

St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy

9th September 2008

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Introduction

This is second St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy. It has been driven, through public consultation, by the residents of St Neots along with local stakeholders and interest groups. Public consultation has also been used to ensure that the schemes contained in the strategy are appropriate for the town and to inform a priority order for their implementation.

Aims of the strategy

This new St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy forms part of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11 (LTP). The aims of the LTP are therefore taken forward as aims of this strategy. These are:

- To create a transport system that is accessible to all.
- To protect and enhance the built and natural environment.
- To develop integrated transport and to promote public transport, walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of transport.
- To make travel safer.
- To maintain and operate efficient transport networks.
- To provide a transport system that supports the economy and the growing population of the County.

In pursuing these aims, the strategy should contribute towards the economic growth and prosperity of the town and its surroundings. Improving accessibility to key services, such as schools, and town centre activities, such as shopping will also help to reduce social exclusion and the problems

associated with it. Providing increased opportunities for walking and cycling will also contribute to the health of the people within the town.

The strategy provides a programme of schemes to be implemented up to 2011 from LTP funding and other funding sources. The programme has been formulated to support the objectives of the LTP and complement the works already carried out and contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the town.

Background

St Neots is situated in Huntingdonshire district at the western edge of Cambridgeshire, close to the border with Bedfordshire. It is the largest of Cambridgeshire's market towns with a population of 28,000, a figure that could rise to significantly in the next twenty years.



The number of dwellings in the town has been rising year on year for over 20 years, and this pattern is likely to increase as land is allocated for development under the Local Development Framework (LDF). Currently most development (including the current Love's Farm site) has taken place close to the existing urban area, with most dwellings continuing to be within 4km of the town centre.

Further development could occur in the area south of Love's Farm and north of the A428, and at Little Paxton, placing greater demand on the transport network. Developer funding via Section 106 agreements may become available during the life of the strategy through these developments for use in the provision of transport infrastructure to mitigate the effects of increased pressure on the network.

St Neots is an important shopping centre for the area attracting visitors from the surrounding villages, particularly on market days (Thursdays). There is also a strong industrial economy with two main industrial parks and gravel extraction at Little Paxton, and an increasingly prosperous tourist trade.

Many people who work in the town also live in the town or in one of the radial villages. The topography of the town and surrounding area is ideal for walking and cycling.

Travel to, from and within St Neots

St Neots is well connected to the national rail network. The railway station is on the East Coast Mainline, with links to Huntingdon and Peterborough (inter alia), and a direct half-hourly service to London. The railway station is only 1.5km from the town centre. The link to London has made St Neots a popular place for rail commuters, including those accessing the station in St Neots from Cambourne and the surrounding rural areas. This has resulted in St Neots becoming a significant railhead for the local area.

Bus services are frequent between St Neots and Cambridge, with regular links also to Bedford and Huntingdon. Services within the town have seen improvement in recent years, with a new route being implemented as part of the first St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy. This provides a fast and frequent (every 20 minutes) service from Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford to the town centre. However the more rural villages are less well served by public transport with some smaller villages such as Diddington receiving only one bus a week on market days. These rural accessibility issues were brought up frequently during the public consultation.

St Neots has good links to the strategic road network, with the A1 providing a western bypass and the A428 a southern bypass. Despite this, traffic movement through the town can still be problematic, with 14,000 car journeys along the high street on a daily basis. This results in the town centre becoming congested, with associated air quality and road safety problems. There is an Air Quality Management Area on the High Street and three accident cluster sites in the central area. The location of the car parks contributes to the need to travel along the High Street, as there is no parking to the south of the town centre. The consultation process suggested that there are high levels of public concern over pollution levels and traffic on the High Street.

Due to the town's flat topography and compact nature, it is in many ways ideal for walking and cycling; however the respective modal shares of these methods of transport are still low. On average only 2% of journeys within the town are made by bike and 4% on foot (although this rises in the town centre). Under the first strategy there has been considerable investment in cycle / pedestrian facilities, and while some routes and facilities are very well used, others have attracted less use than was hoped for.

The River Great Ouse and the railway line both present significant barriers to east – west travel in the town. This discourages the use of sustainable transport modes due to the need to travel to a bridge lengthening many journeys, particularly for those living in the south of the town.

Though considerable investment has been made under the first strategy with a number of schemes being carried out, there is still much that can potentially be done to improve transport in St Neots. This second strategy aims to build on the work already carried out by continuing to address the key transport problems in the town at the present time.

Transport issues in St Neots

To support the growth of St Neots, encourage economic vitality and enhance the environment in and around the town, it is important that transport infrastructure and services meet the needs of the population and keeps pace with development.



There are a number of key transport issues that the strategy will seek to address by delivering specific schemes and measures for implementation. These issues have been identified through consultation with County, District and Town Council Members and officers, surrounding Parish Councils, key stakeholders including local businesses and the public. The main issues identified in the development of this revised strategy are:

- Congestion in the town centre resulting in air quality problems on the High Street.
- Road safety in the town centre, particularly with reference to the three accident cluster sites and the high proportion of accidents involving vulnerable road users.
- Low modal share of cycling and walking despite the compact nature of the town, its relatively flat topography, and the relatively porous layout of the residential areas.
- Limited opportunity for cycle / pedestrian river crossing to the south of the town centre. There is a pedestrian/cycle bridge at Coneygeare but the facility does not provide a significant advantage to cyclists or pedestrians from the southern areas of the town.
- Single road crossing of the Great Ouse within the town.
- Lack of easily available bus route and timetable information. This is partly due to the absence of a bus station and much of the information available at the bus stops is out of date or difficult to read.
- Poor public transport services to and from many of the outlying villages.

