

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Local Transport Plan

Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 - 2026

Steve Kent Director of Community and Environment



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Cheshire West
and Chester

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For more information contact the Local Transport Plan Team

Tel: **0300 123 7036**

Email: **ltf@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

For full details about our transport strategy and its supporting documents please visit the Council website

(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) and search for **Local Transport Plan**

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Tel: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 18001 01606 867 670

email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Foreword



Welcome to Cheshire West and Chester Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP). We've written down what we're proposing for our highways and transport facilities so that you know what our priorities are for the years to come. After all, you have helped us to identify what is important and required to make a difference in Cheshire West and Chester.

Our area is both diverse and unique in character and this has meant that our new transport plan has been prepared to respond to a wide range of issues. We wanted your local views and concerns to be the thing that shaped our work in preparing this new Plan. You have told us loud and clear that you want our roads and bridges to be well maintained; that congestion is reduced in our town centres and on our main roads; that commuter links to neighbouring areas be improved and that local bus services take people where they want to go, at times that are convenient to the passenger. You want to see improvements to road safety and reductions in the number of casualties on our roads and to see more encouragement in the use of sustainable types of transport like walking and cycling.

How we get from A to B affects each and every one of us. So we have spoken to partner organisations and stakeholders to get their thoughts and views on our direction of travel for our new transport plan. In taking this broad approach, the goals that have emerged take into account our local aspirations as well as the Government's national priorities for transport, not least supporting the economy and addressing climate change. Listening to your opinions and what is important to you locally, our top priority for action will be to manage a well maintained and efficient transport network and we are committed to improving the overall condition of our roads and reversing the decline of the network.

The next few years will be challenging as we work to deliver our shared priorities. The economic downturn and the reduction in government spending means that we may have less money available to spend on transport than we have in the past. We will need to make every pound count, making the best possible use of our existing transport networks and investing in low cost measures that can have the highest impact. We will look to innovate where we can, to bring forward new transport services in new ways with new partners. Our investment will be focussed where it can make the biggest difference for all, not least by improving the condition of our roads. It is important to us that over the lifetime of this plan that you helped us create, that we are able to show you how we are making a difference and providing you with the best value for money services.

The Council has committed to deliver a wide social, economic and environmental agenda to its residents, businesses and all who live, work and visit here. To deliver on these priorities, we must deliver our goal of providing and managing a well maintained, safe, integrated and sustainable transport network for today, tomorrow and beyond. Our approach to transport underpins our approach to localism and delivers on our local aspirations to improve our local neighbourhoods, address inequalities, improve health and wellbeing, enhance our local environment and improve our safety.

This plan provides the basis to turn our shared vision into a shared reality.



Councillor Mike Jones
Leader of the Council



Councillor Lynn Riley
Executive Member for Community and Environment



Section One

Setting the context for our new Transport Strategy

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Transport is an issue for everybody. It is a key factor in helping to support economic growth and regeneration, improving links to jobs and everyday services, improving the environment, helping to reduce the threat of climate change, and helping to tackle poverty. The opportunities available to people in how, when and where they travel have a major impact on transport patterns as well as our wider quality of life.

1.1.2 This document sets out Cheshire West and Chester Council's plans and proposals for improving local transport over the next fifteen years.

1.1.3 It consists of a longer term **Integrated Transport Strategy** for the period 2011 to 2026. This includes:

- An assessment of the characteristics, future trends and issues that will have an impact on travel in West Cheshire in the years to come;
- Consideration of local views and aspirations which have been reviewed following extensive consultation and engagement with partners and the wider community;
- A set of goals and objectives that support both national and local aspirations for transport; and
- An analysis of local transport issues, challenges and opportunities alongside a series of policies and suggested actions to deliver our transport priorities over the plan's lifetime.

1.1.4 This is accompanied by a separate **Implementation Plan** covering the first four years of the strategy. This includes:

- A one year delivery plan that has been developed to meet our objectives and to secure value for money within current financial limits;
- An outline of future spending proposals including consideration of where additional funding can be found to deliver our longer term objectives;
- A set of performance indicators and targets that will be used to monitor progress;

- A detailed risk assessment of our planned delivery programme; and
- Details of how we propose to report the outcomes of our transport strategy and implementation plan to partners and the wider community in the future.

1.1.5 A short summary document has also been prepared to set out our plans in a concise format.

1.1.6 The remainder of this section examines the wider characteristics that have influenced the development of our new strategy. In doing so, it considers the trends and issues that make West Cheshire the place it is now and what it will become in the future. Reference is also made to national transport policies that this new transport strategy supports.



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1.2 Setting West Cheshire in context

1.2.1 West Cheshire is located in the North West of England between the Welsh border and the Wirral in the West, the Mersey Valley to the North and the Shropshire border to the South. It includes the historic city of Chester, the industrial and market towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford, together with Neston, Frodsham, Helsby and Malpas. The Borough possesses extensive motorway, trunk road and rail networks which carry a significant amount of local, regional and national traffic. Traffic patterns are also influenced by the nearby conurbations of Merseyside and Greater Manchester and there are also strong commuter links with North East Wales.

1.2.2 Cheshire West and Chester Council is a new council. It came into existence on 1st April 2009. It is a unitary authority and replaced Chester City Council, Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council, Vale Royal Borough Council and the western part of Cheshire County Council. The new Council adopted the former County Council's Local Transport Plan for the period 2006 to 2011 as an interim transport strategy until the preparation of this new document.

1.2.3 A considerable amount of social, economic and environmental evidence and data was examined to inform the preparation of this strategy. This is available on our transport strategy website for information.

1.3 The policy context

1.3.1 The Government has confirmed that there remains a statutory duty for all local authorities to prepare a Local Transport Plan and this must be consistent with the framework set out in their national guidance.

1.3.2 Government has also confirmed that local authorities must build their new plans around the themes of the national goals for transport. The top priorities are:

- To support national economic competitiveness and growth by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks; and
- To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases with the desired outcome of tackling climate change.

1.3.3 These are complemented by additional goals:

- To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society;
- To contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health; and
- To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.

1.3.4 The Council's response to the national goals is set out in Section Three of this document. This section also shows how these goals are closely linked to the Council's own Corporate Plan, Local Development Framework and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

1.3.5 The Coalition Government's own vision for local transport is set out in the new Transport White Paper "Creating growth, cutting carbon – making sustainable local transport happen". This was published in January 2011. This reinforces the Government's priorities for developing a transport system that helps create growth in the economy and tackles climate change by cutting carbon emissions. Immediate challenges include influencing how people make shorter, local trips with a focus on increasing levels of walking, cycling and public transport.

1.3.6 A more detailed review of the various national and local policies which have influenced the preparation of this strategy can be found on the transport strategy website as part of our background evidence.

1.4 Challenges for the future

1.4.1 In preparing this document it has been recognised that there are a number of critical challenges and issues which will impact on West Cheshire over the duration of our fifteen year transport strategy. These include:

1.4.2 **The economy** – The current recession has had a major impact on business confidence and unemployment rates. In the short-term, this has led to a slight decrease in the amount of commuter traffic on our roads. The challenge for the future will be to make sure that new transport projects help to support economic growth and improve links to jobs and training opportunities. This will include supporting the Council's regeneration projects, assisting the provision of new developments and housing, as well as improving connections to neighbouring areas.

1.4.3 **Downturn in public spending** – An outcome of the economic down-turn is the Government's priority to reduce the economic deficit and manage the Country's debt. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in public spending including a reduction in the amount of money that Councils receive from the Government to spend on transport. This means that maximising efficiencies and securing best value for money will be at the heart of our spending plans.

1.4.4 As a result the Council will need to focus on:

- Making the best use of our existing transport networks and infrastructure;
- Delivering more low cost / high impact schemes including projects to encourage greener travel such as walking, cycling and car sharing;
- Making sure that our spending is informed by local views, effective prioritisation and the importance of demonstrating overall value for money;
- Working with partners to help combine budgets and deliver projects which meet shared goals;
- Inviting contributions from local communities to support the delivery of local priorities;
- Seeking to make further efficiencies in the way we work through the integration of activities with our partners and neighbouring authorities; and
- Seeking to obtain additional national funding for our transport priorities by making successful bids to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and Regional Growth Fund, as well as securing funding for transport improvements as a result of new developments.

1.4.5 The implications of future funding allocations are examined in more detail in the Implementation Plan that accompanies this Strategy.

1.4.6 **Climate change** – It is understood that some degree of climate change is unavoidable as past carbon emissions will continue to influence the climate for at least several decades to come. How we respond to this challenge is likely to have an increasing impact on how we travel in the future.

1.4.7 Local climatic trends since 1961 have been hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Current forecasts suggest that these trends will continue. It is also expected that there will be more prolonged heavy rainfall and that urban areas are likely to experience more extreme temperature increases due to the urban “heat island” effect.



1.4.8 A further challenge is to consider how best to meet the national targets to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 and by 40% over the lifetime of this strategy.

1.4.9 How we work to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change will be important considerations in how we plan to deliver transport priorities in the future. This will be essential if we are to cope with unpredictable changes in our climate and meet national targets to reduce carbon emissions.

1.4.10 **The localism agenda** – The Coalition Government wishes to return power to local communities and create the “Big Society”. Central to this is the idea that local people will be given greater involvement in how local priorities are determined and how services are delivered. This is likely to have a significant impact on how local transport budgets are determined and spent in the future.

1.4.11 **Rising fuel costs** – The cost of petrol and oil in the UK has increased in real terms by 20% over the last 12 years and there is a high probability that fuel prices will continue to rise over the next fifteen years. This could act to limit car use and encourage people to make use of alternative, more sustainable types of transport. It could also see a gradual move towards the use of alternative fuels such as hybrid, electric or hydrogen fuel cell powered vehicles.

1.4.12 **IT and technology** - There is every expectation that the use of IT and new technology will continue to grow over the lifetime of our new transport strategy. It is expected that ever increasing levels of internet shopping and home and flexible working will continue to impact on traditional ways of working, shopping and travelling.

1.4.13 As a result, it will be important that this strategy is kept under review and is updated and revised at regular intervals to respond to emerging issues and challenges. Updates will be published on our transport strategy website.

1.5 The format of the new Local Transport Plan

1.5.1 The remainder of this document sets out the Council's new Integrated Transport Strategy.

Section two provides an overview of how we consulted on the proposals set out in the new strategy and reviews our response to the issues, concerns and local aspirations raised during this process.

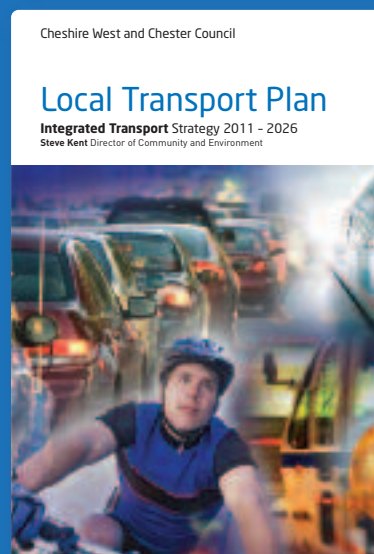
Section three sets out our long term vision and objectives for transport and outlines how these relate to the Council's overall priorities for the future. It also shows how these objectives will help to meet the wider aspirations that are contained in the Sustainable Community Strategy and in our Corporate Plan.

Section four reviews and sets out policy relating to how transport can help support economic growth and regeneration.

Section five contains information about how we propose to reduce carbon emissions from transport and how we plan to adapt to the longer term impact of climate change.

Section six considers the Council's approach to asset management with a particular focus on how we plan to maintain our roads and bridges.

Section seven reviews a number of themes relating to how transport can improve safety, security and health.



Section eight sets out our approach to supporting equality of opportunity and focuses on how we can improve accessibility to jobs and key services as well as outlining how we intend to remove barriers to mobility especially to meet the needs of disabled and older people.

Section nine assesses how transport can help to improve our quality of life including protecting the built and natural environment and enhancing biodiversity. It also sets out how we can improve access to leisure activities and the countryside including our Public Rights of Way network.

Finally, **Section ten** considers how we plan to keep this strategy up to date.

1.5.2 This document is accompanied by a separate Implementation Plan which, as noted in paragraph 1.1.4 above, will set out full details of the Council's planned spending and delivery programmes. A shorter summary document is also available.

1.5.3 In addition, a wealth of supporting material has been produced to complement the development of this strategy. This includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment, an Equality Impact Assessment and a Risk Assessment of our proposals. All this information is available on our website as part of our background evidence.



Section Two

Consultation and local aspirations

This section outlines the how Cheshire West and Chester Council has worked with partners and the wider community to consider local issues, concerns and aspirations for transport and sets out how these have influenced the preparation of our new transport strategy.

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Listening to local views has been an important part of our work to produce the new transport strategy. This has provided a better understanding of local issues and challenges which, in turn, helped to inform the development of this new strategy and our delivery proposals.

2.1.2 Work to consider local views and issues was developed in three stages:

- A preliminary round of “soundings” to seek views on overall priorities and to consider local issues and concerns. This was undertaken between October 2009 and January 2010;

- An examination of views and comments relating to transport from previous community surveys undertaken by the Council; and
- A final round of consultation undertaken between October and December 2010 to seek feedback on the proposals contained in the draft Integrated Transport Strategy.

2.2 Initial soundings October 2009 – January 2010

2.2.1 The first round of consultation was undertaken to seek views and feedback on the national goals for transport. Consultees were also invited to consider whether these should be ranked in a priority order. The consultation process included:

- The use of a questionnaire survey – distributed to some 2500 organisations and individuals including all statutory consultees, and also available online and in Council offices, libraries and Information Points. Table 2.1 below shows some of the organisation contacted as part of this exercise;

- Presentations and discussions with Councillors, the Local Strategic Partnership and its Thematic Groups, the five Area Programme Boards and fifteen Local Community Forums;
- Interactive workshops with various groups and organisations including neighbouring authorities, the Cheshire Youth Parliament, Association of Parish Councils, Third Sector Assembly, Local Access Forum, Cheshire and Warrington Rural Partnership and the business sector; and
- A series of press releases to encourage people to respond to the consultation exercise.

2.2.2 The main focus of the questionnaire survey, along with discussions at workshops and meetings, was to seek views and feedback on the national goals for transport. For each of these goals, a series of additional issues and challenges were set out for consideration and consultees were invited to rank these in priority order of importance to them. The questionnaire also allowed sufficient space for the respondents to add their own thoughts and comments.

