



Cirencester Area Public  
Transport Study

**Cirencester Area  
Education Travel**

July 2023



a company of Royal HaskoningDHV

# Cirencester Area Public Transport Study

## **Cirencester Area Education Travel**

Final report

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For:



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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Integrated Transport Planning (ITP) was appointed by Cotswold District Council (CDC) to consider various aspects of public transport in Cirencester and the wider area. The study was funded by the Gloucestershire Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF).
- 1.2 This report considers aspects of transport provision linked to education in and around Cirencester. Two other separate reports consider:
  - Options to improve public transport links between Cirencester, Kemble and Tetbury
  - Potential locations to establish a transport hub in Cirencester town centre

## Study aims

- 1.3 The aim of this study element was to identify and assess the transport needs and opportunities of a cluster of secondary, further and higher education provision in Cirencester to the west of the town centre, which in combination form an 'Education Quarter'. In so doing, the study considers the implications for the wider public transport network centred on Cirencester. The report has examined the current and potential future situation regarding transport to and from the Education Quarter, with the following aims:
  - Seek to establish the public transport demand and potential demand arising from education travel in this area, including additional demand resulting from The Steadings development and as a result of Gloucestershire County Council projections for education demand.
  - Identify options for how this demand could be met through changes to public transport provision in the area.
  - Assess how the opportunities presented by subsidised bus services serving the college could be better used to support wider public bus usage.
  - Bring these things together to establish how education related transport should shape the provision of services in the core project of improving public transport links to Kemble railway station, Cirencester, Tetbury and surrounding areas and the potential for these journeys to contribute to the overall viability of those services.

## Study approach

- 9.1 The study drew on various sources of information and from direct engagement with stakeholders and interested parties. A Project Steering Group oversaw all aspects of the study, providing inputs and challenge throughout, and discussion on the emerging findings and recommendations. The Steering Group consisted of representatives of the following organisations:
- Cotswold District Council
  - Cirencester Town Council
  - Cirencester's Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group
  - Gloucestershire County Council (Integrated Transport Unit)
  - Gloucestershire County Council (Transport Policy)
  - Cirencester Community Railway Project
- 9.2 Outside of the Steering Group, and as part of the wider consideration of the public transport network, there was engagement with the following:
- Gloucestershire County Council (Integrated Transport Unit; Transport Planning)
  - Cirencester District Council (Planning: Sustainability; Community Wellbeing; Tourism)
  - Tetbury Town Council
  - Greening Tetbury
  - Parish Councils
  - Cirencester College
  - Deer Park School
  - Royal Agricultural University
  - Cirencester Community Rail
  - Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership
  - Cirencester Action on Buses
  - Sustrans
  - Bathurst Estates and its transport consultant (iTransport)
  - Stagecoach West
  - Great Western Railway
  - National Express (and Bennett's Coaches that operate on its behalf)
- 9.3 For the education travel considerations there was direct engagement with Cirencester College, Royal Agricultural College (RAU), Deer Park School, Kingshill School, Stagecoach and Gloucestershire County Council's Home to School Transport Team,

along with consideration of a draft joint travel plan for the three institutions in the Education Quarter.

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<sup>1</sup> Cirencester College, Deer Park School and the Royal Agricultural University

## 2. Context

### Cirencester

- 10.1 Cirencester is the largest town in Cotswold District, with a population of approximately 20,000 people. The population of the town is spread across residential areas to the northeast, southeast, south and west of the town centre, which is itself encircled on three sides by bypass roads. The existence of Cirencester Park means there is no development to the northwest of the town centre.
- 10.2 Cirencester is the focus for retail, public services and education in the sub-region and the town centre itself has vibrant retail and hospitality provisions within an attractive historic setting, which attracts many visitors and tourists. The town's facilities serve the surrounding rural hinterland.
- 10.3 Cirencester is also a centre for employment, with about 15,000 jobs based in the town in 2020<sup>2</sup>. Its location also makes it attractive to commuters working in Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Swindon and London.
- 10.4 The town itself does not have a railway station. The nearest station is in Kemble, which requires a journey of around 7km from the town centre. This is served by Great Western Railway (GWR), with trains between Cheltenham, Gloucester, Swindon and London Paddington.
- 10.5 The town's population and employment provision are set to continue to grow in the coming years, albeit with an increasingly ageing profile. For example, a significant development, including 2,350 new homes and around 9 hectares of additional employment land, is underway on the southwest edge of the town, in the form of The Steadings (planning application reference: 16/00054/OUT). On the opposite side of the A429 Fosse Way to The Steadings, a new 12 hectare business park comprising educational, research, agricultural business uses/conference facility also has planning permission at the Royal Agricultural University Triangle Site (planning application reference: 20/03566/REM).
- 10.6 The town is home to Cirencester College, which draws students from a wide area and continues to expand. Close to the College, on the western fringe of the town, is the Royal Agricultural University (RAU). Whilst currently this offers specialist courses, it also has plans to grow and develop, offering a broader range of courses. The number of

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<sup>2</sup> Nomis Business Register and Employment Survey (2020)

students is expected to increase from 1,200 to 1,500 in the coming years, most of whom will come to learn and live in Cirencester.

- 10.7 Cotswold District Council is keen to see Cirencester's appeal and economy grow. There is currently a new Framework Masterplan for the town centre under development, which will seek to provide a foundation for growth and improvement, including expansion of the town's evening economy, including a new cinema and an enhanced leisure offer, and the provision of many additional homes in and around the town centre.
- 10.8 Furthermore, the Council has committed to carbon neutrality by 2045, which will require significant action on several fronts, including transport. Early work on Cotswold's Sustainable Transport Strategy has identified a need to triple public transport mileage by 2045 to meet this objective. This will require significant enhancement of public transport across the district and within Cirencester itself. Not only will more services be needed, but it will also be important for greater integration between transport modes, pointing to the need for a dedicated transport hub in the town centre.

## Local policy context

### Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan (under development)

- 10.9 The Plan seeks to improve all aspects of the town and local area. Sustainability and good accessibility by alternative travel modes to the car are key themes, with the aim of reducing car journeys.
- 10.10 Projects under consideration include the principle of 20-minute neighbourhoods, with the ability to access local needs within 20 minutes by walking, cycling or public transport. It also includes the funding of regular, all week (including late evening) public transport, connections to regional centres (e.g. Cheltenham), rail interchanges, hospitals and local destinations (e.g. Fairford and Tetbury). A further proposal is to improve the linkages between the RAU, Cirencester College and the rest of Cirencester.

### Cotswold District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024

- 10.11 The Corporate Plan sets out various aims for the district and for the Council to pursue. Important ones that support the improvement of public transport include:
- Encouraging reduction in carbon emissions by promoting sustainable travel options.

- Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy to reduce the reliance on the car and establish better sustainable transport routes and travel options.

### Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2018)

- 10.12 As part of its vision and aims, the Local Plan seeks to support the local economy by encouraging the vitality and viability of town centres, including maintaining Cirencester's key employment and service role, and by supporting sustainable tourism. Furthermore, it seeks to promote sustainable travel by ensuring that development takes place in sustainable locations, which can offer better access to facilities, jobs and public transport, as well as supporting improvements in public transport and provision for walking and cycling. These principles are promoted through Policies DS1 (Development Strategy) and INF3 (Sustainable Transport).
- 10.13 The Local Plan highlights the strategic importance of Cirencester. 25% of the district's population lives in the town, a third of all employment is based there and it is listed in the top 200 retail centres in the UK.
- 10.14 The Plan notes the high dependence on car travel in the area.

### Partial Update of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031

- 10.15 A partial update of the adopted Local Plan is currently underway. The principal aim is to make the Local Plan 'green to the core'. In essence, this means updating the Local Plan so that it better responds to, and takes action on, the Council's declared climate Change Emergency. This will include updates to various transport-related policies and the policies concerning Cirencester, which will help to reduce transport-related carbon dioxide emissions and will help to deliver the emerging Sustainable Transport Strategy (discussed later in this section).
- 10.16 An Evidence Paper: Sustainable Transport and Air Quality, supporting the Local Plan 2018-2031 Partial Update, suggests the need for more direct promotion of sustainable travel in the Local Plan policies.

