

Divisions Affected – Banbury Calthorpe

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

4SEPTEMBER 2025

BANBURY - CHERWELL STREET IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – DETAILED DESIGN

Report by Director of Environment and Highways

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) **Approve the Final scheme design for progression to construction.**

Executive Summary

1. Several amendments are proposed for the final design to address concerns whilst also retaining the benefits for bus users and pedestrians. Approval is sought to enable the delivery team to start the construction phase. All changes to the design have been reviewed by key stakeholders.

Background

2. The Cherwell Street improvement scheme in Banbury is a Department for Transport and Section 106-funded project to reduce bus journey times as part of Oxfordshire's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and deliver pedestrian improvements in line with Local Transport and Connectivity Plan priorities. The first version of the BSIP was approved by Cabinet on 19 October 2021 and has been updated and approved by the Delegated Cabinet Member on 18 June 2024. This Banbury scheme constitutes of measures to improve bus journey times from the current George Street bus lane into the town centre. The preferred scheme also proposes related pedestrian improvements (see design drawing **Annex 1**).
3. At the Infrastructure & Development Cabinet Member Delegated Decision meeting on 10 October 2024, the principles of the Cherwell Street improvement scheme were approved to be taken forward into preliminary design. A second public consultation was undertaken in March 2025 following completion of the design, which also included modelling data. A number of

areas of concern were raised about the impact of the scheme and a Road Safety Audit and technical assurance review also highlighted concerns.

Traffic Modelling Results

4. The VISSIM model, which is a microscopic traffic flow simulation, has been updated from the previous model that was developed as part of the feasibility study. A full breakdown of the modelling results can be found in **Annex 2**.
5. By 2040, physical road changes alone will increase overall bus journey times. This is because pedestrian safety had been prioritised. However, a key bus route sees improved journey times. With 25 per cent of people changing their travel habits, there is significant improvement across all routes. This is most significant in journeys from Swan Close to Bridge Street.
6. By 2040, without any mode shift, northbound journey times for general traffic improve significantly due to improved signals and changes to the road layout. There are increases in journey times travelling southbound because of reduced capacity on the network to improve pedestrian access. With 25 per cent of people changing their travel habits, there is significant improvement across most northbound routes. Even with travel habit changes, southbound routes see increases in journey times, this is because of a reduced network capacity to improve pedestrian access.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

7. The adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) sets out the modal hierarchy with pedestrians given the highest priority and buses also prioritised above motor vehicles. The recommended scheme prioritises both these modes.
8. The scheme meets the priority to “put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work” by influencing a move to sustainable transport and the priority to “invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network” by making services, amenities and sustainable modes of travel more accessible.

Financial Implications

9. There are no new budgetary implications. The budget for the project has already been approved through Full Business Case. The total capital funding allocated to this project is **£3.5m**. This comprises of £2.3m Bus Service Improve Plan (BSIP) funding and £1.2m of Section 106 contributions.

Comment checked by: Filipp Skiffins (Assistant Finance Business Partner) on behalf of Rob Finlayson, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
(Rob.Finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Procurement and Legal Implications

10. The Council is the local highway authority for Oxfordshire under the Highways Act 1980 and is also the traffic authority under the Traffic Management Act 2004 and has a duty to secure the expeditious movement of traffic.
11. The Council appointed Mott MacDonald Limited to carry out the preliminary and detailed design for the scheme. The appointment was made via a call-off under the ESPO Framework Agreement for consultancy services. The contract contains an option for the council to instruct Mott MacDonald Limited to provide design support during the construction phase.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

12. The project will be delivered with existing staff resources. Resources are in place from the Place Planning North and Infrastructure Delivery teams to take the scheme through the construction phase. The Infrastructure Delivery team will provide project management resource to manage the project finances, risk, programme, change control and internal reporting. The client team will support with public and stakeholder engagement on the details and objectives behind the scheme.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

13. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed (**Annex 5**) and highlights an overall positive change for pedestrians and bus users with protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010). Officers and consultants have engaged with local groups to ensure the proposals provide benefits.