Table 2.1- First Round Consultation distribution List

Statutory consultees

Bus Operators
Highways Agency
Public Transport User Groups
Network Rail
Train Operating Companies
NW Regional Development Agency

Statutory Local Development Framework consultees

Neighbouring local authorities
4NW
Cheshire Constabulary and Cheshire Fire Authority
Primary Care Trusts, Hospital Trusts and Health Authorities
Government Agencies including English Heritage, Natural England, Environment Agency, Government Office for the North West and DEFRA
Welsh Assembly Government
Taith
Liverpool John Lennon and Manchester Airports
British Waterways Board

Non-statutory consultees

Cheshire West and Chester Council Departments
Chester Renaissance
Local Strategic Partnership and Thematic Working Groups
Parish and Town Councils
Area Action Boards and Local Community Forums
Mersey Dee Alliance
Groundwork Cheshire
Environmental Groups including NW Transport Activists Roundtable, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Friends of the Earth, and members of the Cheshire & Warrington Sustainability Alliance
Ellesmere Port Air Quality Forum
Developers and House Builders
Business Sector
Connexions and Job Centre Plus
Chester & District Housing Trust and Weaver Vale Housing Trust
Visit Chester & Cheshire (Cheshire & Warrington Tourism Board)
Chester Zoo
University of Chester and local FE Colleges
Chester Civic Trust
Sustrans, CTC and Chester Cycling Campaign
Community Transport and Taxi operators
Freight Transport Association
Members of Cheshire Youth Parliament

Results

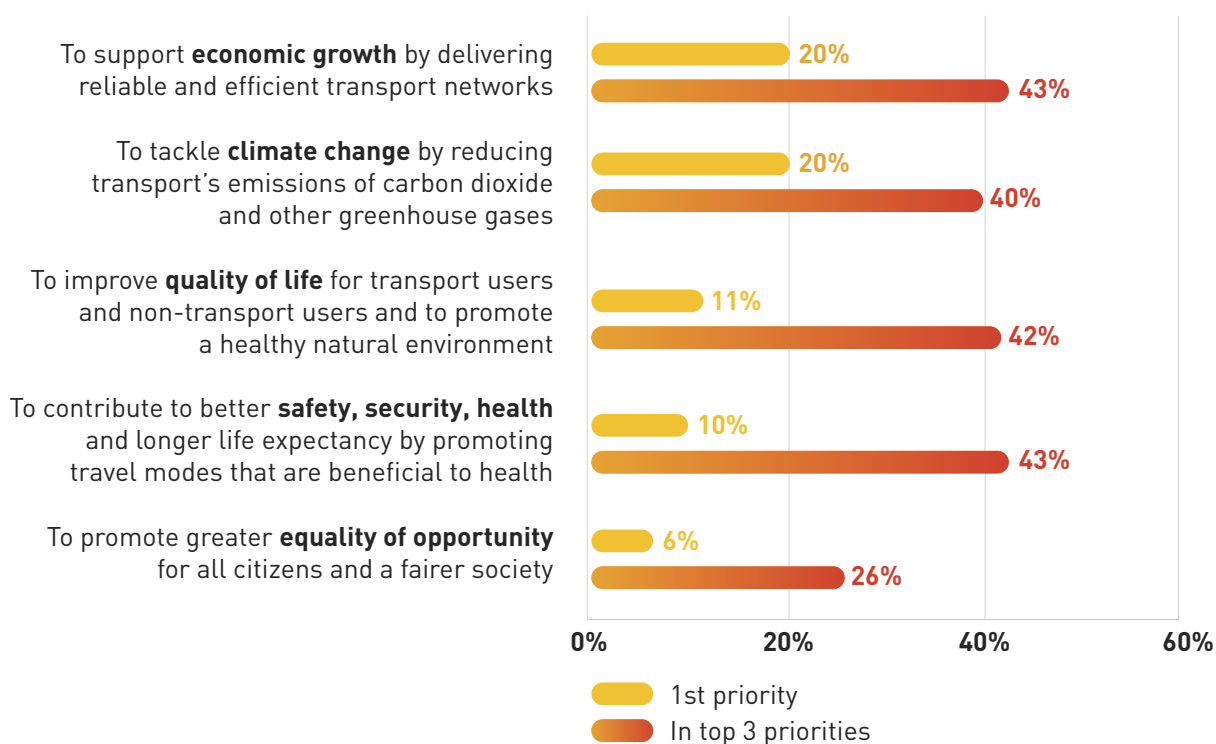
2.2.3 A total of 392 questionnaires were returned. 101 of these were online submissions. This represents a 16% response rate (which can be compared to a 13% response rate for the previous LTP2 consultation exercise in 2004).

2.2.4 A profile of the respondents found 62% were male and 38% female. 12% considered themselves to be disabled. The age profile was biased towards older respondees. 49% were aged between 45 and 64 and a further 35% were aged 65 and over. Only 1% of respondents were aged 24 or under.

2.2.5 To balance this response, the results of a further 58 written responses were considered and the notes taken at some 37 meetings, workshops and events were also analysed as part of this exercise.

2.2.6 **Overall priority of the national goals for transport** - 31% of the questionnaire respondents thought that the five national goals should have equal importance; 69% did not. When asked to rank the goals economic growth was considered to be the top priority (supported by 20% as first priority and 43% in their top three). Climate change was also supported by 20% as a top priority and 40% in their top three. Safety, Security & Health and Quality of Life issues came joint third while Equality of Opportunity was ranked last (supported by 6% of respondents as a top priority). See Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 - Priority given by respondents to national goals for transport
% of times each goal was chosen as a first priority and in the top 3 priorities



2.2.7 A full report setting out the results of the consultation exercise can be found on the Council's Transport Strategy webpage. See: http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/transport_and_roads/plans_and_policies/local_transport_plan.aspx

2.2.8 Comparison to the Sustainable Community Strategy Questionnaire - A short questionnaire survey was undertaken to support the preparation of the Sustainable Community Strategy during autumn 2009. A series of ten questions covered a broad range of community related issues. While not as statistically valid as the LTP consultation responses, it is noted that the two top priorities from this survey were *"providing a safer environment, including on our roads, and reducing fear of crime"* and *"a thriving and strong economy"*. Both were considered to be a priority by 78% of respondents. The third highest priority supported by 65% of respondents, was *"providing a well maintained and connected transport network to ensure equality of access to services and opportunities"*. It is interesting to note that in this exercise only 44% of respondents considered that *"reducing our carbon footprint and responding to climate change"* should be a top priority.

2.3 Seeing the bigger picture – Transport issues in our Community Surveys

2.3.1 Additional evidence which was used to help prepare our draft proposals was taken from the results of a number of previous community survey exercises undertaken by the Council.

2.3.2 Our Community Survey (June 2010) - This survey was undertaken by Cheshire West and Chester Council to help monitor changes in public attitudes relating to a number of topics.

2.3.3 The 'Our Community Survey' asked residents about a number of issues relating to life in Cheshire West and Chester. A questionnaire was sent out to a random sample of 5,000 people across West Cheshire, the response rate was 35%.

2.3.4 Twenty suggested priorities for improvement were set out in the questionnaire and respondents were asked to rank them. Three transport themes were included in the list. Themes relating to levels of pollution and access to nature were also included which indirectly relate to transport. Results are set out in the table below.

Table 2.3 - Our Community Survey – Key improvements needed in local areas

Theme	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Northwich and Rural North	Winsford and Rural East	Rural West	CWaC average
Road and pavement repairs	66% (1st)	57%(1st)	61% (1st)	65% (1st)	58% (1st)	62% (1st)
Level of traffic congestions	34% (3rd)	19% (7th)	37% (3rd)	33% (3rd)	27% (4th)	31% (3rd)
Public transport	21% (6th)	18% (10th)	22% (7th)	29% (5th)	39% (2nd =)	26% (5th)
Level of Pollution	6% (17th)	19% (7th)	15% (12th)	7% (16th)	10% (14th)	11% (13th)
Access to nature	4% (20th=)	4% (19th)	3%(20th)	2% (20th)	3% (20th)	3% (20th)

2.3.5 The results clearly show that addressing maintenance is the top priority for the local residents in all parts of the Borough, alongside taking steps to address traffic congestion.

2.3.6 A further question examined attitudes relating to climate change. 78% of respondents agreed that reducing carbon emissions was important compared to 7% who disagreed. However, only 17% were willing to make more use of public transport and less than 4% were prepared to be part of a car sharing scheme to help make a difference.

2.3.7 **The 2008 Cheshire Community Survey** was undertaken to provide baseline information and evidence to help prepare the Borough's new Sustainable Community Strategy. It found that:

- A significant majority of respondents had access to a car. Only 7% of respondents never had access to a car but this figure rose to 22% for those living in the Borough's most deprived areas;
- Access to everyday services was generally considered to be good. However, 40% considered access to hospitals to be difficult. There was no real difference found between urban and rural residents, but the greatest problems were encountered in deprived areas who have the greatest reliance on bus services to reach hospital sites; and
- 27% regularly used a bicycle, the majority of trips were for leisure and exercise purposes. 40% of local residents were generally satisfied with the cycleways in their local area.

2.3.8 **The 2006 Cheshire Community Survey** included questions to examine attitudes towards traffic congestion. Nearly 62% of respondents considered congestion to be a problem particularly in Chester and in other larger urban centres and 56% commented that congestion was a frequent problem on the motorway network. 73% of respondents considered that the main cause of congestion was the volume of traffic. A significant number also highlighted the impact of road works and the school run as additional causes.

2.4 Consultation on the draft Integrated Transport Strategy

2.4.1 Based on the outcomes of the first round of consultation and an assessment of other supporting evidence, a draft Integrated Transport Strategy was prepared. This included a series of proposed objectives and policies. This was then subject to a further and final round of consultation which took place between October and December 2010.

2.4.2 The consultation exercise included the use of a number of focus group sessions around the Borough and circulating a questionnaire to members of View West, the Council's Citizens Panel. This group is broadly representative of the area's adult population.

2.4.3 **Results** - Over 1500 questionnaires were returned. This represents a 33% response rate. The results from the View West Citizens Panel are particularly important as they provide a better representative sample of local residents by age, gender and home location.

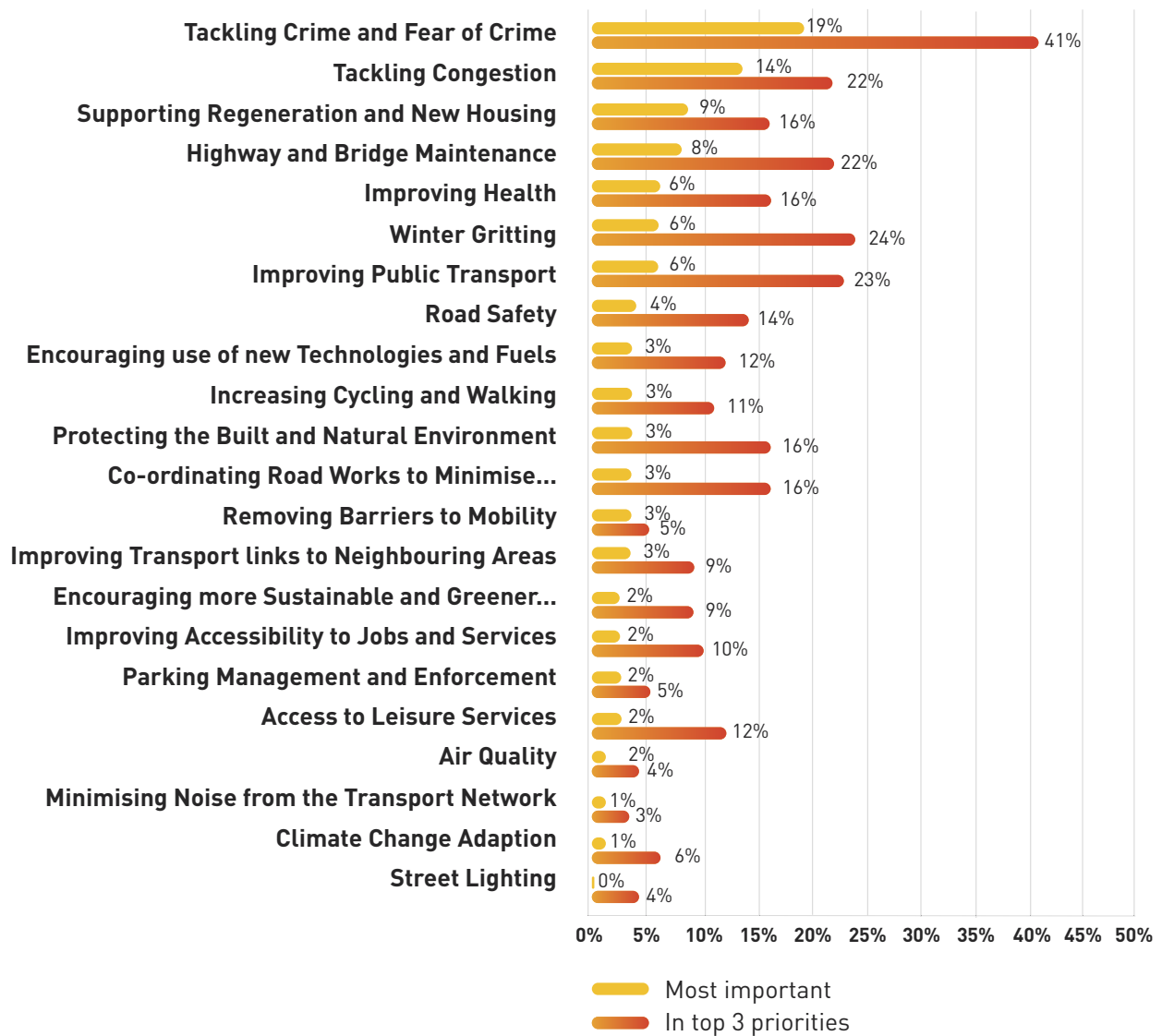
2.4.4 When reviewing overall priorities, tackling crime and fear of crime, congestion, maintenance, improving passenger transport and winter gritting were considered to be the most important priorities for action.

2.4.5 Tackling crime and fear of crime is seen as an important issue but it may well be the case that respondents were thinking about it in the wider sense rather than just related to transport issues. Likewise, the importance attached to winter gritting may have been due to the consultation taking place during extremely snowy and icy weather conditions during late November and December 2010.

2.4.6 The views expressed by focus group members were similar. Tackling congestion and highway maintenance were clear priorities for action. There was also strong support for co-ordinating roadworks to minimise traffic disruption, improving public transport, parking management, improving transport links to neighbouring areas and encouraging the use of new fuels and technologies to reduce carbon emissions. The least popular options included improving access to leisure activities, minimising noise from the transport network, improving air quality and adapting to climate change. See Table 2.4 on next page.

Table 2.4 – Top priorities

% of times each option was chosen as the most important and in the top 3 priorities (VW)

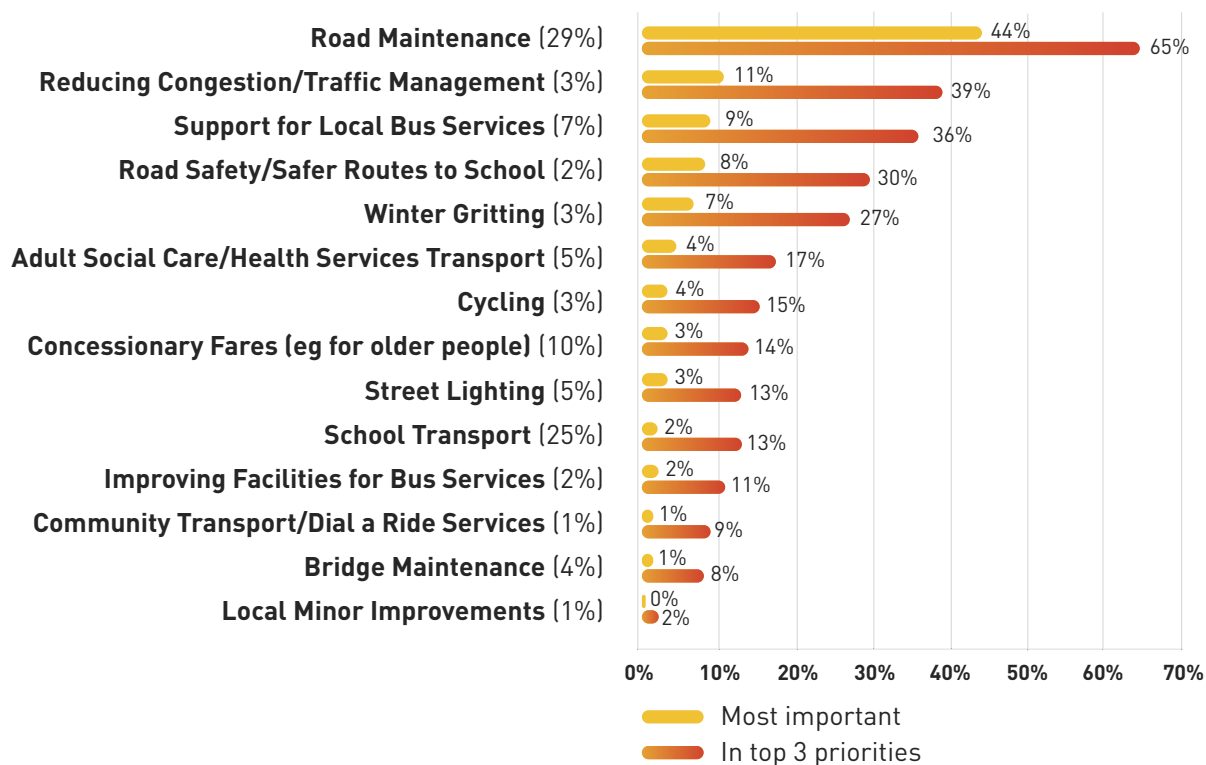


2.4.7 Similar themes were also highlighted when respondents were asked to consider potential spending priorities. This is shown in Table 3.5 on the next page.



Table 2.5 – Spending priorities

% of times each activity was chosen as the most important and in the top 3 priorities (VW)



2.4.8 The following table sets out the main issues that were raised during this exercise and outlines how the new transport strategy has been developed in response to these challenges.

