

## **REPORT AGENDA ITEM 10**

### **LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS FORUM FOR NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE**

**1ST NOVEMBER 2007**

#### **MANUAL FOR STREETS**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to respond to a previous request of the Forum for information on the implications of the new government guidance on street design. The report also provides information on the updating of the County Council's development guide and the progress in working towards a consistent regional approach.

##### **Background**

2. In Leicestershire we adopt approximately 14 kilometres of new development roads a year, the majority of which are to access new housing. We adopt residential streets wherever possible (that is accept responsibility for their future maintenance), to ensure that they can be properly and efficiently maintained to safeguard the frontager's interests. It also contributes to our Local Transport Plan aims and objectives to provide safe layouts and to increase the attractiveness of walking, cycling and the use of public transport.
3. In 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Department for Transport (DfT) published detailed research, "Better Streets, Better Places – Delivering Sustainable Residential Environments; PPG3 and Highway Adoption". County Council officers attended the stakeholder meetings and provided input to the research as we were in the process of updating our own development guide. The research demonstrated that the combined effect of existing national and local policies and legal and technical guidance were not helping to generate consistently good quality streets.
4. The research proposed a number of interventions including publishing a Manual for Streets (MfS), clarification of parking policy in planning policy guidance (PPG 3), and publishing a circular on the justification for and calculation of any payments by developers for the future maintenance of adopted highways.

5. In September 2004 the County Council approved as policy its new developer's design guide, "Highways, transportation, and development" (Htd). This reflected current national guidance whilst at the same time addressing many of the barriers identified in the 2003 ODPM/DfT research that were preventing the delivery of better quality sustainable streets. The key to the guidance is flexibility to ensure that developments reflect local character and circumstances, and to allow layouts not covered in the superseded document. It also emphasises the need for joint working between the highway authority, planning authority and developers to seek to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity. Htd is a web-based document to ensure that it is as easy to use as possible and to enable it to be readily updated ([www.leics.gov.uk/htd](http://www.leics.gov.uk/htd)).

### **Manual for Streets (MfS)**

6. Following on from its research into street design, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the DfT commissioned a team led by consultants WSP to investigate and publish the MfS. Leicestershire County Council officers were invited to advise on the sounding board, largely because of our involvement in the previous research and because Htd took into account much of its findings. A number of developments in Leicestershire were considered in the evidence for MfS, which was launched in March 2007.
7. MfS supersedes Design Bulletin 32 and its companion guide Places, Streets and Movement. It complements Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, and comprises technical guidance. It does not set out any new policy or legal requirements.
8. MfS focuses on lightly trafficked residential streets, but many of its key principles may be applicable to other types of street. It does not apply to the trunk road network, the design requirements being set out in the Highways Agency's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). This will also continue to be the appropriate design manual for many county roads whose main function is accommodating the movement of traffic.
9. There are many recommendations in the MfS. A summary leaflet produced by WSP Consultants is attached for information, and a full copy of the guidance is available at [www.manualforstreets.org.uk](http://www.manualforstreets.org.uk).
10. It is intended that MfS will "bring about a transformation in the quality of new and existing streets. People will need to think creatively about their various roles in the process of delivering streets, breaking away from standardised prescriptive risk-averse methods to create high quality places inclusive of all people regardless of age or ability. The process is based on a clear user hierarchy of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and finally, motor vehicles."

### **Highways, transportation and development (Htd)**

11. MfS recognises that local standards and design guidance are important tools for designing in accordance with the local context. MfS strongly recommends that local authorities review their standards and guidance to embrace its principles. Although Htd has already addressed many of the issues in MfS it is currently being updated to take account of revised design standards based on the further research to ensure that it remains as one of the best development guides. Subject to approval by the County Council's Cabinet it is intended to publish this revision in December 2007.
12. The research into PPG3 and adoption also recommended a clarification into parking policy for residential estates. WSP consultants were commissioned by ODPM in 2003 to research parking demand in housing developments. Again County officers were invited to advise on the sounding board and provided evidence used for Htd. The resulting research paper was published in May 2007, and makes cross-reference to MfS. It is intended that the residential parking standards in Htd are amended to follow that approach. This should ensure as far as possible that there is appropriate on-street and off-street parking provision to reduce the problems caused by inappropriately parked vehicles.
13. The research into PPG3 and adoption also recommended publishing a circular on the justification for and calculation of any payments for the future maintenance of adopted highways. This arose from concerns from local highway authorities on the potential increase in maintenance costs if residential streets changed from a standard layout, which could be maintained within current budgets, to less prescriptive layouts using non-standard materials. Htd sets out how the County Council will recover any additional maintenance costs from developers through the payment of commuted sums (an initial payment to cover future additional costs).
14. The DfT has recently commissioned a project into commuted sums and it is intended to publish guidance in May 2008. County officers are on the steering group of this project as they have significant experience in the assessment of maintenance costs and securing costs through legal agreements under the Highways Act 1980. At present it is not envisaged that there will need to be any major changes to current policy, but Htd will be reviewed at the appropriate time.
15. Our local guidance is now kept up to date and officers take every opportunity to be at the forefront of changes to national guidance to ensure that there is proper consideration of detailed issues. This has ensured that Htd is well regarded at a local, regional and national level.

16. To have a more consistent approach over a wider geographical area would give many benefits to both authorities and developers, especially with the demands for infrastructure that housing growth in the Regional Plan will require.
17. To this end discussions have been ongoing with Leicester City Council who will adopt Htd as their guidance in October, and it is envisaged that Nottinghamshire County Council and Derbyshire County Council will follow in April 2008. There is also much interest from the Midlands Service Improvement Group, which represents highway authorities across the whole of the midlands, in developing a regional design guide based on Htd, and it is hoped that this can be progressed in future.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

18. The MfS and Htd aim to provide new developments that are useable by all groups of society.

### **Recommendation**

19. It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.

### **Officer to Contact**

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### **Background Papers**

Department for Transport Manual for Streets [www.manualforstreets.org.uk](http://www.manualforstreets.org.uk)  
Leicestershire Highways, Transportation and Development (The Leicestershire Guide) [www.leics.gov.uk/htd](http://www.leics.gov.uk/htd)  
Leicestershire County Council's Cabinet Report 'Review of Design Guide Highways, Transportation and Development' – 23rd October 2007