

# Chapter 11

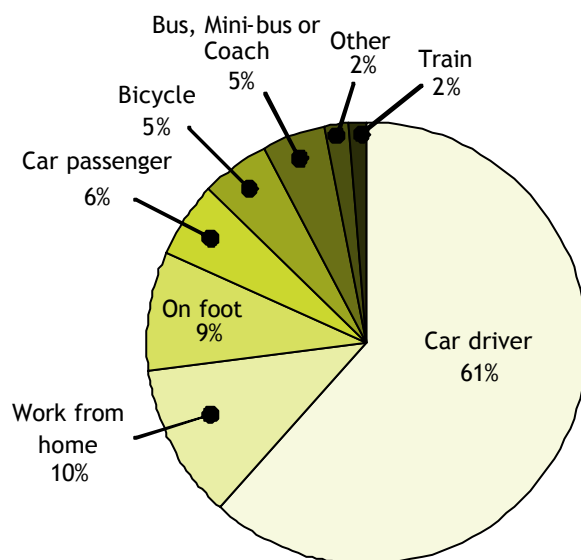
## West Oxfordshire

### Background

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West Oxfordshire is the most rural district in Oxfordshire with a population of approximately 96,000. The town of Witney is the administrative centre and had a population of 23,000 in 2001. Only two other towns in West Oxfordshire exceed a population of 5,000: Carterton (12,000), the home of RAF Brize Norton, and Chipping Norton (6,000). The remainder of the population is dispersed over 80 Parishes with populations varying between 40 and 4,000.

According to the 2001 Census data there are 50,000 residents of West Oxfordshire in employment; their usual mode of travel to work has been broken down by mode as shown below:



### Development Challenges in West Oxfordshire

West Oxfordshire is a very attractive and mainly rural area where pressure for development is high. The approach adopted in West Oxfordshire is to locate new housing and jobs where there is (or can be provided) good access

to a wide range of services and facilities. Development will be concentrated into a few locations and this approach provides the best opportunity of securing the necessary supporting infrastructure and services at economic cost, funded wholly or in part by the development itself. Outside the areas specifically allocated for development, further new development will be strictly limited.

The main transport challenge in West Oxfordshire over the foreseeable future is the pressure placed on the A40 and A44, and the demands of new housing on the surrounding transport network. New housing developments in the Witney will particularly impact upon the A40.

### Housing growth assumptions

#### 2006 - 2016

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2006 - 2016 proposes 3600 additional dwellings in West Oxfordshire between 2006 and 2016. These dwellings are expected to be distributed approximately as follows:

- > Witney - 2000 dwellings
- > Carterton - 2000 dwellings
- > Other (within Central Oxfordshire Sub-region) - 250
- > Other (outside Central Oxfordshire Sub-region) - 250.

#### 2016 - 2026

The County Council has recommended to the South East England Regional Assembly that an additional 2200 dwellings be provided in West Oxfordshire between 2016 and 2026, but this figure is yet to be agreed by the Government.

### West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan details the specific locations of where future housing and employment developments should be located in the district.

The Local Plan has proposed that the housing development in Witney should largely be located in the North East Witney Development area, Burford Road (North), the West Witney Development Area, Newland, Cogges and the North Curbridge Development Area.

Existing and committed employment to the West of Witney requires a new junction on the A40 on Downs Road to protect existing residential areas from the employment generated traffic. The county council fully supports provision of this junction and has secured contributions from development towards the scheme. Despite this, existing problems are not sufficient magnitude to make this scheme a priority (relative to others in the county) during this plan period. However the scheme would be taken forward during the Plan if sufficient additional funding can be secured, from further development in the area or other sources.

In terms of employment sites in West Oxfordshire, the Local Plan recommends that new employment is distributed in both rural and urban areas to ensure that both the urban and rural economies remain healthy.

The objectives for transport and movement in West Oxfordshire are to:

- > Guide new development to locations where the need to travel, particularly by private car, can be minimised, and where the opportunity exists for an increasing number of trips to be made on foot, by cycle and by public transport;
- > Protect and improve the infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport, and to ensure that new development include appropriate facilities to offer people an alternative to car travel;
- > Maintain access to a transport network for all people and goods without degradation of the environment recognising that within a rural area the car will remain a main means of transport for people.

In line with these objectives, the Plan states that development proposals which would generate significant levels of traffic will not be permitted in locations where travel by means other than the private car is not a realistic alternative.

