



Planning for Real **NEED** not Speculator **GREED** in Oxfordshire

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OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT & CONNECTIVITY PLAN 5 (LTCP5) – RESPONSE FROM NEED NOT GREED OXFORDSHIRE, MARCH 2022

Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) is a coalition of 36 groups from across the county, together representing thousands of community members. Our campaign is committed to:

- A restoration of planning principles, with a proper balancing of economic, environmental and social considerations;
- Local democracy, with planning control in the hands of locally elected and accountable representatives; and
- Environment and rural sustainability, ensuring that our landscape, nature and rural communities are at the heart of decision-making.

Overview

NNGO welcomes this most recent consultation on LCTP5.

The main Plan is supported by a number of easy to read documents looking in depth at issues around relevant topics, for instance active travel and public transport. We have found the Plan for the most part clearly written and presented with coherent analysis and policy around the 5 Key Themes identified. We are particularly pleased to see Environment, Health and Place developed as 3 of these, with headline targets relating to Climate Change. The Climate Emergency needs determined and focused action, and the ongoing battle against Covid has highlighted many concerns around health and lifestyle.

We are pleased that the document has for the most part addressed the issues we raised in our comments at the time of the Vision consultation. We note in particular the intention to look again at Park and Ride and publish separate strategies for Rail and Bus later this year.

We have been very disappointed with the lack of active implementation of LTCP4. We believe that LTCP5 has much to commend it. It represents something of a sea-change – but we are very conscious that there will be lots of difficulties to be navigated in implementing it successfully. These include not just finance, but the need to work proactively with a range of parties, including transport operators, the

City and other District Councils who are responsible for most spatial planning, developers – and indeed the government (even though the thrust of the document accords with the Department for Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the Treasury will need to be bought in!).

As we have suggested before, getting the balance right (for instance to improve accessibility in rural areas or for elderly and disabled people, or indeed for managing HGV movements) will offer huge challenges. Educating and persuading the gamut of public opinion (from grass roots to government) of the necessity for and perceived benefits of these changes will be vital and will require both joined up thinking and unflinching focus.

In order to increase the chances of success, we suggest that as part of the further development of LTCP5 it might be useful to review the reasons why for the most part LTCP4 was not successful on the ground.

Comments on Content

We fully support the urgency for and intentions of the Plan.

We particularly welcome the targets to remove 1 out of 4 current car trips by 2030 and 1 out of 3 (with a zero-carbon transport network) by 2040. These are accompanied by a pivotal change of approach from ‘predict and provide’ to ‘decide and provide’. We also support the intention of making walking, cycling/riding, public transport, and shared use, the **hierarchy for travel** in Oxfordshire.

These ambitious changes bring with them a clear imperative for both demand management and reworking of current funding priorities. Our comments are intended to be helpful in achieving that.

We are somewhat concerned that the Plan contains a large number of policies – and indeed a large number of KPIs. In the final Plan it might be desirable to have fewer policies – but to accompany most of those by measurable performance targets to focus on ways in which the headline changes could be brought about. We think that the final version of the Plan should have a clear and unified delivery strategy for their achievement; this should involve ‘backcasting’- to enable staging targets for exactly when and how they will be achieved over the time period.

We think the idea of the 20 minute neighbourhood is a good tool to develop; this will require significant cooperation with other bodies; not least the City and other District Councils responsible for planning.

Spatial Considerations

Indeed the sign up and involvement of all Oxfordshire Councils is critical.

We have seen in the recent tranche of District Local Plans, a large number of greenfield sites, many of which are being developed in a way which will lead to increased car use. Some will never readily be served by regular bus routes or be accessible by cycling (even with electric bikes) or walking. Some developments (for Oxford's alleged housing needs) in the Green Belt were in part predicated on the LTCP4 proposals for corridors for bus rapid transit – which have so far failed to materialise.

For such reasons we think it is very important for the County to continue to develop area strategies. However, they must not be developed in isolation, but instead require consistency across Oxfordshire. And a very much firmer line is needed to implement the hierarchy for travel to have any hope of meeting carbon and environmental targets. This will certainly need to include designing out reliance on the private car and designing in, and aligning spending with, the hierarchy. Currently spending is inversely related to the stated priorities!

There should be early opportunities for the development of bus routes, bus priority and, not least, high quality off-road cycle networks.

In this context it is worrying to read that a recent publication from Transport for New Homes ('Building Car Dependency', 2022) concludes that many new housing estates are adding to traffic jams, carbon emissions and trapping communities into car dependence. It is sobering that two of the twenty sites quoted are in Oxfordshire. Great Western Park, Didcot is classified as an 'exclusive exurb' (*sic*) and Barton Park Oxford as a 'severed community'. The publication should be a compulsory read for all those involved with implementing LTCP5.

It is even more worrying to see that the County Council seems currently to be going ahead with major road proposals from Didcot to Clifton Hampden (Didcot Garden Town HIF Scheme Planning Application R3.0138/21). This would make reduction of car trips even more difficult and would have huge environmental consequences (including elsewhere on the road network) which have not been properly considered.

Spending and work on this and all major highway proposals should be paused and reviewed accordingly in the context of the LTCP policies.

Implementation

We look forward to this radical change of approach to transport in the County. Carrying on as normal with the way people travel is no longer an option.

This same point – that we simply cannot carry on as normal - of course applies with force to the decision on growth rates for Oxfordshire. **Achieving LTCP5's ambitious targets will require critical re-examination of assumptions about levels of construction growth that might be accommodated in Oxfordshire in the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan; not least a Peer Review we are still seeking of the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment published last year.**

Covid has had an adverse effect on the use of public transport – but many of the lifestyle changes it has wrought – for instance working from home, greater appreciation of the outdoors, active travel - offer pathways to achieve what is in the Plan.

There may be a need to look at the way the County Council is geared up to focus on this huge challenge; certainly given the current 'bidding culture' of government, there is a need to get the walking, cycling and bus strategies and proposals in place quickly. Much effort will be required to convince developers of the imperative of changing travel modes. The Council will have to change its maintenance policies (think wholly unsatisfactory cycle lane conditions) as well as its capital spending.

New sources of money will be also needed; some (for instance workplace parking) may offer a 'win:win', where income from one area can finance improvements in another. Certainly there needs to be concerted pressure on government to release money in more flexible ways – and in line with its policy and rhetoric.

But this coherent and ambitious Plan is certainly a good start.



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