

Devon Local Transport Plan 2006-2011

Newton Abbot Area Strategy

Quality of Alternative Options

An analysis of the quality of alternative options has been undertaken to establish what improvements may be required in the strategy to address the future needs of the area. The County Council has analysed the factors influencing people's decision to whether to walk, cycle or use public transport in Newton Abbot from a number of sources including community planning, the Local Transport Plan consultation, the Local Development Framework process and direct feedback to local offices.

Walking

Walking has significant potential in Newton Abbot given the compact nature of the town and the flat nature of the terrain in many parts. Whilst there are signs that walking levels to schools have been increasing with the support of School Travel Plans (up from 47% of trips in 2001 to 54% in 2004), those for work and other purposes appear to be static or falling. Whilst changing employment patterns plays a part in this, the local nature of many trips noted above suggests that there are opportunities to increase walking levels, particularly in conjunction with the proposed urban extension. The future prosperity of the town centre is heavily dependant on a high quality walking environment that maximises its historic nature and the quality of key parts of the built environment. It faces stiff competition from out of town stores and competing centres as well as the internet. Key issues to address include:

- Overcoming physical barriers such as rail lines and rivers to create direct and attractive routes;
- The need to make the crossing of heavily trafficked routes feel safer, particularly for older people and children;
- Improving the quality of the main town centre retail area, particularly those on the periphery of the main Courtenay Street. These form gateways into the town centre and create an important first impression.
- The need to build on investment in Shopmobility facilities by reducing barriers to mobility impaired people within the town centre

Cycling

As with walking, the generally flat nature of parts of the town, particularly between Kingsteignton and Newton Abbot, provides good opportunities for cycling. Current levels for all purposes are generally low at between 1 and 2% of school and employment journeys although evidence from counters suggests that there is a slight growth, particularly for leisure journeys. The County Council's preferred urban extension option provides significant opportunities to build in a cycling culture which will also extend to the rest of the town and in particular Kingsteignton. Key issues to address include:

- A lack of segregated routes away from heavy traffic, particularly to and from key employment and education facilities
- A fragmented existing cycle network that requires improved continuity, particularly where improved crossings are required
- A lack of secure cycle parking facilities at key generators and a need to expand short stay provision in the town centre

Buses

The quality and viability of bus routes in the area varies quite significantly between services such as route 12 to Torbay and shorter distance services within the town. Services such as route 12 have high quality vehicles and good patronage levels but may not be meeting their potential due to factors including congestion in Torbay, Kingskerswell and Newton Abbot which:

- Increases actual and timetabled journey times
- Creates uneven intervals and bunching on high frequency routes

- Increases [driver and vehicle] operating costs with knock-on impacts on fares and future investment

Bus punctuality services have indicated that up to 40% of services will be late or very late on the worst affected routes and delays tend to build up during the day. Further work will indicate whether this worsens during peak summer periods. Detailed analysis of individual services has also demonstrated that improvements should be made to reduce delays attributable to boarding and fleet management.

Services within the town have suffered declines in patronage due principally to congestion within the town and the generally low quality vehicles which also have an impact on air quality to the low Euro standard (typically Euro 1 / 2 or less) of the engines. The increasing levels of congestion have also meant that there is a lack of cross-town services that adequately link residential areas to key travel generators.

The quality of Newton Abbot bus station is also an area of concern. It is the principal boarding and alighting point for the town centre and provides an interchange facility into other services, particularly the 12 to Torbay. It has a poor waiting environment for passengers, has limited capacity and is a difficult operating environment where vehicles can be delayed using adjacent roads to turn or exit.

The County Council's preferred urban extension also presents a major opportunity to fully integrate bus services in to the new community and employment area through:

- the provision of dedicated priority routes
- high quality frequent services to key destinations within and beyond the town
- built in real time information
- targeted marketing, information and offers from the beginning

It is also anticipated that there will be strong opportunities to integrate the above with the generally untapped potential in Kingsteignton with the support of travel planning measures.

Rail

Newton Abbot is well served by the rail network with frequent links to Teignmouth, Dawlish, Exeter, Torbay and Plymouth with main line services to Paddington and the rest of the country. There are capacity issues at various peak times which the County Council will be discussing with the recently appointed Great Western franchisee, First. However the future potential of local services in particular could be enhanced through better quality walking, cycling and bus links with the rest of the town and surrounding area. In particular there are major opportunities to closely link the potential urban extension with the support of travel planning measures as well as physical links.