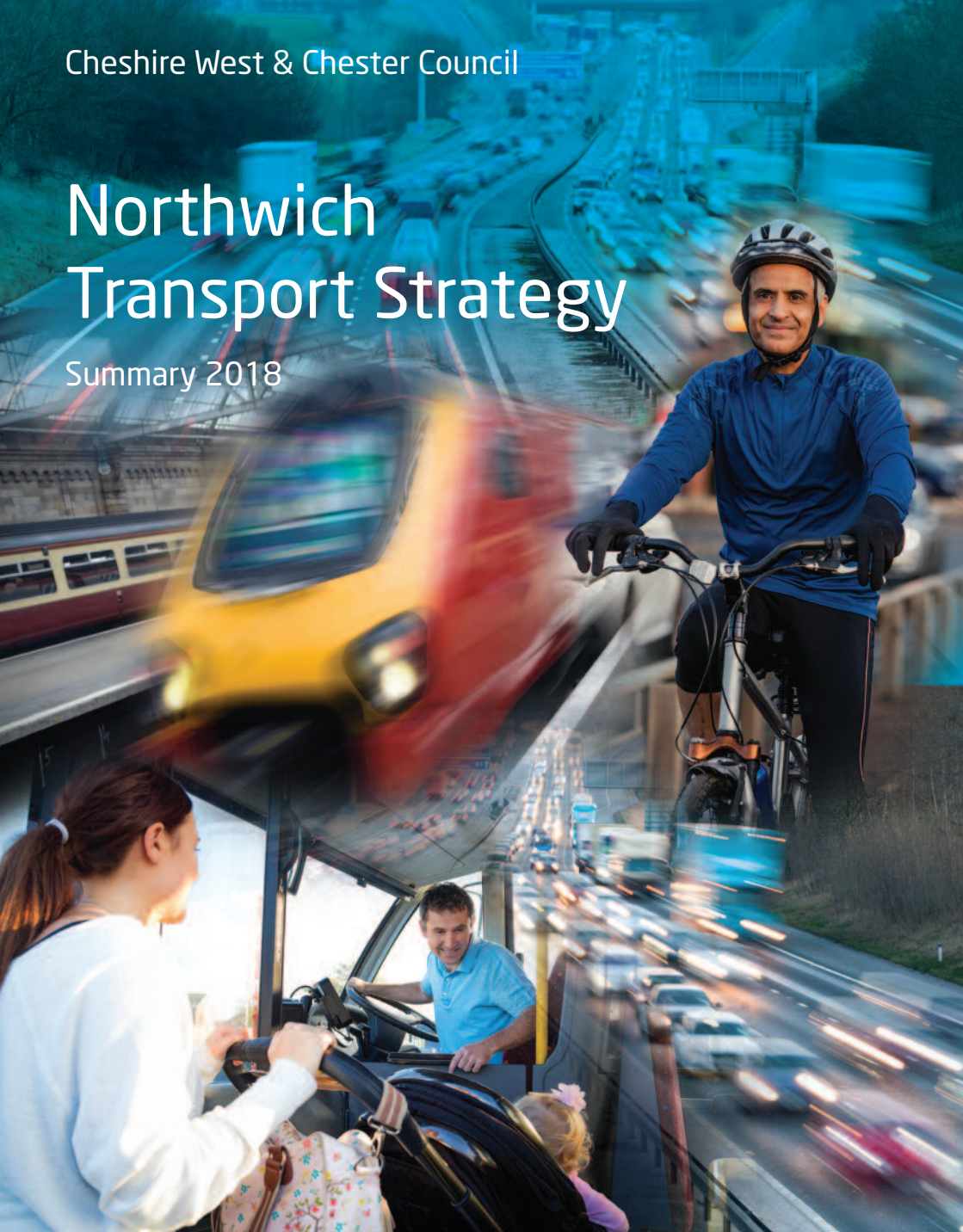


Cheshire West & Chester Council

# Northwich Transport Strategy

Summary 2018



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# Foreword

Northwich Transport Strategy was approved by the Council's Cabinet in May 2018. It aims to assist with the delivery of a number of the Council's wider goals and ambitions to make a real difference to Northwich now and in the years to come.

