

Topic Paper 4: Public Infrastructure

Policy Context

Overall aim or purpose of document	Objectives / targets
European Commission White Paper on the European Transport Policy (EC, 2001)	
Sets out the EU policy on transport including issues such as safety, the environment and sustainable transport.	<p>The principal measures suggested in the White Paper include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving quality in the road transport sector • Turning intermodality into reality • Improving road safety • Adopting a policy on effective charging for transport • Developing high-quality urban transport • Developing medium and long-term environmental objectives for a sustainable transport system
PPG 13 – Transport (ODPM, 2001)	
<p>The objectives of PPG13 are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>Objectives</p> <p>When preparing development plans and considering planning applications, local authorities should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus major generators of travel demand in city, town and district centres and near to major public transport interchanges • In rural areas, locate most development for housing, jobs, shopping, leisure and services in local service centres which are designated in the development plan to act as focal points for housing, transport and other services, and encourage better transport provision in the countryside • Ensure that consideration of development plan allocations and local transport investment and priorities are closely linked • Give priority to people over ease of traffic movement and plan to provide more road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in town centres, local neighbourhoods and other areas with a mixture of land uses • Ensure that the needs of disabled people as pedestrians, public transport users and motorists - are taken into account in the implementation of planning policies
The Future of Transport a Network for 2030 (DTI, 2004)	
The Future of Transport White Paper looks at the factors that will shape travel and transport over the next thirty years and sets out how the Government will respond to the increasing demand for travel, maximising the benefits of transport while minimising the negative impact on people and the environment	<p>Objectives</p> <p>The strategy is built around three key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained investment over the long term, raising planned spending over the next three years to over £12.8 billion by 2007–08 • Improvements in transport management. Better traffic management will ease congestion of the road network • Planning ahead. Government will lead the debate on road pricing, working with stakeholders to establish and explain how and when pricing might provide the reliability and standards road users want
Regional Transport Strategy (contained with the South West RSS Proposed Changes, 2008)	
The Regional Transport Strategy is contained within the Regional Spatial Strategy. The latest version of the evolving RSS is the Proposed Changes stage. The RSS will be finalised and adopted in June 2009.	<p>The main aim of the RTS is to support the RSS and reduce the rate of road traffic growth through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting economic development by maintaining and improving the reliability and resilience of links from the region's Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs) to other regions (particularly the South East and London),

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	international markets and connectivity within the region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing social exclusion by improving accessibility to jobs and services • Making urban areas work effectively and creating attractive places to live by developing the transport network in support of the strategy to concentrate growth and development in the SSCTs • Reducing negative impacts of transport on the environment including climate change
Somerset Local Transport Plan (Somerset County Council, 2006)	
<p>The Local Transport Plan sets out the local policies, objectives and targets for transport in Somerset between the periods 2006-2011.</p>	<p>The following objectives for LTP2 have been identified through consideration of the National, Regional and local community priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the growth of congestion and pollution and improve health • Reduce social exclusion and improve access to everyday facilities • Improve safety for all who travel • Protect and enhance the built and natural environment • Support sustainable economic growth in appropriate locations <p>Some of the indicators that the plan is measuring against are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI 47 People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents (target: By 2010, to reduce killed and seriously injured road accident casualties by at least 35%, compared with the average for 1994-98) • NI 167 Congestion – average journey time per mile during the morning peak (target: decrease in congestion in Taunton and Yeovil) • NI 186 Per capita CO₂ emissions in the LA area (year on year reduction) • Change in area wide road traffic mileage (target: total growth in vehicle kms between 2004 and 2010 not to exceed 7.2% compared to the 2004 baseline) • Pollutant concentrations within Air Quality Management Areas (target: to reduce the concentration of NO₂ in Taunton and Yeovil to 40ug/m3)
Western Somerset Economic Development and Access Strategy (EDAW, 2003)	
<p>Vision for West Somerset includes: Western Somerset will be a more integrated part of the sub region with good connections to the principal urban areas and the wider south west economy.</p> <p>The corridor from Taunton to Minehead will be a focus for activity investment and tourism development. This “Corridor of Activity” will be supported by an integrating transportation system and an extensive ICT network serving businesses, residents and visitors.</p>	<p>The document sets out a number of actions for different corridors in West Somerset including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing regimes for HGVs • Facilities to make walking and cycling safer in villages. • New junctions, climbing lanes and overtaking lanes on strategic routes.
West Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010	
<p>The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out what the key priorities are for the people</p>	<p>Targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce CO₂ emissions

