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

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Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan 5 - Topic papers - Response from CPRE Oxfordshire, May 2020¹

‘There is no such thing as a “rural transport problem” and it is in fact very easy indeed to provide high quality rural public transport in a way that supports vibrant, healthy, economically successful rural communities and contributes to keeping young people in those communities. This is what happens in Switzerland, Germany and Sweden and there is no reason at all why it cannot happen in England. There is a very real need to pose a rather fundamental question at all levels of government and to all political parties and all councillors and MPs “What is the reason why rural residents in England should have a poor quality public transport service when high quality is routinely delivered in Switzerland, Germany and Sweden”?’

Professor John Whitelegg BA PhD LLB, Foundation for Integrated Transport² report

CPRE OXFORDSHIRE’S KEY ASK: A Rural Transport & Connectivity Strategy

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.

¹ An edited summary of this response was filed online, but the boxes did not allow full content to be posted.

² <http://integratedtransport.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FIT-Shropshire-Buses-Report-web.pdf>

We welcome LTCP5's acknowledgement that '*The nature of Oxfordshire means different strategies for urban, rural, connectivity, towns and villages.*' (Area Transport Strategies paper)

However, on the basis of the current papers provided for comment, it is not clear how this will be carried forward. There are just a handful of references to rural issues through the 28 papers, and these are not co-ordinated in any way. A look back to Local Transport Plan 4 also suggests that the strategy for rural areas was not clearly pulled together in one place.

A third of Oxfordshire's population lives in rural areas, rising to nearly two thirds in areas such as West Oxfordshire.³ 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).⁴ Per capita CO2 emissions related to transport are estimated to be 66% higher away from cities.⁵ With transport acknowledged as 'the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire (45% of the total)' (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 these 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:

- 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)
- Establishing rural mobility hubs⁶
- 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 landscapes, in particular Oxfordshire's three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

³ <https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/rural>

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

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-49639003>

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

Many of these proposals are referenced in some way through the current LTCP5 papers, but they need to be drawn together so they can be considered and evaluated as a coherent strategy in as far as they relate to rural communities. This will also enable priorities for funding to be identified, including rural public transport, cycling and walking (and in the latter case, increased funding particularly for the protection and maintenance of rights of way).

We think that LTCP5 must now look specifically at the issues, challenges and possible solutions for rural transport and connectivity. CPRE Oxfordshire would be keen to participate in any discussions related to this and would be happy to support officers/members in any moves to bring together relevant stakeholders.

General Comments

We acknowledge that the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan “Engagement Activity” has the intention to create a platform for opinion prior to a full consultation. However, the papers come over as a series of only loosely connected granular items and lack an overarching “Plan” as such, much less a “Strategy”, which we believe is central to addressing the issues concerned on the scale necessary, especially given the 30 year time period under consideration, against the backdrop of the climate emergency and COVID 19.

CPRE Oxfordshire recommends a far stronger environment led approach to this strategy that principally aims at people’s well-being and health. Rather than a series of ‘tactical adjustments’, the starting point needs to be a serious review of priorities to benefit people and the environment first and foremost.

As it stands the documents presented do not reflect the interconnectedness and complexity of how transport harms and intrudes on people’s health and well-being and the environment, but in other ways brings - or has the potential to deliver - great improvements.

Currently the baseline papers are utterly silent about the qualities of Oxfordshire’s environment - its natural and cultural capital - and the complex interactions in how transport interacts with it. The recognition of climate and air quality as if they were standalone issues not only fails to recognise myriad other aspects of the environment and people’s enjoyment of it, but also fails to recognise the complex pathways of harm and potential benefit they entail. For example, there is no acknowledgement that almost a third of Oxfordshire lies within nationally protected landscapes equivalent in size to the New Forest National Park.⁷

We welcome some of the new approaches in this plan when contrasted with the previous Oxfordshire Local Transport Strategy (LTP4). The addition of “Connectivity” is timely recognising the urgent need to develop the right

⁷ The Cotswolds, Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs. The recent Glover Review recommended that Cotswolds, Chilterns should be ‘strong candidates’ to become National Parks.

infrastructure to support the increased willingness of both employers and employees to use remote working practices, thereby reducing the need for travel.