- Poor timing of services, particularly for morning commuters and leisure trips in the evening.
- Problems with goods vehicles accessing the High Street and a lack of freight signage.
- Parking in the town on market days is at capacity, and parking at the station on weekdays is beyond capacity.

The strategy seeks to address these issues where it can. It is important to note that it will not be able to provide a solution to every problem, but it can seek to identify the transport infrastructure the town will need if major development comes forward. This in turn will allow a robust policy basis for the achievement of transport improvements and funding as part of the planning process for new development.

Links with other policies and programmes

The strategy is planned to link in with a number of schemes and studies currently being carried out in the area, these include:

- The Huntingdonshire Market Towns Parking Strategy that aims to provide possible solutions to the parking problems in the market towns.
- The Accident Remedial Scheme that has been implemented in the town centre, aimed at reducing the quantity of accidents occurring in the area, particularly at the cluster sites.
- Development such as Loves Farm and the future allocation of land under the LDF, as well as the proposed Priory area development.
- The County Council's Home to School Transport Strategy
- The County Council's Freight Management Strategy

The strategy

The following sections outline the programme areas and schemes that form the revised St Neots Market Town Transport Strategy. These schemes are prioritised within their sections and an indicative cost (as of 2007) is given. Some have been brought forward from the last strategy, whilst others are recent innovations arising from current need and consultation with the District and Town Councils, local stakeholders and the community.

Road safety and traffic

Road safety and accident reduction are important aims in themselves, but safer roads also encourage cycling and walking. Public perception that the roads are unsafe for vulnerable users is a known barrier to cycle use and came up frequently during public consultation. Pedestrians often cite safety as a major area of concern.

These concerns are reflected in the fact that a significant proportion of accidents in the town centre involve pedestrians and cyclists. This is particularly true of the accident cluster sites on the High Street, the High Street / Huntingdon Street / Church Street / Cambridge Road junction and Huntingdon Street. Both pedestrians and cyclists suffer from high accident rates in comparison with their modal share, in the period 2003 – 2005 cyclists were involved in 16% of accidents in the town centre, whilst making up only 1% of the traffic.

Under the first strategy a small number of safety schemes were implemented, most notable among which were the improvements to the B1046 Potton Road / Cromwell Road junction. However, these schemes concentrated on four very specific areas, all of which were to the east of the town, and were limited in their scope. All the areas now suffer from a lower density of accidents than the town centre in general and the cluster sites in particular (2003 – 2005 data). Accident rates in the rest of the town (outside the centre) are not high, with most being slight or no-injury incidents.



Almost all road accidents in the St Neots area that resulted in fatalities in the period 2003 – 2005 occurred on the A1, which is managed by the Highways Agency.¹

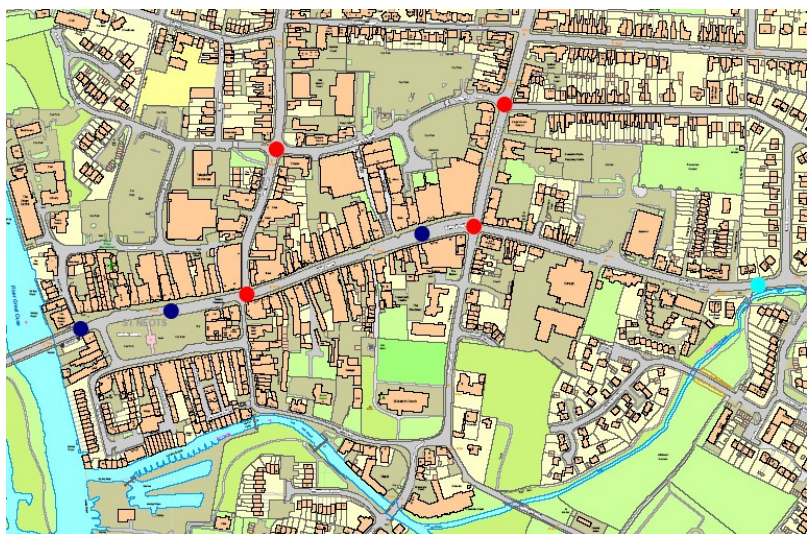
It is important for the economic vitality of the town that workers, shoppers and visitors can access the town centre easily and safely. It is also important for them to be able to do this in a sustainable way, in order to move away from the current high traffic flows (14,000 vehicles a day travel along the High Street) with associated congestion and pollution problems.

In order to improve the safety record of the town centre, the strategy will seek to build on the existing Accident Remedial Scheme (ARS) that has already been implemented in the area. The ARS concentrates on the stretch of road between the Cambridge Road / Huntingdon Road / High Street junction to the far end of Market Square. It introduced a 20mph speed limit, and crossing upgrades and junction improvements along Market Square, High Street and Huntingdon Road.




Proposed improvements

The new strategy will extend the ARS by upgrading the existing Urban Traffic Control (UTC) system within St Neots to include the four main town centre junctions that are the most significant barriers to traffic flow. These junctions would be linked both to each other and to crossings already on the UTC system, providing a coherent traffic movement system through the town. Map 1 shows the area that would be covered by the scheme, and Table 1 summarises the proposals

Map 1 Town centre junctions and crossings included in the Town Centre traffic control scheme



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	Junctions connected using SCOOT software to provide a coordinated loop through the town allowing traffic to pass through more efficiently and reducing build up of traffic.
	Crossings included in the SCOOT network to provide a clear run through the town centre.
	Crossing upgraded and connected to the UTC system and SCOOT to provide better facilities for pedestrians and allow traffic to leave the town centre easily.

