

North Somerset Council

Report to the Executive

Date of Meeting: 8th September 2021

Subject of Report: Approval of North Somerset Travel Plan SPD for public consultation

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Cllr Canniford – Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy

Key Decision: Yes

Reason: The revised Travel Plan SPD will have policy implications in two or more wards

Recommendations: That the draft Travel Plan SPD be approved for public consultation.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1. North Somerset Council officers have undertaken a comprehensive review of the existing Travel Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The current SPD dates back to November 2010 and is in need of a thorough update, particularly in light of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 1.2. A Travel Plan is a long-term management strategy put in place at the planning application stage to help facilitate travel by sustainable means within and between neighbourhoods and other developments, and to reduce car dependency. They are required for all developments which generate significant amounts of movement including residential, businesses, schools, retail and leisure facilities.

The Travel Plan SPD sets out guidance for developers, officers and other stakeholders involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of Travel Plans.

- 1.3. The updated SPD will allow the council to better manage Travel Plans and Travel Plan Statements by setting out new requirements that aim is to ensure a consistent approach across North Somerset, in line with other local authorities. It is an essential tool to support delivery against the aims of both

the North Somerset Active Travel Strategy and Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan.

- 1.4. The update includes thresholds for different development types, minimum requirements for measures and monitoring, the option for developers to take up a Travel Plan Implementation Service provided by the council, and the use of 'Modeshift STARS', a travel planning website which helps to capture specified information.
- 1.5. The Travel Plan Implementation Service is paid for through Section 106 contributions, and sees the council carrying out the measures and monitoring within a Travel Plan. This contribution and service is not compulsory however it is preferred with the aim of avoiding inadequate delivery of Travel Plans.
- 1.6. This report seeks authority to place the updated SPD to public consultation. Officers will report back to the Executive following the consultation.

2. Policy

- 2.1. North Somerset Council initially adopted a Travel Plan Supplementary Planning Document in 2010. This has now been updated to incorporate changes to best practise and learning from other local authorities in the West of England.
- 2.2. Policy relevant to the SPD include:
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)
 - Department for Transport Guidance on Transport Assessment (2007)
 - Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4) (2020)
 - North Somerset Council's Core Strategy (2017)
 - Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 Development Management Policies (2015)
 - North Somerset Corporate Plan (2020 – 2024)
 - North Somerset Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan (2019)
 - North Somerset Active Travel Strategy (ATS) (2021)

Notably the SPD supports the Corporate Plan, Climate Emergency Strategy Action Plan and the Active Travel Strategy because Travel Plans practically facilitate and encourage use of public transport and active travel.

3. Details

Detailed below highlights of key the changes to the SPD:

- 3.1 Travel Plan thresholds
- 3.2 Delivery options – council-led and developer-led
- 3.3 Minimum requirements
- 3.4 Use of Modeshift STARS website

3.1. **Travel Plan Thresholds**

The SPD gives thresholds at which a Travel Plan Statement or Travel Plan is required for each type of development site. The thresholds follow National Guidance except for residential developments (use class C3), where they are reduced to 60 units for a Travel Plan (rather than 80 units) and 40 units for a Travel Plan Statement.

North Somerset Council's Housing Trajectory data 2019 shows 15 residential developments between 60 – 80 units. 6 of these are in Weston-super-Mare and 4 are in and around Yatton. Along with the impact of larger sites, the combination of several smaller developments has an impact on traffic. It is therefore important to ensure the smaller, yet not insignificant developments (60-80 units), have a Travel Plan and work to reduce reliance on cars.

3.2. **Travel Plan delivery**

Option 1 – Council-led

North Somerset Council provides a service of managing and implementing the measures in the Travel Plan on behalf of the developer in return for a set contribution 'per dwelling' (for residential) or 'per square metre' (for business). This option is primarily available for use class B1 (Business) and C3 (Dwelling houses), however other developments will be considered on an individual basis.

The developer retains responsibility of any hard infrastructure measures such as bus stops and pedestrian crossings, whereas the council provides the Travel Plan measures such as personal travel planning, bike loan schemes and sustainable travel vouchers.

A council officer will act as the Travel Plan Coordinator, working closely with the Travelwest Roadshow Team and other service providers to implement the Travel Plan. Officer time, resources and services are paid for from the Section 106 contribution, with trigger points timed to ensure enough money is received to start measures from first occupation.

Work with businesses will be run in partnership - the business will need to lead on measures the council cannot directly implement on their behalf, such as Cycle To Work Schemes. The council will also endeavour to work in partnership with residential developers, as this would likely give better outcomes to the Travel Plan.

