

Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (2011 - 2021)

December 2010



1 Introduction

- 1.1 Increased car use and the impact of 'the school run' is a problem nationally. The level of congestion due to the number of cars on the school run is something we in Bedford are keen to address. Within the Borough, travel to nurseries, schools and colleges generates a significant number of car journeys contributing to peak time traffic flow and congestion. In association with this there are concerns about poor health and obesity in young people, both in terms of inactive lifestyles and the effect of the environment round them and about the risk of injury or death in road collisions.
- 1.2 In recent years there has been an increasing awareness of the links between education provision and transport and this has become even more apparent with the introduction of parental preferences, increased diversity of provision, extended schools and developments in the 14 – 19 curriculum. Coupled with this, there has been greater environmental awareness and a desire for sustainability both in transport and education policies and provision. Schools have been encouraged to become eco friendly and significant efforts have been put into the development of School Travel Plans.
- 1.3 Bedford's Sustainable Modes of Travel to School strategy responds to the changing environment around school travel as well as meeting the statutory requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 1.4 Through this strategy we seek to deliver greater sustainability in all forms of travel to, from and between schools, colleges and other places of education that are available in the borough and surrounding authorities. This document aims to draw together the related strands of work in education travel planning, transport provision and road safety across the authority and by other stakeholders. It links education and travel considerations with the aim of developing effective and comprehensive ways of both improving access to learning and promoting sustainable travel.

2 Background

- 2.1 It is the government's aim for every child to receive the education they need to enable them to fulfil their potential. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 is intended to help achieve this aim. The Act also extends our duties to support choice through the provision of appropriate transport arrangements including free transport for the most disadvantaged families.
- 2.2 The insertion of a new section (508A) into the Education Act 1996 also placed a duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and to publish a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy which was to be reviewed annually.

- 2.3 Sustainable travel is defined as a mode that improves the physical well being of those using it, the environmental well being of all or part of the local area or a combination of the two. Sustainable modes of travel include walking, cycling, buses and other forms of public transport as well as car sharing where there are no other practical alternatives available.

3 Encouraging sustainable transport

- 3.1 Sustainable travel can be encouraged by informing people of the travel choices available to them and making them aware of the consequences of the travel choices on their health, the community and the environment. There are also circumstances where sustainable modes are the most advantageous in terms of time, cost and health benefits. Through pro-active promotion, car use associated with education and learning can be reduced.

4. National Context

4.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006

- 4.1.1 This Act requires the Council to promote sustainable modes of travel to improve the physical wellbeing of those using them and the environmental wellbeing of their area.

The Act states:-

(1) A local education authority in England must—

(a) Prepare for each academic year a document containing their strategy to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of their area (“a sustainable modes of travel strategy”),

(b) Publish the strategy in such manner and by such time as may be prescribed,

(c) Promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of their area.

4.2 National Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG13): Transport 2001

- 4.2.1 PPG13 sets out the objectives to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level and to promote more sustainable transport choices both for carrying people and for moving freight.

The objectives of this guidance are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level to:-

- promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;
- promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling,
- reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

4.3 Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' (2003) and 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (2004)

4.3.1 The Government's vision was to create a joined-up system of health, family support, childcare and education services so that all children get the best start possible. Through the range of measures brought in under the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme, organisations providing services to children, such as schools, hospitals and the police, work together and share information so that all children, especially those from vulnerable groups, have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

4.4 Sustainable Schools for Pupils, Communities and the Environment 2006

4.4.1 The National Framework for sustainable schools comprises three interlocking parts: a commitment to care; an integrated approach and a selection of 'doorways' or sustainability themes. The 8 'doorways' are discrete entry points or places where schools can establish or develop their sustainability practices. Each of the doorways draws its inspiration from a range of Government policies concerning sustainable development and quality of life. There are opportunities and recommendations for schools in relation to each of the doorways.

