

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE BOARD  
13<sup>TH</sup> June 2005**

**Report of:** Michael Crofton-Briggs,  
Business Unit Manager,  
Planning Services

**Title:** **Provisional Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 –  
Consultation Draft**

**Wards:** All

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**Key Decision:** No

**Lead Member:** Cllr Ed Turner

**Scrutiny responsibility:** Environment

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Executive Board is recommended to agree the following comments:**

- 1. To express concern about the lack of strategic vision in the draft document;**
- 2. To re-order the weighting given to the five priority objectives in the draft LTP so that road safety and air quality have top priority in Oxford, and to propose the consideration of a Low Emissions Zone as a longer-term option for the City centre;**
- 3. To request that higher priority be given to a range of actions associated with buses, including a comprehensive Quality Partnership approach, new ticketing schemes to reduce boarding times, pedestrianisation of Queen Street, the introduction of strategic services to support the HAMATS strategy, and reduction of congestion on radial routes (providing such schemes are environmentally acceptable); and**
- 4. To endorse the comments set out in Appendix 2 of this report as the formal views of the City Council to be forwarded to Oxfordshire County Council.**

## **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report outlines the contents of the consultation draft of the Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 and the accompanying draft Bus Strategy, both of which were published on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2005. This purpose of this report is for Members to consider and agree the City Council's response to the consultation exercise.
- 1.2 The County Council's original deadline for comments was 13<sup>th</sup> May 2005. Given the relatively short consultation period, it was not possible to prepare a report for the Executive Board within the timescale set. The County Council therefore agreed to accept Officer-level comments in the first instance, which have been endorsed by the Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder and which take into account the views of the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2005. A copy of this report and attached appendix have already been forwarded to the County Council, with the proviso that the comments expressed are subject to endorsement by the Executive Board at this meeting.
- 1.3 There will be a further opportunity to comment on the draft version of the full LTP during Autumn 2005, to feed into publication of this document in its final form in March 2006.

## **2.0 City Council's Vision and Strategic Aims**

- 2.1 One of the City Council's strategic aims is to "improve transport and mobility". Underpinning this is a recognition that transport in Oxford is always going to be about balancing different needs, together with the statement that "by providing alternatives to the private car for those that can use them we aim to ease traffic congestion and the problems that it causes". The comments in this report reflect the Council's vision.

## **3.0 Background and Context**

- 3.1 The Transport Act 2000 requires local transport authorities to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP), which sets out a five-year strategy for the co-ordination and improvement of all forms of transport, together with a programme for the provision of transport infrastructure improvements and for prioritising future capital investment.
- 3.2 The first LTP's were produced in July 2000, covering the period April 2001 – March 2006. These will be replaced in April 2006 by new plans for the next five years, until 2011. Replacement LTP's have to be submitted to Government in provisional form by the end of July 2005, although authorities will have the opportunity to produce revised and finalised LTP's by the end of March 2006. As part of the LTP process, the County Council is required to produce a bus strategy for the same period (2006-2011).

- 3.3 Copies of the draft Provisional LTP and Bus Strategy have been sent to all District, Town and Parish Councils in the county, as well as bus companies, cycling organisations and other transport-related groups. Although the current consultation exercise is confined to 'key stakeholders' rather than the general public, individuals may comment on the draft documents by accessing the related website [www.transaction.org.uk](http://www.transaction.org.uk).
- 3.4 Under European Union legislation, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required to accompany the draft LTP. The County Council is currently preparing a preliminary SEA report. However, this had not been circulated at the time of writing this report.

#### **4.0 Overview of Provisional LTP**

- 4.1 The structure of the draft LTP is significantly different from the previous one. Whereas the first LTP was primarily topic-based, i.e. it set out mainly countywide objectives and targets relating to discrete topic areas, the emerging LTP has a more geographical focus on the District areas, and within the context of five priority objectives. It contains an analysis of each District's problems and priorities, leading onto a table of 'proposed solutions' in summary form relating to 'problem locations'. An overview of the contents of the draft Provisional LTP and the draft Bus Strategy is contained in Appendix 1 of this report.

