

# Local Transport Plan 3 Summary Report 2011 – 2026

# Introduction

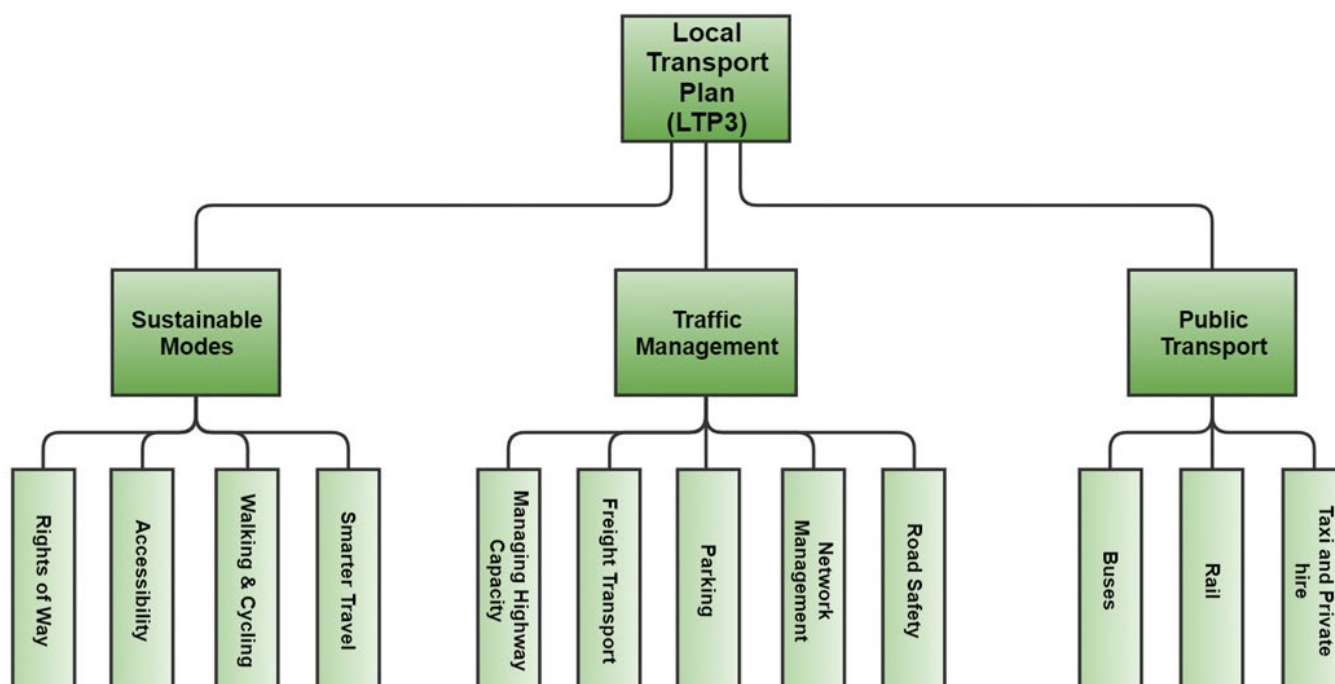
The Bracknell Forest Local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 was adopted in 2011 as a mechanism to strategically plan and develop the transport system to meet the future needs of the Borough, strengthening the Council's place-shaping role and delivering transport services to the local community.

This was the borough's third LTP, with a vision of delivering a sustainable transport network, and set out the 15-year transport strategy from 2011–2026. It supported the Council's wider vision and objectives which included regenerating Bracknell Town Centre, delivering employment space and meeting the target to deliver 11,000 new homes.

The Plan contained twenty policies, for which specific actions and measures for delivery were set out within three over-arching delivery strategies.



- TP1: Accessibility
- TP2: Streetscene
- TP3: Buses
- TP4: Rail
- TP5: Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles
- TP6: Community Transport
- TP7: Smarter Choices
- TP8: Walking and Cycling
- TP9: Public Rights of Way
- TP10: Travel Planning
- TP11: Smarter Vehicle Use
- TP12: Traffic Management
- TP13: Congestion Management
- TP14: Intelligent Transport Systems
- TP15: Movement of Freight
- TP16: Parking
- TP17: Road Safety
- TP18: Network Management
- TP19: Transport Asset Management
- TP20: Air Quality Management



## Why review LTP3 before 2026?

Since Local Transport Plan 3 was adopted in 2011, there have been significant changes in local, regional, national and international politics, whilst increased recognition has been given to climate change, and the role that transport plays in shaping complex social, environmental and economic issues.

Whilst this report will not dwell heavily on the impacts of the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, we cannot ignore the impact on transport in terms of how we work, shop and travel.

Local Transport Plans are a statutory document produced by local highway authorities, and guidance is set out by the government through the Department for Transport. The guidance for our fourth LTP focuses heavily on decarbonisation, with emphasis on ever-more sustainable planning and policy interventions. This is likely to mean more focus on sustainable travel and interventions which help reduce carbon emissions.



## Bracknell Forest – context and characteristics

Whilst there has been significant development since 2011, the Borough's core characteristics remain the same. These are important in understanding why and how our LTP policies are developed and implemented.

As a planned 'new town', Bracknell itself was built with easy and convenient car travel in mind, alongside a comprehensive network of footpaths and cycleways and good accessibility to public transport.



The settlements of Crowthorne and Sandhurst to the South of the Borough have more traditional centres, with older housing stock and road layouts, mixed with more modern development which has increasingly in-filled the areas between the three towns. The north of the Borough is more rural, with Binfield, Warfield, Winkfield and North Ascot effectively now forming an extension of the Bracknell suburban area.

The busy A322 / A329 corridors form a strategic link through the Borough between the M3 and M4 motorways, and the Borough is well connected by road and rail to London and surrounding towns at the heart of what is a powerful economic area. Both Heathrow and Gatwick airports are within easy reach of the Borough's residents and businesses.

There are many factors that make Bracknell Forest an appealing place to live and work, and this is often reflected in quality of life and liveability surveys, although the Borough does also face issues and challenges

### **Borough strengths:**

- Strategic position in the South-East
- A Berkshire authority and part of the Thames Valley Economic area
- Modern transport network
- Comprehensive walking and cycling network
- Relatively small unitary authority area
- Good accessibility by all modes
- Relatively affluent population
- Significant number of parks and green spaces such as Swinley Forest

### **Challenges and issues:**

- High levels of car use and car dependency
- M3 – M4 link can cause congestion through the town
- Low uptake in walking, cycling and active travel despite network
- Parking issues in older residential areas without off-street parking
- Ageing infrastructure
- Reducing levels of physical activity and associated health issues amongst the population

The policies and objectives of LTP3 aimed to address these challenges and build on the strengths and characteristics of the Borough.



## Key achievements in LTP3

The biggest strategic achievement in the LTP3 period was undoubtedly the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre, a project which involved significant highway and public realm improvements to bring the dated 1950s town centre into the 21st Century.

This attracted greater investment into the town and the Borough, and a number of major junction and corridor improvements were delivered to accommodate new housing and employment space whilst improving the reliability of journey times within and across the Borough.



Some of the major sites delivered during the LTP3 period required entire new stretches of road, footpath and cycleway to serve not only houses, but also associated schools, community facilities and green spaces, for which the Council secured Government Local Growth funding, working proactively with developers and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP).



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

The Council also bid directly to the Department for Transport (DfT) for funding through initiatives such as the Local Pinch Point Fund, The National Productivity Investment Fund, Access for All Rail Fund and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund. As a result, over a 10-year period, the Council was able to deliver over £30m worth of infrastructure improvements aimed at unlocking growth and improving accessibility across all modes.



