

2016

Buckingham Transport Strategy - Summary

This document has been produced as a summary outlining the main points of the Buckingham Transport Strategy.



Introduction

This document is a summary of the Buckingham Transport Strategy (BTS) created in order to get your views before its use in informing the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). The BTS is expected to provide a high level, guiding transport strategy for Buckingham, to prioritise potential transport schemes for the area, and to promote a coordinated approach towards transport investment.

The following document describes the:

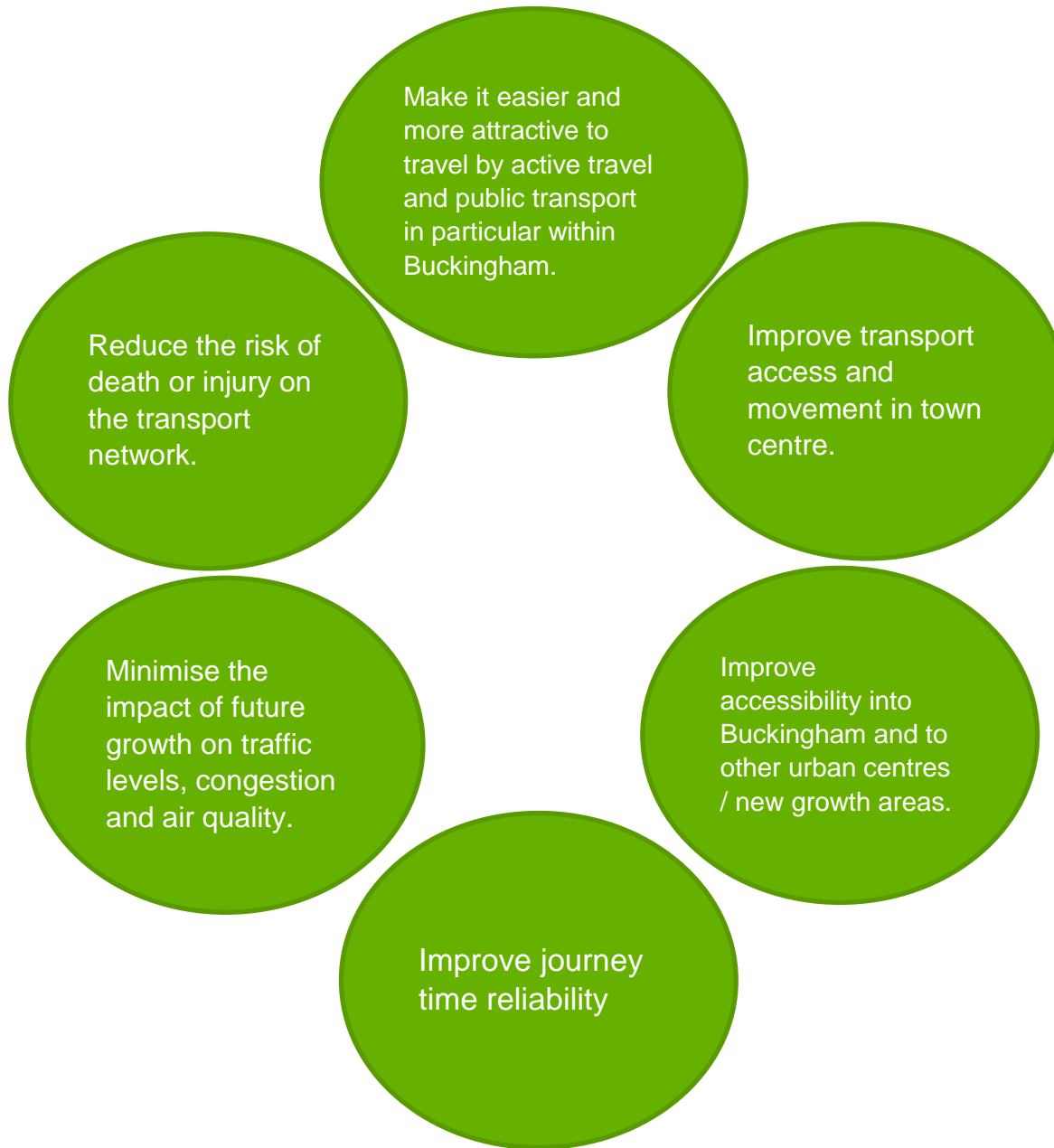
- **context** of the strategy,
- **approach** taken to develop it,
- guiding **strategy objectives**
- existing and future **transport issues**
- proposed **transport improvements** to address the **transport issues**
- summary of current results from the **transport modelling** testing the highway improvements
- **plan for implementing** the strategy.

