

8a Market Town Strategies

Ely Transport Strategy

“I do hope that both the County and District Councils have the courage to propose and implement a meaningful transport strategy that will ensure that Ely will retain its special character despite the pressures of a rapidly expanding population”

Letter responding to the strategy consultation

Introduction

This is the first ever transport strategy for Ely which forms part of the Local Transport Plan. Through the extensive consultation that has informed it, the strategy has been driven by Ely residents, stakeholders, interest groups, visitors and workers. The strategy provides a programme of integrated transport initiatives up until the year 2006 that support the Local Transport Plan and contribute towards the prosperity and well-being of the city.

Ely is changing. The rise in car use over the last few decades has brought greater freedom and opportunity for many, but it has also placed great pressures on a transport network which, as one respondent to the Ely Transport Questionnaire pointed out, was originally designed for the horse and cart. This pressure on the transport network will be accelerated by the new housing developments taking place to the north and west of the city. These will result in Ely increasing by one third in size over the next ten years. As most of the new residents will be living further away from the centre of Ely than existing residents, it is likely that they will make greater use of motorised transport to get into Ely and beyond.

Aims and objectives of the strategy

The main aim of the strategy is to ensure that Ely’s transport system contributes towards the economic vitality and viability of the city. In order to achieve this, the strategy uses the three key Local Transport Plan objectives. These are to:

- make travel safer
- promote integrated and sustainable transport
- manage effective transport networks.

Measures within the strategy are therefore categorised into one of these three objectives.

Making Travel Safer

“My family and I have lived in our present home for the last 5 years. In that time the traffic density and speed has increased past the front of our house dramatically.”

Letter responding to the strategy consultation

Road safety in Ely is a desirable aim in itself. The County has ambitious targets for the reduction in the number of accidents within the Local Transport Plan, and measures already introduced in Ely will help to address these. But road safety goes beyond just reducing the number of casualties – important though this is – in that safer roads encourage people to use other more vulnerable forms of transport than the car and contribute to making the city more attractive to all users.

Accordingly, there is a need to introduce a range of road safety measures. To this end, a number of schemes have been developed. These have been chosen because, taken together, they will have the greatest impact on reducing the number of road accidents and will complement other initiatives contained within the strategy to promote sustainable transport.

These schemes have been drawn up using a combination of the County Council’s ranking system (which looks at the worst accident spots in the County and grades them accordingly) and a system which examines the costs of the schemes and at how quickly they can be delivered.

Table A8.1 shows the schemes that will be introduced as part of the strategy.

Map A8.2 shows the location of these schemes. Exact details of the schemes will be the subject of further detailed consultation as the schemes are introduced.

Promote Integrated and Sustainable Transport

“It is vital that the beauty and character of the city is protected and that it doesn’t become overrun by the car. People should be encouraged to walk and cycle reasonable distances”

“until the public transport is vastly improved I don’t think that you will tempt people out of their car.”

Letters responding to the Ely Transport Strategy consultation

Better public transport and walking and cycling facilities lie at the heart of the strategy if the City is to retain its essential character. In this respect, there is a great deal to be done but also a number of opportunities:

- Ely is relatively small and reasonably flat and the environment is extremely attractive. At present, the number of people walking and cycling is quite small. Improved infrastructure will therefore help to encourage greater use of walking and cycling

Table A8.1 Priority schemes for road safety measures

Priority	Scheme
1	A10 and A142 Angel Drove Ely
2	Junction C134 with B1382, Ely
3	B1382 Prickwillow Road route improvement between Mulberry Way and Beech Lane
4	Junction Back Hill and Broad Street
5	Broad Street and Fore Hill
6	C315 St Mary’s Street route improvement

Map A8.2 Road safety measures



Proposed Highway Improvements

Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
 © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction prohibited. Centre for Information Systems, Cambridge University
 Copyright and title reserved by Cambridge University
 Cambridge University Council OS Licence Number - LA0706931.2001

- the bus services in Ely are currently inadequate for the needs of a growing city. Most of the buses used are fairly old and are not low-floor. There is also little or no information available as to the services that are operating and the existing shelters need to be upgraded. With the increasing population, there is an opportunity to improve bus services in the city that needs to be taken
- rail services are improving. Improvements to the number of services offered will lead to greater choice in the near future.

