



RIDGE

TRAVEL APPROACH
ECO PARK

October 2020



TRANSPORT APPROACH

ECO PARK

Prepared for

Ecotricity

Prepared by

Ridge and Partners LLP
The Cowyards
Blenheim Park
Oxford Road
Woodstock
OX20 1QR
Tel: 01993 815000

Contact

Chris Long
Partner
Ridge and Partners LLP
chrislong@ridge.co.uk

www.ridge.co.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

1.1.1 Ecotricity was founded in 1995 as the world's first green energy company and now supplies customers across the UK from a growing fleet of wind and sun parks, with all its electricity supply coming from 100% renewable energy. Ecotricity has introduced green gas to Britain, and has built and runs Britain's first national network of electric vehicle charge points, the Electric Highway. Ecotricity is a high technology business, developing cutting edge green technology for a low carbon future and generating a large number of high skilled jobs.

1.1.2 Ecotricity has a track record of job creation within Stroud District and seeks to expand upon this in the future through the creation of new business accommodation in an accessible and suitable location to sustain future growth.

1.1.3 This document summarises the Transport Approach that underpins the emerging Master Plan for the Ecotricity Eco Park. The Eco Park Site will create a cutting edge sustainable development that places walking, cycling and public transport use above that of the private car.

1.1.4 At the heart of the Eco Park concept is an aspiration to be a green low carbon development, employing the very best, innovative and most recent practices in sustainable building design and construction; green infrastructure; use of SuDs; and the adoption of best practice ecological management and enhancement. The proposal for the Green Technology Cluster complements the recently consented Forest Green Rovers Stadium development which also forms part of the wider Eco Park proposals.

1.1.5 The Eco park will deliver contemporary buildings, creating clean lines and utilising modern construction techniques to create first class buildings for visitors and staff alike. As with the Stadium design, the new buildings will embody environmentally friendly construction techniques, materials and services. Sustainable transport and the promotion of low carbon modes of travel will be integral to the development and will help attract a wide range of companies from the low carbon economy to occupy the site.

1.2 Policy Background

1.2.1 In June 2019, parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050, which would make the UK a net zero emitter. Prior to this, the UK was committed to reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% of their 1990 levels, also by 2050.

1.2.2 The latest National Travel Survey undertaken by the DfT in 2019, showed that 61% of trips were made by the car, 26% were made by foot and only 2% by bicycle (Figure 1). With the transport sector contributing over a quarter of UK Green House Gas emissions, it is the government's ambition to decarbonise all transport modes and to make walking and cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey, alongside increasing access to safe, attractive routes for cycling and walking by 2040. In line with this and the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

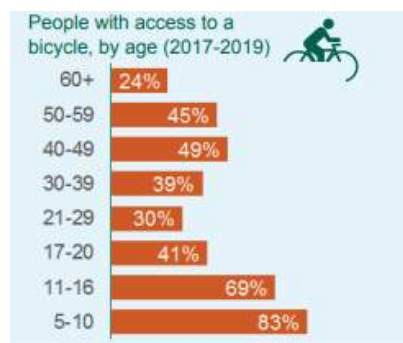
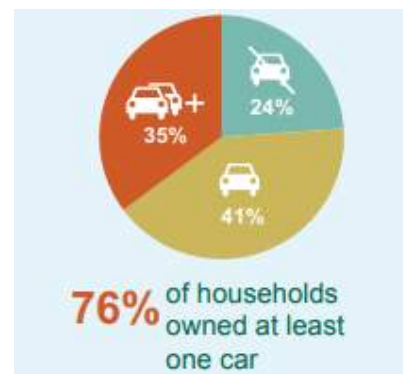


Figure 1 - Modal share National Travel Survey, DfT 2019

1.2.3 At a more detailed level, paragraph 110 of the NPPF states within this context developments should:

- Give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
- Address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
- Create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
- Allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
- Be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

1.2.4 A fresh approach to tackling carbon emissions in the UK was presented by the Government in March 2020 within “Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge”. This document starts the process for the development of The Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) which will set out in detail what government, business and society will need to do to deliver the significant emissions reduction needed across all modes of transport, putting the UK on a pathway to achieving carbon budgets and net zero emissions across every single mode of transport by 2050. The Government will publish the final plan in Autumn 2020.

1.2.5 Recent changes in travel behaviour brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown further support the need to promote active travel within and surrounding new development.

