

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL  
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19<sup>TH</sup> December 2005  
EXECUTIVE BOARD – 16<sup>TH</sup> January 2006**

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

**Title:** Consultation on Full Local Transport Plan 2006-2011

**Wards:** All

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**Key Decision:** No

**Lead Member:** Cllr Ed Turner

**Scrutiny responsibility:** Environment

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to;

1. Note the contents of this report and
2. Highlight any particular issues they may wish to be considered by the Executive Board (see Appendix 3)

The Executive Board is recommended to agree the following comments:

1. To express concern that the Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 lacks both strategic vision and evidence of an integrated strategy to reflect the needs and aspirations of Oxford;
2. To urge a re-prioritisation of the spending programme, considering more radical solutions based on longer-term thinking, including demand management measures and a Low Emissions Zone for the City centre;
3. To welcome in principle the proposed Bus Strategy, the Accessibility Framework Strategy, and the accelerated programme for CPZ development in Oxford; 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 The purpose of this report is for Members to consider and agree the City Council's response to consultation on the Full Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2).
- 1.2 It should be noted that following publication of a Provisional version of LTP2 in July 2005, the County Council is now seeking comments specifically on its proposed Transport Spending Plan 2006-2011. This was published in November 2005 and is attached as Appendix 1 of this report. The County Council has also produced a public consultation booklet entitled 'Moving Forward', which briefly outlines how the proposed programme of schemes and measures relates to strategic priorities.
- 1.3 Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Board considered a report on the Provisional LTP2 on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2005 and 13<sup>th</sup> June 2005 respectively. The City Council's comments were then forwarded to the County Council. Given that many of those comments do not appear to have been taken on board yet, and that more information is now available than at the time of the earlier consultation, Officers consider that the City Council's response to the current consultation should encompass all aspects of LTP2 rather than focusing just on the spending plan.
- 1.4 The consultation exercise closes on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2006 so a copy of this report will be sent to the County Council ahead of that date, with a request that any further comments and/or amendments made by the Executive Board on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006 are taken into account by the County Council as preparation of the final document progresses. It is understood that the County's Cabinet will be considering the final version of LTP2 on 21<sup>st</sup> February 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. A Provisional version of LTP2 was submitted to the Government in July 2005. However, this was not required to detail delivery targets or spending programmes other than in indicative form. Authorities now have the opportunity to produce revised and finalised LTP's and supporting documents by the end of March 2006.

- 3.3 Under European Union legislation, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required to accompany LTP2. The County Council published a preliminary SEA report alongside the Provisional LTP in July 2005. However, at the time of writing this report, Officers have not yet seen the second stage of the SEA, which involves appraising the impacts of the proposed spending programme and suggesting mitigation measures and contingency arrangements to counter those impacts.
- 3.4 Copies of the current consultation booklet 'Moving Forward' have been placed in the party rooms in the Town Hall, and can also be viewed on the LTP2 website at [www.transaction.org.uk](http://www.transaction.org.uk). Copies of the Provisional Oxfordshire LTP2 and its accompanying documents (Provisional Bus Strategy, Framework Accessibility Strategy and Pre-Scheme Strategic Environmental Assessment) are also available in each of the party rooms.

#### **4.0 Key Issues**

- 4.1 Officers believe that there are a number of key issues and messages that need to be conveyed in the City Council's response to this consultation:

##### *Strategy*

- 4.2 The overall strategy set out in the Provisional LTP2 is based on the recognition that "the car is and will continue to be the predominant mode of travel". The County Council therefore wants to improve the reliability and safety of car trips by tackling key congestion 'hotspots'. LTP2 also acknowledges that there is a need to cater for the significant minority who do not have car access so that they are able to reach services and employment. Public transport improvements are stated to be at the heart of the long-term strategy, including promotion of a Premium Routes network of bus services.
- 4.3 The Plan indicates that the LTP2 strategy "is therefore a balanced package to achieve all these things. It is aimed at tackling problems, and the solutions will vary according to the prevailing circumstances".
- 4.4 In the view of City Council officers, this problem-led approach does not amount to a coherent strategy. It results instead in a somewhat piecemeal set of solutions that appears to be primarily driven by budget prioritisation, with little overall strategic steer or consideration of the longer term.