Table 2.6- Consultation issues raised and response in Integrated Transport Strategy

Issues raised	Response in transport strategy
Supporting economic growth	
Highest priority given to managing an efficient transport network to minimise congestion and delay.	The strategy sets out the Council's Network Management Duty. It also refers to demand management and steps to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport.
High priority for improving links to Merseyside, Greater Manchester and North East Wales, particularly by rail.	Support is given to the development of the Manchester Hub and Halton Curve proposals. Support is also given to other rail projects including the Wrexham - Bidston line.
Better interchange at local railway stations.	Steps to improve interchange and passenger facilities at local stations are included in the strategy.
Support given to supporting economic viability in our main centres and at tourist attractions.	Improving access and mobility to town centres, parking measures and options to support the visitor economy are outlined in Section Four of the strategy.
More to be done to address flooding.	Climate change adaptation is considered. Drainage improvements are set out in the Asset Management Section of this document.
Better integration between bus and rail services.	The need for improved interchange is considered when examining options to enhance local rail services.
Reducing carbon emissions	
High priority given to need for new developments to be built in locations that help to reduce the need for car trips.	The need to ensure that the Local Development Framework directs new development to accessible locations is noted.
High priority for providing and encouraging the use of smarter choices and sustainable modes of transport, including measures to increase walking and cycling.	The strategy reviews the importance of smarter choices, travel plans, walking, cycling and passenger transport.
Managing a well maintained transport network	
Highest priority given to repairing poor quality roads and keeping existing roads in good condition maintained to a high standard.	Detailed approach to highways and bridge asset management set out in Section Six of the strategy.

Issues raised

Response in transport strategy

Contributing to better safety, security and health

Highest priority given to reducing the number of people killed or injured on our roads.

A programme of education, engineering and enforcement measures will be pursued to make our roads safer.

Strong support to promote healthier lifestyles by encouraging more walking and cycling.

A range of initiatives are proposed which will promote and encourage the use of active forms of travel.

Call for improved safety at bus and railway stations.

Improved design and better liaison with Community Safety Team will seek to improve safety and address fear of crime.

Promoting equality of opportunity

Highest priority given to improving access to employment and training opportunities.

This will remain as the Council's top priority for accessibility planning.

High degree of support for improving access from rural areas to key services and access to health care.

The strategy supports measures to enhance rural accessibility and improve links to healthcare.

Strong support for improved local bus services.

Opportunities to work with operators to consider new and improved services.

Strong support for improved community transport services.

The development of enhanced community transport and demand responsive transport will be reviewed.

Improving quality of life

Highest priority given to setting high standards for the design and quality of new transport schemes.

The importance of using high standards of design are considered in the strategy.

Support for protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment.

Measures to protect the built and natural environment, particularly biodiversity and landscape are addressed.

Need to enhance access to leisure by improving pedestrian and cycle routes including the Public Rights of Way network.

An outline of the role of green infrastructure and PROW is set out in Section Nine.

2.5 Conclusions

2.5.1 The response to both our consultation exercises has provided us with a very comprehensive overview and assessment of the range of issues and concerns felt by the local community relating to transport. As noted in the following sections of this document, these have been considered to help us develop the new Integrated Transport Strategy.

2.5.2 A detailed report setting out the all results of this consultation exercise can be found on the Council's Transport Strategy webpage. For full details about our transport strategy and its supporting documents please visit the Council website (cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) and search for **Local Transport Plan**.



Section Three

Our vision and objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section sets out our long term vision and objectives for transport and outlines how these relate to West Cheshire's overall priorities for the future. It also shows how these goals and objectives will help to support our wider community aspirations which are contained in the Sustainable Community Strategy and in our Corporate Plan.

3.2. The national goals for transport

3.2.1 As noted in Section One, transport is not an end in itself but is a key factor in helping to improve quality of life, develop our economy, increase accessibility, enhance the environment and tackle poverty. Recognising this, the Department for Transport (DfT) have identified a number of national goals for transport. These are:

Top priorities:

- To support national economic competitiveness and growth by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks; and
- To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases with the desired outcome of tackling climate change.

Supporting priorities:

- To contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
- To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and
- To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users and promote a healthy natural environment.

3.2.2 The DfT asked local authorities to consider the relative importance of these goals for their local areas and build their new transport strategies around these themes. These can be modified to meet specific local challenges and, where appropriate, additional local objectives can be added as well.

3.3 The local dimension – considering the importance of the national goals for transport in West Cheshire

3.3.1 During our first round of consultation, we invited our stakeholders, partners and the wider community to consider whether the national goals for transport should be given equal priority. We also asked whether additional local goals should be included as well.

3.3.2 As noted in Section Two of this document, over two thirds of respondents (69%) stated that these goals should not be given equal priority. Instead, when asked to rank the importance of the goals, supporting economic growth (supported by 20% as first priority and 43% in their top three) and addressing climate change (supported by 20% as a top priority and 40% in their top three) were clearly identified as the two top priorities for action. Safety, security and health and quality of life issues came joint third while equality of opportunity was ranked last.

3.3.3 In addition, the consultation exercise asked people to consider the overall importance of our highway maintenance activities. This is a top priority for the Authority and this opinion was clearly supported and endorsed in the responses that we received. It is recognised that a well maintained transport network is essential to support all of the national goals for transport. In response, we have decided to add highway maintenance as an additional top priority for West Cheshire in this transport strategy.

West Cheshire Together we can aim high

Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2026



www.westcheshiretogether.org.uk

West Cheshire
TOGETHER
Working in partnership for local people

Benefit from the right services that are delivered in the right place and at the right time

- We will appreciate and meet the health and wellbeing needs of all our residents wherever they live, particularly those who have been socially excluded; and
- West Cheshire will be a great place for young and older people alike and we will value their contributions and respect their needs.

West Cheshire will be recognised as a world class place to visit and invest

- We will have a thriving, strong and sustainable world class economy for the future, supported by highly skilled motivated people and a sustainable transport system; and
- Everybody will be proud of our varied and unique local distinctiveness, culture and heritage, with a strong sense of civic pride.

3.4. Our over-arching vision – West Cheshire’s Sustainable Community Strategy

3.4.1 As a result of working with our partners, the Council has established a strong, shared vision for the future which applies equally to this new Transport Strategy, the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework.

By 2026 West Cheshire will be even more prosperous and attractive; a really great place to live, work, learn and visit. The Borough will play a full role in the region and beyond, fulfilling our challenging responsibilities and enabling our residents to benefit from the opportunities in the twenty first century.

More specifically, our communities will:

Live well together

- Our neighbourhoods, towns and villages will be harmonious, with our communities feeling respected, safe and secure; and
- We will have reduced our carbon footprint through our network of low carbon communities and our localised and integrated public transport system, by re-using and recycling materials locally and by supporting local markets.

3.5 Making it happen – our Corporate Plan.

3.5.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Corporate Plan, “Making it Happen”, sets out our pledges and plans to achieve our ambition to be the best council in the Country. Our vision for the authority is simply:

- Customer first;
- Value for money; and
- Best practice.

3.5.2 The new Council is bringing together experience and commitment to:

- Ensure we deliver top quality services and real outcomes that our customers and our communities want to see;
- Work with our partners to deliver exceptional performance across the board to allow us, ultimately, to become the best council in the Country;
- Build a culture that puts the customer at the heart of what we do; and
- Work with our partners to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of all our residents.

3.5.3 Working closely with the Local Strategic Partnership and other partners has been an important part of this process to listen closely to views about services and priorities and to develop an evidence base about local needs.

3.5.4 As a result, clear priorities and targets for the local area have been set out in our Sustainable Community Strategy. As a Council we have a responsibility to lead and contribute to the development and delivery of these priorities which are set out under six thematic headings. These are:

- Jobs and enterprise
- Children and young people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Adult health and wellbeing
- Environmental sustainability
- Resources and transformation

3.5.5 The relationship between our proposed priorities for transport and these thematic headings is explored below.

3.6 Setting out our local transport goals and objectives

3.6.1 This Transport Strategy is essentially one of the route maps to guide us to where we want to be in 2026. To achieve this, we have set the following goals for transport in West Cheshire:

Top priorities

- To provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks which support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area;
- To reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change; and
- To manage a well maintained transport network.

Supporting priorities

- To contribute to safer and secure transport in West Cheshire and to promote types of transport which are beneficial to health;
- To improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity; and

- To ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.

3.6.2 To guide our transport strategy a series of additional objectives have been set for each goal. These are set out below.

Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area.

- Reduce traffic congestion and enhance the capacity of the Borough's local and strategic transport networks;
- Develop transport schemes and measures that help support the economic viability of towns, villages and leisure attractions in West Cheshire;
- Support the delivery of new developments and housing while limiting the impact of additional traffic; and
- Improve connectivity between West Cheshire and surrounding areas particularly to Merseyside, Greater Manchester, North East Wales and to local airports and the Port of Liverpool.

Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change.

- Improve and encourage the use of sustainable (low carbon) transport;
- Promote the use of new technology and alternative fuels to reduce carbon emissions from transport;
- Ensure that new development takes place in accessible locations which minimise the need for travel; and
- Ensure that local transport networks are resistant and adaptable to the impacts of climate change, including adverse weather conditions.

Manage a well maintained transport network.

- Improve the condition of the highway network;
- Reduce the maintenance backlog;
- Maintain the highway network in a safe and serviceable condition for the use of vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians and all other road users; and
- Ensure that the highway is kept in an acceptable condition environmentally.

Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity.

- Ensure that new developments and local services are built in accessible locations;
- Increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas, and to health services; and
- Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.

Contribute to safer and secure transport in West Cheshire and to promote types of transport that are beneficial to health.

- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads;
- Encourage healthier lifestyles by promoting more active forms of transport such as cycling and walking;
- Work to reduce transport related air quality problems;
- Ensure that new transport schemes improve public safety and help reduce fear of crime; and
- Plan for and respond to incidents that may have a significant impact on the transport network.

Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.

- Ensure that new transport schemes complement local character and enhance the built and natural environment and biodiversity;
- Promote access to leisure activities by improving pedestrian, cycle, greenway and Public Rights of Way networks; and
- Work to reduce noise levels that arise from transport.

3.7 Links to wider priorities

3.7.1 It is important to demonstrate how the new Transport Strategy will contribute to meeting the priorities set out in our Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy. The following tables show how our goals for transport will act to support the delivery of the fifteen priority areas set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the main themes for action contained in our Corporate Plan.



Table 3.1 – The impact of our new transport strategy on the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities.

Sustainable Community Strategy Priority	Impact of Transport Strategy	Commentary
Living well together		
Recognising, celebrating and engaging with our diverse communities.	● ● ●	Extensive programme of consultation has informed the development of the Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan. Ongoing dialogue to be undertaken as part of Local Community Forum (LCF) and Area Partnership Board (APB) agendas.
Building and developing the role of the third sector.	● ●	Partnership working undertaken with Third Sector as part of consultation process and ongoing dialogue with Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), LCF and APB.
Increasing public confidence in the public services enabling them to feel safe in their communities.	● ●	Development of road safety agenda and community safety projects to help reduce crime and fear of crime.
Working with our communities to address local issues particularly around crime and disorder.	● ●	Specific issues relating to transport addressed through APB and LCF and supported by local area working.
Engaging with and supporting our communities to take positive action on climate change and sustainable living.	● ● ●	Development of various programmes to provide and encourage the use of low (no) carbon forms of transport, considering use of alternative fuels and “Plugged in Places” project.
Right Services, right place , right time		
Developing and promoting appropriate and accessible ways to increase people’s ability to influence decision making.	● ●	Engagement undertaken as part of transport strategy consultation exercises. Ongoing dialogue through attendance at APB and LCF.
Reducing health inequalities and encouraging people to live longer, healthier and active lives.	● ● ●	Variety of measures to provide and encourage the use of healthier modes of transport. Promoted through Cycle Demonstration Town, travel plans and safer routes to school projects.
Aiming to eliminate the impact of poverty and deprivation within our communities.	● ● ●	Significant work to improve facilities for the vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of the community, widening accessibility to jobs and key services as well as supporting buses and community transport.
Anticipating and supporting the needs and aspirations of an ageing population.	● ● ●	Developed through the accessibility agenda; passenger, community and specialist fleet transport and opportunities provided by free concessionary fares.
Improving access to good quality and affordable homes.	● ●	Supported through work to integrate land use and transport planning as part of the Local Development Framework.

Sustainable Community Strategy Priority	Impact of Transport Strategy	Commentary
A world class place to live and invest		
Supporting the development of a sustainable and resilient economy with thriving businesses.	● ● ●	Supporting national, sub-regional and local objectives to support economic development, regeneration, improving the attractiveness and viability of our towns and rural centres, tackling congestion and maximising business advantages of the accessibility agenda including workplace travel plans. Work underpinned by priority to improve highway maintenance for the safe and efficient movement of goods and people.
Providing our workforce with access to locally relevant skills and training to achieve better paid employment.	● ● ●	Supported by the accessibility agenda with a particular focus on improving access to jobs and training opportunities.
Valuing and promoting West Cheshire's unique and diverse natural and built environment and supporting the development of rich cultural opportunities.	● ●	Ensuring schemes enhance and complement the local environment and support local biodiversity.
Recognising and releasing the potential of young people to play a full and active part in the future of West Cheshire.	● ●	Targeted road safety initiatives, safer routes to school, school travel plans, measures to encourage greater levels of walking and cycling and indirectly supported by accessibility agenda to enhance access to training opportunities.
Adapting built and natural environments to be resilient to climate change.	● ● ●	Steps being taken to maintain the highway network in order to adapt to the longer term impact of climate change.

Key

- Slight direct / indirect impact
- ● Moderate direct impact
- ● ● Strong direct impact

Table 3.2 - The impact of the transport strategy on the priority themes of Cheshire West and Chester's Corporate Plan

Theme	Jobs and enterprise	Children and young people	Safer and stronger communities	Adult health and wellbeing	Environmental Sustainability	Resources and transformation
	Promote economic growth, employment and investment to improve prosperity across our area and in particular in the most disadvantaged communities.	Safeguard and encourage our children and young people to secure their wellbeing and develop the skills and opportunities they need to build positive futures.	Ensure that individuals and their communities are safe and secure, with reduced fear of crime.	Improve health and wellbeing to help everyone live longer, safer, healthier lives; to ensure access to social care is fair and personalised, provided in the right place at the right time and with a focus on prevention as well as support; to ensure that people are better informed for making choices about lifestyle and the care they receive.	Build a clean, attractive and healthy environment for our people to live and work in, with good quality housing and effective transport links, which meet the immediate and longer term needs of our rural and urban communities.	Make the best use of resources to provide high quality services which deliver value for money and get things right first time.
Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area.	● ● ●				● ●	● ● ●
Reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change.		● ●		●	● ● ●	● ● ●

Manage a well maintained transport network.	●●●		●●			●●●	
Contribute to safer and secure transport in West Cheshire and to promote types of transport that are beneficial to health.		●●	●●●	●●		●●	●●
Improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity.		●●	●	●●		●●	●●
Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.	●●●			●●●		●●●	●●●

Key

- Slight direct / indirect impact
- Moderate direct impact
- Strong direct impact



Section Four

Supporting economic growth

Supporting our goal to provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks that support sustainable economic growth in West Cheshire and the surrounding area.

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 West Cheshire is a relatively prosperous area and possesses a strong, vibrant economy. The challenge for the future is to ensure that our existing transport networks and future investment plans provide added value to help support and enhance our well being and our economic competitiveness.

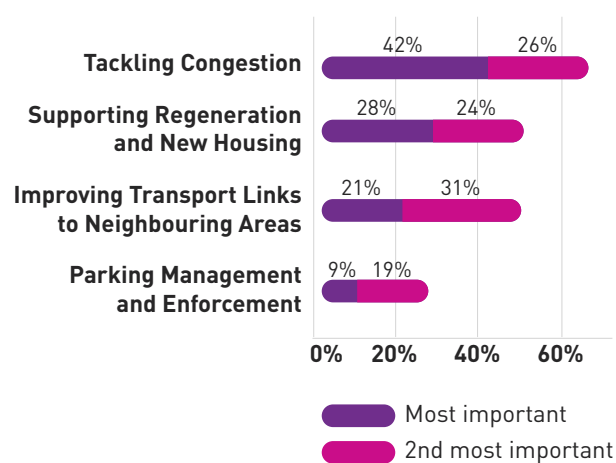
4.1.2 In response to the current recession, our approach to supporting the local economy is one of the Council's top priorities for action within this transport strategy.

4.2 What you said – Feedback from consultation

4.2.1 Our initial LTP soundings found that economic growth, along with steps to address climate change, were considered by respondents to be the top priorities to be addressed in our new transport strategy.

4.2.2 Our consultation exercise found that tackling congestion is the top priority for action. There was also strong support given to supporting the economic viability and accessibility of our towns and local centres, and improving links to neighbouring areas. Least support was given to the better management of car parking. See below.

% of times each option was chosen as 'most important' and 'second most important' (VW)



4.2.3 Feedback from workshops and public meetings noted the frustrations felt when experiencing traffic congestion particularly in Chester and Northwich. There was strong support for improving rail services to Merseyside and Greater Manchester and the need for improvements to local rail stations and interchanges. There were also calls for more integration between rail and bus services. The need to address local congestion was also highlighted as an important focus for future action. Respondents were particularly keen that the Council took steps to manage and maintain our road network so as to minimise traffic disruptions and delays.