1.2.6 A UK-wide survey to understand travel behaviour changes during the Covid 19 pandemic (commissioned by the Department for Transport in March 2020) has showed that during lockdown travel behaviour changes resulted in less car and public transport use and more active travel. 65% of those surveyed walked or wheeled all the way to their destination, and those who did cycle during lockdown for leisure, recreation or keeping fit, were twice as likely to say they cycled longer distances compared to earlier in the year than to say they cycled shorter distances (although more reported cycling similar distances compared to previously). The recently published National Attitudes to Travel Survey (DfT, October 2020) showed that people were 39% and 38% more likely to walk and cycle than before the pandemic respectively (Figure 2).

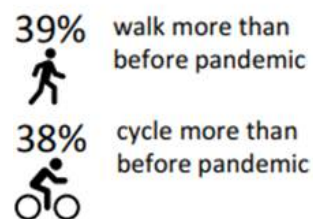


Figure 2 - Source National Travel Attitudes Survey, DfT October 2020

1.2.7 UK policy and recent travel behaviour changes due to Covid-19 all point to a change in attitudes and expectations around travel. There is increasing commitment from the Government to provide significant investment in public transport and active modes- In February 2020, for example, £1bn of funding has been earmarked for cycling and walking routes in the next five years. There is a shift away from reliance on the car, to more environmentally friendly and healthy modes of transport. Regional and Local transport policy reflects this UK wide shift. Gloucestershire County Council’s Emerging Local Transport Plan (2015-2041) identifies there is a change in public attitude towards transport and an increasing concern about Climate Change. There is also a growing understanding that more active forms of transport can play a key role in supporting a physically active lifestyle.

1.2.8 The Emerging Central Severn Vale Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, produced by Gloucestershire County Council, aims to increase trips made on foot and by cycle through infrastructure improvements that improve conditions for cycling and walking for all. Through evidence and consultation, the Plan has established county cycleway desire lines linking Cheltenham and Gloucester and between settlements along the M5 corridor. This includes links between Stroud and Stonehouse and north to Gloucester.

1.2.9 In May 2019 Gloucestershire County Council unanimously supported helping reduce global carbon reduction following a motion on climate change. As part of the motion, the Council agreed to:

- Welcome and endorse on behalf of Gloucestershire the declaration of a climate change emergency by parliament on behalf of the UK and urge other countries to do the same.
- Commit towards an 80 per cent reduction in the council’s corporate carbon emissions no later than 2030, striving towards 100 per cent with carbon offsetting by the same date.
- Commit the council to following the scientific advice of the Committee on Climate Change, and deliver a carbon neutral county by 2050, and work with partners to identify what measures would be needed to deliver a stepped target of 80 per cent carbon reduction by 2030 to reflect the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change.
- To call on Central Government to provide additional powers and resources to support local and national action towards this 2030 target.
- Lobby national government to commit to 100 per cent carbon neutrality by 2050.
- Consider contracts going forward to oblige all contractors to report their carbon emissions and to place a ‘carbon/ environmental cost’ on competing bids.
- Do all in the council’s power to adopt, implement and strengthen the Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy.
- Ensure that the council’s major plans, such as the local transport plan, have clearly identified strategies to reduce carbon emissions.

- Work with district and borough councils to reduce the districts' carbon footprint within their corporate strategies.
- Provide an annual report to the Environment Committee, with a performance update on a quarterly basis to the relevant committees including details of the resources required to meet the council's 2030 carbon neutral target.

1.2.13 In line with National and local policy, the proposals at the Eco Park put sustainable transport and active travel provision at the heart of the development.

1.2.10 Similarly, a climate emergency has also been declared by Stroud District Council, which has led to a framework of measures being set up which will help the district become carbon neutral by 2030. Those actions include working with Gloucestershire County Council as transport authority to offer more low carbon transport options, new renewable energy developments, implementing investment and including provision in new developments for cycle paths, and working with partners to achieve effective community engagement.

1.2.11 Stroud District Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy, part of their emerging Local Plan, prioritises walking, cycling and public transport above the private car. This fits with the ethos proposed by Ecotricity for the wider Eco Park focusing on walking, cycling (National Cycle Route 45) and public transport improvements to link the site to Stroud and the wider district.

1.2.12 The Strategy sets out the following vision: 'Enable mobility for all, prioritising sustainable and low carbon modes of transport, allowing healthy and prosperous communities and economy to thrive, whilst continuing to be an environmentally responsible district.'

1.3 Design Principles

- 1.3.1 High quality active travel provision is integral to the Eco Park proposals. It has therefore been designed against the following principles:
- To ensure that cycling and walking are recognised as important travel modes and therefore part of the transport mix;
 - To ensure the safe and efficient movement of all transport users;
 - To support economic development by facilitating travel to work and services without a car;
 - To reduce congestion and pollution by encouraging and enabling people to travel without a car; and
 - To increase the vitality of communities by improving access by bicycle and on foot; and
 - Where car use cannot be avoided provide electric car parking and charging on-site to make this use carbon neutral.

