

Wethersfield

Travel Plan

Home Office

September 2024

Prepared for:

Home Office

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM Limited (AECOM) has been appointed by the Home Office (the 'Applicant') to prepare a Travel Plan (TP) to discharge a condition pursuant to The Town and Country Planning (Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield) (Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.) Special Development Order 2024. The Special Development Order (SDO) was granted for the temporary siting of asylum accommodation (hereafter the 'Proposed Development') within the former Wethersfield MDPGA, Braintree, Essex (hereafter referred to as the Site). The wider site extends to approximately 322.09 hectares (ha) in area, whilst the main operational works area (hereafter referred to as the Operational Area) is approximately 40.57ha.
- 1.2 The Proposed Development is to provide accommodation for up to 1,2450 resident service users in refurbished military barracks and modular accommodation blocks.
- 1.3 This TP is targeted at staff employed to work at the Site. At the time of preparing this TP 159 staff are based on the Site, which comprises 110 [REDACTED] staff, 19 [REDACTED] staff, 4 [REDACTED] staff, 8 [REDACTED] staff and 18 [REDACTED] staff.
- 1.4 This Travel Plan addresses the following condition within Schedule 3 of the SDO:
- Travel Plan**
10. The Home Secretary must, before 11th July 2024, submit to the Secretary of State for approval a plan setting out how the use of private cars by those travelling to the Order land—
- (a) to work on, or visit, the authorised development; or*
- (b) to provide services to, or in respect of, resident service users, will be minimised.*
- 1.5 The Site is located to the north of the village of Wethersfield, and approximately 14.1km north of Braintree, within Braintree District.
- 1.6 The Site contains approximately 100 buildings, including sleeping accommodation, aircraft hangars, a kitchen block, administration buildings and common rooms. A series of aircraft taxiing routes and large areas of hardstanding for aircraft parking are also located within the Site. The Site excludes the main runway of MDPGA Wethersfield and the accommodation to the south which is a mix of former Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and private accommodation. Car parking is provided within the Site on areas previously used for car parking, accommodating a total of approximately 100 spaces. The Site was vacated by the MDPGA at the end of March 2023 and the runway is not currently in use.
- 1.7 Since April 2023 the Home Office has relied on emergency powers under Schedule 2, Part 19 Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) ('the GPDO'). This permission expired on 11th April 2024. In January 2024 the Home Office submitted a planning proposal to obtain further consent pursuant to a SDO for the temporary siting of asylum accommodation (sui generis) for a period of three years together with the necessary associated site infrastructure and for an additional period of up to 6 months to allow the Site to be reinstated after operations have ceased (i.e. maximum total 3.5 years). The SDO came into force on 11th April 2024.
- 1.8 The Local Highway Authority is Essex County Council (ECC) and the Local Planning Authority is Braintree District Council.

Purpose of this TP

- 1.9 This TP sets out the key principles and travel plan strategy which includes a range of measures to minimise the use of the private car as a mode of travel to the Site. This TP is aimed at employees of, and visitors to, the Site. In the context of the Proposed Development, staff are based at the Site, while visitors comprise those attending the Site for meetings, maintenance work and all activities that involve working at the Site without being based on the Site, or providing services to, or in respect of the resident service users. This TP therefore addresses staff and visitors only as these groups have a wider choice of travel mode.

Best Practice Guidance

- 1.10 This TP has been prepared in accordance with ECC's Guidance Notes for a Workplace Travel Plan (May 2021). The guidance sets out the Highway Authority's requirements for the development of travel plans.
- 1.11 The Site Operator [REDACTED] and subcontractors have been consulted on this TP. This document will be shared with these stakeholders once approved.

Proposed Development

- 1.12 The Proposed Development comprises re-purposing of the former MDPGA Wethersfield to provide temporary accommodation for up to 1,245 resident service users. This will be delivered in three phases, utilising existing accommodation. It is understood that there are currently 159 staff in total during the operational phase, [REDACTED].
[REDACTED] The Site contains [REDACTED].
- 1.13 The main site entrance (referred to as the main gate) is accessed from Sculpins Lane. The Site is also [REDACTED].
- 1.14 Given the remote nature of the Site, the most convenient form of travel for staff and vehicles is via motor vehicle and to utilise the existing parking areas. As such this TP focuses on minimising the number of private vehicle trips made to and from Site by staff and visitors.

