
3. Transport in Oxfordshire

Our ambitions for transport are:

- to support the local economy and the growth and competitiveness of the county;
- to make it easier to get around the county and improve access to jobs and services for all by offering real choice;
- to reduce the impact of transport on the environment and help tackle climate change; and
- to promote healthy, safe and sustainable travel

Policies

- Policy G1** Oxfordshire County Council will seek to implement this Local Transport Plan as and when funding becomes available, including seeking funding from local communities, developers and other external sources.
- Policy G2** Oxfordshire County Council will give a higher priority to expenditure on maintaining existing transport assets than to improvements to the network in the early years of the Plan.
- Policy G3** Oxfordshire County Council will work to ensure that the transport network can meet the requirements of the county's world class economy, whilst protecting the environment and the amenity of Oxfordshire residents.
- Policy G4** Oxfordshire County Council will seek, as a priority, external funding to deliver:
- * improvements to the transport network to develop access to Oxford from other towns and regions;
 - * transport improvements within the Science Vale UK area (Didcot - Harwell - Wantage & Grove); and
 - * transport improvements within and around Eco-Bicester.
- Policy G5** Oxfordshire County Council will support sustainable, healthy and inclusive modes of travel and promote changes in travel behaviour to these modes.

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- Policy G6** Oxfordshire County Council will take into account the location, best use of space and the potential need to prioritise particular movements or users when designing schemes.
- Policy G7** Oxfordshire County Council will consult from an early stage in the development of schemes and initiatives so that the needs of all groups, including disabled people, are considered and, where appropriate, acted upon.
- Policy G8:** The County Council will manage the classification and numbering of the roads in its control to direct traffic, and particularly lorry traffic, onto the most suitable roads as far as is practicable.
- Policy G9:** The County Council will only consider proposals for alterations to road classification and/or numbering if there are significant economic, environmental or routeing benefits which clearly outweigh the financial and environmental costs of making the change or where this is desirable or necessary as a result of new development; new environmental weight limits will generally not be supported unless there is a compelling, evidence-based case for them.

- 3.1 This Local Transport Plan has been prepared in a very challenging time. It is likely that there will be very limited funding available for transport improvements in the first few years of the Plan. Despite this Oxfordshire County Council believes that it is important to set out our ambitions and objectives for transport in the county. This will allow us to respond to external opportunities and pressures on the transport system and prepare the county for the future.
- 3.2 The timescale covered by this Plan has allowed us to set out our aspirations for transport, even while keeping in mind the current economic situation. It is likely, though, that progress towards these ambitions will be limited in the short term. If they are to be met them it is likely that it will be through the development of new relationships between the council and other bodies. This could be through passing responsibility for some activities to local communities or seeking new ways of working with organisations to achieve common goals. We will need to challenge all our ways of working to make the best of this new reality.
- 3.3 With the overall level of funding being scarce the priority must be to protect the networks that the county already has from deteriorating in preference to making improvements. This will

reduce the long-term costs needed to develop and maintain the network (given that deferring maintenance will inevitably lead to greater costs in the future). However this does not mean that we will not take opportunities for improvement should they arise, such as through funding associated with new development.

- 3.4 Our ambitions for transport seek to make Oxfordshire attractive for existing residents and businesses as well as for people in new developments. This can only be achieved through working closely with all those interested in the future of the county. Consideration of transport implications must play a central part in decisions on how the county develops; new developments must contribute to improving the county's transport system and reducing the impact of travel on the county's environment.
- 3.5 For this Plan to be successful it will be essential that local communities and businesses take responsibility for the consequences of their activity and work with us to find realistic solutions. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to working positively with communities, businesses and organisations to achieve our ambitions.

Cross-boundary Issues

- 3.6 Transport and development issues in a number of neighbouring areas will have a part to play in our ability to meet our ambitions for Oxfordshire. Similarly Oxfordshire's policies are acknowledged to have potential impacts outside the county, particularly where the influence of Oxford and Banbury as local service and employment centres extend into adjacent areas.

