

Chilterns Transport Planning: a proposed common approach

Date: 31 March 2020

A. INTRODUCTION:

The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally protected landscape of beauty and tranquillity, providing a vital leisure resource for London and the South East, with 1.6 million people living within 8km of its boundary and 10 million people living within an hour's drive. As a rural and relatively wealthy area, it also has high levels of car ownership and use.

The Chilterns geographical area, within which the AONB sits, straddles the boundaries of four counties and includes significant portions of each one. However, despite the shared set of transport planning issues prevailing across this whole area, there is currently no common transport strategy or policies reconciling the conservation and enhancement of this fragile area with the access needs of visitors, people who live or work in the area, and those who pass through it.

B. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT:

This document has evolved through joint work between the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) and the Chiltern Society (CS), and has now been agreed by both organisations as the basis for ongoing work and wider engagement.

As well as advocating designation as a National Park, the Glover Review suggests a single statutory Local Plan for the entire area. The CCB and CS welcome this recommendation and, through this paper, suggest that this unified approach could usefully be extended to transport planning.

This paper therefore sets out for discussion a suite of suggested transport-related objectives and interventions of intended benefit to the AONB and wider Chilterns, which could be drawn upon to form the basis of this common approach.

It would supplement and complement those policies applying specifically to the AONB which are set out in the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Of these, Policy DP14 has particular relevance.

DP14 Avoid new or upgraded infrastructure (roads, railways, airports, pylons, masts etc.) which harm the AONB landscape, nature, air quality, tranquillity or the visitor experience. Fully assess impacts on the AONB, including increased recreation pressure, traffic, overflying and severance of ecological connectivity in the AONB. Avoid, mitigate and compensate to achieve a net gain for the AONB.

Should the merits of this common approach (both the principle and its possible broad content) be accepted, a particularly significant step would be for all five relevant Highway Authorities to incorporate relevant elements in their respective Local Transport Plans as each comes up for renewal, and in the meantime as a possible policy addendum to their existing Plans.

The content of the document may also be used in other ways, for example internally by both organisations to help inform responses to local, regional or national consultations.

C. SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES:

Road transport affects the Chilterns area and can be detrimental to people, places and wildlife. But it is not purely road transport that has detrimental impacts: for example, noise and pollution from air travel and inappropriate and / or poorly designed and constructed transport infrastructure can also be harmful.

Detrimental impacts on human health and the natural environment can arise from:

- emissions of carbon and air pollutants such as particulate matter, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen
- water, noise and light pollution
- traffic danger, domination, intimidation and severance
- physical and visual damage to the natural beauty, landscape and heritage of the Chilterns.

Developing a common approach with clear objectives and broad ranging interventions will help address the causes of these impacts and will ultimately result in positive outcomes across the entire Chilterns area.

These outcomes include:

- protection and enhancement of the special quality of the Chilterns
- protection and enhancement of the Chilterns natural, historical and cultural heritage
- enhancement of the visitor experience and accessibility into and within the area
- protection of the wildlife and biodiversity in the Chilterns
- support for local businesses and the local economy
- enhancement of the quality of life for people who live in the Chilterns area

The suggested objectives and supporting interventions that follow on pages 4 – 7 are intended to form the basis of such a common approach. They will be variously relevant to the short, medium and longer term, and apply not only to plans and proposals within the Chilterns, but also to plans and proposals for areas outside the Chilterns which might affect them.

For those areas that comprise the setting of the AONB, a legal duty exists under S85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act; the meaning of setting is explained in Policy DP4 of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024.

