

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING?

Accessibility planning is one of a range of cross-governmental policies and initiatives which emerged from the recommendations of the Social Exclusion Unit's 2003 report 'Making the Connections'. The report defines the reasons for poor accessibility to work and other key destinations which have a critical impact on opportunity and quality of life, and proposes solutions to those problems.

Accessibility has been identified as one of the four 'shared priorities' that national and regional government shares with local authorities. The other three shared priorities are tackling congestion, improving road safety, and increasing air quality.

All local transport authorities are now required to develop Accessibility Strategies as an integral part of their Local Transport Plan (LTP) process, with considerations of accessibility underpinning the whole document. Accessibility planning extends Nottinghamshire County Council's approach to partnership working in developing its transport strategy, setting out a way of engaging expert organisations in identifying problems which people experience in reaching a range of services, and jobs.

The integration of this process into the LTP is essential to efficiently target resources for maximum impact. The framework Accessibility Strategy was included within the text of the provisional LTP submitted to Government in July 2005 in order to demonstrate how accessibility considerations influence and integrate into the LTP. This Accessibility Strategy, produced 8 months later after considerable additional development and dialogue with partners, is being published as a separate document appended to the full LTP. This way of presenting the strategy seeks to promote understanding of accessibility needs and show that a clear process has been adopted to develop these plans.

1.2 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE?

In the North Nottinghamshire Personal Perceptions Survey (June 2005), a tenth of respondents with access to a car ranked accessibility as the most important of the shared and local transport priorities for the area; this figure increased to a fifth for those who do not have access to a car. 18% of respondents living in the Retford urban area ranked accessibility as a top priority for the future for their area; similarly 22% of respondents in the Newark urban area ranked accessibility as a top priority. This highlights the importance of ensuring continual improvements in narrowing the relative distance and time between services and people – particularly for those from less affluent and rural areas.

Destinations highlighted in the national guidance on accessibility planning as being of importance are:

- education and training
- employment
- food & essential services
- health

The County Council and its partners have also decided to consider access to leisure and culture destinations as having a significant impact on quality of life, together with potential cross-sector benefits for the four key areas listed above.