

The Ramsey Market Town Transport Strategy

Introduction

The Market Town Transport Strategy for Ramsey will initially form part of the Local Transport Plan 2006-2011. However, from April 2011 it will be incorporated in Cambridgeshire's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), which is currently being developed. This strategy incorporates the proposed objectives contained in the government's strategy document "Developing a Sustainable Transport Strategy" and set out by government to be included in the forthcoming LTP3. These objectives are

- To contribute to better safety, security & health
- To promote equality of opportunity
- To improve quality of life
- To support economic growth
- To tackle climate change

In pursuing these objectives the strategy should contribute to the economic prosperity, health and viability of the town and the surrounding villages. It will also improve accessibility to key services such as schools, shopping centres and health care, reducing social exclusion and avoiding the creation of areas of deprivation. This is particularly important in Ramsey due to the rural nature of the town.

The strategy provides a programme of schemes to be implemented up to 2015. These schemes have been designed to contribute to the objectives of the LTP, to complement and build on existing works in order to gain the best value for money and to encourage economic growth and well-being within the town.

Background

Ramsey is one of the smaller market towns in Cambridgeshire, with a population of 8,047 individuals within the parish of Ramsey itself in just over 3,000 households as of the 2001 census. The neighbouring parish of Bury had a population of 1,713 people in 2001, with a further 3,866 individuals resident in Warboys, 1,281 in Upwood and 527 in Wistow.

Local planning policy recognises that Ramsey has relatively poor transport infrastructure, being well off the Primary road network and relatively remote. Its comparatively limited services, facilities and employment opportunities make it a less sustainable location in terms of travel than some of the other market towns in Cambridgeshire.

Development proposals for the Ramsey area are relatively modest. There are currently proposals for housing and employment development to the north-west of the town. For the longer term, the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Submission Core Strategy sets out a

development strategy up to 2026. For the Ramsey area, this proposes that at least 300 homes will be provided in the following general locations:

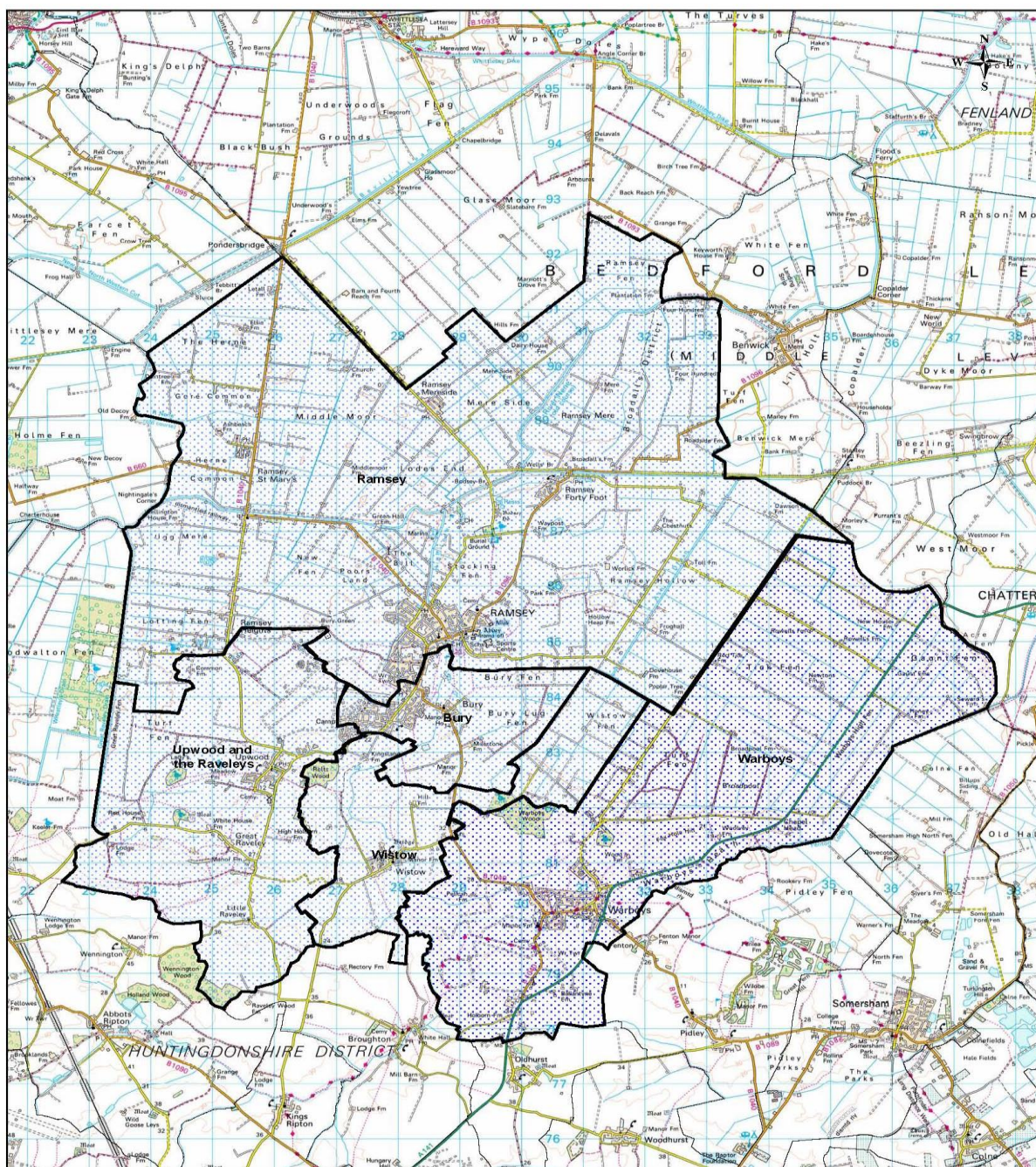
- In an employment-led mixed use redevelopment to the west of the town;
- to the north of the town; and
- redevelopment of previously developed land within the built-up area of the town.

