

ANNEX J

RURAL POLICY

(including sustainability appraisal)

RURAL TRANSPORT POLICY

This strategy helps to deliver the following objectives:

To reduce the need for the movement of people and goods through integrated land use planning, the promotion of sustainable distribution and the use of telecommunications.

To obtain best use of the existing network through effective design, maintenance and management.

To provide a transport system which provides access to employment, shopping, education, leisure and health facilities for all, especially those without a car and those with impaired mobility.

Hertfordshire has a significant rural area that accounts for approximately 80% of the land of the county and is home to over 200,000 residents. Hertfordshire villages are no more than 5 miles from a town and this creates complex journey patterns with network services following a north-south direction to London and poor east-west links.

Hertfordshire rural residents have a high car ownership, as shown in the Sustainable Transport in Rural Areas Project (STRAP) where 65% of households in the project area owned two or more cars. In Hertfordshire, 60% of residents in rural areas described themselves as 'dedicated car users' compared with 44% in urban areas (Transport Factsheet, 2001). According to the Countryside Agency, traffic increased three times faster on rural A roads than on urban roads between 1981 –1997 and in Hertfordshire this is especially evident at peak times. These traffic and transport issues have a major impact on the rural areas of Hertfordshire and the overall result of circumstances is an overwhelming dependence on the car.

This Rural Strategy responds to the Rural White Paper, 'Our Countryside: The Future, A fair deal for Rural England'. The Rural White Paper is a key influencing policy document published in November 2000 and seeks to create a living, a working, a protected and a vibrant countryside. The key themes which have been taken into account are to provide local services, a stronger role for communities, recognise the importance of the car, provide quality public transport and co-ordination, improve rural road safety, reduce the impact of traffic in rural areas and encourage cycling and walking.

The Hertfordshire Rural Forum

The Hertfordshire Rural Forum is a large umbrella grouping of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors that share a common interest in the well being and future of the county's rural communities and environment. The Forum has produced an 'Agenda for Action, 2002-2005' which outlines key rural strands and issues and provides a remit for the Forum. The Forum has identified and

endorsed a key rural strand as 'Transport/Traffic'. Members of the Rural Forum will inform the Rural Programme.

Partnerships

The County Council has undertaken pilot initiatives often with partner support from the Countryside Agency, District, Parish Councils and Voluntary Organisations.

Pilots include the:

- Sustainable Transport in Rural Areas Project (STRAP)
- Rural Transport Co-ordination Project (now the Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership)
- Central Chilterns Area Traffic Management Project
- Chilterns Integrated Access Project
- Hertfordshire Transport Direct

Approaches and rural solutions have been tested through these projects and have involved a high level of consultation and engagement of the local communities across Hertfordshire.

Substantial progress has been achieved through these pilots and the outputs from them are now being co-ordinated and to act as a mainstream approach to transport and traffic issues in rural areas.

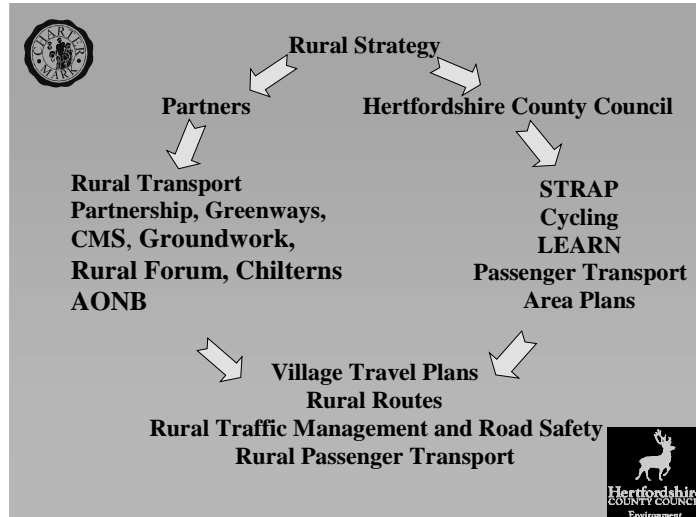
Aims

The County Council's Rural Strategy will work with partners to:

- Support a stronger role for local communities in identifying local needs and deciding how these needs can be met.
- Facilitate cycling and walking and to increase the use of the Rights of Way Network for journeys to work, school, facilities and services.
- Increase the range of locally accessible services that people can reach without the need to travel.
- Improve the quality of passenger transport, making it more responsive to people's real needs, being flexible, well marketed, well integrated, stable and reliable, in accordance with Hertfordshire's Bus Strategy and Intalink Partnership.
- Co-ordinate better services to make best use of what is available. Working with bus and train operators and where necessary investigating with the community and voluntary transport sector in the provision of services in areas not adequately served by scheduled bus services.
- Improve rural road safety.
- Find measures to minimise the impact of traffic in rural areas.
- Integrate transport modes across the network with the provision of relevant user-friendly route and service information.