### Cotswold District Council Climate Emergency Strategy 2020–2030 (2020)

- 10.17 Cotswold District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to "making our activities net-zero carbon as soon as possible, aiming for an 80% reduction against a 1990 baseline by 2030, and a 100% reduction by 2045, with no reliance on offsetting or the trading of carbon credits." In response, it produced a

Climate Emergency Strategy in 2020, which sets out high-level principles, targets and action areas to respond to climate change.

- 10.18 Concerning transport, the strategy highlights that over 45% of emissions emitted in Cotswold District in 2018 derived from transport and the reduction in road transport emissions is recognised as a 'big win'. The authority will seek to deliver multiple benefits through the transport network by reducing carbon emissions, improving local air quality, and providing enhanced access to services. These goals will be refined further in the sustainable transport strategy, but clearly support the need for the provision of attractive public transport services.

### Cotswold District Council Sustainable Transport Strategy (in development)

- 10.19 In response to its Climate Emergency Declaration, Cotswold District Council committed to producing a Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) to guide the decarbonisation of transport in the district. The STS is in production and seeks to establish a specific decarbonisation trajectory for central Cirencester, alongside a corresponding increase in use of sustainable modes of transport.
- 10.20 The first phase of work for the STS has been completed and identifies a high-level framework for the necessary shifts in transport behaviour by 2045 to meet the net zero carbon target. These include:
- A reduction of 25% in annual travel mileage
  - One third reduction in private vehicle mode share of travel mileage, and for all of that to be by zero emission vehicles
  - Tripling of active travel mileage
  - Tripling of public transport mileage
- 10.21 Proceeding in an iterative fashion, this study and the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan will seek to support and enable the increased uptake of public transport and other sustainable modes identified as required in the STS.

### GFirst LEP Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy (2019)

- 10.22 This sets out the desire for Gloucestershire to be a leader in sustainable growth and to be "the greenest place to live and work in England." It seeks to support a reduction in carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, with an aspiration to go further and faster.

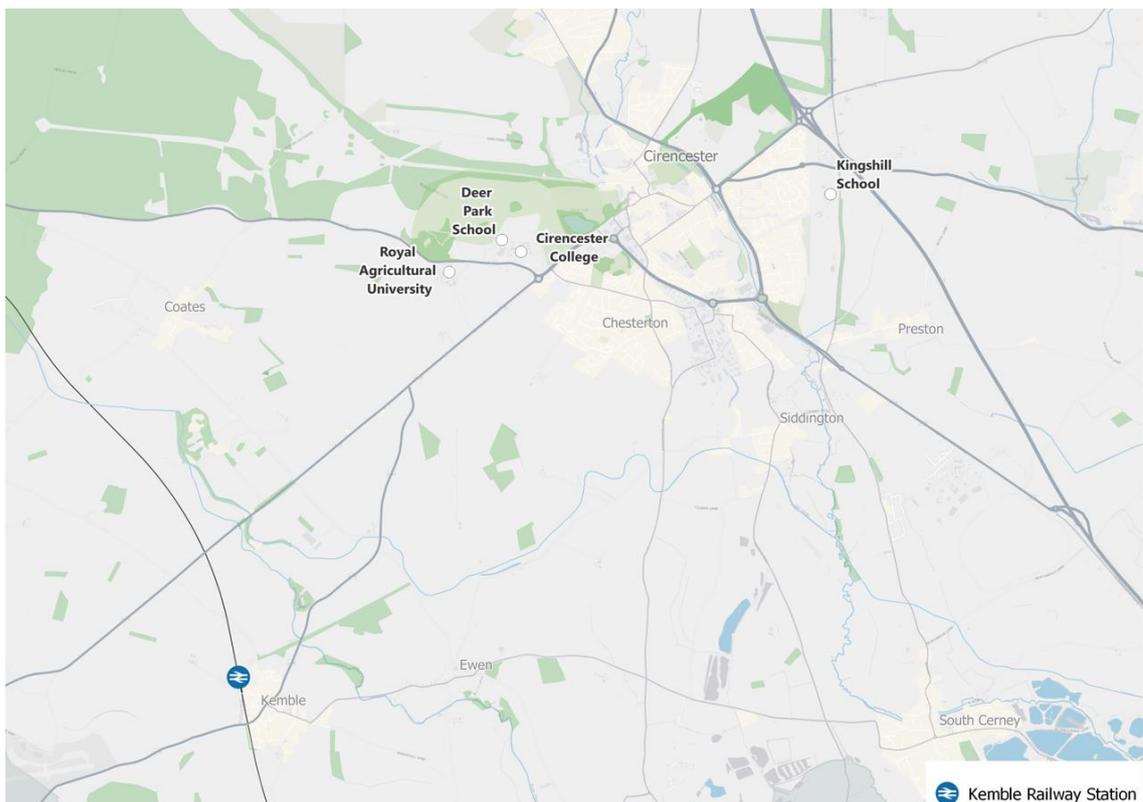
10.23 The Strategy notes how reliable door to door transport choices will be key to attracting and retaining young people, securing the county's economic resilience, boosting productivity and encouraging long term development. In doing so, it wants to achieve a switch to sustainable clean public transport.

## 3. Education-related travel

### Overview

- 11.1 Education provision is an important aspect to Cirencester. The Education Quarter is 1.5km to the southwest of the town centre, off the junction of the A429 Tetbury Road and A419 Stroud Road. It includes:
- Cirencester College
  - Royal Agricultural University (RAU)
  - Deer Park School
- 11.2 To the east of the town is a further secondary school, Kingshill.

### Location plan



- 11.3 Given the proximity of the three institutions in the Education Quarter and their common issues relating to travel and transport, they collaborated in the development of a joint travel plan in 2020.

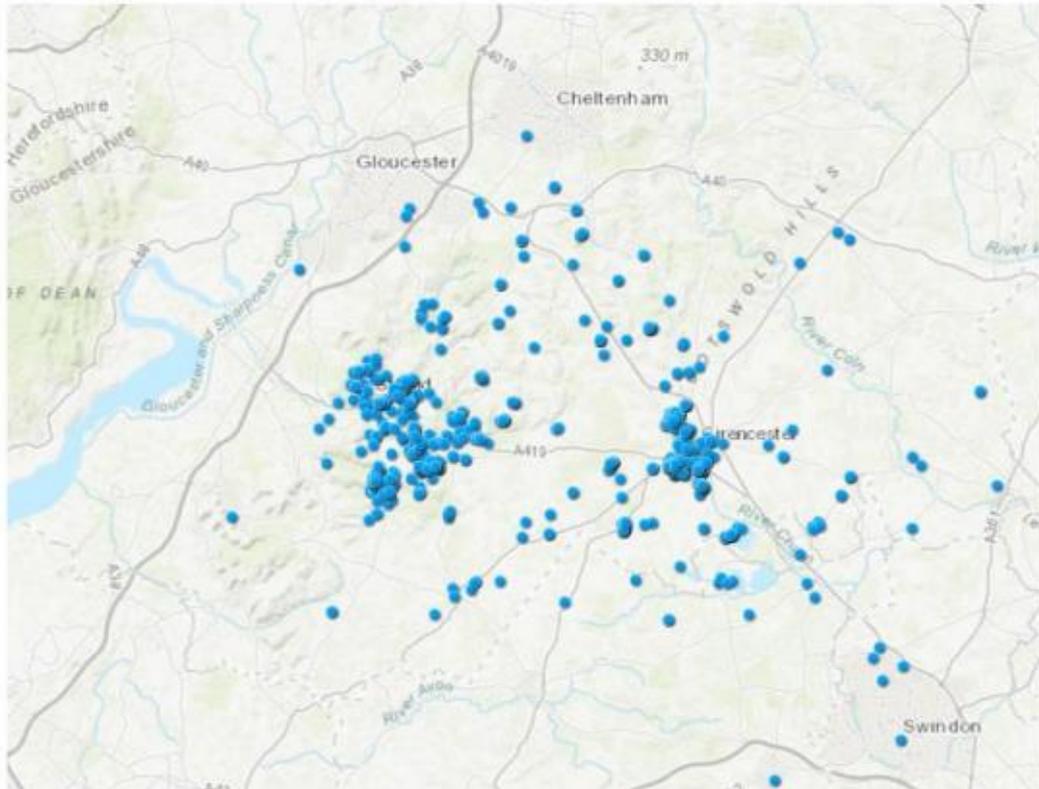
## Cirencester Education Quarter Travel Plan

