

# **Decide and Provide Approach & Transport Assessment/Statement Scoping Guidance**

**INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMMES GROUP**

**Somerset Highways Procedures 26/23**

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### Revision History

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Somerset Council (SC) as local highway authority (LHA) welcomes and encourages early discussion with developers and applicants prior to the submission of a planning application. SC is also the local planning authority (LPA) and the lead local flood authority (LLFA).
- 1.2 Preliminary discussion results in better quality applications which stand a better chance of a successful outcome and helps speed up the decision-making process after submission.
- 1.3 To secure consent for a development, the developer must gain planning approval from the Local Planning Authority (LPA), which is also SC. For many planning applications a Transport Assessment (TA) along with a Travel Plan (TP) or Transport Statement (TS) is required.
- 1.4 The LPA case officer can recommend refusing planning permission if the development, and indeed its transport impacts, are considered to be contrary to the Local Plan, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), or otherwise contrary to good strategic planning. It should be noted that the NPPF paragraphs 104 – 113 should be considered when reading this guidance note. Of relevance to this guidance is **Paragraph 104** of the NPPF which states:

*“Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:*

- a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed.
- b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
- c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
- d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed, and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and
- e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to making high quality places.”

- 1.5 It is considered necessary to fully understand the transport requirements for development proposals regardless of size. TA/TS/TPs are all ways of assessing and mitigating the negative transport impacts of development to promote sustainable development.
- 1.6 The assessment of all of the modes of transport and travel patterns of any development may range from a simple and straight forward process to one that is complex and 'nonstandard'. No two transport assessments or Travel Plans are likely to be the same, what is appropriate for one development is unlikely to be the same for another.
- 1.7 This TA/TS/TP scoping guidance sets out the typical subject matter that a developer and applicants should cover in the completion of their TA /TS/TP.

## 2 The Scope of the TA/TS and TP

- 2.1 The Guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) advise that "The need for, scale, scope and level of detail required of a Transport Assessment or Statement should be established as early in the development management process as possible as this may therefore positively influence the overall nature or the detailed design of the development."
- 2.2 Policy compliance at national level – NPPF and at local level – Local Development Plan is a material consideration in any planning application. The following NPPF 2021 paragraphs are of keynote for supporting the scoping of the need for a TA/TS/TP:
- 2.3 **Paragraph 110:** In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:
  - a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
  - b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;
  - c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and
  - d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

- 2.4 **Paragraph 111:** Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 2.5 **Paragraph 112:** Within this context, applications for development should:
- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
  - b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
  - c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
  - d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
  - e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.
- 2.6 **Paragraph 113:** All developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a transport statement or transport assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed.
- 2.7 With regards to local policy compliance the relevant Local Plan policies should be referred to in the development of the scoping of the TA/TS/TP.

### 3 What are Transport Assessments and Statements?

- 3.1 TAs and TSs are ways of assessing the potential transport impacts of developments (and they may propose mitigation measures to promote sustainable development. Where that mitigation relates to matters that can be addressed by management measures, the mitigation may inform the preparation of Travel Plans). The key output of a TA/TS is the development of a appropriate and effective Transport Strategy that includes interventions internal



and external to the proposed site, within the zone of influence of the development.

- 3.2 TAs are thorough assessments of the transport implications of development, and TSs are a 'lighter-touch' evaluation to be used where this would be more proportionate to the potential impact of the development (i.e. in the case of developments with anticipated limited transport impacts). (Source: MHCLG Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements 2014)
- 3.3 In comparison, the TS sets out the transport issues relating to a proposed development site; existing conditions and the impact of the development proposals in a simple form. It is completed by the developer and supplied with a planning application. A TS is unlikely to include junction modelling and the collection of associated traffic survey data, although on-street parking survey data and an associated parking assessment may form part of a TS for sites located in areas subject to parking stress.

