

Harpenden transport: getting out of the jams

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The commission

Harpenden Society asked the University of Hertfordshire Smart Mobility Unit to review the transport and traffic issues facing the town and to suggest some ways forward



Smart Mobility Unit (SMU)

- Teaching, including new MSc in transport planning, and data unit
- Research (developing local, national & international partners/collaboration)
- Professional Aspects (University Travel Plan/Uno – UH's bus company)
- Consultancy (EU Work/ Quality Partnerships / Social Enterprise (CIC))
- Seminars/Workshops – Sharing & disseminating best practice
- Multi-disciplinary: SMU includes specialists in data, behavioural psychology, engineering and business

Increasingly SMU is part of other university teams, including this Centre for Climate Change Research (C3R) and Centre for Future Societies

University of
Hertfordshire **UH**

**The future of
transport outside
cities: a report on
roundtables held
by the University of
Hertfordshire Smart
Mobility Unit**

The problem

- Traffic levels in Hertfordshire are among the highest in Britain (6.6bn vehicle miles or 55,230 per head)
- Harpenden is one of the county's congestion hotspots
- Car ownership is high (1.38 per household, England average is 1.16)



As well as congestion, these high traffic levels cause other problems – pollution and road crashes...

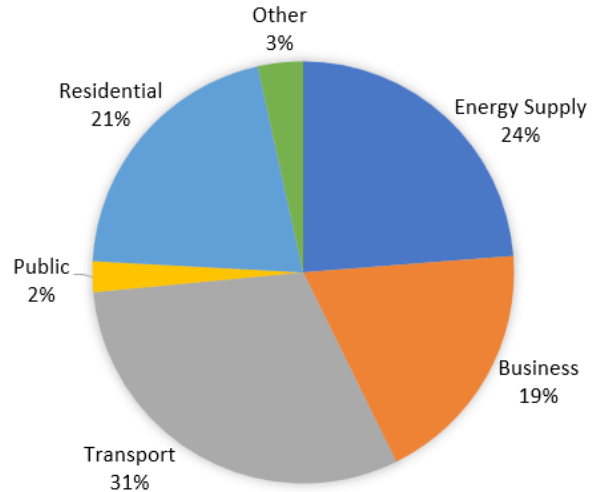
- Pollution from exhausts, brakes and tyres harm human health in various ways – research links them to heart disease, asthma, dementia and other illnesses
- Air quality in Church Green breaches three World Health Organisation pollution limits – 67% nationally (i.e. it's in the worst third)
- Road crashes with excess traffic- also road danger puts people off walking and cycling



And there is climate change -transport is now the main source of carbon emissions in the UK



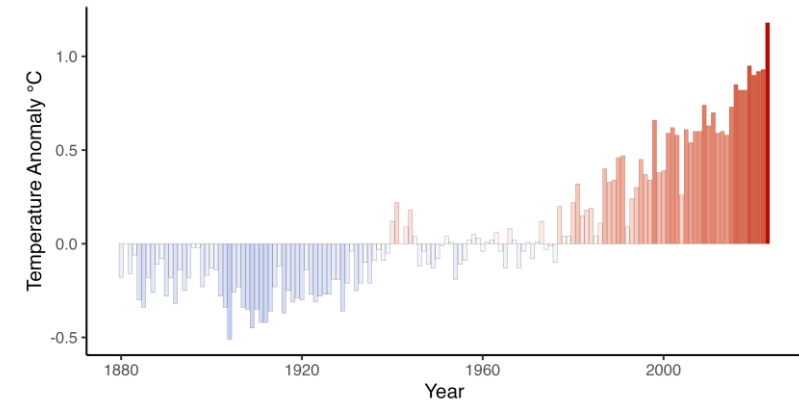
UK CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS BY SECTOR (2021)



Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2022), *2021 UK greenhouse gas emissions: provisional figures*