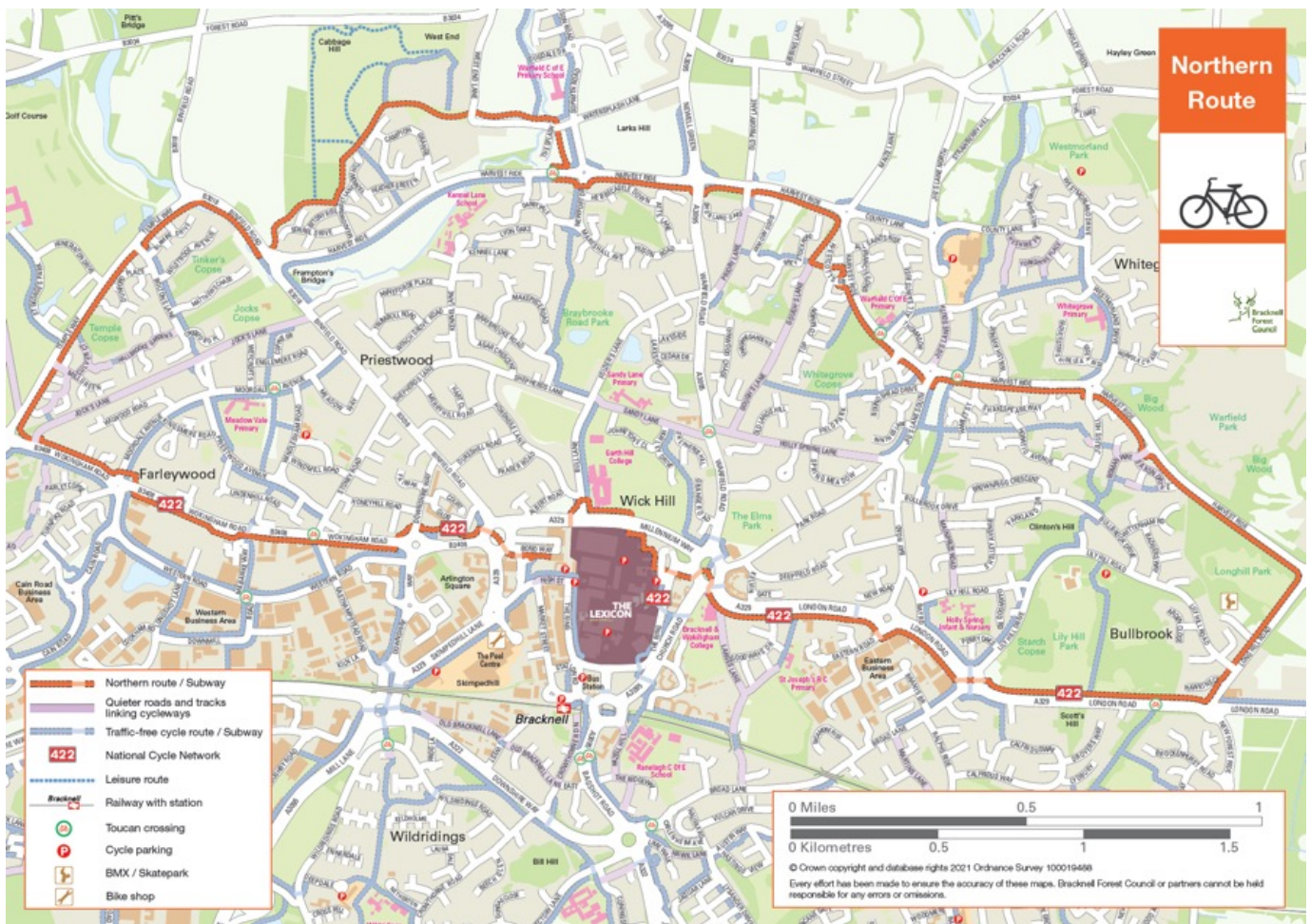
In addition to these more strategic schemes the authority continued to focus on local improvements through its annual capital programme, delivering new and improved road crossings, sections of cycleway and traffic calming measures, whilst working with developers to ensure high quality walking and cycling paths are included in new housing schemes.



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

The Borough's walking and cycling network remains an enviable asset that we are keen to build on and promote. Despite over 100km of cycle routes and a broad increase in cycling observed at our annual surveys, levels of cycling amongst the local population remain around the England average. As such, during the next plan period, the Council will continue to carry out various initiatives to encourage more people to get on their bikes.

During LTP3 the transport strategy team delivered a workplace and residential engagement programme funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, the Love to Ride and Eco-Rewards schemes (where users track their activities for points and prizes), a social media promotional film campaign, and through interactive route maps and circular rides allowing residents to explore parts of the Borough they might not know existed.





There have also been fun and engaging workplace events with partners such as the Berkshire Safer Roads partnership, Sustrans, Avanti Cycle training, Trek and Dr Bike, promoting what the Borough has to offer, providing free bike checks and repairs, showcasing new bikes, and engaging with employees and residents to understand their views and issues.



Bracknell Forest's Bikeability programme has delivered cycle training to over 8000 children at schools in the Borough since 2011, and there has been an increasing focus on extra-curricular training for families, adults, children with special needs and those in care.



Our local work has been supplemented by successful bids to Active Travel England, and the Thames Valley LEP, for example for funding to create the National Cycle Network 422 route, linking Newbury with Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell and Ascot.

## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report



To guide further investment in walking and cycling, a revised Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has been developed which was informed by a major stakeholder engagement exercise in 2022 using the 'Commonplace' platform. The LCWIP covers the whole borough and provides an evidence-based approach to identifying new walking, wheeling and cycling schemes that will encourage modal shift to active travel for local journeys. It will be a key supporting document when bidding for central Government funding to deliver new infrastructure which will form a key part of LTP4.



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

Despite an up-tick after the regeneration of Bracknell town centre, overall bus patronage in Bracknell Forest has fallen slightly during the LTP3 period. This is in line with longer term trends across England since the late 1980s, although the relative convenience of the car may have been more of a factor in declining bus use trends within Bracknell Forest than other semi-urban areas. The Government hopes to reverse this with its recently published National Bus Strategy.

As part of this, the Council has developed and published a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and entered into an Enhanced Partnership with operators. So far, a new 'My Journey' website with comprehensive bus information has been launched, and a passenger charter has been agreed. Central Government funding has now been secured and we are working with operators to implement a range of measures to encourage more people to use local buses. Potential measures include new tap-on/tap-off readers on buses, interoperable ticketing, bus priority at traffic lights, discounted fares for young people and improvements at bus stops.



This work builds on the significant upgrade of the bus station completed in 2015. New waiting areas furnished with real time information screens were installed. The addition of extensive cycle parking means the bus station, located next to the rail station, is a genuine transport interchange providing a choice of modes for connected journeys.



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

Access and public realm improvements to Bracknell station over the course of the LTP3 period have created a more welcoming gateway for residents and visitors to the town, complemented by new lifts providing step free access to the extended platforms which can now accommodate 10-coach trains.

Close partnership working continues with the respective operators to improve services and facilities on both the Reading to Waterloo and North Downs lines.



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

A new BFC-led approach to Travel Planning is being offered to developers of residential sites and this will be promoted and developed further as part of LTP4. In return for a fee per dwelling, the Council will take on the responsibility for delivering the marketing of active and sustainable modes of travel to new residents before car-based habits can become entrenched. Free taster tickets for bus travel, signposting information to sustainable travel options and personalised journey planning will all encourage residents to consider alternatives, supported by the MyJourney website.

Launched in 2021, this provides a one-stop shop for transport and travel information in Bracknell Forest.

### Getting Around



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

Foundations for the conversion to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) have begun, with the installation of 36 fast chargepoints across 12 Council community car parks. These have been part-funded by the government-backed On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) and complement existing chargepoints in Bracknell's town centre multi-storey car parks alongside a growing network of fast and rapid charging options operated by the private sector.

The Council will continue to work with chargepoint operators and relevant stakeholders into the LTP4 period as we further develop a network of fast and rapid charging solutions for those living in or travelling through the Borough.



