

### Introduction

**7.01** An efficient transport system is vital to the economic and social well being of the District. Policy on transport and movement will therefore support the Local Plan's strategy of balance between sustainability and controlled economic growth.

**7.02** The private car allows a section of the population to achieve a high degree of mobility and lorries are essential to the modern freight distribution network. There are, however, several disadvantages to the current system of transporting people and goods. A private car is available to about 80% of households in Sedgemoor, the remainder have to depend on public transport. The current increase in use of motor vehicles is not sustainable, producing traffic congestion and pollution. Some towns are dominated by traffic and roads, with people taking second place.

**7.03** There are challenges to encouraging a shift from the private car to other means of transport. Some bus routes do not operate in the evenings or on Sundays and cycling is perceived by some to be dangerous. In rural areas many villages have limited or no public transport services. There are two railway stations in the District but they have a restricted number of stopping trains. The rural character of Sedgemoor restrains the extent to which dependency on the private car can be reduced.

**7.04** The Plan recognises these deficiencies but Sedgemoor District Council is committed to build on current initiatives and improve the situation by taking practical measures such as:

- entering into a quality bus partnership with bus operators and Somerset County Council;
- continuing in partnership with Somerset County Council to develop the second Local Transport Plan;
- preparing a Green Travel Plan for Sedgemoor District Council to provide a lead and encourage other employers in the District to adopt their own Travel Plans;
- producing a comprehensive Parking Policy for the District; and
- participating in the Somerset Rural Community Transport Partnership.

**7.05** The vision of this Plan for the future is an efficient, high quality and sustainable transport system, accessible to all sections of the community. This will be achieved by maintaining and improving transport infrastructure while reducing dependence on the private car. The Plan aims to achieve the following key objectives:

### Key Objectives

- reduced traffic congestion and pollution;
- maximum accessibility by sustainable modes of travel;
- easy movement for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired; particularly within our Towns and larger settlements;
- walking and cycling as the first choice for short journeys;
- best use of public transport routes and nodes;
- reduced risk of accidents and improved road safety; and
- reducing the length and number of motorised journeys and reducing reliance on the private car.

### Transport Studies

**7.06** Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council worked together on Town and Corridor Transport Studies which identified the transport needs of the District. The studies looked at facilities for walking, cycling, public transport and car parking as well as the need for highways. The studies aimed to produce proposals for sustainable transport systems which allow for economic growth while minimising detrimental effects on the environment. The studies helped shape the second Local Transport Plan (LTP). The studies in the Sedgemoor area were:

### Town Studies

- Bridgwater
- Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge
- Cheddar Gorge and Village

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### Corridor Studies

- Cheddar to Frome
- Bridgwater and Taunton to Minehead
- Bridgwater and Taunton to Shepton Mallet
- Bridgwater to Taunton and Wellington

**7.07** All the studies were complete (except for Cheddar) and their findings have been used to inform the second LTP. Proposals in the LTP are incorporated in the Plan. The Plan will be modified as necessary in the future to keep it compatible with the LTP. Businesses, relevant organisations and the public have and will continue to be fully consulted on emerging proposals.

### Safe and Sustainable Transport

**7.08** Unrestrained use of the private car presents problems of pollution and traffic congestion. It is the aim of this Plan to promote sustainable forms of transport by the provision of high quality alternatives to the private car along with an adequate and safe highway system.

**7.09** This will be done by:

- safeguarding pedestrian and cycle routes identified in the Transport Plans and shown on Figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 11.1. (The Proposals Map shows the proposed off-road routes only);
- safeguarding existing rights-of-way, bridle paths and cycle paths;
- requiring developers to demonstrate how their proposals will connect to the existing public transport system, footpath and cycle networks and an appropriate road within the highway system;
- requiring developers to provide the walking, cycling, public transport and highway infrastructure appropriate to the scale of the development and designed to National and County Council design standards;
- requiring developers of certain sites to produce a Traffic Impact Assessment. The assessment will include the traffic impact of the development on public transport, local roads and the motorway. The assessment for employment sites must demonstrate the measures which will be taken to keep lorry

movements to a minimum and make the best use of rail transport facilities;

- designing cycle and pedestrian routes to minimise disruption to the environment, taking account of the maintenance requirements and the Local Drainage Boards and considering crime prevention measures; and
- limiting parking provision for developments and other on or off-street parking provision, to discourage reliance on the car for work and other journeys where there are effective alternatives.

