

9 Roads, traffic and transport

ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS WILL BE JUDGED AGAINST THE GENERAL PLANNING POLICIES IN SECTION 2, BESIDES THOSE IN THIS AND OTHER RELEVANT SECTIONS.

Introduction

- 9.1 The road network is essential to the life of residents, businesses and visitors. However, highway policies should not be developed at the expense of the environment. Increased road building and upgrading have a significant impact on the landscape and should only take place in the National Park in exceptional circumstances. Government policy is clear: "no new trunk road will be constructed and no existing road will be upgraded in national parks unless there is a compelling need that cannot be met by any reasonable alternative means." (*This Common Inheritance*).
- 9.2 Recent government guidance emphasises the need to reduce reliance on the private car by encouraging alternative means of travel. Vehicle emissions are a major contributor to global environmental problems. A reduction in the use of cars forms part of this Local Plan's aim of sustainability. This can be achieved by: *Sustainability*
- bringing employment and shops nearer to each other and to where people live;
 - increasing the use of public transport and more environmentally friendly forms of transport such as cycling.
- 9.3 The Local Plan's first aim is to conserve and enhance the Park's natural and built environment. The NPA's view therefore is that the road system should be maintained largely as it currently exists, tailoring future traffic to the character of existing roads, and not the roads to traffic. To accommodate this, and to incorporate the requirements of the local community and visitors, an integrated transport and land use strategy will be required, with traffic calming schemes in some villages and other areas.
- 9.4 The responsibility for road building and improvement in the Park is shared between the Welsh Office and the Unitary Authorities. Since local government reorganisation the NPA now deals with nine unitary authorities with highway functions. In addition five of these Authorities act as agents for the Welsh Office in matters connected with trunk roads in the Park. The NPA itself is not a highway authority, but is responsible for strategic land use planning and for determining applications for highway works which require planning permission.
- 9.5 The NPA is keen to work closely with highway authorities in the production of integrated transport and land use strategies, for inclusion in future reviews of this Plan.

ROADS

National Park road hierarchy

- 9.6 The highway authorities use a road hierarchy based on the nationally accepted classifications. The NPA has produced its own more detailed road hierarchy to inform its planning decisions. Categories include through traffic routes, *The functions of roads*

links between local centres, important scenic routes serving recreational areas and access to isolated hamlets. The hierarchy is attached in appendix 1. Its guiding principles are:

- each road should serve a defined function;
- the function of each road should be determined in recognition of environmental factors and the needs of existing traffic.

Policy R1

The compatibility of a proposal with the function of the National Park road hierarchy will be used by the NPA to inform its determination of any planning application.

Design and maintenance of roads

- 9.7 The ways in which existing roads are maintained and road improvements are designed can have a significant effect on their character and on the beauty of the Park as seen by residents and visitors alike. In line with government guidance, the NPA will work with the Welsh Office and highway authorities to ensure that the scale of schemes and the design and materials used are the best that can be achieved, consistent with safety.
- 9.8 The importance of roadside hedges and verges as wildlife corridors is discussed in section 3. The NPA will apply the spirit of policy CL7 when considering roads schemes, taking any opportunity to maintain or enhance these important links and habitats.
- 9.9 The NPA will expect proposals to construct any new or upgraded road schemes within the National Park to demonstrate that environmental quality has been the primary consideration in their planning and design, subject only to the needs of road safety.

Trunk roads

- 9.10 The Park is crossed by several trunk roads. The Welsh Office is responsible for the building and maintenance of these and its proposed improvements to the trunk road system were published in Roads in Wales - Progress and Plans for 1990s. The 1994 supplement to this report provided an opportunity to reassess the impact of proposed schemes. As a result, the A40 in Mid Wales is not seen as a major strategic east-west route, reflecting the adverse impact such a development might have on its rural setting.
- 9.11 The National Park road hierarchy recognises the A465 Heads of the Valleys road and the A470 as being routes for national through traffic, but the A40 and A479 although trunk roads are classed as regional distributor routes, which should not be upgraded to cater for high-speed and heavy long distance through traffic. While small improvements can improve safety standards on all roads and would be welcomed by the NPA, piecemeal improvement to trunk roads can attract additional through traffic and increases its speed, to the detriment of the environment and local residents.
- 9.12 There are four proposed trunk road improvement schemes within the National Park. The NPA has very limited control over these proposals, although government policy requires that it is consulted on any scheme. Its attitude towards them varies considerably, in the light of the Park road hierarchy and of the circumstances of each proposal. They are at different stages of preparation, as set out below. While the NPA may in some cases have objected to the scheme, once a Road Line Order is made by the Welsh Office the NPA as local planning

