Chapter Five:

Using Accessibility Planning

Introduction

5.1. This chapter outlines the authorities' proposals for ongoing use of the accessibility analysis both:

- To inform planning processes and improve integration with land use planning and development decisions through the Local Development Frameworks and ongoing partnership working; and
- To inform wider transport strategies and policies such as incorporation of accessibility considerations in criteria and performance monitoring for tendered bus services, use of Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, prioritisation of resources, appraisal and assessment of accessibility implications of transport projects and schemes including walking, cycling, mobility schemes and major schemes.

How accessibility planning will be used to inform planning processes

5.2. As is clear from the SEU report[1], transport provision is only one element of the accessibility equation. Therefore the role of partners and the wider planning framework in determining the location and delivery of services will be crucial. The partnership work described in Chapter 6 has raised awareness and provided a good foundation for engaging with a wide range of organisations across the Plan area. Continuing this dialogue as the Accessibility Strategy is developed and implemented will support the long-term development programmes of the two authorities and partners in employment, education, healthcare, food and leisure/tourism sectors. Accessibility mapping will provide a new perspective for many partners and will help to inform these discussions and future decision making.

5.3. Accessibility planning provides a framework and methodology to more effectively co-ordinate key service providers' forward planning and the planning authorities' development control processes with transport development, and allows early identification of opportunities for joint working. Partnership working has assisted the authorities to become more responsive to the needs of our partners and in turn is starting to encourage service providers to think about transport and access issues at the start of new developments or service restructuring rather than at the end. Having an overview of key development programmes and drivers for other partners has enabled the authorities to better anticipate partners' needs ensuring that the development of transport services in Greater Nottingham becomes more proactive than reactive.

1 Making the Connections, Social Exclusion Unit, 2004

5.4. There are four key stages at which accessibility can be considered during the lifetime of a development:

- **Feasibility:** Need to consider accessibility planning and local planning policies to choose the right site in the first place. Accessibility planning can inform this stage using GIS software such as *Accession*.

- **Site development:** Maximise sustainable access by locating the building in the right place on the site by considering: Where the key users are travelling from; Where the main access point will be; Locations of existing facilities e.g. crossing facilities, cycle routes, bus/tram stops.

- **Detailed design stage:** Providing the right facilities both within and around the site. Consider provision for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users, safer routes to school, traffic management, parking – safety for vulnerable users should be paramount. Also consider spaces within the building and potential of IT.

- **Operational:** Developing and implementing a Travel Plan. This will be much easier if the site is accessible and the site layout and facilities make sustainable and healthy travel choices a realistic option.

5.5. Where partners have really embraced the benefits of accessibility planning this has generated considerable demand for accessibility mapping, technical support and transport planning advice on potential developments. For example the City Council has been testing the use of GIS software including Accession to input to Nottingham LEA's development of programmes for Building Schools for the Future (inputting to the Outline and Strategic Business Cases submitted to DfES in January 2006), City Academies proposals and primary school organisation. The LEA have now requested that this work is a standard element of their forward planning for primary school provision and the authority is in the process of formalising working arrangements and mapping requirements to deliver this.

5.6. In the long term it is envisaged that GIS mapping software facilities and capabilities will be developed to play a significant role in planning and implementing programs and strategies by other council departments and partner organisations for whom accessibility to services and facilities is a consideration. This is an expanding work area and so there will be staffing and resource implications as accessibility planning becomes more mainstream over the Plan period. Therefore the authorities will have to consider whether it will become necessary to charge some external bodies such as developers for an accessibility planning service and the different levels of information packages that the authorities should offer for different types and stages of development.

5.7. The pilot work will further inform the development of an accessibility mapping and advice 'protocol' for future work with other local authority providers such as housing and leisure services and external partners such as the hospital trusts and the PCTs. There may be potential to build a very basic assessment of accessibility into the

development of NOMAD Plus, an enhanced version of the authorities' free online data and information GIS mapping facility.

5.8. In the longer term integration of transport and land-use planning will continue to be improved through the emerging Local Development Frameworks which are being prepared over the next 2-3 years.

