

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group



Comments on the Oxfordshire Strategic Transport Plan 2015

The Executive Summary starts with the following paragraph:

*“Connecting Oxfordshire sets out Oxfordshire County Council’s policy and strategy for developing the transport system in Oxfordshire to 2031. It has been developed with input from Oxfordshire’s district councils, its businesses, MPs, stakeholder groups and through public consultation. It fits the County Council’s highest level strategic aims, as set out in *Oxfordshire 2030*, our Sustainable Community Strategy. It takes into account the plans and ambitions of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership in its Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for Oxfordshire and so identifies transport schemes that will support the Knowledge Spine growth area. *Connecting Oxfordshire* is nonetheless a plan for the whole county; it also sets out our policy priorities for parts of the county less affected by the Knowledge Spine, thereby providing a basis for securing transport improvements to support development countywide.”*

- 0.i. As one of the main stakeholder groups representing more than 1000 people in Wantage and Grove we are disappointed that we were not asked for input earlier in the process.
- 0.ii. As one of the communities experiencing more than 60% growth in housing (taking more than 5% of the total included in the SEP) with most employment at least 10 miles away we are disappointed that relatively little mention is made of Wantage and Grove in a pack of documents which should provide significant infrastructure to support the development in our area.

1a Volume 1 (Overall Policy) - Supporting Growth and Economic Vitality

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Mostly disagree

1b Volume 1 (Overall Policy) - Supporting Growth and Economic Vitality

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

- 1b.i. The first objective is to *“Maintain and improve transport connections to support economic growth and vitality across the county”*.

Yet there will be little funding for improvements to the A417 and A338 from Wantage and Grove to the areas of employment, no commitment to improvements in bus services and only a commitment to *“Promoting the provision of a station at Grove”* after 2020. Can you please explain how this will help the 5% of the total increase in Oxfordshire inhabitants which will be living in Wantage and Grove to get to the proposed areas of employment? Without this funding this objective is erroneous and should be removed.

Furthermore the plans fail to consider the need to improve links from the Vale to Swindon and the west. Major employers in Wantage including Crown Technology and those at Grove Technology Park would benefit from the provision of the western relief road, and that this would encourage new employers to the area. The western relief road would also improve deployment of emergency services from Grove Technology Park.

- 1b.ii. The second objective is to *“Make most effective use of all available transport capacity through innovative management of the network”*.

Without a commitment to add a train station at Grove, the only transport network near Wantage and Grove are the roads and without significant investment in cycleways between Wantage and Harwell and Grove and Milton Park (referred to in the Cycle strategy paragraphs 46 *“National Cycle*

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Network route 544 currently connects Wantage to Harwell Campus via an indirect route. A shorter route will make cycling more attractive on this corridor. This promoted premium route will most likely make use of the existing route 544 at either end where the route is of a high standard already or is about to be upgraded. The strategy is to upgrade several sections of existing rights of way to create a more direct route. The longer-term aspiration is to also have a route alongside the A417.” And 47 “This strategy for this route is to create a connecting route between the Wantage to Harwell and Abingdon to Harwell corridors. Longer term, a separate route possibly running in the shadow of the railway line between Grove and Steventon could be created..”). The objective must be amended to reflect that “effective use” is a “Longer term” aspiration.

1b.iii. The third objective is to “Increase journey time reliability and minimise end-to-end public transport journey times on main routes“.

We recognise that the A34 is the responsibility of the Ministry yet without dramatic improvements to this road (which is one of the major causes of lack of reliability to journey times throughout Oxfordshire) and more specifically improvements to the A417 and A338 (the major routes through the Vale) to reduce the areas marked on figures 9, 10, 15 and 16 as >95% (over capacity), minimising journey times and increasing reliability will be impossible. Unless plans are included to make these improvements this objective should be removed.

1b.iv. The fourth objective is to “Develop a high-quality, resilient integrated transport system that is attractive to customers and generates inward investment”.

