



# Scrutiny Review of the effectiveness of School Travel Plans

## Report by the Review Board:

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Councillor Claire Dowling

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## The report of the Scrutiny Review of the effectiveness of School Travel Plans

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## Recommendations

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1	<p>The Board recommends that schools continue to return data on pupils' modes of travel through the annual school census run by the Research and Information Team, to enable schools which have travel plans to monitor these with a consistent set of data.</p>	5
2	<p>The Board recommends that Communities, Economy and Transport Officers encourage schools to nominate a senior post-holder to have responsibility for the review of the School Travel Plan, and for this to be included in the School's Development Plan.</p>	5
3	<p>The Board recommends further promotion of the active travel initiatives offered by the Active Access for Growth Programme 2017-2020 to educational establishments.</p>	6
4	<p>The Board recommends that future external funding be sought to support active travel with schools and other organisations, alongside signposting to schools of other funding streams which they can apply for, to support these types of measures.</p>	6
5	<p>The Board recommends the Planning Team include a Condition requiring a new or revised (as appropriate) School Travel Plan, including a stipulated review period. Consideration should also be given to including an Informative, encouraging schools to nominate a senior post-holder to undertake responsibility for its review, and for this to be included in the School Development Plan.</p>	7
6	<p>The Board recommends that the Communities, Economy and Transport department ensure that advice and guidance to develop School Travel Plans and Walking Buses is available electronically, on CZone (the Intranet for schools) and the East Sussex County Council website.</p>	7
7	<p>The Board encourages staff to continue to co-ordinate work in relation to active travel, to support the delivery of key departmental objectives relating to the economy, planning, the environment and health.</p>	7

## Background

1. A School Travel Plan is a statement by a 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 usually made a formal condition of that permission, in accordance with national guidance and established good practice. This contributes to mitigating the impact of an increase in journeys to and from the school site, and to addressing concerns and objections raised by local residents with regard to increases in traffic. 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.
2. A recurring feature of objections to expansions of schools in the County 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.
3. The School Travel Plan is a document produced by the school which sets out how it intends to encourage pupils, parents and staff to travel in a more sustainable way through a set of identified measures and initiatives: cycling, scootering, walking and walking buses, car sharing and school buses. It is also an expression of its ambition to reduce the reliance on car usage and provide greater transport choice.
4. The purpose of the Scrutiny Review is to make recommendations:
  - to support greater effectiveness of the monitoring of School Travel Plans secured through the planning process; and
  - to ensure that existing information in relation to school travel initiatives and guidance in relation to school travel is readily available to access for schools, parents and carers.
5. It is important to note that 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. There was an incentive, in the form of capital grants, for schools to adopt a plan, and this resulted in considerable commitment from schools through the development of plans. This duty still applies, despite there being no government funding available to support this. Subsequent iterations of the strategy have been incorporated in the County Council's Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 (extract at appendix 2). Therefore a summary of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy is currently being developed, which will include current advice for parents/carers on travelling to school and the initiatives available to schools. This will be available electronically in 2019.

## Review Board Findings

### ***School Travel Plans – current situation***

6. Responsibility for a School Travel Plan, once adopted by a school, rests with the headteacher. Consequently, schools are required to monitor the effectiveness of their school Travel Plan with the information that is available to them. The Review Board heard evidence that at Telscombe Cliffs School, whose 2016 School Travel Plan was reviewed in 2018, there was of a drop in car journeys from 50% to 40%. The school used information provided by way of an annual survey conducted by the school to monitor the plan, in response to requirements of the Children’s Services Department.

7. Officers informed the Board that East Sussex County Council still collects data on pupils’ modes of travel through the annual school census, run by the Research and Information Team, although there is no longer a statutory requirement for the authority to collect and report this data. The data is freely available to schools and can be utilised both by officers in supporting the design of traffic infrastructure projects and initiatives, and by schools to inform the review and monitoring of School Travel Plans. The Board recommended the continued collection of this data.

8. The Board considered the results of a questionnaire circulated to a range of schools that had recently received planning consent which had included a condition regarding a School Travel Plan. The Board heard evidence that School Travel Plans used to form part of a school’s overall Development Plan, with a named member of staff or post-holder responsible for reviewing it. The Board considered that this approach should continue to be encouraged as it appeared to be effective.

