



Cabinet

21 May 2008

West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds: Travel Plan (Jun 08/03)

1. Summary and Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.1 In response to a condition of the planning consent for the Public Service Village and in acknowledgement of both Suffolk County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council's environmental responsibilities a travel plan is in preparation for people working at or visiting West Suffolk House. As detailed in the report to Cabinet on 23 January 2008 (Report Y512 refers) the Travel Plan contains both incentives and disincentives to encourage people to travel by alternative means other than the private motor car.
- 1.2 There is a cost involved in the implementation of the travel plan. Pump priming funding has been secured via the Section 106 Agreement for the provision of a new cycleway and support for enhanced bus services and to retain the services of a travel plan officer. There will be a charge for the use of the Olding Road car park and this income will be used to cover maintenance, the loss of interest and measures to support sustainable modes of travel by staff. On this basis there should be no additional costs to the Council Tax payer.
- 1.3 On 23 January 2008 the Cabinet agreed the framework for the Travel Plan; the principle of charging staff and Members to park (delegating authority to set the charging level to the Corporate Director for Resources and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Efficiency following consultation with staff representatives); and that the following matters be investigated and reported back:-
- (i) the feasibility and cost of providing a staff shuttle bus between the town centre and West Suffolk House;
 - (ii) any additional lighting requirements for existing cycleway/footway links to West Suffolk House; and
 - (iii) car parking provision for depot staff.
- 1.4 With regard to the provision of a shuttle bus, negotiations with the bus company have resulted in the extension of the current bus route 83 to include the bus station, rail station and West Suffolk House. This will be implemented at the end of August 2008. In addition, at a cost of £18,000 per annum, the bus company is able to offer a lunchtime service from West Suffolk House following the shortest and, therefore, quickest route into the town centre and back again. This service will run as frequently as possible and will be free to all users.
- 1.5 Improvements to Beeton's Way to incorporate a cycleway/footway are covered by the Section 106 contribution and the works will be completed in time for the occupation of West Suffolk House. In addition, a section of existing cycleway between Beeton's Way and Spring Lane has been identified as being poorly lit and, therefore, unattractive for year round usage. It is proposed that this cycleway be lit to enable a safe link for

pedestrians and cyclists to West Suffolk House and beyond. The cost of these improvement works is £25,000 and with the agreement of Suffolk County Council this can be funded from the Section 106 contributions.

- 1.6 The capacity of Olding Road car park will be 350 spaces. This is over and above the 279 spaces the Borough Council is obliged to provide for West Suffolk House. There are approximately 100 depot staff that have not been included in car parking space provision. It is recommended that following regular monitoring of the car park usage that the depot staff be allowed to park in the Olding Road car park on the same basis as the West Suffolk House staff.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that:-

- (1) a lunchtime shuttle bus service between West Suffolk House and the town centre be established from one month before occupation of West Suffolk House paid for initially from the Section 106 contribution and then from the Olding Road car park income;
- (2) additional lighting be provided to the existing cycleway/footway from Beeton's Way to Spring Lane and under the A14 paid for from the Section 106 contribution; and
- (3) provision be made for depot staff based at Western Way to park in the Olding Road car park.

3. Corporate Objectives

3.1 The recommendations meet the following Corporate Priorities:

Corporate Priority 2 : *'Securing a sustainable and attractive environment'*; and
Corporate Priority 4 : *'Raising corporate standards and efficiency'*.

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4. Key Issues and Background