- 11.4 Collectively, these sites see over 4,000 people travel to them each day they are open, which is very significant to overall travel patterns and the balance of transport provision in the Cirencester area. Due to their location and the limitations of alternative forms of travel, there is significant car use to and from the sites. Virtually all staff travel by car. As such, each of the institutions maintain extensive car parks.
- 11.5 The aim of the travel plan is to reduce unnecessary car journeys by promoting sustainable travel options (walk, cycle, public transport) and identifying alternatives to single occupancy car journeys. Its intentions are to:
- Encourage more sustainable travel options and reduce the carbon footprint
  - Promote wellbeing by encouraging more active travel
  - Protect the environment
  - Work with partners to improve the availability, convenience and quality of public transport
  - Ensure safe access to/from the sites
  - Accommodate any growth in students and pupils without increasing road traffic

### Deer Park School

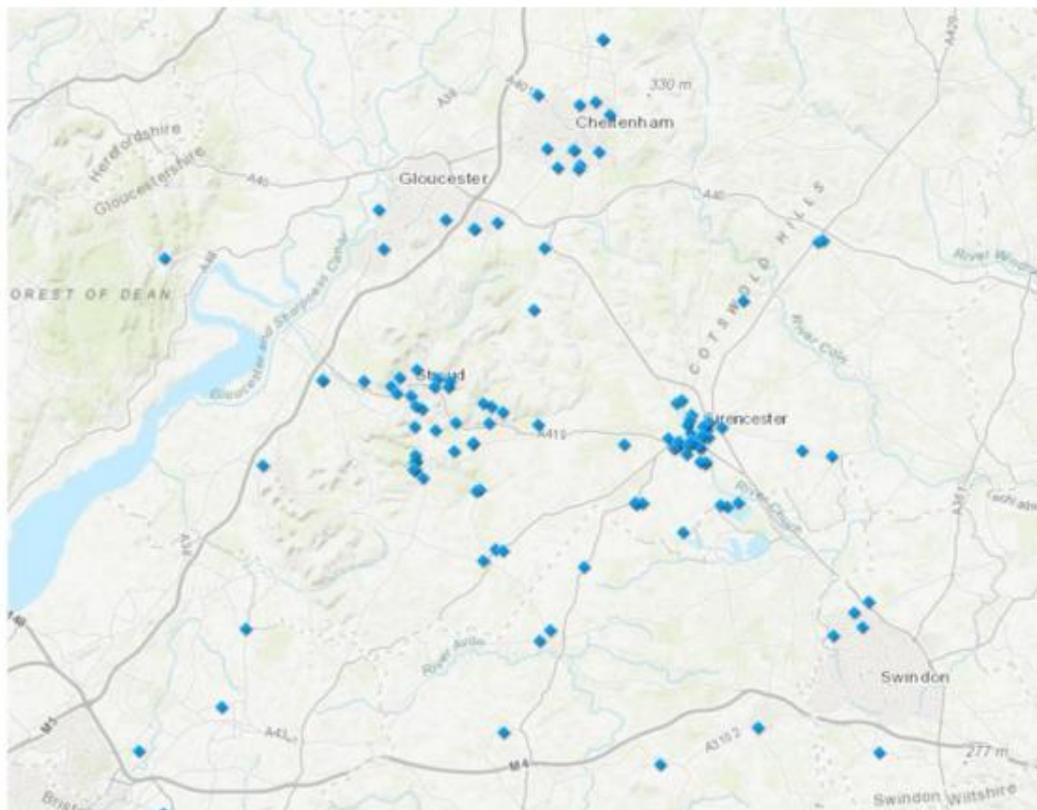
- 11.6 Deer Park School is a large comprehensive school with 925 pupils aged 11-16 that travel each day by foot, bicycle, car and bus. Ten buses serve the school, with pupils coming from up to 15-miles away. Significant concentrations of pupils come from Cirencester or the Stroud area. However, others are scattered widely, as seen on the following map. As a result, many pupils come by car, being dropped off and collected by parents at the start and end of day.

Cirencester Deer Park pupil postcodes



- 11.7 Staff are drawn from a wider area, with many travelling 15-30 miles, although again there are concentrations in Cirencester and Stroud.

Cirencester Deer Park staff postcodes

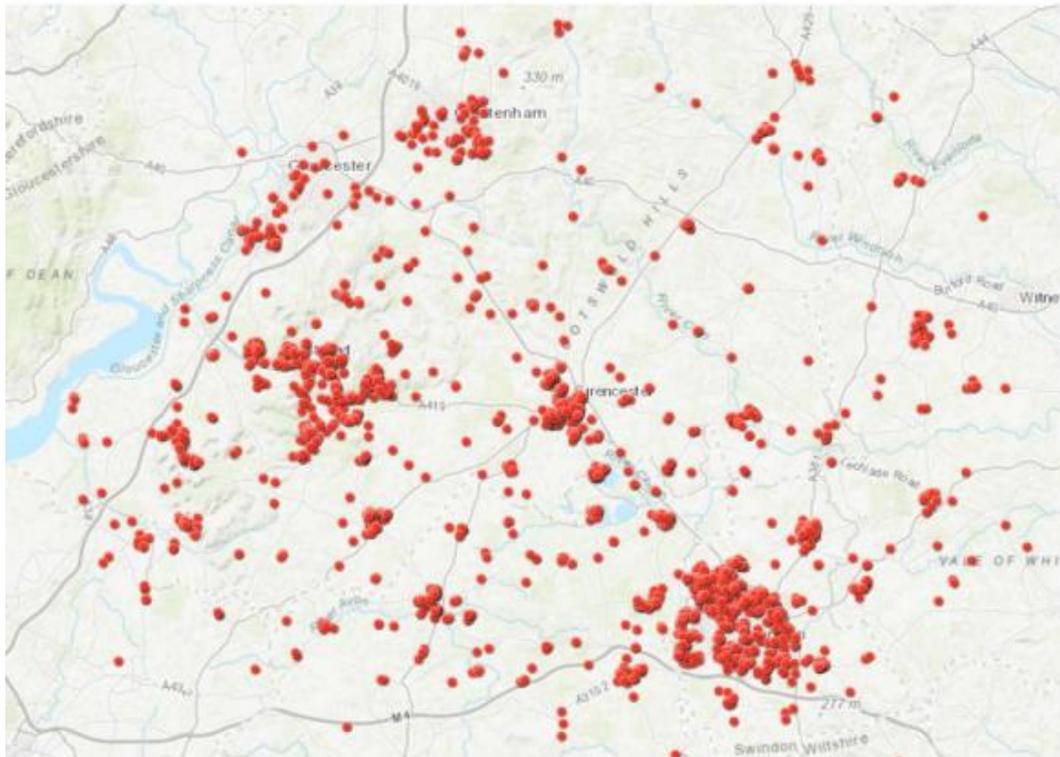


- 11.8 A survey amongst parents in 2019 highlighted several concerns about bus travel, including overcrowding on some buses and reliability. There was a preference to see pupils using dedicated bus services rather than having to use public services.
- 11.9 Whilst the school's main period of opening is 08:45 – 15:30, the school's sports facilities see some community use outside of these times.

### Cirencester College

- 11.10 At the time of producing the travel plan, the College (the largest sixth form centre in Gloucestershire) had 2,300 students and 100 apprentices drawn from a very wide area. Most students travelled 10-20 miles, but there was a significant minority travelling 20-30 miles. Of very local students in and around Cirencester, less than 50% cycled or walked.