Paragraph 34 states that “Within Oxfordshire’s towns, bus networks are relatively under-developed, offering slow, infrequent routes that are more suited to shoppers than commuters. The quality of cycling and walking networks is variable, with some towns having had very little investment in pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Although there is a charge for most town centre parking in district council car parks other than in West Oxfordshire, many of the trips within the towns are to workplaces with ample staff parking, edge of town retail, or schools. This means that even for internal trips, a very high proportion are still made by car.” In Wantage and Grove, public car parks are already close to capacity and most of the housing sites in the emerging Local Plan have not yet been started. Work places in Wantage and Grove centres have little parking and buses are limited. Schools have little parking and there are no joined up safe cycle routes for children to get to school so a VERY high proportion of journeys are made by car.

Furthermore paragraph 38 states that “... Like in other parts of the UK, the condition of the road network has deteriorated over recent years. This is as a result of a severe shortage of funding for maintenance, of increasing numbers of heavy vehicles using roads which were not originally designed to carry them, and successive harsh winters and flooding. This has led to large numbers of claims for damage to private cars, and some for damage to cycles. For cyclists and pedestrians in particular, poor maintenance is a safety hazard and can deter people from walking and cycling.”

We see no evidence of any intent to improve this within this strategic plan so suggest that this objective will not be achieved and should therefore be removed.

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1b.v. As paragraph 101 makes clear, “It is vital that all of Oxfordshire’s residents have an opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, the economic success forecast for the county over the period of this Plan, whether or not they have access to a private car.”

Yet there is no evidence that any of these four objectives will be achieved for many areas of Oxfordshire (particularly Wantage and Grove). They should, therefore, be removed unless evidence can be added to prove that they can be achieved.

2a Volume 1 (Overall Policy) - Cutting Carbon

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Strongly disagree

2b Volume 1 (Overall Policy) - Cutting Carbon

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

2b.i. The first objective in this section is “Minimise the need to travel” yet the Highways Department has made no objection to planning applications for more than 5,000 homes in Wantage and Grove with no improvements to the transport network outside the developments. Surely siting homes in Wantage and Grove when most employment opportunities are along the Knowledge Spine or further afield actually **maximises** the need to travel not minimises it. There has been no evidence that the statement in paragraph 118 “Through our role in supporting strategic planning across the county, we will influence the location of development to minimise the need for car travel in particular, and ensure that where new infrastructure is required, it can be justified and is affordable. We will work closely with Oxfordshire’s district councils and neighbouring local authorities to coordinate land-use and transport planning, with the aim of ensuring housing is located close to employment or good public transport links where possible, and that new developments have good transport links, and are laid out in a way that enables people to get around easily on foot or by bike, or by public transport.” is or will be applied in practice. Indeed there is no evidence that the District or County Councils have attempted to influence the location of developments near to employment and to minimise car travel. This is not an objective but merely an aspiration.

2b.ii. The second objective is to “Reduce the proportion of journeys made by private car by making the use of public transport, walking and cycling more attractive”. More than 5,000 new homes in Wantage and Grove with the strategy for buses being to improve the service to the employment hubs at Harwell and Milton Park to two buses per hour at peak times. The average journey length of approximately 10 miles means that walking to work is not feasible and direct cycle routes are a “longer-term aspiration” as noted in our comment 1b.ii above. Can you either please explain how this will reduce the proportion of journeys made by private car or remove this objective?

2b.iii. The third objective is to “Influence the location and layout of development to maximise the use and value of existing and planned sustainable transport investment”. Yet The SEP and the SHMA have defined a number of homes required each year which exceed anything achieved in the county in the past. As the NPPF requires a presumption in favour of development wherever the 5 year land supply is not being achieved, these documents have effectively handed planning decisions to developers and property investment companies. Therefore we believe that this objective is not achievable and should be removed.

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2b.iv. The fourth objective is to “Reduce per capita carbon emissions from transport in Oxfordshire in line with UK government targets”. While we recognise that this might be possible in Oxford and inner Oxfordshire, for the majority of the County the car will continue to be the only choice. Reducing per capita carbon emissions in line with government targets has to be an aspiration not an objective.

