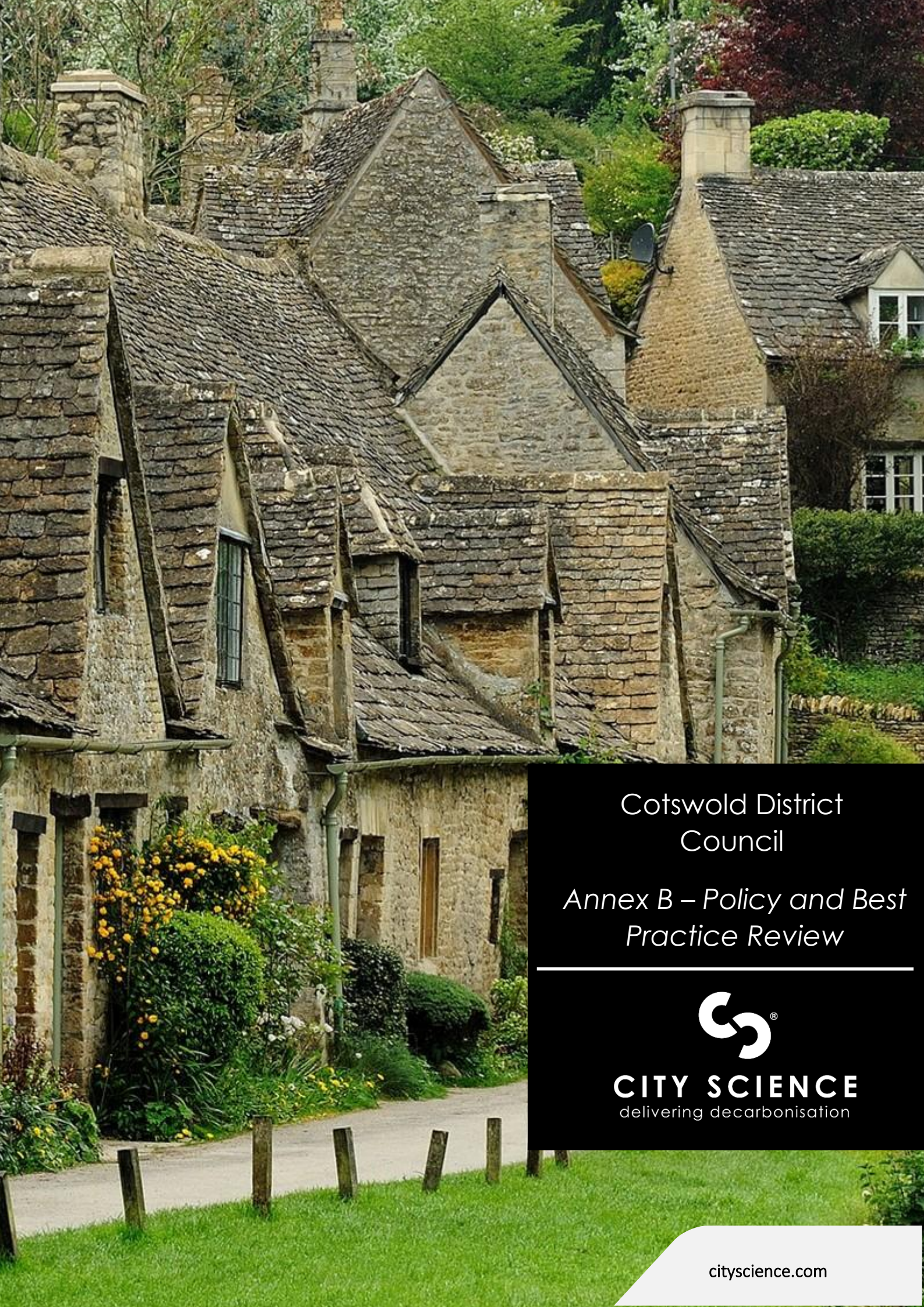




Cotswold District
Council

*Annex B – Policy and Best
Practice Review*



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1 Policy & Technical Guidance Review

Cotswold District Council is preparing a new Local Plan, which will establish the planning framework for development and land use across the district. *The Plan will set out both strategic priorities and locally tailored policies to guide growth and change. The Local Plan covers the Cotswold District, shown in Figure 1-1.*

City Science has been commissioned to support the development of the transport evidence base for the Local Plan through the preparation of a Strategic Transport Assessment. The Review gives particular attention to three themes that are deemed to define the Cotswolds' context: an ageing population, the challenges of rural living, and the district's strong role in leisure and tourism. These themes are considered throughout the Review and help shape the findings and recommendations of this report.

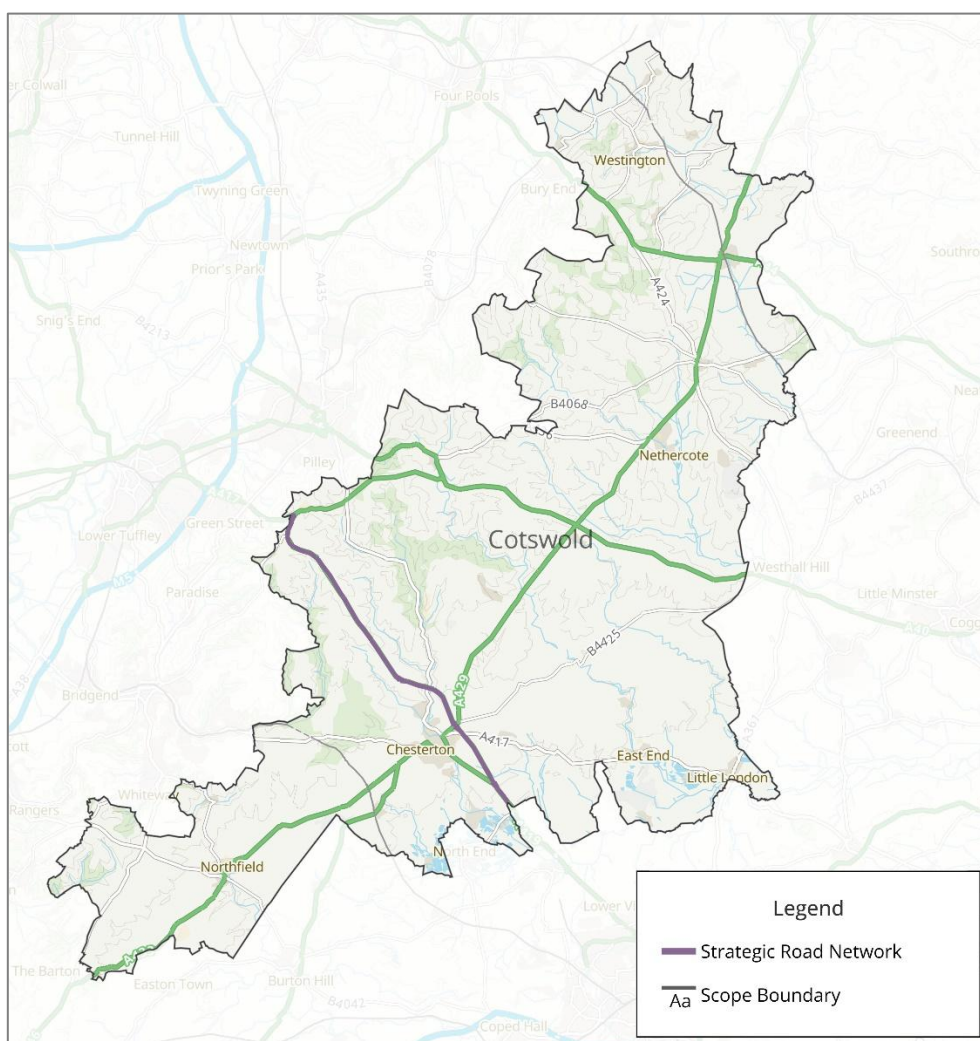


Figure 1-1: Core Study Area & Strategic Road Network

1.1 National Policy Context

1.1.1 Introduction

The national policy context is undergoing a period of significant change following the July 2024 General Election. Additionally, a new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has recently been appointed however no major changes in policy direction is expected. Policies and legislation have largely been designed to reflect the government's five 'missions' set out in the Plan for Change (HM Government, 2024). These are shown in Figure 1-2.