- 4.1 St Edmundsbury Borough Council in partnership with Suffolk County Council is responsible for preparing a Travel Plan for West Suffolk House (PSV Phase 1). The Travel Plan will benefit staff working at the offices; other staff who visit the offices; councillors; general public; and service contractors visiting West Suffolk House. The preparation of such a travel plan is required to fulfil one of the conditions attached to the planning permission, it is also important that Suffolk County Council (SCC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) take seriously their environmental responsibilities.
- 4.2 SCC already has a travel plan in place for its staff whether they work at Endeavour House, Ipswich or Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds. The West Suffolk House Travel Plan is being devised in conjunction with the County Council and its travel plan to ensure consistency of approach.
- 4.3 In accordance with the Council's approved land use and environmental policies the objectives of the Travel Plan include persuading people to use sustainable transport whenever possible and practical; minimising the negative impacts of transport on the environment; reducing the dependency on single occupancy car use; and reducing both travel to work mileage and travel for work (business) mileage. The full details of the elements included in the Travel Plan were agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 23 January 2008 (Report Y512 refers).
- 4.4 In addition at the same meeting, Cabinet agreed the principle of charging staff at West Suffolk House to park. The level of charge was delegated to the Corporate Director for Resources and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Efficiency following consultation with staff representatives. This consultation phase is in progress and the level of charge will be agreed by the end of June 2008.
- 4.5 Report Y512 recommended that three items be the subject of further investigation and the outcomes be reported back to Cabinet. These three items were:-
- (i) the feasibility and cost of providing a staff shuttle bus between the town centre and West Suffolk House;
 - (ii) additional lighting requirements for existing cycleway/footway links; and
 - (iii) the provision of car parking for depot staff.

Bus Service Improvements

- 4.6 To meet the need of both customers and employees visiting the town centre and West Suffolk House an agreement has been reached with First Eastern Counties (the bus company) to extend the commercial service route 83, to provide a half hourly service to West Suffolk House from the end of August 2008. Route 83 will link West Suffolk House with the rail and bus stations and the town centre and will run a half hourly service throughout the day.
- 4.7 In addition to this, it is proposed that an additional shuttle bus service will be provided between the town centre and West Suffolk House during the lunchtime period 12.00 noon to 2.00 pm, Mondays to Fridays. It is proposed that the bus will follow the shortest route into and out of the town centre and will operate on this loop continuously over the lunchtime period. This bus will be free to customers/staff and will require an £18,000 subsidy per annum that can be funded from the Section 106 contributions already received. It is proposed that the funding for the shuttle bus will come from the income derived from car parking charges at the Olding Road car park once the Section 106 funding has finished.

Cycleway/footway links

- 4.8 Funding has already been secured via the Section 106 contribution to construct a cycleway link (including lighting) from the existing cycleway from Newmarket Road along Beeton's Way to the mini roundabout adjacent to West Suffolk House. However the existing cycleway/footway link from Spring Lane to Beeton's Way is not currently lit. Part of this route goes under the A14 and is not an attractive route in the hours of darkness. It is proposed that this route be lit and this has been costed at £25,000, which can be secured from the Section 106 contribution with the agreement of SCC.
- 4.9 An additional cycleway/footway link along Western Way is likely to be provided as a result of the Asda development on Western Way.

Depot staff parking

- 4.10 The legal agreement between SCC and the Borough Council for the sale of the land at Western Way includes an obligation on the Borough Council to provide 279 car parking spaces within land owned by the authority at Western Way for use by the occupants of West Suffolk House. The number of spaces available for staff to park is sufficient to support all the work stations proposed within West Suffolk House.
- 4.11 The car park at Olding Road will have 350 spaces when complete, which is in excess of the level assessed to be sufficient for the number of workstations in West Suffolk House. There are approximately 100 members of staff who work from the depot. Due to Health & Safety requirements it is not possible for this number of staff cars to be accommodated in the depot area. It is, therefore, recommended that as the Olding Road car park will have additional capacity, the depot staff be allowed to park in the Olding Road car park. The use of the Olding Road car park is monitored on a regular basis at present and this close monitoring will continue throughout the year and into the occupation phase. It is noted that the phased occupation of West Suffolk House will allow opportunities for re-assessing the allocation of spaces during this period.

5. Other Options considered

5.1 Not to provide a shuttle bus

This would reduce the accessibility of West Suffolk House to customers and staff and would not benefit existing staff members who will transfer from town centre office locations who are used to easy access into the town centre at lunchtimes.

5.2 To provide a day long shuttle bus

This is still an option for the future if demand dictates so and if the income from the car park is sufficient to cover the increased costs.

