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## Contents

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1 Introduction

1.1 OVERVIEW

1.1.1 WSP, in association with Lambert Smith Hampton, has been appointed by the new Cheshire West and Chester authority to provide consultancy support in undertaking an Integrated Transport Study. The key requirement of this study is to ensure that a comprehensive evidence base is assembled that will underpin the development of the authority’s Local Development Framework (LDF), and subsequently its Local Transport Plan (LTP). The first phase of this work has reviewed the key development proposals in the authority’s area, compiled data that describes the current and future transport demands and identified gaps in the availability of data that need to be filled. This was completed in June 2009. This report summarises that body of data which will be analysed and turned into intelligence from which problems and issues are identified and prioritised.

1.1.2 The new Cheshire West and Chester authority’s area is shown in its regional geographical context in figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1: CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER IN CONTEXT
2 Demographic Characteristics and Travel Patterns

2.1 AREA APPRECIATION

2.1.1 Cheshire West & Chester currently has a population of approximately 330,000 (2009 estimate). The population of the area is forecast to rise from about 328,000 in 2006 to around 346,000 by 2026. This is an increase of 18,000, averaging at growth of 1,000 people each year.

2.1.2 The age profile of Cheshire West & Chester’s population is forecast to change broadly in line with national trends. In particular:

- The number of people aged 65 to 84 will increase by just over 40% between 2006 and 2026, from 50,000 to 71,000;
- The number of people aged 85 or older will nearly double between 2006 and 2026, from 7,000 to 13,000;
- The number of residents aged 16 to 64 (working age) will fall slightly, by around 3%, between 2006 and 2026; and
- There will be around 5% fewer children under the age of 16 living in Cheshire West and Chester by 2026 than there were in 2006.

FIGURE 2: POPULATION CHANGE

![Population Change Graph](image)

TABLE 1: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP (IN THOUSANDS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>0-15 Age Group</th>
<th>16-64 Age Group</th>
<th>65+ Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>210.1</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>211.7</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>211.3</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>207.6</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>205.8</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>204.6</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.3 The Authority covers an area of some 916 square kilometres and contains the major settlements of Chester; Ellesmere Port and Neston to the west; Frodsham to the north; and Northwich and Winsford to the east. A large part of the south and west of the authority’s area is rural and the rural population (from DEFRA’s rural statistics) is some 85,760 or 26% of the total. The rural economy is still serviced from smaller settlements, but there is also a substantial long-distance commuter population resident in the countryside some of which looks to the larger settlements or across the authority’s borders for employment and access to services.

2.2 CROSS BOUNDARY CONNECTIONS

2.2.1 The new authority has strong connections with its surrounding authorities. The north western edge of the authority borders Merseyside, bringing close contacts with Wirral MBC and Merseytravel, the Integrated Transport Authority for Merseyside. There are also important links with Halton and Warrington. Elsewhere the authority adjoins the more rural areas of the newly formed East Cheshire authority as well as part of Shropshire. There are important links with Flintshire and Wrexham in North Wales. A specific issue for Chester is that the urban area of the city extends into Wales.

2.2.2 While there is no common boundary with Greater Manchester, there are strong employment and commercial connections with the conurbation.

2.3 TRAVEL TO WORK DATA – CAR OWNERSHIP

2.3.1 Table 2 below presents figures for car ownership in Cheshire West & Chester and compares this data with data for the North West and Great Britain. The most recent data is used which for Cheshire West and Chester is taken from the 2008 Community Survey and for the region and Great Britain is derived from national transport statistics published by The census results indicate a significantly higher level of car ownership in Cheshire West and Chester than the regional and national averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of cars per household</th>
<th>CW &amp; C</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>GB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31% (2+ cars)</td>
<td>32% (2+ cars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: CW&C – 2008 Community Survey
Department for Transport

2.3.2 The Community Survey data showed that between 2005 and 2008 there was a continuing increase in the number of households with two or more cars and a slight reduction in one car households as a result.
2.4 MODAL SPLIT FOR TRAVEL TO WORK

2.4.1 Cheshire West & Chester’s travel to work patterns have been analysed using data drawn from the 2001 census. Analysis of the modal split shows that the majority of journeys to work are made by residents driving themselves, at 71%. This exceeds both the North West Regional and English National averages of 64% and 60% respectively. Public transport (rail and bus/ coach) usage falls below the Regional (12%) and National (16%) average. Travel by foot and cycle account for 10% and 3% of journeys to work respectively. The figure for walking falls just below the Regional and National average of 11%, with the figure for cycling equalling the National average and exceeding the North West Regional average of 2%.