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of West Somerset and sets out an action plan of how to achieve those aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve air quality To increase the number of community transport schemes supported by the district council To increase the number of local bus passenger journeys
West Somerset Council Corporate Plan 2009-2012	
The corporate plan sets out the vision, business principles and core values that will drive the authority until 2012.	The document has the following key performance indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities Customer satisfaction with parks and open spaces Customer satisfaction with museums and galleries Customer satisfaction with theatres and concert halls Per capita CO₂ emissions
Schools Organisation Plan (2007-2011)	
Somerset County Council as the Local Education Authority is responsible for keeping the provision of school places under review; for having in place a sound strategy for the management of surplus places, and for targeting capital and revenue resources effectively. The School Organisation Plan (SOP) is the statutory document which does this.	<u>Key principles</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued support for a successful system of comprehensive secondary schools (including specialist schools), community education, community-based primary schools, and working as appropriate with the incorporated colleges and others The County Council does not support any selection by ability, and this is reflected in the development of any new provision, including specialist schools Sizes of schools should be determined by local factors and circumstances. Amalgamation of separate infants and junior schools The development of the role of the school in its local community is being actively considered

Baseline Review

This paper reviews the data available regarding the public infrastructure in West Somerset. West Somerset's public infrastructure includes:

- Transport infrastructure including roads, rail, cycleways and footpaths and associated infrastructure.
- Buildings and associated infrastructure such as libraries, schools, museums, leisure centres etc.

(Please note that all issues relating to housing are now addressed in the Population and Social Inclusion Topic Paper).

Transport Infrastructure

Somerset County Council manages the maintenance of all of the road systems in West Somerset. The main routes through West Somerset are the A39 Bridgwater to Minehead Road and the A358 Taunton to Williton Road. The *Western Somerset Economic Development and Access Strategy (2003)* reviewed the issues surrounding transport infrastructure in West Somerset and highlighted the following:

- Traffic flows are seasonal and dependent on the tourist season. Peak traffic flows in the summer are 30% higher than at other times.
- Traffic has increased by 14% on the A358 and 13% on the A39 between 1988 – 1998. However, this compares to an average national and county traffic growth of 21% and 13% respectively during the same period.
- There are bottlenecks in villages along the A358 / A39 corridor in the summer months.
- The Western Somerset Railway offers little potential for passenger services due to slow speeds.
- Bus services are perceived to be slow and expensive.
- There is community severance along the main route to Minehead due to heavy traffic flows and minimal pedestrian facilities.

