

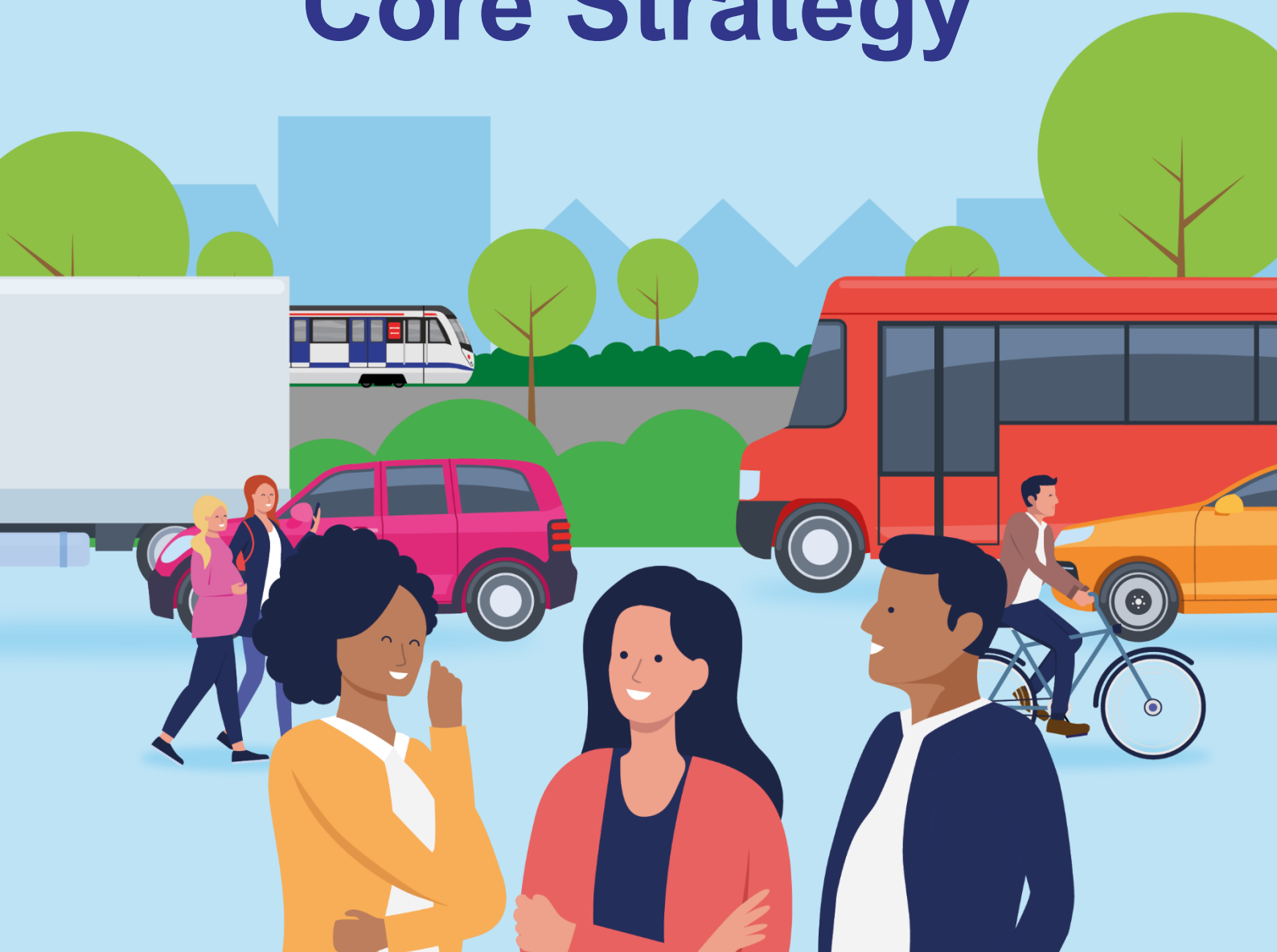
Cheshire West & Chester Council

Let's talk about...

Transport

Local Transport Plan 4: 2025- 2045

Core Strategy



Cheshire West
and Chester

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1. Foreword

For the people and businesses of Cheshire West and Chester, transport and travel are about much more than getting from A to B. How we move is fundamental to the growth of our economy, the ability to connect our communities, and the shape of the places we live and work. It has a fundamental role to play in meeting our Borough Plan vision for a stronger future where we all play our part in thriving, caring and sustainable communities.

During the lifetime of our previous Local Transport Plan, we delivered significant improvements, from a bus interchange for Chester, to our first protected cycle route in Helsby, to repairing over 8,200 potholes every yearⁱ. This progress continues, with advanced progress on transformative regeneration schemes in Ellesmere Port and Winsford town centresⁱⁱ, funding secured for an unprecedented rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across our boroughⁱⁱⁱ and substantial investment unlocked for maintaining and improving our streets and highways^{iv}.

But we know that travel and transport in Cheshire West and Chester is still not what it could be.

Too many people are left behind due to a lack of inclusive transport options, while our businesses struggle to access the talent they need to thrive. Too many of our neighbourhoods are dominated by traffic, generating noise, pollution and road danger that damage our health and the health of future generations. We need to unlock a major uplift in sustainable growth, unlocking our borough’s potential at the heart of the UK’s Green Industrial Revolution, while also supporting the government’s ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes. And transport is a leading contributor to our climate emergency, a fundamental threat to our future prosperity.

Throughout development of this Plan, our residents, businesses and communities have told us that the scale and urgency of change required to address these challenges is substantial. We need to tackle these challenges head on to ensure that the way we travel and our transport networks support good health, provide us all with opportunities to work, learn and succeed, and contribute to strong communities. Our Local Transport Plan is the roadmap to achieve this.

The proposals we set out are certainly not ‘business as usual’. We are proposing a new era for transport and travel, with a fresh approach focused on the real outcomes that people and businesses want and need, helping us to develop the clean, inclusive borough of the future.

CLlr Karen Shore

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Highways
Cheshire West and Chester Council

2. Executive Summary

Let's build a transport system that works for people, for places, and for inclusive prosperity.

Across Cheshire West and Chester, how we move matters. It affects our health, our environment, our communities, and our economy. That's why we've developed a new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) that's bold, ambitious, and shaped by the people and organisations who live and work here.

We've held two rounds of consultation, with over 2,000 contributions from residents, businesses, community groups and stakeholders. The message was clear: people want change, and they want it to be real, visible and fair.

Why it matters - for everyone

Whether you're a resident trying to get to work, a business moving goods, or a visitor exploring our towns and countryside, transport plays a vital role in daily life and economic success.

- Businesses told us they struggle to recruit and retain staff due to poor connectivity.
- Town centres need better access to boost footfall and support local retail.
- Industrial parks need efficient freight links and multimodal access.
- Rural communities need better public transport to avoid isolation.
- Young people need affordable options to reach education and jobs.

LTP4 is about tackling these challenges head-on.

Our Vision

“A fair and sustainable transport system which enables a stronger, thriving future.”

This vision reflects what people and organisations across Cheshire West and Chester have told us they want: a transport system that works for everyone: residents, businesses, visitors and communities.

