



Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at the The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Monday 11 September 2023 at 6.00 pm

Agenda

1.	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members
2.	Declarations of Interest Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.
3.	Minutes (Pages 5 - 10) To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 June 2023.
4.	Chairman's Announcements To receive communications from the Chairman. 6.05pm to 6.10pm
5.	Progress Reports (Pages 11 - 14) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) WNC Local Plan – feedback after consultation exercise 6.10pm to 6.15pm b) Draft Waste Strategy – feedback after consultation exercise 6.15pm to 6.20pm c) Flood Risk Management – The Committee to undertake scrutiny of the Flood Risk Management Strategy 6.20pm to 6.25pm

6.	<p>Bus Network Review (Pages 15 - 110)</p> <p>The Committee to undertake scrutiny of the Bus Network review 6.25pm to 7pm</p>
7.	<p>Membership of the Active Travel Oversight Group</p> <p>The Committee to confirm the membership of the Active Travel Oversight Group 7pm to 7.05pm</p>
8.	<p>Review of Committee Work Plan (Pages 111 - 118)</p> <p>To review and note the Committee Work Plan. 7.05pm to 7.10pm</p>
9.	<p>Urgent Business</p> <p>The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.</p>
10.	<p>Exclusion of Press and Public</p> <p>Exempt Items In respect of the following items the Chairman may move the resolution set out below, on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information (information regarded as private for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972) would be disclosed to them: The Committee is requested to resolve: "That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act of the descriptions against each item would be disclosed to them"</p>

Catherine Whitehead
Proper Officer
1 September 2023

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members:

Councillor André González De Savage Councillor Alison Eastwood (Vice-Chair)
(Chair)

Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Terry Gilford
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Jake Roberts

Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor James Hill
Councillor Sue Sharps

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence and the appointment of substitute Members should be notified to democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare that fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

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If you have any queries about this agenda please contact Tracy Tiff/ Marina Watkins, Democratic Services via the following:

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Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at The Jeffrey Room - The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Wednesday 21 June 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage (Chair)

Councillor Alison Eastwood
Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb
Councillor William Barter
Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Terry Gilford
Councillor James Hill
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor Jake Roberts

Also Present:

Councillor Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste
Councillor Alan Chantler, Assistant Cabinet Member for Planning

Officers:

Fiona Unett, Assistant Director for Waste
Stephanie Gilbrat, Assistant Director Planning
Richard Wood, Head of Planning Policy (Interim)
Vanessa Kelly, Waste Services and Projects Manager
Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
Marina Watkins, Committee Officer

113. **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed the Committee to the inaugural meeting under the new Overview and Scrutiny structure.

114. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Terry Gilford advised that he had recently been appointed to the Liaison Board of Daventry Norse.

115. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 18th April 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

116. Appointment of vice-chair

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Alison Eastwood be appointed Vice-Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair thanked Councillor Bambridge for his work on the Committee during the last two years.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Alison Eastwood be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

117. Chairman's Announcements

None advised.

118. Draft Waste Strategy

The Chair welcomed Councillor Jo Gilford to the meeting as Chair of the Waste and Resources Strategy Members Working Group. An executive summary of the presentation had been circulated with the agenda papers.

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director for Waste and Councillor Jo Gilford, and the following points were raised:

- Four members workshops had been held, each focussing on a different theme
- Officer workshops had also been held, using expertise from independent consultants Wardell Armstrong
- The draft vision would be an interactive document in order to actively encourage residents to respond to the consultation and take an interest in the developing strategy.
- The aim was to deliver a harmonised waste service, tailored as appropriate to take into account differences such as housing type and bin storage capacity
- The strategy had received a name change to become the 'resources and waste' strategy in order to help focus on waste prevention and reduction activity.
- There were currently three different methods of waste collection service delivery across the former council – joint venture, in house and contract. The service delivery method would be harmonised once all contracts had expired
- Value for Money was a key issue highlighted by the member working group.

- A consultation exercise would be carried out with the public and other stakeholders from the end of June until the end of August
- Two key contracts were ending in March 2025 – household waste recycling centres and residual waste treatment. EPB (Executive Programme Board) had agreed that the working group should continue in order to help shape the two contracts

Comments made by Scrutiny members included:

- It was considered that awareness of the rural/urban split across the area was of the utmost importance and thought must be given to the most appropriate service for the location.
- The visits carried out to other council's services had been very useful.
- Residents interacted with the waste service on a weekly basis so it was important to get it right.
- There needed to be a visible difference and an increase in standards with regards to street cleansing
- It was important to find ways to communicate with residents who had no internet access – there would be roadshows across the summer and articles included in the residents magazine that would be delivered to every household
- Clearing litter and debris from trunk roads was challenging and required a road closure order. Such roads were managed by National Highways and it was difficult to coordinate work with them
- Raising an income from the services would be through commercial waste, not residential
- It was noted that legacy landfill sites produced 20% of the council's emissions. The sites had been closed for over 100 years. The Council did not currently own any active landfill sites and so was not responsible for emissions in this respect
- There was a concern that moving to a less frequent collection service could increase the incidence of fly tipping in some areas.
- Education, communication and consultation were key elements to the strategy and any proposed changes to the service

The Chair thanked Fiona Unett and Councillor Gilford for their presentation and members for their contributions.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee noted the presentation
- 2) That the Committee would further review the draft strategy at the September meeting.
- 3) That the members working group would continue, with its current membership.

119. **West Northamptonshire Local Plan**

The Committee received a presentation from Richard Wood, Head of Planning Policy (Interim) on the West Northamptonshire Local Plan

- Work was on going to produce a single Local Plan to run until 2041
- The Spatial vision covered economic, societal and environmental matters

- Sixteen objectives had been identified that linked to the Council's Corporate Plan
- A member workshop had been held in May
- The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) had been contacted to offer advice
- Two further workshops would be arranged covering 'Housing & economic needs assessments' and 'Sustainability appraisal of broad spatial options'
- The housing and economic needs assessment involved assessing what additional land might be needed for the logistics industry. Consultants were looking into the matter and how it could affect the West Northants area
- Should more logistics/distribution businesses be set up in area it was a important that consideration was given to the capacity of the road network to deal with increased levels of traffic
- The documents would benefit from the use of plainer language
- It would be useful if briefing notes were circulated in advance of the workshops in order to allow members time to consider the information
- The current approach of producing three housing land supply figures would remain until the Plan was adopted

The Chair thanked Richard Wood for the presentation and members for their contributions.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i) the Committee notes the draft vision and objectives
- ii) the Committee notes the process for the preparation of the draft plan for public consultation

120. Annual report of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2022-23

Consideration was given to the Annual report of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2022/23. Councillor Dermot Bambridge would present the report to Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual report of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2022/23 be agreed

121. Updates from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Groups

The Chairs of the Task and Finish and Oversight Groups to provide an update to the Committee

i) Active Travel Oversight Group

Councillor Bagot-Webb advised that the Local transport Plan (LTP) needed to be in place so that active travel could be moved forward. An interim plan had been drafted. A meeting of the group would be reconvened to discuss actions that could be delivered quickly, in order that the public can see changes are being made

ii) Highways Contract Strategic Oversight Group

Councillor Bagot-Webb advised that the group had received a detailed briefing on the Keir contract at the last meeting. The budget for the highways service approximately £9.3m million (including £6.5m original budget, £1m increase from cabinet and £1.8m from Government funding). However there was still a shortfall of funding, with £11m required to 'standstill' i.e. maintain the roads in their current condition.

Councillor Larratt advised that new equipment had been purchased which should improve efficiency and should be operational by August. The roads had been impacted by a difficult winter resulting in damage to surfaces. There was a need for better quality work to fill any potholes so that the repair lasted longer. Councillor Larratt undertook to provide information regarding the cost of the new machinery with regards to the overall budget.

Stephanie Gilbrat, Assistant Director Planning advised that work was currently taking place with Finance in order to calculate how much recompense was owed due to the construction of HS2 to compensate for damage to the road network.

The intention was for the contract with Keir to be 'common sense' and to fill all potholes in an area, not just some of them. The issue had been raised at a recent meeting with Keir.

RESOLVED:

That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the updates from the Chairs of the Task and Finish and Oversight Group

122. Review of Committee Work Programme

The Chair introduced the work programme and advised that items on sports and leisure had been added to the programme following the Triangulation meeting.

The Local Plan would return to the September meeting following its consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted

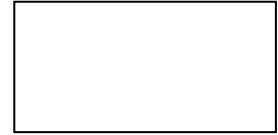
123. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 September 2023

Report Title	West Northamptonshire Local Plan
Report Author	Alan Munn Team Leader Planning Policy Planning Policy and Specialist Services

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

West S151	Martin Henry Executive Director, Finance	Email from James Smith 29/08
Director	Stuart Timmiss Executive Director: Place, Economy & Environment	Email recd 30/08
Legal	Theresa Boyd Solicitor	Email sent recd 30/08
Communications	Becky Hutson Head of Communications	Email recd 29/08

List of Appendices

N/A

1. Purpose of Report

To update on the process for preparing the next stage of the West Northamptonshire Local Plan.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The West Northamptonshire Local Plan (WNLP) will be a single local plan for West Northamptonshire and guide development in the area up to 2041.

- 2.3 The next stage in the preparation of the WNLP is a draft plan consultation. Details of the technical work supporting the plan, needed to inform the next consultation, together with those of further member engagement are provided in section 5 below.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) Considers the process for the preparation of the draft plan for public consultation.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce a development plan for the area. The West Northamptonshire Local Plan will form the development plan for the area alongside the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and made (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans. It is appropriate for the Committee to consider the process for the preparation of the WNLP.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 On 21 June a report was presented to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considering the process for preparing the next stage of the West Northamptonshire Local Plan, specifically in respect of member engagement. This report provides an update on the preparation of the plan.
- 5.2 25 April 2023 the Council's Planning Policy Committee approved an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) for West Northamptonshire. This updated LDS sets out a programme for the preparation of a single local plan to be referred to as the West Northamptonshire Local Plan (WNLP). When adopted, the WNLP will replace the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 (WNJCS) and the Part 2 Local Plans for the former Daventry District, Northampton Borough, and South Northamptonshire District. It is intended that the WNLP will guide development across West Northamptonshire over a period of at least 15 years from adoption. The plan period is currently expected to extend up to 2041, as agreed by the Planning Policy Committee at its meeting in June 2022.
- 5.3 A central element of the WNLP will be the Council's spatial vision for the area which sets out the ambition for our economy, our communities, and our environment. It effectively sets out what sort of place we want West Northamptonshire to be at the end of the plan period and will include place-based visions for Northampton, Daventry, Brackley, Towcester and our rural areas. The delivery of the vision will be underpinned by a set of spatial objectives.
- 5.4 We have previously consulted on a draft spatial vision and a set of 16 spatial objectives which reflect the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. The current draft vision and objectives were considered by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June.
- 5.5 The next stage in the preparation of the WNLP will be the publication of a draft plan for public consultation. It is expected that in addition to our vision and objectives, the draft plan will include draft planning policies, and draft site allocations to meet the housing and economic needs of the area. In addition, work is progressing in respect of the settlement hierarchy and settlement confines which will also form part of the consultation.

- 5.6 In preparation for the draft plan consultation, we have started on a process of member engagement to ensure that members have an appropriate opportunity to give their views and shape the draft policies and proposals prior to its consideration by the Planning Policy Committee and the following public consultation.
- 5.7 Most recently a member workshop was held in the Council Chamber at the Forum, on 3 May. At this workshop members were asked to consider the proposed vision, and to review our existing planning policies in terms of what works well, what doesn't work well and where we have gaps that the new plan could fill. The feedback from this workshop has been captured and circulated to all members. Members who were not able to attend were given the opportunity to add their comments to those recorded at the workshop.
- 5.8 Prior to the member workshop we had provided briefings on the new Local Plan for leading members (in January) and all members (in March). A member briefing on Housing and Planning was held on 17 May, which included information regarding the new Local Plan.
- 5.9 There are two key pieces of technical work which are nearing completion and will which inform the preparation of the draft plan. Firstly, there is an update to the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA). This update will take account of the revised plan period, the latest data available from the 2021 census, and recent evidence on the demand for strategic logistics development. Secondly, we are undertaking a high-level sustainability appraisal of broad spatial options. This is looking at the sustainability merits of different spatial approaches to meeting the development needs of the area. Furthermore work has been commissioned exploring the brownfield opportunities in the districts principal settlements (Brackley, Daventry, Northampton and Towcester), the contribution they can make to meeting the needs identified in the HENA and the role that regeneration could have in place shaping and delivering the vision and objectives of the plan.
- 5.10 Related to the completion of this technical work we are planning at least two member workshops:
- Workshop 1: Housing and Economic Needs – To review the findings of the HENA update and determine the scale and type of housing and economic growth that the WNLP should be planning to accommodate.
- Workshop 2: Spatial Choices – Informed by the sustainability appraisal, a discussion on the different spatial options the Council should consider in order to meet the development needs identified in the HENA.
- 5.9 The timing of these workshops is not yet finalised, but discussions with the Portfolio Holder for Planning are ongoing and it is anticipated that sessions will commence in October.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The Committee are asked to consider the update on plan progression and the proposals for the plan's progression and member engagement in section 5 above.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 It is currently anticipated that the costs of producing the WNLP can all be met from existing resources. If further funding was required this would be the subject of a separate report.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The preparation of the development plan is a statutory requirement and the process for plan preparation is prescribed by the relevant regulations.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 Failure to engage members in the process would put at risk the successful adoption of the plan.

7.4 Consultation and Communication

7.4.1 The requirements for consultation and communication on the WNLP are set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A consultation and communication strategy will be prepared, in collaboration with the Communications team, in advance of the next consultation.

7.5 Climate Impact

7.5.1 The WNLP will include policies to address climate change that will contribute to the Council's ambitions in this respect.

7.6 Community Impact

7.6.1 The consultation and communication strategy will ensure that our communities are given ample opportunity to be involved in the draft plan consultation.

8. Background Papers

None



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 September 2023

Report Title	Bus Network Review
Report Author	James Povey, Transport Strategy and Development Manager, james.povey@westnorthants.gov.uk

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Bus Network Review- Report One

Appendix B – Bus Network Review- Report Two

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To update members on the Bus Network Review undertaken over the past 12 months, key findings and next steps.

2. Background

1.2. The Council commissioned consultants to undertake a review of the bus network in West Northamptonshire and advise on how best to achieve a future sustainable network that provides a stable and financially viable bus network on which to build upon. This was in response to a request from the Department for Transport to all council's to review their bus networks post-Covid. It was also an opportunity for WNC as a new council to review and define an updated policy and approach to local bus provision.

1.3. Local buses in West Northamptonshire face considerable challenges. Following the Covid pandemic, bus patronage levels have still not recovered to pre pandemic levels, and are around 80% of previous levels. Concessionary travel levels are lower than this, and this has been the experience nationally. At the same time of reduced demand, bus operators are experiencing problems with driver shortages and cost inflation related to pay, fuel and maintenance costs.

3. Bus Network Review

3.1 The Bus Network Review is in two parts. Report One provides an understanding of the current situation with a focus on local bus services but also considers demand responsive transport

community transport (CT), academic and worker bus services. It is informed by engagement with parish and town council's, cross-border Local Transport Authorities, bus operators and other relevant organisations.

- 3.2 Report One provides an overview of existing services operating within West Northamptonshire and provides an analysis of the commercial viability of these with an associated RAG rating of them. The report goes onto to discuss gaps in the network and various ways in which these are, or can be filled, as well as risks and opportunities facing the local bus network.
- 3.3 Report Two builds on Report One and aims to provide a framework for decision making in order to inform a future bus network which serves West Northamptonshire to its full potential. As part of this it recommends a new interim bus policy, to guide decision making in the short term, ahead of the adoption of a new Local Transport Plan in late 2024/early 2025 which will define a new overarching transport policy framework for the Council.
- 3.4 The report also includes an options assessment to guide implementation of the policy and how the council should seek to support the local bus network. The appraisal tool used for this has the potential to be used in future for assessing options on particular routes, or the merits of supporting one route over another, therefore providing a tool for officers to support decisions.
- 3.5 The options assessment includes sensitivity tests for various levels of funding to understand whether increased levels of funding significantly alters the relative merits of the different approaches. The report has also considered how local bus subsidy budgets compares to other local authority areas.
- 3.6 The options appraisal provides guidance on how the council should look to support local public transport services, and even if funding remains at similar levels in future years there are still opportunities for the council to better integrate what it spends on transport services to better meet needs cost effectively. There is likely to be some scope to optimise the bus services we subsidise, as well as to support CT providers to fill more gaps in the commercial network. In the short term there will be a need to work with commercial operators through our Enhanced Partnership to direct funding to sustain the commercial network we have, given the pressures faced by the sector, with the intention that the services supported have good prospects of becoming commercially viable in future years.

4. Next steps

After we have considered any feedback from the Scrutiny Committee we will be refining the Bus Review outputs and undertaking a public consultation on the draft interim bus policy. This consultation will also include information on how we intend to progress support for the local bus network in alignment with the policy. Subject to the outcomes of the consultation, Cabinet will then be asked to adopt the interim policy.



Transportation Planning : Infrastructure Design


Bus Network Review

**West Northamptonshire
Report 1**

West Northamptonshire Council

June 2023

Doc Ref: LC/220575/R1/2

Prepared by:	CGQ/LC/BP
	Calum Gill-Quirke/Lucy Crann/Bob Pinkett
Checked by:	
	Bob Pinkett

Document Revision Control

Revision	Date	Status	Prepared By	Approved By
DRAFT	16/12/2022	DRAFT	CGQ/LC/BP	BP
1	24/01/2023	Amended following WNC and Operator comments	CGQ	LC/BP
2	13/06/2023	Amended following WNC comments	CGQ/LC	BP



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APPENDICES

Consultation Summary

Local Bus Services within West Northamptonshire

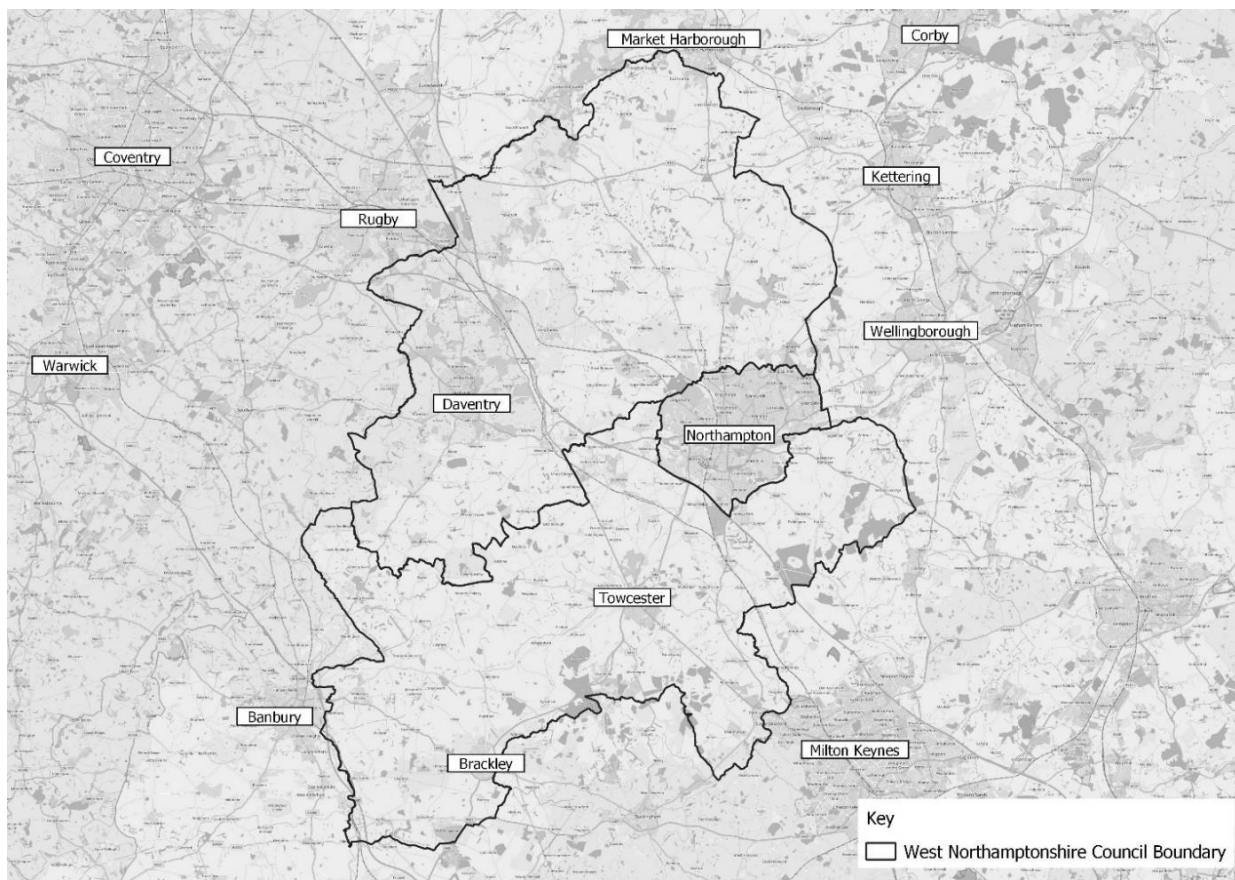
Existing Network Maps – By tiers

Existing Network Maps – Viability (R/A/G)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Buses are the most used form of public transport in England, meeting the needs of old and young, rural and urban communities, and help to support the prosperity of towns and cities. Commercial bus operators have been encouraged to innovate in how they provide key local links and the public sector, both at government and local authority levels, have started to develop and importantly now fund a new model for buses to meet residents and visitors travel needs, particularly in a post Covid environment. The journey is just starting in West Northamptonshire, with new government funding and staff resources becoming available, and new Enhanced Partnerships established to both protect and enhance existing networks, as well as encouraging a step change in provision.
- 1.2 SCP have been commissioned to undertake a review of the bus network on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). The review will advise on how best to achieve a future, sustainable network that provides a stable and financially viable bus network on which to build upon.
- 1.3 As a newly formed unitary authority (April 2021), WNC are currently reviewing policies in order to address key issues such as transport decarbonisation, spatial planning and connecting communities. This provides an opportunity to develop a new bus policy which will look to achieve the authorities aspirations for a better connected and carbon efficient network, this review will contribute towards the development of the policy.
- 1.4 Additionally, the DfT have requested that councils undertake a review of the bus network in order to ensure that there is a continued recovery from the decrease in bus patronage levels arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the intention that local bus services can be self-sustained following the withdrawal of the DfT's Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) planned for March 2023.
- 1.5 The review is undertaken in collaboration with all bus operators running services within the WNC unitary authority area (UAA) and although focussed on Local Bus services, Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), Community Transport (CT), Academic and Worker bus services are also included.
- 1.6 **Figure 1.1** illustrates the UAA boundary.

Figure 1.1: West Northamptonshire Council Unitary Authority Area Boundary



Source: Open Source Data

- 1.7 This bus network review follows on from West Northamptonshire’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP – October 2021), Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan (EPP – April 2022) and Enhanced Bus Partnership Scheme (EPS – April 2022). The EPS and EPP came into effect at the end of April 2022 and will be in operation for 3 years or until agreed with WNC.
- 1.8 Consultation has been undertaken throughout each stage with stakeholders, including Parish and Town Councils, cross-boundary Local Transport Authorities (LTA), bus operators and other relevant organisations.
- 1.9 As part of this review, Parish (PC) and Town (TC) Councils have been consulted to provide input from a local level across the region. The letter to the PCs and TCs and a summary of the responses is included at [Appendix 1](#).
- 1.10 The Parish and Town Council’s that provided a response included:
 - Abthorpe
 - Badby
 - Billing
 - Blisworth
 - Brackley
 - Braunston
 - Brixworth
 - Bugbrooke
 - Clipston

- Cogenhoe and Whiston
- Cosgrove
- Daventry
- Deanshanger
- Denton
- East Farndon
- Evenley
- Farthinghoe
- Flore
- Great Houghton
- Hackleton
- Hardingstone
- Holcot
- Middleton Cheney
- Moulton
- Naseby
- Northampton
- Old Statford
- Slapton
- Syresham
- Tiffield
- Towcester
- Weedon Bec
- Welford
- Welton
- West Haddon
- West Hunsbury
- West and Weedon Lois
- Woodford cum Membris
- Yardley Gobion
- Yardley Hastings
- Yelvertoft

1.11 Cross-boundary LTAs have been consulted with regards to the bus services that operate over the WNC boundary. The cross-boundary LTAs include:

- Buckinghamshire
- Leicestershire
- Milton Keynes
- North Northamptonshire
- Oxfordshire
- Warwickshire

1.12 The letter to LTAs and a summary of the responses is included at [Appendix 1](#).

1.13 Bus operators have been consulted with regards to their bus services within the region. The bus operators within the region include:

- Stagecoach
- Arriva
- Britannia Bus
- Hamilton & Buckbys
- Langton & Tasker
- Marshalls
- Redline
- Unobus

1.14 The letter to bus operators and a summary of the responses is included at [Appendix 1](#).

1.15 This report provides a baseline for the review and follows the following structure:

- Section 2.0 - Existing services: provides an overview of the existing services operating within West Northamptonshire.
- Section 3.0 - Analysis of existing services: presents the network according to its current commercial viability.
- Section 4.0 - Alternatives to consider: discusses alternatives to the traditional bus network as a way to address gaps in the network.
- Section 5.0 – Risks: highlights the current risks facing bus operations.
- Section 6.0 – Summary: summary of the existing network and the next steps to be taken.

