



Local Area Transport Plan Baseline report

**Dunstable & Houghton Regis –
January 2011**

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1. Introduction

The purpose of Dunstable and Houghton Regis Local Area Transport Plan (LATP) is to demonstrate how the transport system in Dunstable, Houghton Regis and the surrounding rural area should be developed in a sustainable way so as to ensure it meets the needs of residents, businesses, visitors and enables the local economy to flourish.

This LATP covers all forms of transport including walking, cycling, public transport, private car and freight.

Dunstable and Houghton Regis sit at the intersection of a number of important road links. Although these provide the conurbation with an advantage, they are also the source of several of the towns' problems including congestion and air quality.

In developing the proposals for this LATP, Central Bedfordshire Council has worked in close partnership with Luton Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire County Council in order to ensure that our proposals are compatible with their plans.

Furthermore this LATP has been prepared in accordance with Government guidance for the production of the LTP3 published in July 2009. Section 4 of this guidance lists the recommended process most relevant to this Local area Transport Plan. A summary of the guidance recommended process is listed below:

- Clarify goals;
- Specify the problems and challenges of the area;
- Generate options to resolve these problems;
- Appraise the options and predict their effects;
- Select preferred options;
- Decide priorities;
- Deliver the agreed plans.

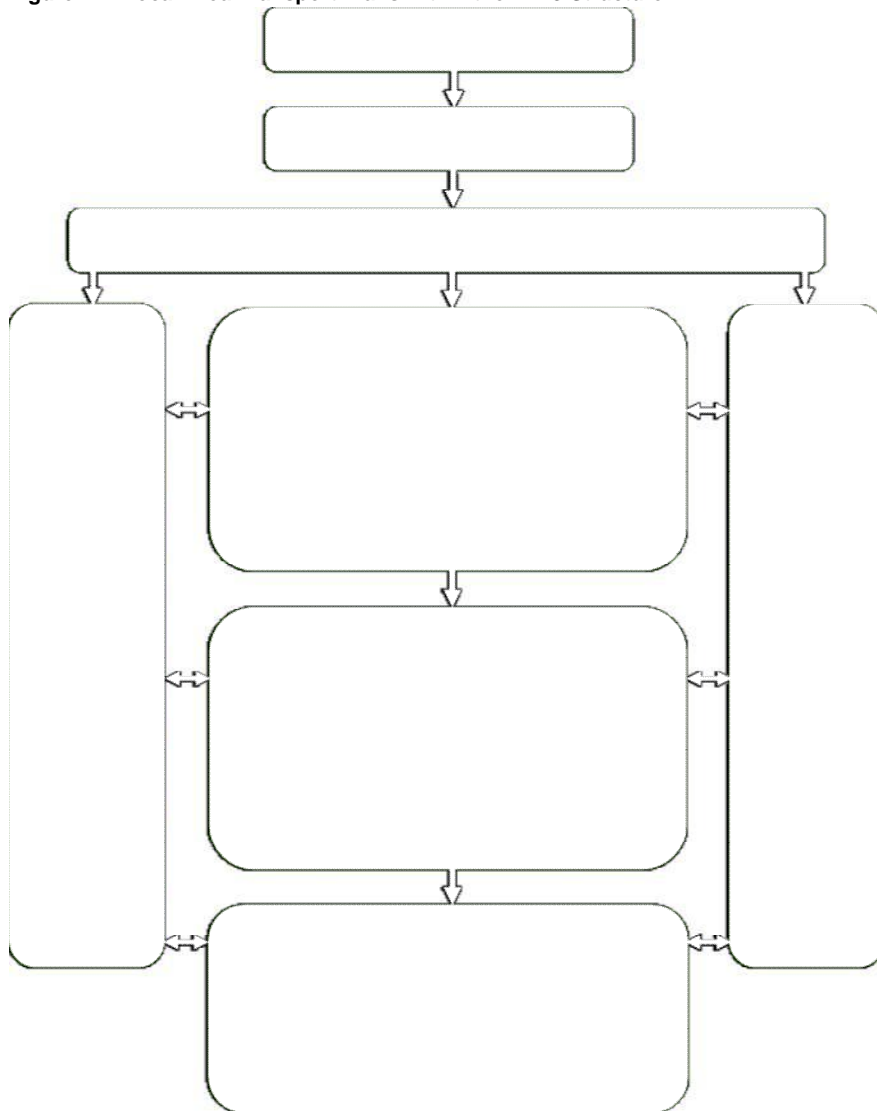
2. LTP Background

The Local Area Transport Plan for Dunstable & Houghton Regis will form part of the first Local Transport Plan (LTP) produced solely by and for Central Bedfordshire. It is, however, the Third LTP produced: the previous two LTPs were developed and managed by the former Bedfordshire County Council and specific to the Dunstable and Houghton Regis areas with Luton Borough Council .

This plan is being developed in accordance with the Local Transport Act 2008, where by the responsible highways authority shall have in place the Third Local Transport Plan (LTP 3) by March 31, 2011.

The following figure 1.1 illustrates how the LAMP fits into the overall structure of the LTP3.

Figure 1.1: Local Area Transport Plans within the LTP3 Structure



This document predominantly covers Dunstable and Houghton Regis however the actual Local Area Transport Plan will include the surrounding districts. This is in line with the potential growth impacts and the natural requirement for people in the outlying areas to access services within

Dunstable & Houghton Regis. The Local Area Transport Plan will inform and be informed by the Modal and Access based strategies which are also being developed as part of the LTP, enabling journeys to work and other services to be considered in terms of each different type of transport.

3. Area Background Information

This Chapter of the report focuses on the findings of the initial investigations into what we have assessed are the major Transport Issues affecting the communities of Dunstable & Houghton Regis.

The evidence we have collected is based around five themes, these being;

1. **Local Context** – Demographics, deprivation.
2. **Quality of Life & Residential Living** – Congestion, Air Quality, Road Safety & Traffic runs.
3. **Opportunity for All** – Accessing Employment, Education, Health & other services.
4. **Growth** – Economic & Housing growth.
5. **Smarter Choices** – Travel Plans & Publicity.
6. **Local Studies and Supporting strategies** – Masterplans and access audits
7. **Current Proposals and Ongoing works** – Major road and infrastructure proposals/plans.

3.1 Local Context

The population of Dunstable and Houghton Regis after the 2001 census stood at 33,805 and 18,000 consecutively. The demographic profiles of the two areas are 21% aged 0-15 years, 63% 16-64 years and 16% aged 65+.

The Downside Estate in Dunstable ranks in the top 10% regionally and the top 30% nationally as a deprived area. The Park Side and Tithe Farm Estates in Houghton Regis are also in the top 10% regionally for deprivation but fair slightly better nationally. It is worth noting that two of the known impacts of deprivation can include;

