

Early years education and childcare

High quality pre-school education is now seen as crucial to raising overall educational attainment in later life. Furthermore, pre-school education and out-of-school childcare are strongly associated with the participation of women in formal employment. These related types of service therefore need to be considered as part of educational and employment-related strategies in our accessibility strategies.

The Buckinghamshire Early Years Development & Childcare Services Strategic Plan seeks to improve opportunities for children in ‘clusters of disadvantage’ where children are particularly prone to under achieve for a variety of reasons. The Plan sets out objectives to achieve this by linking health, education, and social care services.

The Plan focuses on the need to ensure that the geographical distribution of childcare services enables childcare to be readily accessed, especially from more disadvantaged areas. Sure Start Children Centres (for children under 5) will be the centrepiece of this strategy and an extensive network of these facilities are to be established across the County during the Second LTP period.

In general our towns are generally well provided for and parents may even have choice. It does appear however that disadvantaged households and communities, usually only access early education and care if it is within walking distance, as they tend not to have access to cars, and rarely use buses. We believe that this may be because early education sessions generally last for only 2.5 hours and there is insufficient time to use public transport, especially if the parent is caring for a younger sibling.

The number of breakfast and after-school clubs is increasing, but the latter especially are difficult to sustain at smaller primary schools, which are generally outside the larger towns. Breakfast and after-school clubs are only available to children attending the school where they are based as it is not economically viable to provide transport.

Holiday childcare clubs tend to be larger and much fewer, and are therefore relatively sparsely distributed throughout the county. This pattern assumes that most parents that work are able to transport a child to the most convenient facility, although it is recognised that this excludes or deters those without transport options. In this case the parents would either have to find alternative (local) care, or care near or on the way to their workplace, or decide not to work (at least during this period).

Compulsory age education

Across Buckinghamshire, the majority of pupils living outside the main towns have an entitlement to free home to school transport to their nearest appropriate primary and secondary school. Catchment areas, particularly those relating to the grammar schools, extend over wide rural areas and only about 20% of entitled pupils travel to and from school by public transport; the majority being provided with transport on contracted buses or coaches, which are not currently included in the core indicator.

Whilst the outputs from Accession show that there are significant areas in the county where journey times by bus and walking to primary school, secondary school and further education establishments are over than an hour, our current performance measured against the core national indicator for access to schools is good (see below). No more than 15% of pupils make longer

DfT Core indicator	Current performance
<p>Percentage of:</p> <p>a) pupils of compulsory school age; and</p> <p>b) pupils of compulsory school age in receipt of free school meals (*) ...</p> <p>within 15 and 30 minutes of a primary school and</p> <p>within 20 and 40 minutes of a secondary school by public transport</p>	<p>79% (94%*) of pupils live within 15 minutes of their nearest primary school</p> <p>88% (98%*) of pupils live within 30 minutes of their nearest primary school</p> <p>63% (89%*) of pupils live within 20 minutes of their nearest secondary school</p> <p>85% (97%*) of pupils live within 40 minutes of their nearest secondary school</p>

journeys than the maximum time periods suggested in the Government's core indicator. Figure A3 shows that primary schools are highly dispersed across the county and that it is possible for most pupils to walk or use the bus to travel to the nearest school in a reasonable time. This clearly reflects the fact that primary schools tend to serve the immediate area and closer study in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham & Amersham showed that almost all children are within 10 minutes journey time of a primary school.

Table A3, which shows the results of a survey conducted by the Council in 2004, reveals that some 75% of all primary school pupils using school transport travel less than 20 minutes to get to / from school.

Figure A4 shows that most secondary schools are found in the larger towns, and that access by walking and/or bus is reasonable, except in parts of northern Buckinghamshire. Research in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham & Amersham indicates that most areas of the towns are less than 15 minutes from a secondary school. Journey times are slightly longer in High Wycombe as many of the schools are sited nearer the edge of the town.

In Buckinghamshire, most pupils who live outside the main towns are entitled to free home to school transport to the nearest appropriate secondary school. Catchment areas, particularly for grammar schools, extend over wide rural areas and only about 20% of entitled pupils travel to school by public transport. Most travel on contracted buses or coaches that are not currently included in the core indicator.

Indeed the council's survey in 2004 (see table A3) confirmed that only 13% of secondary school pupils for whom transport is provided have a

journey time in excess of 40 minutes and only 1% have a journey of more than 60 minutes. The majority of pupils who travel for more than 40 minutes live outside the county (primarily in Milton Keynes) and have exercised their parental choice to attend grammar schools in Aylesbury or Buckingham.

There are a significant number of secondary school pupils in our three major towns (Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Amersham/Chesham) that live less than three miles from their nearest appropriate school and therefore do not qualify for free school transport. A proportion of these students will be driven to school, making journeys of less than three miles within the urban areas, where the impact of these car trips contributes to traffic congestion. Our current school travel planning activities (see Section B, 7.5.6) seek to reduce car use on the school journey.

The availability of good public transport in these main urban areas could play an important role in improving pupils access to grammar and upper schools - thereby extending choice for those not qualifying for free school transport, and whose parents are possibly unable to transport and fetch them by car. In addition this would help reduce the need for pupils to be taken to and from school by car, thereby reducing congestion on the roads at peak travel times and contributing to improved road safety around the schools.

