

Swindon Borough Council Local Plan

Transport Vision Paper: A Well-Connected, Active Swindon

May 25

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1. Context

Transport is a key driver to support the housing, economic and place-making ambitions that will enable and enhance Swindon's growth and status as a key regional centre. A variety of documents have already been developed that provide a clear 'direction of travel' for how the Council is seeking to promote a more sustainable pattern of transport.¹ All of these documents point towards building on Swindon's excellent regional opportunities (rail and strategic road connections) with a clear emphasis on ensuring local connectivity improvements that focus on bus, cycle and walking corridors. The Council's vision will build on these existing strategies and policies.

Our vision will also consider how key issues with our transport network can be addressed, as well as the aspects of our lives and environments that are affected by our transport decisions.

1.1 Issues

Data from the Borough's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2024) identifies the following key issues:

- There is an over-reliance on the car as a mode of transport in the Borough. The number of annual miles completed in motor vehicles has increased year on year over the past two decades in the Borough. For residents who travel to work, driving remains the predominant mode of transport with an average of 78% of Borough residents travelling by private vehicle to work.
- Since 2018, Active Travel (cycling and walking) in Swindon has fallen to levels significantly lower than the rest of the South West. Active Travel to school has also fallen by 6% between 2014 and 2022 and has been replaced by car journeys.
- Travelling by car to work is on average considerably quicker than travelling by bus, walking or cycling in Swindon. Car journeys for commuters on average take 7.6 minutes in the Borough; while travelling by public transport and walking takes 11.5 minutes and cycling takes 9.9 minutes.² This aligns with the national picture.

1.2 Impacts of our transport decisions and patterns

- Health and wellbeing - The Borough suffers from high levels of adult and childhood obesity, both of which are higher than the national average. An increase in driving has been shown to be associated with reduced physical activity and obesity, while Active Travel has been linked to lower levels of heart disease and diabetes.

¹ Swindon Borough Council, *Vision for the Heart of Swindon* (Updated March 2025); SBC, *Local Transport Plan 4* (January 2022); SBC, *Swindon Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan* (April 2022); SBC, *Bus Service Improvement Plan* (2021); Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, *Rail Strategy Report* (2019)

² Swindon Borough Council, *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* (Updated 2024)

- Air quality – In 2020, 6% of deaths in the Borough for people aged 30+ were attributed to air pollution, a proportion marginally higher than found in the South West and in England.
Carbon emissions – Transport emissions account for 43% of the Borough's CO₂ emissions, making it the largest emitter of greenhouse gases across the Borough.

1.3 Addressing these issues

Considering these issues, the Council's vision is motivated by the following key drivers:

- To enhance health and wellbeing and encourage behavioural change in the next generation
- To reduce carbon emissions
- To improve connectivity across the Borough and to important economic and scenic hubs outside of the Borough
- To create more attractive, safer, and greener places to live

While the vision will seek to promote more sustainable modes of transport, the Council recognises that patterns of movement that depend on the car will likely remain a significant proportion of trips. Still, the Council is looking to encourage a modal shift and ensure that new patterns of movement arise that use greener and more active modes for local journeys. Growth plans must therefore ensure new developments can be accommodated without causing overcapacity of the road network and providing mitigations where needed.

This paper sets out a vision for Transport in our new local plan and our key priority policy area and objectives. It also includes a provisional summary of some of the initial questions raised by stakeholders, and how we address these as part of the next stage of work required for Regulation 19.