NASA July 2023 Global Temperature



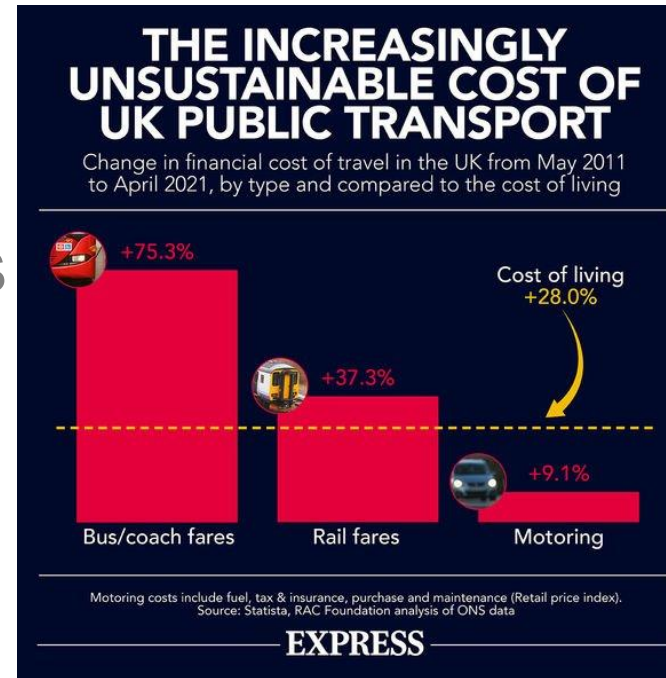
Harpenden transport carbon emissions

- Harpenden carbon emissions from car driving: 1620 CO₂ per person per year (England average 962) so among the worst in England
- But emissions from car commuting are lower because of the high levels of rail use

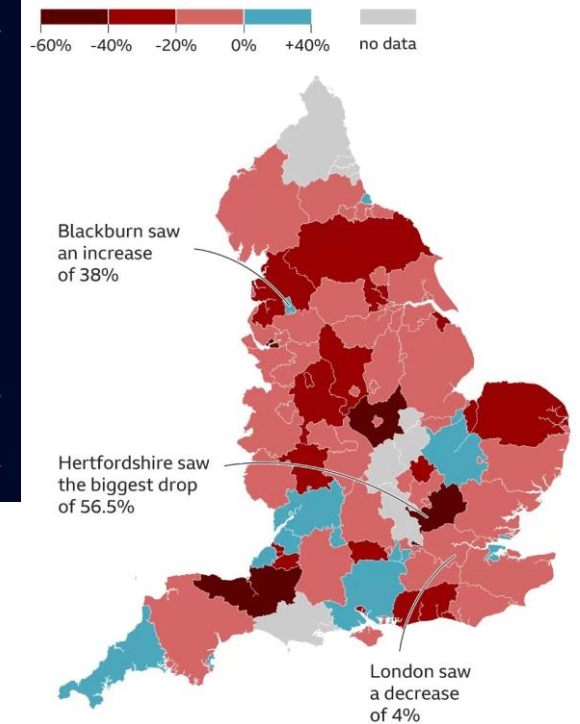


Reasons for high car use and traffic levels

- Cost: until recently cost of motoring has fallen in real terms, while bus and rail fares have increased
- Public transport services – especially buses – don't offer a choice for many of the journeys in and around Harpenden



Bus services have been cut across England
Percentage change in vehicle miles on bus services in 2021-22 compared with 2016-17, by transport authority