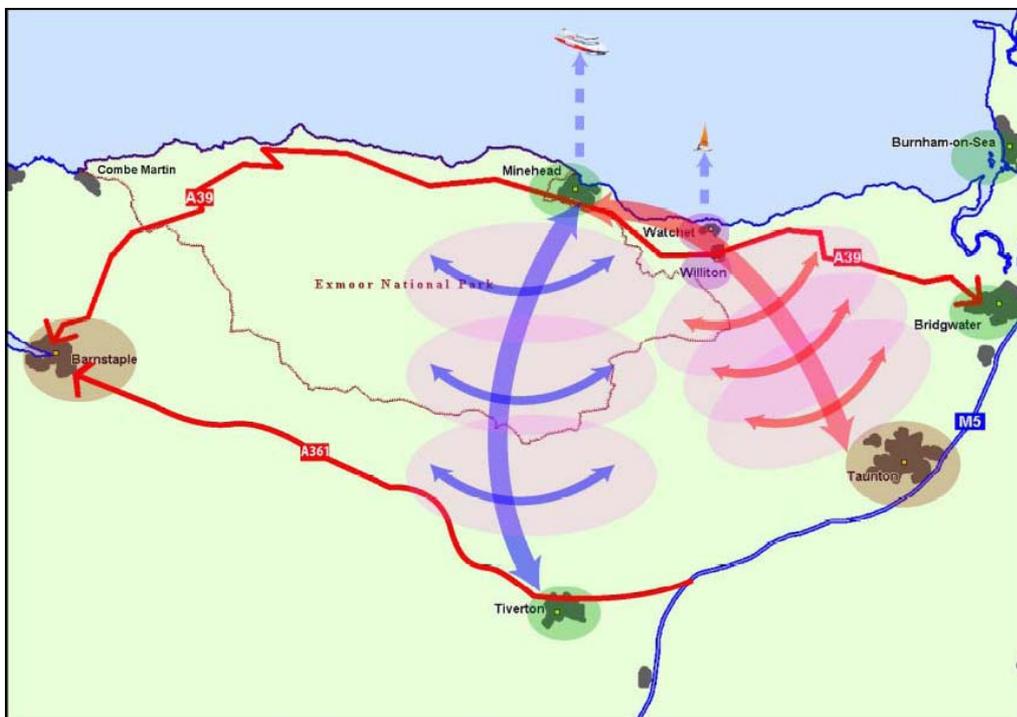
The strategy also sets out a vision for West Somerset, the following elements of which are relevant to transport infrastructure:

Western Somerset will be a more integrated part of the sub region with good connections to the principal urban areas and the wider south west economy.

The corridor from Taunton to Minehead will be a focus for activity investment and tourism development. This “Corridor of Activity” will be supported by an integrating transportation system and an extensive ICT network serving businesses, residents and visitors.

In recognition of this the strategy sets out a spatial strategy as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: The Western Somerset Economic Development and Access Strategy



The first corridor between Taunton and Minehead must link the M5 to Minehead and enable improved public and private transport movement. This includes Williton as an orientation

and economic hub. The second corridor acts as a subsidiary agriculture and tourism axis from Minehead to Tiverton. This aims to support the rural community and rural development. In addition to the two corridors a finer east west lattice for movement and activity is envisaged at the level of minor roads, footpaths and cycle ways. The aim of this network is for leisure activity in Exmoor and the Quantocks.

The strategy elements put forward in the document to enable this to happen are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The Western Somerset Economic Development and Access Strategy

Elements

A358 Taunton to Williton
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbing lane southbound south of Bicknoller (east of Halsway) to ease driver frustration and ease accidents.
A39 Bridgwater to Williton
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overtaking lane southbound north of Holford. • Cross Bristol Channel Ferry / Hovercraft service to improve access into West Somerset and to reduce traffic flows on key routes from the M5. • Provide layby and picnic areas in the short / medium term. • Recommend that this should be the signposted tourist and freight route from the M5.
A39 Williton to Dunster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities in Williton and Washford / Bilbrook. • Railway station interchange and infrastructure improvements at Williton and Washford / Bilbrook. • New signalised junction A39 / A358 in Williton.
A39 Dunster to Porlock
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities. • Traffic management system for Porlock. • A new signing regime for HGVs to reroute traffic to use the identified County and Local freight routes and restrict those vehicles which are unsuitable.
A396 Dunster to Wheddon Cross
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities in Dunster especially between the Visitors Car Park and the Village Centre. • Traffic management for visitors in Dunster village. • HGVs and other through traffic should be encouraged through signing to use alternative routes not through Dunster. This should be on the Local Freight Route B3224.

The climbing lane on the A358 and overtaking lane on the A39 were to be considered in the Somerset County Council Roads Review and delivered through the Local Transport Plan delivery mechanism in due course. However, the schemes did not score well either in the Roads Review process or the new LTP prioritisation process so are unlikely to be implemented in the next 5 years. It is unclear what progress has been made regarding the rest of the strategy.

West Somerset Council has also identified the need for a bypass for Williton.