This system would control the traffic passing through the town centre, facilitating flow and reducing congestion particularly around junctions. Traffic would be allowed through the town in convoys, with queues being stored just outside the central area. The coordination of the lights would mean that once a convoy was moving through the town centre, it would not be stopped frequently by traffic signals.

The reduction of start-stop and stationary traffic on town centre roads would bring with it a number of benefits, including:

- Reduced need for pedestrians to cross between cars
- Reduced temptation for motorists to stop on pedestrian crossings
- Reduced need for cyclists to weave between vehicles to make progress

¹ A serious accident is one resulting in injuries that require treatment at hospital. It is a slight accident if the parties can be treated at the road-side or later by their GP.

- Making junctions easier to negotiate for vulnerable road users as they are less likely to become blocked
- Reduced frustration among motorists as they would not be stopped as often
- Less frustration means motorists are less likely to jump red lights and so come into conflict with pedestrians and other road users.

Table 1 Town Centre Traffic Control / Safety improvements

Priority	Scheme	Cost
1	<p>Upgrade of four junctions in town centre: These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Place/ New Street/High Street • Tebutts Road/Tan Yard/New Street, • Tebutts Road/Huntingdon Road • Huntingdon Road/High Street/Cambridge Street <p>These will be connected to the existing Urban Traffic Control System (UTC) using SCOOT to increase coordination between the sites and so reduce congestion. This would require replacement of the street furniture and new controllers.</p>	£640K
2	<p>Connect three crossings to UTC system: These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Square near the River Bridge • Market Square near Market Place • High Street Near Church Walk <p>Once the junctions mentioned above have been refurbished these crossings could be added to the UTC using SCOOT. There is little value in this if the four junctions are not upgraded and also connected to the UTC</p>	£30K
3	<p>Refurbish crossing on Cambridge Street near Cambridge Gardens: This would result in a better crossing point for pedestrians and could be added onto the UTC using SCOOT at little extra cost. There is little value without the junctions being connected to the UTC.</p>	£80K
4	<p>Upgrade of Crossing facilities at four sites: These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Neots Road (Eaton Ford) • Great North Road near Bushmead Road (Eaton Socon) • Great North Road near St Mary's Church (Eaton Socon) • Cromwell Road near Henbrook Road <p>These require refurbishment and could be upgraded to Puffin or Toucan crossings. They do not all need to be done at the same time and will cost between £50K and £70K each.</p>	£280K

Being able to store stationary traffic outside the town centre could also significantly reduce air quality problems on the High Street. Currently the canyon effect created by buildings along the High Street preventing pollution from dispersing can result in severe build-ups of pollutants, particularly in summer.

During stakeholder and public consultation this scheme saw high levels of support from both motorists and pedestrians, with 88% of consultees expressing support. Benefits to the town centre from the implementation of this scheme would be significant. Table 1 sets out the elements of the scheme along with costs.

Safer Routes to School

Many schools in St Neots have taken part in the safer routes to school scheme and have adopted travel plans. This work will continue under the new strategy, with particular reference to the recent Home to School Transport strategy.

Through local consultation and research, and from analysis of existing accessibility data, we know that that some wards in the strategy area suffer from poor access to schools, particularly secondary education establishments. As can be seen in maps 2 and 3, the area most affected by poor accessibility is the ward of Gransden and the Offords.

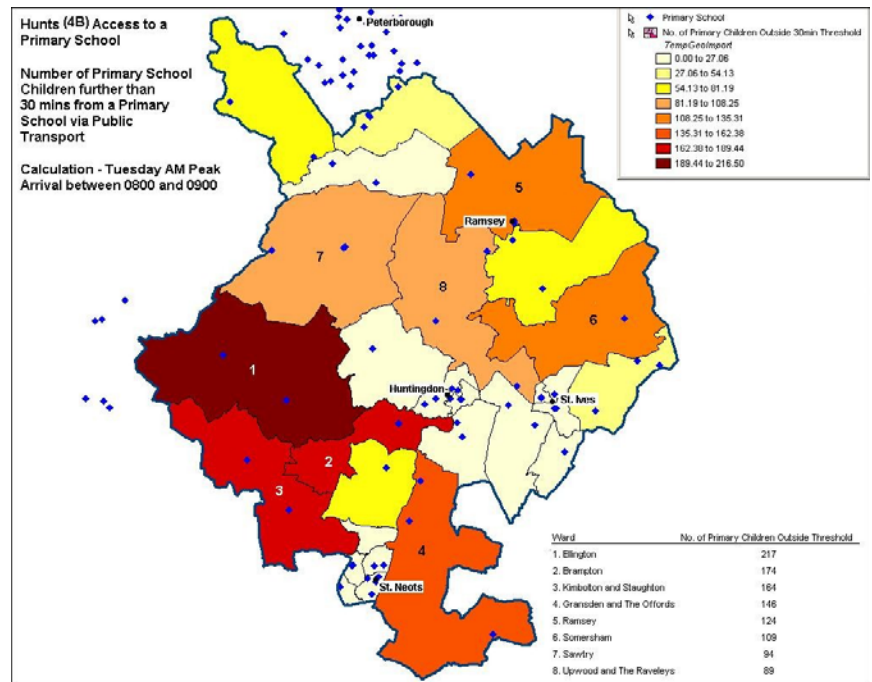
With the implementation of the Home to School Transport Strategy it is thought that this situation will improve. The MTTs will aim to contribute as and when appropriate to the implementation of the Home to School Transport Strategy.