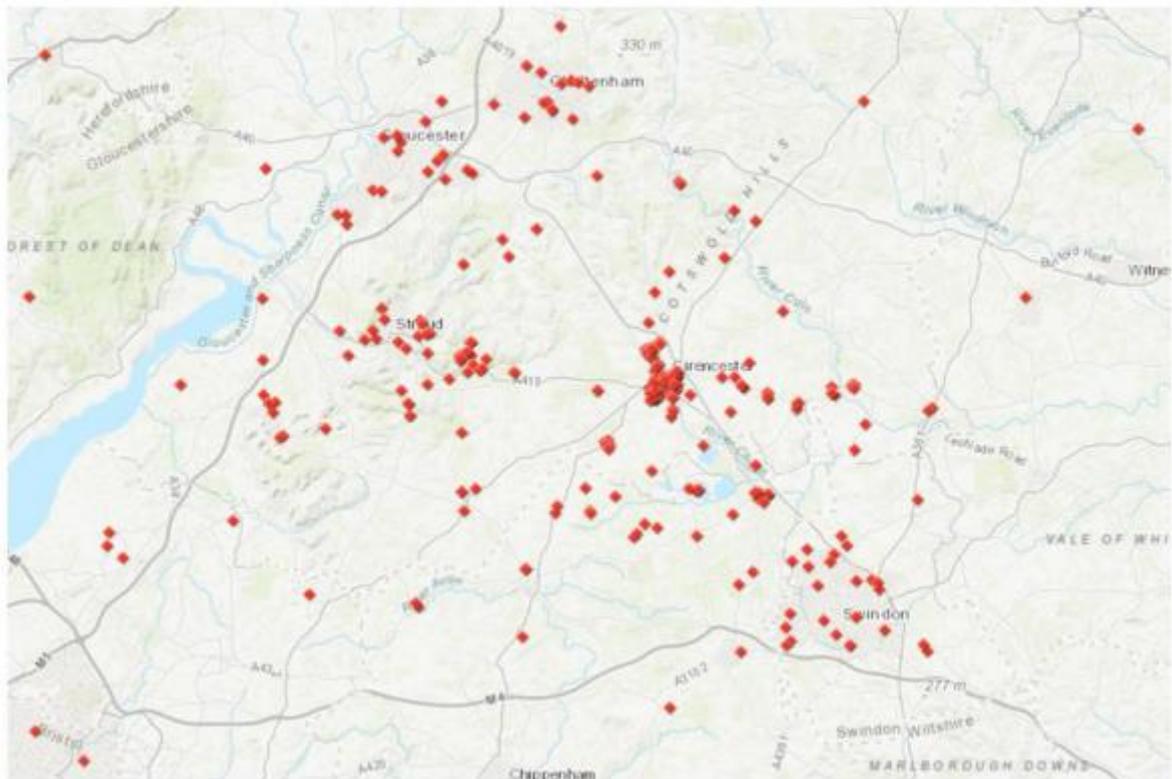
r College student postcodes



- 11.11 As part of a Carbon Management Plan, it was college policy to discourage car use and between 2015 and 2019 the number of students' cars fell by 14%.
- 11.12 60% of students use buses to travel to and from college. The College subsidises a network of bus services to enable students to access education. This funding comes from the College's allocation for education. Rural colleges receive no uplift to compensate for the lack of public transport and local councils do not contribute to student costs of travel post-16.
- 11.13 The College currently subsidises bus transport from a wide area including Carterton, Cheltenham, Dursley, Faringdon, Gloucester, Highworth, Malmesbury, Nailsworth, Royal Wootton Bassett, Stonehouse, Stow-on-the-Wold, Stroud, Swindon, Tetbury, Wanborough, Wotton-under-Edge and Yate.
- 11.14 The College promotes the bus network on its website, at open events, physical displays and via a linked Stagecoach website.
- 11.15 The College provides free parking for staff because of the costs of commuting. Students are charged a fee to park. In part this contributes to the upkeep of the car park, but also acts to deter students from driving and encourages use of the bus services.

- 11.16 To discourage students from driving off-site during the day, the College has invested in more social space and expanded both the scale and range of its own food outlets. It has also provided exercise sessions throughout the week and a gym to incentivise students to stay on site during their free periods.
- 11.17 Staff can use college buses, which are registered as local bus services open to all, but use is very low. Most staff finish work later than the student buses leave.
- 11.18 There were 350 staff, again travelling from across a wide area.

Cirencester College staff postcodes



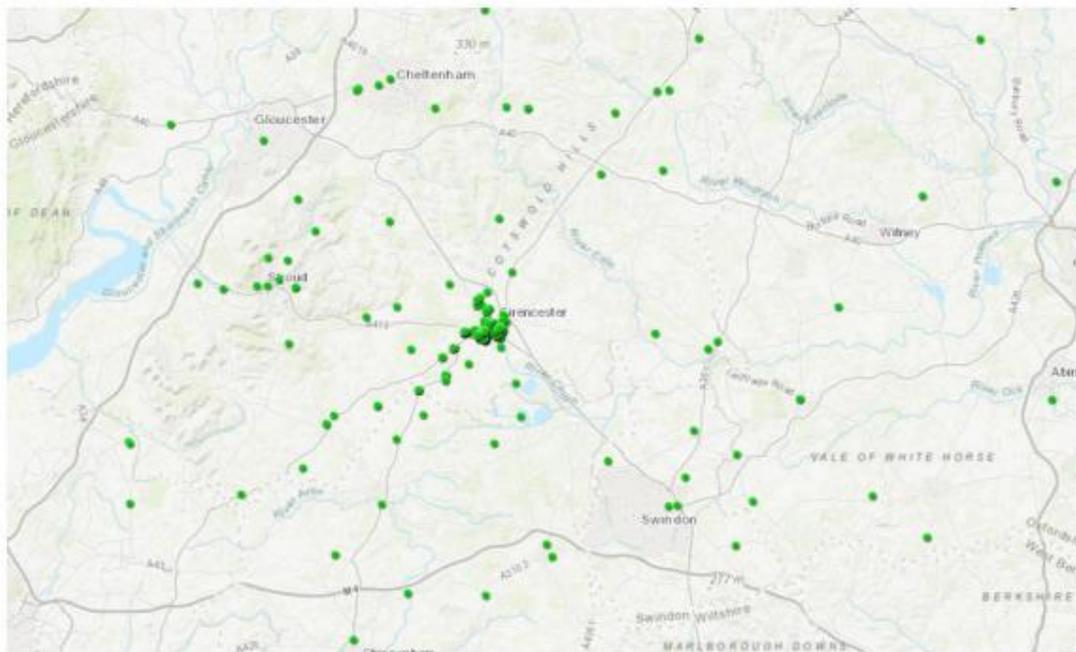
## Royal Agricultural University (RAU)

- 11.19 In 2020, the RAU had an existing Travel Plan (2017-22), linked to the development of the Growth Hub. This was subsumed into the wider joint plan.
- 11.20 Its objective was to encourage sustainable travel to and from the development site and reduce travel using single occupancy car. In support of that, the RAU:
  - Provides a free shuttle bus 7 days a week around Cirencester and to the Rural Innovation Centre at Harnhill
  - Has explored possible links between its shuttle and other public transport infrastructure, such as Kemble Station

- Administers an on-line car share scheme via Liftshare
- Accommodates year 1 students on-site to reduce the need for cars
- Provides 75 secure cycle spaces
- Has provided a walk route with lighting between the Growth Hub and College. This also links to the Stroud Road bus stop.

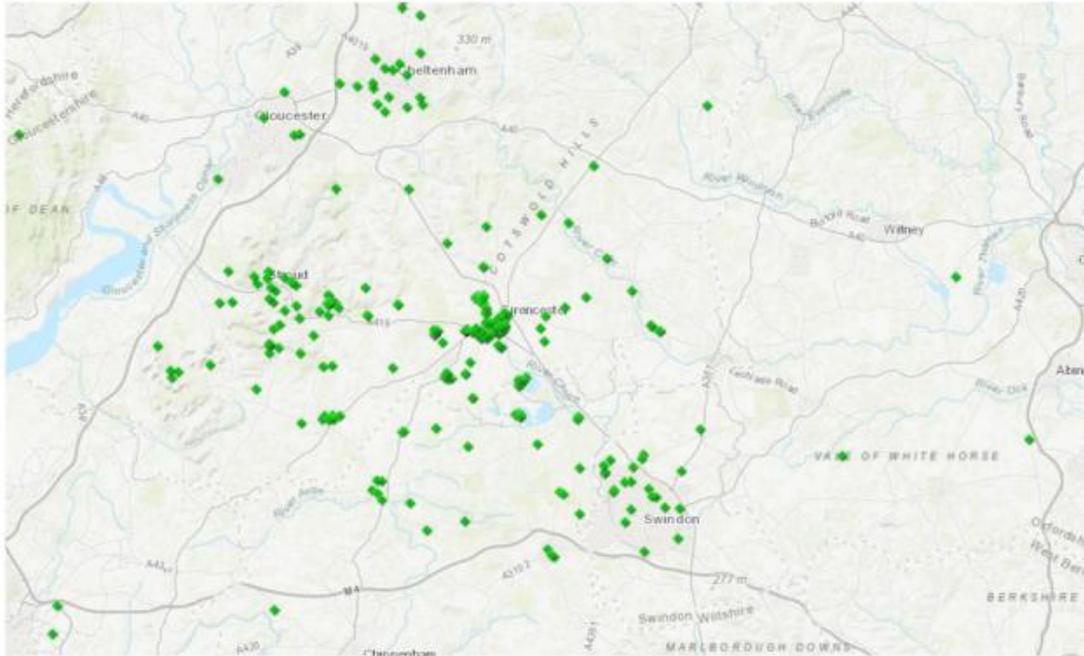
11.21 At the time, the RAU had over 800 students. Year 1 students were accommodated on-site, whilst others were in rented accommodation in Cirencester and the wider area. Due to their dispersed term time locations, most students own and use a car.

