

Swindon Borough Council's

Bus Service

Improvement Plan



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NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

‘IT’S OUR TIME TO CONNECT TRAVEL’

SECTION 1 – Overview

Context and Executive Summary

This Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covers the administrative area of Swindon Borough Council as illustrated at Figure 1.1. The BSIP covers just our single Local Transport Authority. The intention to pursue an Enhanced Bus Partnership in Swindon was published on 30th June 2021.

Figure 1.1: Swindon Borough Council administrative area



In producing this Plan, which will be published on 29th October 2021, the Council has engaged with neighbouring Local Transport Authorities namely Gloucestershire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wiltshire Council.

The Council has been invited to contribute to neighbouring authorities own BSIPs where it is logical to do so.

The Swindon BSIP will constitute the public transport element of the Borough's Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP was adopted in 2011 and a refresh has already commenced and been subject to public consultation. The BSIP will also replace the Council's Local Bus Strategy (Revised 2016). Accordingly, it will form part of the evidence base for, and support delivery of, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the Swindon Local Plan Review to 2036. The Council has just completed a final pre-submission (Regulation 19) consultation, and the Local Plan Review reaffirms the aspiration for the town to deliver 21,400 new homes in the period 2016-2036.

The BSIP aligns with and supports the Council's long-term core priorities and pledges, in particular:

- Priority One – Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing low – carbon economy.
- Priority Two – Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs, in the right places; and
- Priority Four – Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults.

It also helps enable the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan and Town Centre Movement Strategy.

Most directly, the BSIP addresses the requirements in paragraph 1.2 of the National Bus Strategy for England. In so doing, it is intended to be a key vehicle to achieve the following outcomes in Swindon Borough:

- Define and deliver greatly improved bus service outputs and patronage as an effective approach to emissions reduction in both the short and longer-term, in support of the national binding trajectory to zero carbon;
- “Level-up” and support socio-economic convergence by positively transforming sustainable mobility across the most deprived areas, properly integrating them with the wider Borough economy;
- Reduces congestion and other serious impediments to productivity, and better connects growing employment locations to the labour market, especially those areas where available labour exists;

- Delivers high-quality, interconnected public transport options for everyone across the Borough as part of a consistent high-quality, better-integrated sustainable mobility offer.

The aim of the Swindon BSIP is to achieve an uplift in bus passenger boardings of 44% from 11.9m pp in 2019, to at least 17.1m by 2030. This would rise to 18.5m by 2036. By **2025 we expect to have reached an interim milestone of 13.5m ppa.**

The 2030 target requires a 40% increase in propensity to use the bus from the existing population, and a doubling of the bus mode share from the Borough average in the new developments, and from Wroughton and Highworth.

To achieve this:

- We want every community in Swindon Borough with a population exceeding 800 to have access to a bus or daily demand-responsive service, with all communities above 3,000 population within 10 km of Swindon town centre having at least a half-hourly bus service on Mondays to Fridays between 0700 and 1900, including communities outside the LTA area within the Swindon Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) extending into Wiltshire and Oxfordshire;
- We seek higher bus frequencies within the core town network, with a typical minimum daytime frequency of at least every 20 minutes, and preferably at least every 15 minutes. A new high-frequency core service category will operate at least every 10 minutes. We therefore aim to increase the frequency of at least 10 core bus routes within Swindon over the next 5 years;
- Significantly faster bus service speeds to and across the town centre, are required to transform accessibility and the relevance of bus between origins and destinations on and towards the outer margins of a rapidly expanding town. This will see an aim to reduce journey times by 10% as well as ensuring there is increased journey time consistency throughout the day. Morning peak bus journey times will be on average no more than 6% longer than the fastest off-peak journey time achievable within the Traffic Commissioners window. Alongside this it is essential that bus journeys are markedly more reliable and consistent and an improvement of 5% in reliability will be the target.
- To achieve this at least £18 million invested in infrastructure over the next 5 years to help speed up services and improve punctuality, focused on three seamless Quality Bus Corridors to be delivered by 2025, that already feature in the LTP and Local Plan, consolidating existing measures and directly serving the areas of greatest need and future population and employment growth; with work advancing to define and achieve a fourth by 2028;
- To offer more general improvements in bus journey time and reliability £500,000 is already committed to traffic signals maintenance and upgrades which will support the rollout of dynamic bus prioritisation within the

application of Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) and its extension to the Quality Bus Corridors, and the wider core bus network.

- Key connectivity deficits across the eastern and southern flanks of the main urban area will additionally be addressed by two new high quality “orbital” services anchored at the Great Western Hospital. “Kick-start” funding of £2.5m applied over a five year minimum period is intended to establish a sustainable longer-term provision.
- Bus services must better support the 24/7 economy, including both the hospitality, medical, care and logistics and distribution sectors. We will develop standards for early morning, evening, night and weekend services. We aim to spend at least an additional £0.6m securing improvements to these services over the next 18 months;
- Swindon already offers a national exemplar of a simple, unified tariff structure irrespective of operator. Price points have not risen for over 5 years for day and weekly tickets. Multi-operator ticketing is already standard and long established. However we want to see the access of these fares moved on-line to both main operators’ Apps, with the application of price capping on daily and weekly use;
- We want to improve the affordability of bus travel, especially set against the private car, and to improve socio-economic inclusion. The Council will work with bus operators to explore ways of achieving that.
- The Council will work with operators to present our bus network as a single system within the Swindon built-up area with every vehicle and bus stop identifiable as part of the network, and a unified consistent portal for passenger information across the Borough showing all operator’s services;
- We will commit to excellent standards of information and customer care in a Bus Passenger Charter.
- Every bus stop should act as an effective “shop window” for our bus services. A clear programme to improve roadside infrastructure will cover all stops within the Swindon BUA, and on the key inter-urban corridors, for delivery over the next 5 years, with prioritisation of the busiest corridors. This will put in place paved step-free access for the non-ambulant, and a consistent standard of free-standing bus stop flags that will carry attractive and consistent network branding. This is a significant programme and is anticipated to cost £4.5m.
- Given the high rate of sustainable growth within the Borough, a formal strategy to effect early bus penetration and delivery of suitable roadside infrastructure to serve areas of growth and development;
- We want every bus to meet Euro VI emission standards by 2030 and be zero emission by 2035, with the first electric buses entering service within 2 years (subject to successful progression of a ZEBRA business case)

Spatial Portrait of the Borough

Swindon Borough is a predominantly urban non-metropolitan Unitary Authority with a limited rural hinterland mainly to the north. The town has a long and successful history of planned expansion. The Borough has a population estimated to be 221,996 (2018)¹, of which the main urban area accounts for over 200,000, making it by far the largest urban area in the sub-region, and the County of Wiltshire. Two substantial settlements exist as satellites in close proximity: Wroughton (population just over 8,000 in 2011) to the south and Highworth (pop 8,151 in 2011) to the north east.

The Borough has consistently grown much faster than the UK average, as a result of successive rounds of large-scale plan-led growth that started in the 1950s.

The Local Plan Review, rolling forward the existing Local Plan to 2036, maintains a high rate of development, with 21,400 net additional dwellings over the 2018-2036 Plan period. This is likely to add at least a further 35,000 to the population of the Borough. By far the majority of this is directed to four main sustainable urban extensions adjoining the main urban area, with about 1000 dwellings each allocated to Wroughton and Highworth. Accommodating the mobility demands associated with this ongoing sustainable economic growth remains a challenge. As is recognised in the Swindon Local Plan (2015) and existing LTP3, this demands substantial mode shift across the Borough, as well as from residents within the new developments noting that car dependency on recent large-scale development built between 1994 to 2018, is among the highest for urban areas anywhere in England.

Swindon has one of the most productive economies outside of London, measured in terms of GVA per head². It is home to major companies including BMW, Intel, Nationwide Building Society and Npower and the arrival of Amazon and Pannatoni will replace the significant loss of Honda. In addition there are also seven National Research Councils, English Heritage, the National Trust and the UK Space Agency.

Just under one quarter of Swindon's households have no access to a car or van, which is slightly worse than the average for England. Almost half of Swindon's households have access to only one car or van³. There are large pockets of particularly low car ownership, for example in and around the town centre, and in several peripheral communities including Penhill and Eldene.

While only 33% of Swindon's population aged between 16 and 19 can walk or take public transport to a post-16 education/training within 15 minutes, 89% can do so within 30 minutes⁴. This does not consider the availability of courses, though. When considering large employment centres (offering at least 5,000 jobs), this drops to 11% of the working age population within a 15-minute public transport journey and 65% within 30 minutes.

¹ ONS mid-year population estimates 2018

² In 2015, ranked 15th nationally of the NUTS3 areas outside London, Source: ONS.

³ NOMIS Table KS404K from Census 2011

⁴ DfT, Travel Time Destination and Origin Indicators by mode of travel and Local Authority, 2017

town centre regeneration, and Zurich – one of the town’s major employers – is currently building its new state-of-the-art offices as part of this development.

Figure 1.3 Bus Boulevard Illustrative Drawing



The evidence base for the LTP refresh concedes that no meaningful progress has been made achieving some of the objectives of LTP3. There has been reverse mode shift towards a higher level of car dependency, congestion and car journey times have worsened markedly, and there has been a small but clear reduction in the bus mode share, which the growth of the town cannot fully mask in patronage statistics. In fact, bus use from the newest developments is exceptionally low. A review of priority destinations as well as the town centre will be undertaken to ensure that the needs of new developments are being met from initial housing completions

It must be stressed that the Council's evidence base for current congestion impacts, and future traffic conditions arising from growth, is limited. There is no wide-area micro-simulation model available for the urban area, or the interfaces with the Strategic Road Network. The Swindon Strategic Highways Model (SSHM) is a large scale strategic traffic model, which while accepted by the Department for Transport to assess the requirements and broad Value for Money of major highways schemes, cannot properly assess the effects of traffic growth in any detail on experienced journey times.

Relationship with other Swindon Borough Council Strategies

The **Swindon Borough Council Carbon Reduction Strategy 2020** details how the Council will manage and control direct emissions from Council activities, and how it will influence partners and their strategies to address wider impacts and indirect emissions.

'Mission Statement: Swindon Borough Council recognises the impact of climate change and the need to be sustainable and as such will be net zero as an

organisation by 2030. In parallel to this, we will work with all interested groups in an effort to make the whole Borough net zero in line with national targets'

The **Local Transport Plan** is currently being reviewed. The BSIP will form the local bus service element of the Local Transport Plan. The LTP refresh has identified several themes and focus areas that have emerged or grown in importance since LTP3 was produced:

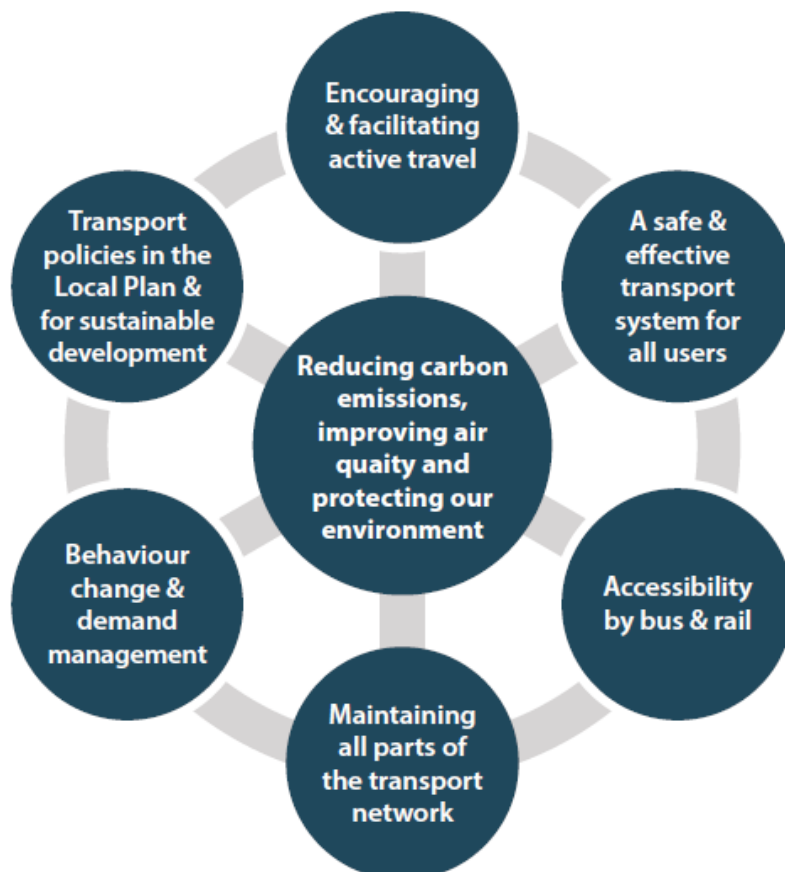
- Climate change and the need to work towards a low carbon economy;
- Transport related social inclusion, accessibility and quality;
- The role of new technology, and
- The importance on a joined up approach to land use planning and transport planning.

The refresh has also revisited some transport areas that may not have been given sufficient focus in the original policies or outcomes related to LTP3:

- The value of effective highway maintenance;
- The impacts of development, regeneration and growth priorities, and
- The location of Swindon and its connectivity with other economic centres.

The longer term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Swindon's transport network has also been considered at a high level.

Figure 1.4: LTP4 Policy Areas



The **Local Bus Strategy 2016** is superseded by the BSIP. The Local Bus Strategy (Revised 2016) focuses on supplementing the commercial network prioritising, in this order, daytime essential connectivity to meet social need, evening, and Sunday services. However since 2017 there has been no financial support for bus services from the Council's revenue budget. However a small number of evening and Sunday service enhancements are operated using Bus Service Operators Grant, and some other routes benefit from developer funding.

The **Swindon Transport Strategy** (2009) aimed to tackle headline issues around transport connectivity by identifying an integrated package of transport measures to address future travel and transport demand and ease of movement by all modes. It incorporates all current transport policy aspirations, including sustainability and the promotion of mode choice.

The main issues and challenges identified during formation of the strategy were as follows:

- Journey times are more attractive by car within the urban area than by public transport;
- The railway line causes major severance for access into the town centre by all modes, but especially for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Car parking issues exist, including pricing and locations of car parks attracting journeys into the town centre by car and underutilised Park & Ride;
- The A419 and A420 act as barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement east-west and north-south, particularly for the proposed Eastern Development Area (EDA); and
- Modelling shows that there will be significant congestion on the highway network with vehicles on a high number of links exceeding capacity, in addition to significant junction delays in the town centre and on the eastern and southern edges of Swindon.

The transport strategy notes that these issues will only worsen over time and with the level of growth proposed for housing and employment, the issues are likely to be further exacerbated. These same growth proposals provide both the opportunity and catalyst for addressing these issues in a sustainable fashion.

A combination of industry best practice, modelling of the transport system and discussions with stakeholders was used as the basis for the development of the strategy. The strategy seeks to address both direct and indirect impacts of future transport congestion and to meet the needs of everyone who lives, works or visits Swindon. The strategy proposes a range of interventions around bus / rapid transport; walking and cycling; parking interventions; intelligent transport systems (ITS); smarter choices and demand management; rail; highways and land use. In regard to rapid transit, the strategy envisaged this mode forming the heart of the transport strategy through the provision of key high frequency transit corridors providing direct access to the town centre / railway station and key facilities

throughout Swindon. Improved interchange would enhance access by other modes including walking, cycling, and for access to the strategic railway network. The core of the proposals was a rapid transit system serving the major developments on the current urban fringe of Swindon, with public transport priority to provide reliable journey times into the town centre. In addition, the strategy envisaged supporting measures around improved interchange; fare incentives on particular routes / zones; multi-modal travel cards; cycle parking at bus stops; easy access to information; yellow school bus schemes; buses serving major employers; re-branding and low-carbon bus fleets (ultimately zero carbon).