Context

Since June 2016 Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC), in conjunction with stakeholders such as AVDC, has been developing a transport strategy for Buckingham that supports future planned growth in the town up to 2033. The focus of this strategy is the town of Buckingham, but also recognises that the town will be affected in coming years by proposed growth in other nearby centres, such as Winslow and Silverstone.

The growth aspirations in the VALP are likely to impact on transport requirements in Buckingham, and may require a number of improvements in/around the town. The aim of the BTS is to consider the intended growth together and propose measures that address their impacts as a whole. In addition to accommodating these future growth aspirations, the BTS should also address existing known transport issues in the town.





Approach

The steps taken to develop the strategy since June 2016 up to this point include:

- A review of the policy context and existing and future conditions in Buckingham;
- The development of strategy objectives;
- A summary of the transport issues and opportunities;
- The development of a set of transport improvements and assessment of their fit with the objectives;
- The development of an implementation plan;
- Holding a workshop with stakeholders to seek their input;
- The development of the draft strategy; and
- Public consultation.

The Strategy Objectives

These objectives have been compiled based upon relevant national, regional and local level policy, with reference to existing relevant work, including the *Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan* and recent transport improvements considered for Buckingham. Further details on these objectives can be found within the BTS.

The Transport Issues

The following is a discussion of the transport issues and opportunities in the form of a Strengths / Weaknesses / Opportunities / Threats (SWOT) analysis. This is categorised into highways, public transport and walking/cycling in the following three tables.

Highways Issues and Opportunities	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buckingham is located on the A421 east/west corridor of regional significance. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congestion in the town centre and through-traffic Insufficient/under-utilised parking in Town Centre Perception of speeding HGV Volumes through town centre are perceived to be too high. Hazardous Junctions
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discouraging through-traffic has the potential to significantly reduce congestion in the town centre. Modal shift away from car usage may be encouraged by the opening of the East-West rail station at Winslow and improved walking/cycling infrastructure Live parking availability data (potentially linked to satellite-navigation devices). 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased traffic on the A421 exacerbates severance between town centre and developments to the south. Traffic modelling suggests that the congestion within the town centre and at A421 junctions will increase in the future. In addition to existing safety concerns, high-speed roads around Buckingham are likely to become the main access points for new developments (employment and dwelling sites) around the town, therefore compounding any speeding hazard in the future. Any improvements would most likely need to rely on limited funding from S106 contributions. Potential loss of government funding for schemes.
Public Transport Issues and Opportunities	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively good spatial coverage of bus services to/from many outlying villages as well as major destinations such as Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Winslow. Existing bus services provide direct connectivity to rail stations in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury. Good coverage within the town itself that links many of the key trip generators/attractors. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus frequency Lack of rail station Bus stand capacity Lack of bus connectivity between town centre and employment areas/leisure destinations
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East-West Rail Station in Winslow Potential new X444 bus route between High Wycombe and Northampton. Promotion of Bicester North railway station as a means of accessing London. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New developments in Buckingham are built in areas with poor public transport coverage and consequently may become highly car dependent. Bus stand capacity may not be able to cope with additional bus services needed for new developments. Town centre needs to remain accessible for buses or services may be altered/discontinued. Potential further delays to the delivery of East-West Rail.

Walking/Cycling Issues and Opportunities

Strengths

- Buckingham is a compact town, and the topology lends itself to walking/cycling.
- The town already has an existing Outline Cycle Strategy, developed in May 2013 by BCC in liaison with the Town Council.
- Existing walking routes: Circular Walk and Railway Walk.

Weaknesses

- Lack of off-road cycle paths
- The main obstacle to cycling is the narrowness of the town's streets due to its historical nature.
- In places, pavements in the town are narrow and in a poor state of repair.
- Parts of the town are susceptible to flooding that severs walking/cycling routes.