This summary sets out the main priorities and actions to deliver a series of transport improvements in Northwich over the next 15 years. These will be essential to support a number of our wider objectives including:

- Capitalising on the £130m of public and private sector investment to transform the town including the £80m Baron's Quay development;
- Supporting future housing growth. The Local Plan allocates 4,300 new dwellings and 30 hectares of development land in the town up to 2030;
- Supporting the objectives contained in four Neighbourhood Plans;
- Responding to the e-Petition for a new Barnton / Winnington Swing bridge, signed by more than 1,200 people, and preparing a suitable and realistic scheme to improve the problems here;
- Addressing traffic congestion problems on the local road network including the town centre, the Hartford corridor and access to Gadbrook Park;
- Taking steps to encourage more people to walk or cycle especially for shorter journeys;
- Working to improve local bus and rail networks and encouraging more people to use these services; and
- Taking full advantage of the longer term opportunities and benefits arising from the HS2 rail project.

Our overall goal is to work towards providing and managing a well maintained, safe, integrated and sustainable transport network for the town.

This is essential to support the Council's wider social, economic and environmental goals and priorities. It will also help to underpin our approach to localism and aspirations to help the Borough thrive as we work to boost our economy, address inequalities, tackle health and wellbeing, enhance our local environment and improve safety and security. This Strategy provides the basis to turn our vision into a reality.

## Councillor Brian Clarke

Cabinet Member Economic Growth and Infrastructure





# Identifying local issues and concerns

Extensive baseline information and background data was used to assess local travel patterns and trends in and around the Northwich area.

Views from local people, businesses, Town and Parish Councils and other partners were also gathered during a series of engagement and consultation events. These have proved to be extremely useful in helping us prepare this new strategy.



Key issues raised that people want addressing by the strategy included:

### In the town centre

- Addressing traffic congestion;
- Improving evening bus services and providing better bus links between the town and the railway station;
- Improvements to local rail services particularly to Manchester;
- Improving town centre car parks and providing more spaces at the railway station; and
- Better cycling and walking routes and signage.

### In the wider urban area

- Dealing with local traffic congestion pinch points including the Winnington / Barnton Swing Bridge, Winnington Hill, the Hartford corridor, the A556/A530 junction and access to Gadbrook Park;
- Concerns about air quality although there are no formal Air Quality Management Areas declared in the Northwich area;
- Calls for better access to jobs and key services, particularly for people who don't own a car;
- The need for more car parking at Hartford Railway Station; and
- More dedicated walking and cycling routes from residential areas to the town centre.

### For longer distance journeys

- The need for better longer distance bus services to Winsford and Leighton Hospital;
- Traffic congestion along the A556 approaching the M6 junction 19;
- Looking at opportunities for better integration between the Mid Cheshire railway line and the West Coast Mainline;
- The need for a longer term approach to improve strategic road links to enable the town to benefit from the Mersey Gateway Bridge and to the planned HS2 station in Crewe;
- Considering the impact of HS2 on the local highway network when this is being constructed; and
- More longer distance cycle routes.





# Our proposed actions and measures

A total of 46 potential improvements and measures were identified in the final transport strategy. These were grouped into a series of packages which fall under five overarching themes.

- 1 The town centre
- 2 Improving local road capacity
- 3 Safe and sustainable
- 4 Improving longer distance connectivity
- 5 Longer term major schemes



## The town centre

We aim to significantly improve the movement of traffic in and around the town centre including junction improvements, improving links to the railway station and developing a parking strategy for Northwich.

### Recommendations include:

- Introducing junction improvements at Winnington Hill / Castle Street / Town Bridge junction to increase capacity and reduce traffic congestion including better access for cyclists and pedestrians;
- Continuing to deliver a series of town centre junction improvements – including improvements at the Town Bridge / Dale Street / Watling Street junction and the Chester Way / Venables Way junction. Proposals also include making better use of traffic signals in the town centre using an Urban Traffic Control system;
- Working with rail operators to improve the facilities at Northwich Station, seeking to improve and extend car parking and introduce better interchange between rail services and the local bus network including links to the town centre and improved access for disabled passengers; and
- Working to improve car parking in the town centre based on the recommendations set out in the Council's Parking Strategy Action Plan for Northwich published in July 2018.

## Improving local road capacity

It is our goal to tackle traffic congestion and queueing at pinch points on the local highway network and help reduce the impact of traffic arising from future housing growth and development.

### Recommendations include:

- Developing a scheme to provide more capacity and reduce the traffic congestion at the Winnington/ Barnton swing bridge;
- Preparing a package of measures to remove congestion pinch-points along the A559 Hartford corridor. This will also help reduce concerns about potential poor air quality in this area;
- Providing new junction improvements to access Gadbrook Park, improve the A556 / A530 junction, work to reduce congestion along the A556 corridor and improve links to the M6 at junction 19; and
- Examine opportunities to develop a longer term package of junction capacity and safety improvements in the Northwich area.