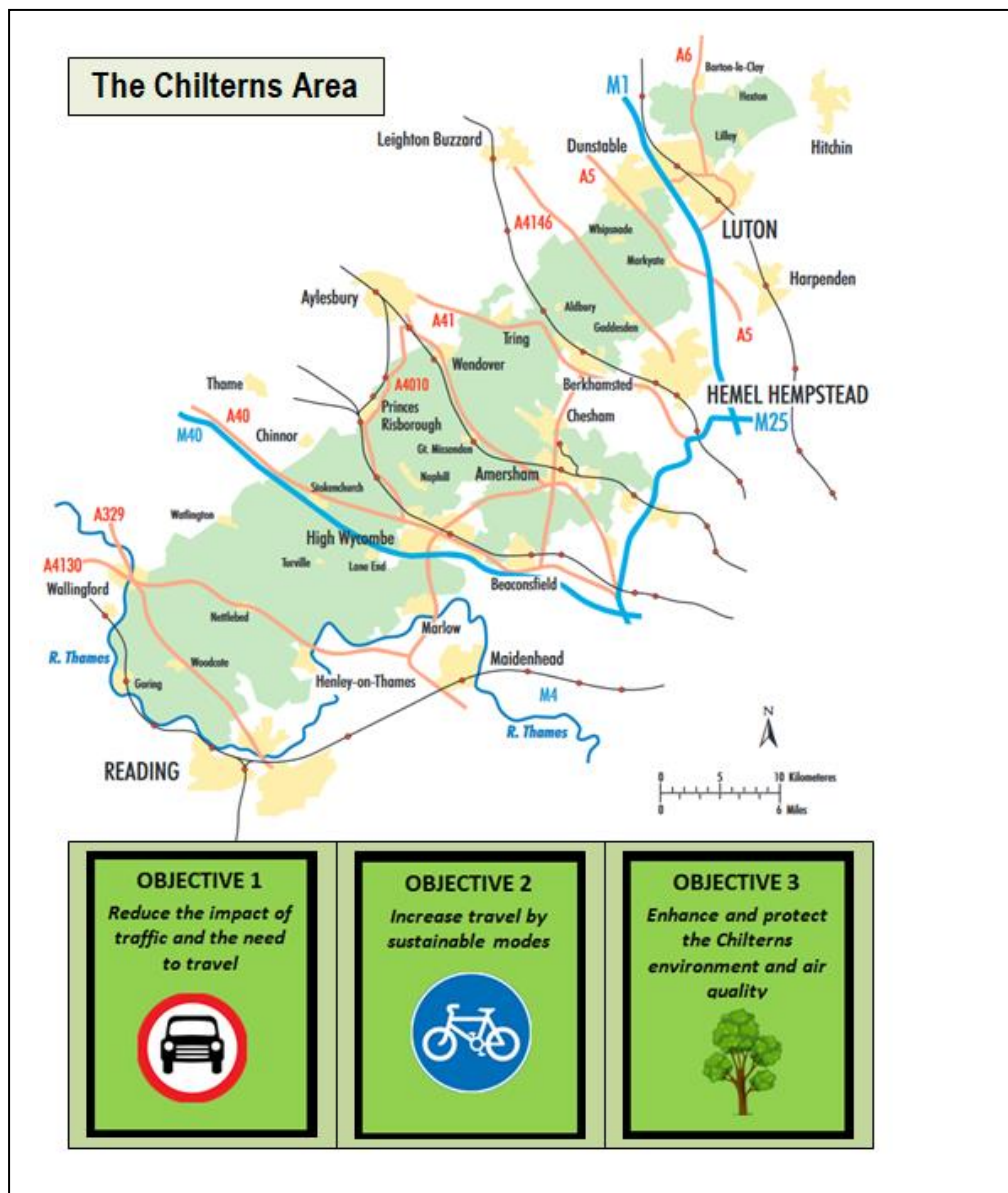
For ease of reference, the interventions have been numbered and organised under three broad objectives, but it should be stressed that all three objectives are closely interrelated and of equal status.

To successfully deliver these objectives will require meaningful engagement with the many organisations, agencies and individuals that have the direct responsibility, ability and powers to make a difference.

These include local organisations such as the highway and planning authorities in the Chilterns area, but also national and regional organisations such as central government agencies, England's Economic Heartland and rail operators.

It will be necessary to work with and influence these organisations to seek policy adoption and policy change, including ongoing co-operation and commitment.

SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES AND INTERVENTIONS IN DETAIL:



OBJECTIVE 1: REDUCE THE IMPACT OF TRAFFIC AND THE NEED TO TRAVEL

1.1 Keep road based through-traffic away from Chilterns and residual traffic off unsuitable roads:

1.1.1 All national/regional strategies and projects (e.g. HS2, OxCam Arc, Heathrow, Luton airports) to avoid and mitigate their traffic and transport impacts on the Chilterns area by, for example, routeing strategies to avoid traffic using through routes that traverse the Chilterns, use of rail instead of road-based transport.