Sustainability Implications

14. The proposed Cherwell Street scheme scores well in its Climate Impact Assessment as it focuses on investing in public transport infrastructure and pedestrian facilities, helping to transition to net zero in Banbury by supporting behavioural change. Any reduction in car trips will help with air quality. The full Carbon Impact Assessment is provided in **Annex 5** - Climate Impact Assessment.

Risk Management

15. A project risk register is being maintained and is updated periodically, with input from key stakeholders including Mott McDonald and M Group, who are the consultants allocated to the detailed design and construction. Significant escalation of risk will be reported to the Bicester and Banbury Programme Board.
16. The BSIP funding deadline is the end of March 2026; an update on the position has been sent to the Department for Transport. There is some risk that complications during the construction will extend beyond this timescale, officers can submit a Project Adjustment Request to resolve the risk. Officers and consultants are working closely to avoid unnecessary delay.
17. The Banbury and Bicester Capital Programme Manager and Board will provide high level project assurance. Technical design assurance has been provided by the county council's technical assurance team, ensuring the detailed scheme design meet all appropriate county and national design guidance. Risk and contingency allowance have been included in the project budget costs and is being managed by the project manager and programme board.

Second Consultation

18. A second consultation was carried out between Monday 24 February 2025 and Sunday 23 March 2025. This consultation included modelling results which demonstrated the impact of the scheme on journey times for buses and other vehicles, which were not available in the initial consultation. Findings have been provided in the Consultation Report (**Annex 3**). Publicity of the consultation included a letter drop to 3,200 addresses, social media posts on X and NextDoor, a press release, digital travel bulletin, posters with QR codes on local buses, and emails to stakeholders and local councillors.
19. 198 surveys were complete as part of the consultations. Below shows the percentage of respondents who were supportive or very supportive and unsupportive or very unsupportive the different scheme elements.

Proposed Scheme element	Very supportive/ Supportive	Unsupportive/ Very Unsupportive
Improve the design of the junction to remove existing pedestrian safety issues and formalise traffic lane arrangements.	30.8%	52.3%
Improve pedestrian crossing facilities to support easier and safer access to bus stops, the rail station and the town centre.	26%	65.3%
Improve signal timings to manage congestion for all traffic, and ensure buses pass through the junction more efficiently.	38.9%	39.4%
Extend the left turn (all traffic) lane from Cherwell Street to Bridge Street (west) to improve bus access to the town centre from the south.	32.8%	47.4%
Improving journey time and reliability of buses accessing Banbury town centre via Cherwell Street and Bridge Street	23.7%	64.6%
Widen and provide better marking of the eastbound bus lane on George Street, and extend the existing traffic island to improve pedestrian crossing facilities at the junction.	27.7%	55%
Refresh lane markings including 'keep clear' at junctions to improve movement of all traffic (including buses) through the study area.	67%	14.2%

20. The final question of the survey invited respondents to comment on various aspects of the proposed scheme; among those who supported the scheme, comments frequently emphasised the enhancement of pedestrian crossing facilities within the study area. Conversely, respondents who opposed the scheme tended to express concerns regarding the anticipated increase in traffic congestion, particularly due to the reduction of traffic lanes, which they believed would negatively impact traffic flow. Details on the main remarks are found in the consultation report (**Annex 3**), including from stakeholder groups.

Officer Response to Concerns

21. Amendments to the preliminary design are proposed as a response to the consultation results, Road Safety Audit, technical assurance and direct feedback from Banbury Active Travel Supporters group. All changes have been assessed to make sure the pedestrian and bus journey time benefits are being retained.
22. The proposed changes following this latest consultation have been reviewed by key stakeholders, and their input has been reflected in this proposed final design documented in this report where possible.

23. These groups and people include the Banbury Active Travel Supporters, Coalition of Healthy Streets and Active Travel, Stagecoach, Councillor Kerr (Oxfordshire Active Travel and Cycling champion), and Councillor Brant (Oxfordshire Public Transport Champion). The meeting notes are shown in **Annex 4**. The Banbury Transport Advisory Committee were also consulted, which includes Banbury councillors of all tiers of local government, and local groups including the Banbury Civic Society, Banbury Association of Driving Instructors and Banbury Business Improvement District.

