Somerset County Council/Langport Transport Group

RYR LANGPORT-SOMERTON AREA

Option Assessment Report

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CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

APPENDICES

No table of contents entries found.

1

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

1.1.1. WSP has been commissioned by Somerset County Council (SCC) to produce a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) as part of a Funding Bid to the Department for Transport (DfT).

1.1.2. Within the SOBC, the purpose of this Option Assessment Report (OAR) is to identify the existing and future challenges currently experienced by the residents and employers in the area for which funding is being obtained.

1.1.3. The Challenges are then utilised as a Case for Change and a guide to setting Objectives to appraise transport options. A long list of options consists of interventions by mode, leading to a short list of options are taken forward for further assessment.

1.2 STUDY AREA

1.2.1. This funding bid is for a solution to the current poor sustainable transport connectivity in the Langport-Somerton area of South Somerset.. This bid aims to contribute to the regeneration of the local economy, build social cohesion and decarbonise transport. This scheme considers solutions to the transport connectivity issue, addressing local concerns regarding increasing highway congestion, increasing air pollution, dependence on the motor car, constrained social mobility and access to education and employment. The scheme considers these issues with respect to improving the use of existing transport infrastructure.

1.2.2. In the past, local and regional transport connectivity included rail services calling at local stations provided connectivity to regional centres and wider connectivity across the country for local residents, particularly for those without access to a car. Current transport connectivity for the Langport/Somerton communities is reliant on the local road network. Residents mobility options for travel to regional centres for services and amenities not available locally is to use the car or use public bus services.

1.2.3. Providing transport connectivity provides increased opportunities to services in larger regional centres and beyond to the rest of the country. Local economic growth has been affected as the quality of transport connectivity between the Langport-Somerton area and its connections to the regional and national economies is heavily dependent on car-based travel.

1.2.4. Transport connectivity for Langport/Somerton travellers dependent on, or choosing to use public transport, is provided by taxi or local bus services connecting to Taunton, and Yeovil. As there is no public bus service to Castle Cary, taxi is the only option for those travellers without access to a car wishing to travel on rail services calling at Castle Cary. The local bus services serve a role of connecting a dispersed community and hence often provide indirect connectivity with regional centres and railway stations.

Langport and Somerton are growing communities with new housing and employment planned in both communities to support their role as Local Market Towns providing services and facilities for a large hinterland of smaller rural communities. Improved access to services and amenities provided in regional centres to support this growth is a key factor in securing the future prosperity of these communities. This study has sought to identify a value for money transport connectivity solution which supports national, regional and local policy.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1. This chapter of the report sets out the National, Regional and Local policies which serve to establish the need for a transport intervention in the South Somerset/Mendip area, as well as setting out the relevant national level strategic guidance which the proposed interventions will align with; particularly those regarding public transport investment and sustainable development outcomes.

2.2 POLICY CONTEXT

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

2.2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the goal of promoting sustainable development and has three key objectives, as follows:

- "An economic objective to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- A social objective to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet current and future generations and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support community's health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An environment objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

National Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

2.2.2. The National Infrastructure Strategy, published in November 2020 by the Treasury, sets out the government's plans to deliver significant improvements to infrastructure across transport, digital, energy and utility networks. The objectives of the strategy are to boost growth and productivity, meet net zero emissions targets by 2050, support private investment, and accelerate and improved delivery.

2.2.3. In particular, the strategy sets out a range of significant improvements to the rail network across the UK, particularly outside London and the South East. The Restoring Your Railways and New Stations Funds are identified for additional and continued funding, including a proposal for a station in the area of Langport-Somerton station, which is specifically listed for feasibility funding for rail infrastructure connecting regions in the National Infrastructure Strategy document.

Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth (2021)

2.2.4. The Build Back Better plan sets out the government's plans to support growth through significant investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation, and to pursue growth that levels up every part of

the UK, enables the transition to net zero, and supports the vision for Global Britain. It is based around the following core pillars of growth:

- Infrastructure: Stimulate short-term economic activity and drive long-term productivity, connect people to opportunity via the UK-wide Levelling Up Fund, and help achieve carbon net zero by providing £12 billion of funding for projects;
- Skills: Support productivity growth through high-quality skills and training; and
- Innovation: Support and incentivise the development of the creative ideas and technologies that will shape the UK's future high-growth, sustainable and secure economy.

2.2.5. On this basis, Options proposed should align with this objective of reducing carbon emissions, providing business accessibility, and enhancing sustainable travel connectivity.

Planning for the Future: White Paper (2020)

2.2.6. This White Paper published by MHCLG provides a vision for the future of the planning system. Specifically, the White Paper states that in identifying land for inclusion in Growth areas or the densities of development appropriate in different locations, 'the opportunity to maximise walking, cycling and public transport opportunities will be an important consideration.'

2.2.7. On this basis, Options will be considered for their ability to improve access to quality public transport opportunities, supported by walking and cycling infrastructure to encourage a fully sustainable journey.

UK 25 Year Environment Plan and Climate Change Act (2018)

2.2.8. The Climate Change Act was amended in 2019 through secondary legislation which included a move to reach net zero emissions by 2050 instead of an 80% reduction as targeted in the 2008 Act. Considering the Climate Emergency, policies are looking at ways to decarbonise transport services. Various policies seek to reduce private car use, and shift behaviour to more sustainable modes. New transport alternatives will align with climate policies and offer a more sustainable mode than the private car.

2.2.9. All options will therefore be considered for alignment with climate policies and its ability to enable residents and travellers in the South Somerset/South Mendip district to access public transport, thereby reducing the need for car travel.

DfT Strategic Vision for Rail (2017)

2.2.10. In November 2017, in parallel with the Control Period 6 (CP6) determination and investment programme, DfT published the document 'Connecting People: A strategic vision for Rail'. The vision sets out 5 key areas for improvement which will lead to a railway that will better meet the needs of its passengers. The Strategic Vision sets out a need to rebalance the economy and create new homes supported by, 'new links between places, spurring development and economic growth.' The Plan also states the need to include proposals to restore lost capacity' and sets out a commitment to improve accessibility to the rail network and offer new connections.

2.2.11. On this basis, Options considered should align with this strategic vision of providing access to a railway station from the South Somerset and Mendip district. It should also provide additional rail capacity if possible.

Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail (2021)

2.2.12. The William-Shapps Plan for Rail sets out a plan for investment in the future of the railway network with the establishment of Great Britain Railways to own and operate the infrastructure and services. The new organisation will prioritise levelling-up, housing, the environment and regeneration. Five-year settlement plans will be produced for the funding across rail services and infrastructure. The plan is to level up rail services across the country to the standards in the capital. Investment will be prioritised in areas which have seen less expenditure in the past. Railway stations will also become more closely integrated with local bus services; availability of bus passenger information and integrated ticketing proposed to deliver seamless travel. In response to the change in travel behaviour as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the Plan supports plans to develop the leisure market and attract more passengers to the rail network.

'Railways may no longer be able to rely so much on the commuter market. As the country emerges from the pandemic the railways must become much better at meeting passenger needs to avoid a society dependent on the car.'

2.2.13. To align with the Plan, any Option should seek to provide enhanced sustainable transport connectivity for the residents of the area, reducing carbon emissions and supporting economic growth.

Decarbonising Transport: A Better Greener Britain (2021)

2.2.14. The Department for Transport's Transport Decarbonisation Plan elevates the decarbonisation of the transport system to the forefront of the United Kingdom's plan to be Net Zero Carbon by 2050. Transport emissions are now the largest contributor to the UK's carbon footprint. A net zero railway is to be delivered by 2050. Investment will be made in the railway network to attract new passengers and encourage mode shift from road to rail. In 2019, rail accounted for 1.4% of carbon emissions compared to 55.4% for cars and taxis. Reducing road vehicle emissions and noise pollution will transform communities, support Levelling-Up and reinvent the streetscape.

2.2.15. The Priority 1 objective of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan is:

'Accelerating modal shift to public transport and active modes: Public transport and active modes will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will have a cohesive, widely available net zero public transport network designed for the passenger.'

The Plan also states that rail travel will be made easier, simpler, and better integrated including through improved journey connectivity with walking, cycling and other services in order to encourage a shift to cleaner less carbon emitting travel. Stations will become mobility hubs within local and regional transport networks.

On this basis, any Option should seek to align with the objectives of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Restoring Your Railways Fund (2021)

2.2.16. In February 2020, HM Government announced a new 'Restoring Your Railway' Fund, in recognition of the importance of better connectivity driving local economic growth, and the success of recent rail re-openings such as the Borders Railway in Scotland. MPs, local councils, and community groups were invited to propose how they could use funding to reinstate axed local services and restore

closed stations with a view to connecting up communities and facilitating sustainable travel. A fund of £500m has been committed to the development of schemes under three themes:

- Ideas Fund – for early stage concepts to be investigated to see if there is a business case to proceed onto the RNEP for restoring lost rail connections to communities.
- Accelerating Existing Proposals – for existing schemes that already have demonstrated a business case and require financial support for more detailed design.
- New and Restored Stations – applications are invited for a share of a £20m pot for New (or re-opened) stations. This strategy would support any rail option seeking to provide a new railway station within the area which could then be used as a railhead for the wider area.

Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (2018)

2.2.17. The DfT's Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP)[1] sets out key priorities for network enhancements, as follows:

- Keep people and goods moving smoothly and safely
- Offering more: new and better journeys and opportunities for the future
- Delivering the benefits from committed programmes and projects already underway
- Changing the way the rail sector works for the better.

2.2.18. Similar to the preceding strategy, the RNEP would strongly support rail-based investment options in the Langport-Somerton area; enhancing connectivity by sustainable transport and opening up better access to jobs and key services such as healthcare and higher education. The enhanced connectivity will enhance productivity with improved journey times making passenger transport smoother and safer.

National Bus Strategy (2021)

2.2.19. The DfT's National Bus Strategy promotes improved bus service connectivity with strengthening of services and development of transport interchanges. The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) guidance identifies a need for the improvement of bus routes serving rural communities. Transport interchanges are considered with buses timed to connect with trains. Transport hubs based on a centrally located railway station are considered an effective way of improving connectivity in rural areas building a hub-and-spoke service pattern with services operating in the same window to facilitate connections.

2.2.20. The BSIP guidance states that in holiday destinations and scenic areas more needs to be done to promote buses to visitors. This is of relevance to the new station scheme as it is located in the Somerset Levels, a tourist attraction of national importance. The BSIP guidance stresses that there is a need to promote buses to visitors with improved services, easily accessible travel information, park and ride sites and special tickets.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-network-enhancements-pipeline

2.2.21. This strategy supports any option which improves the regional bus network and/or enhances connectivity between rail and bus services, such as a new station equipped to function as a local bus hub. This would also align with the Somerset County Council Bus Strategy 2018-2026 setting as an objective improving accessibility to services by 'enabling informed transport choices and linking transport options for easier multi-mode journeys.' The ongoing preparation of a BSIP for Somerset is aligned with Bus Strategy.

Network Rail

Organisation

2.2.22. Network Rail as the rail infrastructure provider has the role of running a safe, reliable, and efficient railway serving customers and the community. As the owner, operator and developer of Britain's railway, Network Rail is critical to the efficient movement of people and goods by rail nation-wide to support the country's prosperity. Its developer role is crucial in Network Rail's support of railway infrastructure development proposals including those proposals submitted for government funding under Levelling-Up and RYR. These programmes aim to re-balance the economy generating economic recovery in the areas of the country whose local economies have been badly affected by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2.23. Network Rail has had a key role in delivering new rail infrastructure which can transform communities. A recent example is Network Rail's role in helping to construct the Borders Railway which offered people in the Scottish Borders access to a rail service for the first time in 50 years. Reopening the railway resulted in an increase in tourism trade and supported economic regeneration of the region's tow ns including new residents taking advantage of the region's more affordable housing to commute to Edinburgh.

Regional Policy

Bristol to Exeter Strategic Study (2021)

2.2.24. The Bristol to Exeter rail corridor strategic study was developed by Network Rail in collaboration with partner organisations and stakeholders including Western Gateway and Peninsula Transport sub-national transport bodies. The study addressed the issue of how to develop the rail network to support sustainable economic and housing growth between Bristol and Exeter. The study recommendations include strengthening inter-regional connectivity by providing additional longer distance journey opportunities to London and the south-west peninsula on the Westbury to Taunton route.

2.2.25. This brief would support potential rail Options, such as a new station which would provide improved access to the rail network for a large catchment area and, through connections at Taunton and Westbury, be able to benefit from the strengthening of inter-regional connectivity.

West of England Line Study Continuous Modular Strategic Plan (2020)

2.2.26. Network Rail have developed the Continuous Modular Strategic Plan (CMSP) for the West of England Line.[2] This will set out investment choices for the London to West Country corridor, devised through a collaborative consultation approach. The study considered network constraints, capacity, onward connectivity, market demand, freight, resilience, and stakeholder priorities. The study highlighted the need for providing capacity relief. Strategies are presented to address the issue of crowding on some services, including investment in additional capacity and new services on the Heart of Wessex line through Yeovil.

Western Gateway STB Rail Strategy

2.2.27. The Western Gateway STB Rail Strategy has been developed by 5 local authorities to promote increased use of rail.[3] The Rail Strategy has an objective of increasing the proportion of the population living within a 15-minute drive, walk or cycle ride of a railway station. The proposed railway station will contribute significantly towards this goal as a park and ride facility will be provided offering a shorter car access journey to rail than is the current position and encouraging mode shift for travellers currently using car for their entire trip. With travellers choosing to use rail, the switch from car will contribute to workers productivity and decarbonisation of transport.

2.2.28. The Western Gateway STB Rail Strategy also has an objective for rail to provide sustainable travel options for housing and jobs growth across the Western Gateway.

2.2.29. This strategy further supports a rail based option which could represent a step change in sustainable travel options for residents and visitors in this area, encouraging use of rail and other public transport to a prospective new railway station. Introduction of an all-day stopping train service between Taunton and Westbury could also transform sustainable transport connectivity, enabling residents to commute by train to Taunton and Castle Cary and beyond.

Heart of the South-West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

2.2.30. The Heart of the South-West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSWLEP) is responsible for working across the public and private sectors to support economic growth in Devon and Somerset. The HotSWLEP has published the document 'Build Back Better' which offers a roadmap for economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic[4]. This roadmap highlights that urban, rural and coastal communities will recovery at different rates and over different timescales. In terms of better transport connectivity, rail network improvements to enhance the resilience of rail lines and strategic connectivity are supported by HotSWLEP.

[2] https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/West-of-England-Study-Continuous-Modular-Strategic-Planning.pdf

[3] Western-Gateway-Rail-Strategy-Final-Published-Report-Brochure.pdf (ndm-server.co.uk)

[4] https://heartofswlep.co.uk/growing-our-economy/build-back-better-plan/

2.2.31. The HoTSWLEP has also published a Productivity Strategy (2018) supporting the strengthening the capacity, resilience, and usability of rail links to connect places and opportunities improving both intra and inter-regional connectivity.[5]

2.2.32. The HoTSWLEP Local Industrial Strategy (2019) has a strategic objective to future-proof infrastructure to support long term prosperity and clean growth.[6] Transport systems are to be future-proofed, 'to create fast, resilient and clean networks. Carbon emissions from transport need to be reduced supported by sustainable transport strategies. The Industrial Strategy states that distance from markets and journey times has a negative impact on the South-West's economy.

The Peninsula Transport Board

2.2.33. The Peninsula Transport Board (PTB) is a new partnership created to transform transport and boost economic growth across the far South West. The Sub-National Transport Body is made up of Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Plymouth Council, Somerset County Council and Torbay Council. The board also involves both the Heart of the South West and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnerships, alongside Highways England, Homes England, and Network Rail.

2.2.34. The PTB produced an Economic Connectivity Study in July 2020[7] and is the first step in development of a Peninsula Strategic Transport Strategy. The study examined the region's economic geography and the role of transport in enabling intra-regional, inter-regional, and international connections. The study identified five trends expected to impact on the ways people connect and travel in the Peninsula: decarbonisation, flexible lifestyles, the world of work, digitalisation, and urbanisation.

2.2.35. The study predicted the population of the Peninsula is forecast to grow by around 12.5% between 2016 and 2040. The impact of a growing population is likely to be the dominant force driving transport demand. Rising incomes and decreasing private costs of transport could also increase trip rates and compound the observed growth in transport demand. The critical challenge is therefore to ensure that the future social costs of transport demand, including CO_2 emissions, are reduced while enabling high productivity and high-quality lifestyles. The study also highlighted existing regional differences within the South-West which disadvantaged some areas would need to be addressed to provide better connectivity.

2.2.36. The PTB has developed a high-level Vision and Goals for the future of transport in the South West Peninsula.[8] A key objective relates to network connectivity:

'Transport connections are vital for much of our activity and so our vision is for an enhanced transport system: more efficient, resilient and cleaner'.

[5] HeartoftheSouthWestProductivityStrategy.pdf (heartofswlep.co.uk)
[6] Hear (heartofswlep.co.uk)
[7] Peninsula-Transport-ECS-Summary-Report-Final-090720.pdf (peninsulatransport.org.uk)
[8] https://www.peninsulatransport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Peninsula-TS-Vision-008-2.pdf

2.2.37. Consultation is currently ongoing for Regional Transport Strategy due to be published in 2022. The strategy will have a number of studies feeding into it, including a Rail Strategy. This is expected to reinforce and support the importance of rail set out by the Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF), identifying a range of rail service and network improvements focusing upon resilience, accessibility, local connectivity, and decarbonisation.

2.2.38. The Langport-Somerton new station scheme is aligned with the Economic Connectivity Study and Transport Strategy as the scheme will provide better connectivity to the rail network for the local communities driving improved economic productivity. Improved accessibility to rail will offer a strong sustainable transport alternative to the existing need to travel at least 13 miles to a railway station. Reduced length of road trips will result in reduced CO_2 emissions. Quality of life will be enhanced as residents' reliance on the car for trip-making will be reduced.

Peninsula Rail Taskforce

2.2.39. In 2013, the Peninsula Rail Taskforce which includes Somerset County Council as a stakeholder was set up and has published, Closing the Gap: South-West Peninsula Strategic Rail Blueprint, 2016[9][13] seeing out the Taskforce's plans for investment in the South-West rail network. Following extensive research and engagement with the rail industry a vision for the longer-term investment in the enhancement of rail in the South-West has been developed producing an estimated £8.4 billion of benefits towards reducing an increasing gap between the South-West and the rest of the UK.

2.2.40. The blueprint defines the Taskforce's ambition for a modern 21st century railway supported by three enhancement priorities:

- Resilience and reliability;
- Reduced journey time and improved connectivity; and
- Capacity and comfort.

2.2.41. The Plan stresses the importance of the passenger and the quality of service offered to promote healthy, inclusive, and vibrant communities. Stations should be designed as accessible gateways to public transport facilities.

2.2.42. Another key report produced by the PRTF is the 'On Track 20 Year Interim Report (2015)[10] which provides a 20-year rail investment strategy. Network connectivity is highlighted as a key issue, and particularly connections between the South-West Peninsula and London. The report states that relative compared with other parts of the country, the South-West Peninsula, although closer to London, has longer journey times to the capital. There is a direct negative impact on productivity and GVA. Regional connectivity, it is emphasised, is not only represented by a reduction in journey times, but also in the ease of interchange which can be minimised with timed connections.

2.2.43. To align with the PRTF, any rail scheme should seek to offer improved access to the study area's residents, with investments reducing overall journey times, particularly to London. Residents of the study area will benefit additionally from these improvements further strengthening rail as an

[9] https://peninsularailtaskforce.co.uk/closing-the-gap-the-south-west-peninsula-strategic-rail-blueprint/
[10] prtf-report-document-final.pdf (wordpress.com)

alternative to the car. This will also have a positive impact on productivity and local GVA, particularly with the minimisation of interchange time.

Local Policy

Somerset County Council

2.2.44. Somerset County Council (Somerset CC) is the Local Transport Authority and Highway Authority. In addition, Devon CC is the Education Authority and Local Flood Authority and provides social care and other statutory functions.

Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy

2.2.45. Somerset County Council has produced a climate emergency strategy. The transport sector is a major contributor to carbon emissions. Latest carbon emission data for the county shows the transport sector accounting for 46% of carbon emissions. A need for greater investment in public transport to improve the quality and size of the public transport network across Somerset.

2.2.46. Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy (2020) which encourages stakeholders to install EV charging points including railway stations. The strategy nodes that railway stations are ideal for EV charging as stations will encourage frequent visits by longer staying travellers.

2.2.47. In consideration of this strategy, any Option put forward for delivery should deliver a reduction in carbon emissions, whether through modal shift of encouraging electric vehicle uptake.

Somerset Future Transport Plan

2.2.48. Somerset County Council has produced a Future Transport Plan for the county which sets out the overarching strategic priorities for transport. The strategy aims to encourage more people to travel by train through partnership with the rail industry. The County Council supports better services, facilities and integration and improvements in how people see train travel.

2.2.49. On this basis, Options should facilitate access to railway stations, as well as providing interchange facilities and encouraging modal shift.

Somerset County Council, Bus Service Improvement Plan (2021)

2.2.50. The County Council has developed a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) setting out the strategic objectives for the future development of the bus network in Somerset. The aims and objectives of the BSIP will be implemented through an Enhanced Partnership. The BSIP focuses on overarching objectives of transport decarbonisation, a more extensive bus network, more frequent bus services, reduced cost of travel, improved coordination, and an easily accessible, reliable, and comfortable network with improved facilities. The BSIP states that connections to rail station will a primary focus for internal and cross-boundary bus services.

2.2.51. For the Langport-Somerton area the BSIP overarching objectives are developed into a series of interventions to enhance the bus network and services. The BSIP recognises that bus is currently an unattractive mode due to the limited network, hours of operation and fare levels. BSIP analysis shows that private car usage is benefits from relatively low car parking charges. Consequently, the car is a more cost effective and accessible means of transport for those who have a car available.

2.2.52. The BSIP proposals for Somerton aim to challenge the current car dependency. The town is to be developed as a mobility hub with multiple bus routes offering interchange opportunities to broaden network coverage. First Mile/Last Mile access by cycling or walking is to be encouraged. Part of

Somerton's role as a mobility hub will be as a focus of a daytime Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) network. Two buses are planned to operate a DRT network covering 80km$_2$ zone. The DRT will unlock sustainable travel for a socio-demographic segment of the population not currently well-served by public transport, namely shift workers, and young people wishing to avail themselves of evening opportunities. Furthermore, the DDRT will provide a flexible transport service addressing social isolation. As well as DDRT there will be a network of fixed feeder bus services which will connect into a hub-and-spoke network encompassing routes 29,54,55,75,77 and 376.

Langport will also benefit from the BSIP proposals as it will be a part of the DDRT network focussed on Somerton.

Schedule of Transport Policies

2.2.53. The Somerset County Council Schedule of Transport Policies has as a goal to encourage local communities to meet their transport needs. Community and partnership involvement is considered essential for delivery of transport for local communities. Sustainable living is to be supported which includes', seeking opportunities through transport to reduce carbon emissions and strengthen our ability to adapt to climate change'. Sustainable transport choices are to be supported by improving infrastructure and facilities to help in reducing carbon emissions. The Schedules of Transport Policies has a goal of improved integration of bus and rail modes both in facilities and timetable coordination. The rail strategy aims to attract more users of rail services and improve the service between key locations for people and businesses. This aim is set out in policy SUS 7 Rail. The County Council will seek to make maximum use of the existing rail network by encouraging services, new connections, and better access for all travellers. Collaboration with other rail industry stakeholders to seek new solutions and promote integration with Somerset's policies to help integrate rail with the wider Somerset transport network.

Somerset Bus Strategy 2018-2026

2.2.54. The Somerset Bus Strategy sets out the bus strategy elements of the passenger transport strategy. The aim is to develop services and provide infrastructure that meet the bus services needs of residents, employees, and visitors. The strategy provides an outline strategy for future service delivery.

Somerset Active Travel Strategy

2.2.55. The aim of the active travel strategy is to offer Somerset's population better access to active travel by improving active travel options by making active travel easier to access and use. A key goal is improving access by active modes to the public transport network. The strategy aims to address issues of social exclusion for residents and visitors without access to a car. The strategy states that encouraging active travel modes 'particularly cycling and links to public transport will 'broaden journey horizons and potentially provide access to a wide variety of services.'

2.2.56. On this basis, any proposed option should encourage increased usage of active travel modes.

South Somerset District Council

2.2.57. The planning policy for South Somerset is set out in the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028. South Somerset District Council (SDCC) is the planning authority for the area covered by the new station scheme.

South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028

2.2.58. In the adopted South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 Langport and Somerton are defined as Local Market Towns.[11] As rural market towns the key functions of these communities is to provide a strong employment, retail, and community role for residents. Within the urban hierarchy of South Somerset as Local Market Towns Langport and Somerton fulfil a role between Yeovil, the principle urban settlement and Rural Settlements. Planning policy is to provide for housing and employment in these settlements to 'develop and support mixed sustainable communities.'

2.2.59. This role is set out in Policy SS1 Settlement Strategy with Langport/Huish Episcopi and Somerton identified as Local Market Towns which are aligned with three key criteria which are to:

- Have an existing concentration of business and employment with potential for expansion;
- Have shopping, cultural, faith, educational, health and public services; and
- Have sustainable transport potential.

2.2.60. The Local Plan states that there is a balance between jobs and workers, however, 60% of Langport workers commute to Yeovil, Taunton, and Somerton. Similarly, 60% of Somerton commuters commute elsewhere; mostly to Mendip District and Yeovil.

2.2.61. Policy LMT2 states that the Direction of Growth in Langport - Huish Episcopi for new housing and employment will be to the north, east and south-east of the town. In Somerton, Policy LMT3 states that the Direction of Growth of new housing and employment developments will be to the west of the town. Further appraisal of Growth locations and considerations is considered in Chapter 4.

Bridgwater, Taunton & Wellington: Future Transport Strategy 2011-2026

2.2.62. This document set out that there was a need to provide better transport options in the area and aimed at forming a long term strategy for improvement in the years leading up to 2026. The document identifies the following challenges facing the area's transport which are of relevance to the scheme:

- 18,000 new homes and 16,500 new jobs in Taunton, which could act as trip attractors or generators in relation to Taunton and Somerton, with subsequent implications for transport capacity and road congestion; and
- Travel to Work, as of the 2009 National Travel Survey, was dominated by private car users; which made up 63% of trips.

2.2.63. This was despite public transport in the area being deemed 'adequate'.

South Somerset Local Plan Review 2016-2036 Preferred Options Consultation

2.2.64. The Local Plan Review 2016-2036 is currently at the second consultation stage which takes account of the latest government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework and the evidence

[11] https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1250/j-plan_pol-web-site-2018-1-local-plan-local-plan-2006-2028-south_somerset_local_plan_2006-2028_adoption_version_march_2015.pdf

base produced to support the Plan process. Key issues for the review are the growing local population with increasing proportion of older residents, and a need for provision of new housing including affordable housing. Other important issues are maintaining access to services and rural connectivity. The Vision for 2036 includes the aim of 'sustainable low carbon towns with enhanced infrastructure of all types and improved public transport links.

2.2.65. A strategic objective is to promote sustainable transport. Specific policy guidance supports improving accessibility by sustainable modes of transport (Policy SS5 Infrastructure Delivery). There is also a general District wide mode shift policy for new housing developments which includes providing good travel information, encouraging electric car use, incentivising sustainable travel, encouraging cycling and walking, home working, public transport, travel planning and timely provision of all these measures at the start of developing sites (Policy TA1 Low Carbon Travel and Policy TA2 Rail Facilities).

2.2.66. Housing growth of 574 housing units at Somerton is planned for development during the Plan period up to 2036. Of this total, 434 units are committed or built. The remaining 140 units (with 29% affordable housing) is addressed by Policy SM1. Employment growth is planned for two sites accounting for 4 hectares of development land (Policies SM2 and SM3).

2.2.67. Housing growth at Langport is set out in Policies LH1 and LH2. A total of 351 housing units is planned for development during the Plan period up to 2036. Of this total 171 units are committed or built. The remaining 180 units (with 29% affordable housing) is addressed by Policies LH1 and LH2. Employment growth is planned of 1.3 hectares of development land (Policy SS3). The Local Plan Review is an update of the Local Plan Review 2016-2036 to reflect and adjusted timetable.

2.2.68. As detailed further in Chapter 4, this proposed growth in Langport & Somerton should be supported by access to employment and amenities, both existing and proposed, across the wider region. This requirement should be considered in any Option taken forward.

Langport and Huish Episcopi Parish Plan 2020

2.2.69. The Parish Plan sets out a plan for Langport to be, 'the Heart of the Levels - a thriving, clean and revitalised market town and surrounding villages. The aim is, 'to increase prosperity in Langport and its hinterland and to improve the quality of life of its citizens'.

2.3 POLICY SUMMARY

2.3.1. Whilst the preceding Plans and Strategies originate from a range of organisations operating at diverse geographic scales from local to national it is possible to identify several key themes which any Option will need to engage with.

2.3.2. The first theme is a reduction in transport's environmental impacts, both in terms of CO_2 and other emissions. This is being spurred by the increasing evidence of the adverse impacts of both anthropogenic climate change and the adverse impacts of pollutants on public health.

2.3.3. The second theme is the desire to encourage employment growth and development. In transport terms, this is through increasing accessibility to jobs and other amenities by means of reducing people's journey times and/or providing new travel opportunities, particularly for those who don't have access to private or shared cars.

2.3.4. The third theme is to encourage greater transport accessibility, through a combination of new services and better integration between existing modes and services.

3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

3.1 STUDY AREA

3.1.1. The study area is centred on the towns of Langport and Somerton in the District of South Somerset, extending north into the Mendip District to encompass the towns of Street and Glastonbury. This study area is defined by a high level of car dependency, as set out subsequently, incurred by a lack of sustainable transport connectivity opportunities to locations outside of the towns themselves. No railway stations are available to travellers, and bus services are infrequent and slow; thus providing little competition to the private car. The boundaries of the study area are set out by the large towns surrounding Langport and Somerton where more amenities are located and/or the national rail network can be reached.[12]

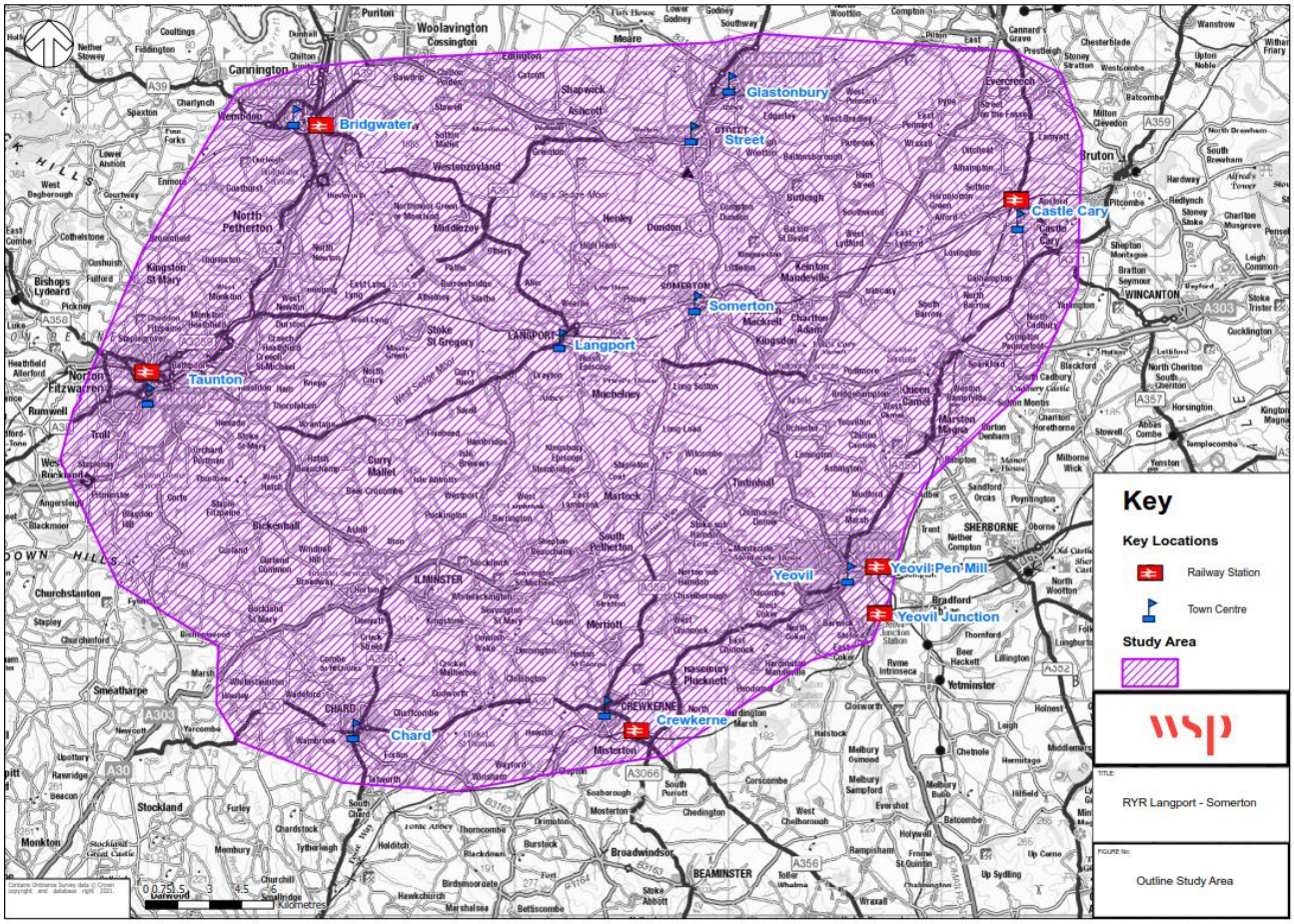


Figure 3.1: Study Area

[12] Whilst the City of Wells, located to the north of the core study area, also lacks a railway station it is not considered within this study. High level appraisal of the origin/destination of trips associated with the City show that it is unlikely to benefit from interventions within the study area, particularly should a rail-based option be selected.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Census

3.2.1. This section of the report considers key demographic statistics extracted from the 2011 Census. Whilst this information is now a decade old, it is the most recent nationwide data available until the 2021 data is released.

Population Age

3.2.2. As set out in the Policy Review, the Local Authorities have expressed concern that the ageing population will pose significant challenges to the district in the future. This section of the report considers population ages to provide further understanding of this statement.

3.2.3. Figure 3.2 shows the percentage of the population aged 0-18 years old.

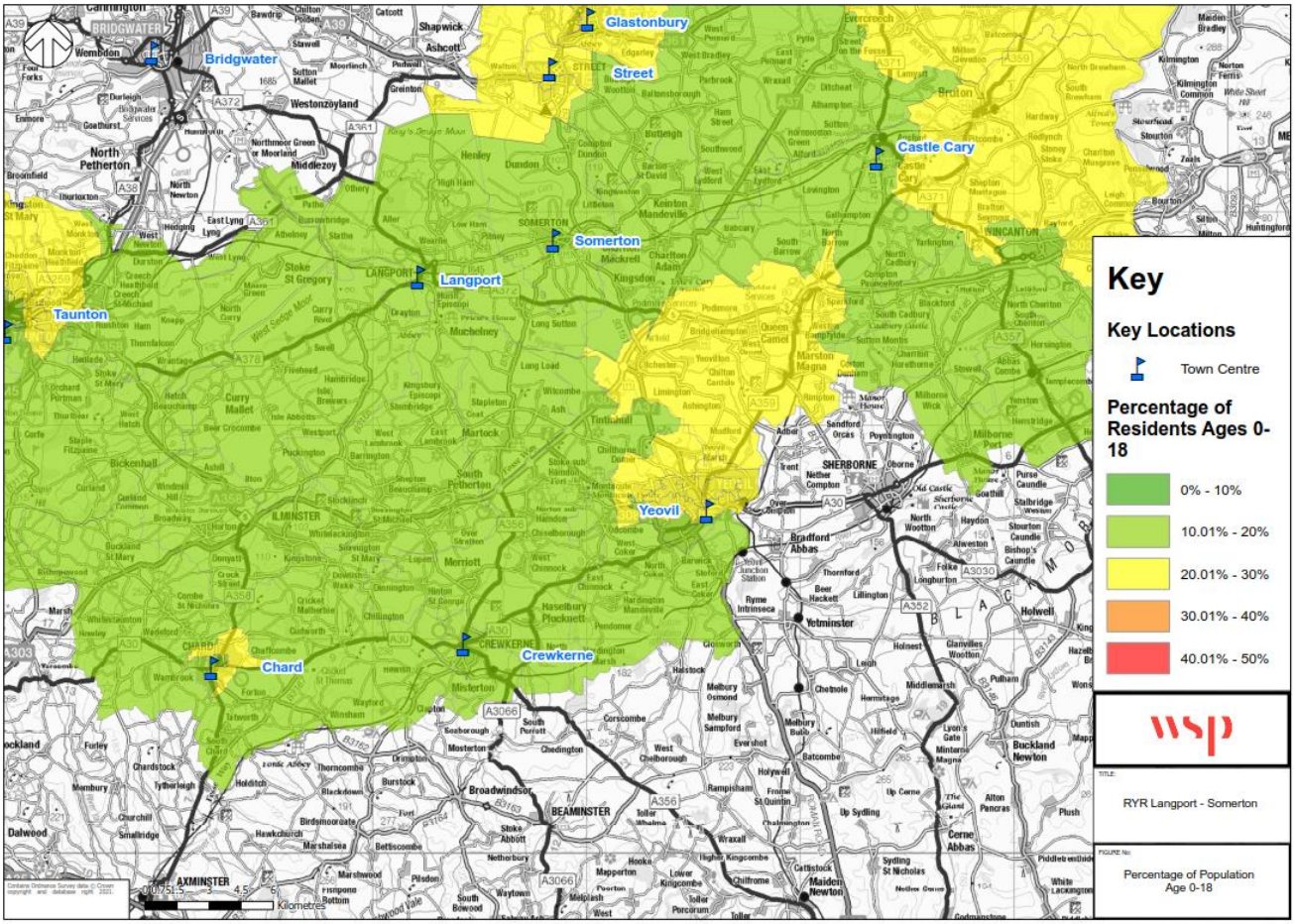


Figure 3.2: Residents Age 0-18

3.2.4. As can be observed, young people make up the minority of the population in most of the study area, with the only places possessing notable populations of younger people being the more urban areas on the fringes.

3.2.5. In regard to the aforementioned **challenge** of an ageing population in the area, it is important to provide high quality public transport access to amenities to enable young residents to travel within the area, as well as encouraging those with young families to move into the area and offset the ageing of the population indicated in subsequent figures. This is on the basis that younger people aren't legally allowed to drive until 16, as well as an increasing portion of the younger generation deferring learning to drive based on recent studies.

3.2.6. Figure 3.3 shows the percentage of the population aged 18-60 years old.

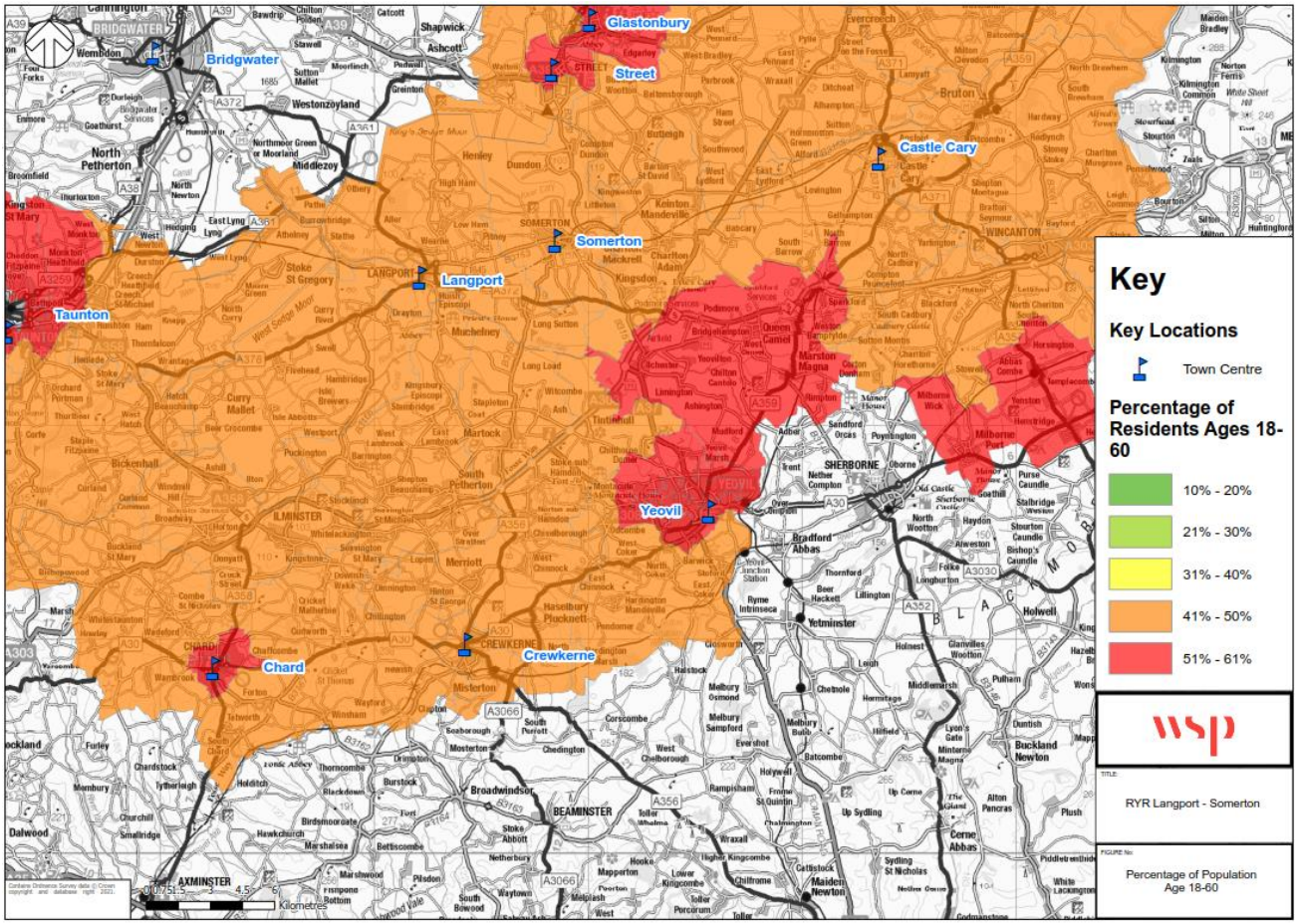


Figure 3.3: Residents Age 18-60

3.2.7. At the time of the 2011 Census the 'working age' (18-60 for the purposes of this study) were in the minority in many areas outside of the regional towns. Of the wider study area, those aged between 18 and 60 formed less than 50% of the population. In conjunction with Figure 3.4, this shows that the concerns raised in Chapter 2 by the local authority regarding the areas ageing population are justified.

3.2.8. Figure 3.4 shows the percentage of the population aged 60+ years.

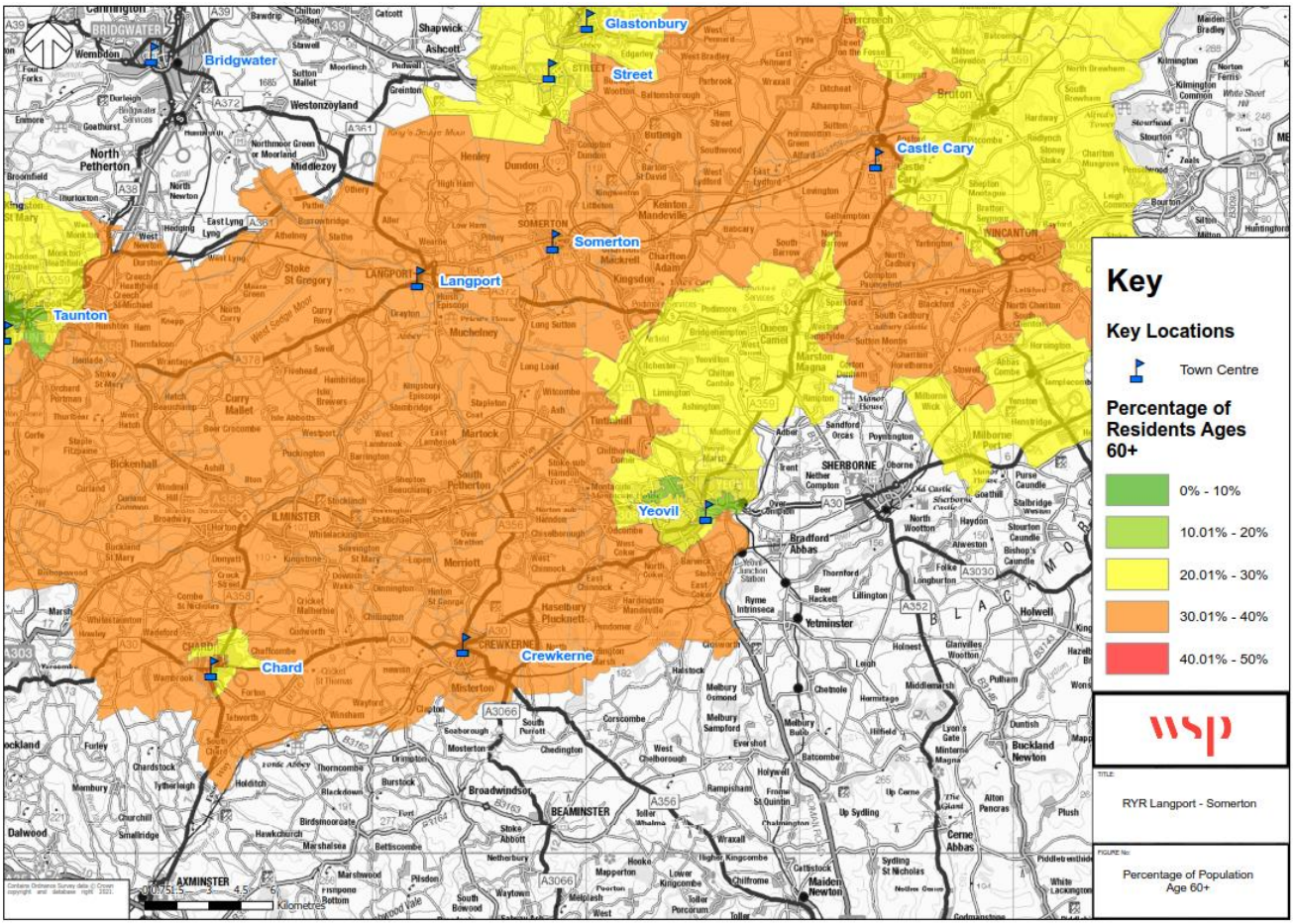


Figure 3.4: Residents Age 60+

3.2.9. Figure 3.4 shows that a substantial proportion of the population in the study area is over 60; forming 30-40% of the population across much of the rural study area. Only Taunton, Yeovil, and Chard have lower proportions of people over 60% and even there they form a significant amount of people.

