

Local Development Framework Briefing Paper Accessibility Planning



Devon County Council's advice to Local Planning Authorities.

This is one of a series of briefing papers prepared by Devon County Council to assist the preparation of Local Development Documents.

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Local Planning Authorities are requested to take the following matters into account in preparing their Local Development Frameworks and other documents:

1. **Overarching Principle** – *The principle of improving accessibility by sustainable transport modes for those in the most disadvantaged groups and areas to destinations that have the greatest impact on people's life chances should be an overarching principle of all LDFs and a key determinant of decision-making. Accessibility planning should thus be a key element of 'front-loading' the LDF process using mapping software where appropriate.*
2. **Partnership Working** - *Devon County Council wishes to work in partnership with District Councils in further developing the above policy areas with colleagues and other organisations and would wish to be fully involved in any discussions relating to them.*
3. **Holistic Approach** - *Accessibility considerations should be incorporated in both specific accessibility planning policies and policies that have an impact on access to services (e.g. housing, health, crime and design).*
4. **Core Strategy** - *A generic 'accessibility' policy should be included in the Core Strategy, which sets out in strategic terms the need to improve access to key services and facilities (especially healthcare, leisure, education, food retail and employment) by sustainable transport modes. This should recognise the importance of using the framework offered by 'accessibility planning' to address social exclusion and recognise that accessibility planning is a process which must be 'owned' and developed by numerous partners.*
5. **Site Specific Allocations** - *District councils should set out in more detail, perhaps in a separate local development document (LDD) or supplementary planning document (SPD), what their policy is regarding 'accessibility planning' and how they seek to mainstream accessibility planning' into their decision making processes.*
6. **Generic Development Control Policies** – *This LDD should include a generic development control policy which states that development that generates a high number of trips should be located where it is accessible to sustainable transport, and include appropriate transport assessments, travel planning initiatives and design and access statements.*

1. Introduction

This briefing paper will examine the County Council's approach towards 'accessibility planning' and its strategy for improving accessibility to those journey destinations with the greatest impact on people's lives (as outlined in its submitted Devon Local Transport Plan [LTP]). It will also address how the Council wish to be consulted by District Councils in incorporating accessibility planning into LDFs.

Its conclusion is that the policies contained within the Devon Structure Plan (2001-16) and strategy and targets in the LTP (2005-11) should be at the heart of local planning authorities' (LPAs) approach to dealing with 'accessibility' in LDFs.

2. Accessibility Planning

'...accessibility planning'...offers a new way to find and solve local problems, checking whether people experiencing social exclusion can reach the services they need, and identifying action to take if they can't.' ("[Making the Connections](#)", February 2003)

The concept of 'accessibility planning', introduced by the Government in February 2003¹, provides an overarching framework to ensure that poor access to services and facilities, and its consequences for social exclusion, are tackled in a coordinated way delivering improvements that meet local needs and priorities. The focus is on access to employment, education, health care and food retail opportunities which the government considers to have the greatest impacts on people's life chances.

Helping to ensure that people can access the services they need is vital to reducing social exclusion. It is not just a matter of improving local transport, but also of changing how, when and where services are provided. Improving **accessibility** thus involves:

*"ensuring that people can get the services they need – either by being able to travel to the service or by the service being available where they are"*²

3. Vision and Strategy

Devon County Council's 'vision' for accessibility planning is outlined primarily through its recent LTP (2006 to 2011) and relevant policies in the adopted Devon Structure Plan (2001 to 2016), though neither of these documents have a time-horizon beyond 2016. A combination of structure plan policies are particularly relevant, particularly TR1 (Devon Travel Strategy) TR2 (Coordination of Land Use/ Travel Planning), TR3 (Managing Travel Demand) and TR9 (Public Transport).

The LTP's **vision** is for:

A significant improvement in access to key services and facilities throughout Devon by sustainable transport, particularly for those in the most disadvantaged groups and areas.

The **overall accessibility strategy** has two complementary elements:

- 1) A countywide approach to improving accessibility and
- 2) A focus on tackling evidence-based accessibility problems in priority areas (e.g. Rural Torridge) where higher levels of social exclusion and poor access by public transport to key journey destinations prevail.