## 4 What are Travel Plans?

- 4.1 Travel Plans are long-term management strategies for integrating proposals for sustainable travel into the planning process. They are based on evidence of the anticipated transport impacts of development and set measures to promote and encourage sustainable travel (such as promoting walking and cycling). They should not, however, be used as an excuse for unfairly penalising drivers and cutting provision for cars in a way that is unsustainable and could have negative impacts on the surrounding streets.
- 4.2 Travel Plans should, where possible, be considered in parallel to development proposals and readily integrated into the design and occupation of the new site rather than retrofitted after occupation.
- 4.3 Where there may be more effective or sustainable outcomes, and in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development, consideration may be given to travel planning over a wider area. (Source: MHCLG Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements 2014)
- 4.4 A TP Statement is a simple form that sets out the existing conditions within and near to the development and contains a commitment to the promotion of sustainable travel. It also sets out objectives and measures to encourage travel by sustainable modes. It is also completed by the developer and supplied with a planning application.

## 5 A Vision-led Approach

- 5.1 Transport planning is currently undergoing a change or paradigm shift. This shift is from the previous predict & provide (P&P) approach to a new decide & provide (D&P) approach (also referred to as vision & validate). This is addressed in the *TRICS Guidance Note on the Practical Implementation of the Decide & Provide Approach*, dated February 2021, which provides helpful guidance.
- 5.2 Transport planning has traditionally used the P&P approach by default. That is, using past trends to forecast the transport needs of the future. Changing trends in travel behaviour (amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic); increasing uncertainty (accelerated by new and emerging technologies); and the policy impetus for transport decarbonisation mean that P&P is no longer the appropriate approach.
- 5.3 The D&P approach provides the opportunity for more positive and integrated transport and land use planning. It involves deciding on a preferred future and providing a means to work towards it, whilst accommodating uncertainty. Central to this process is the need to set out a clear vision to support high quality place making and the development of a sustainable transport strategy. This is considered in more detail in the TRICS guidance cited above.
- 5.4 Parallel with D&P, DfT recognises the increasing role of scenario planning in transport appraisal to deal with increased levels of uncertainty. Rather than a single core scenario, a TA may need to consider multiple plausible scenarios. The TRICS guidance advises that all major planning applications (i.e., 500+ new homes or more than 5,000m<sup>2</sup> employment / retail floorspace) should be supported by a TA that incorporates scenario planning.
- 5.5 Developers/applicants will be required to undertake a Vision led approach for their proposals and share and agree the Vision with SC during early scoping discussions. This is particularly important for larger, more complex developments with more extended (and phased) programmes, where scenario planning will also be needed.

## 6 Development Scale and Development Thresholds

- 6.1 Early scoping discussions with SC will **steer the type** of assessment required. Developers and applicants are encouraged to have these discussions with SC at the earliest possible stage.
- 6.2 Developers should also refer to the Local Planning Authority's (LPA's) Validation Check List to consider what documents are the LPAs required., for example Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) state in what circumstances a TS

will be required and when a TA is required. Note that in SDC TPs are only required for major applications (outline or full).

- 6.3 The very smallest of developments will not require an assessment. For the greater number of planning applications, a TS and accompanying Travel Plan Statement are required
- 6.4 A series of thresholds have been devised to help the applicant determine whether a TS or a TA or TA and TP is required. These are set out below:

Thresholds	TS	TA	TP
Any development that is not in conformity with the adopted development plan (full or outline).		✓	✓
Any development generating 30 or more two-way vehicle movements in any hour (full or outline)		✓	✓
Any development generating 100 or more two-way vehicle movements per day (full or outline)		✓	✓
Any development proposing 100 or more parking spaces (full or outline).		✓	✓
Any development that is in the vicinity of a recorded accident blackspot (full or outline)		✓	✓
Any development proposed in a location within or adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) (full or outline)		✓	✓
Change of Use applications	✓		
Proposed development that affects a classified road or proposed highway (full or outline)	✓		
Proposed development that involves the laying out or construction of a highways access (full or outline)	✓		
Section 73 application (if relevant to highways)	✓		
Full minor applications	✓		
Full and outline major applications		✓	✓
SC (Regulation 3) applications - Minerals and Waste		✓	✓
Any development proposal requiring an Environmental Statement		✓	✓