Setting out the background evidence

- There are some 150,000 people employed in West Cheshire. 82% are employed in the service sector while 11% work in manufacturing.
- The Borough is part of a successful sub-region with economic output (measured as GVA per head) 24% higher than the North West regional average, and 9% above the national UK average.
- Chester is at the heart of the sub-region providing economic links with North East Wales, Ellesmere Port and Neston and Merseyside. There is a large amount of employment in the financial, health, leisure and retail sectors. There is also an important focus on the education sector with the University of Chester continuing to expand.
- Manufacturing still represents 30% of jobs in Ellesmere Port and Neston, but in recent years there has been a 9% fall in employment in this sector. Diversifying the economic base and reducing the reliance on manufacturing has been a successful element of the local economic strategy over the past 25 years. There is a strong retail sector centred around Cheshire Oaks.
- The local economy of Northwich is also based around the financial services sector, with Barclays being a major employer based at Gadbrook Park. Manufacturing is also of importance. Lostock Triangle Business Park is currently being developed which will offer another high quality development site. The Winsford economy is based on manufacturing and industry. However a high proportion of people travel to work in other nearby centres such as Manchester, Chester and East Cheshire.
- The unemployment rate is 3.6% which is below the regional and national averages. The area is vulnerable to changes taking place in the wider economy. Chester was recently identified as the third most vulnerable location in the Country to the effects of the economic downturn due to the concentration of financial sector activities in the City.
- The Cheshire visitor economy is currently worth an estimated £1.4 billion and attracts around 38.5 million visitors each year. Tourism related employment in West Cheshire accounts for approximately 10% of the workforce.
- Over 8.5 million people visit the historic City of Chester every year while an estimated 7 million trips are to the Cheshire Oaks shopping centre in Ellesmere Port. There are a further 1.3 million visitors to Chester Zoo each year while there are an estimated 500,000 visitors to the Blue Planet Aquarium in Ellesmere Port and 150,000 visitors to the Anderton Boat Lift in Northwich. The majority of these trips are made by car.
- Over the lifetime of the new Transport Strategy Chester Zoo is planning a major £225 million expansion (Natural Vision) which will boost potential annual visitor levels to 1.6 million. Plans are also seeking to boost the cultural and tourism potential of Chester and create a "must see" European destination.

Transport facts and figures

- Car ownership and use in the Borough is above the national average. Our most recent survey suggests that 90% of households own at least one car and 50% own two or more vehicles.
- Local surveys and census data reveals that travel to work by car continues to increase in the Borough while trips by bus, cycle and foot have decreased.
- Some 65% of local residents work within the Borough itself. Just over 35% of inbound commuter trips originate in North East Wales with a further 26% from Merseyside (21% coming from the Wirral). Just over 15% of trips come from Cheshire East and 6% come from Greater Manchester.
- Outbound commuter patterns reveal a more varied pattern. Some 23% of trips are to Merseyside, 20% to North East Wales, 17% to Cheshire East, 14% to Greater Manchester, 9% to Halton and 7% to Warrington.
- These patterns reflect the national trend for travelling further and the increased mobility offered by growing levels of car ownership. Equally, they also provide a reflection of the dynamics and changes to employment and economic opportunities in the sub-region and neighbouring cities which influence commuter travel.
- There is a very high dependence on using the car for commuter trips. 91% of inbound and 92% of outbound trips are made by car. Commuter trips by bus and rail are low. The exception is for trips to Merseyside where 16% of commuters use the train and to Manchester where the figure is 5%. Bus use for inbound trips is also particularly high from Wales into Chester. 10% of trips from Flintshire and 8% of trips from Wrexham are made by bus.
- The Council has made modest progress to limit traffic growth but congestion remains a significant problem in parts of the Borough. Traffic levels are forecast to increase over the course of this fifteen year strategy by an average of 12%. Two thirds of residents think that traffic congestion has got worse over the last five years. See Table 4.1 below;
- This growth and the complexity of travel patterns, mean that congestion will remain a problem for the foreseeable future. Table 4.2 below highlights where current and future congestion hot spots will occur.
- In the 2006 Community Survey when asked to consider what measures should be used to address congestion, 45% of respondents called for improved public transport while 30% requested the use of more school and workplace travel plans. A further 21% suggested the need to make better use of the existing network and signal controlled junctions. The majority of respondents disagreed with the need for road user charging as a means to tackle traffic congestion.

Table 4.1 – Projected traffic growth 2010 – 2026

**Projected Growth 2010-2026 (TEMPO 5.4)
Average Day – percentage rise**

GB	14.90%
Chester	13.41%
Ellesmere Port & Neston	12.52%
Northwich and Winsford	9.82%
Average rate	11.91%

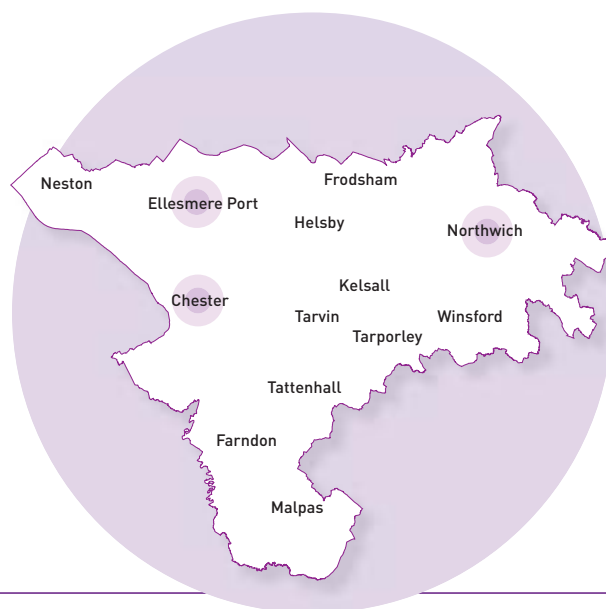


Table 4.2 – Location of congestion hot-spots in West Cheshire

In Chester: The inner ring-road and on key radial routes such as A51, A41 and A5116;
The peripheral business parks generate commuter peaks in particular on the A483 in the vicinity of Chester Business Park;
Congestion problems also occur when accidents lead to the closure of the A55; and
Problems worsen particularly in the run up to Christmas or when seasonal events occur such as Chester Races or Bank Holidays at the Zoo.

In Northwich: The town centre;
A533 through Winnington;
A556 around Gadbrook Park;
A559 through Hartford; and
B5082 Middlewich Road, Rudheath.

In Ellesmere Port: At the A41 in the vicinity of Hope Farm Road;
On approach roads to Cheshire Oaks especially during the Christmas shopping season; and
The A41 through Little Sutton is also a diversionary route from the M53, which loads much more traffic onto this route when there is an incident on the motorway.

On Inter-urban and rural roads: A49/A54 signal junction;
A49/A533 Bartington Crossroads;
A556 between Davenham Roundabout (A533) and the A530 and access to Gadbrook Business Park;
Motorway diversionary routes affect mid Cheshire and can greatly increase volumes on rural roads; and
Motorways can carry significant volumes of purely local traffic, particularly within urban areas such as the M53 in Ellesmere Port.

4.3 Issues and challenges

4.3.1 Tackling congestion - In response to these challenges, and noting the limited level of resources available to make a significant difference in the short term, the Council's proposed response to these issues largely focuses on how to make the best use of our existing network.

4.3.2 This includes making full use of our statutory Network Management Duty to limit the impact of road works, planned events and accidents to ensure that roads operate efficiently and without unnecessary delays. Our approach will also include making modest improvements to junctions, signs and signals and using Traffic Regulation Orders to improve the efficiency of the local road network.

4.3.3 Our approach also includes measures to promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport and demand management. These are considered elsewhere in this strategy document.



4.3.4 Supporting regeneration - Maintaining and enhancing the vitality and economic viability of the Borough's urban centres, its villages and leisure attractions will be crucial to the overall success of our economy and quality of life. Regeneration projects will be supported by detailed transport studies to review the potential impact of development proposals on local transport networks. This work will also help to identify measures to reduce the possible negative impact of such schemes including steps to ensure that new sites are accessible by a range of modes and the use of travel plans to encourage more sustainable journeys.

4.3.5 A high proportion of jobs are linked to the tourism sector and the Council and its partners are seeking to boost the culture and tourism sector with the vision that Chester becomes a "must see" European destination. Many tourism and leisure trips are currently made by car. It will be essential in the future to increase the proportion of trips to such attractions by more sustainable types of transport.

4.3.6 Parking - Local parking provision and the Council's approach to how this is managed and regulated plays a critical role in supporting the local economy. An important challenge for the Council will be to replace the parking policies of the former District Councils and prepare a single consistent approach for their operation in the future. This will also include assessing how best to make use of the Park and Ride network in Chester. Emerging policies will need to balance the needs of local town centres while managing traffic congestion.

4.3.7 Parking enforcement and residents parking schemes are also of importance to improve traffic movements and reduce problems caused by illegal or inappropriate parking particularly in urban areas.

4.3.8 New housing and development - The Council has ambitions to significantly increase the amount of new housing in the Borough. However, the current state of the economy has depressed the housing market and, consequently, there is very limited new housing being built. The challenge ahead will be how best to support house builders and be able to make sites ready for development, for example, by providing transport infrastructure so sites are ready to come forward once the market improves. It will be important that the Council's emerging planning framework promotes sites that are accessible by a range of modes to jobs and services.

4.3.9 Links to neighbouring areas - There are considerable numbers of cross-boundary commuter trips in and out of West Cheshire on a daily basis. These add to congestion problems on inter-urban routes. A longer-term challenge for this strategy will be to encourage a greater proportion of these trips to be made in a more sustainable manner in the years to come.

4.3.10 The Borough already benefits from a new quarter hourly rail service running between Chester and Merseyside. There is also an hourly direct rail service to London. This will boost the attractiveness of these services and will also act as a catalyst for the regeneration of land adjacent to Chester railway station.

4.3.11 A number of important rail schemes will potentially come forward during the lifetime of this plan which may benefit Cheshire residents. This includes opportunities to increase the frequency of trains to Manchester arising from Network Rail's Northern Hub proposals to reduce bottleneck problems in and around Greater Manchester. There are also plans to return the Halton Curve to passenger traffic which will enhance rail access from West Cheshire and North East Wales to Liverpool and particularly to Liverpool John Lennon Airport (via Liverpool South Parkway).

4.3.12 Longer term aspirations in neighbouring areas include rail service improvements on the Wrexham to Bidston line, re-opening the Crewe to Northwich line to passenger traffic, considering a western rail link to Manchester Airport, improvements to Crewe station and considering the potential benefits of the High Speed 2 links between London and North West England.

4.3.13 In order to take advantage of these services and proposals the Council recognise that there is a need to improve interchange at railway stations. There is also scope to enhance cycle and walking access and to increase car and cycle parking capacity at a number of stations to take advantage of future service improvements. The Council is also keen to promote local grass roots station improvements supported through Community Rail Partnership projects. The importance of coach travel also needs to be considered.

4.3.14 Freight and access to airports - A significant amount of freight traffic makes use of the road and rail network in the Borough. There is a need to better understand the longer term needs of the freight industry particularly with the growth of the Port of Liverpool and inter-modal freight terminals in neighbouring areas. In the longer term, there is also the need to consider the potential to transfer appropriate cargos to rail or waterways.

4.3.15 The Borough is also well connected in terms of its close proximity to both Manchester and Liverpool John Lennon Airports. Good links to international gateways is an important issue for many companies considering inward investment in an area, and working to improve links to the airports will be an important consideration in the longer term for this strategy.

4.3.16 There are good road connections to both airports but, currently, there are poor bus and rail links from West Cheshire and North East Wales. Both the Northern Hub and Halton Curve schemes may help improve access in the future.

4.3.17 Major projects - The Highways Agency's recent improvements to the A5117/A550 corridor has improved the route from the M56 through to the Welsh border at Sealand to what is essentially a motorway-standard. This has significantly improved highway links between West Cheshire and North East Wales and reduced previous congestion problems.

4.3.18 While there are no further proposals for such large scale major schemes within West Cheshire currently, there are a number of planned schemes in neighbouring areas which will have the potential to impact on commuter and freight movement to and from the Borough. These include the Mersey Gateway (a second crossing of the river in Halton to provide an alternative route to the existing Silver Jubilee bridge and the Queensway and Kingsway tunnels); M53 Bidston Moss Viaduct improvements on the access to the Kingsway tunnel; M53 Junctions 7 and 8 safety and lighting upgrades; and re-routing the A556 to improve links between the M6 and M56.

4.3.19 Longer term regeneration projects in the Borough may require the provision of major transport investment schemes. However, it is anticipated that over the lifetime of this transport strategy there will be very limited funding available for such projects. Understandably, successful schemes will need to demonstrate a very strong business case and will be required to show how they will contribute to support strategic national and sub-national objectives especially for economic growth in order to secure funding from the Government.

Policy objectives for supporting economic growth

The Council will:

1. Reduce traffic congestion and enhance the capacity of the Borough's local and strategic transport networks;
2. Develop transport schemes and measures that help support the economic viability of towns, villages and leisure attractions in West Cheshire;
3. Support the delivery of new developments and housing while limiting the impact of additional traffic; and
4. Improve connectivity between West Cheshire and surrounding areas particularly to Merseyside, Greater Manchester, North East Wales and to local airports and the Port of Liverpool.



4.5 Policy actions for supporting economic growth

Short term actions	Longer term actions
Tackling congestion	
Manage the highway network in the most efficient way in line with the Council's Network Management Duty;	Consider the introduction of urban traffic management measures elsewhere in the Borough; and
Implement minor junction and signal improvements to address localised congestion problems; and	Consider enforcing moving traffic offences to minimise delay on the network.
Manage the urban traffic management and control system to ensure the efficient flow of traffic in Chester.	
Supporting Regeneration	
Undertake schemes to improve access to the Borough's towns and local centres to support their economic viability;	Support longer term regeneration projects and undertake transport studies and review planning applications and traffic assessments to consider the full implications of these proposals on the local transport network; and
Use planning conditions and obligations to secure the provision of appropriate transport measures, infrastructure and travel plans to minimise the impact of additional traffic arising from new developments; and	Support the development of the new Cheshire Local Enterprise Partnership and work with partners to assess and secure strategic transport improvements to boost the sub-region's wellbeing and viability.
Promote and encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport to support the visitor economy.	
Parking	
Prepare a single strategy for the operation of the Borough's car parks;	Set appropriate parking standards for new developments;
Actively manage parking enforcement and residents parking schemes in the Borough; and	Review Chester's Park and Ride network in line with future regeneration aspirations for the City;
Review car parking policy as a means to influence town centre viability while minimising traffic problems.	Assess the outcomes and implications for West Cheshire arising from the feasibility study into Strategic Park and Ride in the Warrington area; and
	Keep car parking policies under review.

Short term actions

Longer term actions

New housing and development

Undertake modelling, transport assessments and accession mapping to identify preferred locations for proposed housing development;

Ensure that new housing is located in locations which are fully accessible to employment opportunities and local services by a range of modes; and

Use the planning process to provide appropriate transport measures and infrastructure within new housing developments to encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport.

Strengthen the links between the transport strategy and the new emerging planning framework to further integrate transport and land use planning; and

Use planning obligations and conditions to secure residential travel plans for larger scale housing proposals.

Travelling to neighbouring areas

Work with the railway industry and neighbouring authorities to secure service improvements that benefit West Cheshire;

Work with partners to improve interchange and passenger facilities at local railway stations;

Continue to support the Community Rail Partnerships; and

Support coach travel and build on Chester's reputation as a "coach friendly" destination.

Examine opportunities to increase car and cycle parking at railway stations and improve accessibility to local stations by all modes of transport;

Support the delivery of schemes that improve the Manchester Hub and reopen the Halton Curve to passenger traffic;

Support longer term strategic rail improvements, including those in neighbouring areas, that will benefit the Borough; and

Consider the longer term needs of coach travel in the Borough.

Freight and access to airports

Support schemes that improve access to Liverpool John Lennon Airport and to local sea ports.

Develop a freight strategy for the Borough; and

Encourage the provision of more through trains and improved access from West Cheshire to Manchester Airport.

Major schemes projects

Support the delivery of major scheme projects in neighbouring areas where they bring advantages to the local economy.

Review any updated national guidance on the development of major scheme proposals and consider the implications for West Cheshire.



Section Five

Tackling climate change

Meeting our goal to reduce carbon emissions from transport and take steps to adapt our transport networks to the effects of climate change.

