

CABINET – 17 March 2020

Oxford Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan

Report by the Director of Planning and Place

RECOMMENDATION

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

Executive Summary

2. The Oxford LCWIP is a detailed 10-year plan which sets out how to improve cycling and walking in Oxford. The plan includes a target to increase cycling in Oxford by 50% by 2031 and the evidence of how this is to be achieved. There are 28 supplementary plans with walking and cycling schemes provisionally costed at £300 million. The LCWIP fits in with and directly supports the Connecting Oxford proposals. The LCWIP will be a subsidiary document of the new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, currently being developed. The document was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in December and we now have DfT feedback comments. As well as cycling and walking schemes, the LCWIP includes policies which will impact on Council transport policy and procedures and future scheme design and prioritisation.

Introduction

3. The Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is the first of a series of Plans for Oxfordshire to be developed. Plans for Bicester and Didcot are also being prepared for finalisation and approval later this year. 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.
4. The Plan sets out clear proposals for how to encourage walking and cycling in Oxford. It sets out the evidence for increasing cycling and improving walking, including policies and programmes to achieve this, along with outline plans for each proposed new walking and cycling route. In policy terms, the LCWIP would become a subsidiary document of the Council's proposed new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) when this is approved. However, as the LCWIP is a DfT-funded programme with its own milestones, the timescale for the LCWIP is ahead of LTCP.

National Policy

5. 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 CWIS funding to local authorities.
6. Government 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 Oxford 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 Oxford. Secondly, for the Government, it sets out the scale of our ambition and the funding needed to achieve this change. It includes a detailed analysis of the challenges and potential impact of cycling and walking schemes. It includes a target to increase cycle journeys in Oxford by 50% by 2031 along with measures to improve the comfort and attractiveness of both walking and cycling.
8. A report* to Parliament issued in February 2020 by the Minister of Transport, responsible for cycling and walking, gives a first indication of current Government thinking. It states that the “forthcoming multi-year ‘Spending Review’, expected later in 2020, will be the vehicle for identifying both the scale and type of investment required to meet our aims and targets” and that “substantial further investment is required over the next five-year period” to meet the 2025 target of doubling cycling. [*DfT Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy Report to Parliament - Moving Britain Ahead*]

DfT feedback

9. The draft Oxford LCWIP was approved by the Cabinet Member for Environment in November 2019 and submitted to the DfT in December, with a list of walking and cycling schemes provisionally costed at £300 million. After submission, Oxford LCWIP was assessed by the DfT alongside LCWIPs from 33 other local authorities
10. Feedback from the DfT on the Oxford LCWIP, received on 10 February 2020, was very positive. The DfT particularly noted its “innovative and forward thinking” approach. Positive comments included:
 - (a) the political endorsement by the Cabinet member
 - (b) the clear integration with LTP policies
 - (c) the wide engagement with stakeholders
 - (d) the research into cyclists’ infrastructure preferences
 - (e) how the LCWIP was set in the wider transport context of:
 - (1) Connecting Oxford traffic management proposals
 - (2) The extension of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) across Oxford
 - (3) Support for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs)

- (4) 20 mph speed limits and proposals to introduce average speed cameras

- 11. In summary, the DfT commented “Oxford’s LCWIP provides a sound discussion of relevant policies and reflects what are already highly progressive and ambitious approach to proper transport planning”.

Oxford LCWIP challenges

- 12. Achieving 50% increase in cycling is a significant challenge. Although Oxford has had high levels of cycling for 40 years, there has been no significant decline or increase (fluctuating between 20,000 and 24,000 cyclists per day two-way at the inner cordon). Increasing cycling levels by 50% therefore depends on being able to deliver wider transformative transport changes.
- 13. The LCWIP sets out eight “pillars” or policy measures to achieve the increase in cycling and improvements in walking. These measures include a comprehensive cycle network, low traffic neighbourhoods, speed enforcement to make cycling both feel and be safer, public realm improvements in the city centre and local shopping centres and the extension of controlled parking zones to control and remove pavement parking. Significantly, the LCWIP designs are dependent on and designed to support and fit in with the ‘Connecting Oxford’ proposals. In essence, the LCWIP schemes have been designed to ‘lock in’ the decongestion benefits of Connecting Oxford proposals for the benefit of walking and cycling

