

Planning

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Dear ██████████

Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) – Vision consultation

Thank you for consulting our Councils on the above document. This is a joint response on behalf of South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils. We have responded to the consultation questions as follows;

Page 7 - Vision in Context - Have we identified the key related strategy and policy developments in Oxfordshire (Yes/No)

Yes, the key related policy developments have been listed. You could also include reference to those from outside Oxfordshire. For example;

- Transport plans (and other Local Plans) from neighbouring areas including the transport strategy for the South East (they're referenced on the previous page)
- Relevant national strategies and guidance

It is noted that the 5 key themes were amended from those chosen for the March consultation last year to reflect those in the emerging Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy. It is helpful that the vision is consistent with these although the fit with the LTCP is not as clear or explained well in this document. For example, the OP2050 and Local Plans encompass all five themes so it seems odd to have them only under 'place shaping'. With reference to climate change this could also reference ecological health and biodiversity.

Page 9 - Have we identified the key transport and connectivity challenge for Oxfordshire? What other key changes should we consider as we develop the LTCP in more detail?

Yes, the Plan recognises the important transport and connectivity challenge that face Oxfordshire and that radical solutions are required. In particular, the recognition that *'whilst cars have increased personal mobility, they are having negative impacts. Congestion is disrupting journeys and accommodating and managing vehicles in our*

towns and villages has created environments that have become less welcoming places for people.' Page 8. This is the case across our Districts.

The LTCP should set out how the County Council will tackle this together with other stakeholders including transport providers, the Districts, Local Town and Parish Council and communities. It will need all partners to work together on projects. For example, how we design new streets and retrofit existing streets to encourage active and sustainable travel and increased electric vehicle use.

The key challenges will include accommodating electric vehicle use and the Government's proposal to encourage street trees. Electric vehicle charging points, improved cycle, walking and public transport infrastructure and tree planting will all present important challenges for our transport network and it is important that this is highlighted as a key challenge for the LTCP.

A further key challenge will be 'behaviour change' encouraging more people to leave their cars at home for short trips, being more active and using public transport more often (where this is an option).

Page 11 – Based on our analysis of the engagement activity do you think that we have identified the key points? If you disagree, what key points do you think we have missed?

Yes, this appears to be a good summary of the engagement activity. Unfortunately, the consultation took place at the beginning of the pandemic which could have reduced the number of respondents. It is noted that there was a comparatively low rate of response from the younger age groups, a greater proportion of men than women responding to the survey and a low level of response from the 4 Districts (approx. 12% from South, 17% from the Vale and only 6% from Cherwell), when compared to Oxford City at 40%. This means that results of the engagement activity may not provide a reasonable representation of the challenges and barriers faced by those living in the market towns and rural areas in Oxfordshire.

Page 12 - Have we identified the key evidence for Oxfordshire? Yes/No. What other evidence should we review as we develop the LTCP in more detail?

No, further evidence should be collected as the LTCP is developed.

The Royal Transport Institute published a report in January which helps to highlight the magnitude of the difficulties facing Oxfordshire in moving towards 'net zero transport'; <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/netzerotransport>

The report is helpful in discussing how spatial planning and place-based solutions can help lead to transport de-carbonisation. The report is accompanied by a discussion paper on ways to overcome the barriers to net zero transport. This Paper identifies a series of barriers which make it difficult to convert the public, political and legislative will to achieve net zero surface transport and better place outcomes into tangible results on the ground. A number of these barriers require further consideration as the LTCP develops if it is to be effective in delivering the LTCP's vision for Oxfordshire. For example, barrier 6 is how to *encourage; 'a behavioural shift away from car-dependent lifestyles'*. Providing infrastructure such as new pedestrian paths and cycleways will not be enough in isolation to move people away from car-dependency. As highlighted in the RTPi report and the LTCP Vision we will need to work with communities to change our street space to better accommodate

and prioritise walking, cycling and public transport. It will also be important for the LTCP to look at how to support and encourage electric bike use. This should include addressing its specific infrastructure needs (including secure, sheltered parking and charging points).

There are many opportunities in our Districts to work with local community events, such as the Wallingford Festival of Cycling to help get people cycling. There are also projects in Oxford City to encourage cycling (Active Oxfordshire) and there is a lot of emerging research and best practice available following the 'Mini Hollands' projects in London and Waltham Forest. This can all help with developing the LTCP and look at how we can build on the existing interest local people in Oxfordshire have in cycling and how to apply that to our Districts to encourage more cycling. The current projects in Oxford City can also help inform projects. New infrastructure to support cycling and re-purposing street space to make streets safer will be required alongside initiatives, such as the Wallingford Festival of Cycling. This is important to persuade people to cycle more regularly after the event.

Consultants City Science are currently updating the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and this work should also help to identify priority transport projects (using a place-based approach) to help the development of the LTCP.

The Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy can also feed into this document.

Page 13 (a) Do you agree with our draft vision (Yes/No). do you have any further comments on the vision, particularly if you disagree and have views on how it can be improved?

Yes, our Council supports your draft vision for the LTCP and looks forward to working with the County Council to help achieve a net-zero Oxfordshire transport system. Councils in Oxfordshire have made a commitment to supporting a strategic active travel network and this should be an important part of the vision. OCC should consider whether the statement could also be expanded to include a commitment to reducing private car movements and an increase in active travel and public transport provision/use, as this is fundamental part to achieving a net-zero transport system.

It is important to recognise the scale of the challenge. Improving public transport options and active travel whilst improving gigabit connectivity alone may be insufficient on its own to reduce car trips. Whilst better connectivity could reduce the number of trips that are necessary, for example for shopping and work, people still rely on private vehicles to provide variety and choice in the range of facilities that they access. Therefore, improving the opportunities for residents to walk, cycle, use public and shared transport and the quality of that experience will be key to addressing this alongside ensuring that there is a wider range of facilities (The 20 minute neighbourhood concept).