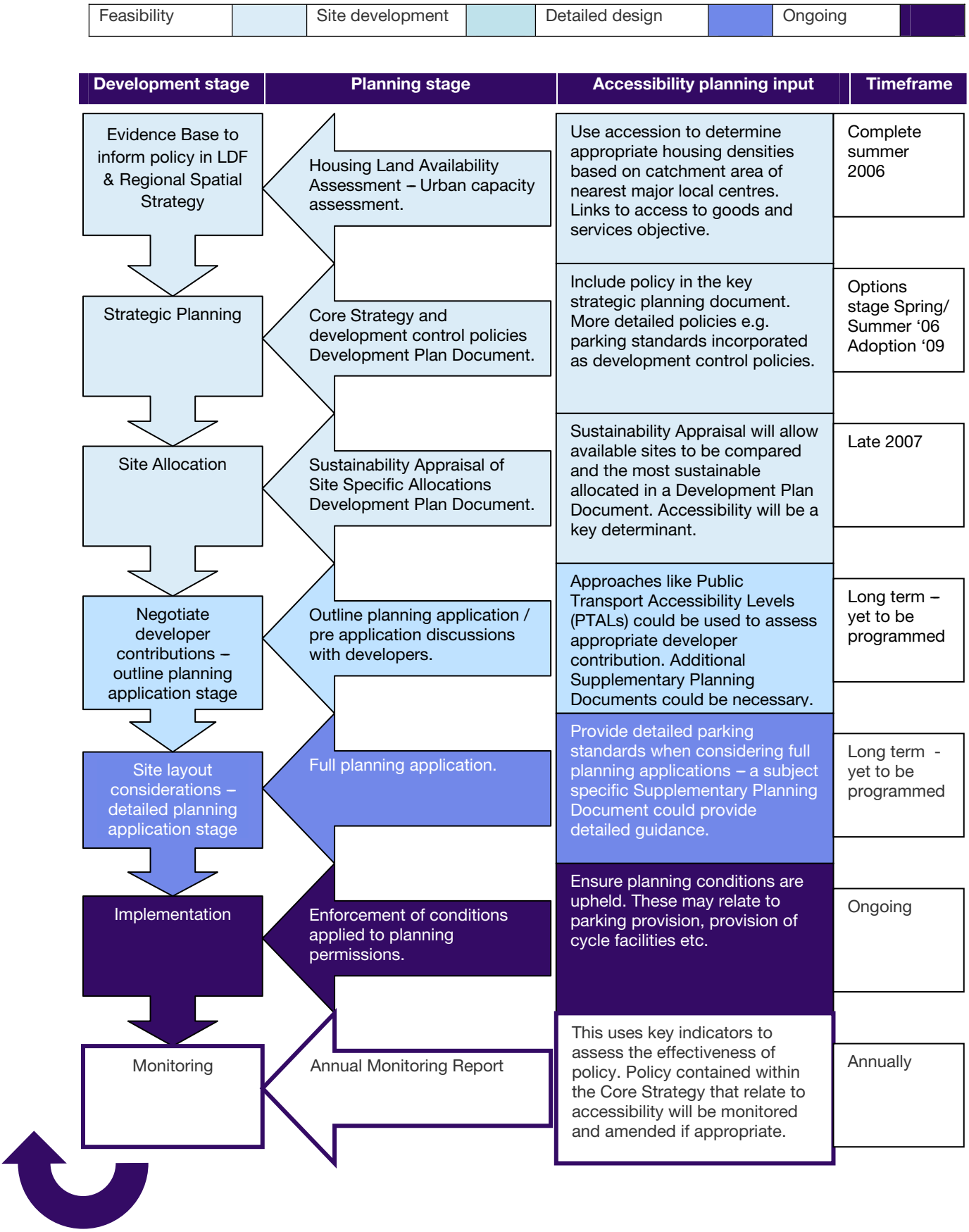
Accessibility Planning and Local Development Frameworks

5.9. Following recent changes to the planning system, all local planning authorities are now required to prepare a Local Development Framework, which will contain all the planning policies and proposals for each planning authority's administrative area, and against which decisions on planning applications will be made.

5.10. The City Council as a unitary authority is in an ideal position to use the accessibility planning process and tools to fully integrate planning and transport policies and decision-making. The LDF will not come into full effect in Nottingham City for 3 years and so this presents a number of opportunities for closely integrating accessibility considerations into planning policies and future development control processes.

5.11. The City Council has identified a number of short, medium and long-term interventions to use accessibility planning in the preparation of the LDF which will be developed over the Plan period. Figure 5.1 illustrates how accessibility planning will inform the development of the LDF for Nottingham. Nottinghamshire County Council is working with the district planning authorities for Ashfield, Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe to provide accessibility planning support to their LDF processes.

