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Guidance

Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements

Provides advice on when Transport Assessments and Transport Statements are required, and what they should contain.

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Overarching principles on Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements

This guidance relates only to Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements in relation to decision-taking.

It may also be useful in plan-making if local planning authorities are of the view that Transport Assessments can beneficially inform their Local Plans (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans--2>) (for example, in order to facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport).

Further guidance on transport issues can be found on the Department for Transport's website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport>).

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 42-001-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What are Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements?

Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements are all ways of assessing and mitigating the negative transport impacts of development in order to promote sustainable development. They are required for all developments which generate significant amounts of movements.

Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 42-002-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What are Travel Plans?

Travel Plans are long-term management strategies for integrating proposals for sustainable travel into the planning process. They are based on evidence of the anticipated transport impacts of development and set measures to promote and encourage sustainable travel (such as promoting walking and cycling). They should not, however, be used as an excuse for unfairly penalising drivers and cutting provision for cars in a way that is unsustainable and could have negative impacts on the surrounding streets.

Travel Plans should where possible, be considered in parallel to development proposals and readily integrated into the design and occupation of the new site rather than retrofitted after occupation.

Where there may be more effective or sustainable outcomes, and in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development, consideration may be given to travel planning over a wider area.

Related policy:

- paragraph 32 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport>)
- paragraph 36 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport#para036>)

Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 42-003-20140306

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What are Transport Assessments and Statements?

Transport Assessments and Statements are ways of assessing the potential transport impacts of developments (and they may propose mitigation measures to promote sustainable development. Where that mitigation relates to matters that can be addressed by management measures, the mitigation may inform the preparation of Travel Plans).

Transport Assessments are thorough assessments of the transport implications of development, and Transport Statements are a 'lighter-touch' evaluation to be used where this would be more proportionate to the potential impact of the development (ie in the case of developments with anticipated limited transport impacts).

Where the transport impacts of development are not significant, it may be that no Transport Assessment or Statement or Travel Plan is required. Local planning authorities, developers, relevant transport authorities, and neighbourhood planning organisations should agree what evaluation is needed in each instance.

Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 42-004-20140306

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How do Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements relate to each other?

The development of Travel Plans and Transport Assessments or Transport Statements should be an iterative process as each may influence the other.

The primary purpose of a Travel Plan is to identify opportunities for the effective promotion and delivery of sustainable transport initiatives eg walking, cycling, public transport and tele-commuting, in connection with both proposed and existing developments and through this to thereby reduce the demand for travel by less sustainable modes. As noted above, though, they should not be used as way of unfairly penalising drivers.

Transport Assessments and Transport Statements primarily focus on evaluating the potential transport impacts of a development proposal. (They may consider those impacts net of any reductions likely to arise from the implementation of a Travel Plan, though producing a Travel Plan is not always required.) The Transport Assessment or Transport Statement may propose mitigation measures where these are necessary to avoid unacceptable or “severe” impacts. Travel Plans can play an effective role in taking forward those mitigation measures which relate to on-going occupation and operation of the development.

Transport Assessments and Statements can be used to establish whether the residual transport impacts of a proposed development are likely to be “severe”, which may be a reason for refusal, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 42-005-20140306

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Why are Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements important?

Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements can positively contribute to:

- encouraging sustainable travel;
- lessening traffic generation and its detrimental impacts;
- reducing carbon emissions and climate impacts;
- creating accessible, connected, inclusive communities;
- improving health outcomes and quality of life;
- improving road safety; and
- reducing the need for new development to increase existing road capacity or provide new roads.

They support national planning policy which sets out that planning should actively manage patterns of growth in order to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

Government’s policy on parking is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Travel Plans, Assessments and Statements can also be important tools to improve the quality of town centre parking (and where, necessary to improve the vitality of town centres, the quantity too).

Local planning authorities and developers should both consider the wider benefits of Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements such as helping to promote the attractiveness of a district or site to new visitors and releasing land for development that would otherwise be taken up by required related parking.