Outside of the above proposals, there is an outline planning application for RAF Upwood which proposes at least 650 units of housing and at least 10 ha of employment. This has yet to be determined, but is contrary to the LDF Core Strategy, which suggests that far fewer than the proposed 650 housing units should be provided. Part of the reason for promoting a lower level of development is concern about the potential transport impact of such large scale development.

Whilst not endorsing proposals for a higher level of development than those proposed in the LDF, this strategy needs to consider the potential implications of larger scale development. This could potentially enable faster completion of the MTTS programme through use of development related ("Section 106") funding. Larger scale development could also fund a number of proposals to mitigate the effects of the development, including enhancement of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.

Strategy Area Map 1 below shows the strategy area.

Map 1 – The Strategy Area



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Cambridgeshire
County Council

Travel to, from and within Ramsey

As mentioned above, Ramsey is not located on any major roads, with all roads leading into and out of the town being of B road and C road classification. This means that all traffic, including HCVs and buses, must access Ramsey via comparatively minor roads. These roads also run through the smaller villages that surround the town such as Ramsey St Mary, Ramsey Mereside, Ramsey Heights and Ramsey Forty Foot, making it extremely difficult to re-route large vehicles away from the town without adversely impacting other areas.

The main roads through the town are the High Street and the Great Whyte, both running through the town centre. With no ring road or bypass available this directs the majority of traffic straight through the town and provides little opportunity for re-routing to avoid congested areas. This is a particular problem with HCV traffic, which has no option but to negotiate the narrow streets of the historic town centre. The problems caused by this have been raised both in consultation with members and stakeholders.

Ramsey is served by a number of bus services, including the 29 to St Ives via Warboys running once an hour in peak times, the 30 running from Ramsey to Huntingdon via Warboys once an hour, the 31 to Peterborough which has a less regular service pattern, the 32 to March which is again irregular in service frequency, the 21 to St Ives which has a low frequency and the RH2 and the RH5 which are local services running only on Fridays. The RH services are run as a community transport scheme and as such are distinct from the commercially run services. The RH5 runs a circular route on Friday mornings from the Great White through the local villages of Ramsey Heights, Ramsey Mereside, Ramsey St Mary and Pondersbridge. The RH2 runs through Upwood and Bury, providing a link with the town centre.

There is no direct service to Cambridge or to the interchange at Chatteris. Though there is evidence that the buses are relatively well used, it was raised in stakeholder consultation that there is a feeling that public transport is generally lacking in the town. This may in part be due to the lack of easily available information as to the available services.

The small size of the town and the typical fenland topography make it well suited to cycling, however uptake is low. This may be a result of the poor perceived safety of this mode when considering busy and narrow rural roads and cramped conditions on the High Street.

Transport problems in the town

The main issues outlined below were raised in consultation with members and stakeholders and as such it is hoped that they accurately reflect the current situation in the town. Where possible the schemes seek to tackle these. They are as follows:

- High Street: There is a conflict here between the need for people to park and the flow of traffic. The narrow nature of the area means that traffic can become congested and it is perceived as dangerous for cyclists, particularly children travelling to Abbey School. The High

Street also has narrow pavements and poor drainage, making it an unpleasant environment for pedestrians. Wider pavements in this area would be desirable but would result in a loss of parking spaces. The problem of parking will be explored further as a separate issue.

- Freight: HCV traffic is seen as problematic by stakeholders and the public, with particular concern expressed about the junction of the High Street and Great Whyte, where the turn is tight and there may be a safety problem. This is exacerbated by motorists parking too close to the junction. There may be an issue with HCVs travelling down the Great Whyte too quickly, though further research is needed to confirm this.
- Lack of public transport information: This is a major barrier to service use. This may be particularly important in Ramsey as two of the main services to the town do not run at regular intervals. It is therefore important for accurate information to be available to ensure wait times are minimised.
- School travel: The lack of safe paths to the schools has been raised a problem. Improved safer routes may help to reduce the number of school-run related car trips in the area.
- Parking: On-street parking has been raised in a number of contexts, mostly with relevance to blocking traffic and making junctions unsafe to negotiate. There is a problem with a lack of enforcement resulting in inconsiderate and illegal parking becoming commonplace. Abuse of the limited wait time bays also leads to a lack of turnover in the town centre, potentially damaging local businesses.

Links with other policies and strategies

It is important that this strategy is neither formulated nor implemented in isolation. There are a number of other strategies and activities that must be taken into account, as they will influence the implementation of the strategy. These include:

- The Huntingdonshire Market Town Parking Strategy and the 2009 review.
- Safer Routes To School
- The Cambridgeshire Freight Management Strategy
- Huntingdonshire District Council's Local Development Framework
- Ramsey Gateway Urban Development Framework
- The design framework for south of the High Street
- Cambridgeshire Guided Busway