*Trunk road
improvements*

authority is obliged to protect the chosen line from development. Such protected lines are shown on relevant proposals maps.

Policy R2

The NPA will oppose any proposal to construct a new route through the National Park, or any programme of major improvements to existing routes that would cater for or encourage their use by additional through traffic, with the exception of the A465, A470 and any sections already protected by a Road Line Order .

A465 (T) Heads of the Valleys road

- 9.13 The Secretary of State for Wales has brought forward proposals to widen the A465 Heads of the Valleys road from three lanes to a dual carriageway between Abergavenny and Hirwaun, partly for safety reasons. The NPA supports these proposals in principle, as they would help direct east-west through traffic off the A40 and improve safety on the A465. However, they have a significant effect on the National Park: in the narrow and spectacular Clydach Gorge, the Taf Fawr valley north of Merthyr Tydfil and the area north-east of Hirwaun. It will require the highest level of landscape and engineering skills if damage to these areas of recognised importance is to be minimised.
- 9.14 The NPA will work with the Welsh Office to achieve a scheme of the highest quality, that protects the natural beauty and historical interest of all three areas, in line with paragraph 9.9. Of equal importance, the NPA will expect the maximum benefit to be gained for the local communities in the construction of this road scheme. There are opportunities to create new vehicle, pedestrian and cycle links, and for improvements to the physical environment of many of the affected settlements. When a Road Line Order is published, the NPA will protect the chosen line from development.

A470 (T)

- 9.15 The A470 is the major north-south trunk road through Wales and is essential to the Welsh economy. The Cefn Coed bypass completed in 1997 is part of a larger scheme to bypass Merthyr Tydfil. The NPA worked with the Welsh Office to achieve the highest landscape and engineering design standards, to minimise damage to this important area.
- 9.16 A scheme to improve the vertical and horizontal line over a dangerous section of the A470 at Nant Crew is supported by the NPA. Consultations with the Highway Authority, which is undertaking the work on behalf of the Welsh Office, will continue in order to minimise the visual and ecological impact.

*Nant Crew
improvement*

A40 (T)

- 9.17 The NPA welcomes the Secretary of State's decision to delete the A40 Crickhowell bypass from its programme and to defer the A40 Abergavenny western bypass. When consulted on any improvements to this road, the NPA will apply the criteria of paragraph 9.9, and resist any schemes that do not conform to them.

A479 (T)

- 9.18 The proposal to bypass the constricted historic core of Talgarth has been the subject of public consultation and a public inquiry into the proposals was held in 1998. The Secretary of State proposes to consider and consult further on options to resolve the problems in Talgarth. The NPA will work with the highway

*Talgarth
bypass*

authority to ensure the needs of the Community are met whilst taking into account the requirements of paragraph 9.9.

County roads

- 9.19 The NPA will continue its close liaison with the relevant highway authorities to ensure that the detailed design of roads included in future capital programmes are sympathetic to the rural character of the Park. There is an opportunity for new design standards to be created that fit in with the rural scale. Particular attention will be given to the scale and materials used for kerbing, signing, lighting, treatment of verges and boundaries including crash barriers. This follows the first aim of this Local Plan, to conserve and enhance the Park's natural environment.

A4059

- 9.20 Mid Glamorgan County Council formally requested the NPA to safeguard the line of a proposed bypass/improvement to the A4059 at Upper Penderyn. The proposal, first suggested in 1970, lay outside Mid Glamorgan's five-year capital programme, but there is a reasonable expectation of its construction by its successor authority, Rhondda Cynon Taff, within the Plan period. Consequently, the NPA will safeguard the route as shown on the proposals map from development that would prevent its construction.