Through delivery of the interventions across all modes, the strategy aims to:

- Reduce congestion at key junctions within the town through encouraging modal shift and intelligent transport systems including UTMC (Urban Traffic Management Control);
- Help to improve mode shift; and
- Improve access to the town centre, including for those in deprived wards.

Swindon Transport Strategy: Objectives

- Deliver a vibrant local economy
- Improve the sense of place
- Reduce the need to travel

Swindon Transport Strategy: Principles

- Encourage short distance trips by walking or cycling
- Encourage journeys into the town centre (capturing trips that currently 'leak' from the town)
- Encourage journeys around but within Swindon
- Provide good access to the strategic transport network

The **Swindon and Wiltshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)** (2016) updates and revises the Strategic Economic Plan which was approved by Government in April 2014. Its function is to provide a commentary around transport priorities for the town and wider region, including linkages between transport investment and economic growth. In so doing it highlights the priorities and future opportunities for investment through to 2026.

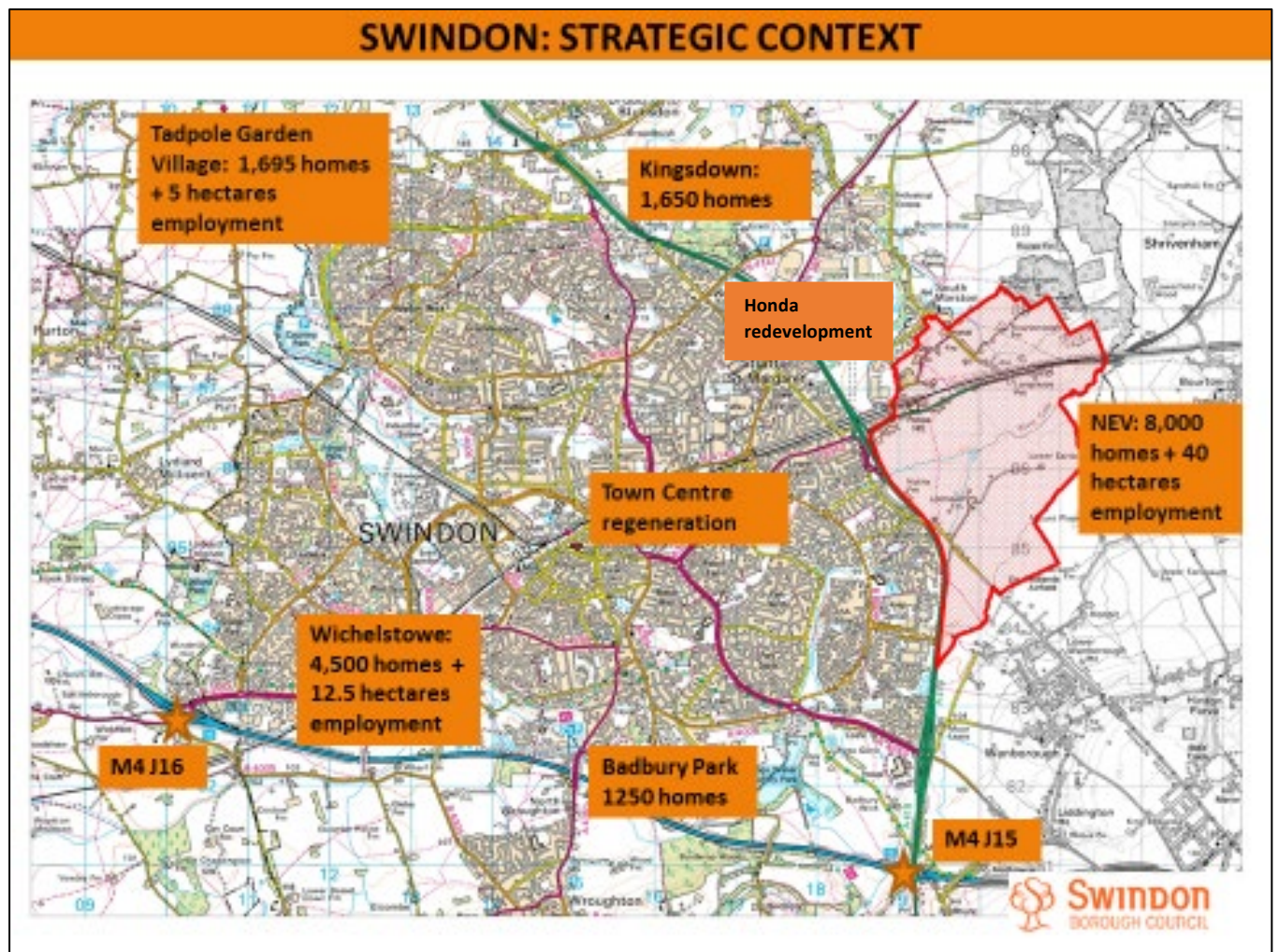
By 2026, the SEP aims for Swindon and Wiltshire to be world-renowned for innovation, entrepreneurialism and great quality of life. It focuses on the area's existing strengths and the base of established business sectors to build an outstanding, sustainable business environment in which the economy will thrive.

The **Swindon Local Plan** Review is currently under way. The main aspects of this comprise rolling forward the existing Local Plan to 2036, with 21,400 net additional dwellings over the 2018-2036 plan period and additional employment opportunities, including redevelopment of the Honda site in South Marston which could deliver between 7,000 and 9,000 jobs.

The delivery of Symmetry Park within the NEV is already enabling a further 1500 jobs (Amazon and Iceland Regional Distribution Centres).

Planned development is likely to increase the population of the Borough by 35,000. The majority of this development is directed to four main urban extensions at Kingsdown, Tadpole Garden Village, Wichelstowe and the New Eastern Villages (NEV) as illustrated in Figure 1.5, with about 1000 dwellings each allocated to Wroughton and Highworth.

Figure 1.5: Plan highlighting strategic urban extensions



The current proposals for the NEV and the redevelopment of the Honda site will draw heavily on access by bus, through the development areas and to the town centre and railway station. There is a need for both new bus services and integration with existing bus services to achieve the target modal share.

The **Swindon Town Centre Movement Strategy** (2020) sets out a plan of action to deliver improvement in all elements of the Town Centre's movement system from car parking, walking, cycling and public transport. Sitting alongside a refreshed Town Centre Masterplan, the multi-modal transport strategy is intended to support and facilitate growth and regeneration of the central area.

The Strategy is evidenced based and objectives led, ensuring that it responds to current and anticipated issues in a way that delivers the widest possible benefits to the Town Centre. Comprising 25 individual but interconnected interventions, the Strategy is specific and defines tangible actions whilst allowing sufficient flexibility in the detail of individual schemes to enable them to be refined, evaluated and optimised through on-going engagement with stakeholders.

Figure 1.6 Town Centre Movement Strategy Interventions

Priority Theme		Intervention	
1	Rationalise Street Network	A	Whalebridge Reconfiguration
		B	Rodbourne Area Action Plan
		C	Corporation Street Bottleneck
		D	Bus Boulevard Enabling Works
		E	Farnsby Street/Milton Road Corridor
		F	Station Road/Holbrook Way Corridor
		G	Commercial Road/Cromby Street Corridor
2	Maximise Bus and Taxi Accessibility	H	Fleet Street Bus and Urban Realm Enhancement
		I	Bus Boulevard
		J	RTPI and Selective Bus Detection
		K	Improve Taxi Rank Provision
3	Improved Walking and Cycling Environment	L	Heritage Action Zone Connectivity
		M	Cycle Parking Review
		N	Walking and Cycling Network Improvement
		O	Cross-Railway Connectivity
4	Improved Public Realm	P	Manchester Road Urban Realm Enhancement
		Q	Wood Street Urban Realm Enhancement
5	Effective Car Parking	R	Improve Evidence Base
		S	Strategic Capacity Assessment
		T	Improve car park quality and safety
		U	Enhance car park accessibility
		V	Increase public Electric Vehicle Charging Point supply
6	Maximise Capacity of Great Western Way Corridor	W	Event Management Plans
		X	Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC)
		Y	Localised Capacity Improvements

Existing bus service provision

The bus network is focused on a substantial town network, beyond which a number of inter-urban routes operate regularly, some on a high-frequency basis. As well as providing important connectivity to Wroughton and Highworth, and across the Borough's boundaries, these services perform an important role on some radial corridors within the town. 95% of mileage within the Borough is operated commercially.

Overall bus patronage between 2011 and 2019 had been remarkably stable overall, despite significant changes in the town. The total number of local bus passenger journeys (i.e boardings) in Swindon has fallen from 12.5 million to 11.9 million⁵, with total passenger numbers fluctuating throughout this time period. This masks a steady rise on boardings on most out-of-town services, and a general decline on many town routes, though the picture is mixed.

A smaller number of uncommercial services cover smaller rural communities, many of which are financially supported and administered by neighbouring Authorities, principally Wiltshire and West Berkshire, of which Swindon Borough Council financially contributes to.

Reflecting the industry structure prior to deregulation in 1986 Swindon Borough Council has two major commercial bus operators:

- The former municipal organisation, since 2017 owned by Go-Ahead Group as part of Go South Coast (GSC), trading as Swindon's Bus Company, operating the majority of routes solely within the built-up area. GSC had separately operated hourly into Swindon from Salisbury, under its Salisbury Reds brand, which continues to date.
- The former National Bus Company subsidiary, now part of Stagecoach West, who have a minority share of the town network, but operating the great majority of inter-urban services extending beyond the town and as far as Chippenham, Oxford and Cheltenham.

Additional bus operators operate cross-boundary bus services into Swindon borough, under contract to neighbouring authorities, but these are very limited in scope and frequency.

While the Bus Service Improvement Plan formally covers the next five years, the strategy intentionally looks ahead well beyond this period.

The town is just embarking on a renewed rapid growth trajectory over the 2021-2036 period, after several years of consolidation, across four planned expansion areas:

- SA1 Wichelstowe about 4400, approx. 2800 yet to be delivered
- SA2 Kingsdown (East of A419) about 1750
- SA3 New Eastern Villages approx. 8000.

⁵ DfT Bus Statistics

- SA5 Tadpole Garden Village 1695, near completion.

In addition SA4 Badbury Park, Commonhead is nearing completion and will deliver about 1200 dwellings.

A further 1400 dwellings have been consented since 2012 outside the plan-led system in Blunsdon, east and west of the A419, in close proximity to Tadpole Garden Village.

Successive Local Plans, supported by the Local Transport Plan and the subordinate Swindon Transport Strategy, have long recognised that the mobility needs of the enlarged town demand a substantial shift towards public transport, both from very large-scale urban extensions and existing residents. As evidenced by the Swindon Strategic Highways Model, (SSHM), including its latest version (2021) this is absolutely necessary for resulting demand to be accommodated within existing and deliverable network capacity.

It is now that much the more urgent a task, given the need to achieve challenging nationally binding decarbonisation goals and local aspirations to exceed them.

The Strategy seeks to consolidate the current commercial offer, with a strong focus on achieving radical improvements in bus journey time, reliability and frequency by delivering Bus Rapid Transit levels of service on the three key radial Quality Bus Corridors to the major expansion areas already identified in Council Policy, and where some progress towards delivery has already taken place.

To this, the BSIP adds a fourth QBC, extending existing bus priority measures beyond Mannington towards the established mixed use West Swindon area, which hosts some of the largest concentrations of employment in the Borough near M4 junction 16. This will be subject to detailed transport modelling and submission of a full Business Case. These 4 QBCs are anticipated to achieve the necessary doubling of bus passenger boarding along the corridors in question by 2030.

The strategy prioritises broader roadside infrastructure investments across the Borough, securing high value-for money and immediate impacts by prioritising stop specification and project delivery according to a clear service hierarchy. “Lean” processes will be used to help expedite this.

The strongly radial town network is unable to offer competitive journey times to a large number of destinations outside the central area, of which the Great Western Hospital near to M4 junction 15 stands out.

This BSIP seeks to “kick-start” **two entirely new orbital routes** directly tackling this lack of connectivity: the first across the northern and eastern flanks of the town; and the second across the southern flank. Both will take advantage of existing and proposed bus priority measures, mainly involving filtered permeability. The proposals seek to deliver relevant timetables with regular frequencies and sufficient hours of operation to establish a strong uptake. These routes are essential to tackle the high level of car dependence in the Borough. It also will address at root significant socio-economic exclusion which is broadly spread in the Borough, including outer wards

such as Moredon, Penhill, and Eldene, where multi-factor disadvantage is aggravated by physical peripherality.

Two demand responsive pilots are proposed serving identified markets that are unlikely to sustain a relevant scheduled public transport offer. These are:

Route A

- A north of Swindon rural area centred around the villages of Castle Eaton, Hannington and Iglesham. This will provide links to the following key areas/hubs -
- Orbital Retail Park – providing shopping and retail links, as well as fitness centres
- Great Western Hospital – Providing vital NHS services and a link to Marlborough and Salisbury via local bus services.
- Swindon Railway Station – Providing fast and frequent services to London Paddington, Cardiff, Swansea and connections to the Midlands/North of England
- Swindon Town Centre – Providing links to Education centres, businesses, retail, leisure, shopping with national and independent retailers and connections to all areas of Swindon via the Public Transport Network.
- Stratton / Gablecross – Providing a link to Swindon's police station, retail shopping area, business centre and connections in to Oxford via the S6 local bus service
- Blagrove/ Windmill Hill industrial estates – Providing links to business parks and local amenities, with links to the M4 motorway Junction 16.
- Mannington Retail Park – providing shopping and retail links, as well as fitness centres to help boost Swindon's financial economy.
- Linking into these hubs with a demand driven responsive system will allow the residents of Castle Eaton, Hannington and Inglesham to have direct links for work, health care and leisure activities, as well as being able to go shopping, having meals and drinks in restaurants, pubs and bars, which will help boost the local economy.

Route B

- A south of Swindon rural area centred around the villages of Chiseldon, Liddington and Wanborough. This will provide links to the following key areas/hubs -

- Orbital Retail Park – providing shopping and retail links, as well as fitness centres
- Great Western Hospital – Providing vital NHS services and a link to Marlborough and Salisbury via local bus services.
- Swindon Railway Station – Providing fast and frequent services to London Paddington, Cardiff, Swansea and connections to the Midlands/North of England
- Swindon Town Centre – Providing links to Education centres, businesses, retail, leisure, shopping with national and independent retailers and connections to all areas of Swindon via the Public Transport Network.
- Stratton / Gablecross – Providing a link to Swindon’s police station, retail shopping area, business centre and connections in to Oxford via the S6 local bus service
- Blagrove/ Windmill Hill industrial estates – Providing links to business parks and local amenities, with links to the M4 motorway Junction 16.
- Mannington Retail Park – providing shopping and retail links, as well as fitness centres to help boost Swindon’s financial economy.
- Linking into these hubs with a demand driven responsive system will allow the residents of Chiseldon, Liddington and Wanborough to have direct links for work, health care and leisure activities, as well as being able to go shopping, having meals and drinks in restaurants, pubs and bars, which will help boost the local economy.

The scale of these is such that a collaborative approach to delivery, with either Gloucestershire, or Wiltshire, is likely to be necessary to enable villages in other local authorities closeby near the border to achieve similar benefits.

Beyond the built-up area, there is a clear aspiration to work collaboratively with Stagecoach and GSC, and neighbouring LTAs, to further improve frequencies and journey times to Oxford, Chippenham, Cirencester and Marlborough in particular. Away from the commercial network, we seek to secure in partnership with adjoining authorities, minimum hourly service frequencies on thinner cross-boundary supported services including to Cricklade, Malmesbury and Lechlade into the longer term.

Targets will allow the monitoring of outcomes every 6 months in the following areas of focus, as required by National Bus Strategy – England (NBSE):

- punctuality,
- journey times
- patronage

We will review the plan annually, based on the outcome of this monitoring regime. This will allow the most effective ongoing management of revenue funding to achieve the greatest impacts across both the core commercial network, and supporting services.