2.0 EXISTING SERVICES

2.1 The existing bus services in West Northamptonshire are predominantly commercial services, however there are a small number of Community, Worker, Academic and DRT services operating in the region. The services have been tiered as part of the EPS based on frequency and type of service offered, these tiers are as follows:

Urban Tier 1 – *“defined as a higher frequency service substantially serving one town and for the majority of the route travels within the one urban area the typical frequency for buses along the main corridor is 15 minutes or better in the weekday daytime”*

Urban Tier 2 – *“defined as a medium frequency service substantially serving one town and for the majority of the route travels within the one urban area the typical frequency for buses along the main corridor is 30 minutes or better in the weekday daytime”*

Urban Tier 3 – *“defined as less frequent than hourly throughout the weekday daytime”*

Inter-Urban Tier 1 – *“defined as higher frequency (around 30 minutes on most parts of the route (daytime weekday))”*

Inter-Urban Tier 2 – *“defined as lower frequency (around hourly on most parts of the route (daytime weekday))”*

Rural Tier 3 – low frequency service operating with more than one service every weekday

Rural Tier 4 – low frequency service operating on one or two days per week

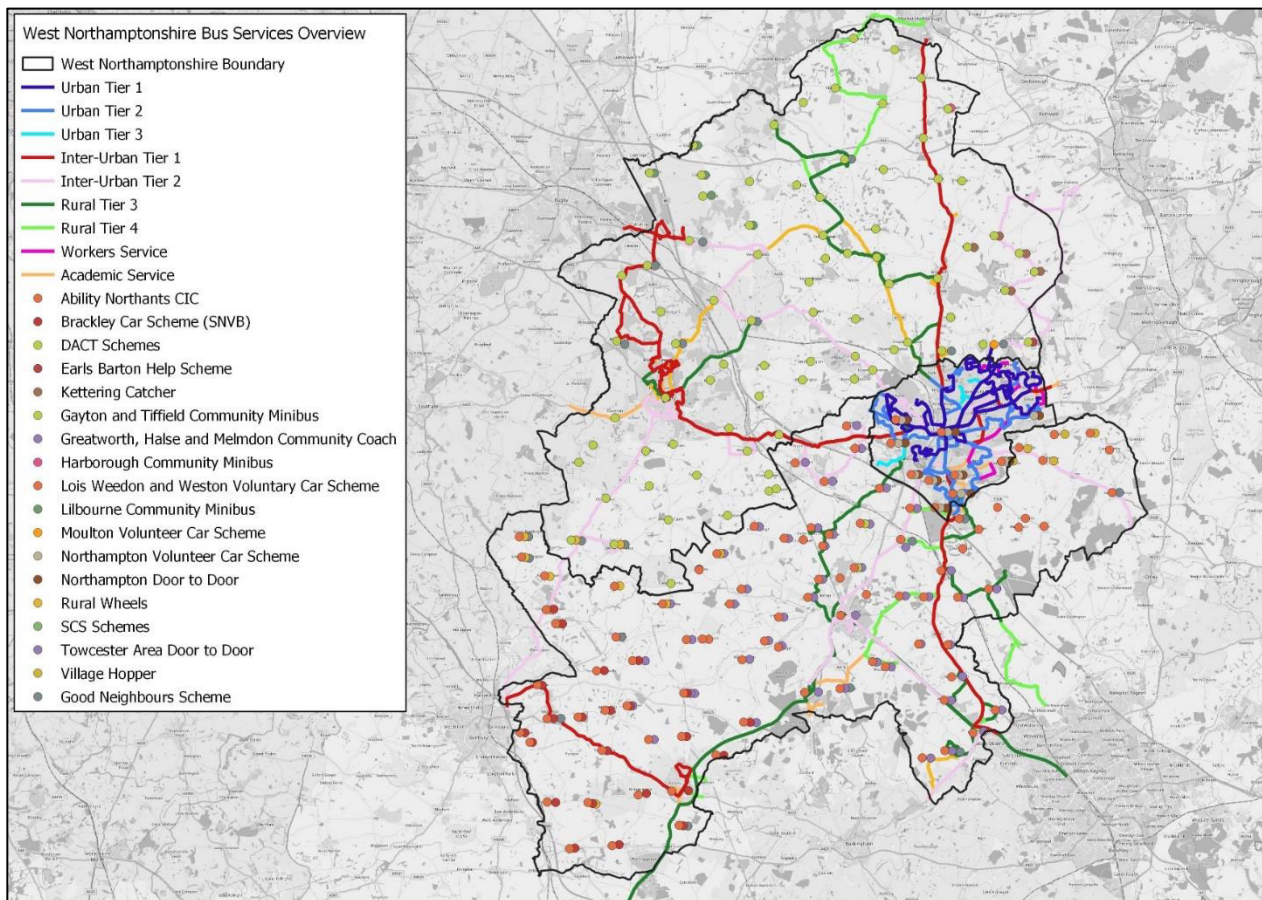
Workers Service – bus service to employment location with specific operating hours for employment

Academic Service – bus service to education location with specific operating hours for education

2.2 **Appendix 2** provides a full list of bus services and their corresponding tier.

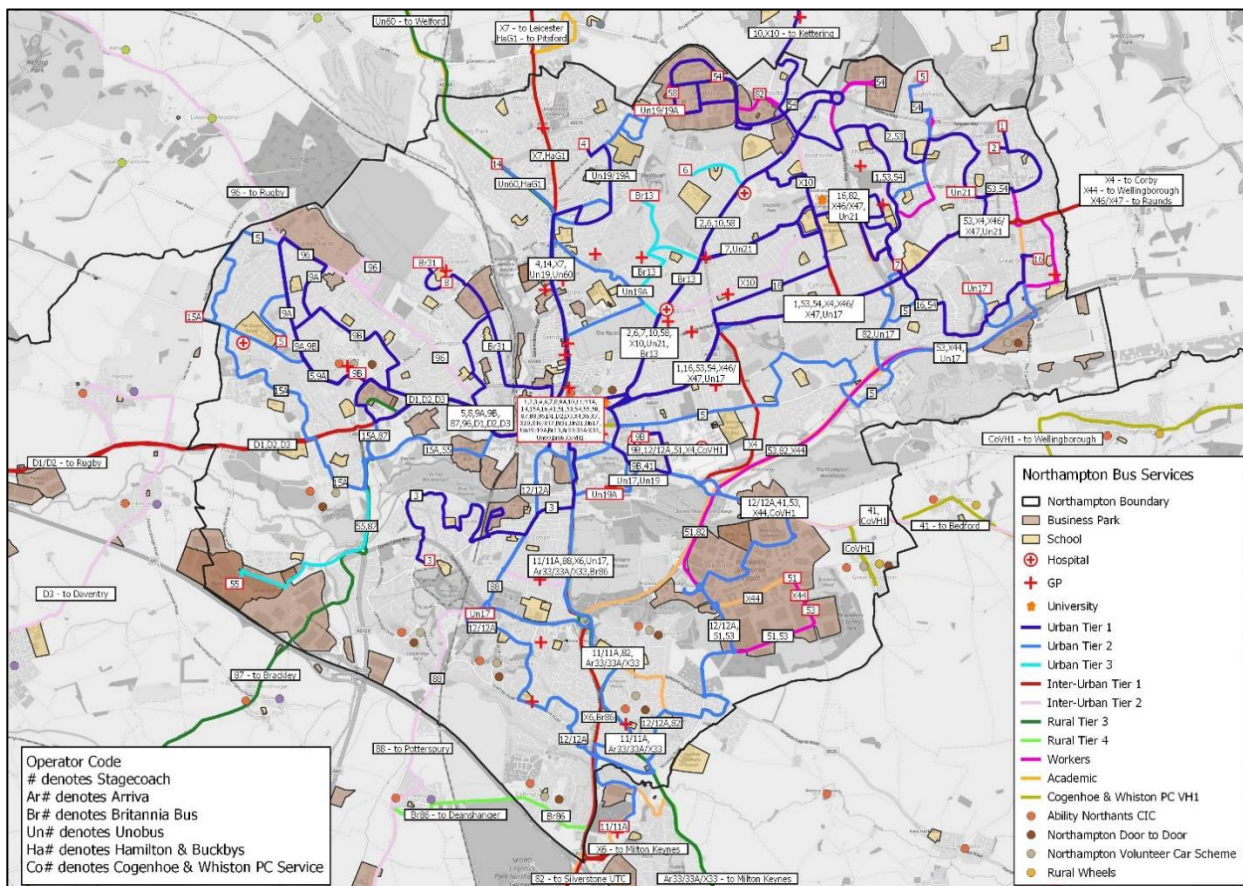
2.3 As is shown in **Figure 1.1** above, the main urban areas in West Northamptonshire are Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley. The services which operate across the West Northamptonshire UAA are shown at **Figure 2.1**. A larger version is attached in **Appendix 3**. The plan is laid out to show preference to more frequent services, therefore the Urban Tier routes are brought to the front and this continues to Academic routes which are sent to the back.

Figure 2.1: West Northamptonshire Bus Services (December 2022)



- 2.4 As is shown in **Figure 2.1** above, the Urban Tier services are limited to Northampton whilst Inter-Urban Tier services connect between the largest towns and villages across the UAA.
- 2.5 Rural tier services provide less coverage of the UAA and there are gaps in rural areas which are bridged by Community Transport (CT) schemes, notably between Towcester, Brackley, Banbury and Daventry.
- 2.6 There are CT schemes spread across the UAA, with most coverage provided by Ability Northants CIC (Ability) predominantly in the south and Daventry Area Community Transport (DACT) Schemes predominantly in the north. The importance of these schemes to residents is recognised through the consultation summary in **Appendix 1**. The majority of local bus services are operated by Stagecoach (approximately 71% of services), the vast majority of which route through Northampton.
- 2.7 Northampton is the largest town in West Northamptonshire. The services which operate within Northampton are shown at **Figure 2.2**. A larger version is attached in **Appendix 3**.

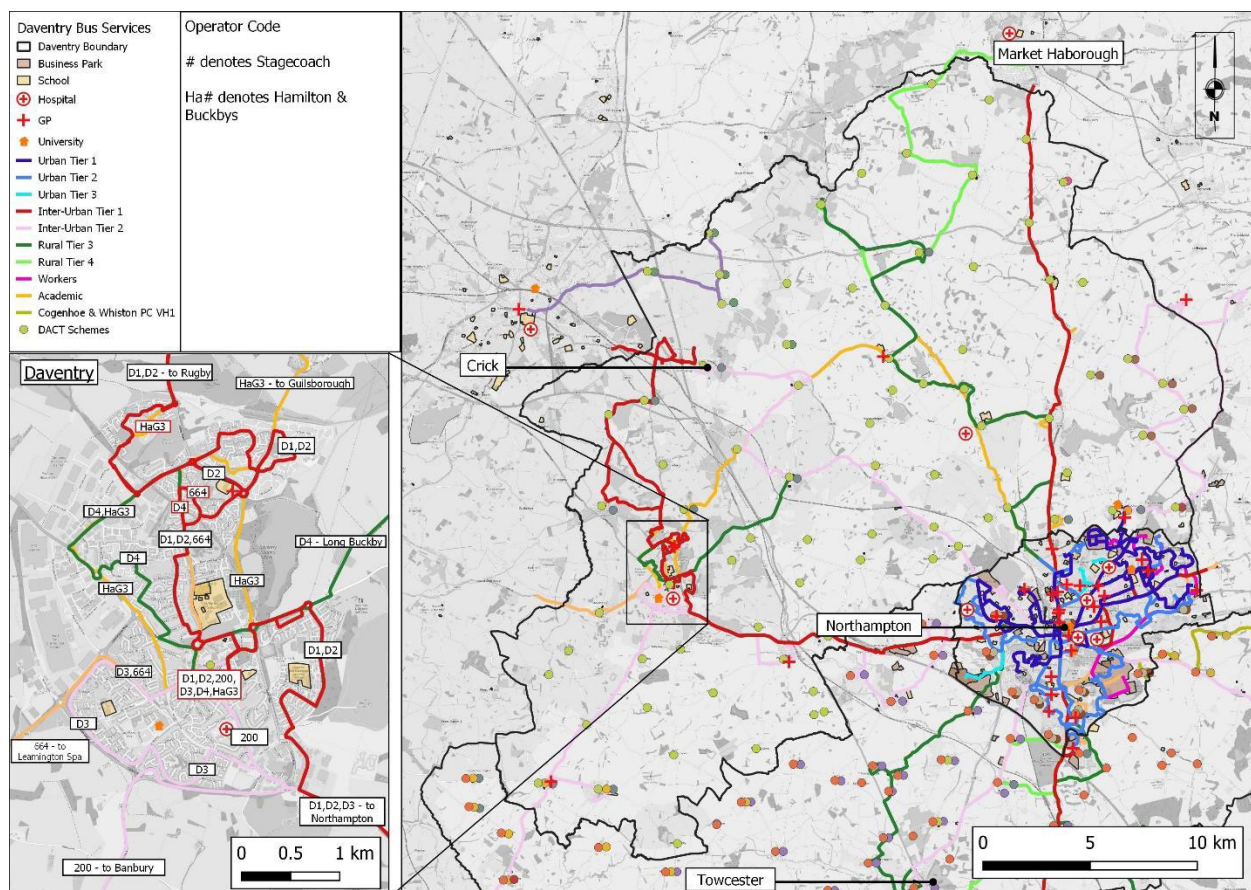
Figure 2.2: Northampton Bus Services (December 2022)



- 2.8 **Figure 2.2** illustrates that the majority of routes are in the Urban Tier, with most Urban Tier 1 services running between the town centre and the north side of the town through dense residential areas.
- 2.9 The majority of amenities are shown to be near to regular service routes. The business parks in the north of the town are all close to Urban Tier 1 routes and the business parks in the south of the town are at a minimum connected to an Urban Tier 3 route. The same applies to schools and colleges which are predominantly connected by Urban Tier 1 routes. Whilst these important regional employment and educational areas are connected, it is imperative that the service times correspond with the operational times, particularly of businesses.
- 2.10 Additionally, there are several connections to neighbouring villages, towns and cities. These include cross-boundary routes to Milton Keynes to the south, Wellingborough to the east, Corby, Kettering and Leicester to the north, and Rugby and Coventry to the west. The vast majority of these cross-boundary routes are Inter-Urban tier 1 or lower, except for the Stagecoach 10/X10 service to Kettering which is Urban Tier 1.

- 2.11 There are four community bus service or car schemes that connect to the town, however these only serve the centre and southern suburbs at present.
- 2.12 The services which operate within Daventry are shown at **Figure 2.3**. A larger version is attached in **Appendix 3**.

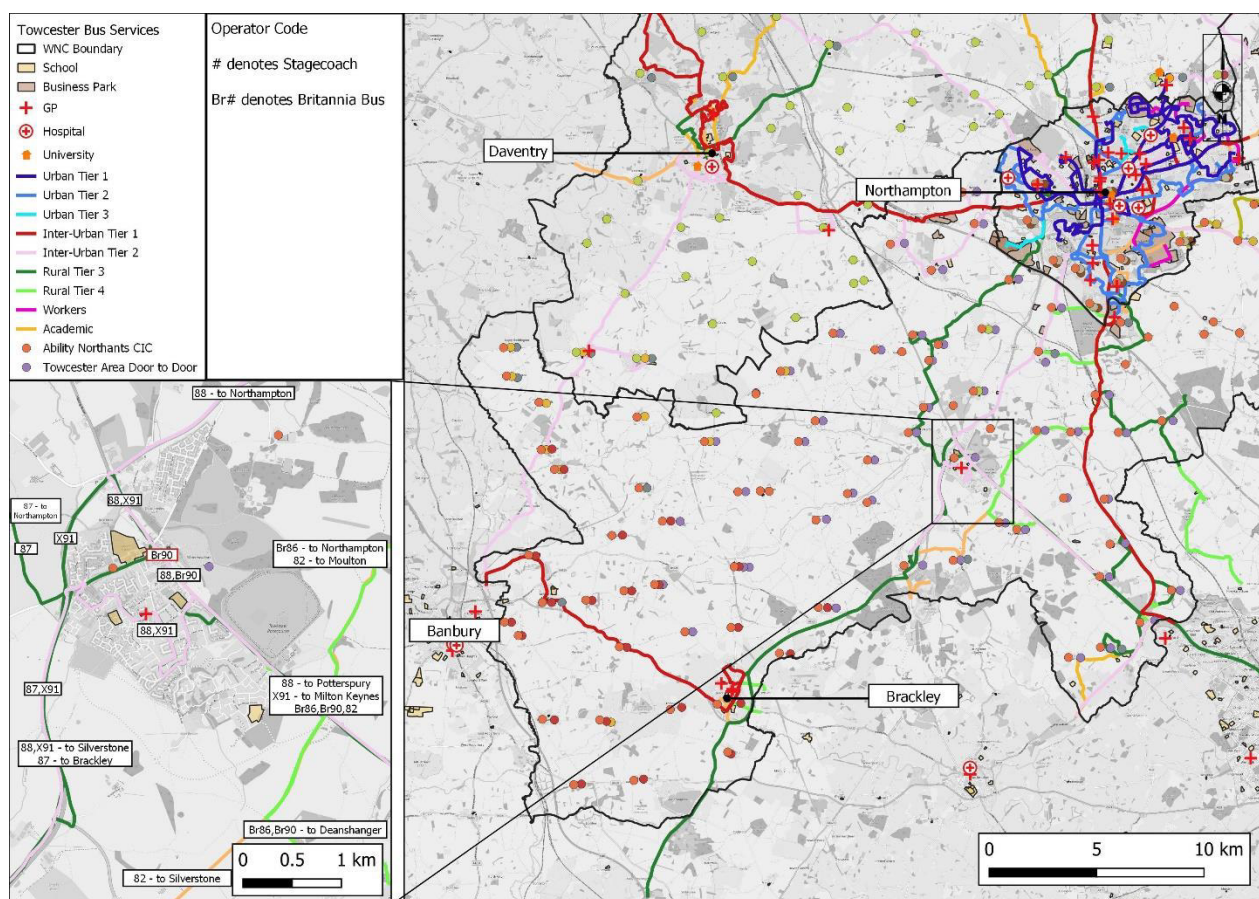
Figure 2.3: Daventry Bus Services (December 2022)



- 2.13 **Figure 2.3** shows that there are Inter-Urban Tier 1 and 2 services which cover the majority of the town. The most frequent are the Stagecoach D1 and D2 services which combined provide an Inter-Urban Tier 1 service between Rugby and Northampton. The D3 is an Inter-Urban Tier 2 service which also connects to Northampton. The remaining routes are either Rural or Academic services. The Stagecoach D1, D2 and D3 services combined provide a regular route to Northampton where the vast majority of amenities are located.
- 2.14 There is a car scheme provided by DACT, which serves residents in Daventry and also serves many other towns and villages in the north and west of West Northamptonshire.

- 2.15 Consultation with Daventry Town Council has highlighted that there is a gap in bus provision for rail interchange, as the D4 service which is the only existing bus service connecting to Long Buckby rail station has a low frequency.
- 2.16 There are cross-boundary services to Leamington Spa, Banbury and Rugby, albeit they are not very frequent services. It is observed that there are no direct routes to Towcester which is one of the closest major towns other than Northampton, people must travel via Northampton to connect between Towcester and Daventry.
- 2.17 The services which operate within Towcester are shown at **Figure 2.4**. A larger version is attached in **Appendix 3**.

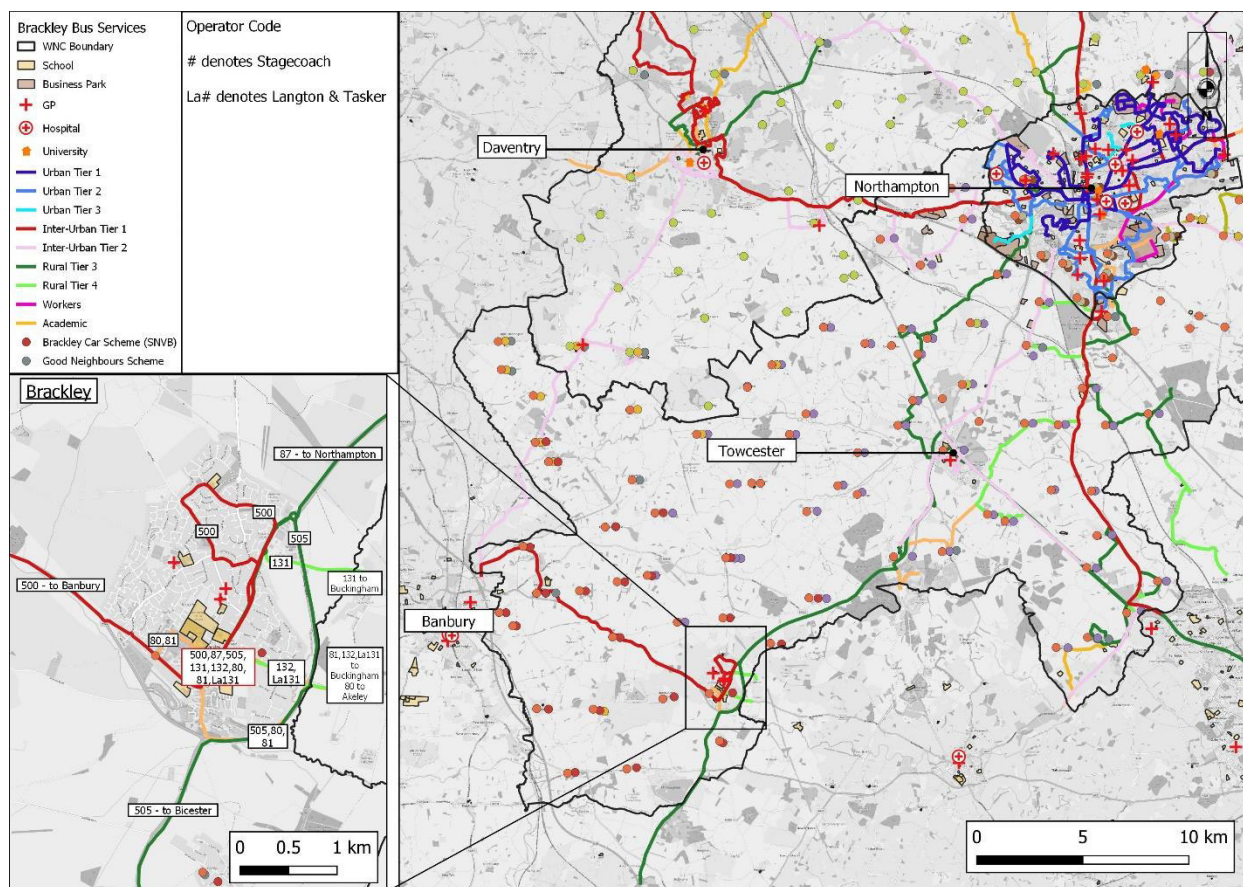
Figure 2.4: Towcester Bus Services (December 2022)



- 2.18 **Figure 2.4** shows that there are a few services that run through Towcester. The most frequent service is the Stagecoach 88 which is an Inter-Urban tier 2 service connecting Towcester to Northampton and Silverstone. Stagecoach’s other two services (87 and X91) are in Rural Tier 3 and serve Northampton, Brackley, Silverstone and Milton Keynes.

-
- 2.19 Residents in Towcester have access to two community bus/car scheme services provided by Ability and Towcester Door to Door. As is shown on the plan, these services have a good coverage of the south half of West Northamptonshire and connect to Northampton, Daventry and Brackley.
- 2.20 Consultation with Towcester Town Council identified that there is a gap in the provision of direct and frequent services to major settlements such as Northampton and Milton Keynes. The existing bus services which provide connections to Northampton and Milton Keynes are infrequent and are time-consuming due to stopping at several villages en route.
- 2.21 Additionally, the existing service to Brackley is Rural Tier 3 and it was identified in consultation that population growth in Brackley and Towcester would benefit from improved bus services.
- 2.22 As outlined above, it is observed that there are no direct routes to Daventry which is one of the closest major towns other than Northampton, people must travel via Northampton to connect between Towcester and Daventry.
- 2.23 The services which operate within Brackley are shown at **Figure 2.5** overleaf. A larger version is attached in **Appendix 3**.

Figure 2.5: Brackley Bus Services (December 2022)



2.24 **Figure 2.5** shows that Brackley has a reasonable number of bus services, particularly when compared to Towcester. The most frequent service is the Stagecoach 500 which runs from Brackley to Banbury and is an Inter-Urban Tier 1 service. Additionally, there are Rural Tier 3 services, the Stagecoach 87 and 505 which provide a less frequent but additional connection from Brackley to Northampton and Bicester, respectively.

2.25 In terms of community bus/car schemes Brackley appears to be worse off than the other major towns in the UAA. There is one CT scheme which is accessed via Brackley (the Brackley Car Scheme) and another which can only be accessed by the Good Neighbours Scheme in the neighbouring village Evenley. These schemes mostly cover the south west of West Northamptonshire but do not have as much coverage as other schemes across the UAA.

2.26 Consultation with Brackley Parish Council has identified that there is limited access by bus to Northampton and Towcester, the 87 provides a Rural Tier 3 service to Towcester and Northampton. Additionally, there is a gap identified for an academic service to colleges in Silverstone and Northampton.

2.27 Whilst there are cross-boundary services to Buckingham and Bicester, these are infrequent. The cross-boundary service to Banbury is slightly more frequent.

3.0 ANALYSIS OF EXISTING SERVICES

3.1 The bus operators have provided details about the existing services they run within West Northamptonshire. These details include estimates of patronage and revenue and a R/A/G rating based on whether the service will be maintained going forward.

3.2 R/A/G is a red, amber or green rating which can be defined as follows:

Red: A service is likely to be discontinued or funding is required to maintain the service

Amber: A service is at risk of being discontinued and will need to be reviewed

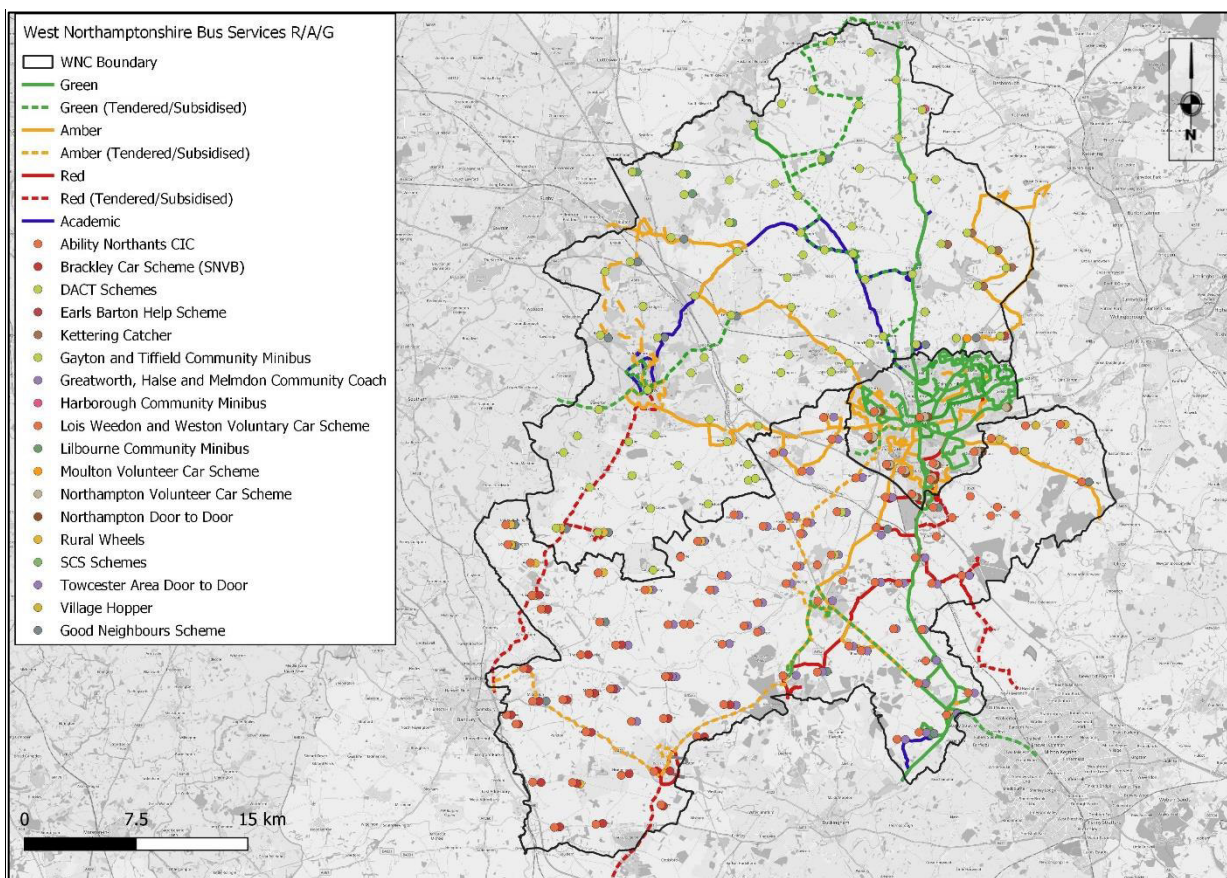
Green: A service is to be maintained or enhanced

3.3 A number of services within the UAA are currently supported through public funding streams. These services are likely to be less commercially viable and therefore vulnerable to being reduced or removed in the future. The tendered routes have been shown in a dashed line in their R/A/G colour to differentiate from non-tendered/subsidised services.