Reading

- 3.7 Reading is a large urban centre on the edge of rural South Oxfordshire. The Borough Council is planning significant development in the centre, south, south west and south east of the borough – but not in the suburb of Caversham which lies north of the Thames and borders on South Oxfordshire. The Reading 15-year Local Transport Plan is focused on improving non-car access, particularly in these growth areas, with additional funding being sought from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.
- 3.8 There are many commuters from South Oxfordshire to the Reading area, predominantly travelling by car but with significant numbers using rail services from Didcot and intermediate stations or using bus services from Sonning Common. Oxfordshire County Council

supports Reading Borough Council's efforts to improve the attractiveness of bus, walking and cycling in central Reading; coupled with the electrification of the railway to Oxford and London, better onward travel to non-central workplaces (hospital, university and business parks) will improve the alternative options to car travel for South Oxfordshire based commuters.

- 3.9 Oxfordshire County Council will work in partnership with Reading Borough Council to investigate the case for park and ride into Reading from South Oxfordshire and will support proposals provided that suitable locations can be identified and that they would not adversely affect conventional bus services from Oxfordshire to Reading.

Figure 3.1 Oxfordshire and neighbouring counties



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- 3.10 It remains an aspiration of Reading and neighbouring Wokingham Borough Council to construct a new bridge across the Thames with the northern end located in South Oxfordshire at the eastern edge of Caversham. Oxfordshire County Council remains opposed to this proposal, which would generate substantial increases in traffic on unsuitable roads through rural South Oxfordshire. However with the current financial constraints it is unlikely to be deliverable within the lifetime of this Local Transport Plan.
- 3.11 Significant Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) flows have been identified on roads through Caversham and across the existing Thames bridges, many originating in or heading through Oxfordshire, particularly via the A4074. Oxfordshire County Council will continue to work with Reading Borough Council and others to address this issue.

Swindon

- 3.12 Swindon is a large urban centre which borders the Vale of White Horse district in south west Oxfordshire. Substantial housing and employment growth is planned during the next two decades, predominantly in an Eastern Development Area which would extend almost up to the boundary with Oxfordshire on the A420 corridor.
- 3.13 Swindon's 15-year Local Transport Plan is based on the 2009 Swindon Transport Strategy which focuses on improving alternatives to the car and supporting sustainable growth. The aim is to integrate the Eastern Development Area with the rest of Swindon; this will involve reducing the severance caused by the railway and, particularly, the A419 dual carriageway. Other aspects of this approach include encouraging walking and cycling for local journeys, providing for orbital trips within (as opposed to outside) Swindon, and encouraging trips to the centre in order to "capture trips that leak from the town".
- 3.14 Oxfordshire County Council supports the approach taken in the Swindon Transport Strategy. We have, however, expressed concern that the Eastern Development Area may increase car commuting into Oxfordshire, particularly on the A420 towards Oxford and on less suitable rural roads towards the Science Vale UK area to a greater degree than is anticipated for in Swindon's plans. Proposals for logistics development as part of the employment growth could also increase lorry traffic into Oxfordshire. We have suggested that a potential railway station to

serve the Eastern Development Area could complement proposals for stations at Grove and possibly Milton Park and provide a significantly more attractive public transport alternative to the car for travel into Oxfordshire.

Buckinghamshire

- 3.15** The county of Buckinghamshire lies to the east and north east of Oxfordshire. Major settlements include High Wycombe on the M40 and Chiltern rail corridors and Aylesbury which has road links to Oxfordshire (A418 via Thame bypass and A41 via Bicester bypass). These settlements do not abut the boundary with Oxfordshire which is largely rural and includes part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 3.16** Significant housing growth was proposed for Aylesbury in the South East Plan and was expected to be located mainly on the south east side of the town, away from Oxfordshire, but could still have led to some increase in traffic on the A418. However, when the regional spatial strategies were abolished, Aylesbury Vale District Council decided to withdraw its Core Strategy and a lower level of development now seems likely.
- 3.17** There are two rail proposals that would improve links from Oxfordshire to and through Buckinghamshire, in addition to the existing Chiltern line linking Banbury and Bicester to London via High Wycombe. Both proposals are based on improving the existing branch line from Oxford to Bicester Town with its current infrequent local service. East West Rail would reopen the line beyond Bicester to Milton Keynes with a spur to Aylesbury. Evergreen 3 would see a short link built from Bicester Town station to join the Chiltern line to London Marylebone via High Wycombe, with an additional station at Water Eaton with giving local access from north Oxford and Kidlington.
- 3.18** There are no major road proposals that would affect Oxfordshire, but Buckinghamshire County Council does intend to build a “coachway” interchange for coach services and local park and ride into High Wycombe at M40 Junction 4. Oxfordshire County Council has expressed concern that this might delay coaches between Oxford, London and the major airports if they were to serve the proposed interchange.
- 3.19** Buckinghamshire County Council's Local Transport Plan is based on a series of sub areas. Two bordering Oxfordshire (Buckingham and South West Chilterns) highlight the need for a freight strategy;

