West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) welcomes on-going engagement on the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), which outlines the long-term vision for transport in the County, and the policies required to deliver this.

We previously commented on the development of the vision document, which we were generally very supportive towards. We did feel that some important considerations needed stronger emphasis including the response to climate change which should form a 'golden thread' that runs through all parts of this plan. In addition, we felt that there should be a stronger focus on the role of emerging technologies and the importance of multi-modal travel in reducing car usage rates. We also considered that there should be a stronger recognition of the challenges faced in rural areas where public transport is much less accessible than in urban areas of the county. Finally, we felt that more could be said about the possible opportunities of a post-Covid world.

Overall we are extremely supportive of the Plan. It provides some useful background and contextual information, is easy to navigate and includes some useful case studies.

Our comments regarding this Plan are provided below and they are divided into relevant headings which correspond to the consultation document for ease of reference.

Vision

As we expressed before, we support the overall vision which aims to achieve a net-zero Oxfordshire transport system. However, as previously stated, this vision should make reference to the need for improved multi-modal travel which is vital if we are to reduce the number of miles travelled within the County by car. There should however be recognition that private transport will remain a key mode of transport in rural areas and therefore the focus should be on encouraging cleaner electric vehicles in these areas.

Reference to improved outcomes for health and well-being and social inclusivity is welcome. It however remains unclear what is meant by the reference to education which could usefully be expanded/ clarified. Mention could also be made here to the need to support walkable and well-balanced communities which will reduce the need for short distance car trips.

The vision refers to the protection of the natural and historic environment. This should however go further and refer to positive gains or enhancement. This should also make reference to the importance of green infrastructure which helps to enhance the natural environment and also supports active travel and healthy lifestyles.

Given the predominantly rural nature of the County, the vision should seek to articulate how the current challenges faced will be addressed in rural areas. Perhaps the vision should have an urban and rural focus and explain how the two will effectively be brought together through improved connectivity whether digital or physical (for example through

improvements in multi-modal connections and the future opportunities associated with automated vehicles).

Key Themes

We previously stated that we support the five key themes proposed as these are relevant and sensible to achieving the overall vision. We do however suggest that climate change is included as a separate theme given its critical importance and cross-cutting nature which affects every aspect of our lives. Conversely, we wonder whether health and place-shaping could be combined as they go largely hand in hand under the banner of healthy place-shaping.

Within the environment theme, there should be mention of heritage alongside the natural environment to ensure consistency with the overall vision.

Under the connectivity theme, mention is made of the need for seamless interchange between different travel modes. This is a critically important issue and should be explicitly mentioned within the vision itself.

Within the productivity theme, 'well-maintained' should be added in reference to the transport network.

Headline Targets

Whilst we do not object to the proposed targets, we do not necessarily feel that these best reflect the proposed vision and key themes. The vision and themes are multi-dimensional covering not just the number of car borne trips but an array of other related lifestyle choices and limitations. These include the proportion of trips on foot or bike, public transport usage rates, fear of crime related to active travel routes, access to facilities to support agile working, recreational opportunities etc. These all link to the vision and themes and should be reflected in the targets. Assessing the number of trips alone does not provide an accurate picture of travel patterns or behaviour nor does it link into the need to reduce overall private transport miles rather than simply the number of trips. This is particularly relevant in rural areas where the first part of a journey may be by private transport but where the latter part may be by more sustainable means via a mobility hub, for example.

Notwithstanding the comments above, in terms of the targets proposed, it would be useful if more information could be set out to explain what steps will be necessary to achieve a reduction in car trips. In addition, the 2050 target is vague and it would be useful to understand in more detail what is envisaged by a 'climate positive future'.

Walking and cycling policies

We strongly agree that encouraging more walking and cycling is central to delivering the vision for travel in Oxfordshire. However, in rural areas there will remain higher usage of private vehicles and we are encouraged that the LTCP recognises that a more targeted approach will be necessary in these areas. It may be more realistic to accept that many

journeys will continue via private transport in rural areas but that walking and cycling rates can be increased though the development of smart mobility hubs and good connections.

It is particularly important to ensure that future policies require new developments to provide strong active travel linkages to key facilities, amenities and mobility hubs in the wider area to facilitate sustainable travel and avoid car dependency. This is still difficult to achieve based on current policy and is fundamental to achieve the overall vision of the Plan.