The eight doorways are:-

- Food and drink
- Energy and water
- Travel and traffic
- Purchasing and waste
- Buildings and grounds
- Inclusion and participation
- Local well-being
- Global dimension

5. Local Context

5.1 Bedford's Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2021

The underlying objectives of Bedford's LTP3 (2011-2021) are:-

- Encouraging modal shift
- Promoting access to services
- Promoting the links between health and active travel
- Reducing the environmental impact of transport within the climate change and carbon reduction agendas
- Maintaining the asset

5.2 Bedford Borough Council' Corporate Plan 2009 – 2012

5.2.1 Bedford Borough Council is committed to working with its communities and partners to improve local quality of life. Working together with our partners, as part of the Bedford Borough Partnership, we are determined to make the Borough a better place to live, work and visit. In November 2009, the Council and Partnership published its *Sustainable Community Strategy – Moving Forward Together*. This sets out the Partnership's vision for the Borough, based on what people have said together with a range of demographic and social indicators about needs in the Borough.

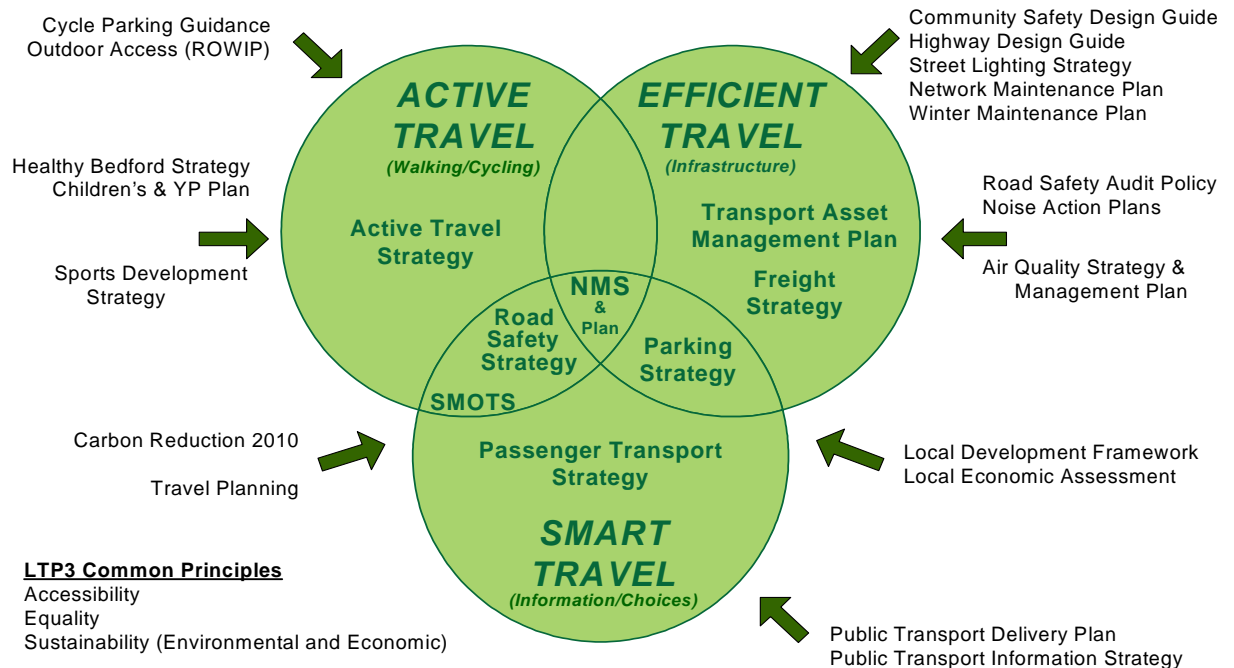
5.2.2 The vision challenges everybody in the Bedford Borough Partnership to work together to make the Borough:-

- Thriving – a strong local economy delivering high levels of growth and employment;
- Greener – supporting a natural environment which is valued and enjoyed by all;
- Aspiring – ;children and young people are able to lead safe, healthy and happy lives and are provided with opportunities to develop their self-esteem, maximise their life chances and realise their full potential;
- Healthy – where everybody has access to high-quality health and social care services;
- Safer – people live safer lives without the fear of crime;
- Inclusive – where people, whatever their background, feel part of the wider community;
- Sustainable – where housing and economic growth are built on sustainable improvements in the related infrastructure including transport.

The Corporate Plan sets out the Borough Council's contribution to meeting the challenges contained in the Strategy.