¹ ODPM (2003) *Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion*, Social Exclusion Unit, February 2003.

² Department for Transport (2004) *Guidance on Accessibility Planning*, 2004, p.3)

The **priorities** for improving accessibility in Devon are:

- 1) Support and sustain existing community and voluntary transport services
- 2) Work in partnership to deliver improved accessibility
- 3) Deliver accessibility through better public transport

The **Devon Local Transport Plan (2006 to 2011)** includes a detailed chapter on ‘delivering accessibility’. This attempts to show how Devon County Council has undergone a systematic ‘process’ of developing accessibility planning, supported by a strong evidence base, partnership working and extensive accessibility assessments using Accession mapping software (see *Figure 2*) and other related evidence (e.g. social profiles, community strategies) (see *Appendix 1*). The result was the identification of several “priority action areas” which face significant access difficulties (and often significant social exclusion problems) as the focus for accessibility planning. Accessibility action plans and local accessibility assessments will be produced during the LTP period in partnership with local and strategic partners for each of these areas.

[The significant amount of work carried out for the LTP on ‘accessibility planning’ resulted in the writing of a detailed chapter as an addendum to the LTP’s accessibility chapter. This can be found at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/dltp-accessibility-strategy-2006.pdf>]

Figure 1: The LTP’s Priority Action Areas for Accessibility

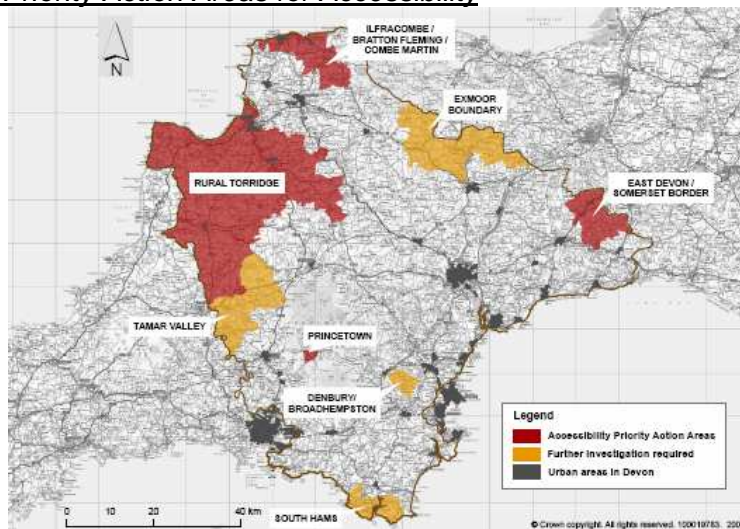
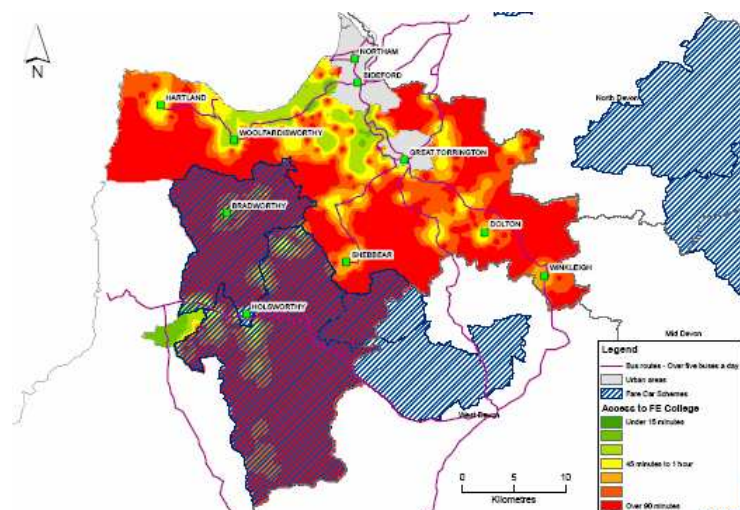


Figure 2: Example of a Detailed Local Accessibility Assessment using Accession



Land-use planning policy will be essential to delivering accessibility improvements for the most disadvantaged groups and areas, as access difficulties are often as much due to the **location** of key services and facilities as the quality of transport links. Planning Policy Statement [PPS] 1³ emphasises accessibility planning's role in delivering sustainable communities by:

- (a) Reducing the need to travel
- (b) Encouraging public transport provision
- (c) Giving a high priority to ensuring new development is located where everyone can access services on foot, bicycle and public transport.