3.4 The services shown on the R/A/G plans are listed in the table attached in [Appendix 2](#). The table specifies which services are Red, Amber, Green, or Academic (blue).

3.5 [Figure 3.1](#) below is a plan showing the services within West Northamptonshire, coloured based on their R/A/G rating. A larger version is attached in [Appendix 4](#).

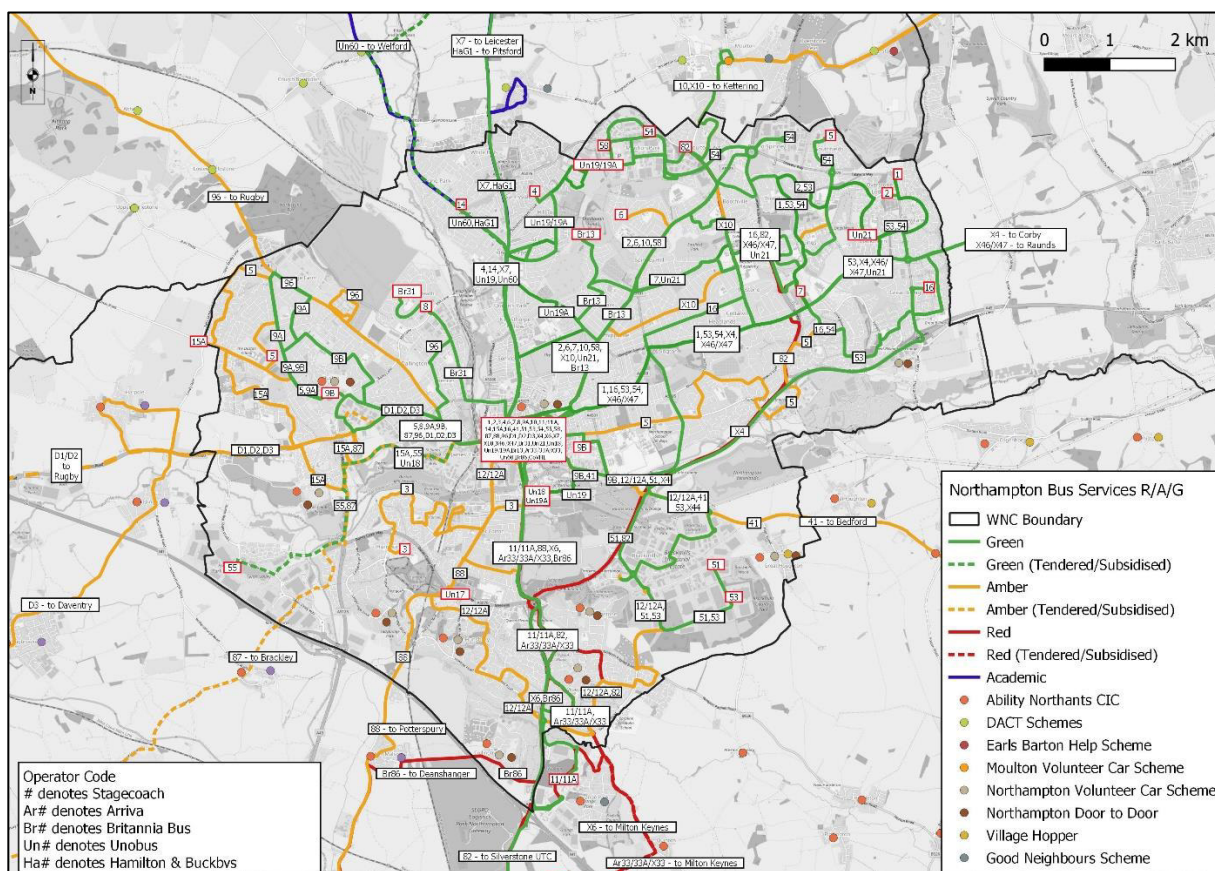
Figure 3.1: West Northamptonshire Services R/A/G (December 2022)



3.6 As is shown in **Figure 3.1**, the highest proportion services expected to be maintained are in and around Northampton. Daventry contains a high proportion of at risk services.

3.7 **Figure 3.2** below is a plan showing the services within Northampton coloured based on their R/A/G rating. A larger version is attached in **Appendix 4**.

Figure 3.2: Northampton Services R/A/G (December 2022)



3.8 As is shown in **Figure 3.2**, the services which are likely to be discontinued include:

- Britannia 86 (there are plans for this service to be absorbed into the Britannia 89 service);
- Stagecoach 82 (academic service), and
- Arriva 33/X33/33A (currently supported by WNC).

3.9 At present, Arriva 33/X33/33A is supported by WNC and provides a Rural Tier 3 service between Northampton and Milton Keynes. Whilst the key destinations between Northampton and Milton Keynes are linked by the Stagecoach X6, which is a viable Inter-Urban Tier 1 service, a number of smaller settlements for example Hartwell and Quinton would lose this connectivity.

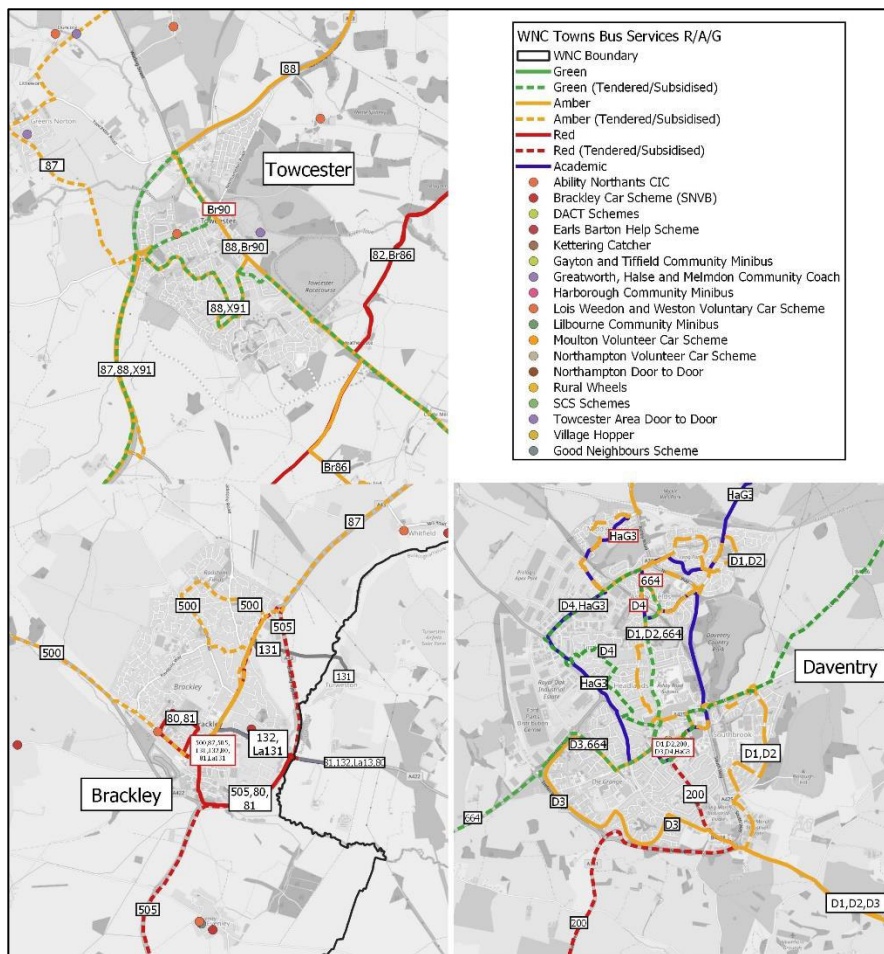
3.10 Stagecoach 55 is an Urban Tier 3 service between Northampton and Swann Valley. This service received some funding through S106 agreements, but Stagecoach have asserted it is likely to be maintained.

3.11 Stagecoach’s D1/D2 Inter-Urban Tier 1 service between Rugby and Northampton currently received funding through S106 agreements, this service is at risk of being discontinued and should be reviewed in the near future.

3.12 Unobus 60 is a Rural Tier 3 services between Welford and Northampton. Although this service is likely to be maintained it is supported by WNC and therefore unlikely to be commercially viable should this funding be removed.

3.13 **Figure 3.3** below is a plan showing the services within Daventry, Towcester and Brackley coloured based on their R/A/G rating. A larger version is attached in **Appendix 4**.

Figure 3.3: Daventry, Towcester and Brackley Services R/A/G (December 2022)



3.14 As is shown in **Figure 3.3**, the area at risk of most withdrawals is Brackley, as there are no current services which have been categorised as commercially viable. The services in Brackley which are likely to be discontinued are the 80, 81 and 505, all operated by Stagecoach. The 505 received S106 funding but is not expected to be commercially viable¹.

¹ Stagecoach's service 505 has now been withdrawn (June 2023) however changes have been made to the 500 service between Banbury and Brackley, now extending to Elmsbrook and Bicester every hour, this is being funded through Oxfordshire County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plans.

- 3.15 Through Towcester, it is worth noting that although likely to be maintained Stagecoach's X91 is currently supported by WNC and therefore are unlikely to be commercially viable should this funding be unavailable. Similarly, Stagecoach's 87 also receives support from WNC and is at risk of being discontinued in absence of this support. Withdrawal of this service would mean that there would be no direct services between Towcester and Brackley.
- 3.16 Although academic service 664 through Daventry is likely to be maintained, it is currently supported by WNC and therefore unlikely to be commercially viable should this funding be unavailable.
- 3.17 As mentioned earlier, Stagecoach's D1/D2 Inter-Urban Tier 1 service which operates through Daventry is currently received funding through S106 agreements, this service is at risk of being discontinued and should be reviewed in the near future. Furthermore, Stagecoach's 200 between Banbury and Daventry is currently supported by WNC and is likely to be unviable without any further funding. Should the 200 be withdrawn there would be no direct bus services between Banbury and Daventry².
- 3.18 Overall, the smaller towns in the UAA appear to be at a greater risk of service impacts in the near future compared to Northampton.

Summary

- 3.19 Through the analysis it is clear that a number of links between key towns are at risk. These include:
- Daventry – Banbury. Currently served by Stagecoach 200 between Daventry and Banbury, this service is not commercially viable and is likely to be discontinued with financial support, this service is currently being funded by Oxfordshire County Council.
 - Brackley – Banbury. Currently served by Stagecoach 500 and categorised as partially viable (amber) meaning it is at risk of being discontinued and will need to be reviewed in the near future, this service is currently being funded by Oxfordshire County Council.
 - Brackley – Bicester. Should Stagecoach's 505 be discontinued there would be no reasonable public transport links between these locations³.

² Service 200 is being operated with financial support from Oxfordshire County Council.

³ Stagecoach's service 505 has now been withdrawn (June 2023) however changes have been made to the 500 service between Banbury and Brackley, now extending to Elmsbrook and Bicester every hour, this is being funded through Oxfordshire County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plans.

- Northampton - Towcester. There are currently two services between Northampton and Towcester, the Stagecoach 87 and 88 services which are categorised as partially viable (amber); they continue to Brackley and Potterspury, respectively, after Towcester. These services should be reviewed in the near future.
- 3.20 Services that receive support/funding from WNC are unlikely to be commercially viable and therefore should be reviewed regularly to assess their risk of withdrawal should funding be removed.
- 3.21 In addition to these key towns, there are number of smaller settlements whose current level of services is at risk and will need to be considered in the next stage of the review.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PROVISION

- 4.1 We recognise that for many in the community it is conventional local buses, primarily operated by commercial providers, that is seen as the core public transport network. West Northamptonshire has a mix of national and local operators that meet many of its travel demands (as considered in detail in chapter 2). However, the bus company commercial objectives may not always match with the Council's policy objectives, for example in achieving the balance between ensuring financial viability for the operators while meeting the community's needs for mobility and access, particularly in delivering social welfare outcomes.
- 4.2 Where there are gaps in the provision of local bus services, it is not always possible that these demands can be met through supported services funded by the Council (using its powers defined within the Transport Act 1985 and subsequent legislation). This may be a matter of Council revenue funding not being available, lack of competition or no bus operators available to undertake the service, or that the potential demand is insufficient to ensure a long term viable service. This can be a key issue in rural areas and in communities with ageing populations.
- 4.3 The government has in recent years recognised these concerns, where the safety net of council supported local bus services cannot meet the demands from rural areas or for certain segments of the population. It has promoted the integration and sharing of resources through the recent "Total Transport" initiatives, it has funded rural mobility services through one off grants, supported emerging demand responsive transport solutions, and of course, has had a long history of encouraging community transport (CT) and Dial a Rides (DAR) through legislation and funding.
- 4.4 There has also been talk of the "Uber-isation" of public transport, with ride sharing apps, but this digital revolution has not yet taken hold except in the largest urban areas. Taxi transport continues to provide a safety net, even in rural areas, but without wider adoption of ride sharing it is often not affordable or convenient for many.
- 4.5 We have been advised that a study is currently being undertaken by the Council to review community transport and so it is our intention to cross refer to that work, and particularly ensure the options tested and solution we propose are complementary.
- 4.6 Our review of the wider transport network confirms that West Northamptonshire has a well-established community transport sector, which is either wholly volunteer operated or sometimes run with some paid staff. Its characteristics are that the schemes are generally rural or village based, often relatively small scale and charity or parish council managed, funded and operated. The exception to this model is Ability, which is a larger Community Interest Company (CIC) operating several vehicles in the south of the UAA. Details of the provision in the CT sector were

considered in the previous chapters and therefore this section comments on the ability of the sector to meet existing or new demands.

- 4.7 Community transport is often very proud of its social role as a safety net, for residents who would otherwise have no access to services. Many are able to cope with existing demand but could not necessarily grow without additional vehicles or more crucially recruiting more volunteer drivers. While in theory CT operators could replace services no longer provided by bus companies there are constraints – they may have vehicle size limits so could not transport large school flows, for example, or they may be able to operate between 0900 - 1700 but would struggle to recruit volunteer drivers for early morning employment trips or late night social trips for young people. So community transport often provide greatest value in replacing off peak rural services, but with the caveats noted on the availability of resources.
- 4.8 Dial a ride (DAR) services are primarily provided for people with disabilities or mobility issues, often the elderly and are distinct from community transport, which is usually open to all. They will generally operate fully accessible minibuses, with ramps or tail lifts, and will often be focussed on semi variable scheduled shopping trips or offering healthcare links. This is a problematic area as non - emergency health trips should be the responsibility of the NHS, but in most areas there are strict criteria on accessing Patient Transport Services (as provided by East Midlands Ambulance Service) and DAR (and CT) therefore can be carrying passengers that ideally should be on PTS.
- 4.9 Voluntary car schemes also provide links to local hospitals and in some locations are used for shopping trips – these may be run in conjunction with CT schemes or by parishes, as well as through the NHS. In some rural communities it is expected that informal car sharing is very important in meeting travel needs that otherwise would be unmet. It is unlikely that these services, run by volunteers on a mileage reimbursement rate, would be able to provide anything but marginal additional capacity if faced with the loss of a local bus service.
- 4.10 There has been considerable interest in Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) as a solution to reductions in local bus services, as in theory the flexibility of the semi scheduled service can meet many demands across a wide area. Northamptonshire County Council previously invested in Call Connect DRT services to fill gaps in the network but found that the subsidy per passenger was high compared to conventional bus services. The DRT model should be explored further, as operating costs are being reduced as the ride booking technology matures and innovative approaches to vehicle utilisation are tested, but it is unlikely to provide a whole or even partial network replacement package, without considerable external funding.

- 4.11 Taxis are often the unsung heroes of local transport and we should not forget the additional capacity provided, albeit generally at higher cost for the individual (but it can be viable for group travel). Because taxi operation, whether hackney carriage or pre booked private hire, is provided by individual operators or small companies their imperative will be to serve passenger demand where it's the most lucrative, so unsurprisingly the focus is often on stations, hospitals and the night time economy. The economics of taxi operation is also dependent on the regular contract provision of vehicles for SEND school transport, effectively offering a cross subsidy within council funding. Shared taxi travel legislation was introduced many years ago but has seen limited take-up (with the notable local exception of black cabs in Corby). When considering safety net options we should therefore not discount taxis, but recognise they may have a very specific role, passenger market and cost profile.
- 4.12 There is often other transport provision that may have resources available to supplement a network – for example education, health, social care. Uno in Northampton is good example of an education transport provider widening its offer to the wider community, but always primarily focused on its core student market.
- 4.13 There have been a number of council run integration and partnering projects in the UK aimed at utilising resources more efficiently, recognising that public sector vehicles and drivers may have different 'down times' when they could be utilised for different markets. The classic example is using buses for pre 0800 employment trips, then for school runs and then for social care or village bus operations off-peak. Many bus and coach operators already work these types of services together to maximise their internal efficiency for staff and vehicles, but there will be resources such as council owned minibuses, for example in health and social care, which may be underutilised. The 'Total Transport' concept was focussed on maximising all resources in a defined area, often through enhanced management systems, scheduling and passenger allocation and booking. What is less likely to occur is the direct real time mixing of passenger groups, for example where school pupils and social care clients would be difficult to coordinate and provide safeguarding.
- 4.14 This is not to say that greater integration within councils and through partnerships, informal and formal, should not be pursued but the efficiency gains will normally be achieved in the medium and long term through management and procurement systems rather than in shared 'on the road' operations. Often the block to achieving more integration and resource sharing is the council department's budget controls and risk sharing, for example on maintenance, depreciation and overheads.

4.15 In summary each of these alternative transport options has considerable value in West Northamptonshire and in most cases may be called upon to fill network gaps at the margins, although without significant investment would have to be considered as only a partial solution in the short to medium term. We will therefore consider, model and test the greater use of alternative providers in more detail in the second stage of this review.

5.0 RISKS

5.1 Context is always important when considering the current risks to the local bus network. West Northamptonshire has already seen considerable disruption to its traditional bus market, both post deregulation with company ownership changes and more recently with the almost total withdrawal of revenue support by Northamptonshire County Council. Bus patronage will have been impacted and outside of the urban areas may not have recovered. The rise of the community transport safety net, while it has successfully filled many gaps, can only be a partial solution focussed primarily on off peak travel for a limited demographic.

5.2 In the table below we identify an initial list of risks that should be considered in more detail, with severity and mitigation considered, when options are developed in stage 2 of the review:

Type of Risk	Description
Public sector funding	Further reductions in national and local public sector funding, as part of austerity programmes, reduces budget to support tendered local bus services (or CT alternatives).
Tendering outcomes	Tender prices increase as operator costs are passed on, arising through lack of competition, and/or operators exiting the market.
Concessionary fares	Reduction in funding as new generation factors or scheme attributes introduced, with a return to pre Covid funding on no better, no worse off basis reducing income from this sources as concessionary travel passenger numbers does not recover.
Post Covid demand	Fails to recover, thereby reducing income for commercial operators and on tendered services, especially on gross cost contracts where council takes the revenue risk.
Changing demand, demographics	Continued growth of new housing areas, that may be more difficult to serve. New employment locations, which may be edge of urban area and not on existing routes. Changing retail patterns may reduce demand for traditional town centre and even out of centre shopping trips. Rural population changes, with an increased car ownership, alongside rural poverty where access to work and education becomes even more difficult for a small

	percentage of the population. Ageing population does not necessarily increase concessionary travel as older people continue to drive longer and do not transfer to bus.
Commercial viability of services	Most services have a critical patronage level that post Covid they may no longer reach, hence further service withdrawals introduced on commercial network.
Fuel costs	Dependent on external factors but a major risk for all operators, even with fuel hedging, in the short and medium term. The transition to zero emissions buses may be encouraged but will need funding by government grant or from operators profits.
Drivers	Major concern currently is recruiting and retaining drivers, placing pressure on wages and therefore on costs and profitability. Competition arising from HGV operators and other manual work, particularly warehouse employment.
Competition	Loss of competition as established bus operators exit the market, with a possible cost increase as operators recognise monopoly position.
General externalities	The economy, politics, legislation, climate change.

6.0 SUMMARY

6.1 SCP have been commissioned to undertake a review of the bus network on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC).

6.2 This report provides the first half of this review by presenting the existing network and its current commercial viability. A further report will be prepared which provides a framework for decision making in order to inform a future bus network which serves West Northamptonshire to its full potential.

6.3 The review highlights that whilst most major settlements have direct links to the nearest large town(s), the frequency of service or length of journey can create a barrier for some and should be considered for improvements:

- Daventry – Rugby, Stagecoach’s D1 provides an hourly service with a journey time of 1hr10mins.
- Daventry – Northampton, Stagecoach’s D1 provides an hourly service with a journey time of 43 minutes. Stagecoach’s D3 provides a service every 90 minutes with a journey time of 1hr24mins.
- Towcester – Northampton, Stagecoach’s 87/88 provides a service every 120 minutes with a journey time of 34-49 minutes.
- Towcester – Milton Keynes, Stagecoach’s X91 provides 5 services a day with a journey time of 48 minutes.
- Brackley – Towcester, Stagecoach’s 87/88 provides an infrequent service which has a journey time of 25 minutes.
- Brackley – Banbury, Stagecoach’s 500 provides an hourly service which has a journey time of 1hr24mins.
- Brackley – Bicester, Stagecoach’s 500 is now extended to serve Bicester on an hourly basis with a journey time of 25 minutes.

6.4 Routes which have been categorised as ‘amber’ or ‘red’ are not expected to be able to continue commercially and are therefore at risk of being withdrawn should the network remain unchanged or if further funding is not provided.

6.5 As a result of the above analysis a number of potential future gaps between towns in the network have been highlighted, these include: Daventry – Rugby, Daventry - Banbury, Banbury - Brackley, Towcester – Northampton, Brackley – Bicester, Brackley – Towcester and Daventry - Towcester. In addition, a number of smaller settlements are at risk of losing their current level of service.

-
- 6.6 The views of stakeholders including bus operators, local transport authorities and town and parish councils have been captured within this report with a summary of their responses included within **Appendix 1**. It is important to consider these responses when developing the framework for the future network.
- 6.7 The report also highlights the important role which Community Transport plays within West Northamptonshire and how this as well as other alternatives could form part of a new network.
- 6.8 Finally, the current and expected risks which the bus industry face are summarised within this report and must be considered within the next phase of work in order to develop a resilient network.

APPENDIX 1



Transportation Planning : Infrastructure Design

10 South Parade
Leeds
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www.scptransport.co.uk

LC/220575
04 November 2022

Issued via email
[\[insert email address\]](#)

Dear [insert name]

West Northamptonshire Bus Network Review Request for Information

I am writing to brief you on a bus network review which SCP are undertaking on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) covering the West Northamptonshire area and services operating into surrounding counties. I would also welcome your input as detailed below.

Background

WNC have commissioned a bus network review in order to plan for a future, sustainable network that provides a stable and financially sustainable bus network. The Council's objective is to avoid reverting to the underlying trend of declining patronage and service provision in the area, as seen prior to and during the Covid pandemic.

The Study

The aim of this review is to assist WNC to identify and deliver a core bus network which is commercially viable and which increases bus use within the council area.

As a bus operator your input is crucial to helping to determine what the future network should and will look like.

The review will categorise the existing bus services into 3 categories: green (viable), amber (marginal) or red (non-commercial).

The output of the review will be a report which clearly identifies potential improvements and a draft network plan based on evidenced need. The wider strategic issues, including economic and financial pressures, will be considered to assist planning for the medium and long term of public transport in West Northamptonshire.

Request for Information

To support the review, we will be seeking information, such as:

- The total number of journeys undertaken by passengers on each of your services at a high level, detail to be discussed (e.g. timeframe and/or split by concessionary passengers and fare payers).
- For the amber and red services, understand when and where people are travelling.
We appreciate that the above is sensitive information and would be happy to sign a non-disclosure agreement.
- Evidence of any barriers to existing bus use (excluding Covid-19 pandemic).



- What you think can be done to make bus use more attractive.
- Any aspirations/risks which you believe should be included within the review.

All information should be provided to our project manager, Lucy Crann (lucy.crann@scptransport.co.uk) by **Friday 18th November**.

Please be reassured that we work with bus operators data regularly and we will ensure full confidentiality of any data provided, keeping information in a secure digital vault. Any commercial data referred to in the report will be disaggregated to respect individual bus operators information.

It would also be appreciated if you could review the table which is appended to this letter and check that the information which is relevant to your services is correct, amending where necessary.

Timescales

It is expected a draft Bus Network Review will be produced by January 2023, at which stage wider community and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken.

Yours sincerely



Lucy Crann
Senior Transport Planner
On behalf of SCP
Lucy.crann@scptransport.co.uk

Summary of Bus Operators Consultation Responses

Letters were sent to Bus operators on the 4th November 2022 with a deadline set for responses on 18th November 2022.

Stagecoach East

Stagecoach East currently provide service route 41. Post COVID, they are now running a reduced service with 1 PVR route. They are meeting on 17th November to discuss future services. They would share a CT feeder bus model to be considered within the review.

Stagecoach Midlands

Stagecoach Midlands outlined issues they currently are experiencing and others that may cause future consequences. After COVID, patronage levels are still slightly down, this is partly to do with concessions still lagging. They considered the ability to recruit and retain drivers to be a risk to the company as people are showing to be less willing to work evenings and weekends. However, Stagecoach do offer enhanced rates for these periods currently but increasing these will need operators to expand the network and frequencies. There is also competition for skilled workers for maintenance, this is likely to cause future problems.

They also highlighted that concessionary reimbursement is a big risk. This is currently being paid at 90% patronage, but this expires in March 2023 with funding and guidance for 2023/2024 unknown. BRG however is not as much of a concern as planning for this ending has been well known. There are S106 funds available, but the authority needs to consider how this should be spent.

Stagecoach have aimed to have a zero emissions fleet by 2034 but in order to achieve this, work from the authority will be needed.

Stagecoach also mentioned that the current economic climate is only concerning for them would be if the need for the new warehouses disappeared. They stated Northampton services remained healthy through COVID, so in turn they were not worried about a recession.

Stagecoach believes the fares within the WNC area are reasonable. They recently changed the fare zone boundaries to accommodate journeys from further afield. However, fares possibly will need to increase to cover the rising fuel and wage costs. They believe that reliability and quality of service comes before cost in passenger demand. Stagecoach is in the process of developing tap in and tap out systems which would benefit passengers and reassure them of value for money.