3.2.10. Figure 3.5, extracted from local strategy, shows the long-term trend in population make up between 2001 and 2019.

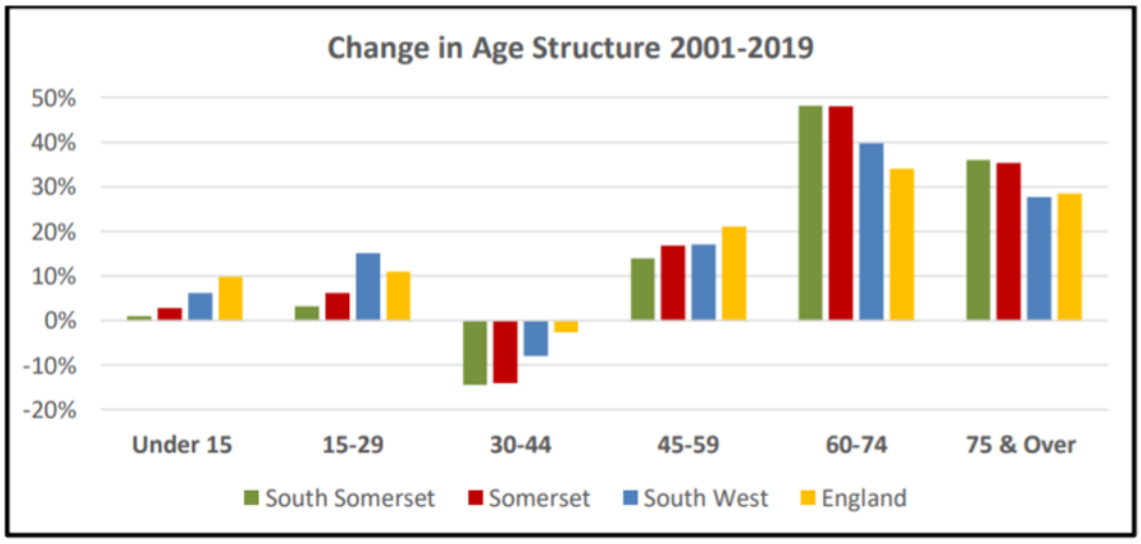


Figure 3.5: Change in Age Structure 2001-2019

3.2.11. Figure 3.5 shows that, whilst there is some growth in the population in the 0-29 age bracket, the primary population increase in South Somerset and Somerset has occurred in the 60+ age bracket, with a greater increase in the elderly population than the wider South West Region or the UK.

3.2.12. This trend towards an ageing population presents several challenges for the transport network:

1. Firstly, whilst the retirement age has risen recently, there will still be an increasing number of retirees in the area. In turn, prospective employees will need to travel into the area from further afield, or travel from areas such as Yeovil and Chard where the population is younger.
2. With increasing age, people need increasing support to drive long distance and/or experience reduced confidence in driving generally[13]. In turn, this generates an increasing demand for alternative modes for longer distance trips.
3. Compounding this is the greater need for the elderly to be able to reach medical facilities. Figure 3.35 shows that whilst the area is well provided with pharmacies, neither Langport nor Somerton have hospitals, whilst those in Glastonbury and Street lack A&E facilities, for which residents would need to travel to Taunton or Yeovil.
4. Finally, in conjunction with the elements above, there is a risk of rural isolation for the elderly in locations with poor public transport accessibility.

3.2.13. As such, any option needs to provide increased public transport accessibility for those who are no longer confident in driving, as well as those who would benefit from increased access to medical facilities. These improvements would also be beneficial to staff working at such facilities.

[13] Sourced from *The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society,* published by Age UK in 2015.

Car Ownership

3.2.14. A key element in people's travel decisions is their access to a car. As such, this section considers car ownership in the district.

3.2.15. Figure 3.6 shows the percentage of households in each MSOA without access to a car.

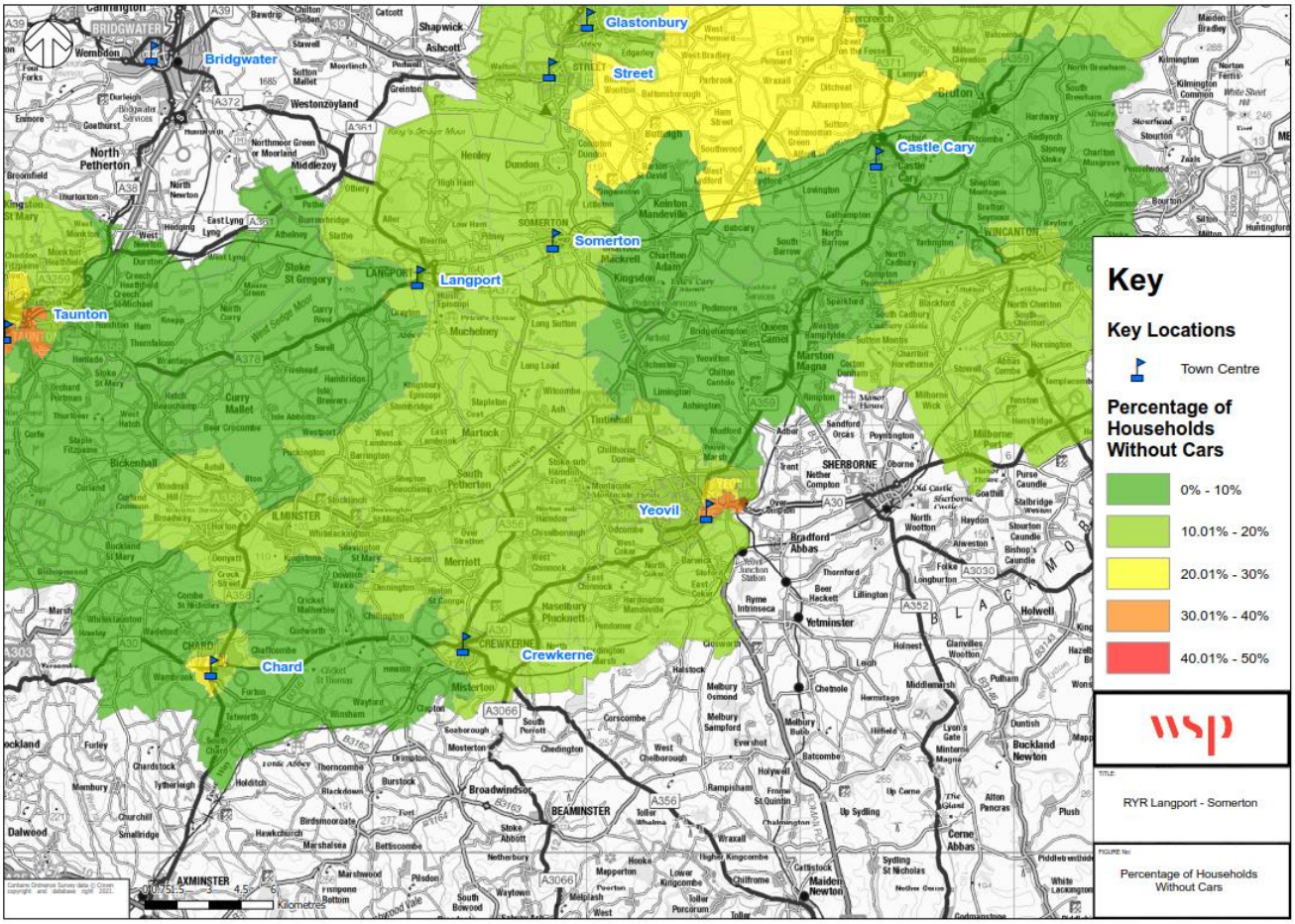


Figure 3.6: Households Without Cars

3.2.16. As shown in the preceding figure, the majority of households within the study area have access to a car, with 80-100% of households having access to a private car across most of the area, with some correlation between reduced car ownership and the larger towns such as Langport and Somerton. The only areas with lower car ownership are Yeovil, where some areas have up to 50% of households without cars, and Chard, where the 20-30% of residents in the heart of the town have no access to a car.

3.2.17. In terms of transport investment this presents two challenges. Firstly, there is generally a correlation between high car ownership and high car usage, with subsequently higher traffic levels and the impacts thereof. Secondly, whilst 10%-20% of households without access to a car represents a minority, it still forms a notable proportion of the population of Langport and Somerton's population who are dependent on walking, cycling and public transport to access amenities and for whom the current low frequency, low coverage public transport network might restrict access to employment and amenities.

3.2.18. The latter point is reinforced by the Future Transport Plan document, which states that "Dissatisfaction with access opportunities amongst disabled people and those without a car is significant in Somerset".

Education

3.2.19. This section of the report considers the educational level of residents of the area. This is relevant to this study as improving transport within the region improves access to education resources for all.

3.2.20. Figure 3.7 shows the percentage of the working age population without any formal qualifications.

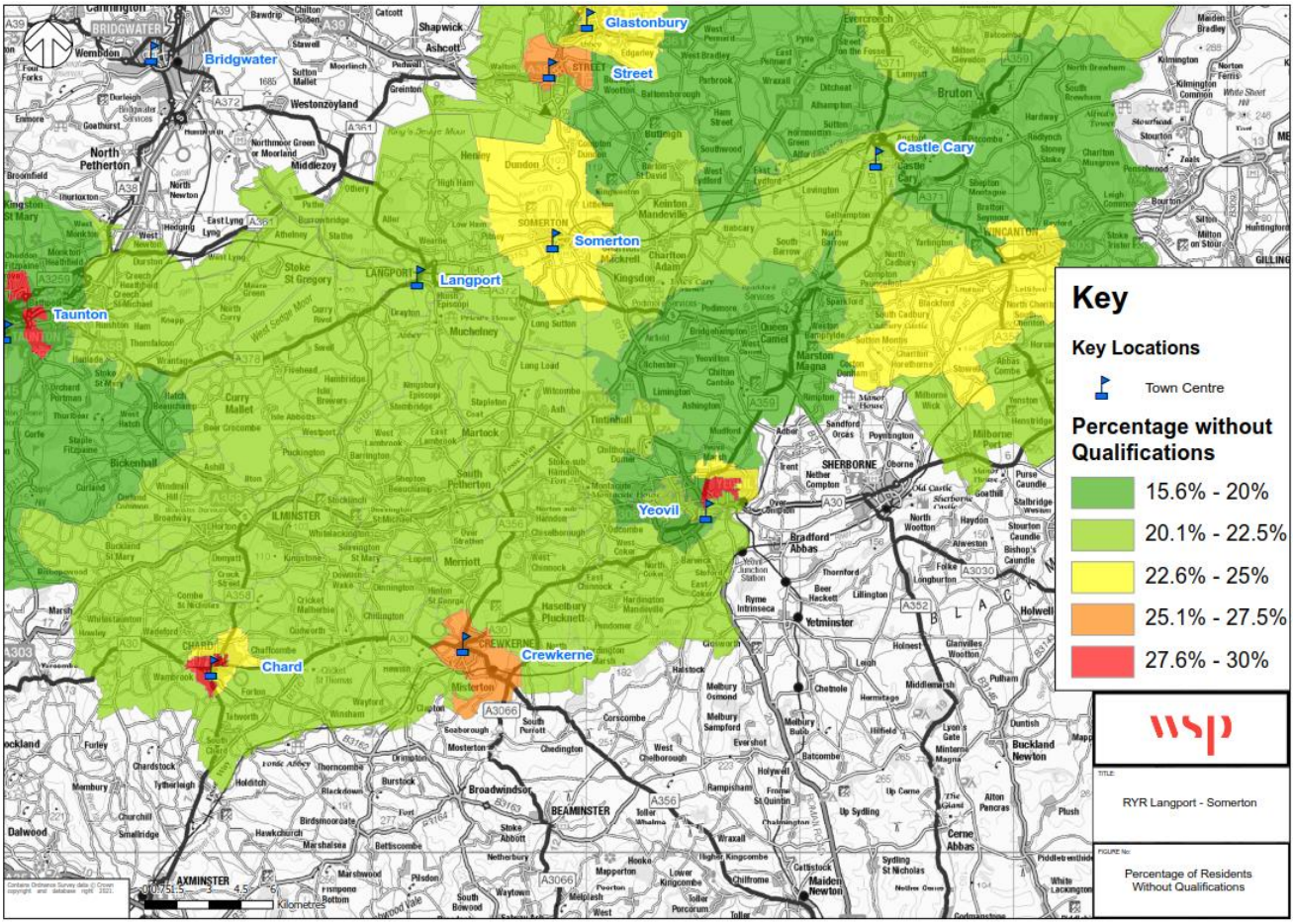


Figure 3.7: Residents Without Qualifications

3.2.21. Figure 3.7 shows that the majority of the population within the study area (over 70%) have at least some amount of formal qualification. Of the central towns, Somerton has a slightly higher proportion of people without qualifications, making up between 22.65 and 25% of the population. Outside of the towns central to this study, it is the more urban areas that have larger proportions of residents without qualifications, though these are still the minority of the overall population.

3.2.22. One **challenge** arising from areas with low educational qualifications is the need to provide access to residents to gain qualifications, or to reach suitable employment.

Employment Status

3.2.23. Transport is a key element to accessing employment for residents, as well as providing employers with a labour pool with the right talents to fill positions. As such, this section of the report identified potential challenges arising from the distribution of employment within the district.

3.2.24. Figure 3.8 shows the percentage of population who are unemployed.

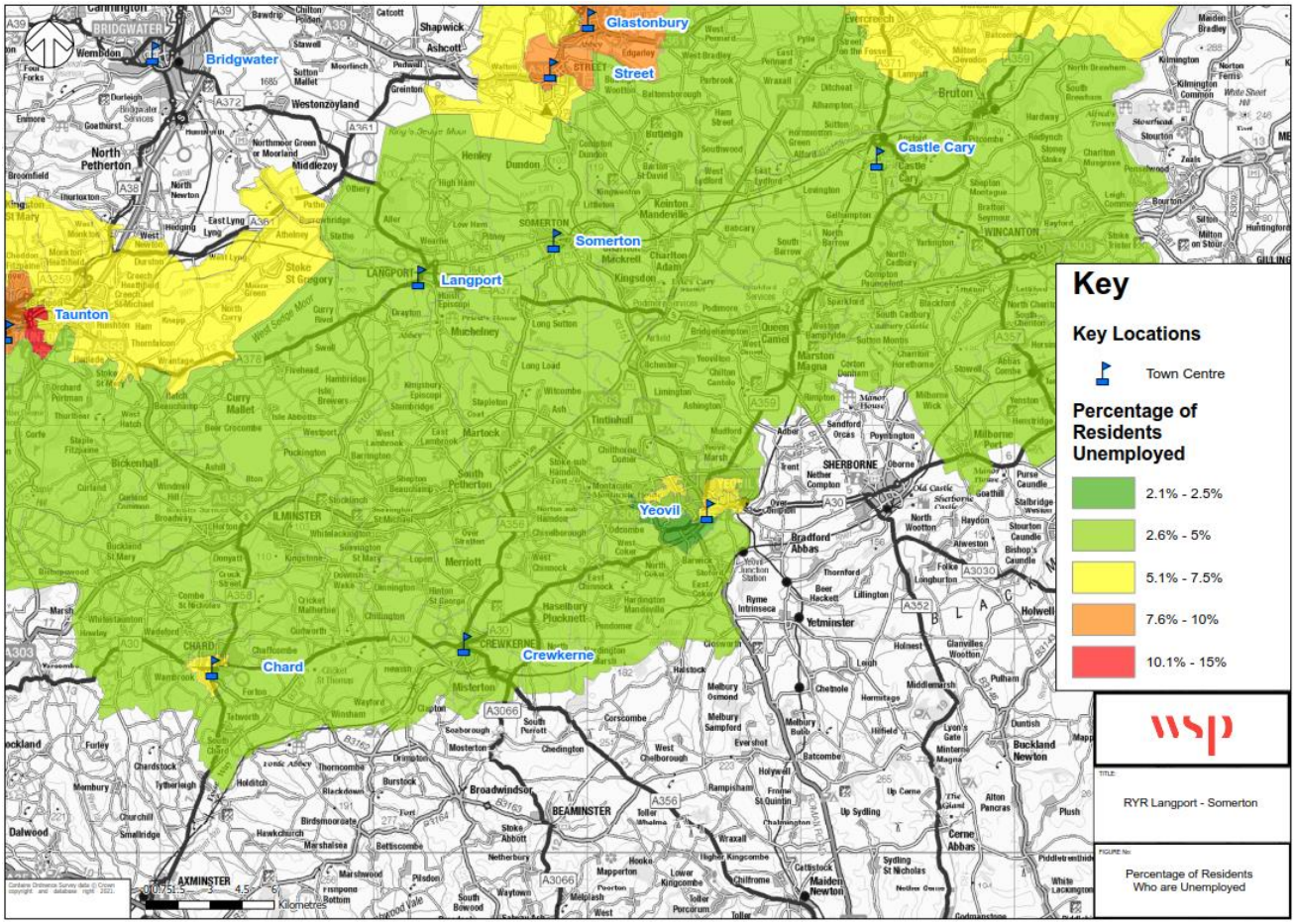


Figure 3.8: Residents who are Unemployed

3.2.25. As can be observed, the majority of the area's population are either in employment or in education. The exception to this can be found in the north of the study area, with 7-10% of the populations of Taunton, Street and Glastonbury unemployed at the time of the census.

3.2.26. It is therefore important to increase accessibility to and from these locations, to allow individuals to reach a greater range of employment opportunities and/or amenities, such as further training or for work.

3.2.27. Figure 3.9 shows the percentage of the population who are students.

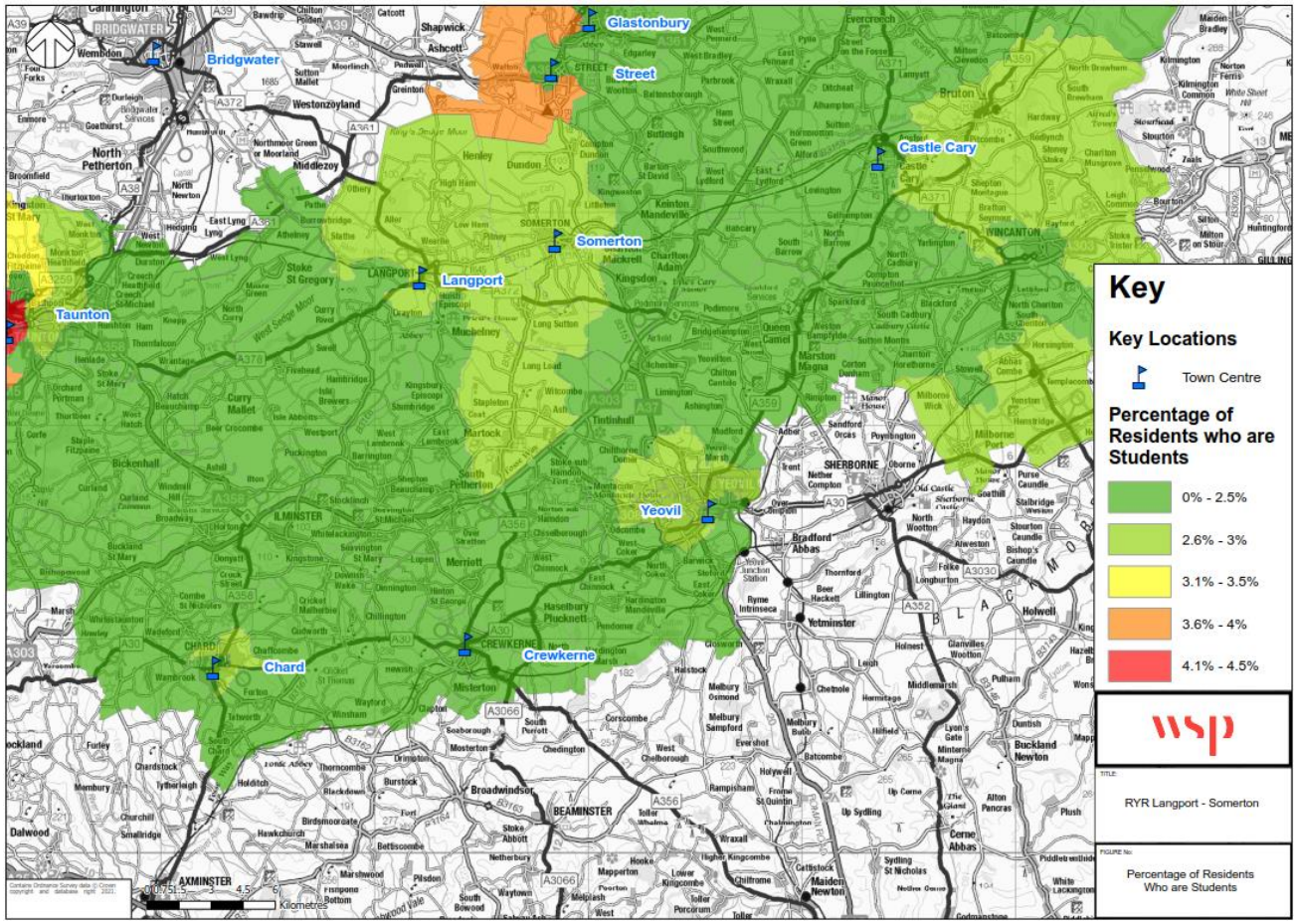


Figure 3.9: Residents who are Students

3.2.28. As illustrated in Figure 3.9, students make up less than 3% of the population across South Somerset. Langport and Somerton show 2.5-2.75% and 2.75%-3% of the population being students, with other 2.25-3% student populations being recorded in Chard and Yeovil.

3.2.29. The **challenge** here is to encourage access to continued education and hence provide access to study locations, such as those in the larger towns of Yeovil and Taunton.

3.3 LOCAL DEPRIVATION

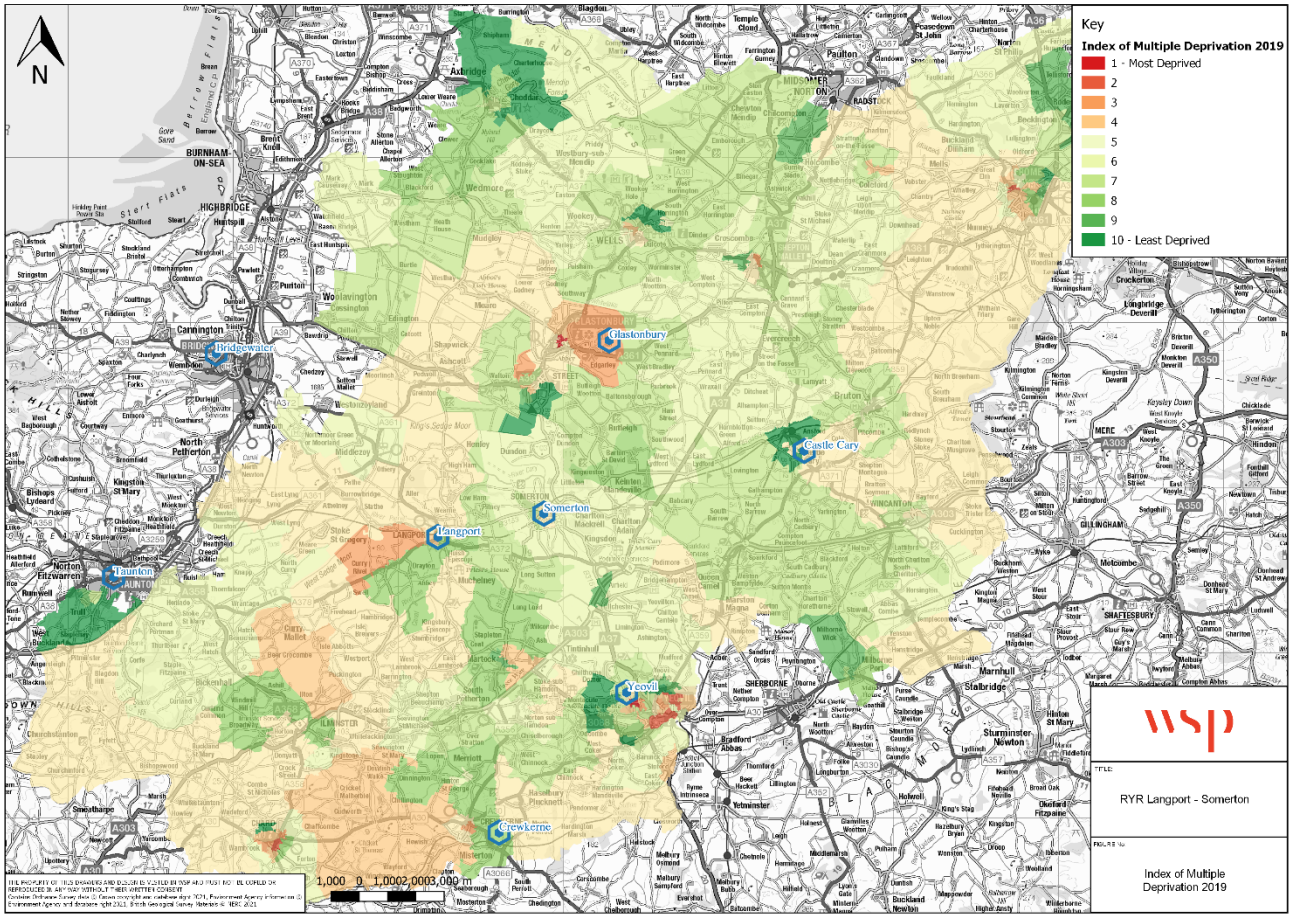


Figure 3.10: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in South Somerset & Mendip

3.3.1. The IMD data presented in Figure 3.10 shows that the majority of the study area is mid-tier in regard to deprivation, neither being in the least deprived nor most deprived categories. However, there are areas west of Langport and around Glastonbury which fall into the 30% most deprived, with one area close to the latter settlement being in the 10% most deprived.

3.3.2. On this basis, any option taken forward for further development should seek to improve accessibility to and from these areas particularly, to provide their residents with additional opportunities for further education, reaching key amenities and having a range of social and commercial choices.

3.4 TRAVEL PATTERNS

Overview

3.4.1. This section of the report utilises data from the National Travel Survey and the 2011 Census to analyse mode shares observed and key origin-destination movements respectively.

Key Movements

Introduction

3.4.2. Utilising Origin & Destination data gathered in the 2011 Census, this section identifies key movement flows originating or terminating within the study area. These subsequently form the basis of our analysis of locations where transport interventions should be focused to encourage sustainable travel.

3.4.3. The importance of inter-urban travel is emphasised by the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 which stated that 60% of Langport commuters travel to Yeovil, Taunton, and Somerton, whilst 60% of Somerton commuters travel outside of the town to the Mendip District and Yeovil. This is supported by the data presented in Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12.

Langport & Somerton

3.4.4. Figure 3.11 shows travel to work trips in the towns of Langport and Somerton.

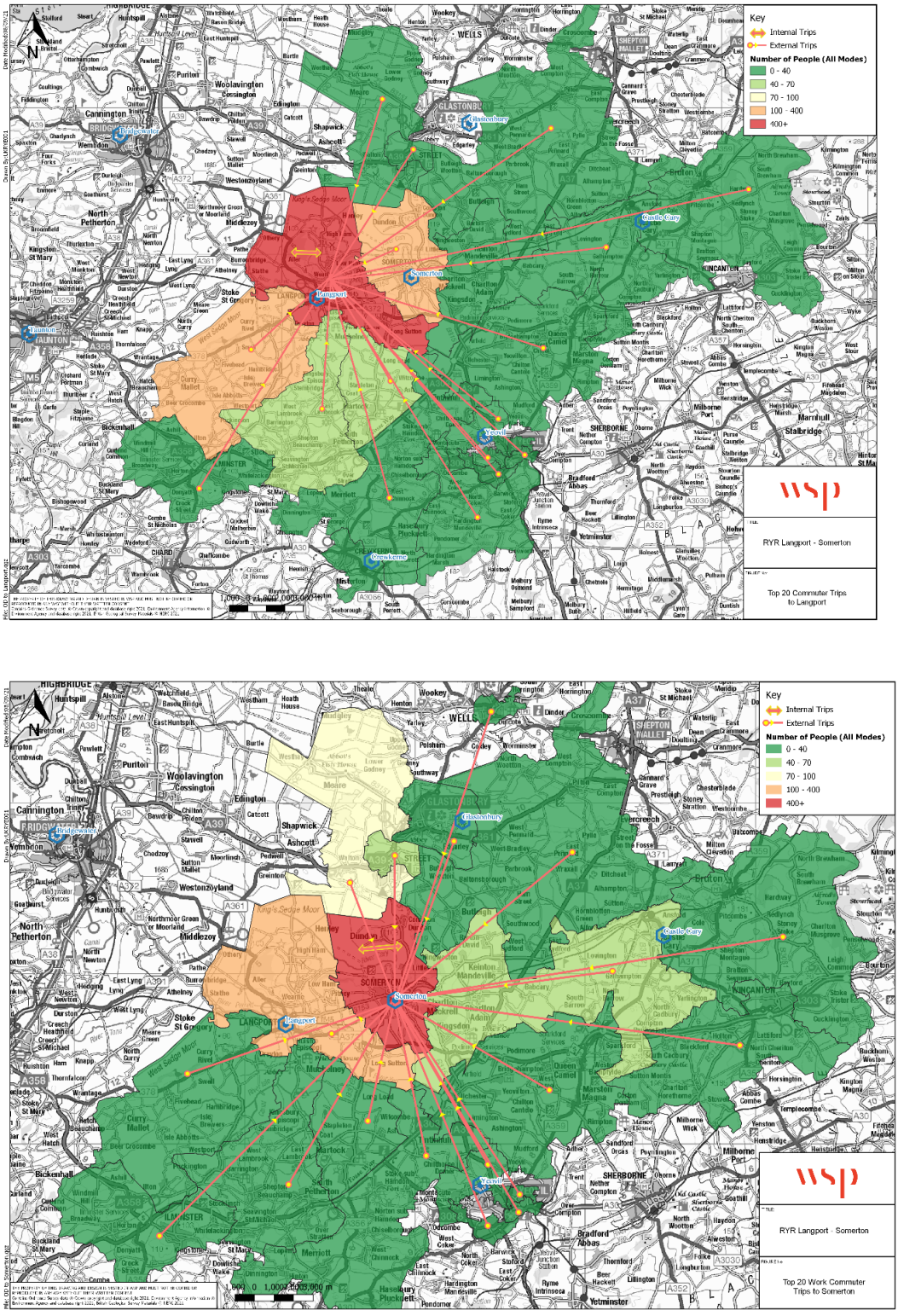


Figure 3.11: Travel to Work Trips to Langport & Somerton

3.4.5. As can be observed, a considerable proportion of trips to work in Langport and Somerton are internal to the two towns.

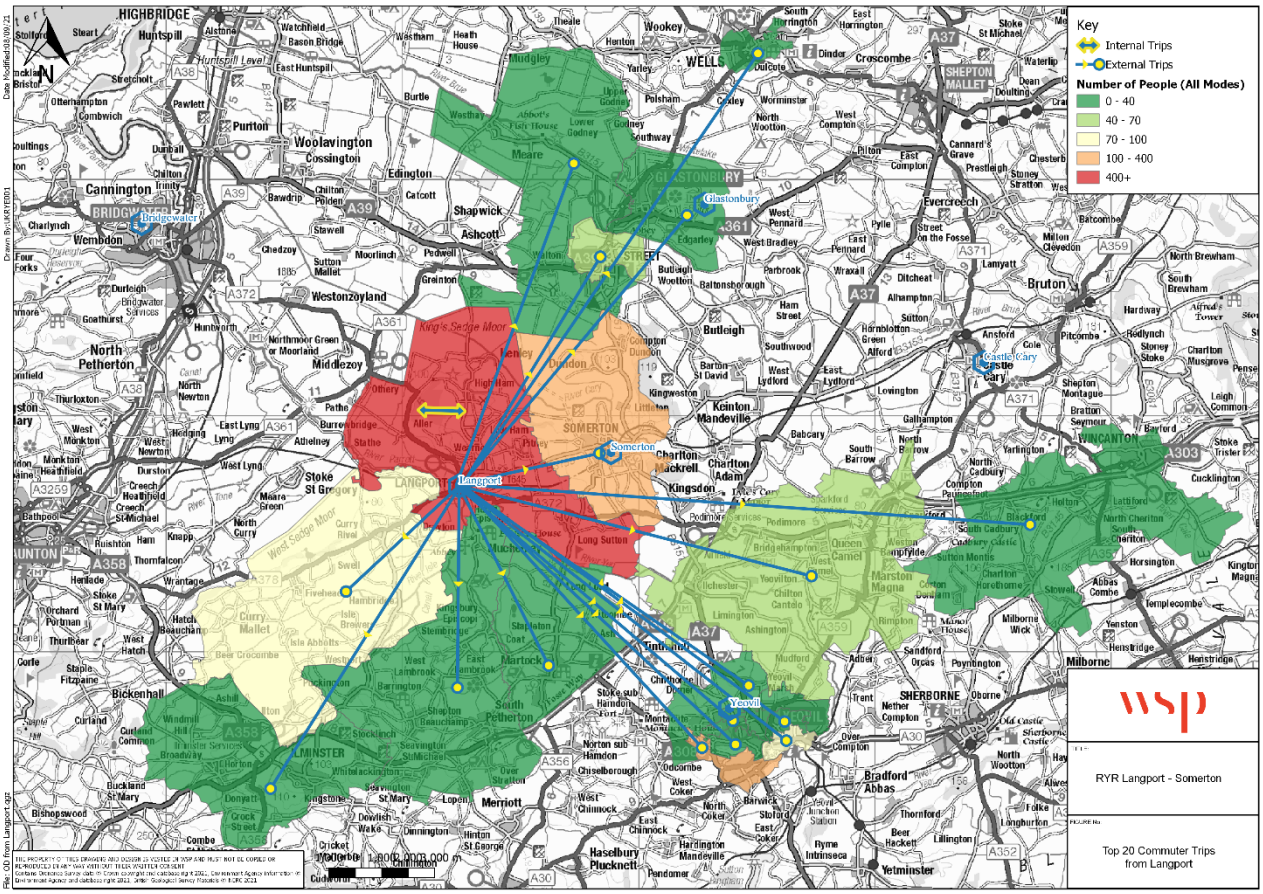
3.4.6. Outside of that, the primary origin of trips to Langport is the rural area to the southwest, including Drayton, Curry Rivel and Fivehead.

3.4.7. In regard to long distance trips, 2% originate in Castle Cary and 1% in Bruton, on the Great Western Mainline to the east of the study area. A further 1% originate in Taunton and 4% in Bridgwater, on the Great Western Mainline to the west and a change at Taunton, respectively.

3.4.8. In regard to Somerton, the primary trip origins after Langport are Street and Castle Cary. As set out elsewhere in this report, connections to the former by sustainable travel modes are poor, whilst the latter is remote from the network. As per Langport, there is also considerable trip generation from Yeovil and other locations in the south of the study area.

3.4.9. In regard to long distance trips, 4% originate in Castle Cary and a further 1% originate in Bruton.

3.4.10. Figure 3.12 shows trips travelling to work from the towns of Langport and Somerton.



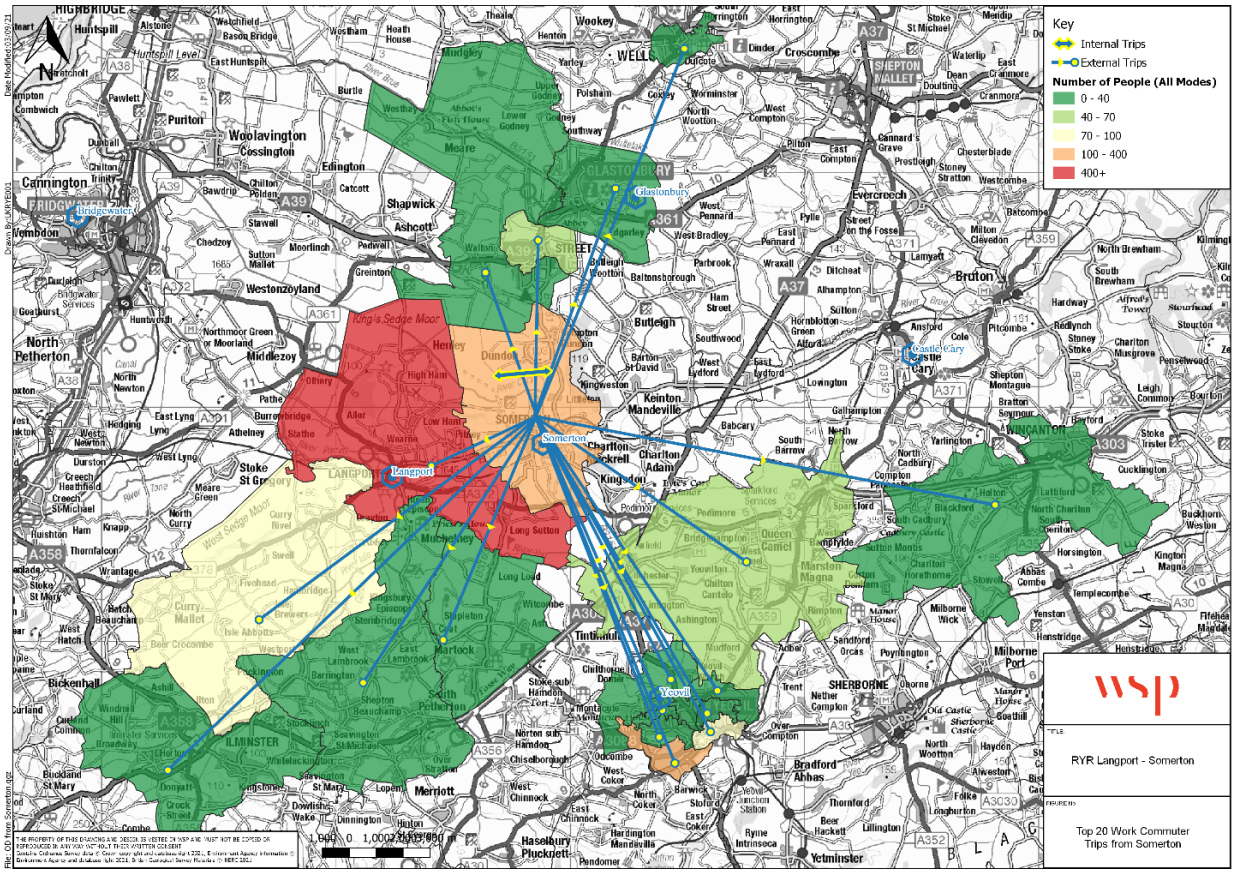


Figure 3.12: Travel to Work Trips from Langport & Somerton

3.4.11. The preceding figures indicate that the primary destinations for commuter from Langport and Somerton, outside of intra town movements, are Yeovil and Street. Langport also generates a considerable number of commuter movements towards Taunton, whilst Somerton also shows ties to Castle Cary.

3.4.12. Regarding trips outside of the South Somerset area, 8% of trips from Langport and 4% of trips from Somerton travel to Taunton, with a further 2% and 1% respectively travelling to Bridgwater. A further 3% of movements from Somerton travel to Castle Cary.

Wider Study Area

3.4.13. As set out in the introduction, Langport and Somerton are in the centre of an area that lack high quality public transport and would benefit from investment in the form of enhanced bus services or provision of a new station which would act as a railhead for the area.

3.4.14. Figure 3.13 shows trips travelling to work in the town of Glastonbury

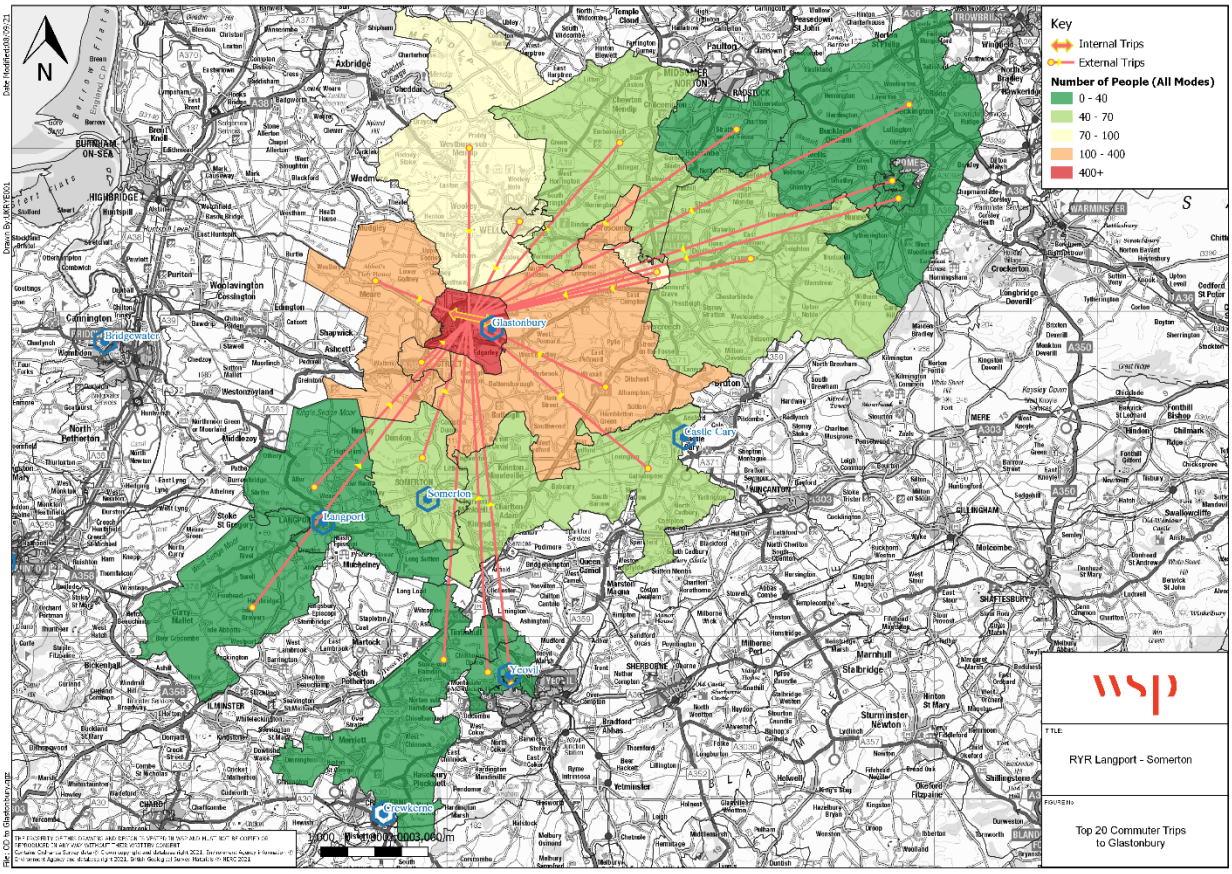


Figure 3.13: Travel to Work Trips to Glastonbury

3.4.15. Figure 3.13 shows that that the primary origins to TTW movements into Glastonbury are from Street, followed by the rural area to the town's east and then Wells and Shepton Mallet, the latter lying outside the study area. Whilst not being a primary movement, a connection is also shown with Langport and Somerton. There're also several longer distance movements to Taunton & Bruton, which form 4.3% and 0.7% movements respectively.