To achieve this, we're focusing on five strategic priorities:

- **Tackling the climate emergency**, by cutting emissions and building resilience
- **Creating a fairer transport system**, with affordable, inclusive travel choices for all
- **Championing inclusive, sustainable economic growth**, through better-connected businesses, improved freight connections, and a thriving tourism sector.
- **Enabling people to live healthier and happier lives**, by tackling air pollution, eliminating serious road injuries, supporting active travel, and improving access to healthcare and green spaces.
- **Creating and protecting great places**, with greener, better-connected communities.

How we'll deliver change

In this LTP4 Core Strategy, we've set out seven core policies to guide every transport decision:

1. Putting the vision at the heart of decisions. Every transport project must help us build the future you've asked for, as a whole not just bits of it.

2. Smarter places, smarter travel. We'll work with developers, employers and schools to make sure places are well-connected and services are structured to give people choices in how they travel.
3. Giving people and businesses real choices in how we travel. We'll prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, while recognising the continued role of cars, especially in rural areas, and the strategic importance of freight.
4. Let's join things up. We want to make travel seamless across modes and boundaries, with better interchanges, simpler ticketing and accurate travel info.
5. Making the most of our existing streets. We'll invest in maintaining and improving existing roads, not building new ones for general traffic. Safer junctions, greener infrastructure, and better space for buses and bikes is the way to deliver a transport system that works better for everyone.
6. Local issues, local voices. We'll keep listening and co-designing solutions with residents, businesses, transport operators and user groups, doing our best to hear from all voices and perspectives, not just the ones that shout the loudest.
7. Protecting our people, our neighbourhoods and our environment. Every transport decision will consider health, safety, climate and biodiversity, and support great places to live and do business.

Next steps

We're not stopping at this Core Strategy. Alongside it, we're developing a series of Policy Papers that will apply these principles to specific modes and topics, like buses, cycling, freight, road safety and rural travel. These will guide how we deliver change on the ground.

We'll also roll out area-based and programme-based delivery plans, backed by a robust Implementation Plan that sets out funding, actions and how we'll track and report our progress.

Final thought

This is a plan shaped by you, and it's designed to deliver for you, and with you. Whether you're running a business, raising a family, or planning your next journey, we want transport to be easier, safer and fairer.

We've got the vision. We've got your support. Now it's time to make it real.

Let's get moving. Together.

3. Introduction

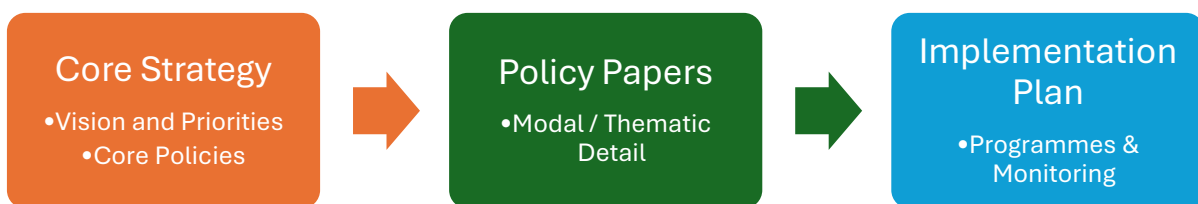
What is LTP4?

Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) is a statutory document which sets out the Council’s vision and plan for how transport can address the strategic challenges we face. It forms part of the Council’s constitutional Policy Framework and influences delivery of local transport, regeneration, public health and other programmes.

When we talk about transport, we mean all forms of transport – cars, taxis, walking, wheeling¹, cycling, buses, coaches, trains, vans and heavy goods vehicles, amongst others. We also mean all transport networks – highways, rail and public rights of way, as well as the organisational and digital structures which connect them. This Plan is not just about connectivity for people, but also the movement of goods and materials that serve our communities and local economy. Moreover, given that our streets and footways make up around three quarters of all public space^v, it is also about the types of places which our transport networks create – high streets, neighbourhoods, and places to work, live and play.

LTP4 fully replaces the third Cheshire West and Chester Local Transport Plan (LTP3)^{vi} produced in 2011 and refreshed in 2017. LTP4 Policy Papers will detail where they replace or update existing strategies or policies. Local area transport strategies developed under LTP3 will also be reviewed once LTP4 is in place.

LTP4 structure



LTP4 is composed of three interlinked components, designed to ensure the plan is both visionary and actionable:

1. LTP4 Core Strategy – the statutory LTP4 strategy, which sets the case for change, the vision we are seeking to deliver, and the key principles that will guide how this is achieved.
2. A suite of Policy Papers – non-statutory elements which provide thematic or modal policy detail aligned with the Core Strategy, adding clarity and depth in areas such as bus, active travel, highways and rural transport.
3. LTP4 Implementation Plan – the second statutory component of LTP4, this focuses on short- to medium-term delivery of the strategy. It sets out specific schemes, programmes and funding allocations, along with performance indicators to track progress. The Implementation Plan is informed by a series of area-based delivery plans and modal programmes, such as our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and Highways Asset Management Plan. It translates the strategic direction of the Core Strategy and the thematic focus of the Policy Papers into actionable delivery.

¹ “Wheeling” refers to equivalent alternatives to foot-based mobility, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters and rollators.

Together, these three components ensure that LTP4 is strategically grounded (Core Strategy), offers policy depth and clarity (Policy Papers) and is deliverable and measurable (Implementation Plan).

How has LTP4 been produced?

The development of LTP4 has been shaped by a robust combination of technical analysis and extensive public engagement. This Core Strategy has been informed by two dedicated rounds of public consultation, each attracting over 1,000 contributions from residents, stakeholders, and community groups through surveys, workshops, drop-in events, and targeted outreach. This inclusive approach ensured that the plan reflects both the lived experiences and aspirations of people across the borough. Key themes, such as fairness, connectivity, safety, and sustainability, which emerged consistently from public feedback have been embedded into the approach set out in this Core Strategy. The Council's commitment to transparency and responsiveness has guided the process, with public insights directly influencing the vision, priorities, and delivery programme. LTP4 is not only a technical blueprint for future transport investment, but also a shared roadmap shaped by the voices of Cheshire West and Chester.

Section 4 sets out further detail about the feedback that has informed development of this plan, and how it has shaped this Core Strategy.

Devolution

In December 2024, Government published the English Devolution White Paper^{vii}, which sets out plans to move power out of Westminster and back to local communities. The Cheshire and Warrington region, including Cheshire West and Chester, has secured a position on the government's Devolution Priority Programme. Following a central government consultation, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council and Warrington Borough Council have all voted in favour of forming a Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority.^{viii} Once established – potentially as early as February 2026 – the Cheshire and Warrington Mayoral Combined Authority will have greater control over key areas such as transport, housing, skills, and economic growth, while unlocking access to significant new funding and investment opportunities. And, in May 2027, the area's residents will have the important decision of electing Cheshire and Warrington's first Mayor.

