Part 3 Section 21
Major Projects

Objectives

21-1 To contribute to casualty reduction targets and policies
21-2 To serve developments identified in the development plan
21-3 To ensure that the local environment is safeguarded and, where possible, improved
21-4 To benefit means of travel other than the private car, where possible
21-5 To improve the efficient operation of the principal road network and help to remove traffic from minor roads

Existing Situation

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan defines two types of Strategic Routes: Major Through Routes and County Inter Town Routes. Through and lorry traffic should wherever possible use the major through routes. Below this tier, the County Council will in general prefer the use of the inter-town routes to the use of less suitable roads. It will reinforce the hierarchy by restrictive measures on more minor roads where necessary.

The County Council does recognise, though, that there will be occasions where no suitable higher tier road is available to take particular traffic. Where this traffic results in road safety or environmental problems, or to support town centre viability or new developments, then the County Council will consider constructing new roads or bypasses.

While the County Council’s current capital programme only includes one scheme (the A40 Bus Lane) which costs more than £5 million and for which funding will be sought through the Local Transport Plan it also includes the following significant (>£0.5 million) schemes for construction before 2011:

**County Funded Inter Urban Schemes:**

- A415 Marcham Bypass – small village bypass
- Traffic in Burford – solutions to environmental problems in historic town to be investigated including possible bypass

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Developer Funded Inter Urban Schemes

Carterton A40 Access Road – improved route to provide local bypass and serve new development

Shilton Dip – improved route to resolve accident problem and serve new development

Sutton Bypass – village bypass to provide relief from gravel extraction traffic

Developer funded Urban Schemes

Banbury Hennef Way Dualling – upgrading of town centre relief road

Banbury Grimsbury Bridge – pedestrian & cycle link across railway

Bicester Skimmingdish Lane, Howes Lane, A41/A4095 Link – complete town perimeter road

Bicester Town Centre Link – town centre relief road

Bicester Launton Road Link – public transport link

Didcot Milton Heights Link Road Stage 2 – town centre relief road

Didcot Northern Perimeter Road Stage 3 – complete bypass road and serve new developments

Witney Cogges Link – relief road and new river crossing

Witney West End Link – town centre relief road and new river crossing

Developer funded schemes are those which are intended to be wholly or mainly funded from contributions from private developers. In appropriate cases, for instance where a scheme would also solve a pre-existing problem or where such contributions are not sufficient to allow a scheme to be constructed, the County Council may part fund a scheme from its own resources as part of an integrated strategy for the town.

In addition the County Council retains the lines of the following additional schemes which are not currently included in its construction programme:

A44 Woodstock Bypass – Town bypass on a Primary Route

A415 Cokethorpe Park – Route improvement to resolve accident problem and cope with increased gravel traffic

A415 Kingston Bagpuize – Link to A420 trunk road bypass to complete benefits of reduced traffic in village

A418 Tiddington Bypass – Village bypass on a through route with continuing road safety problems

Oxford A4142 Junction Improvements – Improvements on ring road to improve capacity and safety

Witney NE Distributor – New road to complete relief road and serve new developments (to be provided as part of new development)

The County Structure Plan also includes a proposal for ‘an appropriate connection between the A40 and the A34’, although no scheme has yet been identified.

Strategy

Of the county funded schemes included in the lists above the A40 Bus Lane and Marcham Bypass are scheduled to be constructed during the Plan period. Developer funded schemes are more difficult to put dates on but it is likely that Didcot Milton Heights Link Road, Bicester Perimeter Road, Witney Cogges Link Road and NE Distributor, Banbury Hennef Way and Grimsbury Bridge will be built between 2001 and 2006.

Review of Road Schemes

The County Council will carry out a full review of its entire programme of proposed and retained schemes through the course of the Plan, as part of its Transport Networks Review (see Part 5 “Transport Improvement Programme”). The review of road schemes will be carried out in consultation with local people, organisations and councils, with the aim of ensuring that:

- the County Council is not retaining any schemes which are no longer needed or whose aims could be met by non-road building means
- there are no outstanding highway or development needs, including detrunked routes, which may require major new highway construction
- the County Council’s capital programme contains all requirements both on the county’s current road network and on those roads which are to be detrunked
- The County Council is in a position to bring forward appropriate major schemes for inclusion in future LTP bids.