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

New town inheritance continues to bring unique highway asset management demands as much of the infrastructure is now over 60 years old. The ongoing financial pressures upon highway maintenance due to increasing asset scale and competing demands for government and local authority funding provide further specific challenges to maintaining network performance.

The adoption of a revised Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan has now set a clear approach on the efficient use of maintenance funding by prioritising timely interventions and targeting further relevant funding opportunities where available. The pressures of climate change will also impact upon network resilience, and the need for it to perform through periods of extreme weather has become more apparent in recent years.



Between 2016 and 2019, all of the Council's streetlights were upgraded to LED, reducing energy usage, costs and contributing to efforts to reduce our carbon emissions. This involved the conversion of more than 13,000 lights, which also have a new management system and are more adaptable to the specific streets they are in. Light pollution and maintenance is also reduced.

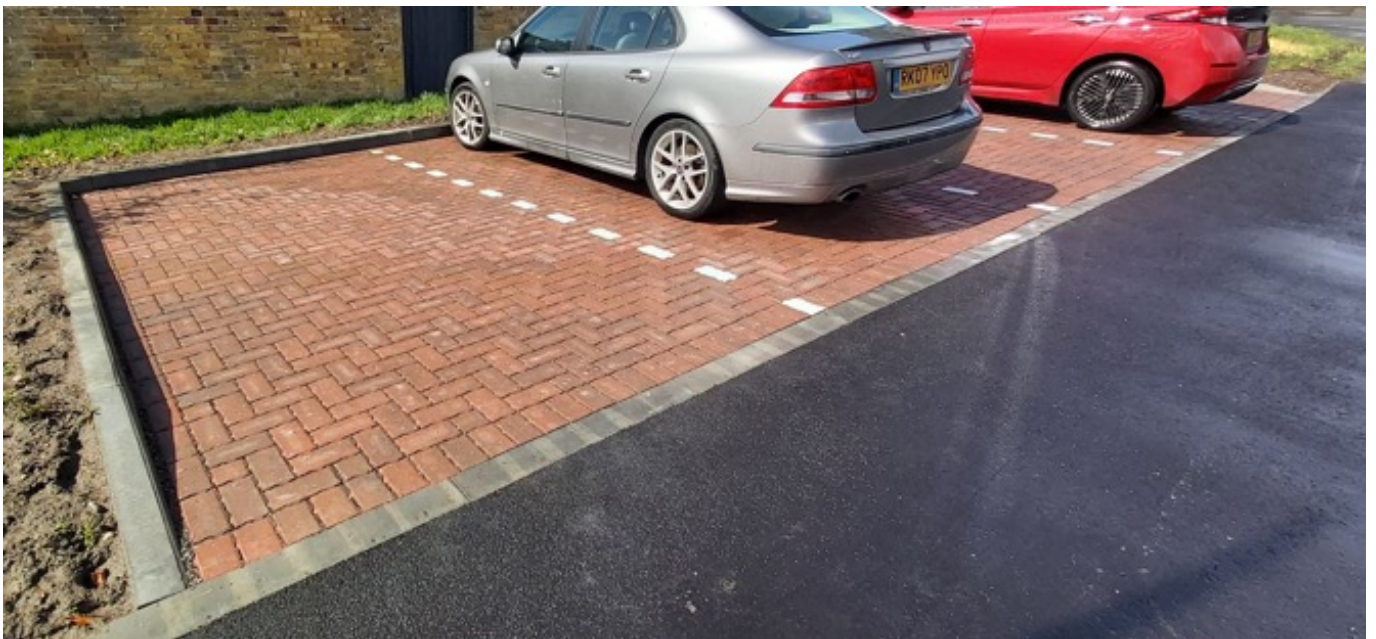


## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

During the LTP3 period, there have been some significant changes both in the way we travel and how people work. Our traffic data suggests that the traditional morning and evening peaks have reduced, and an element of trips are now spread over a wider timeframe. Weekend trips have also increased. Fewer cars in peak periods are being replaced by more goods vehicles, presumably a result of more flexible working and more home deliveries. Balancing the needs of businesses and consumers alongside our aims to protect the environment clearly presents a number of challenges.



An effective strategy for dealing with parking issues is vital to deliver sustainable growth in the borough. A balanced approach to delivering parking standards for new development can help stimulate growth whilst meeting the needs of our residents. The Parking Standards SPD introduced in 2016 has sought to deliver effective parking solutions for the future. Nevertheless, many of our existing neighbourhoods were built when car ownership levels were much lower than they are today and this results in localised parking hotspots which cause problems for residents. Our capital programme has continued to address these issues.



Effective network management to maximise availability and efficiency of road space is key to the operation of the wider transport system, co-ordinating streetworks as far in advance and as practically as possible, and challenging any unreasonable work durations to minimise disruption to residents and road users. Monitoring congestion and traffic flow through dedicated Intelligent Transport Systems and refining or automating junction performance with technology has also brought improvement to key transport corridors. These innovations will continue to evolve in future years.





Future mobility solutions will be key to improving sustainable travel, and may be well-suited to Bracknell's characteristics, such as personal e-modes like electric scooters/bikes and a demand responsive public transport systems that provides greater flexibility. LTP4 will consider how changing lifestyles, work and technology will combine to shape our transport system over the next 10+ years.

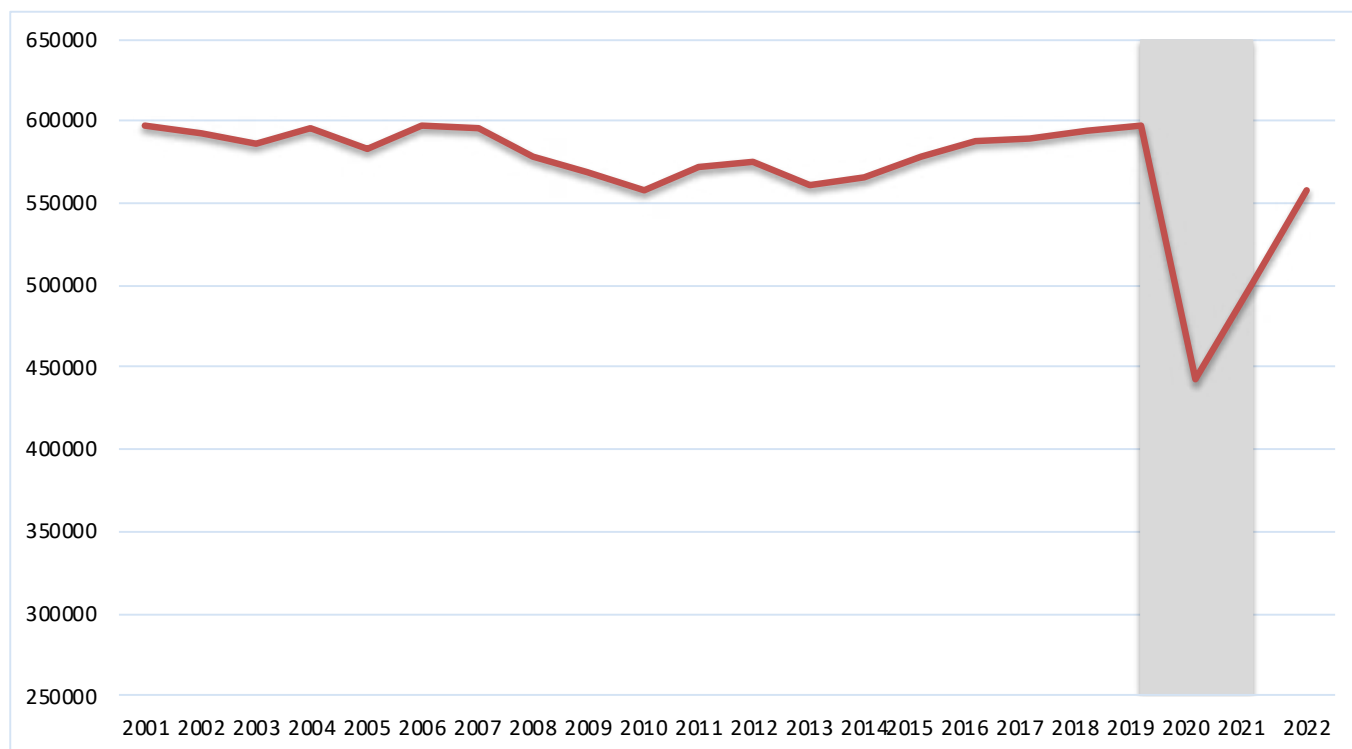


## Data and Statistics – How the Borough travels

### Road traffic

The Council has around 50 permanent traffic monitoring sites around the Borough, on a mix of road types, which provide hourly data every day of the year. Some of these sites have been gathering data since the 1980s, although for consistent reporting we tend to focus on 2001 onwards. The graph below shows the annual average traffic level, using data from all sites which have been in place since 2001. This includes all traffic – from motorcycles through to HGVs.