This process is not about merging councils or taking decisions away from councils. Combined Authorities are strategic organisations led by a directly elected mayor who work with local councils, benefitting from greater local control over a range of areas, including transport and local connectivity. Individual councils would retain their current responsibilities and continue to provide services for local people. Devolution offers an opportunity for greater coordination and funding of regional transport flows and infrastructure, reflecting that travel patterns do not stop at borough boundaries.

This Core Strategy will steer Cheshire West and Chester Council's approach and priorities for transport and travel across our borough, and help to shape our input to development of a future regional Local Transport Plan process.

For further information on Cheshire and Warrington Devolution, please visit

<https://www.cheshireandwarringtondevolution.com/>

4. The Case for Change

This section summarises the supporting sets out why a new Local Transport Plan is needed and the strategic challenges it attempts to tackle. This analysis is informed by a range of local, regional and national sources, as well as a wide-ranging programme of engagement and consultation. Further details of the contributing evidence base are available in the supporting appendices published alongside this Core Strategy.



What have people told us?

Public engagement – key messages

The Council undertook a two-stage engagement process to shape this LTP4 Core Strategy, incorporating feedback from residents, local businesses, community groups, and wider stakeholders. Full findings from these exercises are set out in Appendix 1.

Stage 1: Early Engagement (November 2023 – January 2024)

Over 1,000 responses highlighted a strong appetite for change. Respondents endorsed an ambitious draft vision and priorities focused on the need to tackle the climate emergency, create a fairer society, improve health and wellbeing, boost the local economy and create great places to live. However, to achieve this, they also stressed the need for:

- Better public transport - more reliable, affordable, and accessible services.
- Safer, well-connected walking and cycling routes to reduce car dependency.
- Improved rural connectivity, addressing isolation and access to services.
- Clear implementation plans to demonstrate how the strategy will be delivered.
- A focus on the critical importance of ongoing maintenance of existing infrastructure.

Stage 2: Public Consultation (June – August 2025)

Nearly 800 survey responses and hundreds of contributions from drop-in events, workshops, and written correspondence reinforced the need for action:



- Many respondents want to travel more sustainably, but feel constrained by poor infrastructure and a lack of quality public transport services.
- Respondents value fairness, especially for low-income groups, young people, and disabled users. Affordability and accessibility were recurring concerns.
- Transport's role as a catalyst for economic growth must be championed
- Rural isolation is a major barrier to economic and social inclusion.
- Road safety concerns, including poor footpaths, speeding, and disconnected active travel routes.
- Calls for better integration across transport modes, real-time information, and simpler ticketing.
- Delivery confidence is low – respondents want clearer communication and visible progress to demonstrate that the ambitions of LTP4 can be achieved.

Overall, the feedback supports the LTP4 vision, but the message is clear: change is needed to make fair, sustainable travel a realistic, safe, and inclusive option for everyone.

Local Transport Plan 3 review

The Borough's third Local Transport Plan is now more than a decade old. It is out of step with significant local, regional and national developments, including the Council's declaration of climate and poverty emergencies, adoption of new strategies such as our [Borough Plan](#), and the emergence of regional transport bodies. The Council's approach to transport needs to change to better deliver against the challenges and priorities we face today and expect to face in the future. Having an outdated Plan would also hinder our ability to put forward a compelling regional vision for transport as part of devolution discussions.

We have conducted a review of LTP3, assessing progress against the LTP3 Goals and Objectives. The table below summarises the learnings from this review, with full details set out in the LTP3 review published alongside this Core Strategy:

 Observations from LTP3	 Learning for LTP4
<p>While the aims of LTP3 were right, many of the actions proposed were not well defined or not measurable. Where successes in meeting the aims were achieved, it was difficult to link these back to specific actions from LTP3.</p>	<p>The LTP4 Implementation Plan will identify specific actions and include a detailed monitoring and evaluation framework to track delivery against our vision and objectives.</p>
<p>Reliance on central government funding and uncertainty about how much funding would be provided meant that the ability to deliver on the priorities of LTP3 was inherently uncertain.</p>	<p>LTP4 will focus on improving how we target existing and known investment available to us, from central government and other sources. Devolution offers greater local confidence and control over long-term funding availability, boosting our ability to deliver on our ambitions as set out in this Plan.</p>
<p>Awareness of LTP3 was limited beyond the Council's transport team, meaning it had limited influence on delivery programmes across the Council more broadly, or amongst partner organisations.</p>	<p>LTP4 will recognise that achieving our vision can only be delivered in partnership, both within the Council and with external partners. It will promote an integrated approach to achieving these shared goals. LTP4 will continue to be a key part of our ongoing engagement with partners to ensure this approach does not simply 'sit on the shelf'.</p>
<p>LTP3 had a number of visions, objectives and aims, and it was unclear where the Council's priorities lay should these come into conflict.</p>	<p>LTP4 has a streamlined vision, aligned with the Council's broader Policy Framework. This vision prioritises our declared Poverty and Climate emergencies. We have carried out a detailed policy review which demonstrates that LTP4 aligns with national, regional and local priorities and strategy.</p>



Where are we today?

Appendix 2 (Evidence Base) and Appendix 3 (Policy Review) set out a robust analysis of the current state of transport and travel in Cheshire West and Chester. This analysis identifies a strong need to transform transport across the borough. It demonstrates how transport and travel affects the lives of people and communities across Cheshire West and Chester, understanding the challenges that communities face and what matters most to them. The findings of this analysis are summarised out below.



Our people

Cheshire West and Chester has a population of around 360,000 people^{ix}, forecast to increase to over 385,000 by 2040^x. Our population is also aging, with over 21% of residents aged 65 or older compared to an England average of 18.5%^{xi}.

24,000 of our residents live in neighbourhoods which are within the top 10% most deprived nationally^{xii}. Residents in some of these areas have a healthy life expectancy 10 years shorter than in less deprived areas of the borough^{xiii}.

More than 65,000 residents are disabled^{xiv}, and 1 in 5 disabled people report they are unable to travel due to a lack of appropriate transport options^{xv}. Disabled people also report that they frequently do not feel safe using footways and street crossings.

17% of households do not have access to a car or van^{xvi} and 1 in 3 jobseekers say that poor transport connections are the biggest barrier to finding work^{xvii}.

Health and wellbeing is also a concern. The borough has above national average levels of adult obesity and below regional average levels of physical activity amongst adults^{xviii}. Poor air quality leads to 285 premature deaths per year^{xix}. At least one person is killed or seriously injured on the borough's roads every week^{xx}. Traffic collisions disproportionately affect those living in deprived areas^{xxi}.



Our geography

Cheshire West and Chester is a complex combination of urban and rural communities. While the majority of the borough's population live in urban areas (particularly Chester), just under one in three live in rural communities^{xxii}.

Rural communities are typically harder to serve by traditional public transport options and can be less suited to walking, wheeling and cycling for local trips due to greater distances between services and fewer footways and cycleways. This leads to much greater reliance on the private car, with car use up to 12% higher in rural areas than in urban areas^{xxiii}.

Rural areas also tend to have a higher proportion of older residents, while urban areas have a higher proportion of younger residents and children^{xxiv}.