3.4.16. Figure 3.14 shows trips travelling to work from the town of Glastonbury.

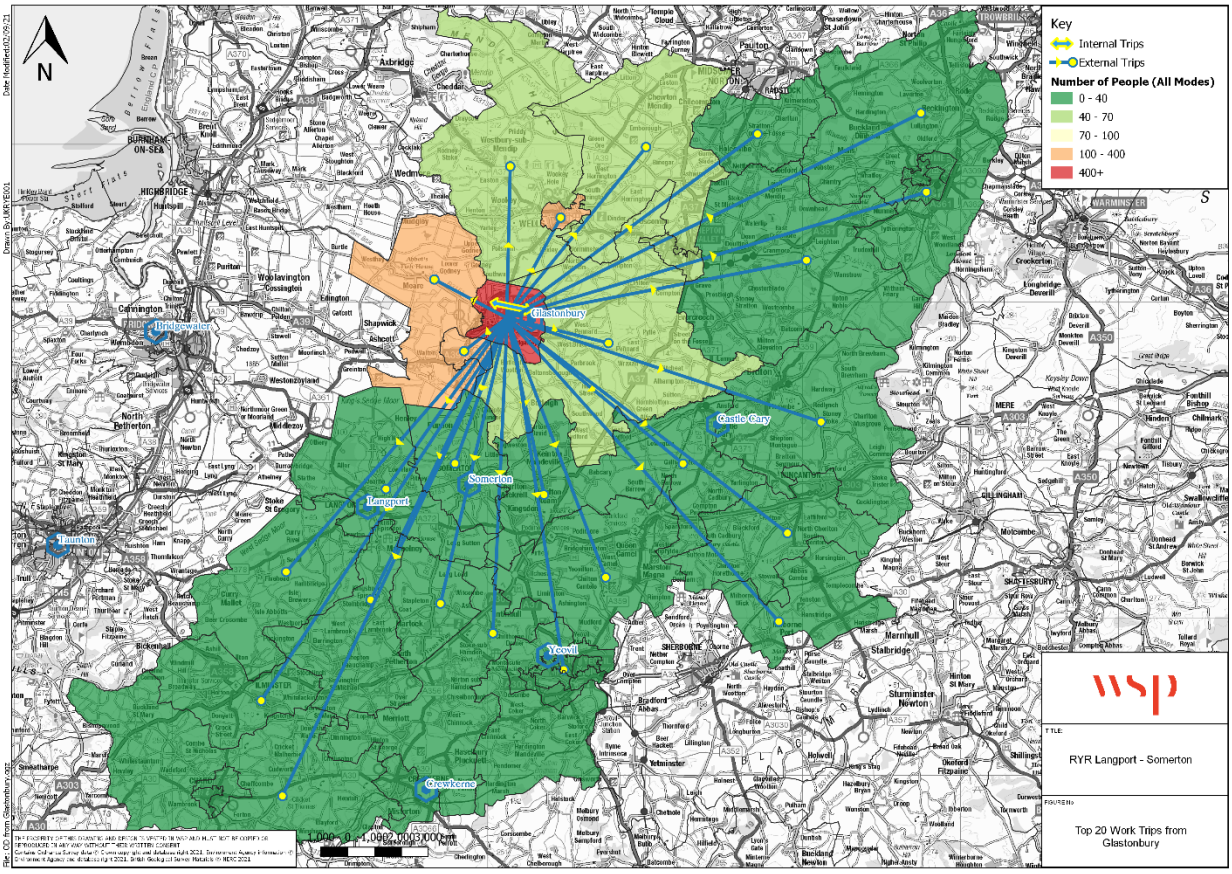


Figure 3.14: Travel to Work Trips from Glastonbury

3.4.17. Figure 3.14 is similar to Figure 3.13 in that it shows strong connections Glastonbury and Street, with the latter being the primary destination for trips from the former, followed by Wells and Shepton Mallet. There are also some movements into the study area of Langport and Somerton, as well as longer-distance trips into Taunton (2%), Castle Cary (1.8%) Yeovil (4.5%).

3.4.18. Figure 3.15 shows trips travelling to work from the town of Street

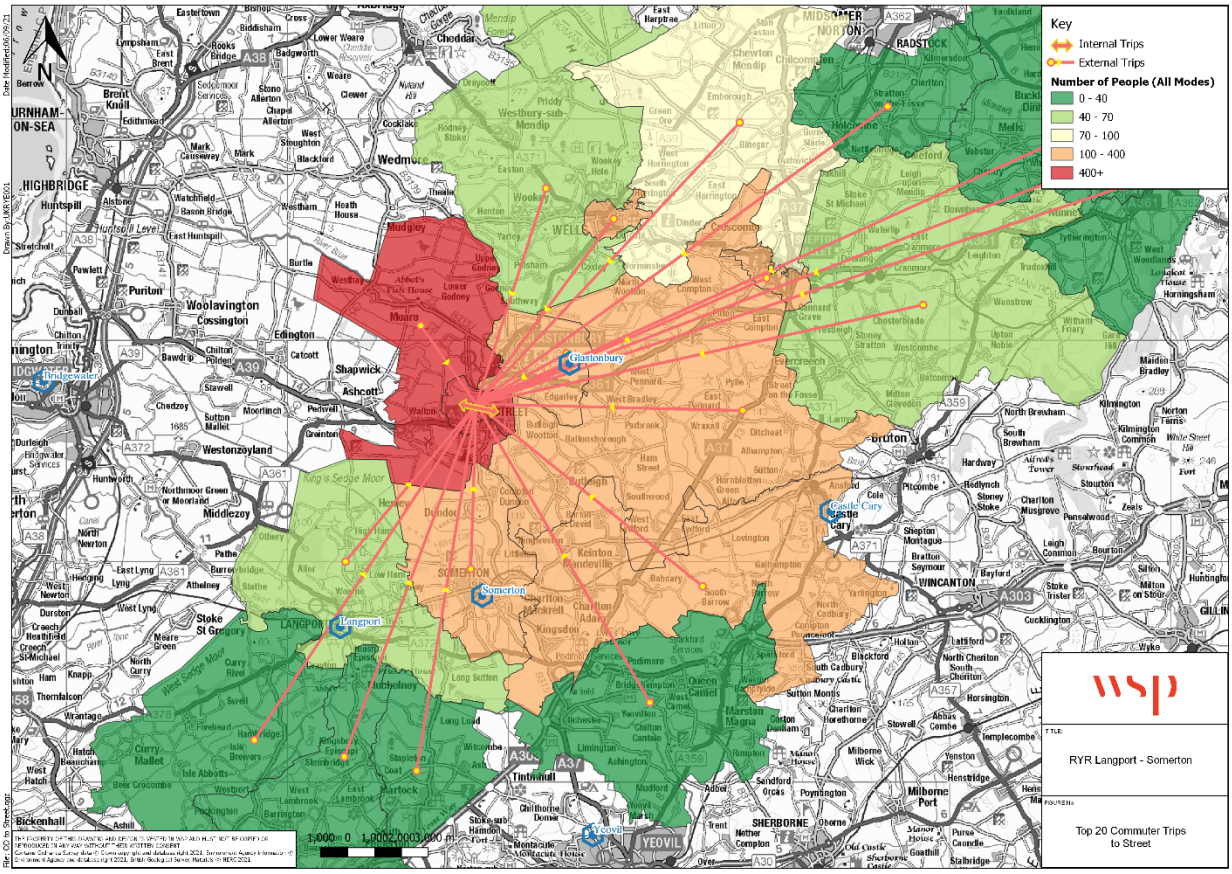


Figure 3.15: Travel to Work Trips to Street

3.4.19. As already discussed in the preceding Figures, Street has strong ties with Glastonbury in terms of travel to work trips attracted. The town also has strong ties to the study area, with a considerable number of trips originating in Somerton and Langport, the former in particular.

3.4.20. Regarding longer distance trips, there are also some commuters to Street from Castle Cary (7.4%) and Taunton (1%)

3.4.21. Figure 3.16 shows trips travelling to work in the town of Street.

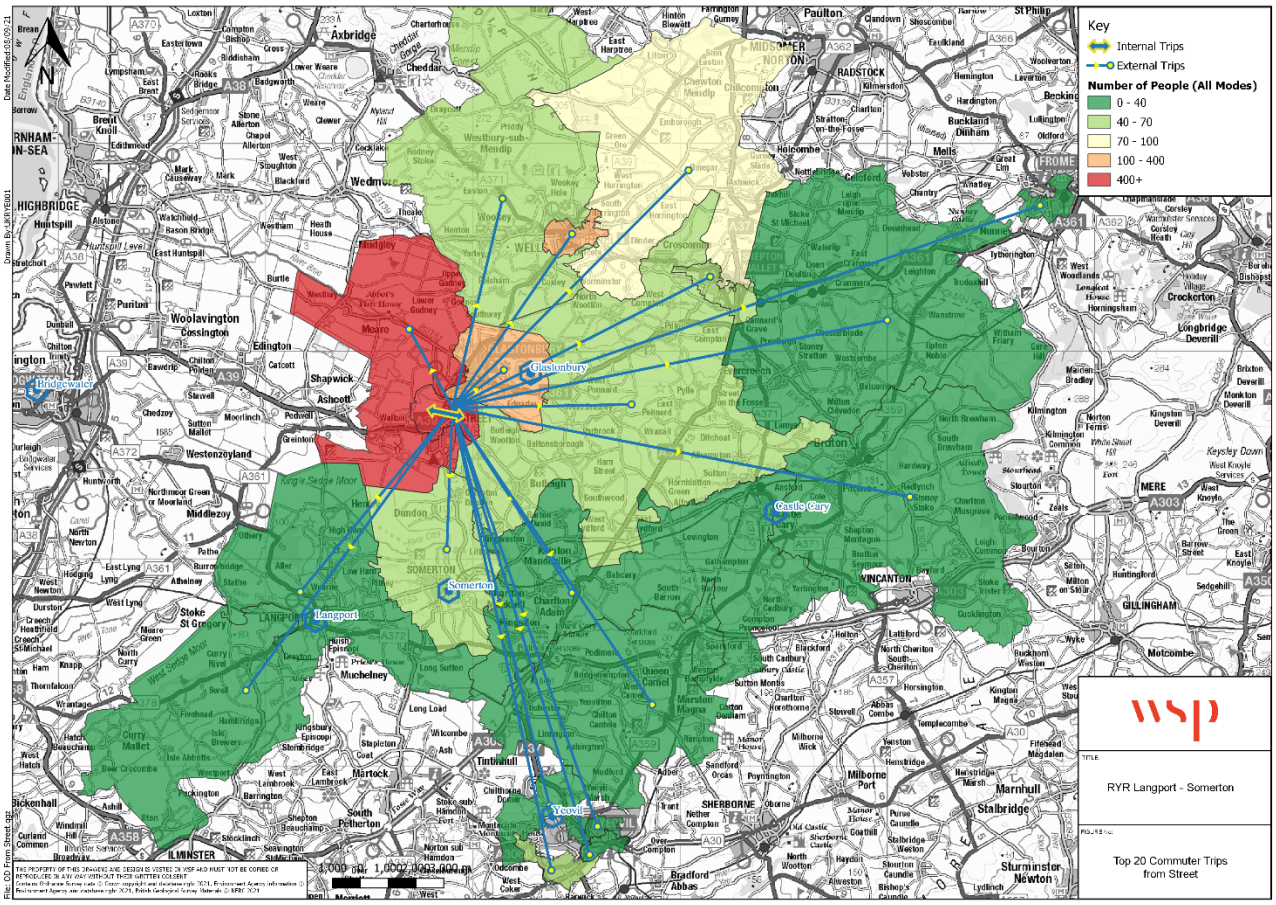


Figure 3.16: Travel to Work Trips from Street

3.4.22. Figure 3.16 shows that the primary destination for Street residents travelling outside of the town is Glastonbury. Other key destinations are Wells and Shepton Mallet.

3.4.23. There are also a considerable number of trips to locations within the study area, including Somerton, Taunton (3%) and Yeovil (6%).

3.4.24. Figure 3.17 shows trips travelling to work in the town of Curry Rivel.

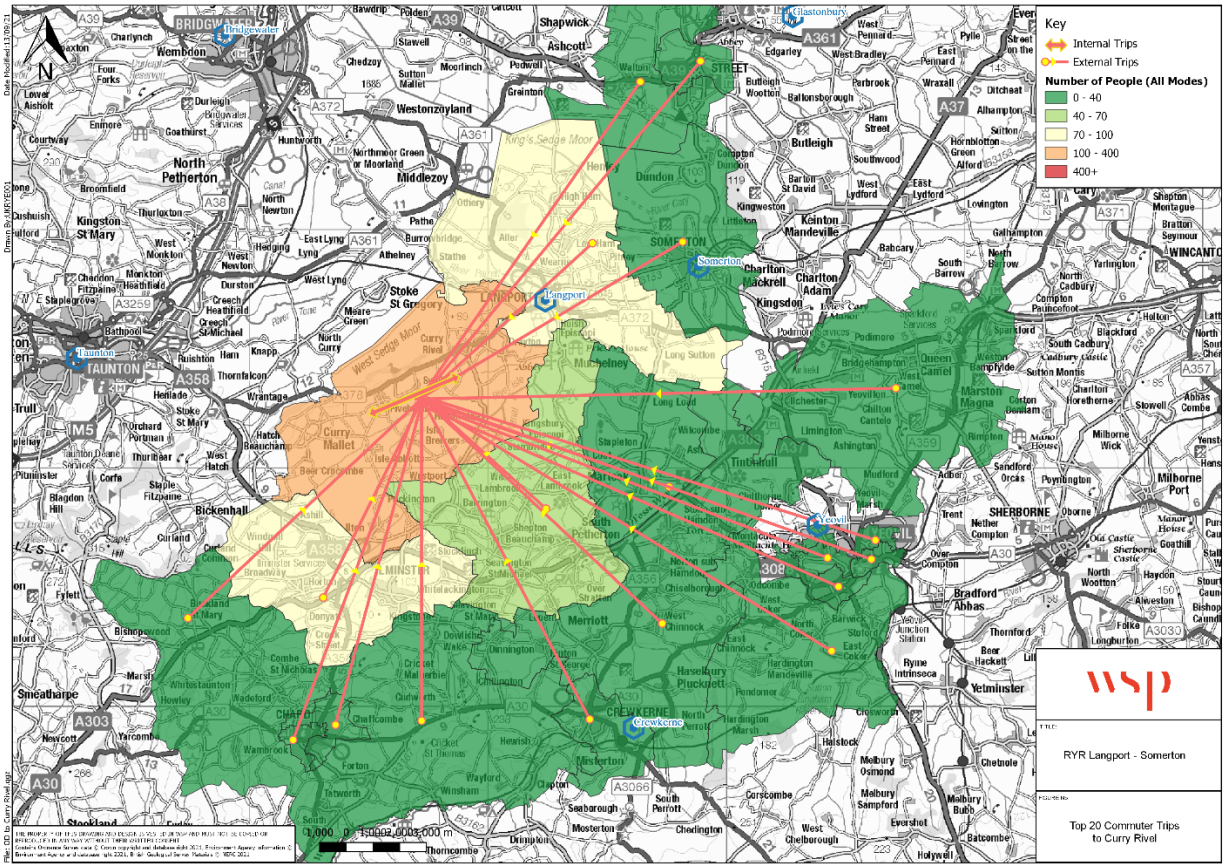


Figure 3.17: Travel to Work Trips to Curry Rivel

3.4.25. The primary origin of trips into Curry Rivel are Langport and Ilminster, though there are also considerable movements from Taunton (16%) and Yeovil (12%) to the town's west, south and south east respectively.

3.4.26. Figure 3.18 shows trips travelling to work from the town Curry Rivel.

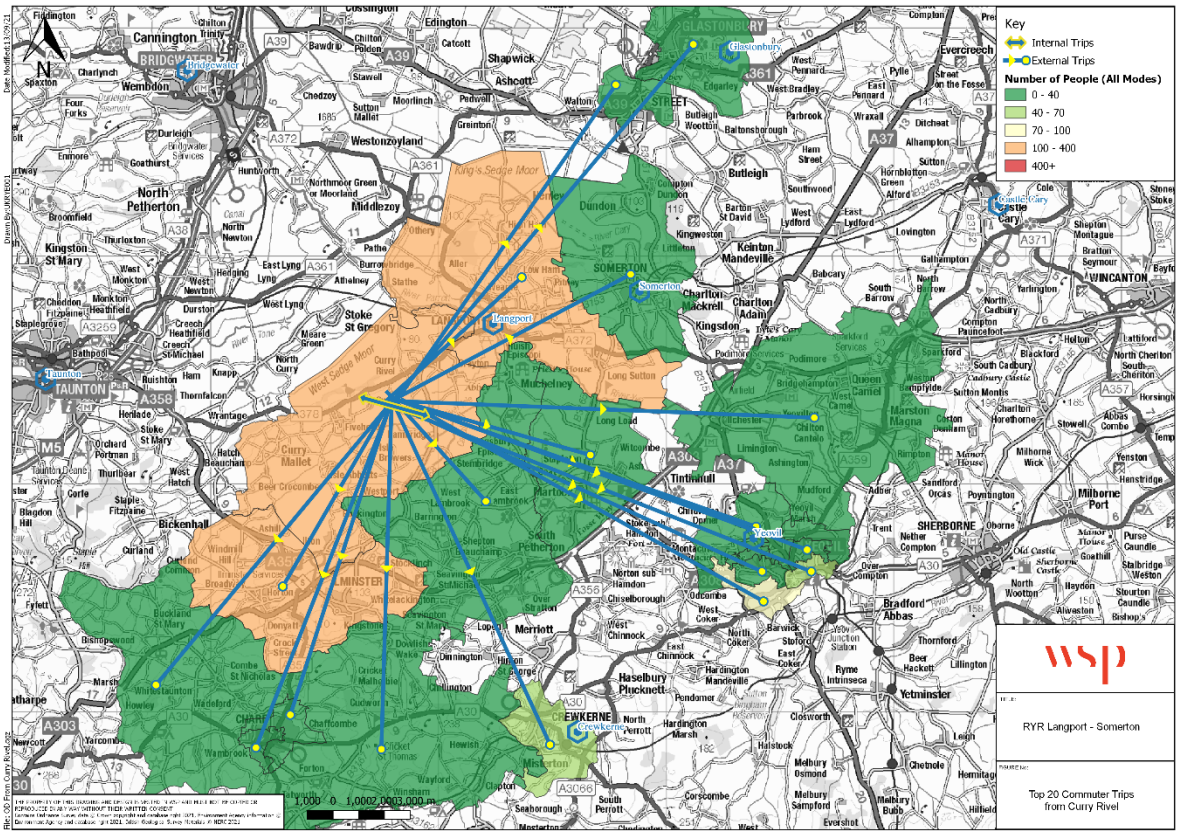


Figure 3.18: Travel to Work Trips from Curry Rivel

3.4.27. Movements from Curry Rivel are similar to those to the town discussed previously, reinforcing the strong tie to Langport, and strengthening the importance of Taunton (3%) and Yeovil (2%) to the town's employment.

Summary

3.4.28. From the travel to work origin and destination analysis, several key movement corridors can be identified within the study area. These include:

- Intra-town movements between Langport and Somerton;
- A wider west to east axis between Taunton and Yeovil via Langport and Somerton;
- A north to south axis from the hinterland south of Langport to Street via Langport and Somerton; and
- North and south to west, covering movements to Taunton from the hinterland area of Langport and Somerton.

3.4.29. The majority of these movements currently suffer from poor support by sustainable modes, with no railway services present[14] and the bus options, where available, being quite infrequent and with limited operational hours. Meanwhile, as set out in Section 3.5, there is reasonable highway infrastructure supporting all of the movements detailed above. As such, a **challenge** exists to improve regional sustainable transport accessibility to support both travel to work movements as those identified above and general inter-urban movements. This is considered further in Sections 3.6 and 3.7.

Mode Share

Regional Level

3.4.30. Figure 3.19 sets out the travel to work[15] mode share for the South Somerset District in comparison to Somerset County and the UK.

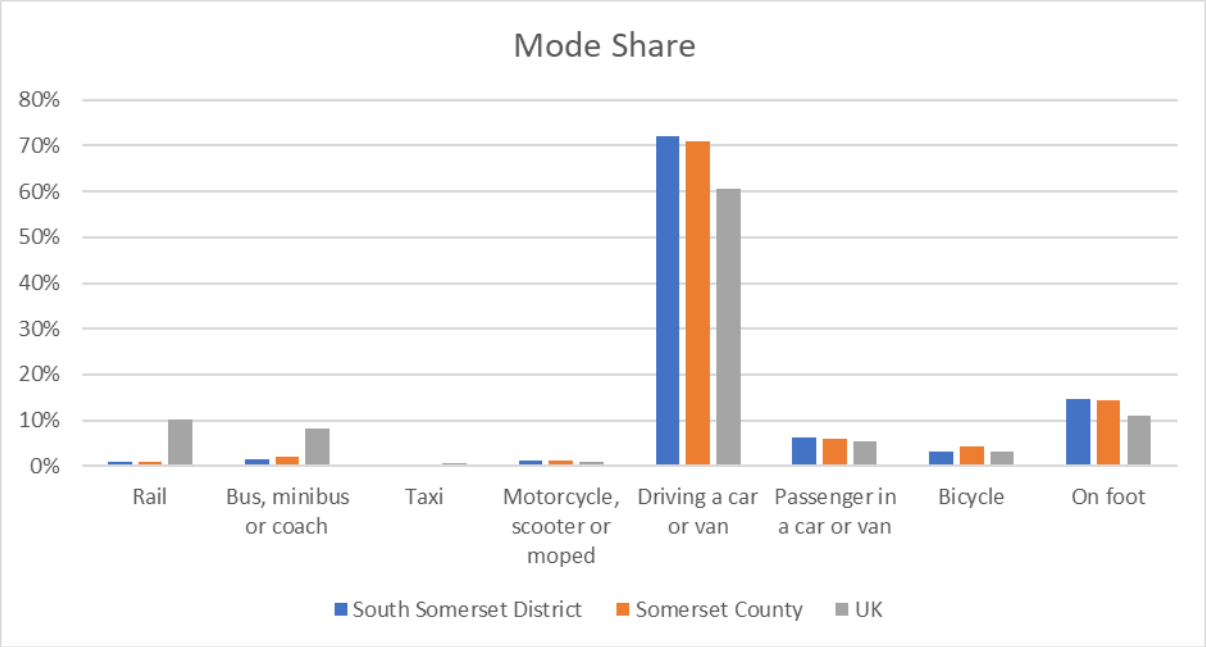


Figure 3.19: District, County & National Mode Shares

3.4.31. Figure 3.19 shows that Somerset, and South Somerset in particular, have a larger car mode share than the rest of the UK, particularly in regard to Car Drivers. This is mostly driven by a very low rail and bus mode share. In turn, as discussed in detail below, this is likely driven by much of the area being remote from railway access since the 1960s.

[14] Despite Glastonbury & Street and Wells once having their own stations, Langport & Somerton both having their own stations and a former direct line from Langport to Yeovil.
[15] For clarity, this has excluded the "Other" and "Working from Home" mode shares. The former doesn't allow any firm conclusions to be drawn, whilst the latter generates minimal transport impacts of relevance to this study.

3.4.32. South Somerset District does have a level of walking above the national level. From review of the movements above, this is likely due to Langport and Somerton being relatively isolated and therefore having a high proportion of internal trips suitable for walking access. Similarly, the bicycle mode share is slightly above the national average.

3.4.33. Therefore, the overarching challenges in the area are:

- Improving rail and bus usage and mode share.
- Maintaining and growing the existing above-average walking and cycling mode shares.
- Reducing the driving mode share to reduce congestion and carbon emissions.

MSOA Level

3.4.34. This section of the report reviews mode share information within the study area in comparison to the wider South Somerset area. Analysis has been undertaken at Mid Level Super Output Area (MSOA) level utilising data from the 2011 Census.

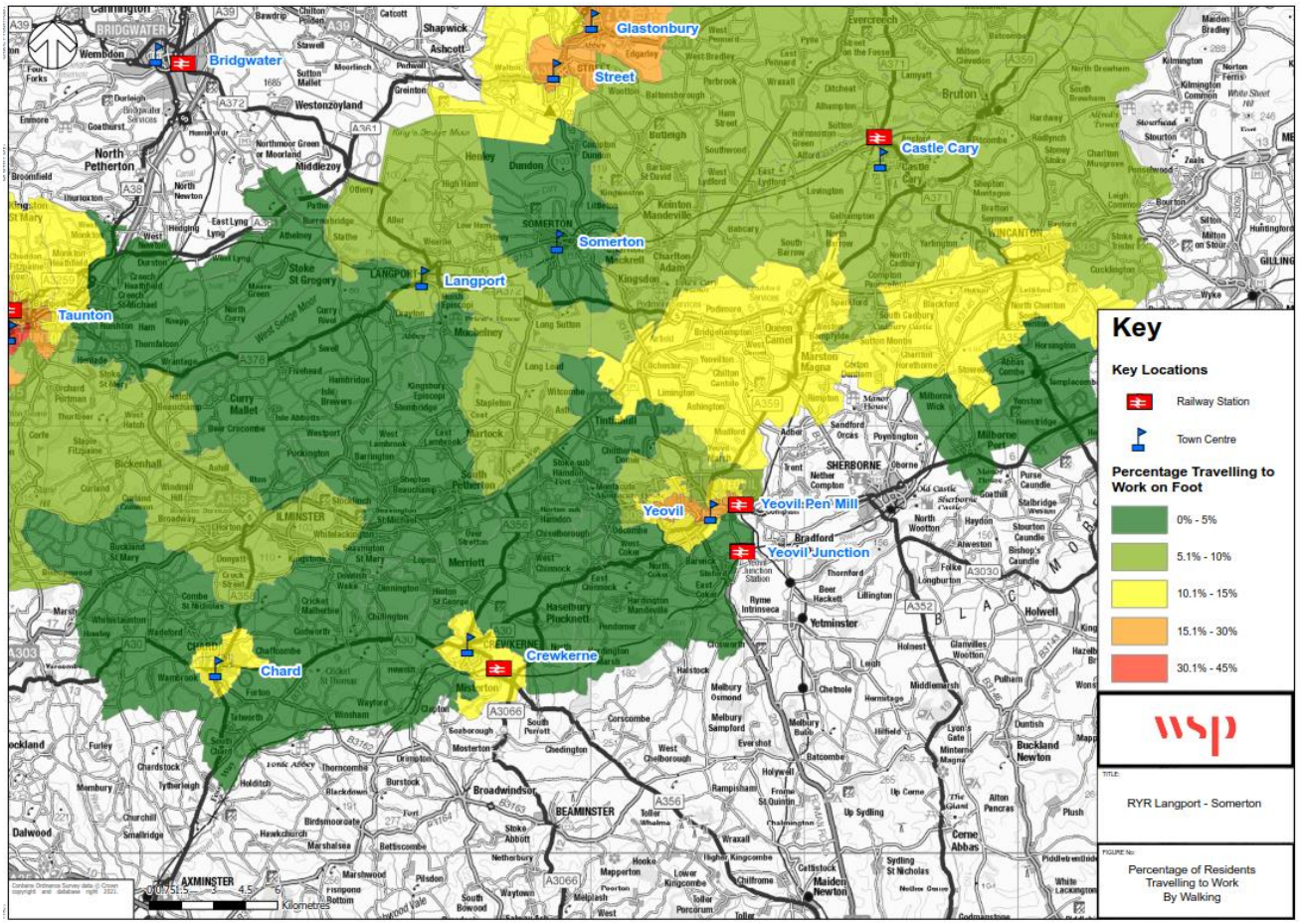


Figure 3.20: Percentage of the Population Travelling on Foot

3.4.35. Figure 3.20 shows that the portion of the population walking to work varies across the study area. In the more rural areas, there is generally a lower portion of the population walking to work, reflecting the lack of jobs currently in the smaller towns and villages. The areas with above-average walking mode shares are the more urban areas; Yeovil, Crewkerne, and Chard.

3.4.36. In Langport and Somerton, between 6 and 12% of the population walk, slightly below the national average and markedly below the average for Somerset and South Somerset.

3.4.37. Considering the number of trips internal to Langport and Somerton, discussed in relation to movement patterns, there is an evident **challenge** to increase the walking mode share for intra-town trips.

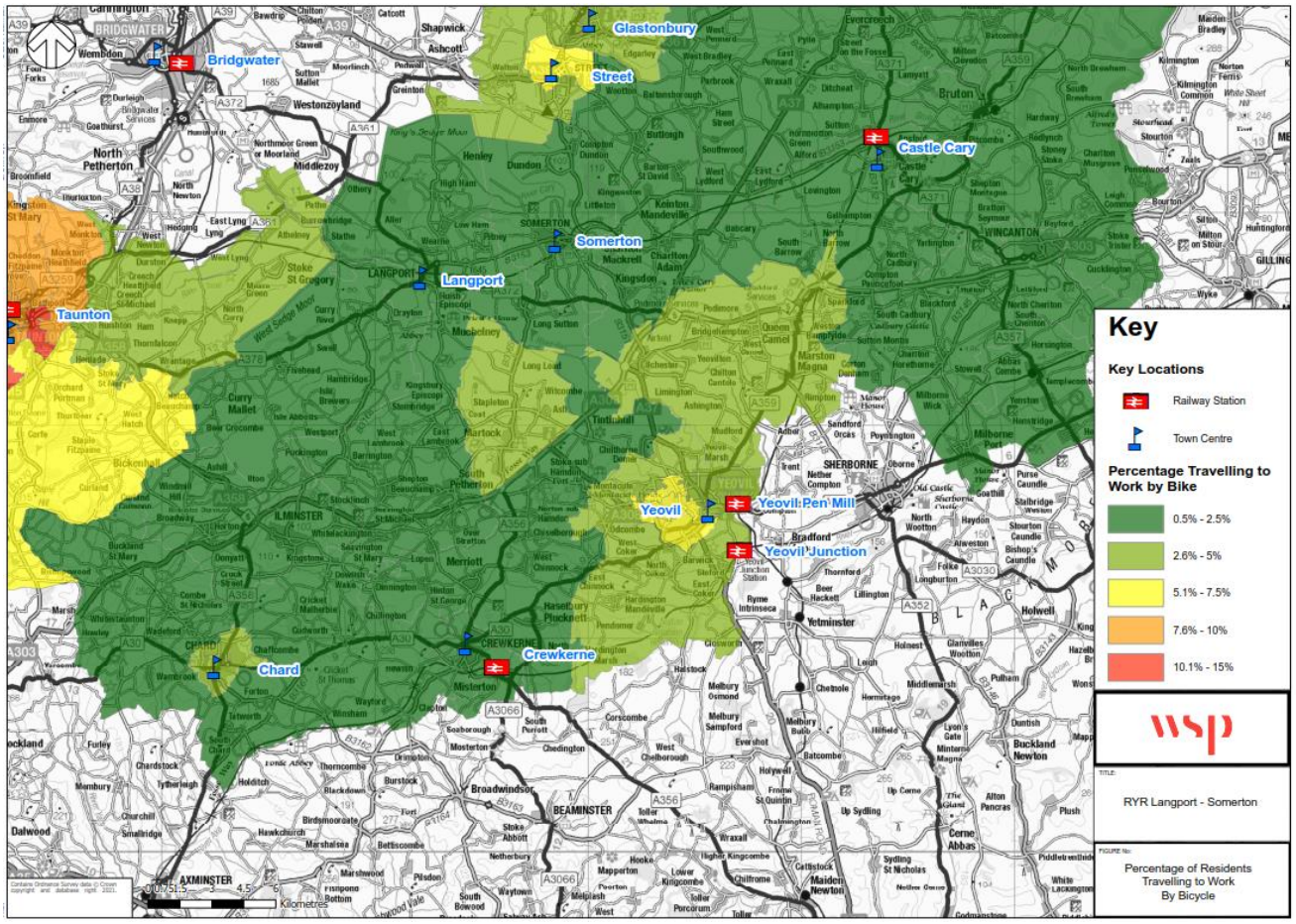


Figure 3.21: Percentage of the Population Travelling by Bike

3.4.38. Figure 3.21 shows the cycle mode share for travel to work trips within the study area. Whilst the area as a whole is slightly above the national average, this is predominantly focused on the periphery of the area, around Yeovil, Taunton, Glastonbury, and Street. Within the primary study area around Langport and Somerton, there is minimal cycle use, forming only 3% of trips.

3.4.39. As set out in regard to travel to work movements, there are a considerable number of trips between Langport and Somerton, a distance of circa 5 miles. This places the two towns within guideline cycle commute distances of each other. Therefore, a reasonable **challenge** is to increase the use of bikes as a travel to work method, as well as for other trips.

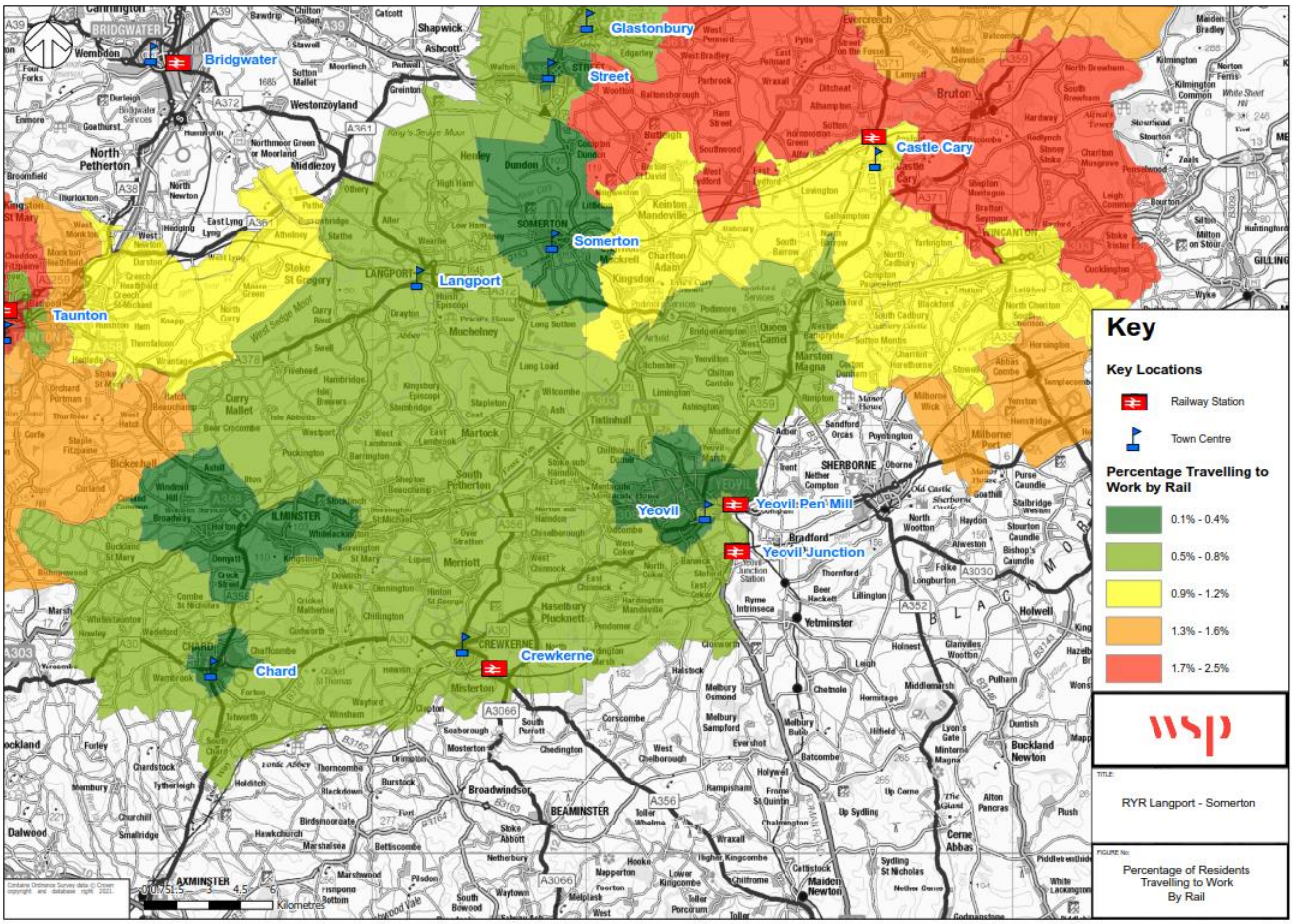


Figure 3.22: Percentage of the Population Travelling by Rail

3.4.40. Figure 3.22 shows the percentage of each MSOA's population who travels to work by rail. As can be observed, the whole study area has a below national average (3%) rail mode share, with the highest rail mode share recorded in the eastern areas around Castle Cary and in the western areas around Taunton. The lowest rail mode shares are within Somerton, which might be expected considering the town's distance from the railway network, and Yeovil. The latter is moderately surprising given the quality of the town's rail service as discussed later within this document. However, with the town functioning as a local centre, a considerable number of residents work within the town, which is reflected in the above-average mode share for walking and cycling observed previously.

3.4.41. The low mode share for rail in the area presents a **challenge** to encourage its increased usage for medium-long distance journeys.

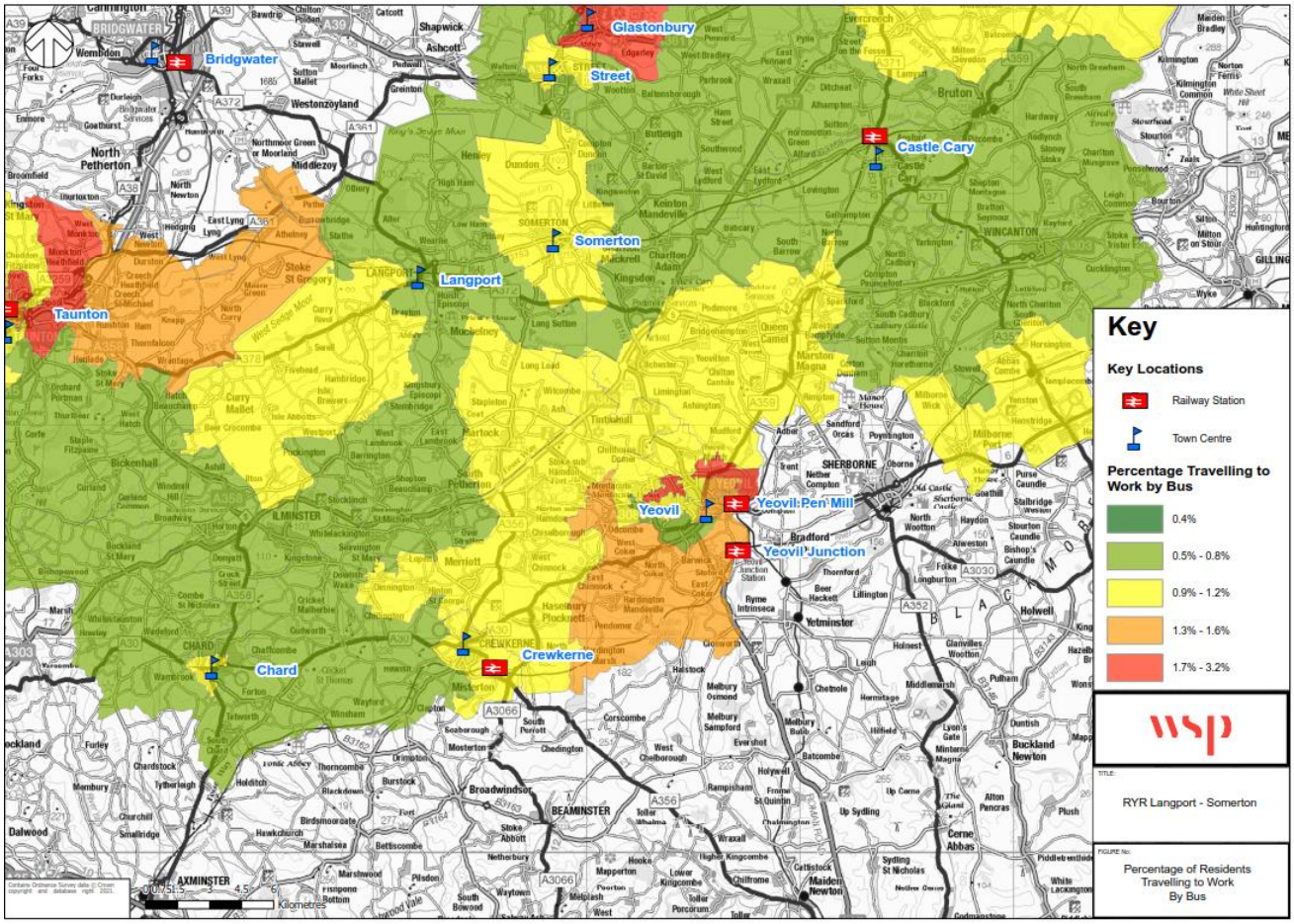


Figure 3.23: Percentage of the Population Travelling by Bus

3.4.42. Figure 3.23 sets out the mode share of the bus travel in the study area. As can be observed, bus is very much a minority mode share with below national average usage.

3.4.43. The primary concentrations of users are, again, around Taunton, Yeovil and Glastonbury presumably for trips into the towns. This also reflects the slightly better network coverage and frequency observed in these locations. The key towns of Langport and Somerton have very low bus usage of 1.5-2.1 % of Somerton's work travellers and 0.8-1.4% of Langport's.

3.4.44. This low usage share, in conjunction with the existing lack of high quality services set out subsequently, makes a case for bus improvements within the region to support key travel to work movements. This investment would also encourage increased bus use for other purposes as the improved service would benefit all.

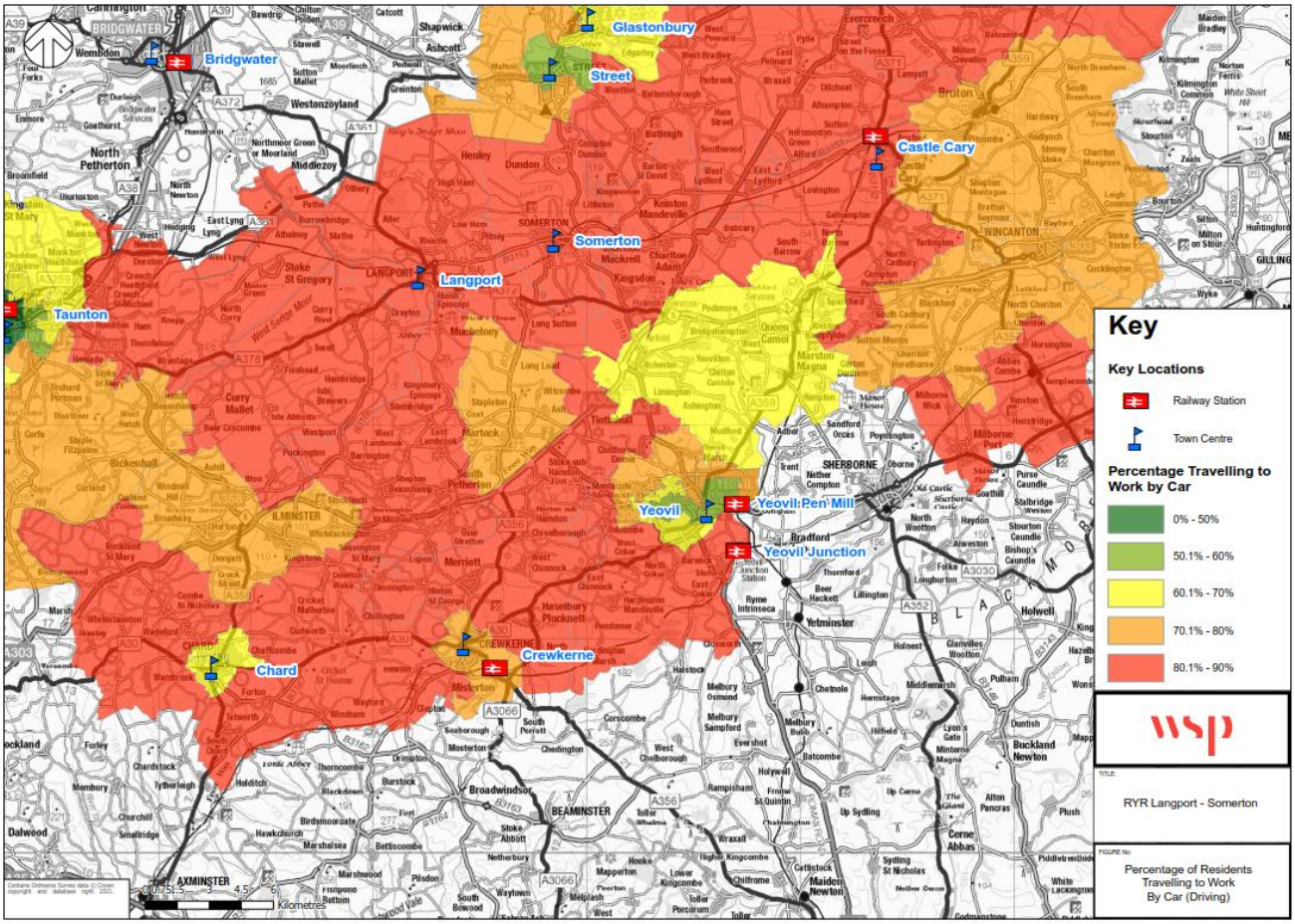


Figure 3.24: Percentage of the Population Travelling by Car

3.4.45. Figure 3.24 illustrates car mode share within the study area. As can be observed, car is the primary mode across the county, forming over 50% of people's trips. Even within the urban areas, car mode share is above national average, standing between 50 and 70% of trips. Within the core study area of Langport and Somerton, car mode share is even higher at 80-85% of trips.