It should be stressed that the requirements of NBSE and the strategic objectives of the BSIP are generally likely to require a focus on the existing busiest corridors and secondarily the largest identified traffic flows where bus connectivity is identified to be deficient, within the Swindon urban area. Only by securing substantial increases in quality and from this, patronage, will the policy outcomes sought be achievable.

Figure 1.7: Map showing geographical area of DRT North bid

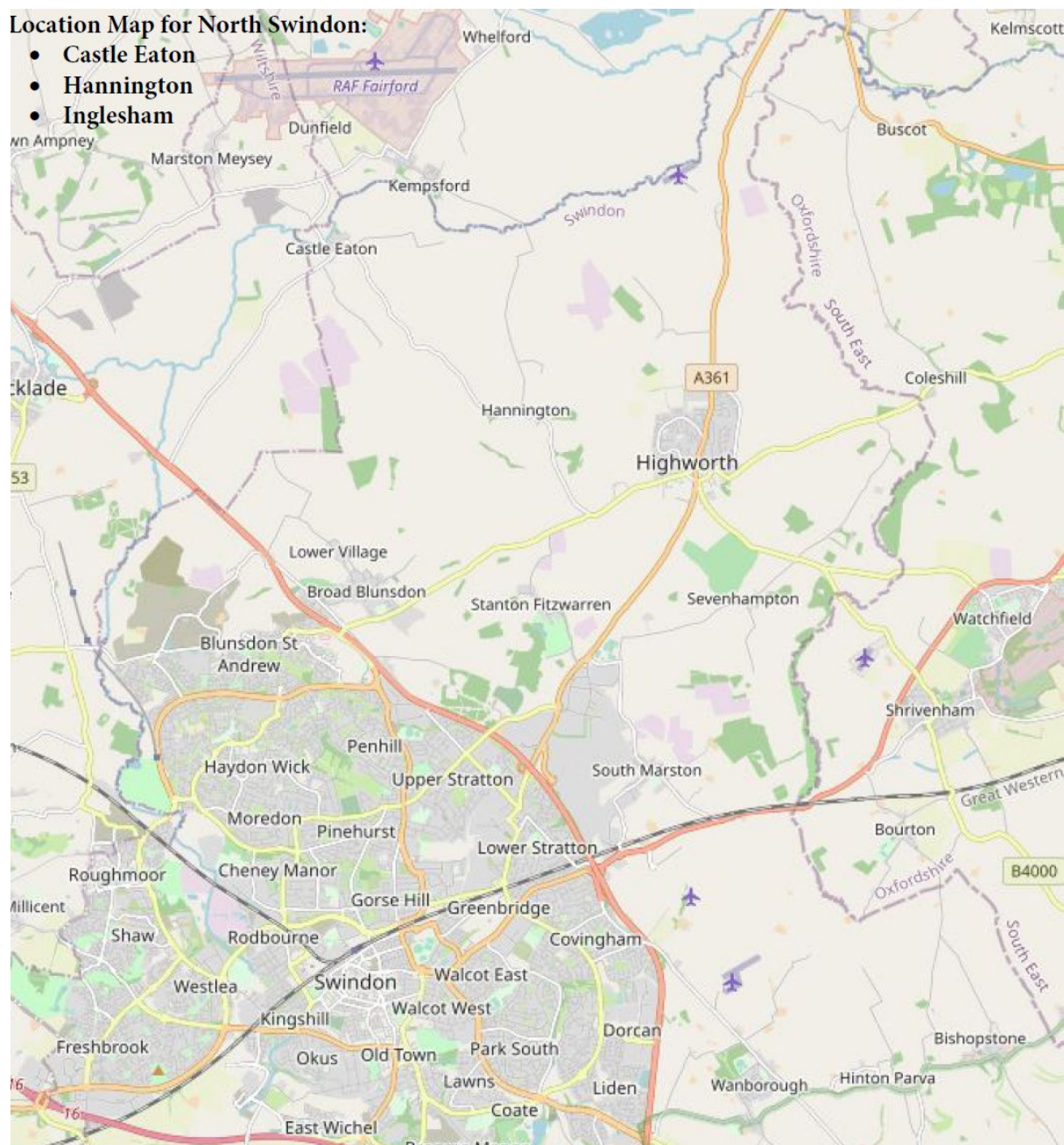
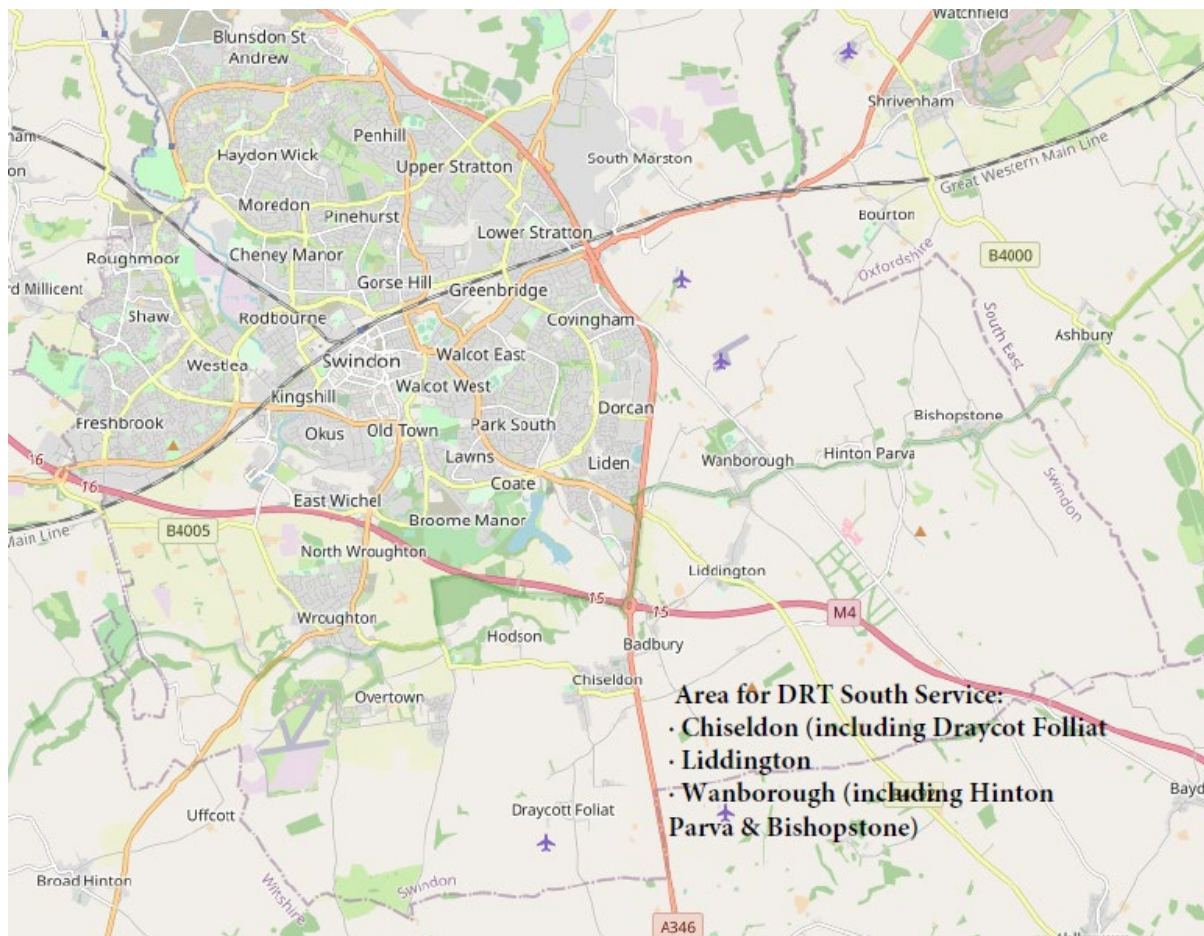


Figure 1.8: Map showing geographical area of DRT South bid



SECTION 2 - Current bus offer to passengers

Analysis of existing local bus services compared to BSIP outcomes.

NBSE requires an assessment of the current bus service offer across the Local Transport Authority area. The assessment must take account of the views of passenger groups, MPs, and the business sector. The Council invited views from stakeholders during July and August 2021. Responses received have informed the preparation of the BSIP and the following themes and issues have been identified:

- Bus stop audit, improving bus stops and shelters
- Minor route revisions
- The need for an eastern arc bus service to the GW Hospital
- The need for a western arc bus service to avoid changing buses in town
- Improvements to bus infrastructure
- More frequent bus services
- Better service connections
- Later evening buses/all night bus services
- Need for Kingshill Road bus service
- Better access to further education sites
- Need for Sunday bus services
- Cheaper ticket prices
- Better bus station
- Requests for bus services
- Buses serving leisure areas
- Website showing all bus services
- Need for rapid transit routes
- Fares
- Improvements to the whole passenger experience

Engagement with stakeholders is ongoing and will be used to inform Enhanced Bus Partnership and future investment decisions.

Further, initial findings of the National Highways and Transport Survey 2021 highlights the highest satisfaction score at 76% of how easy buses are to get on and off (PTB105). In terms of key themes, Public Transport scores highly at 61% compared to a NHT average of 55%.

The survey was sent to 4,300 households across the Borough and 991 members of the public responded, representing an overall response rate for Swindon of 23.1% (compared to the national average of 23.8%). The full report is due to be published on 29th October 2021.

Bus Industry Structure

Swindon's Bus Company operate 86 buses from its Swindon operating centre, representing the bulk of the urban network inherited from Thamesdown Transport (the former Borough-owned bus company). These routes cover the entire built-up area of Swindon, apart from some neighbourhoods on the eastern flank, and

Freshbrook in the far south west. Much of the network is run at high frequencies, at or above every 10 minutes. A direct, high frequency link between West Swindon, the town centre and Great Western Hospital is of particular note. Since 2017 GSC has made significant investments in both new vehicles, and in roadside infrastructure and general network presentation.

Salisbury Reds, also part of GSC, has run an hourly service between Salisbury, Pewsey, Marlborough and Swindon as the X5 for many years, with some modest support from Wiltshire Council.

Stagecoach West operates a fleet of 75 buses across urban and interurban services linking Swindon with Oxford, Chippenham, Marlborough, Royal Wootton Bassett, Trowbridge and Cirencester. Highworth and Wroughton are served by frequent services connecting with the urban area of Swindon. Service S6 to Oxford and Service 55 to Royal Wootton Bassett and Chippenham, are of particular note, being run up to every 15 minutes prior to COVID, with high-specification premium EURO VI buses.

The Council, as part of its own Local Bus Strategy (introduced in 2013 and revised in 2016), supports some bus services based on social need, and evening and Sunday services supplement daytime commercial services. These are funded through Bus Service Operators Grant and Developer Contributions (£106). No bus services are currently funded from the Council's revenue budget.

In addition, the following cross boundary services operate with third party revenue support:

- Coachstyle operates a regular service between Swindon and Malmesbury contracted to Wiltshire Council. This is due for re-tender in one year.
- West Berkshire Council self-operates a cross boundary contracted service using their own minibuss vehicle fleet from Lambourn.
- Stagecoach run a series of services into both north and east Wiltshire on a fully contracted or part commercial basis. The most regular are the 80 to Marlborough and Tidworth, and the 53 to Purton and Cricklade.

Beyond the scope of the BSIP, Swindon is a regular stop on scheduled express coach networks. National Express operate a number of long distance coach services that serve Swindon and Stagecoach MegaBus Service calls at Swindon although not at the two main bus terminal points in Swindon.

Swindon Borough's Bus Network

The Swindon Borough bus service network, commercially-operated up to March 2020 serves the main built up area quite comprehensively. There are very few neighbourhoods entirely unserved.

However gaps do exist, of which the most notable are the village of South Marston, and a major development in the far south east of the town at Badbury Park,

approaching completion. A temporary bus service for Badbury Park has been introduced and a new service is planned to be introduced in late 2021.

Swindon town services each have a daytime frequency that ranges from 2 to 6 buses per hour depending upon demand arising within the corridor concerned. By virtue of size and proximity, Wroughton and Highworth within the Borough and Royal Wootton Bassett within Wiltshire, benefit from at least 4 BPH into Swindon. Frequency is linked to demand and where demand increases this has been reflected by timetable improvements. This has been particularly evident on inter-urban service 55 (RWB-Calne-Chippenham) and S6 (Faringdon-Oxford) which has seen strong growth for some years.

However, extensive areas of the town, while served commercially, suffer from relatively low frequencies (generally every 30 minutes) and extended journey times. Much of which arises from the fact most are large mono-tenure owner-occupied suburban expansions built after 1985. Very high car ownership exacerbates the impacts of highly unhelpful urban design. The largest of these, the Northern Development Area, stretches over 5 km across the northern extent of the built up area and has a population of about 27,800 people⁶. There are other incipient areas of deficit, notably Broad Blunsdon, where the village has seen planning permissions issue for about 900 additional homes since 2016, but service frequencies are limited.

The relevance of bus across extensive swathes of the town is limited, reflected in peak **bus mode shares well below the average for English non-metropolitan urban areas**. For example, the NDA has a 2011 bus JtW mode share of just 4.1% on average, but ranges from 2.8 to 5.8%⁷. In West Swindon, built prior to 1990, the 2011 Census average is 6.1% but this masks wide variations between 4.3% in Roughmoor and Sparcells built in 1987-1990, to as high as 8% in the former local authority areas in Toothill built in the early 1970s. This compares with a figure for the contiguous Built-up Area of 6.3%. The average for urban areas in England is over 8%.

Although since March 2020 Government support has so far protected the pre-existing network to a great extent, bus services were already facing serious structural challenges prior to the onset of and impact of Covid 19. The town centres strength as a retail and employment value has been seriously challenged, for several years, and while the Council continues to progress ambitious investments to leverage the considerable locational, connectivity and heritage assets in the central area, these have yet to fully bear fruit.

By contrast, key facilities and employment on the edge of the town, many rapidly developing and sited with regard to the availability of high-speed highways, have poor bus connectivity, even if some, like the Hospital, Greenbridge and the Marston Park/Honda Area benefit from a frequent bus service.

Maps of the bus service network are attached at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

⁶ NOMIS table KS101EW, from Census 2011 indicated just over 26,000 in 2011, before the development was build complete, and including parts of Woodhall.

⁷ NOMIS Table QS703EW from Census 2011

Traffic Conditions

Although the growth of the town since 1956 was accompanied by extensive highways construction, including a large number of dual carriageways, this has failed to accommodate unconstrained demand for car use. Congestion is a serious problem and there is evidence that its impacts have substantially increased since 2010.

The junctions of the local network with the Strategic Road Network are typically problematic, along with a number of pinch points more widely scattered in the town, including much of West Swindon, where junctions designed in the 1970s and 80s cannot address throughput, Old Town, the network around the out-of-town office park at Pipers Way, Oxford Road and the Cricklade Road north of the town especially at the Moonrakers junction. Despite its size, Great Western Way and Cirencester Way, through the centre of the urban area, are also chronically challenged at peak times, made worse by the restricted capacity of the few highways links under the Great Western Main line.

However, prior to 2005, substantial efforts were made to offer bus advantage. There are some extended lengths of bus lanes on Queens Drive, Fleming Way and Cricklade Road. Mode filters were pioneered to some considerable effect in the town, and this reserves extensive lengths of streets for free through movement by buses, in particular Penzance Drive, and through Gorse Hill which links to priority on Cricklade Road. 14 bus exempted mode filter (“bus gates”) exist in the town – not all on frequent routes, however. However, even on some of the best-endowed corridors, bus priority is discontinuous and the effect of measures in place is seriously hindered by this.

Comprehensive data on traffic speeds and delay on the Swindon highways network is limited. However the Council data does show that:

- Average journey times by car across the network have continued to extend since 2011
- There is increasing levels of unpredictable delay on the towns major arteries
- Average car journey speed to the town centre increased from 10.9 minutes to 11.7 minutes in just the 2-year period 2014-2016 – a rise of 7.3%.