2.4.2 In summary, the commuter patterns of Cheshire West and Chester are significantly more car dependent that those of the region or nation as a whole. More people travel by car, with correspondingly fewer people travelling by public transport, in comparison with the regional and national averages. The figures for walking and cycling are relatively similar to the regional and national figures.

2.4.3 These results are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

**FIGURE 3: RESIDENTS’ TRAVEL TO WORK MODE SHARES: A COMPARISON OF CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER WITH NORTH WEST AND NATIONAL AVERAGES**
2.4.4 Some differences are apparent between travel characteristics of urban and rural areas, with the two extremes being represented by the urban areas of Chester and the “Rural West” of the authority’s area.

2.4.5 In Chester only 60% of residents drive to work whereas the equivalent figure for the ‘Rural West’ area is 79%. The respective proportions for journeys to work by other modes include vary from 11% in Chester to 4% in the rural west for public transport, 15% to 7% for walking and 5% to 2% for cycling.

2.5 COMMUTING PATTERNS

2.5.1 Analysis of journey to work patterns within authority’s area and between Cheshire West and Chester and the rest of the country has been undertaken. Particular observations from this analysis are:

- In total there were 50,341 journeys to work into CW &C in 2001 and 52,528 journeys out of the authority’s area. This means that there was a net export of 2,187 work-based trips;

- There were 100,377 internal trips. This is approximately double the number of trips out of the region, showing that the majority of people who live in Cheshire West and Chester also work there. This indicates that overall, Cheshire West and Chester is not a significant exporter of labour;

- When looking at the individual Travel Areas, some clear patterns emerge. Only eight of the Travel Areas are responsible for over 1,000 inbound journeys (East Cheshire, Flintshire, Greater Manchester, Halton, Liverpool, Warrington, Wirral and Wrexham). The same eight Travel Areas also have highest number of outbound trips to them from Cheshire West and Chester, showing a high level of movement in both directions between Cheshire West and Chester and these Travel Areas.

- There was a net loss of over 4,000 trips to Greater Manchester, over 2,000 trips to each of Liverpool and Halton and over 1,000 trips to each of Warrington and East Cheshire;

- There was a net gain of over 4,000 people travelling into Cheshire West and Chester for work from both Flintshire and Wirral, and a net gain of almost 2,500 from Wrexham;

- Two thirds of Cheshire West & Chester’s workforce (67%), live in the authority’s area and two thirds of employed residents, work in the Borough (66%);

- Despite its proximity to two large conurbations, Cheshire West and Chester is not a major exporter of labour. Indeed, in relation to Merseyside, it is a net importer of labour.

- Cheshire West & Chester's relationship with the two neighbouring conurbations, Merseyside and Greater Manchester, is markedly different. Firstly, the relationship with Merseyside is considerably closer than that with Greater Manchester, and consequently generally the number of trips moving each way to/from Merseyside is much greater than is the case with Greater Manchester – almost twice the number of residents travel to Merseyside for work than to Greater Manchester. Secondly, whilst the number of people commuting to/from Merseyside from Cheshire West and Chester is relatively balanced, the authority area has a net balance of -4,303 trips to Greater Manchester, showing that Greater Manchester is a significant net importer of labour from Cheshire West & Chester.
Cheshire West & Chester is a major attractor of journeys to work from Merseyside with over 13,375 trips. The vast majority of these trips are from the Wirral, which accounts for over 10,000 trips to Cheshire West & Chester alone. Links between Merseyside (and particularly the Wirral) are therefore very important;

The commuter patterns between Cheshire West & Chester and Wales make up a significant proportion of all trips into and out of the authority’s area. Over 10,000 Cheshire West and Chester residents travel to work in Wales and 17,688 people travel to work in the opposite direction;

For people commuting out of Cheshire West and Chester to work, dependence on the car is very high, with between 86% to 97% of all trips being made by car;

At 63%, reliance on the car was significantly lower for internal trips within Cheshire West and Chester. 16% of internal trips were made on foot or by bike and a further 14% of residents worked from home. It is noted that, if people working from home are excluded from the analysis, 73% of internal commuters within Cheshire West and Chester commute by car, which is still relatively high;