Another issue is congestion within Northampton. With help from West Northamptonshire Council, they should ensure consistent journey times as this is key to increasing patronage levels.

Stagecoach would support plans for smart corridors and bus priority lanes particularly on Harborough Road, Kettering Road, and Wellingborough Road. They also state that enforcement for the existing bus priority needs to be improved. Stagecoach is currently developing a toolkit for WNC which would look to address several of the concerns stated above.

Britannia Bus

Britannia's services are viable. There are plans to expand service 89 to absorb the less frequent service 86(red) and 90(amber).

Britannia suggested integrated school services into the commercial network. Therefore, in most cases this would be cheaper than a dedicated school bus and money. Britannia bus believe that the rising diesel prices are not affecting fares.

Britannia believe that as the waiting list for drivers is long, recruitment is not an issue. However, they are worried about the industry being franchised.

Post COVID, Britannia's business model is working well. Their services are very reliable, and the company is constantly listening to passengers on ways they can improve. By keeping passenger informed through covid19 and beyond, patronage levels have steadily began to rise. The company are dealing with the common issues proactively. They stated they aren't worried about the recession as buses tend to do better within the current economic conditions.

Their current fleet have been upgraded from Euro 2 to Euro 5 engines, with Euro 5 being used on town services. They stated there is a plan to eliminate Britannia expressed how for the cost of one electric bus, several midlife buses could be retrofitted with improved engines.

Britannia commented that congestion is present, but this was no more than other areas. A significant area for concern is the gas works roundabout next to the bus station. Another problem they would like to raise is the fact that although the Enhance partnership is good in theory, it is not achieving anything currently. Britannia would welcome having direct contact with the Board if it becomes established.

Unobus

Unobus' core model is focusing on providing for staff members and students at the Universities. The network adjusts around the constantly changing needs of the University.

The university heavily subsidises student fares. However, these may increase due to the uncertainty on the costs of fuel.

PVR levels are not up to 2019 levels. This is to do with the changing locations and reduced demand from the university. With most students now studying at Waterside, there is less demand and in turn a reduced frequency and lower PVR.

Unobus stated that the volume of traffic congestion is becoming an issue as it impacts the unpredictability of journey times. It is therefore extremely difficult to build timetables and achieve them consistently as the length of journey times varies greatly. Even though recruiting drivers is less of an issue as the network has reduced and Unobus are fully staffed, it is challenging to recruit and maintain skilled workers.

However, they believe the main risk is the bounce back of concessionary travel. This is because it impacts the off-peak demand, and it previously provided a significant amount of patronage at off-peak times.

Unobus has a young fleet of euro 5 or better buses, and although zero emission vehicles is an ambition, it is not immediate. Northampton network is not as compatible with zero emissions fleet as Hertfordshire as it is high daily mileage with less opportunity for top up charging

They wanted to acknowledge that this review should not just consider the local bus network but consider the potential of all suppliers eg: DRT and community buses. They provided examples of this working well in Hertfordshire to serve rural areas, but it is very expensive.

The other bus operators (Hamilton & Buckby's, Langston & Tasker, Marshalls, and Redline) are all school services that offer a limited service for students only. Langston & Tasker operate only for school students only as the drop off and afternoon pick up are from The Royal Latin School site only. Marshalls has a closed school service, with pick up/drop off in Deanshager only.



Transportation Planning : Infrastructure Design

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LC/220575
11 November 2022

Issued via email
[\[insert email address\]](#)

Dear [insert name]

West Northamptonshire Bus Network Review

I am writing to brief you on a bus network review which SCP are undertaking on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) covering the West Northamptonshire area and services operating into surrounding counties. I would therefore also welcome your initial views on cross boundary bus services in your area, as detailed below.

Background

WNC have commissioned a bus network review in order to plan for a future, sustainable network that provides a stable and financially sustainable bus network. The Council's objective is to avoid reverting to the underlying trend of declining patronage and service provision in the area, as seen prior to and during the Covid pandemic.

The Study

The aim of this review is to assist WNC to identify and deliver a core bus network which is commercially viable and which increases bus use within the council area.

As a council with cross boundary services, your input is crucial to helping us to determine what the future network should look like. We recognise you will be facing many of the challenges that WNC face, whether in terms of funding or operational issues, and so coordination on 'shared' services will be essential. We will therefore be considering local bus services, as well as opportunities for volunteer run community buses, demand responsive minibuses and integration with other services to improve connections in rural areas and on key cross boundary corridors.

The review will categorise the existing bus services into 3 categories: green (viable), amber (marginal) or red (non-commercial). We will be working with local bus companies to understand their plans for the services they provide now and in the future, as well as assessing the value of the council funded bus services that currently fill in gaps in the commercial bus network.

The output of the review will be a report which clearly identifies potential improvements and a draft network plan based on evidenced need. The wider strategic issues, including funding and operational pressures, will be considered to assist planning for the medium and long term of public transport in West Northamptonshire.

Initial Request for Information

Following the study there will more opportunities to give your views through a formal WNC consultation on the proposals but to inform our work on the review we are seeking your initial views on the following questions:

- How do you anticipate existing cross boundary bus services (commercial and supported) will be maintained (and possibly developed)? Or are they at risk?

- The concerns of bus users being reported to you in your area (excluding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic) – for example increased concerns about frequency, routes, destinations, times, fares?
- Your council's plans for the future development of the local bus network, recognising the BSIP and enhanced partnership stated objectives (and perhaps the reality of delivery)?

Ideally, we would like to have a Teams call with each of the adjoining LTA areas but recognise the severe constraints on PT officers time in each council so would be pleased to have an initial email response, with follow-up to discuss specific routes as required.

All information should be provided to our project manager, Lucy Crann (lucy.crann@scptransport.co.uk) by Friday 2nd December.

Timescales

It is expected a draft Bus Network Review will be produced by January 2023, after which stage formal community and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken by WNC.

Yours sincerely

Bob Pinkett
Transport Director
On behalf of SCP

Summary Of Local Transport Authorities Consultation Responses

The letter was sent out to Local Transport Authorities on the 11th November 2022.

How do you anticipate existing cross boundary bus services (commercial and supported) will be maintained (and possibly developed)? Or are they at risk?

LCC retendered all 16 supported services. They noted residents in the north of WNC areas may look to Market Harborough for their main local town and this has lots of services on key routes. There is not currently a tendered cross boundary bus service.

BC have done their network review in 2022. They have 1 supported rural bus which travels around Buckinghamshire and goes to Brackley a couple of times. There is demand for the cross-boundary school services.

NNC are still to do their network review. They are wanting to subsidise more moving forward. Western parish council has an existing commercial service but has no funding apart from concessionary fares. For the Northampton to Wellingborough service, in the future this wants to increase in frequency due to demand. There are no supported services across the border, but NNC would be interested in collaborating.

WCC are doing a similar review but have a much larger supported network. They have lots of school services with can achieve a good level of integration. There are making reductions on contracts in Stratford area. They would not support the 96 or D1 as there is the rail as an alternative. They have several DRT services but noted they shouldn't leech passengers from mainstream services. If funding dries up, they discussed that removing services would drag commercial services down.

OCC in response to expected challenges from a reduction in patronage, have set funds aside to support previously commercial services. They are taking on contracting responsibilities for three Stagecoach services. Services 200 and 500 are protected until 2024 and service 505 until March 2025. Beyond, they are considered to be at risk.

The concerns of bus users being reported to you in your area – for example increased concerns about frequency, routes, destinations, times, fares?

LCC said there were many barriers to use of buses that PC's feel they experience. Just under 40% feel that poor.

BC's bus services are feeling the pressure from inflation but the flow between Brackley is expected to be safe. BC believe that residents have unrealistic expectations of rural village service with their main concerns being reliability of service and capacity.

NNC claimed there were no real concerns with cross boundary except for A43 village services. There have been complaints about loss of connections due to Stagecoach changes. Stagecoach have simplified fares to become more zonal; some bus users feel that they are not receiving value for money.

OCC outlined the main issues, other than service reductions due to COVID, is the ongoing drive shortage and congestion. There are more than 100 cancellations a day of bus services in the Oxford urban area due to major reliability problems associated with increased congestion.

The council's plans for the future development of the local bus network, recognising the BSIP and enhanced partnership stated objectives?

LCC made some progress on their enhanced partnership- dates have been agreed and meetings are relatively regular. They are considering core services but have excluded cross boundary services.

BC have scoring mechanisms for each service based on school flow, village of a certain size, hospital etc.

WCC are looking to develop a framework for making decisions based on evidence. They currently act more reactively and do what is best at the time. They want to reduce ENCTS payments as it doesn't incentive operators to grow patronage.

OCC have received BSIP funds are prioritising service 505. There are a couple of services that are proposed to be replaced by BSIP-funded DRT services. They do not have a budget for subsidised bus services, they currently spend over £6m on such routes. They propose to introduce a further cross-boundary bus service to Newbury. Retain two service commenced in 2020 and introduce two new DRT services. Their enhanced partnership is currently out for stakeholder consultation. They are currently in line to receive over 160 new electric buses.

All detailed responses have been forwarded to West Northamptonshire County Council.

LC/220575
11 November 2022

Issued via email

Dear Sir/Madam

West Northamptonshire Bus Network Review

I am writing to brief you on a bus network review which SCP are undertaking on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) covering the West Northamptonshire area and services operating into surrounding counties. I would also welcome your initial views on bus services in your area, as detailed below.

Background

WNC have commissioned a bus network review in order to plan for a future, sustainable network that provides a stable and financially sustainable bus network. The Council's objective is to avoid reverting to the underlying trend of declining patronage and service provision in the area, as seen prior to and during the Covid pandemic.

The Study

The aim of this review is to assist WNC to identify and deliver a core bus network which is commercially viable and which increases bus use within the council area.

As a local council, representing your community, your input is crucial to helping to determine what the future network should look like. We recognise that not all communities are served by local bus services, but opportunities for volunteer run community buses, demand responsive minibuses and integration with other services will also be explored to improve connections in rural areas.

The review will categorise the existing bus services into 3 categories: green (viable), amber (marginal) or red (non-commercial). We will be working with local bus companies to understand their plans for the services they provide now and in the future, as well as assessing the value of the council funded bus services that currently fill in gaps in the commercial bus network.

The output of the review will be a report which clearly identifies potential improvements and a draft network plan based on evidenced need. The wider strategic issues, including economic and financial pressures, will be considered to assist planning for the medium and long term of public transport in West Northamptonshire.

Initial Request for Information

Following the study there will more opportunities to give your views through a formal WNC consultation on the proposals but to inform our work on the review we are seeking your initial views on the following questions:

- Is your community served by a local bus service and if so are residents satisfied with the service?
- Evidence of any barriers to bus use in your community (excluding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic) – for example concerns about frequency, routes, destinations, times, fares?

- What do you think could be done to make bus use more attractive?
- Do you have any ideas or options which you believe should be included within the review?

All information should be provided to our project manager, Lucy Crann (lucy.crann@scptransport.co.uk) by Friday 2nd December.

Timescales

It is expected a draft Bus Network Review will be produced by January 2023, after which stage formal community and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken by WNC.

Yours sincerely

Bob Pinkett
Transport Director
On behalf of SCP

Summary Of Parish and Town Councils Consultation Responses

The letter was sent out to Parish and Town Councils on the 11th November 2022. By the 13th December, 34 responses have been received.

Is your community served by a local bus service and if so are residents satisfied with the service?

In response to question one, eight Parish Councils (PC) have no bus services operating in their local area. Thirteen PC's have one service, but the majority stated these services were unreliable. However, some areas, such as Hardingstone, feel they are well served by buses. Some PC's have had reduced frequency services prior to the pandemic and feel that COVID has caused an increase in cancellations and delays. With routes being axed and others planning to be withdrawn, in areas such as Yardley Hastings and Old Stratford, valuable services are leaving elderly and non-drivers isolated without any support in accessing healthcare facilities etc.

Furthermore, seven PC's are relying on community transport schemes to access amenities in the main urban areas of West Northamptonshire. These include the ability bus, local Hopper services and the Lilbourne minibus. However, those areas relying on CTS are struggling due to limited seats and limited days the service runs. A further two PC's responded with a request for a demand responsive transport scheme.

Additionally, just over 70% of PC are not satisfied by the services operating in their area. This is mainly due to poor reliability and a reduction in the frequency of the services. Other PC's are only partially satisfied and this is due to services only serving specific individuals (either elderly or commuters) due to timings of the buses. Only 12% are satisfied with the services.

Evidence of any barriers to bus use in your community (excluding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic) – for example concerns about frequency, routes, destinations, times, fares?

There were many barriers to use of buses that PC's feel they experience. Just under 40% feel that poor timings of the services result in many residents not being able to access public transport, others simply don't have access to a service at all (21%). Due to the locations of bus stops, 15% of PC's residents cannot easily reach a service. As many have a large population of elderly people that cannot drive or are physically unable to walk the distance to these stops, they are remaining isolated and reliant on resources such as local food banks. One stated that due to the location of the stops, people have had to walk on poorly lit streets with no footpaths which can be extremely dangerous.

As many residents are elderly, they have access to a bus pass. However, these can only be used at certain times (after 9:30am) and services can become overcrowded, forcing those with mobility issues to stand on long journeys. Some stated that confusing timetables were an issue and that paper timetables were no longer available, meaning elderly that couldn't always access online timetables were left abandoned. Other barriers included the expense of the service, poor waiting environments and last-minute cancellations. If individuals were not informed of these cancellations, many may be stranded for an extensive length of time.

What do you think could be done to make bus use more attractive?

Each PC has suggestions for their specific localities to make services more attractive. Many referenced a sustained improvement in frequency and timings of buses to allow for more individuals to use buses for more than the occasional shopping trip. Others felt that allowing the use of bus passes for an extended length of time would benefit their community. Some mentioned investment in seating, improving the affordability and advertising of the services that are accessible to residents. Suggestions also included more environmentally friendly buses, movement of bus stops and diverting routes so parishes can use a service.

Do you have any ideas or options which you believe should be included within the review?

Consultees were asked if they had any suggestions they would like to include in the review. Common responses included functional timetables enabling the long-term use of the service and the allow for the retention of services. and investing further into community transport schemes. Others mentioned that due to the dramatic increase in fuel costs and the energy/climate crisis, more people will rely on public transport. Specific responses cover integrating the buses with rail services, the roll-out of fully electric buses and changing the way the routes are devised. In the age where the norm is for people to use public transport, the bus service is just not currently suitable. The majority of parishes *'just want a fairly decent regular service'*.

All detailed responses have been forwarded to West Northamptonshire County Council.

APPENDIX 2

West Northamptonshire Bus Services (December 2022)

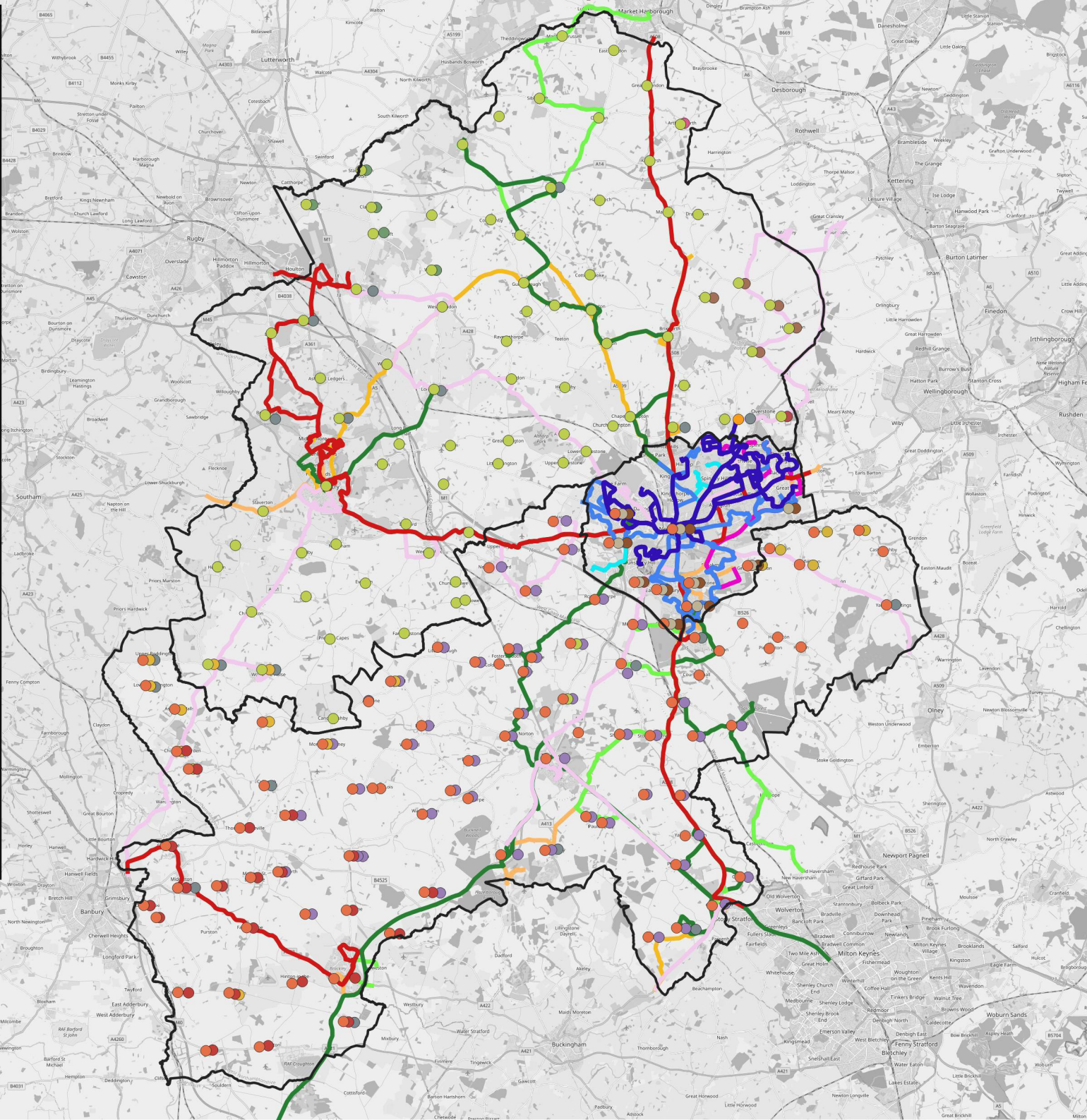
Operator	Service	Route Description	Service Tier Level	R/A/G
Britannia Bus	13	Northampton – Links View	Urban Tier 3	
Britannia Bus	31	Kings Heath - Northampton	Urban Tier 1	
Britannia Bus	86	Northampton - Deanshanger	Rural Tier 4	
Britannia Bus	89	Milton Keynes – Deanshanger - Potterspury	Rural Tier 3	Plans for 89 to absorb 86 & 90
Britannia Bus	90	Deanshanger - Towcester	Rural Tier 4	
Stagecoach	1	Rectory farm - Northampton	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	2	Northampton – Blackthorn	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	3	Northampton – Camp Hill	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	4	Northampton – Sunnyside	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	5	Northampton – Southfields	Urban Tier 2	
Stagecoach	6	Northampton – Parklands	Urban Tier 3	
Stagecoach	7/7A/7B	Northampton – Moulton Park	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	8	Northampton – Kings Heath	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	9/9A/9B	Northampton – Duston – Northampton	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	11/11A	Northampton – Grange Park	Urban Tier 2	
Stagecoach	12	Northampton – Wootton	Urban Tier 2	
Stagecoach	12A	Wootton – Northampton	Urban Tier 2	
Stagecoach	14	Northampton – Acre Lane	Urban Tier 2	
Stagecoach	15/15A	Northampton – St Giles Park	Urban Tier 2	
Stagecoach	16	Northampton – Ecton Brook	Urban Tier 1	
Stagecoach	41	Northampton – Bedford	Inter-Urban 2	
Stagecoach	51	West Favell Centre – Northampton – Brackmills	Workers	
Stagecoach	53	Northampton – Brackmills	Workers	
Stagecoach	54	Northampton – Moulton Park	Workers	
Stagecoach	55	Northampton – Swan Valley	Urban Tier 3	S106 funding
Stagecoach	58	Northampton – Moulton Park	Workers	
Stagecoach	80	Akeley – Brackley	Academic	
Stagecoach	81	Buckingham – Brackley	Academic	
Stagecoach	82	Moulton – Silverstone UTC	Academic	
Stagecoach	83	Milton Keynes – Silverstone UTC	Academic	
Stagecoach	86	Coventry – DIRFT	Inter-Urban 2	
Stagecoach	87	Northampton – Brackley	Rural Tier 3	Tendered
Stagecoach	88	Northampton – Silverstone	Inter-Urban 2	
Stagecoach	96	Northampton – Rugby	Inter-Urban 2	
Stagecoach	200	Banbury – Daventry	Inter-Urban 2	Tendered
Stagecoach	500	Banbury – Brackley	Inter-Urban 1	Sun & BH Tendered
Stagecoach	505	Brackley – Bicester	Rural Tier 3	S106 Funding
Stagecoach	664	Daventry – Leamington Spa	Academic	Tendered
Stagecoach	D1/D2	Rugby – Northampton	Inter-Urban 1	S106 Funding
Stagecoach	D3	Northampton – Daventry	Inter-Urban 2	

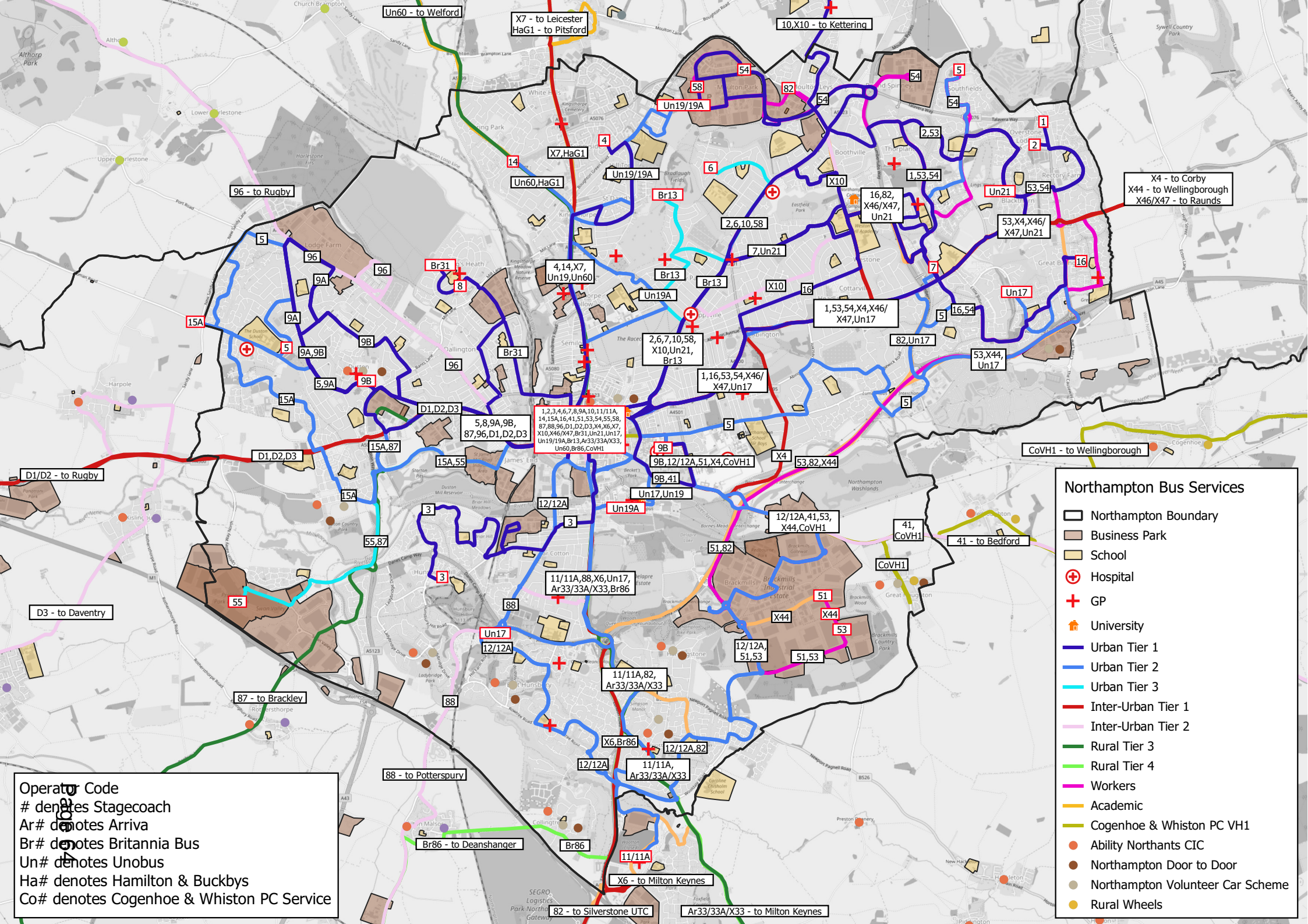
Stagecoach	D4	Daventry – Long Buckby	Rural Tier 3	S106 Funding
Stagecoach	X4	Northampton – Corby	Inter-Urban 1	
Stagecoach	X6	Northampton – Milton Keynes	Inter-Urban 1	
Stagecoach	X7	Northampton – Leicester	Inter-Urban 1	
Stagecoach	10/X10	Northampton – Kettering	Inter-Urban 2	
Stagecoach	X44	Brackmills – Wellingborough	Academic	Now withdrawn
Stagecoach	X46/X47	Northampton – Raunds	Inter-Urban 1	
Stagecoach	X91	Milton Keynes – Silverstone	Rural tier 3	Tendered
Arriva	X60	Aylesbury – Milton Keynes	Inter-Urban Tier 2	
Arriva	33/X33/33A	Northampton – Milton Keynes	Rural Tier 3	Tendered/S106 Funding
Unobus	17	Little Billing - Mereway	Urban Tier 2	Now withdrawn
Unobus	18	Sixfields -Waterside Campus	Urban Tier 2	
Unobus	19/19A	Waterside Campus – Boughton Green Halls	Urban Tier 2	
Unobus	21	Rectory Farm – Northampton	Urban Tier 1	
Unobus	59	Welford – Market Harborough	Rural Tier 4	Tendered
Unobus	60	Welford – Northampton	Rural Tier 3	Tendered
Redline	131/132	Buckingham – Banbury	Rural Tier 4	
Marshalls	943	Newton Leys – The Royal Latin School, Brackley	Academic	
Langston & Tasker	131	Brackley – The Royal Latin School, Buckingham	Academic	
Hamilton & Buckbys	G1	Pitsford Turn – Guilsborough Academy	Academic	
Hamilton & Buckbys	G2	Lamport - Guilsborough Academy	Academic	
Hamilton & Buckbys	G3	Daventry - Guilsborough Academy	Academic	

