

Participants

- Professor Glenn Lyons, Mott MacDonald Professor of Future Mobility, University of the West of England (Chair)
- Claire Haigh, Chief Executive, Greener Transport Solutions
- Bridget Rosewell, Commissioner, NIC
- Stephen Joseph, Trustee Foundation for Integrated Transport
- Victoria Hills, Royal Town Planning Institute
- Kamal Panchal, Local Government Association
- Professor Peter Jones, UCL
- Richard Dilks, CEO, CoMoUK
- Stephen Cragg, Head of Appraisal and Model Development, Transport Scotland
- Lynn Basford, Founder of BasfordPowers (and lead author of recent planning guidance)
- Rose McArthur, Director, Transport and Highways, Cheshire West and Cheshire Council
- Richard Bradley, Head of Strategy, Midlands Connect
- Martina Juvara, Director, URBAN Silence
- Nick Richardson, Technical Principle, Mott MacDonald
- David Milner, Deputy Director of Create Streets
- Brian Love, Connected Cities
- Professor Laurence Pickup, International Director, Vectos
- David Walmsley, Transport Analyst
- Mark Frost, Chair, Transport Planning Society

The meeting was held under Chatham House rules, meaning all remarks made in this summary note are **non-attributable**.

Summary of meeting discussion

Opening remarks and presentation

At the commencement of the session, attendees listened to introductory remarks setting out that the session was intended to explore how the planning system, its different components and decisions deriving from it could support the decarbonisation of transport.

The attendees then heard a presentation that outlined that transport was based on derived demand, part of which was based on the built environment and planning decisions in a local area.

A public transport system needed dense developments to flourish, and shorter distances were needed to encourage active travel. The speaker did not believe that cycling was a suitable replacement for a lot of motorised transport journeys.

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) had assessed that transport infrastructure would still be needed in 30 years' time because of the movement of goods needed for a successful economy. This meant making dense settlements more attractive.

Behaviour change must be supported by infrastructure that encouraged positive decisions, including making new developments more friendly to active travel. Devolution and other levers were needed to create a freight and delivery system for the future, without handing more power to large multi-nationals like Amazon.

The speaker was asked how it was possible to bring about change at the scale to meet the net zero deadline. The key solution was devolution of funding settlements to local authorities (LAs) from Whitehall alongside new powers.

Meeting housing needs

The population growth level in the UK was well-below the replacement level because of a falling fertility rate, alongside plateauing immigration in the long-term. However, the data for conducting housing assessments and needs was out of date, having been produced in 2014.

The result was that the UK did not need 300,000 new houses a year, but instead closer to 200,000. In the long-term, the country did not need an indefinite growth in housing stock. An over-scaling of long-term housing need meant the wrong types of built environment were being created.

We should instead focus on restructuring existing built environments for this century, a speaker said.

Planning reforms

Planning reforms might be delivered through the Levelling Up Bill when it was published in the summer, given the Government had backed some from its more controversial reforms. The climate change obligation should be legally reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Existing housing stock should also be retrofitted to meet new modern, energy efficiency standards.

The biggest change factor in terms of influencing people's behaviour is likely to be driven by public health. This is in part due to a greater public appreciation of healthy lifestyles, and the publicity of the link established between obesity and COVID-19, which has seen more people appreciating the benefits of walking and cycling.

Devolution and freight transport

Government was throwing more support behind local authorities as a potential rapid redevelopment for local travel plans loomed. Tools available to support LAs included a decarbonisation playbook to help them tackle climate change and looking at EV charging points.

Action was also needed to move freight traffic on to cleaner models of transport, including rail freight or sea.

Another speaker asked if planning reforms would be able to address transport decarbonisation, to which there was no consensus among attendees.

Investment in freight transport must account for most road congestion coming from cars and not lorries. The UK was a very centralised country and would benefit more from locally based decisions.

Role of local authorities in transport decarbonisation

There was plenty of joined up thinking in local authorities but planning decisions were not in line with sustainable transport. It was important to encourage planning authorities to consider the long-term carbon impact from their decisions.

Conversations in local authorities around how the planning system could support transport decarbonisation were often stymied by a lack of public transport infrastructure in their areas. The speaker insisted there were plenty people within LAs who wanted to provide alternative arrangements to the car.

Another attendee said no councillor in the country gave much thought to the design of schemes because the building of big roads was prioritised over all other decisions. Delivering infrastructure at speed and without challenge was a “disaster”.