Rail use is low overall, with 2% of journeys from Greater Manchester and Wirral and 6% of journeys from Liverpool being made by rail. There is no significant movement by rail within Cheshire West & Chester, which is perhaps surprising given the large number of stations in the area;

Levels of walking and cycling are very low for external trips (to be expected due to the relatively long distances involved) but quite high for internal trips at 16%; and,

Bus use is highest from Flintshire, with 10% of trips being made by this mode. This is likely to reflect the close proximity of some of the urban areas of Flintshire to Chester, and the relatively low car ownership found in these areas.
## TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF COMMUTING TRIPS BETWEEN CHESHIRE WEST & CHESTER AND THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Inbound</th>
<th>Outbound</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>East Cheshire</td>
<td>7,796</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>8,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater Manchester</td>
<td>3,147</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wirral</td>
<td>10,425</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>6,587</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>1,473</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3,943</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sefton</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowsley</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Merseyside total)</td>
<td>(13,375)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(12,089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lancashire, Blackpool &amp; Blackburn</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cumbria</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Halton</td>
<td>2,346</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5,033</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warrington</td>
<td>2,147</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3,870</td>
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<td>Denbighshire</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>264</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flintshire</td>
<td>11,453</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>7,647</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrexham</td>
<td>4,515</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,059</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid Wales</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North West Wales</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>201</td>
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<td></td>
<td>South Wales</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>108</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rest of East Midlands</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>204</td>
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<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>Herefordshire</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Shropshire + Telford &amp; Wrekin</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>225</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Warwickshire</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Midlands Conurbation</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>261</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worcestershire</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>London</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yorkshire &amp; The Humber</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Trips to / from CW+C</td>
<td>50,341</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>52,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Trips within CW+C</td>
<td>100,377</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100,377</td>
</tr>
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3 The Economy and the Environment

3.1 ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

3.1.1 Economically, the sub-region is successful and prosperous, with a diverse economy and a significant presence in the aerospace/automotive, chemicals, financial services, food, engineering and tourism/retail sectors. West Cheshire has been recognised as one of the fastest growing sub-regions of the United Kingdom and its diversity of economic activities provides a good basis for establishing recovery from presently challenging conditions.

3.1.2 Despite this relative prosperity, West Cheshire and Chester still contains areas of significant deprivation. The former authority of Vale Royal includes some of the most deprived areas in Cheshire with 8 wards being amongst the most deprived 20% in the country with significantly disadvantaged communities in parts of Winsford and Northwich.

3.1.3 Ellesmere Port also contains some of the highest levels of deprivation in Cheshire with 12 Lower Level Super Output Areas (LLSOA) being in the highest 20% in England on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007. The former Central, Westminster and Stanlow & Wolverham wards exhibit high levels of deprivation, particularly in terms of health deprivation and disability (19 LLSOAs, which equates to one third of the former district in the worst 20% nationally.

3.1.4 Blacon and Overleigh wards in West Chester recorded LLSOAs ranked in the 2% most deprived in England. The Lache Estate, forming part of the new Cheshire West and Chester Overleigh ward, is an area of predominantly social housing located on low lying land south of the River Dee and close to the Welsh Border. Blacon is a larger community of some 16,000 people, physically separated from Chester and predominantly residential in character, with a split of half-private ownership and half social housing, with relatively few shops and facilities. The Growth Point initiative seeks to build on the regeneration work already underway in these communities.

3.1.5 There were 6800 unemployed claimants in February 2009 in Cheshire West & Chester. This represents some 3.5% of the working age population. The highest rates are found in the former Stanlow and Wolverham and Westminster wards in Ellesmere Port, with 7% and 7.8% respectively of the working age population claiming benefit. In Chester, Blacon Hall (4.6%) and Lache Park (4.2%) have the highest proportion of claimants and in former Vale Royal the highest rates are found in Northwich Witton (5.6%), Winsford Over (4.9%) and Winsford Wharton (4.6%). The proportion of unemployed claimants in Cheshire West and Chester is lower than the averages for the North West region (4.3%) and Great Britain as a whole (3.8%).

3.1.6 There are a number of key employment areas in and close to the authority’s area and some particularly large employers. These include Vauxhall at Ellesmere Port, the Shell refinery at Stanlow, British Aerospace at Broughton and Bank of America and Marks and Spencer Financial Services in Chester. In addition, the major town centres are major concentrations of employment.
3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

**CO₂ emissions**

3.2.1 Table 4 summarises the volume of CO₂ emissions by the three principal sectors in Cheshire West and Chester and the UK as a whole. Figure 3, below, shows the proportion of CO₂ emissions by sector for the Cheshire West & Chester area as compared to the national average.