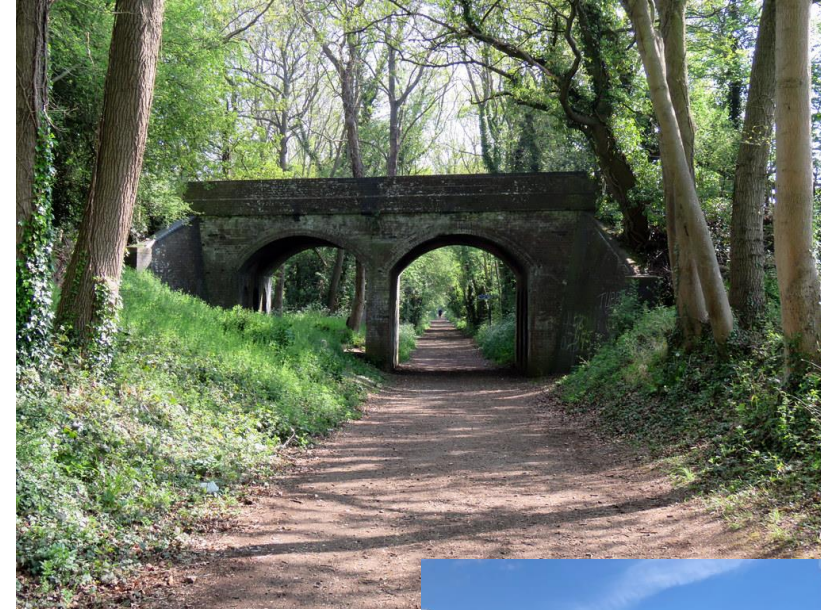
Note: Data unavailable for newly formed or merged local authorities

Source: Department for Transport

BBC

Reasons for high car use and traffic levels

- Active travel has not been promoted: there is a lot of walking in Harpenden, but no strategy for making it easier
- Limited infrastructure for cycling apart from the Nickey and Lea Valley lines
- New development has been planned round the car with lots of cheap/free parking



Ways Forward

Traffic congestion and high traffic levels are not inevitable! Ways forward include:

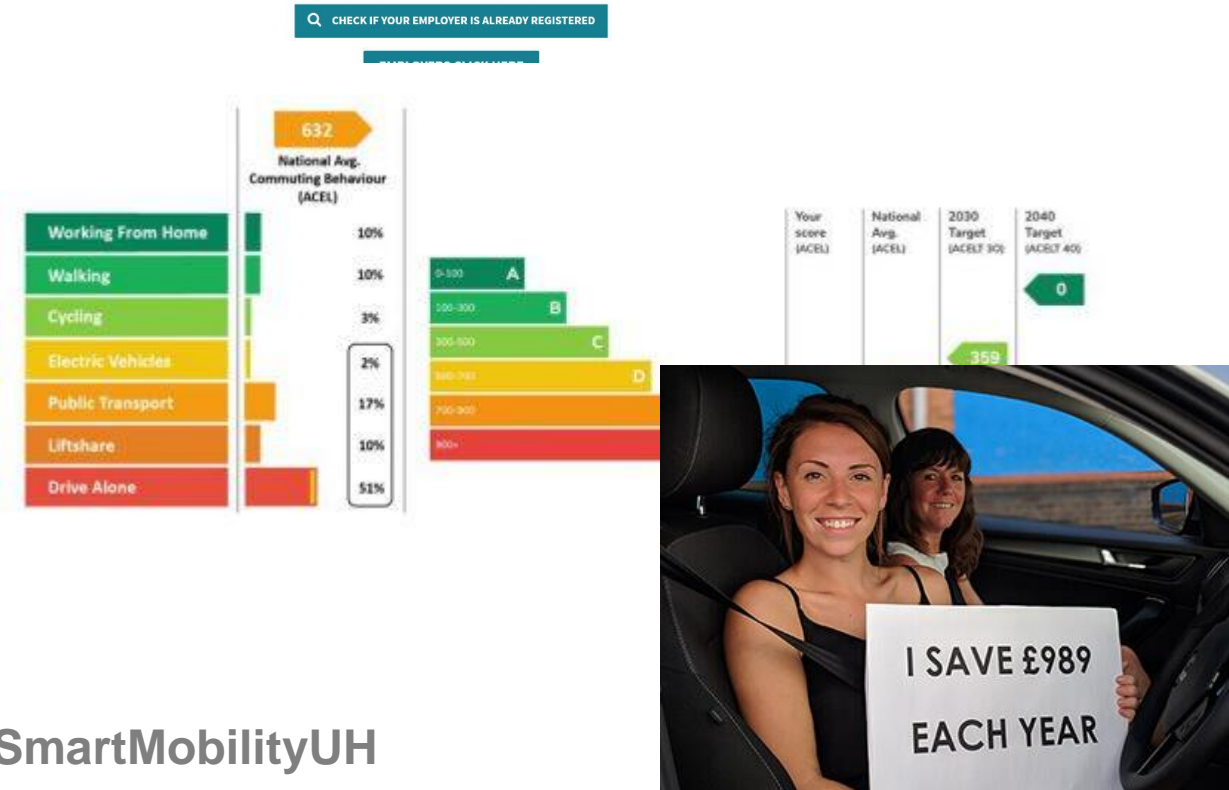
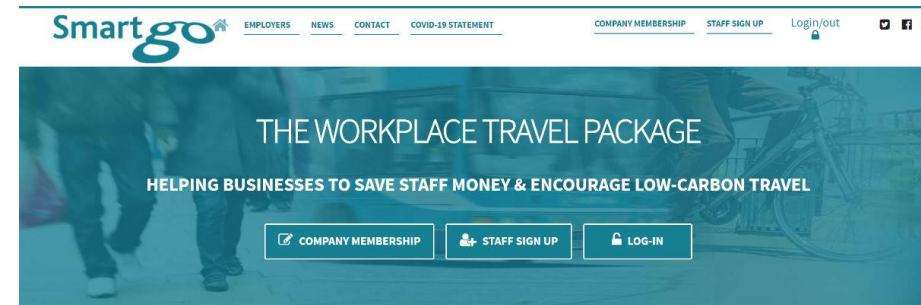
- Changing commuting
- School travel
- Better public transport
- Active travel
- Car clubs