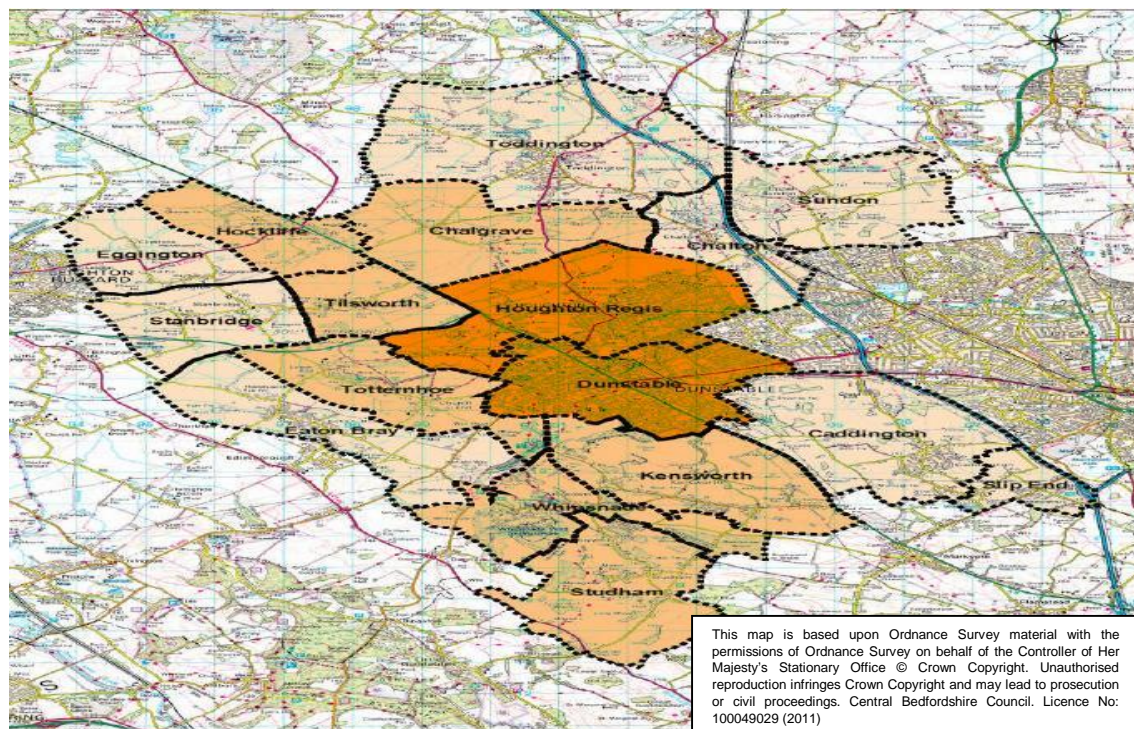
1. More children affected by injuries including, as a pedestrian
2. Barriers to joining social activities and employment due to lack of money and time/access to transport issues.

3.1.1 The Rural area surrounding Dunstable & Houghton Regis

Dunstable and Houghton Regis towns are surrounded by villages which are largely dependent on the two towns for access to services such as jobs, health, shopping and education. Any transport strategy developed within the Dunstable and Houghton Regis LAMP needs also to cater for the needs of the residents of the surrounding rural area.

For this reason this LAMP'S area of impact is extended to take into account the transport needs of the surrounding rural areas which are judged to be mainly, or partially, dependent on the urban area for access to services. (Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1: Dunstable & Houghton Regis – Surrounding reliance



KEY: -

- - - Boundary Area
- LAMP Area
- Outer area mainly reliant on LAMP Area for access to services
- Outer Area partially reliant on LAMP Area for access to services

A total of around 18'850 people who live in the surrounding rural areas are dependent on access to the two towns to reach some or most services. These areas consist of the villages listed below together with their latest population:

Village	Population	Location in relation to the Urban Area
Caddington	3740	South
Chalgrave	440	North East
Chalton	580	North East
Eaton Bray	2610	West
Hockliffe	790	North
Kensworth	1440	South West
Slip End	1960	South east
Studham	1110	South west
Sundon	280	North East
Toddington	4350	North
Totternhoe	1130	West
Whipsnade	430	South West
TOTAL	18850	

- Mainly reliant on Dunstable & Houghton Regis LAMP area for access to services
- Partially reliant on Dunstable & Houghton Regis LAMP Area for access to services

3.2 Quality of life & Residential living

Transport has a key role to play in influencing the Quality of our residents' lives and the opportunities they have. This section aims to look at the specific issues Dunstable & Houghton Regis have and the associated implications.

3.2.1 Congestion

There is some congestion in Dunstable and Houghton Regis town centres, due to limited road capacity and high volumes of traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles. The A5 trunk road lies at the heart of Dunstable's transport infrastructure, directing movement north and south. The following table details the high number of traffic travelling through the area.

Table 3.1 Traffic numbers and vehicle allocation

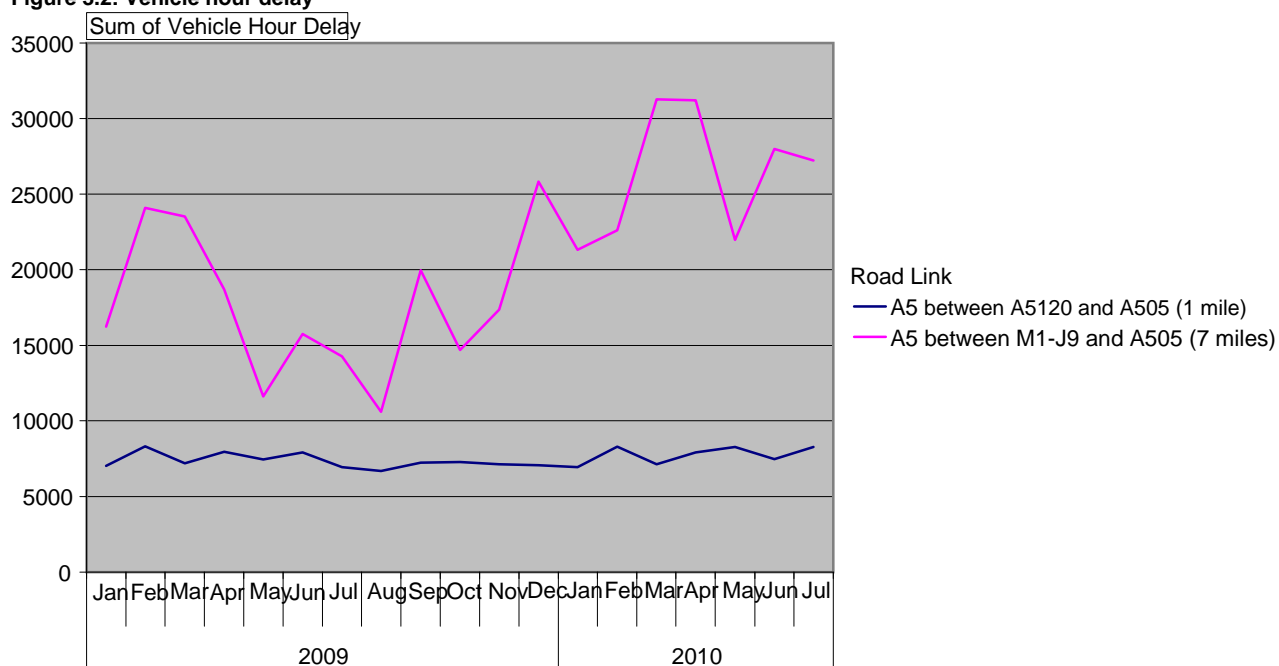
Route	2009/2010 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic Count)
Dunstable A5 High Street North	17,273 (14% HGVs)
Dunstable A5 High Street South	25,435 (2.5% HGVs)
Dunstable Church Street	24,356 (11.7% HGVs)
Dunstable Brewers Hill Road	10,690 (0.4% HGVs)
Houghton Regis: Houghton Rd / High Street*	12,778 (6.12% HGVs)

Source: ATC & Manual Counts (HA & Amey)

Exacerbating the problem is the large volumes of goods vehicles currently using routes through Dunstable, particularly the A5. Access to the Woodside Industrial area via the M1 / A505 / Poynters Road / Boscombe Road is also a heavily used freight route within Dunstable.

Figure 3.2 below shows the long and unreliable journey times along the A5 trunk route through Dunstable which imposes significant additional costs for business and the community.