Cycling and Walking

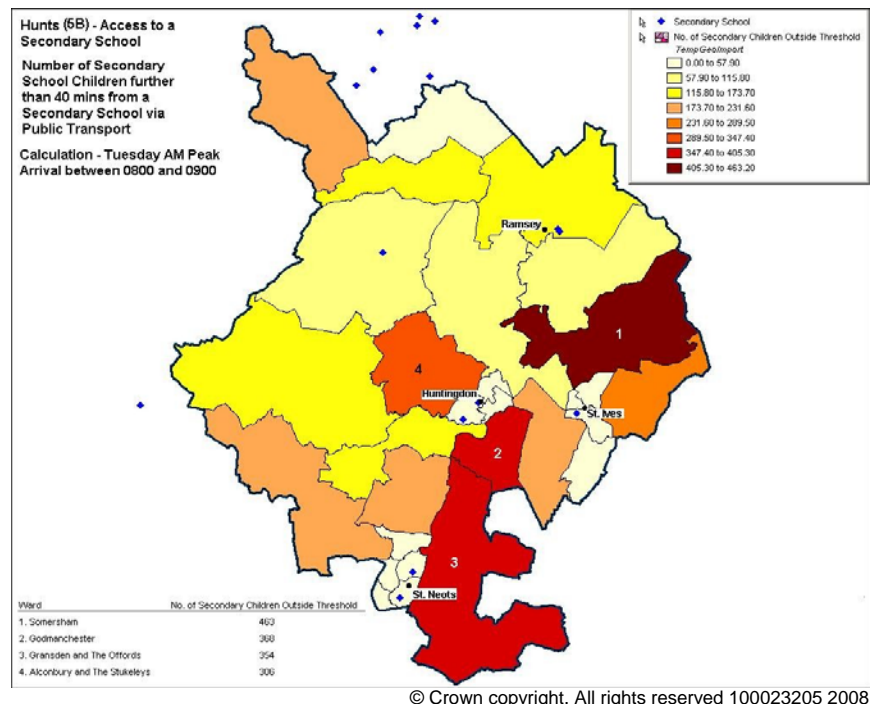
Cycling and walking represent a key part of the LTP strategy for sustainable travel and thus form an important part of the Market Town Transport Strategies. They also link into the health agenda in that they contribute to the reduction of obesity and the risk of heart disease. They have the benefit of being non-income dependent methods of travel whilst also being environmentally friendly.

However, they are both also subject to considerations of personal safety, being susceptible both to injury on the roads and to crime. It has been found during the formulation of this strategy that even though St Neots has a low level of crime, there is a perception that pedestrians are vulnerable and this is contributing to the general preference for car use. During stakeholder and public

Map 2 Accessibility to primary schools in Huntingdonshire



Map 3 Accessibility to secondary schools in Huntingdonshire



consultation it also became apparent that cycling is considered to be dangerous, with people feeling safer in their cars. This is actively hindering the up-take of cycling as a means of travel.

Cycle measures proposed under the last strategy have been reviewed and it has become apparent in consultation with the District and Town Councils and Sustrans that the paths suggested did not form a wholly coherent network through the town.

We have therefore developed a revised network, in partnership with Sustrans, which aims to provide a cohesive, interlinked web of facilities throughout the town and nearest villages. This network is shown in Map 4.

Some of the paths, including the route from Little Paxton to the town centre, have been brought forward from the last strategy. The proposed network can be seen in map 4 below.

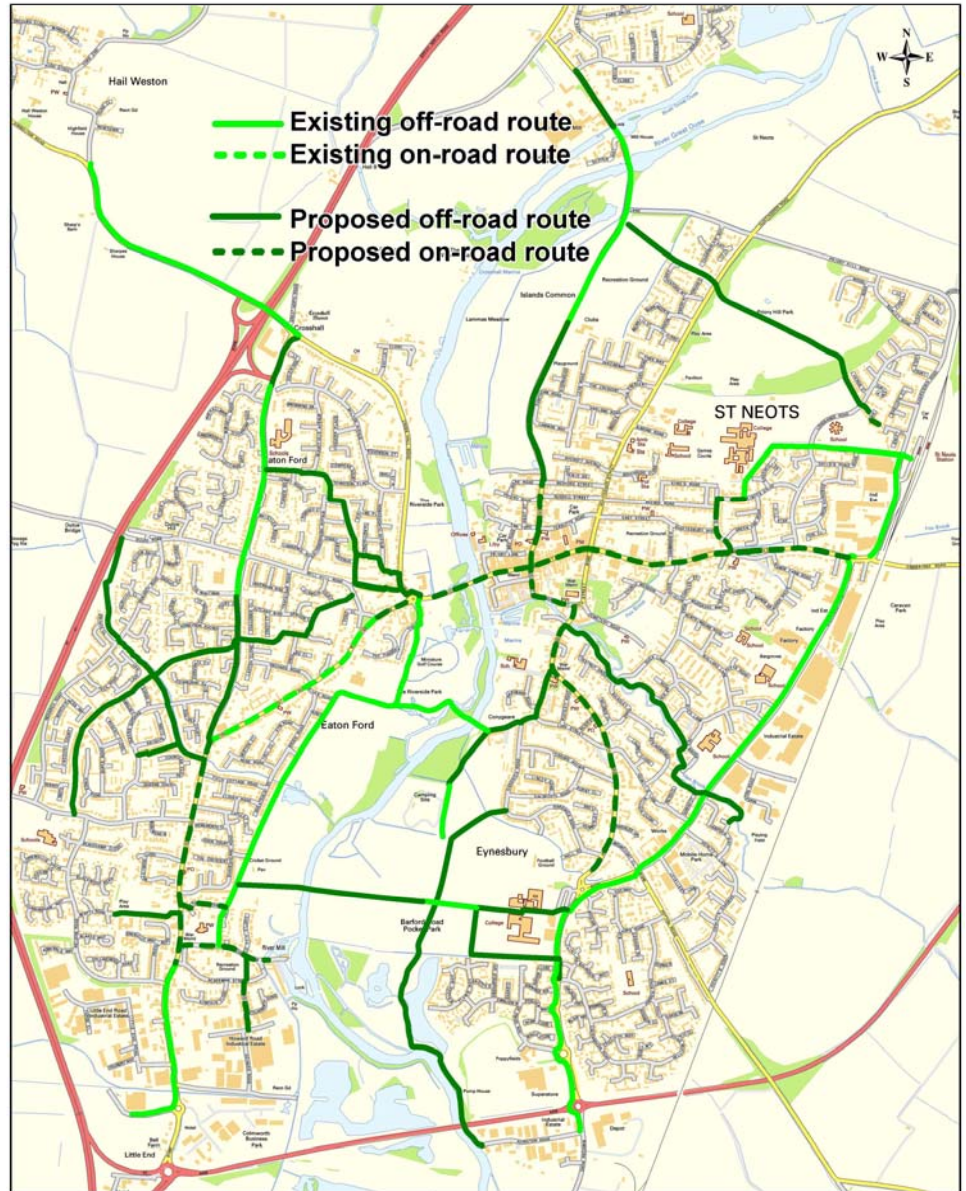
Map 5 shows the individual routes, and Table 2 describes these routes. The map and table also indicate which routes will require limited work such as signing and road markings, and those where more major work will be required.

