

## 10. QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

The County Council has considered other quality of life issues in each of its strategies and policies, and the Strategic Environmental Assessment process has also ensured that each of the LTP's objectives, strategies and policies encompass the issues raised in the sections below. The County Council also attends the Hertfordshire Environmental Forum ([www.hef.org.uk](http://www.hef.org.uk)). HEF is a county-wide group of local authorities, not just the County and District/Borough Councils, but Parish Councils as well through their umbrella organisation, the Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils which has as an aim to 'stimulate an environmental awareness and encouragement of involvement, activity and sustainability at all levels'.

### 10.1 Public space and better streetscapes

The County Council is committed to improving the quality of the built environment and has demonstrated this by signed up to the CPRE's Clutter Challenge and by supporting English Heritage's 'Save Our Streets' campaign. The County Council through this plan seeks to enhance the quality of public spaces and protect and enhance streetscapes through providing a permeable environment that attracts people into the local environment to access local services and facilities. The quality of the built environment in Hertfordshire is highly valued for its contribution to the long-term vitality of local communities and centres. The County Council has implemented Home Zones, Quiet Lanes and town centre and village enhancements to improve the quality of life of local people.

To ensure that local transport schemes do not have any adverse impacts on the physical environment each scheme is assessed through the Environmental Management System (EMS) process. This should investigate what impacts, both positive and negative, a scheme would have on the environment, and put in place mitigation measures if required and also enhance and promote any positive benefits.

Community severance and identity is an issue where transport routes or the level of transport have an adverse impact. The County Council seeks to mitigate the effects of transport through environmental improvements to improve the quality of life for residents. Traffic has been managed or removed from some town and village centres to provide public space and improve the street streetscape providing attractive local facilities which reduce the need to travel. Through engaging the local community in developing proposals the County Council is able to identify what are important local characteristics. For example, in the Quiet Lanes schemes, the entry posts were based on a design of the local church.

Improving access to transport services and facilities plays an important part in improving the quality of life for local people, especially for those with disabilities. This includes improving access at interchanges and rail facilities, encompassing DDA requirements such as: step-free accesses; and visible and aural information. Clutter free streetscapes are especially important for people with disabilities, as demonstrated by Disability Audits carried out by the County Council with local disability groups e.g. Welwyn Hatfield Access Group, and Hertfordshire Society for the Blind.

## 10.2 Community Safety, Personal Security and Crime

The County Council seeks to contribute towards reducing crime and the fear of crime through this plan. The programmes will utilise crime mapping information and design safer communities through schemes which will bring positive influences to street activities. Particular aspects to address are lighting issues, subways, alleyways and visible bus stops. For example, in Hertford on Gascoyne Way, a new crossing has been installed for pedestrians and cyclists providing an alternative to the subway.

## 10.3 Healthy Communities

In Hertfordshire, the transport and health sectors are establishing partnerships to integrate policies and actions to improve health through transport initiatives.

Examples include:

- The Hertfordshire Integrated Transport Partnership consists of the County Council, Strategic Health Authority and PCTs seeking to provide appropriate information and transport to meet individual's needs to access healthcare.
- The Safer Routes to School programme have been working with the University College London on a three year study to investigate the health benefits of the Walking Bus Scheme and the health consequences of child car dependency.
- The County Council works with the District Councils on air quality issues and will seek improvements through the implementation of the Congestion Action Plan and providing sustainable transport choices through the implementation of this plan.