Figure 1-2: The Government's five missions

The legislative agenda of the current parliament (running to July 2029 unless an early election is triggered) was set out in the King's Speech (2024). Economic growth was identified as the driving aim of the government, and this has been reinforced in recent policy announcements.

In April 2025, the Secretary of State for Transport announced her vision for transport including tasks for a better decade of transport

- **Towards a better Railway:** Establishing Great British Railways and seeking to unify track and train.
- **Towards Public Ownership:** Moving all operators into public hands starting with Southwestern and c2c.
- **Towards Better Buses:** Greater control for local authorities for buses including franchising options.
- **Towards Better Roads:** Increased financing for local highways with a focus on dealing with road surface quality.
- **Towards Fairer Work:** Greater protections for seafarers.
- **Towards Cleaner Skies:** New Sustainable Aviation Fuel mandate.
- **Towards a Fossil-Free Future:** Driving the decarbonisation of all modes of transport.

Having run a call for ideas until February 2025 an Integrated National Transport Strategy is currently being drafted and is due to be published by the end of the year. Initial showcases of the strategy suggest that it will focus on embedding people at the heart of transport planning rather than a focus of on major infrastructure projects. Balancing the benefits of devolution with a national strategic vision is also expected to feature.

In parallel, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has embarked on a programme of reform to the planning system, and to local government devolution and reorganisation. This has included changes to the National Planning Policy Framework as well as an English Devolution white paper. These changes are intended to drive shorter development times for infrastructure as well as increase the accountability of transport systems.

This section summarises the national policy environment (as of **July 2025**) most relevant to the development of the **Cotswold Local Plan**, organised under the themes shown in Figure 1-3.

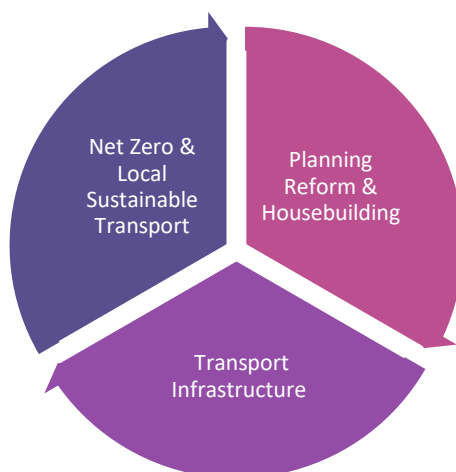


Figure 1-3: National Policy Themes Described in this Section

1.1.2 Planning Reform & Housebuilding

One identified key enabler of the missions is reform of the planning system to be more ‘pro-growth’ and, ‘pro-infrastructure’. This is intended to build in a default approval to development occurring on brownfield sites as well as critically important infrastructure. To support this, the Government has committed to fast-tracking planning decisions for at least 150 major economic infrastructure projects within the current parliamentary term. These policies centre on:

- **Updating:** All relevant National Policy Statements (NPS) planned by summer 2025. Consultations on updates to the NPS were completed in May 2025. A new Water Resources Infrastructure NPS was deployed in July 2025 with other updates expected.
- **Publishing:** A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was published in December 2024.
- **Improving:** Local planning processes and increasing capacity. The government has recently launched a consultation on changes to streamline the planning of nationally significant infrastructure planning.

Whilst all are important, revision of the NPPF is of particular significance in the context of the Cotswold local plan. The revised NPPF (2024b), released in December 2024, places greater emphasis in several areas including achieving sustainable development, prioritising economic growth and addressing climate change. Promoting ‘healthy and safe communities’ and ‘sustainable transport’ are key planks of the framework, outlining the following recommendations:

- Places should promote social interaction and community cohesion through mixed-use spaces, walkable street layouts, and accessible, active public areas.
- Ensure environments are safe, inclusive, and support healthy lifestyles by reducing crime, providing green spaces, and encouraging walking, cycling, and access to healthy amenities.
- Considering transport in the early stages of the plan-making process.
- Using a vision-led approach to identify transport interventions which will deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places, with internal transport networks and external connectivity considered in full.
- Locating development in locations where the need to travel can be minimised and which can offer a genuine choice of travel modes.
- Providing a mix of uses which will minimise the number and length of journeys.
- Providing attractive active travel infrastructure to maximise the share of short journeys made on foot or by bicycle.
- Providing appropriate public transport facilities and services and connecting to existing networks.
- Developments that generate significant movement must provide a travel plan and be supported by a vision-led transport statement or transport assessment.
- Be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators, and neighbouring councils.

The Government has identified a pressing need to speed up housebuilding, including affordable and social housing (Prime Minister's Office, 2024b). The Planning & Infrastructure Bill (2025b), currently in the committee stage in the House of Lords, would enact tools to support this ambition, including Spatial Development Strategies which will support cross-boundary strategic planning, and amending the Transport & Works Act (1992) to streamline delivery of transport infrastructure supporting new housing.

More generally, the Government has set out the importance of appropriate investment, devolution of local government decision-making, and planning reform (including reintroducing mandatory housing targets with a new calculation method) to achieve a step-change in the number of houses built. In the Plan for Change, the Government sets a milestone of delivering 1.5 million new homes within this Parliament (by July 2029 at the latest), some of which will be in “a new generation of new towns” and major urban extensions.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Rural Connectivity:** Given the rural nature of the district, transport planning must focus on improving accessibility across dispersed settlements, maintaining essential services, and connecting communities to necessary services such as employment, education, and healthcare.
- **Engagement:** The Transport Working Group will comprise representatives of relevant local and transport authorities across this project. Each organisation will be actively involved in the ongoing process of the evidence base, interventions and modelling.
- **Vision-led:** Transport proposals will be guided by a vision-led methodology, maximising sustainability for Local Plan sites and the wider district, while considering the distinctive social, economic, and environmental characteristics of the Cotswolds.
- **Scenario Planning:** Multiple scenarios will be assessed to understand the effects of development on transport networks and the wider environment. This ensures that proposed interventions are robust, adaptable, and responsive to the district's unique challenges, including seasonal tourism pressures and rural access.

1.1.3 Transport Infrastructure

Transport infrastructure investment is a key focus of the Government's agenda for delivering national and regional economic growth. While many national initiatives focus on large urban or nationally significant projects, the Cotswolds' rural context, dispersed settlements, and tourism-driven traffic mean that infrastructure planning must carefully balance local needs with broader policy objectives. Policies to date suggest that the Government is seeking local authorities to focus on building and developing communities that can promote sustainable transport solutions.

The Infrastructure Strategy (HM Treasury, 2025b) and related announcements reinforce this commitment, focusing on projects that directly support housing and job creation. Central to these efforts is integrated spatial planning, ensuring transport systems effectively support new developments. Key initiatives include:

- Over 50 nationally significant road and rail upgrades, designed to unlock approximately 39,000 new homes and create 42,000 new jobs.
- Renewed backing for major regional projects like East West Rail and TransPennine Route Upgrades, to enhance connectivity.
- Encouragement of transport investment that closely integrates with spatial planning and the wider industrial strategy for sustainable growth.