Our economy

The government has a strong focus on growing the economy and the creation of more employment opportunities for the borough^{xxv}. However, from our work with local businesses, we know that ambitions for clean, inclusive economic growth are being held back where businesses struggle to recruit due to poor accessibility.

Employment levels in Cheshire West and Chester grew less than 2% between 2015 and 2023, compared to nearly 10% across England^{xxvi}. At the same time, our town centres have seen a significant decline in footfall, and many have high vacancy rates. This is a national trend, linked to changing shopping habits. High streets were also significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and have struggled to recover in places.

Efficient freight transport is vital for the local economy. Van traffic has particularly increased, potentially due to increases in online shopping^{xxvii}. More than 110 million tonnes of freight move within and through the borough yearly, almost exclusively by road^{xxviii}.

Patterns of work have changed, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic. The proportion of residents working from home almost tripled between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, with up to one in three people in the borough working mainly from home^{xxix}. While this has since reduced from its peak during lockdown, levels of home working are still significantly above pre-pandemic levels^{xxx}. Residents in rural areas and affluent individuals are significantly more likely to work from home than those living in urban areas and those from more deprived areas^{xxxi}. Working from home has brought about significant changes in the workplace, including in the demand for travel.

Local government is facing significant cost pressures and budget constraints, particularly from the costs of adult social care and children's services. National government finances are similarly stretched. This impacts the level of investment we can make in our transport networks.



Our environment and climate

Our climate is changing. Between 1981 and 2020, annual mean temperatures in northwest England increased by 0.54°C. This is predicted to continue, with hotter summers and wetter winters. Extreme events such as heatwaves, droughts and flooding are also predicted to increase in frequency and intensity^{xxxii}.

Transport is a major contributor to climate change in the borough, accounting for over 20% of our total climate change emissions in 2022^{xxxiii}. Transport emissions also contribute to poor air quality. The majority of transport emissions are directly generated by road-based trips, particularly private cars^{xxxiv}. Unlike the reductions seen in other sectors, emissions from road transport have stayed fairly unchanged.

Latest government targets for increasing house building will make it even more important that new areas of housing provide attractive and good quality environments for people. This equates to an increase in required housing need to 1,914 dwellings per annum (up from 1,100 in the current Local Plan)^{xxxv}. Cheshire West and Chester Council has commenced development of a new Local Plan to reflect this increased housing need^{xxxvi}. Ensuring sustainable access to forthcoming development sites is likely to be a major area of focus throughout the LTP4 period.



Our transport and travel

The way we travel is dominated by the use of private motor vehicles. Average car use in Cheshire West and Chester is around 10% higher than the regional average^{xxxvii} and total vehicle miles driven in the borough increased 8.1% between 2009 and 2019^{xxxviii}. Over three quarters of all traffic on our streets is cars and taxis, and most cars are only carrying a single person^{xxxix}. Car occupancy levels are lowest at the busiest times of the day, with 1.47 people per vehicle in the weekday morning peak hour^{xl}.

Use of walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport modes is low. Bus travel has been decreasing faster than the national average and 71% of residents do not have easy access to a half hourly or better bus service^{xli}. People with disabilities are especially affected by the limited availability of public transport. Levels of walking, wheeling and cycling are also low, with perceived road danger and a lack of quality infrastructure quoted as key barriers to increased uptake.

Percentage of trips taken by mode in Cheshire West and Chester^{xlii}



The need to travel is also changing, with the number of commuting, business and shopping trips reducing significantly since 2002^{xliii}. This is likely to be due to the rise of online services.

Electric vehicle registrations in Cheshire West and Chester increased from 19 in 2013 to 6,100 by Q1 2025, demonstrating consistent year-on-year growth^{xliv}

We know that good cross-border links are critical to support sustainable commuting patterns. Around 39% of jobs in Cheshire West and Chester are occupied by people living outside the borough, and a similar percentage of our residents work outside Cheshire West and Chester^{xlv}. Travel to work patterns show key links with the neighbouring areas of Cheshire East, Warrington, Wirral, Flintshire, Wrexham and further into Liverpool and Manchester.

The borough has strong links with neighbouring authorities in Wales and further into North Wales. We need to work closely with Transport for Wales and the Welsh local authorities to improve the cross-border connections.

Our highway network infrastructure is a vital and valuable asset, valued at more than £5 billion^{xlvi}. The Council spends approximately £7 million a year on maintaining our highways network. However, the maintenance backlog to bring our streets into a good state of repair is estimated at over £290 million, and growing^{xlvii}. This is a challenge currently faced by local highway authorities across the country. The highway network is critical for all modes of transport, including access to rail stations, and keeping it in a good state of repair is one of the council's most critical transport functions.

Public transport operators, especially bus operators, are also facing significant commercial pressures in delivering their services with reducing patronage and rising fuel and staffing costs^{xlviii}.



What do we need to do?

Transport in Cheshire West and Chester needs to change to meet these challenges. Feedback from residents, businesses, and stakeholders has made this clear: our current system is not delivering the connectivity, reliability, or inclusivity needed to support a thriving borough.

People want to travel more sustainably, but poor infrastructure, unreliable public transport, and safety concerns are holding them back. Rural communities feel disconnected, and many residents (especially young people, disabled users, and those on low incomes) face affordability and accessibility barriers that limit their choices.

Businesses also face growing constraints. They rely on efficient transport networks to move goods, access suppliers, and attract customers, visitors and employees. Poor connectivity between homes, workplaces, attractions and services is increasingly impacting productivity and growth. Without action, transport risks becoming a barrier to economic development and a source of environmental harm.

We need a transport system that is efficient, reliable, affordable, and inclusive - one that connects people and places, supports business activity, and enables everyone to travel safely and confidently.

Public feedback has highlighted the need to:

- Ensure fairness in access to transport across geographies and user groups.
- Improve the condition and safety of streets, footways, and active travel routes.
- Reverse the decline in public transport services.
- Provide better integration across transport modes, with simpler ticketing and accurate, and up-to-date travel information.
- Communicate clearly and consistently about how improvements will be delivered.

This is a pivotal moment for transport in Cheshire West and Chester. LTP4 sets out how we will respond to these challenges, transforming how transport works, expanding travel choices, tackling long-standing problems, and unlocking the benefits of a better-connected borough within a thriving regional economy. Doing nothing is not an option. The challenge is significant, but the public and business community are ready for change. This change is both essential and urgent.

5. Local Transport Plan 4 – Our Vision and Priorities

Based on these challenges, and informed by the public engagement mentioned above, we have developed a vision for the future of transport in Cheshire West and Chester borough. The vision paints a picture for the future borough we want to see, and how transport will play its part in delivering that future.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 4 VISION

A fair and sustainable transport system which enables a stronger, thriving future.

To achieve this vision, in response to feedback from public consultation, we will prioritise:



1. *Tackling the climate emergency* and making sure that our transport networks are able to cope with a rapidly changing environment. We want to reduce the emissions from transport and achieve net zero carbon emissions from transport by 2045, delivering the Council’s Climate Emergency Response Plan.