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section outlines proposals to reduce carbon emissions from transport and how we proposed to adapt our transport networks to the longer term impact of climate change.

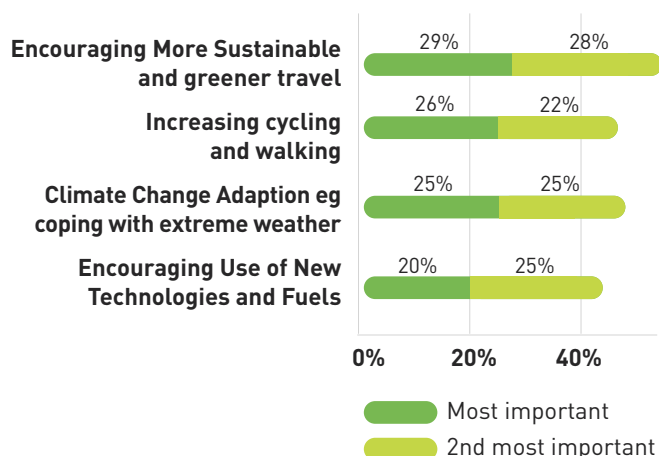
5.2. What you said – Feedback from consultation

5.2.1 Reducing problems associated with climate change, along with supporting economic growth, was clearly supported as the top priority for action by the Council by the majority of those who participated in the first round of consultation.

5.2.2 Our initial round of consultation found that the highest priority was given to ensuring that new developments (particularly schools, health centres and employment sites) are located in locations that are easily reached to reduce the need for car travel. There was also support for reductions in greenhouse emissions by providing and encouraging sustainable forms of transport. Planning to ensure local transport networks can cope with severe weather conditions was considered to be less important.

5.2.3 Overall priorities from the second round of consultation are set out in the table below.

% of times each option was chosen as 'most important' and 'second most important' option (VW)



5.2.4 Feedback from focus group meetings found that people were keen to see more integrated transport to help to reduce car use. There was strong support for taking steps to improve cycling and passenger transport. Tackling traffic congestion through the use of smarter choices (such as workplace and school travel plans and personalised journey planning) was also supported alongside proposals to examine the use of alternative fuels and new technologies as a means of reducing carbon emissions. A small proportion of respondents also highlighted the need to reduce the risk of flooding.

Setting out the background evidence

- Climate change is recognised as posing a major threat to our environment, the economy and our way of life. The principal cause of climate change is identified as carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from a range of sources.
- The overall climatic trend in the UK has been for hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters and projections suggest that these trends will continue.
- The Climate Change Act includes a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% on 1990 levels by 2050 and by 34% by 2020. In response, the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan makes clear that transport has a critical role to play in helping the UK reach this target.
- The North West Climate Change Impact Study (2003) and the Local Climate Impact Profile (LCILP) for Cheshire West and Chester (2010) predict that a changing climate is likely to affect future flooding, water supply, agriculture, biodiversity, tourism and leisure in the Borough.

Transport facts and figures

- Since 1990, greenhouse gas emissions from transport have increased by 12% and now represent over 20% of total UK domestic emissions. Of this, domestic road transport is by far the biggest source of emissions at around 92%.
- Emissions in West Cheshire tend to be higher than the national average with a higher proportion arising from industry and business than the UK average and a lower proportion from road transport and energy production. This reflects the nature of the local economy, which retains a number of energy-intensive processes – see Figures 5.1 and 5.2.
- Greenhouse gas emissions are higher per head of population in West Cheshire than the national average. The average emissions from road transport (1,077m tonnes) is the equivalent of 3.29 tonnes per head of population per year. This compares with the national picture of 2.23 tonnes.
- Low Carbon Transport: A Greener Future” (2009) sets out how the Government intends to reduce greenhouse gas emissions arising from transport. Actions are based around the themes of promoting the use of sustainable (lower carbon) transport such as walking, cycling and public transport; supporting a shift to new technologies and fuels; and using market-based measures to encourage a shift to lower carbon transport.

Figure 5.1 CO2 emissions by sector – Cheshire West and Chester

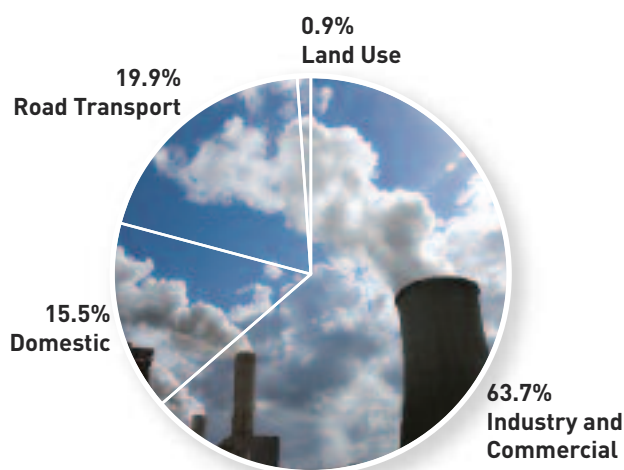
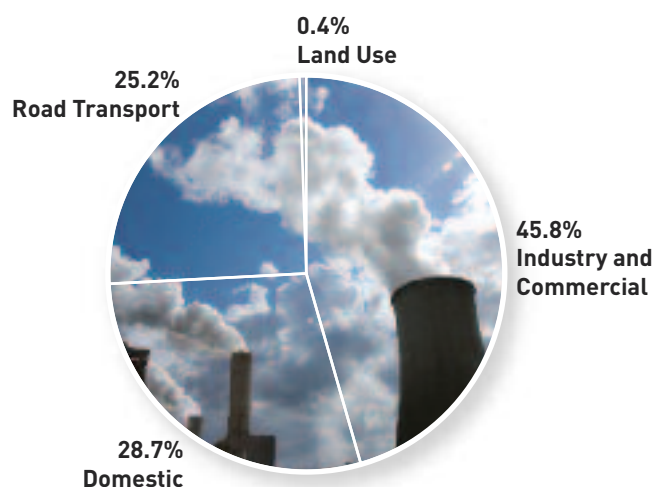


Figure 5.2 CO2 emissions by sector – UK



5.3 Issues and challenges

5.3.1 Smarter travel choices, travel plans and the journey to school – Smarter travel choices consist of effective and low cost actions to influence behavioural change. A number of successful workplace travel plans have been introduced in West Cheshire and in a number of locations car trips have been reduced by as much as 15%. The results from the Sustainable Showcase Demonstration Towns project have shown that modest travel awareness programmes have led to a 9% decrease in car trips while walking levels have increased by 14%, cycling levels by an average of 12% and bus patronage increased by over 10%. The challenge ahead is to build on this agenda, including considering the lessons learnt as part of the Chester Cycle Demonstration Town project to encourage further use of sustainable types of transport. The Council itself recognises the importance of leading by example. It has prepared a new travel plan for staff based in central Chester and now plans to roll out measures to staff based in other locations. Further opportunities to develop this agenda will be central to our planned bid for the Government’s new Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

5.3.2 All schools in West Cheshire possess a travel plan. These outline a range of measures, including the use of walking buses, safer walking and cycling and awareness campaigns which are designed to encourage pupils, along with their parents, to use more sustainable types of transport for the journey to school. This work also helps to identify and prioritise safer routes to school projects which provide safer walking and cycling routes to local

schools. The provision of statutory home to school transport is also of importance in this context. This is reviewed in more detail in the Equality of Opportunity section of this strategy.



5.3.3 Cycling and walking - There has been considerable investment in the local cycling network over the last ten years. Chester was successful in gaining Cycle Demonstration Town status between 2008 and 2011 and this has led to an increase in the number of people cycling in the City. The challenge for the future is to improve local links to the cycle network and to consider how to extend the successes and lessons learnt from the Demonstration Town project to the rest of the Borough. As well as further integrating cycling as part of the smarter choices agenda, there is a need to promote cycling as part of the tourism agenda, developing awareness campaigns to highlight the health benefits of cycling and encourage greater community engagement and participation in adult cycle training schemes. It is also recognised that there is a need to respond to complaints about the small minority of cyclists who fail to comply with highway regulations, or who cycle inconsiderately on multi-user and shared paths.

5.3.4 Walking is an important mode of transport in its own right and it is estimated that this accounts for 25% of all journeys and 80% of journeys under 2 km. 13% of West Cheshire residents walk to work on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the proportion of people who regularly walk is falling and often even relatively short journeys are made by car. The Council

recognises that pedestrian routes need to be safe and convenient. Links to local schools, shops, healthcare services, recreation and employment all need to be fully accessible by foot. Work will continue to deliver the objectives set out in the Council's walking strategy.

5.3.5 Public Transport - Passenger transport has an important role to play in supporting measures that influence travel patterns and hence, contribute to the Council's plans to address climate change. Issues and proposed policies relating to rail and buses are set out in Sections Four and Eight of this strategy.

5.3.6 Supporting a shift to new technologies and fuels - The use of new technologies and fuels can help to lower the consumption of fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases. Currently, national interest has focussed on the development of electric vehicles. However, this is only one aspect where technological innovation may make a contribution towards carbon reduction. The improved efficiency of conventional fuel engines, plus the use of sustainable biofuels, hybrid vehicles and emerging hydrogen fuel cell technology are all likely to grow in importance over the lifetime of this transport strategy. Improved traffic and speed control systems may also act to influence the way we travel in the future.



5.3.7 Market-based measures to encourage a shift to lower carbon transport - Market forces have the potential to play an important role to encourage people to consider making more use of low carbon forms of transport. Potential measures include road user charging, workplace parking charges, public car parking charges, taxation measures that could favour low carbon travel but penalise less sustainable options and fuel price taxation. Many of these approaches will require the lead of central government but it will be important for the Council to be ready to respond to these issues if they arise during the lifetime of this strategy.

5.3.8 Reducing the need to travel – Managing traffic demand is an important part of our approach to addressing traffic problems. The planning process provides a valuable opportunity to influence travel behaviour. It will be important that the Council's new local planning framework supports this agenda and ensures that new developments influence and encourage the use of low carbon form of transport. In addition, the digital revolution offers people the opportunity to enjoy lifestyle choices without travel (eg, working from home). Installation of high speed broadband, especially in rural areas, and other measures can encourage this.

5.3.9 Climate change adaptation – It is anticipated that the impact of climate change will be felt for at least the next four to five decades as the climate will be slow to respond to the planned measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, it will be important that measures are in place to adapt to the impact of potential changes in the climate. At a national level considerable work is already underway to adapt the strategic road and rail networks. The resilience of local networks remains the responsibility of local authorities and the Council is working to develop a broad corporate approach to respond to this challenge.



Policy objectives for tackling climate change

The Council will:

1. Support an overall reduction in levels of greenhouse gas emissions by supporting and encouraging the use of sustainable (low carbon) forms of transport and technology;
2. Ensure that new development takes place in accessible locations and is designed to reduce the need for car borne travel and minimise carbon dioxide emissions; and
3. Plan ahead to ensure that local transport networks are resistant and adaptable to the impacts of climate change including adverse weather conditions.

Policy actions to tackle climate change

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Smarter choices, travel plans and the journey to school

Develop and promote smarter choices initiatives to complement existing activities such as cycling, travel planning and passenger transport;

Prepare updated guidance setting out the Council's expectations on how travel plans will be prepared; and

Encourage the voluntary take up and delivery of workplace, school and residential travel plans at existing sites;

Review the need to update the Council's Sustainable School Travel Strategy.

Use planning conditions and obligations to support the preparation of travel plans for new development sites and, where appropriate, secure developer contributions to support their successful delivery;

Monitor statutory travel plans, prepared to meet planning obligations and conditions, and take enforcement action, if appropriate, where plans are failing to meet agreed targets; and

Deliver a programme of safer routes to school projects to complement and support the successful implementation of school travel plans.

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Cycling and walking

Deliver awareness and training programmes to encourage more cycling;

Ensure that new highway and development schemes meet the needs of cyclists and pedestrians;

Make use of the planning process to provide improvements and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians especially where new developments require a travel plan;

Promote the tourism and leisure benefits of walking and cycling;

Encourage cyclists to abide with highway regulations and promote a more considerate approach to cycling when using shared paths; and

Deliver the objectives set out in the Council's walking strategy.

Improve local linkages to the National and Regional Cycle Network and work with neighbouring authorities to maintain cross-boundary links;

Investigate opportunities to improve cycle access in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford;

Ensure that design guides have better standards for cyclist and pedestrians and improve safety; and

Promote the development of footpath and cycle networks using canals, the Public Rights of Way network and other "green corridors".

New technologies and fuels

Promote and support the adoption of new transport technologies and fuels that help support carbon reduction projects.

Assess the merits of running the Council's own fleet vehicles using alternative fuels in order to lead by example.

Market mechanisms and reducing the need for travel

Undertake transport assessments for all new developments to assess overall accessibility and suitability to support sustainable travel patterns; and

Support home and flexible working as part of Smarter Choices initiatives.

Support the provision of high speed broadband in rural areas; and

Review the longer terms use of market forces to encourage a shift to lower carbon transport but only introduce such measures if they secure the widespread support of the local community.

Adapting to climate change

Complete reviews, assessments and related requirements to comply with national standards for climate change adaptation.

Develop a Climate Change strategy to set out the Council's corporate response to addressing climate change.



Section Six

Managing and maintaining our assets

Meeting our goal to manage a well maintained transport network.

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section sets out the Council's plans for highway and bridge maintenance.

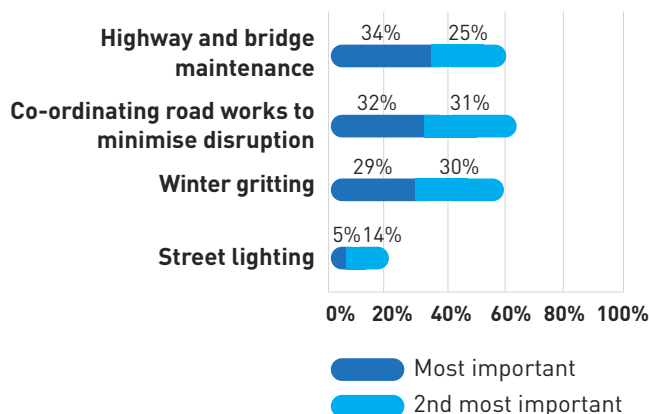
6.2 What you said – Feedback from consultation

6.2.1 The need to improve the poor state of the road network was clearly expressed during the initial consultation exercise. Results were also cross-referenced with the outcomes of a separate maintenance survey conducted during autumn 2009.

6.2.2 The results found that highest priority was given to repairing poor quality roads so they are of a good standard. Support was also given to keeping roads that are already good quality maintained to a high standard, maintaining pavements and pedestrian areas, and maintaining main roads. Additional comments focussed on a number of issues including the need to maintain footpaths and Public Rights of Way. There were also a number of responses calling for the de-cluttering of street furniture.

6.2.3 Apart from the importance of undertaking maintenance, the second round of consultation revealed strong support for co-ordinating road works to minimise traffic disruption and for improving winter gritting. It should be noted that this consultation coincided with a period of very cold and snowy weather. Overall priorities are shown below.

% of times each option was chosen as 'most important' and 'second most important' (VW)



6.2.4 Similar themes also emerged in workshops and written responses. Additional comments called for the better maintenance of cycleways, repairing pot holes, the need for better and longer lasting repairs and concerns about the impact of maintenance activities on biodiversity. Discussions about street lighting revealed contrasting views about turning off some street lights overnight to reduce energy consumption versus views that good levels of street lighting helps to reduce crime and fear of crime.

6.2.5 Comparing the results with the separate maintenance survey found that, in general, findings from both surveys were similar. Both placed "repairing poor quality roads so that they are of a good standard" as the top priority along with "maintaining local roads". These were well ahead of other options. "Maintaining pavements and pedestrian areas" was seen as less of a priority. In both surveys "maintaining cycleways, street lighting and bridge maintenance" were considered to be lower priorities for action.