**TABLE 4: CO₂ PER CAPITA EMISSIONS BY SECTOR (TONNES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Industry and Commercial</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Road Transport</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire West and Chester</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.2 Overall, the total per capita CO₂ emissions are nearly twice as much for Cheshire West and Chester as they are for the UK as a whole. This principally reflects the relatively large amount of heavy industry located in the area and the associated higher emissions that this creates.

3.2.3 In addition to the difference in total CO₂ emission, the proportion of CO₂ emitted by sector in Cheshire West & Chester differs from the national position, with a higher proportion attributable to industrial processes and business than the UK average, and lower proportions attributable to both road transport and domestic power. This reflects the nature of the local economy, which retains a number of energy-intensive processes.

3.2.4 The CO₂ emission figure for road transport (1.077m tonnes) equates to 3.29 kilo-tonnes per head per year. This compares with the national picture of 2.23 kilo-tonnes.

**FIGURE 3: % OF ALL CO₂ EMISSIONS BY SECTOR**

![Diagram showing CO₂ emissions by sector compared between Cheshire West and Chester and the UK.](attachment://diagram.png)
Air Quality

3.2.5 In 2007 a small number of locations within Cheshire West and Chester were identified as requiring more detailed assessment with respect to air quality standards. These included areas within Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Chester. Subsequently Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have been declared in parts of Chester and Ellesmere Port. Progress within the four locations where air quality standards were noted as being of concern in 2007 is described in table 5 below.

**TABLE 5: LOCATIONS SUBJECT TO AIR QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Area</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Pollutant</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>Boughton Gyratory</td>
<td>NO₂</td>
<td>AQMA declared</td>
<td>Action Plan being developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>Northgate Bus Station area</td>
<td>NO₂</td>
<td>Detailed Assessment carried out</td>
<td>No action required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellesmere Port</td>
<td>A5032 Whitby Rd / Station Rd</td>
<td>NO₂</td>
<td>AQMA declared</td>
<td>Action Plan published 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural East (nr Middlewich)</td>
<td>A54 Sproston Green</td>
<td>NO₂</td>
<td>Investigated need for detailed assessment</td>
<td>No action required, however still area of concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 The Transport Network

4.1 HIGHWAY NETWORK

4.1.1 The road network inherited by the new Cheshire West & Chester authority comprises:
- 328 km ‘A’ (principal) road;
- 642 km ‘B’ and ‘C’ road;
- 1,359 km Unclassified roads; and,
- In addition, there are 40.5 km of Motorway and 30km of non-motorway trunk road.

4.1.2 The main geographic features of this network are:
- A circuit of motorways and trunk roads around Chester, with the western segment lying in North Wales;
- Traditional radial networks of routes focussed on Chester, Northwich and Winsford;
- Ellesmere Port’s enclosure by a ‘box’ of major roads;
- A heavier density of major routes is evident in the west of the Authority’s area compared to the east;
- A major strategic interchange (M56/M53/A55/A5117) located on the south-eastern edge of Ellesmere Port;
- A web of rural interurban ‘A’ roads across the area oriented very roughly in north-south and east-west directions;
- A large network of rural roads of all categories; and,
- The M6 on the eastern periphery of the authority’s area.

4.1.3 Usage data for Cheshire West & Chester for the period 2004-2007 has been disaggregated from the previous figures published for Cheshire as a whole in the Local Transport Plan. This data is presented below in table 6.

**TABLE 6: TRAFFIC GROWTH 2004-07, CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER BY CATEGORY OF HIGHWAY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road traffic Mvkm</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motorway</td>
<td>1118</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>1151</td>
<td>1165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunk</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1438</td>
<td>1428</td>
<td>1460</td>
<td>1427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3873</td>
<td>3857</td>
<td>3965</td>
<td>3974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source – DfT NRTS)
4.1.4 The resulting local annual growth rates are:

- Motorway 1.4%
- Trunk roads 0.72%
- Principal roads -0.03%
- Minor roads 2.07%
- Overall 0.87%

4.1.5 Key issues relating to the road network in each of the main urban locations are identified below;

**In Chester:**

- There is peak hour congestion on the inner ring road and key radial routes such as A51;
- Problems worsen, particularly in the run up to Christmas or when seasonal events occur such as Chester Races or Bank Holidays at the Zoo;
- The peripheral business parks generate commuter peaks in particular on the A483 in the vicinity of Chester Business Park;
- Congestion problems also occur when accidents lead to the closure of the A55; and,
- Maintaining the historic city core also reduces the potential capacity of the central area.

