



Congleton Town Council

Historic Market Town

Chief Officer: David McGifford CiLCA

Congleton Town Council Comments on the Transport Delivery Plan Consultation.

Members of Congleton Town Council raised the following points in connection with the Cheshire East Consultation on the Transport Plan Delivery Plan at a Strategy Working Group meeting held on the 8th of January. The comments of the Strategy Working Group were discussed at the Community and Environment Committee on the 21 January, the minutes of which were approved on the 11 March 2021.

General

In general Congleton Town Council was supportive of the measures being suggested by Cheshire East Council to deliver the Local Transport Plan for Congleton. At the Strategic Working Group, the Councillors agreed in principle with ALL 71 proposals being put forward, although acknowledged that some of the items – such as point 53 - were outside of the Congleton Town boundary and would wish to know the views of the residents and appropriate parish council.

Congleton Town Council also thought there were areas where more action was needed, and this paper largely covers the additional points that we wish to raise.

OBJECTIVES

The five objectives suggested by Cheshire East Council for the delivery of the Local Transport Plan in Congleton are:

1. Strengthening the transport network to accommodate development sites such as Congleton Business Park extension and residential developments in north Congleton included within the Local Plan;
2. Improving access on key routes to wider Cheshire, the Potteries and Greater Manchester;
3. Improving access to Congleton town centre for residents and visitors to support the town centre economy;
4. Supporting access to education and employment sites including Radnor Park Industrial Estate; and
5. Supporting access from rural communities to key services and employment.

Congleton Town Council (CTC) Response:

CTC supports the objectives, but would like to see Objective Three expanded to:

'Improving access to Congleton town centre and key attractions/destinations (e.g., Astbury Mere, Congleton Park, Congleton Station) for residents and visitors, to support the local economy

Reason: We believe many of the journeys made locally are not just to visit the Town Centre. Attention should also be given to areas that attract large numbers of users such as the key attractions and destination points.

Objective One: These options aim to improve access to the Local Plan development sites within Congleton and ensure that the transport network has capacity to support this growth:

Congleton Town Council agreed with the 9 actions proposed but would also ask for the following actions to be added:

- a) New Point: Include a long-term plan to extend the Congleton Link Road to the Newcastle Road A34 (this affects the properties within the development sites)
- b) In point 5 CTC would like to see separate cycle and footway paths on Link Road and adjoining roads – plus suggest additional wording to read ‘and connect Congleton Link Road to the town centre with cycle paths and footpaths ‘
- c) Within Objective 1 Congleton Town Council would like to see more emphasis on bus routes including adding bus routes to the new development sites so that no new home or business is more than 500m from a bus stop with a service at least every 15 minutes into Congleton centre
- d) Within Objective 1 Congleton Town Council would like to see an action Adding bus services to connect from business sites to Congleton Railway Station and Holmes Chapel Railway stations at morning and evening peak times and less frequently during the day, to connect with trains to Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent.

Objective Two: These options aim to improve transport connections along key corridors.

Congleton Town Council agreed with the 14 actions in this section. In addition, Congleton Town Council would like to see:

- a) Point 10 - Extend the Congleton Link Road to the Newcastle Road A34.
- b) Point 18 - Cycle and footway should be separate on the Link Road
- c) Point 18 - Add...’and connect Congleton Link Road to the town centre with cycle paths and footpaths
- d) Point 19 on buses could be strengthened. Congleton Town Council believes that the bus services need to be improved based on the needs of Congleton and surrounding parish residents as follows:
 - Encourage bus use, even by car owners through lower fares, better promotional campaigns and making all tickets cross-company.
 - Improve frequency: Buses between-towns should be at least every 30 minutes and the services extended into the evenings and on Sundays
 - Improve customer experience of bus use: Replace broken bus-stops, add digital displays. Have a local ‘bus app’ giving all timetables across companies and real-time information
- e) **RAIL:** Make services more attractive, integrated and customer centric. CTC agrees with points 20 -23 but would like to change the wording to make it clear this is to optimise

services based on the needs of Congleton town and surrounding parish residents. CTC also believes it is important to work with the local Rail User groups on improving rail services.

- f) CTC would like to see connecting bus services from **every** part of town to the station without changing buses, to fit with key commuter trains from 7-9am and 5-7pm
- g) Campaign for later trains from Manchester and from Stoke-on-Trent to link with theatre etc.
- h) Explore free bus use with rail ticket
- i) Free parking at Congleton station, or explore cheaper/easier parking options so that the parking charges and time taken to purchase a parking ticket does not deter people from using the train.

Objective Three: Several options have been developed to improve access to the town centre:

This is the Objective that CTC wanted to alter to read: 'Improving access to Congleton town centre and key attractions/destinations (e.g., Astbury Mere, Congleton Park, Congleton Station, schools and workplaces) for residents and visitors, to support the local economy

The Town Council agreed with the 24 actions identified in this part of the consultation and asked that

- a) Point 37 change to '20 mph in relevant residential areas and school streets'
- b) Point 30 – add 'No right turn from Chapel Street into Albert Place or Canal St'
- c) Point 50 - Congleton Railway Station needs free parking, not more spaces.
 - Car park is half-empty because commuters are parking along Cross Lane and surrounding areas, ever since the charges were introduced.
 - Parking at the station should be free of charge to encourage public transport use for journeys to Manchester, Stoke and further afield. Or at least it should be cheaper and easier for rail users.
- d) Point 51 – consider discounted parking fees for electric vehicles
- e) Additional action – consider Introducing an Integrated Transport Pass for Congleton Residents:
 - Annual Transport/Parking Pass for Congleton Residents for e.g., £50
 - Pass includes up to 4-hours per day parking as many times as required for one year. This would solve the problem of needing change for parking.
 - Free unlimited bus use included in the same Pass (may encourage car owners to use the bus sometimes)
 - Reduced Cost Pass for those who do not require parking, e.g., £20 per annum.
 - Encourage bus use in short journeys to and from the town centre and to and from Congleton Station – see bus suggestions
- f) Would like to see Walking and Cycling promoted through a multimedia campaign
- g) Add a pedestrian crossing at the end of Mountbatten Way near Aldi, at the roundabout
- h) Improve canal towpath and create separate walking and cycling lanes where possible and automatic lighting in dark areas for winter walking/cycling
- i) Biddulph Valley Way - create separate walking and cycling lanes.
- j) BUS: Encourage bus use, even by car owners (see point 19 on Objective 2)

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- Lower fares and a multimedia promotional campaign to get people using the buses
 - All tickets should be cross-company
 - Improve bus frequency
 - Round-town should be every 15 minutes
 - All services to run in the evenings and on Sundays
 - Extend and improve the round-town bus services (90,91,92...)
 - Review routes so that buses go into estates, so no house is more than 500m away
 - Add a West Heath circular route (which has been lost)
 - Add new round-town services for new housing estates
 - Add a bus service between the shopping centres in Congleton (Town Centre, Barn Road, West Heath)
 - Have multi-bus 'town hopper' tickets for a day/week/month/year – low-cost
 - Improve customer experience of bus use
 - Replace broken bus-stops
 - Add digital displays
 - Have a local 'bus app' giving all timetables across companies and real-time information
- k) Review traffic speed in Leek Road, Manchester Road, Macclesfield and other main routes –
- consider average speed cameras
 - Improve signage and better enforcement
- l) Refuse trucks should avoid major roads and school routes at peak times.

Objective Four These scheme options aim to improve connections by all modes of travel to schools and employment within the Congleton area:

- a) Congleton Town Council agreed in principle with the 7 actions lists in under this objective, however in line with the other Objectives the Town Council does believe that the bus options for school and employment sites also needs to be strengthened.
- *“In comparison with figures for England, bus service use in Congleton is 7% lower and rail use is 2% lower than the national average.”* There is little in the current proposals to improve this situation. Our current transport infrastructure encourages people not to use public transport for commuting to schools and work: For example:
 - The bus services in Congleton are week-daytime only, do not support commuting to work and are infrequent and more expensive than using a car.
 - Parking charges at Congleton station have meant that many people living on the north side of Congleton now drive to Manchester or Stockport instead of using the train
 - In addition, many train commuters now block the roads around the station by parking there in preference to paying the charges.
- b) School buses need a radical overhaul - they are often a poor experience for many – expensive, requiring a long-term commitment, subject to overcrowding and concern for pupil welfare.

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- c) There is virtually no option to travel to work or school on the bus in Congleton. Apart from the dedicated school services there is little bus connectivity for schools. Any pupils involved in after-school activities do not have a public service bus to take them home.
- d) Congleton Town Council would like to see Improved surface and lighting on Tommy's Lane and evaluate feasibility of pedestrian crossing on Brook St at the end. This would help pupils for Havannah, Buglawton and Eaton Bank.
- e) More efforts put into organising 'walking buses' to primary schools across the town – promote and engage the community. Also – cycling buses – especially for high schools
- f) Pedestrian crossing on A34 Newcastle Road near the Mount
- g) Pedestrian Crossing at Mossley Traffic Lights – a key walking route from Henshall Hall and Woburn Drive to Mossley Primary School.
- h) Review air quality outside schools and implement 'anti-idling' campaigns
- i) Refuse trucks should avoid school roads at school times
- j) Incentivise or set up 'car share' schemes in Congleton area

Our responses to the earlier Objectives also apply here:

1. Make bus services frequent, cheap and available all day and evening
2. Make parking at the station free
3. Connect bus and rail with timed services for commuters
4. Have integrated bus/rail/parking tickets for commuters and leisure travellers alike
5. Encourage bus and rail use with a multichannel promotional campaign.

Objective 5 These options aim to improve connections to employment and services for those living in rural areas

Congleton Town Council agreed with the 11 actions suggested under this objective and would also ask Cheshire East Council to consider

- a) Bus services – consider linking village bus services to the new housing developments on the outskirts of Congleton e.g., Eaton with the Manchester Road area and Somerford with Back Lane, then into Congleton Town Centre.
- b) Point 71 – Promote Flexilink service more.
- c) As many of these proposals were outside of the Congleton Boundary the views of the parishes are very important as they will best understand their communities.
- d) Consider bus links to Brereton Heath and Astbury Mere, and review parking in these sites

On behalf of the Community and Environment Committee.



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