Operator data shows that the effects on buses has, if anything, been worse. This largely arises from the fact that buses cannot simply reassign route dependent on the traffic conditions encountered.

Patronage trends

The Council's operation Thamesdown Transport was loss-making prior to its sale 2017, and margins on Stagecoach's town network have been weak and declining, such that it has been difficult to justify continuing major investment in the town bus fleet, much of which is ageing.

In common with most urban areas of its size, there is a pattern of broadly gentle decline.

Boardings in the Borough, have declined from 12.7m per annum in 2011 to 11.9m in 2019. This is a 6.3% decline.

This reflects a number of factors, including the elimination of the Councils own revenue budget, which was applied to limited number of fully-supported services, many of which have been severely cut back if not withdrawn entirely. The withdrawal of Oxfordshire's budget in 2016 led to the loss of two supported cross boundary services, also contributing to decline.

To the degree patronage has been quite stable on many key routes over this period, this reflect that the network, while catering well to its core audience, is not meeting the needs of those who have the ability to drive. The relatively low Borough wide peak bus mode share of 6.3% indicates that the bus offer is essentially used by "essential users" – those who have very limited alternative mode choice. It is also reflected in the very strong correlation between indices of multiple deprivation and bus boardings, within statistical Output Areas.

Service levels have also been reduced on some main corridors within the town. Most notable is Stagecoach service 10 running from Freshbrook across the town centre to Upper Stratton, and GSC service 2 between the centre and Covingham. Both have been reduced from every 10 minutes to every 15 in recent years.

The main inter-urban services operating at least every 60 minutes, have generally shown steady growth. Outstanding performance has been demonstrated by service 55 (Swindon-RWB-Chippenham) which has grown by over 14% between 2012 and 2018, and service S6 (Swindon-Faringdon–Oxford) which grew overall by 80% between 2011 and 2019, albeit much of that within Oxfordshire.

Branding and network presentation

NBSE seeks a unified locally relevant brand covering all operators' services.

Stagecoach operate bus services in their own national livery although unified local branding was explored many years ago. Inter-urban services 55 and S6 have been upgraded to a premium "Gold brand". However Stagecoach is intending to retire this as part of a national re-branding exercise.

Go South Coast has a policy of presenting fresh, locally relevant brands across each identifiable geography in which it operates. The Swindon's Bus Company fleet bears a refreshed local livery introduced in 2017 across the local operation, that ties directly back to the legacy of the local authority operation. GSCs X5 operation reflects the Salisbury Reds brand operating across the south and east of Wiltshire.

Therefore, while a distinct town bus identity exists within the GSC Swindon's Bus Company operation, this does not cover the Stagecoach portion of the town network.

The wide range of long-distance inter-urban services makes it especially hard to envisage a single “network brand” for all buses in the Borough.

Roadside Infrastructure

In line with a long-withdrawn 1973 MoT Circular, that was then transposed into Institution of Highways and Transportation Guidance, the Council and its predecessors prior to 1997 generally sought to ensure all homes were within 400m (5 minutes walk) of a bus stop within 400 metres. All stops in the urban area are marked.

The Council reviewed its bus stop provision in 2010 when stops were brought up to an agreed minimum standard across the Borough. This includes a flag and a timetable case, except at shelters where an information panel is incorporated on the shelter, and flags may not be provided.

While in 2010 a good deal of retrofit took place to the most deficient stops, this could not be considered a comprehensive programme or a “levelling up” effort. Rather it set to establish an appropriate “floor”. There is no standard flag or specification of case aperture size across the Borough. Where no shelter is provided, freestanding flags and timetables cases are mainly attached to legacy steel or concrete posts dating back to the 1950s and 1960s. The result of this is that the bottom of flags starts to create obstruction to tall pedestrians in extreme cases, and in many more, the height of timetables displays is either too high for the non-ambulant, especially where attached to lighting columns, or too low for taller adults. Flags and stops make no attempt to present a consistent “whole network” brand and they fall far short of creating confidence in a high quality product.

Convenient and safe boarding areas on or adjoining footways are also of exceptionally inconsistent standards. The Council had specified and invested in Equalities Act compliant boarding areas in certain places, incorporating a 160-180mm precast smooth-faced nibless Kassel kerb over 4m with 1m transitions.

There is evidence of a comprehensive programme having taken place in about 2004 to improve boarding and waiting facilities on a corridor basis along Service 7 within Highworth. This includes full DDA/Equalities Act-compliant boarders and a significant number of shelters.

However, in a great many places, there are no concessions to disabled/pushchair accessibility at all, with boarders as narrow as 1m wide within grass verges even on urban routes. There are especially serious issues with bus stop infrastructure across extensive areas of relatively recent development.

The Northern Development Area with over 26,000 residents, stands out. Most of this was constructed after 1998, and the Master Plan was entirely clear about the internal circulation hierarchy within which the so-called All-Vehicular Routes (AVRs) were always intended to accommodate bus services, Nevertheless across significant neighbourhoods, especially at St Andrews Ridge and Abbey Meads; and south of Thamesdown Drive, including Taw Hill and Haydon End, no roadside infrastructure was planned at reserved matters stage or through the s38 highways adoption

process. Very many stops are little more than a flag attached to a lighting column irrespective of whether a safe boarding point is available. Many stops require boarding and lighting onto a grass verge, or otherwise onto a driveway crossover at carriageway height – a serious health and safety risk and in breach of Equalities Act 2010 as well as the Construction Design and Management regulations (as amended). An especially good example is the Thursday Street Stops on Torun Way where great attention has been paid to creating a semi-shared space, with the carriageway at footway height, delineated by a surface channel. Without kerbs, even with buses “kneeling”, it is impossible for non-ambulant customers to safely board and alight. Partially sighted or blind people are arguably in an even more hazardous position.

A contract is in place with Clear Channel for the provision and maintenance of bus shelters within the urban area and most of this is funded from advertising. There is a quite comprehensive level of provision especially on the core arterial routes which benefit from a high level of advertising exposure. A smaller number of non-advertising shelters are in place on side streets, within the terms of the contract. The contract has been in place for many years and many of the non-advertising shelters are significantly damaged. The assets in the main can be characterised as quite functional but utilitarian, most featuring plastic perch seating.

A smaller number of shelters, most importantly on Fleming Way which is the main terminal for the town network, is owned by the Council and these are a bespoke design.

The Clear Channel contract does not consistently extend beyond the built-up area. In Wroughton as well as the smaller villages, bus shelters are owned by parish and town Councils. In one or two of the most recent developments, including Tadpole Garden Village, shelters have been provided by the developer and rather than being presented for adoption, will be retained by the development management company in due course.

Information and Publicity

Both main bus operators provide their own timetable information in paper and digital format. However, there is no comprehensive network map or guide, including timetables, though for many years after deregulation a unitary timetable book and map used to be published. This is a particular lack and especially perverse when it is considered that the ticketing and tariff structure within the town has always allowed full inter-availability of day and period passes across both operators services, with no operator-specific network tariffs sitting alongside this, as is the case elsewhere in the UK.

Timetables on bus stops and timetable cases are all capable of presenting comprehensive timetable information. Generally this shows a list of departures.

Until 2017 bus stop publicity was generated and posted by the Council for both operators, using Thamesdown Transport staff. This ceased after the sale. This material is now being separately generated by each operator and posted at each stop by their own publicity staff.

An investment in 50 real time passenger information (RTPI) displays within Swindon was made in 2006. The limited number of displays were installed only on the municipal operator's routes, due to Stagecoach not being in a position to be part of this process at the time. There was no particular focus on key corridors, but rather, displays were dispersed across the town to offer a semblance of "equity" across each electoral ward. However, owing to financial constraints this has not been in operation since 2017. This BSIP recognises the value of RTPI, despite the prevalence of personal electronic devices that now present a range of real-time service data direct to the individual on-demand, across all stops. Reinstatement and extension of the RTPI system will be focused on the highest frequency and highest volume routes, to aid confidence especially among less confident and more casual users.

Ticketing and tariffs

Swindon starts in an exceptionally favoured position in that the established baseline position already meets National Bus Strategy aspirations for multi – operator ticketing (MOT). The town network has always been sold as a unity, by both main bus operators.

Within the town there are three concentric zones that set single fares. There is a Town Centre zone and an "Inner" Zone that covers the rest of the built-up area. There are no return fares as the price of a Day Rider ticket is the same or less than the price of two singles in almost all cases. The fares structure within the town is very close indeed to a flat fare structure.

Day Rider tickets, whilst priced and sold individually by each operator, are mutually accepted across both operators. The Day Rider allows unlimited travel on either operators' buses all day within the town in the Central and "Inner" Zones.

Beyond the edge of the town, a third further "Outer" TravelPass zone extends across the rest of the Borough, and extending to Royal Wootton Bassett, Purton, Cricklade, and Draycot Foliat in Wiltshire.

	Adult	Young Person	Ad + 3 Child	Family
Single fare in one zone	£1.70	£1.20		
Across two zones	£2.30	£1.70		
Across three zones	£2.60	£2.00		
Day Rider (Centre and Inner Zone)	£4.20	£3.50	£5.20	£7.00
Day Rider Plus (inc Outer Zone)	£5.00	£4.50	£6.00	£8.50
6 Day Rider Bundle	£20.00	-	£25.00	-
6 Day Rider Plus Bundle	£24.00	-	£29.00	-
Evening Rider	£2.60	-	-	-

There is now established an Evening Rider, offering unlimited travel after 1800h until close of service, for £2.60, again for sale on both operators.

Catering for those who do not travel daily, but still quite regularly (such as part-time workers) "Bundles" of 6 Day Riders are also available. However the limitations of Stagecoach's ticketing system means that these are only available for sale on GSC services.

Equally, period tickets are valid across all services within the town. This tariff range is known as Travel Pass, available as 7-day and above durations. In the same way as for the Day Rider Plus, there is a TravelPass Plus covering the same extent.

Adult	TravelPass	TravelPassPlus
1 week	£14.50	£16.50
4 weeks	£55	£63
13 weeks	£160	£185
Young Persons	TravelPass	TravelPassPlus
1 week	£11	£12.50
4 weeks	£40	£46

Historically there have been no parallel proprietary tariffs within the town and this creates an exceptionally simple and readily understandable tariff structure within the Borough. This is set out below:

As far as we are aware, this situation is nationally unique.

Where the aspirations of NBSE are not met, this principally involves off-bus ticketing and the availability of the same tariffs on-line, through each operators e-shop and their Apps. GSC already has QR code optical readers, but Stagecoach does not have this capability yet installed and app-based tickets are used as “flash cards” on device screens. This means that GSC app-based tickets cannot be used on Stagecoach buses.

The idiosyncratic and asymmetric inter-availability of e-distributed multi-operator products is recognised to be a serious problem by Stagecoach. Prior to COVID, work was well-advanced to set up the systems and fit optical readers to the entire Swindon fleet to implement complete e-ticket inter-availability. Following a delay due to COVID, work to fit readers and enable QR code reading is well-advanced and will be live in 2021. Work is ongoing with Stagecoach and Go Ahead to launch multi-operator acceptance early 2022.

Also falling short of the expectation of NBSE, there is no fare capping and customers need to plan ahead select the relevant period pass or “bundle” offer.

GSC have taken on operation of a number of contracted services extending further beyond the town and Borough Boundaries into Wiltshire. Likewise, Stagecoach service have always extended well beyond the limits of the TravelPass Plus Zone. The extension of a multi-operator flat fare system across a very much wider route extent is clearly a very difficult proposition. GSC offers a “Network Pass” that covers all the services it operates. Stagecoach has an equivalent “West Megarider Gold” which is similar, but has a much greater extent of validity reflecting the much larger scope of Stagecoach’s operations in the sub-region.

There is something close to a network multi-operator product, valid on all operators’ service throughout Wiltshire and Swindon. The Wiltshire Day Rover validity also

extends as far as Cirencester on Stagecoach service 51/51A and as far as Oxford on Stagecoach S6. The adult price point is £8.50. This can be bought on any operators' bus.

Customer Satisfaction

Transport Focus last undertook a comprehensive survey of Swindon's bus passengers in 2019, following a previous survey in 2018 and 2017.

These show that customer satisfaction – which was already very high – rose significantly to the point that it was among the best figures nationally as well as within the wider South West.

Following the sale of the municipal operator to Go-Ahead Group in 2017, there was an immediate series of major and highly visible investments in both the vehicle fleet, roadside publicity, and, shortly afterwards, the customer facing IT platforms and Apps. GSC immediately removed the “no change” policy, and the farebox cash vaults that were a legacy pre-dating deregulation in 1986.

Stagecoach also substantially upgraded its App in this period. Major investments were made on new high-quality premium-specification buses on routes S6 and 55. Notably, the survey indicated that customer satisfaction on Stagecoach services increased to a similar degree as on GSC.

This indicates that the bus operators are doing a very good job of looking after existing customers on a day-to-day basis, and that the customer service those of the companies and local operating staff is very good indeed. This is a very solid basis on which to build. However it has to be stressed that the expectation of Swindon's existing core bus market are unlikely to reflect, exactly, those of generally more affluent demographics that the BSIP is seeking to attract to bus services.

Supported Services

Swindon Borough Council has its own current Local Bus Strategy introduced in 2013 and updated in 2016. This funds bus services based on social need, evening services and Sunday services in that order of priority.

Bus services are funded by Bus Service Operators Grant and Developer funding (Section 106).

The bus services that are currently funded or part-funded through the Council are:

Bus Operator	Service	Element of Service Financially Supported	Funding	Contract Route Mileage (annual)
Stagecoach West	Service 7 Swindon - Highworth	Monday to Saturday Evening Service	BSOG	
Stagecoach West	Service 9 Wroughton - Swindon	Monday to Saturday Wroughton – Swindon Evening Service	BSOG	
Stagecoach West	Service 9 Wroughton - Swindon Borough Council Service 81/82 Thorney Park - Swindon	Diversion of Service 9 through Wichelstowe Monday to Saturday and Service 81/82 Monday to Saturday whole service	BSOG	
Stagecoach West	Service 10 Kingsdown – Swindon Town Centre	Monday to Saturday Evening Service	BSOG	
Swindon's Bus Company	Service 11 Taw Hill – Swindon Town Centre – Middle Wichel	Extension to East Wichel Monday to Friday	BSOG	
Swindon's Bus Company	Service 11 Taw Hill – Swindon Town Centre – Middle Wichel	Extension to East Wichel Saturdays and Evenings	BSOG	
Swindon's Bus Company	Service 11 Taw Hill – Swindon Town Centre – Middle Wichel	Extension to Middle Wichel Evenings and Sundays	BSOG	
Swindon's Bus Company	Service 16 Swindon – Haydon Wick - Blunsdon	Monday to Saturday morning and evening peak extensions to and from Blunsdon	BSOG	
Swindon's Bus Company	Service 19 Swindon Town Centre - Peatmoor	Monday to Saturday Evening Service	BSOG	
Swindon's Bus Company	Service 21 Swindon Town Centre – Penhill Valley	Monday to Saturday whole service	BSOG	

	Service 23 Swindon Town Centre – Coleview – Stratton Park	Monday to Saturday whole service		
	Service 25 Swindon Town Centre – Kinghill - Mannington	Monday to Saturday whole service		
Stagecoach West	Service 46/46A/X46 Swindon – Hungerford Service 48/48A/X48 Swindon - Marlborough	Cross boundary service with Wiltshire Council, Monday to Saturday whole service for Swindon Borough area	BSOG	
West Berkshire Council	Service 47 Lambourn – Wanborough - Swindon	Cross boundary service with West Berkshire Council, Monday to Saturday whole service for Swindon Borough area	BSOG	
Akcess CIC	Retail Runner	Community Shopping Service Three weekdays	Revenue Support Budget	

Please note, route mileage is not currently available as many of the contracts are not for the complete route of the service, only a part of it.