5.3 Improvement of wider cycleway/footway links

It is considered that all the main routes to West Suffolk House will be sufficiently lit and maintained as a result of these improvements.

5.4 That depot staff park in the depot

There are Health & Safety issues with this option. In addition depot staff would not be charged to park in the depot which can be seen as inequitable by other staff who will be paying to park in Olding Road. In terms of the travel plan, it is important that all staff are subject to the dis-incentives and incentives so that a higher level of modal shift can be achieved.

5.5 Not to charge staff to park.

If staff were not charged to park the Travel Plan would be less effective and may not receive approval by the Local Planning Authority. There would be no income from Olding Road car park to use to support the incentives included in the Travel Plan and

such incentives would have to be funded by the Council Tax payer. The negotiating position of the Borough Council on travel plan and wider environmental matters would be weakened.

6. Community impact *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and diversity issues)*

6.1 General

6.1.1 The Olding Road car park will be available for members of the public to park from 15.30 hours during the week and at weekends and bank holidays. This will be of specific benefit for users of the Leisure Centre.

6.1.2 Any improved bus provision secured as a result of the Travel Plan initiatives will benefit the wider community in this part of town.

6.1.3 Any improvements to the cycleway/footway network will benefit all users, not just staff and customers accessing West Suffolk House.

6.2 Diversity

6.2.1 There is no adverse impact.

7. Consultation

7.1 The West Suffolk House Travel Plan has been devised in consultation with colleagues at SCC including their Travel Plan and Public Transport Colleagues.

7.2 The Travel Plan has been the subject of several staff briefing sessions. Linked to this there have been separate promotions of various elements of the plan including the Cycle2Work scheme, car sharing and the availability of individual travel plans for officers.

7.3 The West Suffolk House Joint Committee, Public Services Village (PSV) Members Reference Group, Portfolio Holders, UNISON and SCC have been consulted. The main issues raised relate to charging for car parking, the need for a shuttle bus to link the site to the town centre, particularly at lunch times and the need to provide lighting of pedestrian/cycle routes that link to the PSV.

8. Resource implications *(including asset management implications)*

8.1 As part of the planning consent both the Borough Council and County Council were required to make a contribution of £374,000 towards the cost of implementing the Travel Plan. The agreement covers the following items:-

- (i) capital cost of constructing a cycleway along Beetons Way (£75,000);
- (ii) revenue cost of enhanced bus provision to the site (£161,000);
- (iii) provision of Travel Plan Officer (£90,000); and
- (iv) contribution to travel plan incentives (£48,000).

8.2 The cost of providing a lunchtime shuttle bus is £18,000 per annum and this can be funded from the enhanced bus Section 106 contribution.

8.3 The cost of improving the lighting on the existing cycleway/ footway is £25,000 capital. With the agreement of SCC this can also be funded from the enhanced bus Section 106 contribution.

8.4 There are no cost implications for including the depot staff in the Olding Road car park and, therefore, there should be no additional cost to the Council Tax payer as a result of these recommendations.

8.5 In the long term, once the Section 106 funding has been exhausted, the income from the Olding Road car park will need to be used to support sustainable travel initiatives.

9. Risk Assessment *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

Risk area	Inherent level of Risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual Risk (after controls)
Shuttle bus service will be discontinued by the bus company or costs will escalate	Medium	Regular consultation with First Eastern. Sufficient reserves should be held to cover future increases in the bus costs.	Low
The Olding Road car park will become oversubscribed	High	Promote the travel plan initiatives to encourage staff to change their travel to work habits. Regular monitoring of the car park usage. Exclusion of use by the public. Devise a range of options to put in place to ensure highway safety is not adversely affected.	Medium

10. Legal or policy implications

10.1 The submission and subsequent approval of a travel plan for West Suffolk House is required by a planning condition attached to the planning consent.

Ward affected	West Suffolk House is in the Minden Ward	Portfolio Holder	Economy and Asset Management
Background Papers		Subject Area Property Management	