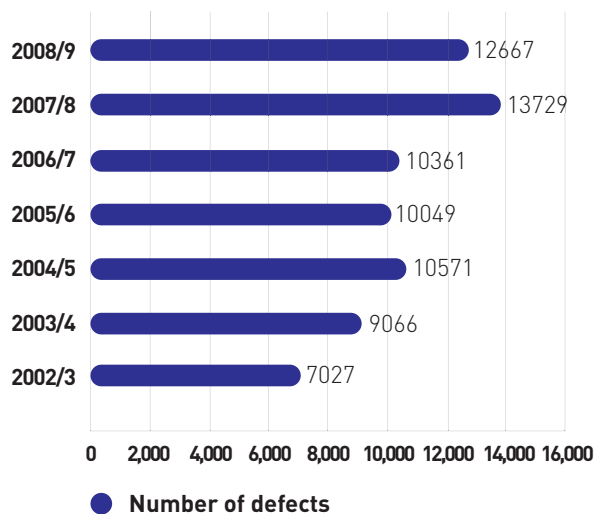
Setting out background evidence

- As a Highway Authority, the Council has a legal duty to maintain and repair the condition of our highway network.
- The network supports the safe movement of people and goods and is used by the majority of our residents, commuters and visitors on a daily basis.
- An efficient and well maintained transport network is essential to meet many of the objectives and proposals set out in this strategy.
- The condition of the network is in decline – see Figure 6.1 below. Reversing this decline is our top priority for action in this Strategy.
- Investment in the network is crucial as it underpins the Council's pledges to provide effective and safe transport and improve standards of maintenance for the highway.

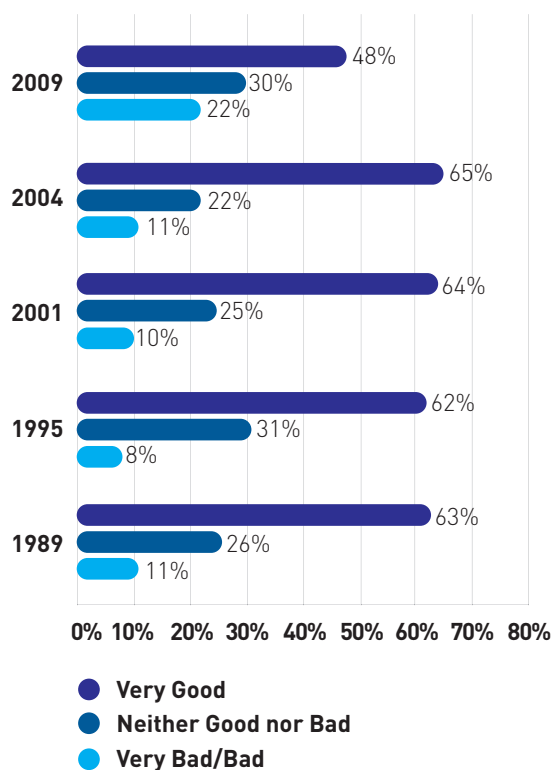
Transport facts and figures

- The Council is responsible for 328 km (205 miles) of Principal Road; 642 km (401 miles) of classified and 1359 km (849 miles) of unclassified road.
- In addition, the Council is responsible for 476 highway bridges and structures of which 116 are found on Principal Roads. Two bridges are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 17 are Listed Buildings including the Grosvenor Bridge in Chester.
- The Council is also responsible for the maintenance of the City Walls in Chester, a 3 km long Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Walls are a major tourist attraction and are used by over 2.5 million visitors each year.
- The Council estimates that the current replacement cost of the highway network, and its associated assets such as bridges, is £4 billion.
- The public consistently place road condition as a top priority for action by the Council – annual Highway Condition and Community surveys show a marked fall in satisfaction levels relating to the condition of the network – see Figures 6.2 and 6.3 below.
- Approximately 50,000 street lights and illuminated traffic signs are currently maintained by the Council.

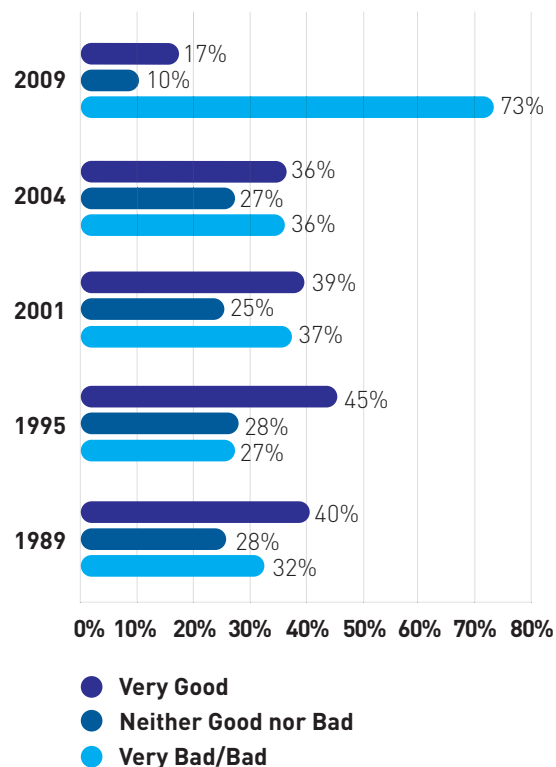
**Figure 6.1 Highway Category 1 defects
2002/03 – 2008/09**



**Figure 6.2 Customer satisfaction history –
main roads**



**Figure 6.3 Customer satisfaction survey –
streets where “you live”**



6.3 Issues and challenges

6.3.1 Highway maintenance - The Council has undertaken an in-depth review of the condition of the highway network in West Cheshire. This found that the network can best be described as being in a state of managed decline. In response, an action plan has been prepared to guide additional investment for maintenance activities to help reduce the level of deterioration. Our proposed response combines the use of our Transport Asset Management Plan to guide day to day activities alongside the development of a longer term approach to reduce the highway maintenance backlog and improve the overall condition of the network.

6.3.2 It will be essential to balance our structural maintenance objectives, to improve the overall condition of the highway network, with broader routine maintenance activities. This includes grass cutting, lighting improvements, gully emptying and drainage work, maintaining footways and cycleways and the repair of highway infrastructure including road signs and dealing with carriageway and footway defects, potholes, minor repairs and tree maintenance. Work is also undertaken to ensure that road signs and markings are maintained.

6.3.3 Winter gritting and maintenance – The Council targets its winter gritting on approximately 1900 km (40%) of the main highway network. Our approach ensures that the roads which carry the most traffic are routinely salted whenever freezing conditions are forecast. A national review of Winter Resilience has examined the national response to the severe winter of 2010 and the impact that this had on the country's transport networks. Its recommendations will be considered by the Council and may influence changes to our approach to winter gritting in the future.

6.3.4 Street lighting – Street lighting plays a very important role in improving safety on the highway network and on footpaths and cycleways. It is planned that our approach to street lighting will continue to be developed to ensure that the level of service provided meets set standards and public expectations. This will include measures to improve the quality of light, reduce levels of light pollution, reduce the amount of energy used by street lighting and make sure that lighting level assist reducing crime and fear of crime.



6.3.5 Drainage – Until recently, the highway drainage network in the Borough has grown and evolved on a relatively ad-hoc basis. As a result, the quality of the records that we possess is variable. A new database has now been established to properly record data. It will also be important to share data with partners such as the Environment Agency and utility companies to help provide a more co-ordinated approach to drainage issues and flooding.

6.3.6 Bridge Maintenance – A detailed inspection is undertaken every two years to review the overall condition of our bridges and to identify potential problems and defects. Results are included in the Council's Transport Asset Management Plan to allow a prioritised approach for improvements. As the bridge assessment programme is nearing completion, the impact that weak bridges have on the local road networks is emerging. The initial priority for bridge strengthening is focussed initially



on bridges carrying the Primary Route Network and Principal Roads and then on those bridges on other classifications of road which are considered to be at risk. Where appropriate, the Council will also consider the use of weight restrictions and route diversions to minimise problems associated with weak bridges.

6.3.7 The Borough's Public Rights of Way network relies upon footbridges and larger bridges, some of which are privately owned and capable of carrying vehicles, to provide access to leisure routes. The vast majority of these are elderly bridges which have not been designed to meet modern standards, leading to increasing concern over their ability to carry pedestrians safely. A programme of bridge assessment is planned to be undertaken by the Council's Greenspace Team to review these in more detail.

6.3.8 Sustainability and highway maintenance – The Council is keen to make sure that sustainability is an important part of our approach to maintenance activities. This includes the re-use and recycling of materials and evaluating the use of new techniques and products which may be more sustainable than current practices. We also act to safeguard and enhance the natural environment as part of our ongoing management of the highway network to support habitat and wildlife. Winter gritting salt is carefully stored to prevent pollution from contaminated rain water entering local ecosystems.

6.3.9 Co-ordination of maintenance activities – As part of our Network Management Duty the Council works closely with utility companies and developers to co-ordinate planned road works and maintenance activities to reduce their impact and minimise the disruption that they can cause. The Council will continue to work closely with numerous partners, including neighbouring local authorities, to ensure a co-ordinated approach for such activities. This includes the Highways Agency who manage the Motorway and Trunk Roads that pass through West Cheshire and the Emergency Services.

Policy objectives for managing and maintaining our transport assets

The Council will:

1. Improve the condition of the highway network;
2. Reduce the maintenance backlog;
3. Maintain the highway network in a safe and serviceable condition for the use of vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians and all other road users; and
4. Ensure that the highway is kept in an acceptable condition environmentally.

Policy actions for managing and maintain our transport assets

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Highway maintenance

Manage a well maintained and efficient highway network so that it is in a safe and serviceable condition for the use of vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians and all other road users;

Halt the deterioration of the condition of the highway network by tackling the backlog of overdue structural maintenance;

Use the Transport Asset Management Plan to improve the highway network and deliver service improvements and cost efficiencies; and

Ensure that the highway network is kept in an acceptable condition environmentally.

Secure a reduction in the overall maintenance backlog.

Winter gritting and maintenance

Undertake gritting and winter maintenance in accordance with the policies and principles set out in the Local Authority Association's Code of Practice for Maintenance; and

Provide support for communities to bring forward their own localised winter gritting initiatives.

Review policies against the recommendations set out in the Independent Review of Winter Resilience.

Street Lighting

Manage and maintain street lighting as part of the Transport Asset Management Plan.

Review longer term measures to improve light quality, reduce the impact of light pollution , reduce the amount of energy (and carbon emissions) used by the Council's highway lighting stock and consider how to improve lighting on cycleways.

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Drainage

Undertake repairs and improvements to surface water drainage systems and river protection measures to reduce whole life costs and preserve integrity.

Develop a detailed drainage inventory and associated condition survey to enable the development of a Drainage Lifecycle Plan.

Bridge maintenance

Address the Council's backlog of overdue bridge maintenance including masonry and concrete repairs and maintenance painting of steel structures;

Develop a strategy with Network Rail and agree a viable strengthening programme for bridges that cross the rail network within current funding constraints.

Use the Transport Asset Management Plan to maintain and improve the highway bridge stock and deliver service improvements and cost efficiencies; and

Undertake bridge parapet upgrading and waterproofing to reduce whole life costs and maintain or improve safety standards.

Sustainability and highway maintenance

Ensure that maintenance activities conform to best practice in reducing, reusing and recycling resources; and

Ensure that maintenance activities support the Council's longer term sustainability objectives; and

Undertake roadside maintenance activities that safeguard and enhance the natural environment, promote biodiversity and take into account protected species.

Consider adopting "Considerate Construction" standards.

Co-ordination of maintenance activities

Work with partners, utility companies and other stakeholders to co-ordinate planned maintenance activities to minimise disruption.



Section Seven

Safety, security and health

Meeting our goal to contribute to safer and secure transport in West Cheshire and to promote types of transport that are beneficial to health.

7.1 Introduction

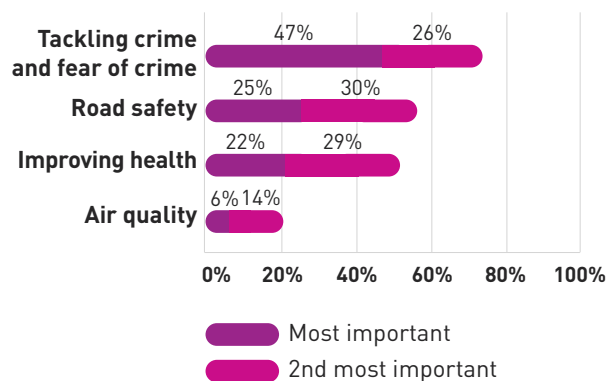
7.1.1 There are a number of ways in which transport can improve safety, security and health. Our planned approach to addressing these issues includes road safety, promoting the use of more active forms of transport, improving air quality, tackling crime and fear of crime and reducing the vulnerability of transport networks to natural and man made incidents.

7.2 What you said – Feedback from consultation

7.2.1 The need to reduce the numbers killed and injured on the roads was considered an important priority by the majority of respondents during our first consultation exercise. Support was also given to promoting healthier lifestyles by encouraging more walking and cycling and ensuring that new transport schemes address public safety concerns.

7.2.2 The importance of addressing crime and fear of crime was the most important issue highlighted during the second round of consultation with road safety ranked second. See table below.

% of times each option was chosen as 'most important' and 'second most important' (VW)



7.2.3 Feedback from focus groups and written comments also showed the importance of addressing public safety both in urban and rural areas. Requests were made to improve road safety for cyclists and pedestrians. There were also calls for more to be done to ensure that cyclists abided by highway laws. Feedback from workshops highlighted the importance of safer routes to school projects and road safety education. Green infrastructure and the better use of the Public Rights of Way network were identified as options to help promote more active forms of transport.

Setting out the background evidence

- The 2008 Place Survey found that 78% of West Cheshire residents considered their health to be “very good” and “good”. This is significantly higher than both the North West and national averages. Nevertheless, it is recognised that a number of communities in the Borough, particularly in deprived areas, fall well below the average for West Cheshire.
- There is a 13 year difference in life expectancy in parts of Ellesmere Port when compared to other parts of the Borough.
- 5% of West Cheshire residents claim disability allowance.
- The level of child obesity is 15%. This is below the national average.
- National statistics suggest that only 37% of men and 24% of women meet the Chief Medical Officers minimum recommendations for physical activity. The cost to the economy of physical inactivity has recently been estimated at over £8 billion, representing in excess of 80,000 lives lost prematurely each year.
- Although evidence proves that West Cheshire is a relatively safe place to live in, there remains considerable public concern about crime and fear of crime. Issues relating to addressing crime and disorder are seen as a priority for action by local residents.

Transport facts and figures

- Nearly 85% of road collisions in West Cheshire occur on the locally managed network. The other 15% occur on trunk roads and motorways which are managed by the Highways Agency. Road casualty data for West Cheshire is shown in Table 7.1.
- Vulnerable road users (such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists) involved in a collision are statistically more likely to be seriously injured or killed than occupants of motor vehicles. The latest data for West Cheshire is shown in tables 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4.
- Road collisions are the single biggest cause of death for people aged between 16 and 25 and accounts for 25% of all people killed or seriously injured on our roads.
- There is a clear recognition that the steady decline in physical activity, especially the fall in levels of walking and cycling, is having a negative impact on our health. It is often the case that even short journey's previously undertaken on foot or by cycle are now substituted for trips by car.
- There is strong evidence that moderate physical activity such as walking and cycling can help prevent coronary heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, osteoporosis and arthritis.
- The main transport-related causes of poor air quality are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and 10-micron particulate matter (PM₁₀).

Table 7.1 Cheshire West and Chester Casualties figures

Collision Class	2009	2010	2005 – 2009 Average
KSI Casualties	198	186	206
Child KSI	22	11	20.6
Slight Casualties	1261	1154	935.2

Table 7.2 Casualties involving a pedestrian

Class	2009	2010	2004 – 2008 Average
Fatality	1	4	3.4
Serious injury	39	28	28.6
Slight injury	85	82	94.4
Total	125	114	126.4

Table 7.3 Casualties involving cyclists

Class	2009	2010	2004 – 2008 Average
Rider – fatality	0	1	2
Rider- serious	23	23	18
Rider - slight	67	78	65
Total	90	102	85.4

Table 7.4 Casualties involving motorcyclists

Class	2009	2010	2004 – 2008 Average
Rider fatality	4	4	4.6
Rider – serious	30	46	48.2
Rider - slight	62	58	84.6
Total	96	108	137.4

7.3 Issues and challenges

7.3.1 Road Safety – The Council has a statutory duty to promote road safety and make improvements to the highway network to reduce casualties. Overall, trends show that there is good progress being made to meet road safety targets. It is considered that the steady decrease in road casualty numbers is the combined result of targeting of investment, awareness campaigns and behavioural change and improving vehicle technology and safety measures. Nevertheless, collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists remain at or above the 2004 to 2008 average.

7.3.2 The challenge for the future will be to maintain our overall progress to reduce the level of casualties while targeting activities at the more vulnerable road users. The Council proposes to prioritise a combination of education, engineering and enforcement measures to address these priorities. This will be backed up by a programme of research and data analysis to target our activities where they are most needed. Dealing with speeding will be an important part of this work. Opportunities to consider the introduction of 20 mph zones as a means to reduce casualties will also be reviewed. Partnership working with the Emergency Services and the health sector will be essential to ensure the continued delivery of our local road safety agenda.