**7.10** New developments should be designed to cater for the requirements of buses. On small sites this will involve the construction of a pedestrian link to a bus stop. Larger developments will require a road layout suitable for buses, bus stops and shelters. The largest of developments may require a new bus route subsidised by the developer for the initial years of service.

### POLICY TM1

**Safe and Sustainable Transport will be achieved by the following means:**

- a) development will not be permitted which would prejudice the construction of cycle and pedestrian routes and bus lanes defined on the Proposals Map, unless suitable alternative routes are provided by the developer;**
- b) development will not be permitted which would reduce the convenience and safety of existing rights-of-way, bridle paths and cycle paths unless suitable alternative routes are provided by the developer;**
- c) development will only be permitted if the design makes adequate and safe provision for access by foot, cycle, public transport and vehicles so long as it's appropriate to the scale of the development and in accordance with National and County Council design standards and Somerset County Council's Highway hierarchy;**
- d) the Developer shall provide the transport infrastructure required by the development to an agreed phased programme. Where off-site works are required, these shall be appropriate to the scale**

**and nature of the development and shall be funded by the developer; and**

- e) development will not be permitted for proposals which would have a significant impact on the highway network without the prior submission of a Traffic Impact Assessment.**

### **New Roads**

- 7.11** Current government guidance stresses the need to consider alternatives to building new roads. Proposals for construction of major new highways must therefore, meet the most rigorous levels of justification. The Structure Plan for Somerset contains two such proposals, both for Bridgwater. They are the Northern Distributor Road and Colley Lane Southern Access Road. These highway proposals were examined and approved by the Bridgwater Transport Study and are central to the Bridgwater Transport Plan. Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road was built in 2001/02 and so has been deleted from the proposals map.

### **Colley Lane Southern Access Road, Bridgwater - TM2b**

- 7.12** Taunton Road is the only main road into Bridgwater from the south, and connects to the motorway at Junction 24. Heavy Goods Vehicles travelling from the motorway from the Colley Lane Industrial Estate must travel the length of Taunton Road into the Town Centre to reach the industrial estate.
- 7.13** The Colley Lane Southern Access Road would take Heavy Goods Vehicles direct to the industrial estate, reducing traffic on Taunton Road, improving the environment of those who live and work in that area. The reduction in traffic would also ease outward bound bus journeys. Funds for this road will come from the LTP for Bridgwater and contributions towards transportation infrastructure from the South Bridgwater development (H55). The road will require bridges over the canal and River Parrett.

### **Leggar Link Road, Bridgwater - TM2z**

- 7.14** This proposal comprises widening and upgrading a short length of existing narrow road to current highway standards. The road will form a useful link between the Town Centre, Wylds Road Industrial Estate and the A38 Bristol Road.

Public funds and contributions from developers will be needed to finance construction of the road. Contributions towards the completion of this road will come in part from development in association with employment land allocation on land to the north of Bridgwater Retail Park, east of The Leggar, Bridgwater (Policy E13).

### **Stockmoor Link, South Bridgwater – TM2s**

- 7.15** This developer funded road will provide primary access to the South Bridgwater housing allocation from the A38 Huntworth roundabout.

### **Burnham-on-Sea Eastern Distributor Road - TM2e**

- 7.16** Berrow and Brean draw about 1.5 million visitors a year to the popular caravan parks and holiday camps on the coast. Almost all of these visitors travel from the motorway into Burnham-on-Sea and then northwards along the coast road to reach their destination. This extra traffic causes considerable congestion from March to November. The eastwards expansion of Burnham-on-Sea has taken place within the framework of a proposed "Eastern Distributor Road" between Stoddens Road and Burnham Road, Highbridge. The protected road line for that scheme was established in 1977 and included a short section of a potential northwards extension of the route towards Berrow. Housing developments since that date, including allocations made in the Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan have been required to fund this road construction and the route should be complete to Stoddens Road within the next few years.

- 7.17** The Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan (adopted 1990) noted that funding for a northwards continuation beyond Stoddens Road was not likely to be available during the Plan period, but the longer term aspiration for such a road justified the 550 metre section north of Stoddens Road being treated as a safeguarded road line. This route was examined as part of the county-wide Transport Corridor Study. The study did not consider this road as a scheme appropriate for public funding. As a result of these findings Policy TM2e only safeguards the section of the Burnham-on-Sea Eastern Distributor Road north west of the housing site proposal H16 (Radio Station, Highbridge) and not the section north of Stoddens Road.

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### Ashcott By-Pass - TM2y

**7.18** Somerset County Council examined several options to relieve the effects of heavy traffic along the Central Somerset Strategic Access Route. This route includes the Villages of Walton and Ashcott. One option is the construction of a by-pass to the south of the Polden Ridge. A possible corridor for such a road was safeguarded in the Bridgwater Area Local Plan, adopted 1995. The route is amended slightly at the extreme eastern end to conform to the option for the Walton by-pass safeguarded in the Mendip Local Plan. Somerset County Council has retained this proposal as a possible major scheme during the Plan period.

It is acknowledged that the route safeguarded in the 1995 Plan conflicted with a County Wildlife Site. This conflict will be considered as part of the County Council's work at the detailed design stage.

### Car Parks and Park and Ride Sites

**7.19** The Bridgwater Town Transport Study proposed two Park and Ride sites for the Town. It is unrealistic to assume that public transport will provide a travel option for many who live in rural areas. Travel by car will therefore remain the main means of transport for a significant proportion of the population of this District.

**7.20** The purpose of the Park and Ride sites is to reduce car traffic in the Town Centre. This will improve the environment and increase the attractiveness of walking and cycling. Motorists may leave their car on the edge of town and use a high quality, high frequency bus service to the Town Centre. Only one site has a realistic possibility of construction during the Plan period.

### Taunton Road, Park and Ride Site, Bridgwater - TM2h

**7.21** This site would serve traffic from the south of Bridgwater and from motorway Junction 24. Buses serving the site will be able to make use of the inbound Taunton Road Bus Lane (Policy TM1). The provision of this site is linked to the South Bridgwater Housing Development. In order to reduce dependence on the private car consideration will be given to reducing the number of car parking spaces in Bridgwater Town Centre in conjunction with the provision of this Park and Ride site.

### POLICY TM2

**Proposals for development which would prejudice the provision of the following highway infrastructure defined on the Proposals Map will not be permitted:**

- a) **Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road;**
- b) **Colley Lane Southern Access Road, Bridgwater;**
- z) **Leggar Link Road, Bridgwater;**
- s) **Stockmoor Link, South Bridgwater; and**
- y) **Ashcott By-Pass;**

**Park and Ride sites at:**

- h) **Taunton Road, Bridgwater;**

### Parking for Vehicles and Cycles

**7.22** It has been the practice in the past to make provision for the predicted peak demand for car parking spaces. This approach has resulted in car parks using land which could be put to more beneficial use. Abundant provision of car parking spaces also encourages the use of the private car to the detriment of other forms of transport.

**7.23** The Bridgwater Town Transport Study encourages a shift from the provision of car parking space from long term parking for commuters to short term parking for shoppers. This policy encourages the use of sustainable transport for commuting while promoting the Town Centre for shoppers.

**7.24** The Government recommends the adoption of limits to the number of car parking spaces at developments. The limit will depend on the nature of the development and the level of accessibility of the site by public transport, cycling and walking.

### Non-Residential Parking

**7.25** The provision of parking at non-residential sites can be split into operational and non-operational. Operational parking makes provision for vehicles which have to drive to the site to service the activities of the development. Non-operational parking caters for staff and visitors.

**7.26** The number of operational parking spaces should be kept to the minimum practical level. Applicants will be requested to advise the Planning Authority of their operational needs.

**7.27** Non-operational parking should be set at a reasonable level. Each site will be assessed on its merits. Maximum levels for various Use Classes are shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 3. Reductions will be made in line with Appendix 7.1, Tables 1 and 2 after consideration of:

- a) the nature of the development;
- b) existing facilities for walking and cycling to the development and any enhancement proposed by the developer; and
- c) the existing level of public transport serving the development and any enhancement proposed by the developer.

**7.28** The distinction between Areas of High Restraint and Areas of Standard Restraint referred to in Table 2 of Appendix 7.1 recognises that Bridgwater, with its generally better pedestrian, cycle and public transport links offers greater scope for reducing parking provision than other locations in the District. It is not intended that the definition of Areas of High Restraint should create an incentive to locate away from the Town Centre.

**7.29** The following interim policy will be used pending adoption of the County-wide Parking Policy under preparation by Somerset County Council.

### **POLICY TM3**

**Car Parking at Non-Residential Development shall be provided on the following basis:**

- a) **operational parking will be kept to the minimum necessary; and**
- b) **non-operational parking will be set at a maximum of the level shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 3, reduced according to the availability of public transport and facilities for walking and cycling, as shown in Appendix 7.1, Tables 1 and 2.**

**7.30** Sedgemoor has a higher use of cycles than the national average. Cycling provides a healthy, sustainable mode of travel for short journeys. However, lack of secure cycle parking can be a deterrent to the use of cycles. Adequate provision of cycle parking at sites such as rail and bus stations, libraries, shopping centres and secondary schools will help promote this form of travel. The following standards will be used

pending publication of the Somerset County Council county-wide standard.