2b.v. The objectives in this section of the strategic plan are not achievable for the county as a whole so should either be reclassified as aspirations or removed from the plan.

3a Volume 1 (Overall Policy) - Improving Quality of Life

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Mostly agree, whilst we agree with the aim, it is not being met in Wantage and Grove.

3b Volume 1 (Overall Policy) - Improving Quality of Life

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

3b.i. The first objective in this section is to “Mitigate and wherever possible enhance the impacts of transport on the local built, historic and natural environment”. We applaud the sentiment in paragraph 157:

“We will work with partners to develop Oxfordshire’s ‘green infrastructure’, which includes our public rights of way network. Details of our plans will be set out in the forthcoming Oxfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.”

We look forward to studying this document in due course and seeing plans for improving green infrastructure and plans to improve connectivity of footpaths and cycle ways within and between our towns and villages.

Paragraph 167 refers to “Towpaths along the River Thames and the Oxford Canal” and makes no reference to the Wilts and Berks Canal, part of which is also within the County. We hope that this will be corrected in the Oxfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.

3b.ii. The second objective is to “Improve public health and wellbeing by increasing levels of walking and cycling, reducing transport emissions, reducing casualties and enabling inclusive access to jobs, education, training and services” yet no mention is made of working with the NHS and emergency services to ensure adequate access to services is possible through the transport network.

4a Volume 2 section i (Oxford Transport Strategy)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Don’t know

4b Volume 2 section i (Oxford Transport Strategy)

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

4b.i. We note that on page 30 of Volume 2 section i it states that “initial estimates suggest that the implementation of the OTS will require a total capital investment (including funded schemes) of around £1.2 billion. When factored against the level of growth expected within the county in the next 20 years, this equates to an investment of approximately £14,000 per additional job and home.”

Given that the growth for Oxford is shown as an additional 11,000 households and 15,000 jobs compared with growth in the Science Vale of 20,000 households and 20,000 jobs, can we assume

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that at least £1.5bn will be spent on the Science Vale with a significant proportion of that being spent on the transport impacts of the additional 5,000 households planned for Wantage and Grove?

7a Volume 2 section ii (Area/Route Transport Strategies) - Science Vale

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Mostly agree

7b Volume 2 section ii (Area/Route Transport Strategies) - Science Vale

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

7b.i. We note that paragraph 13 and 14 state that:

“The transport priorities for Science Vale are to improve access to the Enterprise Zone sites at Milton Park and Harwell Oxford for international, national and local travel, to enable economic growth at other key employment sites in the area, to plan ahead to manage the impact of future housing growth on the transport network, and to improve connectivity between employment, services and areas of housing growth.

To achieve this we will improve:

- access to strategic road and rail networks;
- opportunities for sustainable travel, on foot, by bike and using public transport to help to deliver a real step-change in the provision of alternative modes of travel to the car;
- journeys across Science Vale;
- the capacity, resilience and reliability of the transport network for all modes of travel
- connectivity between employment, services and housing;
-”

We assume that this should allow for Grove Technology Park being upgraded to Enterprise Zone status in the same way that Milton Park is.

7b.ii. We note that an “Ambition” beyond 2020 is:

“As part of our Science Vale and Science Transit strategies, our ambition is to provide a new railway station / interchange at Grove. This will help to serve and meet the needs of new development across western Vale area, and ensure the future ambition of connecting Wantage and Grove with Didcot, Swindon and beyond.”

7b.iii. Paragraph 33 states that:

“The following additional schemes are seen as a priority to improve connectivity between new growth areas, key employment sites and residential growth areas.

SV 2.1 Delivering cycle route upgrades and maintenance through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. This includes provision of new routes, branded signs, trial bike hire scheme and marketing measures to provide a high quality, safe and attractive network.

SV 2.2 Securing new strategic bus services and associated infrastructure between major residential sites at Didcot, Wantage and Grove, Wallingford, Abingdon-on-Thames, town centres / retail and the employment sites at Milton Park, Harwell Oxford, Culham Science Centre, and Oxford. A minimum of two buses per hour during the morning/evening peak travel periods is required to provide a credible level of service.