APPENDIX 3

West Northamptonshire Bus Services Overview

-  West Northamptonshire Boundary
-  Urban Tier 1
-  Urban Tier 2
-  Urban Tier 3
-  Inter-Urban Tier 1
-  Inter-Urban Tier 2
-  Rural Tier 3
-  Rural Tier 4
-  Workers Service
-  Academic Service
-  Ability Northants CIC
-  Brackley Car Scheme (SNVB)
-  DACT Schemes
-  Earls Barton Help Scheme
-  Kettering Catcher
-  Gayton and Tiffield Community Minibus
-  Greatworth, Halse and Melmdon Community Coach
-  Harbrough Community Minibus
-  Lois Weedon and Weston Voluntary Car Scheme
-  Lilbourne Community Minibus
-  Moulton Volunteer Car Scheme
-  Northampton Volunteer Car Scheme
-  Northampton Door to Door
-  Rural Wheels
-  SCS Schemes
-  Towcester Area Door to Door
-  Village Hopper
-  Good Neighbours Scheme





Operator Code
 # denotes Stagecoach
 Ar# denotes Arriva
 Br# denotes Britannia Bus
 Un# denotes Unobus
 Ha# denotes Hamilton & Buckbys
 Co# denotes Cogenhoe & Whiston PC Service

Northampton Bus Services

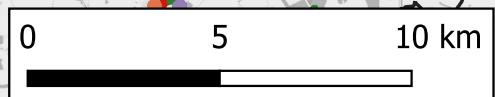
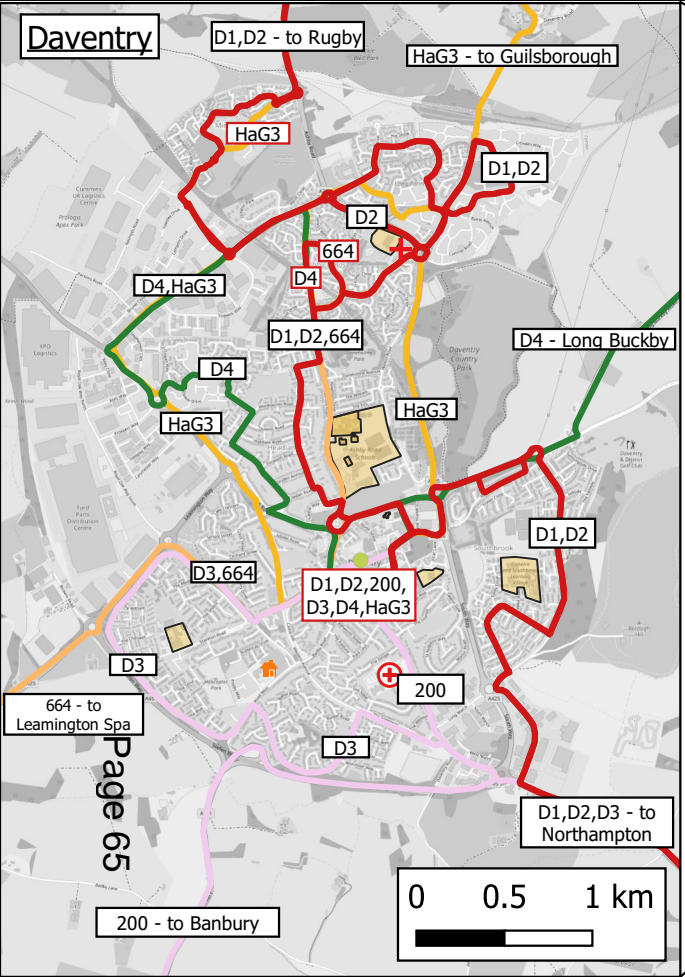
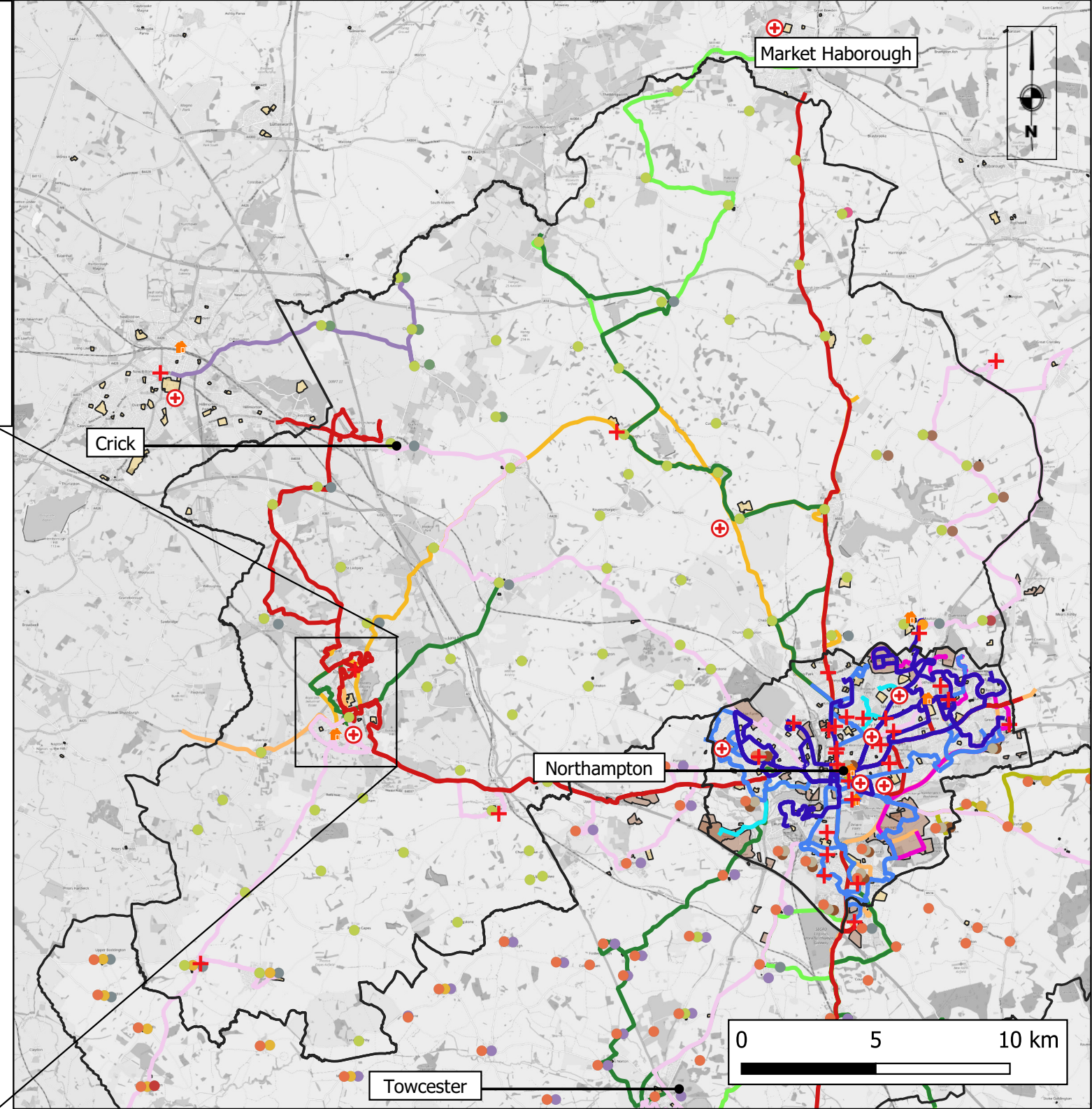
- Northampton Boundary
- Business Park
- School
- Hospital
- GP
- University
- Urban Tier 1
- Urban Tier 2
- Urban Tier 3
- Inter-Urban Tier 1
- Inter-Urban Tier 2
- Rural Tier 3
- Rural Tier 4
- Workers
- Academic
- Cogenhoe & Whiston PC Vh1
- Ability Northants CIC
- Northampton Door to Door
- Northampton Volunteer Car Scheme
- Rural Wheels

- Daventry Bus Services**
- Daventry Boundary
 - Business Park
 - School
 - Hospital
 - GP
 - University
 - Urban Tier 1
 - Urban Tier 2
 - Urban Tier 3
 - Inter-Urban Tier 1
 - Inter-Urban Tier 2
 - Rural Tier 3
 - Rural Tier 4
 - Workers
 - Academic
 - Cogenhoe & Whiston PC VH1
 - DACT Schemes


















Operator Code

denotes Stagecoach

Ha# denotes Hamilton & Buckbys

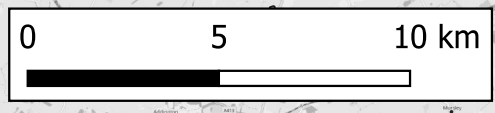
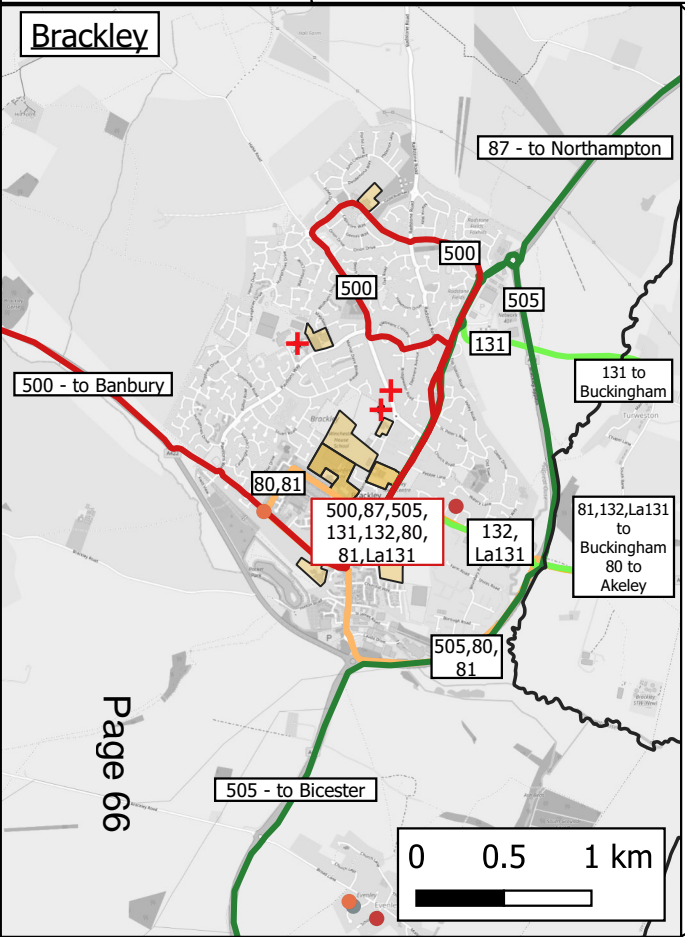
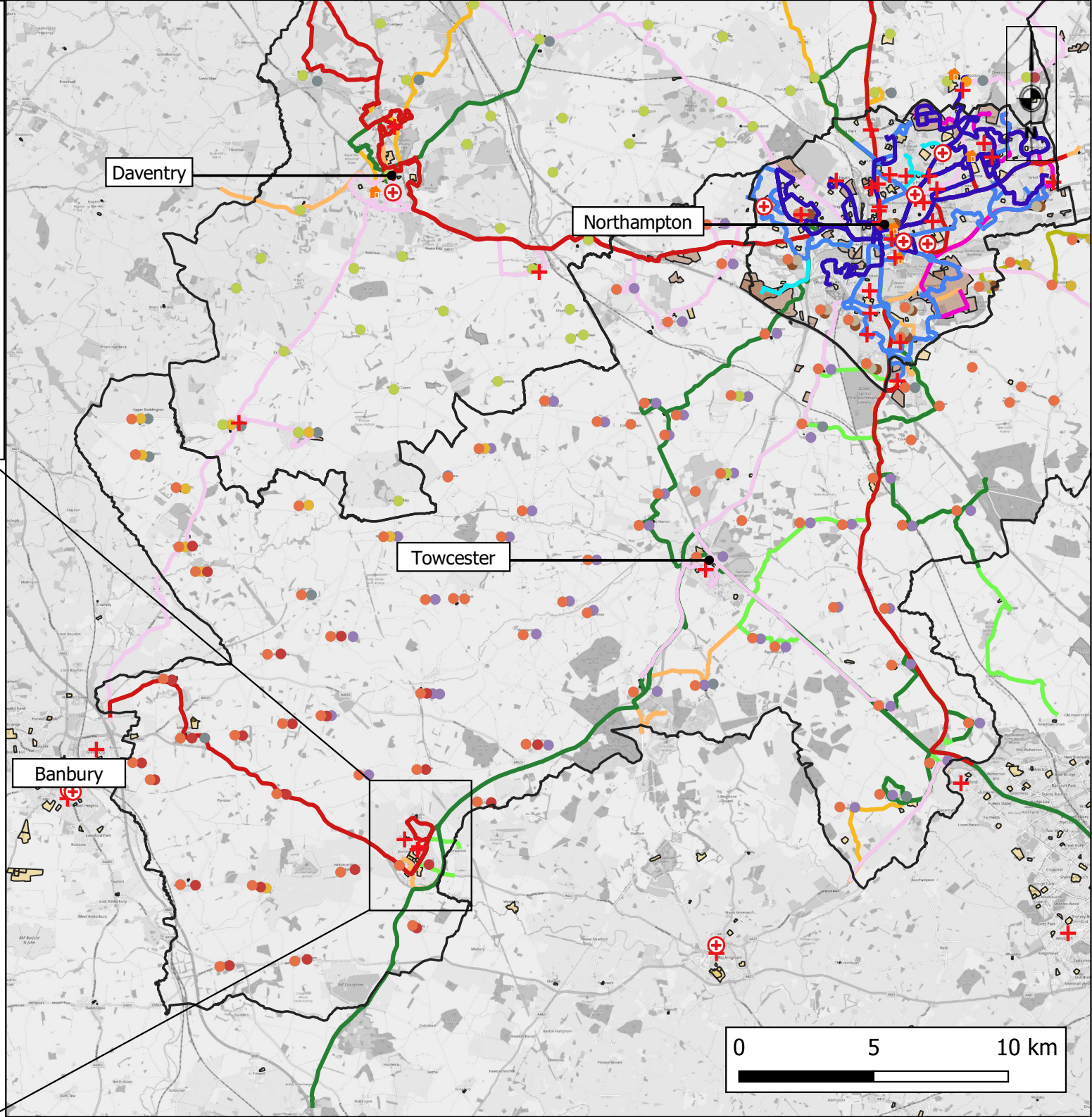


Brackley Bus Services

-  WNC Boundary
-  School
-  Business Park
-  GP
-  Hospital
-  University
-  Urban Tier 1
-  Urban Tier 2
-  Urban Tier 3
-  Inter-Urban Tier 1
-  Inter-Urban Tier 2
-  Rural Tier 3
-  Rural Tier 4
-  Workers
-  Academic
-  Brackley Car Scheme (SNVB)
-  Good Neighbours Scheme

Operator Code

- # denotes Stagecoach
- La# denotes Langton & Tasker

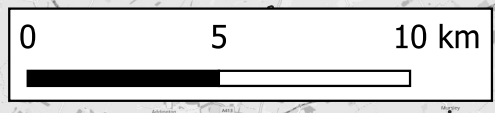
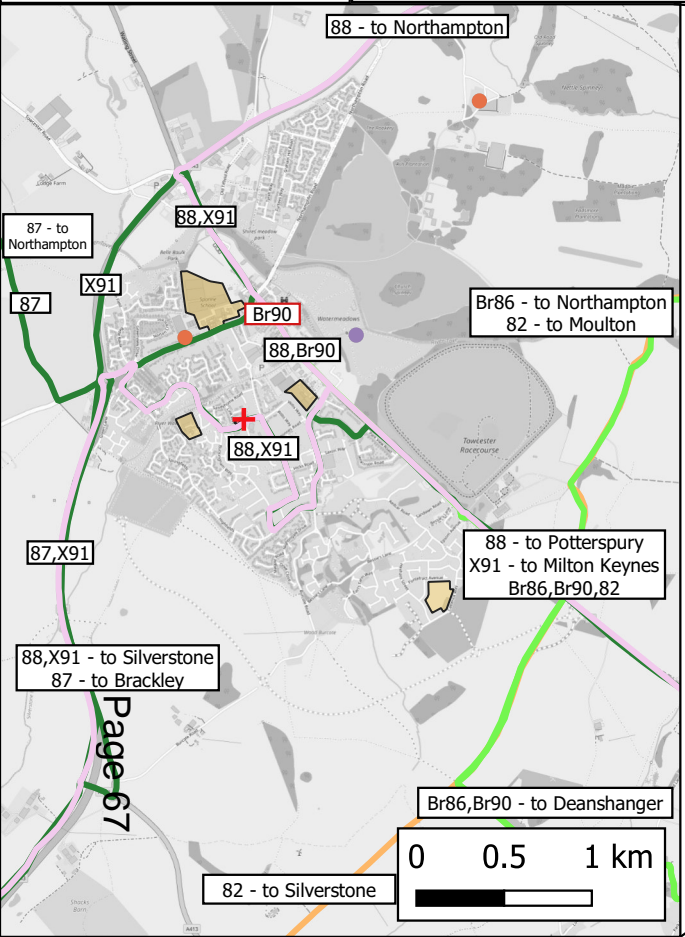
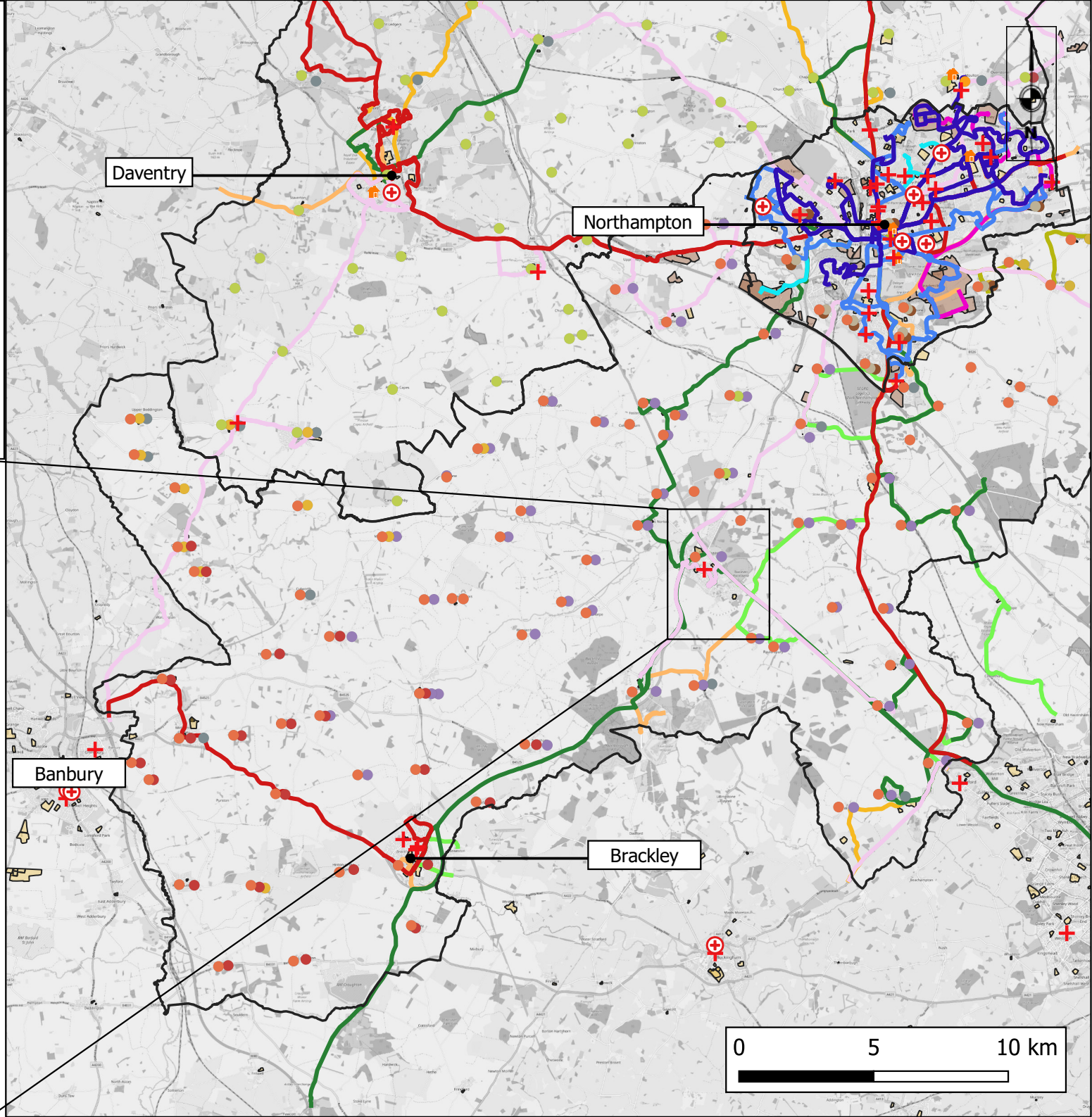


- Towcester Bus Services**
- WNC Boundary
 - School
 - Business Park
 - GP
 - Hospital
 - University
 - Urban Tier 1
 - Urban Tier 2
 - Urban Tier 3
 - Inter-Urban Tier 1
 - Inter-Urban Tier 2
 - Rural Tier 3
 - Rural Tier 4
 - Workers
 - Academic
 - Ability Northants CIC
 - Towcester Area Door to Door

Operator Code

denotes Stagecoach

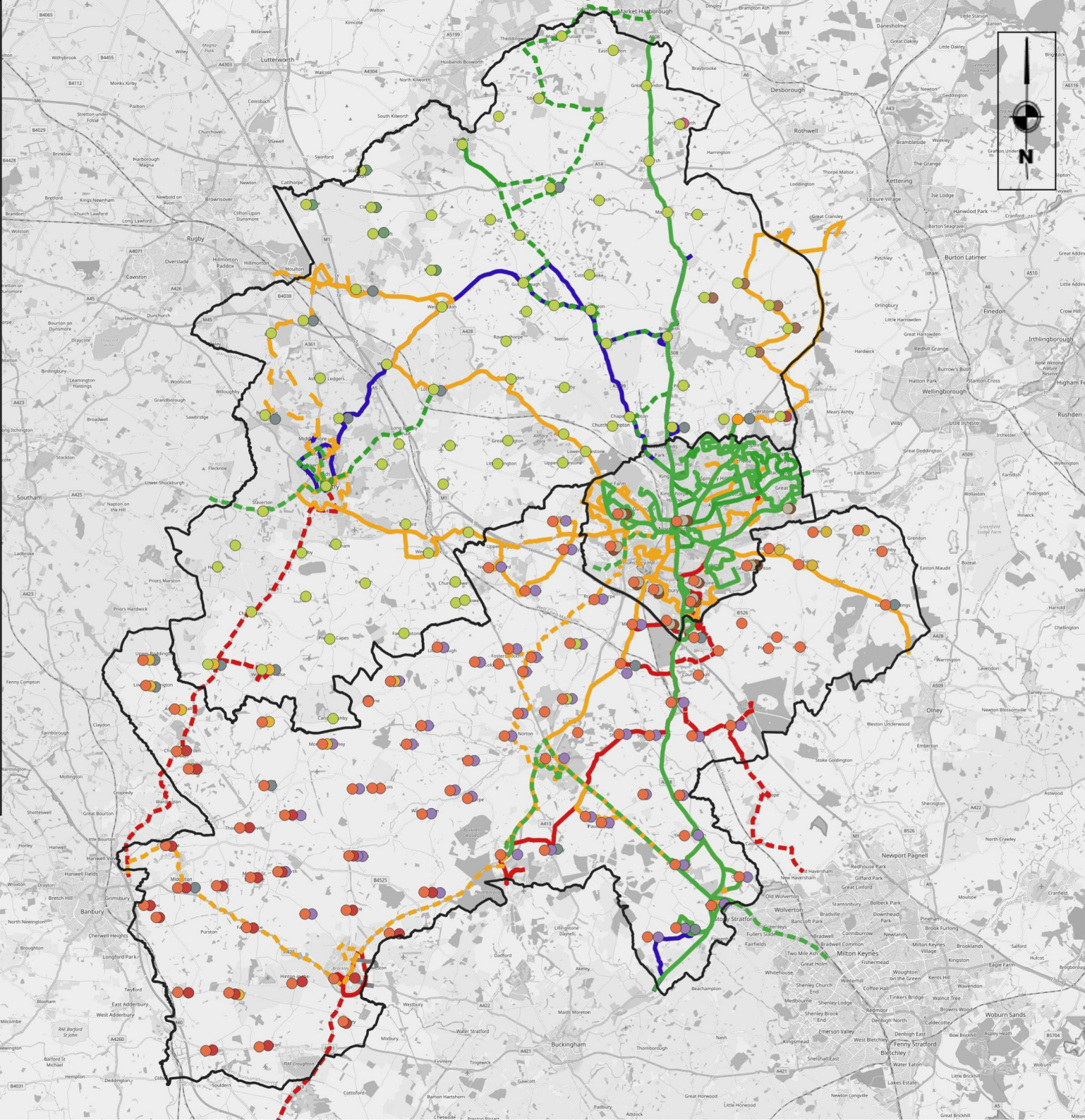
Br# denotes Britannia Bus

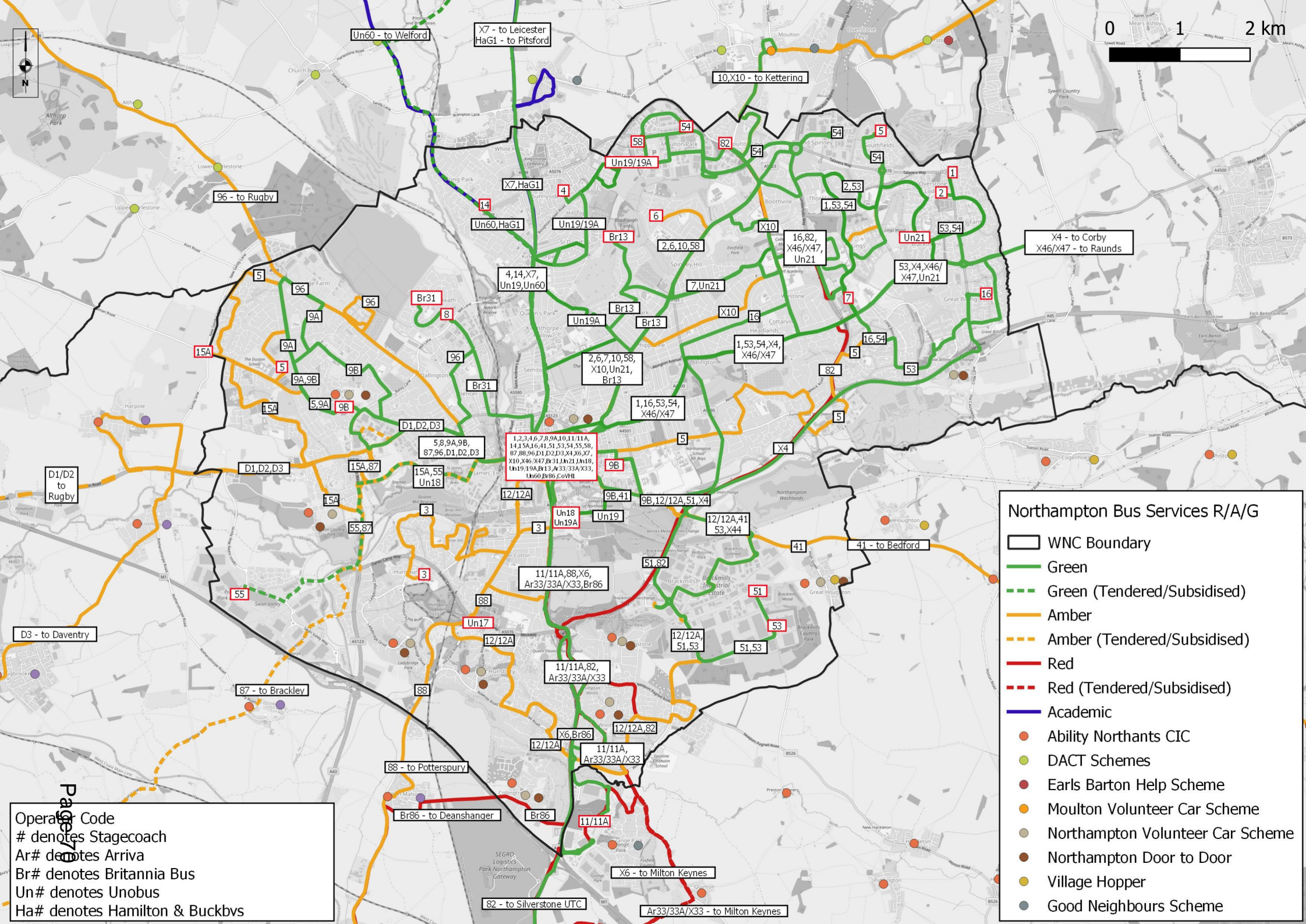


APPENDIX 4

West Northamptonshire Bus Services R/A/G

- WNC Boundary
- Green
- Green (Tendered/Subsidised)
- Amber
- Amber (Tendered/Subsidised)
- Red
- Red (Tendered/Subsidised)
- Academic
- Ability Northants CIC
- Brackley Car Scheme (SNVB)
- DACT Schemes
- Earls Barton Help Scheme
- Kettering Catcher
- Gayton and Tiffield Community Minibus
- Greatworth, Halse and Melmdon Community Coach
- Harborough Community Minibus
- Lois Weedon and Weston Voluntary Car Scheme
- Lilbourne Community Minibus
- Moulton Volunteer Car Scheme
- Northampton Volunteer Car Scheme
- Northampton Door to Door
- Rural Wheels
- SCS Schemes
- Towcester Area Door to Door
- Village Hopper
- Good Neighbours Scheme