CPRE wholeheartedly supports the further development of innovative public transport to encourage modal shift from private motor vehicles. However, whilst we genuinely hope that the development and deployment of a vaccine will render this unnecessary, we believe that there is a major challenge to the future of public transport systems and their economic viability, and therefore suggest that OCC needs to make use of the academic and research opportunities of Oxford's Universities and other relevant organisations concerning the safe use of large-scale shared public transport settings in a post Covid-19 world where respiratory protection could remain as a key feature in their widespread use.

Other modes of transport

Air transport - It is very noticeable that there appears to be no mention of air transport, despite the ambitions of some to grow Kidlington airport for more regional and commuter traffic. This may not be significant in volume but is a substantial issue in environmental terms, and should be more clearly recognised as unsuitable strategically, the better option being rail.

Water transport - while water transport is not in itself a major mode of conveyance, in its widest sense it is an important consideration, reflecting growing residential use, tourism and recreational access to and across rural areas and waterside national and other long distant trails. Oxford is at the junction of two major waterways, the Thames and the Oxford Canal, while Abingdon is at the eastern end of the defunct Thames and Severn canal for which there are long term plans of restoration. Integrating water transport into the overall strategy should also be considered because of its social and environmental benefits.

Active & Healthy Travel: Cycle Streets

These seem a good idea for new, larger-scale developments eg Dalton Barracks.

Whilst desirable in principle, it will be more challenging in our established market towns and villages, where the majority of roads will be too narrow to accommodate a separate cycle lane, especially as you approach the centres.

Suitable and secure bicycle parking will be required at end destinations, which again may prove difficult in the centre of older settlements, but may be solvable with local community support.

The needs of other travel users (not just pedestrians/cyclists v cars) must also be considered eg bicycles with trailers, cargo bikes, electric and mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs.

Active & Healthy Travel: Greenways

CPRE Oxfordshire is supportive of the concept in principle, with increased access to the countryside, and the associated health & wellbeing benefits, at the heart of many of our own activities. CPRE Oxfordshire has a long tradition of creating and protecting footpaths in the county (Oxfordshire Way, D'Arcy Dalton Way, Oxfordshire Green Belt Way) and would be happy to collaborate with officers in further consideration of the Greenways approach.

However, we remain nervous about the practicalities of funding and implementation.

To deliver a marked shift in transport use, substantial investment would be required to achieve a significant upgrading of the network as a whole, rather than creating isolated routes. The responsibility for, and funding of, long-term maintenance would also be an issue. Recent experience suggests that maintaining the existing network is a sufficient challenge in itself and should be the priority for any available funding. We can see though that third sector funding might unlock some opportunities.

Greenways such as in Cambridge -

<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/greenways> may provide OCC with some ideas. They could also be used by horses & carriages, for whom there are very few safe off-road opportunities.

In terms of practicalities:

- Any such routes would need to be at least 3 metres wide to provide safe passing and preferably have some form of physical segregation (but not in the form of a shallow step which can cause walkers to trip or cyclists to crash).
- Surface treatment would need to consider the local context - simply covering the countryside in tarmac is not acceptable! (We note that the <https://disabledramblers.co.uk/> ask for the removal of man-made barriers such as steps, stiles, narrow gates and narrow bridges but “*We [Disabled Ramblers] do not ask for tarmac everywhere.*”)

Routes such as this Bridleway - Shabridge Wood near Stonor are better for equestrians who can use the earth path down the middle.



- Artificial lighting for the routes should generally be avoided as inappropriate in the countryside - Dark Skies are vital for wildlife.

- Consideration would need to be given to how to avoid unauthorised use eg by motorcycles / 4x4s. A code of conduct/speed limit might be needed for other vehicles such as electric bikes and scooters.
- Permissive routes, negotiated with landowners, are often not marked on maps such as Ordnance Survey, because there is no guarantee of their existence in perpetuity. This means that public awareness of their existence can be low. Although this is a national issue, it would be helpful to give some thought to how this could be addressed locally.

Active & Healthy Travel: Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans

CPRE Oxfordshire welcomes the introduction of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans and would like to see them rolled out as quickly as possible to other areas.

Whilst the paper mentions a 2025 timeframe relating to the Government Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, the Powerpoint presentation and accompanying notes mentions delivery of the non-Oxford Network to be completed by 2050 which fails to be demanding in any context and must be accelerated to 2030 at the absolute latest. Any new significant development is already required to provide active travel priority measures so including developer funded schemes with only a 2050 deadline seems disingenuous.