Full scheme evaluations will be produced for any schemes which require specific funding through the Local Transport Plan (i.e. those schemes costing more than £5 million) as part of the annual LTP monitoring report at the appropriate time.

Most of the schemes outlined in this section, including developer funded schemes, will require the County Council to make submissions through the Planning and Statutory Order processes. As part of these the County Council will normally produce environmental and traffic assessments which will explain the schemes and their likely effects in detail.

Guided Transit Express (GTE)

The County Council will continue to prepare a proposal for the GTE light transit system for Oxford. While this is likely to be a major feature of the County Council’s second Local Transport Plan to cover the period 2006-2011 it may be possible to accelerate this proposal to allow implementation to start in the later years of this Plan. For further details see Part 5 “Transport Improvement Programme”.

Part 3 – Network Management
Vulnerable Road User Audit

The Council has resolved to adopt Vulnerable Road User Audit procedures to ensure that consideration is given to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities (consideration will also be given to the inclusion of equestrians). Once adopted, all new highway schemes will be subject to these procedures – for details of the procedures see Section 27 “Traffic”.

Indicators

Progress on assessing the County Council’s existing programme of proposed and retained road schemes, and identifying schemes to be progressed as part of the Transport Networks Review (see Part 4, “Transport Improvement Programme”).

Progress on programmed schemes.

Cross References

Banbury
Bicester
Didcot
Witney
Detrunking
Traffic
Rural Transport

Return to Contents List
Part 3 Section 29

Witney

Objectives

29-1 Reduce the adverse impact of motorised traffic within the town as a whole and particularly the most sensitive parts of the Conservation Area

29-2 Protect and enhance the vitality and attractiveness of the town centre

29-3 Improve accessibility to facilities within the town, especially within the town centre, for all people including those whose mobility is limited

29-4 Create a better environment for people on foot, cyclists and bus passengers

29-5 Improve accessibility to Oxford, particularly by public transport

29-6 Improve accessibility between Witney and the surrounding countryside for recreational purposes

29-7 Promote the efficient operation of all types of traffic and related activity

29-8 Reduce road danger throughout the town, and reduce the number and severity of road casualties

**Vision Objectives**

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Existing Situation

Witney is an historic but growing market town with a population of over 21,000, and employment for over 9,000 people. The Structure Plan identifies Witney as a major location for housing growth in the County with about 2,700 dwellings scheduled to be built in the town in the period 1996-2011. It is the main retail and employment centre in West Oxfordshire District, and is situated within a predominantly rural area about 10 miles west of Oxford, adjacent to the A40 Trunk Road.

Witney is a town with considerable assets, both in terms of its historic and beautiful town centre buildings and townscape, and in terms of the general layout of activities, and patterns of travel. The level of car use in the town is average, despite higher than average car ownership, thanks to a culture of cycling (three times higher than the national average), a frequent bus service to Oxford, and a town layout which avoids the need to travel long distances. The town centre is considered to be economically successful, and this has continued since the opening of an edge-of-centre superstore in 1995, and there is a widespread desire to protect the town’s retail competitiveness.

Nevertheless, the full potential quality of Witney as a place to live, work and visit is unrealised because of the adverse effects of traffic, especially in the town centre. Visitors tend to use the centre only for shopping, and there is potential for diversifying activity and thus generating a more lively centre which acts as the social “heart” of Witney and the surrounding areas.

A by-pass for the A40 Trunk Road was built in the late 1970s to take heavy east-west traffic out of the town, but traffic flows on the old route across the River Windrush (via Bridge Street) are now back to the levels experienced before the bypass was opened. A local relief road for the town centre was also built during the 1980s, but again no measures so far have been taken to reap the full potential benefits of traffic reduction in the historic centre. A key aim is therefore to secure the environmental benefits made possible by earlier road investment.

A further problem, solutions to which can only be applied indirectly, is the high level of commuting into and out of the town, despite a rough numerical balance between jobs and employed residents in the town. About 1,800 people (23% of employed residents) travel to Oxford to work, and three out of four do so by car.