Structure

- 1.15 This TP includes the following sections:
- **Section 1** – Introduction, which outlines the purpose of the TP and describes the Proposed Development;
 - **Section 2** - Site Assessment, which presents information on the accessibility of the Site including opportunities to use sustainable transport;
 - **Section 3** – Objectives and Targets, which presents a series of objectives and targets for the TP;
 - **Section 4** - Travel Plan Measures, which outlines the measures that will be put in place for the Proposed Development;
 - **Section 5** - Monitoring and Management, which describes how the TP will be monitored and managed to meet its aims and objectives; and
 - **Section 6** – Action Plan, this summarises the programme of measures to be implemented.

2. Site Assessment

- 2.1 This section of the TP provides a review of the Site's accessibility, including to sustainable transport and the availability of local services and amenities.

Services and Amenities

- 2.2 The Site is in a remote, rural location with limited services or amenities in the immediate vicinity. The nearest convenience stores are in the villages of Finchingfield (3.4km to the west), Great Bardfield (6.1km to the south), Sible Hedingham (11.3km to the east) and Bocking (12.2km to the south).
- 2.3 Most amenities and services can be accessed within Braintree town centre, approximately 14.5km (a 20-minute drive) to the south.

Walking and Cycling

- 2.4 As outlined above, there are no services or amenities within walking distance of the Site and there is little opportunity for walking to and from the Site from villages in the area, given the distances involved and the rural nature of the roads with limited footway provision.
- 2.5 There is no designated footway provision along Sculpins Lane to the west of the Site. There is a very narrow (partially overgrown) footway on the southern side of the B1053 to the northwest of the junction with Sculpins Lane which appears to provide pedestrian access to the bus stops. There is a Public Right of Way (PRoW) to the south of the Site (Footpath 33 Wethersfield) that traverses farmland and extends towards Wethersfield. The current condition of the footpath is unknown and this does not provide a complete connection between the Site and Wethersfield.
- 2.6 There are no cycle facilities in the surrounding area.

Public Transport

Bus

- 2.7 The nearest bus stops named 'Justice's Farm' are located on the B1053, approximately 280m (a four-minute walk) to the west of the junction with Sculpins Lane and approximately 20 minutes (1.6km) from the Site. The north and southbound bus stops are unmarked with no bus flag or waiting area. The stops are served by the number 9, 9A, 16 and 419 bus services. The 9 / 9A bus provides an hourly service to Braintree and Great Notley via the southbound bus stop and Great Bardfield and Blake End via the northbound bus stop. Bus service 16 offers less frequent connections to Chelmsford. Bus service 419 is a school service.
- 2.8 A summary of the bus services is provided in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Bus Services

Route	Direction	First Bus	Last Bus	Average Frequency
9 / 9A	Great Bardfield Finchingfield – Braintree – Great Notley	06:42	17:50	Hourly
	Great Notley – Braintree – Finchingfield – Great Bardfield	07:45	17:55	Hourly
16	Chelmsford – Wethersfield	10:33	17:57	Four services per day
	Wethersfield - Chelmsford	06:55	14:34	Four services per day
419	Great Sailing – Wethersfield – Saffron Walden – Newport	07:13	-	School Service
	Newport – Saffron Walden – Wethersfield – Great Sailing	15:20	-	

Source: Central Connect (centralconnect.info), Heddingham and Chambers (Heddingham and Chambers), Stephenson of Essex (stephensonsofessex.com). Correct as of 16th August 2024.

Rail

- 2.9 Braintree railway station is approximately 14.8km to the south of the Site.
- 2.10 This station is the northern terminus of the Braintree Branch Line served by Greater Anglia which provides hourly services towards London Liverpool Street (one hour journey time) via several stops including Witham, Chelmsford, Shenfield, and Stratford. The station has a 28 space car park and 84 bicycle storage spaces.

