

Introduction

Travel Plans (TP) are a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework. They are an integral part of a Transport Assessment (TA), which sets out the transport issues relating to a proposed development. It is considered best practice to assess the TA and TP as an integrated package of information to understand the transport impacts of the development and where possible to identify issues that need mitigation with potential solutions. To make the process effective, developers and local authorities can agree at an early stage the scope of the TA and the outcomes sought through the TP.

A TP is a long-term management strategy for an occupier or developer of a site, to deliver sustainable transport objectives through positive actions. Travel plans have been used successfully for many years, whether secured through planning or prepared on a voluntary basis. They are an important tool for promoting sustainable travel (e.g. walking, cycling & public transport) and help to reduce single occupancy car use. They also encourage more effective use of current transport networks and support their enhancement. Travel plans are now being used to secure the provision of sustainable travel choices, both to new developments and to extensions of existing sites, whatever their use.

Policy Background

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published its National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 27th March 2012. This places the onus firmly on local authorities to provide the policy framework for sustainable development – in accordance with the twin priorities of economic growth and management of adverse environmental impact. The NPPF states that development should not be refused on transport grounds unless “cumulative residual impacts” are “severe”. This implies that transport objections should not be allowed to obstruct the delivery of housing or economic growth. It is in the interests of developers, local authorities and their communities to ensure new housing and employment is accessible by all modes of transport, to maximise economic benefits and social inclusion, and to minimise traffic congestion.

The NPPF clearly endorses the ‘continued use’ of travel plans to ensure a long-term management strategy is in place to promote sustainable travel in and from new developments. Travel plans will play a critical role in delivering the “sustainable”

element of a “presumption in favour of development”, ensuring that development is sustainable from a transport perspective. However, with no explicit reference to monitoring or enforcing travel plans within the NPPF, it is essential that Local Policy is in place.

SCC has adopted and published comprehensive TP Guidance for use In Somerset, which all the Local Planning Authorities have either adopted or used to form the basis of a TP Policy in their Core Strategy.

Expenditure

The main expenditure for SCC in the delivery of TPs is staff time. The Travel Plan Team sits within the Highways Development Management service area and is made of up two FTE SCC funded posts and one developer funded implementation officer post.

The team advises on, reviews/audits, and monitors TPs provided by a developer (usually as part of a planning submission) to ensure that they are appropriate for the development that is being considered and that they comply with the requirements of SCC’s adopted policy. The team also ensures that the Travel Plan, Travel Plan Fee, Safeguarding Sum and all Travel Plan requirements (such as Travel Plan Coordinator, Green Travel Vouchers and more) are secured wherever possible by a Section 106 Agreement, should there be a resolution to grant planning consent.

There are also developer monies spent on the delivery of site specific TP measures, where SCC is appointed through the S106 Agreement as the Travel Plan Co-ordinator. These measures and costs vary site by site

Delivery

There are numerous development sites, where SCC has been appointed as the travel plan co-ordinator, for example Wyndham Park and Brimsmore in Yeovil.

In these cases, the SCC implementation officer takes responsibility for the delivery of measures to ensure compliance with the TP and to ensure that the targets are achieved.

Typically, TP measures include (but are not limited to):

- Green Travel Vouchers – typically towards bicycle purchase; bus ticket provision; outdoor/wet weather equipment to enable walking
- Development specific booklets (advice and information including maps, timetables, hints & tips, etc. on local facilities and alternatives to car use)
- Development specific websites (as booklets but with live links to Travel Information & more detail)

- Sustainable travel related events e.g. cycle servicing and Personal Travel Planning
- Liaison with resident's associations, Parish and District Council colleagues
- Monitoring obligations
- Newsletters, postcard drops, surveys, social media publications

Monitoring

SCC has developed a bespoke Travel Plan monitoring system, called iOnTravel which was developed in 2010 in conjunction with the web-design company Netspin, specifically to manage and monitor the travel planning process.

iOnTRAVEL is an online management system, developed to ensure that agreed travel plans are implemented effectively, accurately and on time. It is utilised by all development sites across Somerset with a TP and is used to compile an evidence base of progress against the targets secured within the s106 agreements.

TPs are monitored for a period of 5 years from the point at which the development reaches 80% Occupation. Targets are monitored annually, to ensure compliance with agreed targets and where necessary action is taken to work with developers to influence results and ensure compliance. If targets are not met then SCC has the ability to access the safeguarding sum which was secured through the agreement and in line with the adopted SCC TP Policy.

Outcomes

SCC Policy aims to realise a reduction in Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV) by 10% as a result of travel plan measures and actions. The latest data (March '17) from iOntravel shows that SCC has achieved an average of 9% SOV reduction across our development sites.

This is considered a success and we intend to build upon this, as more TP's are secured and implemented, and as our reputation for effective delivery grows.

Where SCC has acted as the travel plan co-ordinator for the Wyndham Park development in Yeovil, there is a recorded reduction in the level of SOV by 15.3%, exceeding our target.

Facts & Figures

In the last two years, 35 TP's have been secured by legal agreement (with more by condition only) and a significant number are currently under negotiation for inclusion

in Section 106 Agreements. This shows a continued increase in the securing of TP's by legal agreement and the delivery of initiatives in line with the NPPF.

Across the County there are currently more than 300 live TP's in operation, where developments are at different stages of their lifespan.

SCC acts (or will be appointed to act when sites go live) as T.P. Co-ordinator for many of the Urban Extensions. These include Lyde Road (Wyndham Park), Brimsmore, Keyford and Mudford, in Yeovil; Comeytrowe and Staplegrove in Taunton; Huntspill Energy Park in Bridgwater; and there are a number of other sites where we formally provide TPC support (e.g. Aginhills, Taunton; Kingwell Rise, Wincanton; Kinglake, Taunton; Killams, Taunton).

This equates to more than 12,000 homes that we are already engaged with, with other developments yet to commence.