RAU student term time addresses



11.22 Staff are drawn from a wide area, with concentrations in Cirencester, Stroud, Swindon and Cheltenham. Many are part-time.

RAU staff postcodes

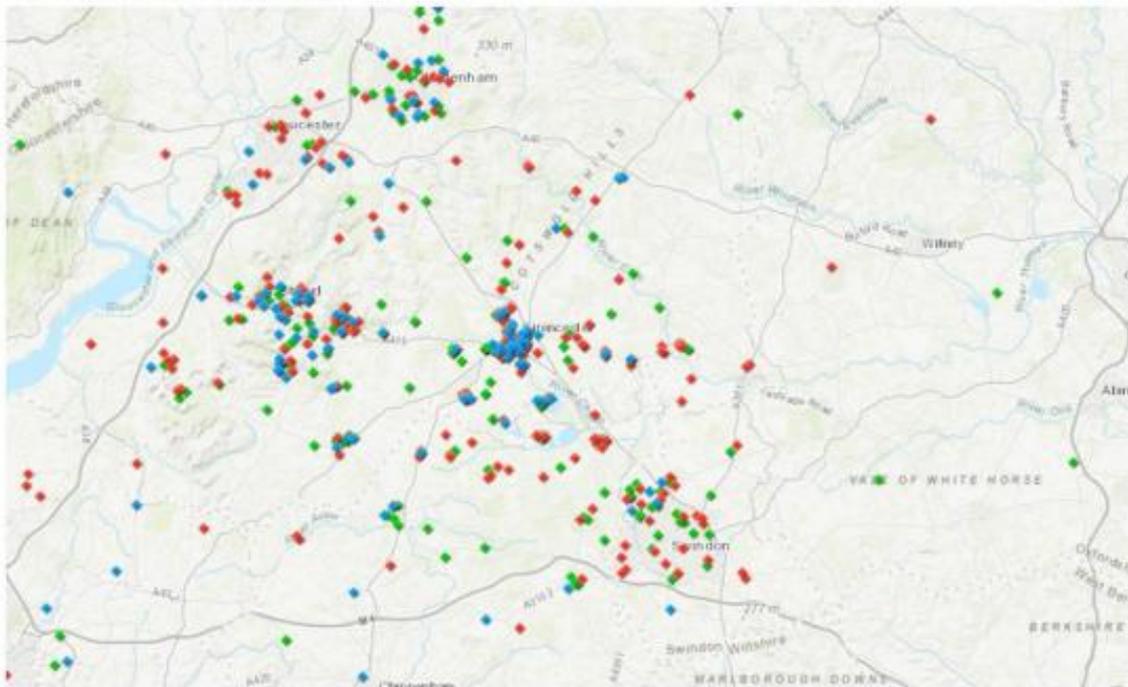


- 11.23 The Growth Hub and conferences draw other people to the site, most of whom arrive by car or taxi.
- 11.24 The travel plan noted that there was a high dependency on car-use by all those travelling to and from the site, where there were 400 car parking spaces.

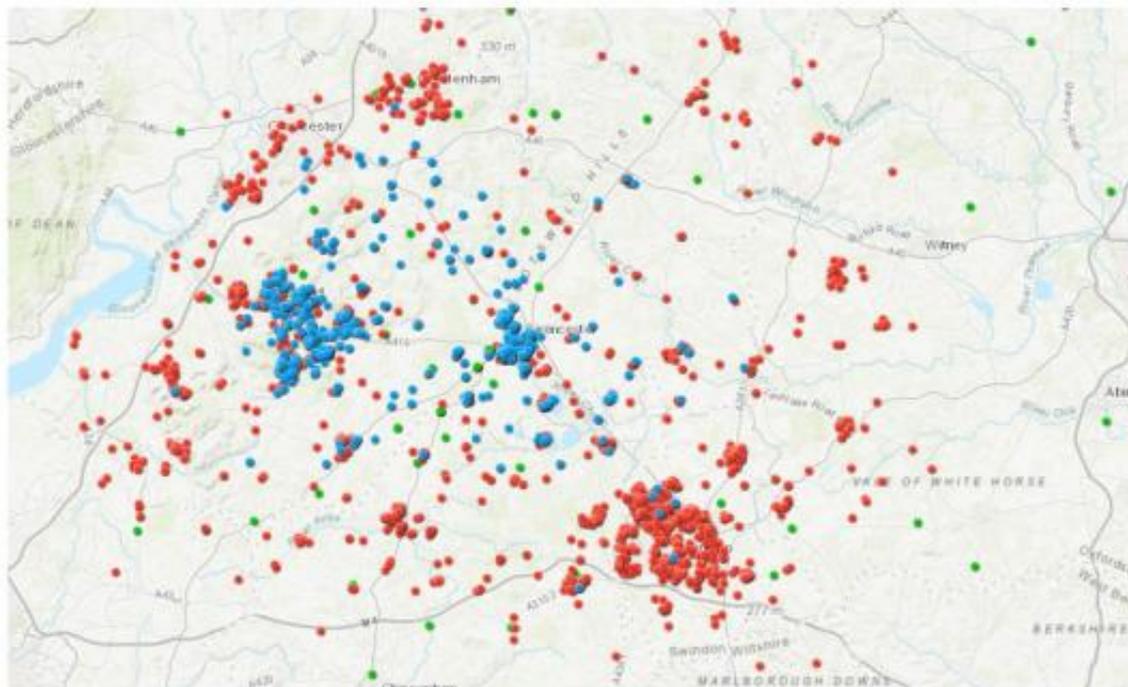
### Combined locations of students and staff

- 11.25 The following plans show the combined location of students and staff attending Cirencester's Education Quarter. The scale and dispersed nature of the locations indicate the challenge for achieving more sustainable travel use.

Whole Ed Quarter staff postcodes (CC DP RAU)



Whole Ed Quarter student postcodes (CC DP RAU)



## Identified barriers to public transport use

- 11.26 The Travel Plan highlighted several barriers in respect of public transport:
- Limited availability of bus services generally in the area
  - Lack of any regular, coordinated link to/from Kemble railway station
  - Limitations of the rail service and the cost of rail travel

## Potential measures

- 11.27 The Travel Plan included a long list of potential measures relevant to public transport provision that either individual institutions or the three collectively could pursue. This underlines the desire to support public transport services and to work with any other agencies or interested groups to achieve this.
- 11.28 Specific identified potential options listed are as follows:
- **Bus stops** – improve bus stops and waiting infrastructure on Stroud Road and Tetbury Road and provision of a safe bus stop at the University Gate.
  - **Bus services** – provide a free shuttle bus to/from Kemble railway station and subsidise other new services in collaboration with other agencies.
  - **Staff shuttles** – provide work buses from areas where there are concentrations of staff located.
  - **Guaranteed ride home** – provide a taxi for staff members using alternatives to driving themselves (public transport; cycle; car share) where, for whatever reason, that alternative failed or wasn't possible.
  - **Rail travel** – negotiate discounted fares for staff and students to travel to/from Kemble station.
  - **Public transport season tickets** – provide interest-free loans to staff for the purchase of season tickets.
  - **Information** – undertake more promotion of public transport services.
  - **Liaise with transport operators** – to jointly achieve the most effective and cost-effective transport solutions.
  - **Education session timings** – consider opportunities to amend session times to fit with transport timings or to enable transport services to be provided in a better or more cost-effective way.

- 11.29 Additionally, the Travel Plan highlights how the institutions can seek to work with and support other organisations that have an interest in public transport improvements in the area, including District and County Councils, along with bus and rail operators.