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SV 2.3 Securing improvements to existing bus services and associated infrastructure between Oxford, Didcot, Wantage and Grove, Abingdon-on-Thames, Wallingford and employment sites in Science Vale.

SV 2.4 Strengthening public transport links from Didcot Station through improved bus connections, including segregated priority sections of route, to improve bus reliability and journey times. Bus priority measures will be investigated on the A4130 from Science Bridge into Didcot, through the Valley Park development site located to the west of Didcot; and between Grove, Milton Park and Didcot via Steventon.

SV 2.5 Delivering Wantage Eastern Link Road to support developments in Wantage and Grove and provide relief to central Wantage.

...

SV 2.10 Delivering improvements along the A417 corridor to address congestion, safety and the conflict between the volume of traffic, east-west travel, and access to the villages along this route. Elements of the strategy include junction improvements, bus stop infrastructure, footpath and cycleway improvements and speed limit reviews.

SV 2.11 Delivering improvements at Steventon traffic lights at the A4130 / B4017 junction and improvements to Featherbed Lane. To remove the ‘bottle-neck’ and improve journey times to the A34, Milton Park and other Didcot employment sites.

SV 2.12 Reducing congestion at Rowstock roundabout through measures to increase capacity of the junction.”

We are pleased that cycle route upgrades and the Eastern Link Road are proposed for the period 2015 – 2020 but disappointed that two buses per hour is all that is envisioned. When a choice between a car journey which would normally take less than 30 minutes and a 30 minute wait for a bus, it is easy to see why bus services are not popular. Also the Harwell site works 24/7 and requires a bus service which operates on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays.

It is a pity that the Western Relief Road has been pushed into the far future and only then "it is to be considered".

We will be interested to see what “Delivering improvements along the A417 corridor” actually means in practice. We hope that it will include pedestrian crossings / roundabouts to allow the residents of the villages to be able to access the buses and to enable cyclists and cars to be able to turn out of the villages onto the A417. This is becoming increasingly difficult even before many of the additional houses are built.

7b.iv. We note that:

“SV 2.16 Undertaking a corridor study on the A338 from Wantage to the A420, and promoting capacity improvements to the A338 /A415 Frilford lights junction. This will help to improve accessibility between Wantage, Grove and Oxford.” will not take place until 2026 – 2031. Given that this junction is over capacity now, we would have hoped that this would include the total re-design of the Frilford Junction and could have been completed earlier.

7b.v. Furthermore, we note that throughout the plan period 2015 – 2031 the following activities are proposed:

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“SV 2.17 Promoting the use of sustainable transport and reducing single occupancy car use for the journey to work through undertaking travel promotions and marketing measures, particularly with partners at Milton Park, Culham Science Centre and Harwell Oxford.

SV 2.18 Providing new and substantially upgraded strategic cycle routes to Milton Park, Harwell Oxford and Culham Science Centre through the Science Vale cycle strategy.

SV 2.19 Securing safe and attractive walking and cycling routes as part of planning for new developments.

SV 2.20 Establishing links from new development to Public Rights of Way.

SV 2.21 Establishing a bus route between Grove, Wantage, Milton Park and Didcot.”

We are disappointed that the safe and attractive walking and cycling routes are only connected with new developments and that would suggest that extending them to connect to existing facilities (schools, leisure facilities, shops etc.) would encourage usage.

7b.vi. Finally we are disappointed to note that the proposals “to safeguard and maintain the ability to deliver strategic pieces of infrastructure” are only “if required in the future due to significant additional development”, specifically:

“SV 4.3 Safeguarding and protecting the ability to provide a Wantage Western Link Road if there is substantial additional development in west Wantage. This would complete the perimeter route for Wantage and provide relief to key roads within the town.

SV 4.4 Safeguarding and protecting the ability to provide a station at Grove.”

We believe that the Western Link Road is an important part of the perimeter route for Wantage and would provide relief to key roads within the town for the developments already committed for Wantage and Grove. This should be brought forward as an important part of the transport infrastructure of the town.