The Local Plan identifies specific transport objectives for Witney to supplement the district-wide objectives:

- > To introduce measures to minimise the impact of traffic on the town;
- > To secure a network of roads which provides for the satisfactory and safe circulation of traffic within the town with effective links to the primary road network but which minimises any detrimental effect on the character and amenities of Witney; and
- > To reduce and/or slow traffic flows in environmentally sensitive parts of the town, particularly the town centre.

## Community Strategy for West Oxfordshire

Working Together for the Community - the Community Strategy for West Oxfordshire was prepared by the West Oxfordshire Partnership.

The main issues relevant to this Plan are highlighted below:

- > Crime - this includes an aim to make the roads of West Oxfordshire safer for all road users;
- > Education and employment - one of the five main aims of the district's Economic Strategy is 'Transport and communications';
- > Environmental issues - one of the eight headings in the Local Agenda 21 strategy is 'Transport and Traffic';

- > Health and social issues - one of the issues under the heading of information exchange and partnership working is 'Rural volunteers' transport to enable access to health and social care.'; and
- > Young people - one of the aims is to promote social inclusion and access to services and one mechanism to achieve this will be by improving transport links.

### Transport Network

West Oxfordshire is well served by the county road network with the A40 dominating the main east-west movements. However, there are significant congestion problems caused by demand for travel along this route. The A44 is another important route for traffic heading to Evesham, Stratford-upon-Avon and beyond via the towns of Woodstock and Chipping Norton.

West Oxfordshire has only limited access to direct passenger train services. The Cotswold line crosses West Oxfordshire, providing services between Oxford and Worcester, Great Malvern and beyond, serving the stations of: Ascott-under-Wychwood, Charlbury, Combe, Finstock, Hanborough, Kingham and Shipton. At present the line suffers from capacity restraint and the County Council supports the further development of the line in partnership with the Cotswolds and Malvern Transport Partnership.

The remainder of this chapter sets out the identified high priority problems in West Oxfordshire. For most of these problems, solutions have been identified (based on the actions identified in chapter three and the related strategies in chapter 4) for implementation over the next five years. However, given that funding is finite, there are some problems for which detailed solutions have not been developed and programmed within the timescale of this Plan.

### Tackling Congestion

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Oxfordshire's worst congestion problem is located in West Oxfordshire, yet aside from this the district has just a few localised congestion problems which are largely on routes into the district's main settlements. The County Council intends to focus its efforts over the Plan period on the following congestion hotspots in West Oxfordshire. These priorities have been identified through the prioritisation system outlined in chapter five using the following evidence:

- > Traffic flow data
- > Approximate two-way bus flows
- > Current congestion levels and future pressures from Transport Networks Review and local modelling.

## A40 Witney to Oxford

### Problem

Congestion on the A40 between Witney and Oxford is amongst the most severe transport problems in Oxfordshire. Flows on the A40 single-carriageway between Witney and Oxford are approximately 23,000 - 29,000 vehicles per day. The high level of congestion on this route results in many vehicles, including the frequent buses between the Witney area and Oxford, taking an alternative, less-direct route to avoid the congestion and subsequently journey time delays. The following bus services are affected in this way:

- > Services between Oxford and Witney (20 buses per hour)
- > Services between Carterton and Oxford (5 buses per hour)

The main cause of congestion is insufficient capacity at the Wolvercote and Cutteslowe roundabouts, but Eynsham Roundabout and the signals at Cassington also add to the congestion. Westbound congestion is at its worst during the evening peak and is caused primarily by insufficient junction capacity at the Eynsham Roundabout and insufficient link capacity between Eynsham and Witney.

### Proposed solutions

Scheme	Cost	Expected Completion	Details and expected impact on problem
A40 Cassington signals	£325,000	2006/07	Redesign of existing signals to reduce delays to A40 traffic and increase bus priority.
Eynsham Premium Bus Route - Phase 1	£534,000	2007/08	Bus priority measures to increase the attractiveness and reliability of bus services between Witney, Eynsham and Oxford (via Botley). This will help to reduce pressure on the A40 by encouraging local journeys from Witney and Eynsham to Oxford to be made by bus.
A40 North of Oxford - Cutteslowe roundabout improvements	£TBC	2011-16	Redesign of key ring road roundabout to reduce congestion on A40 and improve bus priority. This scheme is expected to help reduce eastbound queuing on the A40.