However, Phase 1 of the Spending Review (HM Treasury, 2025a) introduced a more selective, evidence-driven funding approach. Several large transport schemes were paused or cancelled due to concerns about cost, deliverability, and local impacts, signalling a pivot towards investments with clear, measurable benefits for communities and economies.

Large transport investments projects have been scaled back or cancelled suggesting a government focus on delivering smaller scale interventions that can still provide an impact. For example, the scaling back of HS2, reflects the growing emphasis on affordability, regional benefit, and deliverability (DfT, 2024e). This is likely to have implications for potential local rail schemes such as the Cirencester-Kemble railway restoration.

The Strategic Road Network (SRN) provides vital connections between the Cotswolds and regional centres. Key routes such as the A40, A429, and A436 link Cirencester to major hubs such as Gloucester, Birmingham and Bristol, providing important access for both residents and visitors. The National Highways Initial Report (2024b) highlights a shift from network expansion and enhancement to prioritising renewals, resilience, and efficiency. Further, DfT Circular 01/2022 (2022) requires local authorities to develop robust transport evidence bases and collaborate closely with National Highways to ensure sustainable growth that does not overburden the SRN. Reducing local trip demand on strategic roads by expanding active travel and public transport is a key government expectation - highly relevant for new developments across the Cotswold District.

Although some nationally significant schemes have been paused or scaled back, local transport funding remains a priority. The Local Transport Fund commits £2.4 billion over the same period for local priorities, including supporting housing growth. Road maintenance remains a priority too, with the Government allocating funding for pothole repairs and road maintenance, signalling its intent to promote road safety.

To ensure investments meet broader economic, social, and environmental goals, new appraisal guidance and a comprehensive Transport Infrastructure Review are being introduced. These reforms aim to promote accountability, and projects that advance levelling up, social inclusion and net zero ambitions.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Vision & Validate:** A vision-led approach will guide the development of Transport Evidence Base ensuring proposals support sustainable growth, rural accessibility, and the distinctive character of the Cotswolds. This methodology naturally aligns with the guidance set out by National Highways, strengthening the case for delivering well-designed transport infrastructure that supports long-term place-based goals.
- **Robust Evidence:** Transport interventions will be assessed for cost, deliverability, and local impact, ensuring decisions are well-justified and deliver measurable benefits.
- **Local Priorities:** The Transport Evidence Base will be informed by local transport priorities, including improving rural transport links, supporting the mobility needs of an ageing population, and managing seasonal pressures from leisure and tourism.
- **Multi-Criteria Appraisal:** Proposals will be evaluated using a multi-criteria framework considering economic, social, and environmental factors, including climate and net zero objectives.
- **Integration with Planning:** Transport evidence will inform all stages of the Local Plan, ensuring housing, economic development, and leisure/tourism infrastructure are well-connected and accessible, and that new developments are in the most sustainable locations from a transport perspective

1.1.4 Net zero & Local Sustainable Transport

The UK Government remains committed to its legally binding target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, with transport seen as both a major contributor to emissions and a critical solution. The Plan for Change reinforces this ambition, positioning net zero as a driver of economic growth, job creation, and investment. While it does not set detailed transport policy, it reaffirms that carbon budgets will be used to measure progress, underlining the importance of aligning local planning decisions with national climate goals.

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan (DfT, 2021a) remains a critical strategy, setting out a national vision for reducing transport emissions through modal shift, electrification, demand management, and investment in active and public transport. While the current government has not indicated that it intends to reissue the Plan, sector-specific initiatives have continued including:

- **Bus Reform:** The Bus Services (No.2) Bill (2025b) includes provisions to expand local authority powers over service franchising, mandate zero-emission buses by 2030, and strengthen duties around socially necessary services. In parallel, the Government continues to provide financial support for network improvement through initiatives like the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) (DfT, 2023a), the Bus Service Operators Grant Plus (DfT, 2023b), and a recent £38 million allocation to purchase over 300 new electric buses (DfT, 2025e). Ongoing national fare caps (DfT, 2024b) and a focus on affordability and reliability make buses a key strategic priority, particularly for spatial strategies aiming to reduce car dependency in both urban and rural settings. The rural context of the Cotswolds provides a challenging area for buses with services requiring high subsidies with longer journeys and fewer passengers. Additionally, the Spending Review (2025a) committed £750 million per annum during this Parliament to improve bus services, including around £250 million per annum of Bus Service Operators' Grant.
- **Active Travel & Mode Shift:** The Spending Review (2025a) has committed £616m in active travel funding from 2026/27 to 2029/30. Alongside this, Gear Change (DfT, 2021b), prepared under the previous government, sets a strong foundation with ambitions for half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030. Recent funding allocations for active travel include over £300 million through the Third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3) (DfT, 2025g). This is aimed to support local authorities in delivering better connected, walkable and cycle-friendly neighbourhoods. This direction aligns closely with the updated NPPF (2024b), which reinforces expectations that new development should prioritise active and sustainable modes of travel. The focus on active travel for towns and cities means there has been comparatively less focus on active travel's role in rural trips. Rural trips are often longer and are more likely to require full segregation due to higher road speeds. Due to the longer trips a focus on e-micromobility may be most relevant to the Cotswolds.
- **Local Sustainable Transport:** The Local Transport Fund (SR2025) was suggested to represent a major shift in national policy, by devolving over £2.4 billion for locally led transport schemes (DfT, 2025f). Funding focuses on bus improvements, cycling and walking infrastructure, road safety, and digital mobility - particularly outside major city-regions. This new funding stream supports the principle of devolved responsibility for transport planning, encouraging councils to integrate transport upgrades with wider regeneration, housing, and climate goals.
- **Climate Adaptation & Resilience in Transport Systems:** The Government has launched a consultation on improving climate resilience within transport systems (DfT, 2024a), including proposals for infrastructure risk assessments and updated design standards.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base:

- **Decarbonising Transport:** National policy places strong emphasis on decarbonising all aspects of the transport system, with significant commitments to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuel dependence. Across EV incentives, bus reform, and modal shift strategies, the clear objective is to reduce car dependency and promote cleaner, more efficient alternatives. The Transport Evidence Base will support this by testing how transport interventions enable low-carbon travel choices to support sustainable development.
- **Prioritising Sustainable Transport:** The national vision supports a long-term shift toward more sustainable travel modes - walking, cycling, and public transport - within new development and regeneration areas. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan and supporting strategies set out ambitions for a significant reduction in car use in favour of sustainable travel, while the Local Transport Fund reinforces the importance of locally led, place-based delivery. The Transport Evidence Base will help embed these principles by identifying where sustainable transport infrastructure is most needed and can be most effective in shaping future growth.
- **Prioritising Active Travel & Micro-Mobility:** Government strategy sets clear goals that half of all journeys in towns and cities will be cycled or walked by 2030. In the Cotswolds, long distances between towns and villages limit the uptake of conventional walking and cycling. Within market towns such as Cirencester and Tetbury, pedestrian- and cycle-friendly neighbourhoods can be successfully promoted. In more rural areas, e-bikes, e-scooters, and other micromobility solutions may be essential to enable short, low-carbon trips. The Transport Evidence Base will assess where infrastructure can be most effectively delivered to support these modes, helping to prioritise investment and maximise accessibility.
- **Rural Buses:** The upcoming Bus Services (No. 2) Bill will give local authorities greater control over franchising, route planning, and protection of socially necessary services. Delivering sustainable bus networks in rural areas is challenging due to longer routes, low passenger numbers, and higher subsidy requirements. The Transport Evidence Base will provide detailed analysis of demand, route viability, and service design to support reliable and affordable bus provision across the district. New developments could focus on attempting to bolster the demand for existing services.
- **Network Resilience and Climate Adaptation:** Sparse transport networks in rural areas mean disruptions, such as road closures or infrastructure failures, have disproportionate effects. Climate adaptation and resilient design are therefore crucial. The Transport Evidence Base will help identify vulnerable routes, assess risk, and prioritise interventions, ensuring continuity of access for residents, visitors, and businesses.