In 1990 about 62% of all trips by Witney residents were
made by car. Applying trends in car use and population growth, by the year 2011 it is expected that the number of car trips by residents could increase by about 50%. Traffic volumes would be likely to increase to an even greater extent due to increases in journey lengths associated with higher levels of car use. Traffic modelling suggests that by 2011 Witney would experience persistent and extensive peak hour congestion, and spreading of peak conditions to longer periods of the day. Traffic in the wider area would be likely to divert through village and rural roads to avoid this congestion. Conditions for bus users, cyclists and pedestrians (whose share of total trips could decline from 38% to 25% under this scenario) would inevitably deteriorate substantially. Levels of road safety would also be likely to deteriorate.

A sample survey has been undertaken in Witney to determine the scope for mode switch away from the car. This found that one in four car trips made at present could be transferred to other modes, without any change in trip characteristics or destination, if infrastructure improvements were made to remove impediments to walking and cycling.

A further survey found that three quarters of visitors to the town centre come from within three miles (which is a suitable distance for cycling), and half came from within the town itself, most of which lies within a reasonable walking distance of the town centre. Half of the journeys to work in Witney are less than 2 miles long, yet 40% of these are made by car.

The town is one of the four Country Towns in Oxfordshire designated for population and employment growth to take pressure from Oxford. This growth, together with the general trend of increasing motorised travel, means that the environmental quality of Witney is further threatened by the adverse impact of motor traffic. The County Council as well as West Oxfordshire District Council and Witney Town Council are concerned about these trends, and are agreed on the need for action to avert worsening conditions and on the need to create better economic and environmental conditions in the town.

Following a detailed consultants’ study by Llewellyn Davies a package bid was submitted in the 1998 TPP. This was not accepted by the DETR, however, because of doubts about whether the demand management strategy would be effective without stronger parking restraint proposals. The County and District Councils have discussed this and the District Council in October 1999 introduced time limited parking management in the main public car parks in the town. A monitoring procedure is currently being agreed between the Councils. If this shows that the strategy has not produced any modal shift, particularly in the journey to work, then the District Council has agreed it will consider what further measures are required to control parking in the town.

**Strategy**

The town centre is to be made more attractive as a trading and social environment by closing the main shopping area to general motor traffic, and investing in environmental enhancements including re-paving. Traffic will be reduced by a combination of a “drive to, not through” concept (drivers park at the nearest off-street car park, and return without driving through the centre) and “preferential routeing” through the centre for bus, cycle and pedestrian traffic.

Parking will be managed more effectively including the reduction of long stay parking, and its replacement with short stay in accordance with the parking strategy in this Plan.
Outside the town centre, improvements will be made to the network of routes for both walking and cycling, including routes which link nearby villages. Traffic calming measures will be used to improve safety throughout the town, guided by an overall speed management strategy.

The target pedestrian and cycle routes networks will form a comprehensive network linking the town centre with schools, residential areas and also between Witney and nearby villages. In addition it is expected that the lessons of the “Better Ways to School” pilot project in Faringdon will be applied in later years of the Plan.

New housing in the north east of the town will provide the opportunity to provide a new road and river crossing (the Cogges Link and the North East Distributor Road). The strategy also includes traffic management measures to secure potential benefits of traffic relief on the existing Bridge Street approach routes.

The infrastructure aspects of the strategy will be supported by “soft measures” designed to influence people’s travel decisions, and land use planning policies to ensure that new developments are consistent with the demand management approach.

**Indicators**

Proportion of trips by local residents made by car reduced to 50% by 2006
- local household surveys
- traffic surveys at locations around the town

Proportion of trips to work made by workers in Witney made by car reduced to 46% by 2011
- National census 2011,
- possible local surveys in intermediate year(s)

85% of vehicles travelling within speed limits
- speed surveys on major roads

Reduce traffic levels on roads with frontage development to >5,000 vpd
- traffic surveys at locations around the town

Proportion of trips to work between Witney and Oxford by car reduced to 38%, by bus increased to 35% by 2011
- National census 2011,
- possible local surveys in intermediate year(s)

**Cross References**

Walking
Cycling
Major Projects
Better Ways to Work
Better Ways to School

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