

# Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility

## Introduction

- 6.55 Our approach seeks to encourage sustainable modes of transport and a reduction in the need to travel and these are key features of our vision and objectives set out in **Chapter 3**.
- 6.56 The Local Plan 2031 has been informed by national policy as well as the principles within Oxfordshire County Council's adopted and emerging Local Transport Plans (LTP)<sup>1</sup>.
- 6.57 The main requirements of national policy relating to transport are to reduce the need to travel, promote more sustainable modes of travel and improve accessibility. The location of all forms of development is therefore very important and these principles have helped to inform our spatial strategy set out in **Chapter 4**.
- 6.58 The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 3 (2011-2030)<sup>2</sup> sets out transport policies and area transport strategies for the county up to 2030. It aims to deliver four local transport goals:
- to support the local economy and the growth and competitiveness of the county
  - to make it easier to travel 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.
- 6.59 We have set out a number of site specific proposals and policies relating to transport in our sub-area strategies included within **Chapter 5**. This section includes policies that apply across the whole district, these are:
- **Core Policy 33: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility** – which seeks to support key improvements to the transport network
  - **Core Policy 34: A34 Strategy** – which sets out the councils support to the long-term strategic planning of the A34
  - **Core Policy 35: Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking** – which seeks to support the provision of sustainable transport measures to promote the use of public transport, cycling and walking
  - **Core Policy 36: Electronic Communications** – which promotes electronic communications to help reduce the need to travel

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/local-transport-plan>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-2011-2030> Work has started to prepare the LTP4. For more information please visit:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plam-ltp4>

## The local and strategic transport network

6.60 We have conducted a district wide assessment of how our strategy may impact on the transport network<sup>3</sup>. This has been prepared in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and independent consultants. The work concludes that the impact of the proposed growth is acceptable, subject to the implementation of comprehensive highway infrastructure and public transport improvements, which are outlined in this plan.

6.61 The assessment does acknowledge that the proposed housing growth set out in the plan will place increased pressure on the road network at certain locations within the district. However, where congestion is expected to worsen, the level is forecast to be within acceptable tolerances in relation to the NPPF test<sup>4</sup>. For this reason, a number of measures are proposed to help minimise the identified impacts. Where infrastructure is funded by development, we will seek the timely provision of infrastructure to ensure any short term impacts are within acceptable limits before they improve. The proposals include:

- the delivery of a comprehensive package of new highway infrastructure
- significant improvements to public transport and measures to encourage sustainable travel choices, and
- requiring Transport Assessments and Travel Plans to accompany planning applications for any major development<sup>5</sup> to ensure any local impacts are successfully mitigated.

6.62 Our main proposals for improving the transport network are located within the Science Vale area because this is where around 75 % of our strategic housing growth is located. This is explained in more detail in the South East Vale Sub-Area Strategy (see also **Figure 5.6a**).

6.63 However, the plan also proposes improvements to the highway network across the other parts of the Vale to ensure development in our other sub-areas is sustainable and to minimise any impacts on the highway network. These are set out in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area and Western Vale Sub-Area Strategies.

6.64 The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) published alongside this strategy sets out all the strategic transport measures that are planned or required to accommodate proposed development in the plan<sup>6</sup>. The IDP is a live document that will be updated as further requirements emerge and where additional resources are secured through the Local Plan 2031 and Local Transport Plan processes.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence) .

<sup>4</sup> CLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), para 14.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to Oxfordshire County Council Guidance for New Developments: Transport Assessments and Travel Plans (March 2014). <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/transport-new-developments>

<sup>6</sup> [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence)

6.65 The Vale of White Horse District Council, working with Oxfordshire County Council, has had some success in securing significant external funding towards strategic highway infrastructure (£26.1 Million as at Sept 2014). The funds include monies contributed from the Oxfordshire and Oxford City Deal and Local Growth Fund, in addition to a commitment from the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to contribute £40 million Enterprise Zone Business Rate income towards critical new highway infrastructure.

6.66 **Core Policy 33** sets out the council's commitment to continue working with Oxfordshire County Council to promote sustainable transport and accessibility for example by supporting measures identified in the up-to-date Local Transport Plan.

### **Core Policy 33: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility**

The council will work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to:

- i. actively seek to ensure that the impacts of new development on the strategic and local road network are minimised
- ii. ensure that developments are designed in a way to promote sustainable transport access both within new sites, and linking with surrounding facilities and employment
- iii. support measures identified in the Local Transport Plan for the district including within the relevant local area strategies
- iv. support improvements for accessing Oxford
- v. ensure that transport improvements are designed to minimise any effects on the amenities, **CHARACTER AND SPECIAL QUALITIES** of the surrounding area, and
- vi. promote and support improvements to the transport network that increase safety, improve air quality and/or make our towns and villages more attractive.

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### **A34 Strategy**

6.67 The A34 has a dual role as a nationally important strategic route as well as being a vital part of the local road network in Oxfordshire linking Didcot and Abingdon-on-Thames with Oxford and Bicester.

6.68 The Highways Agency is currently preparing a Route Based Strategy for the A34 as part of the wider proposals for movement between the Midlands and the Solent. As part of this, work a Baseline Statement was prepared by Oxfordshire County Council to assess the capacity and capability of the A34 in terms of its physical characteristics, traffic flow patterns, network performance and conditions<sup>7</sup>.