Also we are disappointed to note that Grove Station is only included as an ambition to provide a new railway station / interchange at Grove. We would hope that more emphasis could be placed on this as an important part of the transport infrastructure necessary to reduce road traffic and to help to serve and meet the needs of new development across western Vale area, and ensure the future ambition of connecting Wantage and Grove with Didcot, Swindon and beyond.

12a Volume 2 section ii (Area/Route Transport Strategies) - A420

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Mostly agree

12b Volume 2 section ii (Area/Route Transport Strategies) - A420

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

13b.i. Paragraph 9 of the A420 strategy states:

“To have a strategic highway and public transport corridor capable of moving a significant number of people along it whilst maintaining suitable access to and from the A420 from communities along the route , both for vehicular access to the A420 and pedestrian or cycle access to bus stops for the premium bus route. This will be achieved by:

- ...
- Reviewing and managing the impact on the surrounding road network, including parallel roads to quantify the likelihood of rat running being caused by proposed and allocated

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development traffic and identify effective measures to combat this. Potential mitigation measures required to reduce the impact of through traffic on these include local traffic calming and traffic/speed management measures, to be agreed with the relevant local communities. Key other routes to be evaluated are:

- B4508 east of Shrivenham
- B4000 south of Shrivenham
- B4507 Swindon – Wantage “

Any work on the B4507 will impact the A417 between Wantage and Faringdon as it will simply push traffic north of Shrivenham.

13a Volume 3 (Science Transit Strategy) - Our approach to delivering Science Transit

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Mostly agree

13b Volume 3 (Science Transit Strategy) - Our approach to delivering Science Transit

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

13b.ii. As part of Science Vale we are disappointed to see that other areas impacted by similar numbers of new households are included in the Transit strategy but Wantage and Grove are not.

14a Volume 4 (Mode Strategies) - Cycling

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Mostly agree

14b Volume 4 (Mode Strategies) - Cycling

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

14b.i. Paragraph 9 of this section states:

“We will identify a series of strategic routes in collaboration with users where we will [define?] Cycle Premium Routes and Cycle Super Routes, which will become the focus of our future investment. The greatest investment potential lies in connecting the areas of employment growth to transport hubs and areas of housing growth. Many of these routes may already have good levels of cycling or have the potential for more cycling if made safer.”

Earlier sections of the Strategic Plan have referred to possible plans for cycle paths from Wantage and Grove:

- paragraph 47 of the overall policy “This strategy for this route is to create a connecting route between the Wantage to Harwell and Abingdon to Harwell corridors. Longer term, a separate route possibly running in the shadow of the railway line between Grove and Steventon could be created..”.
- Specific Science Vale Policies include: “SV policy 2.10 Delivering cycleway improvements along the A417 corridor”

Given the lack of funding for road widening along the A338 and A417 corridors, we would request that these routes could be given priority as there is the potential for cyclists from over 5000 additional households needing access to employment at Harwell, Milton Park, Culham and further afield via Didcot station.

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14b.ii. Paragraph 24 includes “Cycling to school can also offer a healthy and cost effective alternative to school bus travel on some secondary school routes. We will look to invest in these routes where there is a clear case for promoting cycle trips for students.”

As secondary schools (Such as King Alfred’s in Wantage and new schools at Didcot and Grove Airfield) have large catchment areas and encouraging safe cycling could help to reduce the traffic congestions on major routes throughout the Vale of the White Horse, we believe that this should be encouraged and should be given some level of priority.

14b.iii. Paragraph 38 of this section states:

“We will ensure that developer funding is used to fund infrastructure improvements that people will want to use. We will engage with developers to ensure that high quality cycle infrastructure is designed-in to their own development plans and secure Section 106 money to improve cycle facilities in and around the site, to encourage people to cycle as soon as they move in to the development. Where appropriate, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding will be used to provide cycle schemes or create sections of the overall county cycling network, with cyclability audits providing a user perspective.”

We understand that developer funding is focussed on improvements within the developments but would wish funding to include the connectivity between the development and existing cycleways to enable safe cycling to existing schools, places of employment and community centres.