The recent Schools White paper includes proposals to extend rights to home to school transport. Current arrangements provide a guarantee of home to school transport for only a small minority of pupils. The preference for schools is often hindered by concerns among parents about the cost and availability of transport, resulting in inequity. The Government therefore proposes to introduce legislation to

Table A3: Journey times to Primary and Secondary Schools by school transport

Journey time to school (March 2004)	Up to 10 minutes	11-20 minutes	21-30 minutes	31-40 minutes	41-50 minutes	51-60 minutes	> 60 minutes
Transport to primary schools	42%	33%	10%	5%	5%	5%	0%
Transport to secondary schools	12%	36%	24%	15%	9%	3%	1%



enable parents of disadvantageded pupils - those entitled to free school meals, or in receipt of their maximum level of Working tax Credit - to have free transport to any of the three suitable schools closest to their home, where these schools are more than two (and less than six) miles away. In addition to this, the development of 'Extended Services' at schools, will have significant impacts upon both accessibility and inclusion in the future, particularly where there are currently limited choices for the school journey. These new policy developments will require consideration as we further develop our accessibility strategy and review our school travel strategy.

Further Education for 16-19 year olds

Figure A5 shows that further education facilities in Buckinghamshire are located within our main towns (Amersham & Wycombe College and Aylesbury College). In some cases however students travel to educational facilities outside the county (see the Adult Education section below). As a result students in rural areas may have lengthy journeys, or no access at all in certain time periods. However it needs to be noted that outside the major towns, access to secondary education is assisted by extensive provision of home-to-school transport that offers free travel for entitled pupils to their nearest appropriate secondary school and subsidised transport for all 16-19 year olds living more than three miles from the nearest school or college offering their chosen course.

For those studying at schools, transport is normally provided on existing school buses, only available at the start and end of the school day, thereby reducing flexibility of travel times. A failure to provide travel opportunities that fit with the curriculum has been identified by young

people as a barrier to further education. A survey of Year 11 students in 2004 identified that many had limited knowledge of travel opportunities and financial support, whilst some reported that paying the costs of travel to further education would be difficult, and that journeys would be long and time consuming.

The current performance of the public transport system measured against the core national indicator for access to further education facilities is shown below.

The Bucks Lifelong Learning Partnership has informed us of other concerns with regard to 16-19 year olds and adult learners:

- For those living in rural areas access by public transport into colleges in Aylesbury and High Wycombe is difficult early in the morning, and for courses finishing in the evening, learners (or potential learners) are generally unable to get homes by public transport.
- Cross-county journeys to educational facilities are in some cases difficult and time consuming.
- Bus journeys across town to some training/education facilities are very time consuming.
- Buses, especially from deprived areas are not always well routed relative to learning centres.

DfT Core indicator	Current Performance
Percentage of 16-19 year olds within 30 and 60 minutes of a further education establishment by public transport	81% of 16-19 year olds live within 30 minutes of a Sixth Form or FE College by public transport. 87% of 16-19 year olds live within 60 minutes of a Sixth Form or FE College by public transport.



Adult Education

Adult education, takes place in many locations including specific adult education centres and temporary facilities, further education (FE) colleges, and some workplaces. No mapping has been carried out specifically for adult education establishments, though it was for FE facilities.

A Learning & Skills Council study in 2002-3 of travel-to-further education patterns showed that the main FE centres outside Buckinghamshire used by Buckinghamshire residents included: Milton Keynes College (MK), East Berkshire College (Slough), Barnfield College (Luton), Henley College (Henley-on-Thames), Oxford College (Oxford), North Oxfordshire College (Banbury), Dunstable College (Dunstable), Reading College and School of Arts & Design (Reading), and Berkshire College of Agriculture (Maidenhead).

There is also quite a large amount of travel into the County to FE colleges. The study showed that both Amersham & Wycombe and Aylesbury Colleges had above average inflows of learners from outside the sub-region:

- Amersham & Wycombe College: Herts, Berks, and London;
- ^a Aylesbury College: Beds & Luton and Herts.

The County Council's Adult Education Service is the main provider of part-time learning opportunities for adults in Buckinghamshire. The Service's Plan up to 2006 argues that continued prosperity in the area depends on increased productivity which is partly dependent on increased training and education of the workforce, and an improvement in skills across the whole population.

The Plan also recognises the need to concentrate on older people given the likelihood that more will continue working beyond the current retirement age, and should be enabled to actively participate in the community and economy.

Discussions are underway with local partners - including the District Councils - to ensure that the need for adult learning provision is incorporated into the appropriate local development documents, particularly in the growth area of Aylesbury Vale.

Three new learning centres have recently opened in Aylesbury and High Wycombe to provide

learning in areas where adults have low educational attainment levels and participation rates. There is an acknowledgement however that communication and transport problems pose significant barriers to widening participation in more rural parts of the County.

Adult Learning's inclusion / accessibility-related strategic objectives include:

- Attracting new learners, especially from 'hard to reach' groups such as the 25-45 age group (particularly men) and young people aged 16-18 not engaged in learning
- Establishing new Centres in "High Street" locations, giving priority to High Wycombe and Aylesbury
- Providing good quality accommodation to deliver programmes in rural areas

The main findings of relevance from the 'Strategic Area Review' (StAR), led by the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) included:

- Some learners, particularly in rural areas, face accessibility/transport problems
- Gaps exist in learning provision for the expected growth areas in the local economy
- An increasing number of learners in South Bucks and Aylesbury Vale are travelling outside the County for education and training
- Evidence of a link between lower performance and areas of deprivation
- Significant numbers of people in Bucks have basic skills problems
- More integrated information, advice and guidance needs to be provided

Further work needs to be done to identify how accessibility planning could contribute to addressing the above mentioned problems.