We agree with the transport user hierarchy outlined in Policy 1 in principle although there should be more flexibility to allow for certain circumstances where it is necessary to prioritise another mode. For example, it may be necessary to prioritise a bus lane over a cycle lane at a certain pinch point if this forms a crucial part of the overall network.

Stronger mention should be made to bicycle parking (as well as facilities for e-scooters or similar where these are considered a safe option) and opportunities for bike hire scheme at key destinations such as town centres, P&R sites and railway stations etc. In addition, the creation/ improvement of safe and convenient connections to key sites such as to schools should be listed.

Healthy place shaping policies

We fully support the aim of these policies given the importance of creating safe and healthy neighbourhoods and tackling issues such as obesity. We agree that streets should be designed to prioritise people over motor vehicles and to create places where people feel welcome, safe and choose to walk and cycle. Obesity and poor mental health can often be linked to a lack of exercise and time outdoors. Therefore increasing the amount of accessible green space and connections will promote walking and cycling which plays an important role in assisting physical and mental wellbeing

Considering the 20-minute neighbourhood concept under Policy 17, whilst we support the principles behind this, this should be applied with a level of flexibility and discretion. It is not always appropriate to apply a strict 20 minute neighbourhood concept on new developments across the whole county particularly where they relate to more rural areas where average densities are lower. Therefore, whilst the principles can be adopted County wide, in reality 20 minute neighbourhoods in their truest sense are much more appropriate in larger urban/ suburban schemes and towns. We are encouraged that there is an acknowledgement that this concept does need to be tailored to rural areas.

Road Safety

In terms of road safety, this policy area should include reference to 'safe speeds' and planning for pedestrians/ cyclists. Mention should also be made to 'people-centric street designs' within residential areas to aid safety.

Whilst we support the 20mph speed limit policies (Policies 21-24) in general, we feel that this should be applied to particular streets only according to a set of criteria such as outside schools or busy pedestrian streets in a town centre rather than being applied to a wider

blanket area. By focusing these areas to small' zones', they are more likely to be observed and these should be accompanied by other speed reduction measures that are appropriate and sympathetic to the character of the area. Excessive signage should be avoided, particularly in historic areas.

Public transport policies

We previously raised the need for the public transport policies to improve opportunities to integrate the various transport modes in a more streamline way using the latest technologies to assist. Whilst this is mentioned in this section, this could be applied more strongly within the policies themselves.

P&R sites and railway stations should be seen as multi-modal hubs wherever possible rather than being considered separately. Opportunities to locate P&R hubs close to services (such as shops/ childcare facilities and so on) should also be taken where possible and practicable. We are encouraged that the Eynsham Park and Ride is planned to operate as a multi-modal hub and it has been included as a case study in the Plan. We also feel that Hanborough Station could helpfully be included as a case study given the work being undertaken on the Hanborough Masterplan and its relationship with Salt Cross. We also support the concept of smaller rural hubs which may consist of bus stops in key locations where other facilities such as bike hire could be located and more emphasis on these could be included in the policies.

Considering community transport opportunities (Policy 27), which is particularly important in rural areas, technology could transform the ways in which these operate. These may become automated vehicles and bookable electronically. The opportunities that will result from these have yet to be fully explored but as an example, these could help to provide a regular shuttle service to larger transport hubs radically improving multi-modal connections. These can also utilise cleaner energy than traditional vehicles such as electricity and potentially hydrogen as this is developed in the future.

We previously raised the need for this Plan to highlight the challenges of multi-modal trips and we are encouraged further details have been provided (Policies 36-37). We particularly support the statement that multi-modal travel recognises that various transport modes are not mutually exclusive and, in many cases, support one another. As an example of this, where a change from train to bus may be required, the logistics should be in place to ensure any such trip is as simple and convenient as possible. This will require consideration of how to implement/ improve multi-ticketing options. The importance of utilising technology in making real-time information accessible through apps and the ability to purchase/ scan tickets using smartphones is also vital in improving customer experience and reducing the total number of miles made by car.

Digital Connectivity

We fully support the inclusion of this section given its importance in reducing the need to travel and the ability is has to transform our travel experience.