#### **Recommendation 1.**

**The Board recommends that schools continue to return data on pupils’ modes of travel through the annual school census run by the Research and Information Team, to enable schools which have travel plans to monitor these with a consistent set of data.**

#### **Recommendation 2.**

**The Board recommends that Communities, Economy and Transport Officers encourage schools to nominate a senior post-holder to have responsibility for the review of the School Travel Plan, and for this to be included in the School’s Development Plan.**

### ***Active Access for Growth***

10. The Board’s attention was drawn to the £1.2m of funding the County Council secured to deliver the Active Access for Growth programme in 2017 for a three year period. This is a programme of cycling and walking initiatives targeting those that are currently inactive and are struggling to access work opportunities, with the aim to broaden employment and training horizons and support greater access to educational opportunities.

11. As part of the programme the County Council launched the Active Access for Growth Community Fund, to enable organisations and schools to apply for small grants to enable them to deliver cycling and walking initiatives. The scheme offered:

*Individual grants to support small projects which enable improved access to work, education and healthy lifestyles, through the Active Access for Growth Fund programme (AAfG). AAfG is funded through the Department for Transport's Access Fund, and focuses on inspiring and enhancing existing and longer term active travel (cycling, walking and public transport) across the three key growth areas of Newhaven, Eastbourne/South Wealden, Bexhill and Hastings.*

12. So far the scheme has assisted Seaford Head School, Oakwood Primary Academy, Eastbourne; Sandown Primary School, Hastings; and Annecy Primary School, Seaford with projects ranging from new cycle storage to cycle promotion initiatives.

13. The County Council has commissioned Sustrans (a national walking and cycling charity) to lead the management of the Active Access for Growth Programme. The Board strongly encouraged the promotion of this programme to schools, alongside the signposting to other potential funding streams, and the County Council exploring the opportunities for future funding for these types of measures.

14. A summary of the Active Access for Growth Programme can be found at the link below:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/localtransportplan/funding/active-access-for-growth/active-access-for-growth/>

**Recommendation 3.**

**The Board recommends further promotion of the active travel initiatives offered by the Active Access for Growth Programme 2017-2020 to educational establishments.**

**Recommendation 4.**

**The Board recommends that future external funding be sought to support active travel with schools and other organisations, alongside signposting to schools of other funding streams which they can apply for, to support these types of measures.**

### ***Review of Planning Conditions***

15. The Board considered that ensuring greater prominence for the monitoring and review of Travel Plans, either by way of re-drafted Planning Conditions or an additional note (Informative), would be beneficial. Officers confirmed that the wording of Conditions had been discussed with the Head of Planning and other team members. A standardised Condition, applicable to all applications, is difficult to achieve, given the range of school settings. The Planning Team prefer to consider the individual merit of each application, and tailor the Conditions accordingly. A selection of previously applied Conditions is at appendix 3.

16. The Board considered the appropriate interval between reviews. Officers commented that a period for review and a nominated post-holder in a school responsible for the review is included in all approved Travel Plans. Typically the first review is at the end of the first year with subsequent reviews every two years. The Board considered the benefits of including these requirements in an Informative to the planning consent, which would draw the applicant's attention to the matter and set out best practice.

**Recommendation 5.**

**The Board recommends the Planning Team include a Condition when issuing a planning permission, requiring a new or revised (as appropriate) School Travel Plan, including a stipulated review period. Consideration should also be given to including an Informative, encouraging schools to nominate a senior post-holder to undertake responsibility for its review, and for this to be included in the School Development Plan.**

***On-line material***

17. Officers remarked that guidance on a range of options (walking buses, school travel plans) was previously available on CZone (ESCC's Intranet for schools). This could assist schools in developing School Travel Plans, taking into account the local geography.

18. Officers provided the Board with examples of the material, confirmed that it had been reviewed, and was currently with Legal Services and the Insurance Team for their input. Officers confirmed that this material, once finally approved, will be made available on CZone and the County Council website. The Board considered that this would ensure a consistency of approach, and economy of effort.

**Recommendation 6.**

**The Board recommends that the Communities, Economy and Transport department ensure that advice and guidance to develop School Travel Plans and Walking Buses is available electronically, on CZone (the Intranet for schools) and the East Sussex County Council website.**

***Public Health***

19. The Board considered the link between School Travel Plans and Public Health outcomes, and the Board discussed how School Travel Plans could be used as part of a holistic approach. Officers confirmed that the Public Health Team is currently reviewing the "Healthy Weight" strategy, which could include reference to School Travel Plans. School Travel Plans could complement the work schools undertake on Health Improvement Plans by the County Council's Public Health department.

20. The Board encouraged the continued sharing of information, knowledge and sources of funding, especially between those staff in Communities, Economy and Transport and Public Health with commissioning roles. This will have the twin effect of raising the profile of School Travel Plans and assist with supporting the delivery of key departmental objectives in relation to the economy, planning, the environment and health.

