

CABINET – 18 MARCH 2014

TRAVEL PLANS: TECHNICAL GUIDANCE & MONITORING FEE SCHEDULE

Report by Director for Environment and Economy

Introduction

1. Travel Plans are long-term management strategies for sites, which seek to ensure that travel associated with them is sustainable. As part of the development control process, they have an important part in wider strategy to reduce the proportion of the growth in travel which is made up of journeys by private car, something that is vital in order for networks to cope with increasing travel demand and thus to facilitate economic and housing growth.
2. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Oxfordshire County Council requires developers to provide Travel Plans for sites which are expected to generate significant amounts of movement. Travel Plans also feature in Local Plans and in many cases District Councils insist on them.
3. Whilst Travel Plans are site-specific, there is potential in co-ordinating Travel Plans on a larger scale (across an urban area for example) to achieve a positive benefit for movement in and around that particular area.
4. To be effective, Travel Plans need to be implemented and remain active for several years (typically five) after a development is occupied. This involves a modest effort and expense for the developer, so to ensure that they are implemented the Council generally seeks S106 agreements supported by appropriate conditions.

The benefits of Travel Plans

5. To complement improvements to public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, it is also important to try and reduce the need for people to travel by private car. Travel Plans play a key part in providing travellers with quality information and advice across all modes so that they can make an informed choice for their journey.
6. Opportunities for councils to promote sustainable travel are limited, both by resources, and by the ability to reach people at an individual level. Travel Plan co-ordinators at the site where people work, live or study are far better placed to influence people, via a range of incentives and local management practices. Through Travel Plans, individuals' travel behaviour can be directly influenced through on-site management. Tangible and realistic targets can be monitored and enforced relatively easily. Thus, the Council can tap into

additional resources at no cost to the public purse, as a means of delivering wider transport objectives.

7. Travel Plans help to maximise the benefit and value of spending on sustainable travel infrastructure and services, and boost demand for public transport, thereby making services more sustainable.
8. Additionally, there are direct benefits to businesses from encouraging and enabling their staff and customers to travel sustainably. Walking, cycling and public transport use encourage people to be active, which brings health benefits for individuals and employers and helps to reduce pressure on public spending.

Transport Assessment and Travel Plans Guidance

9. Developers frequently ask for advice on preparing and implementing Travel Plans, and a standard guidance document has been developed in draft to ensure that Travel Plans are effective as well as consistent, making it easier for the council to assess planning applications. The guidance will also help to make efficient use of officer time, and make the process more straightforward for the applicant. The document has been combined with guidance on the Council's requirements for Transport Assessments, which set out the expected impact of new development on the transport network. The draft Transport Assessments and Travel Plans Guidance is attached at Annex 1.
10. The document is in line with official guidance issued by the Department for Transport and includes information on whether and what type of Travel Plan will be required, for each size and type of development. It sets out clearly the Council's expectations for what should be contained in a Travel Plan and how it will be monitored. It is hoped that by formalising and publishing the Guidance, our requirements will be clear to developers from an early stage and therefore that developers will resource and prioritise the development of Travel Plans appropriately, making them more effective.

Fees

11. Councils are permitted to make charges to cover the costs of monitoring S106 agreements. Department for Transport guidance on Travel Planning states that 'Local authorities should consider charging for the process and publish any agreed fee scales.' Hitherto, the County Council has made very modest charges for Travel Plan monitoring on an ad hoc basis. However, as resources have become much more limited for the County Council to subsidise this type of work, it is necessary to formalise a charging schedule in order to raise revenue to recover the costs of monitoring.
12. An assessment of the staff time required for monitoring has been made and a proposed scale of fees based on staff cost has been included in the draft guidance document. Officers have made comparative checks on what other local authorities charge for this service and consider the proposed fees to be

realistic, fair and unlikely to raise significant objections from developers. The proposed monitoring fees are shown on pages 60 & 61 of Annex 1.

13. In order to contribute further to covering staff costs, it is also proposed to introduce charges for other Travel Plan related work, in the event that third parties would wish to procure such services from us. These services could include support with writing and implementing Travel Plans for prospective developments in the county and consultancy support to organisations who may wish to develop voluntary Travel Plans outside the planning application process. This kind of work is not a statutory requirement for the County Council but it has previously been carried out at no charge.

Policy implications

14. The use of Travel Plans is supported by national planning policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 36. In addition, some of Oxfordshire's Local Plans, for example that for Oxford City, have a specific policy requirement for Travel Plans. Travel Plans also contribute to meeting the objectives and high level policies of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan, LTP3 2011-2030.
15. A review of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) has now begun and Travel Plans are likely to remain an important strategic tool in the implementation of that document. It may therefore be appropriate to adopt the Transport Assessments and Travel Plans Guidance as a subsidiary policy document to the new LTP.

Equalities

16. An equalities impact assessment is not considered to be necessary on this technical guidance. However, it should be noted that Travel Plans can contribute significant equality benefits, through improving accessibility to sites.

Financial and Staff Implications

17. The process of advising on, checking and monitoring Travel Plans will be carried out by a small team of 3 existing staff, who will be re-directed from other work areas as part of a re-structure to reflect changed priorities within Environment & Economy. It is projected that by 2016/17 the full staffing costs of the officers involved will be covered from the proposed fees, thereby delivering an already agreed budget saving of £75,000 p.a. in that area.
18. Although the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy across the county over the next few years will narrow the range of the S106 Planning Obligations regime, limiting it to site mitigation measures, it is anticipated that Travel Plans will remain within the remit of that regime, hence the associated monitoring fees should also continue to be chargeable through S106 contributions. There will, however, need to be an agreed arrangement with our District Councils that monies collected by them, via S106 agreements, for Travel Plan monitoring will be passed on to the County Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) approve the Transport Assessments & Travel Plans Guidance Document and monitoring fee charging schedule (Annex 1) for publication; and**
 - (b) approve the charging of fees to cover staff costs for other non-statutory Travel Plan related services on an hourly basis by agreement.**

SUE SCANE

Director for Environment and Economy

Background papers: Good Practice Guidelines: Delivering Travel Plans through the Planning Process, DfT, 2009.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101124142120/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pg/sustainable/travelplans/tpp/goodpracticeguidelines-main.pdf>

Contact Officer: Chris Kenneford
Tel: (01865) 815615

March 2014