PLANNING TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT:
Turning transport planning on its head to deliver good growth

1.0   Context

1.1   The Housing Crisis, Economic Growth and Brexit. There is an urgent need to deliver more housing, and Government is putting pressure on Local Planning Authorities to deliver. There is also pressure to deliver economic growth and deliver improved productivity and market resilience in the light of Brexit, for example through the industrial strategy.

1.2   Meeting emerging development priorities. There is increasing concern about the impacts of development on issues such as road safety, air quality, and the effects on health of car use. There is also an increasing recognition that the development planning process has been delivering car dependent development and that this works against achieving good growth with can meet these and other important sustainable development outcomes.

1.3   Transport technology and the sharing economy. At the same time, we are entering a period of unprecedented change in the transport environment. Technological advances and the emergence of the sharing economy together have the potential to transform the way we travel, which are not accounted for in current practice.

1.4   Increasing importance of getting it right. These factors are serving to place increasing burdens on the process, and create political, policy and practical conflicts which cannot easily be resolved, at a time when there is significant pressure to accelerate development. The need to understand and address the adverse consequences of current transport and development planning practice is therefore of real importance and urgency.

2.0   Changing transport planning practice – meeting good growth objectives?

2.1   Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning? PPG13 was published in 1994. This heralded an integrated approach to land use and transport planning for new development, through the local planning and development planning process. Local Development Plans and Transport Assessments, (TAs), were to consider the needs of sustainable modes before those of cars.

2.2   Simplifying and accelerating the planning process? The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 was aimed at simplifying and accelerating the planning process, and was accompanied by the withdrawal of transport assessment guidance. Its reference to development proposals being acceptable unless transport effects are 'severe' brought no better understanding of how to perform TAs or reach agreement about how to deliver sustainable development and transport proposals. Obtusely, this has probably exacerbated an already difficult situation.

2.3   Transport Assessment – common practice. Whilst there has been a shift in transport planning practice towards consideration of sustainable modes, transport assessments have continued to take account of traffic growth over the development period, and planning conditions and obligations for development have often adopted a precautionary approach to the delivery of highway mitigation to provide for it. Many practitioners believe this modified

'predict and provide' approach does not effectively take account of major changes now taking place in the transport environment, and that it continues to reinforce car dependent behaviour as development is implemented.

2.4   **Transport for New Homes.** Emerging research being undertaken by the Foundation for Integrated Transport (Transport for New Homes) has considered the relationship between forms of car dependent development in urban extensions and rural development, and the outcomes in terms of the local employment, amenities, and health and wellbeing factors that underpin successful communities. This qualitative study connects car based development broadly with poor community outcomes, suggesting that current practice is failing to meet good growth objectives.

3.0   **Disruptive Changes affecting Transport Planning**

3.1   **The Internet of Movement.** Future travel demand (and therefore transport planning) is going to be affected by disruptive changes in technology and the emergence of the sharing economy. Whatever your view may be about this, the advent of autonomous vehicles and integrated information and ticketing systems brings the potential for historic trends to change significantly over the next 20 years. There is at least the potential for the trends of younger people away from car use to be reinforced by changes towards Mobility as a Service, (MaaS), and for this to make forecasting and design even more of a lottery than it would otherwise be.

3.2   **All Change.** Recent research undertaken by the Independent Transport Commission highlights some important changes in travel trends over the last 20 years. In particular, this research suggests that the link between traffic growth and economic growth has been broken, and that there are significant changes amongst younger people whose propensity to travel by car has fallen, in men by some 47%. Whilst the older generation are generally travelling by car a little more, the trends amongst younger people away from car travel might have very significant implications for future transport provision.

3.3   **Public Perception of transport challenges and solutions:** Despite some very significant shifts in travel patterns over the last 20 years, public perception remains focussed on continued road use and congestion, (as increases in population, last mile logistics and private hire drive aggregate travel demand), rather than the underlying changes taking place. Highway capacity measures are seen as preferred solutions, rather than measures in support of sustainable transport.

3.4   **Shaping our transport future - a generational issue?** Changes in travel behaviour are mostly being experienced by the younger generations as they adapt to the reality of technological and economic factors, whilst the older generations who have less experience of this are more likely to regard assertions about change as being illusory. Those responsible for shaping our future communities might therefore fail to appreciate the importance of these factors in planning strategy and decision making.

