

The Symington Building Green Travel Plan

Foreword from Harborough District Council

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough LE16 7AG, underwent a major refurbishment during 2013. The whole building was completely empty for around a year. The newly refurbished building was intended to be used for a range of services, including Harborough District Council (HDC), Leicestershire County Council (LCC), the Library and Museum, Registry, other partners, and 3 retail units. As part of the planning application (12/01196/FUL) for the refurbishment, there was a requirement to produce a green travel plan, to encourage more sustainable transport choices for those using the building.

1.2 The Green Travel Plan was produced in January 2014, to coincide with the gradual re-occupation of the building. The Plan was devised in a period when the businesses and organisations that would occupy the building had not yet been finalised. This is the first review of the Green Travel Plan, capturing the progress since 2014 and revising the Action Plan.

1.3 A Travel Plan is a package of practical travel and transport related measures and initiatives, which aims to reduce the need to travel and to encourage staff to select the most sustainable modes of transport for their journeys to and from work, and during work. The Travel Plan is being driven primarily by the need to help reduce traffic congestion and conserve the environment. Its objectives are therefore:

- To reduce the number of car journeys and promote the sustainable use of the car
- To increase the use of walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing
- To encourage the use of green fuelled vehicles where the use of a vehicle is essential
- To set an example and promote good practices to other local employers and the community

1.4 The Travel Plan provides a strategic way to ensure that the impact of travel to work is minimised and to provide opportunities to maximise the health and wellbeing opportunities of staff choosing a more sustainable means of transport, where possible. The Travel Plan also helps an organisation to manage the flow of traffic in the vicinity of the building and perhaps reduce organisational costs.

1.5 Although The Symington Building is occupied by various organisations, the travel plan is a common document to support green travel planning for all of the organisations in the building. This includes:

- Harborough District Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Retail outlets
- Citizens Advice
- Job Centre Plus
- Other smaller occupiers, such as, Turning Point, HDCYPC, Prospects, etc.

2.0 Policy Background

2.1 Nationally the UK Government supports the principle of green travel planning through the planning system. National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 36) suggests that all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a Travel Plan.

2.2 LCC is required to produce a Local Transport Plan under the requirements of the Transport Act 2000. This plan is a strategic approach to transport planning. Leicestershire have now produced their 3rd Transport Plan LTP3, which has been adopted by the Authority. Under this plan all major employers, including District Councils are required to produce Green Travel Plans, showing how their actions contribute towards the objectives of the LTP. This document identifies how the transport authority, working collaboratively with other stakeholders, will seek to ensure that transport continues to play its important role in helping the county to remain prosperous, safe and attractive. Travel Planning is identified as an important tool in helping to reduce the need to travel by private car and encouraging other more sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling.

2.3 The Harborough District Local Development Framework Core Strategy was adopted in November 2011. The Transport chapter of the Core Strategy commits HDC to supporting LCC in meeting the Goals of LTP3 with regard to a range of outcomes, one of which is encouraging more people to walk, cycle and use public transport as part of their daily journey. The continued use of Travel Plans to support sustainable travel will be a feature of the emerging Local Plan that is scheduled to be adopted in 2018.

3.0 Transport Links

3.1 The District has good access to regional and national transport links. The M1 passes through the District in the west, whilst the M6/A14 is located to the south. Other main routes in the District include the A6, A47 and A508, which between them provide links to Leicester, Northampton, Kettering and Corby. Market Harborough is located on the East Midlands train route with frequent links to London, Leicester and the North. Both East Midlands Airport and Birmingham Airport are located within 50 miles of Market Harborough.

3.2 Public transport provision in the District is patchy. There is a frequent and reliable bus service between Market Harborough and Lutterworth, as well as regular links with Leicester, Rugby, Hinckley and Northampton. The more remote smaller rural settlements in the District are served by limited public transport provision.

3.3 There are a number of national cycle network routes near to The Symington Building, including Route 6, an off road route along the Brampton Valley Way; Route 64, a rural on road route; and route 6 from Leicester, mainly on road.