Oxfordshire County Council would wish to be involved in this to ensure a consistent and mutually beneficial approach.

- 3.20 A number of cross-boundary bus services are significant, particularly Oxford-Thame-Aylesbury but also Reading-Henley-High Wycombe. Improved cycling access between the Oxfordshire market town of Thame and the nearby Buckinghamshire village of Haddenham (with its railway station) has generated significant local interest, in both counties.

West Berkshire

- 3.21 West Berkshire is a unitary authority lying to the south of Oxfordshire. It is mainly rural except for the town of Newbury (located in the busy A34 corridor) and western suburbs of Reading (with stations on the Great Western main line). Most proposed development in West Berkshire is to the south and east of Newbury, furthest away from Oxfordshire and, given the buffer of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is not likely to have a significant impact upon Oxfordshire. West Berkshire Council is, however, concerned about the possible impact of development in Oxfordshire's Science Vale UK area on the M4/A34 junction at Chieveley and on the A338 between Wantage and Hungerford. It is keen to protect roads such as this and the A329 Wantage to Reading road from traffic growth, particularly HGVs; Oxfordshire County Council takes a similar position on protecting unsuitable roads such as these.

Northamptonshire

- 3.22 Northamptonshire lies to the north east of Oxfordshire, adjacent to Cherwell District. Further housing growth in the town of Brackley, where housing is cheaper than in Oxfordshire, could see traffic growth towards Banbury, Bicester and even Oxford, particularly as this is a rural area with significant levels of deprivation. There are regular bus services from Brackley to Banbury and less frequent ones to Bicester and Oxford, but there are no rail links between the two counties.

Warwickshire

- 3.23 Warwickshire is a largely rural county lying to the north of Oxfordshire. The two main towns of Warwick and Leamington Spa have good rail and road (M40) links south into Oxfordshire via Banbury. No significant development is proposed in the rural districts adjacent to Oxfordshire. The main issue that has arisen in

relation to Warwickshire in the recent past has been the importance of achieving consistency between the two counties' recommended lorry route networks.

Gloucestershire

3.24 Gloucestershire is a largely rural county lying to the west of Oxfordshire. The two major settlements, Gloucester and Cheltenham, are some distance from Oxfordshire via the A40 primary road with rail access to London via Didcot. The A44 from Oxford to Evesham and Worcestershire also passes through part of Gloucestershire including the market town of Moreton-in-Marsh. No significant development is proposed in the rural districts adjacent to Oxfordshire.

3.25 The main issue that has arisen in relation to Gloucestershire has been lorry routing and, in particular, Oxfordshire County Council's efforts to reduce the number of lorries passing through the historic market town of Chipping Norton in order to achieve air quality and other environmental benefits. The aim is to de-prime the A44 and sign HGVs between Evesham and Oxford along the A429 and A40 via Northleach in Gloucestershire, while also discouraging use of the A424 via the historic market town of Burford.

East West Rail

3.26 East West Rail is a strategic infrastructure project that will bring benefits across a wide area, including:

- * Supporting economic growth and investment in new jobs and homes
- * Faster journeys between towns and cities to the north and west of London
- * Less congestion on the roads and lower carbon emissions

3.27 In planning terms, the most advanced section of the route is the Western Section, between Reading, Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford, with a spur to Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The Evergreen 3 project, promoted by Chiltern Railways, has recently been the subject of a public inquiry under the Transport and Works Act. As well as providing a new train service between Oxford and London, this project – if approved – will deliver the track and signalling improvements needed for EWR between Oxford and Bicester.