At the current time, Wantage has almost no cycle paths and those that do exist are not connected.

There is no evidence that the multiple new developments will change this situation.

15a Volume 4 (Mode Strategies) - Cycling (Science Vale Cycling Strategy annex)

To what extent do you agree with the proposal to focus cycling investment on connecting the Science Vale growth towns and employment sites with high quality cycle routes? Mostly agree

15b Volume 4 (Mode Strategies) - Cycling (Science Vale Cycling Strategy annex)

What would you add or change? If possible please explain why

15b.i. Paragraph 41 of this section states:

“The network of Cycle Premium Routes in Science Vale will be based on connecting the large employment sites: Milton Park, Harwell Campus and Culham Science Park to the towns; Didcot, Abingdon, Wantage and Grove. This enables us to maximise our opportunities for funding and investment by focussing the network on the employment and housing growth areas. There are already good cycling levels in and between these points, which will help us to build on existing success and achieve our vision in the most efficient way.”

As stated in the wider cycling strategy, “More people cycling means fewer people driving, which will reduce congestion” and “Sharing narrow carriageway space with fast-moving vehicles – particularly HGVs – is intimidating for even the most confident, experienced cyclists. All available evidence shows that this is why most people will not cycle on the carriageway.”

Creating direct routes to Harwell, Milton Park and Didcot from Wantage and along the side of the railway from Grove to Didcot would encourage more cycling.

15b.ii. Paragraph 46 states: “National Cycle Network route 544 currently connects Wantage to Harwell Campus via an indirect route. A shorter route will make cycling more attractive on this

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corridor. This promoted premium route will most likely make use of the existing route 544 at either end where the route is of a high standard already or is about to be upgraded. The strategy is to upgrade several sections of existing rights of way to create a more direct route. The longer-term aspiration is to also have a route alongside the A417.”

The Local Community Plan is supporting a cycle/pedestrian etc pathway between the 3 villages along the route and “the northern route around the churchyard” referred to by the West Hendred Chair at the 17/18 February cycling strategy meeting is one possibility that the 3 villages are actively considering. But that is for school children cycling to school, mothers with prams and buggies the elderly perhaps in chairs etc. It is not suitable for a commuter route.

A commuter route from Wantage to Harwell Oxford is one of the most important cycling routes but it must be fully suitable for commuter cycling on a growing scale if it is to meet this strategic need. So we are pleased to see this need given prominence in the strategy.

15b.iii. Paragraph 47 states:

“This strategy for this route is to create a connecting route between the Wantage to Harwell and Abingdon to Harwell corridors. Longer term, a separate route possibly running in the shadow of the railway line between Grove and Steventon could be created.”

Given that there are plans for at least 3,500 new homes on the North and West of Grove, a direct route to Milton Park and Didcot would be an attractive option to cyclists in the area. We would like this route to be upgraded from a long term possibility to a key part of the plan.

17a Volume 4 (Mode Strategies) - Bus

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this section? Mostly disagree

17b Volume 4 (Mode Strategies) - Bus

What would you add or change? If possible, please explain why.

17b.i. There are few plans for improvement to bus services between Wantage and Grove and the Knowledge Spine yet over 5% of all the new households planned for Oxfordshire will be built here. As the strategy states “the bus will remain the sole or main alternative to the private car for most medium-distance inter-urban journeys, and an important mode within the larger towns and their surrounding hinterlands, and therefore one of the main means of tackling congestion and facilitating social inclusion.”

Also the Harwell site works 24/7 and requires a bus service which operates on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays, not just at peak times.

17b.ii. We have no bus station and buses clog up the market place in Wantage. We need a place for them to wait to recalibrate times and provide rest stops for drivers which does not destroy the attractive nature of Wantage centre. We also need facilities to allow for transport interchange (parking for cars and cycles to allow more commuters to use bus services). This could either be on one of the new developments or near Grove Technology Park with shuttle services to the centres of Wantage and Grove. There is reference in the plan to “enhancements of facilities at smaller interchange locations, for example in Abingdon, Didcot, Wantage and Witney” but no detail as to how this could be achieved.