Priority locations would be our market towns that are facing significant expansion through housing development, such as (but not limited to):

- Banbury
- Wantage / Grove
- Abingdon / Wallingford / Thame
- Witney.

Multi-user routes should be considered that can link to bridleways, with suitable, secure cycle/car parking at end destinations.



Ref: Busy A6187 Castleton-Hathersage, Derbyshire. Approx 2.5 kms of multi-user path and a cycle lane on the road itself. Taken from Horse Riders UK Facebook page

Active & Healthy Travel: SHIFT

CPRE Oxfordshire welcomes the SHIFT concept, which we see as an integral part of an overall package of measures needed to support rural communities.

SHIFT should not be treated as just an urban and suburban or commuting need but looked at more holistically as a way of helping people to get about and about for their physical and mental health.

Any hard infrastructure created in association with SHIFT needs to be sensitive to its local surroundings eg artificial lighting in rural areas or cycle parks in historic places. The criteria for SHIFT projects should not be determined only in terms of transport integration and modular shifts, but also in benefits to well-being and environmental health, while avoiding environmental harm.

Managing tourism and general visiting around Oxfordshire's most attractive areas should be a key issue in this. Some benefits in quality of life (and visitor experience) could accrue from reducing footfall, not increasing it as if tourism has no detrimental impact. The implications of coach and tourism traffic, especially in Oxford and at Blenheim, need serious consideration from a heritage settings standpoint: it is ludicrous that prominent parts of a Grade I Registered Park that forms the setting of one of Britain's greatest buildings, that together form a World Heritage Site, should be regularly used for parking hundreds of cars

The focus should not be entirely on how to get more people into Oxford which, as an historic and constrained city, has limits on its capacity and already suffers from bus and bike congestion hotspots. It would therefore be helpful if an alternative pilot scheme could also be considered, connecting two market towns eg Banbury/Bicester. We note for example that there is currently no public transport provision from Abingdon to connect with the villages to the east, namely Clifton Hampden, Dorchester-on-Thames and Wallingford. To travel from Dorchester to Abingdon (7 miles by direct road link) by bus requires an approx. 75 minute journey via Oxford.

The concept of SHIFT should be enhanced at the existing P&R sites to allow a park and "active travel" approach inside the Oxford Ring Road. This is not currently highlighted or provided for sufficiently.

Active & Healthy Travel: Equestrians

Horse riders are considered Active Travel & their needs should be included as stated by Robert Courts MP -9 July 2019 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-07-09/debates/C1FCA47F-DCB1-428B-9C9E-B3EF56A3E2F1/ActiveTravel>).

As OCC states, 'The highways infrastructure used by riders (roadside verges, minor or unsurfaced roads, public rights of way, greenways) needs to be high quality and well managed to improve confidence and prevent harm.'

Horse riders also have to use major roads or at least cross them to link between bridleways & quieter routes. As our towns & villages expand traffic increases and minor roads become more dangerous. The network could be made safer by making new, and upgrading, current cycleways to multi-user routes, providing Pegasus crossings over A-roads & heavily trafficked B-roads.

Most roadside verges are not available to horse-riders as they are no longer cut regularly or to the depth they used to be. Many have become overgrown with blackthorn, brambles, nettles & thistles. When they are cut once or twice a year, only 12 inches of grass depth is removed, the hedges are not cut back & the vegetation collapses over the cut grass. Hedges must be cut back where bridleways meet roads & other paths so that the rider can see the traffic without having to move the horse into the road. Many roadside verges have also become severely damaged by lorries so safe refuge by horse-riders or walkers is impossible.

It would be helpful if the needs of equestrians could also be flagged up in the Strategic Active Travel Network document.

Public Transport: Bus Strategy

CPRE Oxfordshire welcomes recognition of the need to improve the bus service offer as a strategic transport priority for the County Council and for future new investment. In particular, we support the ambition to seek opportunities to fund and develop demand responsive and rural services.