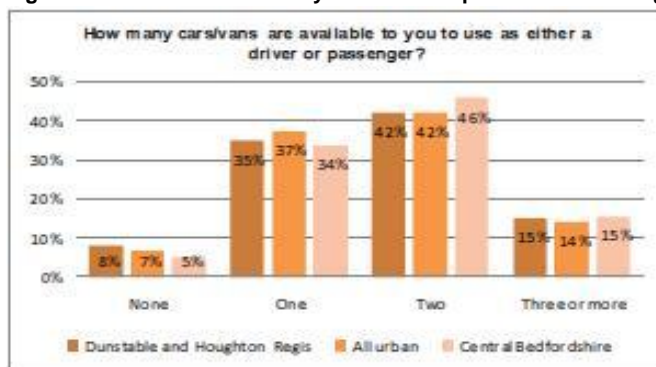
Figure 3.2: Vehicle hour delay



3.2.2 Car ownership

On average, there is more than one registered car per household in Central Bedfordshire, and car ownership is growing by 2% (ONS) per year. Extra housing needed for the area will lead to a further increase in car use – by up to 250,000 trips per annum. The householder survey found that 42% of respondents have access to two cars as either a driver or passenger however this figure is lower than the rest of Central Bedfordshire by 4%. 72% of respondents travelled as a driver/passenger most days.

Figure 3.3: Householder survey car ownership Dunstable & Houghton Regis



3.2.3 Road safety

High volumes of traffic on the main routes through Dunstable and Houghton Regis results in conflicts with pedestrians, particularly at busy junctions in the town centre.

Clusters of Personal Injury Accidents are most notable at the following key junctions within the conurbation:

- A) crossroads of the A5 High Street / A505 Church Street / West Street and the adjoining bus interchange
- B) A5 High Street North / Queensway
- C) A5 / A5120 Houghton Road / Brewers Hill Road
- D) A505 / Poynters Road
- E) A505 / Boscombe Road

The total number of accidents within the Dunstable & Houghton Regis areas totals 100, between the periods of 01/01/2007 - 31/12/2009 the breakdown of those accidents is as follows:

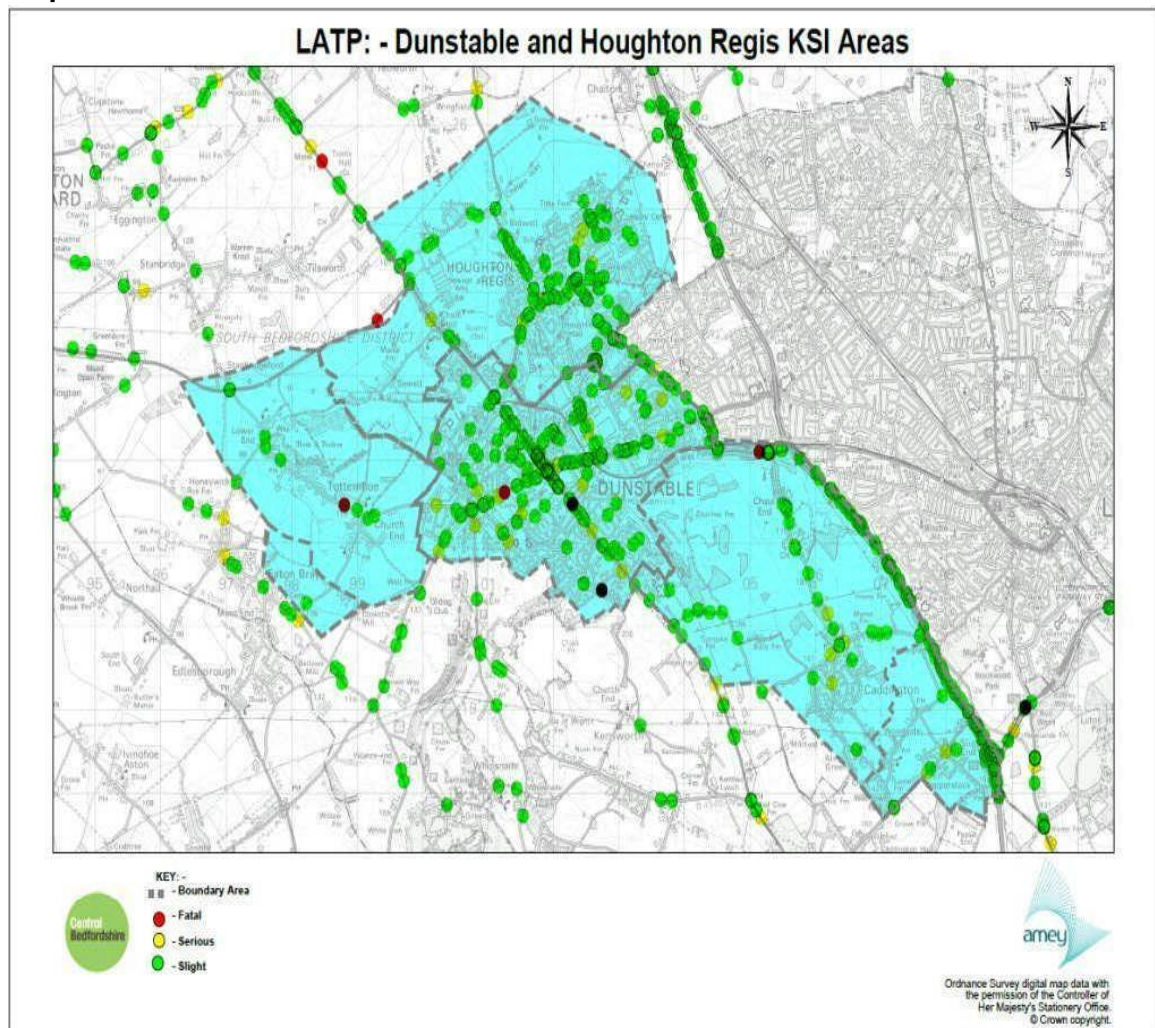
- 5 fatal
- 70 serious
- 25 slight

Further breakdown shows that 91% are adults over the age of 16 years of age and;

- 18 are pedestrians
- 5 are cyclists
- 27 are on a motorcycle (5 of these are passengers)
- 31 are vehicle drivers
- 15 are vehicle passengers

The following map details the accidents and locations over the last twelve month period.

Map 1



3.2.4 Air quality - Dunstable AQMA

Previous rounds of review and assessment identified parts of Dunstable as needing to be declared as an AQMA in January 2005. This was in respect of the annual nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) air quality objective. The main source of the pollution was identified as coming from road traffic. Since then progress has been made to work towards improving the air quality within the AQMA. Before 1st April 2009, the Highways Agency who is responsible for the A5 and Bedfordshire County Council (responsible for local road network) along with South Bedfordshire District Council produced an AQAP and work started on trying to reduce the pollution levels. Since 1st April 2009, this work has been continued by Central Bedfordshire Council.

An Air Quality Action Plan was drafted by South Bedfordshire District Council in collaboration from colleagues in Transport Strategy, Bedfordshire County Council Highways and the Highways Agency and submitted to Defra for comment in December 2006.

Air quality has not been considered in isolation as the wider social, economic and environmental considerations of proposed actions have been addressed and where possible integrated with wider plans/strategies.

Guidance on air quality action planning requires that the measures included in an AQAP should be ranked and prioritised based on their cost and overall benefit to local air quality. This has proved a difficult task to undertake for all the measures in the South Beds Action Plan as many of the general measures are statements of desired 'outcomes' achievable through a variety of different measures rather than specific schemes with easily quantifiable costs and benefits. The Local Transport Plan 1 (LTP1) also addressed air quality issues.

Funding has been secured to purchase a new NO₂ monitoring and relocate to another site representing relevant exposure. Currently Planners and the Highways Agency are being consulted with regards to potential sites.

Diffusion tube monitoring has shown a decrease in the concentration of NO₂ being recorded, however some sites continue to record concentrations above the air quality objective levels. Detailed dispersion modelling of the roads around Chalton Cottages was undertaken as the area had been identified through local monitoring as potentially exceeding the annual mean NO₂ objective. Modelling was carried out for a base year of 2007 and future year 2010.

