

Neighbourhood Planning

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Neighbourhood Planning and Transport

A guide for neighbourhood
planners

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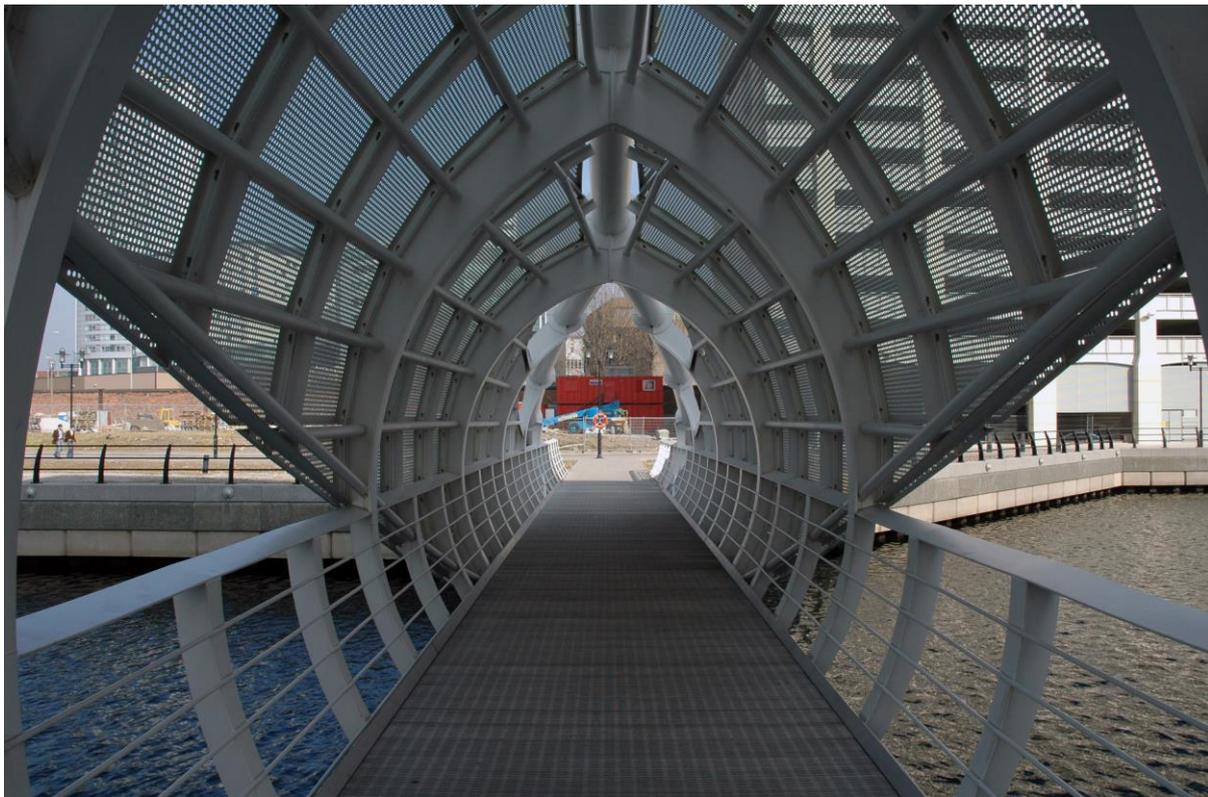
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Introduction

One of the key issues for many neighbourhood planning groups is that of transport. However, there is sometimes confusion over what kinds of transport issues a neighbourhood plan can address. Some transport matters fall within the scope of planning policy, whilst others fall outside of it. To make things more confusing, there are some transport matters that are sometimes relevant to planning and sometimes not.

“Transport” is not just about vehicular traffic and parking, but also about public transport, pedestrian facilities, cycling and other modes of travel. Indeed, a balanced range of transport options is a key element in making places sustainable.

It is necessary to differentiate between planning and non-planning aspects of transport when formulating neighbourhood plan policies. This quick guide seeks to help neighbourhood planning groups to identify the transport issues that can be addressed by policies and those that have to be addressed in different ways.



Transport and Material Planning Matters

Planning is concerned with the use and development of land. Transport issues need to be considered where they relate to proposals for changes of use and/or the physical development of sites.

Examples of transport considerations relevant to planning include:

- Ensuring new development has adequate parking and servicing provision. This could include car parking, cycle storage and delivery areas for commercial development.
- Making sure the layout of development allows for pedestrian convenience and safety.
- Ensuring development includes cycle paths.
- Creating easy pedestrian access to public transport facilities in terms of direct and convenient connections.
- Considering whether access arrangements to a site, existing or proposed, are adequate.
- Making sure that local transport capacity is adequate to serve development. This could include consideration of highway capacity, train services, bus services and other modes of transport.