5.2.2 Employment deprivation and access

Registered unemployment in Buckinghamshire is substantially lower than the UK average: only 1.3% (3,748 people) in January 2005 compared to 2.6% for the whole of the UK. The wider ILO definition of unemployment suggests however that the number of unemployed people in the County is much higher: the most recently available data for 2002/3 showed it to be 3.8% (about 9,500 people). Of these 40% lived in

Wycombe, 32% in Aylesbury Vale, 17% in Chiltern, and 11% in South Bucks.

The Index of Deprivation (2004), which uses a wider definition of employment deprivation, shows the worst concentrations of employment deprivation in the County (below ward level) as being in Aylesbury and High Wycombe, but there are also small clusters in Amersham, Chesham and some isolated rural communities (see figure A6).

The core national indicator for access to employment relates to access to employment centres (super output areas with over 500 jobs) for people of working age, and particularly for those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance. Figure A7 show the mapping audit we have completed for access to employment.

Although we have measured this national core indicator, we have reservations and consider it to be of limited value in measuring access to employment since it is not a measure of access to employment opportunities. Also the focus of the indicator on those on job seekers allowance is probably not as appropriate for Buckinghamshire as it might be in other areas with higher registered unemployment.

The national indicator does not take account of the fact that, as the 2001 census showed, there was a substantial difference (i.e. 30,494 jobs) between the number of residents in Buckinghamshire that work (240,744) and number of jobs in Buckingham-shire (210,250), explaining why there is such a high level of out-commuting. This suggests that those with limited access to jobs may have fairly limited local job opportunities.

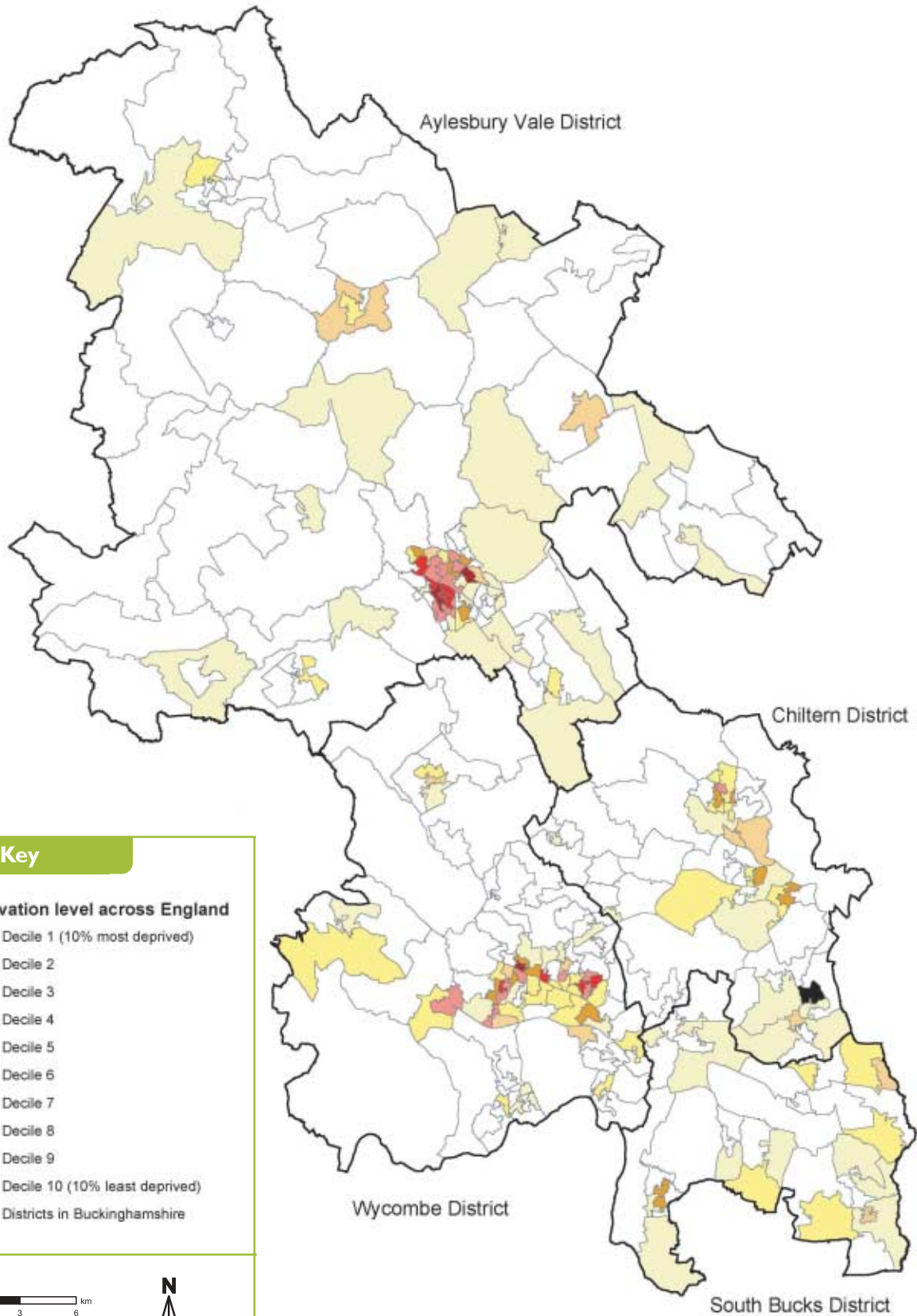
Accession (Figure A7) shows that there are significant parts of the County - off the main corridors in 'rural' areas - where journey times by public transport to major employment centres is poor and services are non-existent at peak-times, and indeed on many days. Our current performance measured against the core national indicator is shown in the table below.