Concentrations of NO₂ are predicted to decrease between 2007 and 2010. This decrease is due to decreasing background concentrations and improved vehicle emissions controls. Exceedence of the annual mean NO₂ objective are predicted as likely at three of the six sensitive residential receptor locations in 2007 and probable at one receptor. The model predicts that by 2010 it is possible that the annual average NO₂ AQO will be exceeded at four receptors, however it is very unlikely to be exceeded at the remaining two. No predicted exceedences of the 1 hour mean objective were identified for either 2007 or 2010. Diffusion tube monitoring has shown a decrease in the concentration of NO₂ being recorded, however concentrations are still above the air quality objective levels.

It is important to note that the UK annual mean NO₂ air quality objective refers to the objective year of 2005. Therefore any location of relevant exposure identified as having an annual mean of above 40µg/m³ beyond 2005 is classed as showing an exceedence.

In accordance with the Defra guidance LAQM local authorities have to designate those parts of their areas where the prescribed objectives are not likely to be met by, or at any point beyond the relevant deadline, as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's). Therefore the council will need to declare an Air Quality Management Area for the NO₂ annual mean objective for the area around the Chalton Cross Cottages and the Long Meadow Farm identified as exceeding.

3.2.5 Parking

Current objectives for parking according to LTP2 are to:

- Provide a safe and free-flowing road environment by discouraging injudicious on street parking;
- Support economic regeneration and local businesses by providing safe, convenient and competitively priced off-street parking;
- Promote sustainable transport; and
- Provide residents with a fair opportunity to park within the street in which they live, free from commuters and shoppers.

Residents' Parking Schemes currently operate over a group of streets in Dunstable town centre, to the north-west of the crossroads of High Street / West Street / Church Street. These serve as a means of giving precedence towards parking for residents over competing demands for shoppers, local businesses and schools. A number of presently unrestricted streets near the town centre suffer from competing parking demands for residential parking and town centre parking.

Parking has also been highlighted as a problem for some of the residential areas in the town, for example in the Downside area of Dunstable verge parking.

A number of off-street car parks are concentrated near to the intersection of the A5 and A505, catering for both long-stay and short-stay car parking. There are also a number of private car parks for larger retail stores to the east of the A5, which are not subject to any form of control.

3.2.6 The Implications

Some of the more specific implications for Dunstable & Houghton Regis are detailed below.

- A) There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the long and unreliable journey times through the centre of Dunstable and Houghton Regis is impacting on economic growth.**
- B) Rat-running through residential areas gives rise in turn to concerns in relation to road safety.**
- C) Monitoring shows that NO₂ levels along the A5/Church St in Dunstable are above the air quality objectives and it is therefore still designated as an Air Quality Management Area.**
- D) High proportion of HGV traffic passing through the centres of Dunstable and Houghton Regis causes concerns in relation to traffic congestion, road safety and air pollution.**

The Dunstable A5 queue relocation scheme (“Green wave Scheme”) was designed to provide a co-ordinated traffic management control system using existing and new traffic signals along the A5. The scheme’s aims were to improve the flow of traffic; reduce queues; improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

However, the Post Opening Evaluation Report (2006, National Audit Office) indicated that the scheme did not deliver some of the benefits forecast for safety, journey times, environment, accessibility, and scheme costs. The evaluation made no mention of the impact on congestion on the A5, in the Town Centre or on surrounding routes, and did not fully evaluate changes in air quality. Besides the obvious implications over the injury and potential loss of life, Road Safety concerns are a barrier to people choosing more sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling.

A lot of work is being done to reduce the number of child casualties predominantly through the Safer Routes to Schools Programme. However, this is quite a low proportion of total road injuries. To this end, more needs to be done to look at reducing accidents involving other users. With that in mind a more radical approach might be needed to change how the different road users interact i.e. a combination of reduced volume, reduced speeds and greater interaction will deliver the greatest injury savings.

3.3 Opportunity for All

This section firstly analyses the general issues surrounding the core services people need to travel to. These are workplaces, health, education and shopping/leisure destinations. The section then follows with a more detailed analysis of the varying modes for travel other than the car such as Public Transport, Walking & Cycling.

3.3.1 Employment

Map 2 shows the employment areas in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. In terms of employment provision, Dunstable and in part Houghton Regis is characterised primarily by logistics and distribution industries, benefiting from convenient access to the M1. Office space is generally more limited. One significant office park is Houghton Hall Business Park, which adjoins the Woodside Industrial area.

The Woodside Industrial area accounts for some 80% of employment land in Dunstable, and it is therefore important that this area is also a key focus for access by all modes of transport. In 2008, Bedfordshire Highways undertook an audit of the pedestrian network and cycle routes in the area for compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This identified a large number of opportunities for improvements, such as provision of dropped kerbs, tactile paving and even footway surfaces and compliance of bus stop layouts to appropriate standards. Potential for improvements to lighting were also identified along some walking and cycling routes, to improve personal safety and security.

The Woodside Industrial area will be directly served by the Luton – Dunstable Guided Busway, if built.

The Householder survey found that 77% of respondents stated that their primary transport used to travel to their workplace was by car, this figure is 8% more frequent than that for other urban areas within Central Bedfordshire.