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- 3.28** The Western Section is the subject of a bid for project development funding to the Regional Growth Fund. The bid has been submitted by the EWR Consortium and is supported by 3 Local Enterprise Partnerships along the route: South East Midlands, Oxford City Region, and Thames Valley Berkshire. The Department of Transport have also said that the Western Section will be one of the rail schemes to be assessed for government investment over the period 2014 -2019.
- 3.29** Analysis of the Western Section shows a benefit to cost ratio of 6.3:1, which is extremely high. Sensitivity testing shows that this increases to 15:1 if there is a 20% contribution to the costs of the project from the private sector. The government is promoting the Community Infrastructure Levy as the way in which local authorities can secure contributions from developers towards the costs of strategic infrastructure. This Council, along with all local authorities along the route of the EWR Western Section, is committed to including EWR in the infrastructure planning that will underpin our CIL Charging Schedule.

Road Classification and Numbering

- 3.30** The management of road classification and numbering, which up until now has been carried out by the Department for Transport, is largely to be devolved to local highway authorities for all roads not managed by the Highways Agency.
- 3.31** The road numbering system should indicate to drivers which is the most suitable road for any type of journey. Although it has been amended several times since then, the core of the road numbering system dates back to the 1920s and anomalies have arisen over the years, particularly as route standard was rarely a condition in determining the original status of routes. However, because route improvements have tended to be focused on higher status roads, expectations of the levels of service which roads of different classes should provide have changed over the years and there is now a general feeling that higher status roads, particularly those which cater for large lorry flows, should be of a high standard and not pass through settlements. More funding is made available to the County Council in respect of highway maintenance for Principal (A-class) roads than for B, C or unnumbered roads.
- 3.32** The roads classification system has been created in parallel with the existing road numbering hierarchy and provides the basis for road signing. It provides a greater level of detail for higher

standard roads than is present with road numbers alone (particularly through the designation of the Primary Route Network), but conversely is less detailed for more minor roads. The road numbering and classification systems are generally complimentary but can be a source of confusion on the precise status of a road.

3.33 The Primary Route Network (PRN) is a national system which designates routes between major settlements and ports/airports. The Department for Transport maintains a list of primary destinations between which journeys should be able to made using only roads in the PRN (except at the start and end of trips). In Oxfordshire the primary destinations are Oxford and Banbury, while in adjacent counties the primary destinations to where a Primary Route needs to be defined are: Newbury, Reading, Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Milton Keynes, Cheltenham, Coventry, Rugby, Stratford-upon-Avon and Evesham. The addition or deletion of primary destinations remains a matter for the Department of Transport. Routes may only be removed from the PRN where it can be demonstrated that either direct traffic between the two locations is too low to justify a Primary Route or that a journey of broadly similar convenience is possible through other sections of the PRN.

3.34 The following table summarises the classification of roads which will be used as the basis for the management of the road network in Oxfordshire:

STATUS	DEFINITION	CHARACTERISTICS/TREATMENT
Class 1. Motorway	A road suitable for high speed long distance national traffic. <i>Responsibility of the Highways Agency</i>	Dual carriageway with limited access and type-restricted use. No weight restrictions.
Class 2. Primary Routes	A road suitable for longer distance and inter-regional traffic. Main connections between defined primary destinations. Form, with motorways, the national lorry route network. <i>May be either Trunk Roads (the responsibility of the Highways Agency) or county roads.</i>	Able to cater for relatively high levels of traffic. Should aim to be at a standard to allow for free passage of current and expected future traffic. Can be dual- or single carriageway; no restrictions on access. No permanent weight restrictions.
Class 3a. County Principal (A) Classified Roads (major)	A road suitable for important cross- and inter-county traffic where there are relatively large volumes of traffic but not longer distance travel. Major A-roads would cater for more important	Able to carry current flows safely and without excessive delays. Usually good standard single carriageway although some sections might be of a lower standard.