4.0   Implications for the Transport Assessment and Planning Process.

4.1   Vision and Validate. Professor Peter Jones has postulated that Transport Planning needs to be 'turned on its head'. He suggests that, rather than to continue with (an albeit a slightly more enlightened version of) 'predict and provide', we should employ a 'vision and validate' approach. This would envision what we want 'good growth' to look like, and use forecasting and design skills to test scenarios in order to identify the approach which will provide us with the best opportunity of achieving that vision.

4.2   Beyond Strategic Planning. The focus of academic debate about this concept appears to be on strategic planning at the sub national/ city region scale, in which the spatial plan - and the infrastructure required to deliver 'good growth' - is set out. Yet the local planning process outside the major conurbations is delivering many of the houses, schools, and employment floorspace being demanded by Government now through the Local Development Plans and Local Infrastructure Plans that define the development plan – and in the planning process for development itself.

4.3   The Development Plan. This is the logical place for the vision for 'good growth' to be established and enshrined, reflecting national and local priorities. However, pressure on Local Authority budgets has adversely affected the ability to plan for transport infrastructure over the long term. Funding is fragmented, and a range of funding sources are often needed to bring forward new projects. The business case appraisal methodology required to secure funding favour road based solutions, making it relatively more difficult to promote sustainable transport options as part of the Development Plan, with consequential effects for development proposals working to fit into the wider plan.

4.4   A new approach to transport assessment? Development Plans and development planning are influenced by local politicians and stakeholders, often drawn from the older generations, who inevitably reflect public perceptions about the need to provide for car use in future development schemes. If this is likely to be compounding problems of car dependency, with consequent impacts on community cohesion, economic performance and health, an alternative approach to transport assessment which can gain the trust of these key stakeholders needs to be identified and adopted.

5.0   Understanding how far we have to travel

5.1   The Transport Policy Development Cycle. The CREATE project seeks to help cities decouple economic growth and high mobility from traffic growth, and to create a sustainable transport system. This project postulates the existence of a 'transport policy development cycle':

- **Stage One:** Cities with 'pro-car' policies – characterised by rapid urban economic growth like to the growth of car ownership and use. Road building and car parking is prioritised.
- **Stage Two:** Cities facing problems associated with increased car use, such as congestion and pollution, introduce policies to provide better public transport alternatives and limit car access to city centres.

- **Stage Three:** Cities aspire to become 'liveable cities' by encouraging street activities, relocating road space to public transport and promoting walking and cycling.

These are helpful concepts when thinking about the progress being made in terms of delivering sustainable outcomes from development through the development planning process. Arguably, the Vision and Validate approach is necessary to move into Stage Three.

5.2   **Progress at the strategic/ city level.** Cities such as London and Manchester are focussing on the outcomes they are keen to achieve. Factors such as air quality, health and wellbeing, safety, transport choice and resilience are considered as priorities, and are resulting in strategies such as healthy streets being set out in strategic land use and transport plans. This suggests that they are now embracing a transition to stage three in terms of their strategic planning, and embracing a Vision and Validate approach. The arrangements for devolution no doubt make this process easier to deliver, with the prospect of greater controls over local funding and delivery mechanisms.

5.3   **Some way to go at the local level – outside our main conurbations.** Planning for growth and housing through the planning process, through the local plan and development management process is under pressure to deliver housing and employment, but there is ongoing public concern about the impact of development on road safety and congestion, and support for road based solutions to these issues, which are influencing the outcomes of the planning process.

It is not uncommon for developers to present an enlightened approach to development. They can see value in creating sustainable communities, and benefits to be gained from avoiding the social, environmental and economic dis-benefits of car based development solutions. However, there is regular experience where this leads to costly and time consuming assessment and negotiation, culminating in a precautionary approach to planning conditions and obligations for highway mitigation being adopted.

This suggests that (very generally) the development planning process outside the main conurbations is caught between stages one and two – places that are seeking economic growth and regeneration through housing and employment development, quite likely to be suffering from the effects of road congestion, wanting to support public transport, walking and cycling, but finding this hard to do and instead continuing with the predict and provide, roads based thinking they are used to, and in response to public/ Member concern

5.4   **What are the consequences?** There are a range of effects arising from these issues, all of which tend to work against the objectives of good growth. There are three broad issues:

The lack of a clear vision for development and a plan for infrastructure delivery at the local plan level can result in unplanned development being permitted, and undermine the effectiveness of, and funding for the intended infrastructure plan, and the sustainability derived from the intended relationship between housing, employment and other facilities.