The Strategy

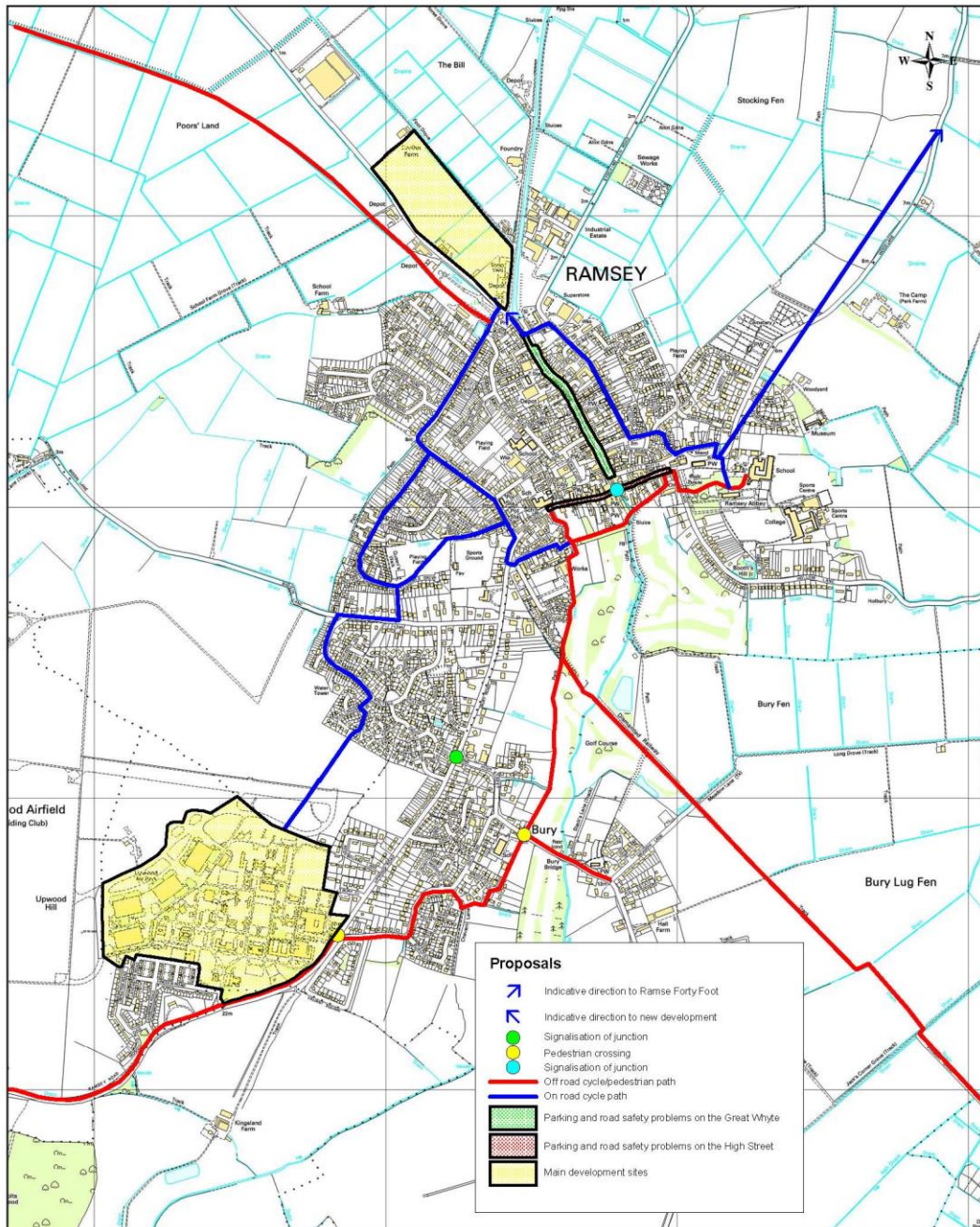
This section lays out the programme of schemes that will be implemented over the next five years. They are aimed at either solving or mitigating the problems outlined in the previous section. They have also been selected in light of both national and local transport policy.

Map 2 below outlines all the schemes that form this strategy along with areas

of development that either have planning permission or are proposed under the LDF.

Map 2 – Map of proposals

Ramsey Draft Proposals Map



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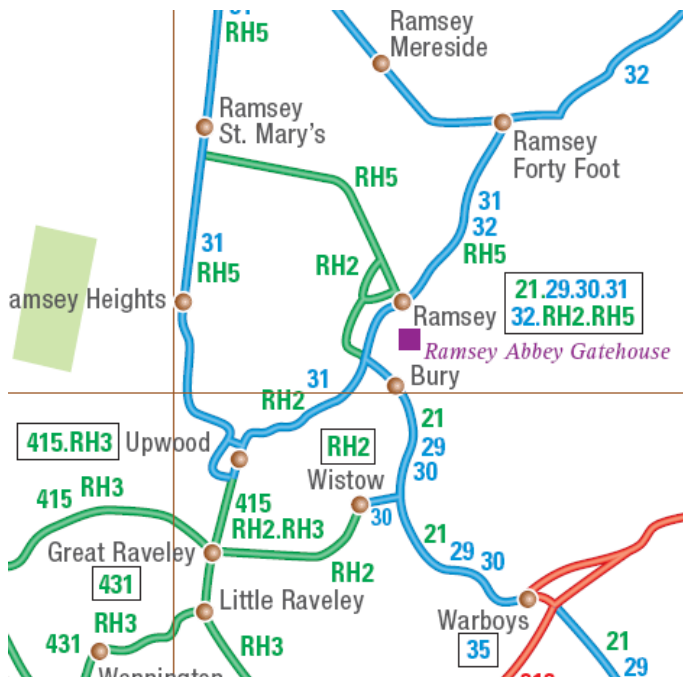
Public Transport

Access to high quality public transport is known to be hugely beneficial to improving access to services for those members of society who cannot, for a variety of reasons, access a car. This is particularly acute in rural areas where distances between households and services are often large, making walking and cycling less practical than in urban areas. It is therefore of concern that rural areas are often less well served by public transport due to low population density making service provision economically unjustifiable. Poor access to key services can lead to areas of social exclusion and deprivation.

Map 3 below shows the public transport network in the Ramsey area and demonstrates where the various services enter and exit the town. As mentioned above the RH services are limited to Fridays and only serve the local villages on a community transport basis. Of the other services only the 30 has a regular timetable. In order to travel to other areas such as Cambridge passengers need to connect to other services.

Within Ramsey 1.35% of people travel to work on the bus compared to a district average of 2.75%. Though this is not a huge difference, it is a very low modal share for commuting journeys. It is however acknowledged in this strategy that the range of services and frequencies available are often not suitable for commuters, other than those travelling to Huntingdon.

Map 3 – Ramsey Public Transport Context



The scope of this strategy does not extend to the provision of new services or long-term subsidisation of increased frequencies, as it is based on capital funding rather than revenue. Therefore, the strategy will seek to support where possible other strategies and schemes that are aimed at improving services to the area, with an acknowledgement that this would be desirable and providing a policy basis for future improvements. These include the Local

Strategic Partnership Transport and Access Group and the Neighbourhood Management Board.

However, there are elements of public transport service that can be improved as part of this strategy.

As mentioned in the previous section, the 31 to Peterborough and the 32 to March do not have regular timetables, but run at differing intervals throughout the day. These are two of the three main services to the town providing access to key services in other towns and connecting with other services. The irregular timetables mean that high-quality information is needed in order to give people enough confidence to use the services. This can be provided in both paper and electronic form and via Real Time Passenger Information technology.