Walking

Improving the walking environment will serve to encourage walking as a primary means of transport with all of the benefits this will bring in terms of the health of users and the reduction in traffic congestion. Additionally, an improved walking environment will make it easier for car and public transport users to get around the city once they have reached a car park or bus stop or rail station. This in turn will facilitate the more efficient use of car parks, encourage public transport and (through the use of better pedestrian signing) promote the retail economy of Ely.

The measures that have been drawn up reflect these principles. The routes connect up the main car parks in Ely with the city centre and also join up with existing initiatives, such as the Heritage Trail, to provide a comprehensive network of routes within the city centre.

Map A8.3 shows the areas where improvements will be made

The current experimental pedestrianisation scheme on Ely High Street now appears to be largely accepted by both shoppers and traders. The current scheme will therefore be made permanent. However, the scheme will not at present be extended.

Cycling

“Cyclists are poorly catered for here at the moment”

Questionnaire response

Cycling is an essential element of the strategy. Increasing numbers of cycle trips will contribute both to the need to reduce congestion in Ely and to the promotion of the health of users, because of the contribution that cycling can bring in significantly reducing the risk of coronary heart disease.

Cycling as a sustainable mode has common themes, it is:

- a mode of travel that increases the health of the individual
- a non-income dependant mode
- contributing to, and benefiting from, traffic reductions.

Understanding these issues and their relationship to cyclists is central to the strategy. For this reason, cyclists will benefit from many of the measures in the strategy, particularly those that promote safety and reduce traffic congestion.

Additionally, if cycling is to be encouraged, there is a need to provide better facilities and new cycle routes. The facilities should include secure cycle parking in the city centre and at key transport nodes, whilst the routes need to link schools, the city centre, employment areas and the station with surrounding residential areas, neighbouring settlements and the National Cycle Network.

Over the strategy period it is therefore intended to progressively increase the numbers and quality of secure cycling facilities in the city.

The cycle routes are still being developed, but the principles are established. One route – connecting Witchford with the city centre – is already under development, and proposals linking the

centre with the railway station and points to the southeast of Ely are being drawn up. A further two routes will be developed over the strategy period: one connecting the Community College with Ely city centre; and the other running north east from the centre of Ely.

Proposed routes are shown in Map A8.4.

Buses

“The bus services have to be good – reliable and reasonably priced.”

Questionnaire response

After cars, buses are the most common form of transport in Cambridgeshire and will remain so for the foreseeable future. For this reason, encouraging greater bus use is a key element of the Local Transport Plan. For many people living in Ely and the surrounding area, buses are the only form of public transport that have the potential to meet a significant proportion of their transport needs.

At their best, buses can provide a genuine alternative to the private car. In order to do so, they need to be:

- reliable,
- frequent,
- of high quality,
- accessible,
- convenient in terms both of the route and the times, and
- affordable.

The information on bus services needs to be easy to understand and use. If the bus services in Ely could meet this criterion, they could substantially reduce the congestion currently threatening the city’s prosperity.

Unfortunately, however, the bus services that currently serve Ely do not meet these criteria sufficiently. Research carried out in drawing up the strategy showed:

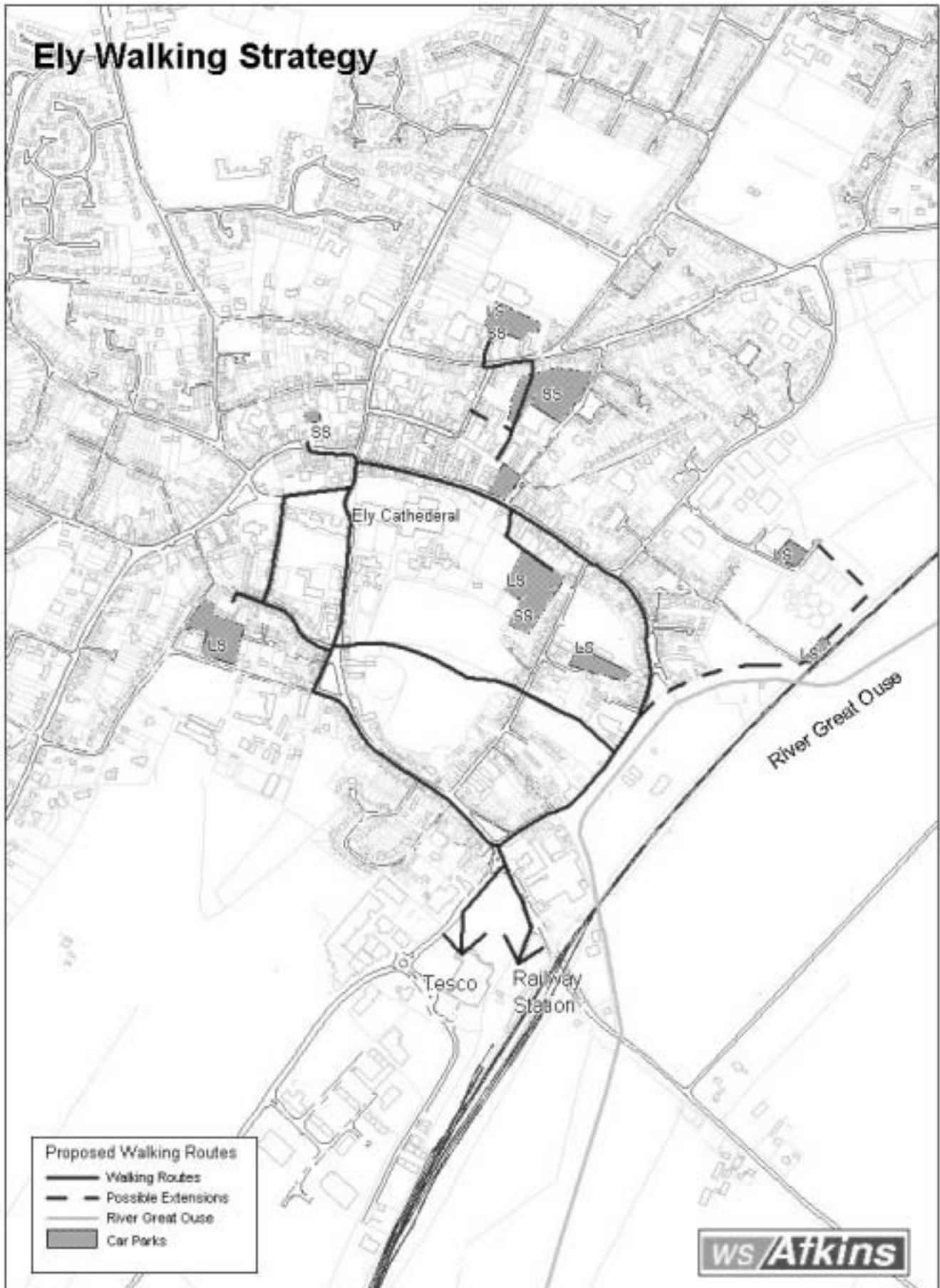
- the most frequent services currently operated are hourly,
- those services serving the Ely residential areas do not run in the peak hours, making them useless for commuters,
- most of the buses used are old and do not offer low-floor access,
- there is a lack of bus information. Only in Market Street is it clear which services stop, without having to read the timetable, and the majority of bus stops (78%) have no timetable information at all, and
- there are only twelve bus shelters in the whole of Ely.

Additionally, many of the buses are not well-used: for example, surveys carried out on buses numbers 22 and 23 on a non-market day showed loadings of between 0 and 8 passengers.

If buses are to serve the needs of Ely and meet the objectives set out in the Local Transport Plan, there is therefore clearly a great deal that needs to be done.