**In Northwich:** - Peak time congestion occurs

- In the town centre;
- On the A533 through Winnington;
- On A556 around Gadbrook Park;
- The A559 through Hartford;
- The B5082 Middlewich Road, Rudheath; and,

**In Ellesmere Port:** - Congestion occurs at peak times:

- At the A41 in the vicinity of Hope Farm Road;
- On approach roads to Cheshire Oaks especially during the Christmas shopping season;
- On the A41 through Little Sutton when there is an incident on the M53.
4.1.6 On the **wider rural and inter-urban network**, a number of specific hot spots are understood to experience stress:

- A49/A54 signal junction;
- A49/A533 Bartington Crossroads;
- A556 between Davenham Roundabout (A533) and the A530 and at its junction with the access to Gadbrook Business Park;
- Motorway diversionary routes affect mid Cheshire and can greatly increase volumes on rural roads; and,
- Motorways can carry significant volumes of purely local traffic, particularly within urban areas.

4.1.7 In the other main towns, the normal morning and evening traffic peaks produce congested conditions but these are generally quite short in duration.

4.1.8 The strategic network is likely to become a particular focus of network stress in future years. The forecast growth in traffic levels and the strong degree of interaction between the strategic and local networks generate a need for an integrated approach to managing traffic, reflecting the influence each network has on the other.

**Freight – lorry movements**

4.1.9 The roads carrying the highest lorry flows are:

- A550 between the M53 Wirral motorway and North Wales;
- A41 between Chester and the boundary with Shropshire;
- A5117 between the M56 and A449, and between Pool Lane and M56 junction 14;
- A51/A500 between Chester and the M6;
- A54 between A51 and A556, and connecting Winsford with the M6;
- A49 north from the A51 at Tarporley to the boundary with Warrington; and,
- A556 between A49 and the M6, and the connecting routes via the A533 to Winsford Industrial Estate, and the A530 to Middlewich.

**4.2 ROAD SAFETY**

4.2.1 Reducing the number of road casualties is a national priority, with local authority actions guided by a prescriptive target and indicator regime. Up until 2007 (the latest date for complete data availability), Cheshire County Council was on course to meet the relevant targets.
4.2.2 The latest figures reported for the former County Council are for 2007 and appear in the 2008 Road Casualty Report and are reproduced below.

**TABLE 7: ROAD CASUALTY REDUCTION – CHESHIRE 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KSI Casualties</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>-15%</td>
<td>-44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child KSI</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight Casualties</td>
<td>3807</td>
<td>2919</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight Casualties per 100m vehicle km</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-8%</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

4.3.1 Despite the comparatively low levels of public transport use when compared with regional and national averages, Cheshire West and Chester has a number of important strategic public transport linkages. It is served by a number of major rail lines and parts of the area enjoy frequent and relatively well patronised bus services. A summary of the key public transport issues is provided below.

**Rail**

4.3.2 The West Coast Main Line (WCML) runs from north to south through the centre of the Cheshire West & Chester area. There are stations at Acton Bridge, Hartford and Winsford, but these are not served by inter city services to London and Scotland, for which a connection is needed at Crewe or Warrington Bank Quay.

4.3.3 Chester is served by a frequent (hourly) service to London operated by Virgin West Coast. This service was increased in frequency to its current level in February 2009, with the intention of offering easier links to London from the South Wirral. By contrast rail connections from Ellesmere Port to Chester are poor.

4.3.4 Rail services also connect Chester to Crewe, the North Wales coast, Liverpool, Manchester via Warrington Bank Quay or Northwich, Wrexham, Shrewsbury, Birmingham and South Wales.

4.3.5 Rail development is the concern of several Community Rail Partnerships covering the Borderlands (Wrexham-Bidston), Chester-Shrewsbury and Mid-Cheshire lines.

4.3.6 Three larger scale rail proposals have either been studied or have received support from Cheshire West & Chester Council and other interested parties:

- Reopening the Sandbach – Northwich freight line to passenger traffic and reopening Middlewich station as part of the service package;
- Establishing a regular passenger service over the Halton curve, linking the Chester – Warrington line with Runcorn and Liverpool, via Liverpool airport; and
- Future development of the Wrexham-Bidston line, possibly by electrification or conversion to tram-train standard.

