

SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Report of the Director of Environment

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress made with the use of school travel plans within the planning process in support of County Council policies and government planning guidance.
- 1.2 To seek the approval of the Committee for dissemination of additional guidance to assist school developers and district planning officers make best use of school travel plans.
- 1.3 To recommend the adoption of this approach and circulation of "Additional Guidance for Developers" within HCC and to the 10 districts, the local planning authority for non HCC schools.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Government guidance and County Council policies recognise the contribution that school travel plans can make to the encouragement of safe, sustainable travel. Guidelines have been produced by Hertfordshire County Council to assist schools develop effective travel plans.
- 2.2 Informative advice appended to planning permissions for school developments has not stimulated the development of school travel plans as anticipated. Planning conditions are proving to be a more effective way to ensure that travel plans are prepared and schools take into account changes associated with a proposed development of a school site.
- 2.3 There is, however, uncertainty about when a school travel plan will be required to support a planned school development and the level of detail that a travel plan supporting a planning application should contain. In addition, it is important that all schools are treated consistently irrespective of whether their planning authority is the District or County Council. Therefore supplementary guidance, to support the general guidance available about school travel plans, is necessary to assist those involved in development of a school site.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The report concludes that a travel plan, including detailed baseline information, should accompany all major developments of school sites. For smaller developments a programme of preparation and implementation of a school travel plan will be sufficient if an existing plan is not available. In both cases, the implementation of an approved travel plan will be a requirement of the planning permission and this will be achieved through the imposition of conditions.
- 3.2 Additional guidance for school developers is required to support the existing general guidelines, setting out greater detail about when a travel plan will be required, what information it should contain and how it should be developed.
- 3.3 To ensure that all schools across Hertfordshire are treated fairly and consistently, District planning authorities should be recommended to adopt a similar approach to the County planning authority.

1. Progress made to develop the use of School Travel Plans within the planning process

- 1.1 National guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (March, 2001) and the adopted County Structure Plan (1999 – 2011) sets out Hertfordshire's broad policy framework to address these issues (Appendix A). This is supported by Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2001/02 – 2005/06) encouraging schools to develop School Travel Plans, incorporating targets for modal shift and the promotion of TravelWise objectives. Member's support of school travel plans has been reinforced by the recent scrutiny of the TravelWise campaign that included the recommendations encouraging all schools to develop travel plans.
- 1.2 A successful bid for government bursary enabled a School Travel Plan Co-ordinator to be appointed to Hertfordshire's Transportation Planning and Policy Unit in July 2001. The Co-ordinator's duties include supporting schools in the development of travel plans and, in consultation with the Highway Authority development control officers, reviewing and making recommendations relating to travel plans submitted during the planning process.
- 1.3 Guidelines to assist schools develop effective travel plans were produced in November, 2001. These have been well received and guide a school in devising an effective and robust strategy, encouraging travel by sustainable modes and raising awareness of the impacts of travel choices and road safety.
- 1.4 For a number of years, planning advice about the preparation of a school travel plan was appended to planning permissions, granted by the County Council. This was because, whilst the impact of the development did not justify a recommendation that planning permission be refused, there were known to be problems, particularly affecting the public highway outside the site, which needed to be addressed. However, it is clear that often little notice has been taken of the advice given and that when a further application on the same site is submitted, the same problems still exist or have even become worse. The only examples where a planning informative has led to the production of a travel plan, has been where they have been stimulated by other factors (9 primary schools involved in the Borehamwood reorganisation and 3 selected as Safer Routes to School projects).
- 1.5 More recent applications for new and expanded school facilities have been required to submit a school travel plan, with planning permission conditional on the approved plan being implemented before the development is occupied. 32 schools have been required to develop travel plans in this way. Of these, 7 are discharged or nearing completion, 15 are overdue for submission and are being followed up by the planning authority, with the remainder under development. This is an improvement but uncertainty remains over the criteria that

determines when a travel plan will be required by the appropriate planning authority, at what stage in the planning process it should be produced and the detail it should contain. This can delay the planning process, incur additional cost for the developer, place unreasonable pressure on a school to develop an effective plan in a short time scale and can lead to inconsistencies in the use of school travel plans by different planning authorities in Hertfordshire. For these reasons there is a need to provide additional detailed guidance to supplement the basic school travel plan guidelines.