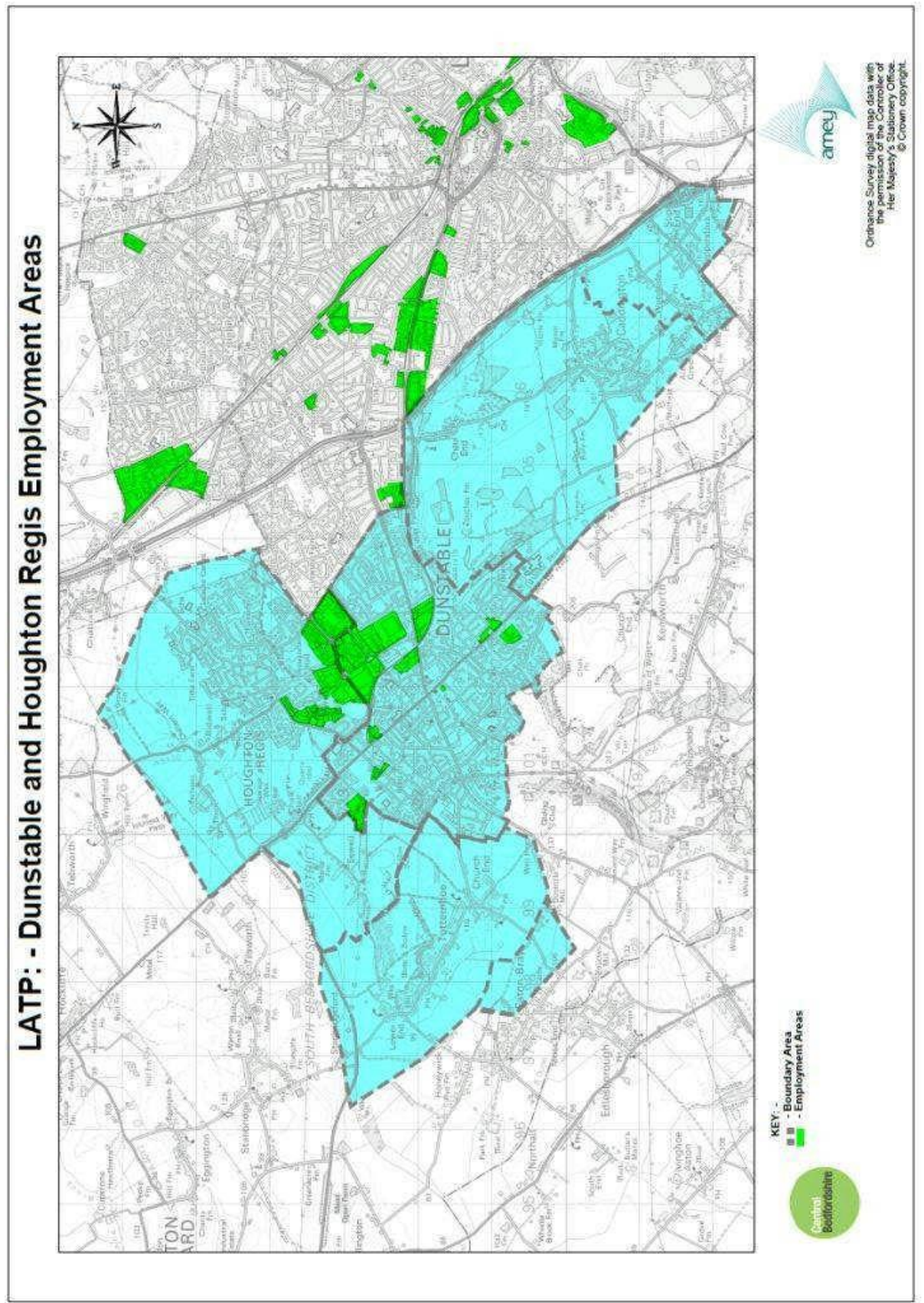
3.3.2 Health

The main hospital serving the area is the Luton and Dunstable Hospital. As in many hospitals throughout the country, parking is an issue particularly given the residential streets surrounding the hospital. Access by public transport can be difficult as there is not a bus stop directly outside the hospital which means for some visitors they need to cross the busy dual carriageway in order to reach the hospital entrance. Visiting at the weekend can be restrictive for those reliant on public transport given the limited services particularly on Sunday. It should also be noted that the hospital is also one of the area's major centres for employment.

3.3.3 Education

The householder questionnaire found that 73% of respondents travelled to school/college by walking, this is 21% higher than Central Bedfordshire as a whole and 7% higher when compared to other urban areas. However there are issues with regards to students accessing Higher Education by public transport as a whole and can be a barrier for those people living in the deprived areas.

Map 2 – Employment areas



3.3.4 Food Shopping & Leisure activities

Respondents of the householder survey showed that 73% of respondents did their main food shop at a location within two miles of their home. This is 33% higher than Central Bedfordshire as a whole and 12% higher than other urban areas.

The three main leisure activities cited by respondents were:

1. Swimming / gym (19%)
2. Walking / Running (19%)
3. Sports (17%)

However, 46% choose to travel to their leisure activity by car.

3.3.5 Public Transport

Several bus routes operate throughout the town and link with the larger terminals in Luton.

Service Frequency

- A minimum of 11 buses an hour operate directly between Dunstable and Luton - Monday to Saturday daytime. An alternative service operates between Dunstable and Luton via Caddington with a basic frequency of 1-2 buses per hour.
- 5 buses an hour operate Monday to Saturday daytime Dunstable – Houghton Regis – Luton.
- Most neighbourhood estates have a basic frequency of 2 buses per hour. Services are less frequent evenings and Sundays.
- The Langdale Road and Lowther Road areas do not have evening services or buses on Sundays.

Town services DB1, DB2, DB3, evening and Sunday services are financially supported by Central Bedfordshire Council Services to surrounding villages and other towns are less frequent.

When asked 42% of respondents of the Householder Travel survey said they did not use a bus because they felt there was not a direct route. 11% also stated that the on-street timetables were unsuitable.

Information

A comprehensive local timetable guide and a comprehensive Central Bedfordshire Bus Map and Travel Guide are published by Central Bedfordshire Council at least once a year and distributed throughout the area. In addition individual timetable leaflets are produced by individual bus operators for most routes.

Roadside timetables are currently posted by bus companies. These are rarely up to date, and in many areas do not give the complete picture (e.g. evening buses not shown).

There are no real time information boards currently available at stops in either Dunstable or Houghton Regis, although some buses are equipped with the relevant technology.

There is little integration between the operators and marketing and ticket cost information is sparse. It is also confusing over which services and operators have interchangeable tickets.

Reliability

Buses are affected by heavy traffic congestion which has adverse effects upon the reliability and frequency of the services.

Cost & payment methods

Costs vary between £3 and £7 per day, depending operator and distance. Critically there is not one system for integrated ticketing.

Infrastructure

Bus stops in the area are sometimes owned by the council and sometimes by the bus companies. Some stops are in the wrong place and a few stops are completely lacking as a result of a contract passing from one bus company to another. In Houghton Regis in particular, there is a high incidence of graffiti at bus shelters. There is a need for a review of this situation.

There are currently three main bus stopping points in the centre of Dunstable which results in an inflexible and impractical interchange option.

Current Proposals & ongoing works

A guided busway is currently planned between Luton and Dunstable.

The current provision and supported services available for public transport are currently under review as part of the Passenger Transport Review. The project is due for completion in September 2010.

3.4 Growth

There is a need for growth to accommodate net inward migration and the local positive birth to death ratio. Planned growth within the Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM) Sub Region would result in an increase in the population of Dunstable / Houghton Regis by around 20% within current planning horizons to 2031.

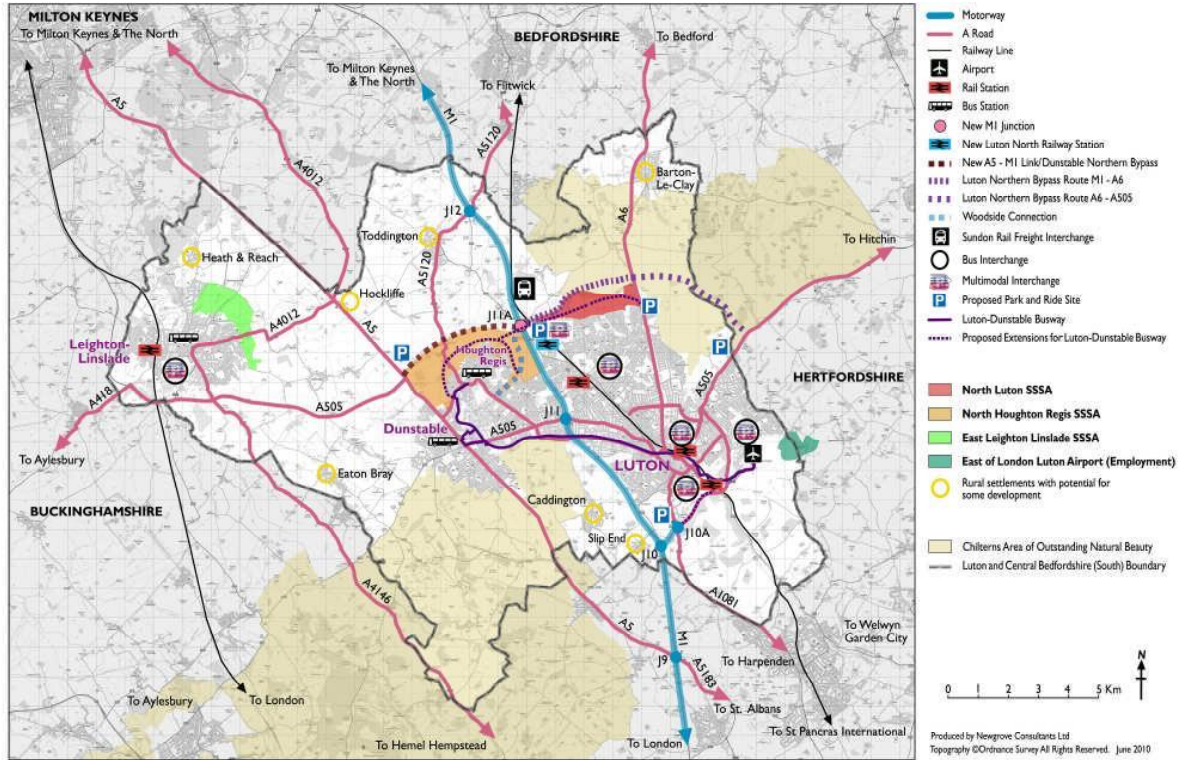
The MKSM Sub Regional Strategy recognises the need for enhancement of town centre retail and services in both Dunstable and Houghton Regis to accompany increases in residential provision. Reduction in traffic impact and improvements in accessibility are also identified as key priorities to be addressed in both Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Houghton Regis is identified as having the potential to function as a town centre for adjoining urban extensions.