Many military establishments are located in isolated areas and the lack of choice that military families have over the location of their service accommodation means some face transport difficulties. When considering transport issues local authorities should consider the particular requirements of any Armed Forces families in their area.

Related policies:

- paragraph 17 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/achieving-sustainable-development#para017>) – bullet point 11
- paragraph 23 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/2-ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres>)
- paragraph 29 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport>)
- paragraph 40 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport#para040>)

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 42-006-20140306

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What key principles should be taken into account in preparing a Travel Plan, Transport Assessment or Statement?

Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements should be:

- proportionate to the size and scope of the proposed development to which they relate and build on existing information wherever possible;
- established at the earliest practicable possible stage of a development proposal;
- be tailored to particular local circumstances (other locally-determined factors and information beyond those which are set out in this guidance may need to be considered in these studies provided there is robust evidence for doing so locally);
- be brought forward through collaborative ongoing working between the local planning authority/transport authority, transport operators, rail network operators, Highways Agency where there may be implications for the strategic road network (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-road-network-and-the-delivery-of-sustainable-development>) and other relevant bodies. Engaging communities and local businesses in Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements can be beneficial in positively supporting higher levels of walking and cycling (which in turn can encourage greater social inclusion, community cohesion and healthier communities).

In order to make these documents as useful and accessible as possible any information or assumptions should be set out in a clear and publicly accessible form:

- the timeframes over which they are conducted or operate should be appropriate in relation to the nature of developments to which they relate (and planned changes to transport infrastructure and management in the area);
- local planning authorities should advise qualifying bodies for the purposes of neighbourhood planning on whether Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements should be prepared, and the benefits of doing so, as part of the duty to support.

Local planning authorities may wish to consult the relevant bodies on planning applications likely to affect transport infrastructure, such as rail network operators where a development is likely to impact on the operation of level crossings.

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 42-007-20140306

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Can Travel Plans, Transport Assessments or Transport Statements be used to justify higher parking charges or other constraints on car users?

While Travel Plans are intended to promote the most sustainable forms of transport, such as active travel, they should not be used to justify penalising motorists – for instance through higher parking charges, tougher enforcement or reduced parking provision (which can simply lead to more on street parking). Nor should they be used to justify (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/design>) aggressive traffic calming measures, such as speed humps.

Maximum parking standards can lead to poor quality development and congested streets, local planning authorities should seek to ensure parking provision is appropriate to the needs of the development and not reduced below a level that could be considered reasonable.

Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements should reflect the important role that appropriate parking facilities can play in rejuvenating local shops, high streets and town centres (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres>).

Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 42-008-20140306

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Travel Plans

When is a Travel Plan required?

Paragraph 36 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport#para036>) of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that all developments which generate significant amounts of transport movement should be required to provide a Travel Plan.

Local planning authorities must make a judgement as to whether a proposed development would generate significant amounts of movement on a case by case basis (ie significance may be a lower threshold where road capacity is already stretched or a higher threshold for a development which proposes no car parking in an area of high public transport accessibility).

In determining whether a Travel Plan will be needed for a proposed development the local planning authorities should take into account the following considerations:

- the Travel Plan policies (if any) of the Local Plan;
- the scale of the proposed development and its potential for additional trip generation (smaller applications with limited impacts may not need a Travel Plan);
- existing intensity of transport use and the availability of public transport;
- proximity to nearby environmental designations or sensitive areas;
- impact on other priorities/ strategies (such as promoting walking and cycling);
- the cumulative impacts of multiple developments within a particular area;
- whether there are particular types of impacts around which to focus the Travel Plan (eg minimising traffic generated at peak times); and
- relevant national policies, including the decision to abolish maximum parking standards for both residential and non-residential development.

Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 42-009-20140306

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How should the need for and scope of a Travel Plan be established?