The role of land use planning in delivering accessibility improvements is emphasised in PPG3⁴ which encourages LPAs to build in ways which 'exploit and deliver accessibility by public transport' and PPG13⁵ which requires that all major new developments are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

4. Proposals/Options to be taken into account in preparing the LDF

The key issues to be addressed/incorporated into preparing Local Development Framework documents are:

a) Front-Loading Accessibility Planning

Accessibility planning needs to be seen as a 'process', which is owned, developed and adopted by numerous partners. It is crucial that a wide range of partners (e.g. the LSP, Job Centre Plus, the PCT, Community and Voluntary Transport, Education) and especially local planning authorities, are actively involved in and committed (in a variety of ways) to delivering Devon's accessibility strategy through a joined-up approach.

Accessibility planning should thus be a key element of 'front-loading' the LDF process. This includes:

- Incorporating accessibility considerations and the use of accessibility mapping prior to the LDF 'issues and options' stage
- Using accessibility planning techniques to decide the location of new development in LDFs and to determine planning applications through development control procedures
- Ensuring LDFs are in conformity with the Devon LTP's accessibility strategy (and other adjoining authorities' LTPs for cross-boundary authorities) and progress in developing local accessibility assessments and accessibility actions plans
- Using accessibility mapping as part of the evidence base for LDF decisions especially in site specific allocations' work and providing 'reasoned justification' of the benefits/constraints of different development options.
- Ensuring district councils are actively involved in developing local accessibility action plans, as is occurring with Torridge District Council for Rural Torridge.

The County Council should be consulted by District Councils in preparing their LDFs, utilising the County Council's strategic planning and mapping expertise.

³ ODPM (2005) PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, HMSO, London.

⁴ DETR (2000) *Revised PPG 3: Housing*, HMSO, London, paras 1-2

⁵ DETR (2001) *PPG13: Transport*, HMSO, London.

b) Taking a Holistic Approach

The Council's vision for accessibility planning is heavily integrated with Government Guidance on accessibility planning in LTPs⁶, reducing social exclusion through improved transport⁷, ending inequalities for older people⁸ and improving young people's lives⁹. This exemplifies the Council's belief that access difficulties must be addressed through a holistic range of integrated approaches, both transport and non-transport related, addressing both real and perceived barriers.

LPA's should take an holistic approach to accessibility planning which is demonstrated by accessibility considerations being incorporated in both specific accessibility planning policies and policies and plans that impact on access and social exclusion (e.g. housing, retail).

c) Core Strategy DPD

Devon County Council would expect all LPA's to have a generic 'accessibility' policy in their LDF Core Strategy. This should set out in broad strategic terms how they will be improving access to key services and facilities by sustainable transport modes, in accordance with PPG13's 'hierarchy of modes' and in a manner which addresses local needs and requirements.

d) Site Specific Allocations DPD

LPAs in assessing the suitability of sites for development should consider their accessibility to key journey destinations by sustainable transport and the potential for them to improve such accessibility. This will often require LDFs taking a proactive approach to development at locations and sites where it would fill gaps in service provision or deliver accessibility improvements, for example by creating community or neighbourhood hubs which encourage joined up service delivery and economic/operational efficiencies, or encouraging more intensive development in locations well served by walking, cycling and public transport routes.

It may be appropriate for district councils to set out in more detail, perhaps in a separate local development document (LDD) or supplementary planning document (SPD), what their policy is regarding 'accessibility planning' and how what is proposed will deliver improved accessibility by sustainable transport. This includes addressing the following key issues:

- Availability, affordability and accessibility of local public transport
- Design, location and delivery of non-transport services
- Crime and fear of crime
- Widening travel choice and reducing the need to travel
- Cross-border flows and the need for cross-border solutions
- Demand-responsive transport (e.g. fare cars, ring and ride)
- Funding and financing accessibility solutions

⁶ Department for Transport [DfT] (2004) *Guidance on Accessibility Planning in Local Transport Plans*, December 2004.