1.1.5 Future of Rural Transport

There is an increasing understanding and focus on the different challenges faced by rural communities. To address this, the DfT issued a report following a consultation called “Future of Transport: supporting rural transport innovation” (DfT, 2023). The report found that:

- **Car Dependence:** The rural environment makes the socio-economic impact of a lack of access to a car more pronounced. This means that there is a higher importance for the reliability of rural roads but also the additional challenges to sustain an alternative system.
- **Local Integrated Transport Strategies:** Local plans in rural areas need to be more integrated across land use, economic growth and housing to maximise the connectivity that can be delivered through sustainable transport.
- **Innovative in Rural Mobility:** Rural areas can benefit from emerging and innovative technologies such as Demand Responsive Services, automated and shared mobility options.

- **Electrification Infrastructure:** The higher dependence on private vehicles for transport in rural areas means that meeting sustainability goals will rely more heavily on electrification than in urban areas and as such a higher focus on electric charging infrastructure is needed.

The report outlines nine rural principles for transport:

1. New modes of transport and new mobility services must be safe and secure by design.
2. Innovation in transport should consider the needs of rural transport users and must be available and accessible to all parts of the UK and all segments of society.
3. Walking, wheeling, cycling and micromobility must be enabled as the best options for short rural journeys.
4. Affordable and accessible public transport and shared mobility must be fundamental to an efficient rural transport system.
5. New transport modes and services in rural areas should support a rapid transition to zero emissions and be adapted to climate change.
6. Innovation should improve road efficiency and reduce congestion by promoting shared mobility, improving user choice and consolidating freight.
7. The marketplace for mobility must be open to stimulate innovation and give the best deal to users, working alongside local authorities to complement existing services.
8. New transport services must be designed to operate as part of an integrated system that combines public and private modes with community-led schemes for transport users.
9. Data from new transport services must be shared where appropriate to improve both choice and the operation of the transport system.

1.1.6 Mobility for Older People

The median age of the Cotswold (49 years old) is above the median for the region (44 years) and England as a whole (40 years old). Over the last decade the median age of the Cotswolds has also increased from 46 years old suggesting that the region is likely to continue to have an aging population and this should be reflected in its wider local planning. There are several national policies and guidelines that determine how to integrate older people into planning.

1.1.6.1 Accessible Travel Policy by the Office of Road and Rail (ORR, 2020)

The Accessible Travel Policy by the Office of Road and Rail (ORR, 2020) the document provides guidance around the provision of transport to be fair and equitable to those with disabilities as well as older people. It highlights the need to provide:

- **Space and Clearance:** Standards for ensuring that transport spaces provide enough clearance and space for wheelchair and mobility assistance users
- **Spaces to Rest:** The guidance highlights the need for older and disabled people to have spaces to sit down and rest to facilitate their transport needs. This includes walks to transport hubs as well as within transport systems themselves (e.g. bus stops)
- **Toilet Provision:** Ensuring that public spaces provide adequate facilities for going to the toilet is of more importance to older and disabled individuals.
- **Wayfinding and Journey Planning:** Additional consideration should also be given to neurodiverse users and ensuring that transport systems and spaces provide welcoming and easy to navigate spaces.

1.1.6.2 Inclusive Transport Strategy

The inclusive transport strategy (DfT, 2018) outlined the Government's strategy for ensuring the needs of those with additional needs (such as reduced mobility) were being fully accounted for in transport planning. It identified five key themes.

1. **Existing Rights:** The report identified that existing rights of equality were not always known and enforcement needed to improve.

2. **Staff Training:** The report identified that staff awareness (e.g. bus drivers) was lacking about the needs and rights of disabled people
3. **Improved Information:** The report highlighted the need to produce information in forms that all people could access and understand. For older people this highlights the need to consider lower digital literacy.
4. **Inclusive Infrastructure:** New systems must ensure that the infrastructure is built without barriers to those with mobility and other impairments.
5. **Future:** Early involvement and engagement with disabled people was deemed to be highly important for these communities in any change or innovation to the transport system.

1.2 Sub-national Policies & Plans

1.2.1 Route Strategy Initial Overview Report Route 19: Birmingham to Exeter (National Highways, 2023)

Route 19 forms part of the M5 corridor between Birmingham and Exeter and is one of 20 routes assessed by National Highways. The Initial Overview Report (2023) identifies strategic issues and opportunities, including connectivity with the Cotswolds and wider regional networks. Key pressures are safety, congestion, and severance at junctions where the M5 interacts key A roads. These factors directly influence access into and across the Cotswolds, particularly via key east-west links.

A particular link along this route relevant to Cotswold is between M5 J11A and J12 (Gloucester). This stretch of the motorway is strategically important for the Cotswolds, as J11A provides direct access to the A417, the main east-west route across the Cotswolds towards Cirencester, Swindon, and the M4 corridor. As a result, pressures on this section of the M5 affect both the reliability of long-distance travel and visitor movement to and from the Cotswolds.

Another relevant section is between M5 Junctions 12 and 14, which provides onward connectivity from Cirencester and the central Cotswolds to the M5 corridor. This link supports both commuter movements and visitor travel, linking the A419 corridor via Stroud. It also links Cirencester with destinations further south, including Bristol and the South West. Ensuring resilience along this section is key for both for local accessibility and for sustaining the visitor economy.

Generally, both sections record relatively low collision rates compared with other parts of the corridor. However, pressures remain around these junctions, particularly in the form of long slip-road queues and the associated risks of poor air quality and elevated noise levels. The report identifies measures to strengthen local connections and safeguard environmental receptors around Junctions 11A and 12, alongside proposals to improve resilience to seasonal traffic flows along the M5.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Engagement with National Highways:** Ongoing collaboration with National Highways ensures alignment with strategic road planning, including recognition of existing issues and anticipated pressures along the M5 corridor affecting the Cotswolds.
- **Severance & Connectivity:** Observed severance at junctions such as J11A and J11 highlights the importance of planning for inclusive, well-connected development, particularly in areas divided by major infrastructure. Ensuring smooth east–west movement across the Cotswolds remains a key consideration.

1.3 Gloucestershire-wide policies and plans

1.3.1 Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (2020-2041) (Gloucestershire County Council, 2020b)

The Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP) set out Gloucestershire County Council's (GCCs) local transport ambitions for the next 20 years. The main priorities are to: protect and enhance the natural and built environment; support sustainable economic growth; enable safe and affordable community connectivity; improve community health and wellbeing; and promote equality of opportunity.

