

Thatcham Town Council response to the draft West Berkshire Council draft Local Transport (LTP4) Strategy 2024-2039

Your Views		
	Please state the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:	
a	The existing Local Transport Plan should be updated	Strongly agree
	<i>Thatcham Town Council Comment</i>	It s clear that many things have changed fundamentally since the current Local Transport Plan LTP3 was approved in 2011 – including the declaration by both West Berkshire and Thatcham Town Councils of a climate emergency, the Government’s announcement of the end of sales of new petrol and diesel cars in 2030, and the increased focus on active travel.
b	You have a good choice of Travel Options?	Disagree
	<i>Thatcham Town Council Comment</i>	As described in following responses, there is no evening bus service between Newbury and Thatcham, and the cycle lanes along the A4 are not continuous.
	The following are important transport considerations to me:	
a	Clean air	Strongly agree
b	Safe access to schools	Strongly agree
c	Pedestrian facilities	Strongly agree
d	Cycle facilities	Strongly agree
e	Access to public transport	Strongly agree
f	Access to a car	Agree
g	Car parking	Agree
h	Reducing carbon emissions	Strongly agree
	<i>Thatcham Town Council Comment</i>	These are all essential aspects of a transport strategy, and it is difficult to see how anybody could rationally disagree with any of them.

		We have given less weight to 'Access to a car' and 'Car parking' because, if the strategies for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport are successful, the need to travel by car will reduce.
The LTP Strategy - Vision & Objectives		
	The draft Local Transport Plan Strategy is vision led and aims to communicate the priorities we propose to focus on.	
	Do you agree these are clearly explained?	No
	Please tell us what could be explained more clearly and how?	The phrase 'vision-led' is meaningless management-speak. For the Strategy to be 'vision-led', it needs to contain elements that are visionary, and therefore also distinctive. There is nothing in this draft strategy that distinguishes it from what a consultancy might write for any Highways Authority in UK, and many of the 'objectives' are little more than statutory requirements. Focussing on certain priorities implicitly means that some other aspects are given lower priority. These four priorities are so broad that it is unclear what aspects fall outside them, and are therefore what is not a priority. If every objective is designated a high priority, then none of them is actually a high priority.
	Do you agree with the chosen priorities?	
a	Creates Places for People	Agree
b	Provide Sustainable Access for All	Agree
c	Decarbonise Transport	Agree
d	Support Sustainable Growth	Agree
	Please tell us the reasons for your responses.	These priorities are certainly important, but we cannot 'strongly agree' with them without knowing what is not a priority.
	Please tell us what other priorities you would like to see included and why.	Maintaining the road network in good condition. This is the issue that residents of Thatcham most frequently raise with the Town Council If the road network is genuinely maintained in good condition, potholes will not often occur, so there will be no need to fill them. It is important that repairs to potholes are durable, not just temporary patches. It is also

		important for road safety that road markings are re-painted when they start to fade, and before they become unreadable or invisible.
	Do you agree with the proposed objectives associated with our priorities?	
	Places for People	
a	To put people's health and wellbeing at the centre of the strategy. Central to this is Vision Zero, for no one to be seriously or fatally injured on the West Berkshire highway network.	Strongly agree
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	We assume that this objective applies to the West Berkshire Council's highway network. The M4 and A34 are managed by Highways England, and therefore outside of the influence of the Council – as well as being the most likely locations of serious accidents.
b	To create safer residential and school streets that will also create quieter and better places to live and ensure children and young people can walk and cycle to school safely.	Strongly agree
c	To reduce the dominance of vehicles in centres where change can support vibrancy and the local economy	Strongly agree
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	West Berkshire Council has commissioned Hemingway Design to develop a place-making strategy for Thatcham. Supporting the vibrancy of Thatcham town centre and its local economy is the key objective of this project, and one of its key recommendations will be to reduce the dominance of vehicles in The Broadway and on the A4. Thatcham Town Council understands that the report by Hemingway Design will offer several options to achieving this objective, and we look forward to working with West Berkshire Council to deliver it.
d	To contribute to increasing physical activity, providing benefits to people's health, improved mental wellbeing,	Strongly agree