We acknowledge that our overall performance measured against the core indicator seems poor, but this should be balanced against the low number of people on Jobseeker's Allowance. In terms of absolute numbers there is little evidence at a strategic level that accessibility presents a significant barrier to employment in Buckinghamshire. It is recognised however that opportunities for those living in rural areas to access work by public transport is minimal, and that its cost and availability have been identified as barriers to employment by young people in particular.

We recognise however that improving access to employment is about more than just tackling unemployment. It is also about addressing the link between recruitment and retention difficulties and access, and generally improving people's access to employment opportunities because of the economic benefits.

DfT Core indicator	Current Performance
<p>Percentage of: a) people of working age; b) people in receipt of Jobseekers' allowance ...</p> <p>within 20 and 40 minutes of work by public transport</p>	<p>55% of people of working age (47% in receipt of Jobseekers' allowance) live within 20 minutes of a major employment centre by public transport</p> <p>83% of people of working age (71% in receipt of Jobseekers' allowance) live within 40 minutes of a major employment centre by public transport</p>

Figure A6 - Areas of worst employment deprivation in Buckinghamshire



Map Key

Deprivation level across England

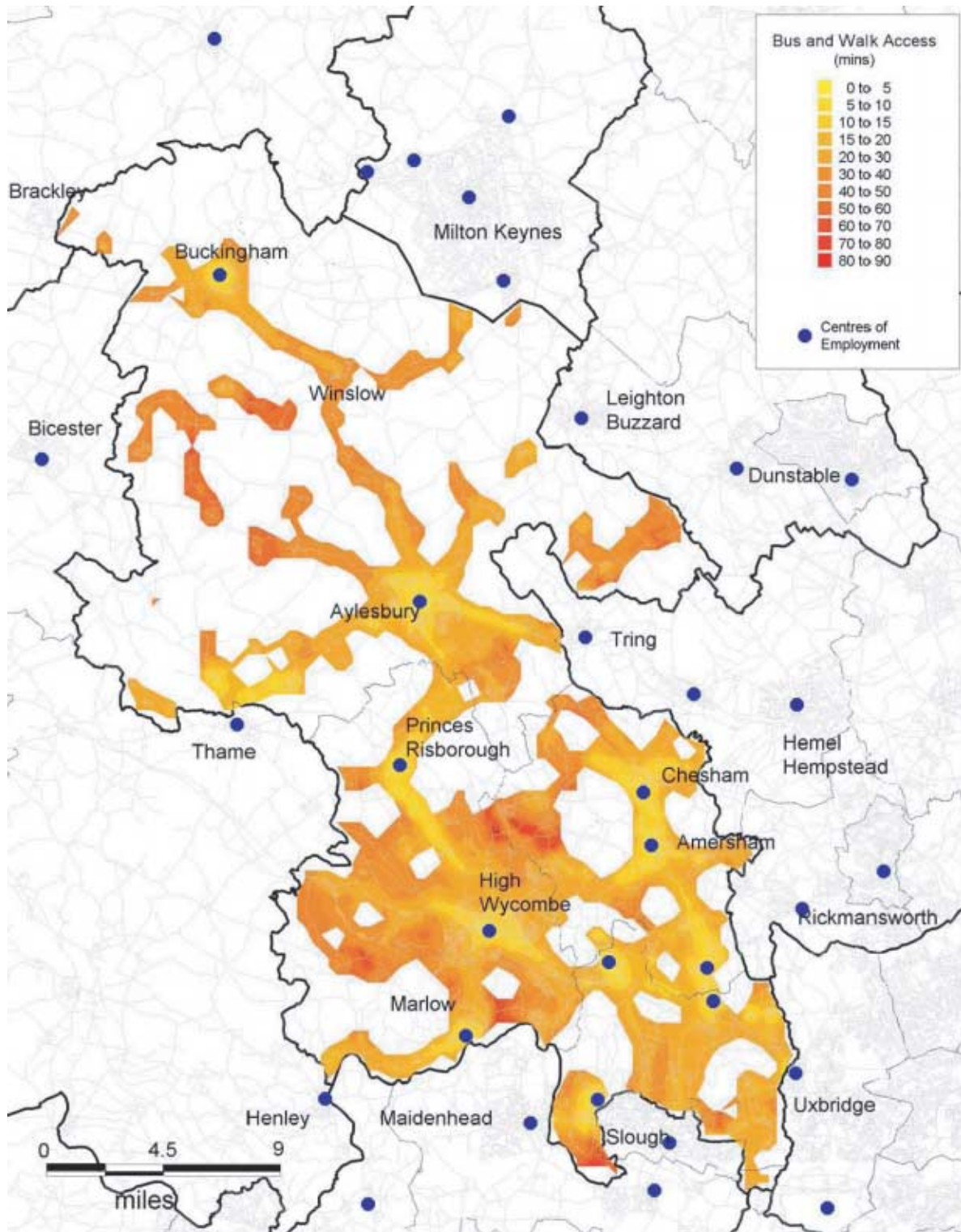
- Decile 1 (10% most deprived)
- Decile 2
- Decile 3
- Decile 4
- Decile 5
- Decile 6
- Decile 7
- Decile 8
- Decile 9
- Decile 10 (10% least deprived)
- Districts in Buckinghamshire