## Targets, monitoring and review

- 11.30 The Travel Plan highlights the need to establish targets. Of relevance to public transport development are two suggested measures:
- Reduce the number of peak hour vehicle journeys – by discouraging journeys by car and encouraging alternative travel modes, including public transport, by making it more attractive.
  - Increase daily commutes by bus (by 5%) – by making it more attractive (timely, convenient and affordable).
- 11.31 A steering group, representing the three institutions was envisaged being set up to drive forward the travel plan work. It would commission surveys and produce an annual assessment of progress. It would also propose and consider amendments and new initiatives to continue to drive towards the achievement of the targets set.

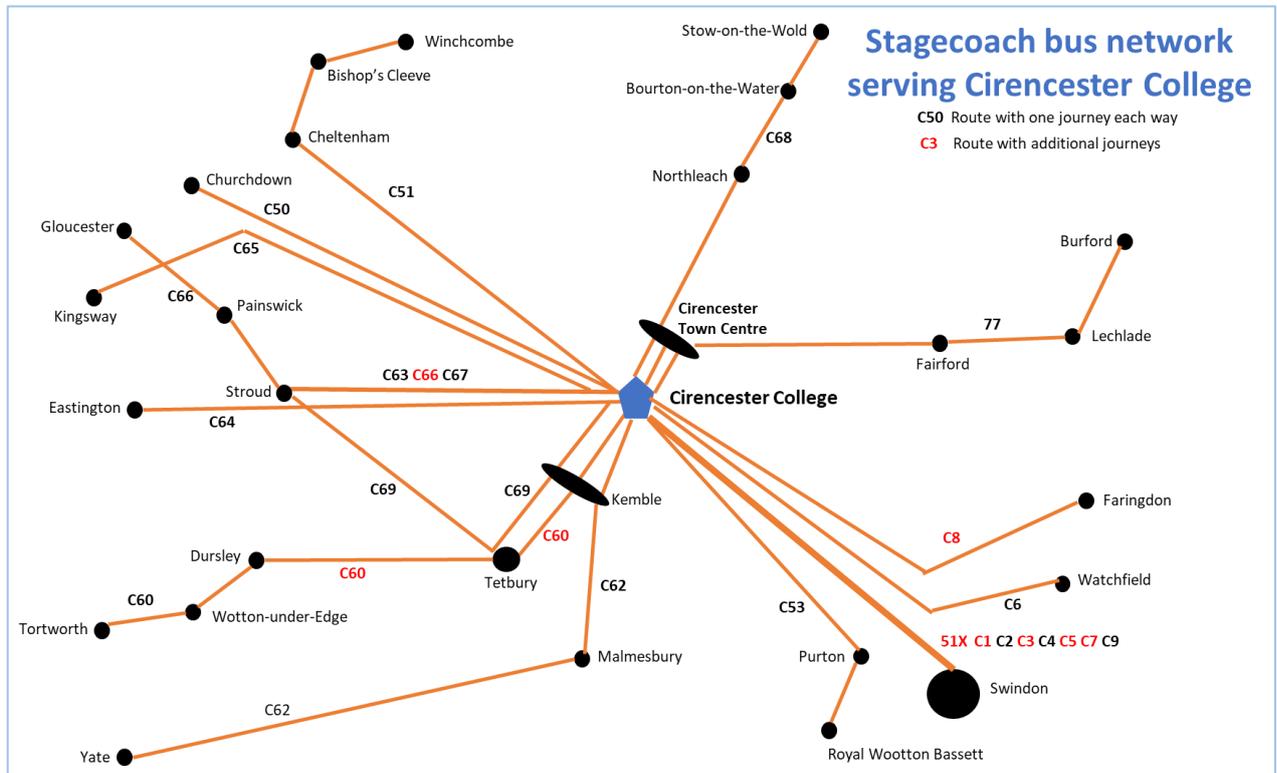
## Cirencester Kingshill School

- 11.32 Kingshill School is a secondary school catering for 880 pupils aged 11-16. It draws pupils from a wide area, including villages as far north as Birdlip and south towards Cotswold Water Park, including South Cerney.
- 11.33 Nine buses serve the school, four of which are shared with Deer Park School.

## Cirencester College bus network

- 11.34 Stagecoach operates an extensive network of bus services to the College from a wide area. A total of 23 routes converge on the College, arriving about 08:45. They depart the college between 16:10 and 16:20. Services operate on college days only. They are registered as local bus services, so are available to the public to use as well. In practice, there is little use made by anyone other than students.
- 11.35 The majority of routes are dedicated services designed specifically for the needs of students attending the College. Two services run as part of mainstream bus services – the 51 Swindon – Cirencester (operating hourly and supplemented with more direct 51X journeys) and the 77 from Lechlade and Fairford (which includes peak time journeys on non-college days too).

11.36 On eight of the routes, additional journeys operate late morning into the College and at 12:35 from the College, offering alternative travel options for students not needing to attend college all day. On one route (Stroud), there is an additional late departure leaving the College at 18:00.



11.37 Most routes only serve Cirencester College. Just four services also serve Cirencester town centre, either stopping there on the way through the town to reach the College (C68 and 77) or extending there after serving the College (51X and C60).

11.38 Parts of the network offer some overlap with other bus services as follows:

- 51 Swindon – Cricklade – Cirencester (operated by Stagecoach)
- X54/54/54A Stroud – Cirencester (operated by Cotswold Green)
- 77 Lechlade – Fairford – Cirencester (operated by Stagecoach)
- 855 Stow-on-the-Wold – Cirencester (operated by Pulham's)
- 882 Tetbury – Kemble – Cirencester (operated by Stagecoach)

11.39 The College buses add some additional value to services 51, 77 and 855, but only on college days. However, for services 54 and 855 there is the added complication of being operated by different operators, meaning that different tickets would apply (and Stagecoach Student MegaRider tickets would not be valid on those services).

## 4. Stakeholder engagement

- 4.1 Meetings were arranged with several stakeholders to gather further insights into education-related travel and transport.
- 4.2 A summary of the main points from these discussions is given below.

Table 4-1 Summary of stakeholder meetings

Stakeholder	Summary of main points
Cirencester College	<p>Total of 2,780 students attend the college undertaking 'A' and 'T' level courses (the latter involving 1 day per week work placement). 75% of students travel by bus, using an extensive network of 23 routes across a wide area, including Swindon and Cheltenham. Bus routes are planned and provided by Stagecoach, with a subsidy provided by the college. The aim is for routes to be as direct as possible, offering journey times of less than an hour. Students purchase a MegaRider annual ticket (£640 in 2021-22), which allows travel outside of college on Stagecoach services. The college provides bursaries (on a sliding scale) to students from low-income households, to assist with travel cost.</p> <p>College day is split into 3 sessions – one in the morning and two in the afternoon (with break at 14:30). Some students will only need to come in for certain sessions on certain days. Therefore, some buses operate during the day to convey students travelling into college for later sessions or returning home earlier in the day. This spreads the demand on some of the routes and reduces the number of buses needed first thing in the morning and later in the afternoon.</p> <p>Deer Park School is adjacent to the college and draws pupils from a wide area. It starts 20 minutes before the college and ends 40 minutes before, so it is not possible to share transport.</p>

<p>Deer Park School</p>	<p>There are 1,000 pupils on the roll, with 40% coming from outside Cirencester, including Swindon, Stroud, Cricklade and Minchinhampton. There are dedicated services for pupils eligible for free school transport, arranged by Gloucestershire County Council. Pupils from Tetbury and Stroud are reliant on local bus services. School starts at 08:50 and pick-ups in the afternoon are at 15:20/15:25 – some transport is joint with Kingshill School, which finishes at 15:15. The times being different from the College means that there aren't capacity issues on the buses.</p> <p>Most buses come into the school site, except the Stroud service, where pupils must cross the A419 to reach the stop for the journey home.</p> <p>The possibility of arranging more dedicated discretionary transport (for pupils not entitled to free school transport) has been investigated with parents, but this has proved to be more expensive than buying a season ticket on the service bus. School pupils are less likely than college students to get value from a MegaRider ticket arrangement.</p>
<p>Gloucestershire County Council (Integrated Transport Unit – Home to School Transport)</p>	<p>GCC arranges free school transport for those pupils who are eligible under its policy (i.e. those attending their nearest or locally designated school and living more than 3 miles from the school or a shorter distance where the walking route is not considered to be safe). Because of the designated transport areas, some places will have transport going to two different schools, as parents will be able to choose.</p> <p>9 buses are arranged for pupils to Kingshill School and 6 buses to Deer Park. 4 buses serve both schools, which is possible due to the coordinated start/finish times of the two schools. The 882 local bus service (which is financially supported by GCC) provides transport to both secondary schools in Cirencester. Generally, buses call at Kingshill first, then Deer Park, except the 882 from Tetbury, which calls as Deer Park first.</p> <p>Transport is provided by vehicles of different sizes, ranging from 12 seats to full size coaches.</p> <p>Spare seats on school transport services are made available to non-eligible pupils for a charge. However, there is no guarantee that a spare seat will remain available, if the number of eligible pupils increases.</p> <p>Paternoster School in Cirencester caters for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Pupils are generally conveyed by smaller vehicles and taxis.</p>