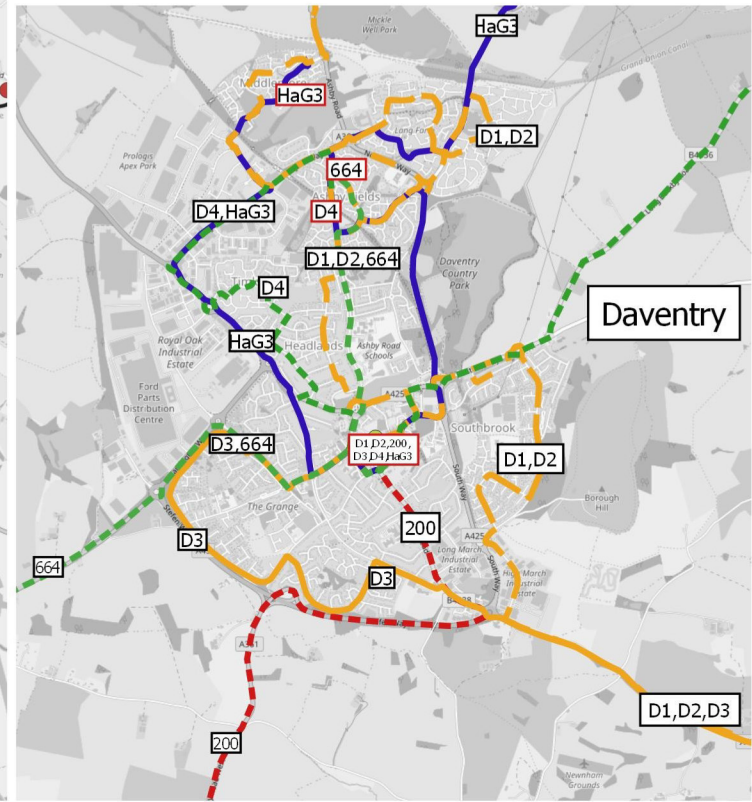
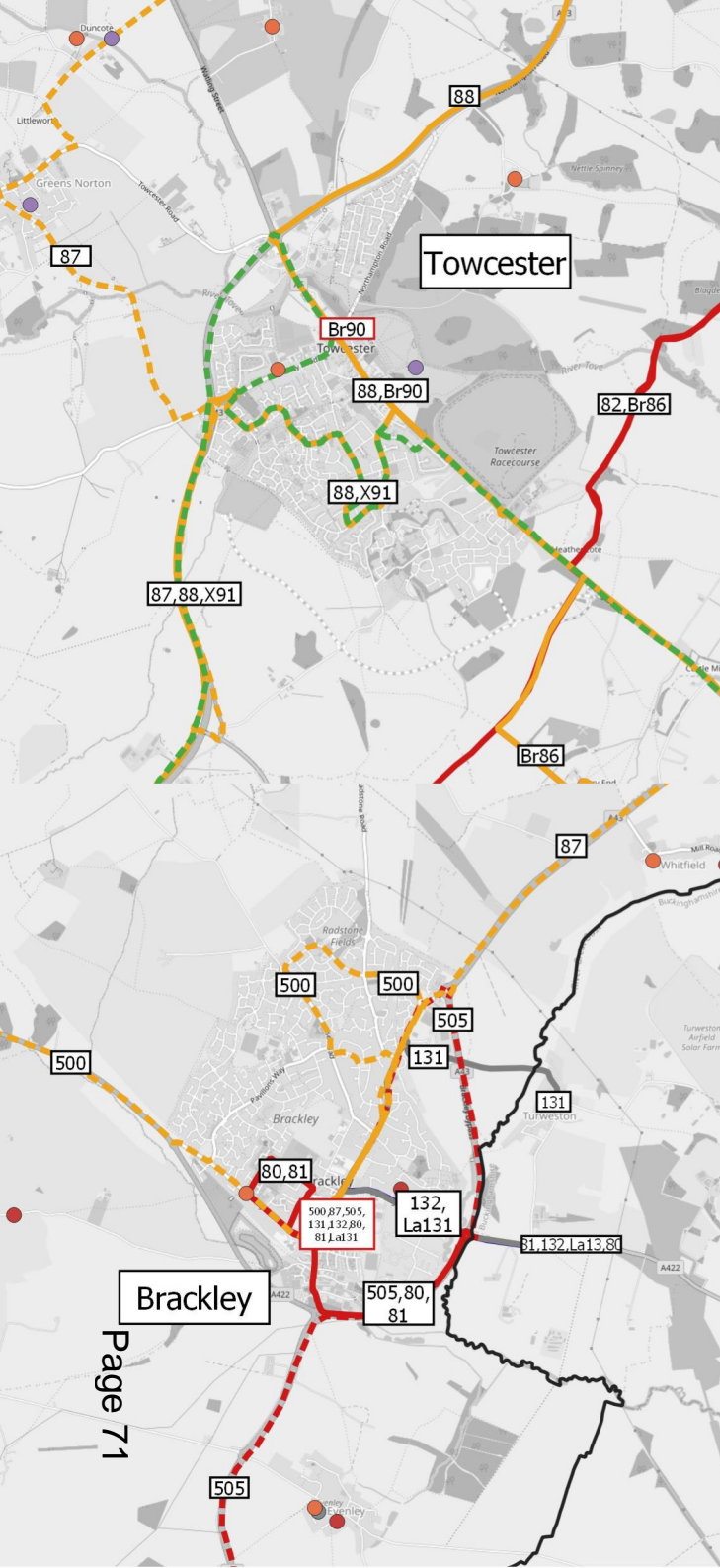
0 1 2 km

Northampton Bus Services R/A/G

- WNC Boundary
- Green
- - - Green (Tendered/Subsidised)
- Amber
- - - Amber (Tendered/Subsidised)
- Red
- - - Red (Tendered/Subsidised)
- Academic
- Ability Northants CIC
- DACT Schemes
- Earls Barton Help Scheme
- Moulton Volunteer Car Scheme
- Northampton Volunteer Car Scheme
- Northampton Door to Door
- Village Hopper
- Good Neighbours Scheme

Operator Code
 # denotes Stagecoach
 Ar# denotes Arriva
 Br# denotes Britannia Bus
 Un# denotes Unobus
 Ha# denotes Hamilton & Buckbys

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Transportation Planning : Infrastructure Design


Bus Network Review

Report 2

West Northamptonshire Council

August 2023

Doc Ref: LC/220575/R4/0

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Buses are the most used form of public transport in England, meeting the needs of old and young, rural and urban communities, and helping supporting the prosperity of towns and cities. Commercial bus operators have been encouraged to innovate in how they provide key local links and the public sector, both at government and local authority levels, have, particularly post Covid, started to develop and significantly now fund a new model for buses to meet residents and visitors travel needs. The journey is just starting in West Northamptonshire, with new government funding and staff resources becoming available, and new Enhanced Partnerships have been established to both protect and enhance existing networks, as well as encouraging a step change in provision.
- 1.2 SCP have been commissioned to undertake a review of the bus network on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) as requested by the Department for Transport (DfT). The review will advise on how best to achieve a future, sustainable network that provides a stable and financially viable bus network.
- 1.3 In December 2022 Report 1 was prepared and issued to WNC as a baseline review, considering existing services, their commercial viability and alternative provision, as well as opportunities and risks at a high level. It classified all current routes as red/amber/green, with red routes most at risk of not being commercially viable in the future and where WNC intervention will possibly be needed to maintain key links and network resilience.
- 1.4 This second report has been prepared to provide a framework for decision making in order to inform a future bus network which serves West Northamptonshire to its full potential. It will be presented to the Council and utilised in further policy development.
- 1.5 Building on the assessment of local bus services in Report 1 and initial discussions with operators, council officers and parish councils we have undertaken further analysis and testing of options to enable us to recommend a sound policy approach, funding criteria and a delivery mechanism for public transport in West Northamptonshire.
- 1.6 This report therefore develops:
- Policy - A draft local bus policy statement, consistent with the WNC Bus Service Improvement Plan, the Local Transport Plan and WNC corporate policies
 - Options - An appraisal and sifting tool for prioritising and selecting the optimal services or service models to support in the future
 - Scenario testing - A review of the potential outcomes of the prioritisation within a number of funding and operational scenarios

- A further review of opportunities and risks after the prioritisation exercise
- An action plan and advice on further consultation
- Conclusions

2.0 LOCAL BUS POLICY

- 2.1 Under the terms of the Transport Act 1985, West Northamptonshire Council is responsible for securing such local bus services as it considers necessary, that are not provided commercially by the market. The Council also has a duty to formulate and publish, from time to time, general policies as to the description of local bus services it proposes to secure through revenue support funding.
- 2.2 Northampton, as the largest town and key urban destination, has a well-established commercial network served by three local bus operators. Beyond the other main towns in West Northamptonshire (Brackley, Daventry and Towcester) where some commercial and supported bus services are provided it is often in the more sparsely populated rural areas and smaller towns where services could be procured by tender and financially supported by the Council. In practice the level of funding available to the previous County Council and now for WNC has historically constrained the level of supported services in the area.
- 2.3 Report 1 set out the current list of supported bus services and noted that the budget available for supported bus services could be further reduced. The budget for 2023/24 has been retained at the same level as the previous year by utilising £215k of contingency to supplement the £100k base budget, providing a base budget of £315k per annum (excluding government grants and S106 payments). This is the council budget funding which is within WNC's control. Based on recent years this revenue support budget would be supplemented by the DfT BSOG payment to Local Transport Authorities of £109,528. In addition WNC will receive its final Bus Recovery Grant allocation for April to June of £41,814.
- 2.4 On 17th May 2023 the DfT announced BSIP+, which are additional revenue funding allocations to support Bus Service Improvement Plan implementation, and WNC will receive £687,109 in the current financial year (2023/24). This funding can be used to support both new and existing services, and the DfT subsequently confirmed on July 24th 2023 that the same level of funding will be available for 2024/25, giving a total of £1,374,218. It is expected that LTAs will use the funding to maintain existing service levels or on measures that are consistent with Departmental guidance on BSIPs:

“You may use the funding to target it on the actions that you – and local operators through your Enhanced Partnership – believe will deliver the best overall outcomes in growing long term patronage, revenues and thus maintaining service levels, whilst maintaining essential social and economic connectivity for local communities. In some places that may involve ensuring existing connections are maintained (either by conventional services or DRT). Elsewhere it might be

achieved through increasing the frequency on key corridors or the operating hours of some services whilst reducing others; or reducing fares or introducing new local concessions to open up new markets and revenue.”

- 2.5 Notwithstanding the two year additional funding for BSIP+ the longer term context of ongoing public sector budget pressures suggests that the Council should consider adopting a new overall policy for supporting local bus services and then develop a mechanism for prioritising funding for an equitable, needs based and optimal supported network.
- 2.6 Previously Local Transport Authorities had a statutory duty to produce a Bus Strategy, as an element of their Local Transport Plan, as set out in the Transport Act 2000 (s108). This requirement was removed in the Local Transport Act 2008 (s26) but many LTAs have continued to include a Bus Strategy as a chapter in their LTPs or as a supporting document (as in Northamptonshire previously).
- 2.7 To a certain extent the production of Bus Strategy is now replaced by the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) and Enhanced Partnership (EP) process, albeit that theoretically an LTA could decide not to establish an EP. While the BSIP sets out the wider context and approach of an LTA, with reference to specific transport policies and wider corporate policies, for example on sustainability, it is primarily seen as a bidding document and the development of a business case for central government funding. It is therefore not in itself the core policy document which sets the framework for supporting local bus services, which continues to be the statutory Local Transport Plan.
- 2.8 The most recent LTP covering the WNC area is the 2012 Northamptonshire Transportation Plan, which was established for a 15 year period, and it therefore continues to be the key statutory transport policy document until 2026. It was supported by a stand-alone Bus Strategy, initially produced in 2013 and updated in 2018, which had as a core objective:

The bus strategy aim is to.....increase the attractiveness of bus travel to encourage modal shift and allow the housing growth proposed in the county to be accommodated.

- 2.9 Clearly much of the 2018 Bus Strategy has been overtaken by events, including council reorganisation, public sector financial pressures, slow economic growth, a slowdown in land development, the Covid 19 pandemic and a subsequent loss of bus services across the region. We understand a new LTP is being produced by WNC and we anticipate that the draft interim Bus Policy set out below could be incorporated as part of the statutory document.

- 2.10 In the 2018 Bus Strategy the 13 local bus policies covered all aspects of public transport, including commercial and supported services, home to school and voluntary sector, rapid transit, information, ticketing and infrastructure. The 2018 Bus Strategy policies are set out in Appendix 1 for reference.
- 2.11 It is also important that any new bus policy is incorporated into the new statutory WNC Local Plan, because of the importance of connections to development and access to jobs and services, which are currently highlighted in Policies C1-C6 in the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (2014).
- 2.12 The Council now has two clear choices on developing its own public transport policy:
- Update the 2018 NCC policies and following consultation adopt them as the WNC policies, or
 - Develop a new consolidated policy statement
- 2.13 It is our recommendation that while each of the previous 2018 policies had merit, the context for delivering on these promises has so significantly changed that a new pragmatic, yet still aspirational, policy position should be adopted.
- 2.14 We have undertaken a review of national, regional and local transport policies, as well as relevant West Northamptonshire Council policies on environmental, social, planning and economic development matters.
- 2.15 In addition we held a workshop with officers on 5th May 2023 to review the policy options, consider the draft policy statement and to agree strategic objectives to inform future service delivery. The policy structure is therefore an overarching statement of intent, with sub clauses introduced as necessary to cover specific modes and infrastructure. Because of ongoing policy development by West Northamptonshire Council, including a new Local Transport Plan, we have developed an interim policy, which could be adapted as new strategic transport and planning policies are adopted.
- 2.16 Our proposed policy statement is needs based, rather than supply side orientated and as such puts the communities and users first. The mechanisms for meeting that need, through identifying the demand for services and encouraging supply solutions, whether delivered by the private or public sector, is then indicated.
- 2.17 The proposed draft interim policy is as follows:

- *PT1: The needs of our communities to access employment, education, healthcare, retail and leisure is recognised and this mobility can be achieved through the provision of high quality, efficient and reliable public transport.*
 - *PT1.1: Priority 1: The Council will encourage the commercial operation of local public transport services, through partnership working and infrastructure investment*
 - *PT1.2: Priority 2: Where there are unmet needs and gaps in the commercial bus network provision, the Council will seek solutions through supported local bus services or community transport initiatives, where funding is available and it is consistent with Council policies and priorities*
 - *PT1.3: Priority 3: The Council will fund and administer concessionary travel for elderly and disabled residents in line with national regulations*

2.18 Additional policy sub clauses could consider integration with rail, education, health and social care transport, the provision of information and infrastructure, but our proposed simplified policy is focused on meeting current legislation responsibilities under the Transport Act 1985 (supported services and policies) and Transport Act 2000 (concessionary travel). Other matters can be considered as aspirations (or actions if funding secured) in the bus strategy element of new Local Transport Plan and within the BSIP.

3.0 OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 Based on our previous work in Report 1, we have generated a range of public transport options and prepared a “long-list” of possible public transport interventions for the future. This enabled us to undertake an initial multi criteria appraisal to provide enough information to enable a short list of options to be identified. This is based on a simplified DfT Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) type assessment, with additional scenario testing and scoring of the identified service options against the Council’s objectives.
- 3.2 The EAST process provides a useful template to undertake a high level sift which removes those options that are unfeasible on the basis of one or more ‘show-stoppers’, such as for significant social, economic and environmental criteria. The Red - Amber - Green (RAG) approach to scoring services within the BSIP, and as reviewed in our report 1, can be replicated in EAST and as such it provides a simple and easily understood visual guide as to a service option’s value and impact.
- 3.3 The use of EAST as starting point is fitting, as not only does the tool identify, at a high level, the nature and extent of all the social, economic and environmental impacts of options, it is also in line with the Treasury’s Green Book and is consistent with Transport Business Case principles. This is important when making a bid to central government for future funding of both revenue and capital projects.
- 3.4 We have therefore developed a two stage appraisal approach, utilising a spreadsheet tool, the West Northampton Council Appraisal and Sifting Tool (WNCASST), which is found in Appendix 2:
- Strategic – to include high level options such as ‘do nothing’, ‘do minimum’, and ‘do something’
 - Detailed assessment – a review based on current services, where a range of criteria are applied and a rank order for future financial support is developed

Strategic Case – WNCASST Summary Table

- 3.5 In our strategic consideration of options to secure public transport services for communities in West Northamptonshire we have utilised standard classifications of actions that a local transport authority would model and appraise:
- Do Nothing (DN): withdraw completely from the delivery of a service or project
 - Do Minimum (DM): the ‘business as usual’ option, maintaining existing services, projects and funding

- Do Something (DS): Consideration of all potential options and scenarios, from minimal change to comprehensive change

3.6 In the Summary table of WNCASST we have scored each of the standard options against business case objectives, based on HM Treasury and DFT guidance:

- Strategic – clear scheme objectives, policy compliance
- Economic – impacts on users/non users, economic activity, non-monetary benefits (social, environmental)
- Financial – costs, income
- Commercial - procurement, risks
- Management – resources, deliverability and timescales

Do Nothing

3.7 The Do Nothing option can act as a baseline in a ‘first principles’ review of local bus services, in that starting from a zero base position the reasons for supporting bus services (that would otherwise not be provided by the commercial bus operators) can be fully assessed. This can include how supported bus services aid the Council in meeting its social, economic, sustainability and connectivity objectives, for example.

3.8 However funding on local bus support is discretionary, despite the statutory requirement to identify needs under the Transport Act 1985, and therefore as other LTAs have reduced or removed such funding completely there is value in considering the impact the full withdrawal of support would have in the WNCASST assessment.

3.9 In the appraisal DN unsurprisingly scores low against strategic objectives, as it fails to meet both transport policy goals and wider corporate objectives, it has a net negative impact on the local economy but it scores positively on financial savings. On balance the savings would be significantly outweighed by the impacts on resident’s mobility, access to jobs, education and health care and should only be considered when other budget saving options have been exhausted or rejected.

3.10 The WNCASST score for Do Nothing is **35** (scored against a maximum of 90)

Do Minimum

3.11 This option represents ‘business as usual’ and therefore acts as more realistic baseline than a Do Nothing scenario, which is unlikely to be adopted.

- 3.12 For WNC the Do Minimum is to maintain support for the existing (May 2023) tendered bus services (33/A, 59, 60, 87, X91, 200 and 500), plus services still supported by developer contributions (55, 505, D1, D2 and D4). DM would also include maintaining the existing funding of voluntary and community transport organisations that provide a safety net of services that fill gaps in the network, primarily in rural areas. It should be noted that these community based services are being independently reviewed by the WNC Transformation Team concurrently with this study, so we have established this funding as a fixed component in the current DM model.
- 3.13 Within the appraisal the DM approach scored better on strategic objectives, albeit they are not as aspirational as the strategic objectives in the previous Bus Strategy or current BSIP. It is producing net benefits on economy and social welfare, for example, but because of the low numbers of passengers on supported services the benefits are spread relatively thinly. It meets the commercial and management objectives, as it is utilising existing systems and processes, but clearly there is a cost to provision which is rising and wider operational and market challenges are increasing as are risks.
- 3.14 The WNCast score for Do Minimum is **61**.

Do Something

- 3.15 We assessed 5 Do Something options, which represent a mix of providers, operating models and a balance of service within the existing funding envelope. If more or less funding is available then further runs of WNCast can be undertaken, but the initial review sets out to compare, as much is possible, 'like for like' inputs, outputs and outcomes.
- Do Something 1 - Rebalance within local bus services
 - Do Something 2 - Rebalance between local bus and voluntary sector
 - Do Something 3 - Reallocate all local bus support to community bus schemes
 - Do Something 4 - Greater integration with education, social care, health transport
 - Do Something 5 - Reallocate all local bus support to demand responsive transit

Do Something 1

- 3.16 The opportunity to rebalance the distribution of funds between services may arise through the loss of commercial services, which when tested within the WNCast model score more highly than existing services. This is one step away from the 'business as usual approach' and is a representation of the pragmatic approach and choices that officers will already present to councillors for decision.

3.17 As with the DM option this approach to optimising the use of limited funds scores well against policy objectives, will bring reasonable cost benefit outcomes and is deliverable, relatively quickly as it utilises existing tendering systems and relies on established commercial operator capacity. It is effectively moving resources around in a 'black box' where it is possible more trips can be made with WNC bus funding support, but with the down side that areas where tendered services have 'under-performed' may lose out. These services may still be a lifeline for more rural communities or socially excluded groups, where alternatives such as community transport, taxis or lift sharing, may not be available for relatively low numbers of users.

3.18 The WNCAST score for Do Something 1 is **71**.

Do Something 2

3.19 It is recognised that funding of community transport services can be highly efficient, especially where the cost base is lower than on tendered services because of small scale operations, low overheads and particularly the use of volunteer (or low cost part time) drivers.

3.20 Therefore rebalancing to utilise the community transport sector to fill gaps, either where a service is no longer considered viable by a commercial bus operator or where the service can provided at a significantly lower cost by a community based provider, should be considered.

3.21 The strategic objectives are generally well met by this approach and the cost benefit (and non-economic benefits) are generally higher, reflecting the community focus and use of volunteer drivers. The key issue is on deliverability and risk, as the sector has limited capacity and can take time to mobilise. It is also an issue that community transport responds well to meeting off peak travel demands, but is less able to recruit drivers who want to provide early morning workers trips or drive school buses, for example. Therefore the rebalancing can work best when the journey purpose of the underperforming tendered service can match the market served by CT schemes. In the long run the sector could broaden its offer, but investment in vehicles, systems and capacity building would be required.

3.22 The WNCAST score has been developed without taking into account the improvements that may be achieved as an outcome of the WNC Transformation Teams report on the Community Transport sector and the score therefore may improve dependent on the success of that project.

3.23 The WNCAST score for Do Something 2 is **60**.

Do Something 3

- 3.24 There are no examples identified in our research where an LTA has fully withdrawn support for conventional bus services to fund community transport, even with the lower cost model identified in DS2 above. This is not to say it doesn't have benefits, both on costs and building community involvement, but because capacity building can take time it is not an option that can be introduced quickly where a large scale deregistration of commercial services happens, for example.
- 3.25 Because of the exceptionality of this approach it is possible it could be undertaken as a pilot or trial scheme, possibly attracting government or third party funding. However while the subsidy cost per passenger may reduce the number of passengers, particularly for key work and education trips, may also be significantly reduced. Further work with the Transformation Teams review of the sector may identify a future role for CT in providing the majority of the socially necessary 'safety net' services currently provided by conventional local bus services, but at the cost of building sector capacity in the medium to long term.
- 3.26 The WNCAST score has been developed without taking into account the improvements that may be achieved as an outcome of the WNC Transformation Teams report on the Community Transport sector and the score therefore may improve dependent on the success of that project.
- 3.27 The WNCAST score for Do Something 3 is **53**.

Do Something 4

- 3.28 In 2016/2017 the DFT promoted the concept of Total Transport, with number of pilot schemes, including a scheme in Northamptonshire led by the County Council and the University. The premise of this approach is that there is often no shortage of vehicles and drivers in the public sector, just underutilisation, but through better integration and sharing of resources significant efficiencies can be achieved.
- 3.29 In practical terms many local authorities had previously introduced varying levels of integration, initially with their own home to school transport provision and subsequently with adult social care travel. Total Transport introduced NHS non-emergency ambulances into the mix, albeit subsequent reporting suggests integrating resources across separate council and health organisations was problematic in terms of systems, management process and control priorities.
- 3.30 However greater integration is theoretically a potentially driver of efficiencies, bringing new or underused resources into the market, possibly at marginal cost. It is identified in the WNCAST model as being relatively policy compliant, but scores low on deliverability and commercial

benefits because of set up costs and long timescales to secure agreement for fully integrated resource sharing. The costs in officer time and resources in establishing new ways of working, particularly where vehicle brokering and innovative contracting arrangements may be necessary, should also not be underestimated. With the pressures facing the NHS and the Ambulance Service at the moment this may be a low priority for their engagement with WNC. However it should remain as an option as the fundamental principles are sensible and with the right approach achievable over time.

3.31 The WNCAST score for Do Something 4 is **51**.

Do Something 5

3.32 Northamptonshire has some experience with demand responsive transport, both with the services provided by some community transport providers (offering a dial a ride type service) and with the County Council's previous use of the Call Connect model developed by Lincolnshire County Council.