3.4.46. The high car travel to work share is liable to have multiple negative implications for the District. These include increased congestion and pollution on road corridors, as well health impacts from both emissions and from lack of activity. Therefore, there is a **challenge** for any proposed option to reduce car mode share within the district.

Conclusions

3.4.47. Through analysis of the preceding figures, it is evident that the district's travel to work movements is currently dominated by the private car. Whilst walking and cycling are well used in the more developed areas, exceeding the national average, longer distance trips are car dominated, with bus and rail having very small mode shares.

3.4.48. On this basis, the key **challenges** rising from mode share analysis are:

- Maintaining and developing the use of walking and cycling within towns.
- Improving the bus and rail network to encourage sustainable transport use on longer distance trips.

3.5 HIGHWAY NETWORK

Current Network

3.5.1. Figure 3.25: Highway Network shows the current highway network within the study area and surrounding districts.

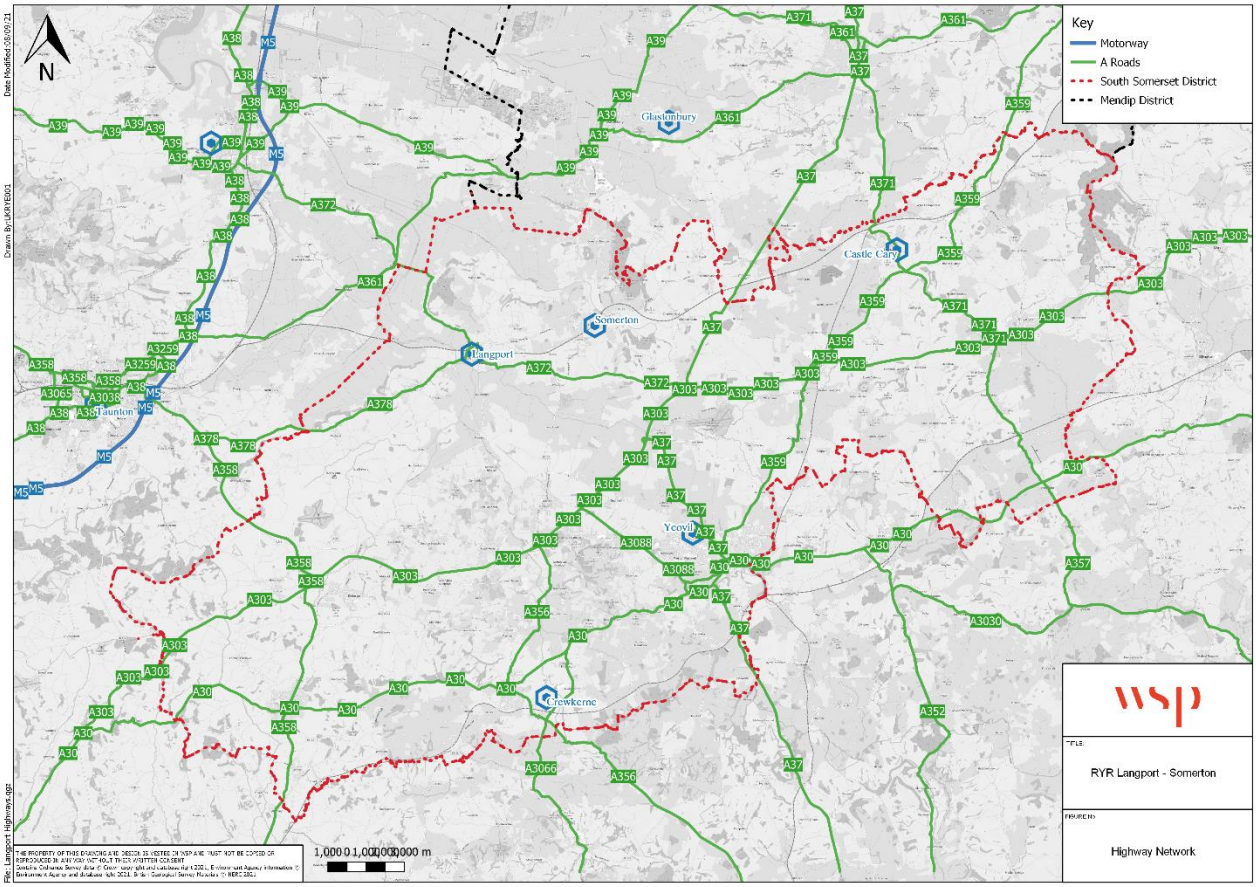


Figure 3.25: Highway Network

3.5.2. The primary roads within the study area are the A372 and A378. Other key links are the A303/A37, A358 and M5.

3.5.3. The A372 connects Bridgwater and Podimore, passing through the centre Langport and to the south of Somerton. This road is single carriageway for the majority of its length and passes through several built-up areas aside from Langport, including Combe, Huish Episcopi, and Pibsbury.

3.5.4. The A378 diverges from the A372 at Langport and continues west until intersecting with the A358. Similar to the A372, this route passes through the centre of several communities, the most notable of which is Curry Rivel. This route is single carriageway for the majority of its length.

3.5.5. Based on the route passing through several settlements, there is a **challenge** to reduce the usage of these corridors and reduce the impacts of traffic on these residents, particularly in Langport where the two corridors intersect.

3.5.6. The A358 is in the west of the study area, providing connections to Taunton. This corridor is currently single carriageway but, as detailed further later in this chapter, Highways England is currently intending to dual the section between the study area and the town. This route provides one of the key strategic connections within the study area, both with its connection into the regional centre of Taunton and to the M5 strategic route. This latter corridor provides connections to a considerable number of larger settlements, including Exeter to the south and Bristol to the North. As discussed elsewhere within this document, residents are liable to need to access these centres for further education and other amenities not available in the study area.

3.5.7. As this strategic access is one of the key drivers for traffic on the A378 and A372, there is a **challenge** regarding the provision of alternative means of access to these amenities which do not require use of the private car.

3.5.8. The eastern end of the A372 connects with the A303 which provides strategic connections to the wider highway network. Most importantly for the study area, it provides links to the A37 and thence Yeovil, which is a key regional centre. One **challenge** regarding this route is that there are several PIC clusters on the route, as well as the AADT data showing increasing traffic. Any option taken forward should, therefore, seek to relieve traffic on these routes. In regard to the non-car modes, this PIC and traffic volume relief would come through modal shift, replacing car trips with bus, rail, walking and cycling movements, depending on the intervention selected.

Personal Injury Collisions (PICs)

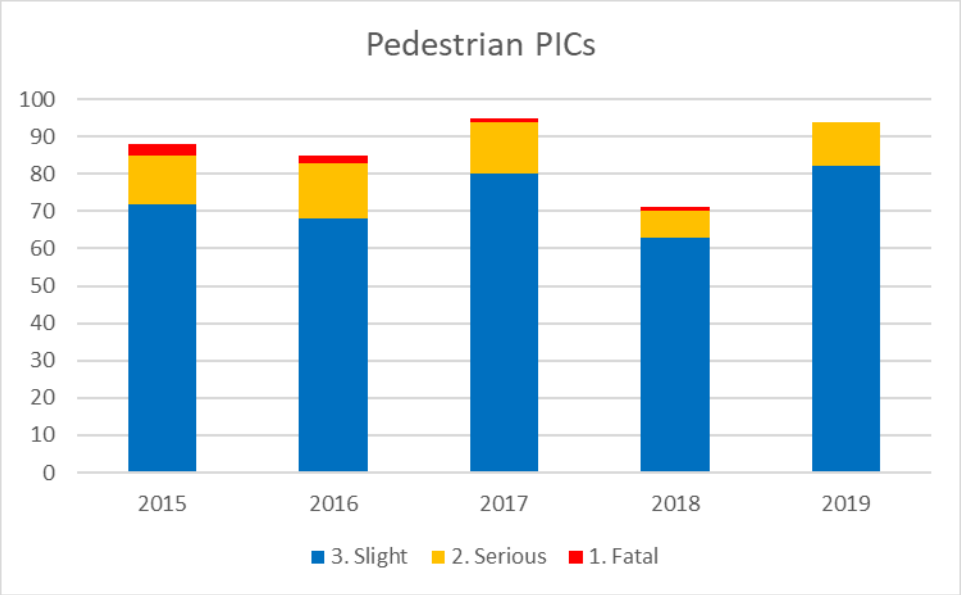


Figure 3.26: PICs in Study Area

3.5.9. Figure *3.26* sets out the trend in Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) between 2015 and 2019. As can be observed, PIC occurrences have been relatively stable year-on-year, though there has been a slight decline in the proportion of Serious and Fatal incidents.

3.5.10. This raises two **challenges**. Firstly, to maintain the trend towards reducing Serious and Fatal PIC occurrences. Secondly, to deliver a long term reduction in the overall number of PICs.

3.5.11. Figure 3.27 shows PICs which have occurred in the study area between 2015 and 2019.

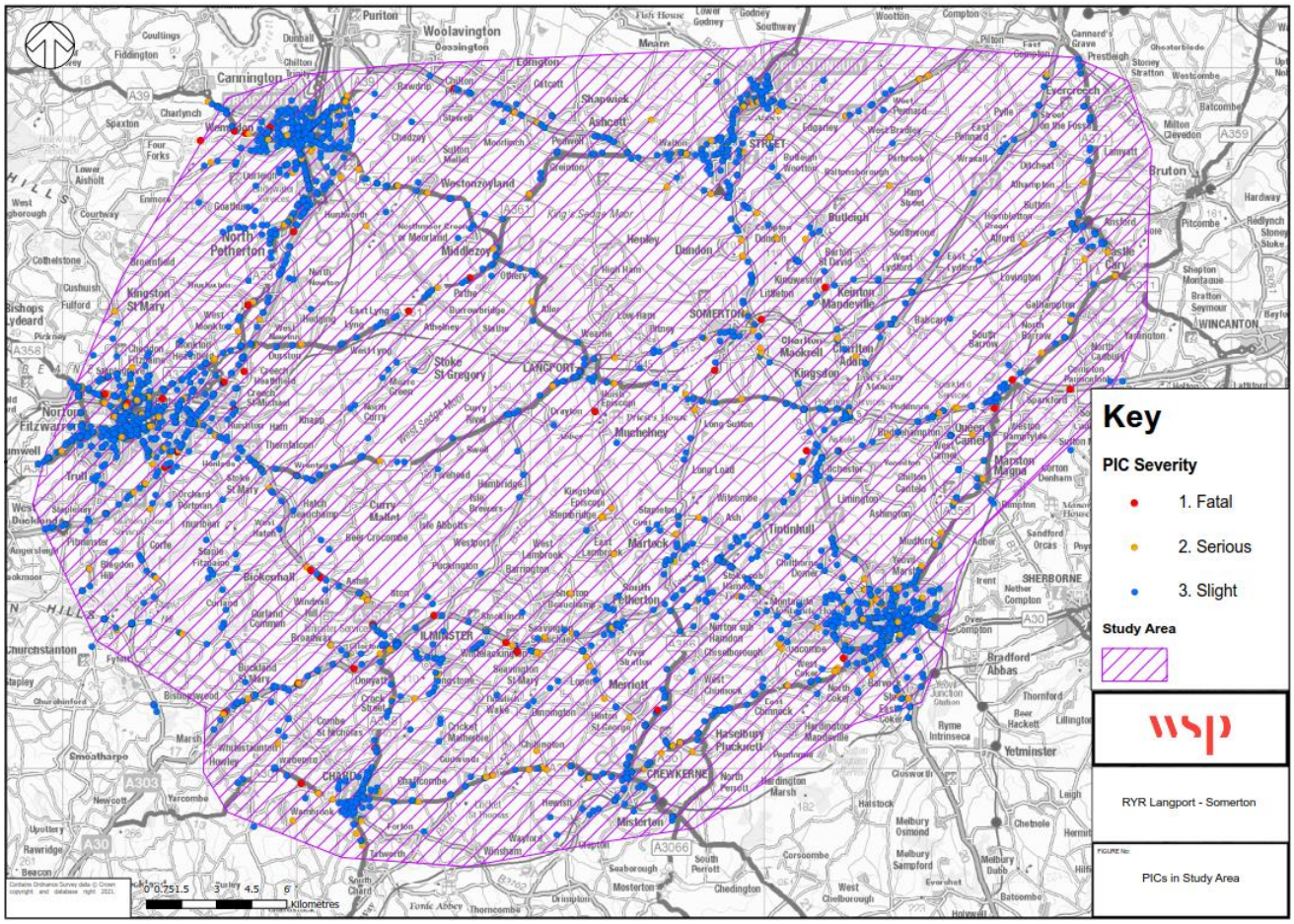


Figure 3.27: PICs in Langport & Somerton

3.5.12. Figure 3.27 shows a considerable concentration of PICs in and around the west of Somerton, as well as on the links between Langport & Somerton. This presents a **challenge** for any forthcoming issue to provide mitigation for this issue.

3.5.13. There are also PIC clusters west of Langport, on the route towards Taunton, and on the B131 east of Somerton. These incidents will be driven by travellers between Street, Glastonbury, Somerton and Yeovil. There is, therefore, a **challenge** to encourage a reduction in car traffic on this link to mitigate this PIC cluster.

Traffic Flow Trends

3.5.14. The DfT records Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) data on key corridors around the UK network.

3.5.15. Figure 3.28 sets out the changes in traffic flow recorded between 2014 and 2019 at locations in the study area surrounding Langport and Somerton.

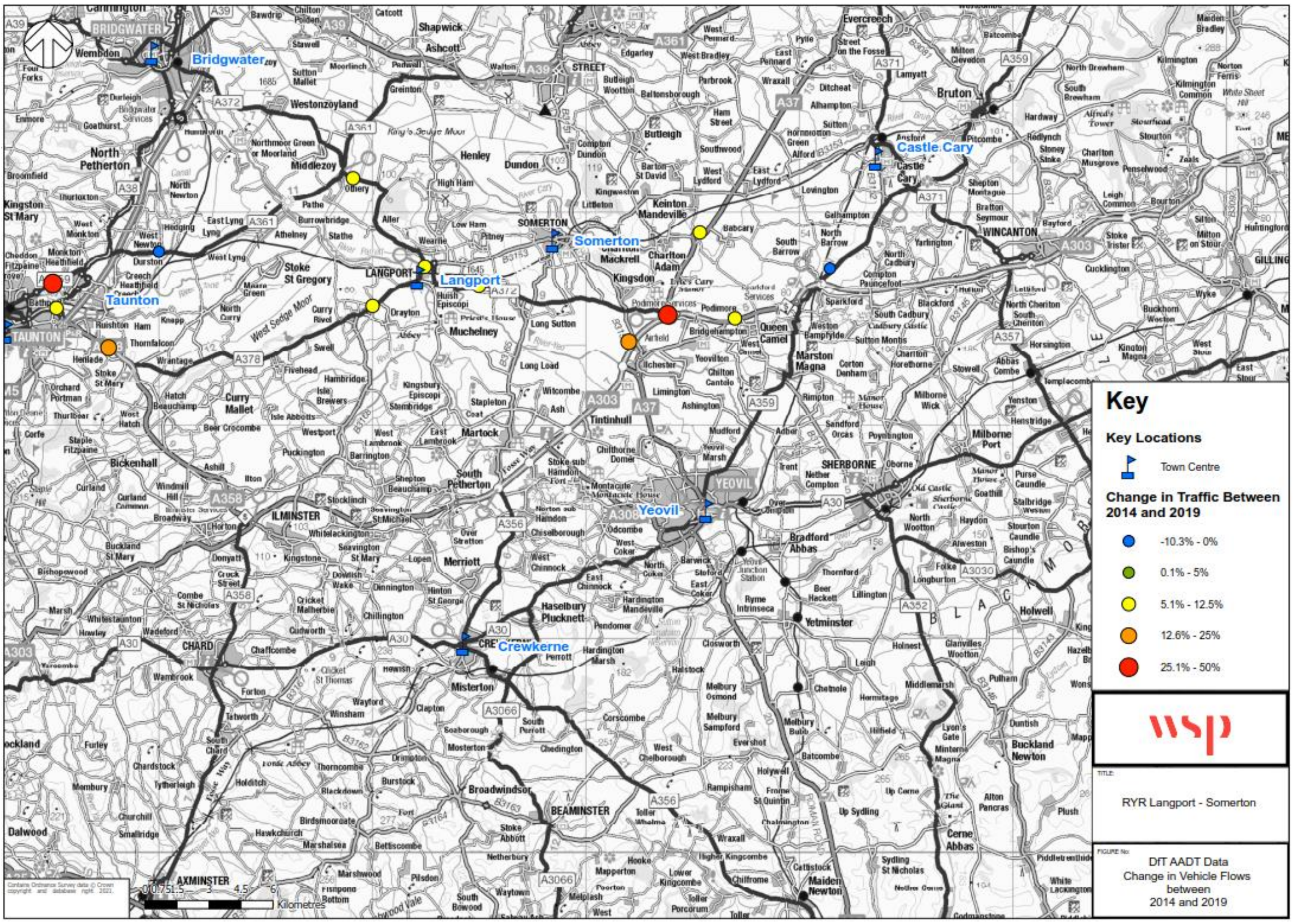


Figure 3.28: AADT Between 2014 and 2019

3.5.16. As can be observed, all routes between Langport & Somerton and the wider area show increases in traffic flow, particularly on the A3259 approaching Taunton from the northeast and the A303 travelling east from Langport and Somerton.

3.5.17. There are also marked increases on the A358 approaching Taunton from the southeast and the A303 south of Somerton.

3.5.18. The only exceptions to the overall increase in traffic are on the A361 northeast of Taunton and the A371 southwest of Castle Cary. The former is somewhat offset by an increase in traffic east of Taunton on the A358, as aforementioned. The latter is also partially offset by the increase on the parallel A37.

3.5.19. For consideration of longer term trends, Figure 3.29 sets out flows between 2000 and 2019.

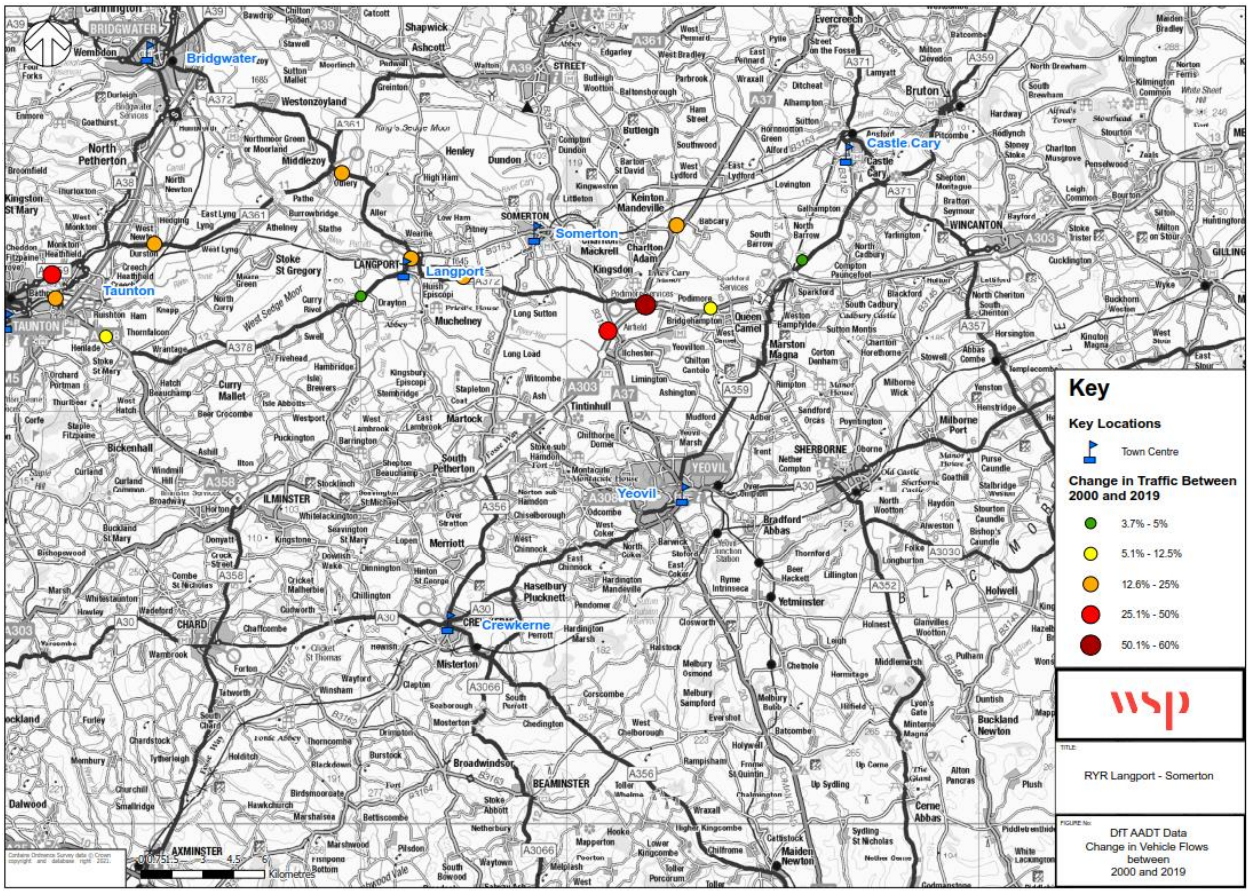


Figure 3.29: AADT Between 2000 and 2019

3.5.20. Figure 3.29 shows that the increase in traffic between 2014 and 2019 reflects a wider trend in increasing traffic flows, particularly at the locations between the study area and Taunton and to the south of Somerton. The two locations which showed a slight decrease from 2014 and 2019 show a long term increase between 2000 and 2019, most markedly the A361 where a short term decrease of less than 10% is offset by an increase of 12.5-25% long term.

3.5.21. The trends shown in the preceding maps establish provide evidence that one of the **challenges** facing the area stems from increasing road traffic on key roads. Should the trend towards increasing traffic continue, there will be increased pollution and CO2 emissions impacting communities living alongside the roads, as well as economic impacts stemming from less reliable journey time and subsequently reduced access to amenities and employment opportunities.

Proposed Investments

3.5.22. This section of the OAR considers what investments have already been confirmed which might impact the highway network and potentially offset the aforementioned trend towards increasing traffic volumes.

Somerset

3.5.23. In their role as the local Highways Authority, Somerset County Council are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the road network within the study area beyond those operated at a national level by National Highways.

3.5.24. Reviewing information provided on their website, no strategic investment is scheduled within the study area over the next five years. Review of the Travel Somerset website, also maintained by Somerset County Council, shows no forecast road schemes of strategic importance; only short-term closures relating to maintenance, water works and Wi-Fi installation.

Heart of South West LEP

3.5.25. The Taunton Toneway has been granted £6.7m of Growth Deal Funding by the Heart of the South West LEP[16]. This investment will include the following elements:

- Widening of the Toneway East Approach from two to three ahead lanes.
- Widening of the Bridgwater Road South approach to four lanes at the stop line, with three lanes for right turning and traffic and a separate lane for right turning traffic. One of the right turn lanes is shared to provide a straight ahead movement. The existing segregated left turn lane will be removed.
- Removal of the dedicated right turn lane from Toneway West to Bridgwater Road South with this lane now marked for straight ahead traffic. The existing segregated give-way left turn lane on this arm will remain.

3.5.26. In regard to Langport and Somerton, the Toneway provides access to Taunton Station and town centre from the East. The increased capacity on the Toneway will make driving into the town easier and overcome congestion currently observed in the area. It will also improve access to Taunton Station for residents wishing to access the rail network.

National Highways

3.5.27. National Highways are responsible for operation and maintenance of the A303 to the south of the study area, the M5 to the west and the A36 to the east.

3.5.28. At present, work is ongoing on two capacity enhancement projects. Construction has begun on dualling the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester, to the south of the study area, whilst consultation has begun on dualling between A358 between A303 at Ilminster and the M5 at Taunton.

3.5.29. Of these, the former is of most relevance to residents of Langport, Somerton and towns to the south as the A358 provides a key link in journeys from the area into Taunton, meaning that they will likely benefit from this intervention. The latter intervention might benefit some longer distance trips to the east from the study area, however, as previously discussed, the majority of trips are north-south across the A303 to and from Yeovil.

Challenges

3.5.30. Whilst providing additional road capacity, through interventions such as that on the Toneway in Taunton, reduce congestion in the short term there is considerable evidence that the released

[16] Source: https://heartofswlep.co.uk/projects/taunton-toneway/

capacity from such schemes is often filled by increased car trips, leading to congestion and pollution issues elsewhere on the network where capacity was not increased.

3.5.31. As such, the **challenge** for any investment is to encourage the use of the road infrastructure in a sustainable fashion, such as using it as the basis for an opportunity to increase access to sustainable transport by promoting and encouraging trips to the railway station, or into town by bus.

3.6 BUS

Introduction

3.6.1. This section considers bus operations within the study area. This commences with a review of the current network, before looking to policies and strategies that could potentially influence its form. The section then concludes with an appraisal of the challenges facing the network going forward.

Current Bus Network

3.6.2. This section considers the existing bus network within the study area which is illustrated in Figure 3.30, with solid lines represent routes operating several times per day, whilst dashed lines represent those operating only once per day. Additional detail on the services is provided in Table 3.1[17].

[17] Service routeing and timetable information was primarily sourced from Traveline.

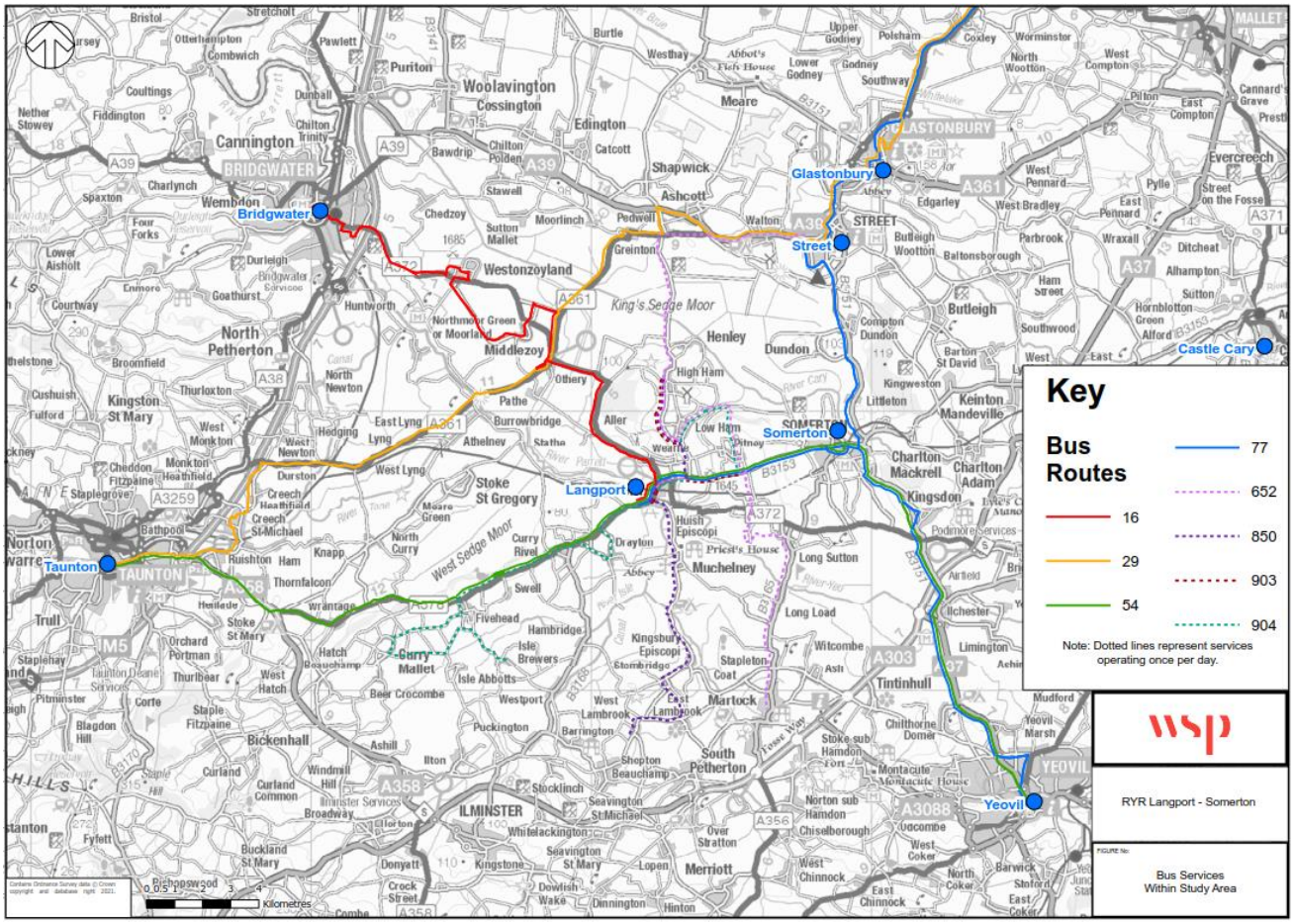


Figure 3.30: Somerset Bus Network

Service Number	Operator	Route	Service Frequency	First Bus	Last Bus	Note
29	Firstbus	Taunton – Street – Glastonbury - Wells	2 AM Buses (07:30 and 07:35) Every 2 Hours After	07:30	17:20	Service Supported by Somerset County Council
		Street[18] – Glastonbury – Street - Taunton	3 hour gap from 07:13 to 10:03 Every 2 Hours After	07:13	17:07	

[18] Services from Wells operate for a shorter period – 06:45 to 15:35

Service Number	Operator	Route	Service Frequency	First Bus	Last Bus	Note
			2 services in PM peak.			
16	Hatch Green Coaches	Langport - Bridgwater	Every 2 Hours	08:00	16:00	Service Supported by Somerset County Council
		Bridgwater[19] - Langport	Every 2 Hours	09:15	17:15	
54	Firstbus	Taunton-Curry Rivel-Langport-Somerton-Yeovil	Approximately Every 90 minutes. The 13:20 service terminates at Somerton	07:00	17:40	
		Yeovil-Somerton-Langport-Curry Rivel-Taunton	Approximately Every 90 minutes, except for 13:15-16:15 gap in departure from Yeovil; the 14:13 service starts at Somerton.	06:55	17:07	
77	Firstbus	Yeovil-Somerton-Street-Glastonbury-Wells	Irregular Service Pattern Across Day 60-120 minute intervals between services Only one bus every 3 hours continues north beyond Street.	05:55	17:35	Service Supported by Somerset County Council

[19] Route starts from Bridgwater College at 16:45

Service Number	Operator	Route	Service Frequency	First Bus	Last Bus	Note
		Wells-Glastonbury-Street-Somerton-Yeovil	Irregular Service Pattern Across Day Service every 60-120 minutes from Street. Only one bus every 3 hours starting in Wells.	07:20	19:00	
652	South West Coaches	Martock – Street	1 Per Day	07:45	07:45	Service Supported by Somerset County Council
		Street - Martock	1 Per Day	16:45	16:45	
850	Isle Valley Transport	West Lambrook - Langport	1 Per Day	12:15	12:15	
		Langport-West Lambrook	1 Per Day	11:15	11:15	
903	Isle Valley Transport	High Ham - Aller - Langport	2 Per Day	10:01	12:15	
		Langport-Aller-High Ham	1 Per Day	11:15	11:15	
904	Isle Valley Transport	Isle Brewers - Langport	1 Per Day	09:57	09:57	
		Langport-Isle Brewers	1 Per Day	12:05	12:05	

Table 3.1: Weekday Bus Services

3.6.3. Table 3.1 raises two key features pertaining to bus services within the study area in their current form. Firstly, they're generally low-frequency, with only four services running more than once per day. Secondly, of those four services, three are subsidised by Somerset County Council. In turn, this gives them a degree of control over headways and timetabling.

3.6.4. As illustrated in Section 3.4, Somerton and Langport are closely linked for Travel to Work Trips. Given their nature as market towns with vibrant economies, this is most likely paralleled by a considerable number of shopping and leisure trips. On this basis, the No54 bus service's low frequency between the town provides limited opportunity for these users.

3.6.5. The lack of buses in the evening further compounds this issue, deterring use for social activities or shift workers. As well as journeys between Langport and Somerton, the No54 is also the only access from the towns to Taunton, which is a regional hub for employment, shopping, education and other amenities. The relatively early cessation of services from this location, in conjunction with the uncompetitive journey times[20], make public transport use unattractive in comparison to the private car for those who have access to one, whilst also handicapping accessibility for those who're dependent on bus travel. These issues also apply from those dwelling in Langport and wishing to travel to Yeovil, or vice versa.

3.6.6. The No77 provides an alternative for the No54 for residents of Somerton, as well as connecting the town to Street and Glastonbury. Even in conjunction with the No54, service headway is, at best, 45 minute intervals south of Somerton. This is considerably less than the 20 minute minimum headway generally identified providing an attractive alternative to the private car. This issue is magnified north of Somerton where the No77 is the only north-south service. In addition to the low frequency, the service is also similar issue to the No54 in regard to limited operational hours, with the last bus leaving Yeovil relatively early. The last southbound service, from Wells, is marginally more useful to those wishing to socialise or shop (for example) after work. Finally, this service has an erratic timetable, with the gap between buses varying from 60 to 120 minutes. This makes it more difficult for prospective passengers to memorise the service patterns and compounds the issue of low frequency.

3.6.7. The third service in the study area is the No29 connecting Wells and Taunton with Glastonbury and Street, providing the two smaller towns with access to the opportunities available in the larger settlements, including Taunton's railway station[21]. As per the other services considered in the study area, the No29 is presently a low frequency service operating relatively limited hours. In turn, the service suffers from the lack of attractiveness to potential passengers and the reduced mobility for those who do not have access to the private car.

3.6.8. There are also the 624, 652. 850, 903 and 904 services. These operate one return trip per day, generally one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Their scheduling gives a few hours in the destination town or City in regard to Yeovil. As such, these are of no use for commuters and are of limited use for other uses, such as meeting friends, watching films or attending medical appointments. These services are particularly unattractive if people have access to a private car and can effectively 'turn up and go'.

[20] For further information on journey times, see :
Table **7.2: Car, Bus and Prospective Rail Journey Times**

[21] Glastonbury and Street were previously served by Glastonbury & Street station on the famous Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway between Bath and Bournemouth, with a branch-line to Wells diverging at this location. The branch closed in 1951 and the main line between Bath and Bournemouth closing in 1966. Following these closures, the nearest rail access to the towns is either Castle Cary or Bridgwater.

Service Number	Operator	Route	Service Frequency	First Bus	Last Bus
29	Firstbus	Taunton – Street – Glastonbury - Wells	Approximately Every 2 Hours	07:35	17:20
		Street[22] – Glastonbury – Taunton	3 hour gap from 07:13 to 10:03 Every 2 Hours After	07:13	17:07
16	Hatch Green Coaches	Langport - Bridgwater	Every 2 Hours	08:00	16:00
		Bridgwater - Langport	Every 2 Hours	09:15	17:15
54	Firstbus	Taunton-Curry Rivel-Langport-Somerton-Yeovil	Every 1.5 hours.	08:40	17:40
		Yeovil-Somerton-Langport-Curry Rivel-Taunton	Every 1.5 hours.	07:05	16:15
77	Firstbus	Yeovil-Somerton-Street-Glastonbury-Wells	Every 3 hours.	05:55	17:35
		Wells-Glastonbury-Street-Somerton-Yeovil	Every 3 hours.	07:20	19:00
652. 850, 903 and 904 have no Weekend Service.					

Table 3.2: Saturday Bus Services

3.6.9. As shown in Table 3.2, above, the issues identified in regard to weekday bus services apply in the weekend, though with further reductions in frequency and, in several instances, operating hours.

[22] Services from Wells operate for a lesser period – 06:45 to 15:35

Considering the importance of leisure travel at the weekend, this reduced service is likely to make the bus an unappealing prospect to potential users and act as a handicap to those without access to the private car.

3.6.10. There is no Sunday service in the region. Additionally, the once-per-day services only operate Monday-Friday. This omission has considerable implications for accessibility considering the number of shops, job sites and entertainment activities that take place at weekends; not considering other travel purposes such as tourism or visiting family.

3.6.11. Finally, in addition to the low frequency of the existing services, there are also several network gaps. As set out in section 3.4, there are considerable links from Langport and Somerton to Castle Cary and Crewkerne, as well as from Glastonbury and Street to Taunton. At present, these movement axis are only served by routes which require several interchanges between infrequent routes, deterring bus use for commuting, leisure or access to the railway stations located in those towns. Additionally, the existing bus services from the core of the study area to Taunton currently terminate in the town centre, necessitating a walk of approximately a mile to the railway station. This makes the bus services less viable for people with reduced mobility and less attractive overall.

Policies

Somerset Transport Policies

3.6.12. Whilst the bus network as set out in the preceding section is delivered primarily by private operators, Somerset County Council (in conjunction with the District Council) can influence the function of the network through investment in infrastructure and subsidy of services, as well as identifying where services might be required to support strategic level growth. Indeed, SCC currently subsidise the No29, No16 and No77, which are three quarters of the services operating more than once a day within the study area; the only regular service not identified for subsidy being the Taunton-Yeovil (via Langport & Somerton) No54.

3.6.13. Somerset's Future Transport Plan states that the Council's strategic goal for the bus network is to

"Do what they can to maintain essential services in the early years of this plan and work to improve the way services work together and provide better bus information during its later years"

3.6.14. To deliver this goal. The following options are considered:

- Maintain and, where possible, improve services provided by existing community transport organisations;
- Deliver an effective strategy to promote bus and community-based accessible transport. Offer business advice and travel surveying to help community organisations who provide community transport services;
- Work with the community voluntary sector so more of the local bus services they provide can carry the general public;
- Work with communities and partners, such as schools and colleges, (particularly in rural areas) to see how we can get the best out of existing services;

- Develop and expand district wide SLINKY[23] services;
- Assess the potential for providing more 'Somerset Accessible Transport' community transport schemes;
- Develop more community car schemes and work to understand how publicity and booking arrangements could be improved; and
- Improve the efficiency of community transport through partnerships and better co-operation. To do this we will:
    - Work with partners to reduce the need to travel by providing more services locally;
    - Ensure Local Development Frameworks and other planning documents tackle accessibility issues;
    - Carry out accessibility studies in partnership with the relevant district council; and
    - Work with the 'South West Community Transport Benchmarking Group' to improve the skills of community transport providers and the quality of their services.
- Improve the integration of rail and bus services at railway stations, through the actual facilities available and the way timetables fit together;
- Audit walking and cycling routes to railway stations and principal bus interchanges, major taxi ranks and car parks with a view to making them accessible for all and prioritising improvements;
- Continue our programme of high quality interchange improvements;
- Continue to implement the proposed programme of Quality Bus Partnership routes; Implement a 'limited stop' Quality Bus Partnership route between Taunton and Yeovil and investigate the feasibility of implementing others across the county;
- Consider measures such as bus priority and changes to parking charges to support the introduction of the new park and ride services;
- Work with operators to develop smartcard ticketing across the County, beginning by
    - using smartcard technology for concessionary travel (for people who are disabled or aged over 60) and 'scholars' tickets' in partnership with other south-west authorities; and
    - Introducing a smartcard 'CountyTicket' in parallel with the 'scholars' tickets' discussed above.
- Work undertaken to improve bus stops and interchanges will consider how it could contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption. By providing shade at bus stops, for example;

[23] Local Demand Responsive Transport

- Deliver a ‘single point of contact’ call centre for all bus and community transport needs in Somerset. This will include public transport, social needs transport, school transport and non-emergency health transport and offer an out of hours service;
- Create a website that provides electronic timetable and community transport information and is user friendly and easy to navigate;
- Produce all bus services booklets in the same format, making production quicker and the booklet cheaper to produce;
- Improve the use of SMS text messaging and audio technology for information provision; Introduction of ‘smart points’ that provide interactive real time information at key transport interchanges; and
- Compile an accurate list of all bus stops, poles, flags, bus shelters and low floor kerbs in Somerset. We will use appropriate GIS systems to help improve identification, monitoring and maintenance.

3.6.15. There are also some specific proposals relating to Taunton which could benefit trips to and from the wider study area:

- Quality Bus Partnership
- Bus priority on routes to the town centre

3.6.16. There are also proposals included in the document to improve bus services surrounding Yeovil

- Bus Station improvements
- Real time passenger information (RTPI) and on-bus electronic information
- Dedicated bus routes and other priority measures

3.6.17. The Bus Elements of the Future Transport Plan were further developed in the Bus Service Improvement Plan released in November 2021. The policies identified would make progress towards mitigating the challenges identified previously related to bus operation within the study area. Specifically, it sets an intent to:

- Increase service frequency on the corridors within South Somerset, including the No54 and No77 services previously discussed;
- Increasing service operating hours to allow use by shift workers and enable evening activities by residents;
- Implementing a Digital Demand Responsive Transport Network (DDRT) centred on Somerton but covering much of the study area; and
- Improving connections between bus and rail services.

3.6.18. Somerset County Council policy establishes a route map for improving bus services within the study area, though the timescale for these interventions is yet to be established. It also sets out that, should the chosen intervention include bus infrastructure, it should be planned in conjunction with local authorities to ensure that it is integrated with the existing network and that the facility should provide data relating to other bus services.

National Bus Strategy & Integration with Rail

3.6.19. At present, none of the bus services in the study area connect with the railway stations of the towns which they serve. At both Yeovil and Taunton, the services terminate at town centre bus services, requiring a thirteen minute walk in both cases to access the station, or the use of a connecting bus service.

3.6.20. As set out in Chapter 2, both the 2021 Bus Back Better Strategy and the 2021 Williams-Shapps Plan for rail call for closure integration of bus and rail services. As such, any proposed scheme in the area should aim to further this goal.

Challenges

3.6.21. Drawing on the preceding appraisal of current bus services in the area, as well as the need to align with local and national public transport strategies, there are several **challenges** which the local bus operation would benefit from meeting:

- Lack of evening services on most routes
- Low service frequencies, reducing further on Saturday.
- No Sunday Service
- No service to Castle Cary, which is shown in Chapter 2 to be a considerable trip attractor in the area, particularly from Somerton
- The challenge of delivering better bus and rail connectivity, in line with the National Bus Strategy.
- Extremely low frequency services to smaller towns, particularly south of Langport & Somerton.

3.7 RAIL NETWORK

Overview

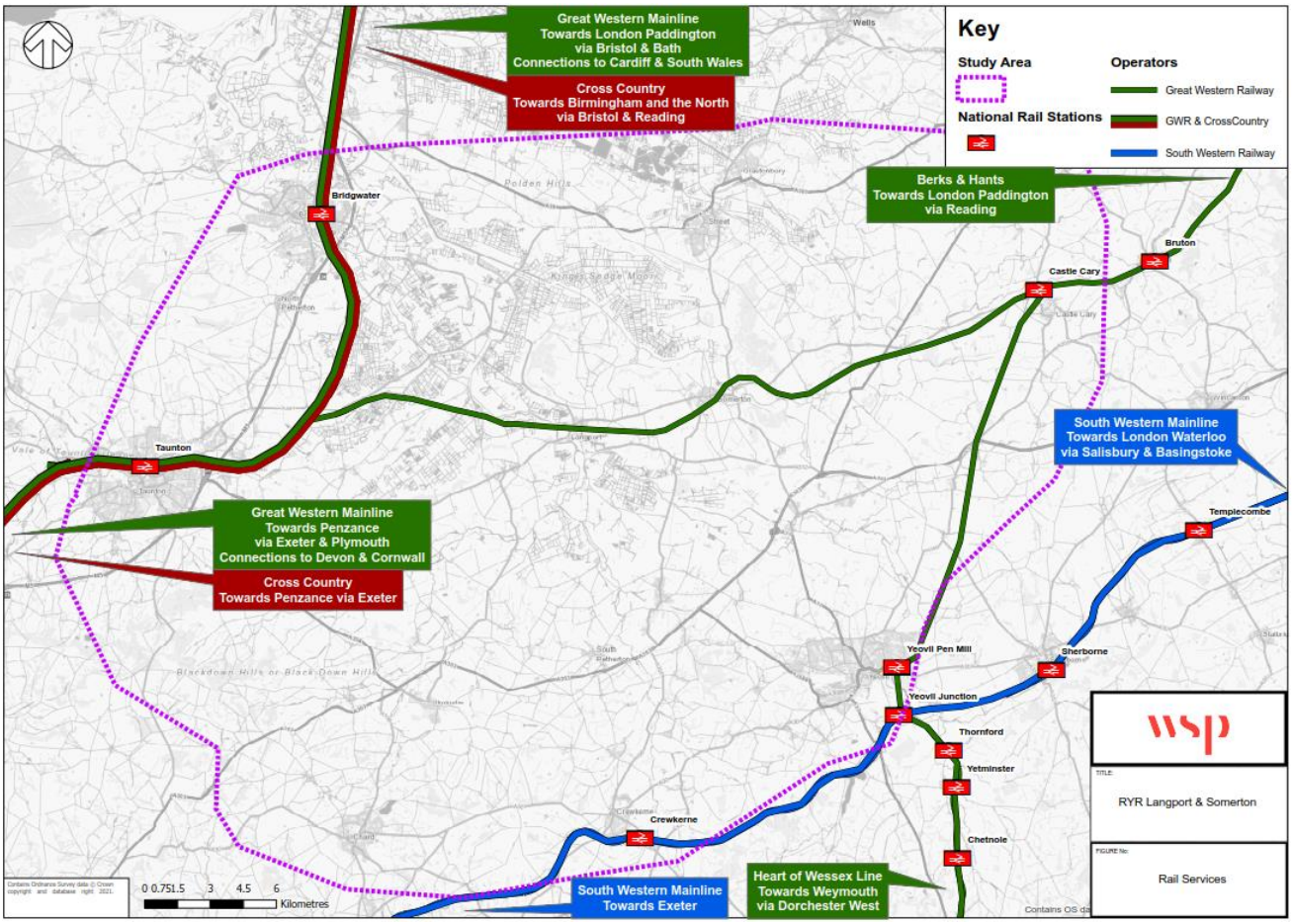


Figure 3.31: Rail Network

3.7.1. Figure 3.31 shows the current rail network in the study area centred on the towns of Langport and Somerton, which sit astride the Reading to Taunton line. This line opened in stages, with Taunton to Langport opening in 1853 as part of a branch line between Taunton and Yeovil. This line included Langport's first station; which became Langport West on the opening of the line between Langport and Reading in 1906. This was to differentiate it from Langport East which opened with the new line. Somerton station was also located on the Reading to Taunton line.