Wolvercote roundabout improvements	£TBC	2011-16	Redesign of key ring road roundabout to reduce congestion on A40 and improve bus priority. This scheme is expected to help reduce eastbound queuing on the A40.
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### Bridge Street, Witney

#### Problem

The main access point into the town centre from the north and east, Bridge Street carries over 25,000 vehicles per day. Bridge Street's congestion is continuous throughout the day, but is at its worst during both the morning and evening peak. Bus services that are delayed by this congestion include:

- > Services between Oxford and Witney (22 buses per hour)
- > Services between Carterton and Oxford (6 buses per hour)

Three mini-roundabouts in under a kilometre also add to the congestion problems faced on this stretch of road.

#### Proposed solutions

Scheme	Cost	Expected Completion	Details and expected impact on problem
Bridge Street Area measures	£521,000	2009/10	Measures to encourage traffic to use Cogges Link and not Bridge Street and provide enhanced facilities for buses.
Cogges Link	£15,792,000	2010/11	New relief road to remove traffic from the town centre and Bridge Street in particular. The scheme is expected to reduce congestion significantly and also improve air quality.

### Burford High Street

#### Problem

Situated on the A361, between its junction with the A40 to the south and a narrow traffic-signalled single lane medieval bridge to the north, Burford High Street experiences traffic flows between 11,000 and 13,000 vehicles daily.

The high flows and bottleneck at the bridge lead to congestion occurring frequently on the High Street, especially at the approaches to the bridge, which can extend the whole length of the road through the town.

#### Proposed solutions

The Transport Networks Review recommended that traffic management and lorry routing be investigated to reduce the impact of traffic on Burford

High Street. If suitable schemes can be identified these will be implemented as part of the TNR routeing measures programme. If these are not sufficient to eliminate the problem then bypass options will be investigated for the longer term.

## Delivering Accessibility

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Accessibility mapping has shown that much of Oxfordshire shares broadly similar accessibility characteristics, particularly with regard to rural bus accessibility. The notable exceptions in West Oxfordshire are:

- > By car, West Oxfordshire has the poorest access to a major centre of all the districts;
- > In the rural areas of West Oxfordshire, accessibility is poor especially for those reliant on public transport; and
- > In the area of access to work, West Oxfordshire suffers the longest journey times to selected places of work by car.

### Access

#### *Supermarkets*

- > Accessibility to supermarkets by car is generally good, with half the district within 15 minutes of a supermarket; and
- > Depending upon the time of the day, roughly half the population of West Oxfordshire is with a 30 minute bus journey of a supermarket.

#### *Major Centres*

- > By car, most of the district is within 40 minutes of a major centre; and
- > Less than 5% of the district is within 60 minutes of a major centres by bus. Remainder is either more than 60 minutes or is not served bus.

#### *Town Centres*

- > Over half of district is within 10 minutes of a town centre by car and the remainder within 25 minutes; and
- > By bus roughly 30% of the district is within a 60 minute bus journey.

#### *Further Education*

- > Like the rest of the county, nearly 100% of the district has access to further education by car within 25 minutes; and
- > About 60% of those living in the rural areas have no bus access under 60 minutes of higher education.

#### *Primary and Secondary Schools*

- > Similarly, nearly 100% of the district's population has access to primary schools within a 15 minute period by car;

- > Access is less good by the conventional bus network from the villages, with about 50% being within a 40 minute bus journey;
- > Nearly 100% of the district's population has access to their nearest secondary school by car of under 25 minutes; and
- > About 60% of the district that have no access to secondary schools by conventional bus services, but these are filled in by the contracted school transport.

### *Employment*

- > About half of the population are within a 10 minutes car journey of selected places of employment and 50% of ward places of employment;
- > Nearly the entire population is within a 20 minute car journey of both ward based and their selected employment sites; and
- > About half of district's population have access to employment of under 60 minutes by bus.

### *Healthcare*

- > The entire 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 and in Banbury;
- > Deprived areas which have poor access to hospitals include those in Charlbury and Chipping Norton. In addition there is also poor access from other settlements including Woodstock;
- > Nearly everybody lives within 20 minutes of a GP surgery by car;
- > About 25% of the population is within 60 minutes of a GP surgery by bus;
- > Over 50% of the population lives within 10 minutes of a dentist with the remainder being within 25 minutes of a dentist by car; and
- > Roughly, 50% of the District is within 60 minutes of a dentist by bus.

