traffic will be directed instead along the A40 and A429. In the longer term the A44 may be considered for a change in status, providing that the congestion problems along the A40 route between Oxford and Witney can be resolved.

Cross-boundary Issues

Warwickshire & Northamptonshire

The southern end of both of the counties look towards Banbury as their main shopping and service centre, it is therefore essential that the accessibility strategies of the three counties are co-ordinated to ensure that boundaries do not become a barrier to these important movements.

Buckinghamshire

Developments proposed for Aylesbury and Milton Keynes are likely to have significant impacts on the network of Cherwell. This is especially true for routes such as the A41, A421 and A4421 between the M40 and the growth areas.

Oxfordshire County Council has and will continue to work closely with Buckinghamshire County Council to ensure that the East-West Rail scheme (as outlined in the Rail Strategy in chapter four) is implemented to provide an important link through the growth areas and relieve some of the congestion hotspots that are currently experienced in the vicinity of the proposed route.