**Graph 1: Average Annual Daily Traffic – Bracknell Forest (50 count sites)**

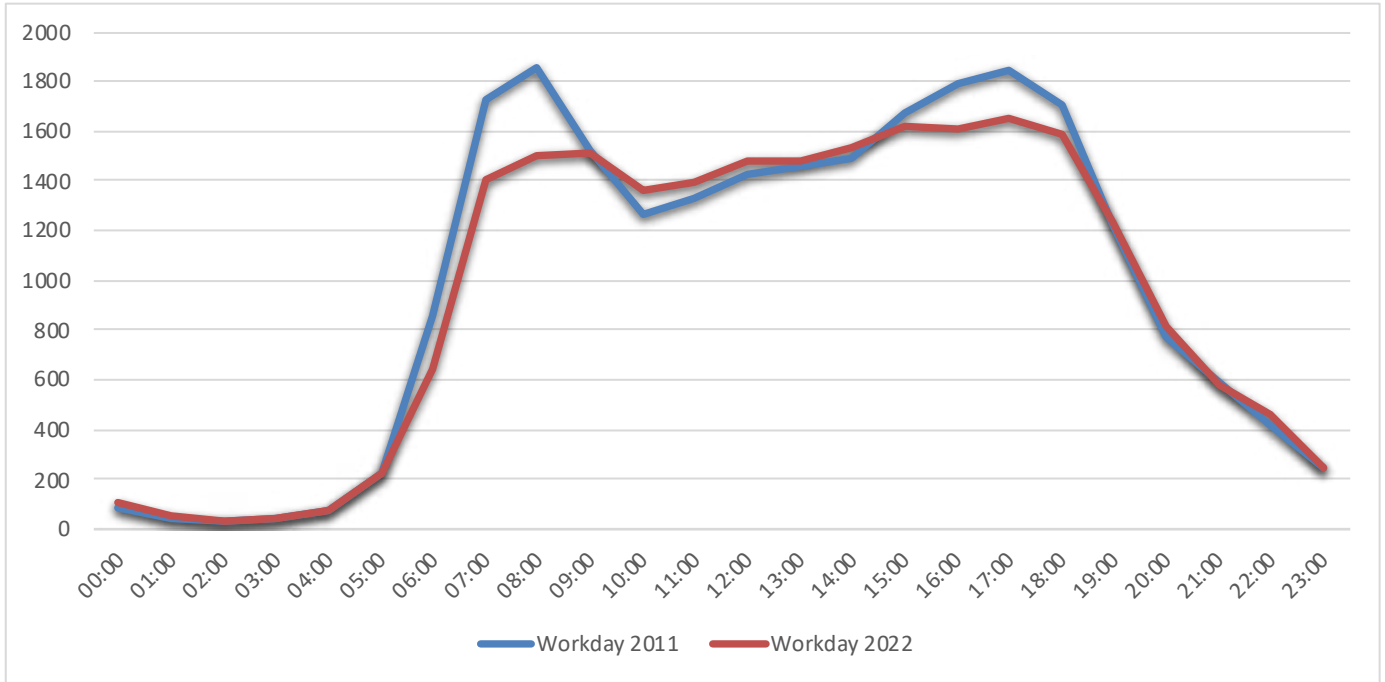


The grey area on this and the following graphs shows where the Covid-19 pandemic had an effect on traffic and travel

Our figures suggest Bracknell Forest's traffic actually peaked in 2006-07, followed by a drop and fluctuations associated with socio-economic factors (in particular the 2008 recession), and a steady climb to a high in 2019 before the clear impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is fairly reflective of the national picture, although DfT data suggests traffic in Bracknell Forest, and across England reached an all-time peak in 2019.

Traffic on some roads is now at or above 2019 levels, but we are seeing differences in how that traffic is spread throughout the day, for example with lower morning and evening peaks, but higher traffic levels during the middle of the day. Graph 2 shows this pattern on the A329 London Road, between Bracknell and Ascot, compared to 2011 at the start of the plan period.

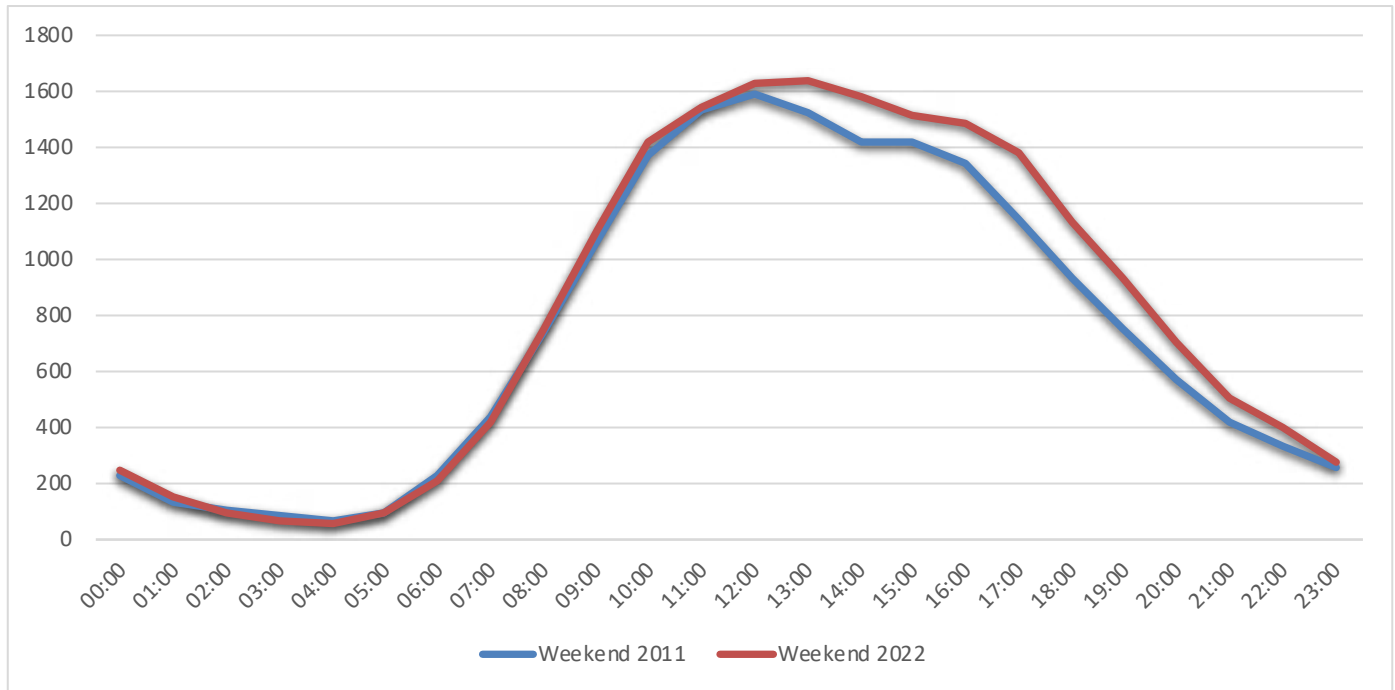
Graph 2: Comparison of Monday-Friday traffic, 2011 vs 2022



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

We are also seeing weekend traffic volumes on some roads up to 15% higher than recorded pre-pandemic. This is likely down to people commuting less, working more flexible hours and travelling more for leisure purposes than was the case pre-pandemic. Graph 3 shows this pattern on the A329 London Road between Bracknell and Ascot

**Graph 3: Comparison of Weekend traffic, 2011 vs 2022**



The most recent national statistics (March 2022) suggest that road traffic overall is 5.9% lower than pre-pandemic levels, although of that traffic, cars and taxis are down 9.6%, whilst light goods vehicles and HGVs are up 9.9% and 3.2% respectively.