Shared Mobility

- 2.11 There are no car clubs or other shared mobility schemes (such as bicycle or scooter hire) in the vicinity of the Site.

Highway

- 2.12 The Site is located off the B1053 which links the nearby villages of Finchingfield, and Wethersfield with Braintree. Braintree is approximately 14.1km to the south via the B1053. From Braintree there are links to the A120 and A131, with onward strategic connections to Colchester to the east, Chelmsford to the south and the M11 and London Stansted Airport to the west.

Summary

- 2.13 To conclude, the Site is located in a rural area, with no services within walking distance and limited sustainable transport options in proximity to the Site. There are no formal cycle paths or routes close to the Site. An hourly bus service stops within a 20-minute walk of the Site, providing a link to Braintree. In light of this, most staff and visitors will be likely to travel to and from the Site by motor vehicle, and therefore it will be important to encourage car sharing as part of the TP.

3. Objectives and Targets

Introduction

- 3.1 For a TP to succeed it is important to be clear about what it is attempting to achieve by setting clear aims, objectives and targets, with well-defined timeframes. Aims and objectives are intended to provide direction in preparing and implementing the TP, as well as providing the foundation on which targets should be set.

Objectives

- 3.2 The TP will aim to explore and influence the travel patterns of staff and visitors (such as those visiting for meetings, onsite maintenance etc.). The overall aim of this TP is to encourage the use of sustainable, active modes of travel to and from the Site, although it is acknowledged that the remote nature of the Site makes this more challenging.
- 3.3 Based on this aim, the following objectives have been set out:
- Encourage sustainable modes of travel for staff travelling to and from the Site, with a focus on car sharing given the location of the premises;
 - Reduce the proportion of staff trips by Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV);
 - Raise awareness of the TP amongst staff and visitors;
 - Undertake surveys at the Site at pre-defined intervals to obtain information regarding trips to / from the Site, their purpose, mode of travel, and attitudes to behaviour change; and
 - Regularly review and update the TP in line with ECC guidance.

Targets

- 3.4 To support the objectives of the TP, the Department for Transport (DfT) recommend that targets set should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related), as summarised below:
- **Specific:** Target increase / decrease in mode share shown over a set timescale;
 - **Measurable:** The mode share of staff will be measured and monitored using traffic surveys;
 - **Achievable and Realistic:** Targets should be sensible and realistic given the lack of travel options in the local area; and
 - **Time-bound:** Progress towards achieving targets is to be monitored on a regular basis (every six months) and met throughout the period of the TP's implementation.
- 3.5 Targets should be directly related to the objectives and can be both outcome and action based. A baseline survey will be undertaken within three months after approval of the TP and then repeated every six months. More detailed targets will be set once the baseline survey has been undertaken. The targets will be reviewed as part of the TP monitoring. The action targets are as follows:
- Encourage use of sustainable transport (car sharing, public transport) for staff travel to and from the premises;
 - Ensure travel information is made available to consult and that all staff and visitors are aware of the sustainable travel options available to them upon implementation of the TP;
 - Collect data every six months for a period of three years from first implementation of the TP to assess the success in meeting the applicable targets; and
 - Collate and consider feedback from the surveys to ensure that the TP reflects the needs of staff and visitors and promotes sustainable travel during the period of operation to 2027.

- 3.6 The interim target for the TP is to achieve a minimum of 40% of staff and visitors making journeys to and from the Site by sustainable travel modes, which includes car sharing which is likely to be the majority contributor. This target is considered to be ambitious but also realistic, given that the Site has a low level of transport accessibility, and that the indicative share was taken during set up of operations. This target will be revisited following the baseline survey on the basis that minimising private car travel will be the aim, and opportunities to deliver improvements on the outturn will be sought. If this target is achieved early, the target will be revisited during the monitoring process to ensure that the target remains relevant to progress at that time.
- 3.7 The targets will form the principal means by which the success of the TP will be measured. To gauge the implementation of the TP, it will be important to assess the number of journeys to/from the Site and staff and visitors' travel mode choices over time. This will be achieved through monitoring in the form of surveys.