- 4.5 It is recognised that LTP2 comes at an awkward time, given that important decisions about the location of major housing allocations and supporting infrastructure in the county have not yet been taken. However, despite the inclusion of a chapter on the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area within the Provisional Plan, there is little evidence of joined-up land-use and transport planning or that the County Council is making any contingency plans should an urban extension to Oxford go ahead in future.

#### *Access to Oxford*

- 4.6 LTP2 acknowledges the need to improve access into Oxford and therefore enable the City to fulfil its role as a regional hub. Although this is welcomed in principle, officers are concerned that the Provisional Plan places such emphasis on expensive schemes to upgrade ring road junctions (e.g. a £10 million scheme to redesign Wolvercote roundabout, including a new link road plus redesign and bus priority for Cutteslowe roundabout). In practice, such schemes may simply displace the traffic queues from outside the ring road, onto radials and other roads within the City.
- 4.7 LTP2 does not allocate any capital funding towards increasing the capacity of park and ride sites in or adjoining Oxford. This may be necessary to cope with the current growth in car journeys to Oxford, whilst limiting traffic growth within the City. It is also important given proposed commercial and other development in the City to support its role as a regional hub. The County Council should address the potential future demands on the Park and Ride network in LTP2 and allocate funds accordingly.
- 4.8 The proposed improvements to the ring road junctions may encourage more car journeys in total, particularly as there has been no consideration of new measures to discourage unnecessary car traffic from entering central Oxford. Officers believe that it is time for the County Council to start thinking seriously about measures to mitigate increases in highway capacity on the approaches to Oxford, such as a central Oxford workplace parking levy and a public parking charges review (in partnership with the City Council). Such measures could potentially attract external funding, for example through the Transport Innovation Fund currently being piloted by the DfT.

#### *Targets*

- 4.9 There is currently little information on how targets are being developed, and there has been limited opportunity for stakeholders to comment on this aspect. The range and scope of targets is limited when compared with the previous LTP 2001-2006, and they do not at present include key (albeit optional) targets for modal share to work; school and workplace travel plan coverage; satisfaction levels relating to walking and cycling; and casualties relating to specific road users. A target should be set to limit traffic growth in Oxford (the 'outer cordon count'),

and secondary local indicators relating to specific problematic suburbs, e.g. Headington/Marston area, should be considered.

#### *Shared Priority Objectives*

- 4.10 The original weightings proposed in the draft provisional LTP for the 'shared priority objectives' have been retained for the purposes of scheme assessment. Hence congestion becomes the top transport priority across the County, followed by addressing road safety, accessibility, air quality, and finally street environment.
- 4.11 The City Council's request that joint top priority in Oxford should be afforded to road safety and air quality has not been accepted because the County feels that having different priorities in different districts may lead to a "postcode lottery", whereby, for instance, a scheme to resolve a road safety problem of a given severity would be funded in one district but not in another. This is of some concern given the particular issues facing Oxford, such as poor air quality in central Oxford and the safety of cyclists and pedestrians, and has most likely contributed to the decision to prioritise investment in other areas such as junction capacity enhancement.
- 4.12 The County Council should be urged to reconsider its priority assessment framework applicable to Oxford, given that it does not reflect local priorities.

#### *Air Quality*

- 4.13 The Draft Air Quality Action Plan for Central Oxford proposes a Low Emissions Zone, which is seen as potentially the most effective means of improving air quality towards achieving the target of reducing Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx) levels by 68%. The proposed Transport Spending Plan 2006-2011 allocates £400,000 for measures to reduce emissions in central Oxford (excluding the High Street), but there is currently no detail on exactly how this money will be spent. Further measures for High Street are proposed alongside more general improvements.
- 4.14 The specific allocation of money for addressing air quality in Oxford should be welcomed. However, it is vital that air quality targets for 2011 are agreed with the City Council, which ensure as far as possible that the objectives set out in the Air Quality Action Plan are met. There should be a commitment in the full LTP2 as to what measures will be pursued within the LTP programme, and these should conform with the Action Plan. A key measure that should be considered is the implementation of a Low Emission Zone for the City Centre. An important first step that should be undertaken as a priority is a feasibility study of a LEZ, which looks not only at the impact on NOx levels, but also at wider climatic and health-related impacts. Measures and targets proposed in LTP2 also need to take account of development proposals within the City centre.

- 4.15 Members will note that the Air Quality Action Plan should be incorporated into the LTP2. Consultation on the Draft AQAP closed on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2005, and all relevant comments will be passed onto County Council Officers for their consideration.