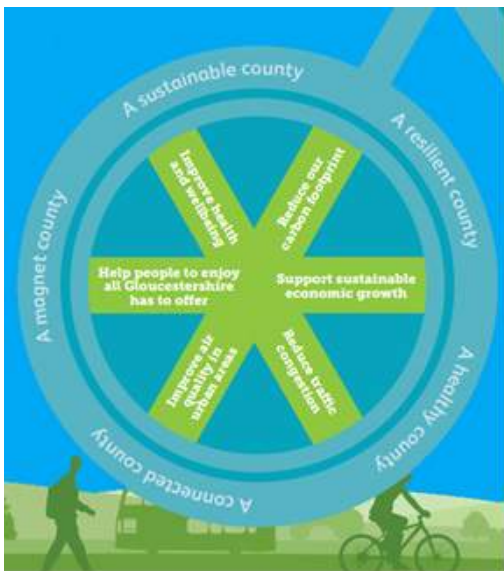


Figure 3 - Source Gloucestershire County Council

1.3.2 Businesses will be attracted to Eco Park because of the above principles. One of the key aims of the concept Masterplan is to seek to ensure that alternatives to private car use are available from the outset and that the integration of active travel modes have been considered during the master planning of the development.

1.3.3 It is intended that through the provision and promotion of sustainable travel alternatives to private car use, a significant shift in travel patterns to and from the site can be achieved. A Travel Plan for the Eco Park has been developed specifically to drive forward this modal shift through the implementation of a series of measures and setting of targets aiming at promoting sustainable travel.



Figure 4- Travel Plan Pyramid, DfT Travel Planning Good Practice Guidelines



1.4 Walking and Cycling

1.4.1 As stated within Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan 4 (2015-2031), new development provides an excellent opportunity to create better cycling opportunities and travel practices by ensuring that issues of severance and connectivity are addressed and the local cycle network benefits.

1.4.2 A comprehensive network of wide footways within the development will provide good connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. These proposals will integrate the whole development with the wider landscape, including the Stadium development to the north of the A419. Permeability throughout the development will be key, allowing people to access local centres and facilities with ease. Dropped kerbs and tactile paving at crossing points will assist those with mobility difficulties.

1.4.3 The towpath running alongside the reinstated canal along the southern edge of the Site and Spring Hill connects to National Cycle Route 45. To the west along the Canal and via the Site a new cycle route will be provided to connect towards the A38 and Fromebridge. To the East this new section of route alongside the canal will connect to the existing segregated route and provide an attractive and direct connection to the existing national cycle network towards Stonehouse and Stroud.

1.4.4 Given recent changes in UK junction design, there is also the option to consider a more radical change along the A419 corridor towards Stroud with the implementation of 'Dutch Style' roundabouts to further encourage cycling and the use of electric scooters by providing further road space for these modes of transport.

1.4.5 In conjunction with other scheme coming forward in the area, there will be the opportunity to have a radical review of the sustainable transport options along the Stroud/Stonehouse corridor, connecting with existing train stations at Stonehouse and Stroud and the proposed reopening of the Stonehouse Bristol Road station approximately 2km east of the Site.

1.4.6 Within the Eco Park, secure and covered cycle parking will be provided, as well as changing, showering and locker facilities for all employees to encourage cycling. Covered and secure short stay spaces cycle parking will be provided for visitors.





1.5 Public Transport

1.5.1 Encouraging the use of public transport is an effective means of reducing car dependency, especially for those who do not wish to walk or cycle and/or those who need to travel relatively long distances.

1.5.2 The site is located within between 500m and 900m walk to bus stops and within cycling distance of Stonehouse railway station. Site-wide public transport measures are being put in place to improve links within Eco Park and between the site and Stroud.

1.5.3 Stagecoach, the local bus operator, has confirmed that the following bus services will be available to serve both Eco Park and the West of Stonehouse development:

- Bus No. 61 / 61A currently provides an hourly service between Stroud, Chipmans Platt and Dursley from approximately 7am to 7pm, and is planned to be diverted to serve the West of Stonehouse development as well as Eco Park.
- Service 66S / 66E which provides a combined broadly half-hourly service between Stroud and Gloucester from approximately 6am to 11pm is to be diverted to and through the West of Stonehouse development, and via Eco Park.
- These services combined can provide a 20 minute to half hourly service between Eco Park and Stonehouse / Stroud, and a half-hourly service between Eco Park and Gloucester.

1.5.4 Subject to viability and demand, the FGRFC match day shuttle bus service from Nailsworth, Stroud, Stonehouse and Cam & Dursley train station could be expanded to be a commuter service for the Green Technology Cluster.