Other communication infrastructure

Broadband access in West Somerset has improved rapidly in the last three years and every BT exchange in the district now carries broadband. However, there are many businesses and homes that are still too far from their local exchange to get even a basic broadband connection. To remedy this issue, a community interest company has been created, West Somerset Internet (WSI). WSI uses advanced wireless technology to connect over 200 remote businesses to the internet at broadband speeds. The network is growing, now extending into North Devon (West Somerset Council website, accessed 21st April 2009).

Other public infrastructure

There are currently five multi-sport areas in rural locations (Dulverton, Wheddon Cross, Williton, Washford (Old Cleeve) and Watchet plus Aquasplash Leisure Centre in Minehead and West Somerset Sports & Leisure centre, which are now established as the major swimming and sports sites in the district. Leisure facilities are managed by West Somerset Council.

Somerset County Council runs libraries at Minehead, Williton, Porlock and Watchet.

West Somerset does not have any publicly run museums although the following museums / collections are open to the public:

- West Somerset Rural Life Museum in Allerford has a number of collections relating to life in West Somerset including the West Somerset Photographic Collection - a collection, covering most villages and hamlets in the District.
- Blue Anchor Railway Museum and Dovery Manor Museum both in Minehead.
- Bakelite Museum in Williton.
- Watchet Market House Museum.
- Dunster Water Mill, Dunster Castle and Dunster Dolls Museum.

West Somerset has the following main parks and gardens all of which are situated in Minehead: Blenheim Gardens, Parks Walk, Jubilee Gardens & Quay Street and Culvercliffe.

West Somerset Council also manages the following play areas - Teal Road, Minehead; Plover Close, Minehead; Sycamore Road, Minehead; Whitworth Road, Minehead; Kingsland, Watchet; Woodland Road, Watchet; Townsend, Williton and Burgage Road, Stogursey. There are a number of other smaller play areas within the District which are the responsibility of the relevant Town/Parish Council. There is also a mobile play bus run by CLOWNS (Creating Learning Opportunities in Western Somerset) that provides play opportunities to the more isolated areas.

Under the requirements of PPG17 West Somerset Council need to undertake a local assessment of the requirements for open space and sports and recreation facilities. This will be undertaken in due course and will be fed into the LDF process. However, some issues became clear during the consultation on the West Somerset Community Strategy:

- People want improved leisure, sports and entertainment opportunities, including tourist and family attractions.
- People in rural areas believe that more leisure and recreational facilities are needed in villages, e.g. sports, keep fit, computers.
- People with disabilities are unhappy about the lack of social activities available to them.

There are seventeen schools in West Somerset. The West Somerset Initiative (comprises Heads of all schools in West Somerset) aims to raise pupil attainment across all 17 schools. The main issues in relation to schools in West Somerset are:

- The continued viability of some small rural schools.
- The fact the some more popular schools are over subscribed and others are under subscribed.

- The difficulties of access to some schools by public transport

Sources of Data

- West Somerset Online. <http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/home.asp>
- Somerset County Council Libraries and Information Service
<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/culturecommunity/culturalservice/libraries/>
- Western Somerset Economic Development and Access Strategy
<http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/template3.asp?parent=102&pid=260&area=2>

Data Gaps

There is uncertainty regarding the measures taken to implement the Western Somerset Economic Development Access Strategy.

The West Somerset assessment of open space and sports and recreation facilities is not yet complete.

Trends

A number of measures have been proposed for the transport infrastructure in West Somerset, some of which are unlikely to go ahead.

Public infrastructure issues identified

- Lack of social activities available to people with disabilities.
- Viability of rural services and facilities.

Implications for the plan and the SA

The plan must take into account the fact that some of the transport measures envisaged in the Western Somerset Economic Development and Access Strategy may not go ahead.

The plan must take into account the results of the Open Space Audit.

Suggested SA Objectives and Indicators

SA objectives	SA indicators / appraisal questions. Will the plan lead to...
Ensure equitable access to viable facilities and services for all sectors of the community including those in rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to services and facilities (including open space, recreation and sports facilities, cultural and educational facilities)?