## Social Exclusion

Oxfordshire County Council Social Inclusion Group commissioned Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion to profile Oxfordshire to give a detailed picture of social exclusion across the county. The main results for West Oxfordshire were:

### *Health*

- > Many of the smaller settlements, but also including Witney, have areas with relatively high proportions of people with limiting long-term illness, relative to the rest of the county.
- > The rate of informal care provision stands at 9.2%, just below the England average of 9.9%.

### *Low Income*



- > The proportion of people living on a low income is 4.0% which is below the county average of 4.9%.
- > The proportion of people under 20 living on a low income is well below the England, regional and county averages.
- > However, of the ten wards in Oxfordshire with the highest proportions of people under 20 living on a low income four lie in the district.
- > Only one of the twenty wards in the County with the highest proportion of people aged over 60 and living on a low income is in the district.
- > Has the lowest number in the county of children eligible for free school meals, below half the England average and significantly below the south-east average.

#### *Education*

- > Witney has a high proportion of full-time students.
- > Within Witney there are also areas with relatively high levels of adults with no qualifications.

#### *Deprivation*

- > There are no areas that are in the most deprived 10% across the county.
- > However there are there are pockets in the district that are experiencing high levels of multiple deprivation including in Witney and Chipping Norton.

#### *Work*

- > Has a worklessness rate of 3.3%, below the county level of 4.2%.
- > The areas with relatively high claim rates tend to be located in the more urbanised areas including parts of Chipping Norton.
- > West Oxfordshire has levels of people workless through unemployment that are below the England, regional and county averages.
- > Of the twenty wards in the county with the highest rates of people workless through sickness there is only one, Chipping Norton ward.

### **Proposed solutions**

During the course of the LTP the County Council will be developing schemes and initiatives to tackle areas of poor accessibility and social exclusion in West Oxfordshire. These will be in the form of Local Accessibility Assessments and will be tailored to the individual areas concerned. These local assessments will include a review of local evidence and data held by partners.

*Access to Health from Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Charlbury and Woodstock*

Like many other areas of the District, the five largest settlements in the District, Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Charlbury and Woodstock all have poor access to healthcare, reflecting the concentration of hospitals in Banbury and Oxford. Many of the smaller settlements of West Oxfordshire, but also including Witney have areas with relatively high proportions of people with limiting long-term illnesses, relative to the rest of the county. The work involved in looking at access to health for West Oxfordshire is planned to begin in the autumn of 2008 and be continue in the spring of 2010.

## Safer Roads

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### *Problems*

There are a range of locations and routes in West Oxfordshire where accidents occur with a higher than average frequency. The County Council routinely investigates all such sites and routes to establish whether or not measures could be implemented to improve safety. It is not possible to identify all such locations in this Plan, so only locations with a particularly high frequency and severity of accidents have been highlighted below.

### *Proposed solutions*

In addressing the site and route problems identified below (and other sites where value for money casualty reduction solutions can be developed), the Council will investigate carefully all possible causes of incidents, and use this information to develop appropriate solutions. The County Council has included an allocation of around £2.8 million in its LTP spending programme for such improvements.

Location	Type	Accidents	Action
A415 from Newbridge to the Standlake turn	Rural route	25 injury accidents (7 fatal or serious and 18 slight)	Monitoring/Further investigation
A44 Salford Hill (North-west of Chipping Norton)	Site	24 injury accidents (6 fatal or serious and 18 slight)	Monitoring/Further investigation
Curbridge to Brize Norton Road	Site	16 injury accidents (6 fatal or serious and 10 slight)	Monitoring/Further investigation

## Better Air Quality

A detailed screening process (based on traffic volumes, speeds, types of traffic and the location of points of relevant exposure) carried out on the whole road network in West Oxfordshire revealed a small number of locations where air pollutant levels may have exceeded national air quality objectives. Detailed monitoring and modelling of air quality at these locations has concluded that there are 2 locations in the district where national air quality objectives are exceeded - these are highlighted in the table below. The only air quality objective that is exceeded in West Oxfordshire is the national objective for the annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide, which states that levels should not exceed 40 microgrammes per cubic metre at points of relevant exposure.

Location	Measured NO <sub>2</sub> levels in 2003 - not necessarily representative of relevant exposure (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	National air quality objectives exceeded at points of relevant exposure
<i>Witney</i>		
<b>Bridge Street</b>	<b>54.6</b>	2005 objective for annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide
Mill Street	50.3	None
Early Road	16.1	None
Staple Hall	33.7	None
<i>Chipping Norton</i>		
<b>Horsefair</b>	<b>56.4</b>	2005 objective for annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide
West Street	37.1	None
Coopers Close	14.2	None
Withers Way	15.9	None

*Figures from West Oxfordshire District Council*

### *Proposed solutions*

Where pollutant concentrations exceed national objective levels, 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 intend to reduce concentrations of the pollutants concerned to meet national air quality objectives.

The national objective for the annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide is likely to be exceeded in Bridge Street in Witney, and Horsefair in

Chipping Norton. Air Quality Management Areas were declared for both in 2005, and Air Quality Action Plans for both are being developed jointly by the County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council, in the context of the County Council's wider transport strategies. The Action Plans are currently in unpublished draft form and are therefore not available for inclusion as part of this document. However, the County Council has allocated funding for Air Quality Action Plan measures in its LTP programme.

In Witney, one specific scheme that is already in the Council's LTP programme and is very likely to be part of the Action Plan for Witney is the Cogges Link road, details of which are included in the table below.

Scheme	Cost	Expected Completion	Details and expected impact on problem
Chipping Norton Town Centre Measures	£473,000	2007/08	Measures to improve air quality in Chipping Norton as part of the emerging Air Quality Action Plan.
Bridge Street Area measures - Witney	£521,000	2009/10	Measures to encourage traffic to use Cogges Link and not Bridge Street.
Cogges Link - Witney	£15,792,000	2010/11	New relief road to remove traffic from the town centre and Bridge Street in particular. The scheme is expected to improve air quality significantly and also reduce congestion.

## Improving the Street Environment

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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.

## Witney High Street

### *Problem*

The central area of Witney is an area of outstanding environmental quality which has expanded considerably in recent years to meet the increasing demands from the growth of the town without losing the strong local architectural traditions. The High Street is still dominated by traffic, impairing both the attractiveness of the town centre and its economic and commercial vitality.

### *Proposed solutions*

The road proposals for the Cogges Link Road and West End Link should enable traffic management measures to be undertaken which can reduce or slow traffic on the historic town centre streets, improving the environmental quality of the central area especially for shoppers and visitors.

Scheme	Cost	Expected Completion	Details and expected impact on problem
Bridge Street Area measures	£521,000	2009/10	Measures to encourage traffic to use Cogges Link and not Bridge Street - will reinforce the benefits outlined above.
Cogges Link	£15,792,000	2010/11	New relief road to remove traffic from the town centre and Bridge Street in particular. As well as improving air quality and reducing congestion, this scheme will significantly improve the street environment in Bridge Street and the town centre.

## Integrated Delivery

The County Council has put in place two main mechanisms - the Transport Networks Review and Integrated Transport Strategies - for ensuring measures developed in response to the problems above are considered as strategic elements of an integrated package wherever appropriate, rather than in isolation.

### **Intra-urban Networks: Integrated Transport Strategies (ITS)**

ITSs have been developed for many of Oxfordshire's larger towns and for Oxford. In West Oxfordshire, Witney has an Integrated Transport Strategy. 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; and
- > Providing a framework for integration between transport and land use planning. ITSs enable the County Council to anticipate and minimise the transport impacts of new development. To help do this, the Council will continue to secure funding for transport improvements needed as a result of development. Any such improvements will be implemented as part of the LTP spending programme.

### 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.

The Transport Networks Review recommended that measures be taken on a number of roads in West Oxfordshire to protect them from excessive traffic, particularly where traffic is using them to bypass congestion locations on the major road network. These were

- > A424 (Burford to Stow on the Wold) - downgrade to B road with weight limit (proposal will need to be co-ordinated with Gloucestershire County Council)
- > B4027 (A44 to A40) - downgrade to unclassified with weight limit
- > B4030 (A44 to A4260) - weight limit
- > A4095 (A40 to A420) - downgrade to B road.

The B4477 links Carterton with the A40. Consideration will be given to upgrading this road to an A class road to reflect the increase in size and importance of the town and the improvements that have been made to this route in association with recent housing developments.

New Bridge is one of the oldest bridges in the county, dating from the 12th Century and with no modification it is still carrying modern traffic across the Thames. It has been assessed as substandard and recent inspections show that it is deteriorating fast. The bridge is classified as a Scheduled Ancient

Monument; this, combined with the narrow road and poor vertical alignment, means the bridge cannot be strengthened and that a new alignment for the road bypassing Newbridge is required. Construction for this is proposed for 2009/10.