- Seek opportunities for Green Tourism and Leisure in Rural Hertfordshire that can play a supporting role for the rural economy.

The overarching process of delivery of the above objectives will be through the development of a Village Travel Plan. Such Plans could include the other funding streams identified in this strategy of Rural Routes, Rural Traffic Management and Road Safety, and Rural Passenger Transport.



Village Travel Plans

The County Council with the support of partners will develop Village Travel Plans and build upon Parish Environmental Action Plans (PEAPS), Parish Design Statements/Appraisals/Plans and support the work of Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Planning across the county.

The Village Travel Plan process will involve the identification of local issues through research such as questionnaires, mapping exercises and facilitating local ownership of issues and solutions through working groups. The Village Travel Plan will seek to provide a holistic package of measures and sign post delivery mechanisms.

A Village Travel Plan toolkit includes measures to:

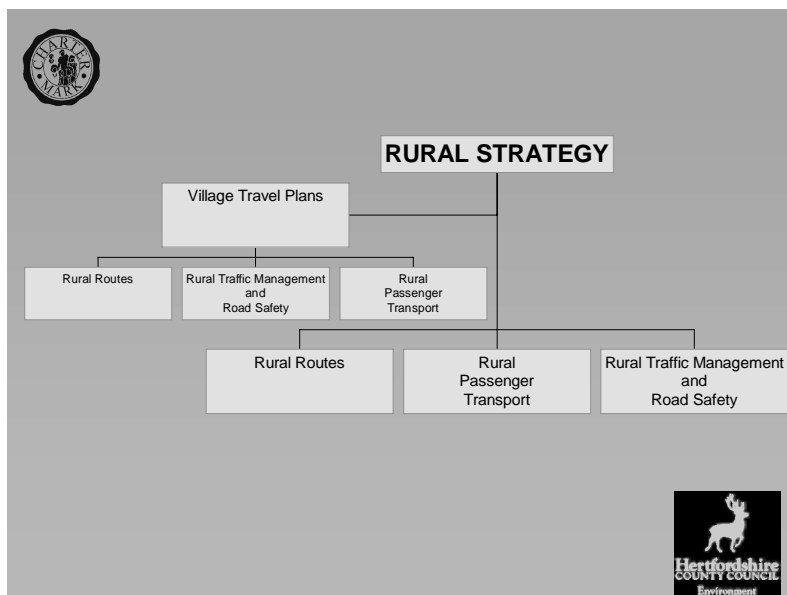
- Bring services closer to people by reducing the need to travel through enhancing the range of services provided to rural communities.
- Make local amenities and facilities more accessible for those without access to a car.
- Improve personal mobility, for example through car sharing information, car clubs, wheels to work schemes and providing alternatives to the car.
- Investigate the provision of more responsive passenger transport through the Rural Transport Partnership, Rural Bus Grant and Rural Bus Challenge funds.
- Improve passenger transport interchanges and information provision in the rural areas through raising the rural profile of the Hertfordshire's Intalink Partnership and the Bus Strategy.
- Provide innovative rural traffic management solutions to address local transport issues.

Examples of implemented schemes: PEAPS in Shenley, Local Parish/Village Timetables, 30mph Village Speed Limit Policy, Central Chilterns Traffic Management Project

Case Study – Shenley PEAPS

A Parish Environmental Action Plan helps a parish to take stock of its' important environmental features and enables a community to decide how best to improve their local environment. Local residents and community groups in Shenley worked in partnership with the Countryside Management Service to produce a Parish Environmental Action Plan. Conservation of the historic rural landscape and access to the countryside were high on the agenda. With grants from the Countryside Agency, Watling Chase Community Forest, Herts Environmental Landfill Partnership and Hertfordshire County Council and with the help of Hertsmere Borough Council, the Parish Council and local businesses, 5 environmental projects have been undertaken in last year and a half.