Other factors that affect the use of local bus services

A number of structural factors particular to Swindon affect the use of local bus services in the Borough. These to a great extent relate to the rapid planned expansion of the town in successive iterations starting in the late 1950s under the Town Development Act 1952.

Since the 1970s a series of very extensive planned urban extensions have been built, These have consistently been some of the largest such projects then underway in the UK. These include:

- West Swindon – 1973-1990, 10,870 dwellings (plus over 800 within Wilts)
- Northern Development Area (NDA) – 1994-2011; 9,700 dwellings
- Southern Expansion Area (SEA) or Wichelstowe – 2008 onwards, to be 4,400 dwellings

The New Eastern Villages project is just commencing, and this will deliver at least 8,000 dwellings East of the A419, with first occupations likely to take place in Summer 2022.

There have also been extensive smaller expansions.

All to date have been planned and delivered with the aim of facilitating unrestricted private car ownership and use. The focus of transport policy has, on the one hand, been largely focused on predicting and providing for traffic, while increasingly, since the promulgation of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 – housing in 2000, and PPG17 in 2002, has led to the conflict between urban design and highways engineering being very poorly resolved, with the greatest negative impacts on buses. The legacy of these ill-conceived approaches has been especially serious in Swindon, given the extent of new development involved. This mainly arises from inadequate on plot parking provision, leading to uncontrolled on-carriageway parking, on streets that are already engineered in width and alignment to passively slow traffic speeds.

The location and design of these development means that bus journey times are very extended, even in relatively free-flowing off-peak conditions. The sheer extent of the NDA and low achievable speeds within it means that GSC service 15 takes 15 minutes between the town centre and the western end of the NDA, entering it west of Wood Hall, but a further 18 minutes just to reach the Orbital Shopping Park, which is only about 2.5km to the east. This service only serves about 60% of the entire NDA. From the same point service 16 need a similar time to reach the top of Salzgitter Drive at the eastern end of the NDA, via a more direct route.

Given that it takes at least 30-35 minutes to reach the town centre, it can be seen that cross-town journeys by bus, even without a change, are not an attractive or relevant prospect for many peripheral neighbourhoods.

The position of Swindon in the urban hierarchy, and the nature of wider sub-regional housing and labour markets, has profound implications for the demand for and supply of bus services. Swindon is an “island” of lower-cost housing compared with almost all surrounding localities for an extensive distance, especially towards Oxfordshire, and to Bristol and the Thames Valley which are easily accessible via the M4 and the Great Western Main Line. There is strong evidence that increasing proportions of new residents in the town do not participate in the local labour market, but out-commute increasing distances, most by car. Over 50% of adults in Tadpole Garden Village which is the most recent major development are understood to commute out of Swindon entirely.

The potential for bus to feed the rail service at the important railhead at Swindon is truncated by relatively cheap and quite plentiful station parking, and very poor bus interchange facilities at the station itself. While Fleming Way is not too far distant the walk is not readily legible and the quality of the pedestrian experience is very poor, and involves crossing several busy streets.

At the same time the town is a major economic growth focus and an importer of labour from an extensive hinterland – again aided by its high quality strategic road and rail connections. It is very hard to provide relevant choices for bus and coach

alternatives. The extreme dispersal of economic activity to a large number of out-of-town locations, directly adjoining the national SRN, further hinders this.

The impact of this car-borne traffic on the local road network is adding to long-standing congestion problems.

Swindon has intentionally sought to favour out-of-town investments through its Local Plan and its approach to development management, for at least 40 years. The planned West Swindon District Centre opened in 1983 was the first of several planned developments of substantial retail- and leisure-led mixed use venues that are surrounded by plentiful free parking. While it was mainly intended to serve the new neighbourhood it has helped to draw activity and footfall out of the central area. What this did for retail was done for employment at Pipers Way, Windmill Hill/Blagrove and elsewhere.

Whatever lessons might have been learned here this was further compounded by the Northern Orbital Park within the NDA opened in 2001. This offers a hypermarket and the largest concentration of comparison fashion retailers in the town.

By contrast, there has been very little investment in the retail and leisure offer in Swindon town centre since the mid-1970s, or in office development, since the mid 1980s. The town has particularly struggled therefore to keep up with secular changes in both consumer and employer expectations and requirements.

The town centre has progressively lost all its foodstores, Sainsburys being the last one closing in Spring 2021, with its two superstores remaining Out of Town at Bridgemoor and Stratton. The Morrisons store at Regent Circus failed in 2019 within 5 years of opening largely because parking was payable on entry, albeit refunded in-store. It too retains two OOT sites. This followed all its department stores, with the exception of the House of Fraser Outlet store at the far end of the retail pitch replacing the original store in 2008. This has itself been slated for closure twice in 2018 and 2020.

The Javelin Venuescore is both a relative and absolute quantitative toolset to evaluate the health of town centre and retail venues. Venuescore ranks the UK's top 3,500 retail destinations including town centres, malls, retail warehouse parks and factory outlet centres. Each destination is given a weighted score for the number of multiple retailers present, and the score attached to each retailer is weighted depending on their overall impact on shopping patterns. In 2014-15 it was 220 with a ranking of 72. Work by Knight Frank in 2017 highlighted the strong demographic credentials of Swindon for retail investment. This potential has clearly not translated into trader decisions. It is notable that Bath, Reading, Oxford and Cheltenham are all within easy reach of Swindon with fast rail and road links, and much stronger overall retail and visitor positioning.

The ongoing weakness of the retail and leisure offer in the central area, and the steady erosion in town centre office employment, has had an ongoing serious impact on the market for bus services, which is still heavily focused on the town centre.

The dispersal of major trip attractors to the edge of the urban area implies that a great deal of cross-town movements must be taken to reach them from extensive parts of the town. Swindon is bounded by the M4 on its southern flank, and the A419 trunk road on the east and north-east. There are convenient junctions providing direct access to what is a near continuous orbital expressway. Key highway links including Great Western Way and Thamesdown Drive provide high-capacity fast links directly to these junctions. When the journey times achievable by car are compared with a cross-centre bus service, which can easily take over an hour dependent on connection times and frequencies, it is obvious why car dependency is so high in the town.

Car Parking

Free public parking is readily available across the Borough, especially across out-of-town retail, service and employment locations.

Within the Borough payable parking is operated by the Borough Council in almost all cases, at a few on-street bays in Old Town, and within the town centre. the Council also manages 256 long-stay spaces at Swindon Town Football Club, outside the central area, which is anomalous.

In addition public payable parking is available at:

- the Rail Station, (GWR)
- the McArthur Glen Outlet Centre (McArthur Glen).
- Great Western Hospital

The budget for Parking is £2.9m, which is made up of £162k Bus Lane Enforcement, £67k on Street Parking and £2.7m on Car Parks.

This total is offset by an expected income from car parking charges and fees.

The table below sets out the level of provision. It can be seen that parking in the town centre is plentiful. The Council provision is split between about 2500 off-street short stay spaces, and just over 2300 long-stay spaces.

Site		Spaces		M-Sat day	Eve	Sun	24h	Notes
Commercial Road	on street	17	1 hr max	£ 1.50	Free	Free	N/A	
Harding Street	on street	15	1 hr max	£ 1.50	Free	Free	N/A	
Market Square	on street	18	1 hr max	£ 1.20	Free	Free	N/A	
Sanford Street	on street	6	1 hr max	£ 1.40	Free	Free		
Wood Street	on street	15	1 hr max	£ 1.20	Free	Free	N/A	
Regent Close		9	Disabled only	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Blue Badge
Dammas Lane		12	evenings and weekends	£ 0.75	£ 2.00	£ 0.75	£ 40.00	

Bath Road		28	Long stay	£ 0.75	£ 2.00	Free	£ 8.00	£135/month season ticket M-F
Bristol Street		320	Long stay	£ 1.20	£ 2.00	Free	£ 8.80	£135/month season ticket M-F
Brunel West MSCP		225	Long stay	£ 0.75	£ 2.00	Free	£ 8.00	£135/month season ticket M-F
Cheltenham Street		85	long stay	£ 1.20	£ 2.00	Free	£ 8.80	£135/month season ticket M-F
County Ground		256	Long stay	£ 0.50	Free	Free	£ 4.00	Managed by STFC on match days
Spring Gardens		662	long stay	£ 1.20	£ 2.00	Free		£135/month season ticket M-F
The Planks		61	Long stay	£ 0.75	£ 2.00	Free	£ 8.00	£135/month season ticket M-F
Whalebridge MSCP		840	Long stay	£ 1.20	£ 2.00	Free	£ 8.80	£135/month season ticket M-F
	TOTAL	2477						
Brunel West MSCP		274	short stay	£ 1.20	£ 2.00	Free	£ 8.80	3.40 shopper special up to 4 hrs
Britannia Place		140	short stay	£ 0.75	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.00	
Brunel North MSCP		754	short stay	£ 1.40	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.80	3.40 shopper special up to 4 hrs
Catherine Street		6	short stay	£ 1.20	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.80	
Fleming Way MSCP		654	short stay	£ 1.40	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.80	
Granville Street		247	short stay	£ 1.40	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.80	
Princes Street		112	short stay	£ 1.40	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.80	
Prospect Place		79	short stay	£ 0.75	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.00	
Queen Street		9	short stay	£ 1.20	£ 2.00	Free	£ 40.80	
Wyvern		40	short stay	£ 1.40	Free	Free		
	TOTAL	2315						

Town centre parking is cheap in the evenings, and free on Sundays.

Short-stay parking in Council car parks costs between 1.20-£1.40 per hour. There is a substantial mark-up above 6h. A substantial discount is now available for shopping visits of up to 4 h in the Brunel Centre car parks, of just £3.40. **This is less than the costs of the all-operator DayRider day ticket**, of £4.20.

Long-stay parking is a great deal cheaper. A £8/£8.80 day rate seems quite expensive but at least as relevant is a Monday-Friday season ticket which per months costs £135, and thus for daily use represents a little under £6.75 per day.

The very ready availability and limited occupancy of both short-stay and long-stay parking in the town centre, even before COVID, indicates that town centre parking is over-provided for and that cheaper parking options are available beyond the

Council's car park estate. This is despite the closure of the Parade/John Street MSCP in February 2021, removing several hundred spaces.

The main car parks not operated by the Council are as follows:

Regent Circus – UK Parking Control

Regent Centre (former Morrisons Car Park) - Euro Car Parks

Both over a substantial (unknown) number of spaces also within a short walk of the town centre via Regent Street. The former relates to the Cineworld and casual dining offer remaining at the development and has charges broadly in line but slightly below Swindon's Short stay car parks. The latter has a three hour limit. Pricing is substantially discounted against the Council car parks being about £1 per hour for the first two hours, and less for the third.

There is some additional privately owned parking as part of town centre office developments, in particular the Tricorn Centre and off-site at Bristol Street; and east of Regent Way, including at the DHSS building. Parking is also available for staff at the Borough Council's offices.

Station parking includes the Council's own assets at Bristol Street and Bath Street. The parking on Network Rail's estate, is extensive and quite well located for the main station entrance. It is managed by APCOA for Great Western Railway. There is a £10 per day headline rate. Season tickets are available. This is undercut at the Signal Point Car Park which is just £8, privately operated, and very close to the station.

Outside the central area, the main chargeable public parking is at the Outlet Centre. Parking here is heavily over-subscribed on peak trading days. This partly reflects the charges which are a nominal flat rate of £1 for up to 5 hours.

At the Great Western Hospital, there is a £1.10/hour fee for the first 4 hours in the public car parks, rising to £8.80 for the day. This is very close to the tariff in the town centre long stay car parks. Staff parking is available and charged at a much lower rate. However the staff parking has been over-subscribed for many years. This has mainly been resolved through strong incentives to lift-share. However where the public transport journey to the Hospital is less than 30 minutes staff are not eligible to be registered car users. The fact that the threshold only realistically applies to those living within close walking distance of GSC route 1 between Penzance Drive and the site means that the vast majority of staff are not captured.

SECTION 3 - Headline targets

Our Vision

The Council and operators have a shared vision for improving bus services in Swindon Borough recognising it is time to connect travel:

“Through a programme of co-ordinated and sustained investment we will deliver a renaissance in bus passenger travel, which will see the number of journeys made by bus increase year-on-year as part of an exemplar multi-modal transport network’.

This BSIP will be a catalyst for bus passenger growth which will contribute to a wide range of other policy objectives, such as de-carbonising travel, reducing inequalities and using road-space much more efficiently. Buses will be increasingly attractive to more people, with a broadest demographic improving accessibility across the Borough.

Targets for patronage uplift

The objective is to achieve a 44% increase in bus passenger boardings throughout the Borough from 11.9m in 2019 to:

- at least 13.5m by the end of 2024 which is a 29.4% increase.
- at least 17.1m by the end of 2032 which is a 43.7% increase.
- At least 18.5m by the end of 2035 which is a 55.5% increase.

This will be achieved by securing an uplift of:

- 12.8% in peak bus mode share across the town centre and corridors serving the main urban area built prior to 1985, representing an uplift in boardings of about 40%.
- A much more significant transformation in bus use from West Swindon and the Northern Development area, which accounts for nearly a third of the town's population, to achieve an 9% peak bus mode share from these neighbourhoods.
- To secure, from all committed new developments, at least a 10% bus mode share. For clarity this includes Tadpole Garden Village, Wichelstowe, Kingsdown and New Eastern Villages.

Beyond the town we aim to secure mode share from Wroughton and Highworth of at least 9%.

On inter-urban corridors the ambition is to secure a compound 2.5% rate of growth.

The bus fleet in 2030 will average no more than 10 years old and will all meet EURO VI standards.

We aspire for the urban network within the town and including Highworth and Wroughton to be zero-emission by 2025, with a wheel to well zero-carbon reduction of at least 60% as this is the maximum that can be achieved by battery electric vehicles.

Swindon has successfully submitted a ZEBRA bid and a business case is being co-developed with the Department for Transport to

Targets for journey time improvements

- Within the Swindon urban area, peak journey times on the main bus corridors will be no longer than 5% more, end to end, than off-peak journey times
- Within the Swindon urban area, bus journeys from the outer ends of the urban network to Fleming Way will take no longer than 24 minutes. Today this is typically 28-32 minutes.
- Journey times – 10% reduction on all journey times across the Borough;
- Increased journey time consistency throughout the day
- Reliability – 5% improvement in reliability

Targets for reliability improvements

By 2025 95% of journeys will operate within the Traffic Commissioners Window. This will include the improved productivity and peak journey time enhancements. In other words, reliability will no longer be at the expense of greatly extended journey times.

Targets for customer satisfaction

Using the Passenger Focus methodology and other national surveys for cross comparison with other local authorities.

Increase bus passenger satisfaction by 5% from a base of 92% in 2019/20 to 97% by March 2025

Targets for bus stop infrastructure

By April 2022 agree a specification for a minimum level of bus stop infrastructure and a protocol for maintenance for all bus stops commensurate with their Network categorisation.

By April 2023 all stops within the urban area and in Wroughton and Highworth will fully meet Equalities Act 2010 compliance with a 4m long paved boarder, ambient lighting and a free-standing network branded flag and timetable case at a standard height above the footway. This will prioritise stops within the NDA and West Swindon during Financial Year 22-23.

By 2024 there will be an agreed strategy for Park and Ride, and Local Mobility hubs across the Urban areas and in Wroughton and Highworth

Targets for improved passenger information including real time information

By 2025 we would aim to have all bus corridors with real time information at each bus stop.

By March 2023 all publicity material whether produced by the local authority or bus operators will clearly indicate other operators' services within the relevant area.

We would aim to have co-ordinated bus timetable information, a bus map showing all services and operators App showing all bus information in place by 2023.

Targets for increase in bus service provision.