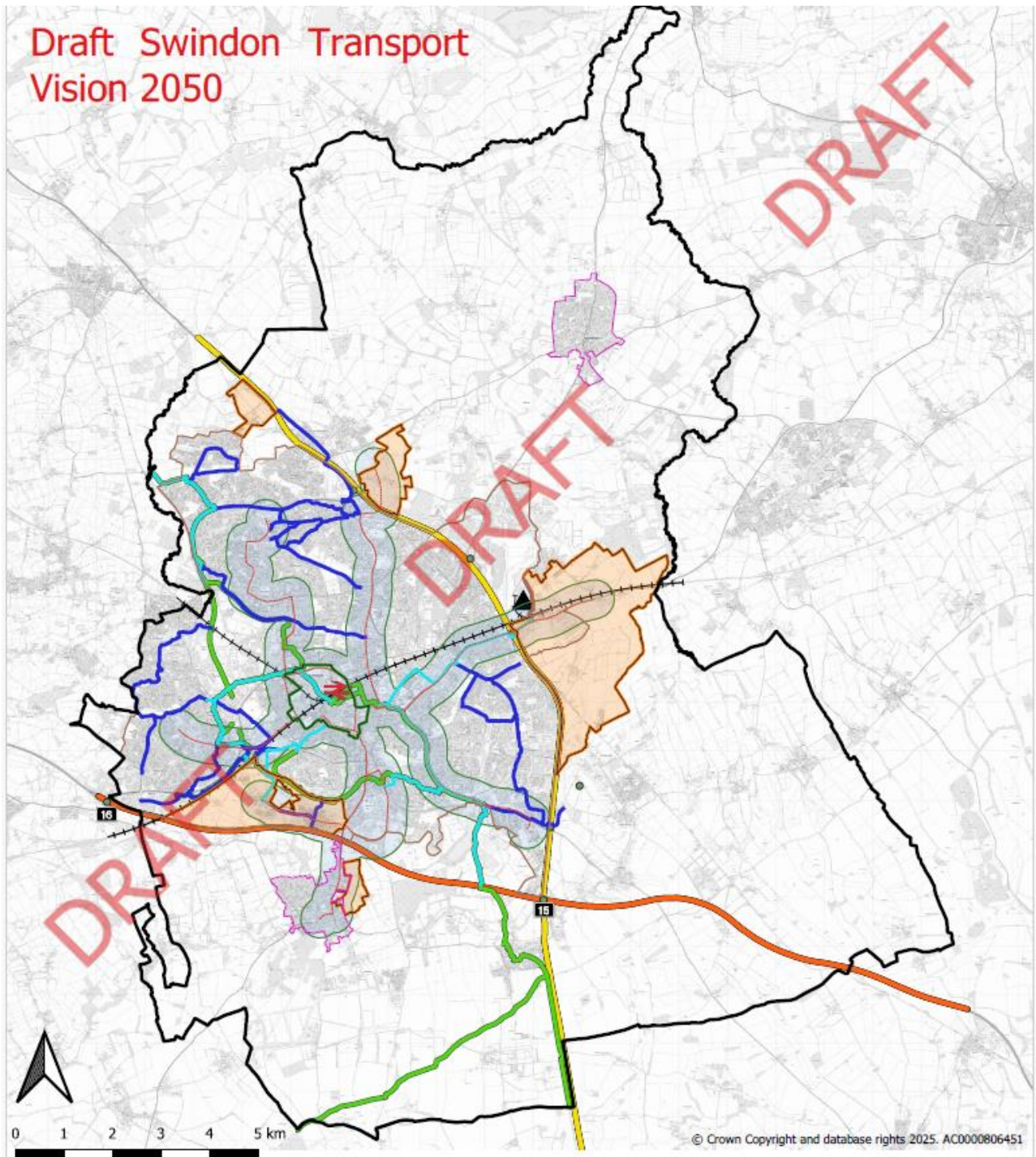
2. Transport shaping Swindon

2.1 Sites and Growth

A central feature of the new Local Plan includes the Heart of Swindon ambitions for redevelopment of the Town Centre to create up to 8000 new homes, with allocations proposed in the Plan for around 4,500 homes. Development of the Central Area will be concentrated around the rail hub and the new Fleming Way bus boulevard. It will be key to implement new cycling and walking routes to support the new population.

The Plan further proposes that sustainable growth corridors will fan out from the Central Area. Some will link with the key strategic village sites allocated by the Local Plan 2026: Wichelstowe, New Eastern Villages, and Kingsdown. The new Local Plan will encourage the continued growth of these key village sites. These will be connected to Swindon by several radial road/transit corridors as shown in the Transport diagram below:

Draft Swindon Transport Vision 2050



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|--|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Swindon Boundary | Key Public Transport Corridors | Modelled Junctions |
| Settlement boundaries | Key Public Transport Corridors | Rail |
| LP43001 Swindon Urban Area Boundary (Reg 18) | Primary Cycle Routes | A419 |
| LP43004 Rural Service Centres (Reg 18) | Secondary Cycle Routes | M4 |
| Strategic Growth Locations | Improved National Cycle Network | |
| Central Area | M4 J15 | |
| Kingsdown, North Tadpole, NEV, East Wroughton, Wichelstowe | M4 J16 | |
| Transport | Rail Freight Terminal | |
| Railway Station and New Bus Interchange | | |

2.2 How we make the vision happen – Key priorities

A) Enhancing the gateway to Swindon and the Region

Swindon has excellent rail connections to London and the West with further enhancements planned to Oxford. Swindon Railway Station though well-located forms a barrier to the developments and land to the north.