We previously raised that emerging opportunities should also be reflected upon from strongly such as increased rates of home working and a reduction in face to face meetings which have been possible through improved digital connectivity. This technology is developing at a fast pace and is likely to continue to develop in a post-Covid world, providing new opportunities in the way we work and communicate; the benefits of which allows commuting to be reduced from the levels we saw before the pandemic - reducing stress, congestion and pollution.

Within this section, the opportunities for 'local community business hubs' and the future role of mobile technology should be strengthened further as this is likely to expand and transform in coming years.

Environment, carbon and air quality

We strongly support the aim of reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality across the county whilst recognising that cars will still be a part of the transport mix particularly in rural areas where there are limited alternatives but that cleaner technologies can assist in reducing emissions.

In considering the tools that can help to achieve this, we suggest that a stronger focus could be given to technological advances, not just in terms of vehicles which may include clean driverless shuttles in the future but also in terms of changing behaviours. For example, technology now allows much more communication to be virtual and which has a huge impact on our carbon footprint. This technology is likely to develop rapidly and will have a dramatic impact on the way we work, shop and socialise – all of which will affect our travel behaviour and in turn, our environment.

Finally, we note that the Green Infrastructure section is also heavily related to walking/ cycling and Healthy Place Shaping so this topic crosses all these sections. There could also be a stronger emphasis in Policy 50 on the need for ecological improvements and biodiversity net gain which green infrastructure, including green corridors, could help achieve.

Network, parking and congestion management

We agree that there needs to be disincentives to car use in certain circumstances, particularly in urban and congested areas as well as parking management.

This however needs a targeted approach, which is flexible and recognises that in rural areas of the County, which makes up a large area, private transport remains the only feasible option. Therefore, it is vital that this approach is tailored and goes hand in hand with the development of other opportunities including the provision of easily accessible mobility hubs, bus services and community transport and walking/ cycling routes.

 In addition, whilst we agree that parking management is an important element of disincentivising high car usage in congested areas, this should also be balanced with the economic benefits of convenient access to town centres. Free car parking across West

Oxfordshire continues to be extremely popular and valued by businesses, residents and visitors.

Innovation

We strongly support the need to embrace future innovations to help support modal shift whilst recognising that technology alone will not solve all of the challenges identified, particularly in the short term.

We believe that emerging technology will play a crucial role in contributing to our ambitions of modal shift and addressing climate change. As such, this is considered to be a cross-cutting issue which is relevant to all sections of this Plan including active travel and public transport.

We consider there to be some exciting opportunities and case studies included in this section which we welcome, however like all emerging technologies we also need to be mindful at all stages of the potential risks such as those posed by E-scooters on pedestrian safety and also those posed by drones in terms of privacy.

Regional/ Local connectivity and cross-boundary working

In respect of regional/local connectivity, it will be essential for LTCP5 to reflect and 'join-up' with broader infrastructure planning work being progressed through the OXIS refresh.

We support all the initiatives suggested in this section including zero-emission vehicles, mobility hubs, the rollout of 5G, the improvement in greenway etc and it is important that all these initiatives are implemented together, rather than in isolation, to create improved connectivity in rural areas.

Within the 'transport corridor strategies' section, more information should be included about the A40 works which are extensive and are subject to a live planning application. The scheme will transform the function of this corridor and the dominant mode of transport and therefore is particularly relevant to this section.

Under the 'rural journeys' section, we welcome recognition that residents in rural communities face specific connectivity challenges that will require a targeted approach and we also welcome the explanation as to the reasons why this is the case. As we previously stated, it should also be recognised that in many rural areas, achieving modal shift away from the car is not currently a feasible option for many. Private transport allows many residents in West Oxfordshire and other parts of the county to access employment, leisure and appointments which would otherwise not be possible. Therefore, in rural areas including larger villages, it may be more realistic to accept that many journeys will continue via private transport and there should be an emphasis of promoting cleaner electric vehicles by incorporating charging points within new developments, for example.

Monitoring

The proposed key performance indicators are supported in general. As previously suggested, rates of commuting and home-working could be included. Some wider indicators on health and well-being may also be helpful. There could also be data on personal safety relevant to the creation of pedestrian connections, which should include natural surveillance and suitable lighting etc. In addition, wider indicators of biodiversity would be useful such the creation/ loss of habitat including wildlife corridors linked to active travel connections/ along roads.