



Response sent via email

Email: LTCP5@oxfordshire.gov.uk

EEH Business Unit
c/o Buckinghamshire Council
Walton Street
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Dear Sir/Madam

Draft Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan consultation

England's Economic Heartland welcomes publication of Oxfordshire's draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

The plan is rightly ambitious in its objectives to achieve net zero emissions and oversee a significant shift from private car journeys to walking, cycling and public transport.

As the sub-national transport for the county, we strongly support the document and look forward to working with the county council and other partners to support the plan's delivery.

Vision and targets

The plan's vision and key themes align well with the regional transport strategy, 'Connecting People, Transforming Journeys', published in February 2021.

We particularly welcome the recognition that transport is an enabler for tackling inequality and unlocking better health, education, wellbeing and places for residents.

The headline targets are ambitious, reflecting the need for a step-change in the way our transport system is planned and used. The target for a net zero transport system by 2040 aligns with the ambition set out in the EEH transport strategy.

Regional working

We welcome the LTCP's section on regional connectivity and cross boundary working and the significance placed on collaborative working with partners across the wider region.

We strongly support policy 89 regarding working collaboratively with sub-national transport bodies, alongside the emphasis being placed on regional working to cut carbon emissions.

EEH's connectivity studies, in partnership with local authorities including Oxfordshire County Council, seeks to identify opportunities to improve connectivity along key corridors. Oxfordshire is included in the first three studies: Oxford-Milton Keynes; Oxford-Northampton-Peterborough; and Oxford-Swindon.

The outputs from this work, alongside other studies including the Oxford-Cambridge arc connectivity: roads study', will inform EEH's evolving investment pipeline – which already includes East West Rail and a solution to the A34 - for the region.

Our work at a regional level will complement and support Oxfordshire's policies in areas such as active travel, public transport, freight, data and delivery.

For example, our emerging active travel strategy states that EEH has a key role in helping to ensure a joined-up approach to network connectivity across local authority boundaries. As you know, we are also working with Sustrans to realise the transport strategy's ambition for the 'Varsity Way' cycling route between Oxford and Cambridge.

The importance attached to buses in the LTCP is also reflected in our emerging regional bus strategy. EEH is complementing work of local authorities by ensuring that cross-boundary bus and coach journeys are considered as part of the region's strategic transport network.

With regards rail, EEH was pleased to co-fund the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study. Its recommendations are of strategic interest to the wider region and are reflected in the EEH transport strategy.

In particular, the ambition to remove the bottlenecks at Oxford Station and provide new direct services to Swindon and Bristol as part of an 'East West Main Line' is a regional priority. This aim is also shared by the East West Main Line Partnership (formerly the East West Rail Consortium) which has an ambition for 'coast to coast' East West Rail services from Norwich and Ipswich through to Bristol and south Wales.

We also strongly endorse Oxfordshire's policies and aspirations for mobility hubs, which are a key policy of the regional transport strategy. We will shortly be commissioning work to further develop our understanding of how mobility hubs can best be deployed and look forward to working with colleagues in Oxfordshire on this.

With regards delivery, EEH is creating a regional scheme development hub – a small, dedicated team comprising specialist technical and professional skills upon which all partners, including Oxfordshire, can draw to support their development of detailed scheme proposals.

Such an arrangement will achieve significant economies of scale, providing value for money for taxpayers. The team will accumulate knowledge and experience that can be retained within the region to the collective benefit of partners.

Summary

We welcome publication of what is a forward-thinking plan for long-term connectivity in Oxfordshire. It rightly embodies an approach of 'decide and provide' rather than the traditional 'predict and provide'.

EEH looks forward to continuing our strong record of collaboration with Oxfordshire, and for Oxfordshire continuing to share its best practice with the rest of the region.

Your sincerely

Cllr Richard Wenham,
Chair, England's Economic Heartland