Relevance to the Cotswolds Transport Evidence Base

- **Transport Emissions Reductions:** Gloucestershire County Council's aim for net zero transport emissions by 2045 is significant for the Cotswolds, where dispersed settlements and reliance on private vehicles contribute significantly to emissions. Strategies that improve sustainable transport options, such as public transport enhancements, active travel, and low-emission modes, are essential for reducing the environmental impact of travel across the rural area.
- **Rural Connectivity and Mode Choice:** The LTP highlights the importance of supporting accessible and reliable transport networks in rural areas. In the Cotswolds, this includes improving bus and rail services, as well as safe walking, wheeling, and cycling routes between key employment and service hubs. Enhancing these networks supports local mobility and reduces dependence on private vehicles.
- **Managing Population and Travel Demand:** With an ageing population and dispersed communities, transport interventions must address accessibility for all residents, particularly those without access to a car. Targeted improvements to local transport infrastructure can maintain social inclusion and enable access to healthcare, education, and essential services.
- **Major Transport Projects:** Key infrastructure improvements relevant to the Cotswolds include enhancements to the M5 corridor and bus priority schemes. These projects improve regional connectivity while supporting rural communities, facilitating both commuter and visitor travel.

1.3.2 Gloucestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2024 (Gloucestershire County Council, 2024a)

The BSIP outlines GCC's strategy to increase bus use, and support decarbonisation by improving service quality, coverage and integration. It includes a range of proposed measures such as faster and more reliable routes, new ticketing options, zero-emissions buses, and plans for a future mass rapid transit system.

Relevance to the Cotswolds Transport Evidence Base

- **Enhancing Rural Accessibility:** The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) focuses on improving service quality, coverage, and integration, which is particularly relevant for Cotswold's dispersed rural communities. Reliable and frequent bus services can support residents without access to private vehicles, enhancing access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services.
- **Informing Future Transport Planning:** The BSIP provides input for planning and scenario development, particularly in assessing how bus service improvements could influence mode shift and connectivity within the Cotswolds. By integrating these measures, transport strategies can better reflect the needs of rural populations and visitor demand.
- **Integration with Wider Transport Networks:** Proposals for bus priority measures also contribute to more integrated regional travel, linking the Cotswolds to neighbouring centres and major corridors, supporting both daily mobility and the visitor economy.

1.3.3 Journey to Net Zero (Gloucestershire County Council, 2024b)

This Roadmap, published by GCC, provides a summary of the current transport emissions in the county and a resulting plan to reach net zero by 2045, reducing emissions by 80% by 2030. It focuses on three overarching aims of avoiding the need to travel, shifting mode of travel, and improving vehicles and driving via more efficient networks and more low carbon vehicles.

Relevance to Cotswolds Transport Evidence Base

- **Supporting Behavioural Shifts in Rural Areas:** The Roadmap identifies five key behavioural changes including making more local trips, shifting from private cars to sustainable modes, and adopting smaller or zero-emission vehicles. In the Cotswolds, achieving these outcomes requires not only transport interventions but also developments that support sustainable behaviours, particularly in dispersed rural settlements.
- **Reducing Transport Emissions:** With transport accounting for a significant portion of local emissions, these measures are critical to achieving net zero targets while maintaining access for residents and visitors. Rural-focused solutions, such as low-emission buses, active travel routes, and improvements to key corridors, help reduce reliance on private vehicles and support decarbonisation.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration:** The Roadmap highlights the importance of working with a range of stakeholders, including transport operators, and strategic bodies such as National Highways. For the Cotswolds, such collaboration ensures that transport strategies reflect local needs, support connectivity across rural communities.

1.3.4 Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy (Gloucestershire County Council, 2025)

Published in 2019, this Strategy (Gloucestershire County Council, 2019) establishes clear decarbonisation targets (e.g. carbon neutral by 2050 and 80% reduction in emissions by 203). Since then, it has been operating on a five-year rolling Action Plan with themes and targets updated as relevant.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Low-Carbon Transport Options:** The Strategy emphasises providing practical, low-carbon travel solutions for all, including improvements to local bus services, school transport, and cycling and walking infrastructure, particularly relevant for dispersed rural settlements in the Cotswolds.
- **Behavioural Change:** Encouraging residents to shift away from private car use is a central focus. Supporting behaviour change alongside transport interventions helps reduce emissions while maintaining accessibility in rural areas.
- **Rural Resilience and Accessibility:** By embedding decarbonisation measures into planning, the Strategy encourages that transport networks remain resilient, inclusive, and capable of meeting the mobility needs of Cotswolds communities.

1.4 Local Policies & Plans

1.4.1 Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) identify cycling and walking improvements required in local areas and set out a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks. Much of the LCWIP and national focus has been on urban environments and as such there are no LCWIPs in the Cotswold District outside of Cirencester.

Policy	Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base
Cirencester Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (Gloucestershire County Council, 2022)	The plan identified both existing barriers to active travel and a series of proposed measures to address them. It highlights that Cirencester suffers from fragmented walking and cycling routes and poor integration with wider transport networks, leading to high dependency on private cars even for short trips. It sets out a package of improvements including the development of continuous and safer cycle corridors, enhanced pedestrian routes to schools and employment areas, and better connections to public transport hubs such as Cirencester town centre and Kemble Station. Its detailed route mapping and community engagement insights can be used to inform broader transport planning, guide infrastructure investment, and support scenario development in the Cotswold Transport Evidence base.
Overarching Cycling Infrastructure Plan (Gloucestershire County Council, 2023)	The countywide plan determined that existing cycle routes were concentrated within the urban environments particularly Gloucester and Cheltenham. The plan focuses on filling the gaps between LCWIPs to promote a cohesive cross-county network accounting for the more rural character. In particular the challenges of building LTN1/20 compliant routes in rural areas where high speeds and traffic volumes limit the ability for segregation despite it being most necessary in those places. Five routes are found to have a high degree of deliverability and impact: Coleford to Lydney, Tewkesbury - Bishops Cleeve, Moreton in Marsh - Stow-on-the-Wold, Stonehouse – Dursley and Cirencester to Cricklade. Of these only Cirencester to Cricklade and Moreton in Marsh to Stow-on-the-Wold within the Cotswold District are prioritised.

Table 1-1: Cotswold Area Local Cycling and Walking Plans

1.5 Relevant Policies & Plans of Neighbouring and Similar Authorities

The Local Plans of adjacent LPAs have been reviewed to understand current and emerging growth ambitions, and to identify strategic developments, infrastructure proposals, and cross-boundary transport pressures that could influence outcomes within the Cotswold District. The table below summarises some of the most relevant and recent plans.

Policy	Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base
South Gloucestershire New Local Plan (Reg 19) (South Gloucestershire Council, 2025)	South Gloucestershire is currently in the process of developing a new Local Plan that will guide and manage growth across the district to 2041. The Regulation 19 consultation closed in April 2025, with submission to the Planning Inspectorate expected by September 2025. The Plan is strongly aligned with the principles of Vision and Validate planning, setting out a clear long-term vision for 2041 and using strategic objectives and policies to guide development toward that desired future. South Gloucestershire's vision centres on sustainable, connected, and thriving communities, reduced car dependency, and integrated, resilient transport infrastructure. Strategic objectives and policies, such as LPS9 (Sustainable Movement) and LPS10 (Climate Change) support development patterns that reduce the need to travel, promote active and sustainable modes over private vehicles, and embed modal shift principles. These policies go beyond reacting to current transport conditions and instead set clear ambitions for reducing emissions, enhancing accessibility, and shifting travel behaviour. As a neighbouring authority, South Gloucestershire provides a valuable example of applying a Vision and Validate approach to spatial and transport planning, offering a clear framework that the Cotswold district can utilise. The Plan proposes major developments at: • Brabazon (Filton Airfield) with a minimum of 6,500 homes, a new railway station, student accommodation, new offices, services and amenities as well as a 17,000-seat arena. • Charfield Village, delivering over 3,000 new homes as well as a mobility hub, new commercial and retail space and a community meeting space. To service these developments there will be significant improvements to transport infrastructure, including MetroBus service extensions and a new railway station in development at Charfield. These developments, combined with enhanced public transport provision, are expected to increase commuter flows, influence modal shift and reshape cross-border travel patterns, particularly along the M5 and A38 corridors.
Forest of Dean Draft Local Plan 2021-2041 (Forest of Dean District Council, 2024)	The Plan places strong emphasis on sustainable development, net zero construction, and climate adaptation. These policy directions contribute to the broader regional commitment to sustainability and inform how future interventions might align across boundaries.

