

Transport Corridor Connectivity

Longer-distance journeys within Oxfordshire and to towns and cities close-by are currently focused on a number of transport corridors, most of which are located along the routes of several main A-roads. The A34 runs through the centre of Oxfordshire, linking Science Vale, Oxford and the M40 near Bicester, with the rail line between Didcot and Oxford and Oxford and Bicester providing public transport connectivity along this central corridor. Other key transport corridors include the A40 between Oxford and Witney, the A41 between Bicester and Aylesbury, the A4074 between Oxford, Wallingford and Reading, the A44 between Oxford and Chipping Norton, and the A420 between Oxford, Faringdon and Swindon. These corridors provide the main routes for bus services linking up Oxfordshire settlements, as well access for general traffic. The A420 is a good example of some of the transport and connectivity challenges and opportunities along these major transport corridors.

A420

The A420 connects Swindon and Oxford. In the early 2000's the A420 had its trunk road designation removed and was returned to local authority control, with previous proposals to upgrade the road to a dual carriageway withdrawn. The A420 is currently designated as part of the national 'Major Road Network'.

Over the last 20 years the A420 has become a major commercial corridor, functioning as a strategic route between Swindon and Oxford, having to deal with significant traffic growth arising from housing development along the corridor and from urban extensions in Swindon. The A420 also functions as a major HGV corridor, including 'just-in-time' deliveries, servicing Symmetry Park distribution centre in Swindon, and it provides an alternative route to the M4 and A34 for long distance strategic HGV movements despite HGVs being signed via the motorway network.

However, the A420 also operates as a local road, routing through some settlements, and providing access to towns and villages located on either side. This results in immense difficulty crossing the road to access properties and services e.g. schools, particularly during peak periods. Access to the road from local communities – mostly via T-junctions – is often very difficult and unsafe due to speed of traffic, contributing to the significant casualty history on the route. There are also concerns on air quality.

It carries an important commercial, high-frequency bus route – the Stagecoach S6 – but passengers have difficulty crossing the road to get to bus stops in places such as Littleworth, Little Coxwell, Great Coxwell, Longcot, Tubney, Fyfield and others - many stops are single posts in the verge on the edge of traffic.

What could be changed

- Consider the strategic function of the A420, taking into account local requirements in light of alternative highway links such as the A34/M4, including whether there are any realistic measures which can be taken to better manage HGV movements.
- Explore the potential for new/enhanced rail connections, including direct rail links between Swindon and Oxford the development of a station at Grove.
- Speed reductions on dual carriageways.
- Buses taking priority at pinch points and on dual carriageways.

- Improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists along and across the A420 including measures for residents to access properties, services and facilities on the route, for example installing pedestrian islands or traffic signal crossings to make it safer for pedestrians to get from one side to the other and may also have the benefit of breaking up traffic flow, helping access onto the road.
- Measures to improve safety and reduce accident levels, for example speed limit changes or junction improvements.
- Building on the current strategic bus route, support measures to provide a more frequent, faster and reliable bus services between Swindon and Oxford.
- Establish new protocols with Swindon Borough Council, Thames Valley Police and Wiltshire Police during incidents such as road traffic collisions or flooding. The aim should be for traffic to not be diverted through villages such as Watchfield, Longcot, Fernham, Great Coxwell or the villages west of the A420.

Supporting the Bus route

There are several actions that could be taken, in order to promote and support a faster, more efficient bus route along the A420 corridor, to reduce carbon emissions, lower congestion, improve air quality and make road crossing safer.

- Mini-Park and Rides. Creating a number of small, safe and accessible parking areas close to current bus stops could encourage drivers to change to the bus well before they reach Oxford. They could also support people living in more rural areas of the county without access to a car, if they were able to use smaller connecting services, such as dial a ride, or on-demand services, to access them. This would depend on our ability to acquire areas of land and securing funding.
- Develop better and safer provision at bus stops, such as shelters, high quality secure cycle parking, waiting areas and service information.
- Buses could have priority at pinch points along the A420, e.g. at junctions. A bus lane could be justified where there are high service frequencies, such as on the approach to Oxford, where the Swindon and Wantage services both operate.

Question 18

Transport Corridor Connectivity - What do you think?

What approaches to managing transport and movement should be developed on major corridors such as the A420? What changes do you think would be realistic and effective? What would encourage you to switch to using the bus on the major routes through the county - A40, A44, A420, A4074? If you live near or on a major transport corridor what would you like to see changed?

To respond please use the online consultation form.