The following funding streams are seen as forming part of the Village Travel Plan toolkit as well as standalone projects.



Rural Routes

The County Council with the support of partners will develop Rural Routes through network improvements to facilitate journeys to work, school, facilities and services. Rural Routes will involve at least adopting a minimum standard on the rights of way network and where appropriate incorporating the Quiet Lanes approach on the highway. The Rural Routes standard would seek surface, signs and promotion improvements and seek to be accessible to all.

Rural Routes will:

- Contribute to the County Council's statutory duty to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan to assess the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public. This Improvement Plan will include a statement of action for the highway authority to secure an improved network of local rights of way. This will include opportunities for non-motorised users to avoid using roads used mainly by motor vehicles and providing access to the countryside.
- Improve the rights of way network to provide opportunities for journeys to school, work, facilities and services through improving access, surface condition, signage, route publicity, seeking to provide links with other modes of transport particularly passenger transport and overcoming legislative difficulties.
- Support the development and implementation of the County Cycling Strategy and local Walking Strategies.
- Develop with CMS Rural Enterprise Walks and leisure routes to support the rural economy.

Examples include: Watling Chase Greenways, Ayot St Peter Quiet Lanes, The National Cycle Network, Chilterns Integrated Access Demonstration Project.

Case Study – Watling Chase Greenways

An area of Watling Chase Community Forest in Hertsmere became a national pilot for the development of a Greenways network. A community based Steering Group was established, a 'Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats' Analysis and a Demand Assessment carried out and route development initiated. To date a number of routes have been implemented covering a network of 7.9km and a 10 year Greenways Strategy produced.

The vision of the strategy is:

'A community partnership to develop an accessible network embracing town and countryside for non-motorised local journeys'

Rural Passenger Transport

The County Council with the support of partners will develop the rural profile of the Hertfordshire Intalink Partnership, investigate the provision of more responsive passenger transport, improve passenger transport interchanges and information and co-ordinate service provision.

Rural Passenger Transport will:

- Work with Borough/District Councils and commercial bus and train operators to maintain and develop the Passenger Transport network in rural areas.
- Improve the quality and reliability of information to the user.
- Through partnership working, promote marketing of the rural network, contributing funds to major projects and funding contract services, concessionary fares and Dial-a-Ride.
- Work with Borough and District Councils, Statutory Agencies, commercial bus and train operators and the voluntary sector to develop and co-ordinate transport provision in the rural areas.
- Actively promote countywide co-ordination of concessionary fares, provision of Dial-a-Ride services, partnerships with Health agencies and the voluntary sector to provide community based transport schemes.
- Maintain the County Council's successful track record of funding transport co-ordination projects with the Countryside Agency and Health Agencies and promote and develop partnership bids to access Rural Bus Grant and Rural Challenge Funding.

Examples include: The Intalink Strategy that enables the County's future bus network to be defined. Village/Parish Timetables, used as a case study in the Rural White Paper. Taxibus Scheme in Ashwell for commuters, Dial-a Ride, Roundabout Transport (Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Watford Rural) funded by Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership and Rural Bus Challenge. Hertfordshire Action on Disability (HAD) – Rural Bus Challenge, Chilterns Integrated Access Demonstration Project, Hertfordshire Transport Direct.

Case Study – Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership

Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership has the aim to support, co-ordinate and work in partnership with both public, private and voluntary groups addressing social exclusion, economic and environmental issues in rural areas, promoting and developing a range of transport options in rural areas as well as offering sustainable alternatives to the car.

23 small projects have been funded via the Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership Delegated Fund which includes, promotional flyers, transport needs surveys, cycle sheds, cycle racks and local path links to primary school/local services.

Rural Traffic Management and Road Safety

The County Council with the support of partners will develop and implement rural transport and traffic solutions appropriate to the local rural context.

Rural Traffic Management and Road Safety will:

- Work closely with the local community when designing a rural traffic management scheme to ensure that the local rural context is accounted for during the process.
- Investigate the implications of a possible Rural Speed Management Strategy.
- Build upon the Quiet Lanes pilot scheme at Ayot St Peter and pursue best practice.
- Undertake rural sign audits.
- Reinforce the road hierarchy by seeking appropriate improvements to the Primary Route Network.
- Undertake traffic surveys and research.
- Consider and pilot the recommendations of the Rural Roads Scrutiny which included controlling HGV routing, formalising selected minor rural roads as 'single track roads with passing places', and making use of speed 'buffer' zones on the approaches to villages.
- Undertake promotion and education awareness through the TravelWise Initiative and Road Safety.
- Work within the Chilterns AONB to meet the aims of the Travel & Transport Section of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan.
- Work and support the countywide themes of LEARN, Cycling, Road Safety and the Area Transport Plans to deliver rural transport and traffic measures.