3.7.2. Of the three stations in the study area, Langport West was the first to close, along with the Yeovil branch as a whole, in 1964. Langport East and Somerton then closed in 1967 leaving the town's residents without immediate rail access. Also closed were Isle of Athelney, Charlton Mackrell, Keinton Mandeville and Alford, leaving the railway between Castle Cary and Taunton without any stations.

3.7.3. At the present time, the nearest railway stations to Langport and Somerton are Taunton, Castle Cary and Yeovil. The latter location has two stations, Yeovil Pen Mill in the town centre and Yeovil Junction to the south of town. Further details on these stations and the services available from them

are set out in Table 3.3 through to Table 3.6, based on information extracted from National Rail Enquiries and Realtime Trains, providing station details and service information respectively.

Passenger Services

Taunton

3.7.4. Taunton is a junction station where the line between Bristol Tempe Meads and Exeter and the London Padding to Exeter lines intersect. Reflecting its status as an interchange, the station is well provided with amenities including Wi-Fi, an ATM, toilets and two cafes. The station is staffed 24 hours a day and much of the weekend and also contains a lost property office. The station has a public transport interchange, cycle storage and 264 car parking spaces, of which 6 are accessible. Access to the station is covered in further detail in Chapter 3.8.

3.7.5. Table 3.3 shows the key train services accessible from Taunton.

Destination	Operator	Frequency	Journey Time	First Train	Last Train
Bristol Temple Meads	GWR	Hourly (Extra services in peak)	60 minutes	05:13	23:03
	CrossCountry	Hourly	40 minutes	06:51	21:22
London Paddington	GWR	45-60 minutes	120-140 minutes	06:17	21:16
Exeter	GWR	Hourly (Extra services in peak)	30 minutes	06:15	02:37
	CrossCountry	Hourly	28 minutes	07:11	22:15

Table 3.3: Core Taunton Services

Yeovil Pen Mill

3.7.6. Yeovil Pen Mill is one of two railway stations serving Yeovil and the closest of them to the Town Centre at approximately one mile's walk. The station is located on the Heart of Wessex line between Bristol and Weymouth. The station is reasonably well provided with amenities, which include refreshments, toilets, public wi-fi and staffing across the peak hours of the weekday and the core hours of the weekends. Regarding access, the station has 25 car parking spaces and 12 cycle stands. This low number of spaces makes the station less attractive to users from Langport and Somerton as it's unlikely they would be able to get somewhere to park, the issue compounded by the need to drive through Yeovil's congested road network to reach the station.

3.7.7. Table 3.4 shows the key train services accessible from Yeovil Pen Mill.

Destination	Operator	Frequency	Journey Time	First Train	Last Train
London Waterloo	South Western Rail	6 trains per day. 05:41, 06:55, 07:11, 10:45, 13:25, 15:00	Circa 150 minutes	05:41	15:00
Westbury	Great Western Railway & South Western Railway	Approximately Hourly across day, some extra in AM peak.	40-60 minutes depending on service/stopping pattern.	07:42	19:26
Weymouth	Great Western Railway	Variable 1 in AM Peak 4 in Inter-Peak (10:00-16:30) 1 in PM Peak	Circa 50 minutes.	07:34	22:15
Gloucester	Great Western Railway	4 Trains Per Day (09:40, 12:32, 14:01 and 15:50)	Circa 3 hours.	09:40	15:50

Table 3.4: Core Yeovil Pen Mill Services

Yeovil Junction

3.7.8. Yeovil Junction is the second of the two stations serving Yeovil, located on the London & South Western Railway mainline between London Waterloo and the South West of England. Historically, the station was also the junction with the Taunton-Yeovil branch line of the Great Western Railway, which served Langport West until 1964. This line also served a third Yeovil station, Yeovil Town, which also closed in 1964.

3.7.9. There was previously a link between Yeovil Junction and the Heart of Wessex Line. Whilst this closed in 1993 the trackbed is now utilised by Yeovil Railway Centre, which preserves several historic buildings and operates a short demonstration line with ex-industrial steam engines.

3.7.10. Yeovil Junction station is open 24 hours across the week, with staff available from 06:00-19:20 from Monday to Friday and 08:55 to 18:25 on Sunday. The station is well provided with amenities including public wi-fi, toilets and refreshments. With regards to access, the station has 199 car parking spaces of which 11 are accessible. There are also 16 cycle storage locations monitored by CCTV for additional security.

3.7.11. Table 3.5 shows the key train services accessible from Yeovil Junction

Destination	Operator	Frequency	Journey Time	First Train	Last Train
Exeter St Davids	South Western Railway	Hourly	Circa 85 minutes	06:15	22:40
London Waterloo	South Western Railway	Hourly	Circa 85 minutes	05:15	21:29
Salisbury	South Western Railway	Hourly	Circa 50 minutes	05:15	23:31
Basingstoke	South Western Railway	Hourly	Circa 100 minutes	05:15	23:31

Table 3.5: Core Yeovil Junction Services

Castle Cary

3.7.12. Castle Cary is located on the Great Western Mainline between Taunton and Castle Cary, as well as the Heart of Wessex Line between Bristol and Weymouth via Yeovil Pen Mill. The station has reasonable facilities available, including Wi-Fi, toilets and a mobile refreshment shop, the latter located outside the station. In regards to access, the station has 8 cycle spaces and 178 car parking spaces of which 5 are accessible.

3.7.13. Table 3.6 shows the key train services accessible from Castle Cary.

Destination	Operator	Frequency	Journey Time	First Train	Last Train
Exeter St Davids	GWR	Irregular until 16:19, then approximately hourly.	Circa 50 minutes	08:42	22:42
London Paddington	GWR	Three in the peak, two mid-day, three in the evening.	Circa 110 minutes	06:40	20:44
Weymouth	GWR	Irregular. One morning, three in the mid-day, three in the	Circa 60 minutes	07:19	22:01

Destination	Operator	Frequency	Journey Time	First Train	Last Train
		PM Peak, one evening.			
Yeovil Pen Mill	GWR/SWR	Irregular. One morning service. Every 30-60 minutes in the inter-peak. Three PM Peak services and one evening service.	Circa 60 minutes (depending on stopping pattern)	07:19	22:01
Gloucester	GWR	Two Hourly from 10:05-16:06, then final evening service.	Circa 150 minutes (depending on stopping pattern)	10:05	21:18
Salisbury	SWR	Irregular. One morning service. Three in Inter Peak One in Evening.	Circa 60 minutes.	07:10	21:42

Table 3.6: Core Castle Cary Services

Station Usage

Introduction

3.7.14. Data was provided to SCC and WSP relating to the quantum of Boardings and Alightings occurring at Taunton and Castle Cary in 2019 and 2021, as well as the number of vehicles using the station car park on several days in the same periods.

3.7.15. This section of the report considers the trends in station utilisation between 2019 and 2021, as well as the relationship between vehicles using the station car park and patronage over the same period.

3.7.16. Due to the car parking data being partial, data is presented as average days per month in the case of the figures and average days per year in the case of the tables.

Taunton

3.7.17. From the data presented, it is evident that passengers parking at the station form the minority of station users. This is likely due to Taunton station being located in an urban area, within walking and

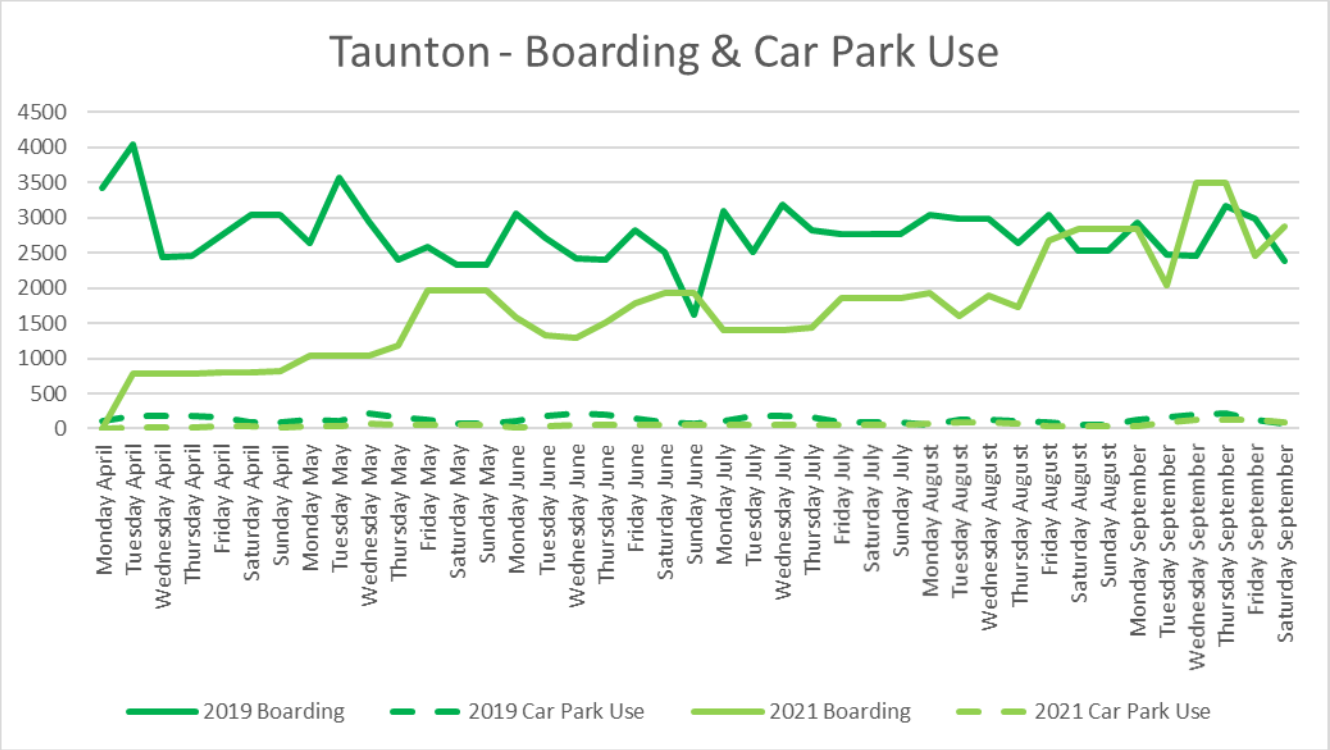
cycling access of a considerable number of the town's residents, as well as being served by several of the town's bus services. This demonstrates the importance of sustainable transport interconnectivity, where improving facilities for one sustainable mode enables and encourages trips by other sustainable modes within a larger journey.

3.7.18. The data also shows that, with the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions in the UK, the number of patronage in 2021 has returned to the level observed prior to the pandemic.

3.7.19. Finally, it is notable that the usage of the station remains stable across the week, with the weekend seeing the same number of boardings as weekdays. This shows the importance of considering all users in developing schemes, as these weekend trips will often be leisure based and not picked up by the census data, or other travel to work surveys.

3.7.20. shows the trends in boarding and car park use at Taunton between April and September of 2019 and 2021.

Figure 3.32: Taunton Boarding & Car Park Use



3.7.21. From the data presented, it is evident that passengers parking at the station form the minority of station users. This is likely due to Taunton station being located in an urban area, within walking and cycling access of a considerable number of the town's residents, as well as being served by several of the town's bus services. This demonstrates the importance of sustainable transport interconnectivity, where improving facilities for one sustainable mode enables and encourages trips by other sustainable modes within a larger journey.

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users in developing schemes, as these weekend trips will often be leisure based and not picked up by the census data, or other travel to work surveys.

3.7.24. Table 3.7 sets out the average boardings per day at Taunton for 2019 and 2021, as well as the average number of vehicles accessing the car park.

Table 3.7: Average Boarding & Car Park Use

Day	2019			2021			Change	
	Boarding	Car Park Use	Trips by Car	Boarding	Car Park Use	Trips by Car	Boarding	Car Park Use
Monday	3091	117	4%	1395	39	3%	-55%	-67%
Tuesday	2998	164	5%	1482	70	5%	-51%	-57%
Wednesday	2727	200	7%	2009	78	4%	-26%	-61%
Thursday	2607	174	7%	1574	64	4%	-40%	-63%
Friday	2800	121	4%	2061	78	4%	-26%	-35%
Saturday	2528	79	3%	2626	73	3%	4%	-8%
Sunday	1629	65	4%	1100	47	4%	-33%	-28%

3.7.25. As the table includes data from across 2021, it is evident that the pandemic lead to considerable reductions in weekday passenger numbers, reflecting a reduction in travel to work trips. However, it is notable that Saturday trips across 2021 increase slightly despite travel restrictions and reduced passenger confidence in the first half of the year. Additionally, the loss of patronage on the Sunday is at the lower end of reductions in passenger numbers compared to Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Taken together, this lends support to leisure travel being a key element in public transport usage and something that should be considered further going forward.

3.7.26. Additionally, it is notable that car park usage fell more than passenger usage on all days except Sunday. Whilst the data doesn't include other modes, several inferences can be drawn:

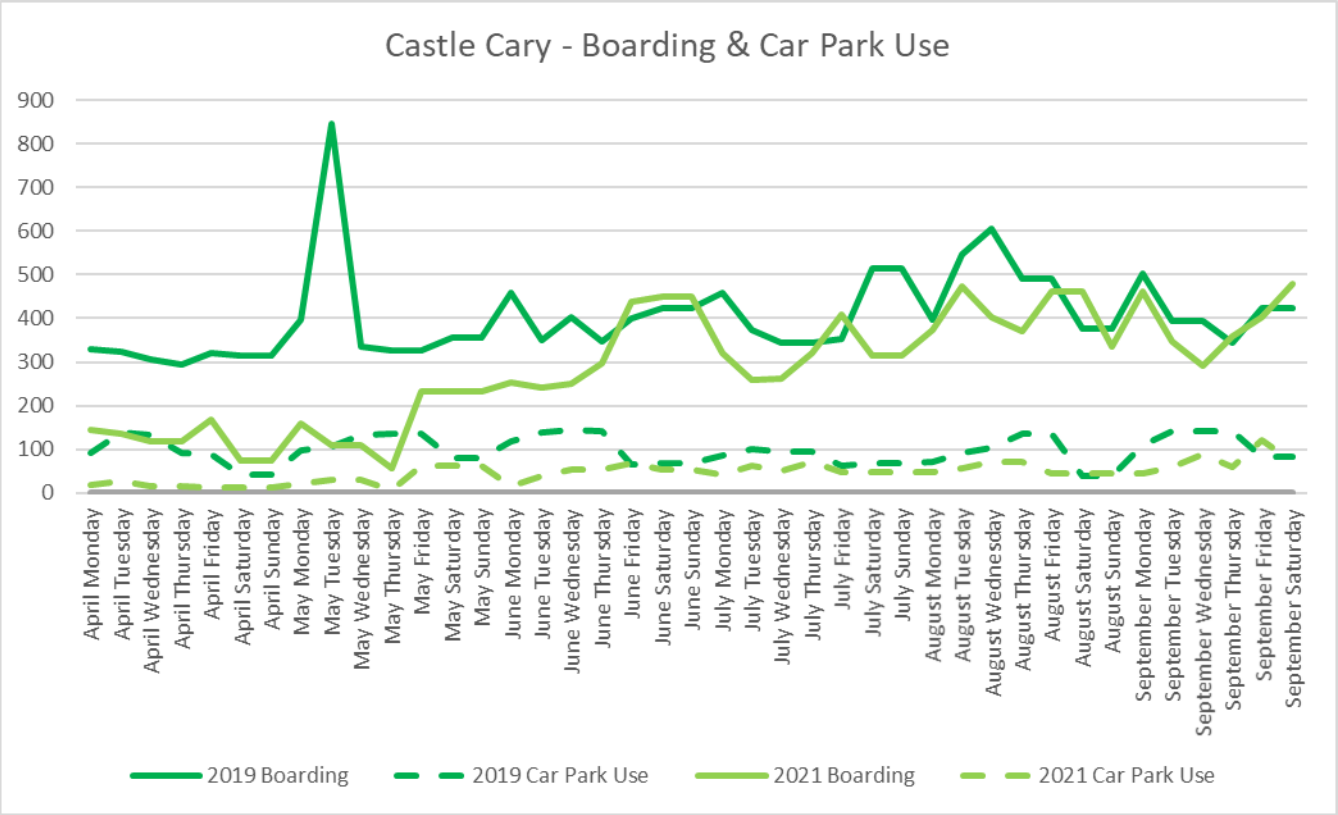
- That a considerable portion of passengers don't have access to the car, so car park use fell faster than rail use. This reinforces the importance of sustainable modes to accessibility for those without access to alternatives.
- That access to a station by walking, cycling and public transport is important to ensuring sustainable transport use.

Castle Cary

3.7.27. The figure shows that, similar to Taunton, rail usage has returned to pre-pandemic levels. It is notable, however, that weekday patronage indicated a slower recovery than weekend patronage. This, in conjunction with Saturday and Sunday showing lesser reductions in patronage than other weekdays, again underscores the importance of the leisure market.

3.7.28. Figure 3.33 shows the trends in boarding and car park use for Castle Cary between April and September of 2019 and 2021.

Figure 3.33: Castle Cary Boarding & Car Park Use



3.7.29. The figure shows that, similar to Taunton, rail usage has returned to pre-pandemic levels. It is notable, however, that weekday patronage indicated a slower recovery than weekend patronage. This, in conjunction with Saturday and Sunday showing lesser reductions in patronage than other weekdays, again underscores the importance of the leisure market.

3.7.30. The figure shows that, similar to Taunton, rail usage has returned to pre-pandemic levels. It is notable, however, that weekday patronage indicated a slower recovery than weekend patronage. This, in conjunction with Saturday and Sunday showing lesser reductions in patronage than other weekdays, again underscores the importance of the leisure market.

3.7.31. Figure 3.33 also shows that there is a larger portion of passengers arriving by car than Taunton. Several elements could factor into this-

- The station is located on the northern fringe of the town, as opposed to Taunton which is located to the north of the town centre and therefore has greater accessibility by walking and cycling
- The town acts as railhead for trips from locations without their own stations, such as Somerton, Glastonbury and Street. This concept is partially supported by the station's use as the railhead for the famous Glastonbury Festival.

3.7.32. Table 3.8 sets out the average boardings per day at Castle Cary for 2019 and 2021, as well as the average number of vehicles accessing the car park.

Day	2019			2021			Change	
	Boarding	Car Park Use	Trips by Car	Boarding	Car Park Use	Trips by Car	Boarding	Car Park Use
Monday	435	96	22%	268	33	12%	-167	-63
Tuesday	451	119	26%	227	44	19%	-224	-76
Wednesday	399	118	30%	242	51	21%	-157	-67
Thursday	345	127	37%	307	59	19%	-39	-68
Friday	377	70	19%	324	54	17%	-53	-16
Saturday	419	60	14%	379	55	15%	-40	-5
Sunday	359	No Data Available		337	46	14%	-22	No Data

Table 3.8: Average Boarding & Car Park Use

3.7.33. Table 3.8 supports the preceding observation that a greater portion of people boarding at Castle Cary use rail. It is also similar to Taunton in that car park usage, generally, hasn't recovered as rapidly from the pandemic as overall station usage, again reflecting the importance of walking, cycling and public transport options to accessibility.

3.7.34. Finally, the usage data also reflects Taunton in regard to the pandemic having had less of an impact on weekend, primarily discretionary, patronage.

Freight Services

3.7.35. As alluded to previously, Langport and Somerton are located on the Reading & Taunton Railway which completed a direct corridor between London and Exeter without needing to travel via Bristol. In addition to the services already discussed in the context of Castle Cary and Taunton, the line is also utilised by freight services moving a range of goods including aggregates from Whatley, tarmac from Westbury and produced from English China Clay's Burngullow site.

Proposals

3.7.36. There are several proposals for investment in railways within the study area. This section of the report sets out the most relevant investments.

Heart of the South West

3.7.37. The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership have several proposals relating to rail improvements within the study area. These are set out in Table 3.9, below.

Investment	Description	Implications	Completion Date
GB03 – Firepool and Taunton Station Access	Junction improvements on the approaches to Taunton railway station in conjunction with a new multi-storey car park for the station and a new development (Firepool) adjacent to the development. These developments also tie in to the Taunton Rail Station Enhancements (detailed below).	The Firepool development will increase Taunton's attractiveness as a place to visit for work, leisure or living. With the development being adjacent to Taunton railway station, provision of new rail access at Langport & Somerton would extend the benefits of this development. Additionally, the provision of increased parking capacity and improved junction capacity will increase the potential for the station to be used by those driving to Taunton station. Finally, the improved junction includes enhanced pedestrian and cycling facilities linking the station to the town centre. This will function as a gateway to the town arriving at Taunton from elsewhere and reciprocally encourage sustainable transport access to the station.	Proposed opening date of March 2023
GD10 – Taunton Rail Station Enhancements	This scheme is intended to support long term rail patronage growth in Taunton and provide capacity for the future expansion of the town. In conjunction with strategy GB03 (Above) it is intended to provide a gateway to the town and support ongoing regeneration of the area around the station. The core elements of this scheme are: • Relocation of the ticket office to provide an	In conjunction with the GB03 development, this proposal will provide an enhanced experience for existing users of Taunton Station and encourage additional use. The provision of a new transport interchange supports the Bus Back Better strategy by providing better rail-bus links, whilst the proposals for an enhanced walking and cycling environment aligns well with the wider sustainable movement agenda. The provision of the new car park will support forecast growth in demand for the station and parking there. Whilst acknowledging trends in station	Work Commenced March 2020 Development opening in phases with the new station booking hall and car parking having opened in May 2021

Investment	Description	Implications	Completion Date
	integrated transport hub for all modes • Development of land around the station. • Providing additional capacity in the station car park.	usage, this also runs counter to the desire for increased sustainable transport access to the location suggested by the new walking/cycling/rail/bus interchange.	

Table 3.9: Proposed Rail Investments by the Heart of the South West LEP

Network Rail

3.7.38. Network Rail's delivery schedule is aligned to five year control periods. The current control period, CP6, runs from 2019-2024 and is liable to be the last under the Network Rail brand, with Great British Railways subsequently taking responsibility for both track and stations, the latter previously split with only major locations in Network Rail ownership and the remainder controlled by the franchised operator. In regards to organisation, Network Rail is divided into five regions. The Reading to Taunton line forms part of their Wales & Western Region, whilst the lines through Yeovil, including the main line from London Waterloo and from Castle Cary, form part of the Southern Region.

3.7.39. Due to its operation across multiple regions, freight is considered separately.

3.7.40. There are several developments proposed by Network Rail which will influence rail travel on the study area's existing network.

3.7.41. The Southern Region's CP6 Delivery Plan includes investment in £90 million of earthworks to improve resilience against landslides induced by climate change events. Work also took place in 2020 to improve reliability around Yeovil in response to wetter winters. Investment is also taking place at the eastern end of the line, around London, to reduce disruption caused by illness on board services.

3.7.42. The Wales & Western Region includes investment in Bristol Temple Meads station, a key calling point on many services through Taunton. The investments are aimed at reducing conflict between movements and improving service reliability. Similar to the Southern region, investment is also being made to improve resilience to climate change impacts.

3.7.43. As set out in Chapter 2, as well as direct scheme delivery, Network Rail is also responsible for working on long term strategy, often in conjunction with local stakeholders. The Bristol to Exeter

Strategic Study (2021), undertaken alongside Western Gateway and Peninsula transport sub national bodies, identified the need for providing additional inter-regional connectivity in the area. The Western Gateway STB Rail Strategy (2020) and the Peninsula Rail Taskforce (2013), both identified the need for improved rail access within the area, as well as strategic connections to opportunities provided by rapid long-distance rail travel.

3.7.44. Collectively, these Network Rail strategy documents provide a strong impetus for rail investment in the area. As such, Rail is one of the investment Options considered in Chapter 6 of this report.

Challenges

3.7.45. Whilst the improvements identified in the preceding section will provide considerable reliability benefit to both existing and future rail passengers, there are several outstanding challenges facing the network. These are as follows:

- Lack of a railhead in the region of Langport & Somerton, which would also benefit passengers from Glastonbury & Street.
- Irregular service patterns to key destinations, making rail less attractive as it's more difficult to plan around.
- Closure of the Taunton-Yeovil branch reducing strategic flexibility and access by rail between Langport / Somerton and Yeovil where alternative public transport modes are quite poor at present.
- A need for increased regional rail connectivity, identified by Network Rail and regional transport bodies.
- Railway station use is supported by walking, cycling and bus access.
- Access to public transport, including rail for at least some of the journey, is important to accessibility for those without car access.
- Leisure travel will be of increased importance due to the pandemic's impacts on the conventional weekday travel and rise in flexible working arrangements.
- Capacity constraint on the Heart of Wessex line north-south through Yeovil.
- Provide rail access for residents of proposed housing developments and workers at proposed employment sites.

3.8 TRAVEL TIMES

Introduction

3.8.1. This sections considers the journey times between Langport & Somerton to key locations, both in terms of trip generators and in terms of access to the current railway network. It sets out the car journey and public transport journey times to the railway stations of each locations, as well as the urban centres.

Taunton

3.8.2. Taunton is located 14.3 miles west of Langport and 18.8 miles west of Somerton via the most direct route on the A376. The car journey times are 24-35 minutes from Langport and 30-50 minutes from Somerton.

3.8.3. For those without access to the car, or preferring to travel by sustainable mode, the No54 bus operates every 90 minutes from both Langport and Somerton, taking circa 51 minutes from the former and 62 minutes from the latter. There is also an approximately 13 minute walk from Taunton bus station to Taunton Railway station.

Yeovil

3.8.4. Yeovil Station is located 13-14[24] miles south of Langport and 10.9 miles south of Somerton via the most direct route on the A376. The car journey times are 24-40 minutes from Langport and 20-35 minutes from Somerton.

3.8.5. In regard to access by public transport, the No54 bus operates every 90 minutes from both Langport and Somerton, taking circa 50 minutes from the former and 35 minutes from the latter to reach Yeovil town centre.

3.8.6. As aforementioned, there are two railway stations in Yeovil. Yeovil Pen Mill station is approximately a 13 minute walk from Yeovil Town Centre/Bus station to Yeovil Pen Mill Railway station. Yeovil Junction Station is located approximately 2 miles south of Yeovil town on the line between London and the South West of England. This places the Station 15.3 miles south of Langport and 12.2 miles south of Somerton. Following the closure of the Taunton to Yeovil Branch, access to Yeovil junction requires an interchange to the No68 bus in Yeovil Town Centre, adding circa 15 minutes to the overall journey time depending on the interchange time in Yeovil.

Castle Cary

3.8.7. Castle Cary is a regional town with access to the national railway network. The town is located 17.2 miles east of Langport and 15.3 miles east of Somerton via the most direct route on the A376. The car journey times are 26-35 minutes from Langport and 20-26 minutes from Somerton.

3.8.8. Whilst Castle Cary is a similar distance from Langport and Somerton to Taunton and Yeovil, there are no direct links from Langport and Somerton. Instead, a prospective user would need to travel into Yeovil and interchange, making public transport access to the town impractical.

Bridgwater

3.8.9. Bridgwater is a market town located on the railway line between Bristol and the South West via Taunton. The town's located 12.4 miles north west of Langport and 16.2 miles of Somerton via the A372. The average journey time from Langport is 24-35 minutes, whilst, from Somerton, it's 30-45 minutes.

[24] Depending on Route.

3.8.10. Langport has a direct bus service to Bridgwater, the No16. This service takes 40 minutes to complete via a fairly indirect route connecting other local villages. From Somerton, the two public transport options are available. The first is via Langport, interchanging in the town. This takes circa 110 minutes on the No54 and No16 buses. The alternative is via Street, taking 122 minutes via No77 and No19 buses.

3.8.11. As can be observed, public transport access to Bridgwater from Langport is reasonable in regards to journey time, however users might be deterred by the services exceptionally low frequency. In regards to Somerton, the public transport journey time is at least twice the comparable car journey time, which makes it a non-competitive option, particularly when taken in conjunction with the service's low frequency.

3.8.12. One benefit that Bridgwater does have in comparison to the other towns studied is that the bus service passes within four minutes walking distance of the railway station, offering a better interchange to the GWR services that can be accessed there.

Challenges

3.8.13. The journey time analysis set out above consistently demonstrates that the current public transport access to neighbouring towns and the railway network is quite unfavourable in comparison to the private car. There are several recurring themes influencing this:

- Low service frequencies which end relatively early in the day, making the services unattractive to casual users, shift workers or those wishing to stay later in the major population centres.
- Bus services from the north of the District and/or Mendip not connecting through to the railway stations in Taunton and Yeovil, requiring long walks or interchange to other buses.
- Bus services taking indirect routes to serve secondary villages, resulting in increased journey times.
- No direct public transport services to Castle Cary.
- Car journey time variability is often in the region of +/- 15 minutes in the peaks, even on relatively short trips. This is caused by congestion and is only likely to worsen should the long-term trend of increased traffic continue. This is likely to be paralleled by bus delays and unreliability as they share the same roads.

3.8.14. These issues form the baseline which any prospective intervention should consider addressing.

3.9 NON-MOTORISED USER NETWORK

Walking & Cycling Infrastructure

Current Provision

3.9.1. As identified in Section 3.2, travel within the study area is dominated by the private car, with high levels of people driving to work supported by high car ownership. One potential method of resolving this Challenge is through the provision of high quality walking and cycling. Figure 3.34 shows the current walking and cycling infrastructure present within the study area.

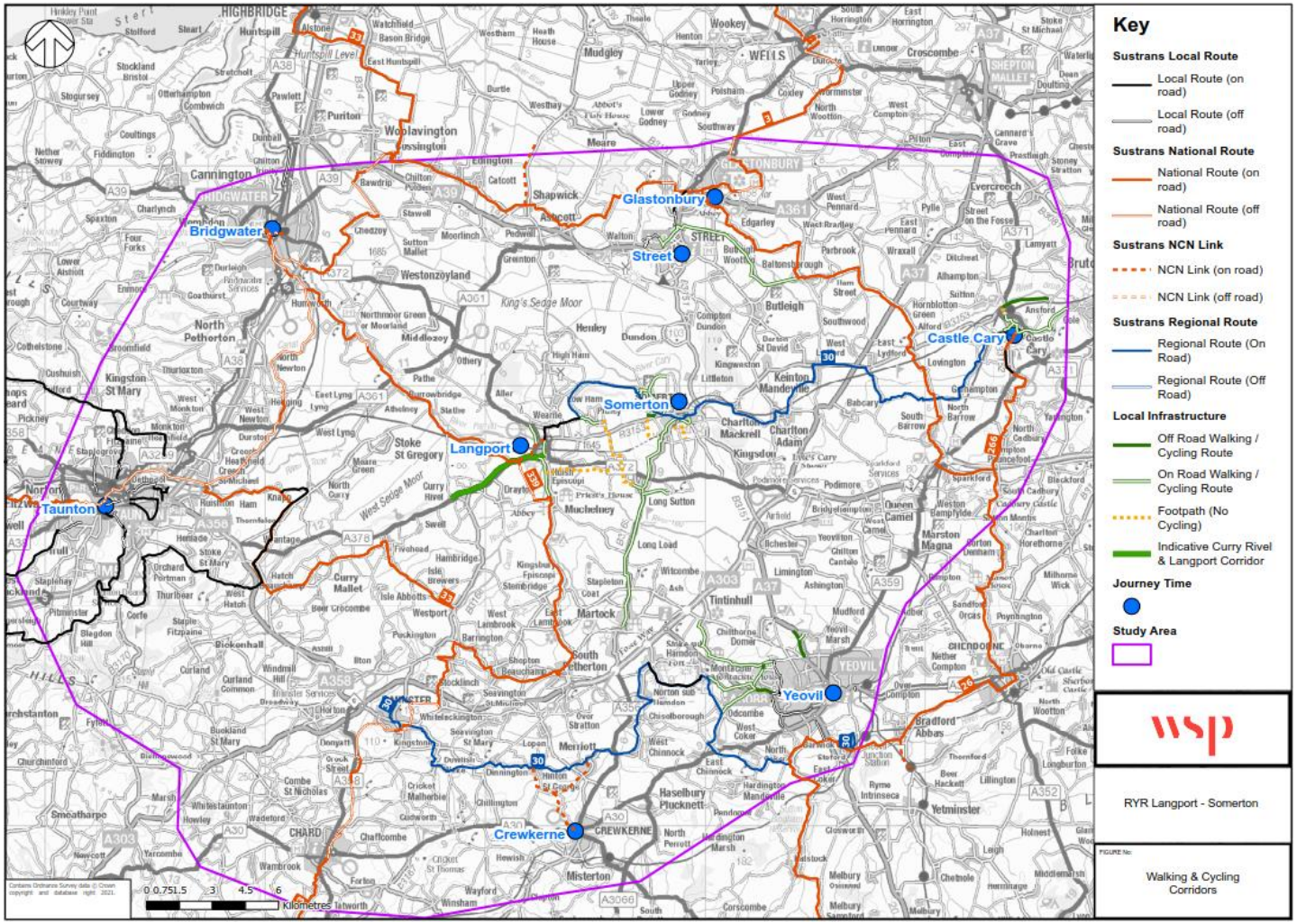


Figure 3.34: Walking & Cycling Infrastructure

3.9.2. As can be observed Sustrans, the national cycling charity, identifies a considerable number of routes within the study area. Those of particular note are detailed below:

- National Cycle Network 339: This Route traverses the study area on a north-south axis, connecting Bridgwater to Langport, then Chard. This route primarily uses secondary roads and paths.
- National Cycle Network 33: East from Taunton towards Langport. This parallels the A378 as far as Tivehead before turning south. This leaves a gap in signed cycle routes between Taunton and Langport. Whilst the proposed Curry Rivel route (see below) will fill some of the gap, there will still be no link from Tivehead to Curry Rivel.
- National Cycle Network 266: This Route connects Glastonbury and Yeovil, connecting with Regional Route 30 (Below) for a link into Castle Cary. It is worth noting that this connection to Castle Cary is quite indirect, requiring a traveller from Glastonbury to pass the town from north to south before turning north again, effectively traversing two sides of the triangle.
- Regional Route 30: Connecting Langport and Castle Cary via Somerton, paralleling the railway via a network of secondary roads. Local routes are then available to connect to Castle Cary station to the north of the town.

3.9.3. Whilst these routes do provide a degree of sustainable transport connectivity, there are still several issues to resolve prior to mode shift can be delivered:

- Lack of direct links from Langport to Taunton and from Glastonbury/Street to Somerton, which would support identified commuter movements.
- Indirect, winding nature of Sustrans network along secondary roads leading to increased journey times for cyclists compared to the A-Road network;
- Lack of lighting and oversite along many of the rural cycle routes. This can raise safety concerns with less confident cyclists, as well as other vulnerable groups; and
- Domination of on-road routes, raising further safety concerns for both less confident riders and for prospective conflict between cyclists and drivers.

Proposals

3.9.4. Consultation has recently completed consultation on the provision of a combined walking/cycling route between Curry Rivel and Langport. This is intended to support the travel to work movements identified in the preceding chapters, as well as support access to amenities identified in Section 3.10, below. An indictive, direct, route has been illustrated in Figure 3.34 for simplicity. Several alternative corridors were considered, accounting for quite routes and less direct corridor. The final preferred alignment is yet to be confirmed.

Challenges

3.9.5. Whilst the proposed investment of a permanent walking and cycling infrastructure in Langport will increase the use of sustainable travel there is a key challenge with the dominance of car travel to work trips via car.

- A majority of journey to work trips are made by car, and a majority of these trips to work are short distance trips.
- The majority of the national cycle network and regional routes are on road, meaning that cyclists have to mix with traffic
- Lack of lighting and development along the roads in the network, increasing the safety challenges
- Network gaps, particularly Taunton to Langport and Somerton to Glastonbury/Street
- Driving to work is embedded in the journey to work culture which could make it difficult instigate use of sustainable travel modes as an alternative.

3.10 REGIONAL AMENITIES & FACILITIES

Introduction

3.10.1. This section of the report sets out the locations of key amenities within the study area, such as food stores, education facilities, leisure facilities and health facilities; all of which form key trip generators and require service by a robust transport network so that no-one is deprived of opportunities by poor transport accessibility.

Amenity Provision

Health Facilities

3.10.2. Figure 3.35 shows medical facilities provided within the study area.

Figure 3.35: Medical Facilities

3.10.3. As previously mentioned in relation to the region's ageing population, the only hospital facilities in the area are located in the larger towns, with A&E facilities being constrained to Taunton & Yeovil. This creates a **challenge** for those seeking medical aid and do not have access to a private car.

3.10.4. In regard to other medical facilities, there is actually a reasonably good coverage of pharmacies, dentists, opticians and sports/fitness facilities in the area, with at least one of each being available in Langport and Somerton, whilst most smaller towns have pharmacies and some sports facilities.

Education Facilities

3.10.5. Figure 3.36 shows the distribution of education facilities within the study area.

Figure 3.36: Educational Facilities

3.10.6. Review of Figure 3.36 shows that there is a gap present in the coverage of educational facilities in that there is a notable lack of Further Education opportunities within the area. Those nearest to the study area are Yeovil College University Centre and University College Somerset, the latter located to the north Taunton.

3.10.7. As set out previously, these locations are currently poorly connected by modes other than car. Therefore, there is likely a supressed market for public transport travellers to/from the education facilities identified within the study area and sites further afield, such as the universities of Bath and Bristol. This latent demand is supported in Figure 3.42 where circa 12% of survey respondents

stated they'd use a new railway station and service in the vicinity of Langport & Somerton to access education facilities.

Food Stores

3.10.8. Figure 3.37 shows the location of food stores within the South Somerset area.

Figure 3.37: Food Stores

3.10.9. As can be observed from the preceding figure, there is only one food store of mid-size or above located in Somerton, with none in Langport. This means that residents are dependent upon travel to Street, Taunton or Yeovil to gain access to a greater variety of food choices[25]. Therefore, any Option

[25] There is also a possibility that these longer journeys will be required to attain the best prices. There is a growing amount of evidence that smaller stores don't offer the same range of deals or prices as larger stores, even of the same brand. As such, a lack of access to larger stores might form a risk of food poverty. Whilst online shopping has grown markedly, particularly during the pandemic, there are those who are not comfortable with shopping online, or who prefer the experience of shopping in person. It is these people who will gain the most benefit of improved transport accessibility.

should consider the Challenge of improving access to more food options in the neighbouring towns accessible by railway.

Summary

3.10.10. To summarise this section of the report, there is a lack of amenity choice present within the study area, particularly in regards to food stores and further education opportunities. This creates a **challenge** of providing improved access to those locations where more choice is available. For food stores, this would most likely be Taunton, Yeovil or Street. For further education, this is likely to be Taunton or Yeovil again, of the provision of connections to strategic/long distance transport such as rail to access facilities further afield, such as the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England.

3.10.11. There is also a **challenge** in the need to provide sustainable access to hospital facilities, exacerbated by the ageing population discussed earlier within this chapter.

3.11 RAILWAY STATION SURVEY

3.11.1. A survey was undertaken in September 2021 that sought to understand how residents of the study area perceived the idea of a new station between Langport & Somerton. This survey attracted responses from 805 residents of the area.

3.11.2. Figure 3.38 shows how frequently the residents surveyed use the rail network.

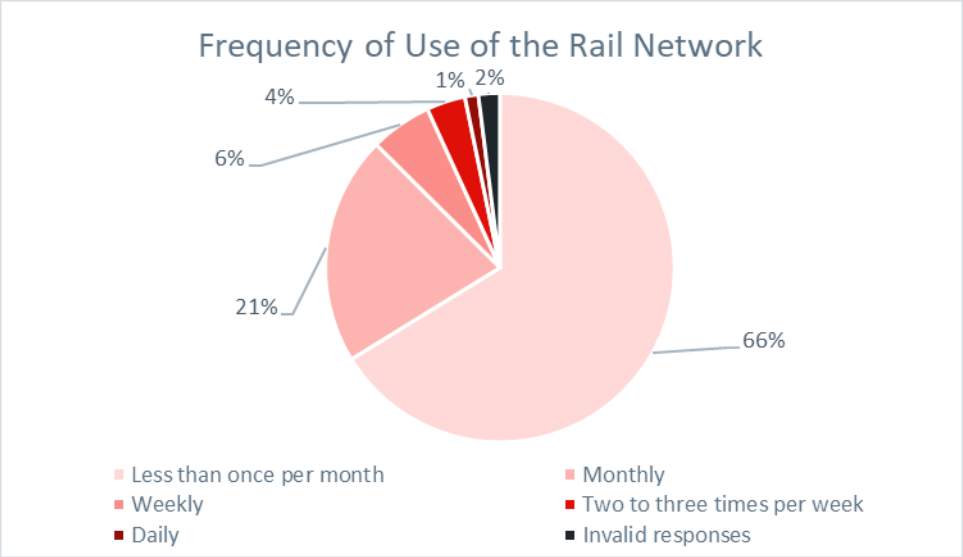


Figure 3.38: Frequency of Use of the Rail Network

3.11.3. The figure supports the conclusions relating to Figure 3.22 in rail being an infrequently used mode within the study area, with 66% of respondents using rail less than once per month. A further 21% only use rail monthly.

3.11.4. Figure 3.39 shows the current distance between residents of the study area and their nearest railway station.

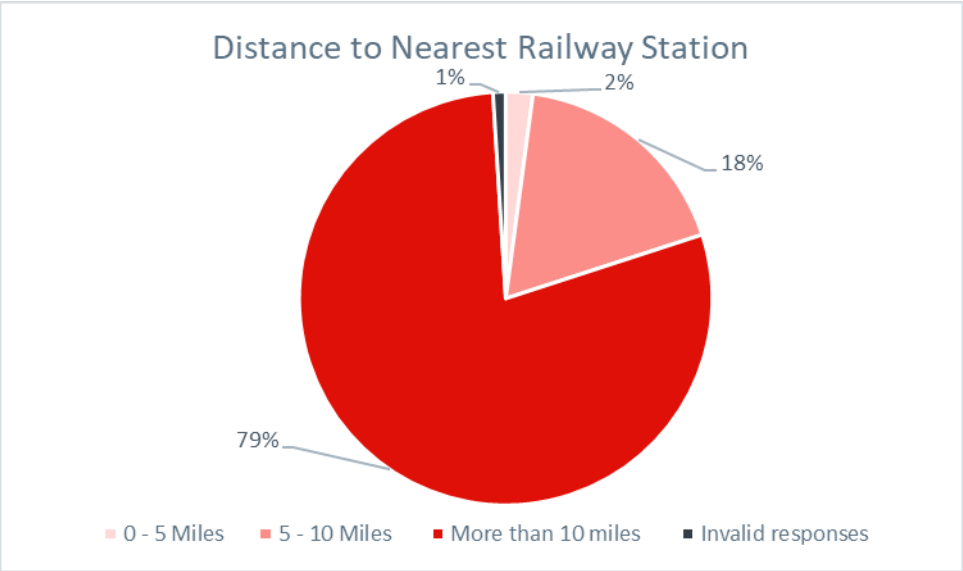


Figure 3.39: Distance to Nearest Railway Station

3.11.5. The figure demonstrates that the majority (79%) of respondents live over 10 miles from a railway station. This presents several challenges:

- The need to use public transport or car to access existing stations. Considering the public transport challenges identified previously, the current access mode is likely to be car, adding to traffic.
    - This also produces the concurrent requirement for parking land at the station, which might be a challenge depending on the location.
- The inability for respondents to access rail via walking or cycling in all but 2% of instances[26].

3.11.6. Figure 3.40 shows the stated likelihood of the respondents to use a new station were one to be provided.

[26] Assuming that people would be willing up to walk 1 mile or cycle up to 5 miles to access a station.