The lack of information and publicity of services was raised in consultation, during which it was felt that improved information could have a positive impact on passenger numbers. Table 1 below outlines the schemes that are included as part of this strategy:

Table 1 –Public Transport Schemes

The problem	Scheme	Impact	Cost
Lack of easily available public transport information	Placement of bus timetables and maps in town centre shops and popular destinations	Improved access to services	£5,000
	Installation of RTPI signs at as many stops as possible	Improved confidence and increased service use	To be confirmed when survey work is carried out.
	RTPI sign in the library	Improved confidence and increased service use	£5,000
	Improved publicity of available services	Improved knowledge of services and awareness of public transport as a viable mode of travel	£5,000

These schemes would potentially result in improved confidence levels in bus services and increased awareness of timetables and destinations. Consultation indicates that this should result in increased service use and

therefore improved accessibility and reduced social exclusion for local residents.

Road Safety

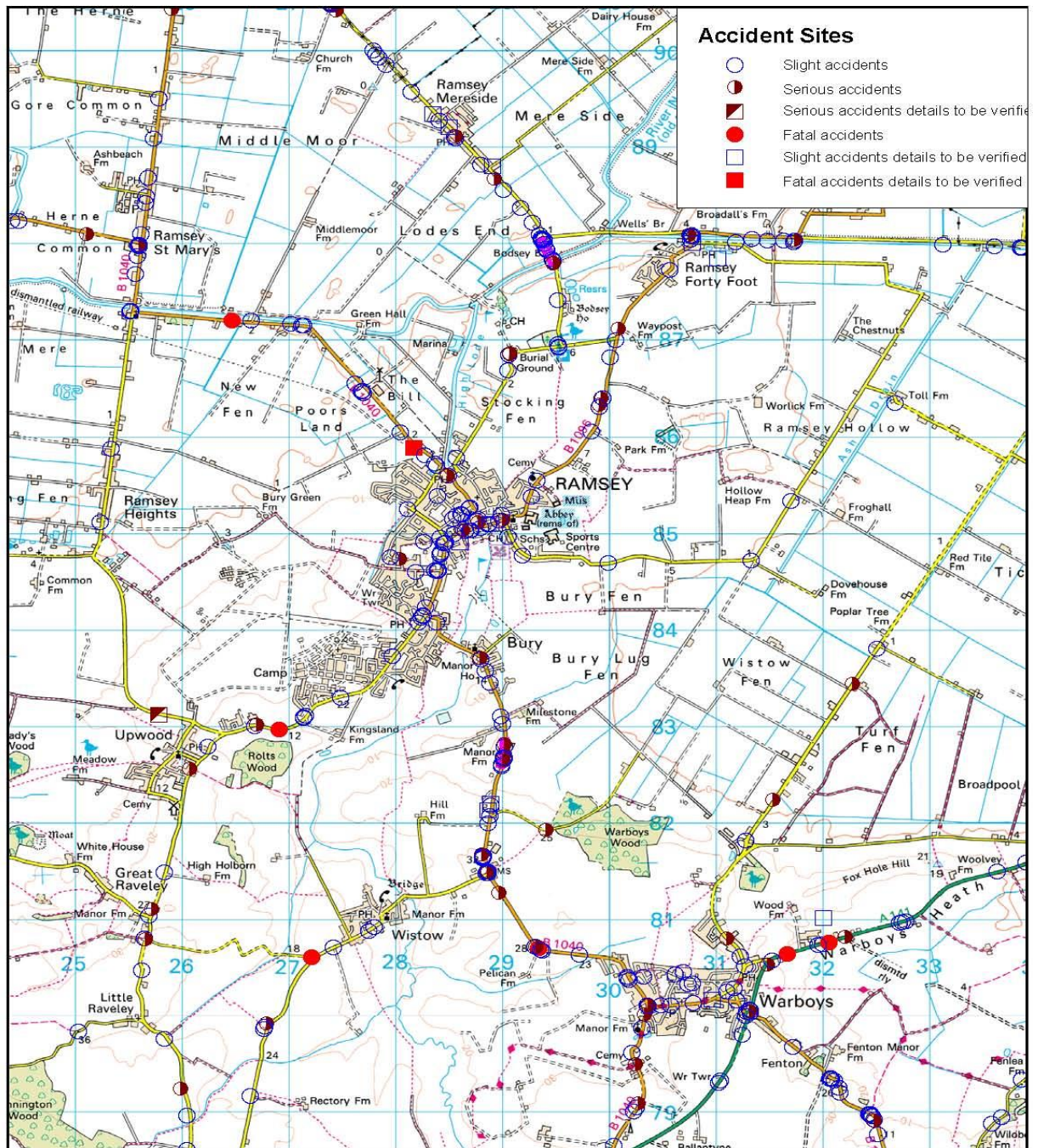
Road safety is an important issue in all areas, however small rural towns such as Ramsey often have different problems to larger towns or extended urban areas. Modes such as cycling and walking are often proportionately more dangerous as rural roads linking villages are frequently fast and narrow, often lacking lighting and footpaths. This can discourage use of sustainable transport and contribute to higher levels of car use. Problems with personal safety were raised by both the stakeholders and members. A general feeling of poor safety can also result in increased social exclusion, particularly of the very young and the older community, as other “safer” modes may not be available to them. This results in people making fewer trips and accessing services less frequently. This can be a particular issue with health care.

Improving road safety would therefore enhance the quality of life of some of the most vulnerable members of the community, whilst also contributing to meeting the Local Transport Plan targets to improve accessibility and reduce road casualties.

Ramsey does not suffer abnormally high accident rates. In the town the vast majority of accidents are slight, due to the low speeds necessitated by the confined nature of the roads. The cluster sites (sites which see a high density of accidents) and all fatal accidents within the last five years of available data have taken place on the rural roads outside the town. This is due to the higher speeds that can be achieved on these roads. Maps 4 and 5 below highlight the areas where accidents are particularly prevalent. Accident sites marked on the map signify only injury accidents that occurred in the time period 2002 – 2007.