4.0 Review of Progress on the Green Travel Plan 2014 Priorities

Priority 1: Promoting walking and cycling:

There has been significant progress on this priority. A secure bicycle parking facility has been provided close to The Symington Building. In addition, good quality shower and locker facilities have been provided on the ground floor as part of the refurbishment. HDC have introduced a scheme to enable staff to buy bicycles at special rates. In all, three members of HDC staff have made use of this scheme up to August 2017. LCC, also, has schemes to support bicycle provision for its staff. Finally, the provision of bicycle training was achieved through signposting to schemes arranged by partners.

Priority 2: Encourage use of public transport:

There has been mixed progress on the actions identified under this priority. It has not been possible to arrange public transport season ticket loans, partly due to the low demand for such a service. Rural areas have less reliable public transport systems and the initial survey suggested only 3% of staff use this method of transport. However, good public transport information, including for visitors to the building has been made available on the website, with links to the LCC "Choose how you move website" <http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/>. This website has a range of information for business and recreational journeys.

Priority 3: Discouraging single car occupancy:

This is a challenging requirement. The survey indicated that around 65% of staff travel more than 5 miles to work and as public transport is limited, most of these have limited, if any, alternatives to car use. The number of car parking spaces has been reduced to discourage those who could make another travel choice to do so. The possibility of dedicated spaces for car sharers has been identified, but the approach to implement this has not yet been agreed. However, a link to the Leicestershare car sharing website (<https://leicestershare.liftshare.com/>) has been included on The Symington Building website, for staff to sign up to themselves.

Priority 4: Encouraging more sustainable modes of travel for business:

The opportunity for pool bicycles for work use was investigated, but very few staff felt that this would work for them, so this was not taken forward. Similarly a pool car system was not found to be viable at the time. A review of car user categories has been completed, with full staff engagement and will be implemented in April 2018; this includes the introduction of a cycle user allowance.

Priority 5: Reducing the need to travel:

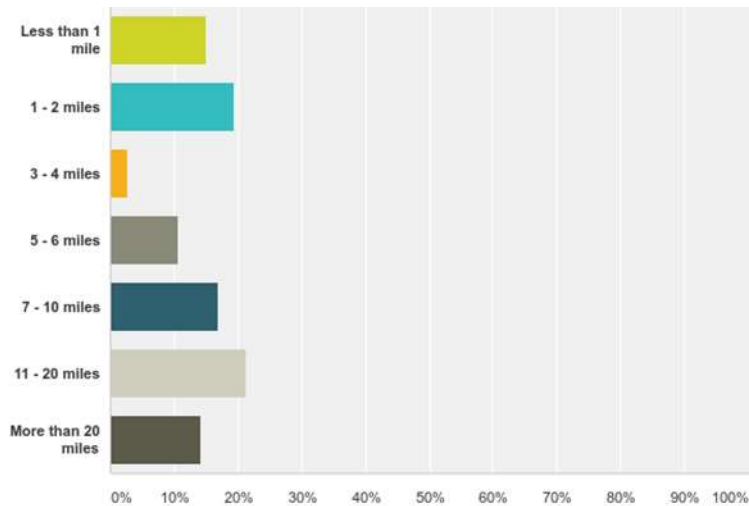
Flexible working, allowing staff to work from home, that was an important part of managing whilst the building was out of commission, has continued. A number of staff are fully home based, with others working part of the time at home. All of the staff are advised to consider their journeys and plan business travel carefully around their time in work. There is a video conferencing suite installed in the building, which can be used to reduce travel and is linked to the LCC system, this has been used on 5 occasions over 2016 for meetings lasting around 2 hours. LCC are withdrawing the County Wide video conferencing service, and as such, a thorough assessment of replacement options such as Business Skype will be investigated. This, alongside, 'staff training' will aim to reduce the need for travel to meetings.

5.0 Staff Survey 2017

5.1 The travel survey ran from early May 2017 until 31 May 2017 and 115 responses were received. It is estimated that this is around half of those working in the building. HDC members of staff were the majority of respondents at 70%. LCC staff members were the next biggest group at 13% in total. The age distribution of the respondents had over 70% in the 35 to 54 bracket, with 20% under 34 and 22% over 55.