4.3.7 A number of other infrastructure-related issues have been identified by the Council which are unrelated to stations, but are still ‘live’ matters for Cheshire West & Chester to consider:
Welsh Assembly Government plans for track redoubling between Saltney Junction and Wrexham, with line speed improvements (currently 60 mph limit), to improve reliability and service speed of Arriva Trains Wales’ North Wales - Cardiff and Birmingham service;

- Line speeds on the Mid Cheshire Line (currently 60 mph limit) and the operational impact of the single line sections of route;

- Infrastructure implications of any longer term tram-train service proposals for the Mid Cheshire and Wrexham-Bidston lines; and,

- Future use of the Ellesmere Port docks rail infrastructure in association with the Ellesmere Port Waterfront development site.

4.3.8 There are at least three longer term strategic investment proposals that have been identified as affecting the area. These could have land use implications if they were to be taken forward, but their status is currently undefined:

- Manchester Airport Western Link from the Mid Cheshire line;

- Rail electrification (Crewe-Chester at least); and,

- A number of potential rail-based strategic park & ride proposals.

**Bus Services**

4.3.9 The number of passenger journeys on buses originating in Cheshire West and Chester is estimated to be currently 15.8 million per annum. This has been calculated by the authority as it is a national performance indicator (NI 177). This equates to an average of approximately 50 bus trips per resident per annum.

4.3.10 A further national indicator (NI 178) highlights that 91.8% of bus services are operating to schedule.

4.3.11 The pattern of bus services varies across the authority’s area. In the urban areas there is a fairly comprehensive network of bus routes both serving intra urban movements and providing interurban connections. The majority of bus services are focussed on routes that serve the City of Chester. As a result the City has several corridors which offer high frequency services. Highest frequencies operate on routes where inter-urban services are combined with those services that operate only within the City.

4.3.12 Ellesmere Port also has a comprehensive network of bus services made up of a combination of town services and bus services to wider destinations.

4.3.13 There is a less comprehensive service in the less densely populated areas. Many of the towns and villages are too small to support significant local bus networks. Furthermore, interurban services often do not carry sufficient numbers to operate on a frequent commercial basis. Therefore there is a continuing challenge in ensuring that revenue funding to support local bus services is deployed in the most beneficial way.

4.3.14 The Cheshire West & Chester authority contracts approximately 50 bus services in its area, with an annual cost of approximately £3 million. These contract services include the Park and Ride services, the Chester and Ellesmere Port Dial a ride service and also extensions of the operating hours of existing commercial bus services.
Park and Ride

4.3.15 One particularly successful policy intervention that has reduced congestion and reduces the pressure for city centre parking has been the park and ride strategy for Chester.

4.3.16 There are four Park & Ride sites serving the city, providing a total of 3,170 parking spaces at the following locations:

- Sealand Road = 760 spaces
- Upton (The Zoo) = 460 spaces
- Broughton Heath = 750 spaces
- Wrexham Road = 1200 spaces

4.3.17 The city’s park and ride service is the 4th largest in the country, carrying over one million passengers per year. Figure 4, shows that patronage of the Park and Ride facilities in Chester has remained relatively static over the last 8 years.

**FIGURE 4: ANNUAL USAGE OF PARK AND RIDE IN CHESTER**

Community Transport

4.3.18 Community-based and demand responsive transport is more appropriate than conventional buses in areas of low demand and for meeting the travel needs of particular groups of users. The Community Transport Strategy for Cheshire (published by Cheshire County Council in October 2007) seeks to identify and address these needs. Previous work to develop this strategy still has relevance to the new authority.
Taxis

4.3.19 Taxis have an important role to play in an integrated public transport system, particularly in:

- Increasing the catchment area of rail and bus services;
- Decreasing car dependence, and enabling mobility of those who do not have access to a car;
- Increasing the accessibility to public transport of areas which are not within walking distance of scheduled public transport services;
- In some areas, taxi services may be the most efficient way of providing for certain statutory travel needs, such as school travel in very rural areas where demand does not justify a bus service; and,
- Complementing Community Transport services in providing demand responsive public transport, particularly in rural areas.

4.3.20 In terms of vehicle numbers, there are currently around 1,000 private hire vehicles licensed in Cheshire West and Chester and around 350 Hackney carriages, the latter being split approximately 100 in Chester, 200 in Vale Royal and 50 in Ellesmere Port and Neston. The private hire vehicles range greatly in vehicle type from standard cars to minibuses and stretched limousines, clearly serving different areas of the market in each case. No private hire vehicle is licensed to carry more than 8 passengers.