Proposed changes for the final design include:

- Retaining the southbound right-turn flare lane on Concord Avenue - in response to the Road Safety Audit showing an increased chance of right-turning vehicles striking the pedestrian island and collision with northbound vehicles due to crossing three lanes of moving traffic. Retaining the flare will also avoid the potential for dangerous manoeuvres as some vehicles use the left turn lane to get around stationary traffic and respond to concerns about the impact of further queuing toward Hennef Way, which has been identified by Oxonair as having very high levels of air pollution.
- Reducing the size of the pedestrian refuge on the north side of the Cherwell Street/ Bridge Street/ Concord Avenue junction - the pedestrian benefits identified in the scheme remain, as the pedestrian signal phase at the junction provides enough time for pedestrians to cross the full length of the Concord Avenue arm and therefore the refuge will only be used by pedestrians who cross the arm late into the pedestrian green phase time. The width of refuge island is approximately 2.45m, which is suitable to accommodate a wheelchair and an accompanying person.
- Retaining the left and right turn running lanes at the eastern end of George Street - to address the concerns of increased journey time and queuing eastbound on George Street for all vehicles which could block access for buses to the bus lane and would negate the other bus improvements. This would also reduce the risk of left turning unauthorised vehicles using the bus lane when right turning vehicles are blocking their exit from the junction.
- Under this amendment, the width of the two additional pedestrian crossings at George Street would be retained at four meters. This means that if they were to be converted to pelican crossings for cycle usage in the future, the width would be LTN 1/20 compliant. The widening of the junction egress for buses is being retained to allow buses to pull-out onto Cherwell Street from George Street, without having to cross into other running lanes. Bus tracking has successfully been carried out through a Swept Path Analysis.
- Moving the pedestrian crossing at Bridge Street slightly to the east - in response to the Road Safety Audit which highlighted the crossing distance was too great at 15 metres. This would impact pedestrian safety, as pedestrians may be left in the carriageway if they cross the arm at the end

of the pedestrian phase. The proposed location would meet the desire line (a route naturally preferred by people) with Lower Cherwell Street.

24. The lack of cycling provisions within the proposed scheme was highlighted in the consultation and directly by local groups. The Department for Transport funding was awarded to reduce bus journey times and deliver more reliable and consistent journeys for buses, and additional Section 106 money was added to enable necessary pedestrian improvements. Due to a lack of available space, improvements for cyclists could not be included in this project. However, Route 10 of the Banbury Local Cycling & Walking Plan (LCWIP) schemes is currently being designed using Active Travel Tranche 5 funds and will pick up Lower Cherwell Street and George Street.
25. The Banbury Active Travel Supporters are involved in the LCWIP Route 10 Feasibility development, the scheme now includes a modal filter between Lower Cherwell Street and Bridge Street east and a cycle link between George Street and Bridge Street, via Lower Cherwell Street. The Cherwell Street final design will include retention sockets, and extra ducting to accommodate poles at the Bridge Street and George Street junctions, so they can be upgraded to toucan crossings, when LCWIP route 10 is delivered.
26. The Cherwell Street improvement scheme is part of a wider package of measures required to improve movement in the town, particularly for those using public transport or walking, wheeling, cycling within Banbury. Current schemes and further interventions will be identified within the Movement & Place Plan for the town in 2026, which will be part of the regeneration proposals for Banbury.
27. In conclusion, the design amendments have been presented across multiple meetings to key stakeholders, to gauge whether they are the best response to the Road Safety Audit, public consultation, technical assurance, active travel group input, and to assess if the scheme has optimised capturing the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan ambitions for the county. Council officers, with support of key stakeholders, believe the design drawing (**Annex 1**) is the best option.

Paul Fermer

Director of Environment and Highways

Annexes	Annex 1: Design drawing
	Annex 2: Modelling report
	Annex 3: Consultation report
	Annex 4: Key Stakeholder meeting notes
	Annex 5: Equality Impact Assessment
	Annex 6: Climate Impact Assessment

Contact Officer

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