<p>Royal Agricultural University (RAU)</p>	<p>The university has 1,200 students, of which 330 live on site. 80% of students have a car and most return home at weekends. With such high car dependency, no charge is made for car parking. Whilst relatively close to both Kemble station and Cirencester, the site seems isolated from both. Public transport provision is very limited, so the university runs a shuttle minibus between the site and Cirencester town centre.</p> <p>The site is used for conferences, short courses and retreats in the summer holidays. A proportion of those attending do come by train to Kemble, with the need for arranged pick-ups or taxis to reach the RAU.</p> <p>Planned expansion will increase the number of students to 1,500 and the diversity of these due to the wider range of courses offered. This will increase the need for better public transport links. Equally, the RAU has a desire to enhance its sustainability and environmental credentials.</p>
<p>Stagecoach West</p>	<p>Whilst the area is not good territory for operating buses, given high car ownership and use, diverse travel demands and sparsity of population in the rural areas, there might be scope to build new markets based around the provision of good, simple services. This could be a regular hourly bus network centred on Cirencester, building on the principles of existing service 51 Cheltenham – Cirencester – Swindon. This might include a service between Lechlade, Fairford, Cirencester and Tetbury, which would replace the existing 882 service with something more regular and frequent. Likewise, regular and more frequent local buses within Cirencester could be built into the network.</p> <p>Digital demand responsive transport (DDRT) services could also be deployed in the area, serving some of the villages off the main roads and avoiding the need for the main services to deviate from the most direct routes. However, the view is that such services need reasonable scale of perhaps 15 vehicles to sustain the operation.</p> <p>The company has a good partnership with Cirencester College, providing transport for students from a wide area. Students buy a network ticket that can be used at other times, in addition to travel to/from college. 20+ buses are required for the operation, of which about two thirds are parked up for much of the day in-between the main runs to and from the college. The other one third of buses run additional services to/from the college late in the morning or in the early afternoon, for students not needing to be at college all day. All buses are registered local services and are available to the public; however, there are not many other passengers, partly because the services are limited to running on college days only.</p>

## 5. Considerations

- 13.1 From the stakeholder engagement and analysis, there are many different issues that might impact on the appropriate way forward. The challenges and opportunities identified are summarised as follows.

### Challenges

- 13.2 Challenges for developing a more comprehensive local public transport offer based on current provision serving Cirencester's Education Quarter include the following:
- Demand for travel to the education quarter is widespread and dispersed; however, those demands focus on a common location, which provides critical mass for the provision of fixed route bus services.
  - Demand for travel is concentrated into certain times of the day (morning and afternoon peak); also, that demand is limited to school and/or college days only. Travel demand for the College and schools overlaps, adding to the peak time demand for vehicles. Even in the afternoon, where the College closes at a later time than the schools, the gap is insufficient for buses to carry out a school and then a college journey. If the college was to close later at 16:30, this could facilitate some double runs by buses, reducing costs of overall transport provision.
  - Car use is embedded in the culture of many people accessing the area, particularly staff across all of the education institutions, but also students at the RAU. Staff commute from dispersed locations and quite long distances and can park without charge.
  - Location of the institutions on the outside edge of the town makes them less accessible to public transport, which tends to focus more on the town centre.
  - The current local bus network is limited and unattractive, giving a low base from which to try and build from. Recent years have seen services reduced and usage is low. This position was exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and bus use still remains lower than in 2019. The fall in use has led to further service reductions.
  - New sources of revenue funding will need to be found to invest in enhanced services. This will be needed to start an upward cycle of growth;

services will need to have a kickstart boost before they start to see increased usage and fares revenue growth.

## College Bus Network

- 13.3 The extensive bus network serving the College is a very positive aspect of the life and work of that institution. It enables students to attend from a wide area, which in turn has facilitated the growth and development of the College and its wide offer of courses. Furthermore, the bus offer to students, with charging for car parking, plays a part in reducing car traffic.
- 13.4 Whilst the bus network is available for public use, little use is actually made of it by anyone other than students. This is due to a number of reasons:
- Services are promoted to students and not the wider public; service numbering prefixed with a 'C' suggests that the services are something different or specifically for the College. Equally, the route numbers denote the many different route variations provided, which are designed around where the students live; these routes tend not to match or overlap with other existing mainstream bus services (apart from the 51X and 77, which are shown as part of the wider public bus timetables). Therefore, there are few opportunities to try and integrate the College and other local bus services.
  - Services only operate on College days, so there is nothing available on other days for those who might wish to use it for work.
  - Service timings are set specifically to meet the start and end times of the College, which may not match with other people's needs for work or personal business.
  - Many of the routes only go to and from the College in Cirencester and do not serve the town centre, which would be the focus for other people's journeys.
  - Because buses are busy with the number of students travelling, it may be a deterrent to other potential users. College staff rarely make use of the buses, even though it may be a convenient option for some. Equally, bus arrival and departure times may not suit staff in terms of any preparations before the teaching day starts or work or meetings at the end of the teaching day.

## Opportunities

13.5 From the stakeholder engagement and study analysis, there are many different issues that might impact on the appropriate way forward. The challenges and opportunities identified are summarised as follows:

- **Supportive policy landscape**, which sees more attractive public transport as one of the necessary measures to addressing the climate emergency.
- The Education Quarter draws in **significant amounts of transport resource** (buses and drivers), which could be put to wider use in the area at marginal cost. In particular are some routes for the College where there are also late morning and early afternoon journeys provided, which have the potential to supplement the main bus network offering off-peak travel options, including the corridors towards Swindon, Tetbury and Stroud).
- Existence of a **travel plan** for the Education Quarter (overseen by a steering group of representatives of the institutions), provides a starting point and an interest in achieving some future change.
- Wider **interest in improving bus services**, including the parallel report to this one, confirming that a good case exists for enhancing the Cirencester – Kemble – Tetbury corridor.
- **Further planned developments**, such as the The Steadings and the delivery of the RAU Innovation Village, will start to increase travel demands (with more students living across the area and a greater number of students on the campus at weekends and without access to a car, but also more population generally that might boost demand for public transport), perhaps lending more support for a shuttle or public transport service between RAU and Kemble and/or Cirencester. Planning agreements for new buildings may seek section 106 funding towards improved public transport provision. Furthermore, The Steadings and RAU Innovation Village developments will help integrate the education quarter more within the town, rather than it remain isolated on the edge.
- **Current Cirencester College arrangement with a single provider** (Stagecoach) creates a useful starting point for a network (with services available to the public), by spreading demand and use away from the peaks – this would not exist if there were separate contracts with several different operators. Equally, the arrangement for students to have **Stagecoach MegaRider tickets** for use other than for travel to/from

college, helps to create wider demand (where services are available). Equally, students with these tickets might provide a base demand for any new bus services (perhaps in evening or at weekends, or during college holidays). Whilst they would create use of services, no additional revenue would be generated from that use. However, students would benefit from the ability to get better value from their existing tickets.

- **Revenue funding** is already going into the network from Gloucestershire County Council and Cirencester College – it will be important to ensure that this is pooled to gain the best service overall.
- **Promoting the use of the institutions for wider activities** (evenings, weekends and holidays) will help develop demand that could justify more comprehensive provision of transport services.
- **Concentrations of potential demand exist** that could be used to start to support the enhancement of particular corridors, such as Stroud – Cirencester, which passes through the Education Quarter.
- **Possible demand responsive transport** provision was considered as part of enhancing the Tetbury – Cirencester corridor, particularly serving those places either side of the corridor. This might provide the opportunity to trial a staff shuttle to the Education Quarter, along with a direct shuttle between the Quarter and Kemble railway station, perhaps also linking with the existing shuttle bus that the RAU provides for students.
- **Other potential trip generators** (such as Cotswold Airport; Westonbirt Arboretum and Cotswold Water Park) offer some opportunity to build some future demand for public transport in the area, provided that suitably attractive bus service options can be offered, along with other measures to encourage mode change away from car.