The anticipated need for a Travel Plan should be established early on, preferably in the pre-application stage but otherwise within the application determination process itself.

Consideration should be given at the pre-application stage to:

- the form and scope of the Travel Plan;
- the outcomes sought by the Travel Plan;
- the processes, timetables and costs potentially involved in delivering the required outcomes (including any relevant conditions and obligations);
- the scope of the information needed; and
- the proposals for the on-going management, implementation and review processes.

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What information should be included in Travel Plans?

Travel Plans should identify the specific required outcomes, targets and measures, and set out clear future monitoring and management arrangements all of which should be proportionate. They should also consider what additional measures may be required to offset unacceptable impacts if the targets should not be met.

Travel Plans should set explicit outcomes rather than just identify processes to be followed (such as encouraging active travel or supporting the use of low emission vehicles). They should address all journeys resulting from a proposed development by anyone who may need to visit or stay and they should seek to fit in with wider strategies for transport in the area.

They should evaluate and consider:

- benchmark travel data including trip generation databases;
- Information concerning the nature of the proposed development and the forecast level of trips by all modes of transport likely to be associated with the development;
- relevant information about existing travel habits in the surrounding area;
- proposals to reduce the need for travel to and from the site via all modes of transport; and
- provision of improved public transport services.

They may also include:

- parking strategy options (if appropriate – and having regard to national policy on parking standards (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport#para039>) and the need to avoid unfairly penalising motorists (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport#para040>)); and
- proposals to enhance the use of existing, new and improved public transport services and facilities for cycling and walking both by users of the development and by the wider community (including possible financial incentives).

These active measures may assist in creating new capacity within the local network that can be utilised to accommodate the residual trip demand of the site(s) under consideration.

It is often best to retain the ability to establish certain elements of the Travel Plan or review outcomes after the development has started operating so that it can be based upon the occupational and operational characteristics of the development.

Any sanctions (for example financial sanctions on breaching outcomes/processes) need to be reasonable and proportionate, with careful attention paid to the viability of the development. It may often be more appropriate to use non-financial sanctions where outcomes/processes are not adhered to (such as more active or different marketing of sustainable transport modes or additional traffic management measures). Relevant implications for planning permission must be set out clearly, including (for example) whether the Travel Plan is secured by a condition or planning obligation.

Travel Plans can only impose such requirements where these are consistent with government policy on planning obligations.

Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 42-011-20140306

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How should Travel Plans be monitored?

Travel Plans need to set out clearly what data is to be collected, and when, establishing the baseline conditions in relation to any targets.

The length of time over which monitoring will occur and the frequency will depend on the nature and scale of the development and should be agreed as part of the Travel Plan with the developer or qualifying body for neighbourhood planning. Who has responsibility for monitoring compliance should be clear.

Monitoring requirements should only cease when there is sufficient evidence for all parties to be sure that the travel patterns of the development are in line with the objectives of the Travel Plan. This includes meeting the agreed targets over a consistent period of time. At this point the Travel Plan would become a voluntary initiative.

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Transport Assessments and Statements

When are Transport Assessment and Transport Statements required?

Paragraph 32 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/4-promoting-sustainable-transport>) of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that all developments that generate significant amounts of transport movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment.

Local planning authorities must make a judgement as to whether a development proposal would generate significant amounts of movement on a case by case basis (ie significance may be a lower threshold where road capacity is already stretched or a higher threshold for a development in an area of high public transport accessibility).

In determining whether a Transport Assessment or Statement will be needed for a proposed development local planning authorities should take into account the following considerations:

- the Transport Assessment and Statement policies (if any) of the Local Plan;
- the scale of the proposed development and its potential for additional trip generation (smaller applications with limited impacts may not need a Transport Assessment or Statement);
- existing intensity of transport use and the availability of public transport;
- proximity to nearby environmental designations or sensitive areas;
- impact on other priorities/strategies (such as promoting walking and cycling);
- the cumulative impacts of multiple developments within a particular area; and
- whether there are particular types of impacts around which to focus the Transport Assessment or Statement (eg assessing traffic generated at peak times).