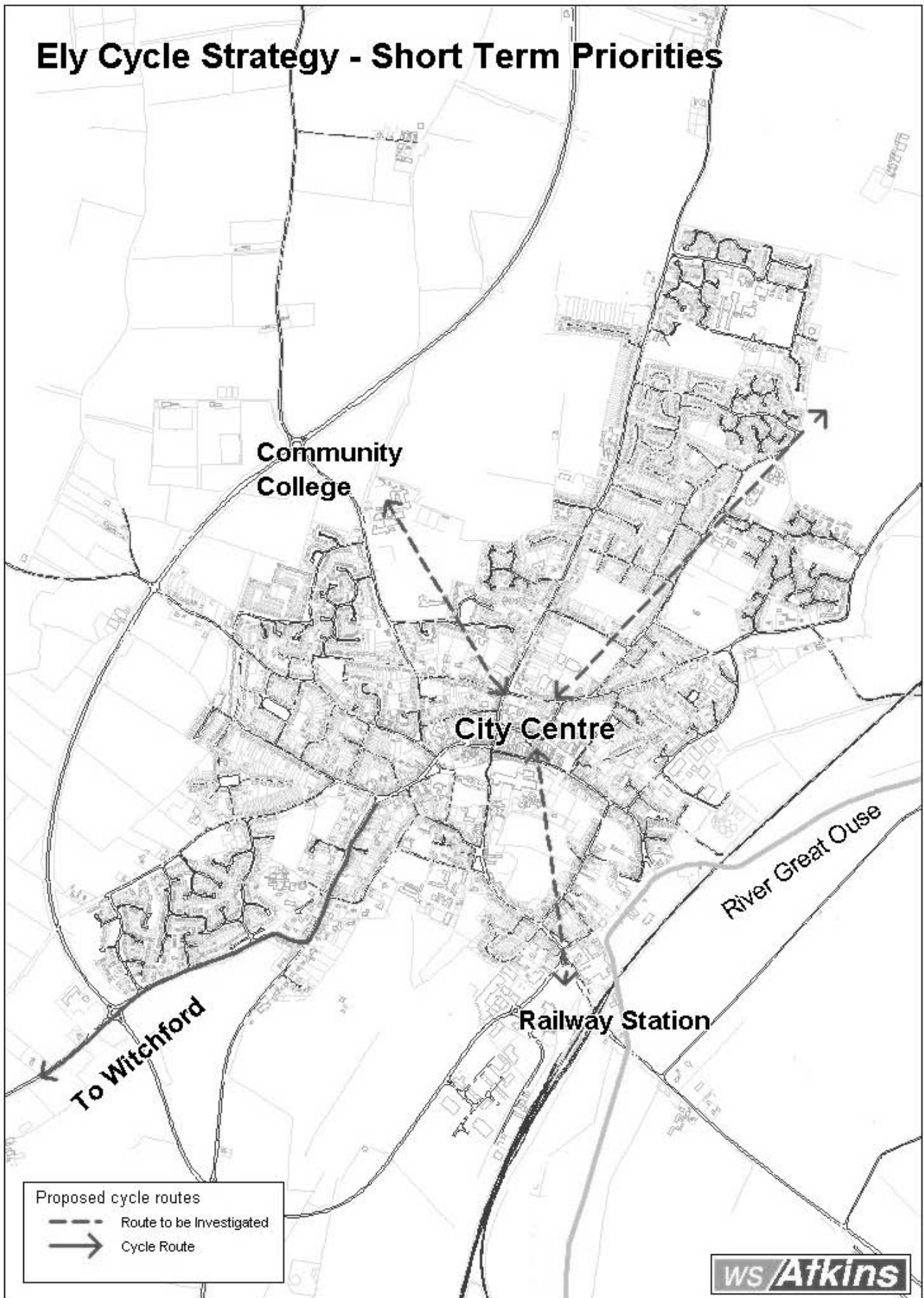
The strategy approaches this at three levels, by seeking to improve:

- the infrastructure, through a rolling programme of improvements at key waiting points, including new shelters and low-floor build-ups at the rate of two shelters and build-ups per year
- the information and promotion of services by providing new signs and bus information at all stops in Ely and at other key points in the city as well as by actively marketing bus services

Map A8.3 Walking improvements


Map A8.4 **Cycling measures**

Ely Cycle Strategy - Short Term Priorities



iii. the frequency and availability of bus services by examining the possibility of introducing new bus services. This will depend upon a source of revenue funding becoming available, such as the potential introduction of car parking charges: it is estimated that one new, low floor bus would cost £80,000 a year to support in the first instance. Determining exact routes and frequencies will need to be the subject of further work.

Park & Ride

In Cambridge, Park & Ride has been shown to be one of the most effective means of encouraging car drivers to use Public Transport. Based on the principles of providing a high-quality service running at frequent intervals at an attractive price, the service has proved to be extremely popular.

In principle, a scheme on the A10 serving Ely and Cambridge could be just as successful. This is, however, an area that needs further examination within the context of the Local Transport Plan and the Cambridge sub-regional transport strategy.

Rail

“Better rail services needed”

Consultation response

Rail is an area substantially outside local authority control. However, there are a number of improvements that will benefit users in Ely that are about to be introduced. These include:

- new direct rail services between Norwich and Cambridge
- improvements to services connecting with Peterborough
- a halving of access costs for rail freight, which will encourage use and thus lead to a reduction in the number of lorries.

Of particular importance is the need to improve interchange facilities at the station: if the strategy succeeds in promoting more sustainable forms of transport, then there is a need to ensure that users can access the railway station.

To this end, a study will be commissioned that looks to improve the interchange at Ely station. Particular issues to be examined are the expansion of the numbers of the existing car parking spaces and the potential for providing better bus facilities at the station. These will be needed should new bus services be introduced connecting Ely and neighbouring settlements with the station.