3.33 The proposed approach with DS5 is to fully reallocate the existing tendered bus budget to supporting one or more DRT providers across the council area. This is a fundamental change from scheduled fixed route bus provision to fully flexible or semi flexible routes and timetables. Key to its success is minimising the overhead costs of booking, through call centres or preferably by an app. While this brings considerable efficiencies – generally the vehicle only travels in passenger fare paying services – the barriers to entry, to non-technology orientated users or infrequent travellers and visitors to the area, can be significant. Finally the costs of setting up DRT, ongoing operation and therefore the subsidy per passenger is consistently demonstrated in other schemes across the UK as significantly more expensive than conventional service provision. Therefore at times of constrained budgets, which have to be spread widely to meet many passenger's needs, DRT scores low on financial criteria.

3.34 Again if third party or government funding could be secured for a trial then some of the implementation costs could be reduced and the cost benefit ratio improved. While quicker to deliver than DS3 and DS4, it would take as long or longer than a retendering exercise for conventional local bus services.

3.35 The WNCAST score for Do Something 5 is **47**.

Hybrid Options

- 3.36 Each of the ‘do something options’ above, can to greater or less extent be mixed, to achieve different outcomes. The theoretical ‘all or nothing’ assessment of each is intended to be used in comparative analysis and it is recognised that in practical terms each of the approaches could be applied in part in specific geographical areas, for specific travel needs or to better allocate operator and financial resources optimally across West Northamptonshire. This opportunity to mix solutions is enabled in the detailed assessment in the WNCAS model.
- 3.37 In particular our discussions with officers has highlighted the benefits of a hybrid solution, where the optimal elements of DS1 and DS2 could be secured by rebalancing funding between local bus services in some areas or for some specific travel needs, while also considering whether community transport can be more efficient providers within a commercial bus, supported local bus and community transport combined network. In such a scenario if a conventional bus service is no longer viable, the default is to utilise any funds available for lower cost community transport. This presumes a level of capability and capacity in the community transport sector, but as a result of the WNC Transformation Team’s review this may be better option in the medium term as resources are reallocated or added as part of that review.
- 3.38 This hybrid DS1/2 could, particularly in the longer term, encompass greater integration with health (non - emergency patient transport services) and/or with technology and cost improvements ‘second generation’ demand responsive transit could be viable. It is also more dynamic in responding to the level of funding available, where local bus interventions may cost £100,000 pa plus but community transport service, especially building on existing structures and voluntary sector inputs, could be secured for say £20,000 pa. As such this allows a more ‘fine grained’ response to the needs identified and optimises the ways of meeting the user demand that arise from that need. As the funding sources increase in variety and availability – one off DfT or DLUHC grants, s106 contributions or Infrastructure Levy in the future, local bus revenue support budgets, town and parish council funds – the ability to fine tune the network and grow it efficiently is also enhanced.

Detailed Appraisal and Options Testing - Review

- 3.39 The WNCAS spreadsheet model has been developed to provide an initial assessment of a range of high level options, to inform public transport policies, overall budget choices and medium to long term opportunities. The Summary table provides this assessment.
- 3.40 It is also possible to use the tool for more detailed route and/or area specific decision making in each of the Do Something options. For example under DS1, where the balance of funded services

is being tested the score for a commercial service that is being withdrawn can be assessed against the score for an existing tendered service. If the withdrawn commercial services scores significantly more than the tendered route then this could be considered a rationale for reallocating funds, recognising that the costs are unlikely to be the same. We have therefore included current tendered service costs and the ability to introduce a proxy cost to replace the service, based on an estimate of vehicles required, peak vehicle costs and any income contribution. Annual patronage figures are included where available and therefore a subsidy per passenger trip can also be estimated, to allow further comparison.

- 3.41 Similarly in DS2 - DS5 inputting route specific data, community transport grants, demand responsive transport (DRT) tendered prices or estimates of integrated transport costs allow further comparisons to be made.
- 3.42 The major factor to consider in using WNCASST for detailed analysis and decision making is that inputting all of the data for every service and against every criteria in the WNCASST model would be very resource intensive and would need considerable attention to keep it up to date. It is therefore envisaged that the tool is used to support decision making on a case by case basis, to provide an evidence base and rationale, as a starting point for negotiation and stakeholder discussions.
- 3.43 The second factor to recognise is that the criteria are currently all equally weighted, so that high policy objective compliance will score as highly as positive cost benefit or ease of delivery. Some LTAs rank tendered services with regard to the predominant journey purpose, for example adopting a hierarchy with work and education trips given the highest priority for funding, then health, followed by shopping and leisure. However there is increasing concern that wider negative community impacts, such as social isolation, well-being and reinforcing rural poverty, could as easily lead to a reverse prioritisation with off peak social trips being considered the most valuable, not to the economy, but to the health and happiness of communities. As off peak travel is often marginally costed compared to peak travel for employment, for example, contracted services and therefore subsidy per passenger may be lower too.
- 3.44 In the workshop with officers on 5th May 2023 consideration was given to the possible weighting of the criteria in each of the 5 categories and a possible hierarchy of trips. The consensus view was that weighting the criteria is unnecessary at the moment as the model already replicates the WNC hierarchy of trip priorities, but if this were to change (for example in a new Local Transport Plan) then the WNCASST model could be updated with weight given to any new Council priorities.

- 3.45 The final factor to be addressed is the subjectivity that perhaps invariably can influence ranking and therefore scores. While some criteria are measured by real values, so in the Financial tab costs of services can be an absolute £ value, and to an extent in the Commercial and Management tabs the ease of delivery and timescales are broadly known, for example. However when considering how well a scheme, particularly where it is innovative and untested, meets Strategic and Economic objectives will be much more subjective. This should not diminish the value of the WNCast tool – indeed much the Treasury Green Book business case appraisal method it is based on rests on subjective views and estimates of costs and economic impacts. The subjectivity can be lessened where the inputs are considered by more than one officer (and indeed external stakeholders if appropriate) – in developing and testing the model for WNC we utilised a panel of three with varied experience and knowledge, including finance, policy, operations and procurement.
- 3.46 In this context we see multi criteria models such as WNCast as tools that have merit over standard basic measures such subsidy or cost per passenger or by km, that with considered inputs can challenge conventional thinking and bias, as well as supporting officers when the ‘right answer’ confirms their knowledge and experience. It will not provide an instant answer but it shows evidence to councillors, parishes and town councils, bus users, and operators that complex decisions are not made lightly or without evidence or thought to back them up.

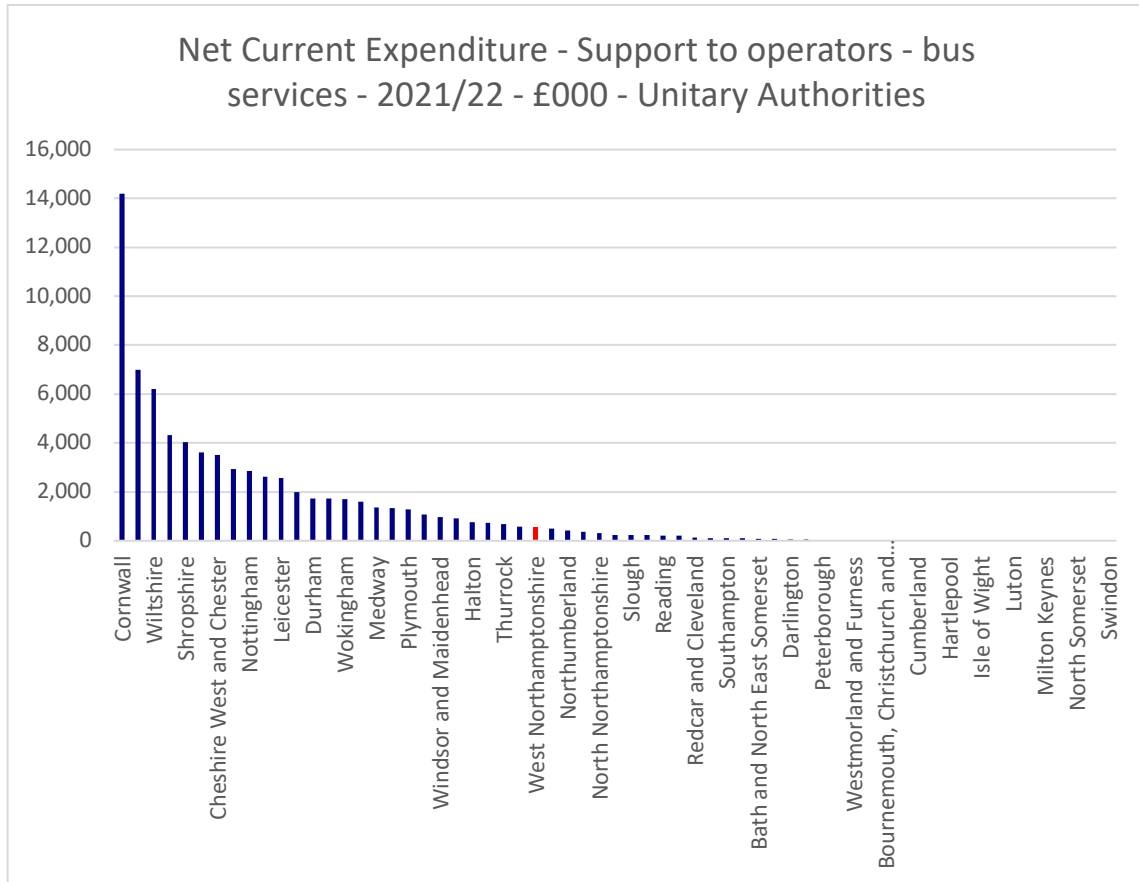
Benchmarking

- 3.47 At the workshop we discussed an additional task to set the level of bus support expenditure in context and we have reviewed a number of Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) data sets, to identify how well the Council is doing compared to its ‘next nearest’ neighbours, both geographically and in key demographics. The latest set of data available with local bus support budget out turns is 2021/22 and it is recognised that during this period there was instability with Covid and additional DFT payments to councils and operators, which we have excluded.
- 3.48 We have used ‘Net Current Expenditure - Support to operators - bus services’, from the Revenue Outturn returns which are compiled annually by DLUHC. ‘Support to operators - bus services’ is the specific code for bus revenue support expenditure from the return, RO2, which includes all Highways and Transport Services expenditure. The RO returns collect data on local government expenditure from each council, for provisional, interim and final spend, and the final out turn report is published in March in the following financial year (i.e. March 2023 for FY21/22). It is noted by DLUHC that some councils fail to submit data or submit partial data by the deadline and so we have undertaken further cross checks have been undertaken to ensure like for like comparisons.

Where necessary out turn data has been manually updated to reflect corrected final figures collected post RO2 reporting in March 2023.

3.49 In summary the WNC 2021/22 revenue expenditure out turn of £545,000 (revenue support and BSOG grant) compares as follows:

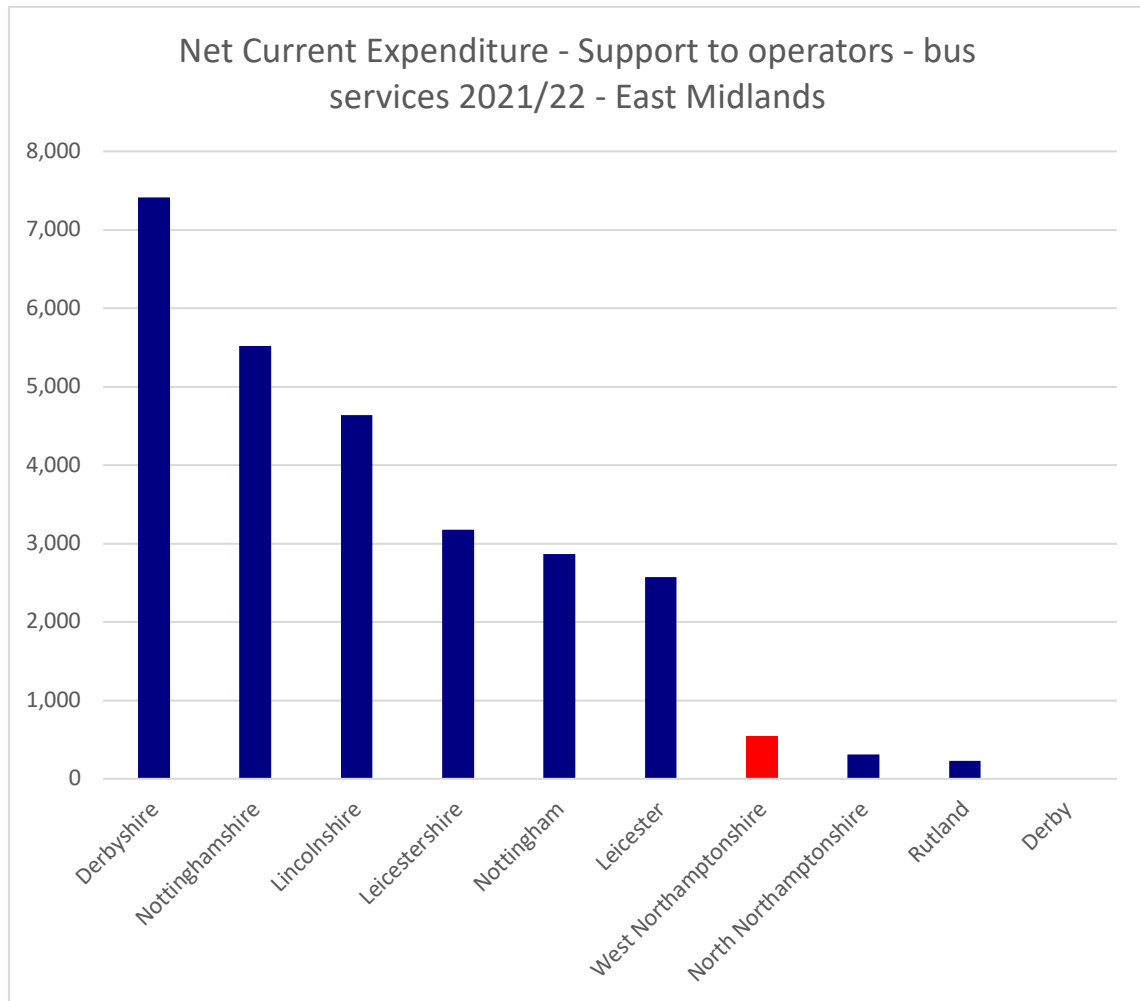
- 27th out of 59 unitary authorities



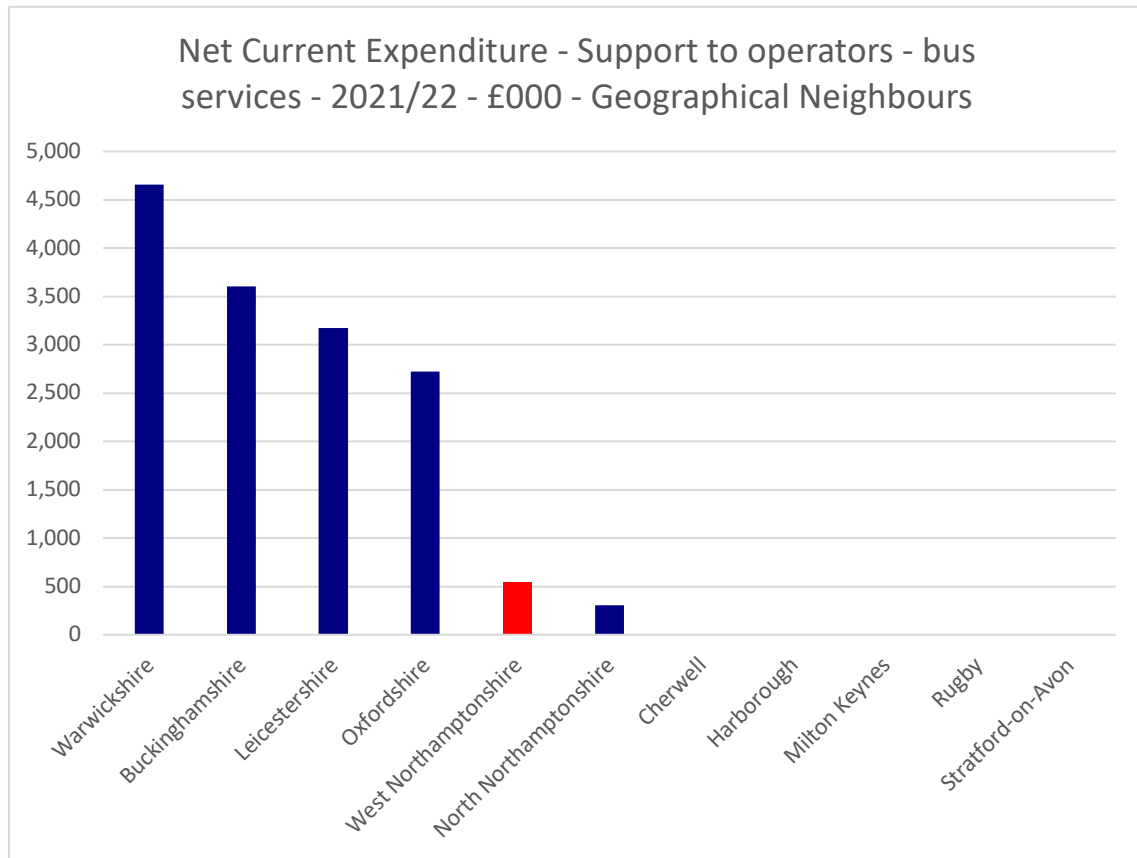
Cornwall is an outlier as it received significant additional DFT funding in a Devolution deal which created the integrated transport authority operating as Transport for Cornwall.

Not all unitary councils directly fund local buses as they may be part of combined authorities where they pay a precept to an integrated transport authority, such as in the ex-metropolitan counties or mayor led conurbations, and so the long tail on the graph above is primarily unitary authorities where transport responsibilities or budgets are devolved to other strategic bodies (or in few cases where no revenue support is offered – Blackpool where the network is wholly commercial, for example or NE Lincolnshire, where a policy decision has been taken not to fund buses).

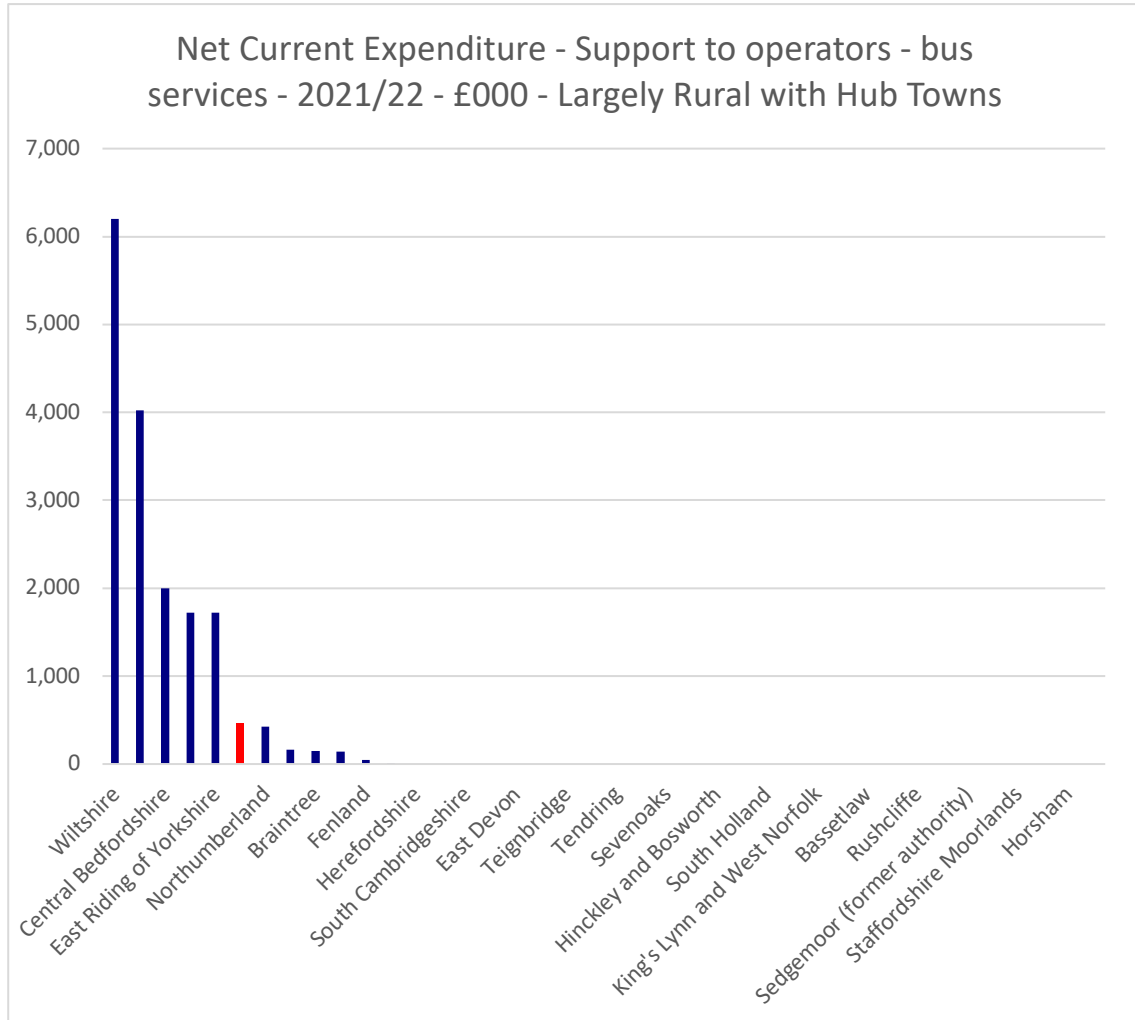
- 7th out of 10 East Midlands authorities



- 5th out of 11 geographical neighbours

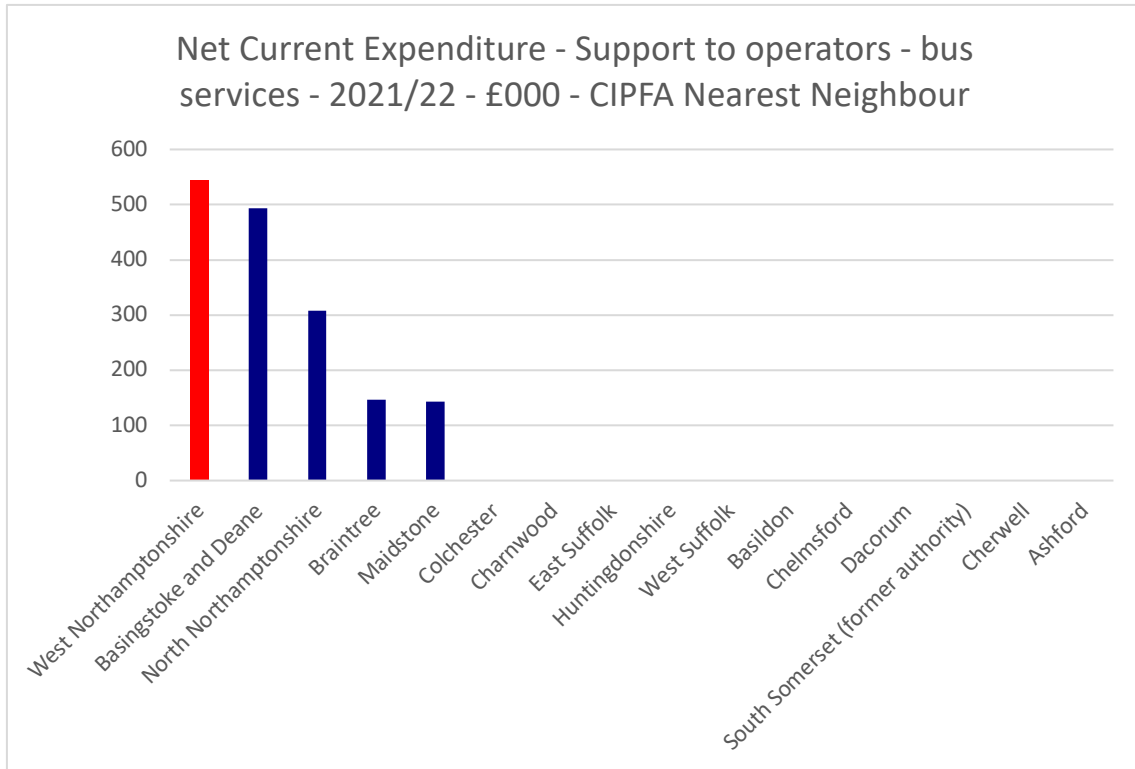


- 6th out of 36 'Largely Rural including hub towns 50 - 79%) - less than Wiltshire, Shropshire, Central Bedfordshire, Durham, Yorkshire East Riding, but more than Northumberland and Herefordshire, for example



3.50 West Northamptonshire scores well (highest) against the formal CIPFA nearest neighbour set but most of these are District Councils where revenue support is provided by County Councils.

3.51 The CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model tool uses statistical processes and the factors upon which the classifications are based provide a balanced representation of the authorities' traits. The variables employed in making the assessment are all descriptive of characteristics of the area each authority administers. Featuring 40 metrics using a wide range of social-economic indicators, including population, age profile, incomes, employment, deprivation (but no transport indicators), the tool is designed to help to interpret statistical results and encourage benchmarking.



3.52 In this assessment it should be noted that the Basingstoke, Braintree and Maidstone expenditures are additional to the upper tier (County Council) spend on local bus support in their area and that all the others are district councils which do not directly support local bus services.

3.53 WNC scores well in English National Concessionary Travel Scheme provision, but this reflects both demographics and network coverage.

3.54 By undertaking this benchmarking exercise it is clear that, particularly as a new smaller local authority, comparisons with larger nearby local authorities should be addressed not only on overall budget expenditure but split per capita. In such a comparison in the East Midlands group West Northamptonshire scores low:

	Population	Bus Support	Per Capita
Derbyshire	796,800	£ 7,409,000	£ 9.30
Nottinghamshire	826,300	£ 5,519,000	£ 6.68
Lincolnshire	769,500	£ 4,637,000	£ 6.03
Leicestershire	712,600	£ 3,175,000	£ 4.46
Nottingham	319,600	£ 2,863,000	£ 8.96
Leicester	366,000	£ 2,576,000	£ 7.04
West Northamptonshire	426,500	£ 545,000	£ 1.28
North Northamptonshire	360,400	£ 308,000	£ 0.85
Rutland	41,400	£ 226,000	£ 5.46
Derby	261,100	£ -	£ -

- 3.55 This is probably reflecting a number of factors but undoubtedly the recent low levels of financial support for local buses from Northamptonshire County Council is a legacy budget which WNC may need to address if it is to meet the core public transport needs of its communities and to expand the offer of local buses to positively impact on mode share for West Northamptonshire.
- 3.56 We have undertaken some limited sensitivity tests on the scale of budget that would place WNC closer to the norm in the East Midlands region and at the mean with comparable unitary local authorities. A significant health warning is given on these projections as a percentage increase in budget may ‘buy’ more or less services in each area, dependent on operator capacity, supply and competitiveness. The types of passengers trips, services or routes that could be supported with extra funding will also vary and may not be strictly comparable. Finally external factors will have considerable impact – local economies, population densities, demographics, etc – will impact on demand for travel.
- 3.57 The WNCASST scores do not change significantly if realistic levels of extra funding are input – for example on an increase of £500,000 per annum the scores would change as follows:

Description	Current Budget Score (out of 90)	Additional Budget (£500k) Score (out of 90)
Do Nothing	35	35
Do Minimum	61	70
Do Something - Rebalance, local bus	71	73
Do Something - Rebalance, local bus and voluntary sector	60	61
Do Something - Reallocate all local bus support to community bus schemes	53	55
Do Something - Greater integration with education, social care, health transport	51	52
Do Something - Reallocate all funds to DRT	47	47

- 3.58 It has to be recognised that although Do Minimum improves considerably in scoring compared to other DS scenarios when an additional £500k is secured. In part this is an effect of the deliverability being simpler, as it is ‘more of the same’, primarily service development and tendering to existing suppliers. It could be argued that if the current budget was doubled, even if business as usual scored well, councillors and communities would be concerned that a step change in service provision is not being offered for a substantial investment.

