

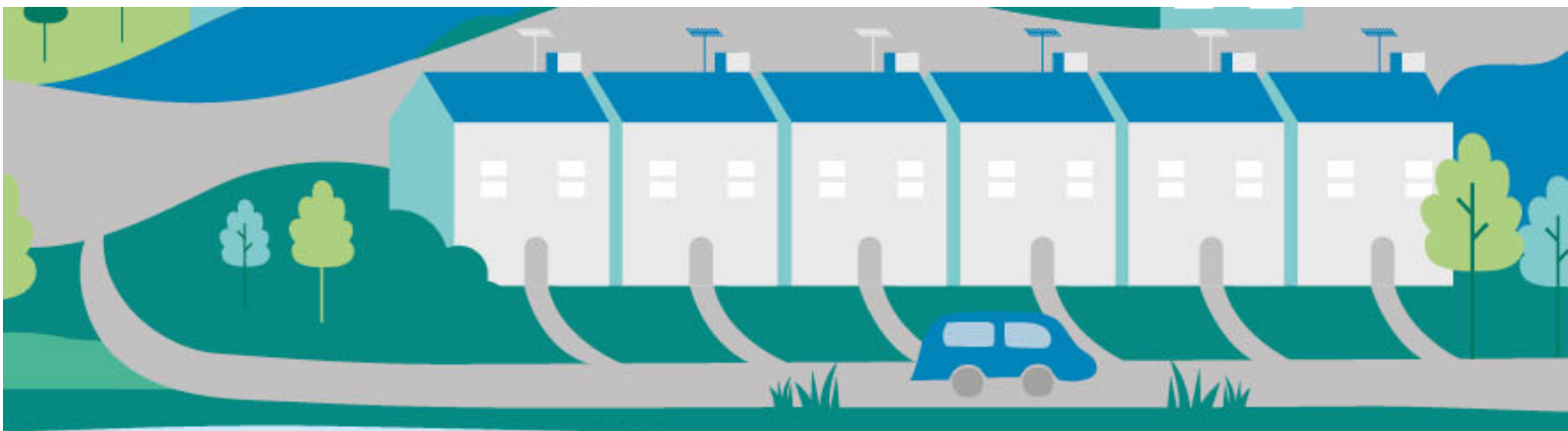


Urban Vision Enterprise

Town and Parish Council Planning Service

Neighbourhood Plans: Transport and Active Travel

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1. Introduction

1.1 Transport and Movement

Transport and movement are key issues for many neighbourhood planning groups. Transport is not just about vehicular traffic and parking, but sustainable modes of transport, such as public transport, and active travel (which includes walking and cycling). A balanced range of transport options helps to make a place more sustainable.

There is sometimes confusion over what kinds of transport issues a neighbourhood plan can address, and those transport matters that fall outside of the scope of planning policy. To make things more confusing, there are some transport issues that are sometimes relevant to planning and sometimes not.

It is necessary to differentiate between planning and non-planning aspects of transport when formulating neighbourhood plan policies. This guide seeks to help neighbourhood planning groups identify the transport issues that can be addressed by policies and those that need to be addressed in other ways. It also looks at ways of drafting effective transport and movement policies.



2. Material Planning Considerations

2.1 Issues Relevant to Planning

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

There should already be policies in the Local Plan to making sure that local transport capacity is adequate to serve development. This could include access, parking standards, servicing, highway design, public transport and walking and cycling.

A Neighbourhood 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 to assess development proposals submitted for planning permission. This could include deciding to impose conditions or a Section 106 obligation to require any transport improvements necessary for the scheme to go ahead.

2.2 Issues Outside of the Scope of Planning Policy

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

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 the development. However, even where this is the case, a neighbourhood plan could not be prescriptive about the actual solution. It could not set out, for example, changes to the speed limit or specific highway improvements.

3. Meeting the Basic Conditions

3.1 The Basic Conditions

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

3.2 Sustainable Development

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 also sustainability. Transport policies in a neighbourhood plan could require or encourage a balanced range of transport options and design to support active travel, rather than over-reliance on the motorcar.

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

3.3 National Policy and Guidance

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 parts of the document.

Planning Practice Guidance also deals with public rights of way and transport. The National Design Guide should also be considered.

3.4 General Conformity with Strategic Local Policy

Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with strategic local policies. The local planning authority should clarify which policies are strategic in nature. Local plans will usually have specific sections and policies on transport, including parking standards, which would usually be strategic.

Neighbourhood plan groups should work in close liaison with the local planning authority and the highways authority (these are sometimes part of the same local authority, but sometimes in different authorities).



3.5 Environment and Habitats

Traffic generation and pollution may be a significant issue where there are European sites or other environmentally sensitive built 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. Transport issues can be a significant issue when an emerging neighbourhood plan is screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).



4. Planning for Transport and Movement

4.1 Overview

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 or improved public services more viable. For example, new housing can help to make new or more frequent bus services possible.

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.

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

Access to transport 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, with limited public transport options.

As with all planning policies, transport and movement policies must have a clear rationale and be supported by evidence. The local planning authority and local highways authority will have data on local transport networks, cycle routes and footpaths. Public transport providers and other regional and local transport bodies may also have useful data.

Community and stakeholder engagement is an important part of the process and key stakeholders could include public transport service providers and local walking or cycling groups.

4.2 Policies for Active Travel

Many Neighbourhood Plans refer to walkable neighbourhoods. Walkable neighbourhoods can have the following characteristics:

- A mix of uses within walking distance, such as housing, shops, employment and community facilities;

- A convenient pedestrian network connecting different parts of the area, to allow for ease of movement on foot;
- Where there are sustainable transport services, easy access on foot to bus stops or train stations.