13.6 The student market is an important one to pursue in respect of improving public transport. Several large university cities see university-related bus services operating (such as in Southampton) – these are available to the public and there is sufficient other demand to sustain them through holiday periods.

## The Steadings

13.7 The Steadings development to the south of Cirencester will see 2,350 dwellings built over a 16-year period to 2038. When complete, this will have increased the population of the town by over 5,000 people (based on average household size for Cotswold district in 2021 of 2.28 persons).

- 13.8 This will increase the demand for school places. Based on average figures for Gloucestershire, every 100 dwellings will see 16.3 primary pupils and 13.2 secondary and post-16 students. This suggests that The Steadings will be home to over 380 primary-aged pupils and 310 secondary/post-16 students. Primary pupils will be accommodated at a new school to be provided as part of the development. This will be centrally located and at the heart of a pedestrian and cycle route network. Therefore, it is unlikely that any bus travel will be generated.
- 13.9 Secondary and post-16 students are likely to need to access Deer Park School. Provided that a safe walking route is available across Tetbury Road and, if necessary, Stroud Road, the students will not be entitled to free home to school transport from Gloucestershire County Council, as they will be within a 3-mile walking distance of the school. However, for at least those further to the east of the development, parents may choose to take their children to school by car.
- 13.10 There may be sufficient demand for a bus to be provided; this would certainly help to reduce the number of parents' cars travelling to the school. However, any fares charged would be unlikely to meet the cost of such provision. Therefore, other funding is likely to be required.
- 13.11 If it was possible to use an existing bus that had already dropped students at the college in the morning and had time to do a run from The Steadings to Deer Park School (and vice versa in the afternoon), then it may be possible to provide such a service cost-effectively. Unfortunately, this is unlikely in the morning, with transport to both establishments timed to arrive at similar times (08:40/08:45). There would not be a problem in the afternoon when a bus could leave Deer Park School at 15:20 and be back at the college for a departure at 16:15.

## 6. Recommendations

- 14.1 The proximity of the three education institutions that make up the Education Quarter means that they all face common issues. As such, they should continue to work collectively in the development and implementation of a joint travel plan, overseen by representatives of the three institutions. Whilst this will facilitate discussion around the needs, issues and actions that fall within the control of the institutions, it may not sufficiently link to wider interests.
- 14.2 Therefore, it is recommended that a Cirencester Area Transport Group also be established to bring all interested parties (public, private and voluntary sectors) together, including the education institutions. This group could collectively harness the opportunities identified in this study and focus on facilitating an action plan of measures to pursue, develop and ultimately deliver. The group's aim would be to improve public transport services in the area through collaboration and taking a holistic view of needs, issues and solutions.

### Potential actions

- 14.3 Actions are likely to fall under different themes, as follows:

#### **Developing the demand for public transport**

- Identify ways of shifting demand away from the car (such as parking provision, management and cost; trialling staff shuttles or work buses).
- Establish more use of the buildings and facilities for different activities outside of usual school/college opening times.
- New demands may be created from the expansion of the institutions and their facilities.
- Seek to draw in wider potential demands linked to other travel purposes across the area, such as access to employment, shopping, leisure and tourist attractions. Particularly look for other unmet demands for transport off-peak, where they would fit with existing Cirencester College peak services.
- Introduce service improvements on corridors with potential for development, which could encourage public transport use from being suitably attractive. Stroud – Cirencester would be one such corridor to develop into an hourly service (as it goes through the Education Quarter), following the introduction of improvements envisaged for the Cirencester –

Kemble – Tetbury corridor in response to the business case recently undertaken to support that. Services should operate on regular headways and for periods of the day that meet most needs.

- Trial a bespoke shuttle minibuss between Kemble station, the RAU, Cirencester College and Cirencester town centre (which could be linked with the RAU's existing shuttle minibuss). Work with GWR to see whether attractive fares could be offered for students using the train and shuttle service.
- Institutions could encourage and/or incentivise staff to travel to/from them by bus.
- Institutions could consider whether they amend their curriculum and activity timetables to spread travel demand even more than now, with the aim of further reducing the peak requirements and create more opportunities for service provision to be spread across the day.

### **Funding public transport improvements**

- To be able to attract any Government funding for bus service improvements, it will be important to ensure that the specific proposals set out above are incorporated in **Gloucestershire's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**. The document should be reviewed annually by Gloucestershire County Council and bus operators, providing the opportunity to do this.
- Seek **section 106 contributions** from all planned land developments in the Cirencester area for area-wide public transport improvements.
- **Pool all existing transport funding** and resources in the area (GCC bus support; community transport; Cirencester College bus support; RAU shuttle bus), to see whether more provision can be achieved through economies of scale and integration.
- Seek to establish **new revenue funding streams** to support public transport improvements. This may include direct funding from the educational institutions, a tourist tax levied per night on visitors staying in the area or a supplementary charge on car parking specifically to fund public transport improvements.

## Options for early exploration

- 14.4 Taking account of the opportunities identified earlier in the report and some of the challenges that will need to be addressed, the following are options that could be taken forward initially.

### Integration of college and public bus networks

- 14.5 Where appropriate, it would be beneficial to start to bring the two networks closer together:
- Those college services that have some overlap with other public bus services could be given route numbers that are the same as public services, such as 855 Stow-on-the-Wold, 51/X51 Swindon, 54 Stroud and 882 Kemble and Tetbury. These journeys should be promoted and highlighted within the wider timetables for services in those corridors.
  - The provision of a multi-operator ticket would facilitate those using a Stagecoach bus in one direction and another operator in the other.

### Bolstering existing bus services

- 14.6 The large peak requirement for buses to serve the College is not matched between 09:00 and 16:00. This means there are buses available during the off-peak daytime period that could be put to use, in a cost-effective way, to provide new or enhanced services, albeit only on college days, but also during college holidays if some new funding support was available. Services with greatest potential might include:
- Those highlighted above with integration opportunities. In particular, the 54 Stroud – Cirencester, as a service that passes through the Education Quarter, and 882 Tetbury – Kemble – Cirencester, a service that passes by the Education Quarter.
  - Services that would benefit from enhanced levels of service (either running for longer periods of the day, at more regular intervals or more frequently), which might in turn start to generate patronage growth and have some chance of longer-term commercial success. These would include:
    - Cirencester – Fairford - Lechlade (establishing an hourly service)
    - Cirencester local town bus services (establishing a half hourly or better frequency, linking up different parts of the town).

## Establishing new bus services

- 14.7 As the RAU grows and develops there will be a greater need for a regular shuttle bus between the campus and the town centre, potentially extending at times to/from Kemble railway station. It would be beneficial for this to be a publicly available registered local bus service, available to all for a fare (but with free travel for RAU staff and students), rather than as an internally provided shuttle minibus. This would mean it was available to people attending the other establishments in the Education Quarter.
- 14.8 Depending on the route and timings, there may be scope to link the shuttle with other parts of an enhanced town bus network. Equally, there may be scope at weekends to extend the shuttle bus from the town centre to Cotswold Water Park to test out the level of demand for leisure travel.

## 7. Conclusion

- 15.1 The education sector travel market offers the single biggest opportunity for the development of the local bus network in the Cirencester area. In generating many journeys by bus, it draws into the area significant bus resources that are under-used in the off-peak. It encourages use of public transport by young people and involves regular patterns of demand. The downside is that education usage is concentrated on just 185 days of the year, all of which are weekdays and there is no weekend provision.
- 15.2 Formation of a group that can bring relevant parties together to collectively develop proposals for network improvements will provide a forum where issues can be assessed and potential solutions devised. However, crucial ingredients to achieving progress will be the ability to identify and develop other travel demands alongside those relating to access to education, along with additional funding to help kickstart service improvements that will unlock and encourage wider potential demand.
- 15.3 There is clearly some scope to use the transport resources serving the Education Quarter in a broader way, through greater integration of different elements to try and enhance overall public transport provision in the Cirencester area.

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