Oxford LCWIP document

- 14. In total, Oxford LCWIP document is 60 pages long. It is accompanied by cycle maps and scheme designs in separate documents. It includes the following sections
 - (a) **Foreword** by Cllr Yvonne Constance
 - (b) **Executive Summary**
 - (c) **Policy background** including how the Plan directly supports Climate Change, public health benefits and housing and jobs growth.
 - (d) **Cycling** – data on current flows and challenges of achieving 50% increase target
 - (e) **LCWIP+ programme** of 8 pillars to promote cycling and walking, as outlined above, with the evidence of how these policies will promote cycling and walking
 - (f) **Oxfordshire Cycle Survey (OCS19)** providing the evidence for a dual choice cycle network, including a methodology of assessing existing and new infrastructure
 - (g) **Cyclist safety analysis** and **Cycle design standards**
 - (h) **Walking** – data on current flows,
 - (i) **Walking audits** of the city centre and local shopping districts
 - (j) **Analysis of cycle route improvements**, existing and future cycle flows, casualty analysis, OCS19 comments, cycle route prioritisation and overall costings.

Stakeholder and member engagement

15. The LCWIP was prepared in co-operation with key walking and cycling stakeholders. Oxford Pedestrians Association (OxPA) undertook pedestrian audits. The cycle network was identified with the help of Cyclox, Oxford's cycling organisation. Both Cyclox and OxPA have viewed the final draft version and given their support to the final document. In preparing the LCWIP, we also sought the views of cyclists through the Oxfordshire Cycle Survey 2019 (OCS19). Within Oxford, 2600 cyclists identified and described 4648 issues with the local network. There has also been member engagement with both County and City members, including a drop-in session, presentations to Oxford City Cycle Forum and Oxford Locality Members

Key issues and opportunities

16. Producing the LCWIP was a major piece of work involving dedicated officer time and stakeholder engagement, supported initially by DfT grant funding. In its review, the LCWIP identified areas of Council policy and practice that need to be updated and improved if the cycle targets are to be reached. The LCWIP should therefore be regarded as the beginning rather than the end of the process. There are many elements identified in the LCWIP that need now to be developed. These include
- (a) A review of cycle and walking design standards
 - (b) Transforming outline scheme designs for the cycle routes into feasibility designs, including co-production with stakeholder groups
 - (c) Creating a walking survey to better understand the infrastructure priorities and barriers for pedestrians
 - (d) Reviewing existing Council policies and practice related to cycleway design, maintenance, signing, CPZ implementation and speed control.
 - (e) The adoption of a policy to introduce Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) to demonstrate their impact and benefits
17. As the scheme proposals illustrate, the LCWIP already extends beyond the City, identifying key connection to settlements outside Oxford. It therefore provides the evidence and basis for a wider strategic cycle network and complementary proposals being developed, including Cycle Greenways and how Active Travel can be a more significant element of travel into and out of the City, rather than just within it.

Risk management

18. There are challenges involved in ensuring harmonisation of policies within the Council involving the LCWIP, Connecting Oxford and LTCP, with 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 Oxford City Council (and other District Councils) to ensure that LCWIP policies are taken into consideration and where necessary adopted.

19. Delivering the Oxford LCWIP (and developing/implementing Plans in other towns) needs to be coordinated and inform external plans and programmes including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, the Housing & Growth Deal and Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Financial and Staff Implications

20. There are no revenue budget implications, as the staffing impact of this programme will be accommodated through existing resources and additional funding that was approved for the Active and Healthy Travel Hub, as part of the budget sign off by Council on the 11th February. At the time of writing this report, the estimated capital investment of £300m, identified in paragraph 9 is in the main unfunded. Officers plan to bid for funds from Central Government to support the LCWIP programme, but announcements of these funds have not yet been made. Opportunities to re-prioritise elements of the capital programme to support the funding will be considered, but it will not be until both these activities are undertaken that we will be able to establish the extent of the capital funding gap.

Equalities Implications

21. Promoting walking and cycling is likely to improve access and health for all groups and lessen inequalities. An essential element of the Oxford LCWIP is to improve cycle routes to the outlying areas of Oxford, including areas of high deprivation, such as Barton, Rose Hill and Blackbird Leys.

Sue Halliwell, Director of Planning and Place

Background papers:

Annex 1: Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Annex 2: Oxford Cycle Network Map (black and white; and colour)

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