- 3.59 However, if for example £2m pa were provided, perhaps through increased external funding such as DFT grants or revised BSIP+ funding, then investment in DRT, for example, become feasible, notwithstanding its general poor value for money and high passenger subsidy per head. Some Total Transport options of greater in house integration would begin to pay dividends, albeit that a longer timescale would still be required for implementation even if significantly improved budgets were on offer. The prime benefit would be in supporting more conventional local bus services or community transport schemes.
- 3.60 Our sensitivity tests therefore suggest that securing a step change in service provision (and future service protection) could be achieved with budget increases of £250k pa minimum and optimally £500 - 750k, to bring per capita spending in line with similar authorities, both in the region and in the 'nearest neighbour' statistical groups. With typical contract costs ranging between £50k for a limited off peak, marginally costed route extension to perhaps £150k for a net cost peak service with some guaranteed income a budget increase of £500k could represent 3 - 5 new, extended or retained services.
- 3.61 To aid understanding of the spending power that WNC has in the market we can develop anonymised scenarios, based on the Red/Amber/Green classification in Report 1, where red routes are commercial but judged to be at most risk – for example:

A – a red category inter urban route operating between a town in WNC and a larger urban centre in an adjoining council area is fully deregistered by a large national bus company. The service is hourly Monday to Saturday, but with no evening or Sunday service. Sufficient time is given to tender the service and an independent operator provides the lowest cost. There is no contribution to meeting the costs from the other council area, as few of their residents use the service. It is a two bus operation and the incumbent operator quotes £300,000 pa gross cost (£250,000 net if operator keeps fares income), the winning tender is £240,000 pa gross cost (£200,000 net).

If the current bus support budget was fixed (i.e. no BSIP+ or S106 funding) then using WNCast we would determine that the £200,000 required for a net cost contract was good value, carried more passengers, met more strategic objectives and was potentially commercial in the long term, after a period of seed corn funding, than two existing off peak rural services currently supported in a different part of the WNC area. One of the services if funding was withdrawn could be covered by a well-established community transport operator, with a small de-minimus payment of £10,000 pa, but the other would not be replaced.

This demonstrates the risk WNC faces if any of the red category frequent interurban buses are withdrawn, where the distances and the resources required make replacement costly. The

response should be to maximise efficient use of funds to serve the greatest number of passenger trips that would otherwise be unmet, particularly where all other strategic and economic criteria have higher values, but also recognise the importance of low cost bus and coach operators, taxi companies and community transport to fill the gap where there is high level market failure.

B – A town service, previously supported through s106 payments, has come to the end of its developer funding. A two hourly service, Monday to Saturday, categorised amber, it connects both new and existing suburbs of a mid-sized town. Operated by a small local bus company the fares income has not offset rising costs and therefore it is not possible to operate commercially. A de - minimus arrangement (at £3,000 per month) buys time for a full retender and when tenders are received one is from an independent bus and coach operator, offering older single deck buses at £30,000 pa net cost. A community transport provider offers an alternative but they need a one off grant of £15,000 to secure an accessible vehicle and then operating costs of £12,000 per annum net.

Using WNCAS, as well as officer's experience and knowledge of the market, the community transport option appears to be the better choice, albeit it requires a capital grant and there could be a delay in securing a new vehicle. Again assuming no additional budget is available this demonstrates the value in investing in the community transport sector, particularly based on the recommendations of the WNC Transformation teams current review.

4.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

- 4.1 The modelling within WNCASST is offered as a tool to assist and inform decision making, but it cannot be the sole arbiter of where investment in local public transport should be made. To provide advice and support to officers we have developed instructions and supporting data worksheets to allow future customisation of WNCASST. We have built in the opportunity to add weighting to the scoring process, dependent if strategic fit, cost/benefits or deliverability are considered to be more important criteria, for example.
- 4.2 Using the proposed interim public transport policy (para 2.17 above) and WNCASST, officers and councillors can inform stakeholders, bus users and communities of the priorities applied in making choices on the future funding of local public transport. If challenged there is a logical process, which can be documented and shared with interested parties. It will also be useful in discussions with bus operators and community transport operators, as well as a starting point in discussions on future integration with the NHS, for example.
- 4.3 The most significant risk is that even with a model for the most efficient allocation of funds, if the annual bus revenue support base budget remains at a figure of £315,000 (including external DFT funding) or is reduced the flexibility within the various options is severely limited. Even with additional S106 funding, which is invariably linked to servicing needs of a specific area rather than being an allocation for use anywhere in West Northamptonshire, the local bus support funding is low compared to many other comparable LTAs, as demonstrated in the benchmarking section in chapter 3.
- 4.4 Therefore there needs to be some expectation management, as the policy and appraisal process brings order to the decision making, but there will invariably be winners and losers after these criteria are applied.

5.0 ACTION PLAN

5.1 Following the initial review of the WNCAS model and the proposed local bus policy in the officer workshop it is suggested that the following actions be undertaken to deliver the new approach:

Action	Suggested timeline
Presentation to senior officers and councillors	August 2023
Agree public facing summary report, with all commercial sensitive data redacted – include Summary table, but not DS1-5 detailed assessments	August 2023
Develop and agree a communications strategy for the review	August 2023
Discussions with Transformation Team with regard to community transport integration	August 2023
Discussions with local bus operators and community transport providers	September 2023
Share summary report with parishes and users as part of formal consultation	September 2023
Publicise a review of policy and funding choices, possibly within the wider LTP review process	October 2023
Report on consultation outcomes	November 2023
Adopt interim policy and utilise WNCAS in future decision making, budget setting	December 2023
Review impact after 12 months operation	December 2024

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Local authorities face innumerable challenges currently in securing local bus services to meet the needs of their communities. Those needs (access to services, mobility, value for money and appropriate levels of quality) are changing, particularly post pandemic, and as this translates into demand for travel that is hard to predict councils are invariably playing catch up. The policies, plans and practices of even the recent past may no longer be relevant or applicable.
- 6.2 In this report we have developed a new interim public transport policy, building on our understanding of the Council's key policy objectives, as well as reflecting national policies and priorities. A draft interim local bus policy statement, consistent with the WNC Bus Service Improvement Plan, the current Local Transport Plan and WNC corporate policies, has been prepared and it could be a key element in the new Local Transport Plan 4.
- 6.3 We have assessed the current levels of funding and whether that offers a delivery mechanism for high quality public transport in West Northamptonshire. An appraisal and sifting tool has been developed for prioritising and selecting the optimal services or service models to support, within current budgets, and in the future.
- 6.4 The appraisal method, WNCAS, enables the Council to test multiple scenarios, from a 'Do Nothing' and 'Do Minimum' (business as usual) option through to increasing ambitious 'Do Something' options, DS1-5. In the scenario testing there was a review of the potential outcomes of the prioritisation within a number of funding and operational scenarios, including increased use of conventional local buses, community transport, integration and demand responsive transport. The highest scoring scenarios were based on a hybrid of rebalancing of existing local bus services with new community transport initiatives, with longer term integration and DRT implementation deemed viable options if external funding can be secured.
- 6.5 A further review of opportunities and risks was undertaken after the prioritisation exercise. We undertook a benchmarking review of both nearby (geographical) and 'nearest neighbours' type unitary councils, where the current WNC local bus support budgets scored low against most relevant comparators. Consideration was given to what level of future revenue support budget, and additional service provision, would place West Northamptonshire closer to the mean - the assessment suggested that an additional £500,000 (potentially secured from DfT BSIP+ and other external funding) would add 3-5 new or extended services, plus community transport investment and improve mode choices across the council area.
- 6.6 An action plan and advice on further consultation has been provided, as it is recognised that in changing the allocation of funding for any council services can result in 'winners and losers'. Early

engagement, particularly with rural communities, key stakeholders and operators, will be essential.

APPENDIX 1

Northamptonshire Bus Strategy 2018

Policies

Policy BUS 1

- We will work with commercial bus operators to sustain and enhance their core commercial networks, with the aim of improving the frequencies of core commercial services by 2026-31.

Policy BUS 2

- We will continue to support Home to School Transport and Adult and Children's Social Care Transport.
- Through our Network Northamptonshire Total Transport initiative, we will explore opportunities to make services available to wider sections of the community.

Policy BUS 3

- Working with operators, we will consider expansion of multi-operator ticketing schemes through:
 - Further development of the Northampton Buzz Card;
 - The introduction of schemes in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough;
 - A county-wide ticket

Policy BUS 4

- We will support any proposals from operators to use smartcards for further ticketing products, and will consider wider applications for smartcard technology giving access to a wider range of services.

Policy BUS 5

- Access to real time information will be improved to make public transport easy and simple to use and more attractive. This will include 'live' display boards at stops, text-services and a simple and easy to use website which allows users to make well-informed decisions about whether, when and how to travel.

Policy BUS 6

- An interactive multi-modal journey planning service will be introduced, using local network information, which enables users to identify options for end-to-end journeys and to select the option that best meets their travel needs.

Policy BUS 7

- We will continue to concentrate our resources for bus stop improvements on the most heavily-used routes and stops, but also seek to provide each village in the county with a bus service that has at least one marked stop (normally in each direction) with a timetable case and raised boarding facilities. Northamptonshire Bus Strategy – April 2018

Policy BUS 8

- Where new or improved bus interchanges are provided, we will expect them to be provided with a range of facilities appropriate to their location.

Policy BUS 9

- We will consider the provision of appropriate bus priority measures:
 - Where buses are delayed by the volume of traffic on the road network, and
 - The provision of bus priority maximises the throughput of people.
- Where possible we will introduce such measures along complete route corridors, and in concert with other investments and promotions, to maximise their effectiveness.

Policy BUS 10

- The County Council will work with local operators and Government (including through the Green Bus Fund) to introduce hybrid (diesel/electric) and electric buses in Northamptonshire.

Policy BUS 11

- Investigate a rapid transit network for the Northamptonshire Arc that provides:
 - Rapid and frequent links between existing urban and planned growth areas
 - Modern high-capacity, low-emission vehicles coupled with latest technology guidance, command and control systems,
 - High levels of journey time reliability, approaching metro standards
 - High quality real time information when and where passengers need it
 - Smart, multi-modal integrated ticketing

Policy BUS 12

- The County Council will welcome any proposals from express coach operators to introduce additional coach services in the county.

Policy BUS 13

- Within available resources we will seek to:
 - Support operators with advice and financial support to launch new community transport services.
 - Provide a grant process through which operators can bid for on-going support for their schemes.

APPENDIX 2

West Northamptonshire Council Appraisal and Sifting Tool (WNCASST)

West Northamptonshire Council - Assessment and Sifting Tool
WNCASST v1.2.xlsx
25/01/2023

Overview				Strategic					Economic						
Strategic ref	Service ref	Description	Score (out of 90)	Scheme objectives	Scale of impact	Fit with Council bus strategy	Fit with wider Council, regional and government objectives	Fit with local, regional and third party objectives	Key constraints	Score (out of 20)	Impact on passenger mode share	Impact on economic growth in West Northamptonshire	Impact on wider economic growth	Expected benefit: cost ratio category	Wider social, well-being and environmental impacts
DN		Do Nothing	35	To remove revenue support costs completely	1 very negative	1 very low	1 very low	1 very low	Statutory duties not met, open to challenge, reduces mobility, access to services	4	1 red	2 amber/red	2 amber/red	low <1	1 red
DM		Do Minimum	61	To maintain current funding on existing supported services	3 neutral	3 moderate	3 moderate	3 moderate	Future funding unsecured, higher ranked needs may not be met	12	3 amber	4 green/amber	4 green/amber	medium 2>1.5	3 amber
DS1		Do Something - Rebalance, local bus	71	Retain highest scoring supported bus services, reallocate balance of funds to new routes	4 positive	4 high	4 high	4 high	Winners and losers, some communities lose services, political opposition, challenge	16	4 green/amber	3 amber	3 amber	high 4>2	4 green/amber
DS2		Do Something - Rebalance, local bus and voluntary sector	60	Retain highest scoring supported bus services, reallocate other funds to new or existing community schemes	5 very positive	4 high	4 high	4 high	Winners and losers, some communities lose services, political opposition, challenge, voluntary sector capacity	17	2 amber/red	2 amber/red	2 amber/red	medium 2>1.5	4 green/amber
DS3		Do Something - Reallocate all local bus support to community bus schemes	53	Withdraw local bus support, utilise budget to support voluntary sector	4 positive	4 high	4 high	4 high	Voluntary sector capacity, hours, coverage, drivers	16	2 amber/red	3 red	3 red	low 1.5>1	3 amber
DS4		Do Something - Greater integration with education, social care, health transport	51	Resource sharing with other public sector transport users, organisations	4 positive	5 very high	4 high	4 high	Conflicts over peak use, mixing of users, sharing of resources, administration	17	3 amber	3 amber	3 amber	low 1.5>1	4 green/amber
DS5		Do Something - Reallocate all funds to DRT	47	Contract to sole or multiple DRT providers (note not an in house option)	3 neutral	3 moderate	3 moderate	3 moderate	Booking system overhead, complexity, barriers to entry	12	2 amber/red	3 amber	3 amber	low 1.5>1	3 amber

Score (out of 25)	Financial							Commercial			Managerial					Score (out of 25)		
	Affordability	Capital cost	Third party funding	New funding required	Annual revenue cost	Annual income generation	Overall cost risk	Score (out of 10)	Procurement strategy	Delivery contract	Key risks	Score (out of 10)	New vehicles requirement	Operator interest	Stake-holder support		Implementation timescale	Contract length
7	5 affordable	0	0	0	0	0	1 very low	10	not defined	not defined	Loss of goodwill from operators At risk from future service withdrawals or increased costs	2	blank	1 very low	1 very low	5 <1 year	5 <6 months	12
17	3 neutral	0	0	0	£109,528	0	3 moderate	6	defined and compliant	defined and compliant		10	1 no action	4 high	4 high	5 <1 year	2 >2-3 years	16
18	4	0	0	0	£109,528	0	3 moderate	7	defined and compliant	defined and compliant	Limited operator capacity, may impact on local bus operator viability, cross subsidy results in withdrawal of services	10	5 vehicles secure	4 high	4 high	5 <1 year	2 >2-3 years	20
13	4	0	0	0	£109,528	0	2 high	6	defined but not compliant	defined but not compliant	Limited voluntary sector capacity, mobilisation may take longer, funding and cash flow	6	4 negotiations	4 high	4 high	5 <1 year	1 >3 years	18
9	4	0	0	0	£109,528	0	2 high	6	defined but not compliant	defined but not compliant	Limited voluntary sector capacity, mobilisation may take longer, funding and cash flow	6	4 negotiations	4 high	3 moderate	4 >1-2 years	3 >3 years	16
15	4	0	0	0	£109,528	0	2 high	6	not defined	not defined	Requires agreed cost sharing mechanism, possible cross subsidy, control of costs, prioritisation issues	2	1 no action	3 moderate	3 moderate	3 >2-3 years	1 >3 years	11
13	2	0	0	0	£109,528	0	2 high	4	not defined	defined but not compliant	Driver and technology costs, software dependent	4	3 tenders	2 low	4 high	4 >1-2 years	1 >3 years	14

West Northamptonshire Council - Assessment and Sifting Tool (WNCASST)

Instructions for completion

Strategic Case	
Scheme objectives	Briefly state the key objectives and benefits of the scheme
Scale of impact	Select from drop down menu
Fit with Council bus strategy	Select from drop down menu
Fit with wider Council, regional and government objectives	Select from drop down menu
Fit with local, regional and third party objectives	Select from drop down menu
Key constraints	Briefly state any constraints
Economic Case	
Impact on passenger mode share	
Impact on economic growth in West Northamptonshire	
Impact on wider economic growth	
Expected benefit: cost ratio category	
Wider social, well-being and environmental impacts	
Financial Case	
Affordability	Select from drop down menu
Capital cost	Enter latest estimate of any capital costs
Third party funding	Enter understood Third Party funding i.e. s106, parishes
New funding required	Calculated by spreadsheet
Annual revenue cost	Enter estimated annual costs of operation, maintenance etc
Annual income generation	Enter forecast annual income
Overall cost risk	Select from drop down menu
Commercial Case	
Procurement strategy	Select from drop down menu, according to whether strategy is defined and compliant with Council processes
Delivery contract	Select from drop down menu, according to whether delivery contract is defined and compliant with Council processes
Key risks	Summarise the key risks to delivery of the project
Managerial Case	
New vehicles requirement	Select from drop down menu
Operator interest	Select from drop down menu, according to whether operator is engaged
Stake-holder support	Select from drop down menu
Implementation timescale	Select from drop down menu
Contact length	State expected duration of works

5 very positive	4 positive	3 neutral	2 negative	1 very negative	
5 very high	4 high	3 moderate	2 low	1 very low	
5 very high	4 high	3 moderate	2 low	1 very low	
5 very high	4 high	3 moderate	2 low	1 very low	

5 green	4 green/amber	3 amber	2 amber/red	1 red	no impact
5 green	4 green/amber	3 amber	2 amber/red	1 red	no impact
5 green	4 green/amber	3 amber	2 amber/red	1 red	no impact
very high >4	high 4>2	medium 2>1.5	low 1.5>1	low <1	
5 green	4 green/amber	3 amber	2 amber/red	1 red	no impact

5 affordable	4	3 neutral	2	1 unaffordable	
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5 very low	4 low	3 moderate	2 high	1 very high	
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defined and compliant	defined but not compliant	not defined	
defined and compliant	defined but not compliant	not defined	

5 vehicles secured	4 negotiations	3 tenders	2 specification agreed	1 no action	blank
5 very high	4 high	3 moderate	2 low	1 very low	
5 very high	4 high	3 moderate	2 low	1 very low	
5 <1 year	4 1-2 years	3 2-3 years	2 3-5 years	1 >5 years	
5 <6 months	4 6-12 months	3 1-2 years	2 2-3 years	1 >3 years	

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West Northamptonshire Council

Place Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-2024

	Topic identified and scheduled
	Topic identified but not yet scheduled
	Topic completed

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of meeting	Cabinet Member and Executive Director	Proposed Task and Finish Group	Committee's comments
Local Plan for West Northamptonshire	The Committee to consider and provide scrutiny input into the Local Plan for West Northamptonshire at various stages	Date: 21 June 2023 Further meeting dates to be agreed	Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment Planning Policy Manager Cabinet Member for Planning	The Committee will provide Scrutiny input into the Local Plan for West Northamptonshire over a series of meetings	
Sport and Leisure needs assessment	The Committee to consider and provide scrutiny input into the Sports and Leisure needs assessment	Date: TBC -	Executive Director for Place, Economy, and Environment Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure, and the Healthy Communities Manager	TBC or the Committee will provide Scrutiny input into the Needs Assessment at a formal meeting	
Leisure Strategy (including the Playing Pitch Strategy)	The Committee to consider and provide scrutiny input into the Leisure Strategy (including the Playing Pitch Strategy)	Date: TBC	Executive Director for Place, Economy, and Environment Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure, and the Healthy Communities Manager	The Committee will provide Scrutiny input into the draft Strategy at a formal meeting, prior to its submission to Cabinet	
Northampton Town Plan planning and growth including		31 January 2022 (taken place)	Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment	The Committee to consider setting up a Task and Finish Group to	Update: An update on the progress of the Northampton Town Plan

<p>other main town progress /Review</p>		<p>Update to the Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2022- M&S and BHS Development</p> <p>7 February 2023 - The Committee to consider its scope for Scrutiny input in the M&S and BHS Development - APPROVED - added as a separate work plan item below:</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste</p>	<p>undertake a review of congestion, including parking and incorporating consideration of air quality and options for sustainable transport / active travel</p>	<p>would be brought to the Committee in July 2022. (Meeting 12 September 2022)</p> <p>Update to the Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2022- M&S and BHS Development</p> <p>7 February 2023 - The Committee to consider its scope for Scrutiny input in the M&S and BHS Development - APPROVED</p>
<p>M&S and BHS Development</p>	<p>To provide scrutiny input into the M&S and BHS development at Northampton</p>	<p>The evidence gathering for this Scrutiny activity will commence with site visits to various comparable developments.</p> <p>Dates to be agreed and added to the Work Programme</p>	<p>Executive Director for Place, Economy, and Environment Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>The Committee will provide Scrutiny input into the M&S and BHS Development over a series of meetings</p>	
<p>Regeneration and Culture of Northampton Town Centre</p>	<p>a) To investigate the regeneration of the town centre , regarding a place to work</p>	<p>To be considered towards the end of 2023 by the Committee - date TBC</p>	<p>Executive Director for Place, Economy, and Environment Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste</p>		

	b) To have a focus on the gateways to Northampton		Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth		
Highways Contract to include economies of scale	To have an overview, within the constraints of the contract.	31 August 2021 (taken place) The Committee to consider the content of the scope of the Joint Scrutiny Review 18 October 2022 meeting - Oversight Group to be convened The Chair of the Oversight Group will report to the Committee at each meeting when there is an update: 21 March 2023/18 April 2023/June 2023	Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste	A Joint Task and Finish Group with Corp OSC to look at the Highways contract	A joint Highways Oversight Group with Corporate OSC is being convened. The Group has commenced its scrutiny activity
Waste and Resources Strategy Members Working Group	The Committee to set up an Oversight Group to look over various waste issues. The Group would begin to meet after September 2022 onwards. A member group was convened and the Chair provides regular updates to Place OSC	date: 18 October 2022 NB: A working group has been set up (outside the O&S process) - The Chair of the Oversight Group to report to the Committee at each meeting:	Executive Director for Place, Economy, and Environment Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste Chair of the Waste and Resources Strategy	Yes - A Member Group has been convened and the Chair provides a progress update to each meeting	

		<p>21 March 2023 - Taken Place - 18 April 2023 – Taken place 21 June 2023 – Taken place 11 September 2023 15 January 15 April</p>	Members Working Group.		
WNC draft Waste Strategy	The Committee to provide scrutiny input into the draft Waste Strategy	<p>Date: 21 June 2023</p> <p>11 September 2023 (short presentation in conjunction with the update from the Chair of the Waste and Resources Strategy Members Working Group</p>			The final draft of the Waste Strategy to be considered by the Committee prior to its submission to Cabinet at its October 2023 meeting
Active Travel	To provide scrutiny input to enable WNC to progress its plans for active travel	<p>29 March 2022 (taken place)</p> <p>The Chair of the Oversight Group to report to the Committee at each meeting when there is an update:</p> <p>21 June 2023 – taken place 11 September 2023 15 January 15 April</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste</p> <p>Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment</p>	Yes, this work would take around 6- 12 months.	Information gathering to be provided to the Committee at its meeting on 29 March 2022 and a Task and Finish Group to be inaugurated. Councillor Bagott- Webb to Chair.
Libraries	The Cabinet Member and Assistant Director to provide a briefing to the Committee on the Council’s policy regarding libraries	<p>date: 17 May 2022 completed</p> <p>Further report to be received at a later meeting for scrutiny input:</p> <p>Date:18 April 2023 Taken place</p>	<p>Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment and Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure</p>	No	The Committee to provide further scrutiny input at its meeting in April 2024

		Date: 15 April 2024			
Broadband Contract	To monitor and review the broadband contract	18 April 2023 – Taken place Date: 15 April 2024	Executive Director for Place, Economy, and Environment Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs	No	The Committee to provide further scrutiny input at its meeting in April 2024
Home to School Transport Policy	The Committee to consider and provide Scrutiny input in to the proposed changes to the Home to School Policy	18 April 2023 Date 15 April 2024 – TBC	Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment	No	
Place Overview and Scrutiny annual report 2022/23	The Committee to receive the annual report 2022/23 for Place OSC.	21 June 2023 - taken place	Chair Place OSC		
Place Overview and Scrutiny annual report 2023/2024	The Committee to receive the annual report 2023/24 for Place OSC.	Date: June 2024 (date to be confirmed)	Chair, Place OSC	No	
Crime and Disorder Scrutiny	The Committee to receive a performance report from the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)	7 February 2023 (taken Place) 15 April 2024	Chair of the Community Safety Partnership and Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Engagement, and Regulatory Services Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment		To receive a report from the Chair of the CSP each year.

Flood Risk Management	The Committee to undertake scrutiny of the Flood Risk Management Strategy	7 February 2023 (taken place) 11 September 2023	Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste		To include information how West Northamptonshire Council works with Homes England
Fly tipping	To provide scrutiny input into the draft fly-tipping policy that will aim to harmonise cleansing standards across WNC & boost enforcement action	21 March 2023 - The Committee to receive information on progress on actions outlined in the action Plan (taken place) The Committee provide further input into the Policy in 12 months' time. Date: 15 April 2024	Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste Executive Director for Place, Economy, and Environment	The Committee to provide further scrutiny input into the Policy (April 2024)	The Committee could consider the reporting mechanisms, clearance and enforcement when providing input Completed 2/3/22 21/3/23 The Committee to receive information on progress on actions outlined in the action Plan (taken place)
Items to be scheduled					
Tree Policy	The Committee to receive Cabinet's response to the O&S report – Tree Policy and monitor the implementation of the accepted recommendations	Date: TBC			
West Northamptonshire Travel/Infrastructure Strategy	To provide scrutiny input into the Strategy, including footpath and cycleways, timescales, and funding	To be confirmed	Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment	To be confirmed	

Assets Strategy	To provide scrutiny input into the Assets Strategy	To be confirmed	Leader of the Council – Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment	To be confirmed	
Economic Strategy	The Committee to consider the Council’s Economic Strategy	To be confirmed	Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment	To be confirmed	
Performance Monitoring Report	The Committee to consider the Performance Monitoring Report to inform Performance Management Scrutiny	The Chair to contact the Chair of Corporate OSC to ask then when this Committee scrutinises performance management that, if applicable, any issues under Place OSC are referred to this Committee for Consideration Date: TBC	Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment	No	Performance Monitoring Reports will be taken from the Cabinet agenda for Place Scrutiny to consider
Performance Management Scrutiny	The Committee to undertake Performance Management Scrutiny	The Chair to contact the Chair of Corporate OSC to ask then when this Committee scrutinises performance management that, if applicable, any issues under Place OSC are referred to this Committee for Consideration	Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment and relevant Cabinet Members dependent upon the key performance indicator to be reviewed	No	

		Date: TBC			
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Schedule of meetings Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/2024

- 21 June 2023
- 11 September
- 15 January 2024
- 15 April