

1 OVERVIEW

We support the main thrust of the plan to improve transport infrastructure and facilities in Hertfordshire whilst, at the same time, encouraging a more sustainable and healthier lifestyle in line with national government policy. Unfortunately, as a basis for public consultation, the plan documents are too long, too detailed, too repetitive and lacking in focus. Sections of the plan which identify targets and monitoring are unclear and unconvincing.

There is little in the plan which is specific to the needs of Harpenden residents and which is of immediate interest to us as the local civic society. Nevertheless we are affected by and welcome certain proposals, such as real time information on bus movements and better pedestrian and cycle ways, which would help to meet the overall objectives. Likewise, the proposals to reduce road congestion at 'hot spots' would be an improvement for both the private motorist and public transport.

The following sections identify our response in relation to different aspects of the plan and transport policy.

2 USE OF PRIVATE CARS

We recognise that, as people cannot be compelled to reduce the use of their cars, much of the plan is about encouragement to switch to more sustainable modes of getting around and it may therefore be to some extent 'wishful thinking'. Most of the Town's residents are likely to be car owners and doubtless prefer the convenience of using them as long as it is practical and economic to do so. However, the increasing cost of motoring together with limited parking and some elderly ceasing to drive should result in a movement towards public transport. Any significant improvement in the bus services would help to achieve this objective.

3 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

3.1 Bus

We welcome the proposals to improve the experience of travelling by bus. The provision of real time information [RTI] and more and better bus shelters would be a huge improvement. Better timekeeping through the provision of priority lanes and improved traffic flows would also help. With regard to the services passing through Harpenden [45, 321, 366, 620 & 636] the timetables could be improved by maintaining a regular interval between buses and not having periods in the day when, for example, there is a gap of two hours in an hourly service. Also there is no service between Harpenden and Welwyn GC on Sunday and no effective service between Harpenden and Hemel Hempstead on any day. The service within Harpenden [HA1/HA2] is useful but not sufficiently frequent or comprehensive; it would be better served by a circulating minibus and ideally be within five minutes walk of all residences.

3.2 Rail

For many residents one of the attractions of living in Harpenden is the regular and frequent train service to London. The resulting increase in commuting has encouraged the train companies to respond with increased capacity, such as longer trains, but the adjacent road infrastructure is essentially unchanged. We suggest that consideration be given to developing the station with much improved access and/or providing an additional 'parkway' station south of the Town. [see also Section 4 on parking issues].

4 PARKING

Whilst recognising that there is limited space for car parking in Harpenden there are two aspects we suggest should be addressed.

One is the shortage of provision for commuters parking at the rail station which results in street parking over an increasingly wide area and is likely to get worse with the introduction of longer trains serving London. This problem could be eased, possibly eliminated, by some form of multi storey parking such as that provided at Luton Parkway. At the same time we are pleased to note the increased use of cycles, mopeds and motorcycles in recent times and suggest that even further facilities could be provided for these commuters.

The other issue concerns street parking in and around the shopping centre. The present experiment of raising the time restriction for most Town centre street parking to 2 hours is welcomed. We also suggest that, if the initial free period also applied to the car parks, congestion caused by motorists looking for free on-street parking could be reduced.

5 TAXIS

The number of taxis serving Harpenden has increased dramatically in recent years whilst provision for them to park or wait has not grown commensurately. Their main sources of custom are the rail station and, to a lesser extent, the town centre shops; the 'cab rank' at the former is inadequate and at the latter non-existent. As there is no indication that the supply of taxis exceeds the demand we suggest this issue should be addressed within the transport plan.

6 ROAD SAFETY

All measures which effectively improve safety on the roads are welcome. Of particular concern in Harpenden is that part commonly referred to as the Lower High Street between Station Road and Vaughan Road; this has a high footfall and insufficient space for pedestrians to pass without wandering into the path of oncoming vehicles. The problem could best be solved with complete pedestrianisation with provision for delivery vehicles at less busy times. An alternative, albeit less satisfactory, alternative would be to give pedestrians right of way across the whole carriageway with vehicles restricted to, say, 5 mph.

7 MONITORING AND REPORTING

We are concerned that the arrangements for monitoring and reporting progress of the plan are insufficiently rigorous and the section on 'targets' largely incomprehensible. The latter quotes percentages without explanation of their derivation or method of calculation or how any changes are to be measured.

We acknowledge that responsibility for implementing and monitoring progress of the plan lies with the officers and elected members of the Council but suggest that some form of ongoing consultation would be appropriate. We consider this could be achieved with a panel involving local civic societies such as our own.

8 SUMMARY

In general we welcome the proposals and hope they will be achieved over the twenty year period of the plan. From a Harpenden perspective we particularly urge action on the following:

- Provision of real time information on bus movements
- More regular bus services to other towns
- More comprehensive and frequent bus service within Harpenden
- Better access and increased parking at the rail station
- Extension of 2 hour free parking to the car parks.
- Improved provision for taxis near the rail station and the shops
- Pedestrian priority on the 'Lower High Street' between Station Road and Vaughan Road
- Better monitoring and reporting arrangements including participation by our Society

Chris Marsden
Chairman
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