Examples include: Ayot St Peter Quiet Lanes, 30mph Village Speed Limit Programme, Rural Safer Routes to School at Lemsford, Wheathampstead, Buntingford and Little Gaddesden, Central Chilterns Traffic Management Project, respond to multi-modal studies, HCC Major Projects Programme, Rural Safer Routes to School.

Case Study: Ayot St Peter Quiet Lanes

The Quiet Lanes concept is being piloted in Ayot St Peter and aims to create a network of rights of way and highway that are safer for local walking, cycling and horse riding. The scheme includes gateway features at the parish entrance, an advisory 20mph limit and improved entrances to the rights of way network. The Quiet Lanes project has been developed through close working with Ayot St Peter Parish and the outcome of the scheme is being monitored.

Delivery

Hertfordshire County Council will work closely with partners to ensure that pilot projects currently in existence are successfully seen through to completion. Future pilot projects will be developed with partners particularly in the research and development field. Areas for the rural programme will be chosen from across the county through the use of indicators and taking into account the need to co-ordinate with other initiatives in that area. All villages/parishes will be on a rural database that will help to identify areas that will benefit from the Rural Programme.

Monitoring

Schemes will be monitored to see the effects on the mode of transport and travel behaviour where schemes have been implemented.

Programme	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Rural (Hertfordshire Highways)	450	915	900	900
Other Rural (Hertfordshire County Council)	620	1580	1520	1520
TOTAL	1070	2495	2420	2420
Bid (excl. Majors)	450	915	900	900
Bid (Majors)				
Other Investment Programmes	620	580	520	520

The capital programme is also supported by various passenger transport revenue programmes outlined in Section 5.10, including that for Voluntary and Community Transport and the area transport plans.

Other Programmes

Organisation	Programme
Hertfordshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • Rural Passenger Transport Services • Voluntary and Community Transport • Village Speed Limits • Hertfordshire Transport Direct
District/Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for rural bus services, Dial-a-ride and concessionary fare schemes. • Watling Chase Greenways Projects • Hertfordshire Transport Direct
Countryside Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Chilterns Area Traffic Management Project • Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership • Chilterns Integrated Access Demonstration Project
Chiltern Conservation Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Chilterns Area Traffic Management Project • Chilterns Integrated Access Demonstration Project

Performance Indicators

Indicator	Current (year)	Target (year)
Length of Rights of Way which have been improved to a Rural Routes standard	0 (2003)	20km (2006)
Number of Village Travel Plans produced	0 (2003)	14 (2006)
% rural households within 10 minutes/800 metres walk of an hourly or better bus services	36%	40% (2006)

RURAL TRANSPORT POLICY SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

The Rural Transport Policy was reviewed in 2002 to reflect changes in national and local issues since the publication of the policy in the Local Transport Plan 2001/02 – 2005/06. The County Council has undertaken a sustainability appraisal on the new revised policy to consider the environmental, social and economic consequences of implementing the strategies.

Further details on the historical background and process of sustainability appraisals can be found in the LTP 2001/02 – 2005/06 'Sustainability Appraisal' report published in July 2000.

Summary Conclusions

This strategy is broadly compatible with the sustainability objectives and the Local Transport Plan's other strategies. Through encouraging the use of alternative modes of transport e.g. walking and cycling the policy potentially contributes to reducing energy consumption, improving air quality, and reducing pollution nuisances. One of the policy's main aims is to reduce the need for movement through integrated land use planning and promoting sustainable distribution, this will be achieved through the development of Village Travel Plans. Maintenance needs could increase through new initiatives such as 'Quiet Lanes', but in contrast bridge maintenance could decrease as lorry re-routing could mean fewer bridges would need strengthening to 40+ tonnes.

A copy of the full appraisal tables can be found in the following pages.