Policy	Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base
Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 2018-2030 (Worcestershire County Council, 2017)	The Worcestershire LTP shares key themes with Gloucestershire's LTP, particularly around investment in transport technology, promoting travel choice, and increasing capacity. Its objectives - centred on economic development, environmental sustainability, public health, safety, equality, and quality of life.
Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024 to 2030 (Highland Council, 2024)	The highlands in Scotland have a similar transport profile to the Cotswolds. That is that a high proportion of transport in the council is made up of tourism alongside an area that is strongly rural. The council has developed a strategy to deliver a sustainable tourism sector. The strategy identified that domestic tourism as a sector was likely to increase due to more conscious approach to travel. They outlined the need to provide effective infrastructure (including housing) that can meet the growth in tourism. They identify the importance of providing seasonal transport options and working closely with the tourism sector to promote them.
Lake District Local Plan	The Lake District is another area where seasonal tourism contributes a large amount of the total traffic and carbon emissions of the region. The local plan outlines the dichotomy the region has wishing to ensure high quality of life for local people as well provide vibrant places to sustain its tourism sector and ultimately its economy. There are two policies that are highly relevant for the Cotswolds: • Accommodation for tourism: The need for housing and buildings that can sustain longer stays with high quality experiences whilst not jeopardising the needs of local people. ` • Sustainable Access: The local plan focuses on building out sustainable transport options including park and ride and mobility hubs as well restoring lost railway connections and pursuing novel electric micromobility. They identify that protecting and enhancing the rights of way and cycle network will be key to allow modal shift.

Table 1-2: Neighbouring Authorities' Local Plans

1.6 Technical Documents & Guidance

1.6.1 TAG Uncertainty Toolkit, Data Book & Common Analytical Scenarios (DfT, 2023c)

These documents, published as part of the DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG), are primarily designed to support scheme-level transport modelling and appraisal, rather than local plan-making. However, they provide a structured approach to handling uncertainty in forecasting and appraisals, which can still offer useful principles when considering future transport scenarios.

- The TAG Uncertainty Toolkit outlines how to assess uncertainty and introduces the Common Analytical Scenarios - seven standardised, cross-modal futures designed for consistent national-level analysis including:



- The TAG Data Book provides model input assumptions and appraisal values aligned with TAG methodology.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Scenario Development:** The base model which is the foundation for forecasting for the Transport evidence base of the Cotswold local plan will need to be consistent with TAG. Forecasting will also need to consider future uncertainties at the national level around the economy and behaviour to ensure the local scenarios can validate the vision put forward.

1.6.2 National Design Guidance (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021)

This guidance sits alongside the NPPF to confirm the national stance on designs for new developments. It works to support the NPPF and focuses on specific design aspects of developments, including movement and public spaces.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Sustainable Places:** The guidance promotes the creation of well-designed, climate-conscious communities where people can live, work, and thrive. A vision for the Cotswolds that can promote a tourism sector which can grow whilst also providing sustainable transport options in a highly rural setting is crucial. New developments can provide increased demand that can help make existing sustainable transport options more viable.
- **Sustainable Movement:** The guidance emphasises the importance of clear street layouts and accessible, safe, and efficient transport networks. It supports a multi-modal transport approach, highlighting walking, cycling, and public transport. Multi-modality and innovative transport solutions will likely play a key role in the Cotswolds rural locations

1.6.3 Economic Role of National Highways - Role 3: Planning and Placemaking (2024a)

This document suggests a clear and practical framework for how LPAs can collaborate with infrastructure providers, such as National Highways, to develop robust, deliverable, and sustainable Local Plans.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Support for Vision-led & Scenario-based Planning:** A central theme is the promotion of vision-led, scenario-based planning, encouraging LPAs to define a clear vision for future growth and then test a range of development scenarios to determine the most sustainable and efficient transport solutions. The evidence base will utilise the vision-led methodology. A clear vision is needed that meets stakeholder needs and requirements. Early engagement with stakeholders will be used and combined with the key goals and desired of the region (e.g. decarbonisation).
- **Early Engagement:** National Highways strongly emphasises the importance of early and ongoing engagement. It advocates for LPAs to work collaboratively with transport infrastructure providers well before Regulation 19 consultation to identify and address capacity, connectivity, and safety issues on the SRN. There is a limited amount of the SRN that lies within the Cotswolds (only the A417) and this means that other local roads will likely be more important in considering the impacts of development.
- **Evaluation Framework:** Key themes are outlined that National Highways will assess when reviewing Local Plans. These include:
 - The cumulative and residual impacts of proposed development on the SRN. Due to the nature of the Cotswolds this will largely focus on any development in or around Cirencester.
 - The sustainability and accessibility of site allocations.
 - The extent to which transport policies are aligned with local and national infrastructure priorities

Our transport assessments and modelling outputs will be structured to reflect National Highways' evaluation priorities, including safety, operational performance, and accessibility. Given that so little of the SRN is within the Cotswolds it will also account for local priorities

- **Funding:** The document stresses the importance of using Section 278 agreements and developer contributions to support transport infrastructure delivery. Given the rural nature of this area and the increased need for subsidy for sustainable transport this will be fully integrated into the evidence base.

1.6.4 Active Travel England Standing Advice Note: Active Travel & Sustainable Development (Active Travel England, 2024)

This supplementary guidance is designed to support the implementation of active travel in new developments. Whilst primarily designed to support development-level planning, the advice includes useful principles to consider in a plan making context. Active Travel England is a statutory consultee for larger developments, so its advice will be relevant to applications that may arise from the Cotswold area. It includes a Planning Application Assessment Toolkit, which sets out ten criteria for planning developments (listed below).

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Sustainable Development:** The Standing Advice Note sets out criteria that may be useful to inform the Transport Strategy for the Cotswolds:
 - Trip generation and assignment for non-vehicular modes
 - Qualitative route audits
 - Access to amenities
 - Access to public transport and passenger facilities

- Off-site transport infrastructure
- Masterplanning and site permeability
- Placemaking
- Cycle parking and end-of trip facilities
- Travel planning

1.6.5 Local Transport Note (LTN1/20) Cycle Infrastructure Design (DfT, 2020)

LTN1/20 sets out national standards for designing high-quality cycle infrastructure. It aims to make cycling a safer, more attractive, and practical mode of transport for all ages and abilities. The document emphasises the need for inclusive design, ensuring accessibility for everyone, including disabled users. It outlines core design principles such as coherence, directness, safety, comfort, and attractiveness. LTN 1/20 promotes the separation of cyclists from motor traffic on busy roads. It supports integrated planning with other transport modes and land use strategies. Overall, it provides technical guidance for local authorities to create cycling environments that encourage more people to cycle, more often. Of particular relevance to the Cotswolds due its rural nature and its ageing population is the advice guidance around facilitating the use of electrically assisted bikes. Developments should account for the need to facilitate charging of such bikes. Non-standard cycles (such as those for people with mobility needs) will also require parking that can facilitate them.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Sustainable Development:** LTN1/20 sets out the following criteria that may be useful to inform the Transport Evidence Base and Strategy for the Cotswolds:
 - Sets national standards for cycle infrastructure
 - Supports active travel in spatial planning
 - Informs requirements for new developments
 - Promotes inclusive, safe and accessible design
 - Guides sustainable site allocations
 - Aligns with climate and health objectives
 - Justifies developer-funded cycle improvements
 - Strengthens Local Plan policy compliance

New development sites will be assessed for their ability to provide sustainable sites as well as ensuring that new developments enhance not detract from existing infrastructure.