1.1.2 All strategic and local environmental assessments arising from national, regional and local strategies and projects to identify and include the Chilterns as an area that might be affected (a 'sensitive receptor') so that the environmental and traffic/transport impacts on the Chilterns can be fully understood and mitigated.

1.2 Manage traffic and transport demand:

1.2.1 Improve broadband and fast line speed in the Chilterns area to encourage and support 'smart' working.

1.2.2 Consider the use of road charging within the Chilterns as a potential tool in appropriate circumstances for the effective management of traffic demand.

1.2.3 Consider the implementation of workplace parking levy initiatives in the Chilterns, where they do not jeopardise the viability of local businesses.

1.2.4 Implement new parking management strategies for towns and villages in the Chilterns, which deliver environmental benefits without significant adverse economic impacts.

1.3 Integrate land use and transport planning:

1.3.1 All land-use and transport planning policies and decisions to deliver better integration between homes and jobs to reduce the need to travel (e.g. co-location of jobs/homes, local provision of services and facilities, live-work opportunities).

1.4 Adopt an area wide approach to the management of traffic, to include:

1.4.1 A Chilterns road hierarchy and route signing strategy (physical and virtual) to ensure traffic uses the most appropriate routes through the Chilterns.

1.4.2 Traffic management strategies for main routes within and through the Chilterns, affording priority for sustainable modes.

1.4.3 Speed management and traffic calming strategies for minor roads in the Chilterns, including greater use of Quiet Lanes.

1.5 Encourage travel and transport by non-road-based transport modes:

1.5.1 Increase rail capacity and frequency of services, but only where there will be zero net adverse environmental impact on the Chilterns.

1.5.2 Design and construct all rail route improvement proposals in a way appropriate for the Chilterns, including an appropriate level of mitigation works.

1.5.3 Transfer freight onto rail and water where practical to do so and where there will be zero net adverse impact on the Chilterns.

1.6 Reduce the adverse impacts arising from lorry traffic:

1.6.1 Existing local authority Freight Strategies to be reviewed to ensure policies exist that work to protect the Chilterns from the worst impacts of Lorries.

1.6.2 Sat nav providers to update software to exclude routes and roads in the Chilterns that are unsuitable for lorries.

1.7 Manage impacts arising from recreational visitors to the Chilterns:

1.7.1 Develop policies for visitor management and access to the Chilterns, focusing on:

- improving visitor traffic routeing to and from key destinations within the Chilterns
- improving visitor attraction direction signage
- encouraging travel by sustainable modes
- comprehensive marketing and promotion of the Chilterns visitor management and access strategy

OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASE TRAVEL BY SUSTAINABLE MODES

2.1 Support/promote/encourage bus transport as an alternative to car transport:

2.1.1 Create a network of rural bus services in the Chilterns sufficient to provide a realistic offer that helps to address rural isolation and includes appropriate feeder links to the main bus networks.

2.1.2 Where required, financially support new and existing rural and interurban bus services using appropriate government, developer, or other funding.

2.1.3 Implement new Community Bus initiatives and other means of providing shared transport.

2.1.4 Implement promotion and marketing strategies to maximise patronage and fares income.

2.1.5 Improve integration between different bus service providers and between different sustainable modes (especially bus to rail, and walking / cycling to rail), to facilitate door-to-door journeys.

2.2 Support/promote/encourage walking and cycling:

2.2.1 Create a joined-up cycling and walking network for the Chilterns to include:

- a family friendly leisure route network, including filling gaps to connect with the existing Rights of Way network
- the provision of more and improved safe crossing points and traffic calming measures to reduce severance created by roads and road traffic
- downgrading and/or closure of roads considered unsuitable for motorised traffic to convert into safe walking and cycling routes
- cycling and walking to be prioritised along roads in appropriate locations

2.2.2 Implement a promotion and marketing strategy to encourage cycling / walking in the Chilterns (with emphasis on the health and environmental benefits).