2. Additional Guidance for Developers

- 2.1 The Hertfordshire County Council publication 'The School Travel Plan' (November, 2001), offers advice on how an effective travel plan should be developed. However, more detailed information is required if a travel plan is to provide worthwhile support to a planning application. Additional guidance has therefore, been developed in consultation with parties involved in the planning process for school developments. This will provide a robust process that supports the development and implementation of travel plans for new or expanded school facilities and develops a mechanism that will deliver school travel plans in these circumstances. Children, Schools & Families and Corporate Services have been part of this consultation process and support these arrangements in principle. Meetings are planned to resolve the detailed arrangements.
- 2.2 The additional guidance for developers sets out the information required to allow the Highway Authority to assess the impact that a proposed school expansion could have on the highway and the potential that an effective travel plan could have to mitigate it. It also clarifies when a travel plan would normally be required.
- 2.3 This guidance will be helpful in all cases where school travel plans support the planning process but has particular relevance where both the planning authority and the developer are County Council departments making the use of planning obligations inappropriate. This guidance will be kept under review.

Information – Travel Patterns and Pupil numbers

- 2.4 To properly assess the implication of proposed school developments on the County's transport infrastructure, the Highway Authority needs more information than is usually provided, particularly in relation to the numbers of pupils and staff using the site. It is therefore proposed that all HCC planning applications for new and expanded school facilities (permanent or temporary and including the retention of existing temporary classrooms) or parking space will be accompanied by information on past, present and future pupil numbers and related data. A pro forma has been produced to facilitate this (see primary school example – Appendix B.)

- 2.5 To assist the development of sufficiently detailed and potentially effective school travel plans in these circumstances School Travel Plan: Developers Guidance Note (Appendix C) has been produced to supplement that provided in 'The School Travel Plan. This sets out the details of what the Highway Authority needs in its consideration of a planning application. It requires detailed baseline information about the site and how it operates as this will inform specific travel initiatives that could be developed as part of the travel plan. It also outlines the process that should be undertaken to produce an effective school travel plan. This facilitates the early involvement of the school community who need to be committed to the development and implementation of the plan.

When a travel plan will be required

- 2.6 It is proposed that planning applications for all schools in Hertfordshire that involve new and expanded school facilities (permanent or temporary, including retention of existing temporary classrooms) or parking space, will require an up-to-date travel plan produced in accordance with the guidelines set out below.
- 2.7 Major developments i.e. new, relocating or large expansions (0.5 form of entry and above) will be required to submit a detailed school travel plan as a part of the supporting information submitted with the application to the Planning Authority. The Travel Plan will be considered for approval by the Highways Authority who will advise if approval or further development of information is required. The approved plan must be implemented (i.e. adopted by the school and incorporated into school policy) before occupation of the new development and this will be conditioned as part of any planning consent granted.
- 2.8 Smaller developments will be required, to submit with the application, a programme setting out the steps to be taken to prepare a school travel plan. This programme will be reviewed by the Highway Authority who will advise if approval or further development of information is required. Any permission will be conditional on the approved programme of preparation being implemented and the travel plan being submitted to the planning authority within a defined time period.
- 2.9 The County Council as Highway Authority would approve the content of the plan. The appropriate Planning Authority would ensure that the approved plan is implemented. An approved Travel Plan will include arrangements for regular monitoring that will be carried out by the school, reported to the Planning Authority who will pass information to the Highway Authority for review. If further development of the Plan is advised, Highway Authority officers will liaise directly with the developer.