7.3.3 Improving health and promoting healthier lifestyles – There are a number of examples of where the Council can help to encourage the use of more active forms of transport. This includes our safer routes to school programme; workplace, school and residential travel plans including the Council's own staff travel strategy; Bikeability; the Cycle Demonstration Town project; and the wider provision and promotion of cycling using the Public Rights of Way, Greenway and Green Infrastructure networks. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has helped to establish good working relationships with a number of important partners including the health sector to support the promotion of this agenda. As Primary Care Trusts are scheduled to be abolished, it is hoped that the LSP will remain the forum to maintain dialogue with the health sector to maintain a joint approach to encourage active travel.

7.3.4 Air Quality – As part of the requirements of the Environment Act (1995) the Council has a statutory duty to monitor local air quality. Where air pollution is considered to be a health risk, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared and there is a duty to prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to set out the means by which the Council intends to improve overall air quality within the designated area. Potential measures may include traffic management, the adoption of planning policies to control development, public transport improvements, travel plans and vehicle emissions testing. The Action Plans need to assess the cost effectiveness and feasibility of such measures along with the timescales for their implementation and quantification of the expected impacts.

7.3.5 There are currently two AQMA in West Cheshire where local traffic is the primary source of the poor air quality. The first, designated in 2005, is located on Whitby Road and Station Road in Ellesmere Port. The second is at the Boughton traffic gyratory in Chester. Work in Ellesmere Port has already succeeded in lowering pollution levels. Work in Chester is still at an early stage of development.

7.3.6 The Council will continue to monitor air quality in other locations. It will also be important to ensure that the Council's new planning framework avoids locating new development in areas with existing or potential air quality problems arising from local traffic.



7.3.7 Tackling crime and fear of crime – Concerns about crime and fear of crime were clearly highlighted during the LTP consultation exercise. The challenge ahead is address these concerns and there is considerable scope to make use of the Council's Community Safety Partnership and Community Safety Team to do so. Opportunities exist to make more use of our Community Safety Wardens who work closely with the Council's environmental protection and CCTV teams, as well as the Police, Fire Service and other partner organisations. They have a clear role to reduce crime and fear of crime, deterring anti-social behaviour and to care for the physical appearance of neighbourhoods.

7.3.8 Well designed transport schemes such transport interchanges, CCTV in bus shelters and well lit footways and cycleways can all play an important part in addressing fear of crime. Elements of this approach are included in recommendations set out in the new published Design for Streets Manual. Safer and more secure environments for new developments can also be secured through the planning process.

7.3.9 Responding to incidents which may have a significant impact on the transport network – The Government has asked local Councils to consider how transport networks cope with extreme events, such as freak weather (possibly climate change related) or man made incidents (which could include terrorist activity). Options under review include changes to construction and design standards to ensure that new transport infrastructure can become more resilient to extreme weather. This could have significant funding implications. In the longer term, the Council needs to ensure that such approaches are built into routine and long term planning activities. This will be an important part of our work to develop the new planning strategy for the Borough, particularly in respect to responding to climate change.

Policy objectives for improving safety, security and health

The Council will:

1. Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads;
2. Encourage healthier lifestyles by promoting more active forms of transport such as cycling and walking;
3. Work to reduce transport related air quality problems in the Borough;
4. Ensure that new transport schemes improve public safety and help reduce fear of crime; and
5. Plan for and respond to incidents that may have a significant impact on the transport network.

Policy proposals for improving safety, security and health

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Road safety

Education and awareness

Support and promote national road safety campaigns;

Make use of casualty data to develop and implement local education, training and road safety awareness programmes;

Develop programmes to promote safety on the journey to school and encourage and assist schools to meet the safety goals set out in their travel plans; and

Develop existing and new partnerships to ensure close collaborative working to achieve casualty reductions.

Review data to identify problem casualty locations and trends and review options to address identified problems;

Engineering measures

Develop and deliver Local Safety Schemes and associated engineering measures specifically targeted at reducing road casualty levels;

Develop and implement minor traffic and transportation improvements to achieve a reduction in road collisions on West Cheshire's roads; and

Manage and maintain the transport network in the most efficient way with due regard to the safety of all road users.

Review the introduction of route management strategies to co-ordinate safety schemes, maintenance, speed management and other improvement works on inter-urban routes; and

Undertake road safety audits to ensure that road safety issues are given full consideration in the design of highway schemes and new developments.

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Enforcement and speed management

Address speed management issues on the basis of 'localism' particularly for residential and rural roads, working closely with the Police, Fire and Rescue; and

Investigate the underlying causes of road casualties and develop and implement programmes to respond to identified problems, based on extensive consultation with all relevant road users.

Encouraging healthier transport

Promote and develop active travel projects.

The Council will work with partners, including the health sector, to ensure effective liaison and joint working to help encourage healthier lifestyles.

Air quality

Develop and implement Air Quality Action Plans in Chester and Ellesmere Port to eliminate existing air quality problems;

Manage and maintain roadside air quality monitors and periodically review their locations; and

Declare Air Quality Management Areas in locations where poor air quality exceeds levels set out in national standards.

Assess new developments to consider their potential impact on air quality;

Use the Local Development Framework and local policies to reduce the impact of air quality problems and promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport; and

Keep under review the need for AQMA near to European sites covered by the Habitats Regulation Assessment.

Tackling crime and fear of crime

Engage with the Community Safety Partnership and Team to tackle crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour associated with transport; and

Design new transport schemes to address public safety concerns, improve personal security and reduce fear of crime.

Ensure that new developments will be expected to conform to design standards that address personal safety and security issues.

Responding to incidents which may have a significant impact on the transport network

Undertake work to develop resilience planning for transport networks with relevant partners.



Section Eight

Promoting equality of opportunity

Meeting our goal to improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity.

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 It is important that people should not be disadvantaged due to poor access to the transport network, particularly if they don't have a car available. This section considers how the Council can respond to this challenge. It includes an outline of the Council's Accessibility Strategy, the role that passenger transport has to play, the importance of the planning process to reduce barriers to accessibility in the future and considers measures that remove physical barriers to mobility for older and disabled people.

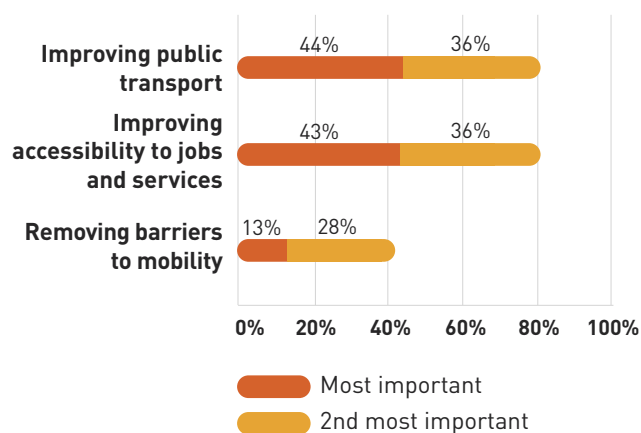
8.2 What you said – Feedback from consultation

8.2.1 Equality of opportunity was ranked as the least important goal for transport during the first round of consultation although this was given highest priority by respondents who were disabled and older consultees. The results found that highest

priority was given to improving access to employment and training opportunities, particularly from deprived areas and access from rural areas to key services and access to health care.

8.2.2 The second round of consultation found that the strongest support was given to measures to improve public transport, particularly local bus services. See below.

% of times each option was chosen as 'most important' and 'second most important' (VW)



8.2.3 Feedback from focus groups and written responses called for improvements to all aspects of passenger transport. This included requests for a more integrated approach to how local bus services are planned, lower fares, more direct bus links to local services especially hospitals, increased frequencies, better quality buses including more low floor, dial a ride and community transport services. The decline in the number of bus services serving rural areas was also a concern. Improving mobility, including the importance attached to shopmobility schemes, was also highlighted. Feedback from workshop sessions highlighted the problems of accessing centralised healthcare facilities and the mobility needs of an ageing population.

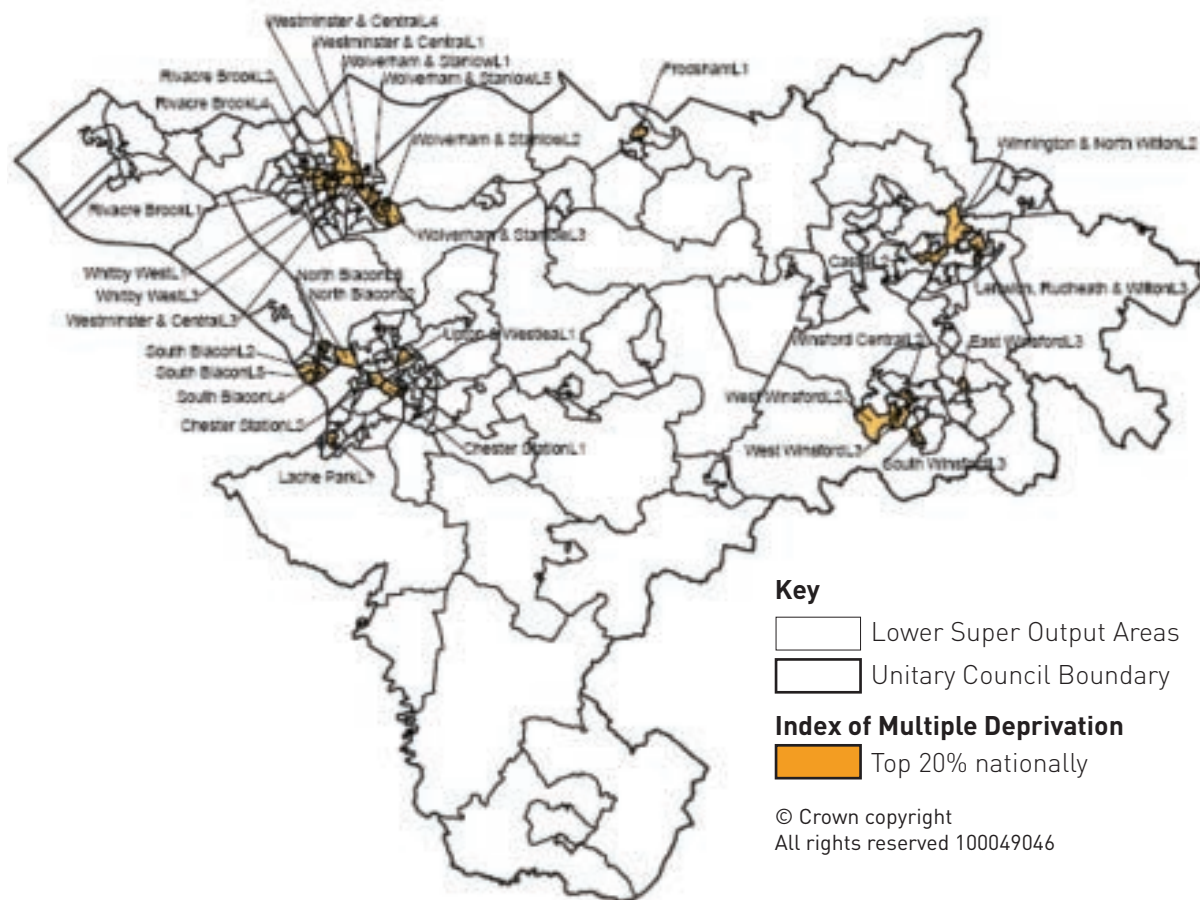
Setting out the background evidence

- While evidence suggests that West Cheshire is not a particularly deprived area overall, there are still persistent pockets of deprivation across the Borough. These tend to be concentrated in the urban areas of Ellesmere Port, Chester, Winsford and Northwich. See Figure 8.1 below.
- These areas suffer from a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, low levels of skills and qualifications, low incomes, poor housing and higher crime.
- Within Cheshire West and Chester, 27% of the population live in mainly rural areas and there are specific issues which need addressing in order to connect people in rural communities to employment opportunities as well as healthcare and education.
- Access to health care is recognised as a long standing issue within the Borough. The modernisation and restructuring of the health service and delivery of local services have added to travel problems in recent years and it is likely that such trends will continue in the future. Problems include inflexible opening times, living in a rural area, infrequent public transport, lack of parking, lack of dropped kerbs and difficulties in booking an appointment with your own doctor.

Transport facts and figures

- Buses carry an estimated 15.8 million passengers each year in West Cheshire.
- The pattern of service varies considerably across the Authority's area. Within the larger urban areas there is a fairly comprehensive network of routes and Chester and Ellesmere Port are particularly well served. There are poorer levels of service in less densely populated areas and many of the Borough's smaller towns and villages are too small to support the provision of high frequency services.
- Wherever appropriate, the Council supports socially necessary bus services. Currently, some 50 local bus services are provided on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester.
- The Council is responsible for maintaining approximately 4,600 bus stops and shelters, and approximately 2,600 bus stop timetable displays.
- There are high levels of satisfaction about bus timetable information among users. However, while many respondents are aware about the provision of passenger transport information on the internet, this is less well used by bus users themselves particularly those living in deprived areas.
- The Council also supports the operation of community transport including Dial a Ride services.
- The Council lets contracts for approximately 190 mainstream school bus services and just over 200 special needs school bus services. It manages a fleet of eight yellow school buses.
- There are currently some 1000 private hire vehicles and 350 Hackney carriages licensed to operate in the Borough.

Figure 8.1 Areas of Deprivation in West Cheshire



8.3 Issues and challenges

8.3.1 Improving accessibility to jobs and services

- Accessibility is the ease by which people can reach essential services, such as employment, healthcare, education and other destinations that are important to local residents. The Council has undertaken a strategic assessment of local accessibility needs. This included detailed consultation and discussions with partners. Results found that the highest priority is to concentrate activities on measures that improve access to employment and training opportunities. Additional issues included the need to improve access to health services and the specific needs of rural areas. Work is now being developed at a local level. This includes making sure that accessibility principles are enshrined and embedded in the work of our partners and that mobility issues are recognised in appropriate plans and strategies such as the Children and Young Peoples Plan and in the Council's Total Place initiative which is seeking to reduce deprivation in Ellesmere Port.



8.3.2 A further challenge will be to make sure that accessibility issues help to inform the development of the Council's new strategic planning framework and influences Development Control decisions. It will be critical that new development is built in the most appropriate locations which help to reduce levels of car dependency and encourage the use of more sustainable types of transport.

8.3.3 Ongoing assessments and “Accession” mapping will remain important activities to provide the necessary evidence base to help overall decision making. A further challenge will be to consider how we can continue this approach in a way that meets local needs and those of our partners in a cost effective manner and within available resources.

8.3.4 It is important to recognise that accessibility is not just about transport, it is also about how key services are planned and delivered. During our consultation exercises local people have highlighted that accessibility is about getting services to people, and that the Council needs to consider how local services can be retained or returned, particularly to rural areas, to reduce the need to travel in the first place. Consideration should also be given to the use of internet technology. This provides many people with access to everyday services, such as banking, and shopping, including food home delivery services. The use of online shopping and services is expected to grow considerably during the lifetime of this plan. Improving Broadband networks and speeds in rural areas will be of importance in this context.

8.3.5 **Improving local bus services** – Buses play an important role in helping people without ready access to a car to reach jobs, schools and everyday services. They also can help to support more sustainable travel and help meet some of our objectives relating to the climate change agenda and tackling traffic congestion.

8.3.6 The Council is responsible for providing socially necessary local bus services. These include most evening, Sunday, Bank Holiday and rural services but there is considerable pressure on the level of funding available to maintain these routes. As a result, important decisions will need to be made so that the best use can be made of our current network. It is also recognised that bus services will need to reflect and respond to changing travel patterns and the level of resources available to support them in the future.

8.3.7 A further challenge will be to continue to work with commercial bus operators to make bus travel more attractive. A partnership approach has been adopted to help work towards common objectives. This includes opportunities to improve the quality of passenger waiting facilities, service frequency and punctuality, providing user-friendly travel and timetable information, marketing and promoting service improvements, bus priority measures, independent travel training and seeking developer contributions to fund new infrastructure

and bus services as part of new development proposals. It will also be important to continue to develop the use smart card technology.

8.3.8 Passenger feedback is an important consideration to help improve bus services. In response to requests from bus users and local Councillors, the Council is considering setting up a new network of Public Transport Liaison Committees to provide a forum for considering and commenting on local public transport issues.

8.3.9 **Concessionary Travel** – The introduction of statutory, free, off-peak concessionary travel for older people and those with certain disabilities has proved popular and has contributed to a significant increase in bus travel in the Borough. The administration of the scheme is undertaken in partnership with Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington Borough Councils. In the longer term, it is proposed to review whether it is feasible to extend concessionary travel arrangements for young people up to the age of 18.

