

Scrutiny Review Terms of Reference Document

Scrutiny Review	Scrutiny Review of School Travel Plans
Responsible Committee	Place Scrutiny Committee
Author	Simon Bailey
Version	1.0
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Background

The School Travel Plan is a statement by the School of its plans to encourage sustainable methods of transport to the School, and to reduce reliance on cars to pick up and drop off pupils. When applying for planning permission, especially in cases of significant expansion, the provision or updating of a School Travel Plan is made a formal condition of that permission, usually to address the concerns and objections raised by local residents with regard to increases in traffic. School Travel Plans have been referred to as worthy of cataloguing as “Fiction in the School Library”. Members of the County Council’s Planning Committee, which determines applications made by County Council controlled schools, have expressed reservations as to their enforceability and effectiveness.

Scope of the Review

A recurring feature of objections to expansions of the County’s schools is the effect on traffic conditions in the area, particularly anti-social parking at pick-up and drop-off times. In the minds of objectors an increase in pupil numbers equates to an inevitable increase in cars, traffic and negative impact on their amenity.

The School Travel Plan is a document produced by the School which sets out how it intends to encourage people to travel in a more sustainable way: cycling, scootering, walking and walking busses, car sharing. It is also an expression of its ambition to reduce reliance on cars, and to encourage drivers to obey road markings and drive responsibly.

The County Council had a duty placed on it by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to produce a sustainable school travel strategy, which it did for 2007-2011. However, even at that stage severe budgetary pressures had been identified as a barrier to implementation, and in particular where improvements to transport infrastructure were a key part of the Plan. Subsequent iterations of the Strategy have been incorporated in the County Council’s Local Transport Plan (LTP)3 2011-2026 (Extract at Appendix 1).

Lines of enquiry

- By what criteria/policy is it determined that a School Travel Plan condition is required?
- Who is responsible of monitoring the terms of the Plan once it is in place?
- How frequently is any Plan refreshed and reassessed?
- Is there an alternative method by which Schools can be encouraged/compelled to address traffic issues in their environs?
- Links to the Local Transport Plan

Outside the scope of the Review

- Zig Zag School Keep Clear markings
- School Crossing Patrols
- Compulsory 20mph zones outside schools

Review methods

It is anticipated that the Review Board will review documentary evidence, question witnesses and undertake research in order to gather evidence to inform its recommendations.

The following list is not exhaustive and will change and develop as the review progresses. As part of the review the Board members will:

- Consider previous and current examples of School Travel Plans, to see how they have developed over time and if there is any learning/experience that can be shared between schools to make them as effective as possible – to be provided by Member Services.
- Consider alternatives to requiring schools to provide a Plan by a condition to their planning permission – by speaking to the Head of Planning and Environment and senior Planning case officers, and considering Planning Committee reports and minutes, detailing previous conditions. Consideration to be given to speaking to staff in Children's Services, to explore capacity for encouragement centrally for compliance with Plans.
- Take evidence on the current effectiveness of Plans, how they are monitored and whether the impacts of the Plans has been the desired impact
- Take evidence on the capacity of staff to monitor and enforce the condition, and whether consideration should be given to removing the requirement for a Plan if there is a lack of capacity to monitor and enforce – by speaking to Planning staff, including the Head of Planning and Environment and Highway Development Control staff.

Potential witnesses for oral and/or written evidence:

- Head of Planning and Environment – as the officer responsible for signing off the Travel Plan as being sufficient to meet the condition imposed by the planning permission
- Senior Planning case officers – as the officers who determine whether a Travel Plan condition is warranted
- Highway Development Control officers – as the officers who advise on the Highway impact of development, and who advise the Head of Planning and Environment as to the fitness of the proposed Travel Plan
- Officers responsible for monitoring and enforcing the Plans

The Place Scrutiny Committee discussed the potential for a review at its meeting on 14 June 2018, and an extract of the minute is at Appendix 2.

Review Organisation and Responsibilities

Initial scoping

The initial scoping of the Review and drafting the Terms of Reference was done by Councillor Godfrey Daniel, Councillor Claire Dowling and Councillor Darren Grover.

Review Board

The Review Board is comprised of: *[to be agreed]*

The Chair of the Review Board is: *[to be agreed]*

The Review Board is responsible for making decisions regarding the scope and direction of the review and will monitor and control the overall progress of it. Board members will undertake evidence gathering activities as agreed by the Board. The Board will consider and provide challenge to all evidence presented to it, develop and agree the final report outlining the findings and recommendations of the review.

Scrutiny Review Support

Support for the review will be provided by the Member Services Team. The Lead Officer who will support the review from the Member Services Team is Simon Bailey, Democratic Services Officer. Their role is to manage the review, ensuring its aims and objectives are met and that the final report is delivered to the Place Scrutiny Committee within the agreed timescales.

Scrutiny Review Completion

When the review has been completed the Lead Officer will co-ordinate the production of a final report outlining the findings and recommendations for agreement by the Review Board. Once agreed, the Review Board will present this to the Place Scrutiny Committee for it to agree the recommendations.

