

## Development in Public Transport Corridors

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### **Context**

This paper is concerned with the relationship between land use development and accessibility by public transport and non-motorised modes of travel. It reviews concepts and practice and offers some conclusions on how future development can be planned to encourage greater use of non-car modes, and discourage use of the car. It is based on a project undertaken for DETR of which the author was project manager within a team led by Llewelyn-Davies.

### **Policy context**

PPG13 (Transport) in 1994 advised that new development should be located so that it is accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, as well as by car. The Transport White Paper of 1998 included a reference to research into the promotion of development in “public transport corridors”. This sparked a great deal of interest by interest groups, including the CPRE and FOE, who commissioned their own research. The RICS also commissioned research into what are now called “Transport Development Areas”. A transport select committee report reviewing the White Paper said that the corridors policy was the one aspect they disagreed with. Meantime the DETR had commissioned the promised research into corridor development. By the time the revised PPG13 was published in March 2001, this research was mostly complete. In June 2003 its publication by the Government is still awaited.

### **The policy issues**

For the Government, the issues are fairly wide as to how development can be focused at locations that are well served by public transport (and other modes). The concern is with implementing the policies advocated in PPG13.

New free-standing settlements are only part of this, but are of concern because of the implications for Green Belts and other protected countryside. The CPRE/FOE are concerned in particular with the new settlement issue, but they recognise that more intensive development in urban areas has a bearing on the

pressure for development in the countryside. The TCPA is also a fairly strong advocate of new settlements, which they see as essential for accommodating the predicted need for new housing, and of locating them in public transport corridors. The clearest exposition of their position is perhaps found in Sir Peter Hall's "Sociable Cities" (Wiley 1998). This advocates many new settlements like beads on a string along existing and new rail lines in south east England.

The RICS study of more intensive development at stations is more limited in scope, but explores the opportunities that can arise at major stations in the big cities where development can both help to fund transport infrastructure and add public transport demand. Elsewhere, land and property values will rarely be sufficient to fund major public transport improvements.

More recently, the Government has issued its plan for new or expanded sustainable communities in four key areas of the south east, namely Thames Gateway, Cambridge-Stansted, Milton Keynes and Ashford.<sup>1</sup> The author has been involved in studies into how major growth in these areas can be accommodated in such a way as to limit car dependence and boost the role of public transport. The study for Milton Keynes explores a long term vision for public transport, involving a major shift of emphasis in development density and form. The study of the Thames Gateway explored the relationship between "zones of change" and plans for transport infrastructure, and will inform the Misc 22 Cabinet Committee.

### **Precedents of planning in relation to public transport**

Before 1950, all development had to be accessible by on foot, by bicycle, and by public transport – these were the only modes available to most people. Therefore most pre-1950 development and the structures that were produced (routes, networks, densities, mix of land use etc.) provide examples of public transport-oriented development.

Since the 1950s-1960s new development has instead been oriented to private motorised road transport, both personal transport and freight transport. This has produced urban structures that are difficult and sometimes impossible to serve by public transport. Walking and cycling has also become difficult due to greater distances and conditions that are at best unpleasant and at worst downright dangerous.

Efforts are now being made to reverse this trend. The biggest efforts, ironically, seem to be made in those places where the process is most difficult to reverse,

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<sup>1</sup> ODPM, 2003, "Sustainable communities: building for the future"

such as cities in north America and Australia. Perhaps they are able to see the problem with stark clarity, whereas we have barely noticed the incremental slide towards car-dependent urban change.

In Canada and the USA, efforts are now being made to consciously plan what is termed “Transit Oriented Development” (TOD). Such efforts are prominent, for example, in parts of California, in Portland (Oregon) and in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver (Canada).

Going back in time, there were plans drawn up in the 1960s for transit oriented development in a number of cities, on both sides of the Atlantic. Perhaps the most famous of these were the

- Copenhagen “finger plan”, where expansion was planned along five radial corridors served by a new suburban rail system;
- Stockholm “self contained” suburban satellites based on the “Tunnelbana” system;
- Washington “star plan”, like Copenhagen based on expanding along rail corridors radiating out from the city centre.

In common with all of these major strategic planning efforts was predicted large-scale population growth and the need to accommodate this in new settlements.

Although apparently transit-oriented plans, all the cities mentioned in fact saw the role of rail as very limited, namely commuting to work in the city centre from suburban areas. It was never envisaged that other categories of trip (shopping, leisure, social, business etc.) would rely on rail. To cater for these other trips, large motorways have been built, mostly around the cities rather than to them. These orbital or tangential motorways have sparked off major development of housing, retail, industrial and commercial uses that are unrelated to rail transport, and which have fuelled a massive increase in car use and car dependency, and of course truck dependency.