### **POLICY TM4**

**Non-residential developments will make provision for secure and covered bicycle parking as follows:**

<b>Development</b>	<b>Use Class</b>	<b>Cycle Parking Spaces</b>
<b>Shops</b>	<b>A1 A3</b>	<b>1 per 200m<sup>2</sup> gross</b>
<b>Offices</b>	<b>A2 B1</b>	<b>1 per 5 employees</b>
<b>Industry</b>	<b>B1 B2 B8</b>	<b>1 per 5 employees</b>
<b>Secondary Schools</b>	<b>D1</b>	<b>1 per 5 pupils</b>
<b>Other Uses</b>	<b>On their merits</b>	

### **Residential Parking**

**7.31** Residential Parking will generally be set at the level shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 4. However, a reduction will be permissible at sites where a lower level would be appropriate. These sites could be in Town Centres where there is existing provision for visitor parking, or in developments which have been designed with a reduced amount of communal visitor parking.

### **POLICY TM5**

**Car and cycle parking at Residential Sites shall be provided on the following basis:**

- a) **car parking at residential sites should be set at the level shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 4. This level may be reduced where it can be demonstrated that shared car parking, public transport or other means can reduce the need for visitor parking; and**
- b) **the developer will be encouraged to provide secure and covered bicycle parking at the rate of one space per dwelling, where no garages are provided with the dwelling.**

### **Rail and Port Facilities**

**7.32** The Government's White Paper on Transport encourages a shift of freight movement from road to rail and waterways. This shift would relieve pressure on the road network and bring benefits to the environment. It is expected that rail and water transport will be a major point in

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the forthcoming revision to Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG 13).

**7.33** Sedgemoor has passenger rail stations at Bridgwater and Highbridge on the Exeter to Bristol line. The stations are used by a significant number of commuters travelling to Bristol or Taunton. The Plan aims to make the most of these facilities by encouraging the integration of bus and rail services and ensuring there is adequate provision for cyclists and pedestrians.

**7.34** There is an operational rail/freight facility at Bailey Street, to the north of Bridgwater station (used for the transshipment of nuclear flasks to and from Hinkley Point and general freight). Until relatively recently there were a number of other rail freight sites in the Bridgwater area, all of which have the potential to be reinstated.

**7.35** The Local Plan will safeguard these possibilities by not permitting development which would prejudice existing or future rail freight and passenger facilities.

### **POLICY TM6**

**Proposals for development which would prejudice the provision of the following rail freight and passenger facilities defined on the Proposals Map will not be permitted. Land can be released for alternative uses following agreement with Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Network Rail and appropriate rail operating companies.**

#### **Passenger Facilities:**

- a) **Bridgwater Station; and**
- b) **Highbridge Station.**

#### **Freight Facilities:**

- c) **Cellophane Business Park, Bridgwater;**
- d) **Royal Ordnance site, Puriton;**
- e) **Colley Lane, Bridgwater; and**
- f) **Bailey Street, Bridgwater.**

**7.36** Sedgemoor is fortunate to have port facilities at Dunball and Comwich. Dunball is particularly well located close to a motorway junction and has potential for future growth. These facilities will be safeguarded and their use encouraged.

### **POLICY TM7**

**Proposals for development which would prejudice the following existing port facilities defined on the Proposals Map will not be permitted:**

- a) **Dunball Wharf; and**
- b) **Comwich Wharf.**

### **Access For People with Disabilities**

**7.37** Most people will at some time experience mobility difficulties of some form. The Local Plan aims to make it easier for people with disabilities to move to and from buildings, through open spaces and public areas. This will be achieved through application of the Building Regulations and imaginative design.

### **POLICY TM8**

**Development shall provide for the movement needs of the disabled by the provision of:**

- a) **appropriately located car parking spaces for buildings to which the public have access; and**
- b) **appropriate access to and between buildings to which the public have access.**

### **Servicing Facilities**

**7.38** Non-residential developments, especially in Bridgwater Town Centre, require adequate servicing facilities to ensure goods vehicles do not come into conflict with pedestrians. Most of the pedestrianised shopping areas of Bridgwater are served by such facilities at present and it is important that new development does not compromise their operation.

### **POLICY TM9**

**Development will not be permitted which would prejudice the operation of existing service yards in Bridgwater Town Centre.**