We note that Oxfordshire is one of eight local authorities that has cut all funding to bus services.⁸

The CPRE report on *Transport Deserts*⁹, produced by the Campaign for Better Transport, looks at the absence of transport choice in England's small towns. The negative consequences of such deserts are clear: *'This denies people choice and opportunity, creates isolation, damages the public realm and fuels a wellhead of unsustainable car dependency... They exclude those who do not have access to a car, most often the young, older people, those with disabilities and low-income groups. As young people move away from small towns, the resulting demographic shows fast ageing populations which, without interventions to maintain liveable communities can lose economic vibrancy and undermine well-being'*.

We recognise that many of the solutions outlined require national impetus, for example:

- A national bus strategy
- A rural mobility strategy
- A rural transport fund
- A capacity building programme for local authorities.

⁸ <https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/future-bus-funding-arrangements.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CfBT-Transport-Deserts-Feb-2020-web-spreads.pdf>

However, the Oxfordshire transport strategy should be much more ambitious in setting out what it is seeking and put the county in the best possible position to take advantage of any Government, or indeed private or third sector, initiatives.

The report from the Foundation for Integrated Transport on the rural bus service in Shropshire¹⁰ sets out a number of ambitions that might make a useful starting point for Oxfordshire eg:

- Every train station in the county to be served by buses that meet selected trains and provide connections to the nearest main settlement and to smaller villages and communities within a 10 mile radius, defined by town and parish councils.
- Every settlement with a population of above an agreed threshold (e.g. 600) to have a bus service to link that settlement with its nearest train station and to a defined hub that would facilitate transfers from bus to bus in addition to bus to train
- All bus services to be 7 days a week including train-bus connections and on weekdays the bus services would offer a 1 hour frequency

This might seem like wishful thinking to us, but is the day to day reality for millions of Swedes, Germans and Swiss. This is the level of ambition we should start from.

Whilst no doubt there are complications behind the scenes, integrated bus ticketing seems on the face of it an 'easy win' that would make a quick difference to bus users. For example, in Chinnor alone there are three bus companies - Red Rose, Carousel and Red Line, which all link up with yet another company, Aviva, which runs services that link to the main towns. There is currently no integrated bus ticket available.

Public Transport: Rail Corridor Study

Cowley Branch Line

CPRE Oxfordshire is concerned that LTCP5 seriously underplays the challenges of re-opening the Cowley Branch line for passenger traffic until the Oxford - Didcot main line connection benefits from a major upgrade, for which there is currently no approved budget nor agreed timescale.

Certainly we need to see a thorough assessment of the reality and probability of re-opening this line for passenger services within the lifetime of the Plan.

The paper makes reference to a Network Rail report looking at the issues, but this does not as yet appear to be publicly available, so it is not possible to assess the evidence it contains.

¹⁰ <http://integratedtransport.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FIT-Shropshire-Buses-Report-web.pdf>

We note that the paper itself is unclear saying that *‘a reliable train service cannot be achieved without capacity enhancement on the main line through Oxford down to Kennington junction, which is over and above enhancements currently committed.’*

In September 2019, the Oxfordshire Growth Board considered the issue, with a caveat which also does not make this project look like a reality at any time in the near future:

“Cowley Branch Line

26. Network Rail has made good progress on the outline definition study for the Cowley Branch Line, which is being ‘fast-tracked’ in parallel with the strategic study, and it is on schedule to complete this work by October.

27. They have completed an assessment of BMW’s freight operations and drafted a concept of operation which sets out how the railway will operate with freight and passenger trains. An achievable journey time from Oxford to the Science Park (7 minutes) and Business Park (11 minutes) has been identified using the existing 25mph line speed, but there is the potential to improve this with additional track improvement works.

28. The Achilles heel is the capacity on the main line between Kennington and Oxford which will need to be considered by the strategic study when considering the wider network requirements. The strategic study will also provide the strategic case for the Cowley Branch Line. The expectation is that main line interventions will be included in the scope of the Oxford Station Phase 3 project, which is **currently not a committed scheme.” [Our emphasis]**

This information will be vital in terms of the spatial planning of LTCP5 but also Local Plans and the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan.

Further comments

Overall, there needs to be a more holistic view of the major need for a long term intermodal shift and what it will take to achieve it, including collaboration with other counties, AONB Boards and Panels, and national transport authorities. (As, for example, in tackling the issue of excessive traffic past the Rollright Stones site.)

