

“Frequently Asked Questions” for Town and Parish Councils about public engagement on the Local Transport Plan

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1. About the Local Transport Plan

1.1. What is the Local Transport Plan?

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is the council's transport strategy. We are legally required to have an LTP by the Transport Act 2000.

The LTP is a high-level, strategic document that sets out the Council's overall transport policies and approaches. It shapes how we prioritise what work gets done, and gives a framework to support our other transport plans, policies and strategies (such as the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy, the Highway Asset Management Plan or the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans). It also includes an implementation plan listing and justifying improvements we would like to see. In the existing LTP improvements ranged from major schemes, such as the building of the A5-M1 link road and supporting the electrification of the Midland Mainline railway, to creating the programme of Local Area Transport Plans to give small areas the chance to choose and implement the improvements they wanted to see.

For information on the existing LTP see the [Transport strategy](#) web page.

1.2. Why do we need a new Local Transport Plan?

The LTP is a statutory document and the existing LTP (LTP3) requires replacing as the existing document expires in 2026. The new version will be updated to align it with new Council objectives, national and sub-national policy changes, proposed growth following the adoption of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035, and developments in technology, such as the rise in electric vehicle ownership, greater use of home working technology and the expected introduction of autonomous vehicles.

An LTP that fails to address these changes poses the risk of decisions not being guided by the latest policy and guidance. This could lead to schemes that are not consistent with current policy and investment that is not prioritised against up-to-date objectives. An up-to-date LTP also increases the likelihood of success when bidding for central government funding for one-off expenses.

1.3. What will the Local Transport Plan include?

At this stage, we really don't know yet. First we need to listen to what everyone has to say, including not only people who live or work in Central Bedfordshire but also businesses, organisations, the transport industry, and other teams within CBC. Then we need to share what they have told us with councillors, along with other relevant information such as facts and figures about how people travel at the moment. Only then will it be possible to decide on the content of the Local Transport Plan.

The LTP also has to reflect national policy, and while it may include "blue sky thinking" its implementation will be bound by financial reality.

This means there are a few things we can be fairly sure about on one level, without having certainty on details. For example, both central government and CBC are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and government statistics show that transport is responsible for around half of greenhouse gas emissions in Central Bedfordshire. Clearly we will need to do something try to reduce those emissions, but how we go about it will have to take into account what our residents and businesses tell

us will or won't work for them, what we can afford to spend and national legislation, policy and guidance.

1.4. How will the Local Transport Plan affect my area?

It will improve it, or at least that's the idea. We don't know how yet, as we need to listen to what everyone has to say, and what CBC's own councillors tell us, in order to be able to work out what should be included in the LTP.

Of course some changes may benefit some people more than others, and lead to some people feeling that they've lost out. That isn't something that can ever be entirely avoided, but obviously we will try to minimise it as far as possible. It should also be understood that the LTP is a high-level document and while it may back particular approaches that doesn't make their implementation a "done deal". Where changes are made to the transport network they will be the subject of an appropriate level of consultation on each specific change before they can go ahead.

2. The engagement approach

2.1. What is the approach to engagement?

We are taking a two-phase approach to engagement around the LTP.

First we will engage with the general public, businesses and other external organisations to gather data on their opinions, needs and preferences.

Then the Strategic Transport Team will analyse the responses (which we expect to take a couple of months) and share what we have found out with CBC Councillors so that they have access to the information and can consider what we have been told.

There will then be a second phase of engagement, meeting with CBC Councillors at the ward level so that they can give us your informed views about your priorities and preferences for the LTP, having had the chance to consider what residents and businesses have said.

2.2. What is the public engagement exercise about, when is it and how long does it last?

We are seeking input to help us to prepare a new Local Transport Plan. It will begin on Wednesday 17 April and run until 30 June 2024.

2.3. What is the best way for people to take part?

If people [visit the website](#) they will be able to find out more about the LTP and respond online in a structured way.

2.4. How else can people participate?

We don't want to exclude people who don't have digital access, or for whom using the website isn't their preferred option. If they're able to send an email or a letter to us, we will log it and include their response. Our address is Strategic.Transport@CentralBedfordshire.gov.uk or The Strategic Transport Team, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ.

If anyone wants a paper copy of the information/questionnaire or needs information in an alternative format, they can contact the Consultations Team at consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or by calling 0300 300 8300.

2.5. What are you asking about?

We are asking questions around four concepts:

- “What?” – asking questions to find out people's views on what we should be trying to achieve;
- “How?” – asking about how people think we should achieve our aims;

- “Why?” – gathering information on why people do or don’t travel in particular ways, to understand how we can improve facilities; and
- “Where?” –an opportunity to report a particular issue or request a particular scheme.

The views we are seeking will be at a higher level than “report a pothole”, though doubtless some responses will still highlight their concerns about maintenance, inconsiderate parking etc., which will also help to show what people care about.

2.6. How are you asking people about these things, and why?

We have developed a detailed survey that will gather specific information in a structured way in order that we can understand their views. This is done in a tool called “Snap Surveys” because it allows us to choose what we ask people – for example if you catch the bus every day, we wouldn’t want to ask you why you don’t use buses, but if you never take the bus it could be useful for us to know why.

Some people won’t want to take the time needed to complete the survey, so we are also offering a simpler opportunity to tell us an idea using the CommonPlace website that acts as a hub for the engagement exercise.

We are also using CommonPlace to give people the opportunity to make their comments using a mapping tool, so that they can tell us about a particular place and how it could be improved (or why it is already good).

Finally, we will be offering a shorter and simpler youth survey to young people who are otherwise less likely to respond, which is tailored to their preferences to help get the best input we can.

2.7. How will people know this is going on and be able to respond?

We will be publicising the opportunity to influence our LTP in a number of ways:

- Emails will be sent to everyone who has registered with us for email updates about council news and/or relevant issues such as transport and highway matters;
- We will issue a press release announcing the engagement period, emphasising what it means to them, and why it’s important to get involved;
- We will promote the engagement online from the homepage of the Council’s website and via the Council’s social media channels;
- We will also use paid, highly targeted promotion on social media to reach those groups who do not usually engage with the Council’s channels (e.g. people aged 18-30) - this will help ensure that the responses we receive are as representative as possible of the demographics of the area as a whole;
- We will provide CBC Councillors with the information they need to be able to encourage residents in their Wards to take part in the engagement process, and answer questions they may have; and
- We will disseminate information via our well-established community network, including libraries, town and parish councils, and community groups.

In addition to asking them to help us spread the word to residents, we will also be seeking the views of town and parish councils and representative groups so that we can understand their views as an organisation.

2.8. Can I help to let people know about the public engagement exercise so my residents can have their say?

Yes, please do. Town and Parish Councils and Councillors are a key link with the communities they serve, especially as individuals who local people know rather than “the faceless Council”.

We have provided Town and Parish Councils a design for a poster for you to use if you have access to any notice boards in your area, or to display if you hold a “surgery”, and there is also some suggested wording that could be used as the basis of an article in your Town or Parish magazine. If you’re happy to mention it to residents you meet, word of mouth is also a great tool.

The council’s communications team will be putting out regular social media posts and if you are able to share these and amplify them when you see them that would be helpful in making sure we reach as many of your residents as possible. ‘Liking’, sharing or commenting on one of the Council’s social media posts also influences the algorithms so our posts are shared more widely.

2.9. What will you be doing during the public engagement period?

The Strategic Transport Team at CBC will be engaged in a few standard activities, which while not exciting will take up a lot of time: providing information to people who ask for it; logging responses that are made via channels other than the website; and answering questions that people ask about the engagement exercise.

We will also be monitoring what responses we get and who we get them from, in order to flexibly and responsively update our activities to try to ensure we get replies from both a high number and a wide variety of people, businesses and other organisations.

2.10. Will you contact individuals about what they have said in their response to the public engagement?

No.

If people respond online we won’t have access to their contact details. We also anticipate a high response rate, and don’t have the resources to enter into discussions with each individual. While email responses will be acknowledged, it wouldn’t be fair to reply individually and offer different levels of service to different people based on the channel they use for their response.

Where residents contact us with an enquiry, rather than sending an engagement response, we will of course reply to it as normal within CBC’s standard corporate timescales.

2.11. Will you be telephoning people as part of the public engagement exercise?

No.

But we do conduct a biennial Householder Travel Survey, which takes place during the May-June of even numbered years. A specialist contractor telephones randomly selected residents to gain a representative sample of the population, asks them about their travel habits, and provides us with a report on their findings. This provides long term monitoring information about how people travel, rather than their views on how we should plan for transport in future. It is separate from, but complementary to, the work to develop a new LTP.

3. What happens next?

3.1. What happens after the end of the public engagement period?

As noted in 2.1 above, we will sort through everything we are told and let CBC Councillors know what we find out from the public, businesses and other organisations. We will then engage with CBC Councillors at the ward level so that they can give us your informed opinions and preferences.

After considering all the different that are expressed, which given the diversity of Central Bedfordshire will doubtless be varied, we should hopefully be able to set to work on preparing a draft LTP.

3.2. What is the process for drafting and adopting the Local Transport Plan, and how long will it take?

We hope to be able to prepare a draft LTP over the winter of 2024-25, based on views of Councillors and the public; government policy; the factual evidence base; and anticipated spending power.

In 2025 that draft LTP will make its way through the committee process to gain permission to go to public consultation. This will give CBC Councillors the opportunity to give further input on the draft document.

Once Councillors are content for us to do so, we will go out to public consultation on what we have written. This will include residents and businesses, and a number of specialist consultees we are required to involve such as transport operators within our area (who we are also writing to at the public engagement stage to make sure we can capture their needs early on). It will last for 12 weeks as this is a legal requirement for some elements of the LTP.

There will then be another round of analysis so we can take what this consultation tells us into account, and recommend any changes based on what the consultation responses tell us.

Finally, the LTP will go through the committee process again, and then to Full Council to hopefully be finally adopted – by which time it will probably be 2026.

4. Who do I contact if I have any more questions?

If you email strategic.transport@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk one of the Strategic Transport Team will get back to you. If you'd rather have a chat, you could send a Teams meeting request to the same email address or ask for a callback, or simply ring us on 0300 300 6904.