Key considerations and challenges:

- Some roads are now back to pre-pandemic daily volumes
- However, peaks are lower and more spread, with more traffic during the inter-peak period
- Car traffic is lower than pre-pandemic, however goods vehicle traffic has increased to fill the void
- Weekend traffic volumes are higher on some roads than pre-pandemic

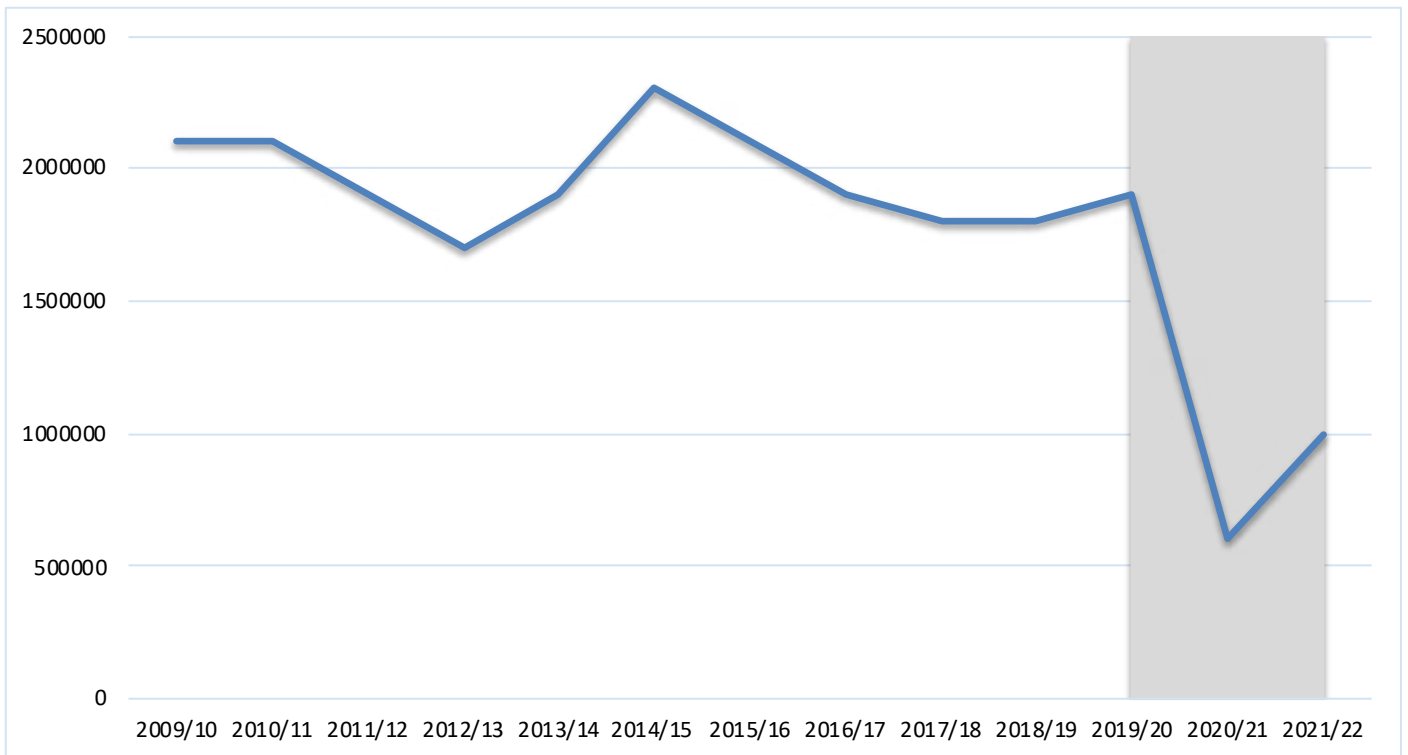
**Buses**

For consistency and accuracy, we use bus patronage statistics issued by the Department for Transport, which also allows comparisons to be drawn at a regional and national level. This data is only available back to 2009, from which time patronage has fluctuated in Bracknell Forest, reaching a peak in 2014/15. Again, the pandemic had a drastic effect on passenger numbers, however this is again on the increase, assisted by short term government initiatives such as the £2 fare cap.

Whilst the Borough's fairly small size and proximity to other conurbations lends itself to ease of travel by bus, patronage numbers are fairly low when compared to the regional and national average, as Graph 5 shows. This is likely explained by the relative affluence of the Borough, and the design of the highway network which facilitates other modes such as car, walking and cycling. Nevertheless, efforts have been made throughout the LTP3 period to encourage and facilitate bus use, through a refurbished central bus station, real-time information, simpler ticketing options and newer, cleaner vehicles.