Map 4 – Accidents around Ramsey

Accidents in the wider area



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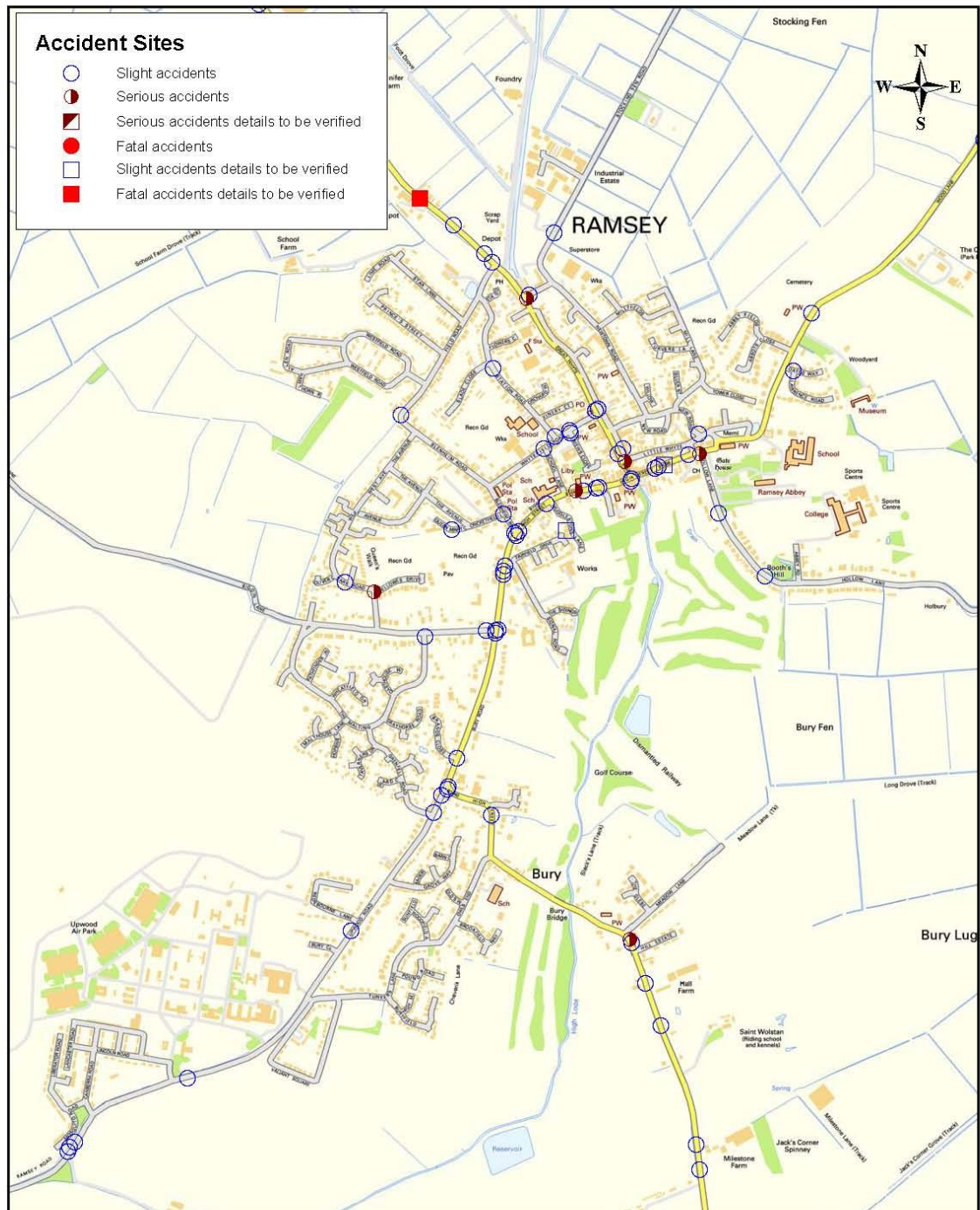
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Map 5 – Accidents within Ramsey

Accidents in central Ramsey



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As can be seen on the Map 5, there have been no fatal and four serious injury accidents within the town itself over the last five years. Also, there are no cluster sites in the urban area. However, there are two cluster sites outside of the town, one near Manor Farm and the other on the road to Ramsey Mereside where it crosses Bodsey brook.

As part of the strategy it is proposed that a review of the signing in the locality is carried out with a view to improving safety on these roads.

It should be noted that the Ramsey Forty Foot to Chatteris scheme involving the installation of average speed cameras does not form part of this strategy and is being implemented separately.

Table 2 below outlines the schemes included in this strategy

Table 2 - Road Safety Schemes

The problem	Scheme	Impact	Cost
Poor pedestrian safety crossing Upwood Road	Installation of a pelican crossing to aid both pedestrians and cyclists to cross the road safely. It will also link in with the off-road cycle path along Upwood Road	Improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists and potential increase in uptake of sustainable travel.	£70,000
High Street - poor safety for pedestrians and cyclists and high accident rates compared to other areas of town.	The exact nature of this scheme will depend on the outcome of urban design work. It will be aimed at improving the environment for pedestrians and cyclists while keeping traffic speeds low and reducing the propensity for accidents.	Improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists, lower accident rates and increased uptake of sustainable transport modes.	This scheme is yet to be defined and so cannot be assigned a cost.

These schemes have the potential to reduce accident rates within the town centre and help create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. This will encourage the uptake of sustainable transport modes and improve safety for children accessing the Abbey School and primary schools in the area.

Traffic Management

It is important that traffic is able to flow around Ramsey as easily as possible whilst coming into as little conflict as possible with other modes, including pedestrians and cyclists. This creates an improved environment and travel

experience for all highway users.

Ramsey currently suffers from congestion at peak times on the High Street, partly due to parked cars which reduce the road capacity and create pinch points. This is compounded by the junction with the Great Whyte, which has poor visibility and is a tight turn for larger vehicles such as HCVs.