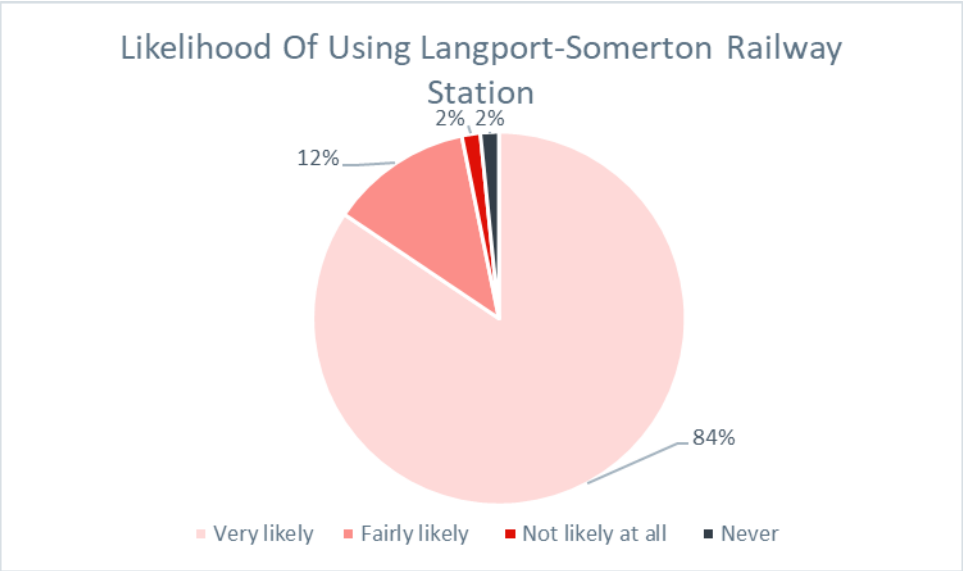


Figure 3.40: Likelihood of Using Langport-Somerton Railway Station

3.11.7. Figure 3.40 shows that 84% of respondents would be likely to use a station within the study area, with a further 12% fairly likely to use one. On the basis that the respondents to the survey represent the majority of residents within the study area, this would suggest considerable latent demand for a new railway station within the study area. It should be noted that people have been observed to respond to such stated preference surveys with the 'correct' answer- i.e. they would use the new service. However, whilst their might be an element of bias within the survey findings, there is still an overwhelming majority of respondents who stated interest in using the new station.

3.11.8. Figure 3.41 shows how frequently the survey respondents would likely use the station should it be provided, whilst Figure 3.42 shows how the survey respondents were likely to use the station were it to be provided. For the latter figure, survey respondents were able to reply to multiple options, which is why the total is over 100%.

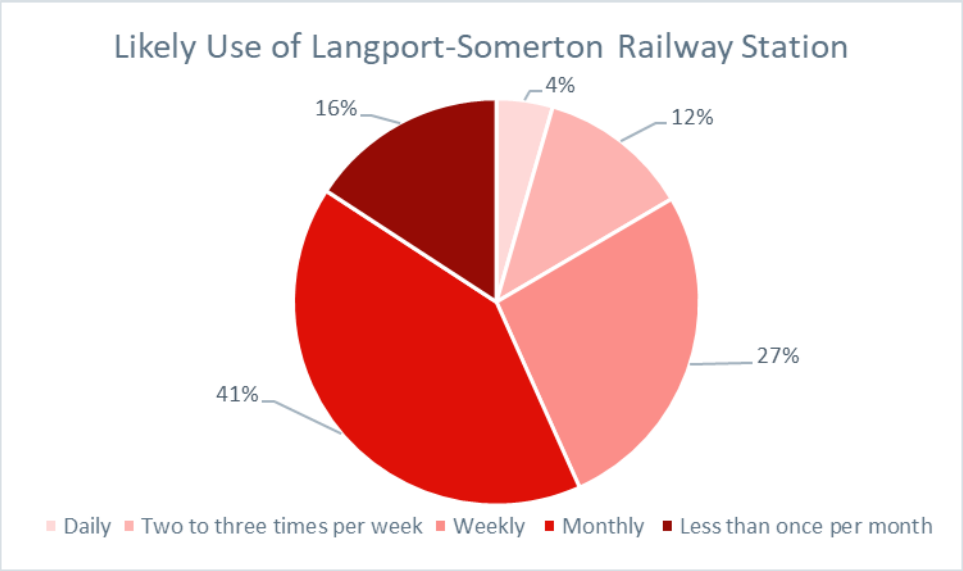


Figure 3.41: Likely Use of Langport-Somerton Railway Station

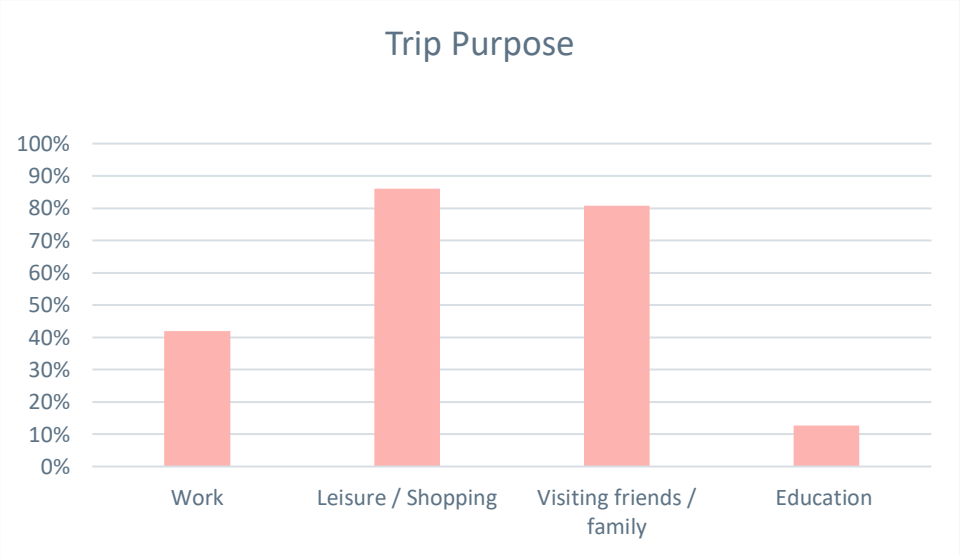


Figure 3.42: Likely Trip Purpose for Rail Trip

3.11.9. Figure 3.41 and Figure 3.42 demonstrate that providing a station would be of benefit to a wide variety of users utilising rail for a range of purposes. As can be observed, the majority of respondents would use the station for leisure or shopping purposes, as well as visiting friends and family. This supports the challenges identified previously regarding a need for improved public transport to neighbouring population centres where a greater range of amenities and venues is available. There is also a substantial portion (40%) who stated they would use the station for work purposes. This would be considerable shift away from the 0-3% travel-to-work mode share held by rail in the area.

3.11.10. Finally, 10% of respondents stated that they would use the station to access further education. Again, this reflects the preceding challenges relating to access to such opportunities as such venues aren't accessible by public transport under the current

3.11.11. Figure 3.43 shows how the survey respondents were likely to access the station were it to be provided. For this question, survey respondents were able to reply to multiple options, which is why the total is over 100%.

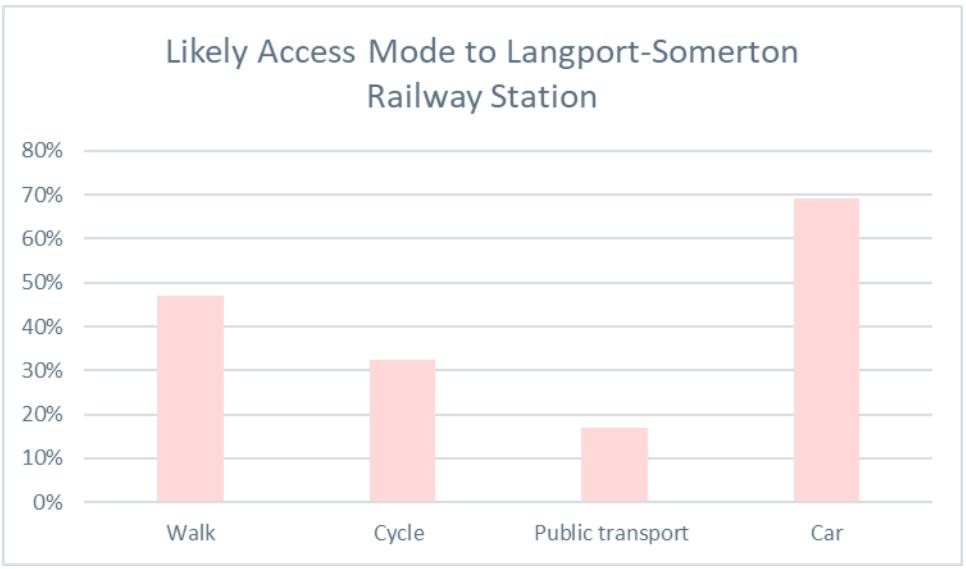


Figure 3.43: Likely Access Mode to Langport-Somerton Railway Station

3.11.12. This shows that providing a station would partially mitigate the challenge identified previously regarding the need to drive or use the bus to access rail transport, instead encouraging use of walking or cycling.

3.11.13. However, a large percentage of respondents also stated that they would sometimes or always use their car to access a station. This raises a challenge of coordinating the station's delivery with public transport users to encourage an increase in its use for long distance trips, as well as aligning well with national policy as identified in Chapter 2.

3.11.14. The survey results set out in Figure 3.43 also suggest that any station site delivered should be well connected by walking or cycling routes, ideally those of a standard accessible by a range of users, to support the walking and cycling survey respondents and encourage a mode shift away from car in the longer term.

Summary

3.11.15. Overall, the survey results identify a strong desire for the provision of a new railway station. Prospective users identify a desire to use rail for long-distance trips to leisure/shopping opportunities and education, supporting the **challenges** identified in the preceding paragraphs. The survey results also identify that, should provision of a station be identified as the preferred option at the high-level sifting stage, then the site should be well connected by walking, cycling and public transport links to minimise replacement of long-distance car trips with local ones accessing the station.

4 PLANNED FUTURE GROWTH

4.1 CONTEXT

4.1.1. As established in Chapter 2,future housing and employment in the study area is primarily covered by the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028). The study area also includes the Taunton & West Somerset Local Plan and the Mendip Local Plan. The boundaries of housing and employment developments included within these documents are set out in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 for Housing and Employment respectively.

Figure 4.1: Somerset Local Plan Development – Housing Sites

Figure 4.2: Somerset Local Plan Development – Employment Sites

4.2 LANGPORT & SOMERTON

Housing

4.2.1. Between Langport and Somerton there is a requirement for 374 new homes (with 289 already committed in Langport and 286 already committed in Somerton) to be provided by 2028. Since the policy was published there have been 163 completions in Langport and 24 completions in Somerton. These developments are shown as an inset in Figure 4.1.

Employment

4.2.2. Policy SS3 Delivering New Employment Land states that the Local Plan will assist in the delivery of 5.07 hectares of additional employment land in Somerton and 3.67 hectares of additional employment land in Langport beyond existing commitments. The aim is to provide choice and more self-containment of jobs within the communities. The total number of jobs to be delivered are 284 jobs in Langport and 307 jobs in Somerton over the period of the Local Plan. These developments are shown in Langport in Figure 4.2, whilst the latter's houses are proposed to be delivered across the town as a whole.

4.3 STUDY AREA

Housing

4.3.1. Outside of Langport & Somerton, Figure 4.1 shows that the majority of developments in the study area are in the larger urban areas, particularly in the south and west of the area. The primary concentrations of new dwellings are in Chard, east Taunton and northern Yeovil. There are also mid-size developments in Glastonbury, Street and Crewkerne. Review of Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 in conjunction shows that many of these are supported by proposed employment opportunities, as well as existing employment sites in the larger towns.

4.3.2. However, there is still a **challenge** to provide links between the proposed housing developments and proposed employment sites to ensure residents have access to a wide range of opportunities in line with their ambitions and interests.

Employment

4.3.3. As set out in the preceding paragraphs, the local plan's proposed employment sites are reasonably well correlated with the housing developments, with concentrations being in Taunton, Chard, Crewkerne and Yeovil; as well as sites in both Glastonbury and Street. Whilst, as aforementioned, these locations are reasonably well connected internally, there is a **challenge** to provide links between the north of the district and south of the districts, to allow residents of the former to access proposed employment sites within the latter.

Other Developments

4.3.4. In addition to the Housing and Employment sites illustrated in Figure 4.1 Figure 4.2, a specialist development is proposed at the Taunton Campus of the Advanced Centre for Engineering (ACE). This development, supported by the Heart of the South West LEP, reinforces the previously identified **challenge** of connecting the study area into the further education opportunities available at Taunton and other conurbations.

5 THE CASE FOR CHANGE

5.1.1. Over the course of the preceding Chapters, a series of Challenges have been identified. Meeting these challenges presents a substantial case for change. The Challenges facing the study area are summarised below:

- Reducing CO_2 emissions from transport;
- Support high productivity, high quality, lifestyles;
- Support the delivery of new homes and jobs in both the study area and surrounding districts;
- Population growing with an increasing number of elderly residents;
- Reduce the high car mode share for travel in the area;
- Provide better access to Higher and Further education, including new developments such as the ACE expansion in Taunton;
- Provide better access to employment opportunities;
- Provide better public transport access to key local and regional destinations;
- Utilise highway infrastructure in an efficient fashion;
- Bridge the gap in rail access in the area between Taunton & Castle Cary;
- Increased Bus and car journey time unreliability due to increasing traffic congestion;
- Reversing the long and short term trends towards increased traffic on the region's roads;
- Engage with strong local support for provision of better access to rail, ideally in the form of a new station[27]; and
- Encourage greater local health through enhanced active mode usage.

5.1.2. These challenges have been used in identifying the Objectives set out in Chapter 6.

[27] This support has been expressed by Langport Parish Council in a 2012 consultation exercise, as well as by the majority of respondents to the 2021 Rail Station Survey.

6 OBJECTIVES

6.1.1. The objectives are shaped by the policy context and the case for change set out in the preceding chapter. Ultimately, they will be used to evaluate the success of the outturn scheme and are therefore set with respect to the DfT guidance on SMART objectives.

6.1.2. In line with DfT guidance, a hierarchy of objectives has been established:

- **Strategic ambitions** (Impacts) – which the intervention contributes to
- **Scheme (Intermediate) objectives** (Outcomes) – which the intervention needs to deliver for the strategic ambitions to be realised
- **Operational objectives** (Outputs) – desirable outputs to achieve the intermediate objectives.

The strategic ambitions support the policy aims set out in Section 1.3 to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, reduce road congestion, support economic growth and improve the transport experience of users.

Table 6.1: Scheme Policy Aims and Strategic Ambitions

Key Documents Referenced	Policy Aims	Strategic Ambitions
National Planning Policy Framework, 2019 South Somerset Adopted Local Plan 2006-2028, 2015 Mendip Local Plan, 2014 West Somerset Local Plan, 2032 Somerset Future Transport Plan, 2011	Support sustainable employment and housing growth at regionally significant locations to deliver on the Levelling-Up agenda	Support economic growth and sustainable development
	To develop sustainable transport modes which will contribute to the delivery of carbon net zero	To reduce carbon emissions through reduced road traffic and congestion and improve air quality
	To provide improved transport integration to improve the quality of life for rural communities	Social cohesiveness and Connectivity
	To offer alternative transport choices which provide enhanced accessibility to improved sustainable transport options	Social cohesiveness and Connectivity
	To offer alternative transport choices which provide enhanced accessibility to improved sustainable transport options	Improve the experience of transport users
	To increase access to higher and further education opportunities and support high productivity, high quality, lifestyles	Encourage further education among existing residents and for young people to seek to live in the area

6.1.3. The strategic ambitions covering economic growth, inclusiveness and social well-being are in turn captured in scheme and operational objectives.

Table 6.2: Scheme and Operational Objectives

Strategic Ambitions	Scheme Objectives	Operational Objectives	Proposed Metrics
Enable economic growth by…	Supporting sustainable economic recovery post-pandemic and longer-term growth.	Support sustainable integrated public transport connectivity between residents and employment and residents and education and healthcare.	Labour market catchment populations. Public transport demand.
		Increase access to further education opportunities.	Level of qualification attained by population. Across-day journey times to/from key towns in study area.
		Support the growth of the local tourist industry.	Public transport demand. Across-day journey times to/from key attractions in study area.
		Mitigate the impacts of local highway congestion.	Highway journey times.
Benefit the environment by…	Reducing the environmental impacts of the transport network.	Support mode shift from the private car to public transport reducing carbon emissions. Achieve net zero emissions from operations.	Highway-kilometres. CO_2 Emissions. Ticket purchase at local railway stations.[28]
		Reduce emissions harmful to health at monitoring sites.	NO_2 emissions at AQMAs in Taunton and Yeovil AQMA sites.
Improve social well-being by…	Improve health, well-being and Quality of Life.	Enhance mobility options, particularly for non-car available travellers to address local social inequality. Provide accessible public transport services which link to bus, walking and cycling connections.	Population catchment for public transport services. Non-car ownership households' catchment for public transport.
	Ensuring a safe environment in which to travel.	Reduce car traffic and encourage shift to safer modes.	Reduction in PICs on regional highway network.

[28] These would include Taunton, Yeovil Pen Mill, Yeovil Junction, Castle Cary, Bridgwater, and any new station delivered through options considered.

7 OPTION IDENTIFICATION AND LONG LIST

7.1 OVERVIEW

This section summarises the longlist of options considered as part of the SOBC process. This considers at a high level the options for achieving improved transport links within the study area centred on Langport-Somerton. A brief description of each option in terms of the likely service levels and infrastructure required is provided in Table 7-1, below.

7.2 OPTION ASSESSMENT

LONG LIST

Table 7.1: Longlist of Proposed Options

Scenario	Description (Service)	Description (Infrastructure)
Reference Case	Baseline 2019 transport network with Langport-Somerton connected to the rail network at Taunton, Castle Cary and Yeovil.	As existing – no new stations between Taunton and Castle Cary
Rail Option	Provision of a new railway station between Langport & Somerton, served by an hourly service operating between Westbury and Taunton. This service would also call at Castle Cary, Bruton and Frome.	New station in area of Langport & Somerton.
Road Option	Improvements to the Strategic and Local Road Networks to improve travel times by road and reduce congestion.	Upgrades to the SRN to reduce journey times and enhanced economic connectivity. Improvements to capacity on the A378 and A372/A37 corridor at and on the approaches to Taunton.
Bus Option	Enhancements to bus links between Langport/Somerton and Taunton, Castle Cary and Yeovil to provide links to existing rail services. These services would be aligned to connect with rail timetables. Baseline 2019 bus timetable serving Taunton, Castle Cary and Yeovil improved to offer regular hourly service on Service 54 and 77.	Bus infrastructure upgrades at existing stations Additional services/vehicles to enhance frequencies

Scenario	Description (Service)	Description (Infrastructure)
	Offer improved bus/rail interchange re-routeing buses to station entrances.	
Active Travel & Future Mobility Option	Baseline 2019 transport network with Langport-Somerton connected to the rail network at Taunton, Castle Cary and Yeovil.	Provision of and enhancements to cycle links between Langport/Somerton and Taunton. Castle Cary and Yeovil. Future Mobility interventions such as e-scooters and e-bikes. Car-sharing and car-pooling schemes.

The options set out in Table 7-1 are considered in more detail below against the identified scheme objectives in Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 by way of a Multi-Criteria Assessment.

RAIL OPTION

7.2.1. The rail option identified as most viable for delivery in the study area is a package containing a new railway station and associated train service in the vicinity of Langport and Somerton. The station would be served by one train per hour in each direction, with the following three options identified for the nature of service provision:

1. Station being served by an hourly call from on the existing GWR Semi-Fast service between London Paddington and Devon/Cornwall. This scenario is considered unlikely due to adverse impact on journey times between the above core destination groups.
2. Station being served by proposed Go-Op Swindon – Bishops Lydyeard service. This service is currently being discussed between Go-Op and Network Rail as to potential pathing, with an option for a call at Langport/Somerton being included in discussion.
3. Station being served by a new 'local' service on the line. This would call at Westbury, Frome, Bruton, Castle Cary and Taunton. Timetable analysis has identified an hourly path for a service of this nature.

7.2.2. For comparison against other Options at this stage of sifting, the operational costs and potential benefits of the last of three options is considered. This is on the basis that WSP's study has shown such a service is deliverable, whilst the other scenarios aren't certain for delivery, or would have adverse impacts on users outside of the study area.

7.2.3. The proposed station would include a dedicated bus interchange facility, walking and cycling links to nearby centres and sufficient car parking spaces to function as a park-and-ride station for local towns that do not have access to the rail network, such as Glastonbury and Street.

7.2.4. This option would resolve the study area's lack of access to the railway network identified in the preceding chapters, as well as benefiting local bus operations by providing a central hub between currently disparate services. By bringing these facilities together, the option would also align with the National Bus Back Better and Great British Railways objectives of encouraging coordination of bus and rail services. A rail-based intervention would provide the most reliable, rapid journey time

improvements out of the options under consideration as it would not be influenced by the congestion on the principal roads or winding nature of the secondary roads.

7.2.5. As well as strong alignment with national policy, the scheme is also supported by the local authorities and Network Rail, with such a scheme being mentioned within regional and national policy documentation.

7.2.6. Finally, this option could be integrated with elements of the bus option to provide a transformative enhancement of accessibility in the area.

HIGHWAY OPTION

7.2.7. There are several interventions already being delivered on the region's highway network, focused on reducing congestion accessing Taunton and Yeovil from the east and west, respectively. These schemes are likely to benefit travellers from the study network by improving car journey time reliability, as well as supporting any bus services on those corridors.

7.2.8. The disadvantage of road capacity interventions is that road infrastructure is often costly, as well as taking considerable amounts of time to deliver due to the need to consult residents and optimise the scheme.

7.2.9. Additionally, there is increasing evidence that increasing road capacity is unsustainable in the long term, due to traffic induced by more reliable journey times resulting in additional traffic, offsetting the capacity uplift initially desired. There are also challenges regarding emissions and the removal of land which could provide economic benefit if not taken for road use. As such, and supported by local policy, sustainable transport options are inherently preferable.

7.2.10. Finally, the highway option does not provide the same journey time reliability as the rail alternative will. During the calculation of the journey times, detailed further in the next section, car was shown to have a journey time variation of +/- 17 minutes to Taunton and 14 minutes to Castle Cary. For travellers intending to catch an onward rail service, or make an appointment, this variation in travel time causes uncertainty on arrival times. As set out in the previous paragraph, whilst a highway intervention might alleviate this issue in the short term, induced traffic would likely negate the benefit in the long term.

BUS OPTION

7.2.11. A Bus Alternative option would be based upon the Bus Service Improvement Package, with some additional elements to overcome specific **challenges** to accessibility identified in Section 3.6. It would not be reasonable to include the BSIP as a Do Minimum scenario on the grounds that funding for the BSIP improvements has yet to be agreed.

7.2.12. At present, services in the study area are generally low frequency, operating daily or with headways of 1-2 hour between services. Of the latter group, 3 out of 4 services operate with SCC subsidy, suggesting that there's limited demand for these routes in their current form, whilst the former, daily group, suggest a low demand for local bus services. This issue is compounded by limited operating hours, preventing shift workers using the network.

7.2.13. Another challenge is that the region's bus routes are often indirect, with some movements requiring several changes between buses and/or the bus service being taking an indirect path between larger towns to provide coverage to smaller ones.

7.2.14. Finally, there is currently limited bus/rail connectivity, with bus stations/stops in both Taunton and Castle Cary being more than fifteen minutes' walk from the railway station.

7.2.15. In order to overcome these challenges, and drawing upon the BSIP proposals, the bus alternative would include:

- Hourly services on all bus corridors, with a primary focus on Services 54 and 16 connecting Langport and Somerton with Taunton and Bridgwater respectively.
- Service re-timetabling to deliver a maximum of ten minutes interchange time between bus services and between bus and rail services.
- Provide a new bus service connecting Langport and Somerton to Castle Cary and the town's railway station;

7.2.16. These operational interventions would be supported by smart card ticketing and improved stop/interchange facilities as set out in the Somerset Future Transport Plan.

7.2.17. There are, however, several challenges to delivering the package.

7.2.18. Firstly, funding would be required to implement the package. At present, services are either subsidised or very low frequency. This reflects the low level of demand for the bus identified in the census analysis. Establishing the new route and enhanced frequencies identified in the Alternative would likely require more subsidy to set up. Whilst the step-change in service provision in the study area would likely lead to some modal shift and new bus demand, it is unlikely this would be sufficient to cover costs, due to the area's low-density population. As such, there would be a need for ongoing support.

7.2.19. Secondly, there is limited opportunity for journey time improvement. The current services are either relatively direct already *or* indirect due to a need to provide access for residents of the smaller settlements. As such, shortening journey times would be difficult without possibly isolating those in the smaller settlements who do not have car access *or* without investment in infrastructure to allow greater bus speed on existing alignments. Due to slow journey times, the bus will remain an unattractive option for most of those with access to a car.

ACTIVE TRAVEL & FUTURE MOBILITY OPTION

7.2.20. As indicated in the review of travel to work mode shares, there is already a reasonable number of people walking and cycling within the study area. This is supported by several walking and cycle routes recognised by Sustrans and local authority organisations. There is also a proposal extant for a new cycle route connecting Langport with the neighbouring village of Curry Rivel.

7.2.21. This package would seek to support the existing walking and cycle users and encourage further mode shift in favour of active travel, to help in meeting environmental and public health goals. Key elements considered by this option include:

- Enhancement of Regional Cycle Route 30 between Langport & Somerton to support observed commuter traffic;
- Enhancement of Regional Cycle Route 30 route east from Somerton to Castle Cary, to support observed commuter traffic and rail access; and
- Enhancement of cycle links between Glastonbury and Street, with an extension south to Somerton.

7.2.22. Improvements to active travel links between the town would encourage the use of sustainable modes for the considerable commuter movements already shown between these towns identified in the TTW study, as well as increasing access to a range of medical facilities.

7.2.23. However, due to the distances involved, this option would do little to solve the wider challenges of low accessibility to higher education facilities located in Taunton and Yeovil, which are too far from Langport & Somerton, not to mention Glastonbury and Street. Additionally, as discussed in Section 3.9, the cycle routes are generally quite indirect, using secondary roads. As such, considerable land take alongside the roads, with associated negotiation and cost, would be required to provide competitive journey times required for regular commuter usage.

7.2.24. It would also not necessarily engage with the issues of an ageing population. Aside from potential health benefits of increased physical activity the majority of medical facilities and amenities are on the periphery of the study area and also outside of convenient cycling distance. Furthermore, the option would not provide for the inter-regional accessibility boost required to attract new, younger residents who would seek the opportunities provided by access to larger settlements

OPTION SIFTING

Introduction

7.2.25. This section of the report considers the alignment of each of the proposed Options against the four scheme objectives.

Supporting Sustainable Economic Recovery Post-Pandemic And Longer- Term Growth

7.2.26. A key component of economic recovery is increased regional accessibility. In order to compare each packages alignment with this objective, comparison has been made of the journey times which will be delivered under each of the Options, as well as an additional Park and Ride journey time; This has been added to reflect current rail use patterns, where passengers have to drive from Langport/Somerton to Taunton for onward rail travel to strategic destinations such as Bristol and Exeter. The Active Travel Option is not considered in this section. Whilst such improvements will improve the environment for local trips, they have little benefit on the key interurban trips which will provide residents of the study area with the greatest range of opportunities in the surrounding urban centres.

7.2.27. Each journey time is made up of the following components:

- In Vehicle Time;
- Walk Times between town/city centres and existing/proposed station sites; and
- Interchange times where applicable.
    - Rail interchange times were established from the interaction of the proposed Westbury-Taunton service with other services at Taunton.

- To reflect the Bus Service Improvement Package / Bus Alternative Option proposal to provide enhanced connectivity between bus services and between bus and rail, interchange times of ten minutes have been assumed for bus trips.[29]

7.2.28. Journey times are calculated for trips outbound from Langport and Somerton in the AM peak (07:00-09:00). This utilised relevant timetable data for rail and bus, supported by Google journey time estimation for car.

7.2.29. No wait time has been included for public transport at the boarding station. This is on the basis that local service users will be familiar with the timetables and, as such, not be waiting at the stop any longer than necessary. Wait times would in any event be similar given comparable bus and train service frequencies, although the wait time for trains services would be expected to be superior given the reliability of train. A walk time of 10 minutes is assumed to the bus stop or railway station located in the centre of Langport or Somerton. This walk time is based on the accessibility analysis.

7.2.30. The resulting journey times are set out in the following Tables:

Table 7.2: Car, Bus and Prospective Rail Journey Times (From Langport)

Destinations	Bus	Rail	P&R Average[30]	Drive Average
Taunton	58	26		45
Castle Cary	65	42		40
Bridgwater	55	67	60	28
Exeter	102	88	72	90
Bristol	146	133	113	90

[29] If the current bus service timetables were to be used, passengers arriving in Taunton from Bristol or Exeter might experience a 90 minute wait for an onward bus. This illustrates the need for greater intermodal connectivity.
[30] Assumed driving to Taunton for onward rail journey.

Figure 7.1: AM Peak Hour Journey Time from Langport

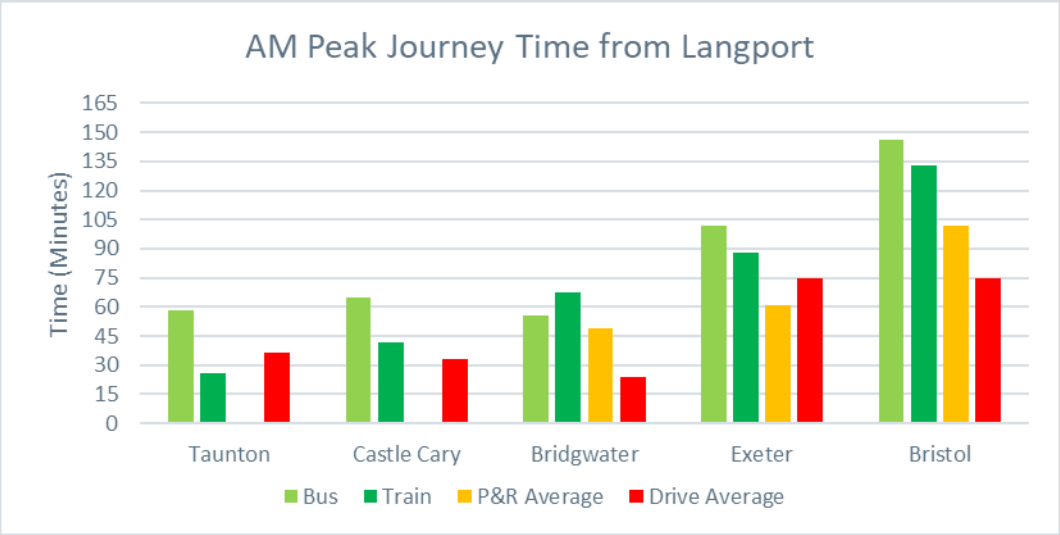
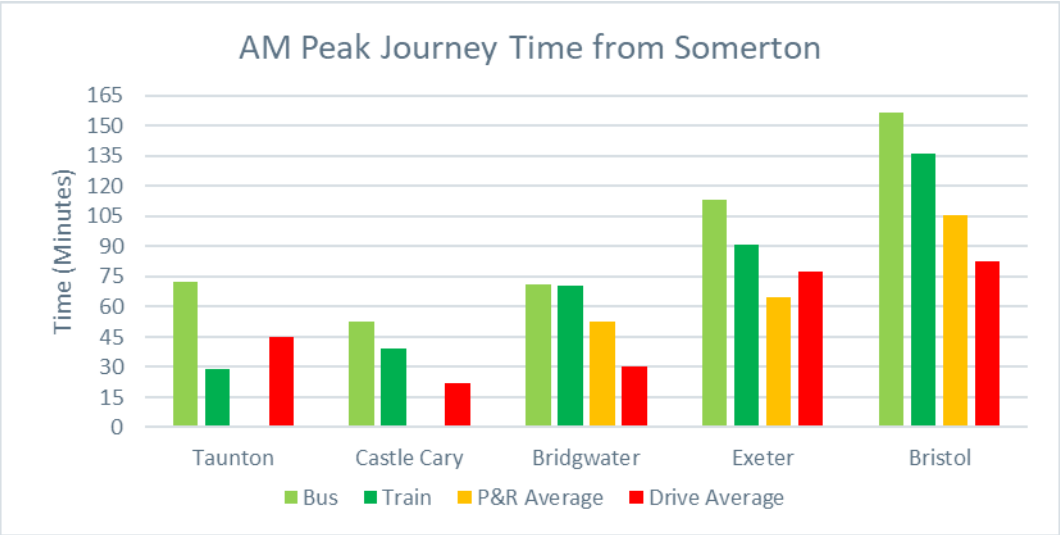
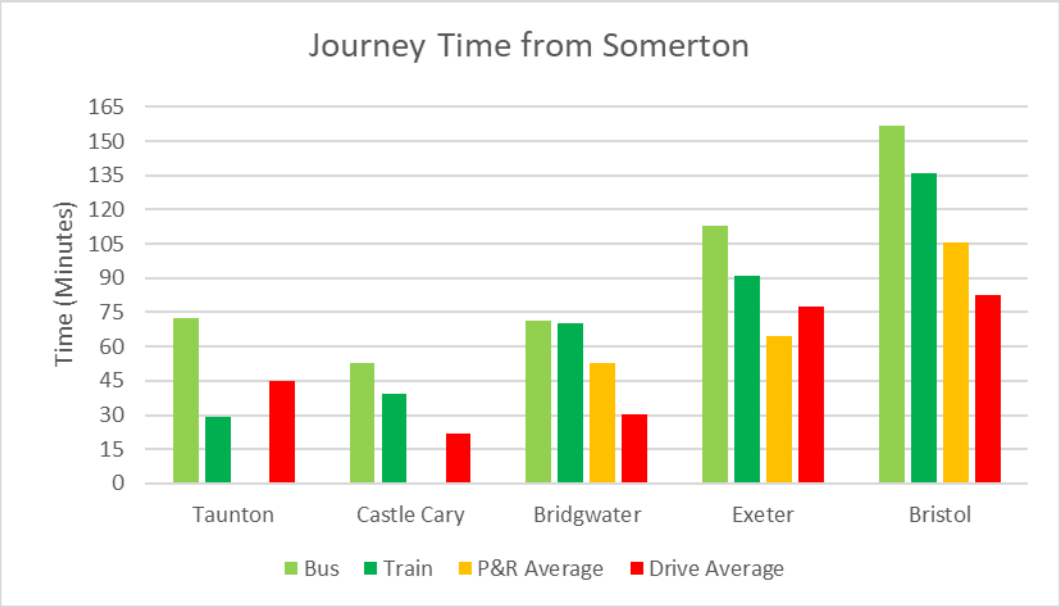


Table 7.3: Car, Bus and Prospective Rail Journey Times (From Somerton)

Destinations	Bus	Rail	P&R Average[30]	Drive Average
Taunton	72	29		55
Castle Cary	52	39		26
Bridgwater	71	70	60	35
Exeter	113	91	72	90
Bristol	157	136	113	100

Figure 7.2: AM Peak Hour Journey Time from Somerton





7.2.31. As can be observed, the private car has, on average, the shortest journey time in the majority of instances, with a key exception being on trips between Langport and Somerton and Taunton where the Rail Option provides considerable journey time savings.

7.2.32. This reflects one of the disadvantages of the highway option; Journey time unreliability caused by traffic congestion. Additionally, the private car, which would be the primary benefactor of the highway option, has considerable disbenefits[31] which prevent it from being the basis of a truly **sustainable** recovery

7.2.33. On this basis, it is important to consider the journey times of the two sustainable travel options. As can be observed in the preceding journey time analysis, the rail option provides considerably shorter journey times than bus for trips to and from key destinations within the study area. Trips to/from Langport and Somerton station sites to the key employment / rail interchange centres of Taunton and Castle Cary shows that the rail option also provides a shorter journey time than the car alternative.

7.2.34. Even where the railway journeys require an interchange, significant journey time reductions compared to bus can be observed. For example, provision of a rail option halves the journey time from Langport to Crewkerne and from Castle Cary to Bridgwater.

7.2.35. Whilst a degree of bus journey time saving might be obtained through more direct routes between the larger towns and/or infrastructure investment to give priority, the former would reduce coverage of the smaller towns and the latter would raise challenges over land use, particularly in the more constrained urban areas where priority might be needed.

7.2.36. Additionally, rail journey times would also be more reliable than an enhanced bus service, due to their not needing to interact with general traffic. Considering the outputs of the DfT AADT counts

[31] Examples Include CO_2 emissions per user, challenges and the land take required for infrastructure.

discussed in Section 3.5, which indicate increasing levels of traffic on local roads, this journey time unreliability is liable to increase in the future. Whilst the package does include priority measures in east Taunton, this would require considerable infrastructure cost in addition to those for the enhanced operations.

7.2.37. As well as the quantifiable reductions in journey times, there is also a qualitative element to selecting a rail option over bus. Whilst often unjustified, there is a negative perception associated with bus usage, something which the BSIP acknowledges. This is partly reflected in the results of the Railway Station survey detailed in Section 3.11, where only 20% of prospective rail users would use bus to access the station. Additionally, railway stations typically become a focus of the community; providing a renewed sense of place to communities in a way that is very difficult for a bus alternative to achieve. Visitors, a key part of the likely growth in the local economy during the pandemic recovery period, are also much more likely to visit this historic Somerset Levels and the historic heritage of the market towns of Langport and Somerton if a rail station is present. Planning and navigating a rail network is far easier without the need to interchange to an unfamiliar, infrequent local bus service to reach the final destination, thus making it considerably more appealing.

7.2.38. Finally, as a contribution to Levelling-Up, a Bus Alternative improving bus connectivity to the nearest regional centres and/or railway stations is unlikely to provide the same degree of enhanced sustainable transport connectivity necessary to support Levelling-Up goals in terms of better access to employment, healthcare and education facilities. Those with limited access to a car will have improved connectivity with a Bus Alternative than the current situation. However, the potential to unlock substantive economic and social welfare benefits are much less than for a rail option offering reduced access journey times to rail services and easy onward connections at interchange stations to the regional and national rail network. The appeal of having a new accessible rail station is evident from the rail survey which found 84% of respondents would likely use a Langport-Somerton railway station.

Reducing The Environmental Impacts Of The Transport Network

7.2.39. As stated in the preceding section, the Highway Option is the least likely of the four Options to provide long term environmental benefit. This is due to the car generating more emissions per occupant, on average, than any of the other modes being considered. Additionally, providing additional Highway capacity would require additional land take, reducing its usage for other purposes.

7.2.40. A Bus Alternative is also unlikely to provide a significant contribution to carbon reduction in line with the Climate Emergency declaration by Somerset County Council. As a less attractive travel mode for the reasons given above (longer, less reliable journey times, less attractive), the scope for mode shift from car will be limited with commensurately less reduction in car kilometres travelled and hence carbon emissions.

7.2.41. For a similar reason, the active travel option is only likely to provide minor benefits to the environment. Whilst increased walking and cycling will reduce emissions on local, intra-town trips, it does not provide a viable option for replacing the longer inter-town movements which make up a considerable portion of highway traffic in the area due to the low population densities and siting of larger amenities on the fringes of the study area or beyond.

7.2.42. As such, rail is considered to have the best likelihood of reducing the environmental impact of the transport network, by providing an attractive alternative to the car on movements both within and outside of the study area. Additionally, aside from the proposed new station and car park, this option would make use of existing infrastructure, therefore having less land take than delivering similar highway capacity would.

Improve Health, Well-Being And Quality Of Life

7.2.43. Of the four alternatives considered, the Highway Alternative is the least likely to deliver improvements to health, well-being and quality of life. This is due, in part, to the aforementioned relationship between car trips and high levels of emissions. Additionally, the presence of highway traffic can form a barrier to accessibility for non-car users, thereby denying people access to amenities which would allow them to improve their health and well-being. Finally, increasing car accessibility is likely to reduce levels of walking and cycling, thereby reducing physical activity and health.

7.2.44. Concurrently, the Active Travel Option is likely to have a strong fit with this objective, due to the investment in walking and cycling increasing the use of those modes on local trips, thereby increasing physical activity and health.

7.2.45. As aforementioned, the Rail Alternative is the most likely to provide a noticeable modal shift away from the private car within the study area. This will, in turn, increase road space available for people to walk and cycle. Furthermore, as set out previously, the reduction in car trips will lead to a parallel reduction in pollutants, providing additional health benefits. Finally, data gathered by the CIHT demonstrates that prospective users are likely to walk further to a railway station, thus directly increasing activity and health levels in comparison to the car trip which might have formed some or part of the journey previously.

7.2.46. Finally, the Bus Alternative will deliver the same modal shift and road space benefits identified in relation to rail. However, as discussed in the preceding section, the mode shift and subsequent benefits are likely to be less than those provided by rail.

Ensuring A Safe Environment In Which To Travel

7.2.47. Of the four alternatives, Bus and Rail are both a strong fit towards providing an environment in which it is safe to travel. This is due to a combination of the aforementioned modal shift reducing the number of vehicles on the road (and thus the likelihood of PICs) and the high safety performance of the public transport vehicles themselves.

7.2.48. The Highway Alternative is likely to deliver some safety improvements for road users, with improved junction design and capacity reducing the likelihood of PICs occurring. This is partially offset by the aforementioned induced demand leading to a higher number of vehicles, and concurrent risk factors, present on the network.

7.2.49. Finally, the Active Travel Alternative is likely to deliver safety benefits for users on the local corridors where investments are made, as well as off the corridor where modal shift leads to reduced car usage. However, this option is unlikely to deliver the same degree of modal shift across the region as the Rail and Bus alternatives, therefore delivering a lower sifting value than the others.

Sifting

7.2.50. On the basis of the Options Appraisal above, a multi-criteria review of the alternative mode solutions has been undertaken, comparing the proposals against the identified scheme objectives as shown in Table 7-2 below. Each option's fit with objectives is scored between 1 (Weak Fit) and 3 (Strong Fit).

7.2.51. Note that no weighting has been applied to the scoring of the objectives. This allows consideration of the results to be undertaken transparently, without bias in favour of any individual Objective.

Table 7.4: Long List Option Sifting

Scheme Objective	Highway Option	Bus-Only Option	Rail Option	Active & FM Option
Supporting sustainable economic recovery post-pandemic and longer- term growth	1	2	3	1
Reducing the environmental impacts of the transport network	1	2	3	2
Improve health, well-being and Quality of Life	1	2	3	3
Ensuring a safe environment in which to travel	2	3	3	2
TOTAL	5	9	12	8
RANK	4	2	1	3

Conclusions

7.2.52. The rail-based option scores highest as this option is best aligned with the Scheme Objectives, due to its ability to provide a strong alternative to the car, delivering the greatest increase to accessibility and providing the safest method of inter-urban travel, as well as encouraging mode shift and improving the environment.

7.2.53. Bus is shown to be the second placed option. Whilst the package of service improvements outlined in Paragraph 7.2.11 onwards would represent a step-change in local public transport accessibility, it would not deliver the same degree of regional connectivity benefits as the rail option.

7.2.54. The Active Travel Alternative is shown to be a strong fit for addressing local problems, however, as set out in paragraph 7.2.20 onward, this option does not provide the regional accessibility enhancements of the rail and bus alternatives. That being said, interventions to improve walking and cycling access to the proposed railway station would be beneficial to support its business case, as well as providing benefits to the wider community.

7.2.55. Finally, the Highway Alternative might resolve some of the challenges in the short term. However, with a risk of induced demand offsetting the capacity generated by any given scheme, as well as the

concurrent encouragement of further car trips being counter to the wider sustainability objectives, this option is not shortlisted.

Preferred Option

7.2.56. In conclusion, the multi-criteria analysis has identified the rail alternative as the best performing option. Therefore, it will be taken forward for more detailed appraisal of alternative locations for a railway station in the Langport-Somerton area.

7.3 SHORT LIST - RAIL OPTIONS

Introduction

Scheme Design

7.3.1. As set out above, Long List sifting identified that railway package consisting of a new station served by an hourly train service would best meet the Objectives set out in the preceding chapter.

7.3.2. Each station will provide the following:

- Platform length sufficient for four carriages
- Car parking with spaces for 100 vehicles, as well as provision for Electric Vehicle Charging (Cars and E-Scooters)
- CCTV and lighting to ensure passenger safety
- Cycle parking facilities
- Live information screens
- Ticket machines
- Help points
- Pedestrian footbridge and lifts to cross the lines

7.3.3. As stated in the Long List Sifting, any proposed station option would be served by an hourly train service. For the calculation of Operational Costs and Benefits of each site, it has been assumed that the service would operate between Westbury and Taunton, with intermediate calls at Frome, Bruton and Castle Cary. Timetable analysis has identified an hourly path for a service of this nature.

7.3.4. Interchange to the wider rail network would be available at Taunton, Castle Cary and Westbury network for destinations such as Exeter, Bath, Bristol, Dorchester, and London.