4. Travel Plan Measures

Introduction

- 4.1 To achieve the aims, objectives and targets, a balanced package of measures has been prepared, targeted at the employees and visitors (e.g. those travelling to the Site for meetings, maintenance etc.), with the aim of minimising the proportion of single occupancy car trips to and from the Site. Given the Site's rural and remote nature, it is acknowledged that many staff will travel to the Site by private motor vehicle, therefore, the TP aims to encourage car sharing for workers and visitors.
- 4.2 The following section outlines the measures, and the supporting marketing and promotion techniques, recommended to be taken forward for this Site.

Measures to Encourage Public Transport Use

- 4.3 To support the uptake of public transport, public transport information including the location of the closest bus stops and the route to the Site from the nearest bus stop as well as relevant websites (e.g., travelessex.co.uk) will be made available to employees through a webpage, correspondence, and posters in prominent staff areas within the Site.
- 4.4 Further measures to promote public transport access, such as season ticket loans, will be considered in discussion with the Site Operator [REDACTED], during regular meetings where the TP will be part of the agenda.

Measures to Reduce Single Occupancy Car Travel

Car Sharing

- 4.5 Car sharing is a more sustainable option than owning a car or travelling alone. Car sharing provides opportunities for cheaper car travel, without requiring all participants to drive and/or own a motor vehicle. Car sharing already takes place informally among staff without measures to promote this travel option, although the distances of journeys and potential for cost savings among staff make this an attractive travel option. [REDACTED].
- 4.6 It is understood from the Site Operator that some 50% of existing journeys by staff in total are car share journeys, although this is an indicative proportion and will be subject to a formal survey at baseline stage. It is also noted that this proportion was taken during the initial 'ramp up' of operations in Spring 2024, which included active management to ensure that staff were able to access this relatively remote site. It is therefore appropriate that the TP focusses on securing this type of travel arrangement amongst staff and visitors. Opportunities and measures to encourage car sharing will be considered and reviewed in discussion with [REDACTED] during regular meetings where the TP will be part of the agenda. A key aspect of this will be the identification of any barriers to car sharing in order that these may be addressed on a rolling basis. Further measures to reduce private car travel may also include the addition of a communal pool car as a potential measure if it becomes clearly beneficial to the aim of minimising private car use. The significant uptake of car sharing is a result of informal networks between staff. The TP will encourage these networks further by the keeping, promotion and updating of a voluntary record or database by the Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC) such that staff can seek to match journeys with colleagues making existing commutes. The management of this record will be a key role of the TPC who will also promote the benefits of car sharing to existing staff. Further details of this role are provided within the next section.

Shift Times

- 4.7 It is recognised that the timing of shifts in relation to network peak travel times can significantly reduce traffic impacts. In addition to this, the staggering of shift patterns among different groups of staff makes a similar contribution to traffic impacts at peak times.

Green Driving Tips

- 4.8 Given that staff and visitors are likely to drive to and from the Site, whether by single occupancy vehicle or by private car, information on green driving tips will be provided. Such tips, which are not exhaustive include:
- Compliance with speed limits;
 - Avoiding abrupt stops and starts;
 - Avoid engine idling;
 - Checking that tyres are inflated to the correct pressure;
 - Combining journey purposes to reduce the overall number of trips; and
 - Remove unnecessary luggage from cars.

Marketing and Promotion

- 4.9 Marketing will promote a switch to more sustainable modes of travel for the journey to work. Staff will be made aware of the 'Greening government commitments 2021 to 2025' webpage on the Home Office website. The TP will also be promoted to staff through correspondence. Printed notices will also be provided in shared working areas, and communal spaces including canteens. The notices would include details of the car sharing database.
- 4.10 Staff and visitors to the Site will be provided with a document outlining the travel options for getting to the Site. This would be emailed with meeting correspondence. Appendix A presents the information which will be provided to all staff and visitors attending the Site.
- 4.11 This document will be developed and managed by the TPC and will form part of the marketing strategy to raise awareness of the TP and to ensure that employees and visitors have the necessary information to make informed travel choices. The TPC is responsible for overseeing and implementing the various measures outlined in the TP and these measures are described in further detail in the following section.