School Transport

4.3.21 The Cheshire West and Chester authority contract approximately 190 mainstream school bus services and just over 200 special needs school bus services. Cheshire County Council owned and managed a fleet of 8 Yellow School Buses. Currently some of these Yellow Buses transport pupils from Winsford to St Nicholas Catholic High School in Northwich.

4.3.22 Data from the 2005 Quality of Life Surveys, shows there are significant differences evident in the modes used across West Cheshire. Ellesmere Port & Neston shows the highest proportion of car based school runs and the lowest by bus, with the latter being much higher in the more rural Chester and Vale Royal areas. The walk proportions are similar across the area.

4.4 ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING

4.4.1 Accessibility in transport planning terms is defined as the ease with which people can reach essential services, such as employment, healthcare, education, food shops and other destinations that are important to local residents. If people cannot access the key services they need at reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease, their quality of life suffers. The crucial point is that accessibility is not just about transport, it is also concerned with how key services are planned and delivered.

4.4.2 Work has been progressing to review and refresh the strategic accessibility assessment to identify the priorities specific to Cheshire West & Chester. This work was summarised in a Strategic Accessibility Assessment published in February 2009.
4.4.3 The assessment has provided a valuable strategic overview of the accessibility concerns for Cheshire West & Chester. The 3 priority themes are:

- Access to key services from rural areas, particularly for older people;
- Access to health care, particularly in relation to Primary Care Trust (PCT) modernisation plans; and
- Access to employment and training, particularly from areas of deprivation.

4.4.4 It is likely that Cheshire West & Chester will focus on access to employment and training as the main priority to address in accessibility terms. With the current economic downturn and rise in unemployment, there is a need to investigate accessibility improvements which support people back into work and training. This work is also intended to lead to a consistent and coordinated approach being taken to accessibility across the Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) sub region.

4.5 SMARTER CHOICES

4.5.1 The Department for Transport categorises a range of activities designed to promote more sustainable methods of transport as Smarter Choices initiatives. Progress in delivering such measures in Cheshire West and Chester is described below.

**Travel Planning**

4.5.2 Significant progress has been made over recent years within Cheshire in developing workplace and school travel plans which are designed to encourage travel by sustainable means. The Cheshire Local Transport Plan Progress Report, published in 2008, indicated that in 2007/8 37% of companies employing over 500 people had a travel plan in place and that 69% of schools had adopted a travel plan. A significant element of LTP funding goes into promoting school travel plans each year, and this pays for a wide range of sustainable travel initiatives such as walking buses, facilities for walking and cycling at schools and working with schools to promote sustainable travel to children.

**Walking and Cycling**

4.5.3 Walking and cycling represent very important modes of travel at the local level. Scope to increase the number of short and medium length journeys made on foot or by bike is considerable and national, regional and local policy is directed towards achieving this objective. Benefits include reduced levels of congestion and pollution and improved levels of health and physical fitness.

**National Cycle Network**

4.5.4 The Cheshire West and Chester area is relatively well served by the National Cycle Network (NCN). The following National Cycle Routes serve Cheshire West and Cheshire:

- National Route 5: Reading - Holyhead via Oxford, Walsall, Chester, & N Wales coast. The northern half is still under development and in Cheshire West & Chester, the route is open and signed between Kidsgrove and Connah’s Quay via Northwich, Runcorn and Chester;
- National Route 45: Salisbury - Chester, via Swindon, Cirencester, Gloucester, Worcester and Whitchurch. The route is already open and signed between Ironbridge and Chester via Whitchurch; and,
National Route 56: This route runs within the Cheshire West & Chester area from Chester to Neston, continuing up the Wirral to Liverpool, via Wallasey and linking with National Cycle Route 62 (the Transpennine Trail) in Liverpool.

Public Rights of Way

4.5.5 Public Rights of Way (PROW) form an important part of the Cheshire West & Chester Transport Network for leisure and utility purposes. They generally fall into the following categories:

- Public footpath (a right of way only for pedestrians);
- Bridleway (a right of way for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians); and,
- Byways (a right of way open to all traffic).

4.5.6 The Cheshire Rights of Way Improvements Plan (ROWIP) was published in 2006. This is a statutory document which forms part of the LTP and identifies where the rights of way network can contribute to improving the quality of life of people in Cheshire, and where targeted interventions could improve the rights of way network.