5.2 The main method of transport to work is the car with 84% of people reaching work in a car as driver or passenger. This is an increase since the 2013 survey, when 78% indicated that they had travelled to work in a car. The 2017 survey indicated that 67% of those working in The Symington Building drive to work alone, a decrease from 75% in 2013. Only 3% of respondents indicated that they used a bicycle to travel to work, this is a reduction from 5% in the earlier survey. However, the number of people walking has increased from 14% to 18%. A very small number of people use public transport to come to work and there is no significant change from the earlier survey. These figures are similar for the HDC employees only, which was checked to ensure comparison with the 2014 survey. In fact HDC only employees show an even greater number walking at 20%.

5.3 When respondents were asked how far they lived from work, around 35% lived more than 10 miles away, compared to 47% in the earlier survey. Around 35% of staff live within 2 miles of work, a slight increase from 33% previously.



5.4. The results indicated that a large number of people indicate that they need their car for work purposes (47%). Information from building users suggest that car park spaces are allocated differently in the different organisations. Some are on a rota, others are only given to staff who need their car as part of their job. Harborough District Council have 73 people with essential car user status and all have parking permits, if there are not enough spaces then car parking in a nearby public car park is refunded as expenses.

5.5 Almost 40% of respondents said that they would not consider changing their use of the car for work. However, around 34% of respondents said that they would consider car sharing if there were special bays identified. In addition, 24% of people said they would consider choosing an electric vehicle, if there was a charger available at work. Only 13% of respondents said that they had used the video conferencing, although some 27% said they would use it in the previous survey, prior to its installation. Training was identified as a barrier. More detailed information on the survey results is included in Appendix 1.

6.0 Updated Travel Plan Action Plan

Priority 1 – Promote walking and cycling					
Ref No	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer	Cost	Notes
TP/P1/01	Publicise availability of cycle facilities including cycle storage, clothing lockers and shower.	Short	C Averill	Nil	More details of how to access bike store on Symington Building website
TP/P1/02	Promote cycling to work through events during bike to work week and other appropriate times	Short/Medium	H Chadwick	£	Link to work on staff wellbeing by including offer of healthy breakfast for those who cycle or walk to work. Offer twice a year.
TP/P1/03	Consider cycling course to increase confidence	Short/Medium	H Chadwick	£500 per course for 10 people	Available via LCC, but with cost implication https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/apply-for-a-cycling-course LCC course requires a minimum of 10 people. Subject to funding, we would need to establish sufficient demand before arranging the course.

Priority 2 – Encourage use of public transport					
Ref No	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer	Cost	Notes
TP/P2/01	Ensure up to date bus and rail schedules are on the website	Short	D West	Nil	

TP/P2/02	Include links to choosehowyoumove for journey planning	Short	D West	Nil	Supplement with HDC Core Brief, provide to all Partners asking them to distribute to staff.
TP/P2/03	Consider a staff challenge to get to work on public transport.	Short/Medium		£100	Possible prize for staff member with most innovative approach

Priority 3 – Discourage single occupancy motor vehicle usage

Ref No	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer	Cost	Notes
TP/P3/01	Promote car sharing via choosehowyoumove . On Website	Short	D West	Nil	
TP/P3/02	Set up a Symington Building car share group on Choose how you move Liftshare and publicise in Symington Building	Medium	H Chadwick	Nil	Leicestershare can set up a specific group for HDC or the Building. (Car sharing with one passenger, a return journey over 20miles each way once a week would save £260 per year and save approximately 287kg of CO ₂ .)
TP/P3/03	Arrange meetings over coffee for those who live in same areas to promote car sharing	Short/Medium	H Chadwick	£100	Meetings after core brief, offering coffee and cake and set around specific locations so people can meet. Possibility of extending to building
TP/P3/04	Investigate putting some parking bays for car shares only	Medium	C Averill		Note may need policy for getting someone home if car sharer has to leave due to emergency