An important aspect of the vision should be to improve the quality of the walking and cycling experience in Oxfordshire. Too often cycleways are narrow or of poor quality or poorly maintained which means people are reluctant to use them. The design and improvement of these facilities will be key to ensuring they are fit for purpose and support active travel.

Page 13 (b) - Our evidence base work has identified that much of Oxfordshire is rural in nature. In the context of the proposed vision, how do you think the approach to improving connectivity in rural areas should differ to more urban areas?

Yes, the approach to improving connectivity (i.e. high quality gigabit connectivity) in rural areas may need significantly more resource than that in the larger conurbations. It will be important for the County Council to work with the Districts to mobilise residents to seek to secure the funding currently on offer from Government to help provide better broadband.

Page 15 (a)- Do the key themes and policy focus areas identified reflect the wider priorities for Oxfordshire and the public and stakeholder engagement we have undertaken to date? If not, what is missing or needs changing?

The proposed policy focus areas include the main priorities, but there should be more about how support for electric vehicles will be delivered. There is already growing demand for support for electric vehicles which could increase significantly once the pandemic passes. How this will be accommodated within Oxfordshire, before the Government phases out petrol and diesel vehicles is not clear. This is referred to in the document under 'air quality' as 'zero emission vehicles' but it would make more sense to have its own section in the document that addresses how to accommodate the growing number of these vehicles. It will be a huge challenge to provide charging points for them within our communities and this should be an important consideration of the new LTCP.

We support the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and we would like to see the number of these across the districts increased to include Didcot and all of the Oxfordshire market towns including;

- South Oxfordshire: Henley, Thame and Wallingford
- Vale of White Horse; Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon

It would also be helpful to introduce LCWIPs or similar documents for the Garden Villages including Berinsfield (SODC) and Dalton Barracks (VOWH) to ensure these locations are effectively linked with nearby larger settlements.

If the LTCP's Vision of '*discouraging unnecessary individual private vehicle use through making active travel, public and shared transport the natural first choice*' is to be realised detailed walking and cycling strategies will be required for a much greater number of settlements. In many communities across rural Oxfordshire the car is the only way that individuals can meet their needs and access facilities. The reality is that for many there is no bus service available and no safe or direct walking or cycling route to reach key facilities. In addition, where there is access to public transport in existing settlements, there may be fears about using it following the COVID pandemic and it may take time to re-establish patterns of use going forward.

Our Districts also support the introduction of School Streets. As OCC are responsible for the design and implementation of new schools the County has the opportunity to lead on providing a school environment that allows for safe access and storage of bicycles and for new schools to include multiple accesses for walking to help students access school on foot.

Alongside this, the County could consider whether new schools could include a place to accommodate bicycle storage so that there is space for local community groups to run cycling sessions from schools? The Government has recently indicated that it will help invest in teaching children to ride bikes. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-51413070> The County Council could support this by ensuring that new schools can help to deliver this and provide a wider offer to the local community. For example, this primary school in Oxford is supporting bikeability; <http://bsbcoop.org/> The County Council could lead sessions for OCC schools and academies to encourage Head Teachers to support active travel. There is great variation in the approach to supporting cycling and walking to school across the County and this is an area where OCC is well placed to lead.

The document also mentions the environment as important and this is included under the policy focus areas as 'air quality' – green infrastructure. It may also help to include here how OCC intends to support the increase in 'street trees' proposed for the County within the highways network.

Page 15 (b) - One of the key areas identified as needing careful consideration based on the engagement feedback is the future of Park and Ride? How do you think we should develop park and rides in order to support the vision and key themes?

The development of Park & Ride options is important, including supporting access to central Reading from South Oxfordshire. However, Park & Ride schemes should only be brought forward if they are likely to be supported by the public. For example, it may be preferable in some cases to improve bus and train routes or encourage car sharing, rather than provide a new Park & Ride. More detailed research may be required with residents to understand how likely they would be to use a proposed project. The potential for linking Park & Ride projects with safe cycle storage should also continue to be explored. In addition, it is important to investigate whether a Park and Ride project would lead to an increase in private car transport?

Page 16 (a) - Do you think the proposed measurables are suitable for monitoring the LTCP?

No, we consider that whilst some of the proposed measurables are important for measuring the LTCP there are others that should also be considered.

Page 16 (b) Are there any other measurables you would considered in the Plan?

Limited information is given about the monitoring indicators that will be used and it is anticipated that further information will be given at the next stage. To help support making active travel, public and shared transport the natural first choice the following indicators could be agreed;

- Increase in the quantity and quality of footpaths and cycleways
- Increase in maintenance of footpaths and cycleways
- Number of rural bus routes restored

Large areas of our District have lost regular bus services and it is hoped that recent announcements by Government could lead to the restoration of some of the bus services that have been lost as a result of Government cuts referenced in the strategy (It is important that new LTCP supports this);

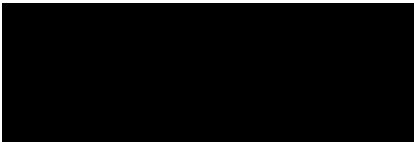
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-better-deal-for-bus-users/a-better-deal-for-bus-users>

We agree 'digital network coverage' is an important measurable and this should include an indicator relating to the delivery of gigabit broadband in rural areas.

As set out elsewhere in our response to this consultation, measures will be required to support the expected uptake in electric vehicles across the transport network so measurables that look at this will be required within the plan; e.g. Increase in the quality and quantity of electric vehicle infrastructure.

I trust that you have found these comments helpful. If you require any further information or wish to discuss them further, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Acting Planning Infrastructure Team Leader - Planning Policy