**Recommendation 7.**

**The Board encourages staff to continue to co-ordinate work in relation to active travel, to support the delivery of key departmental objectives relating to the economy, planning, the environment and health.**

## **Conclusion**

21. In reviewing the effectiveness of School Travel Plans, the Board found areas of good practice that they recommend should continue, such as completion of the relevant sections of the school census, and promotion of the Active Access for Growth programme. By addressing the matter through the planning process, whether in granting consent or providing strategic transport advice, the County Council can encourage schools and their pupils, parents and staff to reduce reliance on cars and choose sustainable methods of travel. Further promotion of the benefits of Travel Plans and opportunities for funding initiatives are also encouraged by the Board.

# Appendix 1

## Scope and terms of reference of the review

The Review was established to consider and make recommendations on the following:

- a) the effectiveness of School Travel Plans
- b) how schools can be encouraged to develop and maintain School Travel Plans

## Board Membership and project support

Initial scoping was undertaken by Councillor Godfrey Daniel, Councillor Claire Dowling and Councillor Darren Grover.

Review Board Members were Councillor Godfrey Daniel, Councillor Claire Dowling and Councillor Nigel Enever.

The Project Manager was Simon Bailey, Democratic Services Officer.

## Review Board meeting dates

16 October 2018

14 November 2018

9 January 2019

25 February 2019

## Witnesses providing evidence

**The Board would like to thank all the witnesses who provided evidence in person:**

Alex Jack, Transport Development Control Team Manager

Andrew Keer, Transport Planning Manager

Lisa Simmonds, Principal Transport Policy Officer

David Vickers, Principal Planner

Headteachers at Burfield Academy and Cavendish School

## Evidence papers

Item	Date
East Sussex County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026	Various
Questionnaire responses	Winter 2018/19

## **Appendix 2 - East Sussex County Council Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011-2026 [extracts]**

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 schools. 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.

### **Local Transport Plan 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 3 - Examples of Travel Plan conditions attached to planning permissions**

### **LW/3226/CC, condition 18 (Tideway School, Newhaven, January 2015)**

Before the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, a Travel Plan shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport. The Travel Plan shall include targets for reduced car use and an associated monitoring programme together with procedures for review. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented in full and thereafter reviewed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To increase awareness and use of alternative modes of transport for school journeys in accordance with Saved Policy T1 of the Lewes District Local Plan 2003.

### **WD/3252/CC, condition 18 (Burfield Academy, Hailsham, March 2015)**

Before the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, a Framework Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport. The Travel Plan shall be implemented and thereafter reviewed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To help increase awareness and use of alternative modes of transport for school journeys in accordance with Saved Policy TR2 of the Eastbourne Borough Plan 2003.

### **EB/3238/CC, condition 14 (Cavendish School, Eastbourne, June 2015)**

Before the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, a Framework Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport. The Travel Plan shall be implemented and thereafter reviewed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To help increase awareness and use of alternative modes of transport for school journeys in accordance with Saved Policy TR2 of the Eastbourne Borough Plan 2003.

**LW/3332/CC, condition 12 (Meridian CP School, Peacehaven, December 2016)**

An updated Travel Plan is required to support this development and shall be submitted to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport for written approval before the occupation of the development hereby permitted. The Travel Plan should include targets for reduced car use and a monitoring programme to ensure these targets are met. This will need to recommend realistic proposals in providing for and improving non-car modes of travel through walking, cycling and the use of public transport and assess the residual impact of the development on the surrounding highway network including ameliorative measures, as necessary, which shall be first agreed in writing with the director of Communities, Economy and Transport. The Travel Plan shall be carried out in accordance with the approved proposals.

Reason: To ensure that private car trips to and from the site are reduced to contribute to meeting the objectives of sustainable development, in accordance with Core Policy 13 of the Lewes District Joint Core Strategy 2016 and the provisions of Part 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

**WD/3385/CC, condition 10 (Willingdon Community School, April 2018)**

No part of the development shall be occupied until a Draft Framework Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport. Thereafter the approved Travel Plan shall be implemented and reviewed as specified within the approved document.

Reason: To encourage and promote sustainable transport options in accordance with Saved Policy TR3 in the Wealden Local Plan 2003.

**WD/3388/CC, condition 12 (Polegate Primary School, June 2018)**

No part of the approved development shall be occupied until a Draft Framework Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport. Thereafter the approved Travel Plan shall be implemented and reviewed as specified within the approved document.

Reason: To encourage and promote sustainable transport options in accordance with Saved Policy TR3 in the Wealden Local Plan 2003.