If Ramsey expands in the future it may become necessary to signalise this junction in order to improve traffic flow through the area and to reduce road safety concerns. It is likely that this scheme would require the removal of some parking bays and the impact of this would need to be investigated. The strategy notes that this scheme should not necessarily be implemented immediately, but its inclusion in the strategy should be seen as an acknowledgement that, if Ramsey continues to grow or other issues emerge at the junction, such as road safety issues, it may become necessary in the future. Its inclusion is therefore intended to provide a policy basis for possible future implementation.

There are also concerns regarding the junction at Upwood Road/Bury Road. Visibility here is poor and it is likely that either signalisation of the junction or the installation of a roundabout would be beneficial to traffic flow.

There is a strong perception in the town that HCV speeds, particularly on the Great Whyte, are excessive. It is possible that this is due to the confined nature of the space causing speeds to seem higher than they are. Further work would need to be carried out to define whether there is a significant problem and what would be the best approach for dealing with it.

The schemes outlined in Table 3 below are designed to help reduce the problems mentioned above and improve the flow of traffic in these areas.

Table 3 – Traffic Management Schemes

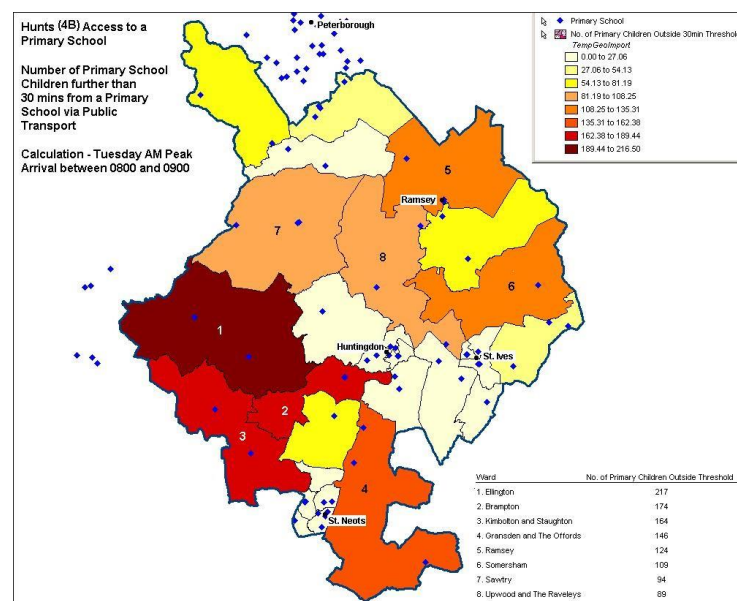
The problem	Scheme	Impact	Cost
Upwood Road / Bury Road junction	Signalisation or installation of a roundabout	Improve the traffic flow at this junction and reduce the probability of accidents occurring	£200,000
Perceived high HCV speeds on the Great Whyte	Speed measurement work to define the problem and potential mitigation measures if it is proven there is one.	Improved environment for other road users	Dependent on measures employed

Poor visibility at the Great Whyte/High Street Junction	Signalisation of junction if required in the future - this removes the problem with poor visibility at the currently unregulated junction.	Improved traffic flow at the junction and therefore on the High Street and enhanced road safety	£180,000
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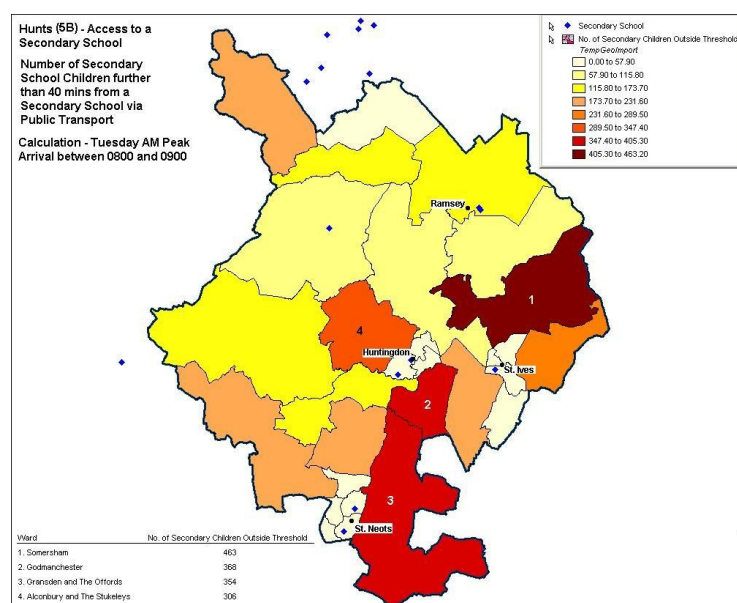
Safer Routes to School (SRtS)

Maps 6 and 7 show that Ramsey benefits from a good level of access to both primary and secondary schools. The town does not fall within the deprived wards or those areas which suffer reduced access to secondary education due to large distances.

Map 6 – Access to Primary Schools



Map 7 – Access to Secondary Schools



The main problems concerning access to schools in Ramsey are focussed on parking and safety. During stakeholder consultation congestion generated by the school run was cited as a concern, as was the safety of children cycling to the Abbey School along the Great Whyte or High Street. It should be noted that Warboys is within the catchment area of the Abbey School.

Though many of these problems are likely to be reduced by schemes set out in other sections of this strategy, it is probable that a number of the concerns raised would be best dealt with as part of the Safer Routes to School project, which is able to dedicate funds to schemes aimed at improving access to schools and providing safe routes. Therefore, where possible this strategy proposes to support the Safer Routes to School Team in encouraging the Ramsey schools to take part. It will also support where possible the Home to School Transport Strategy.

Walking and Cycling

Increasing the modal share of both cycling and walking will help achieve the objectives of the Local Transport Plan and hence forms an important part of this strategy. As well as contributing to a number of LTP targets, increased use of these modes also aids the progress of the health agenda and helps reduce congestion on the road network. They are also non-income dependent and so help reduce the isolation and social exclusion which can be a problem for those on low incomes.