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How should the need for and scope of a Transport Assessment or Statement be established?

The need for, scale, scope and level of detail required of a Transport Assessment or Statement should be established as early in the development management process as possible as this may therefore positively influence the overall nature or the detailed design of the development.

Key issues to consider at the start of preparing a Transport Assessment or Statement may include:

- the planning context of the development proposal;
- appropriate study parameters (ie area, scope and duration of study);
- assessment of public transport capacity, walking/cycling capacity and road network capacity;
- road trip generation and trip distribution methodologies and/ or assumptions about the development proposal;
- measures to promote sustainable travel;
- safety implications of development; and
- mitigation measures (where applicable) – including scope and implementation strategy.

It is important to give appropriate consideration to the cumulative impacts arising from other committed development (ie development that is consented or allocated where there is a reasonable degree of certainty will proceed within the next 3 years). At the decision-taking stage this may require the developer to carry out an assessment of the impact of those adopted Local Plan allocations which have the potential to impact on the same sections of transport network as well as other relevant local sites benefitting from as yet unimplemented planning approval.

Transport Assessments or Statements may identify the need for associated studies or may feed into other studies. However care should be taken to establish the full range of studies that will be required of development at the earliest opportunity as it is unlikely that a Transport Assessment or Statement in itself could fulfil the specific role required of a transport element of an Environmental Impact Assessment (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment>) where this is required. Particular attention should be given to this issue where there are environmentally sensitive areas nearby and where the proposal could have implications for breach of statutory thresholds in relation to noise and air quality either as a result of traffic generated by the site or as a consequence of the impact of existing traffic on the site under consideration.

Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 42-014-20140306

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What information should be included in Transport Assessments and Statements?

The scope and level of detail in a Transport Assessment or Statement will vary from site to site but the following should be considered when settling the scope of the proposed assessment:

- information about the proposed development, site layout, (particularly proposed transport access and layout across all modes of transport)
- information about neighbouring uses, amenity and character, existing functional classification of the nearby road network;
- data about existing public transport provision, including provision/ frequency of services and proposed public transport changes;

- a qualitative and quantitative description of the travel characteristics of the proposed development, including movements across all modes of transport that would result from the development and in the vicinity of the site;
- an assessment of trips from all directly relevant committed development in the area (ie development that there is a reasonable degree of certainty will proceed within the next 3 years);
- data about current traffic flows on links and at junctions (including by different modes of transport and the volume and type of vehicles) within the study area and identification of critical links and junctions on the highways network;
- an analysis of the injury accident records on the public highway in the vicinity of the site access for the most recent 3-year period, or 5-year period if the proposed site has been identified as within a high accident area;
- an assessment of the likely associated environmental impacts of transport related to the development, particularly in relation to proximity to environmentally sensitive areas (such as air quality management areas or noise sensitive areas);
- measures to improve the accessibility of the location (such as provision/enhancement of nearby footpath and cycle path linkages) where these are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- a description of parking facilities in the area and the parking strategy of the development;
- ways of encouraging environmental sustainability by reducing the need to travel; and
- measures to mitigate the residual impacts of development (such as improvements to the public transport network, introducing walking and cycling facilities, physical improvements to existing roads.

In general, assessments should be based on normal traffic flow and usage conditions (eg non-school holiday periods, typical weather conditions) but it may be necessary to consider the implications for any regular peak traffic and usage periods (such as rush hours). Projections should use local traffic forecasts such as TEMPRO drawing where necessary on National Road Traffic Forecasts for traffic data.

The timeframe that the assessment covers should be agreed with the local planning authority in consultation with the relevant transport network operators and service providers. However, in circumstances where there will be an impact on a national transport network, this period will be set out in the relevant government policy.

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- Planning practice guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>)

Policy

- Planning system (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/planning-system>)