But there is a need to look at streets space, parking and new developments



Changing commuting

- Travel plans for employers – Mobilityways, SmartGo and others are promoting alternatives to single-occupancy car commuting
- As well as public transport and active travel, travel plans can include car sharing



School travel

There is already a lot happening on school travel in Harpenden

- Katherine Warington school has a travel plan; others discourage car use and parking by the schools
- More could be done – all schools to have travel plans; walking buses for primary schools, school streets, better cycling



Public transport

Current public transport is not very attractive in cost, availability and frequency. Options:

- demand responsive transport (as already in North Herts) – maybe integrate the Hopper into this?
- employer transport (Zeelo already runs services to Ocado)
- bus priority (not necessarily bus lanes)
- investigate park and ride
- better walking and cycling links to the station



Active travel

- Support and expand already high levels of walking – better crossings, links to schools and station, better pavement maintenance
- Use current draft walking and cycling plan as basis for priority infrastructure plans
- Consider e-bike hire scheme (as Watford and elsewhere)
- Consider e-cargo bike delivery service



Car clubs

- Short term car rental services
- Local access to a car or van without having to own it
- Now widespread in major cities, starting to expand elsewhere – there are car club vehicles in St Albans, Welwyn, Hatfield, Houghton Regis, and Luton
- Options for car clubs in Harpenden should be explored, possible bases at the station and town centre and maybe residential streets



Street space and parking

All this brings choices: increasing space for buses, pedestrians and cyclists may reduce space for cars:

- Review car access to Bowers Parade/Lower High Street
- Options for reducing speed limits to 20 mph should be considered
- A parking strategy for Harpenden should be developed including better enforcement, more spaces for electric vehicles, car clubs and bike parking and review/expansion of residents parking zones



New developments

- New housing developments are planned in the draft local plan and by developers
- If these are car-based and with limited local services and limited alternatives to cars, they will add to congestion in Harpenden
- Current proposals for N Harpenden don't reflect best practice or the measures outlined here
- Transport assessments for all major developments with clear targets/measures for high levels of sustainable travel
- Transport for New Homes checklist could be adopted.



Conclusions and next steps

- Congestion and high levels of traffic and car use in Harpenden are not inevitable
- There are options to reduce single occupancy car use in Harpenden, and some are already happening in Hertfordshire or elsewhere
- Some will involve choices on priority for use of space on the roads – these need to be made by the Harpenden community, not by people from the University!
- A Harpenden transport partnership or forum could be set up to take these ideas forward and consult on them widely.



Thank You

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