Opportunities

- Improving cycling infrastructure in the town can contribute to the fulfilment of many of the BTS objectives.

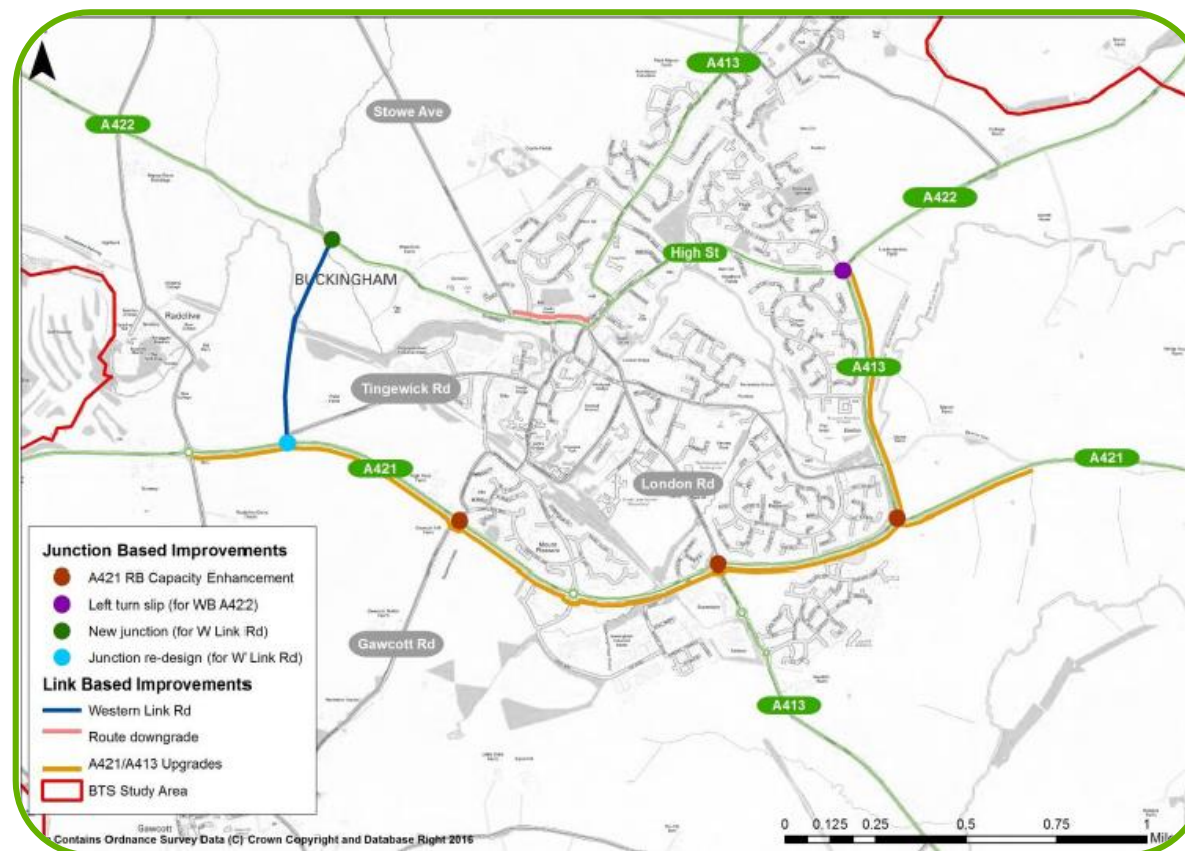
Threats

- Some potential walking/cycling routes run through/adjacent to proposed developments, so should be protected to ensure they remain open and accessible.
- Some of the potential cycle routes identified for Buckingham have not been assessed by engineers so are not necessarily feasible in terms of constructability.
- Any improvements would most likely need to rely on limited funding from S106 contributions.
- Potential loss of government funding for schemes.

The Transport Improvements

In response to the SWOT analysis above, a set of transport improvements have been developed for the BTS. These are categorised below into Highways, Public Transport and Walking/Cycling.