	better concentration levels and productivity	
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	Thatcham Town Council welcomes the objective to “Improve walking and cycling links from Newbury and Thatcham to Greenham Common and to the Eling Way”. This objective also falls within the scope of the West Berkshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the extension of the Eling Way is included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It is important that objectives that are included in several Council policies are cross-referenced, to avoid duplication or them ‘falling through the gaps’.
e	Please tell us the reasons for your responses.	
	Sustainable Access for All	
a	To support improved digital connectivity, and facilitate the role of technology in helping people to access services and transforming the transport system	Neutral
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	There are already signs displaying the next departures at the stops in Thatcham town centre, and there is a Newbury Buses app. Therefore, this objective seems already to have been largely delivered. It is unclear what further is needed, so this should be a relatively low priority.
b	To give people choices about how they travel, increasing access to public transport and shared mobility.	Support
c	To make door to door journeys easier through a seamless interchange between travel modes, particularly at bus and railway stations and improve the attractiveness of public transport vehicles.	Strongly support
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	The two objectives “to give people choices about how they travel...” and “to make door to door journeys easier ...” are effectively two halves of the same objective.

		<p>None of the bus services in Thatcham pass either Thatcham or Newbury stations, and the Jet Black bus takes around an hour to reach Reading station from Thatcham. This needs to be addressed, to provide any interchange between transport nodes.</p> <p>The other aspect of increasing access to public transport are addressed in the Town Council’s comments on frequency of bus services and their availability in the evening.</p> <p>We do not understand why “improve the attractiveness of public transport vehicles” is a priority.</p>
d	To enable everyone to move around on an attractive and integrated sustainable travel network	Support
e	Please tell us the reasons for your responses.	
	Decarbonise Transport	
a	To support the transition of the transport sector to net zero through a combination of infrastructure improvements and behavioural change	Strongly support
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	<p>The promotion of active travel has two distinct objectives: to improve health and wellbeing and to reduce traffic congestion. The Transport Plan should focus on the second of these objectives, and should therefore include e-bikes and e-scooters within the measurement of percentage of trips.</p> <p>Electric bikes encompass a far wider range of modes of transport than just bicycles with a motor in their hub. We have already seen e-cargo bikes in use for parcel delivery around Thatcham. This type of vehicle could form part of the wider range of modes of transport. Therefore, active travel schemes for cycles need to be suitable for all types of cycle described in Figure 5.2 of Department for Transport Local Transport Note 1/20 ‘Cycle Infrastructure Design’, not only bicycles.</p>
b	To have 50% of trips in Newbury and Thatcham made by active travel	Strongly support
c	To support widespread access to zero emission charging facilities and vehicles	Strongly support
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	<p>The UK Government has announced the end of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in the UK by 2030. By 2039, almost all cars will require access to a charging facility. A significant proportion of households in Thatcham have no off-street parking on their property, and need to park on the street. West Berkshire Council</p>

		<p>will need to do more than ‘supporting’ access to kerbside charging points – it will need to take the lead in providing them.</p> <p>In order to plan for this, the Council will need to know how many households in the district do not have off-street parking on their property. It is therefore very disappointing that this is not addressed in the Evidence Base document (perhaps because it would need some real research, rather than just copying data from publicly available sources).</p>
d	Please tell us the reasons for your responses.	For comments on 50% of trips being active travel, see below under ‘Newbury and Thatcham (urban area)’.
	Support Sustainable Growth	
a	To support sustainable growth including carbon neutral development, which means new development should not add to current carbon challenge	Neutral
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	This seems more relevant to Planning Policy than Transport Policy
b	To protect and enhance strategic connectivity, as the movement of people, goods and services in and through the district is vital to the economy	Strongly support
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	<p>This should include finding a solution to the serious traffic delays at the level crossing at Thatcham Station.</p> <p>On 8th March 2021, West Berkshire Council held a Q&A session on the Local Plan Review, using Facebook Live. In response to questions about these traffic delays, the following answers were given:</p> <p>“The Council has said that the issue of the railway crossing will be addressed by the Local Transport Plan which is due to be reviewed soon.”</p> <p>“Possible mitigation measures [to the proposed North East Thatcham development] have not included a bridge over the railway. The question of a bridge will be considered through the review of the Local Transport Plan.”</p> <p>A transcript was made of this event, which indicates that it was a considered to be a significant element of consultation on the development of the draft Local Plan (as described in the Statement of Community Involvement).</p> <p>This transcript is found as a hyperlink on this web page for the draft Local Plan Review:</p>