5. Monitoring and Management

Introduction

- 5.1 The key purpose of the TP is to encourage sustainable travel and minimise single car occupancy trips to and from the Site amongst staff and visitors. Ongoing monitoring and management are an essential part of the implementation of this process. They ensure that progress is being made towards the aims and objectives of the TP defined in Section 3 and allow the effectiveness of the accompanying initiatives and measures outlined in Section 4 to be reviewed so that corrective actions can be taken if the measures are not having the required impact.
- 5.2 This section proposes the management and monitoring structure to support the aspirations of the TP.

Monitoring

- 5.3 To understand the success of the TP, it is essential that a programme of regular monitoring is undertaken, which is to be undertaken on a six monthly basis. The monitoring will be undertaken in the form of multimodal counts at the main gate and Gate 7 and the distribution of questionnaires to staff and visitors. Although indicative car sharing figures have been provided by the Site Operator, these figures will be updated during this monitoring process. The outcome of the TP monitoring will provide the TPC with an indication of which measures / initiatives are working i.e., the results demonstrate that the TP is on course to meet or exceed its targets, or whether the initiatives are not working as expected i.e., on their own they are not sufficient to meet the targets.
- 5.4 The data obtained from the monitoring will inform the TP monitoring reports, which would be shared with ECC Sustainable Travel Planning team, and the Home Secretary. Should the TP be falling behind (i.e. the interim target of 40% of travel to the Site by sustainable modes, including car sharing, is not being met), the TPC would discuss with these stakeholders whether appropriate corrective actions should be taken to increase its chances of success. Examples of potential remedial measures include; public transport taster tickets being provided to staff free of charge, extra funding for the TPC, on-site car parking spaces re-allocated to car share only, personalised travel planning offered to staff, and financial incentives to staff. Stakeholder meetings, if required as a result of the data showing missed targets, would be arranged within a month of submitting each monitoring report to the ECC Sustainable Travel Planning Team.
- 5.5 It is important to note that as set out in paragraph 3.6 this target is interim and subject to review upon completion of the baseline survey. It is considered that 40% is an ambitious target given the rural location of the Site, and therefore the aim is to secure this target as a minimum expectation.
- 5.6 Similarly, if the monitoring indicates that the TP is well in advance of achieving its targets, there may be a discussion as to whether more challenging targets should be set.
- 5.7 The key element of the TP monitoring will be undertaking a Site survey to determine the travel behaviour and the mode share splits for employees and visitors. This would incorporate traffic surveys / data collected at the main gate, questionnaire surveys on car sharing, and car park / cycle parking occupancy surveys. It is proposed that a survey is undertaken within three months of the implementation of the TP, to obtain an accurate baseline and thereafter a survey will be completed every six months until expiry of the SDO.

Management

- 5.8 To ensure that the aims and objectives of the TP are realised, it is important to put in place an effective management structure or team. The TPC has been appointed in order to encourage and foster a sustainable approach to travel, wherever feasible. The TPC role is undertaken by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).
- 5.9 The TPC is responsible for overseeing and implementing the various measures outlined in the TP, to maintain an efficient transportation policy for the benefit of staff and visitors. The TPC is responsible for a range of activities, which are underpinned by the requirement to develop a co-ordinated and consistent approach to travel planning and the monitoring of this process. The TPC is an additional responsibility within the role of the SRO, and ECC Highways shall be informed of their appointment and contact details upon approval of the TP. Fulfilment or resourcing of the TPC role is the responsibility of the Home Office,

which will ultimately make the key decisions with regards to the TP. The role of the TPC includes the following:

- Overseeing the implementation of TP measures;
- Promoting the TP process;
- Preparing travel information to be communicated to employees and visitors throughout the life of the TP;
- Serving as a 'point of contact' for employees and visitors;
- Co-ordinating the monitoring process, analysing the results of the surveys and reporting to appropriate organisations, namely ECC Highways and the Home Office; and
- Updating and taking ownership of the Action Plan (see below) which will serve as a live document and record the issues and initiatives taken to meet the aims and objectives of the TP.