A key aim is to work with Network Rail on a new masterplan vision for the station area which includes new connections over the railway, a new travel hub linking the Fleming Way bus boulevard and triggering regeneration of the surrounding area.

B) Transport transforming the Town Centre

Linked to the station redevelopment is the need to enhance the Town Centre as a hub of activity, creating new cycle and walking routes as set out in the Heart for Swindon document.

C) Improving transport corridors

Create a series of new mixed-use, radial transport corridors as shown on Fig 1, providing priority bus and cycling routes to connect the town centre to the main local housing and economic sites proposed in the Local Plan, providing a structure for future services, facilities and intensification.

D) Bus Rerouting

Examine proposals for a new bus connector routes to and around the town centre linking key leisure, retail and housing sites.

E) Enabling Active Travel and behaviour change

To support healthy communities and a greener environment, encouraging walking, cycling and public transport as methods of transport where feasible by bringing forward the necessary infrastructure (for example, secure cycle/mobility scooter parking, improved pavements, shared spaces). This includes the potential for providing key hubs and where possible controlling car parking at key new sites around and in the town centre.

There is also a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (https://www.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/8394/swindon_local_cycling_and_walking_infrastructure_plan) to further improve connections and encourage Active Travel. Work will continue to examine alternatives to car travel along these key corridors and examine ideas such as orbital bus services.

F) Utilising Freight

Increasing use of methods such as electric vans and cargo cycles, reducing the environmental impacts of deliveries and adding to the economy.

G) Net Zero – promoting Electric Vehicles

Working to seek funding with government and the private sector to increase the roll out of charging points to support growth.

H) Road Capacity

Continue to model and mitigate impacts of growth sites on the road network and key motorway junctions as part of our development management policies. Consider ideas such as car sharing and introducing bus priority controls at key junctions

2.4 Funding and Delivery

Swindon's new Infrastructure Delivery Plan will set out the strategy for bringing forward transport infrastructure.

It is acknowledged that funding is difficult with many initiatives taken forward through feasibility and business case work jointly funded by the Council, Network Rail, other agencies, developers and through grants plus s106 and CIL.

3. Working with our Stakeholders

Key to the Transport Vision is close working with our stakeholders. Duty to Cooperate meetings are ongoing with neighbouring councils, Network Rail, National Highways, and transport operators. Several preliminary sessions have also been held with Councillors and more local discussions with Parish Councils.

Some of the key points to address going forward include:

- Development impacts on traffic such as in Old Town and in North Swindon (A419 corridor).
- The importance of a bridge being delivered to connect Kingsdown to Swindon's Urban Area.
- East Swindon – support for plans to retrofit Drakes Way for more intensive public transport use.
- Central Area – improved connections over railway through the Railway Station are fundamental for unlocking development to the north of railway line.
- Tadpole cluster – include as a key transit corridor and potential for a new junction on A419.
- Orbital route – explore proposals for an orbital route or bus rerouting linking up key transport corridors e.g. Old Town to Great Western Hospital.
- Working with Wiltshire Council to address congestion on Junction 16 of the M4, including the congestion caused by the proposed expansion of Wootton Bassett.
- A clear priority to roll out more EV charging points.

4. Reg 19 Next Steps

The next phase of work will focus on collecting more views following the Regulation 18 consultation including the points raised above.

In parallel, the Council will be undertaking further transport modelling to:

- a) Establish a base model showing the nature of current trips, mode splits by car, rail, cycle, and walking etc., and how these impact the current use of the road and rail network.
- b) We will then identify, in consultation with neighbouring local authorities and National Highways a series of future scenarios of growth and site build out to test and model. Outputs will inform the type of mitigations required to support delivery and growth.
- c) The results will be contained in a Transport Impact Assessment to support the policies in the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

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