- 2.10 Most schools in Hertfordshire are controlled by the County Council and therefore apply to the County Planning Authority for permission to develop their site, however the planning authorities for independent and non County Council controlled schools are the ten District Councils. It is important that all schools in the county are treated consistently and fairly, irrespective of which planning authority deals with proposed development of their site. The process for implementing these proposals in either situation is set out in detail in Appendix D. These diagrams explain the decision making process that informs when a travel plan is required and the subsequent process for approving and implementing a school travel plan.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 Considerable progress has been made in the use of school travel plans within the planning process in support of County Council policies, the Local Transport Plan and government planning guidance addressing sustainable travel. Experience to date indicates that new proposals should be adopted to maximise the potential of school travel plans. However, as the use of travel plans continues to develop and evolve these proposals will be kept under review.
- 3.2 All planning applications for new and expanded school facilities or parking space should be accompanied by information of past, present and future pupil numbers
- 3.3 A travel plan, that includes detailed baseline information, should accompany all major developments of school sites. For smaller developments a programme of preparation of a school travel plan will be sufficient if an existing plan is not available. In both cases, the implementation of an approved travel plan will be a requirement of the planning permission and this will be achieved through the imposition of conditions.
- 3.4 Additional guidance to assist school developers should be disseminated to support the existing general guidelines. This will set out the baseline travel detail that is required by the Highway Authority together with the programme of development for an effective travel plan.
- 3.5 To ensure that all schools across Hertfordshire are treated fairly and consistently District planning authorities should be recommended to adopt a similar approach to the County planning authority.

4. Financial Implications

At this stage, there are no financial implications for the Committee. However, consideration needs to be given to the funding of the School Travel Plans post from April 2004 when the current Government bursary ceases.

Background Information provided by the author in compiling this report

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (March 2001)

Hertfordshire County Structure Plan (1991 –2011)

Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2001/02 – 2005/06

The School Travel Plan (Hertfordshire County Council, November 2001)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (March, 2001) sets out Government guidance to local authorities for the encouragement of travel plans in schools and other organisations. This includes the following statements:

Planning applications for “new and expanded school facilities should be accompanied by a School Travel Plan which promotes safe cycle and walking routes, restricts parking and car access in and around schools” (paragraph 89).

School Travel Plans should be: “worked up in consultation with the local authority and local transport providers. They should have measurable outputs which might relate to the local transport plan and should set out arrangements for monitoring and enforcing progress of the plan” (paragraph 90)

“Under certain conditions some or all of a travel plan may be made binding through conditions attached to a planning permission, or through a related planning obligation.” (paragraph 91).

HCC Structure Plan Review (1991 –2011, adopted April 1998)

Policy 1 sets out general aim to “enable activities and development in Hertfordshire to be carried out consistently with the principles of sustainable development.”

This includes the criteria to “contain road traffic growth, particularly in the main towns, and encourage walking, cycling and greater use of passenger transport use in preference to the car.” (1.v).

Policy 13 ‘Wherever possible new (education and training) facilities will be located with particular regard to the aims of reducing travel need and car usage, and encouraging walking, cycling and the use of passenger transport’

Policy 22 aims to “reduce growth in private motor traffic on roads, and minimise its environmental impact, especially during peak periods” stating “create opportunities to increase the proportion of journeys made by walking, cycling or by passenger transport in the safest manner possible”. (22.ii)

Policy 29 states “The traffic and road safety implications of development proposals, and the related proposals for addressing them, will be assessed in the light of the aims and principles set out in Policy 22 and, in particular, any public transport accessibility profiles required. Development will be located so that traffic is discouraged from using roads, in particular local distributor and access roads, to which it is not appropriate.”

Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2001/02 – 2005/06

Local Education Access Route Network strategy includes the objective to 'enable schools to develop their own local solutions, including individual school travel plans.'