Increases in mode share will demand and be facilitated by substantial increases in both bus frequencies on both urban and out-of-town services. By 2025 within the overall network categorisation:

	2023		2025		2030	
	M-Sat	Sun/Eves from 2000	M-Sat	Sun/Eves from 2000	M-Sat	Sun/Eves from 2000
QBC	7-8	15	7-8	15	5	10
Flagship	10	20	10	15	7-8	15
Core	15	30	15	30	10	20
Non-Core	30	60	30	60	20	30
Recovery	n/a	n/a	-	-	-	-

Two major new orbital corridors will have been implemented by September 2024. Each will run at last every 20 minutes between 0600 and 2000h, and every 30 minutes 2000-2300h Monday to Saturday and every 30 minutes 0700-2300 on Sunday. These will run from West Swindon via Wichelstowe to GW Hospital, and from Woodhall and Pinehurst via Stratton, Grange and Eldene to GW Hospital.

Services 55 and S6 already meet the standards set on in NBSE for "SuperBus" services. We intend to secure further increases in frequency on both services.

Targets for implementation of Bus Priority

By 2025 the QBCs will have been implemented on:

- QBC1 Cricklade Road
- QBC2 Wichelstowe (including the Red Post Drive bus filter)
- QBC3 New Eastern Villages - Lotmead (via Queens Drive)

By 2025 a deliverable strategy will have been agreed with National Highways to secure effective and reliable bus routing and provision between Cricklade Road and Ermine Street at Broad Blunsdon, including a full technical evaluation of north-facing slip roads at the bottom of Blunsdon Hill.

By 2028 the remainder of QBC3 NEV will have been implemented including the Great Stall Bridge over the A419 and the PT Spine through Great Stall to the Great Stall Park and Ride.

By 2028 the entire QBC 1 will have been extended to and through Kingsdown (East of A419) and to the B4018 at Broad Blunsdon; and also via Coldharbour/Turnpike to Tadpole Garden Village via Ermin Street.

By 2028 a Full Business Case will have been submitted to implement QBC4 West Swindon Express bus.

Targets for bus fares and ticket accessibility

By 2025 the existing urban multi-operator range will be available on each operators App for off-bus purchase and delivered as an inter-available optically read product.

Targets for deployment of net zero emission buses.

To ensure that the large local bus operators deliver on their decarbonisation commitments by 2035.

By April 2022 develop a programme to support other local bus operators to submit bids for funding to enable them to commit to decarbonising their own fleets.

If ZEBRA funding bid is successful, this will enable 52% of the town's bus fleet to be electric by the end of 2023.

Targets for age of bus fleets

By 2024 the bus fleet age profile in Swindon Borough would be operated by 85% of the buses being ten years or less old.

Performance against these targets will be reported against and published at least every six months.

SECTION 4 – Delivery

This SECTION sets out how the Council and local bus operators will work together to deliver the reinforced and enhanced bus network in order to realise the planned growth in the relevance effectiveness and consequential use of the bus network.

The bus network in Swindon has recovered patronage in many regards faster than the average for England. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an acceleration in shifts already becoming evident in travel behaviour. Swindon's bus network has been less directly affected by reductions in regular city centre commuting, as high levels of office-based employment exist in the Borough but are generally located in peripheral parts of the Borough and reached by car prior to COVID.

However, we need to urgently reverse the reverse mode shift towards even more extreme car-dependence in the Borough, not least to tackle the impacts on energy and carbon intensity of travel in the Borough, and ensure that transport networks do not become still more sclerotic, with serious health, productivity and quality of life consequences.

We want to deliver a bus network where buses offer Swindon Borough residents an attractive alternative to the private car. This means that buses will be:

- more frequent, offering better turn-up and-go frequencies that keep running into the evenings and at weekends;
- faster, and more direct; benefiting from more bus priority measures;
- more reliable;
- easier to understand and use, supported by high-quality information for all passengers in more places;
- better coordinated with each other and other modes;
- providing a fully integrated service with consistent, simple, transparent pricing valid across all comparable services especially within the urban area.

How will we deliver better bus services

Our plan is to continue to work together, local authority and bus operators to deliver this change. We will deliver an ambitious vision of public transport in Swindon Borough which is sustainable and fit for the future, and the level of achievement will be measured and clearly seen as an economic contribution to the growth of the Swindon Borough area. At the same time our Plan will be a part of, and help, support wider Swindon Borough Council objectives.

We will set out investment priorities for a commercial and supported bus network paying heed to current demand, known network weaknesses and influences of new demand including new development, over the next five years.

To help define our plan we have taken into account the views of our local MPs, Ward Councillors, many who have canvassed their local constituents for their views, SWLEP and the bus operator's public surveys nationally. This all produced excellent feedback which together showed a common theme of how buses and their network could be improved. This evidence will help shape our Enhanced Partnership Plan.

Key Deliverables

1. Modal shift towards the bus improving congestion through people making more sustainable transport choices;
2. Moving towards a decarbonised bus fleet.

Outcomes – What we are Aiming For

1. Faster Journey times and improved journey time reliability;
2. Better bus priority through technology as well as more bus lanes and bus priority;
3. Modal Shift from the car to the bus;
4. Bus Friendly Highway Schemes – new road scheme which enable better bus as well as improve access to services and facilities;
5. Targeted marketing to those with more potential to switch to the bus, especially for shorter journeys;
6. Better located new development which is incorporated into bus routes and accessible to buses;
7. Enabling the decarbonising the bus fleet – delivering new technology and cleaner air through award winning innovation;
8. Better Access to work, education and health services;
9. Better and more integrated ticketing – both through new markets arising from the pandemic, more use of technology and continuing integration to other modes – rail, bike hire schemes, trains and ferries.

We will approach this in the following ways –

1/ Create a foundation of bus infrastructure to support the bus network.

To succeed, the BSIP must first define its key network: that is the network which can be expected to yield the greatest potential uplifts in passenger volumes and the strongest and most sustainable positive spiral of growth and to reverse the secular shift from public transport to personal car use

Ambition 1: We will create a Strategic Bus Network which builds on the three Rapid Transit Routes (Quality Bus Corridors) established in the Swindon Transport Strategy and that represent a key structuring principle in LTP, Draft LTP4 and both the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy to 2026 and the Submission Draft Swindon Borough Local Plan 2036.

Commitment 1: We commit to the delivery of intensive services and focussing investment on our flagship bus corridors in Swindon Borough, and ensure that bus routes and networks that serve the county are made easier to understand. We will:

- a) **Categorise the Bus Network into the following four categories, to ensure that the majority of investment secured will be focussed towards bus**

routes that have the greatest potential to serve and retain existing bus passengers and grow new markets:

- i) **“Flagship” bus routes**, wholly commercial bus corridors with very strong growth potential carrying around 50% of total passengers in Swindon Borough which will be our focus for future investment and initially focused on the QBCs and those radial services where frequencies already exceed 5 BPH;
- ii) **“core” bus routes** that are largely commercial carrying around 35% of total passengers where we will invest to boost passenger growth to enhance overall viability and levels of service, running at least every 30 minutes within the town, and at least hourly beyond it; and
- iii) **“Non-core/ non-commercial” bus route network** carrying around 15% of total passengers, but a higher share of mileage, that has no prospect of operating on a commercial footing, which will continue to require ongoing revenue support to deliver bus or DRT services that meet social/ accessibility needs (adopting new innovations and cost-efficient models for delivery).
- iv) “Recovery routes” which have become unviable through the pandemic but need short term support to enable them to survive and then progress to core or flagship status;

Target 1a: To complete the categorisation of the bus network into the above four categories in partnership with bus operators by the end of December 2021, then will review the network annually.

Beyond the QBCs, working with bus operators, the Council will identify the “flagship” bus corridors with a view to identifying further bus priority measures such as bus gates, bus lanes, priority corridors and modal filters to decrease journey time and improve reliability. This will also include connected ITS through on-bus systems to further improve traffic light prioritisation.

Ambition 2: There must be significant increases in bus priority

Commitment 2 - Reducing journey times will not only increase the attractiveness of services and drive up demand, but also improve efficiency and help bus operators to maximise fleet utilisation. Therefore, we commit to delivering comprehensive bus priority measures along bus corridors within our main urban areas, to speed up and improve reliability of bus services on well-used corridors. We will:

- a) **Develop prioritised plans for bus priority for the most well-used urban bus network corridors (which will see high use by flagship and core bus route services) that taken together will form a coherent series of complementary measures to enable improved bus journey times and bus reliability.**
- b) **Where there is the physical highway space available to do so, we will install bus lanes that continue past traffic congestion hotspots (e.g. through junctions) and ensure that these are in operation all day, evening and night.**

- c) **Provide bus gates and traffic signal prioritisation in locations where there is not sufficient highway space to provide physical bus lanes.**

Target 2a: Reduce bus journey times by 10% by March 2025 on corridors where investment is made in bus priority (corridors will be defined in EP).

Target 2b: Improve journey time reliability by 5% on corridors where investment is made in bus priority.

- d) **Ensure that all existing and new bus lanes and bus gates are effectively enforced once Swindon Borough is given the necessary legal powers to issue penalties for moving traffic offences – currently anticipated to be given to LTAs by December 2021.**

Target 2c: The Council will work with operators to identify and to prioritise enforcement where contraventions regularly occur that cause delays to buses. the Council establish a resource to undertake bus lane enforcement and will send bus operators monthly summary data showing level of enforcement activity undertaken at these priority enforcement areas.

Implement a regular and co-ordinated programme of bus lane and bus stop enforcement to stop misuse by motorists such as on street parking or regular loading or unloading.

- Review the design, geometry and enforceability of existing mode filters to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- Review the design, geometry and tracking of the “virtual” bus priority through Cricklade Road, Gorse Hill (QBC1) to ensure that seamless “rapid transit” level of service is robustly deliverable. This will include review of parking and loading arrangements

We will address the lack of opportunity to park and transfer to bus to be done as follows -

- Deliver a new proposed park and ride site at Acorn Bridge within New Eastern Villages Development (outline planning permission recently granted) at the outer end of QBC3.
- Enable a new park and ride site near M4 Junction 16 west of the junction either on the identified site at Wichelstowe or East or RWB through collaborative work with Wiltshire Council, helping to feed QBC4.

2/ Create an umbrella of supporting facilities and functions to make bus services more attractive to the public as well as existing bus users.

Target 3a: Ensure at least 75% of new capital and vehicle investment is related to the QBC and Flagship Network annually.

- a) **Deliver a consistent high standard and specification for bus stop infrastructure across Swindon Borough with a level of information (real**

time and printed bus journey information) that is commensurate with the level of usage of each stop. This will also include maintaining the highway surface and pavements in the vicinity of each bus stop to ensure that kerbing, lining is of a high standard and that rutting of the carriageway surface is minimised through pavement specification and regular maintenance.

Target 3b: By April 2022 agree a specification for a minimum level of bus stop infrastructure and maintenance for all bus stops commensurate with their Bus Network categorisation.

- b) Implement programme to review all bus stops and their corresponding infrastructure and access.** This will be an extension or continuation of work undertaken in 2010 and will ensure all bus stop and shelter infrastructure is brought up to the level of a consistent standard. This will include the introduction of a bus stop renewal programme as well as being consistent with the introduction of new bus stops. A standard bus stop and flag and timetable combination that is a universal brand image across the Borough will be agreed and implemented. Dimensions of hard standing and dropped kerb provision to meet Equalities Act 2010 requirements. As part of this programme timetable cases and information on timetables would be updated by the Council on behalf of all bus operators.

Apart from some notable exceptions, such as the Bus Boulevard and private ownership, a standard bus shelter programme is to be maintained. This will include a tender for a new long term contract from December 2022.

Real Time Information to be installed on bus stops on all key corridors where there is a bus at least every 15 minutes and at all key interchanges.

- c) Develop mobility hubs.** Future Mobility Hubs will develop around existing transport nodes, such as bus stops, railway stations and car sharing hubs, expanding their reach through improving the provision of active travel. The increased throughput of people through Future Mobility Hubs will open new opportunities to assemble commercial and community assets close by, strengthening local neighbourhoods and creating new revenue streams. For the delivery of goods, they offer the potential to act as convenient collection points, providing an alternative to last-mile delivery.

The primary objective of Future Mobility Hubs will be to facilitate improvements to how we access and use existing and new modes for sustainably moving around our towns and cities. This includes the ability to customise journeys for different customer segments catering for the ways they wish to travel, such as multipurpose trips which include multiple breaks, and unlocking fully accessible journey options for those with disabilities.

Key interchanges such as the Orbital Shopping Park, GW Hospital West Swindon Centre and Old Town will have improved displays to reflect their role as a key transport hub.

- d) **Create improved information, publicity and way finding direction signage connection between the railway station and the new Bus Boulevard** so that all bus passengers have an identifiable footway to the buses and the town centre.

Work with Network Rail to have a bus information kiosk or shop within the railway station with real time information board to display bus service information.

New network maps and service information posters (e.g. Town Centre 'where to board your bus' posters), feeding into new network wide marketing campaign (various phases timed around infrastructure improvements); this will include a network wide bus marketing to promote the new information and ticketing channels and to promote ongoing works and improvements once underway and delivered; Buses to be fitted with next stop announcements both visual and audio.

To co-ordinate publicity implement a joint website and app where all bus information is available and accessible regardless of bus operator. For those who prefer physical information, a programme of a joint timetable booklet or booklets showing all bus service information in the booklet's area would be introduced.

- e) **Improved Network management.** Work with bus operators to create an information or control centre to ensure information on service disruption is maintained and up to date. This would include a feed from traffic management CCTV cameras to be installed in bus operator control rooms to assist in managing disruption to services.

Ensure the base level digital information is in place BEFORE any major infrastructure works in order to support service disruption and customer confidence retention during construction impact;

Build a bus friendly highways programme including how to deal with buses during project build periods.

- f) **We will look to reduce the number of longer journeys that need to be made from rural communities** by championing the introduction of mobility hubs funded through the private sector and owned within local communities to better connect communities and enable seamless interchange points.

Target 4a: To redesign our approach to mobility hubs to be relevant and appropriate to rural areas, engage with the private sector and local communities to allow for a financially viable model to be developed and monitor the impact of hubs.

- g) **We will seek to promote improved mobility within rural areas of Swindon Borough** by working in partnership with private sector micro-mobility / demand responsive transport providers in addition to the voluntary sector. We will firstly seek to develop first mile last mile solutions suitable for rural areas. Where these are not viable, we will seek to bring together local communities and community transport operators to explore the opportunities for smaller

minibus sized vehicles to provide services. These will allow passengers to connect onto commercially viable bus services and rail / ferry services promoting the availability of economically necessary journeys within rural communities and reducing transport poverty.

Target 4b: Funding dependent, to work with providers to trial first mile last mile options and other community transport solutions connecting communities around our rural settlements, feeding Highworth in particular, and monitor the impact of these on rural connectivity and ridership.

- h) We will seek to utilise the latest technology to ensure our services are as flexible and accessible as possible.** We will ensure that rural residents have access to the same Real Time Passenger Information that their urban counterparts have through the provision of a RTPI app increasing confidence in the reliability and the sense of safety whilst using less frequent services. We will bring new technology to our taxi share and community transport services which enable smarter scheduling capabilities for community transport and a more flexible offer to passengers for taxi share services.

Target 5a: To provide and promote a RTPI App specifically to rural residents from April 2022 and introduce new and improved technological solutions to the Council- supported community transport services and taxi shares by April 2023.

3/ Level Up Car Parking Strategy, Access to Urban Realm

- a) We need to prioritise and influence modal shift from the car to the bus.** Buses need to be at the heart of centres and public realm, with better prioritisation and accessibility than car parking; Parking charges and supply should not undermine fair value bus fares, including for multi-person journeys;
- b) Get a fairer understanding of the need for urban centre bus penetration and the value of bus users to the economy (more regular, multi linked trips and aiding our nighttime economy).**

4/ Create a bus network to use these facilities that will improve itself, grow and develop services and initiate the growth of new services.

- a) Reinforce and build on the successful bus network pre Covid 19.**

The Plan to succeed must first define its key network, that is the network which if we invest will see the most improvement in modal shift and take back passenger numbers lost to the motor car over the years.