0 3 6 km



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Figure A7 - Bus and walk access to centres of employment



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While the labour force in Buckinghamshire is generally well qualified compared to other local authority areas, given the low unemployment rate and economic competition, there are significant issues around recruitment and retention and skills gaps at all levels. In a recent survey 38% of local employers reported difficulties in recruiting staff. Furthermore, the 'Strategic Area Review' found that action needs to be taken to prevent serious shortages in the major growth areas in the local economy in the foreseeable future.

Although economic activity in Buckinghamshire is relatively high compared to the national average, it is significantly lower than in Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire. An estimated 50,000 people in Buckinghamshire of normal working age are currently not economically active (see table A4 below), which can be an indication of 'hidden' or latent unemployment.

This picture accords with that of the Job Centre Plus agency for Buckinghamshire, which is aware that in addition to unemployment claimants there are approximately 30,000 other people in Buckinghamshire that they are tasked with encouraging into paid work. This target group consists of three main categories:

- people on disability or long-term sick benefits
- partners of people on disability and unemployment benefits
- lone parents

The Buckinghamshire Community Strategy emphasises the need to promote 'A Thriving Economy', to which end it sets a number of objectives including:

- the maintenance of economic growth - particularly in the north of the County
- the provision of major new business parks
- a significant increase in jobs in modern, high technology sectors
- a significant reduction in the rate of out-commuting
- the development of a major programme of local skills training
- recognition of the importance of jobs in rural areas

Our analysis has therefore identified the following issues to be considered further:

- Public transport access to centres of employment within and outside the county from rural areas
- The need to develop an appropriate indicator that enables us to measure how easy it is to access employment opportunities
- The number of non-employed people in Buckinghamshire that could be encouraged into paid work, to support sustained economic growth

Table A4: Employment and economic inactivity rates for Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire- January 2005

	Employment Rate (%)	Economic inactivity	
		16-59/64 year olds (000's)	Rate - 16-59/64 year olds (%)
Bucks	78.3	50.0	17.2
Aylesbury Vale	78.1	17.0	16.6
Chiltern	79.3	10.0	19.2
South Bucks	76.7	6.0	17.8
Wycombe	78.7	16.0	16.5
Milton Keynes	82.2	18.0	13.2
Oxfordshire	84.0	51.0	13.5

5.2.3 Health deprivation and access

The 2004 Index of Deprivation shows the worst concentrations of health deprivation in the County lie almost exclusively within Aylesbury and High Wycombe (see figure A8). However, we are acutely aware of significant healthcare-related access needs in both urban and rural areas of Buckinghamshire.

The DfT's core accessibility indicators for healthcare, relate to general hospitals and GP surgeries. Figures A9 -10 show the mapping audits we have completed for healthcare.

In this section we examine the evidence of accessibility disadvantage in relation to acute i.e. hospital-based healthcare, and primary healthcare (which is generally delivered outside hospitals and includes general practitioners, primary health clinics, opticians, dentists, home-based services and others).

Acute healthcare services

Access to hospital services is generally perceived to be one of the most serious accessibility problems facing people living in rural areas and smaller settlements. This applies to the whole of Buckinghamshire, but certain parts of the county are significantly worse off than others.

This view is supported by the findings of our accessibility modelling (figure A9) which illustrates that access to a general hospital is reasonable from settlements in the south (with Princes Risborough a key exception) with lengthy journey times from the north, and particularly the northwest. Rural areas off the main transport corridors have limited access. Bus services to hospitals in the south are similar across the day, with slightly better frequencies and journey times

in the morning than the afternoon or evening. Areas around Winslow have poor links, with no bus services during the mid morning period and in the evening peak.

Table A5 suggests that our performance against the core indicator is reasonable with at least 80% of the population able to access a general hospital within 60 minutes. The proportion is significantly lower for journeys less than 30 minutes, although households with no car and low-income groups appear to have significantly better access than the wider population. However, this relatively healthy picture masks the reality of the situation in Buckinghamshire.

There are three general hospitals in Buckinghamshire, located in Stoke Mandeville, High Wycombe, and Amersham, managed by one NHS Hospital Trust. Over the years, mainly driven by clinical and financial considerations, there has been a gradual process, accelerating recently, of increased specialisation across the hospital sector.