### **Government-commissioned research**

The research project for the Government (originally DETR) was carried out by consultants Llewelyn-Davies with Oscar Faber. It involved a review of the concepts of corridor and public transport-oriented development, and an exploration of the issues of implementing such development through a number of case studies.

Some important conclusions from this work are summarised below.

### ***Meeting the new policy agenda***

1. There is scope for closer and more pro-active integration of the transport and land use elements. The Transport Act 2000 and Local Transport Plans were widely expected to offer more scope for such integration.
2. Quality bus contracts and partnerships were expected to strengthen the ability of planning authorities to guarantee delivery of public transport services that are coordinated with new development.

### ***Promoting the benefits of sustainable access***

3. Public transport orientated schemes can prove cheaper for developers in the long run, with lower contributions to transport and more intensive use of land
4. Public Transport Oriented Development (PTOD) can provide a higher quality environment, less dominated by roads, parking and traffic. This environment premium can be reflected in property and land values.
5. Community benefits can also be emphasised because development that is accessible by a choice of travel modes promotes social inclusion. This in turn contributes to the creation of vibrant and diverse neighbourhoods.
6. There is scope for more effective marketing and promotion of public transport in new developments.

### ***Aiming for certainty***

7. Where there is certainty, as in a development brief, or a firm commitment to high quality public transport such as light rail, it is easier to get the support of developers.
8. The provision of public transport often requires “gap funding” to ensure that services are available on day one for early occupants. This can be funded through S106 agreements.

### ***Applying the new policy agenda***

9. Development briefs and master plans should address the issue of accessibility at three levels
  - a) Location and accessibility by all modes
  - b) Site layout and design to promote sustainable access
  - c) Detailed design to enhance access quality

10. Influencing public transport use through land use development is often referred to as a long term policy, but **action is needed straight away** to ensure that the necessary outputs are achieved with each new development. Also, where new public transport services are anticipated, plans need to be in place before the services begin, to ensure that the type, density and design of new development is orientated to maximise public transport use.

### ***The importance of complementary actions***

11. PTOD depends to some degree on measures to control or limit development **outside** the public transport catchment areas. This is one of the most significant aspects of promoting sustainable access.

12. The physical arrangement of urban development and public transport infrastructure provides a necessary but not sufficient condition for increasing the role of public transport. Other factors (such as the relative price of public and private transport, including parking) will have a major influence on actual travel choices and behaviour.

13. While public transport access is important, walking is more prominent in the outcome mode split. To this must be added the walking that is undertaken as part of public transport trips.

### ***Leading by design***

14. Local authorities should be pro-active and not just rely on individual private sector development proposals.

15. Re-orientating development towards public transport involves consideration of bus and rail facilities as integral to urban structure and development, rather than simply as a transport matter.

16. There is a clear need for a much more pro-active role to be taken by local authorities in setting out their requirements and aspirations for PTOD. Of particular benefit will be development briefs or master plans for the areas contained within the walking catchment of important public transport locations particular sites. Such framework documents will carry particular weight and have best effect if they:

- a) Are given Supplementary Planning Guidance status
- b) Are consistent with Development Plan policies
- c) Are integrated with the Local Transport Plan
- d) Provide clear guidance on the likely level and nature of private sector funding contributions that will be sought (see below).

### ***Bringing stakeholders together***

15. Negotiations between developers, local authorities and public transport providers can be difficult, protracted, and prone to weakness in the decisions reached. It is therefore important that policies are clear, consistent and fully supported at all levels of government, including following planning appeals.
16. PTOD development is not simply a matter for local authorities. Central and regional government has a major role to play. As concluded in earlier DETR and Scottish Office research, the establishment of a national upper limit on parking provision, as included in PPG13 (2001), is particularly important.

### ***Securing appropriate developer contributions***

17. Developers may be willing to accept obligations that include financial or other contributions towards public transport improvements.
18. Of particular importance is the need to secure public transport **services** as opposed to infrastructure.

### ***Assessing the case for new settlements***

19. Sustainable access criteria provide no independent support for free-standing settlements, compared to other forms of development. Amongst the local authorities studied, only general arguments have been reported in favour of new free-standing settlements. New settlements should, as set out in PPG3, be the last tier in the sequential approach to new housing where the need for such growth has been established. Issues include:
  - a) the relatively small size of proposed new settlements, and their consequent lack of self-containment;
  - b) the need to address all trips, not just the journey to work; and
  - c) the likely transport outcomes as determined by layout, design, public transport supply, and parking.

Good public transport access is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to justify the creation of new free-standing settlements.

END

The research on which this paper is based was to be published as a companion guide to PPG13, and titled "Planning and Sustainable Access". However, the Government did not publish the work in any form.