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- 6.69 The Baseline Statement examined a number of possible improvements to the A34 and its immediate feeder routes. It also identified that it was likely that by 2030, congestion along the route would take place more frequently, and that instances of network congestion outside of peak hours would increase and that they may occur at anytime of the day including weekends. The Statement suggested that congestion may occur through most weekdays and at weekend peak periods.
- 6.70 To ensure the A34 successfully functions as a major strategic route without impacting local routes a number of traffic management options are under consideration and may form part of the Route Based Strategy. These include ramp metering, speed control, rationalisation of laybys and lorry services, measures to promote bus lanes for shorter journeys, widening of the current route and constructing alternative alignments for some of the route. The Solent to Midlands Route Based Strategy, which includes the A34, is due to be finalised in March 2015.
- 6.71 Core Policy 34 includes a commitment to monitor air quality to ensure we continue to have an up-to-date understanding of potential impacts on the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is important to inform joint working to ensure this SAC continues to be safeguarded.
- 6.72 The Council will continue to support the development and implementation of the A34 Route Based Strategy in accordance with **Core Policy 34**.

### **Core Policy 34: A34 Strategy**

The Council will continue to work with the Highways Agency ENGLAND, Oxfordshire County Council and other partners to develop and implement a Route Based Strategy for the A34, which enables it to function as a major strategic route thereby reducing consequential congestion on the local road network.

The Council will continue to work with the Highways Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and other partners to develop an air quality monitoring framework associated with the A34 within the Vale of White Horse District to monitor any impact on the Oxford meadows SAC.

## Public transport, cycling and walking

- 6.73 New development should be designed to positively promote the use of public transport, walking, cycling and efficient car use and the location of development is therefore essential to encourage their use. However, this approach should also be complemented with the provision of new services and facilities.
- 6.74 For this reason, a package of improvements is proposed to upgrade existing public transport services, particularly between key routes, and to introduce new services to ensure the proposed housing growth is connected by public transport. **Figure 5.6b** shows the proposed new bus routes within the district.
- 6.75 However, the rural nature of the district does mean that some residents will continue to be dependent on car travel, for some or all of their journeys, and so we will also support improvements to travel choices in rural areas.
- 6.76 Transport Assessments are required to support any planning application for major development<sup>8</sup>. These will help us to determine the precise nature of local impacts associated with individual proposals and identify appropriate mitigation measures to compensate for such impacts. Where off-site mitigation is identified, the developments that result in the need for the mitigation will be required to make financial contributions through the appropriate mechanism. These include, for example, Section 106 and Section 278 agreements. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulation 123 list will contain some highway infrastructure projects to be funded by use of the levy.
- 6.77 Travel Plans will also be required for major development to encourage the use of sustainable forms of travel<sup>9</sup>. These plans should set out a package of measures and initiatives with the aim of reducing the number of car journeys made by people travelling to and from the site by providing greater choice.
- 6.78 Cycling and walking can provide a healthier alternative to private modes of transport especially for short trips. They may also form part of a more sustainable way of travel when combined with public transport.
- 6.79 Therefore, we will seek to promote cycling and walking by improving the existing network, in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and other stakeholders. This will include the provision of new routes both generally and in association with new development and making available information on the routes and other measures to promote these forms of travel in accordance with **Core Policy 35**. An example includes improving provision for cycling along the A417 corridor, particularly between Wantage and Grove and Harwell Campus and Didcot.

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<sup>8</sup> as defined by Development Management Procedure Order 2010

<sup>9</sup> Refer to Oxfordshire County Council Guidance for New Developments: Transport Assessments and Travel Plan (March 2014). <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/transport-new-developments>

## Core Policy 35: Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking

The council will work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to:

- i. encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and support measures that enable a modal shift to public transport, cycling and walking in the district
- ii. ensure new development is located close to, or along, existing strategic public transport corridors, where bus services can then be strengthened in response to increases in demand for travel
- iii. ensure that new development is designed to encourage walking as the preferred means of transport, not only within the development, but also to nearby facilities and transport hubs
- iv. ensure that new development encourages and enables cycling not only through the internal design of the site, but also through the provision of cycle friendly infrastructure to link the new residents with nearby services, employment areas, educational facilities and public transport hubs where interchange can be provided for longer distance travel
- v. seek to support the provision of new cycling routes where the proposals are consistent with the other policies of this plan
- vi. ensure proposals for major development\* are supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council guidance\*\*, and
- vii. ensure adequate parking is delivered on new developments in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's published standards\*\*\*.

\* as defined by Development Management Procedure Order 2010

\*\* Transport for new developments (Oxfordshire County Council)

\*\*\* Parking standards for new developments (Oxfordshire County Council)

## Electronic communications

6.80 The Internet provides an opportunity to reduce the need to travel. It means that location is increasingly less important for businesses and enables greater possibilities for home-working. The Local Plan 2031 therefore recognises the role of the Internet and seeks to promote it as a means of reducing the need to travel and supporting the economy.

6.81 **Core Policy 36** seeks to ensure the provision of superfast broadband connectivity to all new developments, and supports network enhancements including supporting infrastructure, to provide superfast broadband to all existing homes and businesses in the district. It is essential that the strategic site allocations set out in this plan provide appropriate infrastructure to ensure all properties can be connected to superfast broadband<sup>10</sup> without any further works post development.

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<sup>10</sup> Better Broadband for Oxfordshire, available at: <http://www.betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk/home>

### **Core Policy 36: Electronic communications**

The council will work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to promote faster, more reliable and more comprehensive coverage of electronic communications and allow businesses and residents to access services and information more effectively, thereby helping to reduce the need to travel.

Proposals for all new development should ensure appropriate infrastructure is provided during development, sufficient to enable all properties to be connected to superfast broadband without any post development works.