Priority 4 – Encourage more sustainable modes of transport for business

Ref No	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer	Cost	Notes
TP/P4/01	Install electric car charging	Short/Medium	C Averill		
TP/P4/02	HDC only Action - Investigate essential and casual user policy to ensure that it is not discouraging non car transport choices	Medium	R Jenner		
TP/P4/03	HDC only Action - Review provision of car parking for non essential and casual car users.	Medium	R Jenner		
TP/P4/04	HDC only Action - Review all job roles assessing whether a car user status is appropriate and/or whether the introduction of a graded casual user could be introduced based on car usage, whereby low level users are not provided with a car park space as a matter of course.	Medium	R Jenner		Added benefit would be for those who use the car extensively, they would waste less time seeking a car park space as currently bays are tied up by many people whose car is not used during the day. ¹

¹ There are a few staff with 'grandfather' rights, but easier some who applied long before the refurb and were provided a pass when we had the whole car park

TP/P4/05	HDC only Action - Ensure policy encourages shared journeys to outside meetings where practical and transport by public transport where possible	Medium	R Jenner		eg could we include a small amount for the car sharer, otherwise, it could be seen to be a way of increasing expenses for the staff.
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Priority 5 – Reduce the need to travel

Ref No	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer	Cost	Notes
TP/P5/01	Explore alternative video conferencing provision	Short/Medium	ICT	tbc	eg Business Skype, https://www.bluejeans.com/ , or other suitable
TP/P5/02	Provide training and more information on using video conferencing	Short/Medium	ICT	tbc	Increasing the use of the replacement video conferencing service, such as Business Skype, and reducing the number of meetings where staff travel to other venues will both reduce the environmental impact but, also, the time for travelling, thus increasing productivity.
TP/P5/03	HDC only Action - Review working from home policy	Medium	R Jenner	Nil	
TP/P5/04	HDC only Action - Training to Managers to improve managing by output not attendance (offer to Partners)	Medium	J Haines	tbc	Need to increase the confidence in home working whilst ensuring staff work effectively

Priority 6 – Review

Ref No	Action	Timescale	Lead Officer	Cost	Notes
TP/P6/01	Travel Survey repeat in 2019	Medium	H Chadwick	Nil	

TP/P6/02	Report progress annually	Short/Medium	C Averill	Nil	
TP/P6/03	Review 2020	Medium	H Chadwick	Nil	

Appendix 1 Green Travel Plan Survey Results

The Green Travel Plan was adopted in 2014. It is a condition of the Planning Permission granted for the refurbishment of the Symington Building. The Travel Plan was informed by a survey of HDC staff who would be working in the building following the refurbishment. That survey had 127 respondents. The Travel Plan has been in place now for 3 years and is due a review. In order to perform this review a survey of those working in the building was taken. This survey included a variety of organisations that are now working in the Symington Building.

The travel survey ran from early May until May 31st and 115 responses were returned. It is estimated that this is around half of those working in the building. Harborough District Council members of staff were the majority of respondents at 70%. Leicestershire County Council staff members were the next biggest group at 13% in total. The age distribution of the respondents had over 70% in the 35 to 54 bracket, with 20% under 34 and 22% over 55.

Mode of Travel to work

The main method of transport to work is the car with 84% of people reaching work in a car as driver or passenger. This is an increase since the 2013 survey, when 78% indicated that they had travelled to work in a car. The 2017 survey indicated that 67% of those working in the Symington Building drive to work alone, a decrease from 75% in 2013.

Only 3% of respondents indicated that they used a bicycle to travel to work, this is a reduction from 5% in the earlier survey. However, the number of people walking has increased from 14% to 18%.

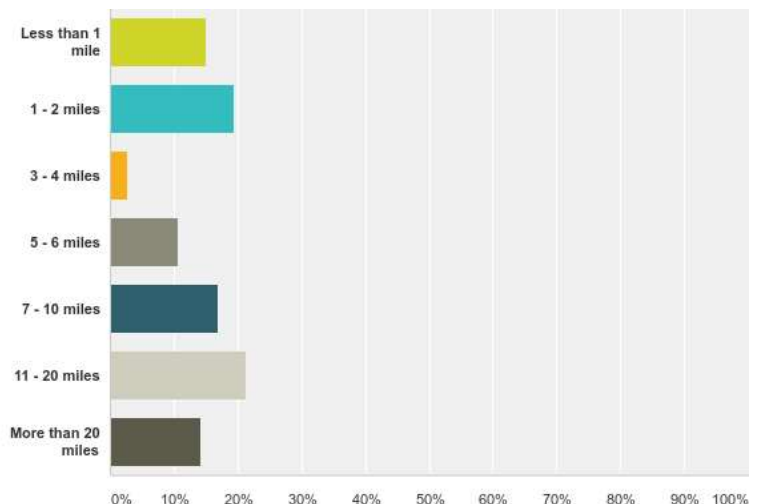
A very small number of people use public transport to come to work and there is no significant change from the earlier survey.