Manage effective transport networks

“If I can’t drive to Ely and park easily, I’ll go somewhere where I can”

Questionnaire response

The measures to improve safety, public transport and walking and cycling are essential to the city in that they will encourage sustainable modes of transport and help to make the environment of Ely more attractive. There remains, however, the need to cater for the car. In this respect, the strategy has two key measures: changes to car parking so as to ensure that car parking capacity is adequate for the needs of the City and the introduction of a new link road to the south of Ely to divert through traffic away from the city.

Car Parking

“I am undecided about car parking charges. If they were reasonable I suppose I would not mind too much, especially if they helped to alleviate the serious problems we have at present.”

Questionnaire response

Car parking in Ely is at capacity, especially on market days and there is a pressing need to address this issue if the city is to retain its attractiveness and continue on its economic upsurge. The option of introducing new car parks within the city centre to cope with increasing demand is not considered acceptable, in part because there is very little room for new car parks, but also because significantly increasing car parking spaces would generate additional traffic that would, in turn, exacerbate the problems of congestion that are already affecting the city. There is, nevertheless, the need to provide some additional parking, because of the increased numbers of cars likely to be generated by new housing developments.

To this end, the strategy has a number of strands:

- use existing car parking more efficiently, through the provision of improved signage and security
- maximise the number of existing car parking spaces to cater for the extra demand arising from new development
- consider the introduction of car parking charges to limit demand and to provide a source of revenue for public transport improvements.

Work has already started that is aimed at introducing an extra 60 spaces in the city centre car parks and it is anticipated that this will commence in the first year of the strategy.

Work looking at the likely effects of a small charge for car parking has already been undertaken. This shows that a small charge would:

- provide the District Council with a much more sophisticated tool for managing demand than currently exists
- produce a reduction in car traffic in the city whilst at the same time having little impact on people’s decision to use Ely instead of going to an alternative centre

Table A8.5 Potential car parking revenue

	Change in parking demand (%)	Annual revenue (£)	Additional on-street parkers	Reduction in car trips
Short-Stay Car parks – 30p an hour				
Unchanged quality standards	-7	330,000	190	20
Improved quality standards	-5	340,000	100	10
Long-Stay Car Parks – 10p an hour charge				
Unchanged quality standards	-13	130,000	70	10
Improved quality standards	-11	130,000	70	10

- result in a revenue surplus, the money from which could be used to promote public transport.

Table A8.5 shows the likely effects of a charge of 30p an hour for short-stay parkers and of 10p an hour for long-stay parkers. This indicates that the introduction of modest levels of charging has the potential to generate significant revenues, which could be

spent on other transport measures. However, the imposition of charges would inevitably also have some knock on effects in terms of on-street car parking and so before such charges could be introduced, a clear strategy for all parking provision needs to be developed. The timing and elements of this assessment are outlined in the strategy programme in Table A8.6.

Table A8.6 Delivery programme: draft timetable

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Scheme</i>
1	Southern Link Road	Start the process leading to the construction of a new Ely Southern Link Road, including bidding to Government for funds and obtaining planning permission
	Cycling	Cycle routes to: Witchford; the railway station and settlements to the southwest of the city
	Buses	Investigate alternatives to fund the introduction of new bus routes, such as Section 106, car parking charges, etc Commence rolling programme of improvements (shelters and build-ups) at selected stops Initiate rail interchange study
	Walking	Introduce all of the new walking routes Make the Saturday pedestrianisation permanent
	Making Travel Safer	Junction A10 and A142 Angel Drove Ely
	Car Parking	Remodelling of Brays Lane and Forehill car parks Introduction of security improvements on the route to Cresswells Lane Further investigate the possibility of introducing car parking charges
	Community Transport	Introduce new Community Transport initiatives
2	Southern Link Road	Continue progressing scheme
	Buses	Continue rolling programme of infrastructure improvements Subject to further analysis and the identification of funding, introduce new bus routes serving Ely and neighbouring settlements Promote these new routes Introduce rail interchange measures
	Making Travel Safer	Junction C134 with B1382, (Queen Adelaide to Littleport) B1382 Prickwillow Road Junction Back Hill and Broad Street
	Car Parking	Subject to detailed findings, consider the introduction of car parking charges
3	Southern Link Road	Continue scheme progression
	Buses	Continue promotion of routes and rolling programme
	Making Travel Safer	Broad Street
	Cycling	Implement two further routes connecting the centre with the north and east of the city
4+	Southern Link Road	Subject to the obtaining of Government Funding and necessary permissions, build route (estimated start of construction: 2006)
	Making Travel Safer	St Mary's Street
	Buses	Continue rolling programme Introduce a new high quality circular route connecting the new housing developments with the city centre and the railway station Introduce a Park & Ride service serving Ely and Cambridge

Southern Link Road

“The southern link road should be built as a matter of priority. The situation with the level crossing and heavy lorries is ludicrous, it actively discourages investment in Ely – surely something the County Council should be encouraging.”