1.6.6 Active Design (Sport England, Active Travel England and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023)

Active Design offers guidance on how the built environment can promote physical activity, health, and well-being through thoughtful planning and design. It outlines ten key principles to embed activity into everyday life, focusing on movement, access, and inclusivity. The document is aimed at planners, designers, developers, and policymakers working across all scales of development. It encourages integration of walking, cycling, and play into neighbourhood layouts, green spaces, and transport links. The guidance supports national planning objectives around sustainability, health, and reducing inequalities. It highlights co-benefits like improved mental health, community cohesion, and

climate resilience. Ultimately, Active Design promotes places where being active is easy, natural, and part of daily routines.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- The ten core principles of Active Design (**Sports England , 2023**) are designed to help shape environments that encourage people to be active as part of daily life. The principles, listed below, may be useful to inform the Transport Evidence Base and Strategy:
 - **Activity for All:** Ensure everyone can be active, regardless of age, ability, or background.
 - **Walkable Communities:** Prioritise walking and cycling through connected, compact, and permeable layouts.
 - **Providing Connected Active Travel Routes:** Direct, safe, and attractive routes linking homes, work, and services.
 - **Mixing Uses & Co-locating Facilities:** Cluster everyday destinations to encourage multi-purpose trips and reduce car dependency.
 - **Network of Multifunctional Open Spaces:** Design inclusive, high-quality open spaces that support formal and informal activity.
 - **High-Quality Streets & Spaces:** Make public spaces inviting, safe, and sociable to encourage active travel and community use.
 - **Providing Activity Infrastructure:** Delivering cycle parking, showers, and wayfinding to support active lifestyles.
 - **Active Buildings:** Design buildings that promote movement and shared activity spaces.
 - **Maintaining High-quality Flexible Spaces:** Ensuring spaces remain clean, safe, and welcoming over time.
 - **Activating Spaces:** Celebrate local culture and promote active use through signage, events, and engagement.

Whilst the rural disperse nature of the Cotswolds means that services are less likely to be able to fully walkable the guidance should still ensure that communities are walkable and provide the ability to sustain active lifestyles.

1.6.7 Decarbonising Rural Communities and Economies (Rural Services Network, 2021)

Rural areas account for more than a sixth of the population of England and a majority of its land. The challenge for decarbonisation is that the whole country and every sector must reach net-zero carbon emissions. Net-zero emissions will come primarily from a reduction in carbon emissions rather than negative emissions technology. This means that every place and sector in the UK will need to see significant change in our it currently operates. As it has a smaller share of the population than urban areas decarbonising rural communities has received less focus. The Decarbonising Rural Communities and Economies (Rural Services Network, 2021) report attempts to fill this gap. It outlines several key features of decarbonising rural communities.

- **Renewable Power:** Rural locations are the sites of the majority (60%) of renewable power generation in England and that is likely to increase as recent planning changes to wind turbines take effect.
- **Building Decarbonisation Challenges:** The report showcases evidence that building in predominantly rural areas are older and have more significant challenges to being made more energy efficient. It also highlights that many of them are off grid for both gas and waste.

- **Electrification Infrastructure:** The report highlights how electric charging infrastructure in rural areas will offer high costs for fewer returns. This is due to the larger distances and lower density of customers. Current progress is slower in rural areas than in urban ones. There are additional challenges with ensuring the electrical grid in rural areas can cope with demand.

The report identifies several policy solutions:

- **Housing:** A targeted focus on ensuring that development and housing is built to the highest possible energy efficiency standards with energy generation included. Rural areas are likely to need a wider range of technologies for retrofitting e.g. heat networks.
- **Electric Vehicle Charging:** A well-planned strategy of roll-out of charging infrastructure that accounts for the longer distances between rural places. It is identified that where rural infrastructure has been built it has largely focussed on SRN chargers to help accommodate through traffic and more needed to be done for communities far away from the SRN.
- **Rural Buses:** The report suggests that the higher route distances and the lower revenue will make rural buses harder to electrify. A study is called for including investigating non-electric options such as a hydrogen.
- **Electricity Grid:** The electricity grid is less developed in rural areas and sustained action must be taken to ensure that carrying capacity is high enough for households and business that transition as well as new supply that comes online. The report also calls for the investigation of the use of microgrids in rural settings.
- **Digital Connectivity and Local Services:** Ensuring that all services can be accessed either physically or digitally will ensure the greatest impact in reduction of carbon emissions.

1.6.8 Compendium of Practice in Rural Mobility (Transport East, 2023)

The Transport East area has a high proportion of rural areas. The STB produced a compendium of best practice rural mobility. The report found that

- **Access to Services:** There was a high degree of variability in what services were available. Secondary and tertiary services had the least availability. These are predominantly infrequent services (supermarkets, larger goods and post-primary education).
- **Mobile Services:** Some rural areas were experimenting with mobile services such as banking and libraries which was seen as a way of reducing the need for travel.
- **Fuel:** Access to fuel and charging facilities was notably poor away from the main roads. This has implications for changing ranges for electrification.
- **No Expansion of Services:** The study found an appetite for increased services accessible locally but also found that the economics and dynamics of rural places meant that there were few considering such an expansion.
- **Poor Transport Options:** Overall, residents had low perceptions of the available transport offerings in rural areas. Rail scored the worst due to the focus placed on commuting trips rather than everyday trips. Buses also scored poorly with many indicating very poor reliable access to bus routes.
- **Community Transport:** Community Transport was well regarded in rural areas and provided evidence that it provided a key transport role in rural communities.
- **Antisocial Driver Behaviour:** All communities reported a high degree of problems arising from congestion and high speeds of cars in their areas. This was exacerbated in areas with points of interest where there are a high proportion of visitors without the infrastructure to support them.

1.6.9 Best Practice Review (Low Carbon Destinations, 2023)

Low Carbon Destinations is a research project studying the carbon impacts in areas that are destinations. That is areas with a large component of tourism. The work has studied national and international cases to determine key priorities for regions in this category. They found that

- **Increase Capacity:** Transport services specifically targeting full home-to-destination trips. This is required to limit the number of private cars driven into the areas. It suggests that dedication and innovation is needed to develop and promote new multi-modal options particularly in rural areas away from mainline train stations.
- **Diversity is Growth:** The study found that there are already significant numbers of people nationwide with low access to cars (25%) and that increasing alternative transport provisions meant that the tourism sector could benefit.
- **User Costs:** Making sure that costs of sustainable travel are kept competitive. It also stressed the need to increase the full costs of car use and utilise policy to bring the externalities of car use into the user costs.
- **Active Demand Management:** They argue that active demand management can be achieved through engagement with existing service providers.