2. *Creating a fairer transport system*. We’re committed to making transport more affordable and inclusive by improving access to jobs, education and essential services, especially for communities who face barriers and exclusion due to poor transport links. This means offering real choices in how people travel, and ensuring the transport system works for everyone – including people on lower incomes, rural communities, young people, and those with additional mobility needs.

In doing so, we will also seek to:



3. *Champion inclusive, sustainable economic growth*. We want to see a better transport system which helps businesses thrive, supports reliable movement of goods and freight, and makes it easier for people to access work and training. This includes strengthening connections to regional and international gateways, supporting efficient freight movement, welcoming visitors and boosting our tourism economy — helping places across our borough prosper.



4. *Enable people to live healthier and happier lives* by giving us all the chance to be more active, reducing social exclusion, tackling air pollution and noise hotspots, eliminating deaths and serious injuries on our streets, and making our transport networks safer for everyone.



5. *Create and protect great places* with attractive, connected, greener neighbourhoods. Transport and travel are about much more than a means of getting around. We want transport and travel networks to play their part in creating and protecting special, beautiful and lively places that people can enjoy spending time in, and enhancing access to green space and nature.

Applying this vision

Cheshire West and Chester is made up of a rich variety of communities, and making this vision happen will look different in different parts of our borough:




- The transport network will enhance Chester’s position as a modern and well-connected regional centre, proud of its history and confident about its future. The city’s integrated transport links will provide safe, accessible and convenient travel for all, making efficient use of constrained city centre space, improving quality of life, supporting a vibrant tourism and leisure offer and enhancing the city’s role as an important economic centre.
- Our urban centres and market towns will be important economic hubs, home to lively, distinctive and successful high streets, well-connected and accessible to the surrounding communities they serve. The neighbourhoods people live in will be safe, healthy and attractive, and residents will not need to own a car to get to work or key services locally. Our business centres and industrial parks will be thriving and accessible hubs, able to attract quality local talent through good multimodal transport links and well-placed for the clean, efficient movement of goods.
- Our rural towns and villages will benefit from clean transport links that enhance the features which make our countryside special, support a booming rural economy, and protect the quality of life for those who live there. Transport and travel opportunities will provide affordable and accessible connections into larger urban centres when required.



These will be developed further in area-based delivery plans which will support LTP4. Further details are set out in Section 7 of this report.

Headline Measures

These headline measures reflect the outcomes our Local Transport Plan is working towards. They have been shaped by technical analysis and public consultation feedback, and are designed to align with each of our five strategic priorities. They will form the basis of a framework of ambitious but achievable goals that will guide delivery and investment decisions.

A full monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as part of the LTP4 Implementation Plan, setting interim targets, how we will track progress, assess impact, and respond to changing needs over time. The monitoring and evaluation plan will also set out how these targets may apply to different parts of our borough, based on different local needs and connectivity levels.

	LTP4 Priority	Headline Measure(s)
	<i>Tackling the climate emergency</i>	Near-zero carbon emissions by 2045
	<i>Creating a fairer transport system</i>	Reduce the proportion of residents at high risk of transport-related social exclusion by 30% by 2045 (2019 baseline) Improved connectivity ratings for resident access to services, by mode
	<i>Champion inclusive, sustainable economic growth</i>	Enhanced connectivity ratings for key employment hubs across the borough

	LTP4 Priority	Headline Measure(s)
	<i>Enable people to live healthier and happier lives</i>	Vision Zero: We want to see zero deaths or serious injuries on our streets, lanes and roads by 2045. Elimination of Air Quality Management Areas across Cheshire West and Chester Borough
	<i>Create and protect great places</i>	Increased public satisfaction with their local area as a great place to live, work, visit and study

What could the future look like?

Achieving this vision means more than meeting statistical targets. It means transforming the everyday experience of travel across Cheshire West and Chester.

Imagine a future where getting to school, work, or essential services is more convenient, comfortable, and affordable. Where cleaner air gives our children a healthier start in life, and more of us can build physical activity into our daily routines without needing to carve out extra time.

Businesses would benefit from a transport network that helps them grow, connect with the right talent, and reach customers and visitors more efficiently — all while reducing environmental impact. Our communities would enjoy greener, safer streets that are better equipped to handle extreme weather, reducing disruption and improving resilience.

All modes of transport will continue to have a role, including embracing that many journeys — especially in rural areas — will still be made by car. But our future network will offer real choice, freeing people from car dependency and giving everyone the freedom to travel in ways that suit their lives.

This is an ambitious vision. Delivering it will require more than council action alone — it will take collaboration across our partners, stakeholders, and communities. Everyone has a role to play in shaping a transport system that works better for all of us.

6. Local Transport Plan 4 - Core Policies

Many aspects of our vision have not changed. Priorities such as sustainable economic growth, reduced carbon emissions and improved accessibility to jobs remain important to us. But we know there is more to do if we are to create the future we want to see for our borough.

Achieving our vision will require a new way of thinking, as well as transformation of transport networks. This section sets out the principles that will define this new approach and steer how the Council will deliver transport and travel services over the next twenty years. This approach applies to transport planning within Cheshire West and Chester and will also shape our approach to cross-boundary and regional transport planning, as part of the emerging Combined Authority and with regional authorities.

Putting the vision at the heart of decisions

Core Policy 1

Our Local Transport Plan 4 vision will be at the heart of all our transport decisions and plans within Cheshire West and Chester.

- a) All transport initiatives we deliver or endorse must help us achieve our vision and priorities, and accommodate a future where this vision is realised; and,
- b) We will remain flexible, adapting our activity to best achieve our vision, informed by ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
- c) We will not support schemes that move us away from the overall vision, even if they benefit one priority in isolation. For example, economic development must be supported by investment in transport that enables sustainable, inclusive access for workers, customers and freight – not increased car dependency.

To facilitate this, we will quantify what a future that meets our vision looks like by setting out the expected mix of travel - such as walking, cycling, public transport and vehicle use - for both people and businesses across different parts of the borough. This will form a key part of our monitoring and evaluation plan within the LTP4 Implementation Plan.

Cheshire West and Chester Council takes a vision-led approach to transport. Our vision sets out how transport in Cheshire West and Chester should evolve over the next 20 years — shaping how we live, work and travel. It must actively guide decision-making, and play an active role in shaping what the future looks like. not just respond to short-term pressures.

For example, we know that investing in car-focused infrastructure leads to more driving, worsening air quality, road safety, and public health. In contrast, providing a bus route to a business park can open up job opportunities for people who otherwise couldn't access them — helping tackle transport-related social exclusion. Our approach will recognise that the structure of our transport system shapes the way we choose to travel, as well as where we choose to live and work.

That's why future local transport strategies will start with a clear vision for each place, aligned to LTP4, and work backwards to design a fairer, greener transport system. This is a shift from traditional approaches that predict future traffic growth and try to manage its impacts — often reinforcing car dependency.

Reducing congestion and improving journey times still matter. But these are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are important insofar as they help us meet our core goals: cutting

carbon, improving connectivity, and making streets safer. New transport schemes must be designed to support a future with more walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport — not lock in future bottlenecks or car reliance.