Figure 5.1: Opportunities for accessibility planning to inform LDF processes



Short term: Preparing the Local Development Framework evidence base

5.12. A major requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and planning guidance is that a clear and robust evidence base underpins policy, and accessibility mapping can contribute to this.

5.13. The City Council is currently drawing up a Housing Land Availability Assessment to replace the Urban Capacity Study. This work is expected to be completed by the summer of 2006. This will provide the evidence base from which future land for housing is allocated in development plan documents and will inform the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands.

5.14. It is proposed to use accessibility planning to provide an assessment of appropriate densities on the sites identified in the Housing Land Availability Assessment. Highly accessible areas will tend to be those within easy walking distance of town and local centres and public transport. Additional housing in these areas would help reinforce the areas and would be likely to lead to less additional traffic that would otherwise be the case and could be built at higher densities with reduced car parking.

5.15. Based on a recent survey of local centres in the City area it will be possible to use *Accession* software to map the distance required to travel to those identified as major centres. This would then be a significant factor in determining appropriate densities for identified sites.

Medium Term: Integrating accessibility planning into the Core Strategy

5.16. The Core Strategy is the key strategic spatial planning document and provides the opportunity to include policies to ensure accessibility is considered from the outset for new developments in terms of site allocation. Development control policies will be incorporated into this document.

5.17. The authorities will investigate how other authorities have used accessibility planning to determine parking standards for different types of development and consider how this could be applied in Greater Nottingham.

Long Term: Individual site assessments and sustainability appraisal

5.18. Towards the end of 2007, the City Council will begin preparing its Site Specific land Allocation Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). This DPD will draw upon the Housing land Availability Assessments and will also undergo a Sustainability Appraisal. Accessibility mapping will help to compare available sites to determine the most sustainable locations.

5.19. In the future there is also potential to use accessibility planning to determine the level of developer contributions (exact arrangements to be clarified after the outcomes of the current planning Gain Supplement Consultation are clear). Again the authority will

look at how this has worked in other planning authorities to determine how this could be applied in Nottingham.

5.20. The long term objective will be to formalise the consideration of accessibility and transport needs into the planning process so that any opportunities for better integration of planning and transport are fully realised at each of the development stages described in earlier thereby creating an environment in which it will be possible to offer people realistic transport choices through the delivery of travel plans and the Smarter Choices agenda.

Local Development Frameworks in the County area

5.21. In the County area, there is an extra tier to the planning system. Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council have developed the Joint Structure Plan, which sets out the strategic land use policies to guide the scale and location of development in the Plan Area. The JSP covers the scale and broad location of housing and employment land, the protection and enhancement of the environment, transport, recreation and tourism, and shopping. This has in turn informed the current Local Plans, influencing their approach to travel demand management.

5.22. The County Council has been working with district planning officers to assist them with their LDF preparation since summer 2005. Planning colleagues are also offered the opportunity to attend Wider Reference Group events described in Chapter 6.

5.23. *Accession* is to be used to assist district councils decide on the most accessible location of employment and other sites. Bi-monthly discussions involving the district technical officers group will assist in this process. Accessibility assessments will also inform appropriate levels of developer contributions. In order to monitor levels of accessibility to major retail centres, destination data will be agreed annually with District Council Planning Departments. This will assist preparation for the accessibility modelling work to be undertaken as part of the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report.

5.24. At a regional level, County officers have fed into the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) contained within it. The RTS contains policies and proposals to help deliver the Spatial Strategy, and aims to reduce the need to travel and traffic growth, promote a step change in the quantity and quality of public transport, and only promotes additional highway capacity when all other options have been exhausted.

Transport scheme appraisal

Accessibility Planning for Bus Travel

5.25. The accessibility planning process lies at the heart of the Greater Nottingham Bus Strategy 2006- 2011. Detailed mapping work has already been developed to support the development of the Bus Strategy and associated public transport funding bids. This work was initially developed for the City area and published in *Accessibility Planning for Bus Travel* [2]. The original bus accessibility maps were prepared using ArcMap and are now being updated and expanded to cover the urban part of the Plan area using GIS software (*Accession* and *ArcView Network Analyst*).