Performance indicator: 10% of all schools to have a school travel plan by 2005

HCC DEVELOPMENT

Basic pupil and staff information required for all applications involving additional teaching space (temporary or permanent) and/or additional parking provision

Example for primary school

PUPILS

Academic Year	Authorised Annual Admission No.	Actual Number of pupils by year group Autumn term								Summer Term Total
		<0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	
<u>Current Year 200</u>										
<u>Previous 5 years</u>										
Yr:										
Yr:										
Yr:										
Yr:										
Yr:										
<u>Estimated Future Pupils for next 5 years</u>										
Yr:										
Yr:										
Yr:										
Yr:										
Yr:										

Current accommodation capacity

No of pupils in permanent accommodation	
No of pupils in temporary accommodation i.e. Classrooms in mobile/demountable units	

Staff

	Full time ¹	Part time ²
<u>Existing</u> :		
Teachers		
Classroom (non teaching)		
Administrative		
Kitchen		
Others (please specify)		
<u>Additional</u> likely as result of development now proposed		
Time of day when most staff are present on site		
Max no. of staff currently on Site at any one time		

1. For full time staff include job share as Single person only if not normally Expected to be on site at same time

2. For part-time, give total numbers, Not full-time equivalent

SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN: DEVELOPERS GUIDANCE NOTE

1. Detailed baseline information required to assist the Highway Authority assess the implications of proposed development:

The applicant is advised to ensure that the following information is available as part of any planning application for new building development on a school site:

- A plan of the school site and map showing location of school and any existing and proposed residential developments within a 3 mile radius of the school.
- Summary of travel issues and problems relating to the school and its immediate vicinity.
- Clear indication of origin of journeys to school (e.g.: Plot of staff/pupil's postcodes), including estimate of pupil numbers that may come from any new developments.
- Results of survey to establish:
 - modal split
 - factors that discourage walking/cycling/passenger transport use
- Identification of existing and proposed school policies/rules relating to pedestrian and vehicle access, cycling, bus use, student drivers.
- Identification of opportunities to raise awareness of safe and sustainable travel choices through the curriculum.
- Identification of ways to promote safe and sustainable travel choices through the school's communication channels.
- Site access arrangements for pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and those with impaired mobility.
- Storage facilities available to pedestrians and cyclists e.g. lockers, coat hooks, cycle racks
- Parking arrangements for staff/pupils/parents/visitors
- Details of before/after school clubs/evening and weekend lettings/community use of facilities
- Location of any HCC approved School Crossing Patrol sites, whether SCP is in post and if relief SCP available (Current HCC School Crossing Patrol Manager Heather Hill 01992 556815)

- School Buses: How many existing buses serve the school and any proposed changes in bus provision, location of bus stops.
- Large scale expansions (i.e. expansions of 0.5 form of entry and above) should indicate pedestrian and cycle facilities throughout catchment area e.g. off road cycle routes, formal pedestrian crossing points and designated routes to the school that do not have separate footway provision.

2. Preparation of a school travel plan

A successful travel plan will involve the developer and occupier. The developer will ensure that design proposals encourage environmentally friendly journeys and support data collection and analysis to inform the development of a travel plan that the occupier will develop, implement and review. The travel plan's aims will include: containment of road traffic growth associated with the journey to school, encouragement of walking, cycling and use of public transport, in preference to the private car, in the safest manner.

Therefore, preparation of a School Travel Plan will involve the following programme, if activities associated with it are likely to be effective:

1. Establishment of a 'Travel Forum' group to develop the plan: The Travel Forum should include Head Teacher or senior teacher, governor(s), supported by local authority representative, teacher, parent and pupil representatives.
2. Consideration by the Travel Forum of baseline travel pattern information and known school travel issues, including issues associated with the proposed development.
3. Setting clear objectives to contain road traffic growth and encourage walking, cycling and greater use of public transport in preference to the car together with any other relevant school travel issues that can be evaluated against SMART targets.
4. Identify who, within the school, will take responsibility for monitoring, evaluation and review of the travel plan and its initiatives. How and when monitoring will be carried out and to whom it will be reported must be specified (Monitoring results must be reported to the appropriate Planning Authority. The governing body and others within the school community e.g. parents association, school council will have an interest and should be kept informed of the results of monitoring).
5. Outline of activities supporting the Plan's objectives that will be maintained or developed for implementation.

More detail is set out in HCC's 'The School Travel Plan (November, 2001)