⁷ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM] (2003) *Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion*, Social Exclusion Unit, February 2003.

⁸ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM] (2006) *A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People*, Social Exclusion Unit, January 2006.

⁹ Department for Education and Skills [DfES] (2005) *Youth Matters*, July 2005.

e) **Generic Development Control Policies DPD**

LDFs should include a generic development control policy which states that development that generates a high number of trips should be located where it is accessible to sustainable transport and include a requirement that transport assessments and design and access statements address accessibility to and from a site by all modes and encourage more sustainable travel behaviour.

LPA's should consider the benefits of including this policy in their Core Strategy.

5. Related Documents:

The Devon Structure Plan to 2016 is available at

http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/devon_county_structure_plan/structure_plan_2001_to_2016.htm

The Submitted Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West to 2026 is available at:

<http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/Final%20Draft/draftrssfull.pdf>

The Devon Local Transport Plan to 2011 is available at:

http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/transport/devon_local_transport_plan/dltp_20062011.htm

DfT Guidance on Accessibility Planning is available at:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_localtrans/documents/page/dft_localtrans_033615.hcsp

6.1 Summary of the Local Transport Plan Process

The County Council underwent a staged, iterative approach to 'accessibility planning' for the LTP in which partners were involved at all stages of the process, to ensure they felt ownership towards the results and would thus help develop and implement the accessibility strategy.

Initially, the council used Accession¹⁰ mapping software to carry out accessibility assessments of access by public transport to the government's key accessibility priorities:

- primary schools
- secondary schools
- acute hospitals
- supermarkets
- urban centres

to represent access to education, health, healthy affordable food and employment.

An analysis of the strategic accessibility maps identified several areas that experienced significant access difficulties by public transport. These 'action areas' formed the subject of more detailed mapping at the local level. Where possible these action areas were integrated with the Devon Strategic Partnership's "targeted communities", to acknowledge the linkages between social exclusion, deprivation and transport provision.

A local accessibility assessment was subsequently carried out for the first priority action area of Rural Torridge, examining access to GP services and further education opportunities from households in Rural Torridge. The maps were presented to local and strategic partnerships (e.g. Torridge LSP) to identify the key local access problems and begin to establish long-term and short-term options for resolving them. This is now being developed by Devon County Council and the Social Inclusion Task Group of the LSP into a detailed local accessibility action plan, which is due to be agreed by the full LSP in Autumn 2006.

6.2 Next Steps

For each priority area, a range of potential actions and the barriers to their implementation (e.g. resources, stakeholder commitment) will be considered and a detailed, local accessibility action plan developed with partners. Local accessibility indicators and targets will then be produced for each priority area in consultation with local communities and partners, to ensure an effective monitoring framework.

The LTP includes an indicative programme for developing accessibility action plans for each of the priority action areas in Devon (shown below). This is subject to change, for example, the work of the Ilfracombe Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder has meant that the action plan and local accessibility assessment work for Ilfracombe is occurring in tandem with the finalisation of an action plan for Rural Torridge.

Table 1: Indicative programme for carrying out local accessibility assessments and developing accessibility action plans in Devon (2006-11)

[Source: Devon Local Transport Plan (2006-11)]

Priority Action Area	Local Mapping	Completion of Local Accessibility Action Plan
Rural Torridge	January 2006	September 2006
Princetown	September 2006	March 2007
Ilfracombe / Bratton Fleming / Combe Martin*	April 2007	November 2007
East Devon-Somerset border	December 2007	July 2008
South Hams	August 2008	March 2009
Exmoor Boundary	April 2009	November 2009
Tamar Valley	December 2009	July 2010
Denbury / Broadhempston	August 2010	March 2011

¹⁰ Accession is a new software tool provided by the Department for Transport to local transport authorities which calculates accessibility by relating criteria for specific journey purposes to public bus services.