2.3 Local Business:

2.3.1 Increase the number of Workforce Travel Plans and monitor compliance.

2.3.2 Encourage smart working to reduce commuting.

2.3.3 Identify transport improvements to reduce congestion and improve accessibility to local businesses.

OBJECTIVE 3: ENHANCE AND PROTECT THE CHILTERNES ENVIRONMENT AND AIR QUALITY

3.1 Support and encourage low carbon policies and policies to improve air quality:

3.1.1 National and local government to seek greater use of alternative fuels for transport (e.g. electric, hydrogen) including a network of electric vehicle (EV) charging points across the Chilterns.

3.1.2 Local government to implement Air Quality Management Areas in Chilterns towns and villages where legally required to do so (i.e. where air quality limits are exceeded).

3.1.3 Local authorities to ensure infrastructure proposals for the generation and effective utilisation of non-fossil fuels within the Chilterns is located and designed appropriately to respect the special qualities of the Chilterns area.

3.1.4 Local authorities to minimise the impacts from lighting (light pollution, energy use, and disruption to wildlife), by not having lighting at locations and times when not needed, and through the use of appropriate LEDs with a warm white colour temperature no higher than 2700 Kelvin wherever possible.

3.2 Reduce the impacts of aviation on the Chilterns:

3.2.1 Oppose the expansion of airports in and adjacent to the Chilterns where unacceptable and unmitigable impacts arise.

3.2.2 The relevant authorities to exercise control to minimise overflying of the Chilterns by commercial air transport and general aviation to protect tranquillity.

3.3 Design, construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure:

3.3.1 Review the use and application of the Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Highways in the Chilterns published jointly by the Chilterns Conservation Board with the County Councils, and engage with local authorities to seek greater adherence where necessary.

3.3.2 Local authorities to ensure the design and choice of materials used for new transport infrastructure, whether in-house or developer-led, and maintenance of existing infrastructure, is consistent with the Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Highways in the Chilterns, and is in keeping and sympathetic to the Chilterns natural and historic environment.

3.3.3 Local authorities to carry out environmental audits of all their proposed highway and open space improvement and maintenance works.

3.4 Enhance biodiversity through proactive measures and mitigation:

3.4.1 National, Regional and Local Agencies to co-ordinate focussed action to protect sensitive habitats (Special Areas of Conservation, SSSIs, National and Local Nature Reserves) from the effects of air pollution and other transport related effects.

3.4.2 Raise the awareness of local authorities, landowners and developers to the issue of atmospheric nitrogen deposition arising from traffic and transport.

3.4.3 Local authorities, land owners and developers to review their traffic and transport proposals and land management practices to avoid and mitigate the impacts of nitrogen deposition on soils, water bodies and flora.

3.4.4 Land owners and local authorities to manage verges and other green spaces for biodiversity.

3.4.5 Local authorities and developers to incorporate measures to overcome the barrier to wildlife movements created by major roads and railways (e.g. road crossings, green bridges).

D. JOINT WORKING:

There will be a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties who will play a role in delivering the objectives and interventions. These include:

STAKEHOLDERS:	
Chilterns Conservation Board	Highways England
Chiltern Society	Environment Agency
Unitary, County, and District Local Authorities within and adjoining the Chilterns	National Trust
Local Enterprise Partnerships	Local Nature Partnerships
England’s Economic Heartland	Network Rail and Train Operating Companies
Town and Parish Councils	Tourist Attraction Operators
Emergency Services	Utility Companies
Transport Operators	Local Landowners and Businesses

E. FUNDING:

Successful delivery of the objectives and interventions will not only be dependent upon stakeholder support and commitment, but also securing the necessary funding.

It is suggested that a funding strategy will be required to identify and guide bids for such funding. Funding sources could include: local authority mainstream funding, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding, Local Enterprise Partnership funding approvals, bids for government funding and grants, funding from OxCam growth arc, funding from HS2 Ltd.

F. REVIEW:

In the light of experience and through engagement with stakeholders, it is anticipated that this document will be periodically reviewed and evolve further as work progresses.