- The County Council will utilise best practice from *Walking and Cycling Action Plan* (DfT, 2004), and *Tackling Health Inequalities: A Programme for Action* (DoH, 2003).
- The County Council, through the Accessibility Planning process has carried out a pilot study in Broxbourne to investigate access to healthcare which will be developed into an action plan with stakeholders from across the health, transport, community and voluntary sectors.
- The 'Wider Welcome to Batchworth Lock Partnership Project' aims to identify and implement a means of creating an improved and integrated network of all-weather/all-year paths/ramps providing off-road access for all in the area. The network will enable a circular route and linear links into, along, and out from the Canal Corridor. It will provide both visitors and residents of Rickmansworth with much enhanced, practicable opportunities to experience and benefit from the local countryside, and functionally allow journeys to and from work or for leisure. Key benefits of the project are: improving the health of the people in the community; improving community safety in the local area; and improving access to physical activity, e.g. walking and cycling and opportunities for the disabled. The project builds and complements two interlinking projects which have been successfully delivered one of which is the "Grand Union Canal Corridor Rural Access Improvements".

## 10.4 Sustainable and Prosperous Communities

The county has pockets of social and economic deprivation which are being tackled through Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, Local Strategic Partnerships,

Community Strategies, Herts Rural Community Council and Community Development Agency for Herts. In Stevenage, the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy has five themes of building the capacity of the community, education, lifelong learning, health, crime, community safety and the physical environment. A Pathfinder Initiative has been undertaken in the St Nicholas area of the town, which looked at accessibility and transport in their broadest sense and through the Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan the issues identified are being taken forward.

### 10.5 Noise

The County's district and borough councils handle complaints from the public around noise including transport noise. Over the last few years there has been a fall in the average number of complaints recorded across Hertfordshire, and in 2004 only 1.5% of complaints made were for road transport. Rail transport and air transport only generated 1% of the complaints between them, and vehicles and machinery in the street resulted in 5.5% of overall complaints. Noise from civil aircraft is also monitored by the airports, and in 2003/04 525 complaints were received by London Luton airport and 3559 for Stansted airport.

The County Council contributes in a number of ways to reducing transport noise, examples include:

- Hertfordshire is trialling the use of noise reducing road surfacing materials;
- Initiatives that reduce road traffic and the need to travel have positive benefits for the environment with reduced pollution and noise levels. Such initiatives include: school travel plans; company travel plans; TravelWise and Business TravelWise;

- Hertfordshire are keen to undertake a pilot study with a new road surface called 'Rippleprint', used on approaches to hazards and changes in speed limits. This surface creates less noise outside of the vehicle compared to other types of rumbled surfacing, but creates an audible warning for drivers inside of the car;
- In 2004 the County Council supplied the Highways Agency with details of specific locations that gave concern regarding the level of noise generated by traffic on motorways and trunk roads. The primary concern was the A1(M) between junctions 4 and 7. The County Council is working with the Highways Agency to identify noise hotspots and is including noise issues within responses to the Highway Agency's Route Management Strategies.

The number of complaints received can often be a misleading measure of disturbance from road, rail and aircraft noise, as many people will not complain about events that they feel they have no way of influencing. The perception of the intrusion of traffic noise is high and the County Council undertakes the measures outlined above to combat these concerns.

### 10.6 Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

The Hertfordshire Community Strategy 2004-2010 builds on the work of Local Agenda 21 and amongst other issues aims to maintain a sustainable environment. This will be implemented through Herts Forward, the strategic countywide partnership bringing together the public sector, local strategic partnerships, businesses, voluntary and community sectors and many others.

Key priorities for maintaining a sustainable environment within the community strategy include:

- to protect and enhance the environment to improve the quality of life for all;
- to encourage more sustainable modes of transport; and
- and, to plan for the potential implication of climate change for the environment and service provision in Hertfordshire.

The Hertfordshire Environmental Forum (HEF) of which the County Council is a member, aims to increase environmental awareness, and encourage local involvement around countywide environmental programmes and Local Agenda 21.

The UK's carbon dioxide target is to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 1990 levels by 20% by 2010. The Local Transport Plan will help to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at a county level by restricting the growth in car traffic and the need to travel, and through raising the awareness and encouraging alternative modes of travel. This is emphasised in the Plan's objectives and wider policies, and will be achieved through:

- Behavioural measures, such as School Travel Plans, Company Travel Plans and Village Travel Plans;
- TravelWise initiatives such as Bikeweek, Walk to School Week;
- Modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport delivered through the Area Plans;
- Safer Routes to School delivered under the STAG Programme;
- All new buses will meet the latest Euro standards for emissions;

- All new street lighting equipment will be chosen with energy and light pollution issues in mind.