5.26. This analysis considered five aspects of bus accessibility: geographical access, physical access, safety, affordability and information, which were mapped on a ward basis for the City area. This information, combined with consultation across all key groups, and a detailed knowledge of growth areas, has identified the need for service enhancements, improved physical access, financial incentives, safety measures and better information. The outputs from the analysis have been merged with information of operational costs, revenue and usage information to determine priorities over the next five years.

5.27. In addition, this information has been used to bid for external funding and as an aide to establish working partnership arrangements with key stakeholders such as the Hospital Trusts, Airport, Experian and Nottingham Trent University. This process has already yielded strong positive results, with the launching of nine highly successful Link bus services providing access to work, hospital, education and local facilities. These are all operated using a mix of financing streams within flexible partnerships, focussing on developing areas. So far they have all had good growth and should have long-term sustainability. Further Link services are actively being developed with the colleges, industrial estates, University of Nottingham and district centres using this same successful model.

5.28. This work has also informed the development of a programme of targeted information and marketing which will be further developed over the Plan period as set out in the Greater Nottingham Bus Strategy.

2 Accessibility Planning for Bus Travel, Nottingham City Council, October 2003

Performance management framework for tendered bus services

5.29. The County Council has developed and agreed the use of a performance management framework (PMF) to assess the social value of its portfolio of supported bus services. The framework:

- Enables all supported bus services to be assessed so that transparent decisions can be made when budget pressures occur; and
- Allows objective evaluation of proposed new bus services.

5.30. The framework allows the services to be assessed against specific criteria considered as being important in supporting the bus network, and provides a score to guide and inform decisions on future financial support. Based on many months of analysis, the following criteria are used to score the services:

- Index of multiple deprivation (IMD);
- Availability of alternative public transport services;
- Subsidy per passenger;
- Number of passengers per journey;
- Primary journey purpose of the contract; and
- Car ownership.

5.31. The model will be used as part of the ongoing assessment of bus contract performance, and will provide an objective and informed basis for determining future changes to the supported local bus service network in the County part of Greater Nottingham, including revised services proposed through accessibility planning.

Rural Bus Subsidy Grant

5.32. One of the key resources available to the councils in improving accessibility is their budgets for tendered bus services. It is possible that re-prioritisation of these funds can be used to support revisions to existing services to increase accessibility, particularly in rural areas.

5.33. In providing funds under the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG), the government aims to improve the access of those living in rural areas to jobs, services and facilities and to broaden the range of transport choice available in those areas. The County Council is the recipient of RBSG monies in the Greater Nottingham plan area and will review the expenditure of RBSG by assessing, and monitoring progress in improving, local people's access to job opportunities and essential public services. By reviewing progress against accessibility indicators, and with the use of its performance management framework, it will be possible to target the use of RBSG and to monitor the effectiveness of services supported by the grant in terms of improving accessibility.

Assessing accessibility for local journeys

5.34. The road network dataset currently being used within *Accession* GIS to model and analyse walking and cycling routes, does not contain many non-motor vehicle routes that would ordinarily be utilised by pedestrians and cyclists. It is therefore likely that journey calculations for these travel modes are currently being over-estimated to some degree. As no GIS network dataset is commercially available that includes these non-road features, considerable work will be required to develop or commission an enhanced travel network including all local walking paths and off-road cycle routes in order to more accurately map accessibility for walking and cycling journeys.

5.35. Compiling an accurate walking routes base map will be particularly important for mapping journeys to primary schools in urban areas where walking is the main mode of travel.

5.36. There are further ways in which the capabilities of journey analysis using GIS software could be tailored to more closely resemble real life travel. This could include applying locally recorded average road speeds or speed limits to the network, rather than relying on the software's generic default settings; incorporating specific junction delays; designating safe routes; and factoring in topography as an influence on walking and cycling journeys in particular. This more detailed modeling could inform the development of travel plans and safer routes programmes.

5.37. A methodology has been developed to incorporate accessibility modeling into a suggested process to prioritise future improvement works on footpaths in the County. This will assign relevant travel time thresholds to individual footpaths, so footpaths serving areas of high social need would be ranked higher in the process of securing funding for improvement works.

5.38. Consideration will also be given to developing accessibility ratings for key destinations by assessing 'barriers' to local travel e.g. traffic speeds and volumes, (lack of) pedestrian crossing facilities including dropped kerbs and pedestrian phases at signal junctions, lighting provision and street maintenance. This could inform the planning of minor works which will facilitate walking and cycling for local journeys and link into the Sustainability Appraisal of development sites within the Local Development Framework as described earlier.