This tiered approach will aid in the prioritisation of schemes and the achievement of a

greater benefit from available funding. The public consultation indicated that 84% of consultees supported the installation of the cycle network.

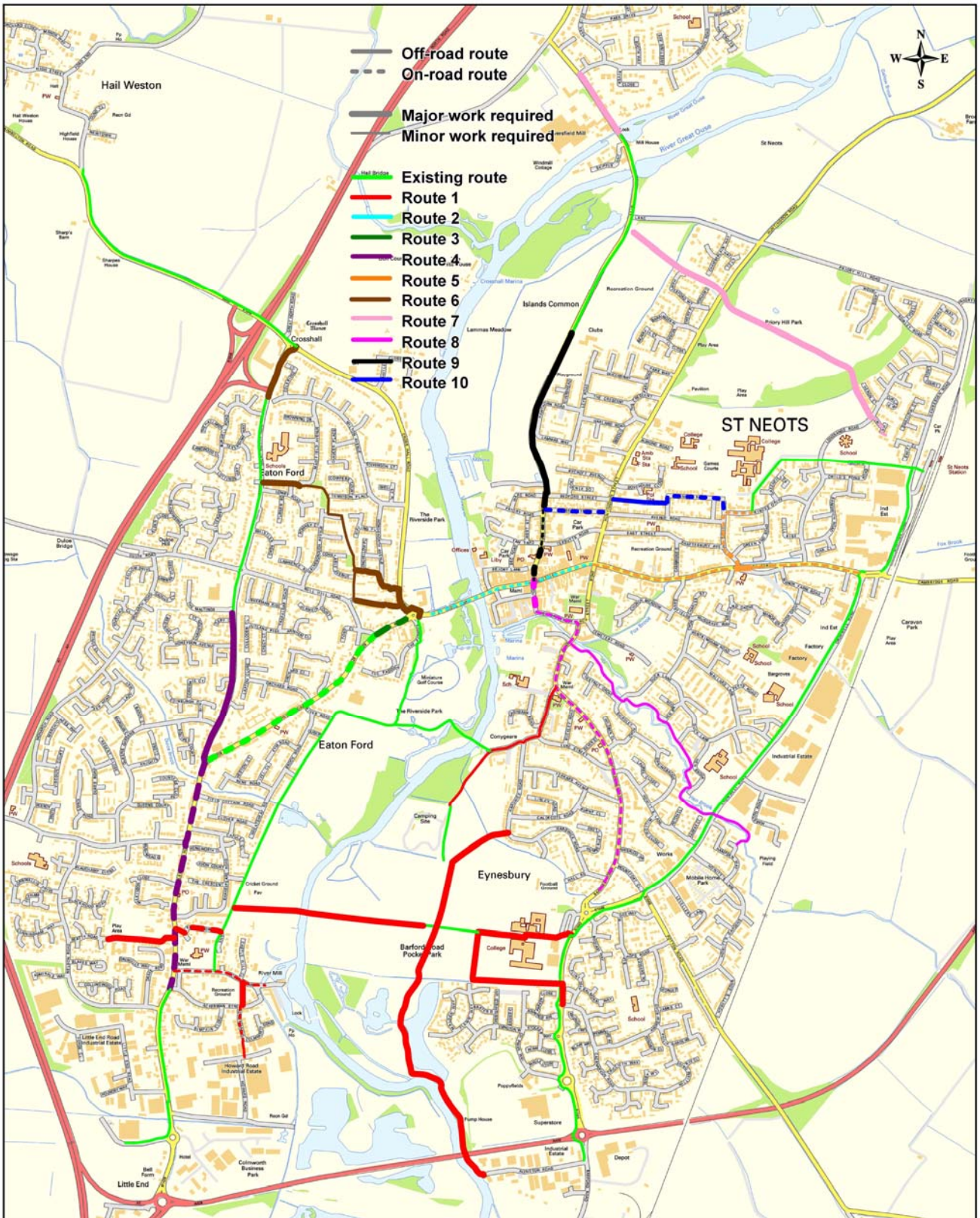
It is not expected that all the facilities indicated will be funded from LTP funding. The network may be used as a basis for securing developer contributions as opportunities arise, with particular reference to the Huntingdonshire LDF. With the expected increase in population this network of cycle and pedestrian facilities will contribute significantly to mitigating the effects of increased demand on the transport network by providing people with the opportunity not to use the car as their primary mode of travel.