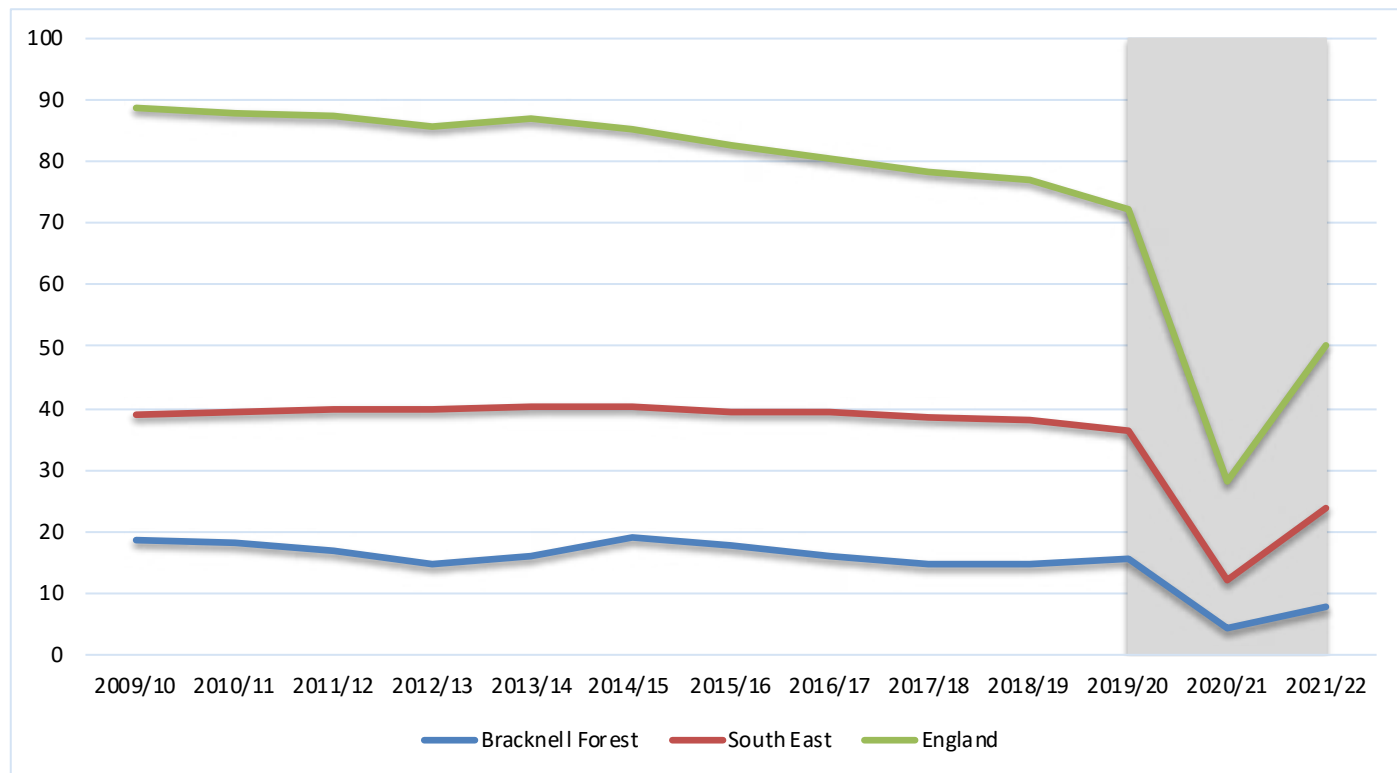


**Graph 4: Passenger bus journeys in Bracknell Forest 2009 – 2022**



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

Graph 5: Passenger bus journeys per head of population, BF, South-East, England 2009 – 2022



Our local statistics suggest that bus passenger numbers are now around 82% of levels in the same period in 2019, although some services have been rationalised in order to keep them commercially viable for the operators.

### Key considerations and challenges

- Increasing operational costs and a decline in patronage post-Covid have meant many bus services are struggling for viability and require increasing subsidy
- Areas away from the town centre are becoming increasingly difficult to serve
- Smart phone apps with vehicle tracking and discounted tickets can attract new bus users but could equally leave residents without access to technology behind
- Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) could be a possible alternative but there is a lack of local/ appropriate case studies



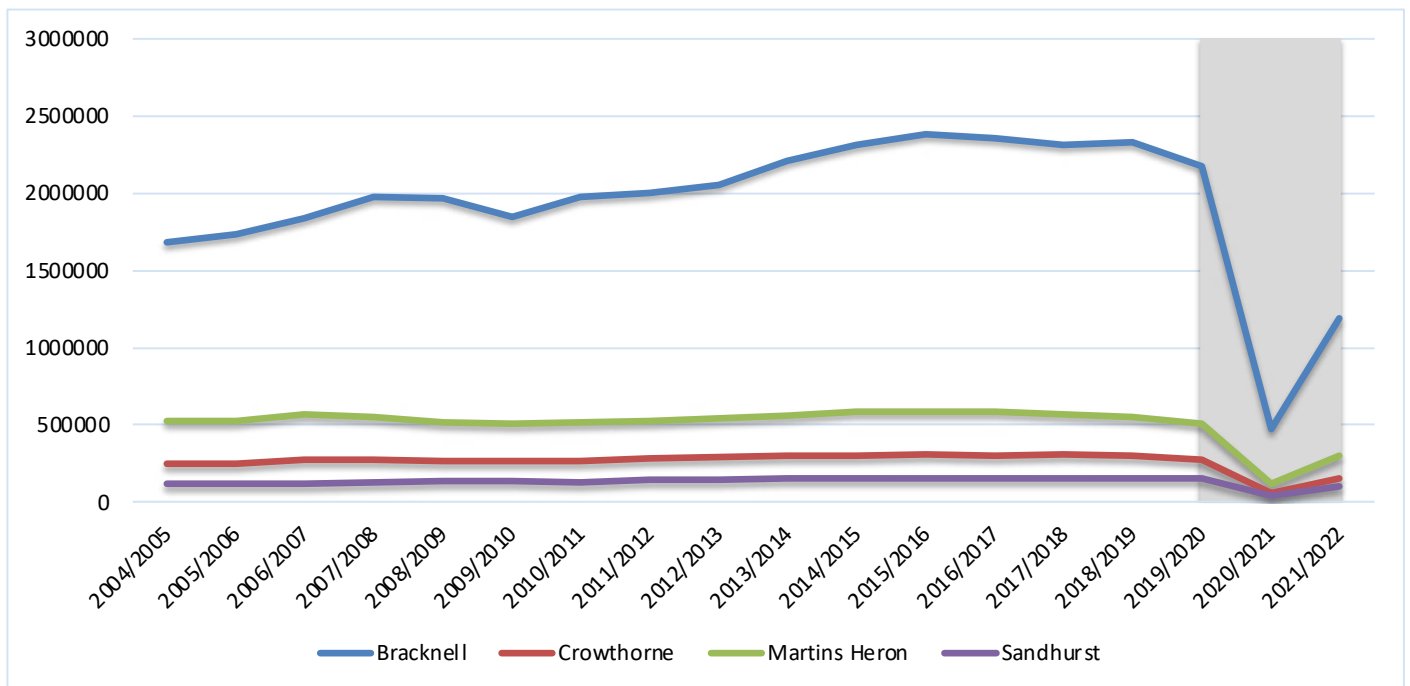
**Rail**

Rail passenger data is available from the Office of Rail and Road and covers back to 2004. Station entries and exits at Bracknell Forest’s four stations (Bracknell, Crowthorne, Martins Heron and Sandhurst) had been at a fairly consistent high between 2015 and 2019, reflecting a similar picture of steadily increasing train use from the 1990s at a national level.

Again, the Covid-19 pandemic severely hit rail passenger numbers, and whilst numbers have bounced back, they are not at the levels seen on weekday services pre-2020.

However, in a similar pattern to road traffic, whilst peak time travel has remained subdued, the operators have reported an increase in weekend passenger numbers, in some cases exceeding those ever seen before. This has been presumed as a result of people getting out to enjoy weekend activities, particularly in London, after a period of being isolated, however should the trend continue timetabling may have to be amended to address the change in people’s travel habits. Measures such as congestion charging and an expanded low-emission zone in London may be acutely further influencing increased rail travel towards the capital for leisure purposes.

**Graph 6: Station entries and exists (ORR) – Bracknell Forest rail stations, 2004 - 2022**



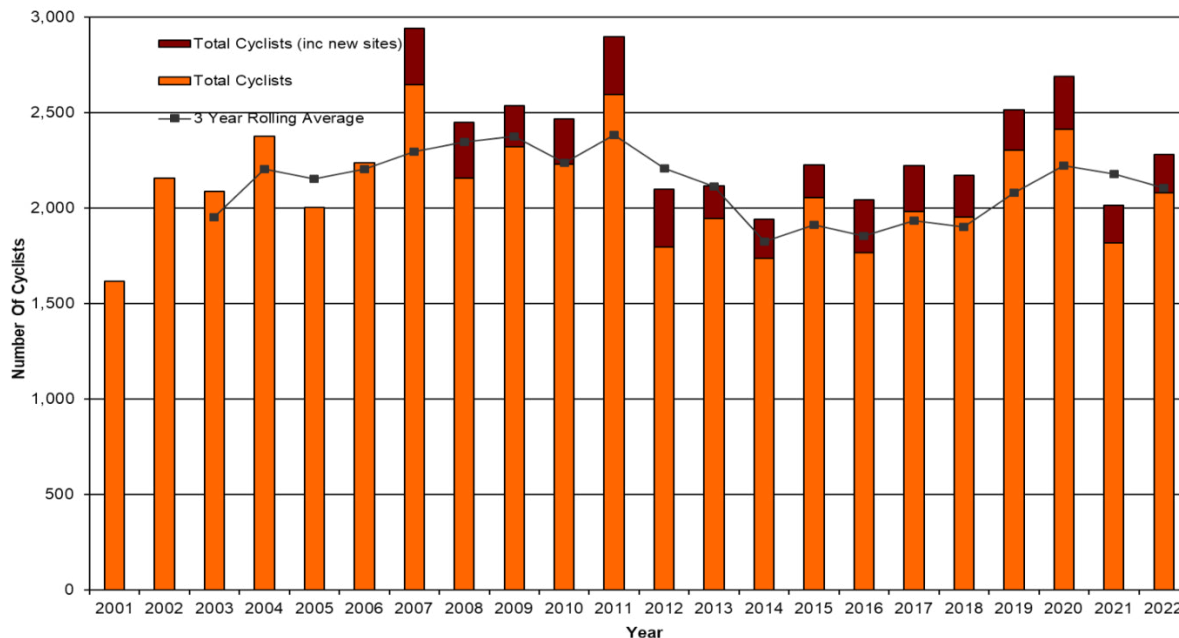
Whilst the Council has limited influence and control over the railways, which are managed by Network Rail, and operated by South Western Railway and Great Western Railway, there have still been successes through partnership working, with the improvement of Bracknell station forecourt, and platform lengthening to allow 10-car trains on the Waterloo to Reading line among the achievements during the LTP3 period.

## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

### Cycling

The Council has carried out annual surveys of walking and cycling at 20 fixed locations around the Borough since 2001. Whilst these surveys only provide a 'snapshot', they are co-ordinated to be on neutral weekdays in the first week of May for as much consistency and reliability as possible.

#### Cycling, 2001 – 2022 (20 locations)



2020 saw one of the highest levels of cycling recorded over the 20-year survey period, with over 2500 cyclists passing the monitoring points in a day, and an increase of 7% on 2019 (another fairly high year).

However, 2021 actually saw a significant reduction, to one of the lowest counts over the 20 year survey period. Whilst this survey was undertaken during a fairly cold and overcast week, at the end of another significant lockdown period, the reduction tallies with findings from the National Travel Survey:

Following a peak in cycling in 2020, the number of trips and distance cycled per person fell back towards pre-pandemic trends. In 2021, there was an average of 55 miles travelled per person, which was similar to pre-pandemic levels, although a greater proportion of the trips were for leisure purposes, and a smaller proportion were for commuting trips. This matches changes seen in commuting trip numbers generally since the start of the pandemic. Compared to 2020, average cycling trips decreased by 27% in 2021 to 15 trips per person, a figure which is 7% lower than 2019.

Whilst this was concerning, Bracknell Forest's own 2022 survey results showed an encouraging increase of 13% on 2021. The Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will aim to identify areas of the network that can be improved.

#### Key considerations and challenges:

- Despite a well-developed network of cycleways, levels of cycling in BFC are still lower than regional and national averages
- Key barriers appear to be concerns about the speed and volume of vehicular traffic, vegetation and debris on paths
- Adoption of the new BFC residential travel plan will allow us to engage with new residents and establish help establish more sustainable travel patterns at an early stage

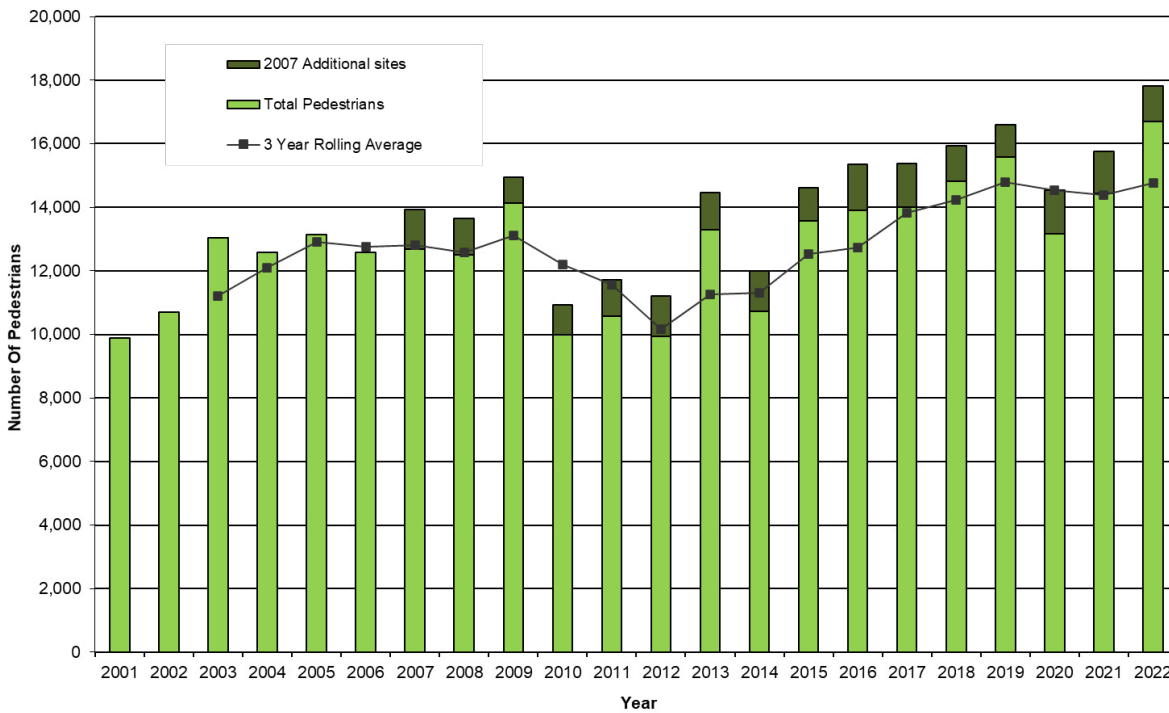




### Walking

The Council's annual surveys count pedestrians at the same locations as cyclists. Conversely, despite a general upward trend until 2019, walking levels were seen to drop in 2020, then rebounded to an all-time high in 2022.

### Walking, 2001 – 2022 (20 locations)



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

To again compare these stats to national trends, the 2021 National Travel Survey found that:

Walking trips in 2021 were similar to the average in 2020 at 235 trips per person, but a decrease of 6% compared to 2019. Average miles walked decreased by 4% in 2021 to 210 miles per person compared to 2020 (220 miles per person), however, this remains an increase of 3% compared to 2019 (205 miles per person)

The Council continues to invest in and encourage walking, particularly for short trips, through new footways and improvements, crossings and lighting, and interactive initiatives such as Eco-rewards.

Key considerations and challenges:

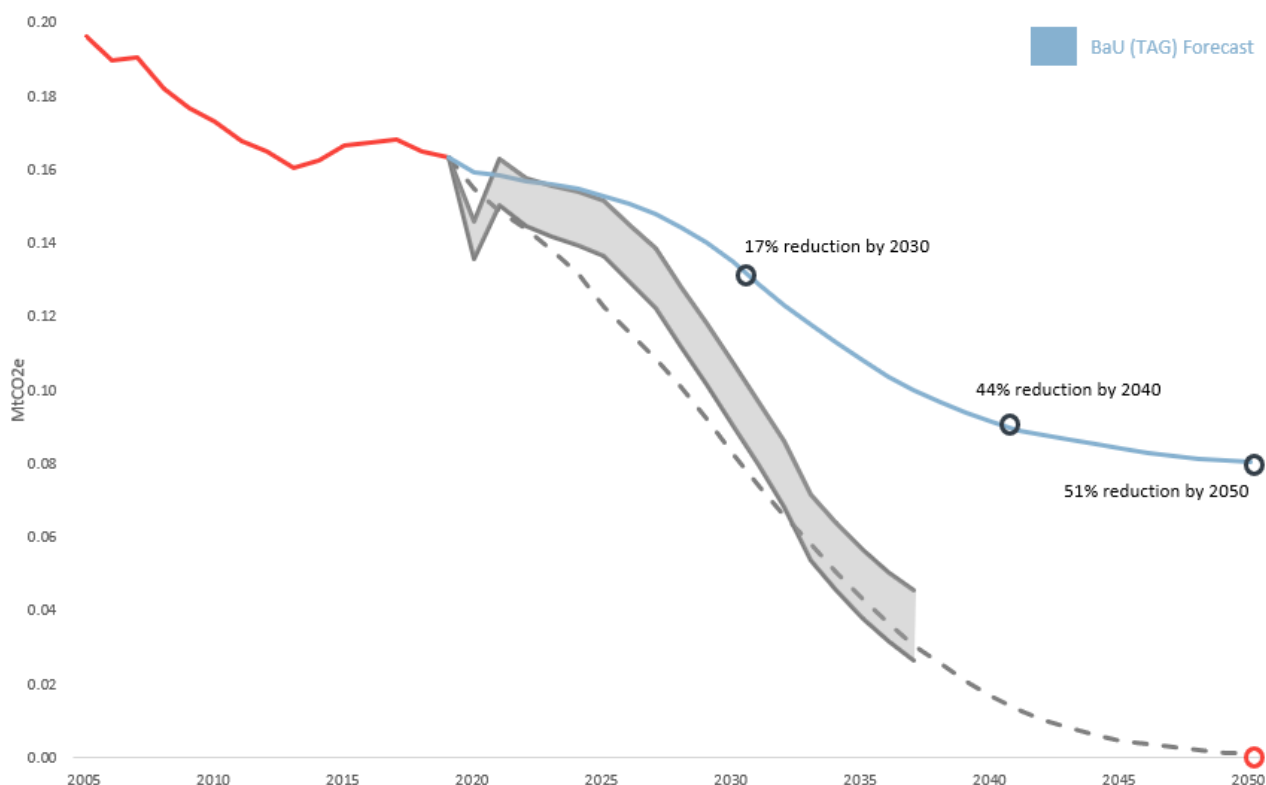
- Although Bracknell Forest has an extensive network of walkways and underpasses, some users are concerned for their personal safety
- Narrow or absent footways, difficulty crossing busy roads and poor surface quality are also issues
- As many of the key walking routes are currently shared paths with cyclists, if we are successful in improving cycling levels it could be to the detriment of walking

### LTP4 – Development

With a new emerging Local Plan for the period to 2037 it would seem logical to align the LTP4 with this timeframe. New LTP development guidance is due to be released by central Government in Summer 2023 and therefore the LTP4 will cover the period 2024-2037.

It is clear that the climate change agenda, and decarbonisation, will need to be central to all transport objectives as we move forward. The Government aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, an objective also shared by the BFC Climate Change Strategy. We have carried out initial scoping work with specialists at WSP to consider possible carbon emissions in Bracknell to 2050 based on various scenarios. The graph below shows two carbon pathways (grey) based on government projections adapted to Bracknell Forest aiming for Net Zero, along with a 'Business as Usual' pathway (blue).

### Carbon emissions from Transport, Bracknell Forest, 2005 – 2050 (million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)

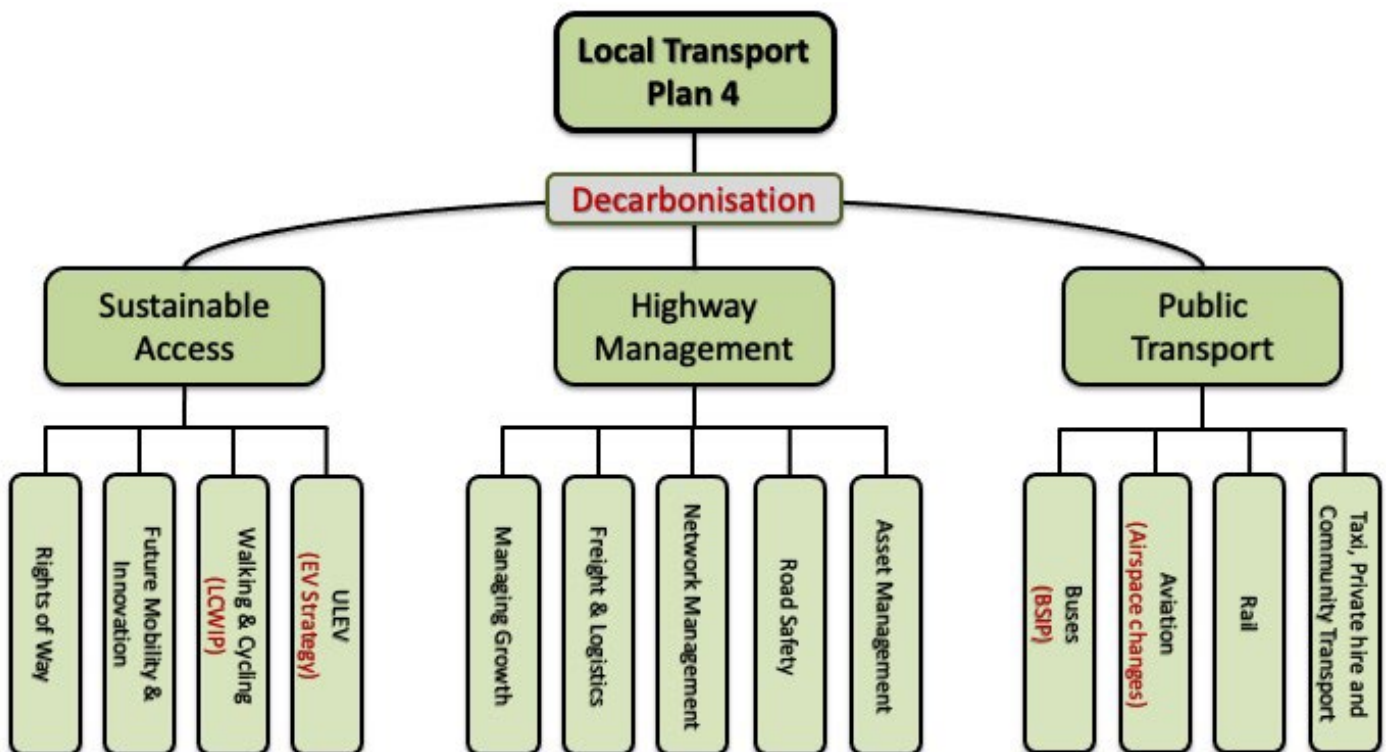


Without policies and interventions to reduce transport emissions in the Borough, the net zero target will not be reached. The LTP4 vision will therefore need to have a strong focus on sustainable, clean transport. Our current LTP vision “To develop a sustainable transport system that supports local economy, provides choice and improves quality of life in a safe and healthy environment” is still very relevant in this regard. However we will need to go further under the next plan to ensure we are on course for net zero by 2050.

New and further steps will need to be explored, including how the Council can lead and support the changes in travel behaviour necessary to decarbonise transport. Technology will play a key part, building on our ability to optimise efficiency of the current transport network. Reducing the need to travel whilst still supporting a thriving economy will be a challenge. So too will be replacing short local car trips with greener, healthier alternatives. We will need to work collaboratively with colleagues in Planning and Public Health as well as businesses and local communities. The work achieved over the last 11 years gives us good momentum with a structured approach. Work has already started on policies and strategies required to take us into the new LTP4 period.

Figure 2 below is a first draft of the updated overarching strategy plan which will introduce new emerging themes: Decarbonisation, Future Mobility, Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, Highway Asset Management and the airspace changes proposed at nearby Heathrow and Farnborough Airports. Plans such as the BSIP and LCWIP will also be integrated.

With technology moving quickly and changes to our work and leisure habits, this approach has allowed us to modify supporting chapters/strategies to reflect emerging work and themes. These can be viewed electronically or printed as necessary.



## Local Transport Plan 3 - Summary Report

### Next steps

Through 2023 we will progress with the development of new policies for LTP4, building on the successes of LTP3 and following DfT guidance and best practice. It is important that we get input from colleagues and councillors across the organisation, and we will establish an internal stakeholder engagement group, meeting on a regular basis to shape our collective approach, considering decarbonisation as a core principle throughout.