4.5.7 In 2006, the Definitive Map showed 2,834km of public footpaths, 171km of bridleways and 123km of byways in Cheshire as a whole. The plan recognises the importance of the rights of way network for the health, sustainability and social inclusion agendas. With this in mind it identifies a number of issues in relation to rights of way within the three districts which now make up Cheshire West and Chester:

- Poor links into Chester district from Ellesmere Port and Neston;
- Poor route density in the central part of Ellesmere Port and Neston;
- Severance caused by major roads, railways and waterways (particularly the Manchester Ship Canal);
- Lack of access in parts of the Peckforton hills;
- An area to the South of Winsford is lacking in rights of way coverage;
- Poor access to the surrounding countryside from Northwich, especially to the north and west; and,
- Lack of facilities for off-road cycling and horse riding in the Peckforton hills.

Connect 2

4.5.8 Cycling projects in Chester and Northwich have secured funding from Sustrans as part of the Connect 2 initiative. In Northwich this aims to establish new and improved cycling routes to the south of the town centre centred around the proposal to replace the now disused Riversdale Bridge as a key walking and cycling connection across the Weaver Navigation.

4.5.9 Work in Chester is mentioned below. The Connect 2 component is a proposed new Dee bridge, providing a new link from Handbridge to Huntington across the river and Dee meadows.
Cycle Demonstration Project

4.5.10 Chester was designated as one of England’s cycling demonstration towns in 2008, and as such now has access to significant financial resources to promote cycling in the city, and potentially the immediate surrounding area.

4.5.11 The City has adopted the brand of “Cycle Chester” for the project, and has so far spent £500,000 of Cycle Town funding up to April 2009 in developing the brand and setting up a number of initial projects. The focus initially is on Chester itself and on the immediate outlying villages within easy cycle commuting distance of the city. Projects embarked upon so far include:

- ‘Let’s Bike’ training schemes in 36 schools in Chester. These have been established with significant parental involvement and have involved the development of a year-long partnership between schools, parents and children;
- The Purchase of 8 hybrid electric/pedal power bikes and 20 ordinary pedal cycles available for community uses such as bike to health schemes through local doctor’s surgeries, social rides from youth centres and community groups;
- A number of cycling festivals occurring in Chester City Centre to celebrate the launch of the project; and,
- Support for a number of significant infrastructure schemes funded from a variety of sources, particularly:
  - The New Dee Bridge to allow a crossing point of the Dee for walkers and cyclists between Huntingdon and the Meadows (noted above);
  - Curzon Park Bridge upgrade, providing ramped access to areas south of the river and improved access for cyclists to British Aerospace;
  - Guilden Sutton to Mickle Trafford greenway extension, providing approximately 3km of extension to the existing Millennium Greenway;
  - Deva Link Access – providing access to the NCN route canal towpath from the Deva Link Road; and,
  - Improving the permeability of the Chester inner ring road for cyclists – a number of potential ways of doing this are being explored.

4.5.12 Cycle Chester is a programme of works encompassing both soft and hard measures that will deliver dramatic improvements to Chester’s Green Infrastructure. Cycle Chester is a key component of the Culture Park Strategy which is a 10 year programme of improvements that will exploit and capitalise on the City’s assets and development opportunities.

4.6 PARKING

Public Provision

4.6.1 The approach to public car parking policy adopted over recent years has been to ensure that the most conveniently located car parks are available for short stay use with long stay parking being located in more peripheral areas or centrally but at a higher cost.
Private Provision

4.6.2 Pressures on parking in residential areas surrounding town and city centres have led to the introduction of Residents' Parking Schemes. Through Decriminalised Parking Enforcement powers the new authority will have the potential to implement further measures in the future. There are two Residents' Parking Schemes, one in Chester and one in Ellesmere Port. The Residents' Parking Scheme provides regulated on-street parking for residents who live in areas which have parking and congestion problems. The Chester scheme has 9 zones around the city centre. In Ellesmere Port the three areas are the Fields and Vale areas and Central area of the town.

4.6.3 The provision of parking in new developments is controlled through the application of Parking Standards. In accordance with national planning guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13, lower levels of parking provision will be required where means of travel other than the private car are available. Furthermore, the new authority will consider applying lower levels of parking where the need for high density development, associated with town centre functions, limit the potential for car parking.
Appendices, Figures & Tables