

APPENDIX 2: COVENTRY TRANSPORT STRATEGY SUMMARY DOCUMENT

A new Transport Strategy for a changing city

This Strategy has been drawn up to help the city's residents, businesses and visitors travel safely, easily and sustainably over the coming years. It has been created after consultation across the city to make sure it supports a thriving economy and a healthy population.

The Strategy explains why change is needed and sets out a long-term vision for the next 15 years.

In bringing in the new Strategy, the Council has said it will strive to ensure all parts of the transport system are accessible to everyone. All forms of transport are covered, including walking and cycling, and not just local transport links, but national and international ones.

The need for change

The Strategy is important to help the city keep up with new developments and the needs of the changing world. Global issues such as tackling climate change, fighting poverty and reducing inequalities must be faced by every city.

In the UK, the Government has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The West Midlands' target is 2041, and that will need major changes in the way goods and people move around the country. In 2016 transport accounted for 39 per cent of the region's emissions and so there has to be a shift away from car travel towards public transport and active travel such as walking and cycling.

Those changes are also key to promoting physical and mental wellbeing and improving the quality of life for residents.

Coventry is a rapidly growing city, with around 25,000 new homes set to be built in the coming years. There are also plans for commercial development, including the establishment of a new business district at Friargate and the regeneration of City Centre South. These developments will create a significant increase in travel demand, which will need to be met in a sustainable way.

All of these local, regional, national and international issues mean we must look at the city's transport network now, and continue to bring in change in the years ahead.

Current Travel Patterns

In 2021 there were 345,000 people living in Coventry. It is a rapidly growing city and this generates a significant level of travel demand, both within the city and to and from neighbouring areas.

Although travel demand fell significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, Coventry remains a city that is largely dominated by car travel. Both the total number of cars owned by Coventry residents and the number of cars per household have been increasing steadily over the long-term.

In recent years, the Council has encouraged residents to switch from petrol and diesel to electric, and other zero emission, vehicles, including by installing more than 500 electric vehicle charge points – one of the largest public networks of charge points in the country. Government statistics show that the number of electric vehicles in Coventry is increasing rapidly, but they remain a small minority of the total.

Regular counts of private and public transport trips into the centre of Coventry show that between 2011 and 2021 cars and taxis consistently accounted for around 75-80 per cent of trips. Around 70 per cent of commuter journeys made by Coventry residents were made by car (either as driver or passenger). The Council's household survey also shows that residents believe that car is the easiest way to travel, but there is heavy congestion at peak times.

In public transport, the city has four local stations and good national links, but services to neighbouring towns only run once per hour, and only three per cent of trips between Coventry and Leicester are made by rail, compared to 30 per cent for Birmingham.

The city also has an extensive network of bus services, but there are some challenges regarding the reliability of services, which can be affected by congestion on the road network, and the frequency of services on some routes, particularly outside of peak hours. The radial nature of the city's bus network also means that many passengers need to travel into the city centre to change buses, leading to longer journeys, and are concerns over accessibility for disabled residents.

Although Coventry is a relatively compact city, the number of people walking and cycling is not as high as it could be, with only 12 per cent of commuters travelling to work on foot in 2018. Levels of cycling are particularly low, accounting for only around one per cent of journeys into the centre of Coventry. A lack of convenient and safe routes for cyclists is likely to be a barrier to higher levels of uptake. In 2021 only 52 per cent of residents agreed that it was easy to travel around Coventry by bike. This is significantly fewer than the number who felt it was easy to walk, drive and travel on public transport.

The case for change

There are seven specific challenges which this strategy is intended to address:

- Tackling climate change – a major change in the way we travel is needed. Electric vehicles will not be enough, it will need a reduction in the total number of vehicles
- Improving health for local people – health inequalities are linked to poverty and physical activity. Better walking, cycling and public transport links to employment centres are essential. Air pollution is also a concern, with traffic jams a major cause
- Preventing road traffic accidents - at present around 600-700 casualties occur each year as a result of incidents on Coventry's roads. In 2019 there were 100 serious incidents and 3 fatal incidents. The introduction of average speed cameras has helped, and work like this will continue
- Supporting the city's economic recovery - there are plans in the city for Friargate business district, City Centre South, a further expansion of Ansty Park, plans for a Gigafactory in the south of the city, and talks over expansion plans with major employers such as the universities and Jaguar Land Rover. While creating new jobs and supporting the city's recovery from COVID-19, these developments will also create additional travel demand, which will need to be met in a sustainable way
- Maximising the benefits of HS2 and other major investments - HS2 is expected to bring substantial economic benefits to the West Midlands, and with an interchange at Solihull, will be close to Coventry. It is also close to Birmingham Airport and the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and forms part of 'UK Central', which is expected to become a major transport hub. Connectivity between Coventry and UK Central is, therefore, a key consideration for this strategy

- Meeting travel demand from new homes - Coventry is a rapidly growing city, with plans to build 25,000 new homes over the period 2011 – 2031. In many cases, these developments are directly dependent on new transport infrastructure being delivered. More generally, the increase in the city's population will generate additional travel demand
- Adapting to changes in the way that people live, work and travel – the emergence of electric vehicles, Very Light Rail, driverless cars and other breakthroughs will mean dramatic changes over the next 10-15 years, and travel habits have already changed considerably as a result of the pandemic. Plans will need to be flexible as further changes are hard to predict.

How we will achieve our objectives

We need to bring about a fundamental change to the way in which people and goods travel to, from and around our city. In particular, current levels of car travel will simply not be sustainable in the future.

This Strategy aims to create a city where it is easy, convenient and safe to walk, cycle and travel on public transport, and where most people do not need to use a car to access the services that they need for day-to-day life. To achieve this, we will also need to be innovative. Coventry already has a reputation as a leader in the field of transport innovation and we will seek to maintain and strengthen this over the lifetime of the strategy.

Action will be required across a range of different areas. The following graphics provide a summary of the most significant improvements that will be delivered over the lifetime of the strategy.

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS WILL BE CONVERTED TO A SERIES OF INFOGRAPHICS BEFORE PUBLICATION

Public Transport

- A first-of-its-kind in the world Very Light Rail system - a new form of mass transit, similar to trams seen in other cities but with smaller, electric powered vehicles
- More frequent rail services to Nuneaton, Kenilworth and Leamington
- New, direct rail services to the East Midlands
- Explore potential for additional railway stations, and make further improvements to existing ones
- The first all-electric bus fleet in the country, by 2025
- A more accessible public transport network – we will deliver the commitments set out in our Transport Charter for People with Disabilities, such as increasing the number of spaces for wheelchair users/passengers with prams and pushchairs on all buses
- Improvements to ticketing, including freezing fares, passenger information, stops and shelters for local bus services
- A city-wide 'On Demand' bus service.

Walking, cycling and micro-mobility

- A network of safe, segregated cycleways
- A safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians, particularly in the city centre and around other local neighbourhood centres
- New Liveable Neighbourhoods, residential areas where through traffic is discouraged to improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists, developed with residents

- A programme of School Streets, where temporary road closures at pick and drop off times make it easier for pupils to walk and cycle to school
- Further expansion of the WM Cycle Hire scheme
- E-scooters, if legalised, to be safely incorporated into our transport system.

Highways

- Targeted improvements to the road network, such as junction improvements and new roads, where these are needed to enable homes and workplaces to be built or to reduce air pollution and congestion
- Further expansion of the public network of electric vehicle charge points
- Local businesses supported to switch to electric vehicles
- Further expansion of 'car clubs'/car sharing services
- Roads, pavements and cycleways maintained to a high standard
- Further rollout of average speed cameras to improve road safety
- Better management of the highway network, and preparation for driverless cars.

Other measures

- Explore the use of parcel lockers and freight consolidation centres, where goods are transferred to/from a zero emission vehicle for the first/last part of their journey, to reduce reliance on home delivery
- Explore the potential for drones to be used to transport goods or passengers in the future
- Engagement with local schools, businesses and residents to support sustainable travel options
- Encourage sustainable travel via incentive schemes, such as providing 'mobility credits'.

How we will measure our progress

An Annual Progress Report will be prepared to report on our progress in delivering our objectives.

The strategy will also be subject to regular review and will be updated if and when our plans change.