*Penderyn
bypass*

Brecon town centre

- 9.21 Powys County Council has been reviewing the need for a traffic management strategy in Brecon, and after public consultation has put forward a proposed scheme in three phases. Further reference is made to this in the Brecon Community section.

Policy R3

Planning permission will be granted for the construction of new streets in Brecon as part of a scheme entitled, "Brecon Inner Relief Roads", and for development required in the implementation of complementary traffic management measures.

Land shown on the Proposals Map is safeguarded for the construction of the Brecon Inner Relief Roads. Other development will not be permitted on the land if it would be likely to prejudice the construction and implementation of these schemes.

Bridges

- 9.22 The National Park contains many traditional stone-built road bridges, which contribute greatly to the character of the area. They were designed for smaller vehicles and lower volumes of traffic than now use them, and the increased weight and numbers, particularly of goods and agricultural vehicles, have often made structural work necessary. Many of these bridges are listed buildings, and some are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. They may also contribute to wildlife conservation by providing nesting sites for waterside birds. The NPA sees the conservation of traditional bridges as part of its statutory duty.
- 9.23 Existing bridges may need improvement for structural or safety reasons, or to comply with EU guidelines, and new road schemes may require new bridges. The NPA is concerned to ensure that such works result in structures that are attractive in themselves, using stone facing for the bridge and parapets where appropriate and possible. Policy CB2 will be applied to bridges that are listed buildings, and

the NPA will press for those which are scheduled monuments to be fully protected.

- 9.24 The NPA has planning control over bridges only where they are a listed building or where a new bridge is to be built by a highway authority. However, as planning authority it can control development that might increase the traffic using a bridge. The Authority will consult with highway authorities and the Welsh Office over proposals involving bridges, and with Cadw concerning scheduled ancient monuments. It will seek to ensure that any necessary works result in a structure that will enhance the National Park.

Policy R4

The NPA will use its planning powers to protect and conserve traditionally built bridges, to ensure that new or modified bridges are of a good design that is appropriate in its setting, and wherever possible to incorporate features to enhance the habitats of waterside plant and animal species.

Estate roads and access to properties

- 9.25 Where development proposals, whether for housing or industrial uses, involve the construction or improvement of highways, the highway authority requires certain standards of design and layout, to ensure that new roads, rights of way or permissive paths are adequate and safe. However, standard designs should not be imposed with unnecessary rigidity where the character of an area would be compromised. The highways design guides and specifications produced by the Dyfed, Powys, Mid Glamorgan and Gwent County Councils or their replacement authorities should be used as supplementary planning guidance.
- 9.26 While building work is in progress, developers of new estates have no obligation to put in roads to a standard at which they can be adopted by the highway authority. This can be a serious problem to the occupants of the first properties. A condition on any planning permission will require the developer to make up the base course prior to the start of building, and to complete the road before the first property is occupied.

Policy R5

Subject to road safety, environmental quality will be the primary consideration in the design of roads in new developments. Before building operations commence, any new roads should be drained and finished to an adoptable base course standard.

Design

- 9.27 Much of the character of towns, villages and country roads derives from traditional roadside features such as hedgebanks, hedgerows and stone walls. Removal of these to gain access to a newly permitted development or to improve visibility often results in suburbanisation. Where it has the power to do so, the NPA will impose planning conditions to conserve or replace such features.

Policy R6

Where development requires a new or improved access from the highway, existing traditional boundary features must be retained as far as possible. Where boundaries must be set back to improve visibility, the same boundary type must be re-created on the new line.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Traffic management

- 9.28 Problems caused by traffic dominating towns and villages were frequently voiced at the Local Plan meetings. Support for effective traffic management was unanimous. Traffic management comprises measures to improve road safety and the environment, including traffic calming, which helps to reduce vehicle speeds and improve driver behaviour.
- 9.29 Support for traffic calming is growing, and various schemes are currently being implemented by highway authorities. The NPA will campaign for schemes wherever necessary, and where appropriate make it a condition for development proposals, including provision for disabled people. The NPA will support highway authorities where they seek to improve driver behaviour and responsibility to pedestrians, cyclists and the local environment. Traffic calming along trunk roads is the responsibility of the Welsh Office.
- 9.30 In the larger towns and villages within the Park, it may become necessary to introduce strategies which integrate land use proposals with new highway schemes. In such circumstances, the NPA will work closely with the highway authority.