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17b.iii. We also need additional parking in the town centre for employees and shoppers. There a number of villages and other communities that are reliant on supermarkets and other shops within Wantage and Grove. Increased problems with parking and congestion in Wantage and Grove and the routes to and from key centres also impact on these communities.

17b.iv. Paragraph 153 states “The present bus strategy emphasises and gives priority to north-south ‘Premium’ routes and services as this is where the greatest demand and modal potential currently lies. While we would also like to see Premium level bus services on key east-west routes within the area there is currently insufficient actual and potential demand for increased/improved services. Realistically our goal given present circumstances is to develop and maintain services at a ‘Connector’ standard (i.e. at least 2 buses per hour) on the priority routes mentioned. The key factor that might enable the achievement of Premium standard east-west bus routes would be additional residential and/or employment development on a sufficiently large scale in the Grove/Wantage area (perhaps linked with the development of a new railway station at Grove).”

Wantage will need an improved bus service to Oxford (the 07.30 bus to Oxford is almost full each morning now before the new homes are built or occupied). We also need a service with a direct link to hospitals. It currently takes between 1-2 hours to get to the Oxfordshire Hospitals on public transport. Two buses per hour to Didcot at peak times is not sufficient incentive to encourage people to wait for a bus, when the choice is between a car journey which would normally take less than 30 minutes and a wait of up to 30 minutes for a bus. Buses to Oxford are popular because they provide a reliable service, buses to Didcot take an hour and are not reliable. Part of the reason for a lack of demand may be the poor service on the current route.

17b.v. Perhaps “Crowd Sourced Transport” as mentioned in the Science Transit strategy could have potential for improving bus usage from Wantage and Grove in the future.

GENERAL COMMENTS

19 Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031?

19.i. Paragraph 149 of the bus strategy states that “Although it has not yet been possible to carry out detailed transport modelling, with the scale of housing and employment growth planned in the area it is clear that without decisive action to further transform public transport infrastructure and improve sustainable travel options, traffic conditions, particularly at peak hour, would be likely to deteriorate significantly.”

As Wantage and Grove will have more than 5% of the new households in Oxfordshire it would seem equitable for 5% of the transport funding to be made available to provide sustainable transport connectivity between homes and places of employment.

19.ii. The plan states that the Oxford Transport Strategy will require a total capital investment (including funded schemes) of around £1.2 billion. Oxford is planned to grow by twice as many households as Wantage and Grove so we would expect capital funding to be available of approximately £0.6 billion for transport schemes around Wantage and Grove or £1.5 billion across the Science Vale.

19.iii. In summary priority MUST be given to:

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- a. Improve road capacity on A417 by installing cycle paths, footpaths and bus laybys to improve traffic flow between Wantage and the Knowledge Spine.
- b. The total re-design of the Frilford Heath junction and installing cycle paths, footpaths and bus laybys to improve traffic flow along the A338 from Grove to the A420
- c. Improve bus services to Harwell, Milton Park and Didcot from Wantage and Grove
- d. Build the Wantage Western By-pass and the Grove Northern By-pass
- e. Reopen Grove station and create a transport interchange
- f. Improve facilities in Wantage and Grove for integration between bus and cycling and walking including safe, accessible routes, street lighting, and cycle parking at key bus stops.
- g. Create a bus station for Wantage and Grove
- h. Ensure that the Vale Planning Department don't approve any more homes this distance from employment and transport hubs
- i. Ensure that all new homes have the space and technology to allow people to work from home and that the appropriate infrastructure exists

ABOUT YOU

20 In what context are you giving your feedback? Representative of a group or organisation

Julie Mabberley, Campaign Manager, Wantage and Grove Campaign Group. The Wantage and Grove Campaign Group represents the view of approximately 1,000 individuals in the Wantage and Grove area and its aims are:

We are not against any development in Wantage and Grove but:

- Developments should be proportionate and sustainable
- The infrastructure should enhance and improve quality of life for its residents.

The points raised in this submission have been discussed by the Group in a public meeting and have been circulated to the distribution list for comment.