Review Methodology

7.3.5. In order to identify which of the station sites identified should be taken forward to SOBC stage, each site will be considered for its influence on a range of factors. These include:

Track

7.3.6. The likely environmental impact of each station was reviewed as a desk-based, high level appraisal.

Highway Access

7.3.7. This considers the alterations required to the highway network in order to access the proposed station car park and bus interchange.

Highway Car Parking

7.3.8. This considers the land available for car parking provision in support of the station, in terms of delivery feasibility and the land available for spaces and/or the integrated bus interchange.

Station Deliverability

7.3.9. This considers the ease of constructing a station with the desired infrastructure at the site under consideration.

Operations

7.3.10. This considers whether the proposed site will impact on the operation of the proposed hourly railway services calling at the station.

Signalling

7.3.11. This considers the scope of the impact on the railway signalling infrastructure, required for the safe operation of rail traffic on the line.

Environmental Impact

7.3.12. The likely environmental impact of each station was reviewed as a desk-based, high level appraisal. Appraisal elements included a review of the following

- Defra's Magic Maps;
- Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning;
- Google - Satellite imagery and Streetview;
- British Geological Survey (BGS) - Solid and drift geology digital map and online BGS geological borehole record data; and
- Somerset County Council – Interactive Map.

7.3.13. For general environmental constraints this constitutes a site study area of 1km, for ecological designations a site study area of 2km has been used, and a 10km site study area has been used for internationally designated sites. Site study areas are based upon available best practice guidance as applicable to environmental topic areas, as well as previous project experience.

Transport Planning Demand Forecasting

7.3.14. A trip rate model was developed to forecast rail demand for the four potential station sites. Trip rate models estimate the likely demand for a station by using a catchment, or catchments, around the station together with an assumed or derived number of journeys per head of population in the catchment(s).

Transport Planning Integration

7.3.15. To establish the population within a given walking/cycling distance, WSP's bespoke Walking and Cycling Isochrone tool was utilised. This produces a map layer illustrating the area reachable within a given walking or cycling time, utilising local infrastructure (roads, cycle routes, footpaths etc). This was then intersected with 2020 Office of National Statistics population data to provide an estimate of the population within walking distances up to 20 minutes.

7.3.16. This was on the basis of Chartered Institute of Highways and Transport (CIHT) Planning for Walking, widely regarded as the primary guidance on such matters, identifying that people are generally willing to walk 800 metres or approximately 10 minutes to railway stations, with 1,600

metres or 20 minutes as an upper margin. This guidance has been used as the basis of this appraisal.

MOSAIC

7.3.17. Mosaic is a cross-channel consumer classification system which segments the population into 15 groups based on demographic data. From this, we have been able to infer their likely travel needs and desires. Additionally, use of this data supports initial appraisal of who each station option might benefit and what the population's response might be.

Cost – Capital Expenditure

7.3.18. This considers the cost of delivering the stations as specified previously on the sites identified.

Cost – Operational Expenditure

7.3.19. This considers whether the site under consideration would impact the operational cost of the proposed service.

7.3.20. As per the Long Listing, no weighting has been applied to the scoring of the factors. This allows consideration of the results to be undertaken transparently, without bias in favour of any individual factor, such as civils.

Station in the centre Langport (Option 1)

Description

7.3.21. This option identifies a location in Langport, close to the town's original station. The station location and associated infrastructure is shown in Figure 7.3, below.

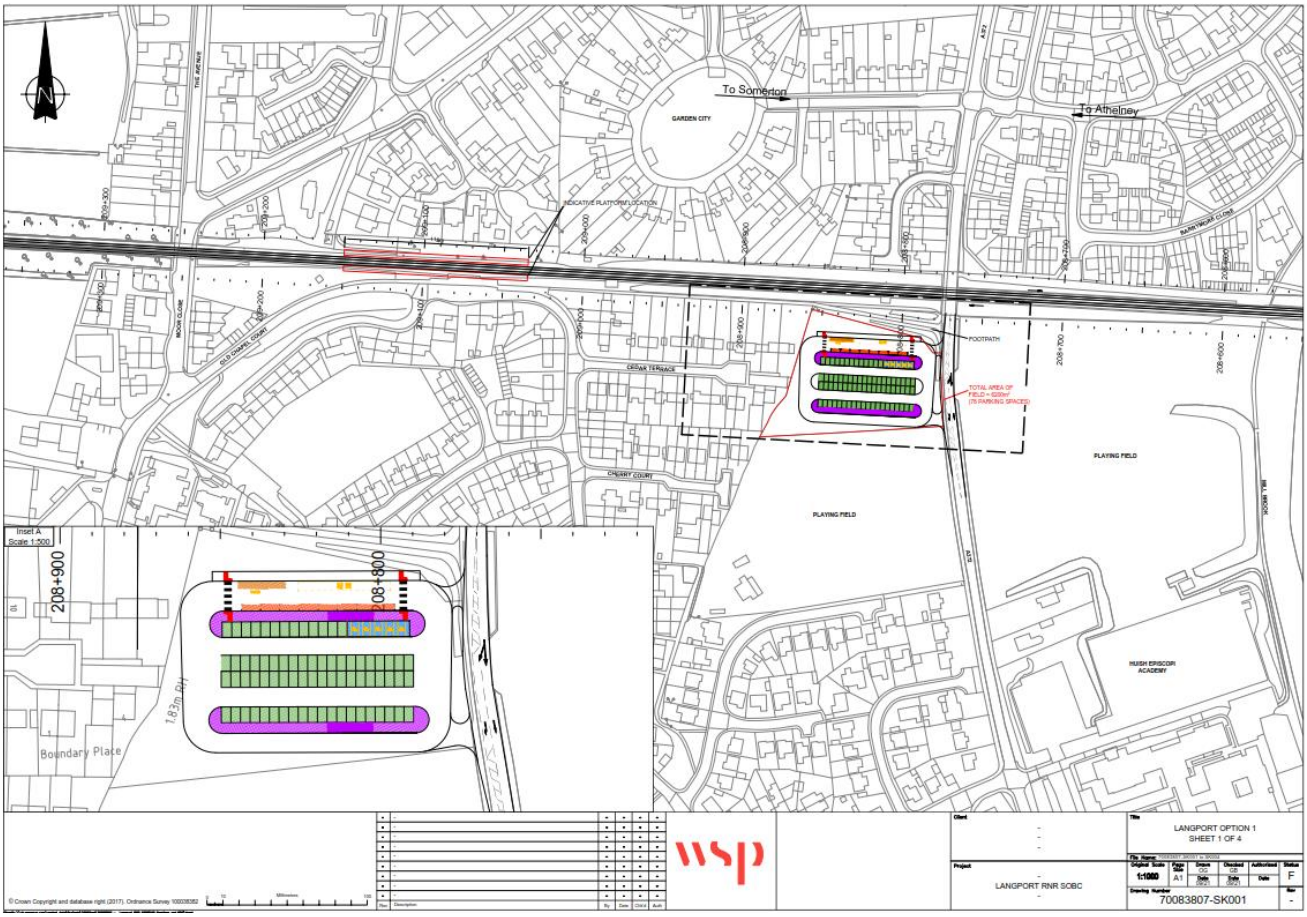


Figure 7.3: Langport Option 1 Station Location

7.3.22. The station would be accessed by road from the A372 as shown in the preceding figure. To further enhance accessibility, a pedestrian link to Eastover Road and/or Somerton Road would also be advised for inclusion in if this site were chosen. Such a link has been included in the walking and cycling appraisal below.

Track

7.3.23. This Option would be challenging to deliver from a track infrastructure position due to SSSI restrictions in place on the embankments and the site being landlocked by the nearby housing.

Highway – Access Arrangement

7.3.24. A car parking location could be provided off of the A372 as per the preceding figure. However, it would need to be 200-250m from the platforms due to the aforementioned constrained site, possibly reducing its attractiveness.

Highways – Car Parking

7.3.25. The car parking site available is below the desired 200 spaces plus bus loop that would allow the station to act as a regional railhead and public transport interchange. Space for only 80 to 100 spaces is present. There are also constraints regarding the interaction with the SSSI in the cutting, as discussed in relation to environment.

Stations

7.3.26. The ability to provide a modern station would be constrained by the land available in the cutting. There would also be challenges to reach the site from the car park due to the need for land alongside the railway to provide a footpath.

Operations

7.3.27. No constraints at this site would interfere with the operation of the proposed hourly train service. As such, there is little to differentiate it from the other sites.

Signalling

7.3.28. At the end of Langport viaduct, there are no signals within the vicinity, to which end the site would require significant signalling alterations to, ensure there are sufficient braking distances either side of the proposed site. As the up[32] direction is across the viaduct, the distant signal would likely fall within the footprint of the bridge over the River Parret, in addition to this there would be inadequate spacing beyond the station making the signal spacing along the route Irregular. Similar issues with irregular spacing are also found on the Down direction, to provide a station starter.

Environmental Impact

7.3.29. The environmental team identified that, whilst the proximity of the station to the town centre and residential areas is beneficial for accessibility, it is offset by environmental constraints. Specifically, the proposed station's operational noise and additional emissions generated by accelerating trains, as well as cars driving to the site, will have significant adverse impacts. Additionally, Langport Railway Cutting is a registered Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and would be impact by the proposed car park location.

Potential Patronage

7.3.30. Langport Option 1 has an estimated patronage of 219,000 passengers per annum, reflecting its location within easy walking distance of the town, as well as cycle distance of the surrounding settlements.

[32]This appraisal uses historic rail terminology, where "Up" is towards London or Eastbound and "Down" is away from London or Westbound.

Sustainable Mode Accessibility

Walking

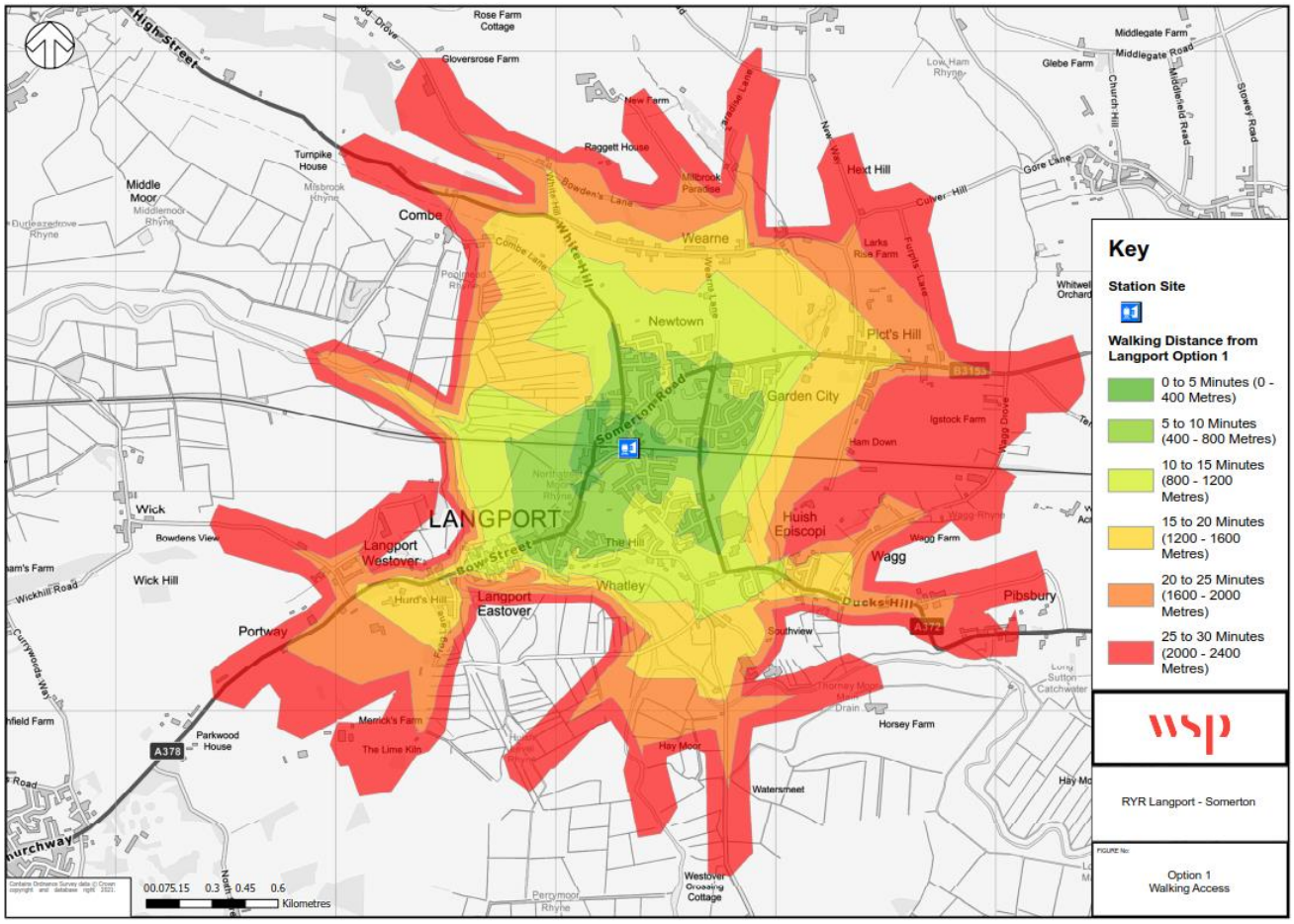


Figure 7.4: Area within Walking Distance of Langport Option 1

Time	Langport, Option 1
0-5 Minutes	280
5-10 Minutes	1,244
10-15 Minutes	651
15-20 Minutes	378
Total	2,553

Table 7.5: Population within 20 minutes' walk of Langport Option 1

7.3.31. Figure 7.4 shows that a station located at the Langport Option 1 site would be within 15 minutes walking time of the majority of the town, including the Local Plan Development sites on the current fringes. This is reflected in Table 7.5 which shows the largest population within 800m / 10minutes walk and the 2nd largest population within 1,600m / 20 minutes.

Cycling

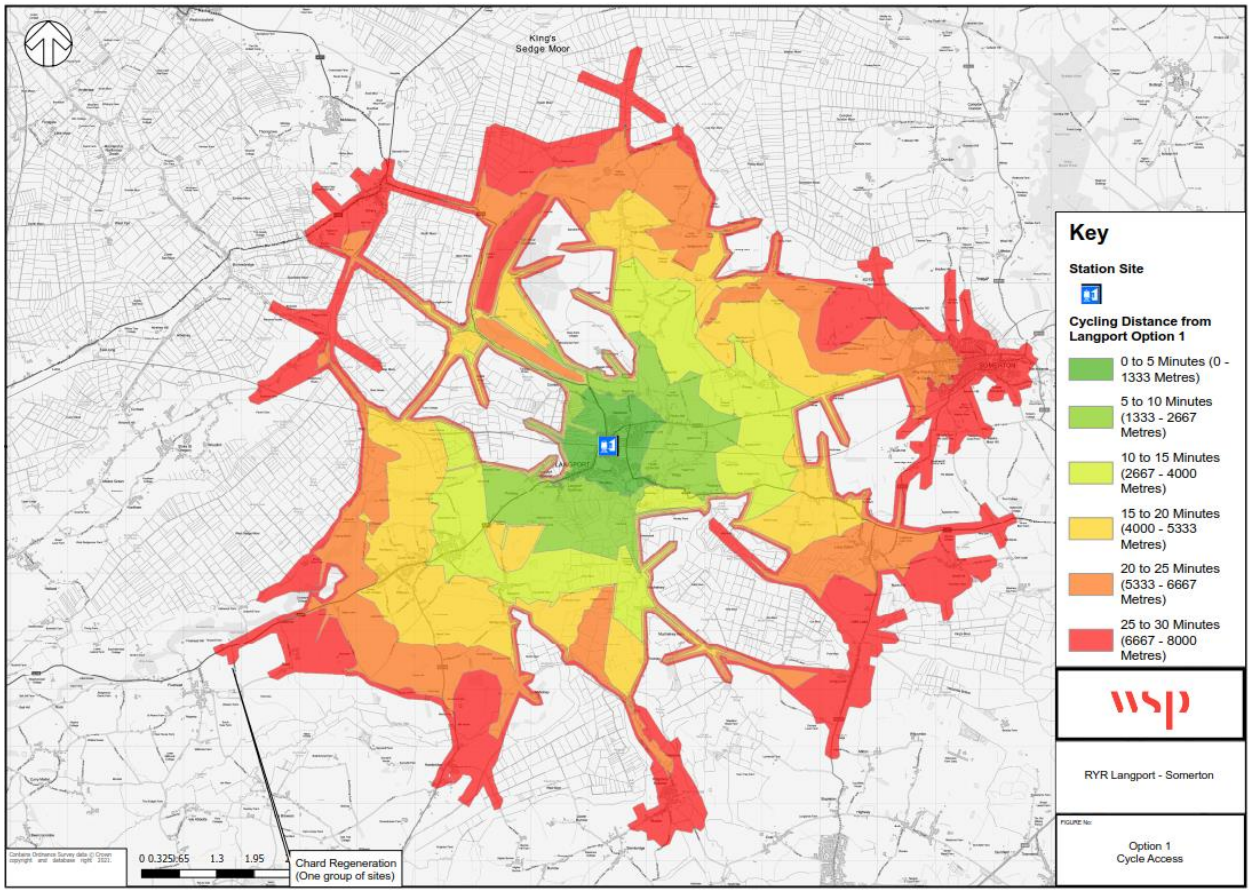


Figure 7.5: Area within Cycling Distance of Langport Option 1

Time	Langport Option 1
0-5 Minutes	2,274
5-10 Minutes	968
10-15 Minutes	1,469
15-20 Minutes	1,484
Total	6,194

Table 7.6: Population within 20 minutes cycle of Langport Option 1

7.3.32. Figure 7.5 shows that a station located at the Langport Option 1 site would be within approximately 5 minutes walking time of the majority of the town, including the Local Plan Development sites on the current fringes. Cycle usage also brings the neighbouring village of Curry Rivel within 20 minutes journey time, aiding in overcoming the challenge of poor connections between the two locations.

7.3.33. Similar to walking, this is supported by Table 7.6 showing the second greatest population within 10 minutes cycling time and a close 3rd in regards to 20 minutes. Additionally, considering that the

station is in town, it is more likely this potential demographic will use bikes due to the urban realm supporting such use, compared to Tengor lane where no walking or cycling infrastructure is present.

Public Transport

7.3.34. Of the four options, this site's central location has the greatest potential for interchange with existing bus services as, should a walking link be provided to the A378, it is a short walk to existing stops served by the No54 and No16. The proposed bus stops and interchange site are also close to the existing locations and, as such, would require minimal re-routeing for the former with the potential of being served by a minor extension of the latter.

Cost – Capital Expense

7.3.35. Construction costs for this station have been estimated at £11,904,000, making it the cheapest of the four to deliver. Cost includes risk /contingency and inflation.

Cost – Operational Expense

No constraints at this site would interfere increase the operational cost of the station and associated proposed hourly train service. As such, there is little to differentiate it from the other sites.

MOSAIC

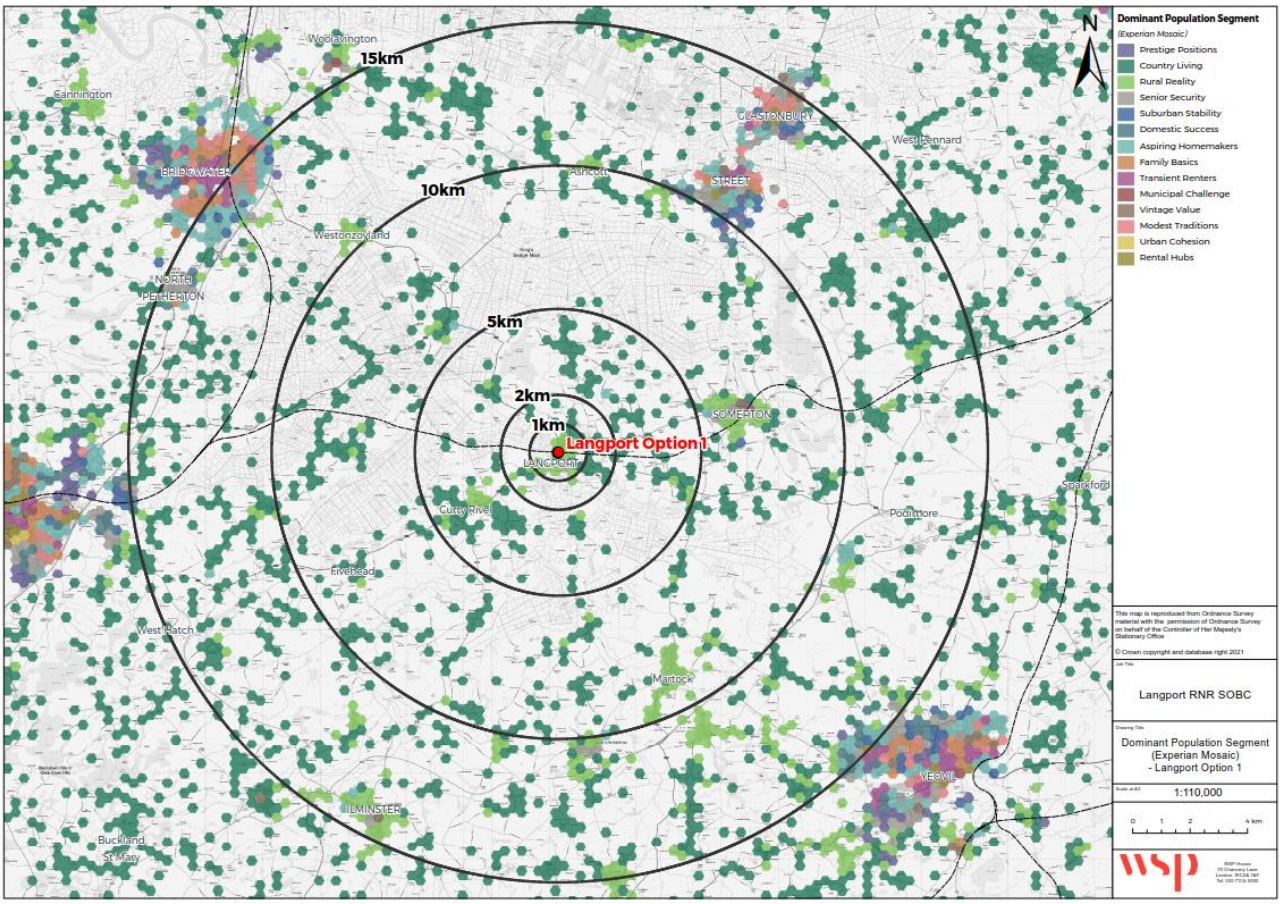


Figure 7.6: Dominant Population Segment surrounding Langport Option 1

		Population @ Langport Option 1				
		0 - 1km	1 - 2km	2 - 5km	5 - 10km	10 - 15km
A	City Prosperity	0	0	0	0	0
B	Prestige Positions	0	0	0	377	740
C	Country Living	213	636	3,374	9,913	21,411
D	Rural Reality	2,361	239	1,403	8,840	19,167
E	Senior Security	217	0	0	1,263	6,540
F	Suburban Stability	2	0	0	482	3,751
G	Domestic Success	21	0	0	642	5,173
H	Aspiring Homemakers	75	0	10	592	11,586
I	Family Basics	0	0	0	0	3,434
J	Transient Renters	0	0	0	239	4,079
K	Municipal Challenge	0	0	0	0	912
L	Vintage Value	183	0	0	600	3,265
M	Modest Traditions	0	0	0	0	4,506
N	Urban Cohesion	0	0	0	0	0
O	Rental Hubs	62	0	0	0	1,661

Table 7.7: Dominant Population Values surrounding Langport Option 1

7.3.36. Figure 7.6 shows the dominant population groups present in the areas surrounding Langport Option 1, with the quantities then provided in Table 7.7.

7.3.37. As can be observed, the predominant groups in proximity of Langport Option 1 are “Rural Reality” and “Country Living”, the former focused on the primarily on Langport and the neighbouring Curry Rivel, the latter more widely distributed across the study area.

7.3.38. MOSAIC identifies the “Country Living group as being “Well-off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life” whilst the “Country Living” group is composed of “Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities”. The former is generally described as being well off homeowners living outside easy commuting reach, whilst the latter have more moderate incomes.

7.3.39. The population identified under Country Living are the most likely market for a potential railway station, due to their generally lower car culture than those in the Rural Reality group. They are also more likely to benefit from general public transport users. That being said, the provision of a high quality public transport service, such as rail, might persuade some to change mode in a way that bus, where considerable social stigma exists, doesn’t.

Station in the east of Langport (Option 2)

Description

7.3.40. This option identifies a location east of Langport, accessed from the A372. The location and associated infrastructure are shown in Figure 7.7, below.

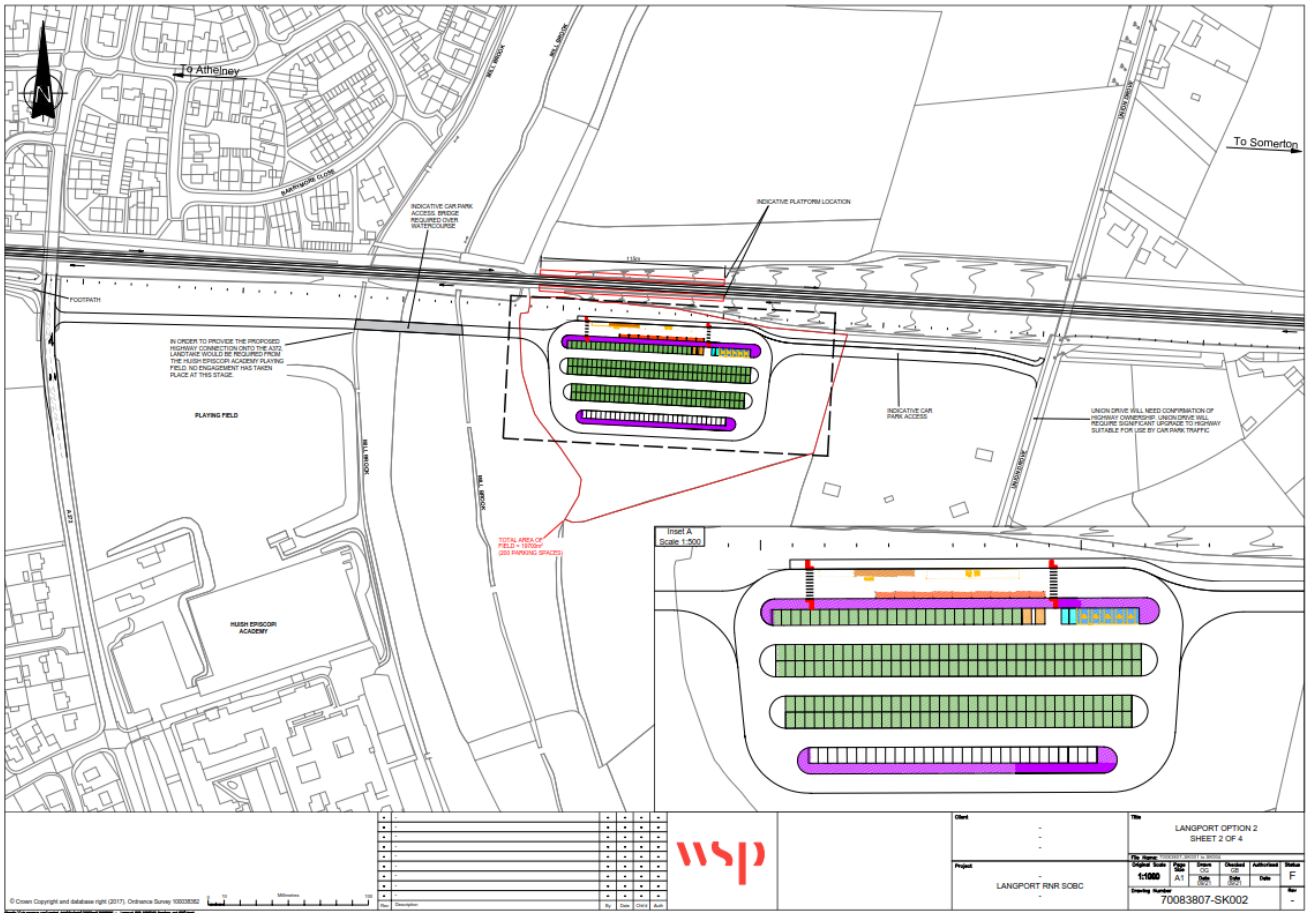


Figure 7.7: Langport Option 2 Station Location

Track

7.3.41. This option is constrained by the location, which will reduce the amount of land available in which to construct any future track work:

- Huish Episcopi playing field (likely to be limited land-take available here if at all)
- Cutting on the eastern half of the site

7.3.42. The location's flooding challenge, raised in the environmental section below, will require larger extents of track renewal with drainage renewal.

Highway – Access Arrangement

7.3.43. Access to the proposed car park could be achieved either from the A372 or off the adjacent Union Drove. However, access from the A372 would require a new section of road to be constructed

across a land currently used as playing fields and the via a new bridge structure across the watercourse known as Mill Brook and its associated flood plain.

7.3.44. It is currently not known whether Union Drove is a public highway or a private road. However, Google mapping indicates that Union Drove mainly acts as a farm access and might require extensive upgrading works (approximately 0.5km) to allow for the proposed traffic flows, including the potential widening / strengthening of an existing overbridge across the railway track.

7.3.45. According to Google mapping, Union Drove is lined by mature trees and some residential development and any upgrading works might affect a number of 3rd party land ownerships and have an adverse effect on ecology.

Highways – Car Parking

7.3.46. The area available on the land earmarked for the proposed car park is big enough to provide at least 200 car parking spaces plus a bus loop with a bus stop adjacent to the proposed station.

Stations

7.3.47. This site is located at a greenfield location with no adjacent developments, which is a point in its favour. However, there are several challenges arising from the fact that the track at this location passes through cuttings. Extensive excavation would be required to accommodate the required platform widths and maintain level access to the platforms would provide further difficulties. The site would also require new pedestrian footbridges with lifts to provide access between platforms.

Operations

7.3.48. No constraints at this site would interfere with the operation of the proposed hourly train service.

Signalling

7.3.49. This option provides better signal siting than Option 1 in the up direction, whilst having less of an impact on signal spacing in the down direction.

Environmental Impact

7.3.50. This location presents similar impact concerns to Option 1 in regard to noise and particulate pollution in proximity in relation to residential dwellings. There is also an additional concern in that the site is partially located within a Level 3 Flood Zone. Mitigating against this could add to site costs.

Potential Patronage

7.3.51. Langport Option 2 has a forecast passenger demand of 223,000 per year, reflecting the blend of Langport Residents who can access it on foot or cycle from Langport and those who can reach it from the east, such as Somerton.

Sustainable Mode Accessibility

Walking

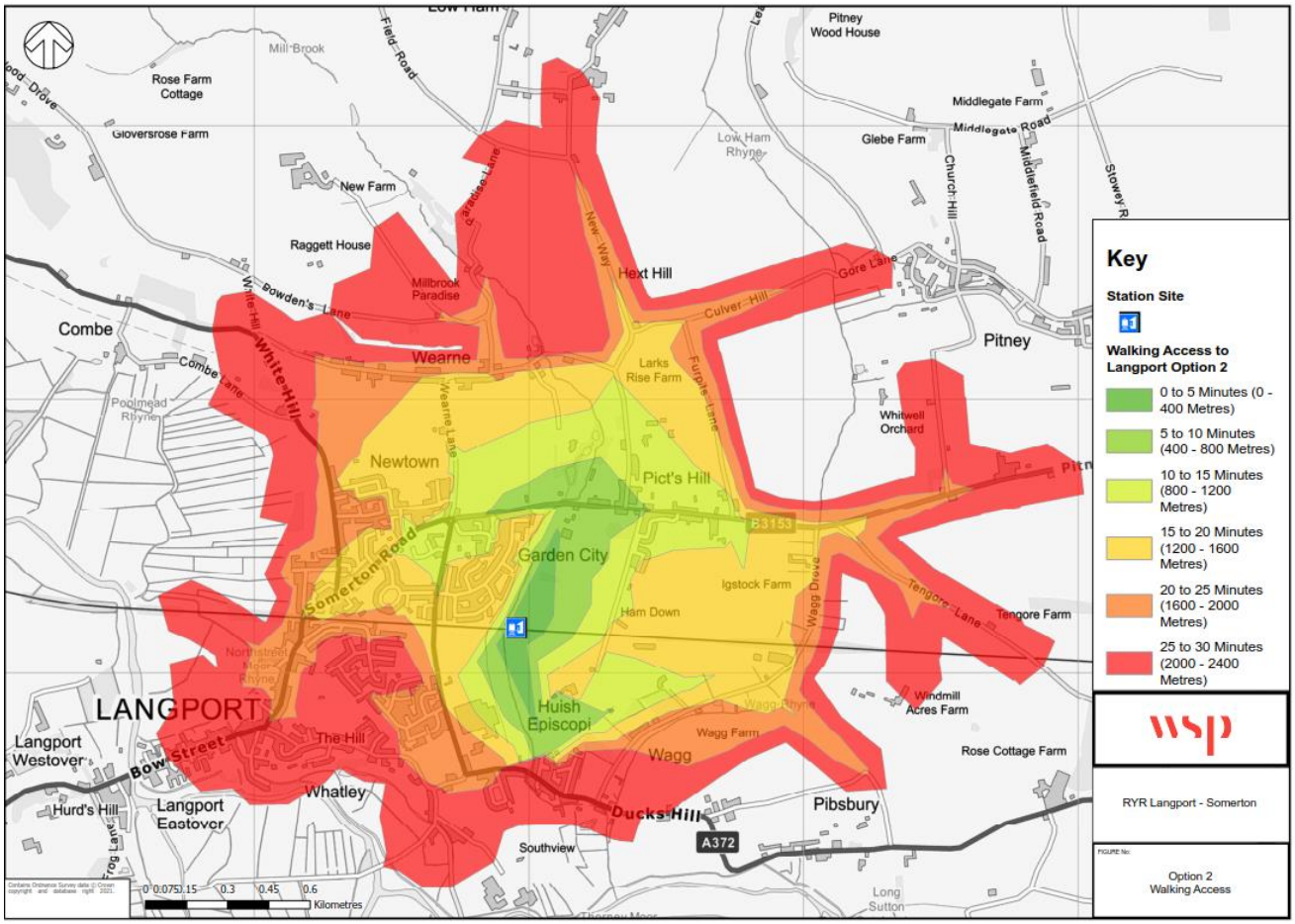


Figure 7.8: Area within Walking Distance of Langport Option 2

Time	Langport, Option 2
0-5 Minutes	107
5-10 Minutes	198
10-15 Minutes	271
15-20 Minutes	780
Total	1,356

Table 7.8: Population within 20 minutes' walk of Langport Option 2

7.3.52. Figure 7.8, supported by Table 7.8, show that Langport's Option 2's location to the east of the town makes it considerably less accessible than Option 1, with the nearest estates being within 15-20 minutes' walk due to the need to walk to the main road and then double back to reach them. Whilst there is some potential to mitigate this through provision of a pedestrian link to the eastern estates independent of the highway access, the site's off-centre location still places it beyond the 10 minute

optimum walking distance identified by the CIHT and on the boundaries of the 20 minute upper limit, particularly in regard to the new developments on the northern and western fringes.

Cycling

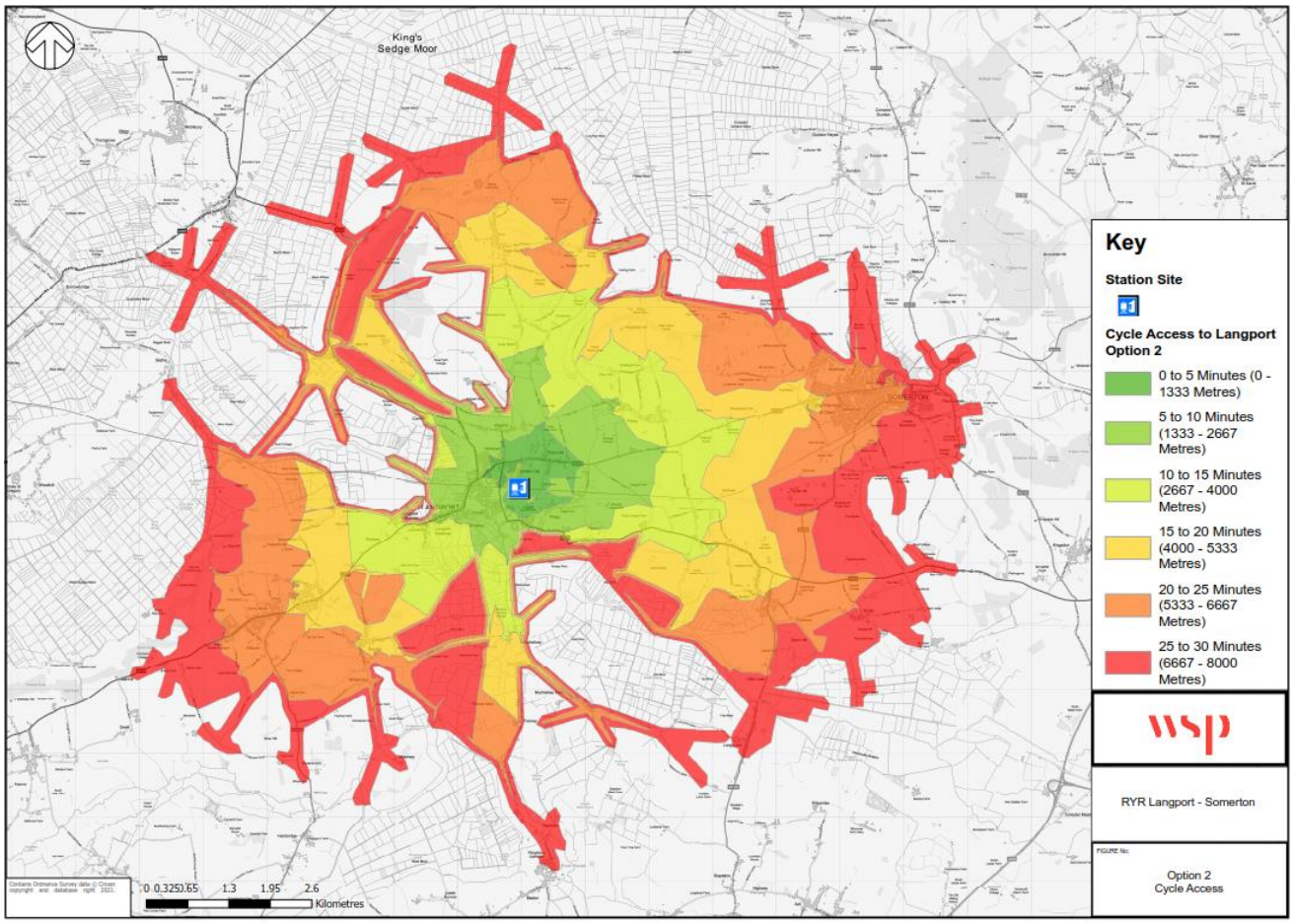


Figure 7.9: Area within Cycle Distance of Langport Option 2

Time	Langport Option 2
0-5 Minutes	809
5-10 Minutes	2,195
10-15 Minutes	718
15-20 Minutes	1,639
Total	5,361

Table 7.9: Population within 20 minutes cycle of Langport Option 2

7.3.53. Figure 7.9 and Table 7.9 show that considering cycle use offsets the poor walking access compared to Option 1. However, the location east of the town still compares unfavourably against the central site in regard to links to Curry Rivel and other villages, was well as being a longer ride from the west of the existing town and the new developments to the north.

Public Transport

7.3.54. This location isn't quite as well located for public transport interchange as Option 1, as it is not within easy walking distance of any of the existing bus infrastructure. However, this is offset by the proposed car park having sufficient space for easy bus manoeuvring. Otherwise, similar to Option 1, accessing the site would require relatively minor re-routeing of the No54 service and/or extension of the No16 option to support the site.

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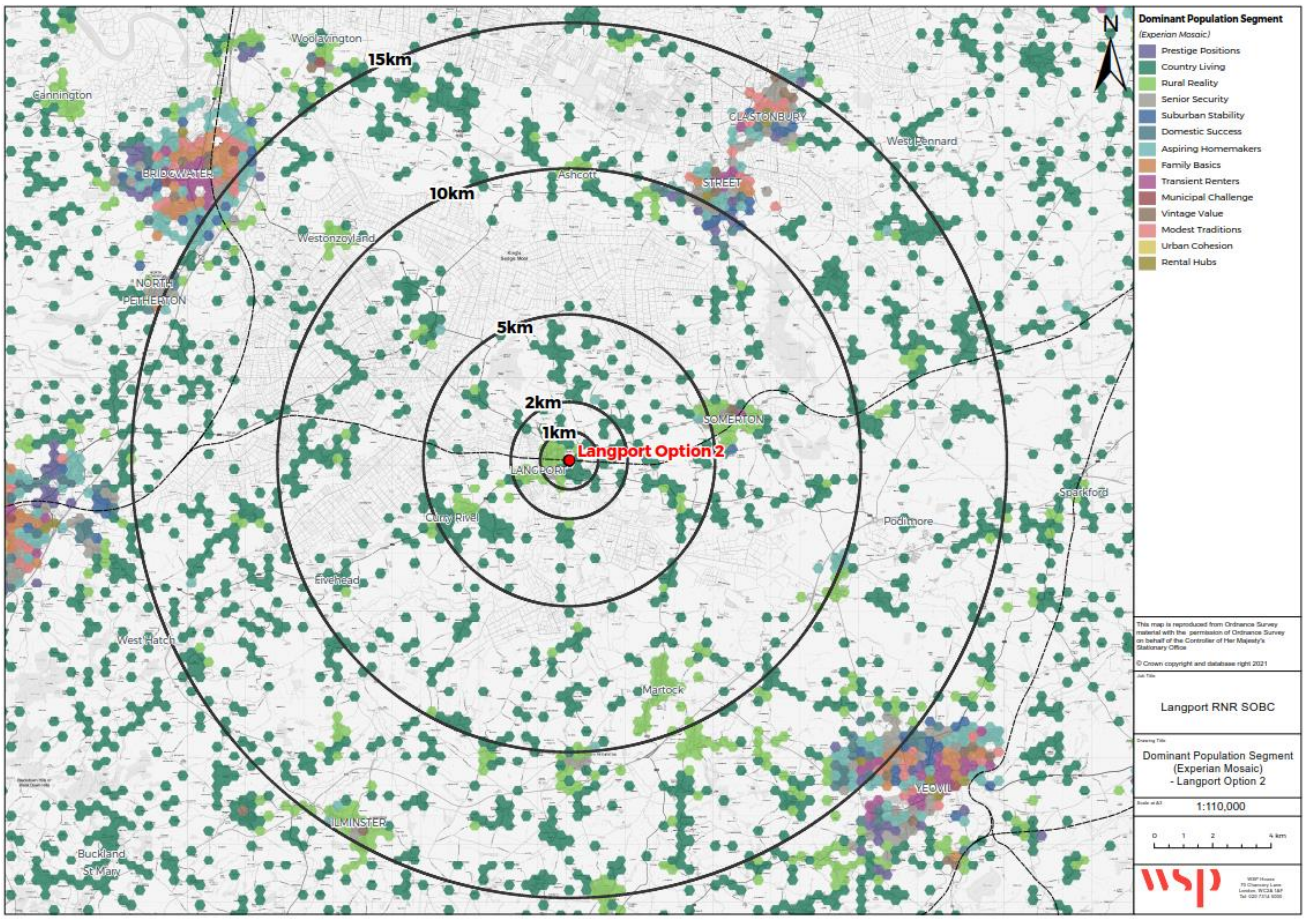

Figure 7.10: Dominant Population Segment surrounding Langport Option 2

		Population @ Langport Option 2				
		0 - 1km	1 - 2km	2 - 5km	5 - 10km	10 - 15km
A	City Prosperity	0	0	0	0	0
B	Prestige Positions	0	0	0	406	771
C	Country Living	541	361	3,426	9,547	21,191
D	Rural Reality	2,014	505	1,478	9,666	17,457
E	Senior Security	206	11	119	1,860	5,709
F	Suburban Stability	2	0	0	1,064	2,595
G	Domestic Success	21	0	35	941	5,023
H	Aspiring Homemakers	64	11	95	1,657	9,675

		Population @ Langport Option 2				
		0 - 1km	1 - 2km	2 - 5km	5 - 10km	10 - 15km
I	Family Basics	0	0	0	0	2,222
J	Transient Renters	0	0	0	239	3,893
K	Municipal Challenge	0	0	0	0	349
L	Vintage Value	183	0	0	600	2,918
M	Modest Traditions	0	0	0	0	3,380
N	Urban Cohesion	0	0	0	0	0
O	Rental Hubs	0	62	0	73	1,639

Table 7.10: Dominant Population Values surrounding Langport Option 2

7.3.55. Figure 7.10 and Table 7.10 show that, similar to Langport Option 1, the dominant population demographics present in the areas with access to the site are Rural Reality and Country Living. This site would be less accessible to the former group, on the basis of the weaker interchange with other public transport types this demographic is more likely to depend upon.

Cost – Capital Expense

7.3.56. Langport Option 2 has been estimated to cost £23,451,000 to deliver, making it the most expensive of the four sites to provide. Cost includes risk /contingency and inflation.