The County Council has been working with the East of England Local Authorities to map levels of CO<sub>2</sub> across the region which are attributable to transport. Hertfordshire contributes to 19% of transport related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the East of England region and will be working with the other local authorities to address these levels. The main areas of CO<sub>2</sub> concern are along the main transport corridors which in Hertfordshire are focused on the Highways Agency network. The County Council will work closely with the Highways Agency to mitigate effects of the network.

### 10.7 Landscape and Biodiversity

Currently (in 2002), 11% of Hertfordshire's landscape is designated as important wildlife habitat. The impacts of new infrastructure developments on the character of the landscape can be substantial and cumulative.

Without strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments on planned transport schemes, biodiversity could be reduced by damaging habitats and threatening sites with designated conservation status.

The character of landscapes may be also be affected by the introduction of new developments such as new road surfaces, lighting, signage and traffic, whilst the connectivity of landscapes may also be disrupted.

An important landscape area within the county is the Chilterns AONB. The County Council is working within this sensitive landscape with

neighbouring authorities to review and update the Chilterns Environmental Guidelines. Furthermore, the County Council is a partner in a project addressing the issue of deer collisions in the National Trust's Ashridge Estate by looking at innovative measures to manage deer movements near or across the highway. The National Trust have undertaken research at Ashridge (November 2005) which found that 76% of respondents considered the countryside location to be either 'important' or 'very important' to their quality of life.

The County Council's transport schemes are designed and implemented through thorough consultation with local residents and stakeholders to take account of local characteristics and to consider the impacts of a transport solution.

Rights of Way are also managed sympathetically in accordance with local diversity and heritage.

Recently the building of the Baldock bypass demonstrated the Council's commitment to protecting its wildlife and habitat. The wildlife included badgers, fallow deer, a common lizard colony, many species of birds in a setting of chalk grassland. It was written into the contract that the important areas of chalk grasslands had to be lifted and transplanted. Baldock bypass demonstrates that with imaginative planning, road schemes can benefit wildlife by creating linear corridors for wildlife to move between areas of good habitat.

## 10.8 Light Pollution

The County Council recognises the effects of lighting on the safety and quality of life for residents. The County Council has a lighting

policy and a street lighting renewal programme to ensure that appropriate lighting measures are considered when developing a scheme.

- The County Council will implement directional lighting onto the highway to prevent light spillage into the night sky.
- The County Council seeks to use lighting sensitively in rural areas.
- The County Council seeks to provide a safe evening environment for all users, and particularly recognises the concerns of pedestrians at night.

## 10.9 Summary of Key Actions for the Next 5 Years

- Implement the 'Save Our Streets' ethos in all new schemes.
- Ensure local character and distinctiveness is retained in developing proposals through community consultation.
- Work with the Crime Reduction Unit to implement actions of the Nuisance Alleyways report.
- To contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions through modal shift and lower emission engines.

## Targets and Indicators That Deliver the Quality of Life Shared Priority

Indicator	Definition
Bus service user satisfaction	Percentage of bus users satisfied with the local provision of passenger transport services
Passenger transport information user satisfaction	Percentage of users satisfied with local provision of passenger transport information
Accessibility	Percentage of people who find it difficult to travel to a local hospital
Air quality	Indicator to be developed (see section 9.5)

The following indicators also support the delivery of the quality of life shared priority:

Principal road condition  
 Non-principal road condition  
 Unclassified road condition  
 Footway condition  
 Road Safety Indicators  
 Public transport patronage  
 Bus punctuality  
 Cycling trips  
 Mode share of journeys to school  
 Congestion  
 Rights of Way  
 School travel plans  
 Speed compliance  
 Abbey Line