Map 4 Existing and proposed Cycle Routes in St Neots



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Map 5 New cycle routes proposed in St Neots



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Table 2 Pedestrian / Cycle schemes and costs

Map Ref	Location	Description of Work	Cost	Priority
1	Eaton Socon / Eynesbury	Incorporating the construction of the new cycle / footbridge and approaches and linking Eaton Socon with the college on the opposite bank of the Ouse. It will link with the Sustrans route running north to south and with the existing route along Cromwell Road	£3.5M	1
2	Town Bridge to Huntingdon Road	On road advisory cycle lanes on the town bridge and along Market Square and the high Street, joining with route 5 out along Cambridge Road.	£37.5K	1
3	St Neots Road	Alterations to existing traffic calming to encourage use by cycles from the roundabout to Ford Close, providing a link between route 2 and the existing off road route further along St Neots road.	£150k	5
4	Great North Road	Continuing of the on and off road routes from Mill Hill Road and extending to Akerman Street. This will link in with existing routes on the Great North Road and with route 1, providing safe access to the cycle bridge.	£500K	4
5	Cambridge Road	Cambridge Road to Huntingdon Street on road route, from the junction with Cromwell Road to the junction with Huntingdon Street. This links in with the existing route on Cromwell Road and to route 2. It also links up with the existing path by the college.	£100K	3
6	Crosshall to Town Bridge Route	Link Crosshall Road with the existing path on the Great North Road and provide an off road route from North of Lowry Road to the roundabout with St Neots Road, via one of the two routes indicated on the map, linking in with route 2.	£500K	2
7	Little Paxton to railway station	Either via Priory Hill Road or Priory Hill Park, linking in the existing scheme on Mill Lane	£500k	2
8	Berkley Street, Duck Lane area	On and off road route providing access from the High Street (linked to route 2) down via Brook Street and St Mary's Street onto Berkley Street. This route also incorporates some minor improvements to existing Hen Brook path.	£150K	3
9	Little Paxton to town centre	This is a continuation of the existing path along Mill Lane towards the town centre, stretching from where the existing facilities end to the High Street, linking in with routes 3 and 8.	£350k	3
10	Priory to Station Route	Complete existing project via Pipers Path, providing a complete link to the station.	£70k	2
12	Cycle racks	Placed at sites where most demand is likely to occur. Locations can be seen in table 3.	£35k	2
Total			£5.892m	

An adaptation of the maps in this strategy could be published in Priorities magazine at no cost. This would result in every household in St Neots and the surrounding villages having a copy of the cycle and pedestrian map and hence go a long way to raising awareness of the network. The map will also be published on the Town Council web site and be made available at the Tourist Information Centre.

The inclusion of signing in the network will result in better integration of the existing cycle paths into the transport network as a whole and help raise awareness of cycling and walking as viable, practical means of travel. Signing was proposed under the first strategy but was never installed.



Table 3 Cycle Rack locations and maps

Location	Cost
Riverside Car Park	£5,000
Market square	£7,500
Rail station	£7,500
Tesco	£5,000
LIDL	£5,000
Priory Park	£5,000
Total	£35,000

During stakeholder and public consultation the lack of cycle racks in the town was considered to be a barrier to cycle use, therefore the provision of cycle racks is included in this strategy. The locations are those that were most often suggested during the public consultation.

Table 4 Maps and signing

Location	Cost
Promotional Map	£20,000
Signing	£50,000

Table 3 indicates the locations and costs for installation of cycle racks, and Table 4 the costs for promotion and signing.

Pedestrian / Cycle bridges across the Great Ouse

The southern cycle/pedestrian bridge is a priority for funding under this revised strategy. It is apparent through accessibility work that this is the one scheme that would make the most difference to cycling and walking in the town and be most effective at inducing a culture change. It is vital to the inter-linking of any cycle/pedestrian network. During the public consultation it was a popular scheme with a number of consultees writing in purely to support it.

At the present time the County Council is preparing the planning application for the bridge and associated route between the two communities of Eynesbury and Eaton Socon.



The application not only presents the technical design of the bridge but also takes into consideration environmental matters, such as minimising visual impacts and reducing effects on areas of archaeological interest. Before the application is submitted the public will be given the opportunity to have their say on the details of the bridge design. The Council intends to submit the planning application in 2008.

Assuming the planning application is successful, the County Council will proceed with delivering the bridge and route. This requires land to be acquired by the Council, potentially through use of

statutory powers. The ease with which the necessary land can be acquired will play an important role in setting the timetable for constructing and opening the bridge.

It is anticipated that construction work will start between autumn 2008 and autumn 2009, with the bridge and routes opening between mid 2009 and mid 2010. All dates given are indicative only and may be subject to change.