## 7 The Contents of a TA & TP Scoping Study

7.1 The contents of a TA study will include the following information:

1. **The Background to the project:** The names of all the concerned parties and their consultants, any previous applications made on the site.
2. **The Vision for the project:** To support the Council's Decide and Provide policy and the Vision led approach.
3. **The site context and description of the development:** Site location plan should be included with the site boundary clearly shown. Description of the proposed use and operation of the development including phasing and timing of key phases, and estimated commencement and completion dates. Proposed staff, visitor, and guest numbers in addition to a description of the hours of operation and shift/occupation/visiting times (where relevant).
4. **The study area for the proposed development:** (area of influence of the site). This should be shown on an accompanying plan. Plans must be included of all relevant transport routes leading to, and adjacent to the development site including public rights of way. The area of influence for the site should include travel time isochrones for walking and cycling, with suitable catchment travel times, such as 5/10/15 minutes (walking) and 10/15/20 minutes (cycling).
5. **Policy compliance statement:** Compliance with NPPF, regional policy, local plan, local transport plan, non-motorised user policies, travel plan, parking policies and demand management policies. Include any emerging policies of relevance.
6. **Existing networks and Baseline conditions:** for all modes, including road safety. Please note that any transport data which is a maximum of 4 years old will only be accepted.
7. **Data sets:** to be used for the TA assessment including any new surveys to be carried, their location and timing. Account should be taken of trends and changes in travel behaviour for journey purpose.
8. **Scenarios:** the development of scenario planning, to be deployed to assess major planning applications which are more complex and/or have an extended project programme (e.g., with multiple phases). Scenario should include:

**Reference cases:** These scenarios are essential to establish the baseline or 'without development' conditions of the transport network. Appropriate

scenarios will need to be identified to reflect different trip generation assumptions for permitted, committed, and planned growth.

**Do-minimum:** This will utilise trip rates derived from comparable sites from the TRICS database based on the proposed development's proximity to key services and its current connectivity provision (i.e. without proposed improvements).

**With connectivity improvements:** Once proposed connectivity improvements are identified, a second set of comparable sites from TRICS (or derived from other sources) is identified that resemble more closely the accessibility characteristics of the proposed development when taking into account the associated proposed improvements.

**Requirement and phasing of further improvements:** Should the proposed improvements modelled in the previous scenario prove to be inadequate to address the impacts of the development proposal, further improvements will need to be identified and modelled. This scenario may also be needed to identify the phasing of improvements, particularly for sites with a protracted build-out programme.

**Extrapolated trends:** Trend data from TRICS will be used to extrapolate potential future behaviour resulting in vehicular trip rates increasing or decreasing (or remaining broadly static) over time in order to accommodate the uncertainty of future travel patterns, this reduction or growth in vehicular trips should be applied to the site and the background growth assumptions as appropriate.

9. **The use of traffic models:** Junction assessments tools that will support the assessment of trip distribution and impact assessment should be disclosed. The age and extent of the traffic models should be cited. Wherever possible first-hand survey work should be carried out with all surveys to be undertaken in neutral months. All junctions within the study area should be modelled unless it is demonstrated to not be required.
10. **The proposed transport strategy for the site:** Access arrangements for all modes, accessibility of proposed land uses to transport infrastructure, parking standards to be applied, provision of electric vehicle infrastructure and access for emergency services. Provision of onsite and off-site transport measures/mitigation should be stated accompanied by a phasing plan for the development.
11. **Person trip generation and distribution:** Number of person trips generated (inbound and outbound) by all modes including daily and peak period totals for a 24-hour period (broken down by hour), please note that TRICS 12-hour standard is 0700 to 1900. Along with their trip purpose

throughout the day where appropriate. Note: The peak periods for analysis should be agreed with SC officers and may include both network peaks and development peaks where these do not coincide. An explanation of the methodologies used to calculate trip generation should be provided with all underpinning evidence provided. Wherever possible first-hand survey work should be carried out with all surveys to be undertaken in neutral months. The use of TRICS data sets and the application of the latest version of the TRICS Best Practice Guidance should be stated, if this is applied. Use of trends for journey purpose should be taken into account and discussed.