Bus services will be categorised as –

‘Flagship/priority’ bus routes, wholly commercial bus corridors with very strong growth potential for growth and high PT modal share;

‘Core’ bus routes that are largely commercial where operators will invest to boost passenger growth to enhance overall viability and levels of service;

“Non-core/ non-commercial” bus route network that has no prospect of operating on a commercial footing in short to medium term, which will continue to require ongoing revenue support to deliver bus or DRT services that meet social/ accessibility PT need;

‘Recovery’ bus routes affected by Covid 19 supported to return them to their pre Covid 19 position so they are in a position to be developed.

Bus Services to be improved –

a/ Existing commercial services will be improved to deliver –

- Regular frequencies of 10, 15 or 20 minutes per hour.
- Regular evening service half hourly between 2000 and 2400.
- Sunday bus services half hourly 0700 to 1800 and hourly to 2300.
- Existing daytime financially supported bus services where demand is justified to operate hourly 0700 to 2400 if this is not currently being achieved. These services to be reviewed for opportunities to improve the routes to link in new sources of passengers e.g an additional village added to route.

b/ New service improvements that will require funding.

- Improve bus access to the Outlet Village, National Trust and STEAM
- New east and west arc bus services to provide outer arcs to link outer Swindon east and west areas to serve the GW Hospital and outlying employment areas. This will meet the public request to replace a previously withdrawn Service 20 in the east area of the Borough.
- New Sunday service to link Swindon with out of borough Cotswolds towns to encourage a leisure network which internally will include a service to Barbury in the south.
- New bus services to serve employment areas taking account of worker shift patterns.
- New bus services to transport non-entitled school children where demand from local schools warrants this.
- Carterton to Swindon bus service in conjunction with Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

c/ Demand Responsive Services

- Introduce demand responsive bus service in south east of Swindon Borough
- Introduce demand responsive bus service in north east area of the Borough linking to Highworth which includes Wiltshire and Gloucestershire villages.
- Late evening 'home hoppa' hub type evening bus service which would penetrate town centre to collect passengers using evening bus stop at Fleet Street and then call at bus station and take passengers home instead of the conventional bus journey or act as a shuttle between town centre, the Old Town area and the bus station.
- On street Town Centre Support Officers will be employed to provide information and supervision support.

Ambition 3: More 'socially necessary' and demand-responsive services

Commitment 3: We commit to fully support bus operators as they seek to respond to challenges of short-term inflationary pressures and the need to increase revenues by attracting back customers who have stopped travelling by bus during the pandemic. This may require some form of short-term targeted revenue support, to retain current frequencies in order to provide a strong platform for achieving our shared ambitions for long-term sustainable passenger growth. Alongside this, we will trial innovative and value for money approaches to meeting the public transport travel needs of rural areas that cannot be viably served by conventional timetabled bus services through the Swindon Borough DRT Challenge Fund.

- a) Currently, bus passenger demand in Swindon Borough has recovered to between 60-78% of pre-COVID levels. In the short term, operators are facing strong inflationary pressures which the reduced levels of fare box income is certain to be insufficient to address. There is considerable uncertainty about the rate at which passenger numbers will continue to recover during the course of 2022 and potentially beyond. Therefore, some form of targeted short-term revenue support is likely to be required in order to safeguard bus service frequencies on routes where passenger numbers are recovering at a slower rate and in order to avoid the need for above inflation fare increases which would run counter to Commitment 3. Such targeted and time-limited support would help to put our bus network in a strong position to subsequently realise our shared ambitions for long-term sustainable bus passenger growth.
- b) We will seek Bus Back Better funding to secure revenue funding to deliver new or improved bus services where these meet a strong community economic or social need, where such services have reasonable prospects of becoming commercially viable in their own right by the end of the funding period. We will endeavour to set tenders at a level that will enable operators to

commit to invest in high quality vehicles. We will also expect our operators to provide an appropriate level of support, that would see the subsidy profile reduce over time to demonstrate our shared ambition and commitment to commercially viable services.

5/ Introduce buses using alternative energy.

Buses by their very nature are cleaner and greener on a per passenger journey basis and contribute just 3% of total roadside emissions. Cars account for well over half UK domestic emissions.

Simply replacing diesel buses with electric models will not alter modal shift. Driving modal shift to public transport will remove polluting car journeys and improve air quality. Speeding up buses will also ease congestion and pollution from standing vehicles too.

We are currently bidding for electric buses as part of the ZEBRA Standard Bid and will be submitting a bid as part of Phase 2 of this process.

If we are successful or not we would wish to invest in electric buses either as a replacement if our bid is unsuccessful or as an addition to our successful bid.

A commitment to the further deployment of Euro 6 vehicles and a move to EV's. We would also consider an experiment with other alternative energy such as hydrogen buses giving strong base of emerging technologies in Swindon.

Ambition 4: Modern buses and decarbonisation

Commitment 4: We commit to providing customers with a modern bus fleet with a high-quality on-bus environment that meets their needs and to working towards decarbonisation. We will:

- a) **Ensure that we provide next stop audio visual announcements and USB charging points on every bus by 2025 to help improve the bus travel experience for customers.**
- b) **Ensure that all buses that operate in the Borough are compliant with Euro VI or better emissions standards for NO₂ as soon by March 2028.**
- c) **If ZEBRA funding is successful that 52% of the towns bus fleet will be fully electric by the end of 2023.**

Target 6a: To ensure that the large local bus operators deliver on their decarbonisation commitments and by April 2022 develop a programme to support local bus operators in their current and future bids for ZEBRA funding to enable them to decarbonise their own fleets.

Target 6b: The Council will develop a minimum Euro VI emissions specification to include within all future tenders for supported services, and work towards a requirement for zero emission vehicles in all tenders to become the norm by 2030.

Target 6c If the Council, Stagecoach and Swindon Bus are successful in their Zero Emission Bus Regional Area Bid for electric buses to comprise 52% of the Towns Bus Fleet.

We would also need where needed to put additional charging/ fuelling facilities in place for these buses.

6. Integrating Transport & Land Use Planning

a) Ensure new development is appropriately located, making better use of existing services and planned to be fully accessible to buses.

This would be achieved by –

1. Embedding stronger public transport assessment in plan-making, urban design and development management processes. Ensure developers engage early with operators early in the development process. Also, ensuring policies for new developments prioritise bus travel;
2. New development should focus on enhancing the existing bus network first, as opposed to developing new dedicated services, to maximise the wider community benefit;
3. Future rail schemes to include stronger bus-rail feeder links
4. Ensure bus operators are fully engaged in Local Plan developments – embedded within Local Plan teams to deliver sustainable development;
5. Ensure bus operators are consulted on planning applications.

b) Work with Local Planning Authorities to align transport planning and town planning work more closely, developing new standards and guidance to ensure that new housing developments are built in locations that are straightforward and commercially viable to serve well by extending existing local bus services and are future-proofed, with layouts that make it easy to operate a bus service through them and that these are accessible with walking distances to the bus route minimised.

Target 7a: *We will embed stronger public transport accessibility tests into development planning processes and will facilitate developers to better engage with their local bus at the pre-application and pre-master-planning stage. Bus operators will be a statutory consultee on all planning applications involving >50 new dwellings and new office or retail floorspace. A new set of standards as to the expectation of a minimum standard of provision of infrastructure and bus services that will be required for different sizes of new development will be developed in partnership with developers and local planning authorities by September 2022. In discussions with LPAs and developers there will be a strong focus on enhancing the existing bus network first rather than developing new dedicated services, to maximise the wider community benefit.*

- c) Work pro-actively to ensure that the Council and bus operator efforts to improve the quality and attractiveness of bus services are not diminished or weakened as a result of policies parking strategies.**

6/ Ticketing and Fares

Swindon starts at a baseline position that meets National Bus Strategy aspirations, for multi – operator ticketing (MOT). The town network has always been sold as a unity, by both main bus operators, such that apart from single and return fares, all day and period tickets are valid across all services within the town. This is known as Travel Pass, available as 7day and above durations. Day tickets, whilst priced and sold individually by each operator, are mutually accepted across both networks. This nationally is very unique.

To build upon this long standing excellent arrangement the next process would be to make the arrangement digital. To complement this we would also wish to introduce ‘tap and cap’ on – bus payment using a bank card with no need to make a specific purchase commitment in advance.

Ambition 5: Fares must be better value and simpler

Commitment 5: *We will make ticket options easier to understand and improve the affordability of bus travel, but we will do this in a way that grows demand without undermining the viability of services. We commit to initiatives that will greatly simplify and reduce the complexity of tickets and fares, developing tap-on tap-off capped fares as the centrepiece of a clear, ticketing strategy that provides bus customers with improved clarity on fares and better value for money.*

- a) We will deliver tap-on tap-off readers and related technology upgrades on all of the bus fleet operating timetabled local bus services so that current Tap-On Tap-Off capped fares trials can be expanded to cover all of Swindon Borough. This would be an important first step towards offering a simpler range of single-operator bus fares that are priced attractively (with daily and weekly ticket fare capping in place) to meet**

the different travel needs of different kinds of bus passengers
recognising that not everyone is a frequent bus user.

Target 8a: Install tap-on tap-off card readers on every bus and offer capped daily fares within each bus operators' own operating area by autumn 2022.

- b) Tap On / Tap Off contactless single operator daily and weekly ticket capping is already possible, and will be provided once buses are fitted with a second reader. Multi-operator capping will follow once back office systems (developed by the bus industry through the DfT's 'Project Coral') are complete. Fare capping will help to make fares much simpler and easier for customers to understand.
- c) We will work to harmonise the upper age limit for child fares across all bus operators, (recognising that for areas of high cross-boundary bus travel, differences may need to remain to achieve local harmonisation within such bus operating areas).

Target 8b: Develop a consistent upper age limit for child fares common to all main bus operators for each bus operating area (subject to reaching agreement with neighbouring LTAs) by Autumn 2023.

Both major bus companies would with regard to fares:

1. Maintain and where possible increase the simplicity of the tariff structure;
2. Scale up a simplified ticketing offer, including for Young People (under 19) and Job Seekers;
3. Look to generate as much transactions off bus as possible to help with boardings and journey times;
4. Maximise the opportunities to stimulate group travel especially off-peak, making use of available capacity and making bus use radically more cost-competitive with car trips for families and friendship groups.

7/ Create a Bus Charter and local Passenger Bus User Group.

In line with the National Bus Strategy we would introduce a Bus Charter and create a Local Bus Passenger User Group.

We would create a cross boundary Local Authority Bus Operation Liaison Group which both bus operators would be part of.

Ambition 6: Give bus passengers more of a voice and a say (and bus services should also be safe and perceived to be safe by all)

Commitment 68: We commit to working to meet and exceed the needs and expectations of bus passengers in Swindon Borough and give them a stronger voice. We will:

- a) **Produce a Swindon Borough Bus Customer charter for all bus services that sets out clear provisions on punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and redress.**

Target 9a: To introduce a new Customer Charter covering all bus services in Swindon Borough by September 2022.

- b) **Fully support other pro-passenger initiatives provided by operators such as their dedicated phone lines for passengers to contact if their service doesn't turn up and explore scope for a delay repay system.**
- c) **We will work with Bus Users UK towards establishing a Swindon Borough Bus Users Forum, which will provide a forum for bus passengers to set out areas of the passenger experience that operators need to prioritise.**

Target 9b: Establish a Bus Users Forum by April 2022 which will discuss and give feedback on punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, proportion of services operated, information and redress.

- d) **We will work with operators to increase the proportion of buses operating in Swindon Borough with on-board CCTV.**

Target 9c: Ensure all buses operating by Swindon Bus and Stagecoach have on-board CCTV by December 2023 and all operators by December 2026.

- e) **We will ensure that all bus shelters are maintained to a good standard of upkeep regardless of ownership. We will also ensure that all future upgrades and improvements to bus shelters incorporate appropriate levels of lighting and will work with Boroughs and Districts so that where possible, well-used stops in town centre locations are covered by CCTV systems.**

Target 9d: Work with Parish Councils to ensure maintenance regimes are in place for the upkeep of all bus shelters in the county by December 2022.

SECTION 5 – Reporting

We will update information every 6 months. The main Council website will have a dedicated website page on Public Transport Strategy which will incorporate the Bus Service Improvement Plan and going forward, the Enhanced Partnership and ZEBRA information.

SECTION 6 – Overview table

Name of authority or authorities:	Swindon Borough Council
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):	Enhanced Partnership
Date of publication:	31/10/2021
Date of next annual update:	30/04/2022
URL of published report:	

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time			Reduce journey time by 10% on corridors where investment has been made.	Bus services will be measured by their journey time and a set survey over a normal week to see how operation in reality measures against each service's published timetable. Each bus service will contribute towards the average total figure.
Reliability			95%	Bus operators currently measure and publish service reliability figures and this will method would continue to be used.
Passenger numbers	11.9m		13.5m	This would be measured as when the Best Performance

				Value figures were measured. This was a successful way of monitoring annual patronage growth.
Average passenger satisfaction		92%	97%	We have worked with Transport Focus in the past who have conducted annual surveys and we would use their method as a neutral collector of data.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements to bus services and planning		
<i>More frequent and reliable services</i>		
Review service frequency	Yes	We aim to speed buses up from the outer areas of Swindon by introducing or improving bus priority and having some services operating as limited stop. We will also reduce cash transactions and improve boarding times.
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Key corridors will be identified and measures for bus priority will be put in place. This will support our core bus network of high frequency bus services. It will also speed up buses entering and exiting Swindon.
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	We intend to implement two demand responsive services in the daytime

		and introduce a night time service to supplement the evening bus network.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Yes	There is a planned programme pre BSIP to introduce 4 bus rapid transport corridors.
<i>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes</i>		
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes although opportunity maybe limited	We intend to explore having a bus /rail ticket or at least having bus publicity and real time information at our one railway station. We are also exploring how we could integrate with cycle routes better.
Simplify services	Yes	Services have been simplified before BSIP and a co-ordinated service number network is in place between bus operators to avoid any confusion.
Review socially necessary services	Yes	We intend to review socially necessary services to see if they are still fit for purpose and value for money. We are also looking at opportunities to improve or extend their route mileage to make them more sustainable.
Invest Superbus networks	Yes	This will be done by adapting existing bus services which have been identified as being already close to meeting this criteria.
<i>Improvements to fares and ticketing</i>		
Lower fares	No	
Simplify fares	Yes	Bus operators will review their fares and see whether any improvement is necessary.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Yes	We have a very good ticket system in place before BSIP which is excellent.

Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
<i>Higher spec buses</i>		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	The bus fleet overall in Swindon Borough is of a high standard and both major bus operators invest and renew their fleets within their agreed internal renewal programmes.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	This will be as part of bus operator's existing renewal programmes
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	We are planning to introduce town centre customer service officers on street to provide information and supervisory support.
Improve buses for tourists	Yes	Additional bus routes have been identified to be attractive to the summer tourist market
Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	We have a bid in ZEBRA Phase 2 and we would explore further energy improvements for any new buses operating in Swindon Borough.
<i>Improvements to passenger engagement</i>		
Passenger charter	Yes	A Passenger Charter will be introduced.
Strengthen network identity	Yes	Existing bus operators have a strong brand identity already so we will address branding in unified publicity, bus timetables and bus map information.
Improve bus information	Yes	See above.
Other		
Other		

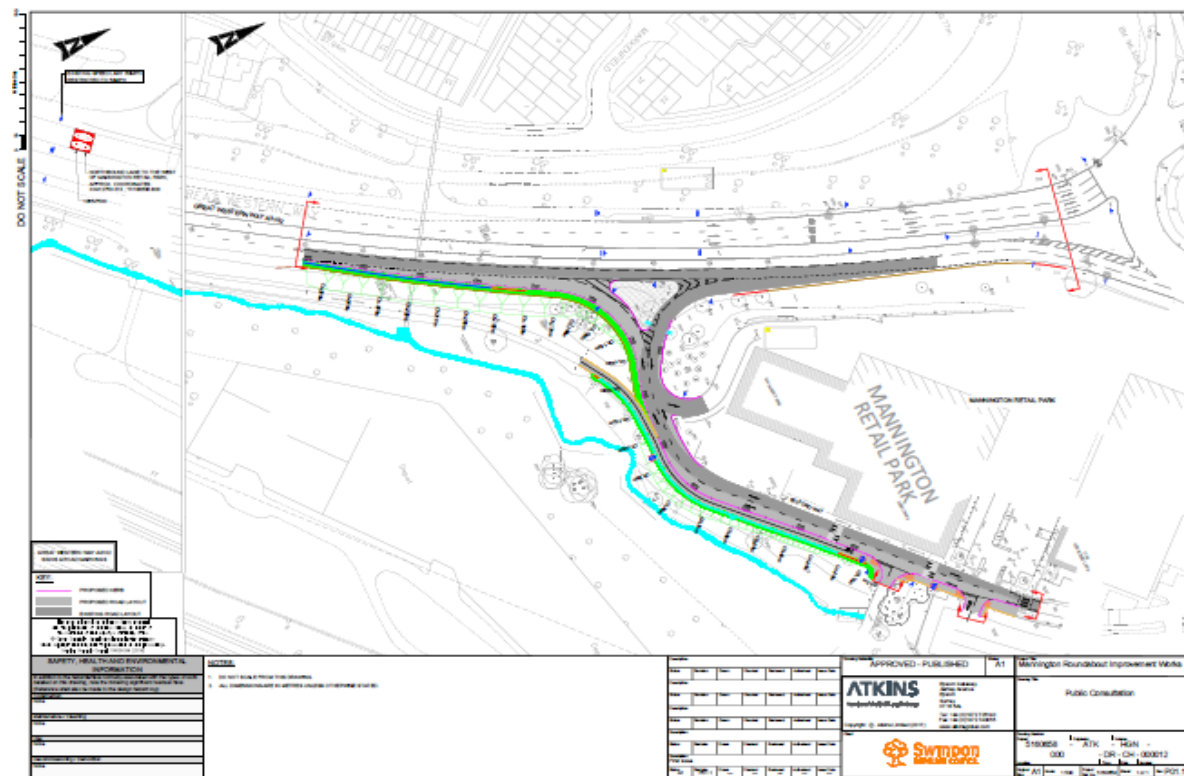
Appendices

Appendix 1: Quality Bus Corridors Plans

Appendix 2: Go South Coast, Swindon's Bus Company Bus Network

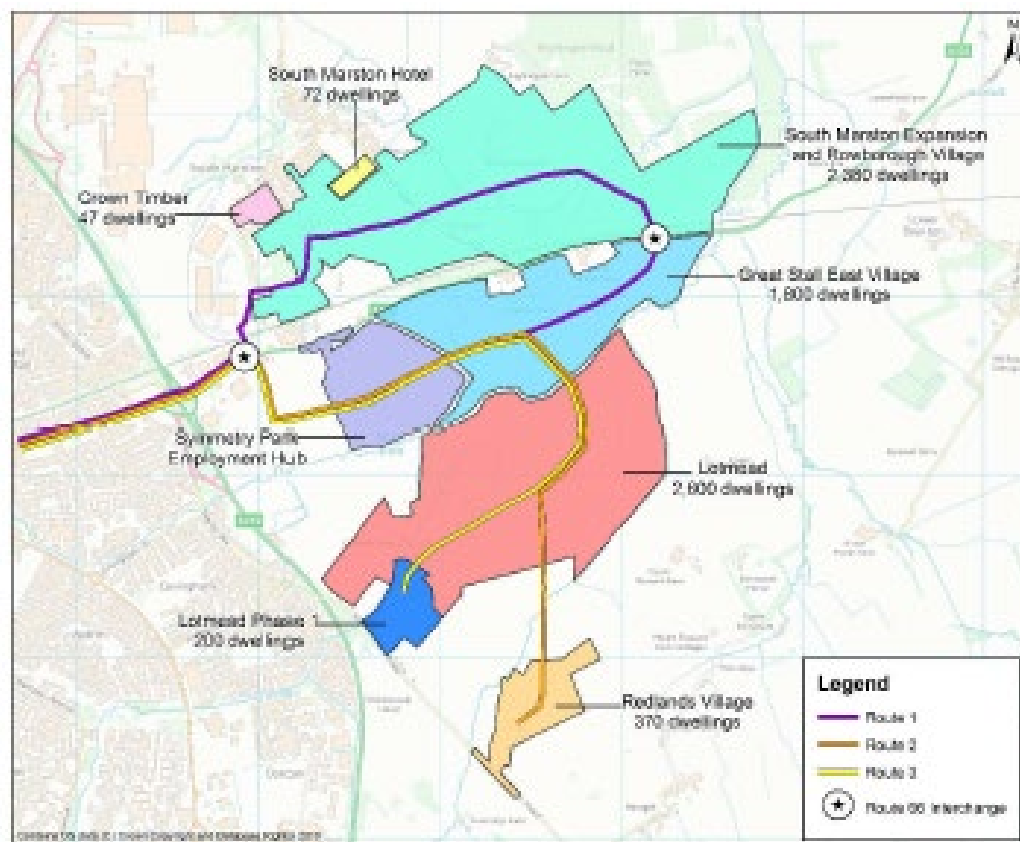
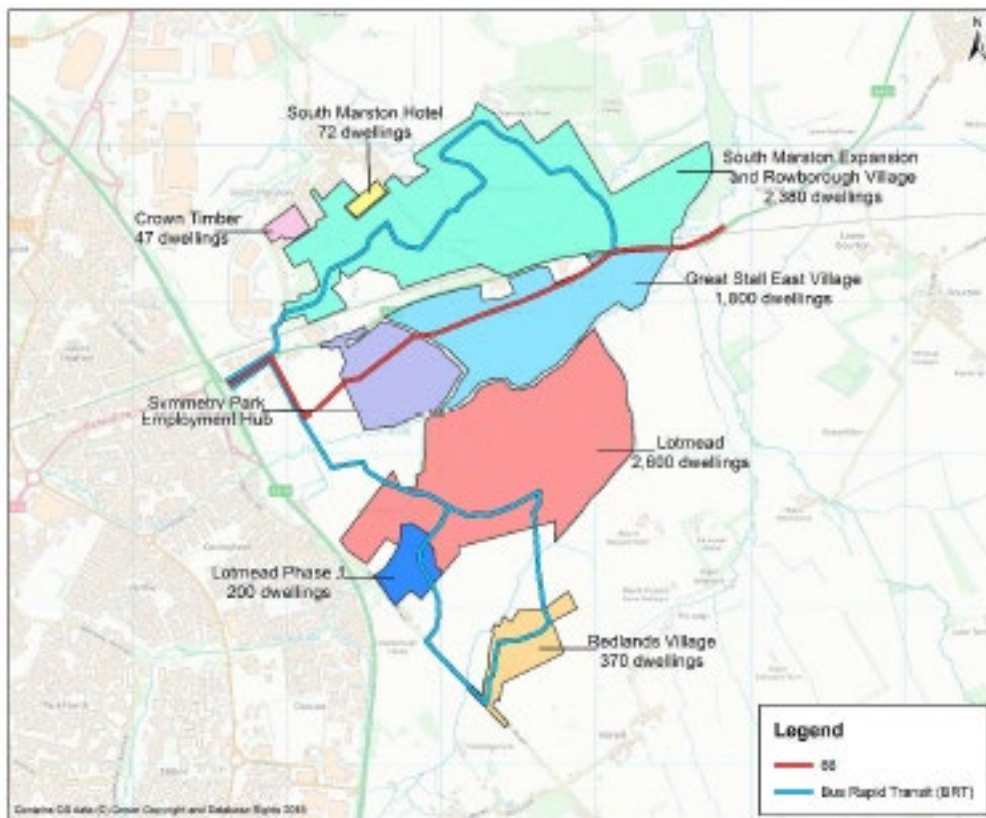
Appendix 3: Stagecoach Bus Network

Wichelstowe QBC – Overview and Mannington Roundabout Inset

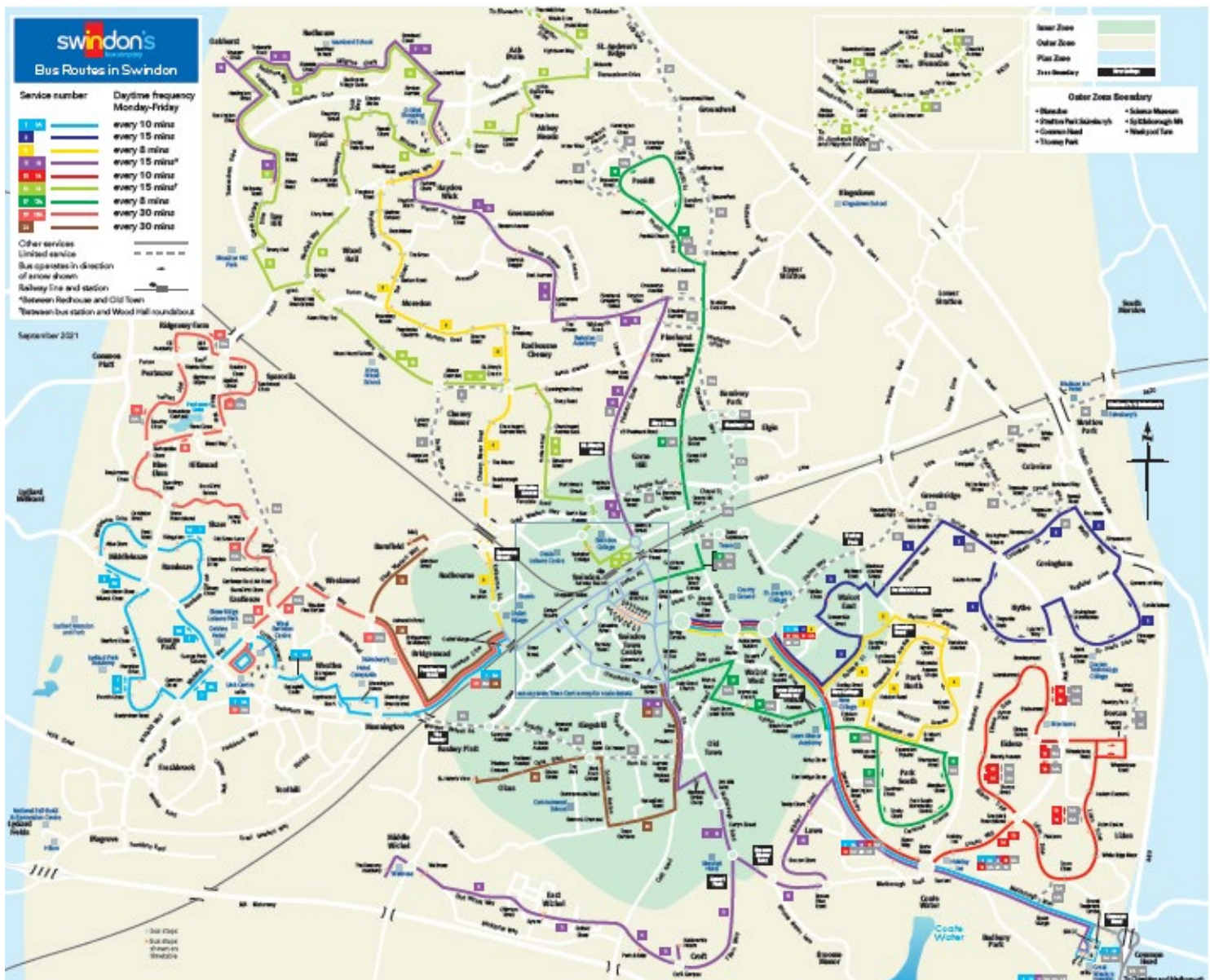


QBC North – Moonrakers Junction Improvement Scheme



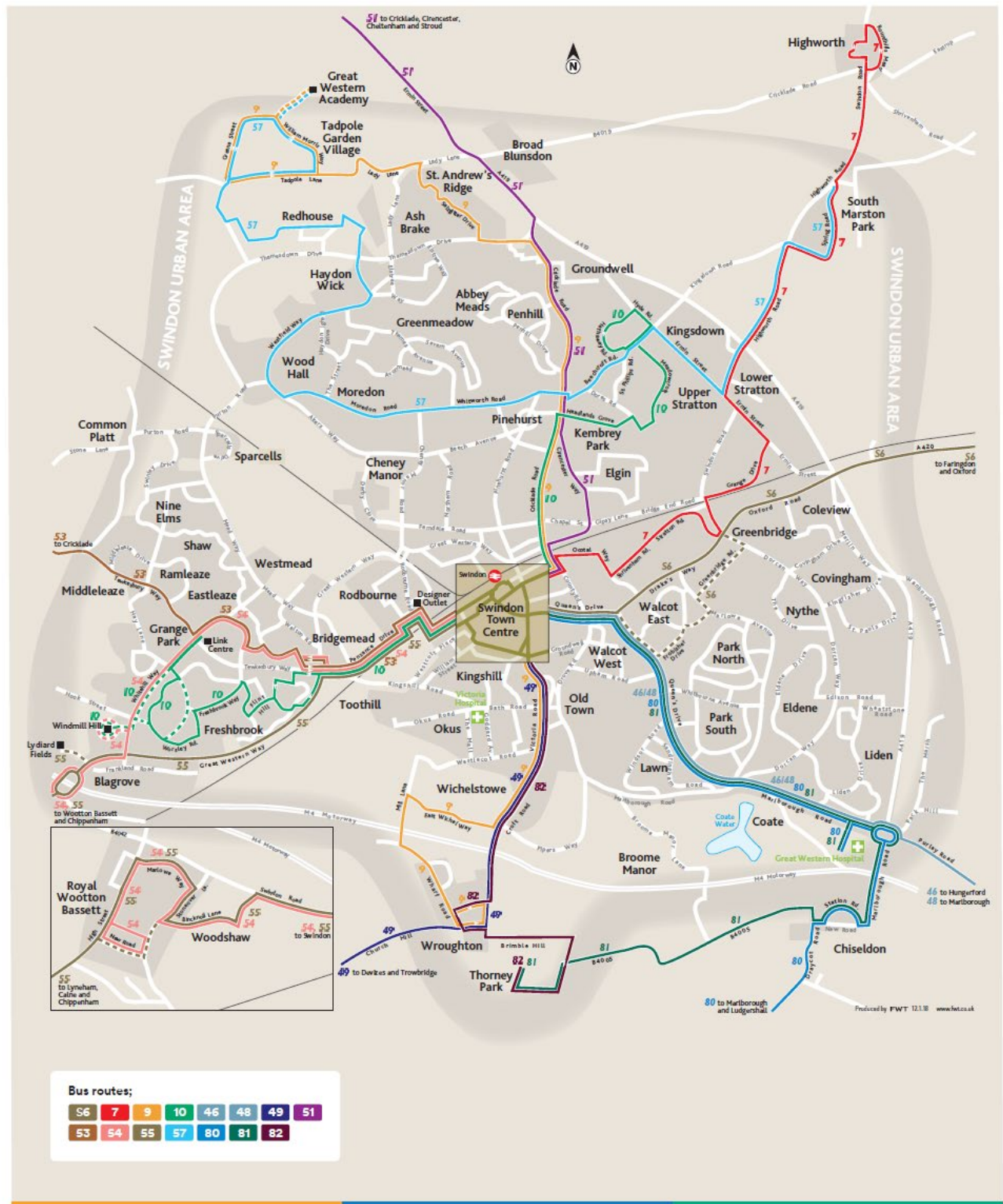


Appendix 2: Go South Coast, Swindon's Bus Company Bus Network



Appendix 3: Stagecoach Bus Network

Swindon network map



End.