In the first strategy a northern cycle bridge was also proposed. This has not as yet been taken forward as the southern bridge is likely to be more beneficial at the present time. However, with increased levels of development and the possibility of developer funding it is important to investigate this scheme further. Accession will be used to measure the benefits this bridge would generate with a view to possible implementation at a later date. There were a number of comments during the public consultation in support of this scheme, however due to limited funding available to this strategy it cannot presently be included.

Public Transport

Increasing the patronage of buses is a key aim of the LTP. In many areas buses provide an essential service for those on low incomes or those who are unable to drive. In this respect they are necessary for improving accessibility. They also play an important role in reducing congestion.

Under the first strategy there were a number of improvements to the public transport network. Bus stop facilities were improved throughout the town including Little Paxton, with all stops now indicated at least by a post. A number of bus shelters were installed, such as the one on Market Square. The extension to the route of the 462 service is well used, and has improved the coverage of the network.



There is a continuing problem with the provision of rural bus services, with some villages receiving only one bus a week on market days. Some of these villages have a small but relatively affluent population, and so lack sufficient demand for a bus service to be maintained. However, the larger communities of Kimbolton and Great Staughton also suffer from very poor bus services.

The Market Town Strategy cannot on its own address these rural accessibility issues. The County and District Councils are working with partners through the Huntingdonshire Local Strategic Partnership to find and implement solutions to these specific accessibility problems. However, it is also possible that the Strategy may be able to facilitate improvements in the future as development comes forward and opportunities present themselves.

The lack of a bus station in the town creates a problem with disseminating bus route maps and timetable information. This issue has been carried forward from the last strategy as lack of easily available information is still preventing people from using the buses, particularly in the town where services are frequent and fairly comprehensive. Journey times from the Eatons and Eynesbury to the town centre are under 20 minutes.

It is therefore a priority for this strategy to solve the problems with distributing information to the public. At the moment bus maps can be found either in the Priory Centre or the Tourist Information Centre. Neither of these is on the Market Square, which is where most buses stop. Maps and timetables will therefore be placed in shops and other public buildings adjacent to the square

where they are easily seen and picked up. The County Council already prints the maps, so the additional cost would be minimal.

During public consultation it also became apparent that timetables in the bus stop cases are often out of date and difficult to read. The strategy will therefore support the countywide scheme to install new format, easily interpreted, bus timetables at all stops in the town in order to raise awareness of the services available and hence increase patronage. As this is part of an existing programme it will not need to be funded purely through the Market Town Transport Strategy. Improved information schemes saw the highest levels of support during the consultation, with 92% of consultees indicating they were in favour.

In addition to this the introduction of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) to the town centre and a number of stops on popular routes would give people immediate information as to which bus stops at that stand, where it goes and when it will arrive. This has proved very successful in a number of locations, including London, and will be installed over the next few years in many Cambridgeshire towns. As the system is installed in collaboration with Bedfordshire County Council, all the buses serving St Neots will already have the technology installed to allow them to show up on the signs. At this time the installation of RTPI would present extremely good value for money.



These schemes are set out in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Proposed public transport improvements

Priority	Scheme	Cost
1	Bus map and timetable provision: Actions taken under last strategy have not been sufficient so this has been brought forward. We will provide bus maps in a central location such as in leaflet racks in main town centre shops such as Woolworths and the rail station.	£5,000
2	New format bus timetables: These are easier to read and will be up to date with current service provision.	Other funding sources
3	Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI): To increase ease of use and make services more predictable, RTPI has been popular in areas where it has already been installed. We will be working in partnership with Bedfordshire county Council to achieve this. 4 Shelters in Market Square will be done with existing stock, and ten other signs a possible.	£35,000
4	Integration of RTPI with train info on Platform: This would enable commuters to know when the next bus will arrive when they arrive at the station rather than having to wait at the bus stop. This was not possible under the last strategy as RTPI was not included in it. Funding is available for this.	£3,500

Lorry management

The whole of the road network in St Neots is now subject to a weight restriction. However Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCVs) still need to access the town to make deliveries. It is vital to the economy of the town that businesses on the High Street can receive goods.

In 2005 HCVs made up 2% of traffic in the central area of St Neots. This suggests that the contribution of freight to congestion is not significant. It is more likely that the quantity of private vehicles accessing the High Street to find parking is the root cause of the problem.

However, in order to help HCV drivers avoid the central area when not delivering the strategy will support where possible the creation of a HCV route map, designed to allow drivers to access the areas they need whilst staying on suitable routes. These maps are being formulated for all the market towns and will eventually be available on satellite navigation devices.

The strategy will also contribute where possible to a county-wide initiative to improve freight signage.

Car Parks

The Huntingdonshire Market Towns Car Parking Strategy was due for final approval by the District Council in January 2008.

A key rationale in the development of the Strategy and Action Plan has been to recognise the need to provide continued accessibility to the town centres within Huntingdonshire, in order to encourage shoppers, to provide parking for those working in town centres and to provide that parking in appropriate locations within each town to support overall economic activity. It has been recognised that parking provision impacts on different people in different ways across a broad spectrum of the population. Therefore the challenge of the Action Plan has been to recommend a programme that recognises those variations in each town and to ensure a degree of equality relating to overall accessibility.

The District Council has recommended a 'Balanced Approach' as the broad strategic approach that should be taken whereby pricing will be used to keep demand at current levels balanced with minor provision of additional parking, improved signage to improve parking distribution and encouraging different travel choices in the future



In St. Neots, investigation works have revealed that parking is already beyond capacity on Thursdays (Market Day) though currently on other days, parking is below overall capacity. However, demand is predicted to rise in line with population, economic growth and car ownership and while other forms of travel will continue to be promoted, such as public transport and cycling and walking, studies show that theoretical capacity could be reached in future years. This is likely to result in the current number of spaces becoming inadequate.