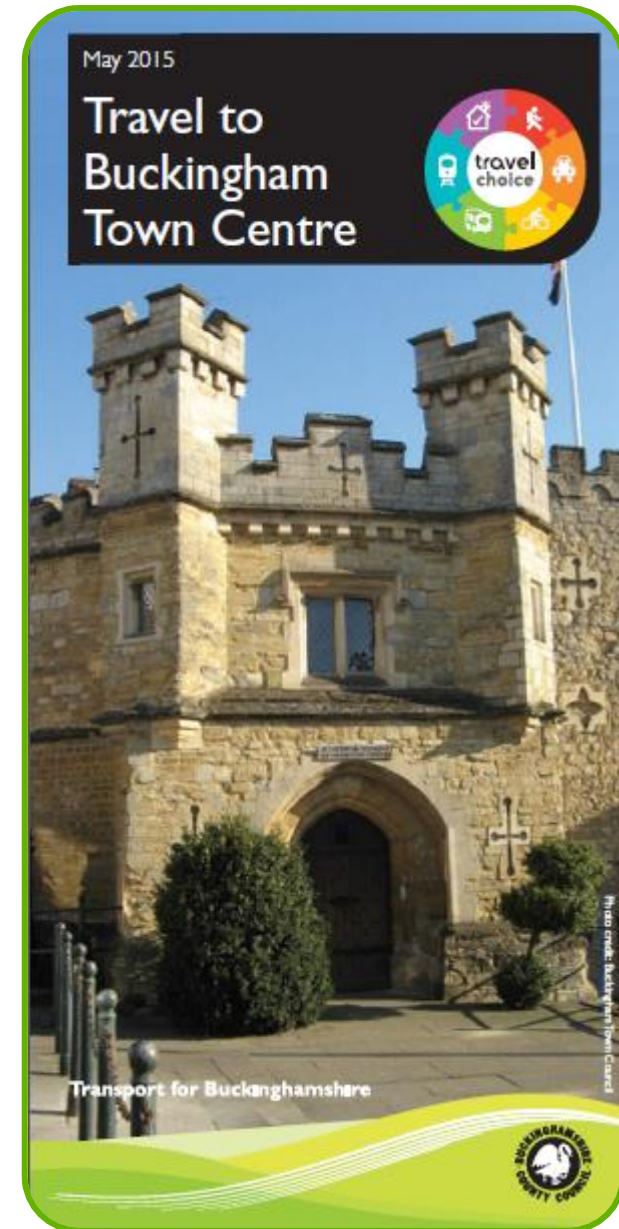
- 1) **Highway Improvements:** The main issue is congestion in the town centre, much of which can be attributed to through-traffic. All highway improvements recommended in the strategy are aimed at reducing through-traffic as a means of alleviating town centre congestion. These are summarised in the map and table below. It is hoped that reducing the amount of through traffic will enable regeneration in the town centre.



Highways Schemes	Description
Western Link Rd	Introduction of a new (single carriageway) Western Link Road between the A422 and A421 with aim of reducing traffic (including HGV) movements through the town. Through-traffic constitutes a significant proportion of vehicular flow through Buckingham town centre.
Town centre route downgrade	The introduction of a route downgrade along West St with the aim of discouraging A422 through-traffic. West St is extremely narrow and not suitable for two-directional traffic, particularly in the peak hours.
A421/A413 Route upgrades & A421 Roundabout Capacity Enhancements	Increasing capacity on the A421/A413 to potentially ease congestion and discourage town centre through-traffic.
A413/A422 Roundabout Left Turn Dedicated Slip	The introduction of a dedicated left-turn slip on the A422/A413 Junction in the NE to encourage users the re-route around the town rather than through the town centre.