They are however subject to concerns of personal safety with regards to road accidents and crime. Even in areas of low crime, there is still a strong perception that these activities are more dangerous than car use.

Pedal cycles make up roughly 1% of traffic within Ramsey and pedestrians account for 9% of town centre trips. This is low in comparison with the rest of the County and other market towns. Ramsey itself is topographically well

suited to cycling as it is flat, being situated in the fens, and very compact. It should therefore be possible to raise the modal share of cycling and walking. This would have the benefit of relieving congestion within the town and contributing to the health of its inhabitants.

Current provision for pedestrians and cyclists is not significant. There are a number of footpaths that pass through the town and the low density of past development in much of the town allows for a high level of permeability. However, pedestrian facilities, including footpaths, in the centre of the town are poor, with the High Street being a particular example of a low quality environment. Narrow streets and on street parking also make cycling difficult and increase the feeling of danger, particularly for young people travelling to school.

The strategy therefore includes a number of routes for cyclists and pedestrians which will enhance their safety and provide faster routes to main destinations. This will involve a combination of on and off road paths forming a network around the town. The paths reflect the ideas raised by consultation. Map 8 below shows the cycle and pedestrian network.

Map 8 – Cycle and Pedestrian Routes

Proposed Cycle and Pedestrian Routes

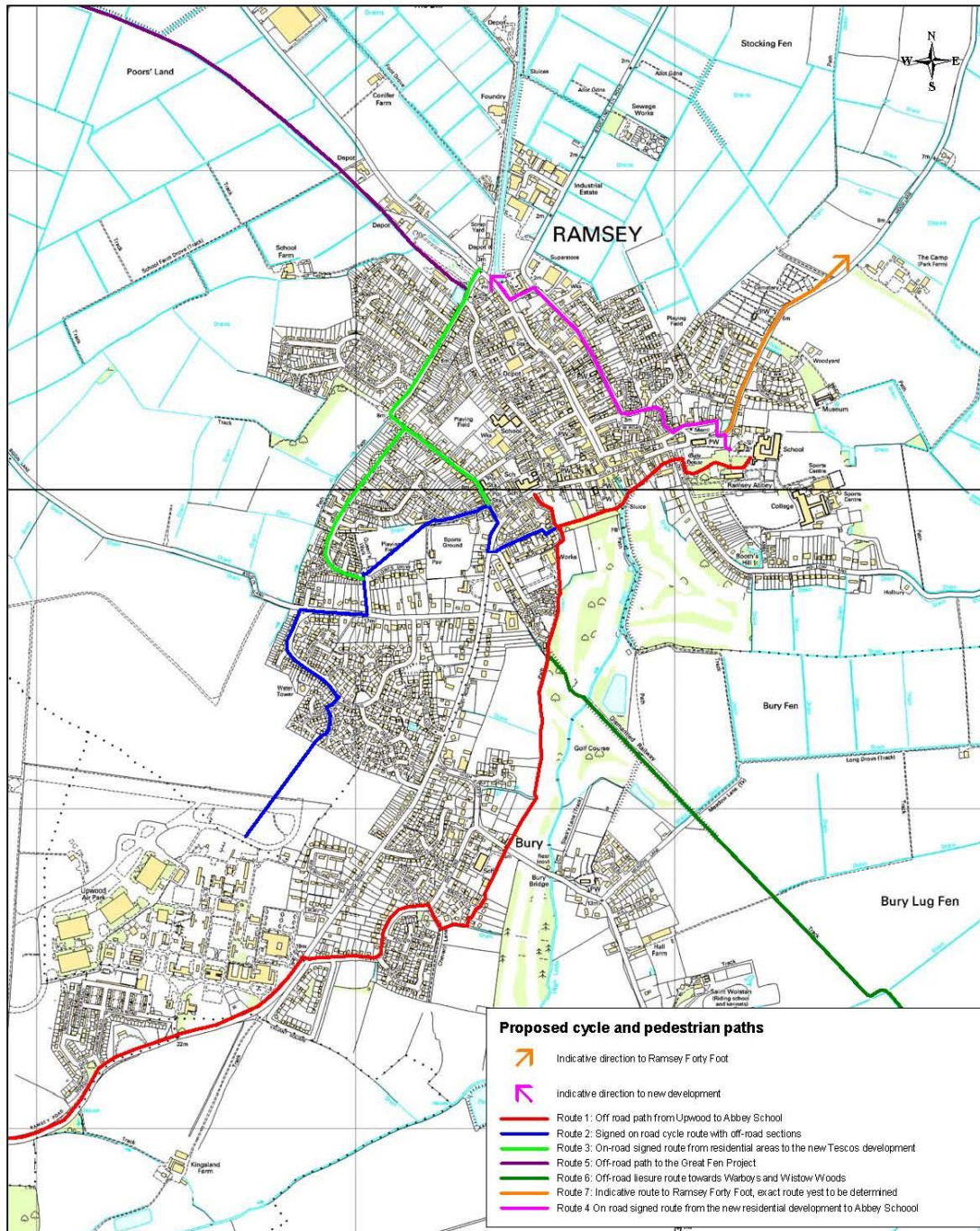


Table 4 below outlines these schemes in more detail.

