

Sustainable Transport Herefordshire



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New Homes & Sustainable Transport The Role of the Bus

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New Homes & Sustainable Transport

1. Introduction

'Aspirations for new homes mirror many aspects of modern society thinking. This envisages more physically active and less isolated lives, reduced congestion on the roads, whilst at the same time promoting a low carbon future. But what are we really building?'

The above is the introduction to a revealing report 'Transport for New Homes' by the Foundation for Integrated Transport. The report identifies the failure to appreciate the relationship between residential land use planning and sustainable transport

The report goes on to say: *We spoke to planners to better understand the increasing popularity of this model of dispersed housing in locations that were bound to be car-based. They explained how the government was anxious to get homes built, but the targets given to local authorities to build these homes do not take into account public transport or indeed proximity to services and employment. In essence, the targets are devised without geography. The result is that a rural or semi-rural authority may have to locate thousands of new homes, year upon year, in relatively isolated locations away from large urban centres, away from a network of good public transport, away from the places that people need to travel to. New roads and roundabouts that accompany house building form the skeleton for car-based development of all kinds.'* Thus it appears that housing targets and quick deliverability are the government norm.

2. The Inter-Relationship between Land Use and Transport

It has long been recognised that land use and transport are linked in a cause and effect formula. New housing generates trips as normal facets of everyday modern life; trips for work, school, shopping, leisure. Equally so, new employment, commercial and retail land uses attract trips. In an age where the car ruled and transport by car was relatively cheap, the relationship has become blurred. Everyone would own a car, or perhaps two or three. It did not matter where your land use was developed the car would cope with the need for transport.

Dysfunctional residential land use/employment and transport planning to date has been inherent in Hereford based on the requirements of providing expensive public infrastructure for the car. This is evident in the Hereford Transport Package which gives locations of new residential developments on opposite sides of the city to the main area of employment growth in the Enterprise Zone. In this instance the housing growth on greenfield sites was used as a major factor in the justification for a new major relief road to the west of the city. A true case of joined-up thinking going out of the window.

Little heed was paid to the former Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which concluded: *'The results of the (transport) model runs reveal the trips associated with additional housing have a significant detrimental effect on the operation of the Hereford highway network. Many junctions are forecast to be operating beyond their capacities, link speeds are reduced and delays are commonplace.'*

But the following fact from the UDP was grasped when working up the Hereford Transport Package: *'Without an Outer Distributor Road the increase in travel demand, as forecast by, is forecast to worsen the congestion within the city of Hereford. Adding the additional trips associated with the Growth Point housing allocations will exacerbate these congestion problems, leading to longer journey times and extensive queuing.'*

3. A Change in Circumstances

Since what was as an abandonment of land use/transport planning during the very early part of this century, an accelerating change in circumstances is now taking place. Detrimental environment factors associated with the unbridled use of the private car have become highly significant in the eyes of the public. Climate change is now the major topic in Britain, overtaking even the withdrawal from the EU. Along with this, the realisation that unbridled use of the car, even when all cars are electric or hydrogen cell powered, cannot continue if the economy, environment and social fabric of the country is to survive in a civilised way.

The pointer is there. We need progressive transport/land use planners to embrace this change and we need local authorities to move away from retrospective planning for the car to the need for a 100% consideration of sustainable modes of travel in their future plans and policies. This need is not confined to city and metropolitan regions, it applies equally to the small market towns, where, already swamped by the car, their historic, economic and social fabrics are being shattered.

4. The Role of the Bus

In 2017 an interesting report appeared on this subject. The most interesting fact is that it was not put out by government, local authorities or transport consultants. It was put out by a bus company. The Report titled 'Bus Services & New Residential Development' was issued by the Stagecoach Group plc . It comprised general highway and urban design advice to applicants and Highway Authorities.

That Stagecoach should publish such a document is indicative that the bus is now seen as a very important part of sustainable transport of the future. With regard to the relevance of buses to sustainable development and transport the report says:

'Over the next 20 years, more new homes are anticipated to be built than in the last 40. In parts of the UK where growth will be focused, many towns will see the most growth they have ever experienced, and several will more than double in size. It is especially important that this growth makes fullest possible use of the opportunities offered by public transport, by "designing in" those features that support the efficient delivery of the highest-quality bus services.

Where buses are properly considered at the outset, in development location, master planning and detailed design, high levels of service take-up are achievable. Indeed, across a very wide variety of scenarios, appropriate development can help catalyse improved bus services that achieve mode shift across a wider area. This can help to offset the residual car-borne traffic from a proposal. Where buses are properly harnessed in support of the best development proposals, they can provide wider public betterment.

Urban design must respond to a number of important considerations. This document is intended to highlight the critical elements that are needed to ensure that buses can best serve developments, and play the fullest possible role in delivering high-quality, attractive and sustainable place making.'

Since 2017 the numbers of publications on the role of the bus has increased tremendously, to such an effect that the government has at long last produced a National Bus Strategy. The document states: *'Buses have huge potential as part of a smart, affordable, sustainable public transport system. Fill a double decker with motorists and it's possible to remove 75 cars from the road. They can help ease congestion in our towns, cities and countryside, improve air quality and*

support better connected communities.

That's why we are taking the lead in launching a revolution in bus services - delivering a better deal for bus users that meet the needs and demands of the travelling public. In a package worth £220 million, we are committing to the UK's first-ever long-term bus strategy and funding settlement.'

The fact that government at long last is taking notice of the humble omnibus is in itself a major step forward. Despite a number of shortfalls in the strategy, a major one being the continued lack of understanding between new development planning and sustainable public transport, the strategy does provide a platform for local transport authorities, bus operators and developers to come together in a long needed new approach to the bus as an important part of Britain's future.

Sustainable Transport Herefordshire

Who Are We?

We are a small group of professionals who embrace transport and land use planning, economics, the environment and who see into the future and learn from the past.

The realisation that future transport has to change led to the formation of the **Herefordshire Sustainable Transport Group** in 2017 (HSTG).

We publish under the title of **Sustainable Transport Herefordshire**.

Our principal aim is to examine and study innovative, environmental and economic changes in transport that can be applied to Herefordshire's current transport problems. We seek to work with the local transport authority, local MPs, the Department for Transport, transport operators and community groups in planning the future.

HSTG is an Independent Group allied to Rail & Bus for Herefordshire and the Herefordshire Transport Alliance.

For a full list of our reports in PDF format contact:

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