

25 March 2021

Joe Kay
Local Transport & Connectivity Plan 5
Oxfordshire County Council
By email: LTCP5@oxfordshire.gov.uk

working locally and nationally to
protect and enhance a beautiful,
thriving countryside for everyone to
value and enjoy

Dear Mr Kay

**RE: Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan 5 Vision Consultation -
CPRE Oxfordshire response, March 2021**

CPRE Oxfordshire campaigns for a better future for the countryside and our rural communities. We are pleased to be able to contribute our views to this consultation.

Q5. Vision in context

The local and regional policy context has changed significantly since 2016 when the last Local Transport Plan (LTP4) was published. This section of the [vision document](#) provides more detail about those strategies to outline the local context and how they have informed the development of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

The key related strategies and policy developments we identified are:

- *Oxfordshire Strategic Vision*
- *Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy*
- *Oxfordshire County Council Climate Action Framework*
- *Local Industrial Strategy*
- *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy*
- *England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy*
- *Transport for the South East and cross boundary proposals*

Have we identified the right strategies and policy developments in Oxfordshire? If not, what other strategies and policy developments in Oxfordshire should we take into account as we develop the LTCP in more detail?

A:

Government's 25 Year Environment Plan

Oxfordshire's emerging Nature Recovery Network incl. draft map & policies - see <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/oxfordshires-nature-recovery-network/>

Government bus strategy (March 2021): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-back-better>

Post-covid research/strategy will also need to be factored in.

Q6. The challenge

Oxfordshire's transport system affects everyone who lives and works in Oxfordshire. It plays a role in connecting our communities, supporting the 30,000 businesses in the county and enabling journeys for education, leisure and work. Therefore, it is vital that we create a plan for a transport system that will be resilient, addresses existing challenges, enables all residents to have a high quality of life and creates a healthy, sustainable county.

The key transport and connectivity challenges for Oxfordshire provide context for why the vision is required and the issues it needs to address. The key challenges identified in the [vision document](#) are:

- High levels of private car use
- Pressures of future housing growth on Oxfordshire's transport network
- Areas with poor transport connectivity. Particularly, rural and village areas with limited or no public transport connections
- Wider challenges such as public health, inequalities, air quality and needing to take action on climate change

Have we identified the right key transport and connectivity challenges for Oxfordshire?

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Yes

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No

What other key challenges should we consider as we develop the LTCP in more detail?

Biodiversity emergency

Pressures from top-down growth strategies such as OxCam Arc

Impacts of Covid eg increase in home-working, increase in deliveries

7. Engagement activity

We have developed our draft vision following analysis of the feedback from our public and stakeholder engagement activity and through an analysis of transport data. We have also aligned our transport vision with broader strategy and policy work affecting Oxfordshire.

The engagement activity gave us a good overview of views on a wide range of transport topics relevant to Oxfordshire. We have analysed these responses in the [engagement report](#) and provided an overall summary in the [vision document](#).

Based on our analysis of the engagement activity do you think that we have identified the key points?

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Yes

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No

If not, what is missing or needs changing?

Nothing on canal or river transport, or aviation. Nothing on tourism

8. Evidence base analysis

In developing the LTCP we have collected a range of evidence to identify the current situation, challenges and opportunities. This data informs the LTCP vision and will be used as we develop the LTCP document.

A summary of the key findings from our evidence base analysis can be found in the [vision document](#). The more detailed evidence base can be found in the supporting [baseline report](#).

Have you identified the key right evidence to inform the LTCP?

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- Yes
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- No

What other evidence should we review as we develop the LTCP in more detail?

Assessment of gaps in provision of public transport in rural areas

9. Draft vision

Following analysis of the engagement activity and evidence we have developed the following draft vision.

“Our Local Transport Plan Vision is for a net-zero Oxfordshire Transport system that enables the county to thrive as one of the world’s leading innovation economies, whilst supporting clean growth, protecting our rich and varied natural and historic environment and being better for health and wellbeing, social inclusivity and education.