### *Cycling and Walking*

- 4.16 Cycle network improvements in Oxford are allocated £250,000 for the five years covered by LTP2. Additional funds totalling £670,000 are allocated for specific cycle and pedestrian schemes, namely Fairfax Road/Purcell Road link, Thames Towpath cycle route (Donnington Bridge to Folly Bridge), Marston Road cycle improvements, and various cycling and pedestrian measures associated with HAMATS. According to the Provisional LTP, Walking and Cycling Strategies produced as daughter documents to the previous LTP 2001-2006 are to be reviewed, in time for submission of the final LTP2 in 2006. However, there are no details of these revised strategies available for public consultation.
- 4.17 Officers are concerned that the proposed target for levels of cycling in Oxfordshire is 'no change'. This does not adequately reflect the transport and health benefits of promoting cycling, and gives the impression of a laissez-faire attitude. Notwithstanding the fact that the County Council is no longer required to include within the LTP a target for increasing the proportion of cycle trips, it is important that Oxford should celebrate and seek to build on its historically high levels of cycling. A target for increasing the level of cycling in the county should be included in LTP2, as well as an appropriate target that specifically relates to Oxford.
- 4.18 Furthermore, there is no target specified in relation to walking as a modal choice. An appropriate target should be specified to support the forthcoming revised Walking Strategy.

### *Oxford West End*

- 4.19 An Area Action Plan for Oxford's West End is currently being developed by the City Council. The County Council is a partner in this project, and the Provisional LTP highlights the importance of the project to Oxford. Proposals include the realignment of part of Oxpens Road, major improvement of Frideswide Square, remodelling of Bonn Square, and major public transport improvements. It would also be desirable to improve accessibility under Botley Road Railway Bridge.
- 4.20 It would be appropriate for the County Council to allocate specific funds in its spending plan to support improvements to public transport and the public realm in the West End, given that it is unlikely that developer contributions will be sufficient to fund all the necessary improvements.

### *Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ's)*

- 4.21 Since the consultation on the Provisional LTP, the County Council has agreed to accelerate its programme for the introduction of CPZ's in Oxford. Details are set out in the spending plan attached to this report as Appendix 1. The accelerated programme should be welcomed, although the possible introduction of charges for residential parking permits should continue to be strongly opposed on the grounds that Oxford residents 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.
- 4.22 Cowley Area Committee has requested that parking problems around the Templars Square Shopping Centre and in Phipps Road be added to the list of CPZ's to be created or reviewed. Members may wish to consider whether this request should be included within the City Council's formal response to LTP2.

### *Headington and Marston*

- 4.23 Major new hospital services are due to open on the John Radcliffe Hospital Site at the beginning of 2007. However, there is currently a funding gap in providing some key strategic services needed to support the Headington and Marston Area Transport Strategy (HAMATS). An example is the proposed 700 Water Eaton – John Radcliffe Hospital service. This is despite significant levels of developer contributions having been made available to the County Council towards development of transport infrastructure; options for best use of these funds are currently being considered.
- 4.24 The County Council should be urged to ensure that the necessary funds become available for the pump-priming of key HAMATS bus services, in the interests of addressing the worsening issues of congestion, accessibility, local air quality and improving the street environment. Such funding is also vital to ensure adequate accessibility for staff and visitors to existing and forthcoming hospital services, whilst minimising increases in general traffic. This may be explored in conjunction with a Quality Bus Partnership covering the area or specific routes within it.

## **5.0 City Council Response**

- 5.1 Appendix 2 of this report sets out in full a proposed response to the County's consultation, which expands upon the key issues outlined above and also covers other issues such as the LTP2 Provisional Bus Strategy and Framework Accessibility Strategy. Where appropriate, the proposed response at Appendix 2 reiterates themes that were highlighted by the Executive Board when it considered the Provisional LTP2 in June 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.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ed Turner  
Legal and Democratic Services: Kate Chirnside  
Financial Management: No comments received

Background papers: Provisional Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (July 2005)  
Provisional Bus Strategy (July 2005)  
Framework Accessibility Strategy (July 2005)  
Strategic Environmental Assessment (Pre-Scheme) (July 2005)

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 LTP2 Transport Spending Plan 2006-2011  
Appendix 2 Proposed City Council response to consultation on the Full Oxfordshire LTP 2006-2011  
Appendix 3 Comments from Environment Scrutiny Committee – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2005