5.2.3 Encouraging people to travel by alternatives to the car is the key action in Bedford's new Local Transport Plan (LTP3) which will involve promoting the alternatives, travel planning measures designed to give succinct information on travel options, and creating the right environment for them, and they will be based on Bedford's 'smarter choices' Active Travel Strategy and its Road Safety Strategy. The diagram below shows how this (SMOTS) strategy sits with the Active Travel and other Strategies in the LTP.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 - THEMES and STRATEGIES



Abbreviations: **NMS** = Network Management Strategy **SMOTS** = Sustainable Modes of Transport to School

6.0 Vision, key aims and approach

6.1 The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a framework for determining increases in sustainable transport to schools and colleges in Bedford Borough as well as improving the health of residents and reducing the incidence of obesity in the school/college population,

6.2 The need for focusing on sustainable travel is centred on the factors below:

- Flexibility in parental choice of schools encourages more and longer car-borne trips
- Congestion in Bedford appears to be encouraging more people to consider walking and cycling
- The health agenda is similarly causing people to consider more active modes of travel

6.3 Bedford Borough Council very much sees the Local Transport Plan and its contributory strategies as the key to achieving a holistic sustainable transport system. Indeed some of the strategies that are most beneficial to delivering sustainable transport may not be specifically transport related, such as this strategy, the Play Strategy, Children and Young People’s Plan and the Healthy Bedford Strategy. Recognising this and to set out our fundamental aims, we will adopt the following vision:

To create an environment and culture in which walking and cycling and passenger transport (of all forms) are seen as the natural choices for travelling to school because they are convenient, affordable, safe, comfortable and attractive.

6.4 School travel plans encourage schools, the local authority and other partners to work together to promote walking, cycling, public transport and car share schemes. Sustainable transport measures aim to reduce air pollution and congestion, improve access to services, increase physical activity and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

6.5 The Council will support the aims of its Corporate Plan by continuing to provide free home to school transport for qualifying children where it remains a statutory requirement. For those children who are not entitled to free transport, the Council will work with passenger transport operators to provide suitable alternative services and will assess the suitability of walking and cycling routes where appropriate.

6.6 Bedford Borough’s Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy will be implemented using the whole of the authority together with partners.

6.7 The Council will provide an open platform for all stakeholders to have an input in the shaping and direction of policies and services that flow from the Strategy.

7.0 Action Plan

Action Plan	
Item	Task
1	Identify all potential internal and external partners and engage with them.
2	Promote the introduction of 20mph zones in residential areas around schools.
3	Encourage the creation of an environment in and around schools which promotes sustainable travel through the provision of safer routes.
4	Identify funding opportunities through the planning process
5	Encourage all schools and colleges to develop travel plans and update them on an annual basis.

Action Plan	
Item	Task
6	Integrate other elements of the strategy with travel planning initiatives including local infrastructure audits and assessment of needs.
7	As part of the Borough Council's review of its client transport services, implement a revised network of public and dedicated school bus services designed to minimise the number of children conveyed by private car.
8	All new schools to be provided with appropriate facilities to facilitate safe dropping off for car and bus users.
9	Make cycle training to national standards available to all school age pupils.
10	Support initiatives in school to motivate children to take up cycling.
11	Ensure cycle parking meets the criteria as laid down in the Borough's design guidance.

8.0 Resources and Partnership working

8.1 We will continue our efforts to maintain and extend close working relationships with our partner organisations. The delivery of sustainable modes of travel to school will be achieved through facilitating and engaging with key partners to achieve delivery of the action plan.

8.2 The uncertainty over future dedicated funding means it will be essential to ensure that sustainable travel is achieved through ever possible avenue.

Revenue Budget

8.3 The end of specific Government funding for school travel plan development and improvements in 2010/2011 means that other funding streams will need to be identified from within the Council's revenue budget as well as from external sources such as new developments.

Capital Budget

8.4 For the year 2010 -2011 the original capital budget for safer routes schemes was approximately £180,000 but as this formed part of the Integrated Transport block allocation from Central Government, it was cut by one third nationally in the Summer and then again by a further third in the Autumn Comprehensive Spending Review. In the future, we will therefore have to bid for additional funding from the new Local Sustainable Transport Fund or rely on growth related funding which makes it even more important to embed Active Travel and Smarter Travel Initiatives into everything that we as an Authority do.