This also means that design and appraisal of new transport projects (including development management activities) must demonstrate sufficient capacity to allow our vision to be achieved, to avoid designing in future network bottlenecks. This means designing active travel and public transport infrastructure to carry significantly more trips than current levels of demand, and placing less emphasis on expanding road capacity for general traffic.

Smarter places, smarter travel

Core Policy 2

We will shape how and where people travel by improving access to jobs, services and opportunities - not by restricting movement, but by designing a transport system that works better for everyone. We will:

- a) Work with developers, employers, schools and service providers to ensure new developments and workplaces are well-connected to new or existing public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling networks, and with day-to-day services to support the communities they serve.
- b) Support flexible working patterns, car sharing, better public transport timetables, and smarter planning (including travel plans) to reduce peak-time pressure and improve access for shift workers, freight and business travel.
- c) Promote digital access opportunities where appropriate, while recognising that not all services — or people — can rely on digital alternatives. This includes both ensuring infrastructure availability and helping to support digital skills.
- d) Continue to build our understanding of how people travel and use this insight to shape services and infrastructure that meet real needs and expand opportunities.
- e) When we are assessing transport proposals, we will require appraisal over a 12-hour period rather than only peak hours, to identify opportunities to spread demand outside peak hours.

Additionally, to support smarter travel choices and ensure that infrastructure investment translates into real-world impact, we will embed scheme activation as a strategic use of capital funding. Where permitted by grant conditions, up to 10% of transport enhancement capital grant allocations will be used to deliver activation activities that are essential to making new infrastructure effective.

We travel to get somewhere – to work, to school or to key local services - and we want this travel to be convenient, affordable and safe. That means planning places and services so they're easier to reach, and designing transport networks that give people real choices. Ultimately, achieving our vision and priorities will be achieved by enabling good travel choices for the thousands of people who travel through Cheshire West and Chester every day.

This policy is about system-wide change, not just individual behaviour. It means working with developers to build well-located communities, with employers to support flexible working and shift-based travel needs, and with transport providers to improve services and timetables to reflect real-world patterns. It also means recognising that reducing the need to travel long distances can support health, wellbeing and social connection.

Better transport planning also helps businesses attract and retain staff, improves access to customers and suppliers, and facilitates economic growth. Reducing the need to travel, particularly during the busiest peak hours, helps businesses operate more efficiently, improves freight reliability, and supports economic productivity. It benefits freight and delivery operations, making movement of goods more reliable and cost-effective.

Infrastructure alone does not change how people travel^{xlix}. To deliver smarter travel, we must also support the conditions that enable people to confidently use new infrastructure. That means investing in activation activities that help people understand, access and adopt new travel options, such as wayfinding, user research and support, promotional activity and targeted engagement. These are not discretionary extras, but essential components of a transport system that works for people and achieves the LTP vision. Research shows that these measures are also more effective when coupled with infrastructure delivery^l. By allocating a small proportion of capital scheme budgets to activation, we ensure that our investment delivers not just physical assets, but real-world outcomes, helping people and businesses make informed, confident travel decisions, boosting utilisation and ensuring that infrastructure investment translates into inclusive real-world impact.

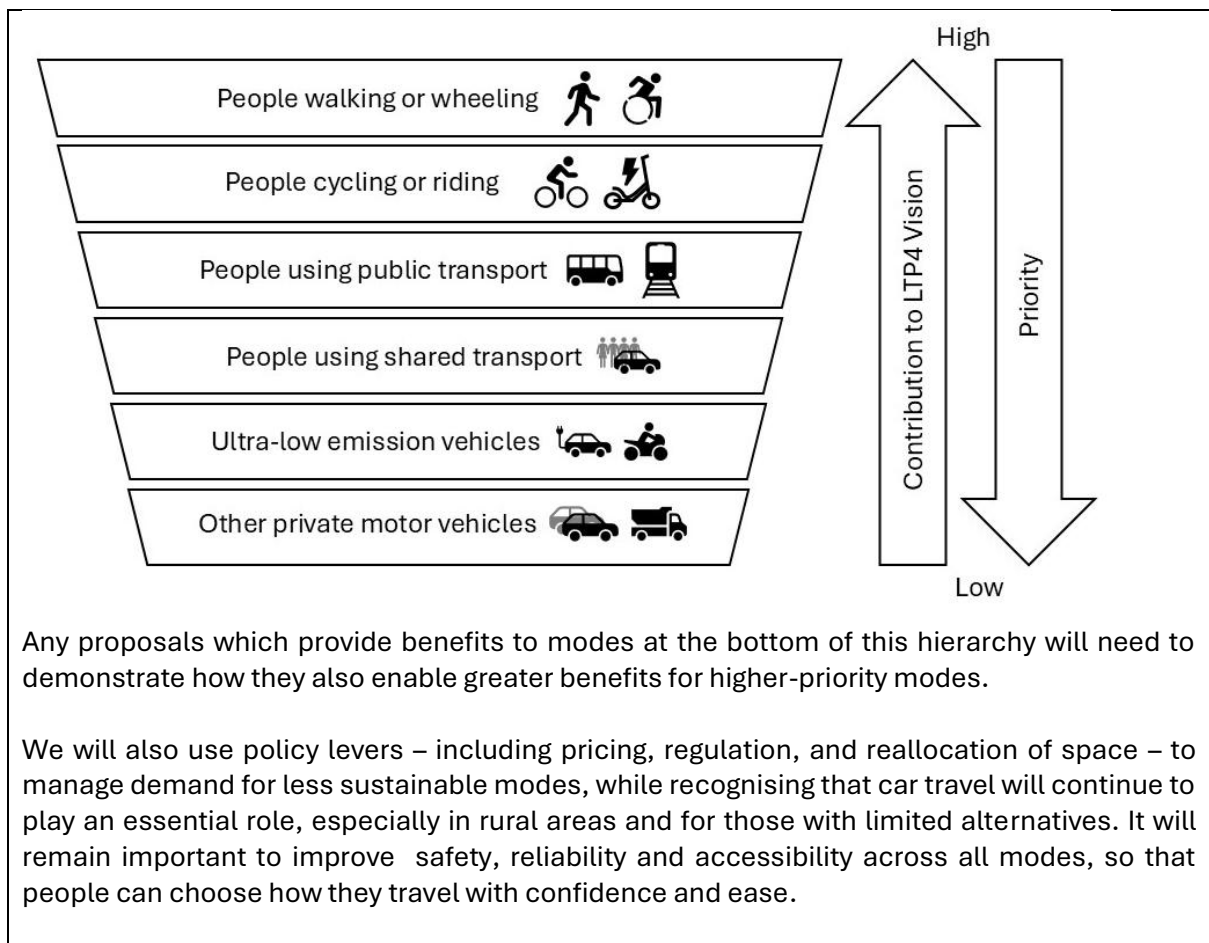
Ultimately, our role is to shape a transport system that gives people and businesses better options, helping communities thrive and supporting a resilient, inclusive economy.

