

Development Strategy

Topic Paper

Appendix 16: Trip budgets as part of development-related transport mitigation strategies



Greater Cambridge Local Plan

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Development Strategy Topic Paper 2026 Appendix 16: Trip Budgets as part of development-related transport mitigation strategies

Purpose

- 1.1 This note has been prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council. It explains how the trip budgets required in the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan strategic sites policies will be identified and implemented, and as such also explains how the County Council as Local Highways Authority will manage traffic impacts for such sites through the development management process.
- 1.2 This technical note sets out the rationale and methodology for the use of vehicular trip budgets as part of the mitigation for major development sites that might otherwise not be able to sustainably mitigate their negative impact in terms of traffic congestion, air quality, and road safety. This might otherwise result in an objection on highway grounds from the County Council as Local Highway Authority when a proposal is considered at planning application.

What is a Trip Budget

- 2.1 A trip budget is a transport policy approach that sets a limit on the level of external vehicular trips that can be generated by a particular development site as part of a comprehensive mitigation package. These are required to comply with the NPPF requirement (paragraph 116) such that 'the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would [not] be severe'.
- 2.2 The need to consider alternative transport mitigation strategies particularly for sites that generate larger volumes of trips, has increased in recent years as part of a shift in national policy emphasis from the previous model of 'predict and provide' to one of 'vision and validate'. This means that instead of calculating the number of vehicle trips likely to be generated by a development based on historic trip patterns at similar developments as was the case with the

predict and provide methodology, the approach now is to prioritise a desired future for a place (the vision) and then use a series of actions to ensure that the vision is being achieved. Instead of looking at historic vehicular trip generation for a particular development type there is a move to cater for trips by non-car modes so that residents and employees have a more sustainable alternative to the private car for everyday trips. Trip budgets and their delivery have historically been secured by the County Council and Local Planning Authorities through appropriately worded planning conditions and obligations and this approach will continue to be applied at major development sites across Greater Cambridge. This is then managed after a planning consent has been secured by monitoring travel patterns, with additional measures put in place as needed.

- 2.3 In order to determine the trip budget for each site there are a number of steps at each stage of the development process, allowing proportionate evidence at each iteration of the evolution of a site, through plan making, planning application, through to delivery and occupation.

The Stages of Defining a Trip Budget

For sites identified through the plan making process

Initial Trip Budget

- 3.1 The first stage is to set the initial value for the vehicular trip budget for a site. This requires the impact of the site on the surrounding highway network to be identified in conjunction with an assessment of the level of network performance that is considered acceptable by the relevant Highway Authority (CCC or National Highways).
- 3.2 To date initial trip budget for the strategic sites in Greater Cambridge have been informed by testing the site in the County's strategic transport model to get an idea of the number of car trips that the highway network within both the local and wider area can accommodate. This initial number is informed by the number of trips that the model allows into and out of the site in each peak

period (generally assumed to be 0800-0900 and 1700-1800 but to be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the Highway Authorities).

- 3.3 The second stage in the development of the trip budget is to consider what the initial vehicular trip budget, indicated by stage 1 above, means for the mode shares required from the site if the development is to come forward while ensuring that the trip budget is not breached.
- 3.4 The car mode share is an important consideration because car mode shares that have been achieved elsewhere in the UK and Europe to give an indication of the minimum car mode shares that could be achievable in the Greater Cambridge area. The acceptable car mode share in an area is informed by the existing and proposed highway network, public transport services, and the active travel offers in the area around a development site.
- 3.5 The resulting car driver mode share informs the eventual development quantum and mix for each site that is considered to be deliverable, so that the proposed development is credible and defensible. Both parts of this initial stage are necessary to demonstrate that there is a reasonable prospect that the proposed development could come forward in a way that does not have a severe residual impact on the highway network around the site.

Refinement of the Trip Budget

- 3.6 Once the initial trip budget has been set the next stage is to look in more detail at the operation of the local highway networks. This analysis should be based on observed traffic data to enable a more detailed analysis of the network performance to be undertaken. The use of observed data will highlight if certain movements at junctions have more restrictions than others. Although this more detailed analysis may result in slight revisions to the trip budget, experience at locations like North East Cambridge and

Waterbeach in Greater Cambridge, and Alconbury Weald in Huntingdonshire show that the refined trip budget is not significantly different to the initial figure, for example, the North East Cambridge initial trip budget was 3,000 vehicles in both peak periods, while the final trip budget is 3,000 vehicles in the AM Peak and 3,900 vehicles in the PM Peak.

- 3.7 The refinement of the trip budget should be incorporated into a detailed transport strategy for the development that identifies the development quanta and mix proposed as well as the mitigation and resulting car mode share required to enable the development to come forward within the identified trip budget. This mitigation should include access for all modes of transport. The transport strategy should also set out the phasing of the proposed development. The phasing plan will allow assessment of when each of the mitigation measures identified are required. It is also at this stage in the process that the detailed approach to implementing the trip budget, and associated approach to monitoring and managing site-related travel, should be established and agreed.
- 3.8 Where the development site comprises more than one landowner / developer the strategy should also identify how the costs for the mitigation required to make the whole site work, including any off-site measures are going to be apportioned to the various landownership parcels within the site to ensure that all developers pay their fair share of the infrastructure bill. Proposals for delivery of such measures should also be established at this stage.
- 3.9 The outcome of the transport strategy will establish the level of acceptable trip making by all modes from the site on the surrounding transport network which will form then a robust basis for planning obligations and ongoing post-planning monitoring. It is at this stage that detailed conclusions can be reached about how the trip budget will be applied and monitored in practice.

Sites not identified through the plan making process

- 3.10 During the planning application process, operational network assessments similar to those set out in the refinement stage of the process set out above should be undertaken as part of the Transport Assessment. This should take account of phasing, access arrangements, network mitigations and wider changes, as well as detailed and agreed methodologies for wider growth / reductions and other committed schemes. The Transport Assessment will report the trip generation, distribution, mode share and assignment in detail of the completed development using a methodology that must be scoped and agreed with Cambridgeshire County Council.
- 3.11 The Transport Assessment needs to establish the level of acceptable trip making from the site on the surrounding network that will form the basis of planning obligations and ongoing post-planning monitoring.

Post Planning – Phased Delivery – ‘The Compliance and Control Stage’

- 3.12 At each reserved matters application seeking consent for the details of the delivery phases of development, the technical work will need to be reviewed to consider the performance of the external highway network at the time of the assessment as well as the performance of any occupied elements of the site against the trip budget and the car driver mode share target identified. External changes can be incorporated into these refined assessments alongside detailed monitoring data from occupied parts of the development. Monitoring will ensure full accountability and if necessary further mitigation, or refocused mitigation which may be needed to ensure that overall compliance with the trip budget is achieved. The full detail of these mechanisms would be established in the s.106 obligations entered into on the grant of outline consent.