Our Plan sets out to achieve this by reducing the need to travel, securing high quality gigabit connectivity, and by discouraging unnecessary individual private vehicle use through making active travel, public and shared transport the natural first choice.”

Do you agree with our draft vision?

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- Yes
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- No

Do you have any further comments on the vision, particularly if you disagree and have views on how it can be improved?

The vision should specifically reference the need to ensure that the Plan caters appropriately for both rural and urban settlements, as their needs will vary.

We propose the following change in wording:

“Our Local Transport Plan Vision is for a net-zero Oxfordshire Transport system that enables the county to thrive as one of the world’s leading innovation economies, whilst supporting clean growth, protecting our rich and varied natural and historic environment, **sustaining both our rural and urban communities**, and being better for health and wellbeing, social inclusivity and education.

Our Plan sets out to achieve this by reducing the need to travel, securing high quality gigabit connectivity, and by discouraging unnecessary individual private vehicle use through making active travel, public and shared transport the natural first choice.”

It would also be useful to spell out more specifically what will help make public transport a natural first choice ie it should be reliable, efficient, affordable and accessible to all.

10. Our evidence base work has identified that 61% of Oxfordshire is rural in nature. In the context of the proposed vision, how do you think our approach to improving connectivity in rural areas should differ to more urban areas?

We welcome this question and support the fact that specific policies will be required to reflect Oxfordshire's rural character.

This is also supported by the 'Revitalising Rural' campaign being run by the Rural Services Network (of which Oxfordshire's four District Councils are members) which calls for:

- Public services to be fairly funded to ensure that additional costs of delivering rural services are recognised and adequately funded, to ensure that rural areas are not left behind in levelling up England.
- All Government policies to be developed and implemented in ways which take into account the particular needs of rural communities and are designed to suit rural circumstances with local delivery wherever possible.¹

CPRE Oxfordshire believes that LTCP5 must include a dedicated section pulling together the strategy for improving transport and connectivity in rural areas, including market towns. This is essential to:

- Best meet the needs of the county's significant rural population
- Help address the high transport carbon footprint of rural communities
- Address wider issues of tranquillity, access to Oxfordshire's national landscapes, enjoyment of heritage, nature and the countryside.

A third of Oxfordshire's population lives in rural areas, rising to nearly two thirds in areas such as West Oxfordshire.² Not surprisingly perhaps, people living in rural areas in England make more trips and travel further than those living in urban areas and they also rely more on their car to make these trips (76% of trips by car v 52% for urban dwellers).³ Per capita CO2 emissions related to transport are estimated to be 66% higher away from cities.⁴ With transport acknowledged as 'the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire (45% of the total)' (LTCP5 Topic Paper - Climate Emergency & Air Quality- Climate Emergency & Transport paper), that makes tackling rural transport requirements a high priority.

Being realistic, private vehicle use is, and is likely to remain, the main option for travel for the majority of rural residents for some time to come, and whilst viable alternatives do not exist, there should be no undue penalty for this.

The focus will need to be on building up these alternative options, reflecting the established hierarchy of sustainable travel, reducing the need to travel, minimising journey distances and supporting modal shift to active travel / public transport. This will need to include measures such as:

- Supporting a commitment to fair funding to ensure that additional costs of delivering rural services are recognised and adequately supported

¹ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/government-urged-to-give-people-in-villages-the-same-opportunity-as-those-living-in-bigger-towns-and-cities>

² <https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/rural>

³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/823068/national-travel-survey-2018.pdf

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-49639003>

- Better broadband to facilitate both home-working and leisure activities
- Increasing flexibility of services eg online medical consultations
- Increasing public transport links between market towns (not just spokes to Oxford) - including analysis and work to address the issue of ‘transport deserts’⁵
- Establishing rural mobility hubs ⁶
- Integrated ticketing between companies/modes of travel
- Support for moving to electric vehicles (including not just cars, but e-bikes and scooters)
- Special regard for the requirements of our designated land, in particular Oxfordshire’s three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Oxford Green Belt
- Particular consideration given to issues of tranquillity and dark skies (noise and light pollution), where even minor changes can have significant impacts.
- Resource to ensure adequate maintenance of rural transport infrastructure incl. both roads and footpaths
- Consideration given to the role transport has to play in enabling people to access green space and the countryside which, now more than ever, we know to be vital to people’s health and well-being. Since rural roads and communities do not have the capacity to deal with large numbers of private vehicles, local green space, accessible via public transport or active travel (walking/cycling), is critical. Assessment of gaps in provision should be an essential part of the LTCP5 evidence base and help inform decisions on future investment.