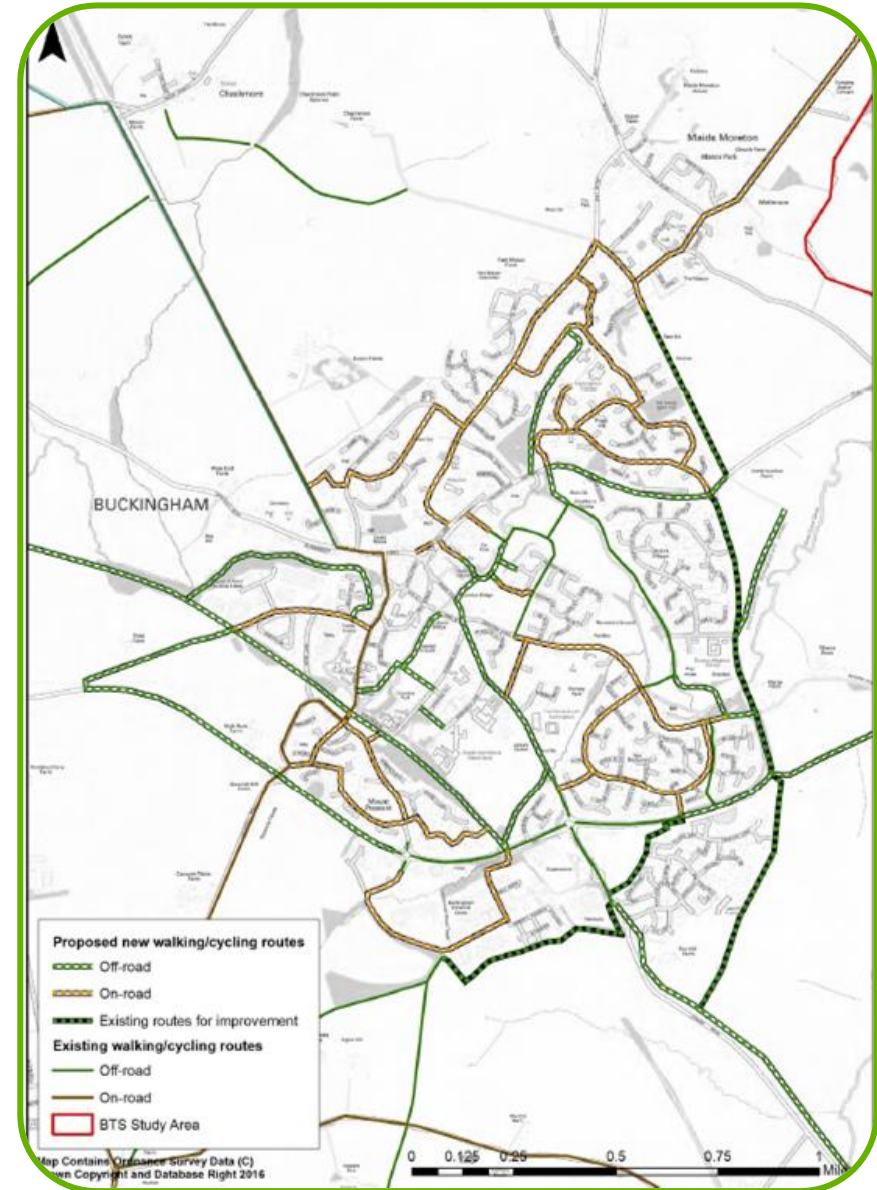
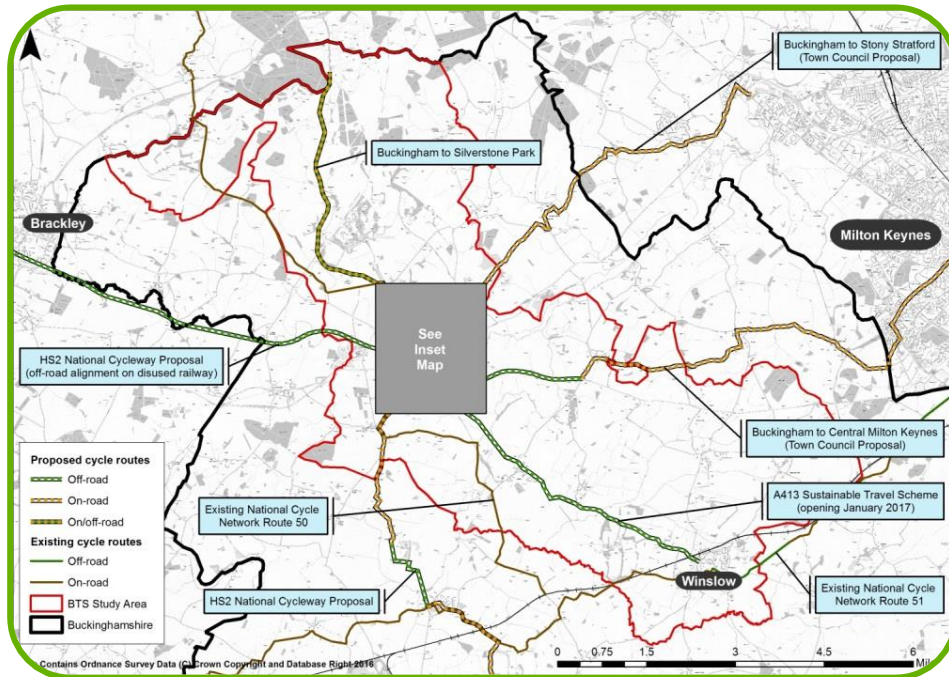
2) **Public Transport Improvements:** the main issues are the capacity of the town centre bus stand and ensuring good coverage of new developments once they come forward. The recommended public transport improvements therefore include (among others) the expansion of the town centre bus stand and re-routing/creation of new bus routes serving the town. These are summarised in the table below:

Public Transport Schemes	Description
Bus connection to Winslow	The new East-West rail station in Winslow will provide direct links to strategic destinations in the south-east that are currently relatively inconvenient to reach with public transport from Buckingham. It is consequently possible (subject to future usage) that the existing bus frequency to/from the town should increase to cater for additional users to/from Buckingham.
Town centre bus station expansion	Capacity issues at the town centre's bus stand on the High Street were identified by stakeholders. At certain times, the bus loading space is insufficient, and buses are forced to load on the street. This is both inconvenient and presents a potential safety risk for passengers. A potential solution to this issue would be an expansion of the existing bus stand, however a suitable location for this expansion would need to be explored in more detail.
Bus coverage of new/existing developments	The existing coverage of the bus network within Buckingham is fairly comprehensive, however the town's growth may leave certain areas without convenient bus accessibility. This includes residential developments as well as employment sites in Buckingham Industrial Estate and (proposed) Silverstone Park. It may therefore be appropriate to implement new bus services and/or alter routes of existing services.
Bus usage monitoring program	Although there are no specifically identified bus services that are currently approaching capacity, it is recommended that bus usage is monitored over the lifetime of the BTS. It is an objective of the BTS to encourage bus usage; however this would be undermined by bus services that are over capacity or too infrequent.



3)

4) **Walking/cycling Transport Improvements:** the historical nature and physical constraints of the town have acted as a hindrance to walking/cycling. The BTS therefore includes a set of intra- and inter-urban walking/cycling routes that have the potential to provide comprehensive coverage for residents, workers and visitors. Due to popular support, the compact size of the town, and fit with the BTS objectives, walking/cycling is a major focus of the strategy. The schemes are summarised in the maps and table below:



Walking/Cycling Schemes	Description
Implement the <i>Buckingham Outline Cycling Strategy</i>	<p>In May 2013 this was developed by BCC in liaison with the Town Council. The key elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved signage and cycle parking - Signage that is consistent, clear, indicates distances in minutes (walking and cycling and is sympathetic to the feel of the town) - Introduce cycle parking at key locations, including covered parking - Focus on longer trips as shorter distances are ideal for walking - Make the most of the existing off-street leisure network - Includes aspirations for longer-distance trips to Winslow/Thornborough/Stowe - A number of new cycle routes were defined in this strategy, which are shown in the map below.
Buckingham Town Council Additional Routes	<p>Subsequent to the <i>Buckingham Outline Cycling Strategy</i> further proposals were made to enhance the cycle network including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quiet Roads: On-road in quiet residential areas, low cost – signage is the only substantial requirement; - Leisure: A single off-road route from Stratford Rd car park to the end of the Railway Walk on Tingewick Road via A413 and A421; - Local Trips: Cycle routes to connect key destinations in the town, such as primary schools, secondary schools, University sites, industrial estate, supermarkets, the Swan pool and the town centre; - Commuters: Routes to the three main exits of the town for quiet cycling routes i.e. Gawcott Rd, Stowe Ave and through Maids Moreton. It is envisaged that these can link onto quiet routes to Bicester, Winslow, Oxford, Silverstone, Brackley, Banbury, Stony Stratford and Milton Keynes. - Two longer distance routes to the east, pre-dominantly on-road routes to Stony Stratford and central Milton Keynes.
High Speed 2 National Cycle Route Proposal	<p>Feasibility work has been progressed by the Department for Transport to create a continuous cycle route between London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. It is envisaged that the cycle route will be within 3 miles of the planned HS2 alignment, each section of which should serve as an important facility at a local level. There are two sections of the cycle route of relevance to Buckingham:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brackley to Buckingham (off-road disused railway line) - Buckingham to Waddesdon Manor (predominantly on-road alignment)
Buckingham to Silverstone Park	<p>Silverstone Park is a proposed development (~20 hectares) in the north of the study area. Proposed transport infrastructure associated with this development includes cycling routes. The route to Buckingham via Dadford Road is assumed to be on-road, however, BCC's preference is for an off-road alignment.</p>
A413 Sustainable Travel Scheme and Town Centre Extension	<p>Subsequent to the publication of the <i>Buckingham Outline Cycling Strategy</i>, funding was received from the BTVLEP for the A413 Sustainable Travel Scheme (currently under construction), and from the Lace Hill Development for the town centre extension. Combined, these cycle routes will provide a continuous cycle route between the town centres of Winslow and Buckingham.</p>

Transport Evidence Base

Computer based transport modelling has been used to indicate the impacts of the future growth on the highway network in Buckingham until 2033, and also enabled some initial testing of the highway improvements identified in this strategy. An example of this can be seen in the diagram below:



The green routes show an increase in traffic flow and the blue routes show a reduction in traffic flow. Therefore, the initial modelling results indicate that the highway improvements above lead to a reduction in vehicle flows within the town centre in both peak hours. This is particularly the case at the two most congested High Street junctions. It is likely that this reduction in the town centre is related to re-routing and increased usage of the A413 to the east of the town, the A421 to the south of the town, and the Western Link Road.

At this stage, further highway improvements are expected to be tested in the Countywide Model for the Buckingham area and these will be included in a final version of the strategy in early 2017.

AM Peak Flow Difference – DS1 with mitigation minus 2033 DS1 without mitigation, 2033

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Implementation plan

A high level timeline of the potential implementation phasing is shown adjacent; this is based on a number of factors, including:

- Inter-dependencies with developments and other transport improvements;
- The scale of the preparatory work; and
- Available funding sources.

The exact phasing of developments impacting Buckingham is not known at this stage and the plan adjacent is subject to change as more information comes to hand and further transport modelling takes place.

Summary and Next Steps

The BTS is intended to determine the overall direction of planned growth and transport infrastructure in Buckingham up to 2033. To enable the progression of transport schemes and interventions which are likely to be required to mitigate the impact of planned growth, it is important to consider the following next steps:

- **Highways:** initial computer based transport modelling provides a high level evidence base for the potential highway schemes in the BTS. As a next step, feasibility of schemes should be assessed by considering all potential options and undertaking a sifting process. Examples of best practice and lessons learnt should be referred to during option sifting/scheme design. This will help create initial scheme details/designs which can then be assessed by stakeholders, defined, prioritised and progressed to business cases where appropriate. This will ensure the interventions provide value for money.
- **Public transport:** the implementation of the public transport improvements should be preceded by work to understand the likely users/benefits and feasibility. This will ensure future proofing of potential interventions and seek to maximise a step change in modal shift, whilst also enabling innovative approaches to be incorporated.
- **Walking/cycling:** a holistic approach across Buckingham should be taken forward to estimate the likely users and benefits of the proposed walking and cycling infrastructure. Furthermore, scheme design should be considered to ensure any potential constraints are identified early on in the process and therefore overcome efficiently.

In addition to these, the likely phasing of developments in the study area should also be investigated due to its relevance for the prioritisation and implementation of transport improvements.

The results of this consultation will be considered in the final version of the strategy, which will be used to inform the future Pre-Submission Consultation of the VALP in early 2017.