		https://www.westberks.gov.uk/local-plan-review-2039 or directly from the following link: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/50886/Q-A-for-on-Local-Plan-review-from-the-public-updated-21-May-2021/pdf/Q__A_on_Local_Plan_review_updated_21_May_2021.pdf?
c	To support improving freight, including the transition to more sustainable modes and the management of freight in and through urban centres	Strongly Support
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	This should include measures to discourage or prevent heavy goods vehicles from travelling through the centre of Thatcham on the A4.
d	To support innovation and the piloting of new measures, giving people first-hand experience of the benefits that new measures can bring, enabling greater public involvement and more dynamic and cost-effective ways of delivering new interventions	Support
	Thatcham Town Council Comment	This objective should be embedded in the Council's strategy for all aspects of its work, and should therefore not need to be stated in the Transport Plan.
	Please tell us the reasons for your responses.	See above
	Are there any other objectives you think we should be considering?	Yes
	Please tell us what other objectives you would like to see included and why.	To support the priority proposed by Thatcham Town Council of 'Maintaining the road network in good condition', there should be objectives for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the maximum time to repair a highways defect after it is reported. - The average lifetime of repairs (especially potholes).

	The LTP Strategy - Objectives as proposed for Places	
	You have just told us whether you agree or disagree with the objectives in the draft Local Transport Plan Strategy. The next few questions let you express your agreement or disagreement with the strategy for each of the Places within the district	
	Strategic Connectivity (road and rail)	
a	Access for All (with bullets)	Strongly support
b	Decarb Transport (with bullets)	Neutral
c	Support Sus Growth (with bullets)	Neutral
d	Free text for any other comments	<p>Thatcham Town Council strongly supports service improvements to Thatcham Station, We strongly support enhancing the bus frequency between Newbury-Thatcham-Reading, though we believe that the top priority should be the provision of an evening service.</p> <p>The Eling Way, while important, is hardly ‘strategic connectivity’; it would be more appropriate within the ‘Rural areas’ section.</p> <p>West Berkshire Council has little influence over the other aspects of strategic connectivity, so they should not be priorities.</p>
	Newbury and Thatcham (urban area)	
a	50% Active Travel	Strongly support
	<i>Thatcham Town Council comment</i>	<p>Hemingway Design has identified that crossing the A4 is currently a major obstacle for residents in the north of the town to walk or cycle to the town centre or station.</p> <p>Over the last two years, West Berkshire Council has implemented active travel schemes along the A4 through Thatcham, which have been supported by Thatcham Town Council. However, the route is incomplete, and much of it has no physical separation from vehicles – which include a large number of heavy goods vehicles. It is therefore unsuitable for less confident cyclists. It will be difficult to solve this – even by 2039 – because the constraints include buildings that are immediately beside the road.</p>

		<p>Active travel is seasonal – only the most dedicated cyclists and walkers use these modes of travel when it is icy, raining or very hot. The increase in the average number of motor vehicles per household that is predicted in Road Traffic Forecasts 2018, and the greater variety of vehicle types (including some that do not require a driving licence), may reduce the propensity of residents for active travel.</p> <p>The West Berkshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) assumes that walking has the potential to replace trips made by other modes of up to 2km in length. However, this is still quite a long distance, because it corresponds to a walk of half an hour or more.</p> <p>To achieve 50% active travel within Thatcham, and between Thatcham and Newbury, it will be necessary to address these issues.</p> <p>The Town Council would support an e-scooter hire scheme for the Newbury and Thatcham area, as mentioned in paragraph 8.12. While the schemes in London and major cities have attracted the most attention, we note that some of the trials have been for smaller communities (e.g. Crewkerne) or for extended areas (e.g. the Isle of Wight).</p>
b	Access for All (with bullets)	Strongly agree
	Thatcham Town Council comment	<p>Paragraph 8.8 of the draft Transport Plan is factually incorrect – there is no ‘late evening’ bus service serving Thatcham. The last bus to Thatcham from Newbury leaves at 20.25 on Monday to Saturday, and 19.00 on Sunday. There are evening rail services between Newbury and Thatcham stations, but Thatcham station is at the edge of the town and beyond walking distance for most of its residents.</p> <p>The Town Council would warmly welcome a 15-minute bus frequency between Newbury and Thatcham. However, we believe that an evening service is a higher priority.</p> <p>In contrast, the smaller communities at the east of the district are served by late evening services departing from central Reading:</p> <p>Calcot: 02:50, every day (Reading Buses Yellow 26)</p> <p>Theale: 22:30, Monday to Saturday (Reading Buses Jet Black 1)</p> <p>Mortimer: 23:00, Monday to Saturday (Reading Buses Lime 2)</p> <p>Purley: 23.22, every day (Reading Buses Sky Blue 16)</p> <p>We understand that these are the termination points of bus services provided by Reading Borough Council primarily for its residents. It should be an objective of West Berkshire Council to provide comparable services for residents of Thatcham (though perhaps not after midnight).</p>
c	Decarb Transport (with Bullets)	Strongly agree
	Thatcham Town Council comment	EV in areas with limited off-street parking is important. See our earlier response.
d	Support Sus Growth (with bullets)	Neutral