Many traffic matters fall outside of the scope of planning. For example, changes to traffic management on existing transport networks are usually a matter for the highways authority to deal with. So changes to traffic lights, restrictions, speed limits, signage, traffic circulation, crossing points and other traffic management devices usually fall outside the scope of planning.

A possible exception to this may be where new development would impact on existing networks, and this necessitates changes to those networks in order to accommodate such development. However, even in cases like these, a neighbourhood plan cannot be prescriptive about the actual solution. For example, planning policies could not include changes to the speed limit or specific highway improvements.

However, the plan could highlight localised traffic capacity and safety issues, or infrastructure deficiencies that would need to be addressed when considering development proposals. It would then be down to the local planning authority (LPA) to assess development proposals submitted for planning permission and to decide whether it would be necessary to impose conditions or a Section 106 obligation in order to approve the scheme.

Meeting the Basic Conditions

Neighbourhood plans must meet the basic conditions set out in planning legislation which are tested through the independent examination.

One of the basic conditions is helping to achieve sustainable development. Transport can have a huge impact on an area's capacity for growth and sustainability. Transport policies in a neighbourhood plan could be a means to require or encourage a balanced range of transport options, rather than over-reliance on the car.

This is often easier in urban areas, where there are a wider range of public transport options. However, even in rural areas poorly served by public transport, policies can include practical requirements, such as secure cycle storage to be designed into every new house.

National planning policy on transport must be considered. The National Planning Policy Framework has a section on 'Promoting sustainable transport' and also mentions transport in other areas of the document. Paragraph 106 sets out requirements for planning policy. Of most relevance to neighbourhood plans are the following:

- a) support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities;
- b) be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned;
- c) identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development;
- d) provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans).

There is a need to be in general conformity with strategic local policies. The LPA is required to clarify which policies are strategic in nature. Local plans will usually have specific sections and policies on transport, including a range of issues such as parking standards. Neighbourhood plan groups will need to work in close liaison with the LPA and the highways authority (these are sometimes part of the same local authority, but sometimes in different authorities).

Traffic generation and pollution may be significant issues where there are European sites or other environmentally-sensitive built, historic or natural environments. The evidence

base for transport policies would therefore include data relating to these issues, not just travel data.

Transport can have other impacts. Quite a lot of the public realm in any city, town or village comprises highways and other transport infrastructure.

Transport issues can be a significant issue when an emerging neighbourhood plan is screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).



Planning for Transport

Transport is closely related to land-use planning. New development can place additional pressures on the transport network for an area. Equally, it can help to make new services more viable. For example, new housing can help to make new or more frequent bus services viable.

New transport infrastructure can enable development, for example, by providing access to new sites or by providing increased capacity to cope with the additional transport needs associated with new development.

When making site allocations in a neighbourhood plan, issues like access, road safety, proximity of public transport facilities and the capacity of transport networks can be included in the selection criteria.

Transport is not just about functional journeys, but also about recreation and opportunities for physical activities, such as walking and cycling. A neighbourhood plan may be a means to help deliver wider strategies and policies, for example on tourism, recreation, health and well-being.

Transport options can have a big impact on social exclusion, especially for groups with less access to motor vehicles, such as the old and the young. This can limit access to employment and community facilities. Neighbourhood plans should consider the transport needs of all sections of the community. This can be challenging, especially in rural areas where there are limited public transport options.

Transport and design policies can help to ensure that parking does not dominate the public realm and that opportunities are taken to create attractive places for pedestrians.

Pedestrian permeability and connectivity can have a huge impact on an area. For example, poor pedestrian permeability can be part of the reason for the failure of local shopping centres. Permeable layouts for new development can link existing networks, or provide more direct and convenient links to community facilities.

As with all planning policies, transport policies must have a clear rationale and be supported by evidence. The LPA and local highways authority will have data on local transport networks to assist with this. Public transport providers and other regional and local transport bodies will also have useful data.

Conclusion

Transport should be considered an integral part of land-use planning. For example, encouraging mixed-use and a range of community facilities in walking distance can be a means to reducing the need for journeys, including travelling by car.

Analysis of evidence and the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement should highlight the issues in an area, which often includes transport-related matters. It is then important to identify which of these issues can be addressed by planning policies and which fall outside of the scope of planning (and must therefore be addressed in other ways).

Credits

The tool has been prepared for Locality by Urban Vision Enterprise CIC, a social enterprise specialising in planning and regeneration. It forms part of a wider set of guidance on neighbourhood planning, including the Locality Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap Guide.

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