Whilst the conflicts inherent in the transport assessment and development management processes persist between good growth objectives and the public perceptions that drive

decision making, the process of securing planning permission will continue to be lengthy, costly and ineffective in delivering good growth.

Whilst current transport assessment practice continues, development and transport schemes will continue to reinforce car use, result in under-investment in comprehensive public transport schemes, and in turn exacerbate congestion and the adverse effects of car use on sustainable development outcomes.

6.0 What needs to be changed?

6.1 **Bolstering Credibility through Evidence:** The fundamental problem underlying the current difficulties in delivering sustainable development and transport solutions through the local planning process is credibility about the success of sustainable transport and land use solutions. Proponents of sustainable development are often told that the decision makers would be very willing to contemplate sustainable transport measures. However, as there is no guarantee that they would be effective, they seek to ensure that the roads based solution can be delivered. To do otherwise, it is believed, would be taking too high a risk which local stakeholders would not support, but does fundamentally undermine any investment in non-car schemes.

This puts the need for evidence at the heart of this debate. Travel Plans have been part of transport and development assessment practice for many years, and Travel Plan Guidance prepared about ten years ago made it clear that the monitoring and review of outcomes should be a critical part of any travel plan. However, the effectiveness of travel plan monitoring and evaluation has been lamentable, leaving us short of useful data that would provide information about what works and what doesn't work.

There is therefore an urgent need for research in this area, particularly as technology to undertake detailed monitoring is now available and affordable. This needs to go beyond the theoretical, and look at UK and (relevant) international examples of development, across a wide range of contexts, in order to better understand the relationships between development form, land use and transport provision and outcomes in terms of movement, so that this can underpin future appraisal and assessment.

6.2 **Setting the Vision and Defining the Roadmap:** NPPF seeks to reinforce a plan led system, and the Development Plan has a key role to play in setting out the long term vision taking into account national policy and local circumstance. This should shape supporting policies such as those relating to the spatial and infrastructure plans, and provide the basis for a clearly defined delivery plan. Appraisal methodologies should be able to reflect the benefits of achieving good growth, and incentives could be put in place for those Local Planning Authorities who deliver good growth in line with their plan.

6.3 **Revised Transport Assessment Guidance.** Whilst it would be helpful to prepare revised guidance for transport assessment, this is probably not the most urgent of these proposals. The current lack of guidance does leave much open to interpretation, and it is the process of setting the vision for growth, the underlying assumptions which define assessment scenarios and the evidence used to support the analysis of alternative sustainable transport options,

which will redefine the process. More important would be a review of how planning conditions and obligations could be written to take account of a more flexible approach to the monitoring and management of development/ movement outcomes, and the need for plans to be reviewed to meet agreed development and transport outcomes.

Possible revised approach to Transport Assessment based around a Vision and Validate approach.

1.0   **Existing Conditions:** Accessibility/ provision by mode/ land use mix/ social infrastructure within travel area/ existing travel patterns by mode, journey purpose, time period etc.

2.0   **Future Conditions:** Establishing/ describing the vision for good growth – in terms of economic/ environment/ transport/ education/ health/ safety objectives.

3.0   **Development Proposals:** Describe alternative development scenarios, and establish transport options to support delivery of preferred outcomes.

4.0   **Scenario testing:** Assessment of alternative transport infrastructure/ services/ management options to identify which provides the optimum route to the vision, taking account of transport planning (evidence), design feasibility and risk, delivery and viability factors.

5.0   **Transport proposals and delivery plan:** Defining transport proposals in terms of design, operation, funding, programme, risk management, contingency planning.

6.0   **Monitoring and Review:** Monitoring requirements: movement/ other outcomes. Manage transport provision to deliver identified outcomes. Share, review and lessons learned.

6.4   **Coalition for Change.** Perhaps most important consideration is the need to establish a collation for change. Experience suggests that there is now wide recognition of these issues, across the local planning and regulatory authorities, developers, transport professionals and academics, many of whom are frustrated by the current situation. Bringing together these different communities into one voice which supports the need for change would demand attention.

6.5   **Outreach to decision makers.** This paper postulates that the perceptions of decision makers are influencing the outcomes of the development planning process. This is inevitable and not a matter for criticism. However, it does need to be addressed, and a programme of engagement with decision makers would provide a good basis for future change. This might initially take the form of providing information about latest travel trends, the future challenges and alternative approaches that can be adopted to land use and transport planning, and the consequences of business as usual.