e	Free text for any other comments	It is premature to include North East Thatcham in the Transport Plan before the new Local Plan has been adopted. We do not understand the relationship between biodiversity and “new approaches to delivery”.
	Rural Areas (AONB and service centres)	
a	Places for People	Neutral
b	Access for All (with bullets)	Neutral
c	Decarb Transport (with bullets)	Neutral
d	Support Sus Growth (with bullets)	Neutral
e	Free text for any other comments	
	Eastern Area (bordering Reading, incl. Theale)	
a	Places for People	Neutral
b	Access for All (with bullets)	Neutral
c	Decarb Transport (with Bullets)	Neutral
d	Support Sus Growth (with bullets)	Neutral
e	Free text for any other comments	
Your response in delivering the draft LTP strategy		
	Is there anything you, or your organisation where applicable, could do to help us to deliver this draft LTP strategy, including any of the additional priorities or associated objectives you may have suggested above?	Yes
	Do you have any further comments?	Connected and Autonomous Vehicles , or ‘driverless cars’

	<p>The period of the Local Transport Plan extends to 2039. By then, it is likely that connected and autonomous vehicles ('driverless cars') will be operating on roads in West Berkshire. The first application is likely to be for 'platooning' of lorries on motorways and trunk roads, but it is likely that by 2039 there will be connected and autonomous vehicles operating in some locations on the West Berkshire Council highway network.</p> <p>It may be too early for the Transport Plan to go into detail, but this development should at least be mentioned.</p> <p>As part of its work on the Vision 2050 for the draft Local Plan Review, Icen Projects Ltd conducted a survey that asked about driverless vehicles, sustainable public transport and sustainable private taxis. Thatcham Town Council provided the following response. Although this addresses the 2050 timeframe, it is likely that these trends will already be emerging by 2039:</p> <p>By 2050, it is likely that driverless vehicles will be widespread, and perhaps almost universal in urban areas. This will result in substantial changes in modes of travel, including convergence between privately owned cars, car pools, public transport and taxis. However, the Vision also needs to address the period up to 2050; for the early part all vehicles will have drivers, followed by a mix of driven and driverless vehicles.</p> <p>The driver forms a substantial part of the current cost of both taxis and public transport. If vehicles become driverless, then many new opportunities emerge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The distinction between a car pool and a taxi service disappears, because anybody can 'call' a driverless car, which can then take them to their destination – regardless of age or infirmity.- The ready availability of hired or pool vehicles that arrive at your door when needed will reduce the need for people to own their own vehicles, and may also reduce their desire to do so.- People can therefore select the appropriate vehicle for the journey that they are about to make, from a single seat vehicle (possibly similar to current e-cargo bikes) for a visit to shops, to a people carrier for a family holiday.- Public transport vehicles can become smaller, and services more frequent. It is possible that public transport as currently understood might become redundant, replaced completely by 'on-call' driverless vehicles. <p>'Pool' driverless vehicles will need places to 'park' when they are not in use. These will probably not be supervised by a person, so they could not be recharged by a plug-in cable. Technologies are already being trialled for the robotic replacement of an empty battery by a fully charged one, and for wireless charging. Both of these will need to take place off the street. The layout of future developments must therefore reserve space for off-road parking and charging bays for 'pool' driverless vehicles, when they become feasible.</p> <p>A major challenge to the feasibility of driverless vehicles is how they respond safely to unexpected situations. A common cause of unexpected situations is on-street parking, and especially children and pets that emerge suddenly from behind a parked vehicle. This is another reason why it is essential that all houses have enough parking space for all of the residents' vehicles.</p>
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