	movements within the county. There would be an expectation that these would be able to cater for all types of vehicles, but this is not a requirement.	Weight restrictions may be considered as a short term only measure where there is a suitable alternate route of same or better standard available.
Class 3b. County Principal (A) Classified Roads (minor)	A road suitable for important cross- and inter-county traffic where there are relatively lower volumes of mostly local traffic. Minor A-roads would serve to link larger settlements with major A-roads and provide missing links.	Able to carry current flows safely. Predominantly single carriageway. Weight restrictions can be considered where there is a suitable alternate route available.
Class 4. Non-Principal (B/C) Classified Roads	A road suitable for other shorter cross- and inter-county movements where volumes are relatively low and no principal road is available.	Able to carry current flows safely. Weight restrictions can be considered providing diversions are not excessive and do not prevent access to properties.
Class 5. Unclassified (UC) Roads	A road suitable for local access traffic only (unnecessary "rat-run" traffic should be discouraged where higher standard roads are available).	Should be able to carry current flows safely. Weight restrictions can be considered providing these do not prevent access to properties.

3.35 Oxfordshire County Council's monitoring of the current situation is discussed in the chapters on Tackling Congestion and Road Safety. Within Oxfordshire the major roads can be distributed amongst these classes as follows:

Class 1	M40
Class 2	Highways Agency: A34, A43, Oxfordshire County Council: A40 (west of M40), A41 [#] , A44 (north of A40) [‡] , A420 (west of A34) [#] , A422 (east of A423, Banbury), A423 (Oxford Southern Bypass), A423 (north of A422, Banbury), A4142
Class 3a	A338, A361, A415, A418 [*] , A421, A4074 ⁺ , A4130, A4260
Class 3b	A40 (south of M40), A44 (Oxford), A329, A417, A420 (Oxford), A422, A424, A436, A3400, A4095, A4129, A4144, A4155, A4158, A4165, A4183, A4185, A4421
<p>[#] These roads are in PRN but are signed as "unsuitable for HGVs" because of height restrictions at railway crossings</p> <p>[‡] A44 is in PRN but lorry traffic between Oxford and Evesham is signed via A40/A429/A424 to avoid AQMA in Chipping Norton</p> <p>[*] A418 is signed as alternative PR between Oxford and Aylesbury to A41 for HGVs</p> <p>⁺ A4074 is signed as alternative PR between Oxford and Reading to A34/M4 to recognise its attractiveness for general traffic but signed as "unsuitable for HGVs"</p>	