Questionnaire response

“We approve of more people and freight going by rail. We note that the consequence of this policy is that the level crossing by Ely rail station will be used more frequently, leading to longer queues of larger vehicles (which cannot use the underpass) backing up and obstructing the approaches to the crossing. We therefore support a proposal which provides an additional method of crossing the rail line and allows for through traffic to be diverted from Ely City centre.”

Cambridge CPRE

The Southern Link Road was the single most popular proposal within the strategy and the one that was identified by the public as the highest priority. The reasons for it are summarised in the quotation above, but it should be noted that building it will take some time.

Given the support for the road and its demonstrable advantages, the strategy aims to introduce the road as quickly as possible subject both to a thorough examination of the alternative routes (including a route to the south of Stuntney), to Government approval and to the obtaining of the necessary permissions.

The needs of disabled people

“Good proposals but more needed for wheelchairs both self propelled and pushed”

Questionnaire response

A number of measures in the strategy will benefit disabled people. These include:

- the introduction of low floor buses, which will benefit many people who have difficulty walking, although it may not prove of particular use for wheelchair users
- the introduction of taxis with wheelchair access – now a legal requirement for new taxi licences
- a Shopmobility scheme is being progressed: the aim is to introduce it within the first year of the strategy
- pedestrianisation and the careful introduction of road safety measures so as to make it easier for those with certain disabilities to get around Ely

- continued support for disabled parking.

Additionally, a Dial-A-Ride service is in the process of being introduced. This will provide door-to-door transport and group hire to people for whom conventional public transport is not at this time appropriate or available. A bid for funding is about to be made that would introduce a service covering the northern part of East Cambridgeshire district.

Combined, these measures should make Ely an easier place for people with disabilities to get around in and the measures will also offer benefits to other users.

Implementing the strategy

“Having lived in Ely for 60 years these points have been on the agenda before. Please do something about it. don’t file these away for the next decade.”

Questionnaire response

Programme

The programme of schemes within the strategy reflects the priorities arising through public consultation combined with a recognition of the realistic timescale for the implementation of some schemes. It shows how the measures will be combined so as to provide an integrated package that will address the needs of Ely. The programme is shown in Table A8.6.

Funding

Indicative costs of the schemes are shown in Table A8.7.

Funding for the strategy will need to come from a variety of sources. These include the Local Transport Plan, developer contributions, District Council contributions and new sources of revenue arising as a result of some of the proposals within the strategy. The pace at which the strategy can be delivered will depend upon the availability of this funding. However, by providing a clear statement of the schemes for which there is clear public support in the town, this strategy aims to provide a clear platform for securing a wide range of funding sources.

Targets

The measures within this strategy are consistent with the Local Transport Plan objectives of achieving stability in peak hour traffic flow and a positive change in modal split in the Market Towns. To measure the performance of this strategy, a series of detailed targets have also been developed for Ely. These are:

- subject to the introduction of new bus services, a 30% increase in public transport use in Ely
- a doubling of the number of cyclists in Ely by 2006
- a 10% increase in walking by 2006.

If met, these targets will contribute significantly to the success of the Local Transport Plan.

Conclusions

The strategy gives a clear indication of the transport measures that will be introduced in Ely up until 2006, and demonstrates why they are necessary and what they will achieve. The measures are consistent with the Local Transport Plan and will, if implemented, greatly assist in the Plan’s aims.

The strategy also reflects the views coming out of the extensive consultation on the strategy. Combined, the measures within the strategy will go some way towards making Ely an even more attractive place to live in, work in, visit and do business in.

Table A8.7 Indicative costs of schemes

<i>Schemes</i>	<i>Indicative cost</i>
Road Safety Measures	£850,000 – £1,050,000
Cycling	£179,000
Walking	£120,000
Bus Infrastructure	£56,000
Bus-Rail Interchange	£250,000
Rural Park & Ride	£1,000,000
Community Transport	£35,000
Car Parks	£178,000
Southern Link Road	£9,000,000
Total	£11,668,000 – £11,868,000