8.3.10 **School bus services** – The number of children being driven to and from school has risen dramatically over the last twenty years. Currently, nearly 40% of local school children are driven to school. This trend is likely to increase and is influenced by a number of factors not least, changing lifestyles, the rise of households possessing more than one car, parental choice in choosing schools outside traditional catchment areas, and safety and fear of crime issues leading to fewer children being allowed to walk or cycle unaccompanied by an adult. There are serious concerns about the long term impact of such trends. However, rising contract costs means that the Council will continue to face mounting costs to provide school bus services.

8.3.11 **Community transport, demand responsive and pre-booked transport services** – Community transport and demand responsive transport services are more appropriate than conventional bus services in areas of low demand for public transport services,





or for meeting the travel needs of specific groups. This is particularly so in rural areas. The Council works to broker agreements with the bus operators and other transport providers and passengers. In the longer term, it may be appropriate for the Council to produce an updated Community Transport Strategy to provide a clearly branded and defined service which maximises coverage to serve the areas and people that need it the most. This approach could be extended to include services provided by other organisations such as the ambulance service and the voluntary sector to improve the provision of pre-booked transport in the Borough.

8.3.12 Taxis and private hire vehicles – Taxis have an important role to play as part of the Council's approach to delivering an integrated transport network in the Borough. They can provide a truly demand responsive service, enabling direct access to healthcare, schools and colleges, employment, and leisure attractions at a time when they are required where conventional bus services would not be commercially viable. In the future, it will be important to consider and take advantage of such services to recognise the supplementary role that taxis provide to traditional public transport. This is of particular importance when considering future approaches to the provision of community and demand responsive transport.

8.3.13 Removing Physical Barriers to Mobility – Opportunities to remove physical barriers to mobility will be an important challenge for the future,

particularly to meet the needs of the mobility impaired, disabled and the increasing number of older people in the Borough. Nearly 5% of the Borough's population currently claim disability living allowance. It is forecast that between 2006 and 2026 there will be a steady increase in the Borough's population with an increasing proportion of older (and more dependent) people. The number of people aged 65 to 84 will increase by just over 40%, and the number of people aged 85 and over will nearly double. Getting on and off buses and trains can be difficult for people with mobility problems. It will, therefore, be important to consider how to make bus and rail travel more accessible. Options include investing in more low-floor buses, providing raised kerbs at bus stops, making sure that all bus and railway station are fully accessible and making use of specialist dial a ride services.

8.3.14 It will also be essential for the Council to comply with the requirements of the newly introduced Equality Act (2010). Promoting equality of opportunity for all people, not just those with disabilities, will be fundamental to ensuring the success of the Single Equality Scheme and is also an essential element of the Community Cohesion Strategy. The Council's Disability Equality Action Plan aims to promote equal opportunities and this was developed as a result of extensive consultation with disabled people. It includes a goal to improve the provision of accessible public transport that can be easily used by disabled passengers.

Policy objectives for supporting equality of opportunity

The Council will:

1. Work to increase accessibility to employment and training opportunities, to key services from rural areas; and to health services;
2. Ensure that new developments and local services are built in accessible locations;
3. Improve and encourage the use of local bus services; and
4. Improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility especially for disabled and older people.

Policy actions for supporting equality of opportunity

Short term actions

Work with partners to improve access to employment and training opportunities; to key services from rural areas; and to healthcare; and

Use the development control process to ensure that all new development is built in accessible locations which can be easily reached by cycle, foot and local bus services.

Longer term actions

Continue to review local accessibility needs working in close partnership with Area Programme Boards and Local Community Forums; and

Work with the members of the Local Strategic Partnership and other appropriate groups to seek opportunities to retain / re-introduce key services within local communities particularly in rural areas.

Improving local bus services

Work with bus operators to improve local bus services in West Cheshire and on cross-boundary routes;

Support the provision of socially necessary local bus services within available resources;

Provide and maintain high quality bus interchanges, shelters and passenger waiting facilities;

Explore the potential to develop 'quality routes' on key public transport corridors and routes in urban areas;

Develop and extend smartcard and other appropriate technology and examine the feasibility of working with neighbouring Integrated Transport Authorities to examine whether smartcard ticketing schemes can include Cheshire West and Chester;

Undertake a bus network review to ensure the effective and efficient provision of supported local bus services;

Investigate opportunities for the shared co-ordination of public transport, community transport and school transport services to deliver a more efficient service that maximises the use of shared resources;

Review and update the Cheshire Bus Information Strategy;

Secure the provision of new bus stations, interchanges and bus priority measures as a result of major new development projects;

Explore the potential for funding real time bus information at bus stops, stations and other locations;

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Improving local bus services continued...

Work with bus operators and other partners to produce high quality public transport timetable and travel information;

Assess and develop independent travel training projects in the Borough; and

Support the delivery of community, demand responsive and specialist transport services.

Work towards the creation of a fully integrated public transport network; and

Consider re-introducing Bus Passenger User Liaison Groups.

Concessionary fares

Review and renegotiate concessionary fares arrangements with Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington Borough Councils.

Assess whether a concessionary fares scheme can be introduced for young people.

Taxi services

Seek to make the best use of local taxi services to meet specific door to door travel requirements.

Consider the development of a taxi strategy for the Borough.

Removing Physical Barriers to Mobility

Ensure that our transport networks, services and new schemes comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.





Section Nine

Improving quality of life

Meeting our goal to ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment in West Cheshire.

9.1 Introduction

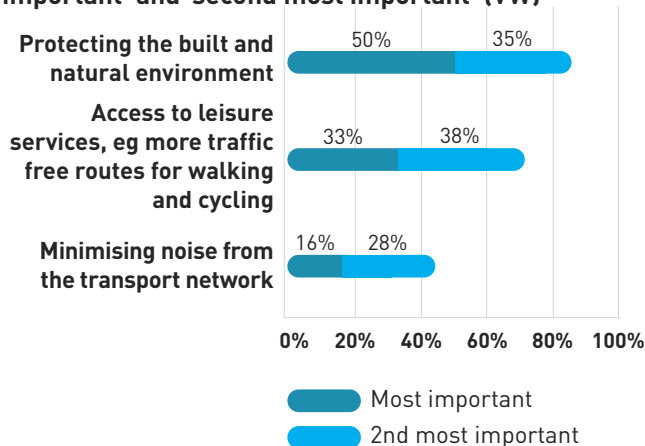
9.1.1 This section considers how transport can help to improve our quality of life including protecting the built and natural environment and enhancing biodiversity. It also sets out how we can improve access to leisure activities and the countryside, including our Public Rights of Way network, and how we plan to respond to problems associated with traffic noise

9.2 What you said – Feedback from consultation

9.2.1 Transport related quality of life issues were ranked joint third in terms of overall importance during the first round of consultation. High importance was attached to measures to protect and enhance the environment, for example, ensuring that new development in Chester is sympathetic to the City's historic buildings. There was also support for setting high standards for the design and quality of new transport schemes which will enhance the built and natural environment and for improving access to leisure attractions by developing and improving pedestrian and cycle routes including the Public Rights of Way network.

9.2.2 Protecting the built and natural environment was given overall highest priority during the second round of consultation. See table below.

% of times each option was chosen as 'most important' and 'second most important' (VW)



9.2.3 Comments received in written responses and at workshops highlighted the negative impact that increased traffic arising from new developments can have on local communities. Measures to improve footpaths and other routes to help improve links to leisure attractions and increasing the use of the Public Rights of Way network were also supported. Calls were made for more to be done to raise awareness and promote attractions which can be readily reached by walking and cycling.

Setting out the background evidence

- The “Communities of Cheshire Place Survey” suggests that 83% of residents are satisfied with their local area. This figure increases to 87% for those aged 65 and over. The highest level of satisfaction is found in the Rural West area (91%), the lowest level is found in Ellesmere Port (70%).
- The quality of our local built and natural environment has an important link to our wider quality of life.
- Improving access to leisure can potentially have a number of significant benefits. These include:-
 - The economy - Countryside access can boost the local tourism and visitor sector;
 - Social benefits – Improving access to the countryside can help to reduce social exclusion;
 - Health benefits – By offering a free and accessible means of exercise; and
 - Environmental benefits - Providing a sustainable means of local travel which can contribute to reduced air pollution, noise and traffic congestion.
- Excessive noise levels can disrupt communication, disturb sleep and generally affect our quality of life. Exposure to road noise has been shown to be associated with increased levels of stress and some studies have linked this with the possibility of long-term effects on blood pressure and on cardiovascular disease.

Transport facts and figures

- Transport can have a considerable impact on the built and natural environment. For example:
 - The construction of new roads can have a serious impact on wildlife habitats, affect historic settings and directly damage archaeological sites, monuments and buildings;
 - Increasing levels of traffic can impact on historic areas and can damage buildings and structures themselves through air pollution and vibration;
 - Traffic disturbs wildlife as a result of noise, light and air pollution;
 - Damage may occur accidentally as a result of maintenance work; and
 - Rainwater run off from roads can disrupt and pollute watercourses and groundwater. It can also lead to localised flooding.
- The highway network includes a number of historic and environmental features designated as Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments as well as:
 - Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
 - Two Local Wildlife Sites;
 - Two bridges are Ancient Monuments and 18 are Listed Buildings;
 - A total of 59 other structures in the highway that are Listed Buildings (eg, milestones, footpath guideposts, crosses, boundary stones, pinfolds, wells and stocks);
 - Eight other structures are Ancient Monuments (eg, crosses and Chester City Walls); and
 - Land adjacent to the highway network also includes approximately 30,000 trees, which add considerably to the visual amenity of the Borough.
- There is an extensive network of public rights of way and cycle routes. This includes a 1261 km Public Rights of Way network including 1088 km of public footpath and 88 km of bridleway. The National Cycle Network in the Borough is some 131km in length while Regional Routes cover a further 217 km. Additional circular and traffic free routes extend the cycle network by a further 155 km.

9.3 Issues and challenges

9.3.1 Protecting the built and natural environment

The quality of our environment has a major impact on our quality of life. Transport planning and the delivery of new schemes provides a real opportunity to enhance the environment and improve our surroundings. In particular, it is important that transport projects comply with local design standards which guide and encourage the provision of high quality urban and rural design that is sensitive to the local surroundings and heritage.

9.3.2 The Council is keen to progress this approach and has already implemented a number of public realm schemes in recent years as part of the Chester City Centre Urban Design Strategy. These have significantly enhanced the quality of the city centre environment. The challenge for the future will be to apply this approach across the Borough, particularly to support regeneration projects, the localism agenda and to maintain local distinctiveness.

9.3.3 The Council is also mindful of the visual impact of the road network and associated street furniture, and will seek to provide only signing and other street furniture that is necessary for the benefit and safety of the travelling public. Reducing unnecessary signage and street furniture will also reduce maintenance costs.

9.3.4 **Landscape and biodiversity** - Transport schemes can have a major impact on the landscape and biodiversity. This can be a result of the loss of landscape features, such as trees, ponds and hedgerows, or more general damage to the landscape's overall appearance and character. New developments, including transport schemes, need to be sensitive to the local environment and contribute to the sense of place, identity and diversity of the area in question. This can be achieved by the careful design and alignment of transport schemes to help minimise impacts on sensitive landscapes and habitats. This can then be complemented by careful landscaping and the planting of tree belts and hedgerows or creating ponds or other landscaping features.



9.3.5 Access to leisure activities – The “green infrastructure” network is characterised by transport routes that are separate from the highway and are largely for the use of pedestrians and cyclists. The network includes the national and regional cycle networks and waterway towpaths including the Shropshire Union Canal and the Weaver Navigation. In places, these are complemented by on-road routes that are promoted as traffic-free or lightly trafficked.

9.3.6 There are a number of opportunities to extend this network over the lifetime of the new LTP. This includes further links to the Millennium Greenway in Chester; developing improved links from deprived areas (particularly in Ellesmere Port) to local town centres, schools and health centres and linking this to active lifestyle promotions; links to Northwich Woodlands including Marbury Country Park; improved access to new college facilities in Winsford and Ellesmere Port; the use of the former Helsby - Mouldsworth railway line as a greenway; the Burton to Deeside route, providing Neston with access to employment opportunities; and consideration of “Green Lane” initiatives.

9.3.7 Public Rights of Way - Public Rights of Way (PROW) form an important part of the transport network in the Borough, both for leisure and wider benefits. The Council is required to prepare a Rights of Way Improvements Plan (ROWIP) setting out where enhancements can be made to develop and encourage the greater use of these paths. This document and its recommendations can be found on the LTP website.

9.3.8 Noise - Noise can have a major impact on quality of life and can affect health. The transport network, in particular the road network, is a major source of noise and consequently those residential areas close to major roads and junctions tend to be those that are worst affected by environmental noise. The Council is working with the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs to develop Action Plans to deal with problems associated with traffic noise. A total of 40 locations have been identified for further consideration in West Cheshire. These are relatively short stretches of the highway network and certain “hot spots” rather than more extensive concentrations found in larger urban and metropolitan areas. It is planned that the Council, as the Highway Authority, will work with DEFRA to support the development of the Action Plans for the identified roads and locations.

9.3.9 In order to meet future demands for new housing and regeneration projects, the Council will need to assess planning applications for residential development close to existing transport routes to control the exposure of new residents to transport noise. Developers may have to provide measures to reduce noise levels in such locations.

Policy objectives for improving quality of life

The Council will:

1. Ensure that new transport schemes complement local character and enhance the built and natural environment and biodiversity;
2. Promote access to leisure activities by improving pedestrian, cycle, greenway and Public Rights of Way Networks; and
3. Work to reduce noise levels caused by transport.

Policy actions for improving quality of life

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Protecting the built and natural environment

Develop transport schemes that are designed to enhance and improve the built and natural environment and ensure that such schemes do not have a negative impact on their surroundings;

Ensure that maintenance work, including activities undertaken by private contractors and utilities suppliers, is carried out in such a way that quality of the public realm is not harmed; and

Ensure that schemes conform to local design standards and statements.

Review and, where appropriate, remove unnecessary road signs and street furniture.

Landscape and biodiversity

Ensure that the design of new transport schemes takes full account of the local landscape and biodiversity and follows all relevant legislation and guidance in relation to protected species;

Manage the transport network in practical ways which promote the maintenance of habitats and species and implement engineering measures which protect wildlife from road traffic; and

Manage the highways tree stock and associated risks.

Develop a biodiversity action plan for the management of the “soft estate” along our transport networks with an overall aim to improve biodiversity;

Subject all future major transport projects to an environmental appraisal to assess the potential impact that schemes may have on the landscape and biodiversity, and balance these impacts against the benefits of the scheme. The use of Construction and Environmental Plans will be used where appropriate. Consideration will also be given to adopting the Civil Engineering Environmental Quality Assessment and Awards Scheme for future major projects; and

Longer term schemes will be monitored to ensure that they are compliant with the Habitats Directive.

Short term actions

Longer term actions

Access to leisure activities

Promote healthier lifestyles by encouraging more walking and cycling;

Improve access to and awareness of green infrastructure;

Manage and maintain cycleways and Public Rights of Way to an acceptable standard; and

Prepare an updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Review the further expansion of the green transport infrastructure network; and

Work to further integrate green transport infrastructure networks with on-highway walking and cycling provision.

Noise

Assess the impact and implications of local transport proposals and associated developments which could result in increased noise levels, including the development of new roads.

Work with DEFRA and other partners to draw up and implement noise action plans, prior to a second round of noise mapping being undertaken in 2012.





Section Ten

Reviewing the Council's Transport Strategy

10.1.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council's new Integrated Transport Strategy has been prepared to review and set out our planned priorities for the fifteen year period between 2011 and 2026. This is the same period of time covered by our Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework.

10.1.2 In the past local authorities were required to update their Local Transport Plan every five years. Now, as a result of the Transport Act (2008), authorities can replace their plans as they see fit. Nevertheless, the Transport Act (2000) still requires local transport authorities to keep their Local Transport Plan under review.

10.1.3 A trigger for such a review could include changes to the direction of the Government's national transport strategy, further changes to the provision or level of national transport funding or the emergence of new political or corporate priorities in the local authority itself.

10.1.4 In the absence of any events triggering a review, it is proposed that the objectives and policies contained in this document should remain current for the lifetime of the accompanying LTP Implementation Plan. This means that the scope and remit of this plan will be reviewed and consulted on again in conjunction with future work to prepare the Council's second LTP Implementation Plan.



Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille, Large Print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

Tel: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 18001 01606 867 670

email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk