

Chapter 5

Identifying Priorities for Action

Chapter Overview

This chapter sets out in more detail the process that the County Council has used to identify and prioritise Oxfordshire's worst transport problems to ensure that the transport investment programme includes the best value for money schemes.

The objectives of this Local Transport Plan will only be achieved if the actions and strategies set out in Chapters 3 and 4 are focused on the right places, and if solutions are developed based on thorough analysis of the available evidence. To ensure that the Council's investment in transport contributes as much as possible to achieving the objectives of this Local Transport Plan, the County Council has developed a prioritisation process grounded in a sound and growing evidence base to identify priorities for action over the next five years.

The County Council has been very keen that its second LTP should not simply be a repackaged continuation of its first LTP. The system outlined in this chapter has helped the Council ensure that, of the schemes developed during LTP1 but programmed for implementation in LTP2, only those schemes still likely to contribute significantly and directly to the objectives of the second LTP are taken forward. The system has of course also generated new schemes and initiatives.

The prioritisation process has been used to assess congestion, air quality, road safety and street environment problems. Accessibility has not been included as it has become clear that accessibility problems are too diverse and complex to be ranked and prioritised in the same way as congestion, air quality, road safety and street environment problems. The Framework Accessibility Strategy takes into account these complexities and has been used to assess the relative priority of accessibility problems.

Oxfordshire's process for prioritising transport investment consists of two key stages, which are summarised below and in Flow Diagrams 4 and 5:

1. Problem Identification and Prioritisation, consisting of:

- > A review of congestion, road safety, air quality, and street environment problems in the county, drawing on a range of sources.
 - > The development of a systematic problem assessment framework, which allows these identified problems to be scored against a range of criteria.
 - > The application of this assessment process to the full list of identified problems, resulting in a list of priorities for investment.
2. Solution identification: detailed investigation of problems and their causes, and identification of solutions which deliver the best improvements possible per pound spent.

The results of this process form the basis of chapters 7 to 11 and 13.

Stage 1: Problem Assessment

Most approaches to the prioritisation of transport measures focus on the assessment and comparison of solutions or schemes. This has usually meant taking a list of potential schemes (pedestrian crossings, cycle tracks, road improvements etc) and prioritising them by assessing the benefits they will deliver against the costs associated with implementing them. This process is undoubtedly a critical part of the process of building a programme that delivers value for money. However, this relies upon the prior identification of where to focus scheme development and the selection of the most appropriate solution. It assumes that a 'wish list' of appropriate schemes already exists and that all a prioritisation system needs to do is decide between them. In practice this is rarely the case so what is really required is a system that *generates* priorities for action and schemes. The Council's emphasis has therefore been on the identification and prioritisation of transport *problems*, leading to the development of schemes in response to the highest priority problems.

To work as part of a strategy, all transport improvements - whether road capacity increases, improvements to public transport, measures to encourage more walking and cycling or any other initiative - must be implemented in locations where their introduction will directly contribute towards the resolution of a significant identified problem. For schemes implemented as part of this Local Transport Plan, a "problem" is defined as a recognised congestion, accessibility, road safety, air quality or street environment problem.

The best value for money schemes are likely to be those that address the biggest problems most successfully for the least amount of money. To deliver value for money schemes it is therefore essential, in the first instance, to get an accurate picture of what the transport problems are and how bad they are relative to one another.

The second Local Transport Plan provides an excellent opportunity to make this process rigorous and focused on tangible outcomes. The County Council has taken up this opportunity by developing a comprehensive process, based on its five LTP objectives, for prioritising transport investment.

The Problem Prioritisation Framework

The most important part of the County Council's prioritisation process is the framework through which the county's transport problems are assessed and prioritised. At this stage it was considered that the assessment should be relatively straightforward and based on existing data sources. Rather than attempt to quantify the absolute level of any problem, the intention is to categorise the relative priority that it should have within the Council's programme as compared to others within the county.

Where problems have been identified as priorities for action within the Plan then a more detailed and quantified assessment will be needed, including any required additional data collection, to ensure that the best value for money solutions are implemented. At this stage, the impact of schemes on the environment, wider local policies and planning objectives will also be assessed. The table overleaf shows the criteria used to assess the identified potential problems.

An initial list of problems for consideration in this process from across the county was developed internally within the County Council. This has formed the basis for the assessment reported below and in subsequent chapters. The County Council has sought opinions from stakeholders (including District and local councils, members of the public, and other organisations) on whether there are any problems which have been missed by the Council's problem identification methods but no significant omissions have been suggested.

The results of this process are that the identified problems have been split into four categories:

- > **High Priority** - the County Council will seek to identify and, where practically possible, implement proposals to resolve these problems during the second Local Transport Plan period. It is recognised, though, that some of the problems identified may require the development of schemes, or programmes of schemes, that cannot be delivered within this relatively short timescale.
- > **Medium Priority** - the County Council will aim to identify solutions to the medium priority problems within the second Local Transport Plan period and implement solutions to these where this is practically possible and where this will not prejudice the ability to resolve high priority problems.

Problem Type	Criterion	Significance
<i>Tackling Congestion</i>	Length of road affected by the congestion	Proxy for amount of delay experienced by road users - longer stretches score more highly than short stretches
	Duration of congestion	Indication of how long the stretch of road identified is congested for on a typical day
	Traffic Flow	Taken together these give an indication of the total number of people affected by delay
	Number of bus services	
	Access to Oxford	Recognises Oxford's importance as a service and employment hub for the county and region.
<i>Delivering Accessibility</i>	Ongoing work on accessibility has revealed that accessibility problems are too diverse and complex to be ranked and prioritised in the same way as congestion, air quality, road safety and street environment problems. The Framework Accessibility Strategy takes into account these complexities and has been used to assess the relative priority of accessibility problems.	
<i>Safer Roads</i>	Number of reported injury accidents in last five years	Shows frequency of accidents
	Number of people killed or seriously injured at location or on stretch of road	Shows how severe accidents are, when they occur. This criterion ensures that locations with relatively infrequent, but severe, accidents are not overlooked.
<i>Better Air Quality</i>	Severity - based on monitoring data from district councils	Areas designated as Air Quality Management Areas are given priority.
	Extent - length of road affected by problem	Proxy for the likely number of people exposed to exceedences.
<i>Improving the Street Environment</i>	Pedestrian flow	Proxy for the potential of the street to become a vibrant public space.
	Public access to property	Proportion of properties to which public have access (inc. shops, pubs, restaurants etc)
	Traffic flow	Provides an indication of the extent to which motorised traffic is intruding on a public space, and creating an unpleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
	Quality of existing streetscape	Subjective judgement, assessing the quality of existing street environment.

In this plan, only solutions for high and medium priority problems have been identified. Clearly some lower priority problems will be resolved wholly or partly by schemes designed to tackle higher priority problems but reference to those is not specifically made in this plan.

- > **Low Priority** - in general the County Council will seek to implement solutions to the problems in this category in the second Local Transport Plan period where doing this will also contribute to the resolution of problems in the higher categories. For example where a low priority street environment problem affects the same area as a medium or high priority congestion problem then the solution devised would need to address both congestion and street environment issues.
- > **Non-priority** - A large proportion of the problems assessed did not score at a level where it would represent good value for money to consider the inclusion of solutions to them within the LTP programme. These will be kept under review in case the scale of the problem deteriorates through the Plan period. As with low priority problems, any opportunities to resolve these as part of schemes for higher priority problems will be taken.

Identified Transport Problems

The worst transport problems identified through the process outlined above are listed below. The full results of the problem identification and prioritisation process, and the details on these and the other priority problems, form the basis of chapters 6 to 11.

Highest rating problems from Prioritisation Process

Congestion problems

District	Location
<i>High priority</i>	
West Oxfordshire	A40 - Witney to Oxford
Oxford	London Road
Oxford	Abingdon Road
Oxford	Banbury Road
Cherwell	A34 - Oxford to M40
Vale of White Horse	A415 Marcham Road, Abingdon
Cherwell	A41 - King's End, Bicester to M40
Vale of White Horse	Oxford Ring Road - Hinksey Hill to Heyford Hill
Oxford	Botley Road, east of railway bridge

Cherwell	A4165 - Cutteslowe to Kidlington
South Oxfordshire	A40 - Shotover Estate to Oxford Ring Road
Vale of White Horse	A34 - Oxford to Abingdon
Cherwell	Oxford Road, Kidlington
Oxford	Woodstock Road

Medium priority

Oxford	Cowley Road - Plain to Between Towns Road
Vale of White Horse	A34 - Marcham Interchange to Milton Interchange
Oxford	Iffley Road - Plain to Cornwallis Road
Oxford	Headley Way
West Oxfordshire	Bridge Street, Witney
Oxford	Garsington Road - Hollow Way to Sandy Lane
Cherwell	High Street/George Street, Banbury
Oxford	Marston Road - St Clements to Cuckoo Lane
Oxford	Windmill Road
South Oxfordshire	A4130 - Bix to Henley
South Oxfordshire	A4155 Reading Road, Henley
Oxford	Marston Ferry Road
West Oxfordshire	Burford High Street
Cherwell	A44 - Yarnton to Wolvercote Roundabout
Oxford	Old Road - Warneford Lane to Windmill Road
Cherwell	Warwick Road/Southam Road Junction, Banbury
Oxford	Elsfield Way (Northern Bypass)

Air quality problems

District	Location
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High priority

Oxford	Oxford City Centre AQMA
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Medium priority

South Oxfordshire	Henley - Duke Street, Bell Street, Market Place, Hart Street, Reading Road
Vale of White Horse	Abingdon - High Street/Stert Street
West Oxfordshire	Witney - Bridge Street
West Oxfordshire	Chipping Norton - Horsefair

South Oxfordshire	Wallingford, High Street
Oxford	A40 Headington Roundabout

Road Safety - Rural routes

District	Location
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High priority

Cherwell	A361 - Wardington to county boundary north of Chacombe turn
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Medium priority

Cherwell	B430 - Ardley to M40
South Oxfordshire	B4009 - A40 to Lewknor village turn
Vale of White Horse	B4494 south of Wantage to county boundary
Vale of White Horse	B4507 - B4001 junction to B4000 junction
Vale of White Horse	A417 - A420 junction to B4508 junction
South Oxfordshire	B4009 - Britwell Salome to Benson

Road Safety - Urban routes

District	Location
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High priority

Oxford	B480 - Divinity Road to The Plain
Oxford	B4495 - B480 to Rymers Lane
Oxford	B480 - B4495 Barns Road to Divinity Road

Medium priority

Oxford	High Street
Oxford	A420 - London Road west of Windmill Road
Oxford	A420 - Seacourt Park and Ride to Hollybush Row

Road safety - sites

District	Location
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High priority

Oxford	A40 Headington Roundabout
West Oxfordshire	A44 Salford Hill
West Oxfordshire	Curbridge Road/Brize Norton Road
South Oxfordshire	Oxford Ring Road - Heyford Hill Roundabout
Vale of White Horse	A420 Botley Interchange Roundabout
Cherwell	A44 Peartree Interchange Roundabout

Medium priority

Oxford	Oxford Ring Road junction with Horspath Road
South Oxfordshire	A418 - west of A329 roundabout, Great Haseley
Oxford	Oxford Ring Road junction with Kiln Lane and Beaumont Road
South Oxfordshire	A40 Aston Hill

Street environment

District	Location
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High priority

Oxford	High Street - Longwall Street to Carfax
Oxford	Cowley Road - Magdalen Road to The Plain
Oxford	Queen Street
Oxford	George Street
Cherwell	Bicester - Market Square
Vale of White Horse	Abingdon - Stert Street/High Street/Bridge Street
Oxford	Banbury Road - Summertown
Oxford	London Road - Headington

