

Connecting Oxfordshire Briefing

GROWTH

- Powered by leading-edge science and technology, the economy of Oxfordshire is thriving and growing. This brings major transport challenges, particularly growth areas of Bicester, Oxford and Science Vale Oxford.
- With 80,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes expected in the county by 2031, demand for transport will continue to rise. Doing nothing is not an option if the county is to make the most of its economic potential maintain the high quality of life people in the county
- The county council has signed up to a City Deal with government that will see the private sector invest over £1bn – but that investment relies on improving transport links

PLANS TO 2020

- As transport authority for Oxfordshire, the county council already works closely with public and private sector partners, including the local bus companies, Network Rail and central Government to improve transport connections and enable more people to use the network
- There is £800m of mostly private sector investment going to transport in Oxfordshire over the next few years, including:
 - Rail network - electrification will reduce journey times with a new station at Water Eaton (Oxford Parkway) and upgrades to Didcot and Oxford stations
 - Road network - new links and roundabout improvements will ease congestion around Bicester, Science Vale Oxford and the Oxford ring road. We're improving four key A34 junctions (Chilton, Milton, Hinksey and M40 junction 9); A40/A44 link
 - Improved connections - easier to switch modes, include a new P&R at Bicester
 - Public realm - improvements including a piazza to Frideswide Square by end 2015

21st CENTURY TRANSPORT NETWORK

- Connecting Oxfordshire starts a debate about meeting the long-term challenges
- We need to think creatively about improving the network and consider new means of transport to create a 21st century transport system that connects people to places and jobs
- We can't rule out ideas that might seem fanciful, such as:
 - creating a passenger service on the Cowley branch line
 - a mass transit system into Oxford
 - monorail connecting key locations around the county.
- But the important thing to recognise that any solution will require strong public and private sector partnership, working through the Local Enterprise Partnership

TRACK RECORD

- We have a track record of delivering improvements, including the first park and ride in the world and now the largest in the country. We reduced congestion round Oxford with hamburger roundabouts, and made the city centre more pedestrian friendly by sorting out

bus congestion on Queen Street and High Street. Traffic into Oxford city centre has reduced by about a quarter in the last 20 years, despite growth in the city and county.

Key facts

TRANSPORT

- Projected £800m in transport investment over the next 2030 years, including electrification, east-west rail and significant road improvements
- 16 million rail journeys to or from Oxfordshire stations in 2012/3 (up 3%) and 39m bus journeys
- A34 carries 70,000 vehicles per day and the M40 carries 102,000 vehicles per day
- Traffic on routes into city centre has reduced by nearly a quarter (24%) since 1993 – despite growth in the city and county
- First park and ride in the world – and now over 5000 spaces
- Oxford High Street carries around 180 buses per hour, but is predicted to rise to around 200 within 10 years if growth continues. This is the same level before the Transform Oxford project
- 80,000 vehicles (including cycles) carry 130,000 people across the ring road in 12 hours every weekday
- There are around 120k jobs in Oxford, of which are done by people outside the city.
- Rail investment will halve journey times to Heathrow and Milton Keynes
- The number of car journeys to work grew by 4% to 181k between the 2001 and 2011 census, but driving fell as a proportion of the different ways of commuting in Oxfordshire (this reflects the growth in population and employment)

ECONOMY

- 80,000 new jobs expected in the county by 2031
- Oxfordshire has four of the five wards in England and Wales with highest employment rate
- Oxfordshire's economy contributes £16 billion a year to the national economy.
- UK Competitiveness Index 2013 ranks Oxfordshire 6th most competitive LEP area out of 39 (competitiveness means being able to attract successful business and maintain standard of living of people involved in the local economy).
- Research base of Science Vale Oxford is larger than that of Cambridge and MIT near Boston.
- The area is amongst the top five Technology Innovation Ecosystems in the world, home to 1,500 high tech firms employing around 43,000 people (Oxford is up against Cambridge, MIT, Stanford/Silicon Valley).
- The LEP area has the highest employment rate among LEPs in England. For the LEP area as whole, over half of employment (53%) is found in high skilled occupations, considerably above the national average, and more than a quarter of employment is in the 'knowledge economy' (27%),

- 12,000 businesses (40%) operate in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sectors, employing over 60,000 people around a fifth of our workforce.

GROWTH

- The latest population estimate is around 660,000 and is growing by nearly 1% per year
- 100,000 new homes expected in the county by 2031

Summary list of committed transport-enabled projects in Oxfordshire

Road

- Northern Gateway (roundabout improvements and new link road)
- London Road scheme (bus lane)
- Improvements at Kennington/Hinksey roundabouts
- Improvements at the Plain roundabout
- Improvements at Junction 9 of the M40
- Link road between A40 and A44 to ease congestion
- Improvements around Science Vale Oxford at Milton and Chilton interchanges
- Bicester park and ride

Public realm

- Improvements at Frideswide Square and surrounding area as gateway to Oxford

Rail

- East West Rail including new Oxford Parkway station at Water Eaton – this will connect Oxford to London Marylebone via Bicester, and in a later phase, Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford
- Electrification of the main network, leading to faster journey times
- Oxford and Didcot station improvements

Background information

- City Deal – signed in January 2014 as partnership between county council, city council, University of Oxford, Oxfordshire Local and Enterprise Partnership and government. The City Deal leverages in £1.1bn of private sector investment, with predicted growth based on science and technology assets in the county. The deal focuses on improvements to transport, skills and housing to unlock that would in turn unlock investment and growth.
- Strategic Economic Plan – The SEP was submitted to government in March 2014 by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to begin negotiation over Oxfordshire's share of the £2bn Single Local Growth Fund pot. The theme is 'growth through innovation', and the bid refers to strong transport connectivity in Oxfordshire but highlights the necessity of tackling congestion to enable growth

- Local Transport Plan (LTP4) – Oxfordshire County Council is about to starting consulting over its new transport plan, which is a strategic document that shapes the long term development and improvement of the transport network. LTP4 will provide a robust evidence-based plan to turn the vision of a 21st century transport system set out in Connecting Oxfordshire into reality.

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