## Safe and sustainable

It is essential to improve safety for all types of transport. We will also continue to encourage people to use more sustainable types of transport including passenger transport and highlight the many benefits of walking and cycling particularly for shorter journeys.

### Recommendations include:

- Preparing a phased programme of road safety improvements including local junction improvements, speed reduction and traffic calming, the use of 20 mph zones and speed limit reviews;
- Working to improve bus connectivity, maintain evening services, seeking the introduction of new services (particularly to neighbouring towns and Leighton Hospital), seeking to introduce bus priority measures and working to introduce integrated smart ticketing for bus and rail services. Proposals also relate to improving access for the mobility impaired, community transport and dial a ride services;

- Encouraging the use of school and workplace travel plans and undertaking travel behaviour and awareness campaigns to help encourage the use of sustainable and active transport whenever appropriate; and
- Developing a long-term network of safe and connected cycle and pedestrian routes linking residential area to the town centre, schools and employment sites. This will build on the existing proposals contained in the Northwich Cycling Strategy and the preparation of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the Borough as a whole.





## Improving longer distance connectivity

The strategy sets out longer term aspirations to improve rail services and provide better access and connectivity to neighbouring areas.

### Recommendations include:

- Working with rail operators to improve services and frequency of trains using the mid-Cheshire line to provide faster and more regular links to and from Manchester and Chester. Proposals also call for the need for better car parking at local stations;
- Making the case for the re-opening of the Middlewich branch line to passenger traffic to provide a direct link to Crewe. Also considering opportunities for new stations in Middlewich and at Gadbrook Park.

This is of particular importance in ensuring that Northwich can take full advantage of the planned HS2 station in Crewe in the years to come; and

- Supporting longer term proposals to provide a direct link from the mid-Cheshire line to Manchester Airport and its HS2 railway station.

## Longer term major schemes

Working up plans and proposals to evaluate and assess potential longer term opportunities for new roads.

### Recommendations include:

- Undertaking a study to examine the case to provide a new road link between the A49 and the A533 following the alignment of the disused railway to the south east of Weaverham.



## Taking work forward

We plan to take forward our proposals as part of a phased programme of activity over the lifetime of the Council's current Local Plan up to 2030. An indicative timetable that outlines the planned scheduling of the various proposals is included in the full Northwich Transport Strategy Recommendations Report.

**In the short term, our priorities for the first three years of the strategy include:**

- Commissioning work to develop a solution and review the business case in response to the traffic problems associated with the Winnington / Barnton Swing Bridge. Work will start in 2019;
- Using a successful bid to secure some £3m from the National Productivity Investment Fund to improve the A556 junction to Gadbrook Park. This will help reduce congestion and improve access to this site. The scheme is due to be completed by March 2020. This has coincided with the introduction of parking restrictions within Gadbrook Park and in Rudheath to reduce problems associated with on-street car parking;
- Introducing Urban Traffic Control (UTC) to improve the sequencing and best use of traffic signals in the town centre and the Leicester Street gyratory to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion.
- Supporting the continued regeneration of Northwich town centre. This includes the continued delivery of the Weaver Square Master Plan, the redevelopment of the former Watling Street offices and ensuring that transport measures continue to support access to the Barons Quay development and the wider town centre;
- Continuing the phased introduction of 20mph zones to improve local road safety and provide a safer environment to encourage more people to walk or cycle;
- Making use of funding secured from housing developers to provide a new bus service that will link Winnington Urban Village, Northwich railway station, the town centre and Gadbrook Park. The Council will also continue to support the weekend evening bus service between Northwich and Winsford;
- Using additional developer funding to build a new cycle route between Winnington Urban Village and Northwich;

- Working with rail operators to improve services on the mid-Cheshire line. This will include seeking to improve the level of service between Greenbank and Manchester along with improved Sunday services. We are also anticipating the introduction of more modern trains and rolling stock in the years to come.
- Commissioning a rail study to assess the business case for returning the Northwich to Sandbach railway line to passenger traffic. It is planned that work will begin during autumn 2018 and that initial recommendations will be published during 2019;
- Working with our partners and the wider community to maximise the potential benefits of the HS2 project while seeking to mitigate the direct impact of the scheme on our local communities;
- Introducing measures to improve the management of local car parks. There will also be a series of schemes to improve the quality of the Council's car parking provision in the town. This will also be accompanied by the introduction of modest car parking fees and better control over the length of stay bringing Northwich in line with the Council's broader management of its car parks across the Borough. Changes are scheduled to begin in autumn 2018; and
- Developing a detailed action plan and timetable for the longer term delivery of the strategy's full recommendations.





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