Respondents were asked to give a reason for their choice of transport mode, and were asked to select one choice. When asked for the reason for choosing a mode of transport, the most common answer was that people needed their car for work purposes, with 47% stating this reason, similar to the earlier survey. Comfort and convenience (43%), time saving (31%), and the lack of public transport (31%) were the other main reasons given. This is comparable with the earlier survey.

When asked about other methods of transport that has been used to get to work over the last 6 months the numbers walking (35%), cycling (16%) and using public transport (25%) increased, although far fewer respondents answered this question.

This is broadly comparable with the previous survey.

When respondents were asked how far they lived from work, around 35% lived more than 10 miles away, compared to 47% in the earlier survey. Around 35% of staff live within 2 miles of work, a slight increase from 33% previously.



Some 44% of people indicated that they worked at the Symington building prior to its refurbishment. Around 34% started work after April 2015, which includes the new organisations that moved in after the refurbishment was fully complete.

Around 58% of staff work full time this is broadly similar to the previous survey. Approximately 39% work part time, which is an increase from the previous survey when only 28% stated that they worked part time. There is a small number (3.5%) working a specialise pattern, e.g. term time only, which is a reduction from the previous survey, when 17% of people stated that they has some other arrangement.

People were asked to state their work place arrangements. Around 58% of respondents said they would be fully office based; this is an increase from the previous survey, when 45% said they would be fully office based. Around 22% stated they were part office/ part home based. This is a reduction from the 42% who stated this in the earlier survey. The small number of those fully home based has also reduced. A new question asked how often people are in the Symington Building in their work week, this was to help understand how often people expect to be in the office. Almost 60% of people expect to be in the office for 4 or more days per week, with 28% present for 2-3 days and 13% for one day. The earlier survey asked for a split of home/office working, 41% identified that they would work 60% of time in the office and 40% at home. This new survey seems to indicate that people are working less from home than previously.

Parking

Around 54% of people use the staff car park. This is a reduction since the earlier survey from 89%. There has been an increase in parking in paid car parks from 4% to 18%. On street parking has also increased from 6% to 13%.

When asked how a reduction in car parking places would affect people, most respondents (45%) stated that they would find an alternative space in a paying car park. This is an increase from 37% in the previous study. Of the remainder 29% would look for space on the street (compared to 24% previously) but less than 3% would change their method of transport, which is comparable to the earlier survey.

Since the previous survey, a bike store has been installed along with showers, so questions were included to find out how well these are used. Only a small number of people (approximately 4%) stated that they used the bike store at any time in the week. Around 8% use the shower, but less than 3 days a week. The majority don't use either of the facilities at all.

Encouraging Change

When those coming to work in a car were asked what would encourage them to change, close to 40% said that nothing would change their method of transport, a big increase from 26% in the previous survey. Better public transport was stated most often as a driver to change, at 13%. The numbers stating that an employee car share scheme would help dropped from 16% to 7%.

Comments

"My Car is needed for work daily"

"I would still have the school run to complete"

"I live in a village so this is unrealistic really"

"I would welcome car share scheme"

However, 34% of respondents said that they would consider car sharing if there were special bays identified. In addition, 24% of people said they would consider choosing an electric vehicle, if there was a charger available at work.

Only 13% of respondents said that they had used the video conferencing, although some 27% said they would use it in the previous survey, prior to its installation.

Comments

"Not applicable for my role"

"Wouldn't know how to access this"

"Not sure whether we could gain access to them"

"Having clear instructions and/or a practice session could help"