Option 2 – Developer Led

The developer retains responsibility for managing and implementing the Travel Plan and pays a non-refundable monitoring fee as well as taking out a bond for any remedial work which may be needed at the end of the Travel Plan (5 years). The bond will be released once the developer has fulfilled their Travel Plan obligations as per agreement with North Somerset Council at the time of planning. This is available for all Class Use developments.

The monitoring fee, secured through Section 106 contributions, allows North Somerset Council to monitor the progress of the Travel Plan, attend steering group meetings, provide support and assist in reviewing progress.

Developers who elect to take responsibility for implementing their Travel Plan will be required to secure funds at the time the planning consent is granted to ensure that the Travel Plan implementation is safeguarded.

3.3. Minimum requirements

To give more detailed guidance to developers, the SPD gives minimum requirements for monitoring and for Travel Plan measures, including providing a Borrow a Bike scheme, walking and cycling maps and Personalised Travel Planning. This aims to ensure adequate plans are in place from the outset to meet targets to reduce reliance on cars. It will also help to reduce the time spent by officers during the planning process requesting more detail is included.

3.4. Use of Modeshift Stars

Modeshift STARS is an online platform where a Travel Plan can be stored, developed, managed and monitored over time. Use of Modeshift STARS will enable officers to hold all Travel Plans in one place, along with monitoring information and progress of measures. Whether opting for Option 1 or Option 2, developers will no longer submit their Travel Plan as a PDF but will be required to enter data directly into the Modeshift STARS website.

Once information is added to a STARS site, both North Somerset Council and the developer can view the plan and its progress. If needed, a PDF of the plan can also be downloaded from the website. The sustainable travel team are already using STARS with schools and businesses.

4. Consultation

- 4.1. The public consultation will run for six weeks following Executive Committee approval. This will be undertaken online.
- 4.2. The consultation will use NSC's online portal 'eConsult' as the host website for information and submission of responses. The consultation will be targeted at Transport consultants, developers, interested residents, businesses and Town and Parish councillors.
- 4.3. Local and regional stakeholders, including developers, transport consultants and town and parish councils, will be notified automatically when consultations are added to this site, prompting their involvement. We will also notify relevant stakeholders directly to ensure they are consulted.

- 4.4. Officers will publicise this consultation through the Council’s social media and look to attract as much involvement from residents, businesses and stakeholders as possible.
- 4.5. An internal officer consultation has also already been undertaken including officers from Transport and Infrastructure, Planning, and Planning Policy.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The service will be funded by Section 106 contributions from developers.
- 5.2. The Travelwest Roadshow team, which is currently in place across the West of England, will be paid to provide many of the measures within the Travel Plan service.

Costs and Funding

5.3. Option 1 – Council-led

The council-led service will be self-funding. All contributions required to provide the service have been calculated, covering officer time and resources needed. The table below shows the costs for the council to run the Travel Plan service at a residential development site of 60 units over 5 years

Resource Required for 60-unit development	Cost
Travel Plan Coordinator Officer’s time to implement the Travel Plan (26 days at JG7)	£6,711
Travel Plan manager (5 days at JM1)	£1,433
Training (for development sales staff and onsite champion)	£1,200
Monitoring (Automated travel counters and resident surveys)	£1,029
Services (Personalised Travel Plan, Roadshow events, Borrow a Bike, Dr Bike etc)	£5,513
Marketing (Travel information packs, local walking and cycle maps, communications)	£927
Total	£16,813

Tables below show the contributions calculated for residential and commercial developments. Costs will usually remain the same for each size and types of development, however they are written as guidance amounts so that the council retains the ability to negotiate higher costs for sites which have build-out schedules longer than 5 years, or low sustainable travel connectivity.

Guidance costs for Residential developments

Size of C3 Development	Cost per dwelling to implement the Travel Plan	Cost for Sustainable Travel Vouchers
60 Dwellings	Rounded to £280 per dwelling	£180 per dwelling
150 Dwellings	Rounded to £220 per dwelling	£180 per dwelling
250 Dwellings	Rounded to £190 per dwelling	£180 per dwelling

Guidance costs for businesses and offices

Floor space	Number of Employees	Type of Plan	Cost for implementation by North Somerset Council (rounded)	Cost per additional m ²
1500 – 2499m ²	Any	Travel Plan Statement	Met by owner / developer Advice available	Not Applicable
2500m ²	Up to 200	Travel Plan	£19,800	£2 per m ²
2500m ²	300	Travel plan	£21,800	£2 per m ²
2500m ²	400	Travel plan	£23, 800	£2 per m ²
2500m ²	500	Travel plan	£25, 800	£2 per m ²

The above fees will be reviewed annually in line with inflation and other costs.