There are currently no viable options for significantly expanding town centre car parks due to the nature of the town and the lack of suitable land on which to make such provision. Though it has become evident that more car parking would be popular across the town, particularly with retailers, this lack of land and its value means that the District Council would need to explore additional car parking proposals as part of wider development options. Some small-scale extension of existing car parking will be investigated.

In terms of the proposed Action Plan, measures are broken down into Short, Medium & Long-Term Options as follows;

Table 6 Parking Action Plan measures

Timescale	Scheme
Short term	Tan Yard to become all short-stay
	Introduce new 3-year pricing policy and amend charges to keep demand at 2007 baseline
	Review Off-Street Parking Places Order to reflect pricing and regime changes including removal of employment-based Season ticket use in Tan Yard and The Priory Car Park
	Introduce low emission vehicle rate within Season Ticket regime for employees working in town centre or residents living within the town
Medium term	Investigate; a) expansion of Cambridge Road long-stay to replace parking lost at Tan Yard, b) improved pedestrian access to Huntingdon Street following any relocation of HWRC and c) consider appropriately targeted charges for long-stay car parking at Cambridge Road
	Investigate ticket machine upgrading including incorporating alternative payment methods i.e. credit/debit cards
	Work with CCC to consider revised one-hour on-street parking charges outstanding from 2004 review following completion of St. Ives trial
	Monitor effect of new ticket machine trial and investigate roll-out to other car parks including hand-held data capture technology
	To continue to work with partners to secure additional parking in association with new development
	Begin scaling long-stay charging levels upwards to reflect local bus journey fare levels
Long term	Continue to evaluate whether the introduction of targeted long-stay parking charges at Cambridge Road would be appropriate
	Work with partners to explore the possibility of additional car parking on the south side of the town centre
	Continue to work with partners to explore the issues arising from decriminalisation
	Explore the possibility of Park & Ride but only when a business case can justify such provision

The MTTTS will contribute to the Parking Strategy and Action Plan as and when appropriate.

Implementing the Strategy

The process of public consultation has informed the strategy and a priority order for funding has been drawn up in reference to the results. This has been organised in phases in order to most closely interpret the results of the consultation. This is as follows:

Table 7 Implementation phases

Phase	Programme	Schemes	Cost
1	Road Safety	Connection and upgrade of four main town centre junctions	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 1 – Eaton Socon to Eynesbury incorporating the Southern cycle bridge	
		Route 2 – Town Bridge to Huntingdon Street	
	Public Transport	Bus map and timetable provision	
Total phase 1			£4.183M
2	Road Safety	Connect the 3 crossings to the UTC system	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 6 – Crosshall Road to Town Bridge	
		Route 7 Little Paxton to railway station	
		Route 10 – Priory to Station	
	Public transport	New format bus timetables	
Total phase 2			£1.135M
3	Road Safety	Refurbish crossing on Cambridge Street near Cambridge Gardens	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 5 – Cambridge Road	
		Route 8 - Berkley Street and Duck Lane area	
		Route 9 – Little Paxton to town centre	
	Public transport	Real Time Passenger Information	
Total phase 3			£1.115M
4	Road Safety	Upgrade of Crossing facilities at four sites	
	Cycling and Walking	Route 4 – Great North Road	
		Signing	
	Public transport	Integrate the Real Time Passenger Information system with the rail station platform info	
Total phase 4			£833.5K
5	Walking and Cycling	Route 3 – St Neots Road	
		Cycle and pedestrian map	
Total phase 5			£170K
Strategy Total			£7.436M

Funding

The funding for this programme included in the strategy will come from a variety of sources. These include the Local Transport Plan, developer contributions and from other sources arising during the course of the strategy. The pace at which the strategy can be delivered will depend on the availability of funding. By providing a clear statement of the schemes for which there is public support in the town, this strategy aims to provide a sound policy basis for securing a wide range of funding sources.

Targets

The schemes within this strategy will contribute towards Local Transport Plan targets to reduce congestion, improve air quality, reduce transport emissions and increase bus patronage and levels of walking and cycling.

Future development of the St Neots Transport Strategy

This second St Neots Market Town Strategy looks at transport issues facing the town at the current time, and runs until 2011. However, it will be reviewed and will evolve as necessary in the intervening period to take account of emerging pressures, such as the likelihood of significant additional development in the period of the new Huntingdonshire Local Development framework.

Transport modelling will take place to quantify the impact of possible development scenarios on the transport network in the town, and on the A1 and A428 Trunk Roads. This modelling will inform the decision of the District Council on the location of future development in Huntingdonshire, and will aid the assessment of what new transport infrastructure will be needed to provide for that developments transport demand.

It will also aid the County Council and the Highways Agency, as highway authorities for the local and trunk road networks respectively, in their planning of transport infrastructure and services on the wider network.

Conclusions

The Market Town Transport Strategy will provide a range of benefits for St Neots, including:

- A clear programme of transport enhancements to 2011
- Increase the opportunities for and safety of walking and cycling in the town
- Reduce congestion
- Improve air quality
- Improve access to bus services

The strategy reflects the consultation process and gives a clear indication of the transport measures that need to be introduced to St Neots up to 2011 and provides some indication of needs beyond this time. The measures in the strategy should help to ensure that St Neots remains a pleasant place to live, work and visit.