1.5.5 The closest railway station to the site is currently Stonehouse Station which is approximately 3.75km to the east of the site. The station provides a connection between the site and Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud and London but does not provide access to Bristol to the south without a change at Gloucester (or Cheltenham). Therefore, it is expected that Cam and Dursley railway station to the south, which offers more direct services, may also be an attractive destination for employees of the Eco Park. Cam and Dursley is approximately 9km from the site by road.



1.5.6 In September this year, Stroud District Council and Gloucestershire County Council gave their backing to the reopening of Stonehouse Bristol Road Station, which would provide a direct rail service to Bristol. The reopening of this station, located on the outskirts of Stonehouse approximately 2km from the Eco Park, would be highly beneficial to the site as it is closer than Cam and Dursley Station therefore would provide a more convenient local railway station connection to Bristol, Gloucester and Birmingham. The new station would be close enough to the Site to walk and cycle to.



1.5.7 Stonehouse Town Council are also engaging currently with South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority on the Charfield Station proposals. Evidence to date is that stations at both Charfield and Stonehouse Bristol Road would work well together, perhaps along with additional stations between Bristol and Gloucester in the future

1.6 Electric Vehicle Use

- 1.6.1 The UK Government's ambition is to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2040. Based on this ambition, the Energy Saving Trust forecasts that by 2030 there could be 8-11 million hybrid or electric cars on the UK's roads, and over 25 million hybrid or electric cars by 2040.
- 1.6.2 The Eco Park will provide 30% active electric charging parking spaces to encourage the use of electric vehicles. 100% of the car parking at the site will have passive electric charging provision, enabling spaces to be converted to active as and when the demand rises.



1.7 Travel Plan

1.7.1 In line with the sustainable vision for the Eco Park, a Travel Plan has been developed with the principle aim of minimising single-occupancy employee and visitor car trips to and from the Park through the implementation of a series of measures aimed at promoting greener, cleaner modes of travel and reducing reliance on the private car.

1.7.2 Travel Plans are dynamic documents which evolve over time with changing travel needs. The Eco Park Travel Plan will therefore be developed and refined over time as the Park grows and different businesses occupy the site. The effectiveness of the Plan will be monitored at regular intervals through a series of travel surveys, organised by a Site-Wide Travel Plan Co-ordinator.

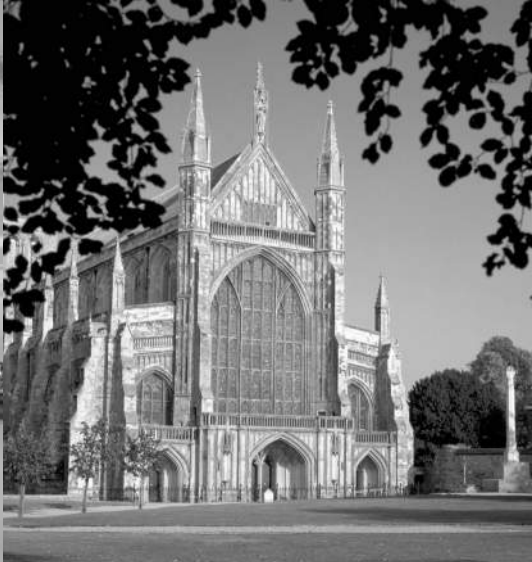
1.7.3 The Framework Travel Plan for the Eco Park has established an interim baseline employee modal split which has been used to set mode share targets for years 1,3,5 and 8 of the development. The aim is to reduce single occupancy car share mode for employees by 8% over an 8 year period, with corresponding increases in walking, cycling and public transport trips. Visitor targets will also be set by each occupier once the baseline has been fully established following occupation of the Park. These targets are seen as challenging yet achievable.



1.7.4 The focus of measures is on providing the physical infrastructure, marketing and communication strategy, and management support to ensure that the occupier specific Travel Plans prepared by the end-users of each element of Eco Park can be as effective as possible in reducing car driver modal share.

1.7.5 It is proposed that a Travel Plan Steering Group, comprising the Framework Travel Plan Coordinator, the individual Travel Plan Coordinators for each element of the development, representatives of GCC and any other invited guests (e.g. local transport providers, businesses, specialist groups etc.) will be formed and will meet regularly during the eight year monitoring period of the Travel Plan.

1.7.6 A programme of monitoring and review will be implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of the Travel Plan measures in place. This will consist of annual travel surveys and monitoring reports submitted to Gloucestershire County Council with the implementation status of the Travel Plan and the performance of the Travel Plan in relation to mode shift targets.



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