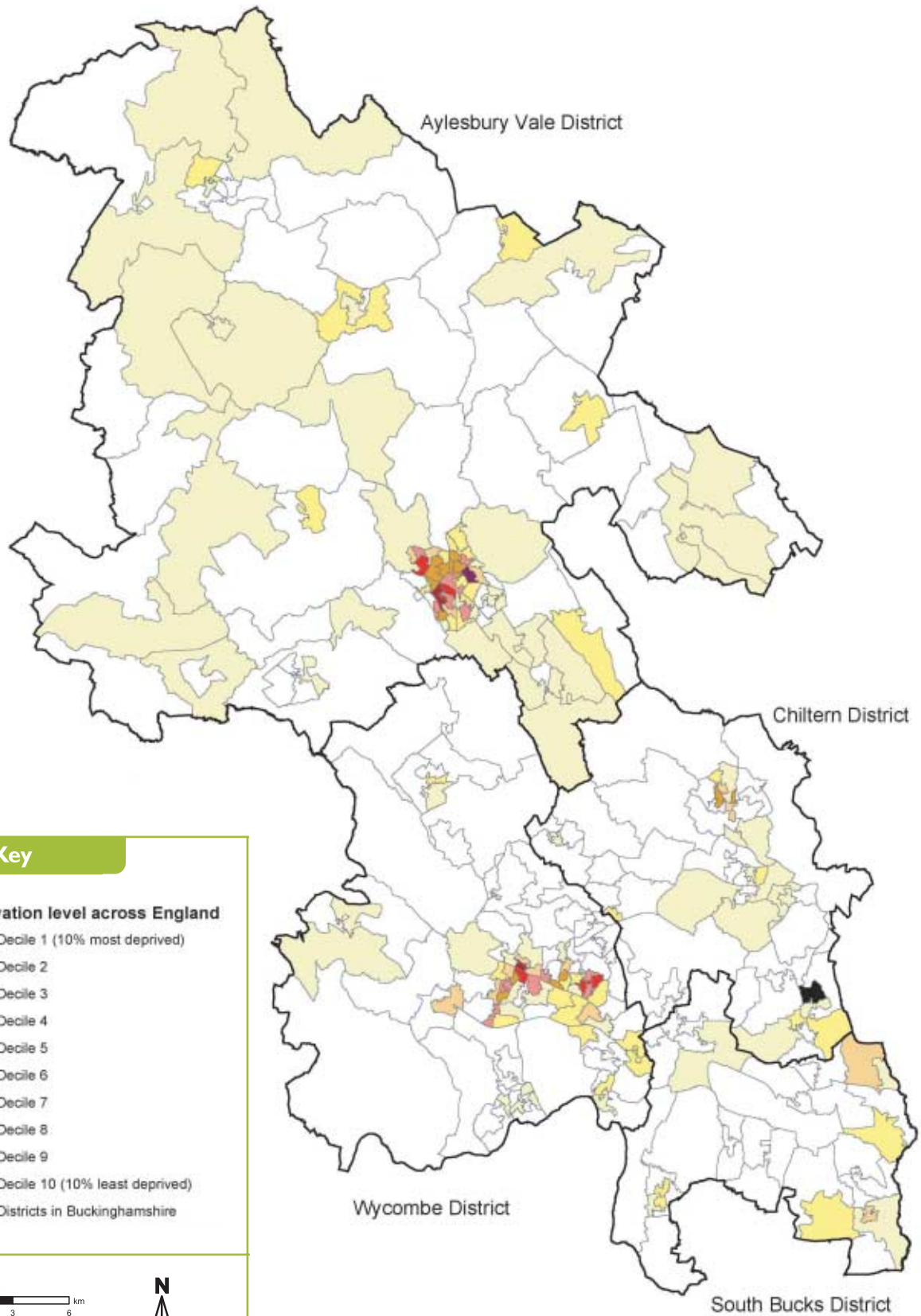
Increased specialisation of hospital services in Buckinghamshire has imposed additional accessibility problems for those without access to a car needing to attend out-patient clinics, or wishing to visit friends or relatives in hospital.

The national core indicator for access to general hospitals is therefore considered to be of limited value in measuring Buckinghamshire residents' access to hospital services since it does not take account of the dispersal of services across a number of general hospitals over a wide area, which constitutes the greatest accessibility problem in this area.

Table A5: Accessibility audit for healthcare (2004 data)

HEALTHCARE	General hospital <30 mins	General hospital <60 mins	GP surgery <15 mins	GP surgery <30 mins
All households	53%	80%	64%	85%
Households no car	65%	88%	77%	91%
All people	53%	80%	63%	85%
Young	54%	80%	64%	85%
Elderly	51%	80%	64%	85%
Low income	59%	85%	71%	89%