6. Action Plan

6.1 The following Action Plan summarises the programme of measures for the TP alongside the appropriate tasks, actions, timescales, and responsibilities required to support its implementation.

6.2 The Action Plan is included at Table 6-1.

Table 6-1: Action Plan

Measure / Initiative	Task / Action	Responsibility ¹	Priority	Timescale	Review
Appoint TPC and set aside budget	Complete. The TPC role is being undertaken by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)	Home Office	High	Appointment made	Every six months
Promote public transport	Provide link to staff for Home Office sustainable travel website Consider other measures to promote use of public transport and review these during regular meetings with [REDACTED] where the TP will be part of the agenda	TPC	High	From when TP implemented	Every six months
Reduce single occupancy private car travel	Encourage car sharing, promoting the benefits to staff Set up voluntary car sharing record to encourage matching of journeys Consider other measures to promote car sharing and review these during regular meetings with [REDACTED] where the TP will be part of the agenda	TPC			
Reduce motor impacts	Promote green driving tips to staff Promote and encourage sustainable travel for visitors and staff by providing information on travel options	TPC			
Maintenance of pathways, signage and lighting on Site	Monitor conditions of on-site infrastructure	Facilities Management Contractor	Medium		
Marketing / display of travel and / or local information	Provide web based travel information Provide poster / noticeboard in communal area to display travel information	TPC	Medium		
Conduct and analyse travel plan monitoring	Design and prepare surveys Conduct surveys and gather monitoring data Analyse responses Prepare monitoring report Update action plan Meet with ECC to discuss results	Home Office ECC to provide feedback to Home Office regarding monitoring and on the potential need to amend the TP	High	Within three months after TP is approved and then every six months	Baseline survey within three months after TP is approved and then every six months

² Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC)

Measure / Initiative	Task / Action	Responsibility ¹	Priority	Timescale	Review
Implement corrective or remedial measures if the TP is falling behind (i.e. the interim target of 40% of travel to the Site by sustainable modes, including car sharing, is not being met)	Potential measures could include; public transport taster tickets provided to staff free of charge, extra funding for the TPC, car parking spaces re-allocated to car share only, personalised travel planning offered to staff, and financial incentives to staff	Home Office Senior Responsible Officer	High	If required, meeting with stakeholders (including Home Office and ECC) to be arranged within three months of a report identifying that targets are not achieved	Every six months (in line with TP monitoring schedule)

7. References

Essex County Council (2021) Guidance Notes for a Workplace Travel Plan (May 2021)

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2014) Planning Practice Guidance Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements

Appendix A Site Travel Information Leaflet

Site Visit Travel Guide for Wethersfield

The following guidelines apply to all visitors attending Wethersfield site.

All site queries and proposed visit requests would be received via email. Once an email request has been received, the site coordinator will liaise with the attendee to facilitate the visit. A negotiated date and time will be planned for the visit.

Due to the site visitor booking process, if the visitor is content with the date and time, we will issue two site visitor forms to be completed and returned to the visit coordinator. (These forms are designed by [REDACTED] [REDACTED])

This request is initiated to all visitors attending a site visit so that we can confirm the attendance to inform the site leads and security. All completed forms to be emailed to [REDACTED] 48 hours prior to the visit date.

Nearer to the date of the visit, the visit coordinator will submit an email to the site to confirm the expected visitors and will issue an email to the attendees to confirm the site address, a map and parking details.

Wethersfield Site:

Address details:

MOD Wethersfield
Wethersfield
Braintree
CM7 4AZ

Getting to the Wethersfield Site:

Journeys can be made to and from the Wethersfield Site by car and taxi, and there are opportunities to travel by bus, bicycle or on foot but these opportunities in themselves are highly restricted due to the rural nature of the Site. If you are planning to take the train to the Wethersfield Site, you will need to take a taxi from Braintree station in order to complete your journey.

The Wethersfield Site operates a car sharing database, and we strongly encourage staff and visitors to contact the site-based Travel Plan Coordinator in advance in order to identify any potential matches for your journey. It is a key objective of the Wethersfield Travel Plan to ensure that car demand is minimised, in order to minimise our impact on local traffic flows, and to reduce travel costs.