Strategy Analysis Table: Rural Transport Policy	Ref.	Annex J, Hertfordshire's LTP Annual Progress Report 2003.			
	Key	μ	No significant effect/overlap	p-	Potentially Negative Relationship
		p+	Potentially Positive Relationship	8	Incompatibility
	4	Compatibility			

Impacts Appraisal		Commentary		Strategic Compatibility		Commentary	
Resources	Reduce energy consumption and improve efficiency of use	4	Policy encourages less energy consuming modes of transport e.g. walking, cycling.	5.2 South West Hertfordshire	4	Rural areas dovetail into all six of the area plans.	
	Reduce water consumption and improve efficiency of use	μ		5.3 Lea Valley	4		
	Reduce quantities of raw materials used, encourage use of renewable resources and ensuring sustainability of source.	μ		5.4 Mid Hertfordshire	4		
	Enhance and improve quality of landscape and open space	μ		5.5 Northern Hertfordshire	4		
Pollution	Improve air quality and reduce CO ² emissions	4	Policy encourages modal shift to cycling, walking, thereby reducing motor vehicle emissions.	5.6 Eastern Hertfordshire	4		
	Improve water quality	μ		5.7 West Hertfordshire	4		
	Improve land and soil quality	μ		5.8 Highway Network Maintenance	P-		Different maintenance needs may be necessary i.e. quiet lanes.
	Reduce polluting nuisances – light pollution, noise pollution	P+	There is the potential to reduce pollution nuisances through modal shift.	5.9 Bridges	P+		Re-routing of HGVs means fewer bridges need to be strengthened to take 40+ ton vehicles
	Reduce quantities of waste requiring disposal	μ		5.10 Passenger Transport	4		
Biodi	Increase numbers and improve quality of wildlife habitat	μ		5.11 Safety	4		
	Increase number of species	μ		5.12 LEARN	4		

Impacts Appraisal		Commentary	
	Improve access to natural environment	4	
Built Environment	Improve quality and preserve historic buildings and sites	μ	
	Improve integration with land use policy to Increase sustainable land use	P+	Achieved through Village Travel Plans.
	Enhance quality of urban environment	μ	
	Enhance quality of rural environment	4	
	Improve public safety and reduce crime	P+	Improved passenger transport services/access may increase patronage which in turn may help people feel more secure using buses/trains.
Transport	Increasing efficiency, attractiveness, reliability and use of public transport	4	
	Improve transport safety	4	
	Increasing attractiveness of walking and cycling	4	
	Reducing the number and length of car journeys	4	
	Reducing the number and length of lorry journeys	P+	Policy includes controlling HGV routeing.
	Reducing the need for staff transport	μ	
Economy	Increase number of jobs	P+	Policy encourages local businesses.
	Increase support for local and community businesses	4	
	Improve equality of opportunity in the labour market	4	
	Increase opportunities for home and flexible working	P+	

Strategic Compatibility		Commentary	
5.13 Rural Transport			
5.14 Cycling		4	
5.15 Urban Plans		P+	Policy could be beneficial to the outer fringes of the urban plan areas.
5.16 Buses		4	
5.17 Rail		4	
5.18 taxis		4	
5.19 Walking		4	
5.20 Powered Two Wheelers		4	
5.21 Parking		μ	
5.22 Interchanges		μ	
5.23 Integration with development plans		μ	
5.24 Passenger Transport Information		4	
5.25 Company Travel Plans		4	
5.26 Travel Awareness		4	
5.27 Airports		μ	
5.28 Social Inclusion		4	

Impacts Appraisal		Commentary	
Social Inclusion	Increase the range of and amount of new services and resources for disadvantaged groups	μ	
	Improve and increase access by disadvantaged groups to existing services in the community	4	
	Improve and increase access by disadvantaged groups to County Hall services	μ	
	Encourage community empowerment	4	
	Increase Partnership and Consultative Working Practices	4	
	Improve educational and vocational training facilities and opportunities	μ	
	Improve mental and physical health of people living in the community	P+	
	Increase awareness of healthy lifestyles and increase participation in Health Improvement Programmes.	μ	

Strategic Compatibility		Commentary	
5.29 Air Pollution and Noise	μ		
5.30 Detrunking	μ		
5.31 Sustainable Distribution	4		
5.32 Horses	4		
5.33 Health	P+		Encouragement of alternative modes e.g. walking/cycling that are beneficial to health.
5.34 Road Hierarchy	4		
5.35 Road Traffic Reduction	4		