Figure A8 - Areas of worst health deprivation in Buckinghamshire



Map Key

Deprivation level across England

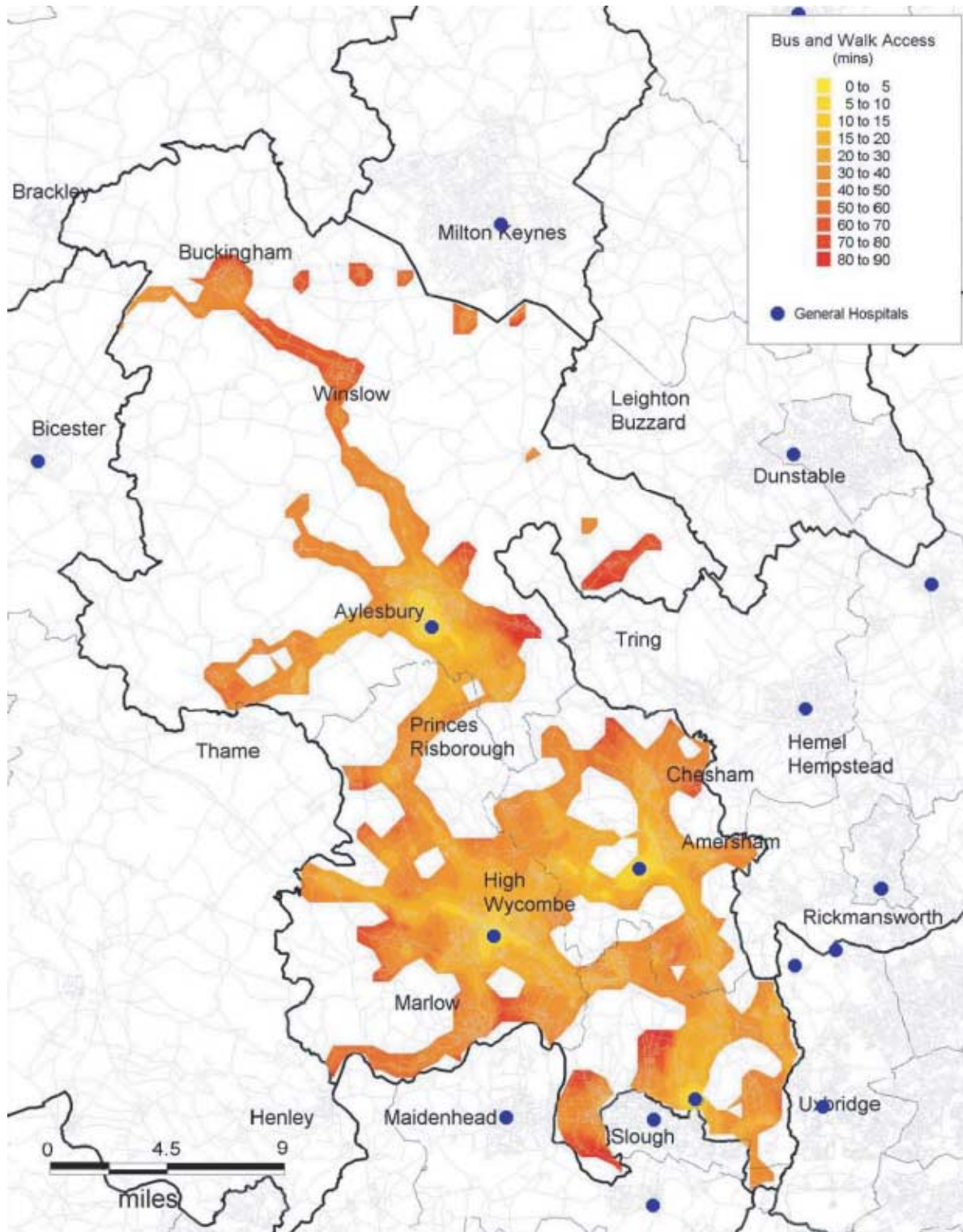
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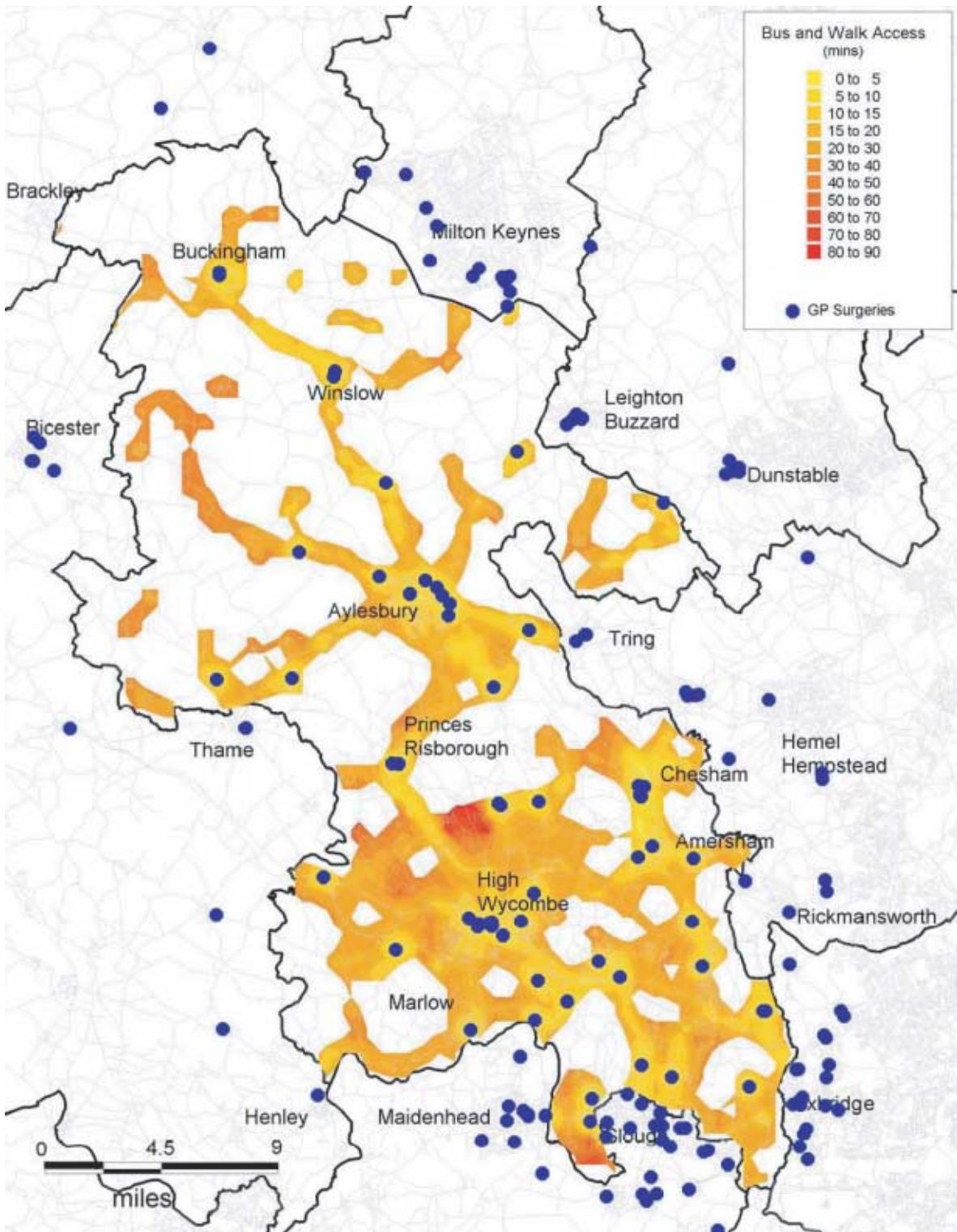
Figure A9 - Bus and walk access to hospitals