Cost – Operational Expense

7.3.57. No constraints at this site would interfere increase the operational cost of the station and associated proposed hourly train service. As such, there is little to differentiate it from the other sites.

Station in Somerton (Option 3)

Description

7.3.58. This option identifies a location west of Somerton, accessed from the B3165 Langport Road and/or the B3153, the latter included as it is the current route for the No54 bus between Somerton & Langport. Similar to Langport Option 2, this location provides space for station facilities and parking. The location and associated infrastructure are shown in Figure 7.11, below.

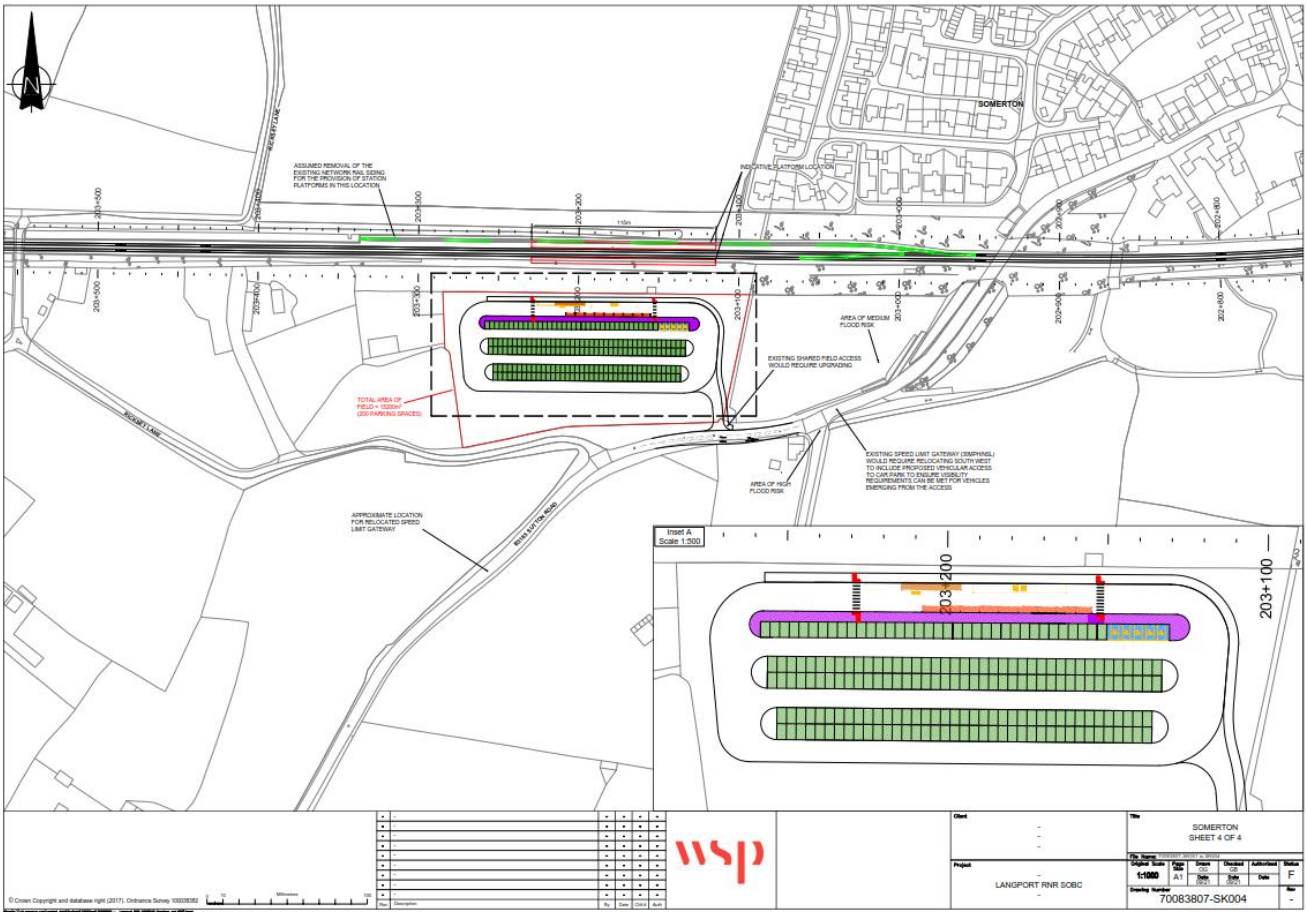

Figure 7.11: Somerton Station Location

Track

7.3.59. Land is generally flatter, with a good length of straight track to tie into for the platform location. Removal of the Network Rail (NR) siding at this location will need to be confirmed, but verbal notice has been given to the project that the siding is to be removed from use permanently. This makes the site one of the easiest to be delivered due to the lack of the cuttings influencing the other locations.

Highway – Access Arrangement

7.3.60. Access to the proposed car park could be achieved off the adjacent B3165 Sutton Road. This is a well maintained road with reasonable capacity available for station traffic, with good connections onward to the west, such as Langport and Curry Rivel.

Highways – Car Parking

7.3.61. The area available on the land earmarked for the proposed car park is sufficient to provide at least 200 car parking spaces plus a bus loop with a bus stop adjacent to the proposed station. However, as detailed in regards to Environment, there might be some challenges relating to the historic monument in proximity to the site.

Stations

7.3.62. As this station is not located within a cutting or near cuttings are per the preceding options, there are no issues accommodating platform widths.

7.3.63. However, despite being located near the B3165 overbridge the existing bridge does not provide sufficient clearance for the introduction of pavements. Therefore, this option would also require a new pedestrian footbridge with lifts; raising the costs.

Operations

7.3.64. No constraints at this site would interfere with the operation of the proposed hourly train service.

Signalling

7.3.65. Assuming network change is approved for the recovery of the previously mentioned sidings, the signals protecting them would need to be relocated to provide station starters. As such, this location would require a lesser revision to the surrounding signalling than the other options.

7.3.66. However, the down signal cannot be moved closer to Taunton due to Somerton tunnel. Leading to excessive braking for all trains. This increases the risk of a SPAD[33] as a driver will be trying to judge from route knowledge when he should begin applying brakes in a tunnel with no visual cues.

Environmental Impact

7.3.67. The Somerton Site is sufficiently remote from residential dwellings to avoid the pollution risks of Options 1 and 2. However, there are potential historic environment and landscape issues associated with a scheduled monument 300m south of the site, which may delay site construction and/or require additional mitigation to deliver the site without adversely impacting the monument.

Potential Patronage

7.3.68. As suggested by the site's close proximity to Somerton and accessibility from Glastonbury and Street, identified previously, this site has the greatest potential patronage of the four considered, with a forecast annual demand of 237,000.

[33] Signal Passed At Danger.

Sustainable Mode Accessibility

Walking

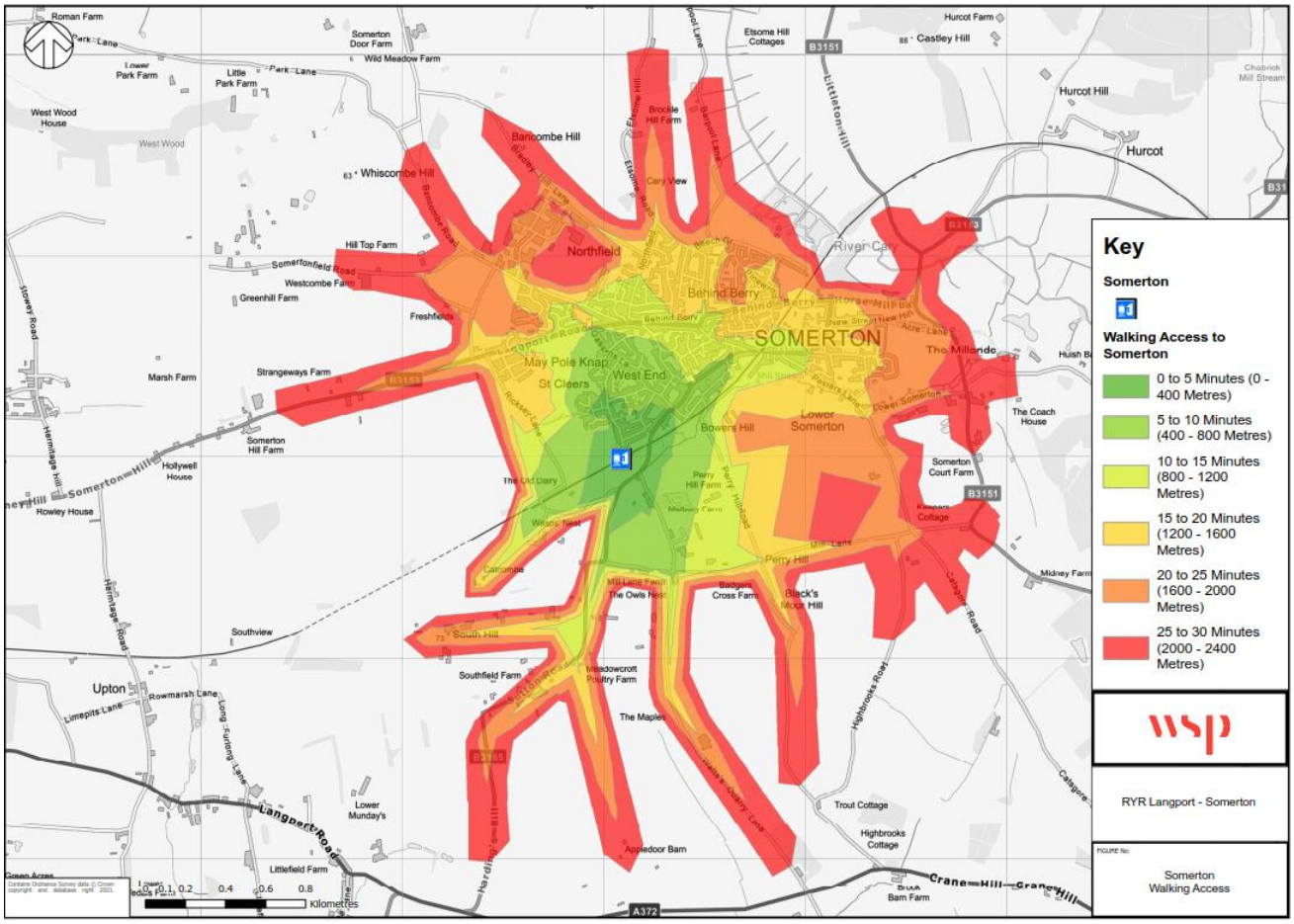

Figure 7.12: Area within Walking Distance of Somerton

Time	Somerton, Option 3
0-5 Minutes	221
5-10 Minutes	820
10-15 Minutes	934
15-20 Minutes	1,279
Total	3,253

Table 7.11: Population within 20 minutes' walk of Somerton

7.3.69. Figure 7.12 and Table 7.11 illustrate that the proposed station site is within 20 minutes' walk of the majority of the town, encompassing several dense housing estates and the town centre street. This population density puts the site close to Langport Option 1 in terms of residents within 10 minutes' walk, despite being slightly further out from the centre of the town. Access to Local Plan developments isn't quite as strong, those being within 20-25 minutes; on the upper end of what is

acceptable for regular use according to the CIHT guidance. Provision of supporting walking infrastructure could serve to increase the population able to access the site.

Cycling

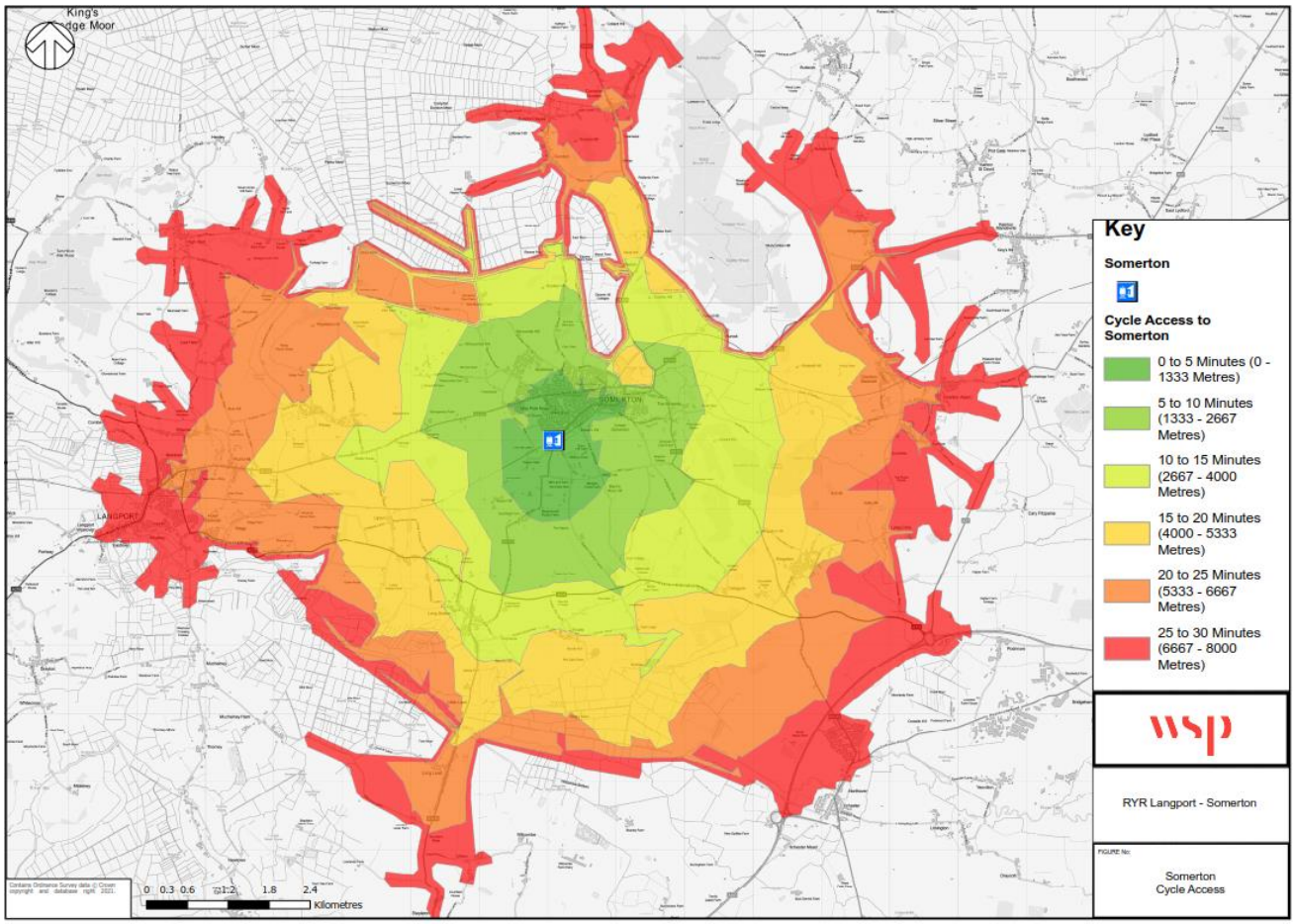

Figure 7.13: Area within Cycle Distance of Somerton

Time	Tengore Lane
0-5 Minutes	2,376
5-10 Minutes	2,267
10-15 Minutes	591
15-20 Minutes	945
Total	6,179

Table 7.12: Population within 20 minutes cycle of Somerton

7.3.70. Figure 7.13 and Table 7.12 show that the proposed site's access to the local road network supports considerable cycle accessibility, with much of the town being within 0-15 minutes riding time, including the proposed Local Plan developments. The broad coverage also could support people

using the station as a starting point for leisure rides, as well as placing the villages of Hurton and Kingsdon within 20minutes travel time.

Public Transport

7.3.71. Somerton's public transport accessibility isn't quite as good as Langport Option 1, as the walk between the proposed site and the No54 and No77 bus stops in the town centre are further away. Additionally, serving the site would require a greater re-route to the existing services than Langport Option 1 or Option 2. This is on the basis that the former crosses the town centre from north west to south east and the latter from north east to south east and the site is located to the south west. Therefore, serving it would require lengthening bus operations through the town centre, or the provision of a dedicated service, increasing cost to the operators. This option is still preferable to Option 4, though, as detailed below.

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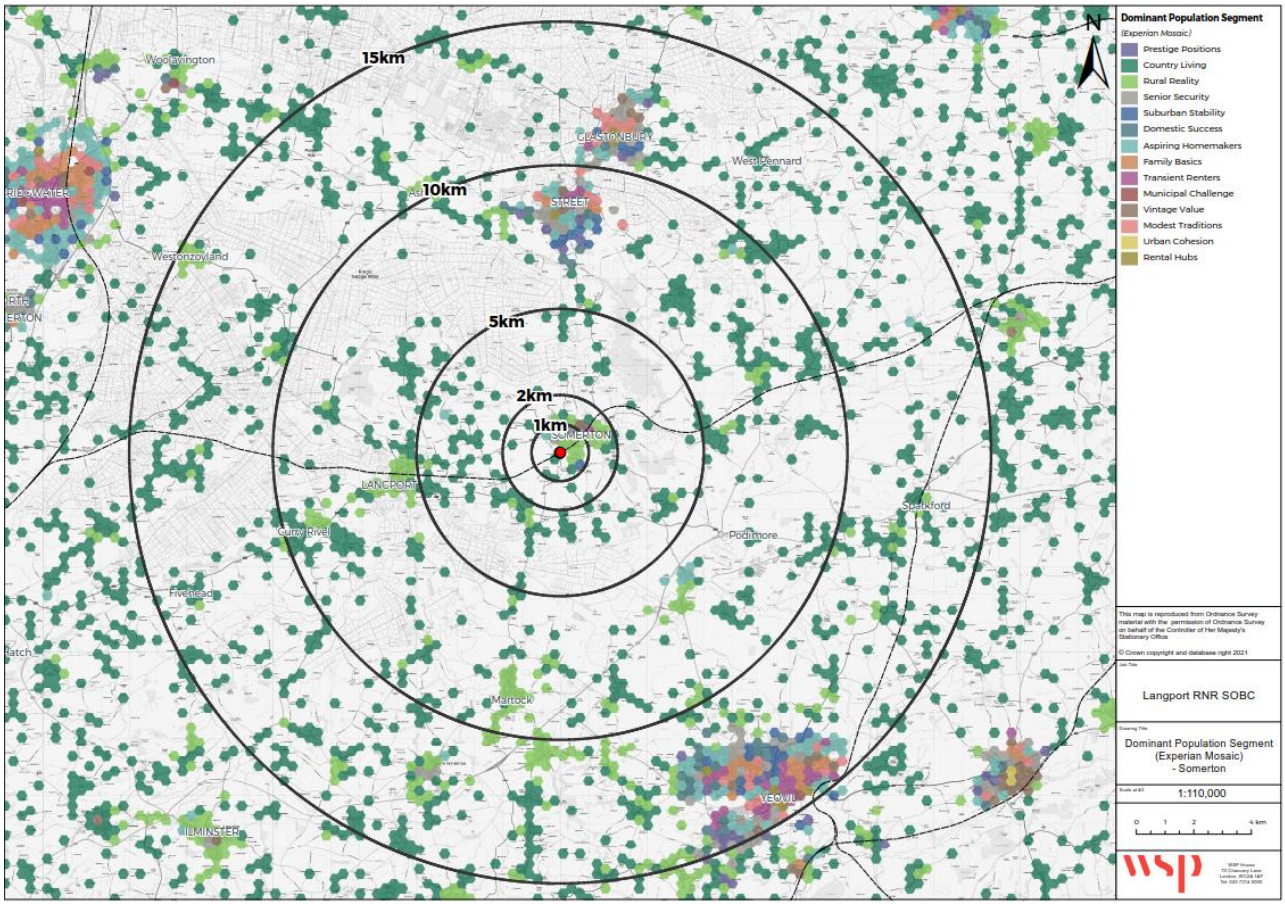

Figure 7.14: Dominant Population Segment surrounding Somerton

		Population @ Somerton				
		0 - 1km	1 - 2km	2 - 5km	5 - 10km	10 - 15km
A	City Prosperity	0	0	0	0	0
B	Prestige Positions	0	0	0	626	2,072
C	Country Living	127	239	2,619	11,401	18,318
D	Rural Reality	1,823	902	323	10,562	12,482
E	Senior Security	505	307	0	2,614	6,797

		Population @ Somerton				
		0 - 1km	1 - 2km	2 - 5km	5 - 10km	10 - 15km
F	Suburban Stability	63	22	0	1,475	5,135
G	Domestic Success	206	78	0	1,995	4,550
H	Aspiring Homemakers	129	56	3	4,126	12,785
I	Family Basics	0	0	0	746	7,114
J	Transient Renters	75	84	0	1,369	8,382
K	Municipal Challenge	0	0	0	27	1,153
L	Vintage Value	42	276	0	1,798	2,473
M	Modest Traditions	0	0	0	859	5,308
N	Urban Cohesion	0	0	0	0	9
O	Rental Hubs	0	0	0	454	3,172

Table 7.13: Dominant Population Values surrounding Somerton

7.3.72. Figure 7.14 shows the dominant population demographics present in the areas surrounding Langport Option 1, with the quantities then provided in Table 7.13. This site has considerable variance from the preceding sites, due to the closer proximity to Glastonbury and Street placing the latter into the 5-10km distance bracket. The 10-15km bracket also includes all of Yeovil, rather than the periphery as per the preceding Options.

7.3.73. As per Options 1 and 2, the primary demographics close to the station are Rural Reality and Country Living. This station should appeal to both groups, being within walking and cycling distance of the Rural Reality demographic in Somerton, whilst a relatively convenient drive for the Country Living group living in the town's hinterland to the west. There is also reasonable bus connectivity to link the site with the former group travelling to the railhead from Somerton.

7.3.74. The more diverse demographics present in Glastonbury and Street are more likely to use public transport than the rural groups discussed previously, as they generally have lower car access and/or desire to use them. This serves to underscore the importance of integrating this site with the local bus network, to best unlock this potential passenger market for the station.

Cost – Capital Expense

7.3.75. Construction costs for this station have been estimated at £15,753,000. This is slightly less than Tengore Lane and considerably less than Langport Option 2. Cost includes risk / contingency and inflation.

Cost – Operational Expense

7.3.76. No constraints at this site would interfere increase the operational cost of the station and associated proposed hourly train service. As such, there is little to differentiate it from the other sites.

Station at Tengore Lane (Between Langport & Somerton) (Option 4)

7.3.77. This option identifies a station located between Langport & Somerton, accessed off Tengor Lane. This location and the associated infrastructure are shown in Figure 7.15, below.

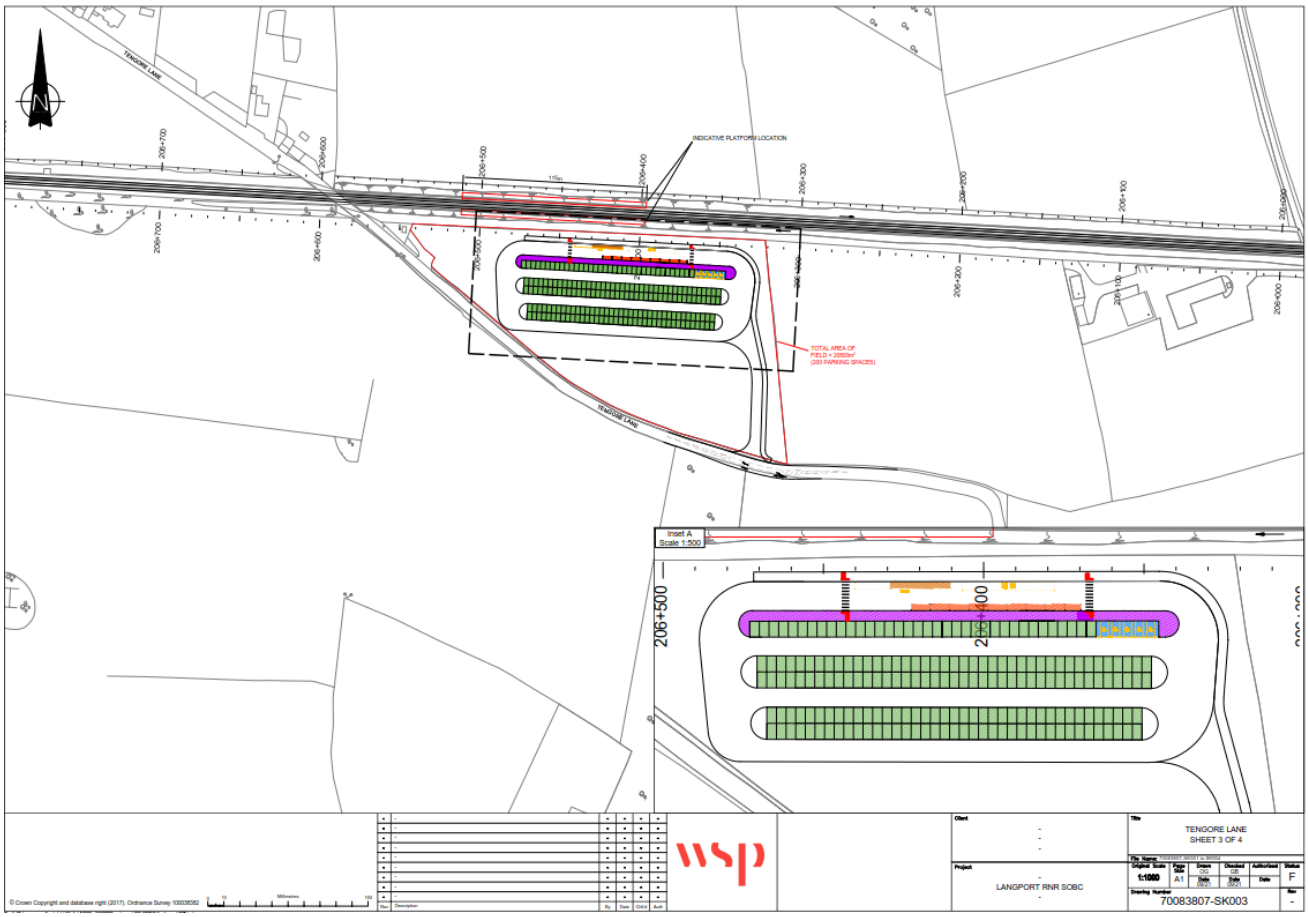

Figure 7.15: Tengore Station Location

Track

7.3.78. This is in medium favour, but the adjacent constraint of the deep rock cutting on both halves of the site will have an impact on available land for construction of trackworks. The site will require larger extents of track renewal with drainage renewal, again due to being on land at risk of flooding.

Highway – Access Arrangement

7.3.79. Access to the proposed car park could be achieved off the adjacent Tengore Lane. However, the proposed station and car park location are located in a relatively remote location between Langport and Somerton.

Highways – Car Parking

7.3.80. The area available on the land earmarked for the proposed car park is sufficient to provide at least 200 car parking spaces plus a bus loop with a bus stop adjacent to the proposed station.

Stations

7.3.81. The site is located on greenfield land with no adjacent developments to the track, which is beneficial to its delivery.

7.3.82. However, the line either side of the site passes through cuttings. Extensive excavation would be required to accommodate the require platform widths and maintaining level access to the platforms would provide further difficulties. The site would require new pedestrian footbridges with lifts to provide access between platforms, thus adding to the cost.

Operations

7.3.83. No constraints at this site would interfere with the operation of the proposed hourly train service.

Signalling

7.3.84. Provision of a station at this site would require some relocation of signals to maintain effective spacing between them, however this would be to a lesser degree than Option 1 or Option 2.

Sustainable Mode Accessibility

Walking

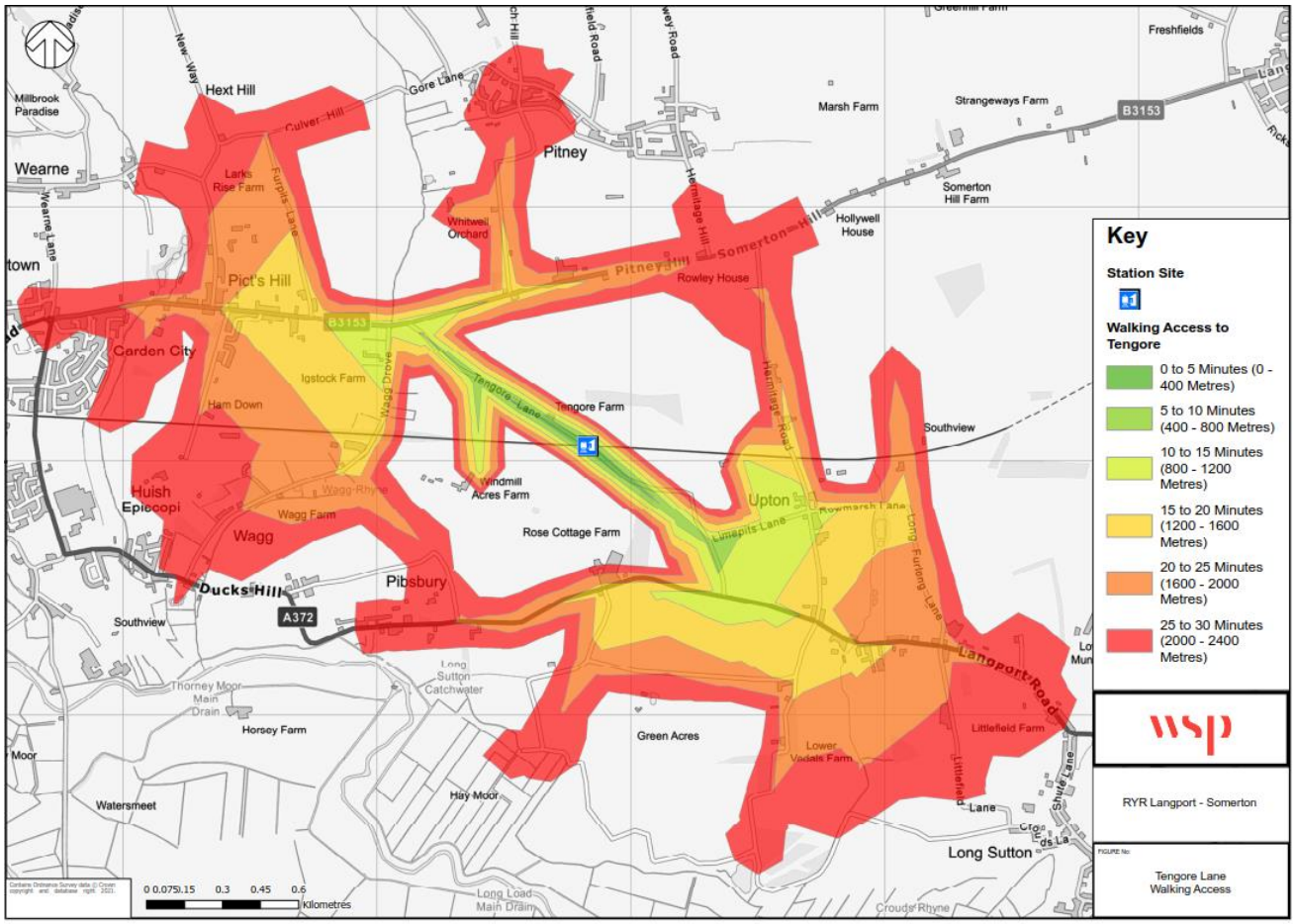

Figure 7.16: Area within Walking Distance of Tengore Lane

Time	Tengore Lane
0-5 Minutes	1
5-10 Minutes	6
10-15 Minutes	20
15-20 Minutes	49
Total	76

Table 7.14: Population within 20 minutes' walk of Tengore Lane

7.3.85. Figure 7.16, in conjunction with Table 7.14 show that the site's remote location on a rode lacking a pavement forms a considerable barrier to pedestrian use, with only a small number of dwellings within 20 minutes access time on foot.

Cycling

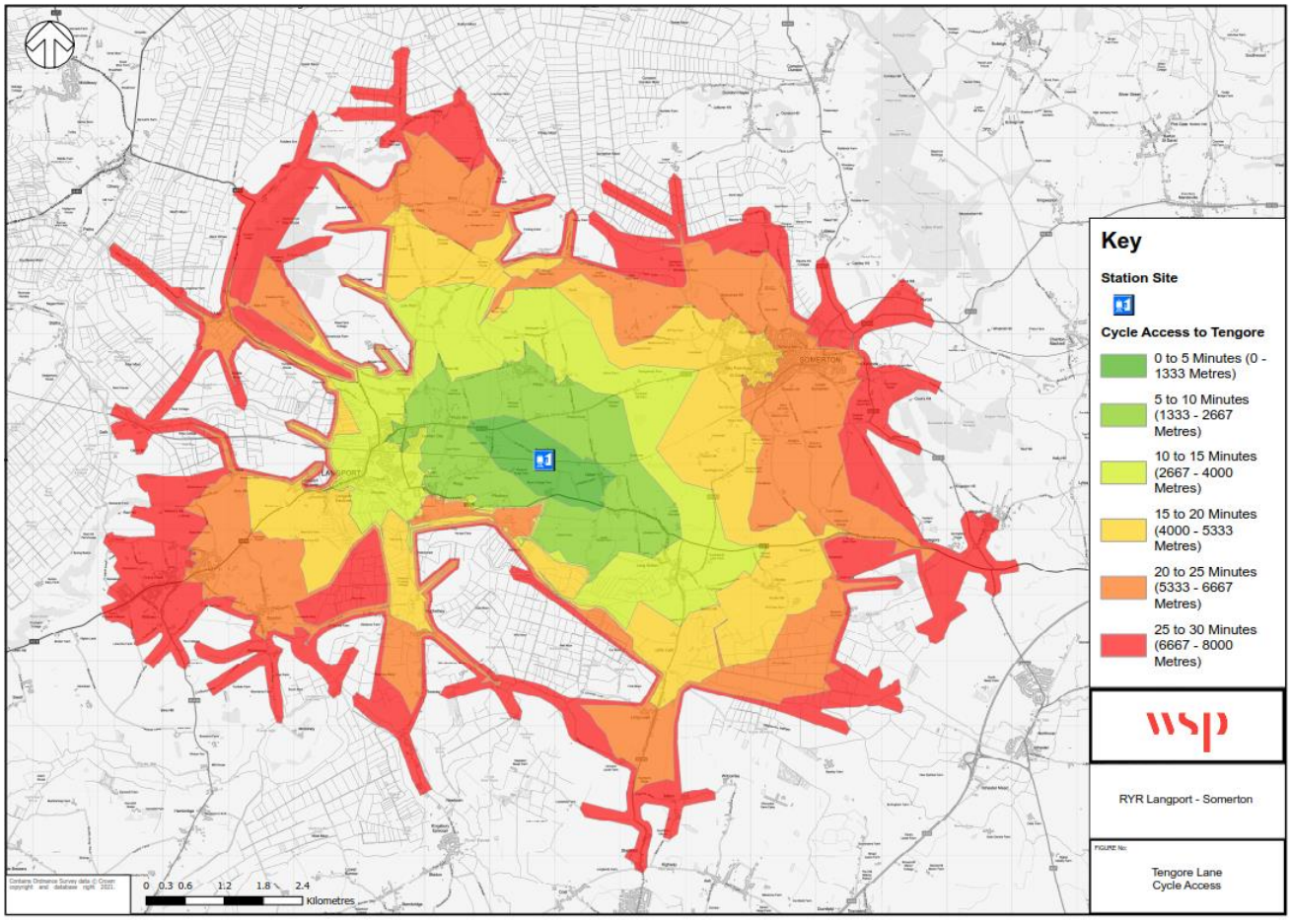

Figure 7.17: Area within Cycling Distance of Tengore Lane

Time	Tengore Lane
0-5 Minutes	149
5-10 Minutes	1,168
10-15 Minutes	2,748
15-20 Minutes	2,137
Total	6,202

Table 7.15: Population within 20 cycle minutes of Tengore Lane

7.3.86. Figure 7.17, supported by the population statistics provided in Table 7.15 show that, whilst the remote location and lack of footpath is unfavourable to walking, the site's location between Langport and Somerton places most of the population of the former within 15 minutes cycle time of the prospective station, as well as the western edge of the latter being within 20 minutes cycle time. These catchments include the proposed Local Plan sites in Langport and some of those in Somerton.

7.3.87. With investment in supporting infrastructure, such as more direct routes, there is considerable potential for this location to be used as a bike and ride site for both of the towns in the study area. However, this would require additional cost and appraisal outside the scope of this study.

Public Transport

7.3.88. In addition to the need for enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure to support this site's delivery, there would also be challenges arising from the need to re-route the local buses to serve the site. At the present the closest regular bus service is the No54, operating on the B3153. Serving the site would require re-routeing it onto Tengore Lane, which is ill suited to bus use due to being quite narrow and winding. Redirecting the bus to serve the location will add to the journey time between Langport and Somerton, which, as previously discussed, is already relatively non-competitive in comparison to the private car. On this basis, the site is quite unfavourable in regards to public transport access as it would either adversely impact passengers not wishing to use the station on the existing services, or would require the provision of an additional, dedicated bus service connecting the station. This issue is compounded due to the site being the most dependent of the four for access due to it being remote from potential users' homes or businesses.

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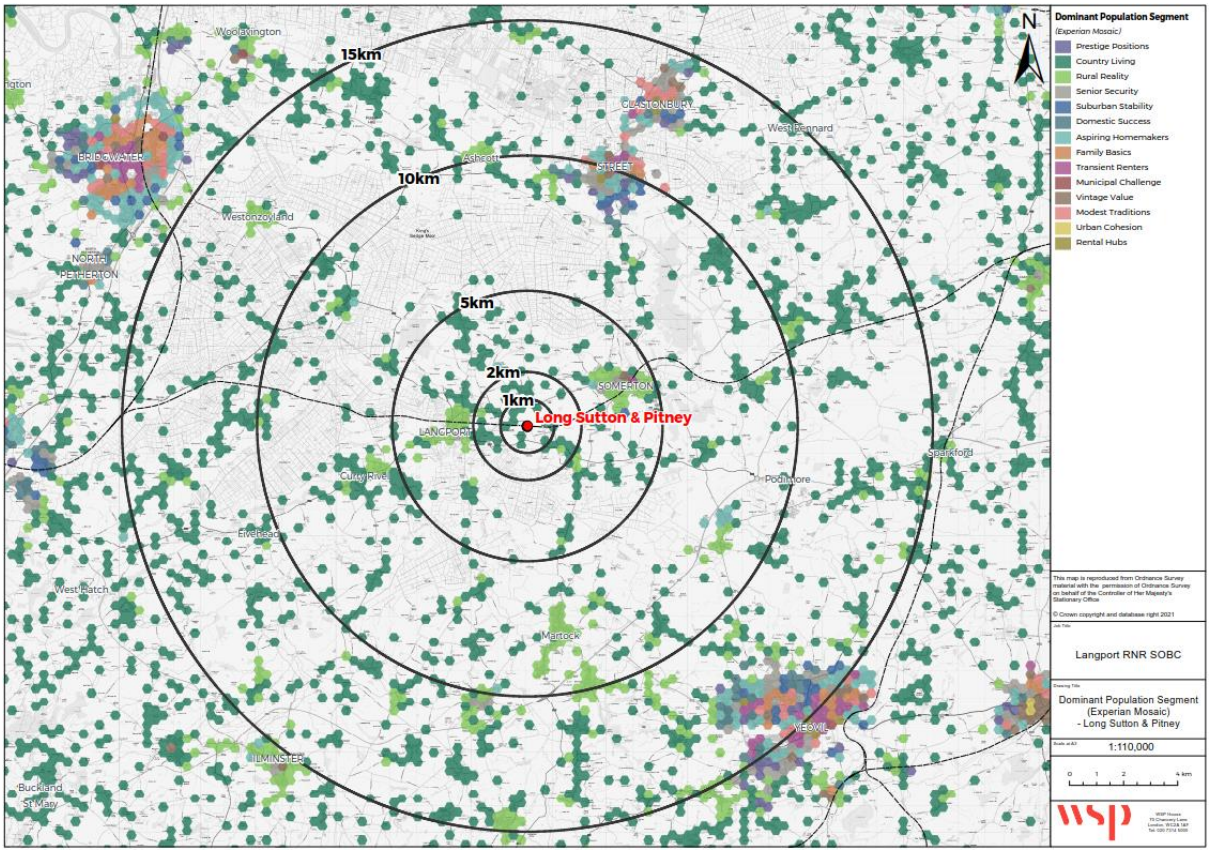

Figure 7.18: Dominant Population Segment surrounding Tengore Lane

		Population @ Long Sutton & Pitney				
		0 - 1km	1 - 2km	2 - 5km	5 - 10km	10 - 15km
A	City Prosperity	0	0	0	0	0
B	Prestige Positions	0	0	0	626	1,205
C	Country Living	141	797	2,687	10,059	20,728
D	Rural Reality	0	144	5,358	9,853	13,447
E	Senior Security	0	0	1,029	1,849	6,325
F	Suburban Stability	0	0	87	1,406	4,555
G	Domestic Success	0	0	305	1,042	5,244
H	Aspiring Homemakers	0	0	263	3,124	9,403
I	Family Basics	0	0	0	30	5,021
J	Transient Renters	0	0	159	428	4,630
K	Municipal Challenge	0	0	0	27	314
L	Vintage Value	0	0	501	981	2,116
M	Modest Traditions	0	0	0	222	3,964
N	Urban Cohesion	0	0	0	0	0
O	Rental Hubs	0	0	62	202	2,077

Table 7.16: Dominant Population Values surrounding Tengore Lane

7.3.89. Figure 7.18 and Table 7.16 show that the dominant population demographics present in the areas surrounding Tengore Lane are similar to those identified in relation to Options 1 and 2. This station site's more remote site might make it marginally more attractive to the Country Living demographic, due to the enhanced car access without needing to drive through the local towns. Conversely, the Rural Reality is less likely to benefit from this option due to the need for either a bus journey and interchange or to pay for petrol and parking to reach the site, which is less appealing on lower budget.

Environmental Impact

7.3.90. This site is the most deliverable from a high-level perspective, as there are minimal constraints influencing its construction. However, there are potential challenges relating to landscape, ecology and land contaminated by agricultural use which still might be identified with more detailed appraisal.

Potential Patronage

7.3.91. Despite the car access identified previously, this site has the weakest potential demand at 188,000 annual passengers, due to the lower population within walking/cycling distance, as well as being remote from Glastonbury and Street compared to Somerton.

Cost – Capital Expense

7.3.92. Construction costs for this station have been estimated at £15,408,000. Cost includes risk / contingency and inflation.

Cost – Operational Expense

7.3.93. No constraints at this site would interfere increase the operational cost of the station and associated proposed hourly train service. As such, there is little to differentiate it from the other sites.

Selection of Preferred Station Site

7.3.94. In order to identify which station option should be taken forward to the Strategic Outline Business Case phase and be used as the foundation of the Restoring Your Railways fund bid, the four station Options were scored based upon the appraisal detailed above. The findings of this analysis are set out in Table 7.17, below.

Option Description	Track	Highways - access arrangements	Highways - car parking	Stations	Operations	Signalling	Environment	Transport Planning - Demand Forecasting	Transport Planning - PT integration	Cost - CAPEX	Cost - OPEX	Total
Langport No. 1	1	4	1	1	3	2	1	4	5	5	3	30
Langport No. 2	3	1	5	3	3	5	3	4	4	1	3	35
Tengore Lane	3	4	5	3	3	2	5	1	1	3	3	33
Somerton	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	3	3	45

Table 7.17 –Short List Option Sifting

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1.1. The option assessment concluded that the provision of a railway station between Langport and Somerton would provide the best fit with national and regional policy goals, as well as providing the greatest potential for resolving the challenges identified whilst reviewing local travel and demographic information.

8.1.2. Of the four potential station sites then taken forward for development, Somerton was identified as the most suitable for further development on the basis of:

- Highest potential demand.
- Good access for passengers arriving by sustainable modes.
- Good highway access.
- Low environmental impact on residents.

8.1.3. Langport Option 2, in the east of the town, has also been shortlisted for further development. This location provided the second greatest demand potential in conjunction with reasonable accessibility and limited environmental impacts.

8.1.4. Overall, the proposed station will restore rail services to the towns of Langport and Somerton, as well as the wider hinterland area of Glastonbury and Street. In turn, this will provide increased access to opportunities for residents and businesses, supporting local growth as the area becomes more desirable and easier to work and live in through the enhanced connectivity provided by the rail service. These outcomes align well with the governments levelling up agenda of enhancing the economy. Additionally, the increased economic activity will aid in offsetting the trend towards an ageing population in the area, whilst also providing elderly residents with a high-quality alternative to the car for journeys.

8.1.5. The proposed station development will also benefit bus passengers, providing a high-quality interchange point and hub for regional services. This is very well aligned with the Somerset BSIP proposals for a bus hub at Somerton. There is also potential to use the delivery of the station as a catalyst for investment in the region's bus network, to encourage sustainable mode use for all legs of peoples' journeys and to spread the scheme's benefits further across the area.

8.1.6. The station option also aligns well with environmental goals. By improving the area's public transport offering as detailed above, the scheme will encourage modal shift away from the private car, one of the primary sources of CO2, atmospheric and noise pollution, as well as carrying considerable safety risks to other road users, particularly when the network approaches capacity. The aforementioned mode shift should go some way to mitigating these trends and supporting a sustainable future for the area.

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