The report will then be presented to Cabinet for comment and County Council for approval. Progress updates on how the recommendations are being implemented by the department will be presented to the Place Scrutiny Committee in due course (usually six and twelve months after the review has been approved by County Council).

Review Timetable

Based on the initial scoping of the review, the Review Board aims to submit the final report to the Place Scrutiny Committee at the meeting to be held on 15 November 2018.

An initial timetable of the meetings and activities required to complete the review is outlined below.

Activity	Timescale/Date
Initial Scoping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Officers, review initial evidence, evaluate value of undertaking the review and potential for change/impact by scrutiny. • Agree outline scope and lines of enquiry of the review. • Draft terms of reference 	September 2018
<u>Review Board Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider initial evidence • Review lines of enquiry/terms of reference • Agree further evidence gathering/requirements. 	September 2018
<u>Review Board Activity/Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine evidence against key lines of enquiry. • Summarise findings and recommendations from evidence. • Discuss draft report. 	September/October
Draft scrutiny review report and finalise findings and recommendations of the review.	October 2018
<u>Final Review Board Meeting to agree Report</u> Review Board meeting to agree draft report, findings and recommendations with input from key officers.	October 2018
Deadline for Report Dispatch	7 November 2018
<u>Report to Place Scrutiny Committee for agreement</u>	15 November 2018
Report to Cabinet	11 December 2018
Report to Council	5 February 2019

APPENDIX 1

LTP 3 2011-2026

Active Travel – Walking and cycling (pp 38-39)

Our approach to providing walking and cycling is ...:

Through school travel plans, promote walking to school and encourage schools to provide adequate, secure, covered cycle parking and provide on-road training for year 6 pupils

Sustainable School Travel 4.60 (page 40)

The County Council has a statutory duty to promote sustainable travel to school. Our strategy for sustainable school travel focuses on measures and initiatives which move away from a car based school run and encourage more walking and cycling in order to make the school journey experience better for families and reduce the impact that school travel has on the environment.

- **SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL TRAVEL**

Facilitate the school community and governing bodies, to introduce sustainable school travel initiatives through school travel plans, which:

- reduce the use of cars on school journeys and increase the number of children walking, cycling , car sharing and using public transport,
- reduce the negative environmental impacts of car travel,
- promote the positive benefits of physically active travel,
- increase and promote sustainable school travel choices, and
- raise awareness of road safety issues.

LTP Background Paper D – Strategic Context (page 9-10)

35 Changing travel behaviours to more sustainable modes of travel will be delivered through our 'Travelchoice' brand, by a range of initiatives and measures including...

- School Travel Plans – as identified in the Sustainable School Travel Strategy, outlined later in the chapter, we will focus on working with schools to ensure that the school travel plans, which have been developed are kept up to date are relevant to existing journey patterns, and introduce measures and initiatives which reduce the number of car borne school journeys.

Sustainable School Travel (page 11)

38 The County Council has a statutory duty to promote sustainable travel to school under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. A strategy has been developed to co-ordinate both policies and partnerships that enable the delivery of services that focus on making the school journey experience better for families, and reduces the impact that school travel has on the environment.

39 All schools in the county have developed or are developing a school travel plan. We will continue to work with schools and governors to maintain their school travel plans as active and relevant to their needs; continue to deliver education and safety programmes and provide practical advice for families about travel and the transport choices available to schools in the county.

40 By moving away from a car based school run and encouraging more families to walk and cycle, there is significant potential to contribute to tackling climate change by reducing local congestion, carbon emissions and improving air quality. This will also positively impact on families' health therefore improving quality of life.

41 Improving road sense in children, through child pedestrian and year 6 on-road cycle training programmes, complemented by highway safety measures, will contribute to a key aspect of this strategy for safety on the school journey. Finally, a reduced number of car journeys at peak times can also contribute to improving economic competitiveness and growth by improving journey time reliability for businesses.

APPENDIX 2

Place Scrutiny Committee minutes – 14 June 2018 – Extract

Scrutiny Review of the Effectiveness of School Travel Plans

4.5 Councillor Godfrey Daniel outlined the reasons for suggesting a review of the effectiveness of School Travel Plans. Often when the Planning Committee is asked to consider applications for the expansion of schools, there is a requirement to update or provide a School Travel Plan to mitigate the impact on local residents of additional vehicles dropping pupils off at the school and to promote sustainable methods of transport. The proposed lines of enquiry include an examination of whether these plans make a difference, how they are monitored, and do they have the impact that they should have. The proposal does not have a financial implication as it is likely that any recommendations can be implemented without the need for additional expenditure.

4.6 The Assistant Director, Economy responded that it may be useful for the Committee to meet with Officers who can inform them about current situation regarding School Travel Plans and is happy to support the Committee's work in this area.

4.7 The Committee RESOLVED to add this topic to the work programme and that a small group of Committee members will investigate the scope of the Review with Officers. It was agreed that Councillors Godfrey Daniel, Claire Dowling and Darren Grover will undertake this work on behalf of the Committee.