It is not clear if/how the study has taken travel integration into account. Consideration of rail services in isolation fails to address the need to integrate with other modes of transport such as driving or cycling, which is essential if people are to change their mode of transport from defaulting to a personal car for the whole journey. This means factors such as adequate approach roads, links to public transport, transit from parking/arrival to the platform and integrated barrierless digital ticketing should also be considered.

It would be helpful to understand what consideration the study has given to the impacts of the climate emergency and how decisions should be assessed in light of

this. What impacts might climate change have on future transport choices (individuals and corporates) and therefore volumes of journeys? What are the carbon costs of any construction required and how will this be measured against potential future carbon reduction?

Far greater prominence should be given to the issue of freight. This would be a good opportunity to call for effective provision for freight on East-West rail to be rectified.

The abandonment of freight on the Cotswold Line was an economy measure about the time the line was singled to avoid having to relay worn track. If doubled this could be an important relief line to Birmingham (if the 6 mile Honeybourn - Stratford gap were reinstated). There is a lot of congestion around Birmingham only to be partly relieved by HS2.

It is unfortunate that possibilities around tram/light rail (esp. Witney/Carterton) are not included. Such options are starting to be considered seriously elsewhere especially for lightly trafficked routes. The unserved population in the Witney area is now likely to be in excess of 50,000 and the A40 investment remains highly questionable in what can realistically be achieved.

CPRE supports a new station for Grove /Wantage with a prerequisite that knock on effects on road/active travel connections are properly considered. This should be in place *before* the massive housing expansion currently proposed.

CPRE Oxfordshire does not support a possible new station at Begbroke which is within the Oxford Green Belt and would exacerbate existing housing pressures.

Public Transport: Park & Ride

CPRE Oxfordshire remains opposed to the remote Park & Ride strategy.

Our position is that:

- a) 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.
- b) 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'!).
- c) 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'.
- d) 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 would shift congestion to rural roads and villages with inadequate supporting infrastructure, as well as impacting on the local landscape. These remote sites would also reduce take up of active travel for the most effective segment of

the entire journey eg for Oxford, active travel inside the ring road is the most effective way of reducing air and noise pollution and reduces congestion where the need is at its greatest.

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.

In terms of 'mini Park & Rides', there may be a role for these (noting the priorities outlined above), but careful consideration would need to be given to their location and the impacts of any infrastructure (lighting, tarmac etc) on the local surroundings. The prospect of the A420 becoming a ribbon of small car parks is not an attractive one.

Climate Emergency and Air Quality: Climate Emergency & Transport

England's Economic Heartland's Outline Transport Strategy (which effectively sits 'above' LTCP5) sets out a commitment to a zero-carbon transport system across the region by 2050. LTCP5 must also make this commitment clear, including setting milestones for achieving this.

As part of this process, it will need to be clear how new transport proposals will be assessed against this commitment.

The list of current actions is welcome but is likely to be insufficient. Rail electrification (or alternative fuel eg hydrogen), including on East West Rail, should be added to the list.

The main options for individuals are to move to less polluting forms of transport. If they rely on their own vehicles, this would mean a move to less polluting forms, notably hybrid or preferably electric cars.

Incentives could guide this behaviour, but we recognise that many of these are in central government control - for example taxation rates on fuel, subsidies for electric vehicles, improving 'green' electricity supplies and changing building regulations.

Working at home, which has developed extensively during the Coronavirus crisis, is one way of reducing traffic and if it can be supported after the crisis this will help reduce transport needs. Another benefit may be that the focus on morning and evening rush hours can be reduced by flexible working hour policies, easing pressure on public transport services and the road system.

Climate Emergency and Air Quality: Green Infrastructure

Oxfordshire's emerging Nature Recovery Network, including the associated mapping, should provide useful evidence to support the identification of strategic green routes for additional investment and should also underpin spatial decisions on provision of infrastructure.

We should perhaps acknowledge that there is some potential conflict between using verges to provide safe routes for walkers and other users, and management for wildlife.

Unless planting of hedgerows & tree planting are properly managed they encroach upon paths and discourage use. They can funnel people together, making it difficult to pass easily & safely, especially on multi-user routes (remembering that vehicles for the disabled can be used on footpaths). There is also the expense of monitoring trees for safety as they get bigger, grow over roads, cause damage to larger vehicles, such as buses, and cause vehicles to move towards the centre of narrow county roads.