Table 4 –Walking and Cycling Schemes

The problem	Scheme	Impact	Cost
Lack of cycling infrastructure	Off-road path from Upwood School to the High Street and Abbey School. Improvement of the existing right of way including better surfacing and installation of lights. This will also include the installation of a pedestrian crossing over Bury Road where it intersects the path.	A safe route that travels the length of the town without use of busy roads should help increase the uptake of cycling and walking as well as improve safety for those who already use these modes.	£1,045,000
	Off road route from the north of the town to the Great Fen project, utilising the existing rail way track bed	Sustainable access to the new project and visitor centre at Great Fen.	£527,500
	On-road signed route through the Maltings to the High Street, potentially linking in with the RAF Upwood development	Provide cyclists with an alternative route to Upwood Road and the High Street, both of which are busy.	£395,000
	On-road signed path from the Maltings to the Tesco development site and linking in with the path to the Great Fen	Improved access to the supermarket and a safer route for cyclists	£345,000
	On road signed route from the Northern Gateway site through the residential area to Abbey School	Provide sustainable links to the new development and potential employment site	£815,000
	Potential long distance route out towards Warboys and Wistow Woods via the dismantled railway	Increase cycling for leisure - potential improvement in health	£825,000

Cycle maps	Link to Ramsey Forty Foot. The route is as yet undetermined but it is thought that this would be a desirable route to be contained in the strategy	Provide a safe link for sustainable transport modes to the near by village.	To be determined when route is finalised
	Cycle racks at key locations	Increased uptake of cycling as a means of transport	
	Provision of up to date information on the paths in and around Ramsey	Increasing awareness of the paths and providing route information will help encourage greater use	£10,000

Lorry management

Freight makes up roughly 2% of traffic within the town, however there is a perceived problem with speeds along the Great Whyte and the amount of vehicles passing through the town centre.

The scale of the problem with freight speeding on the Great Whyte is yet to be determined. It may be a perception caused by narrow pavements and large vehicles in a cramped environment. Work will be carried out to resolve this and if a problem is found the strategy proposes to support necessary measures to relieve it.

Due to the lack of appropriate alternative routes, there is no opportunity to divert freight away from the town centre and as such it is difficult to reduce the number of vehicles passing through the town. Freight makes up a very small proportion of traffic and is also vital to the economy that deliveries can be made to the town centre shops. The strategy will seek to tie in with and support where possible the County's Freight Management Strategy.

Parking

Parking is currently provided close to the town centre, with the majority being on street. Studies carried out as part of the Huntingdonshire Market Towns Parking Strategy indicated that demand for parking does not currently exceed supply and hence there is no immediate need to increase the number of spaces. However, the parking strategy is due to be reviewed soon and it is therefore proposed that this strategy takes account of such a review

The main problem with parking in Ramsey as highlighted both by members and during the public consultation is the lack of enforcement of existing parking regulations. This has led to short stay and on street parking facilities

being used wrongly for long term parking. Also, illegal parking outside the banks that contributes to congestion is not currently regulated. This matter is tied in with Civil Parking Enforcement issues which are being addressed outside of this strategy. Therefore, this strategy will support Huntingdonshire District Council where possible in dealing with this issue.

There are a number of problems created by on street parking, particularly on the High Street where parking near the junction with Great Whyte results in reduced visibility and could increase the risk of accidents. Due to low traffic speeds relatively few accidents occur and they tend to be slight, however, if Ramsey is to continue to grow signalisation of this junction may become necessary in the future. However, further along the High Street it is arguable that parked cars act as a form of traffic calming, reducing traffic speeds and hence contributing to keeping accident rates low.

Any review of parking on the High Street would need to be done with reference to the need to maintain access to the shops, however, it should be noted that a recent study of the use of parking spaces suggests that many of them are used as long term parking, which is not an optimal situation for traders. Parking regulation enforcement is therefore likely to be beneficial to businesses on the High Street.

An urban environmental improvement scheme to find a compromise between enhancing the environment for pedestrians the need for parking and keeping the traffic speeds low would be supported by the strategy.

Implementing the Strategy

Prioritisation

Table 5 below sets out the phases of implementation for the strategy, it has been formulated with reference to the results of the public consultation, during which respondents to the survey were asked to prioritise the schemes.

Table 5 – Implementation Phases

Phase	Programme	Schemes	Cost
1	Road safety	High Street improvements	Undefined
		Pelican crossing on Upwood Road	£70,000
	Public transport	Bus maps and timetables	£5,000
	Total Phase 1		£75,000 +
2	Traffic management	Signalisation of Upwood Road and Bury Road junction	Undefined
	Cycling and Walking	Route 1 from Upwood to the Abbey School	£1,045,000
	Total Phase 2		£1,045,000 +
3	Public transport	Installation of RTPI	200,000
	Cycling and Walking	Route 2 Signed on road route through the maltings	£395,000

		Route 3 On road signed route to the new Tesco	£345,000
	Total Phase 3		£740,000 +
4	Public transport	RTPI sign in the library	£5,000
	Cycling and Walking	Route 4 On road signed route from new residential development to Abbey school	£815,000
		Route 5 Off road route to the Great Fen Project	£527,500
	Traffic management	HCV Speed monitoring	Officer time
	Total Phase 4		£1,347,500
5	Public transport	Improved publicity of available services	£5,000
	Cycling and Walking	Investigation of Route 6 to Warboys and Wistow Woods	£825,000
		Investigation of route to Ramsey Forty Foot	Undefined
		Cycle racks	Undefined
		Cycle maps	£10,000
	Total Phase 5		£840,000 +
6	Traffic management	Signalisation of the High Street/Great Whyte Junction if future development means that it becomes necessary	£180,000
	Total Phase 6		£180,000
Strategy Total			£4,427,500 +

Funding

The funding for the programme included in the strategy will come from a variety of sources. These include the Local Transport Plan and developer contributions. Other sources of funding may be identified during the period of the strategy. The pace at which the strategy can be delivered will depend on the availability of funding. By providing a clear statement of the schemes for which there is public support in the town, this strategy aims to provide a sound policy basis for securing a wide range of funding sources.

Targets

The schemes within this strategy will contribute towards Local Transport Plan targets to reduce congestion, improve air quality, reduce transport emissions and increase bus patronage and levels of walking and cycling.

Future Development of the Strategy

The final strategy will cover the five year period from 2010 – 2015. During this time it is likely that the strategy will be reviewed and evolve to reflect the changing pressures on the town, particularly with regard to the development of the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework.

Conclusions

The MTTTS will provide a range of benefits to Ramsey, including:

- Improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improved accessibility to services
- Improved access to bus services
- A clear programme of transport enhancements to 2015

The strategy reflects the consultation process and gives a clear indication of the transport measures that need to be introduced to Ramsey up to 2015 and provides some indication of needs beyond this time. The measures in the strategy should help to ensure that Ramsey remains a pleasant place to live, work and visit.