

Loughborough town centre transport scheme

11.110 We intend to bid in July 2006 for a major scheme to help regenerate the town centre, improve the environment and reduce road accident casualties. A key element of the scheme is the completion of the Loughborough inner relief road as shown in Figure 11.4. This is essential to remove through traffic and help the regeneration of the town centre.

11.111 The scheme has been developed following the completion of the Loughborough transport study and is being evaluated using the Loughborough transport model.

Town centre regeneration

11.112 At present the A6 passes directly through the town centre, separating important shopping and business areas to both the north and south. It carries up to 11,000 vehicles a day and these conflict with in excess of 20,000 pedestrian crossing movements. This creates a barrier to pedestrian movement and also significant road safety problems, with 87 road casualties on the A6 between the terminal points of the inner relief road from 2000 to 2005, half of which were either pedestrians or cyclists. On the section of the A6 to be fully pedestrianised, three quarters of the casualties were pedestrians or cyclists.

11.113 For many years we and Charnwood Borough Council have recognised that to overcome these problems the A6 through the town centre requires closing to general traffic. The Loughborough inner relief road will facilitate this. It originally appeared in the Charnwood Local Plan in 1971 as part of an inner circulatory road and the northern half of the route is already in place, part-funded by development. Completing it will remove this barrier and unite the separated parts of the town centre, some of which are currently run down.

11.114 Over recent years, Charnwood Borough Council has taken the lead in developing a Town Centre Masterplan, in partnership with many other bodies with an interest in town regeneration. This sets out the vision for the new town centre, a vision that can only be realised if the inner relief road is completed allowing traffic to be removed from the A6. This will facilitate medium term development of the town centre, paving the way for longer term development and regeneration. The scheme will also allow Loughborough to retain its competitive role at the centre of the Three Cities Sub Area as major transport and other infrastructure investment takes place in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. Furthermore, improved bus interchange facilities in the town centre will enhance public transport services between Loughborough rail station, the town centre, Nottingham East Midlands Airport and many other destinations.

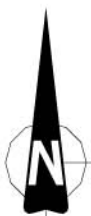
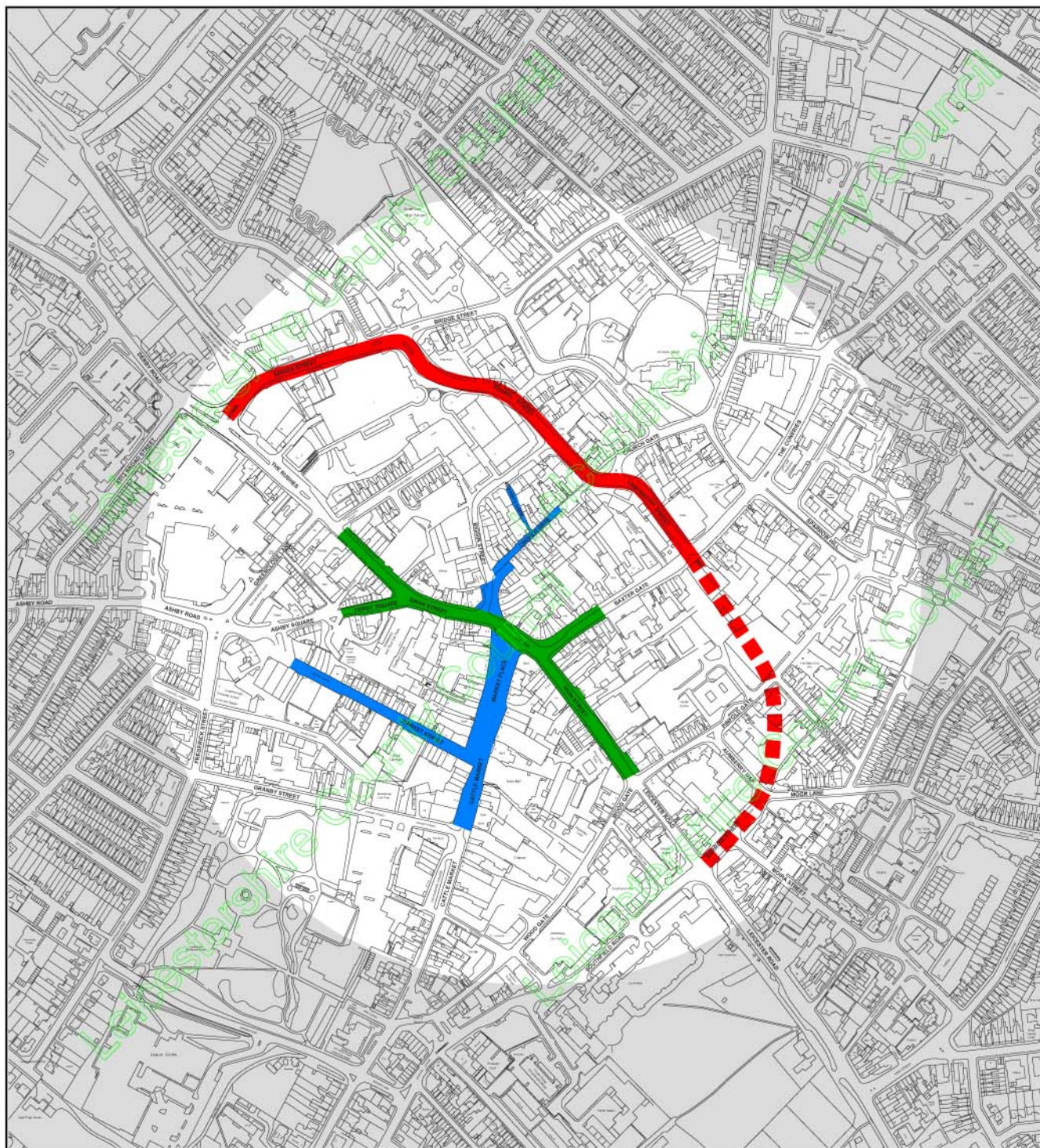
Scope of proposals

11.115 The town centre transport proposals consist of:

- The completion of Loughborough inner relief road, with associated junction improvements on existing and proposed sections of the road to manage new traffic patterns resulting from A6 traffic diverting away from the town centre
- Creation of an improved pedestrian environment along A6 Swan Street/Market Place/High Street and Baxter Gate
- Provision of new high quality bus interchange facilities both in the High Street/ Baxter Gate area and in The Rushes/ Derby Square area.

11.116 To limit the impact of the scheme, the inner relief road is being designed to the minimum standards necessary to deliver its objectives of removing through traffic from the town centre. Further development of the scheme may reveal the necessity for relative low cost junction improvements and other traffic management measures to encourage through traffic to use alternative routes and to help bus movement elsewhere in the town.





Figure 11.4
Loughborough Town Centre Transport Scheme



Not to scale

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Key

-  Existing section of Inner Relief Road
-  Proposed section of Inner Relief Road
-  Existing pedestrian areas
-  New area for pedestrian preference and bus access with stops

Contribution to LTP2 objectives

11.117 The scheme will contribute strongly to the following LTP2 objectives:

- The A6 through the town centre suffers considerable **congestion** at present, and this contributes to congestion north and south of the centre. The inner relief road, and associated improvements, will help to tackle congestion by allowing traffic to flow more freely
- The A6 through the town centre is an Air Quality Management Area. Construction of the inner relief road, with the smoother traffic flows and other improvements from improved vehicle technology, will resolve the problem of **air pollution** at this location
- Pedestrianising the A6 Market Place will allow significant improvements in pedestrian and cycle **access to facilities**, and improved bus facilities will help make access by bus more attractive
- Pedestrianisation will bring an end to **road accident casualties** on the A6 through the central area. The relief road, built to modern design standards and with very little pedestrian/vehicle conflict, is expected to produce an excellent safety record
- Pedestrianisation, and removal of traffic to a more suitable alternative route, will greatly **reduce the impact of traffic** on people shopping, working and living in the central area.

11.118 Scheme evaluation has not yet been completed, but it is clear that the benefits to the local economy and environment will be substantial. Quantifiable benefits will focus on casualty reduction and vehicle time savings through reduced congestion. It is already clear, however, that the only way to realise the economic objective of town centre redevelopment is to take the traffic out of the A6 Market Place, and that completion of the inner relief road is the only way to secure this without causing widespread congestion across much of the central part of the town.

11.119 Start of work on the scheme would be towards the end of LTP2, so there would be no impact on targets for this Plan. When complete, however, the scheme will have a significant effect on a number of targets, particularly those for air quality and for casualty reduction. In particular, Chapter 7 notes that central Loughborough is expected to be one of only two places in Leicestershire in 2010 with an AQMA caused by local traffic, and only this scheme can lead to that designation being revoked.

Consultation

11.120 Public consultation held in early 2005 showed strong public support for the inner relief road as a means of helping to improve the urban environment and assist town centre regeneration.

11.121 Recent public consultation tested views on options for either full pedestrianisation or allowing buses to continue using the A6 through the town centre in one direction only. Strong views were expressed in favour of both options, and we have decided that the best solution is to test one-way operation for a trial period following completion of the inner relief road. This will allow good bus access to be retained, to the benefit of the wider town bus services network. However, if the potential conflict between buses and pedestrians cannot be successfully managed, the option of full pedestrianisation will remain.

Timetable for implementation

11.122 If a bid in 2006 results in programme entry in December 2006, and is successful at the further approval stages, we expect to be able to start work on site in late 2009.