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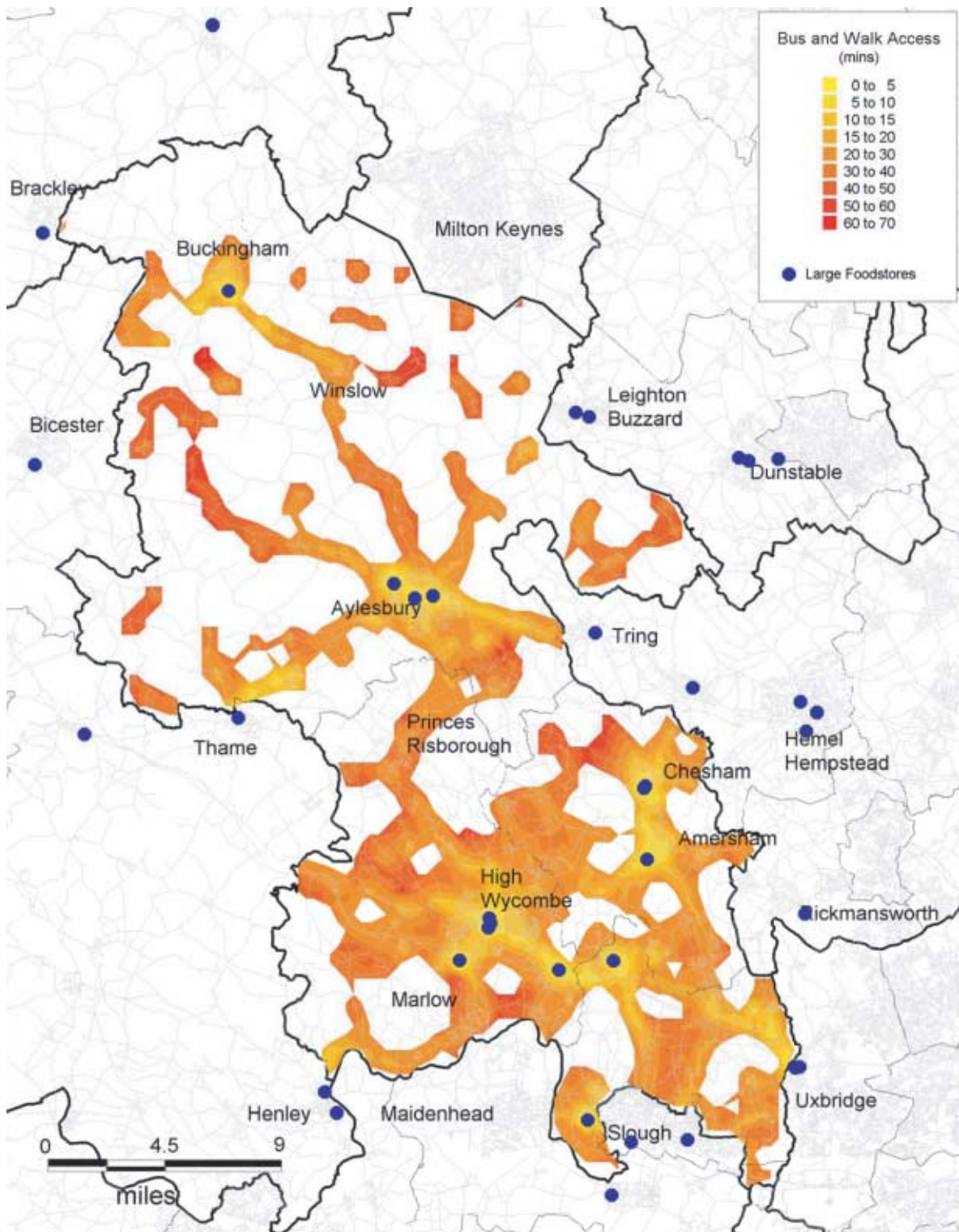
Figure A10 - Bus and walk access to GP surgeries



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Figure A11 - Bus and walk access to large food stores



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