Enhancement of retail and leisure facilities within Dunstable and Houghton Regis town centres will play an important role in ensuring that future growth is delivered sustainably. It is important to ensure that a sustainable transport strategy for the conurbation fully complements the development of the growth area.

Urban extensions to the northern fringes of Dunstable / Houghton Regis and are likely to be developed in tandem with the A5-M1 link road and Woodside Connection. Funding contributions will be sought from developers of land to the north of the conurbation towards the Woodside Connection.

The provision of the Woodside Connection and implementation of Hard Shoulder running on the M1 between Junctions 10 and 13 are of importance towards ensuring good access by Heavy Goods Vehicles to the Woodside Industrial area in North Dunstable.

CORE STRATEGY KEY DIAGRAM



No of dwellings To be built	2011-2016	2016-2021	2021-2026	Total Up to 2026	After 2026
Growth area Development north of Houghton Regis and Dunstable	1150	2000	2,000	5150	1,850
Within Dunstable	1188	182	0	1370	
Within Houghton Regis	343	0	0	343	
Surrounding Rural Area	59	0	0	59	
Additional Unallocated Growth in surrounding Rural area - Not split by parish	206	200	250	656	
All Areas	2946	2382	2250	<u>7578</u>	

3.5 Smarter Choices

Smarter choices are a mixture of marketing and information provision with regards to promoting sustainable transport options such as public transport, walking & cycling. Travel Plans also fall into this category and information with regards to what is prevalent within the Dunstable & Houghton Regis areas are detailed below. Recent experience has shown that, if Smarter Choices measures are delivered as a 'Package' including both hard infrastructure improvements such as new cycle routes and improved bus shelters as well as the promotional campaigns and Personalised travel planning, there is the potential to obtain a 15-20% modal shift (DfT *Smarter Choices 2007*)

3.5.1 Existing School, Workplace & Residential Travel Plans

All schools in Dunstable & Houghton Regis areas have approved travel plans in place except Downside Lower School. One of the main issues regarding encouraging children to walk or cycle to school is the perception regarding safety issues for the school run and letting children travel independently.

With regards to Workplaces an area based approach has been used, including the Woodside and associated industrial areas. We also have travel plans for some individual workplaces in the areas which were secured as part of the planning process, as indeed are those for the new residential areas covered by the Trico site and Sandringham Drive for instance.

All new residential developments with over 50 houses should have a travel plan in place – we are working with planners to ensure this happens.

3.5.2 Walking and Cycling

High levels of vehicular traffic and a lack of continuous and attractive routes can discourage walking and cycling journeys. Pedestrian survey data between 2001 and 2008 shows that levels of pedestrian activity within Dunstable town centre have generally been decreasing over time from 69% in 2001 to 56% in 2008, although it is not known how much of this is as a result of the decline in the retail trade in the town centre.

Footway widths are less than 2m wide on some sections of the A505 Church Street, which may discourage pedestrian and cycle movements. Guard railing is also prevalent in the town centre at junctions and along the footways. This impedes pedestrian and cycle movement and lengthens journeys on foot across the study area.

The householder survey showed that 42% of respondents within Dunstable & Houghton Regis owned a bicycle, this figure is 16% less than in Central Bedfordshire as a whole.

Cycle Routes/ lanes

There is a perception of 'difficulty' when it comes to cycling. Sustrans National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 6 goes through the area connecting from Leighton Buzzard through to Luton and onto Harpenden. This forms the 'spine' of Central Bedfordshire's strategic cycling network. There are few coherent cycle routes and key destinations are poorly served including the town centre and the town's two upper schools.

The A5 is a major barrier to permeability for both cyclists and pedestrians. Although a number of crossing points are provided, many of these are staggered, which doesn't aid pedestrian flow or user experiences. In addition, there are no pedestrian crossing facilities in close proximity to the bus stops.

Promotion of Walking/ cycling

Schools are provided with resources and curriculum materials to promote walking to school through such events as Walk to School Week. Bikeability level 2 Cycle training is offered to middle schools however take up is poor due to lack of promotion.

The authority has consulted with the Luton and Dunstable Cycle Forum in the preparation of a strategic cycling map for the Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbations.

3.6 Local Studies and Supporting strategies

3.6.1 Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan

Consultants were appointed in December 2008 to carry out a masterplan exercise for Dunstable Town Centre with the main objective of creating a sustainable masterplan for the town centre that ensures economic, social and environmental issues are addressed. The masterplan will ensure the continued and enhanced role of the town centre, particularly in relation to the planned housing growth and also contribute to an up-lift in perceptions around the town centre.

The Draft Masterplan sets out a vision for the town centre to help guide emerging proposals for redevelopment as they come forward: - “Dunstable will become a connected 21st century town centre. Building on its heritage and green space, it will become an affordable, attractive and accessible option for resident, employees, investors and visitors alike. The town will bring more to a wider range of people, offering an experience that will make it stand out from the crowd.”

The Draft Masterplan is based on four overall objectives to help deliver this vision for the town centre and which underpin the proposals of the masterplan and are considered essential to its regeneration:

- A network of public streets, spaces and parks
- A diverse mix of activities
- A series of landmark views and frontages that attract and invite
- An accessible town centre

The main proposals of the Draft Masterplan can be summarised as follows: -

Retail

The Draft Masterplan is based on a redevelopment and more intensive use of The Quadrant shopping centre area to provide a significant increase in retail floorspace. It is proposed to provide a new shopping ‘street’ which creates pedestrian links between Grove House Gardens and Priory Gardens, Multi-storey car parks to replace lost car parking are also proposed. This increase in retail floor space in the town centre would provide Dunstable with a step-change and improve its appeal to both retailers and customers, resulting in units being more attractive to let and establishing Dunstable as a major centre within the southern part of Central Bedfordshire.

Community & Leisure

A replacement library facility, a new cinema and new public conveniences are proposed within the proposed regenerated town centre, together with the provision of a new NHS medical centre and replacement ambulance station facility. The new medical centre would accommodate a number of the existing town centre doctor’s practices together with offering a wider range of services to patients.

Housing

The Draft Masterplan proposes a range of housing throughout the town centre area, predominantly focusing on the housing needs as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, i.e. family sized, social rented and accommodation for older people.

Car Parking

It is proposed that the majority of the town centre car parking be located adjacent to the new retail core of the town centre and should be provided by the creation of two separate new multi-storey car parks (MSCPs). The design and height of these MSCPs would need to be sensitive to the local historic context and neighbouring residential properties.

Public Realm Improvements

The masterplan indicates various public realm improvements, a number being focused on High Street North and South, following the possible detrunking of the A5 through the town centre when the A5 – M1 Link road is built. These improvements will include the relocation of pedestrian crossings to create simplified routes across the major roads and the narrowing of the existing highway to allow the possible relocation of the street market.

The Draft Masterplan indicates the delivery of the proposals over a fifteen year period, divided into 3 five year phases with the first phase focusing on key sites which could be brought forward for development. These 'early wins' would send out a clear signal of intent to both developers/investors and the wider community.

It should be emphasised that proposals that come forward for the town centre will need to be market-led and be viable within the current challenging economic climate. Dunstable town centre has been in decline for some time and the delivery of proposals will be assessed against the vision, objectives and principles of the Masterplan, while also providing security for its long-term sustainability and a step change in the quality of the town's buildings, open space and public realm.