Real choices in how we travel

Core Policy 3

When developing transport initiatives, we will prioritise transport modes that help us build a fairer and more sustainable system for both people and goods. In order of priority, this means:

1. People walking or wheeling (includes powered or unpowered wheelchairs, mobility scooters and rollators)
2. People cycling or riding (including cargo bikes, equestrians, micromobility, and e-bikes)
3. People using public transport (bus, coach, rail and community transport)
4. People using shared transport (car clubs, carpooling and car share)
5. Ultra-low emission vehicles, including electric cars and vans (including private, business and taxi and public hire vehicles)
6. Other private motor vehicles, including petrol and diesel cars and vans (including private, business and taxi and public hire vehicles)



We all travel differently depending on our needs — and real choice matters for mental health, social connection, and access to opportunity. But public engagement has shown that many people feel locked into car use because other options are unavailable, unreliable or unsafe.

This policy is about changing that — not by banning cars, but by improving alternatives and managing demand. While all modes will continue to have a place, our investment and design decisions will prioritise the modes of transport which best align to our vision and priorities. That means:

- Cleaner, healthier modes that reduce emissions and support physical activity.
- Affordable and accessible modes, that avoid dependence on costly car ownership.
- Safer modes that protect vulnerable road users, in line with the Highway Code principle that those operating vehicles with the potential to cause the greatest harm in a collision bear greater responsibility to reduce the danger they pose to others^{li}.

We'll invest in better public transport, safer walking and cycling routes that avoid conflict between users, and EV charging infrastructure that doesn't compromise public space. However, research has demonstrated that improvements to sustainable modes alone is not enough^{lii}. Therefore, at the same time as these improvements, we'll apply fair and proportionate measures - like parking management and road space reallocation - to discourage over-reliance on lower-tier modes where viable alternatives exist.

We recognise that not all modes will be applicable in every situation. For instance, people in rural communities often need to travel further and have fewer public transport options. In this context,

this policy supports ultra-low emission vehicles or shared transport modes where possible, while continuing to invest in active and public transport links that work for rural areas, recognising that residents in rural areas might have to drive to work but still be able to access local shops or schools by walking or wheeling.

Ultimately, our goal is to shape a transport system that gives people and businesses genuine, safe and sustainable choices — helping everyone move around more easily, confidently and responsibly.

This hierarchy applies to all types of transport – passenger and freight. However, our forthcoming Freight Policy Paper will set out how this hierarchy is applied specifically to freight transport, recognising the distinct needs and opportunities within the sector.

Let's join things up: a 'One System' approach

Core Policy 4

We will take a 'One System' approach to transport planning, working closely with operators, neighbouring authorities, and partners to create a joined-up travel experience across all modes and beyond the borough's boundaries. This includes:

- a) Ensuring communities have access to high-quality services and transport links as a foundation for integration.
- b) Developing multimodal hubs and improving interchange facilities (including parking for cars and cycles) to reduce transfer times and improve accessibility.
- c) Aligning timetables and services across bus, rail, and other modes to support smoother journeys, and improving access to real-time information services.
- d) Implementing integrated ticketing solutions, including contactless payment and fare capping, to simplify travel and reduce costs.
- e) Making accurate, accessible transport data available to third-party developers to support better journey planning tools and travel apps
- f) Support cross-boundary journeys and regional coordination, including through opportunities presented by devolution.

All integration measures will be developed in consultation with residents, user groups, and accessibility advocates, and will be underpinned by a commitment to improving the quality and reliability of individual services.

We will also support economic growth by improving connections between employment sites, visitor destinations and transport hubs—making it easier for people to access jobs, services and attractions across the borough and beyond.

Most journeys involve more than one mode of transport—whether it's cycling to a rail station, or utilising Chester's Park and Ride system. But when services feel disconnected, people face higher costs, longer waits, and confusing options. This particularly discourages people from travelling by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport.

A 'joined up' network is about more than infrastructure and service design; it must feel smooth, intuitive and easy to use. Better integration supports not only everyday journeys but also the visitor economy and business operations. Seamless connections between rail stations, bus services, and active travel routes help attract tourists, improve access to retail and hospitality centres, and support workforce mobility across sectors. That's why integration matters—not just in infrastructure, but in how services work together and how people experience them.

We're taking a 'One System' approach to transport planning, coordinating across highways, parking, public transport, rail, and public rights of way. Integration can take many forms:

- **Physical:** multimodal hubs, co-located services, and better interchange design.
- **Operational:** aligned timetables, joint ticketing, and multi-operator coordinationⁱⁱⁱⁱ.
- **Digital:** real-time information, journey planning tools, and contactless payment with fare capping.

We also recognise that travel doesn't stop at the borough boundary, and many trips cross into neighbouring areas. That's why we'll work with regional partners to support cross-boundary journeys and explore opportunities for wider coordination, including making the most of the opportunities presented through Cheshire and Warrington devolution. Collaboration and consultation with partners, residents, user groups, and accessibility advocates will be key to shaping a system that works for everyone.

Making the most of our existing streets

Core Policy 5

We will prioritise investment in our existing highway network to improve safety, support modal shift, maintain essential infrastructure, and increase resilience to climate change. This includes enhancing biodiversity, drainage and green infrastructure as part of street design.

As a general principle, we will not support or promote new road-building schemes or projects that add road space for general traffic. Instead, we will focus on making better use of the network we already have, ensuring it works efficiently and equitably for all users.

Exceptions will only be considered where schemes meet strict criteria, which will be set out in a Policy Paper supporting this Core Strategy. These include demonstrating that:

- a) The scheme has been subject to a robust options appraisal, including demand management alternatives, and is the only effective way to meet a clear and unavoidable need, such as addressing priority road danger hotspots, adapting to climate impacts, or directly providing access to sustainable development.
- b) The design prioritises infrastructure for safe, efficient travel by walking, wheeling and cycling and public transport, in line with Core Policy 3.
- c) Measures are included to prevent increased vehicle speeds on new and existing routes, which lead to higher emissions and more severe collisions.
- d) Wider environmental and social impacts have been carefully considered, in line with Core Policy 7.

All decisions will be guided by evidence, local context, and engagement with communities, ensuring that changes benefit all users and do not disadvantage those who rely on car travel where alternatives are not yet viable.

Cheshire West and Chester benefits from an extensive highway network, with over 1,400 miles of streets and roads connecting our communities, and providing vital access to jobs, services and opportunities. This highway network is essential for all modes of transport, including walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport, freight and private vehicles. It also plays a vital role in supporting business operations, from freight and logistics to retail footfall and visitor access.

Maintaining and improving this network is critical to the functioning of our transport system, and supporting local economic growth while reducing the environmental impact of travel.

However, simply adding more road space for general traffic is not a sustainable solution. Evidence shows that expanding capacity often leads to more car trips, higher emissions, increased road danger and reduced fuel efficiency^{liv}. Over time, congestion returns, and the cycle of expansion continues, undermining efforts to create more inclusive, sustainable communities.

In the longer term, increased road capacity can encourage more dispersed patterns of development^{lv}, making it harder to travel by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport and deepening social exclusion for people who do not own a car². That's why we are shifting our focus: from expanding the network to making better use of what we already have.