Many town and village centres or parts of city centres naturally have the characteristics of a walkable neighbourhood.

Poor pedestrian connectivity and permeability can be part of the reason for the failure of local shopping centres, if people can't easily get to them without resorting to car use.

Neighbourhood Plans can support walkable neighbourhoods and promote active travel in various ways:

Mixed Use: Policies for housing, employment, community facilities and town or local centres can support diversification and mixed use;

Pedestrian Safety and Convenience: Design or active travel policies could require development for new housing to have permeable layouts (choice and convenience for pedestrian movement) and to link to existing pedestrian networks or provide direct and convenient links to community facilities.

Cycling Provision: Ensuring development includes cycle paths. Development, including housing, could be required to provide cycle storage facilities.

Green infrastructure: Policies could consider impacts on green infrastructure (which connects different parts of the area), including parks, green spaces and public rights of way.

4.3 Sustainable Modes of Transport

Developers would usually have little or no influence over local public transport services. However, there are ways in which a Neighbourhood Plan could seek to influence sustainable transport.

Design and Movement policies: These could seek to ensure that development has safe, direct and convenient pedestrian connections to transport services, including railway stations and bus stops.

Infrastructure Priorities: A page could be added to the Neighbourhood Plan to encourage priorities for the use of planning infrastructure monies, including for improved local services.

Site Allocations: Making significant allocations for new housing can help to make the improvement of local services more viable.

4.4 Vehicular Traffic

Local Plans will normally include strategic policies on parking and highway standards. However, there is still scope for Neighbourhood Plans to influence traffic provision.

Parking: Parking standards would normally be strategic local policy, so seeking to amend them could run into difficulties in terms of general conformity with strategic local policy. However, transport and design policies could help to ensure that parking does not dominate the public realm and that opportunities are taken to create attractive places for pedestrians.

Congestion: The Neighbourhood Plan could identify road junctions or sections of road where there are existing safety and/or congestion and capacity issues, and where additional development could create severe problems. A technical report/analysis would be required to underpin the policy.

Design: Design policies could seek to ensure that transport infrastructure creates a safe and attractive environment for the local community. Quite a lot of the public realm in any city, town or village comprises highways and other transport infrastructure.

Heritage: Heritage policies could focus on impacts of development, including associated traffic infrastructure, on historic buildings, areas and character.

4.5 Site Allocations

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

Access: Whether vehicular access arrangements to a site, existing or proposed, are adequate.

Capacity: Whether the highway network has sufficient capacity to support the development of a site.



Walkable distance: Whether the site is in walkable distance of a local centre or local facilities.

Public transport: whether the site is served by nearby sustainable transport options.

4.6 Being Effective

To ensure that transport and movement policies are effective, the following tips may be helpful:

- Set consistent requirements for transport and movement, preferably in one policy, rather than different requirements for different uses in different policies.
- As far as possible, promote a balanced approach to travel, including sustainable modes of transport and active travel.
- Make policies as locally specific as possible, supported by evidence.
- Avoid repeating national or Local Plan policies or just stating that development must meet national or Local Plan policy requirements (such policies are inconsequential).
- Take a placemaking approach, beyond a narrow transport focus, for example considering the contribution that transport infrastructure makes to the quality of the public realm.
- Where site allocations are being made, consider whether to include site specific requirements, for example links to surrounding footpaths.

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Parking and transport infrastructure can create poor quality places (above) or, if well designed, can help to create attractive and successful places, taking account of the needs of pedestrians (below).



5. Conclusion

Transport should be considered as 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 car-borne travel.

Analysis of evidence and the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement should highlight transport issues in an area, some of which can be addressed by planning policies and some of which fall outside of the scope of planning (and must therefore be addressed in other ways).

Neighbourhood Plans can include a range of policies to support walkable neighbourhoods and a balanced approach to transport and movement, including active travel.

6. About Urban Vision Enterprise

6.1 Experience and Services

Urban Vision Enterprise (UVE) is a professional planning consultancy providing services in planning, regeneration, economic development and third sector organisational development.

UVE provides a Town and Parish Council Planning Service in England.

UVE has supported well over 200 neighbourhood plans and can provide support at all stages of the process. This includes drafting of effective policies, site allocations and advice on legal compliance at all stages.

UVE specialisms include:

- mediation and complex negotiations;
- neighbourhood planning;
- regeneration and economic development;
- town centres and high street recovery;
- housing growth, site selection and masterplanning;
- heritage-led regeneration and conservation;
- natural environment and blue and green infrastructure;
- urban design, including strategies, policies, guidance and design review;
- community and stakeholder engagement;
- statutory consultation (legal compliance);
- technical reports including housing need, site assessment and heritage studies;
- feasibility and viability studies and project business plans;
- training, continuing professional development (CPD) and education;
- preparing guidance and briefings;
- in person (verbal) and written evidence for Parliamentary committees;
- third sector (not-for-profit) organisational development, including strategy, operations, governance and business development.

Urban Vision Enterprise is ISO 9001 Registered. The practice is an IHBC recognised historic environment service provider (HESPR) and CPD provider.

6.2 Our Clients

Current and past clients include government and funding bodies, UK and national professional bodies and membership organisations, local authorities, town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums and third sector (not-for-

profit) organisations. These include the Heritage Lottery Fund, Locality, Royal Town Planning Institute, institute of Historic Building Conservation, and the National Trust.

6.3 Contact

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