12. **Mode share:** for the proposed development, including how this may change over the implementation period of the development.
13. **Cumulative Impacts:** of the proposed development on the surrounding area, this is particularly important for proposed developments which are subject to a Environmental Statement.
14. **Outline Travel Plan** and monitoring regime. Where necessary school travel plan(s) should be included. The Travel Plan should state how encouragement will be given to travel by walking and cycling within the development and the use of public transport to and within the site.
15. **Monitoring regime:** for the site and reporting schedules.
16. **Section 106 Contributions and S278 agreements:** Proposed arrangements for discussion.

## 8 Agreeing the TA&TP Scoping Study

- 8.1 When the developer/applicant has provided SC with sufficient information to undertake an initial assessment through the scoping study, SC will consider the information submitted and will attend an initial meeting with the developer/applicant and /or their consultants.
- 8.2 Written responses will be sent to the developer/applicant within 20 working days of receipt of the required information and the pre-application fee. A response to the issues raised at the developer and applicant's meeting will be sent within 10 working days of the meeting.
- 8.3 SC is wishing to adopt a "right first time" approach in line with the Somerset Enabling Growth Charter 2020. In adopting this approach SC is committed to providing the developer and applicants with an early indication of those proposals that require significant reconsideration.
- 8.4 Following the initial meeting all parties will agree the TA&TP preparation timescales and any subsequent meetings. It is strongly recommended that at least two additional meetings are held with SC as the TA&TP progresses and any additional information regarding the proposed development emerges. Response times for review of TA&TP will be agreed on a case-by-case basis.

## 9 Next Steps

- 9.1 It is recommended that the developer and applicants include the outcomes of the TA&TP scoping study in the Pre-Application discussions with SC as the LPA. This will allow the LPA to develop awareness of the transport assessment process and emerging issues and proposed mitigation prior to the application being submitted.
- 9.2 Written responses will not be advice to the developer on how to secure planning permission for the proposals. The response will provide a guide of how SC, as consultee on highway and transportation matters, is likely to view the proposals when submitted on a formal basis.
- 9.3 The highway and transportation advice will be provided without prejudice to the SC final formal response on any future planning application. SC's formal recommendations to a planning application will be made after consideration of all the application information and following more detailed assessment.
- 9.4 The final decision on any planning application will be taken by SC as the LPA not by SC as the LHA consultee.



## **10 Fees for the TA Scoping study and Pre-Application advice**

- 10.1 SC has offered such a service for many years but is no longer able to provide this service free of charge. Exercising its powers under the Local Government Act 2003, the Council will levy charges for TA/TS scoping and pre-application advice as this is a discretionary service. The charge will enable SC to provide and sustain an improved level of service.
- 10.2 This approach is beneficial as it provides applicants / agents with full information at an early stage to assist in formulating a proposal before committing to costs and incorporating sufficient information in the application to minimise uncertainty and risk and maximise its chances of success. This approach is also intended to facilitate an efficient application and decision process resulting in quicker outcomes
- 10.3 To take part in this activity you should submit a TA/TS request form by email or post. This submission should include supporting information and agreement to pay the appropriate fee.

## **APPENDIX 1: TA/ TS Scoping Pro Forma**

**Issued by:**

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PROJECT SUMMARY			
Date:			
Planning App. no: (If applicable)			
Scheme title:			
PROJECT STAGE			
Preliminary/Feasibility (002)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planning Application (003)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appeals/Inquires (004)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (General Advice) (005)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Areas You Wish SC To Provide Comment On			
Background Information	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed Area of Study	<input type="checkbox"/>
Existing Highway Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data Sets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scenarios	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of Traffic Models	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trip Generation & Distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mode Share	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cumulative Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)	Enter the name of the discipline		<input type="checkbox"/>

DOCUMENTS AND DRAWINGS FOR REVIEW		
Drawing Title	Drawing Number	Rev
Documents		
Doc 1		
Doc 2		

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## ADVICE BEING SOUGHT

This should be a brief summary to the audit team about the scheme and what information you, the Project Sponsor, are looking for

## PREFERRED RETURN DATE

Click here and then select the dropdown box enter a date.

**This form and all relevant documents should be emailed to Highways Development Management.**

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## Acknowledgement

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Many thanks to Lynn Basford of Basford Powers Ltd for support in drafting this document on behalf of Somerset Council.