5.4. Option 2 – Developer-led

A Monitoring and Audit fee is detailed in the draft SPD for all types of development which require a Travel Plan. The monitoring fee is set at £4800 over a 5-year period. This amount has been costed for staff time to monitor and review developer progress, attend steering group meetings and provide training. The fee will be reviewed annually in line with inflation and other costs.

Developers are also required to take out a bond to the same value as the contributions in option 1.

5.5 The financial implications included within this report are indicative and at this stage in the process are not fully known as they will be determined by the final changes to the Travel Plan SPD approved by the council following consultation. The full financial implications and details on the financial

governance will be included within future reports when the final changes to the Travel Plan SPD are approved.

6. Legal powers and implications

The SPD is prepared by the Council as Local Planning Authority under the powers of Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The SPD will then be used to secure Travel Plans at the relevant sites.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. The aim of the SPD update is to reduce car use in new developments, and to increase the use of active and sustainable travel modes. Transport accounts for just under 50% of North Somerset's carbon emissions, with 24% from A roads and minor roads ([ONS data, 2017](#)). Therefore, reducing emissions from car travel is an essential part of meeting carbon reduction targets. Measures in a Travel Plan aim to reduce single occupancy car use in new developments by up to 10%, through services such as personalised travel planning and the provision of sustainable travel vouchers which help to enable more bus use as well as more walking and cycling.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1. **Risk 1:** The lag time between developers committing to using the Travel Planning service and the development proceeding.

Mitigation: Additional council officers required to work as Travel Plan Coordinators will only be recruited when Section 106 money has been received and developments are proceeding.

Risk 2: The council is taking on more responsibility to make reductions in car usage.

Mitigation: Partnership working within the West of England through Access Fund, and prior to that the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, means North Somerset Council has a wealth of knowledge and experience in behaviour change and sustainable travel. In addition, there is a large range of initiatives already in place which the council can replicate as part of the Travel Planning service.

The council will also endeavour to work in partnership with developers and transport consultants to give the best sustainable travel outcomes.

- 8.2. **Risk 3:** Developers may view higher Section 106 charges negatively.

Mitigation: A balance has been sought whilst costing the service, so that Travel Plans can be adequately implemented but which will also provide an attractive offer to developers.

Contributions required by North Somerset are within the same ball park other councils. They are higher than Bristol City Council due to the more rural nature of North Somerset, further work is needed to reduce car usage. Bristol are also looking at increasing their costs. See Appendix 1 for comparison.

9. Equality Implications

- 9.1. The SPD has been updated to provide detailed guidance to support developers to fulfil their Travel Plan obligation, as detailed within CS10 of the council's Core Strategy. The higher-level Core Strategy was subject to an equality impact assessment.
- 9.2. It is anticipated that the SPD will have positive implications for equality by ensuring Travel Plans are consistently and fully implemented across North Somerset, enhancing quality of place and community cohesion within new developments.

10. Corporate Implications

- 10.1. There are no immediate staffing implications from the Travel Plan SPD. Where developers commit to the council's service to implement the Travel Plan, coordinators will be recruited to fulfil the roles when the development proceeds. The financial implications of this would be provided through S106 contributions.
 - 10.2. When running, the service will generate work which will need support from the Graphics and Marketing and Communications teams.
 - 10.3. The service may have an impact on Planning Enforcement, if a developer defaults on their obligations.

11. Options Considered

- 11.1. Several options have been considered, such as just updating minimum requirements or working with consultants to implement a development's Travel Plan. However, it is considered that the best sustainable travel outcomes will be attained from a council service.

An additional benefit to the council service is that it helps to mainstream services currently provided through short term funding streams, which may not otherwise continue in the future. This is a more economically sustainable situation in the long term.

Author:

Paul Paton,
Lead Transport Policy Officer
Place Directorate

Appendices:

Appendix A: Benchmark costs
Appendix B: Communications Plan
Appendix C: Draft North Somerset Travel Plan SPD

Background Papers:

[North Somerset Travel Plans: Supplementary Planning Document](#)

[North Somerset Council Core Strategy \(2017\)](#)

[Joint Local Transport Plan 4 2020-2036 \(2020\)](#)

[North Somerset Corporate Plan 2020-24 \(2020\)](#)

[North Somerset Council Development Management Policies: Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 \(2016\)](#)

[North Somerset Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan \(2019\)](#)

[North Somerset Draft Active Travel Strategy \(2020\)](#)

[North Somerset Council Climate Emergency – Report on Area Baseline Evidence \(July 2020\)](#)