12. One 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?

If communities are planned properly, with co-location of employment and housing, and adequate provision of high quality public transport, then Park & Rides should not be necessary.

However, if P&Rs are required, CPRE advocates their location as close as possible to the home origin so that users can walk, cycle or ‘kiss and ride’ (acknowledging that this solution might potentially be described a ‘local bus service’!).

The next ‘least worst’ option would be to locate P&Rs as close as possible to the final destination, allowing speedy transfer across the ‘last mile’.

The worst option is a half-way house which sees P&Rs located in rural sites between major settlements. This would do nothing to reduce the number of car journeys but

⁵ <https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/transport-deserts/>

⁶ See Future of Rural Mobility Study - Rural Hubs, Midlands Connect - www.midlandsconnect.uk

would shift congestion to rural roads and villages with inadequate supporting infrastructure, as well as impacting on the local landscape.

For the existing Park & Rides around Oxford, there is considerable scope for improvement in terms of becoming major active travel transport hubs for accessing the City of Oxford and other major employment locations including the Eastern Arc. This should include strategies and facilities to promote and prioritise walking, cycling and electric scooter use/hire. Access to and layout of these sites should be altered to prioritise active modes of travel and not motor-vehicle traffic. (NB This may be particularly important whilst we get to grips with post-Covid 19 concerns about shared public transport.)

A consequence of this active travel approach would be that the policy of closing the existing park-and-ride sites and creating multiple greenfield, greenbelt sites remote from both the journey point of origin and people's destinations, should be dropped.

In Oxfordshire's case, this 'outer Park & Ride strategy' is based on a flawed policy of increasing employment growth within the constrained city of Oxford. Given virtually full employment levels in and around Oxford, there is no logical reason why land should continue to be allocated for employment creation in this area and reducing this pressure would further reduce, or even remove, the need for outer Park & Rides.

13. Achieving the Vision

We are also working to establish how delivery of the LTCP will be monitored, monitoring details will be included in the detailed LTCP document. As part of this work we have identified a proposed set of measurables that could be used to monitor the LTCP. These are included in the [vision document](#) and below for initial feedback:

- Biodiversity
- Walking and cycling trips
- Public transport trips
- Healthy Streets Check
- Impacts of air pollution
- Obesity
- Physical activity
- Jobs and employment
- Economic growth
- Digital network coverage
- Road maintenance condition
- Number of killed and seriously injured in road traffic accidents
- Transport emissions
- Journey times by car
- Journey time reliability
- Congestion

Do you think the proposed measurables are suitable for monitoring the LTCP?

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Yes

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No

Are there any other measurables you would like considered in the plan?

YES.

- Landscape & visual impacts
- Light pollution
- Noise pollution
- Impacts on heritage assets

- ‘Transport deserts’ - number of rural communities with/without public transport and level of service, number of rural mobility hubs
- Protection of designated land, including the Oxford Green Belt
- Overall carbon footprint incl. of any new infrastructure
- User satisfaction

14. Do you have any further comments on the vision document?

- Following the well-established principle of ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ - first considerations should always be to consider if/how we can adapt existing infrastructure to better suit requirements, ahead of costly new projects. This includes adequate investment in maintenance.
- All aspects of the carbon footprint need to be considered in assessing proposals for new infrastructure, recognising that whatever the limitations of the infrastructure we have, new infrastructure may do more damage and adapting what we have may be more sustainable.
- Any decisions on new infrastructure must also take into account emerging technologies and not risk significant expenditure on projects that may quickly become outdated.

Yours sincerely

Helen Marshall

Helen Marshall
Director, CPRE Oxfordshire