This isn't meant to sound discouraging - obviously we recognise the fantastic habitats that already exist and the opportunities to enhance still further - but **funding for ongoing care is as critical as funding for creation.**

Part of this should be the growing recognition of nitrate pollution from air quality, not just water run-off, as a potentially significant cause of plant species becoming extinct in Oxfordshire.

We also believe that there should be more emphasis on 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.

We would also expect to see any final strategy on green infrastructure (and reflected across the Plan as a whole) explain how special regard will be given to our designated landscapes, in particular Oxfordshire's three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We note for example a recently published paper on a common approach to transport planning in the Chilterns (See: <http://chilternsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/News-Planning-Chilterns-Transport-Planning-310320.pdf>).

Traffic and congestion issues remain of particular concern within our AONBs and there will be a need for close collaboration with neighbouring transport authorities, for example with Warwickshire to resolve the HGV and traffic concerns impacting the Rollright Stones.

Area Strategies: Connecting Oxford

On the face of it, the proposals sound very positive. However, CPRE is concerned about the knock-on impacts. There is a risk of merely displacing traffic congestion to smaller roads and more rural locations. The proposals therefore need consideration within an overall framework of reducing the need to travel, for example, by encouragement of home-working and co-location of houses & jobs.

Area Strategies: Area Transport Strategies

The Need for a Rural Transport & Connectivity Strategy

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.

We welcome LTCP5's acknowledgement that '*The nature of Oxfordshire means different strategies for urban, rural, connectivity, towns and villages.*' (Area Transport Strategies paper)

However, on the basis of the current papers provided for comment, it is not clear how this will be carried forward. There are just a handful of references to rural issues through the 28 papers, and these are not co-ordinated in any way. A look back to Local Transport Plan 4 also suggests that the strategy for rural areas was not clearly pulled together in one place.

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Being realistic, private vehicle use is, and is likely to remain, the main option for travel for the majority of these 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:

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- Increasing flexibility of services eg online medical consultations
- Increasing public transport links between market towns (not just spokes to Oxford)
- Establishing rural mobility hubs¹⁴
- 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 landscapes, in particular Oxfordshire's three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Many of these proposals are referenced in some way through the current LTCP5 papers, but they need to be drawn together so they can be considered and evaluated as a coherent strategy in as far as they relate to rural communities.

We think that LTCP5 must now look specifically at the issues, challenges and possible solutions for rural transport and connectivity. CPRE Oxfordshire would be keen to participate in any discussions related to this and would be happy to support officers/members in any moves to bring together relevant stakeholders.

¹¹ <https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/rural>

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

¹³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-49639003>

¹⁴ See Future of Rural Mobility Study - Rural Hubs, Midlands Connect - www.midlandsconnect.uk

Area Strategies: Transport Corridor Connectivity

In terms of 'mini Park & Rides', there may be a role for these, but careful consideration would need to be given to their location and the impacts of any infrastructure (lighting, tarmac etc) on the local surroundings. The prospect of the A420 becoming a ribbon of small car parks is not an attractive one.

The paper should include mention of the A418 to Aylesbury. The lack of bus ticket integration leads people to park in residential areas in Thame to access the 280 bus service.

Area Strategies: Regional Transport Network

CPRE Oxfordshire supports the County Council's position on the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, as an unjustifiable and costly investment at a time when both reducing the need to travel and increasing sustainable/active travel options should be a priority. Given the impacts of Covid-19, including the increased take-up of remote working and the likely significant hit to available funds, we can only hope that the 'pausing' of this project is now rapidly followed by its formal cancellation.

Area Strategies: Local Community Action on Transport

CPRE Oxfordshire welcomes the initiatives outlined in this paper, particularly the opportunity to explore Demand Responsive Travel in rural areas. We would be happy to work with Council officers to explore further possibilities around this issue.

Connectivity: Freight Strategy

We would very much support a clear objective of moving more freight from road to rail (rather than just generating more rail freight per se, which is what the wording currently implies).

It would be helpful if the strategy could also give consideration to enforcement of appropriate lorry routes, including the right use of SatNav, to reduce overweight vehicles on country roads.

The design of new cycle routes/streets should take into account the likely increase in cargo bikes and possibly tricycles.

Connectivity: Motorcycles (updated)

We note that for those in rural areas that are not served by public transport, and particularly those on a low income, motorcycles can be a practical and economic way to access employment.