The work also outlines a six-step approach to decarbonisation of visitors:

1. **Back-casting:** Working backwards from the desired endpoint to identify first steps to delivery.
2. **Stakeholder Mapping:** Mapping key people to include and at which point in the process.
3. **Place-Based Design:** Design mobility options in place-based way.
4. **Co-Benefits:** Determine and maximise the co-benefits of the system. Co-benefits will help to ensure wider support.
5. **Economic Model Development:** Determine the nature and scale of investment required and where likely funding will come from. Outline expected governance of the scheme.
6. **Delivery Pathway:** Plot the delivery pathway for the scheme.

2 Good Practice & Lessons Learnt

The significant changes in legislation and policy described in Chapter 1 mean that the requirements for local plan transport evidence bases continues to develop. All relevant good practice and lessons learnt from the development of local plans in other areas will be considered in developing the local plan for the Cotswolds. Space and the evolving nature of this practice preclude an exhaustive summary, so this section highlights a selection that is particularly relevant to the Cotswolds.

2.1 Examples of Good Practice

2.1.1 The Chichester Local Plan 2021–2039 (Chichester District Council, 2023)

The Chichester Local Plan covers the Chichester District (excluding the South Downs National Park) and sets the framework for development up to 2039. The Plan is currently at the Regulation 19 stage and awaiting examination.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Integrated Transport Evidence Base:** The Chichester Transport Study (Stantec, 2023) assessed the impacts of proposed development on the transport network and identified potential enabling measures. This Study evaluated various growth scenarios and their effects on the highway network, particularly focusing on the A27 corridor. This supports the Plan in meeting the tests of soundness under Regulation 19 and reduces the risk of sites being found unsound due to transport objections at examination. For the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base will adopt this same approach - developing a multimodal STA in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that up-to-date, proportionate evidence supports infrastructure planning and site selection across the district.
- **Monitor & Manage:** The Plan embraces a Monitor & Manage Approach, co-identifying a suite of potential transport interventions with National Highways and West Sussex County Council, and deploying them responsively, if necessary, as development progresses. It thereby focused on transport mitigation only when it is justified by actual patterns of growth and behaviour.
 - The monitoring focused on network performance including real traffic flows, queuing levels and delays at key junctions, mode share outcomes from travel plans, and cumulative impacts from multiple development sites.
 - A dedicated Traffic & Infrastructure Management Group oversaw the monitoring process, using this evidence to determine whether and when specific interventions should be triggered. Monitoring focused on locations such as the A27 Chichester Bypass and its key junctions, as well as local distributor roads.
 - This approach was largely adopted as costs of improvements to the A27 junction could not be funded through contributions from new development alone and no additional funding sources were identified.
- **Early & Structured Collaboration:** A Traffic and Management Group was established as a standing governance mechanism, with key stakeholders including Chichester District Council, National Highways and West Sussex County Council, ensuring strategic buy-in and alignment across organisations as the Plan was developed. The Cotswold Local Plan will also look to establish a similar mechanism through the Transport Working Group, in collaboration with GCC, National Highways, and neighbouring authorities. Ensuring structured engagement throughout the programme helps to secure buy-in to the methodology, outputs and overarching evidence base. This ensures regional travel patterns and strategic corridors are accounted for and addressed consistently.

2.1.2 Oxfordshire's Local Transport & Connectivity Plan

Oxfordshire's most recent Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, adopted in July 2022, introduces a forward-thinking approach to transport planning, emphasising sustainability and active travel.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Vision-led Approach:** Oxfordshire has moved away from the traditional 'predict and provide' model by first establishing a desired future transport outcome - such as reducing car dependency and promoting sustainable modes - and then identifying the infrastructure and policy interventions needed to achieve that outcome. In line with the updated NPPF the Cotswold Local plan will also seek to adopt a vision-led approach. To do this an engagement session with the key stakeholders will be pursued in order to collate a shared vision for the district. This will form a distinct transport vision for the developments and from this vision key measurable objectives will be outlined and tests will be run against these outcomes.
- **Prioritisation of Active Travel & Public Transport Connections:** In preparing site-specific and countywide transport strategies, Oxfordshire placed a strong emphasis on demonstrating connectivity through walking, cycling, and public transport, and diverted funding from road-based interventions to sustainable alternatives. This was achieved by setting active travel mode share targets linked to bonds that can be drawn on if those outcomes are not achieved. As part of the Strategic Transport Assessment, a detailed analysis of current active travel and public transport networks will be undertaken to identify gaps in accessibility for proposed development areas. The Cotswold district has only small stretches of SRN and national rail which means that the scope for growth in major road and rail capacity is likely to be limited. The Cotswold Local Plan will focus on key measures using public and active transport that could be delivered with maximal cost effectiveness.

2.2 Building on Lessons Learnt

In preparing the Local Plan for the Cotswolds it is essential to reflect on recent examination outcomes to help ensure the strategy is robust, deliverable, and capable of passing soundness tests at examination. Ensuring that consensus can be achieved to ensure that a strong local plan can be adopted.

2.2.1 Stroud District Local Plan Examination Review

A particularly relevant case is the Stroud District Local Plan Review, which underwent an extended examination and was ultimately recommended for withdrawal by Inspectors in February 2025. Despite additional work and a ten-month pause to address earlier concerns, the Inspectors concluded that the Plan remained unsound. This decision was primarily due to unresolved issues relating to the transport and infrastructure evidence base - particularly related to the deliverability and funding strategy for critical infrastructure, and uncertainties around the deliverability of major allocations.

The Cotswold Local Plan and Evidence Base will ensure that these lessons are learnt from the outset. The main challenges and associated lessons have been reviewed. The reviewed documents include:

- SDC Letter to Inspectors - December 2024 (Stroud District Council, 2024)
- Stroud District Local Plan Review Examination - February 2025 (Lucas & Wright, 2025a)
- SDC Letter in Response to Inspectors - March 2025 (Stroud District Council, 2025)
- Letter from Inspectors – April 2025 (Lucas & Wright, 2025b)

The findings from this review are summarised below, with a focus on ensuring the Cotswold transport evidence builds on the identified lessons learnt and ultimately presents a strong case to Inspectors.

Relevance to the Cotswold Transport Evidence Base

- **Right Development in the Right Place:** It is important that the development of spatial strategies consider transport impacts and infrastructure needs from an early stage. With the limited scope for new infrastructure in the region this is even more important. This shows the importance of front-loading the transport evidence and letting this shape the plan. Our approach puts transport at the heart of strategy-making from the outset, so that development is directed to the right places, at the right time, with the right infrastructure to support it. We will focus where development can increase the viability and effectiveness of existing infrastructure
- **Clear & Credible Funding Strategy:** The rural nature of the Cotswold will make funding a challenge, and it vital to identify clear realistic funding pathways for proposed measures early in the process. We will prepare a deliverability assessment once the preferred option package is agreed, including a high-level appraisal of costs, risks, and funding options.
- **Engagement with Key Stakeholders:** Unresolved issues with key stakeholders, such as National Highways and Network Rail, undermine confidence in deliverability. Utilising our extensive experience of engagement we will prioritise early and sustained engagement with infrastructure stakeholders to jointly develop and validate transport modelling assumptions. We will pursue a consensus-based approach that ensures a strategy with maximal support across the stakeholders.
- **Robust Transport Modelling & Evidence to Justify Decision-making:** The lack of proportionate, shared and transparent transport evidence - particularly for key sites – can lead Inspectors to question housing delivery assumptions and spatial strategies. To address this, our approach commits to scenario-based testing of spatial options. Full documentation and open sharing of modelling methods and outputs will be embedded throughout the process.

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