#### **5.0 City Council Response**

- 5.1 In response to this consultation, Officers believe that there are a number of key messages that need to be conveyed to the County Council. These are summarised below:
- (a) The draft document lacks a radical vision, and is not as bold and forward-thinking as the City Council had hoped. Given that work is still in progress on some important elements of the new LTP, the County Council is urged to ensure that the final document sets out a clearer explanation of its strategic vision for transport in Oxfordshire and how the various measures proposed fit into that vision.
  - (b) The five priority objectives identified in the draft LTP should not be weighted on a countywide basis. If weightings are to be applied, they should be specific to each local authority area so as to reflect local circumstances and priorities. In Oxford, it is considered that road safety and air quality should have equal top weighting, followed by congestion, accessibility and street environment.
  - (c) The Central Oxfordshire Transport Area Strategy, which recognises the need to improve access into Oxford and therefore enable the City to fulfil its role as a regional hub, is welcomed. The approach proposed is consistent with the Regional Transport Strategy, the

draft South East Plan and the report of the Panel that conducted the Structure Plan EIP.

- (d) Proposals for the upgrading of key ring road junctions and the modification of radial routes should be subject to full consultation with the City Council and the local community. Preference should be given wherever feasible to measures such as Intelligent Transport Systems that adjust timings at traffic signals to favour buses, rather than expensive infrastructure projects.
- (e) The strategy for Oxford City is disappointing and to a large extent merely summarises measures that have been carried out under OTS both prior to and during the first LTP period. There is a need to re-evaluate the transport priorities and potential solutions within the City in the light of an informed assessment of the success or otherwise of the schemes implemented in recent years.
- (f) Greater attention needs to be given to improving accessibility to the major suburban employment areas in Oxford, particularly those where development pressures are greatest such as the Headington and Marston area and the Watlington Road/Garsington Road corridor at Cowley. There is no acknowledgement that traffic volumes have increased in some areas outside of the City centre, including Headington, and how this is to be addressed based upon the requirement for road traffic reduction.
- (g) A Low Emissions Zone should be considered as a longer-term option for Oxford City centre, subject to the reasonable support of key stakeholders, practical considerations and longer term funding priorities.
- (h) The draft Bus Strategy and the moves towards a comprehensive Quality Partnership approach are welcomed. Priority should be given to the development of ticketing schemes that would reduce boarding times, the removal of buses from Queen Street and the introduction of new strategic bus services to support HAMATS, e.g. the proposed Kidlington-Water Eaton-JR Hospital link.
- (i) The possible introduction of charges for resident parking permits in Oxford is strongly opposed by the City Council on the grounds that it is unnecessary as the County Council's car parking account is in surplus. Residents of Oxford should not be expected to subsidise the introduction of similar schemes in the rest of the County, which should be paid for out of fines by those people who contravene the schemes.
- (j) There should be a commitment to investigate the feasibility of a workplace parking charge in Oxford in the longer-term. Such a scheme has the potential to ease congestion on Oxford's radial

routes, particularly during peak hours, and provide a source of revenue for improvements to other modes of transport.

- (k) There should be a greater commitment to developing the walking and cycling strategies published in 2001. These modes are particularly important in Oxford as a compact urban area with excellent opportunities for walking and cycling, but where there is still high potential for their further development.

5.2 Appendix 2 of this report sets out in full a proposed response to the County's consultation. It has been prepared in collaboration with officers dealing with air quality, taxi licensing and other relevant issues in various business units of the City Council. It also incorporates the views of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, which considered the draft Provisional LTP on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2005, and reflects many of the themes highlighted by the Executive Board when it considered what the new LTP should contain at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications for the City Council arising from this report.

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no legal implications for the City Council arising from this report.

## **8.0 Staffing Implications**

8.1 There are no staffing implications for the City Council arising from this report.

## **9.0 Health Impact Assessment**

9.1 A range of direct and indirect health impacts arise from transport, including opportunities for physical activity; road traffic injuries; air pollution; noise and climate change. The inter-relationship between transport and health underlies many of the comments suggested in this report, for instance the City Council's proposal that road safety and air quality should be the priority objectives in Oxford and that consideration should be given to a Low Emissions Zone in the City centre. The benefits of walking and cycling in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles are increasingly being recognised, and this report seeks a greater commitment from the County to developing the walking and cycling strategies published in 2001.

## 10.0 Timetable

- 10.1 The County Council must submit the Provisional LTP to the Government in July. The full LTP consultation draft, to contain a full programme of schemes up until 2010/11, will be published for consultation in Autumn 2005. The final version of the full LTP is then due to be submitted in March 2006.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:

Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, Housing and Economic Development:  
Councillor Ed Turner

Legal and Democratic Services: Kate Chirnside

Financial Management: No comments received

Background papers:           Draft Provisional Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan  
  2006-2011 (April 2005)  
  Draft Oxfordshire Bus Strategy (April 2005)