Later in the session, another speaker flagged those debates in planning decisions were centred on the amount of space allocated to driveways in dwellings, as well as junctions and roundabouts.

They also lamented that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) did not appear to have given much thought to those decisions.

Types of local authorities

A challenge at a local level was the dependency of councils on local votes and the democratic decisions that were not conducive to encouraging long-term decision making on transport decisions. This was exacerbated in places where elections took place by thirds. A constant narrative was required to carry local people along with their LAs, but strong leadership was also needed.

There was greater flexibility on planning for and making transport decisions in mayoral combined authorities given the flexibility and longer-term nature of funding and could be with the new county deals, but that remained to be seen.

Local authorities also lacked the metrics in planning decisions that took account of wellbeing, which should be included in the NPPF.

Later in the session, an attendee warned against cherry-picking case studies to seem that planning decisions were either weighted towards favouring road-based infrastructure or active travel. The planning system should find the balance between both. They felt transport and key attractions should be factored into earlier stages of the planning process.

The session closed with a discussion of the importance of folding sustainable transport decisions into wider planning processes and ensuring LAs were sufficiently resourced and empowered to make decisions.

Remarks raised by participants in the chat during the event

All remarks are unattributable in-line with Chatham House rules.

- *Create Streets has done a lot on "gentle density"*
- *Also, on Suburban intensification this paper 'StreetVotes' gives a solution. Its landed well politically <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/strong-suburbs/>*
- *e-bikes and e-cargo bikes may be game changers, on freight as well as passenger travel locally*
- *Devolution needs to be accompanied by the policy owners having the capacity and capability to deliver. Government is asking strategic transport authorities to support our partners.*

- *Transport for the North tried one form of devolution and it didn't go well. Will Government be able to handle such big changes?*
- *We still have central data that there will be many vehicles that use fossil fuels. How do we handle the changes in population growth if we can't reflect vehicle fuel switching as written in legislation? We can use scenario planning, but many don't value that or can afford it. BTW I love it!*
- *Can you provide a link to your article in the chat when you have a moment?*
- *Sorry in 2050 there will still be high proportions of fossil fuel*
- *<https://elements.lttmagazine.co.uk/ltt842c-juvara.php>*
- *We need to deliver more housing given the crisis we have in housing today especially affordable housing.*
- *Absolutely the housing crisis is a crisis of affordability and a backlog of housing. Not indefinite growth*
- *Research on travel patterns during Covid shows big increase in walking <https://www.creds.ac.uk/publications/less-is-more-changing-travel-in-a-post-pandemic-society/>*
- *Some unitary authorities are poor, though - the Transport for New Homes research found Wiltshire developments were very car dependent, and Trowbridge is seeing fringe development while town centre sites are empty*
- *For me there is a dreadful irony in housing numbers being used to justify low density, often greenfield, developments that lock in private car use and thus embed higher than necessary GHG emissions. While I am in the chat: this is our new report on this area from us, the national charity for the public benefit of shared transport: https://como.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CoMoUK-New-Developments-Guidance-2022_final.pdf*
- *To instil transport carbonisation in planning we need the NPPF to be revised as Victoria stated and requirements relating to transport decarbonisation built into NSIPs and the Planning Act 2008 regime. Strategic housing should become NSIPs.*
- *for enjoyment - see attached article - a positive role model??*
- *"For members of the Royal Town Planning Institute, here it is at last: a play about road building. It even stars Ralph Fiennes. After years of mockery, years of surveyors being derided as polyester-shirted, weedy-voiced nerds who gaze through theodolites, here is dashing Ralph as an urban planner. And not a single hard hat or high-vis tabard to be seen."*
- *There's an ongoing issue of councils have sufficient resources to deal with responding to climate change agenda. Just on planning applications we estimate that taxpayers subsidise that at £180 million a year. We need skills, bums on seats etc. But I think Gov seems to be getting it (or at least DfT do) - with revenue support to develop buses, cycling plans, and last Friday, EV charge points. All siloed thinking though.*
- *Previous root cause analysis on how we can make better planning decisions indicated we need to: better understand and forecast what people experience; we need to be able to understand quality of life; and we need to be able to shape new markets. The early building blocks to solving this are more detailed information in collaboration systems = the elusive Data Model.*
- *Data matters but we have also to be able to communicate it to build any consensus with the public. We can't make it feel 'done to' but rather 'done with'*
- *Need to tackle the problem in three clear phases: Substitute to local trips or on-line; Shift away from car; and switch away from fossil fuels. The evidence gathering for this is not easy, so we need to understand how we deliver action now - with support to local authorities this year.*
- *My experience of running a highway authority (and in a unitary too) is that, if planning is wholly focussed on housing number delivery, it is almost impossible for transport planners*

to significantly influence the principal of consent for sites in the development management process. You are immediately in the realm of securing a 'least bad' outcome in terms of mitigation around the edges. Transport's influence over spatial plans can be a bit more constructive, but you are still very much on back foot because of housing numbers overrule almost everything out.

- The RTPI study <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/> shows that to get to net zero requires a shift to public transport greater than has ever been previously achieved. To bring this about all parts of the country should be required to us a system like London where the PTAL (Public Transport Access Level) is a highly rated factor. The current PTAL methodology should be updated to take distance as well as frequency into account. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_transport_accessibility_level
- Gilston garden town in Harlow is a case in point - HIF funding is going to a new M11 junction and associated dual carriageway "bypass" for Harlow, plus an upgrade to existing roads - before the master planning for the development.
- I think we should also look at how public transport is organised. There is a new housing development near here (Reading) which has been built with a spine road and developments off it, instead of a sprawling development. It would be ideal for a bus route, but there isn't one because the LA doesn't have the money to provide one, and the bus company won't put in a bus until there is a demand for it - which won't happen now because the new residents have organised their lives around the car.
- Building an enterprise view of the use of clean energy across all consumption sectors requires a collaborative approach - if we are not collaborating around real local data, I think we'll continue with silo thinking and local authorities struggling to join in what is a shared mission.
- We keep seeing hybrid applications with a full technical design for a wide road but no detail on the development and how people move around
- Leadership is indeed the main need but one that is not based on current public polls.
- Transport for New Homes work on garden communities found lovely masterplans with lots of sustainable transport, but big roads and lots of car parking in practice
- Regarding density the UN sets 100 persons/hectare as the minimum density required to support public transport. That is approximately 35 dwellings per hectare. To achieve such a density, it is not necessary to build dense midrise everywhere. Immediately around a transport hub it is appropriate, but within the 1km radius around a hub 50% of land can be used for green blue infrastructure and low rise and midrise can easily accommodate 35 dwellings/hectare. The challenge then is to enable and encourage active travel within that 15-minute neighbourhood.
- The solution to bus is probably not a fixed system but a dynamic system for schedules. We think demand responsive transport could work (pilots in Lincolnshire now), just like we see with Tesco delivery slots - get your slot early or you'll have less choice near to when you need your groceries.
- Major developments following the same patterns of big roads first: North Essex, Gilston, Medway/Hoo, Southend. In all the development is justified by ease of commuting - i.e., going away from it, rather than staying. We need to shift this mindset. Local communities already know that.
- We're starting to find car clubs very helpful to tackling ridiculously high parking minimums. c20 spaces replaced by one Zipcar for example. This helps us add more homes therefore more density to support PT or offices/shops
- We have a commercial issue with data for new developments, building from spatial plans doesn't capture this. How do we provide a safe but collaborative place to safe commercially sensitive data of growth plans?

- *I was asked to review a development proposal that involves expanding a motorway junction which the developer claimed was sustainable because they included a short stretch of bus lane where it isn't needed but nothing else.*
- *Our report does have just those sorts of case studies, as do several other reports published in recent months*
- *Case studies are good and give confidence - but should we not be on a fast curve of change to meet the 25% reduction?*
- *Should we not move on from tentative to actual action?*
- *Cost of living crisis is an interesting development here. If this ends up being a long-term trend, and with a particularly pernicious energy crunch element to it, this could potentially drive a lot of travel behaviour change. Question may be therefore how we can push on that 'change moment' to develop new norms from some of these sites. This could be around driving up demand for public transport through fare subsidies etc, but also through improving the offer around new mobility options (micro-mobility, DRT etc), and active travel. My understanding is that 89% of housing built 2011-2019 is either in or nearby to a major settlement so location always the barrier to sustainable transport, more likely the attractiveness of the car and the non-attractiveness of the alternatives to it. If the car becomes unattractive then that will change a lot of these discussions fundamentally.*
- *Politics is public opinion. Changing public behaviour needs all aspects of the COM-B change model in place before we hammer home on the positive messaging. Simply 'lobbying' politicians doesn't seem to work.*
- *(of course, also relies on a decent replacement for fuel duty on EVs!)*
- *The case studies help but not on their own: I think we need a package approach of policy definition; advocacy for that change; case studies; local engagement. In fact, rather like sustainable transport - shared transport, public transport and active travel already heavily intertwine in people's lives when they have the options to use them and when private car use is made less attractive*
- *Absolutely right on skills, so difficult to recruit talent in transport planning, good that DfT is shining a light on the pipeline: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transport-labour-market-and-skills>*
- *Rather than build new infrastructure we need to make maximum use of the existing infrastructure. Rail is the least polluting form of transport, producing less than 3% of transport carbon emissions. Encouraging greater use of the system by building new developments close to stations with an improved frequency of service will greatly assist in enabling the long-term shift to public transport. See www.ConnectedCities.org for such a proposal.*
- *Yes indeed - we find car clubs displace 18.5 private cars per car club car as a UK average. Then you add in shared two wheeled options, link with public transport, provide pleasant active travel options and limit space and access for private cars.*
- *Developments by stations need to be large to generate sufficient demand to justify the large capacity of the train. Works for cities, but not easily elsewhere*
- *yes, I think cost of living will become increasingly important. Echoes of the fuel crises of the '70s and more efficient car engines etc perhaps. Shared transport is already booming - record increases in memberships in the last year. We're just finalising figures but there are now 800,000 car club members in the UK for example, before we add in the bikeshare schemes, the e-scooter trials (which must be well over 15 million rides now), lift sharing, DRT bus services.*
- *The roundtable seems to agree on key short-term action: 1 - Embed climate action and carbon target approach in NPPF; 2 - More devolved responsibilities and devolved budgets*
- *Sorry - need to go now. Thanks for the stimulating discussion!*

- *Whole new settlements of 30,000 persons can be built within 1km of a station, The uplift in land value will pay for the station*
- *https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/27891/Somerset-Enabling-Growth-Implementing-the-End-to-End-Service-Review/pdf/Somerset_Enabling_Growth_Implementing_the_End_to_End_Service_Review_Final_100521_002.pdf?m=637577231883970000*
- *3 - More integrated / coordinated land use and transport; 4- New mindset to the purpose of planning and education in this sense; 5 - skills*
- *This link that I have just provided is all about the integrated coordinated land use and transport and a new mind set!*
- *This is a great book from the States which communicates infrastructure and sprawl well*
- *<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Confessions-Recovering-Civil-Engineer-Transportation/dp/1119699290#:~:text=who's%20serving%20who%3F-,In%20Confessions%20of%20a%20Recovering%20Engineer%3A%20Transportation%20for%20a%20Strong,and%20managing%20America's%20transportation%20systems.>*
- *Embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the NPPF is ideal. But maybe easier is to have the hierarchy of transport modes (active, public, etc) embedded. That would change a great deal.*
- *<https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/>*
- *<https://www.createstreets.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Computer-says-road-1.pdf>*
- *Here's a short paper I put together on transport modelling, referencing Stephen's Vision and Validate point*
- *Just going back to Victoria's point around the importance of retrofitting existing developments, In London new developments are doing the heavy lifting in this space - they come forward with low or zero car parking and residents living there are not allowed to access on-street parking stock, which is reserved for the incumbent population. People buying new housing are therefore expected to do more to reduce negative externalities from transport than people in existing developments. That's better than most of the TfN examples perhaps, but not sure that is always going to be the most progressive outcome. We need to get better at identifying how we can find win: win opportunities where new development unlocks investment in sustainable transport solutions that both the new and existing residents can benefit from and use. A 'development dividend' for improved transport that existing residents benefit from can also help reduce opposition to development etc.*
- *Spot on in terms of importance of cross-boundary planning. The least sustainable location in one authority for housing might still be more sustainable than the most sustainable location in another authority. How is that considered in the current system at present?*
- *Yes, more backcasting please*
- *Absolutely important to measure back from the trajectory we should have to achieve our 1.5°C goals*
- *A question Steve Gooding of RAC Foundation often asks: "what would need to be true for what you want to happen?"*
- *Other than a BAU culture, that's also because the most attractive development dividend for existing residents (and therefore councillors) from most new sites is too often a new road. Need to change that mindset!*