*Traffic
calming*

Policy R7

Integrated transport and land use strategies produced by the NPA in conjunction with the highway authority and subject to public consultation will be adopted as supplementary planning guidance. They will be used by the NPA to augment relevant policies in this Local Plan in determining applications for development.

- 9.31 Within Powys, money is allocated for traffic calming projects in Crickhowell, Llanfrynach, Llangorse, Llangynidr and Llanigon community areas. Further schemes will come forward during the Local Plan period as finance becomes available.

Policy R8

The NPA will work with relevant highway authorities to ensure that traffic calming proposals are carried out in ways which respect the environment and the amenity of nearby residents.

Parking

- 9.32 Dedicated parking for cars, motorcycles and cycles in the central areas of Brecon, Hay, Crickhowell and Talgarth is very limited; either to a few spaces in the narrow historic shopping streets or to larger pay-and-display car parks beyond. Powys County Council owns and manages these car parks. As set out in the proposals sections, the NPA is working with the Council as highway authority to develop an integrated traffic strategy for these towns. These should aim to make public transport more attractive and accessible, reduce unnecessary car journeys and improve the pedestrian environment for everyone, including those with disabilities. It will not necessarily involve the provision of new car parks in the town centres.

Policy R9

The NPA will allocate land and grant planning permission for further car, motor cycles and cycle parking within or immediately adjacent to the towns of Brecon, Hay, Crickhowell and Talgarth where this is proven to be necessary as part of an

integrated traffic strategy. Proposals must be accompanied by a landscaping scheme and show appropriately positioned parking spaces for disabled drivers.

- 9.33 The Local Plan public meetings showed several places in the rural areas where there is conflict between residents and visitors over parking space. This is particularly acute where access to popular walking areas and routes start or finish in a village. The residents expect to be able to park outside their homes; the visitors, mindful of car theft, prefer to leave their vehicles where they are not completely isolated, but have the benefit of being in the public eye. Such a need may be seasonal in nature.

Policy R10

The NPA will grant permission for car, motorcycle and cycle parks in villages and rural areas where there is a need, on appropriate sites that conform to the National Park road hierarchy and are agreed with the local authority and community council.

Public transport

- 9.34 Buses provide the main form of public transport within the National Park. Routes are confined to the main valleys, with most settlements not being served daily or at all. There are no railway stations in the Park. A post bus operates in the Dyfed area and from Brecon to Llangors. A recreational bus service operated in the summer of 1998, and is to be repeated.
- 9.35 The provision of public transport can contribute significantly to sustainability by reducing the need for individuals to travel by car, while improving accessibility in the remoter rural areas. It may also make the National Park more accessible to visitors without cars. Tourist use can help to sustain services, to the benefit of residents. Besides conventional public transport, there may be scope for other services, such as post buses, Dial-a-ride and community car schemes. The NPA's involvement in these is a matter for the National Park Management Plan.
- 9.36 The NPA will work with local bus companies to improve services as far as it can, but does not have the resources to provide any itself. As local planning authority it can grant permission for bus turning circles or car parks at other facilities to improve public transport provided by others.

Policy R11

Planning permission will be granted for facilities that would improve public transport services, subject to the other policies in this Local Plan.

Cycling and walking

- 9.37 The NPA favours cycling and walking as sustainable forms of transport. As recreation activities they are discussed in section 11. The NPA will use any opportunities offered by development proposals to create by agreement new routes suitable for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, and to improve the environment for their users. Existing rights of way shown on the definitive map will be safeguarded under policy G3.

Policy R12

Proposals to create new footpaths and cycle routes that link with the existing network will be permitted if they do not conflict with other policies in this Local Plan.