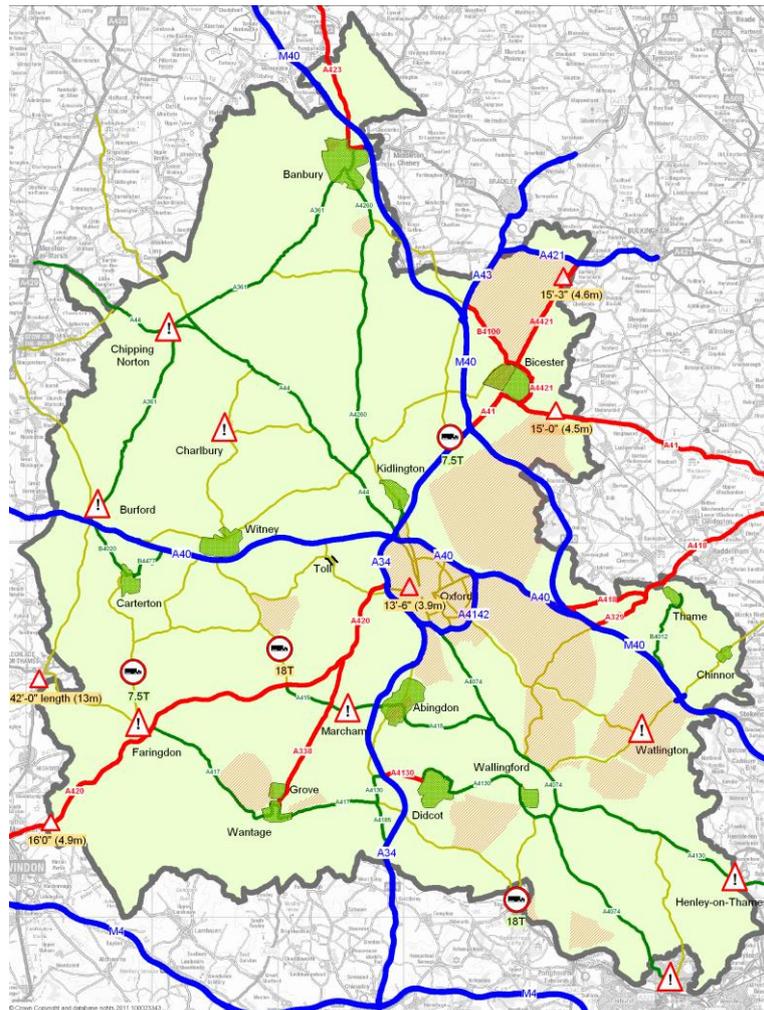
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- 3.36** Although the distinction has value for route management, to the driver there may be little visible difference between Class 3a and 3b roads, although it is likely that direction signing on class 3b roads will be limited to more local destinations. Similarly C-class roads may not be easily distinguishable to the user from unclassified roads, or B-class roads from Class 3b principal roads.
- 3.37** The new government guidelines do not allow roads to change number or classification at highway authority boundaries. Changes to the numbering or classification of these routes can only occur with the agreement of both or all the authorities involved. Oxfordshire County Council will consider any such proposals made by neighbouring authorities on a case-by-case basis. Where neighbouring authorities can not agree on the status of a road then the Department for Transport are proposing to introduce a system of arbitration.
- 3.38** The major costs of any reclassification or renumbering scheme come from the replacement of road signs. This is particularly the case for changes between C/UC-class roads and A/B-class roads and between non-Primary and Primary Route status, which would require an extensive re-signing scheme. Consequently any suggested changes of status between these road classes will need to be strongly justified.
- 3.39** It is unlikely that a change to the classification or designation of any road will, on its own, result in any significant change in flow on its own. Usually to effect a change the re-designation would need to be re-enforced by physical measures and/or traffic regulation orders. The acceptability of any change in classification and standard needs to consider which roads traffic is likely to be diverted onto, and the impact of these increased flows.

Lorry Routes

- 3.40** The PRN must provide unrestricted access to 40 tonne vehicles. If a weight limit is required to be placed on a section of the PRN for structural or safety reasons then the Council has a duty to remedy this situation as quickly as possible or seek to alter the Primary Route. Weight limits may be placed on other routes in appropriate cases provided that this does not, or is not likely to, transfer larger vehicles onto another route of similar or lower standard or classification and provided that it does not result in an undue inconvenience to the diverted drivers. The classification of

a route is only an issue with regard to the imposition of environmental weight limits in respect of Primary Routes.

- 3.41 However, a functioning network of roads open to lorry traffic is considered essential to the economic well-being of the county and the widespread use of environmental weight limits can lead to difficulties in lorry operators finding the most suitable routes to make deliveries. This in turn can lead to drivers ignoring restrictions. Consequently there will be a general presumption against the imposition of new limits except where there is a strong case for them on environmental or safety grounds.
- 3.42 The proliferation of restrictions across the county has meant that the road numbering and classification systems are not always a good guide to the most preferred routes for lorries to take in travelling around or through the county. As a result of this the county also publishes a lorry route map which sets out four categories of route:
- * Strategic road – through route
 - * Strategic road - link to larger towns
 - * Non-strategic road – link to smaller towns
 - * Non-strategic road – local access road
- 3.43 Below this are recommended site access routes to particular lorry generating locations and minor roads which provide access to individual premises. Oxfordshire County Council will publish and maintain a map of the most suitable routes for lorries in the county based on this hierarchy. The current county map is reproduced below. Roads not on this map are generally not considered suitable for heavy lorry flows except where they act as the access route to particular premises.



Strategic Roads

-  Through route
-  Links to larger towns

Non-strategic Roads

-  Links to smaller towns
-  Local access route