3.6.2 Houghton Regis Town centre Masterplan

Masterplan Objectives

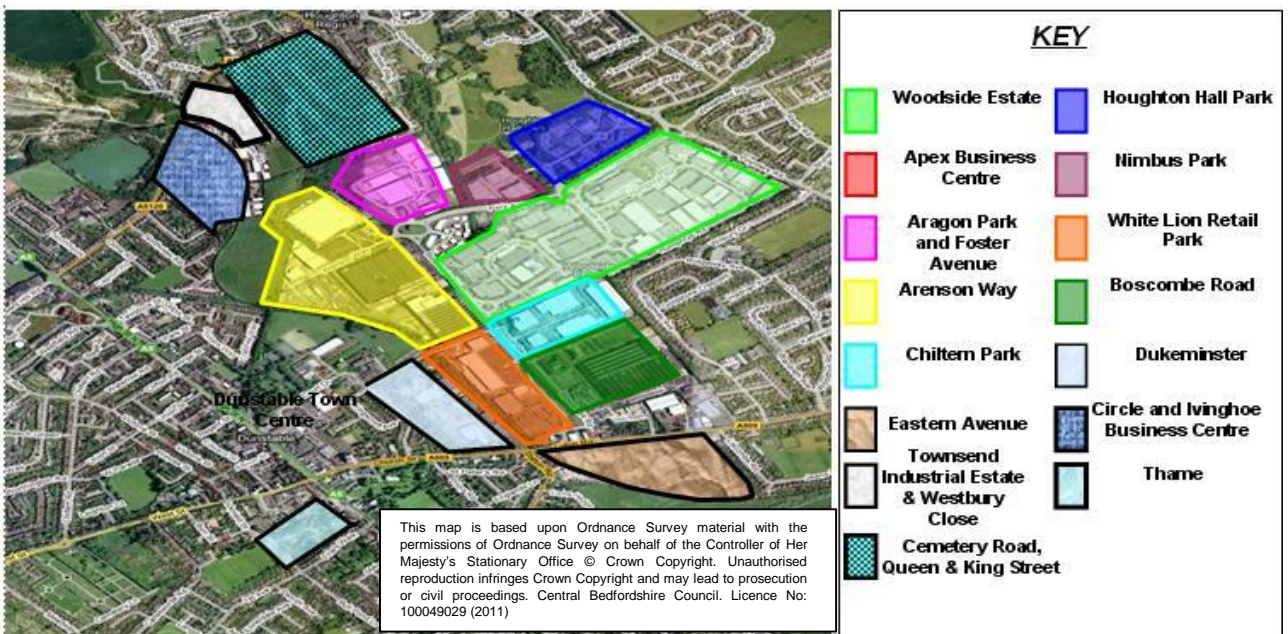
The key objectives of the Masterplan are:

- To identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the town centre
- To understand the issues that affect the town centre and may influence its future
- To explore the opportunities for new development and environmental enhancement
- To set principles and parameters for new development to be realised; site design, capacities, uses, funding, phasing
- To set principles for environmental enhancement to be realised; identification of local distinctiveness / character areas, improvement areas, design, funding, phasing

3.6.3 North Dunstable Zonal travel Plan – Access audit

The NDZTP is an initiative developed through partnership between BCC, HA and Amey to provide travel planning guidance for an area containing approximately 80% of the employment land in Dunstable, employing approximately 5000 people.

Figure below highlights the study area, the composite industrial estates and its location relation to the strategic highway network.

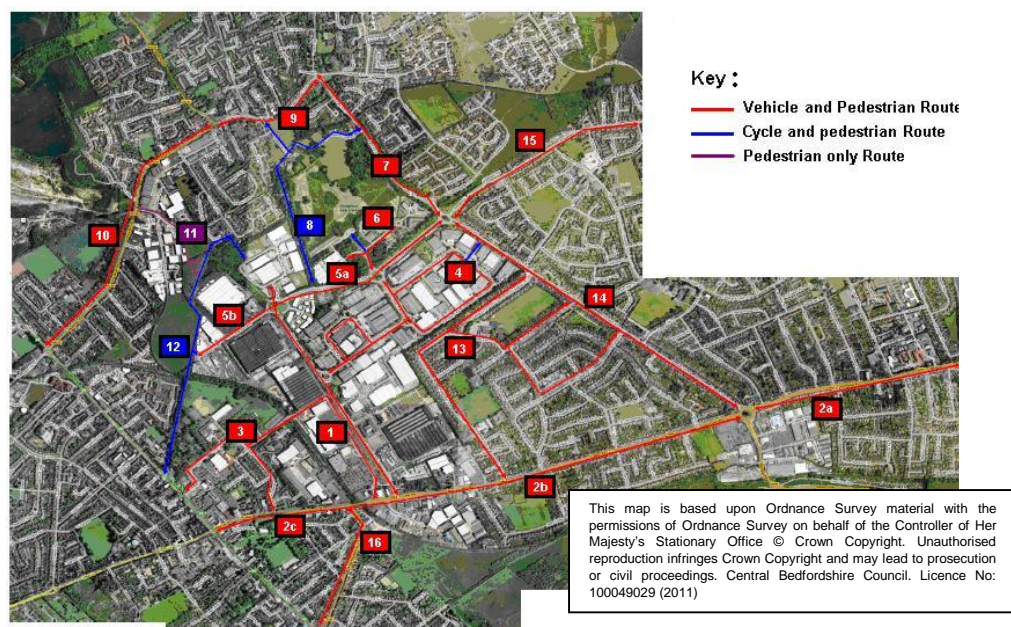


In early 2007, The HA in partnership with Bedfordshire County Council instructed Amey to carry out an investigation into a NDZTP and this resulted in a Stage 1 Framework report in December 2007. The partnership then instructed Amey, mainly working through its Bedfordshire Highways office, to carry out work towards a Stage 2 report which was to show how a zonal travel plan for the area could be put into effect.

During March 2008, Bedfordshire Highways conducted surveys of routes for pedestrians and cyclists into the industrial area, and derived costed improvements to bring these routes up to standards meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Also postal and e-mail travel surveys amongst employers, employees and visitors were carried out to provide data on travel patterns and attitudes to sustainable travel.

This Stage 2 report shows the results of these investigations and provides indications of how industrial area staff, 70% of which live within 5 miles of the area, could be encouraged to use more sustainable travel, including the use of car sharing. A key feature of this is the setting up of a Transport Management Organisation (TMO) involving the area's landowners, employers employees, the HA and the local authorities. The report concludes with a costed Action Plan for setting up the TMO and moving towards the various actions proposed for the NDZTP.

Access Route surveyed through the NDZTP Study



Audit Conclusions

The audit identified a total of 688 faults or weaknesses in the DDA provision for pedestrians and cyclists on 19 key routes in and around the Woodside Industrial Estate. This equates to an average of 36 faults or weaknesses per route audited. The total estimated cost for proposed improvement works needed to bring the local pedestrian network to DDA standard amounts to **£5.8M**.

The most common types of fault raised by the audit were inadequacies of pedestrian crossing facilities, which accounted for some 46% of all faults identified. The majority of these related to consistency in the provision of drop kerbs and tactile paving.

The second most common type of fault recorded during the audit was poor quality pedestrian footway surfaces, accounting for some 14% of all faults recorded. Other particular issues raised

included the need for footway widening, bus stop related measures and issues relating to lighting columns, generally involving relocation.

Analysis by Internal and External Access Routes

It is evident that internal routes within the study area itself require fewer improvements than those outside the estate. The cost of improvements on the 8 internal links is estimated at £1.7M, which compared with £4.1M for improvements to the 11 External links.

The estimated cost for improving key pedestrian links between the study area and future Guided Busway Stops is £1.9m.