Medium priority

Cherwell	Banbury - Market Place
South Oxfordshire	Didcot - Broadway,
Vale of White Horse	Wantage - Market Place
South Oxfordshire	Wallingford town centre
Oxford	Cowley Centre
South Oxfordshire	Watlington - Couching Street/High Street
Oxford	St Clements
West Oxfordshire	Witney - High Street
West Oxfordshire	Carterton - town centre

Accessibility priorities for action

The initial *Accession* results have highlighted a number of accessibility issues in particular locations in Oxfordshire. More detailed local assessment of each of these identified issues is being carried out and Local Accessibility Action Plans developed in partnership with local people, service providers and transport operators. The table below outlines the Council's programme for carrying out these assessments and developing action plans.

Date	Location	Service to which access is poor
Autumn 2005 - Spring 2006	Berinsfield	Health
	South and East Oxford	Health
Spring - autumn 2006	Rural Areas	Health and employment & skills
Spring 2007	Chinnor	Employment & skills
Spring 2008	Didcot	Health and employment & skills
Autumn 2008	Charlbury & Chipping Norton	Health
Spring 2009	Banbury	Health and employment & skills
	Bicester	Employment & skills
Spring - Autumn 2010	Witney/Carterton	Health
	Abingdon	Employment & skills
	South Oxford	Employment & skills
	Berinsfield	Employment & skills

Achieving value for money through problem prioritisation

This process will inform the County Council how to best direct its transport investment to achieve the best possible value for money - in particular:

- > It will allow the Council to compare problems of one type (e.g. congestion) directly with problems of another type (e.g. road safety) and assess their relative severity.
- > The scoring was carried out on a countywide basis. As a result, the process has led to a review of the geographical distribution of investment, both in terms of capital and revenue expenditure.
- > The problem prioritisation system reveals locations and routes where a range of problems coincide - for example, where congestion, road safety and air quality problems occur on the same stretch of road. Opportunities will be taken in such cases to identify a single solution or set of solutions to multiple problems at the same location, resulting in potentially exceptional value for money.
- > By incorporating weightings based on the results of public and stakeholder consultation the system allows the Council to modify the prioritisation to reflect local concerns and priorities.

Stage 2: Developing Value for Money Solutions

Having identified the problems that should be given priority it is then necessary to determine what would be the most appropriate solution. This will be covered in more detail in following chapters where the nature of the problems and the potential actions to resolve these are considered. In many cases there will not be a single scheme which, if implemented, would resolve the identified problems. This is particularly the case in the county's urban areas where it is likely that the most appropriate and effective course

will be through a package of measures which together can resolve a number of the problems. Flow Diagram 5 sets out in more detail the Council's approach to the identification of evidence-based, value for money solutions.

Lessons Learnt from LTP1

In developing and implementing solutions for the identified problems the County Council has taken note of a number of lessons learned from LTP1:

- > The need to focus on programmes and schemes that clearly and demonstrably affect key priorities and outcomes. Some transport projects, whilst locally desirable, do not provide sufficient benefits against key priorities and outcomes to merit inclusion relative to others - many of the schemes within the Council's former Community Safety programme (e.g. pedestrian crossings or non-safety related traffic calming) fall into this category;
- > Certain types of scheme, whilst a "good thing", provide relatively poor value for money, in part owing to high relative construction costs. These include:
 - Home Zones - the programme of these scheme agreed during LTP1 has now been curtailed and is not being pursued in this Plan
 - Inter urban/Rural cycle infrastructure schemes - some schemes developed during LTP1 are now not being taken forward;
 - Rural Traffic Management Schemes - including Quiet Lanes. Further schemes are not being pursued.
- > The need to set up a more robust system for the management of the programme as a whole based upon schemes delivering on the outcomes required to resolve identified problems; and
- > The need to amend the programme as require to react to observed outcomes throughout the LTP period.