This means investing in maintenance, upgrading obsolete infrastructure, and improving how streets and roads are used—especially to support walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. In some urban areas, this will involve reducing the dominance of dual-carriageway highways through residential zones and town centres to improve safety and reduce severance. But such changes must be carefully planned and matched by viable alternatives to car travel.

We also understand that many residents and businesses rely on private vehicles. Reducing road capacity without providing alternatives would be counterproductive. Instead, we will invest in more effective long-term solutions: improving public transport, promoting car clubs, boosting active travel, and managing traffic speeds to make streets safer and more efficient for everyone.

New housing and development must come with the right infrastructure from the outset. Streets should be designed to support sustainable travel and avoid creating car-dependent communities. And as climate change brings new challenges, our network must be resilient, able to cope with flooding, heat and other impacts.

Local issues, local voices

Core Policy 6

We will work in partnership with local communities, stakeholders and transport operators to improve shape a fairer, more responsive transport system. To do this, the Council will:

- a) Involve affected communities in the design of transport plans, ensuring the views of residents, businesses, and underrepresented groups are properly represented.
- b) We will work directly with local business communities to understand and address specific transport challenges they face, such as freight access, staff commuting patterns, customer connectivity, and delivery reliability.
- c) Tailor engagement to local contexts, including rural areas and public transport users, using inclusive, accessible, targeted consultation methods.
- d) Treat engagement as an ongoing conversation, not a one-off event. This means keeping communities informed about transport options, demonstrating how their views have influenced decisions, and supporting behaviour change.
- e) Empower communities to take part in shaping their local transport networks and neighbourhoods, including through volunteering, co-design and locally-led initiatives.

² 1 in 6 households in Cheshire West and Chester do not own a car or van and ownership is lower in more deprived areas. Most households (58%) have one car/van or fewer. People in less deprived areas tend to own more cars and drive more often than people in deprived areas. (Census 2021)

All engagement will be guided by principles of inclusion, transparency and respect, ensuring that decisions reflect the lived experiences of the people they affect. We will aim to understand a true picture of the community's views, including under-represented groups and minorities, and ensure all feedback is taken into account in decision-making.

Transport affects everyone, but not always in the same way. Rural communities, young people, disabled residents, and people with lower incomes often face unique challenges that are overlooked in traditional transport planning. That's why we're committed to listening to a wide range of voices and ensuring they help shape the future of our transport system.

We also recognise that transport planning is a shared responsibility. The Council cannot deliver change alone. That's why we'll continue to work with operators, businesses, and community groups to identify and address local transport issues. We will collaborate with business networks and employers to co-design transport interventions that support recruitment, retention, and operational efficiency, recognising that transport is a key enabler of business success.

We're already seeing the benefits of this approach:

- The Highways Volunteer Scheme, which empowers community groups, through town or parish councils, to support maintenance of local streets, ensuring their neighbourhoods remain the special, beautiful and lively places they value^{lvi}.
- The Enhanced Partnership for buses, which brings operators and stakeholders together to improve services to create a quicker, more reliable, more accessible bus network^{lvii}.
- The Poverty Truth Advisory Board and Community Inspirers network, which ensure lived experience informs Council decisions, operating on the principle of "Nothing about us, without us, is for us"^{lviii}.

By working together, we can overcome barriers and build a transport system that reflects the needs and aspirations of every community.

Protecting our people, our neighbourhood and our environment

Core Policy 7

We will ensure that all new transport proposals we promote or support give due regard to environmental, social and health considerations, supported by sustainability and equality appraisals. Our transport system and the networks that comprise it will contribute to healthier, safer and more inclusive communities, and protect the natural and built environment.

In developing transport initiatives, we will seek to ensure that new proposals:

- Protect and enhance important landscapes, habitats, heritage and cultural sites.
- Improve environmental quality, climate resilience and access to nature, including through green infrastructure, trees, biodiverse habitats, and sustainable drainage. Transport initiatives should align with and deliver on the [Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#).
- Promote inclusivity and affordability, improving access to services, boosting social interaction, enabling physical activity and reducing barriers for vulnerable groups.
- Improve safety and reduce the negative impacts of traffic, particularly in residential areas, by addressing road danger, community severance and public safety concerns.

All major proposals will be assessed for their impact on equality, health, biodiversity and climate resilience, ensuring that transport supports vibrant, connected and liveable places.

Transport shapes the places we live, the health we experience, and the opportunities we can access. High traffic volumes in residential areas can cause distress, reduce safety, and undermine wellbeing. That's why this Plan recognises the importance of quality transport networks in creating and protecting distinctive, beautiful, vibrant places that people value.

We will work with partners to improve access to essential services and to nature, recognising that transport is a key enabler of healthcare equity and mental health. Affordability and reliability are central to this, especially for those without access to private vehicles.

Transport also offers opportunities to enhance our environment, delivering on the [Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#). We will use infrastructure to connect green spaces, improve biodiversity, and strengthen climate resilience. This includes maintaining trees, improving drainage, and increasing street-level greenery—especially in urban areas like Ellesmere Port, Chester and Winsford, where access to nature is limited^{lix}.

There are a range of environmental and social considerations which should be taken into account in the design and development of new proposals and transport network changes, including:

- Climate change, noise, and air quality (both local and wider impacts resulting from diffuse pollution over a greater area).
- Biodiversity, flora and fauna – including ensuring developments leave nature better off.
- Water, including water quality and flooding, and land resources.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Infrastructure.
- Equality and inclusivity.
- Landscape, townscape, heritage and the historic environment.

We will take a co-design approach, working with residents, health professionals, environmental groups and partners to shape transport solutions that contribute to beautiful, distinctive and vibrant places.

Further detail on the environmental and social implications of this Plan is set out in Appendix 5.

7. Delivering on this Core Strategy

This Core Strategy has set out the overall vision, priorities and core policies which will inform our approach to transport over the coming years. Our LTP4 Strategy is completed by a series of Policy Papers, which set out how the Core Strategy will impact detailed policy for different modes and important topic areas – including bus, highways, rural travel and road safety.

In addition to these Policy Papers, LTP4 will be supported by a series of delivery plans, which will set out specific interventions required to implement our strategic approach. These will be developed and updated throughout the lifetime of LTP4.

They could include:

- Area-based plans – for example, for a particular settlement or area of growth. These will build on the area statements set out in Section 5 of this Core Strategy.
- Programme-based plans – for example, refreshing our existing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan or Highways Asset Management Plan, or interventions to support a particular economic sector or to address a specific issue (such as road safety).

A detailed LTP4 Implementation Plan will be published on a regular basis. This will bring together the activities and interventions to be delivered against each of these documents over a medium-term time horizon, along with details of the funding that is secured or will need to be sought, and will set out a monitoring and evaluation trajectory to ensure delivery against the vision of this Core Strategy remains on track.

8. Appendices

The following appendices are published alongside this Core Strategy:

- Appendix 1 – Consultation and Engagement Report
- Appendix 2 – Local Transport Plan 4 Evidence Base
- Appendix 3 – Policy Review
- Appendix 4 – Local Transport Plan 3 Review
- Appendix 5 – Integrated Sustainability Appraisal/ Habitats Regulations Assessment

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