3.6.4 Luton and South beds Retail Study 2005

Updated version of this report published in 2009, concluded that:

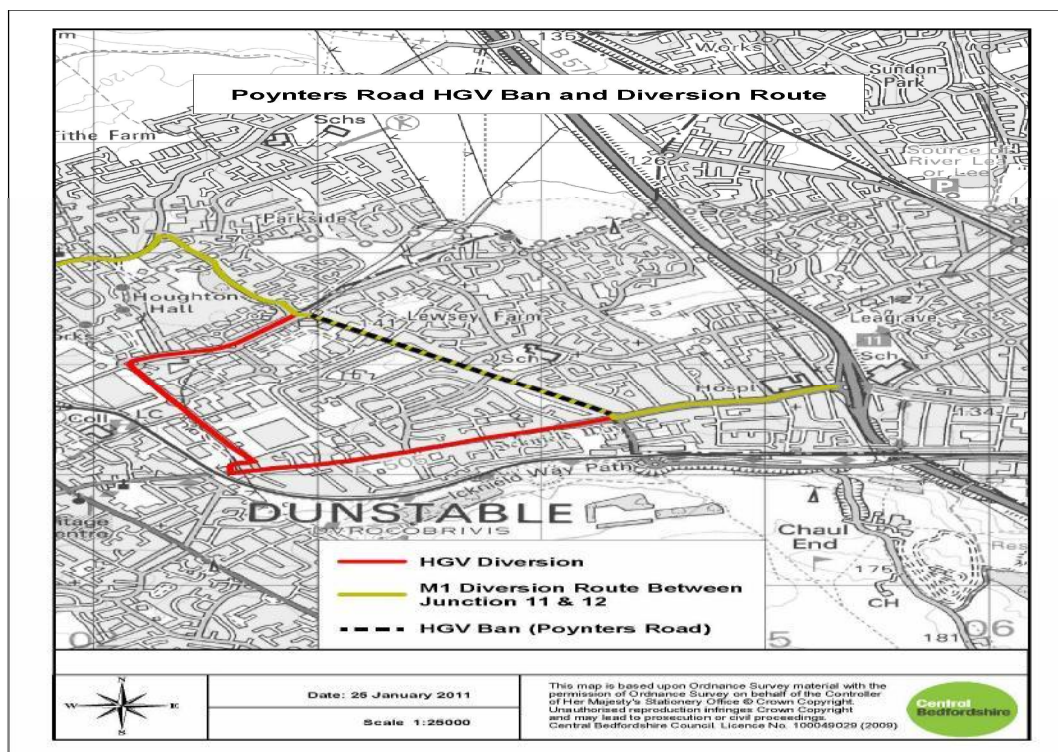
“Dunstable displays moderate levels of vitality and viability and there are indications that that the health of the centre has deteriorated since it was last assessed in the 2005 Retail Study, particularly in terms of the rising level of vacancies and rising shopping yields, signifying reduced investor confidence compared to other towns in the sub-region. The centre’s location on the heavily trafficked A5 has an adverse effect on the overall environmental quality of the town centre and this hampers pedestrian movement within the centre. The centre only has a modest representation of high street multiples and there are fewer current retailer requirements for new floorspace than there were in 2005. Overall therefore the centre is relatively vulnerable to further competition from other larger centres and from out of centre retail development.”

3.7 Current proposals and ongoing works

As part of the solution to Dunstable's growing traffic problems and the housing growth forecast, proposals for A5-M1 Link road North of the town have been submitted. These comprise of a two-lane dual carriageway running east from the A5 north of Dunstable to join the M1 at a new Junction 11a south of Chalton. Current timetables put the start of construction in 2014/15 for completion in 2016/17

An additional new road proposal currently being developed which will contribute towards alleviating congestion in Dunstable is the proposed Woodside Connection, which will run from the new M1 Junction 11A to the Woodside Industrial area in north-east Dunstable. This will relieve pressure from M1 Junction 11, the A505 and the centre of Dunstable, by providing an alternative route into Dunstable / Houghton Regis, which will be of particular benefit for freight traffic and traffic accessing the conurbation from the north. Current timetables put the start of construction in 2016 for completion in late 2017 or early 2018.

We are proposing to introduce ban on HGV's travelling through the centre of Dunstable (High Street and Church Street) and Poynters road connecting the A505 to Porz Avenue. However, as the A5 is currently part of the trunk routes network the HGV ban for this area can only be put in place once this road has been de-trunked, after the opening of the A5-M1 link. Further more, as these roads are part of the diversion routes for the M1 Motorway, the proposed signs need to be capable of being switched off at the time when either of these sections is used as a diversion route for the M1 Motorway.



As part of the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan a Car Parking study was commissioned to review the existing supply of off-street car parking serving the town centre and set out the framework for the car parking strategy in the town centre over the next 15-20 years. This study considered the following:

- Existing parking conditions including a quality review;
- Car parking occupancy rates during weekday and weekend market days;

- Assessment of the car parking proposals for the Masterplan preferred option, and;
- Initial strategy recommendations for future off-street car parking to serve Dunstable.

The findings of this study are set out below:

- It is recommended that the ratio of 1 parking space per 52.9sq.m GFA is used as the basis for updating the future car parking requirements for the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan.
- In terms of CBC parking, 1080 spaces would represent a minimum requirement of off-street public parking operated by the Council i.e. no less than currently available in the town centre;
- All town centre car parks (public and private) should be subject to the future CBC car parking strategy to help facilitate the implementation of a more consistent tariff structure for short and long stay car parking, a uniform high standard of parking stock and designated short and long stay car parks;
- Pay on foot parking facilities could help reduce costs associated with implementing civil parking enforcement in Dunstable;
- Any future review of tariff structure as part of the future CBC-wide car parking strategy should further investigate the initial recommendations with regard to future tariff setting at town centre car parks, which include reducing parking charges on Saturdays and having a 3 hour maximum length of stay in short stay car parks amongst others;
- A programme of car parking quality improvements is identified, with funding made available for improvements and prioritising those car parks that are identified to remain in their current form in the preferred option masterplan. Any planned future parking improvements in Dunstable should review the need for adequate directional signs, and the future disabled parking provision within the town centre car parks should be reviewed in accordance with the guidance contained in Traffic Advisory Leaflet 5/59, and;
- The majority of car parking should be located in the northeast quadrant in close proximity to the core town centre town centre

4. Summary

The information provided in the previous chapters is intended to provide some initial evidence in preparation of the first Members workshop on the 10 June.

It is prevalent from the information provided that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed that could be restricting people from accessing essential services throughout the area. Some of the issues identified are:

- Congestion issues within the main district centres
- Inadequate public transport infrastructure & Information provision
- Low cycling & walking rates (work, leisure & health trips)

Given that Dunstable and Houghton Regis have three existing areas of deprivation and both areas are set to experience substantial housing growth over the coming years it is essential that we create a transport plan that is fit for purpose and which will help Dunstable and Houghton Regis manage the challenges that it may face over the coming years.

Implementation plan Objectives

In order to achieve a more sustainable future, a healthier environment and vibrant town centres encouraging economic growth for Dunstable, Houghton Regis and the surrounding villages, The local implementation plan the following key objectives have been identified:

- Sustainable;
 - To improve the environment by reducing the dominance of private cars
 - To reduce air pollution and the impact of noise nuisance from traffic
 - To promote public transport, cycling and walking as reliable and acceptable alternatives to the car,
 - Encourage use of electric, Hybrid and other green forms of vehicles where and when private car is the most feasible mode of travel
 - To reduce the need to travel far by encouraging better land use planning.
- Accessible;
 - To improve accessibility on all modes of transport but inline with the Council's policy of encouraging travel by the most practical sustainable modes
 - To remove the barriers to travel for all members of the community.
- Safe;
 - To reduce the number of road traffic related casualties
 - To improve personal safety for all travellers
- Efficient
 - To work with Service providers to improve the transport network
 - To improve the integration of planning and transport policy in the Local Area.
- Attractive;
 - To ensure that transport improvements in the public realm are visually compatible with their locations and in particular that of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), conservation areas and points of interest

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