

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**20<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2006**

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**TROWBRIDGE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**  
**TRAVEL PLANNING****Purpose of Report**

1. To update Members on discussions which have taken place since their meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2005 and to offer advice on the potential benefits and implications of a number of issues.

**Background**

2. The meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2005 resolved:

*"that officers be requested to meet with the members for Trowbridge with a view to devising a suitable travel plan that would improve conditions for children's travel to/from school across the whole of the town, but in particular from east to west Trowbridge."*

3. That meeting was convened at County Hall on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2006. The meeting was well attended and discussion took place on a number of subject areas. The notes of the meeting are attached at **Appendix 1**.
4. The views and recommendations of Members are recorded in the notes under paragraph 8 - "Next Steps". However, 8(g) requests that officers from the Department for Children and Education and the Department of Environmental Services present a report to the September meeting, detailing:
  - (i) *A summary of the discussions at this meeting*
  - (ii) *Current travel plan arrangements at each of the three secondary schools*
  - (iii) *The arguments for and against devising a joint travel plan for the secondary schools*
  - (iv) *Possible alternatives to a joint travel plan, i.e. the retaining of individual plans, but improved collaboration between the schools with respect to the implementation of those plans*
  - (v) *The outcome and likely impact (relevant to this matter) of the consultation on the Council's proposal to withdraw support for denominational transport*
  - (vi) *Analysis of the impact on traffic congestion from the different start times of the schools*
  - (vii) *The likely impact of the new Education Act on passenger transport for schools*
  - (viii) *Up to date forecasts of pupil numbers for each of the schools*

## **Response of Officers**

5. Taking each in turn:

### Summary of the discussions at this (July 2006) Meeting

6. The notes attached as **Appendix 1** supply this information.

### Current Travel Plan arrangements at each of the three (Trowbridge) Secondary Schools

7. The County Council, supported by grant from DfT/DfES, employs specialist staff to support schools in developing and implementing School Travel Plans. In Trowbridge staff have been active in seeking to engage all the schools with this agenda.
8. The Clarendon School developed a basic Travel Plan in 2003 but this has not been implemented, monitored, or evaluated since and currently it does not meet DfES/DfT Travel Plan criteria. Both The John of Gaunt and St Augustine's Schools developed Travel Plans in 2004, but have not been successful in promoting the merits of this Plan, in particular the sustainable travel elements, to the school or wider community. It can be concluded that the schools are currently unable to prioritise these projects ahead of other demands on their staff resources.
9. The position in Trowbridge is not unique and greater collaboration is needed between Council Departments and schools to achieve the desired outcomes.

### The arguments for and against devising a Joint Travel Plan for the (Trowbridge) Secondary Schools

10. Travel Plans are specific to the site and the individual school community. They are underpinned by a "hearts and minds" campaign that must be customised and wholeheartedly owned by the individual school to be effective. Thus, the benefits of developing a joint Plan are limited but include co-ordinating any funding bids and needs for highway infrastructure improvements, possibly setting up a dedicated car sharing scheme (especially for staff), and perhaps most usefully, facilitating co-ordinated strategic planning and review at the highest management level. It should be noted that the Passenger Transport Unit already combines all three schools' needs into their school transport provision planning.

### Possible alternatives to a Joint Travel Plan, ie the retaining of individual Plans but improved collaboration between the schools with respect to the implementation of those Plans

11. The three schools already co-ordinate at a strategic level across many areas, including for example, as part of the Trowbridge Post 16 Learning Alliance. Travel Plans should be treated similarly, where individual progress in promoting sustainable travel is reported upon, together with proposed future actions that could impact on the other schools. This will then enable co-ordination to occur at a strategic level, ensuring effectiveness of operations and outcomes and efficient resource allocation. The Council's School Travel Plan Advisers will continue to provide support for this.

### The outcome and likely impact (relevant to this matter) of the consultation on the Council's proposal to withdraw support for Denominational Transport

12. Since the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> July, the Council's position on support for denominational transport has been confirmed, and it has significantly changed from what was previously predicted.

13. At its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2006 Cabinet considered a report on a public consultation carried out between 27<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> August 2006 on a proposal to reduce expenditure on school transport on denominational grounds and, following the consultation, an alternative set of proposals was presented and agreed (**Appendix 2**).
14. The alternative proposals should address the concerns and risks outlined in paragraph 4 (c) of the July 19<sup>th</sup> 2006 meeting notes (**Appendix 1**)

#### Analysis of the impact on traffic congestion from the different start times of the schools

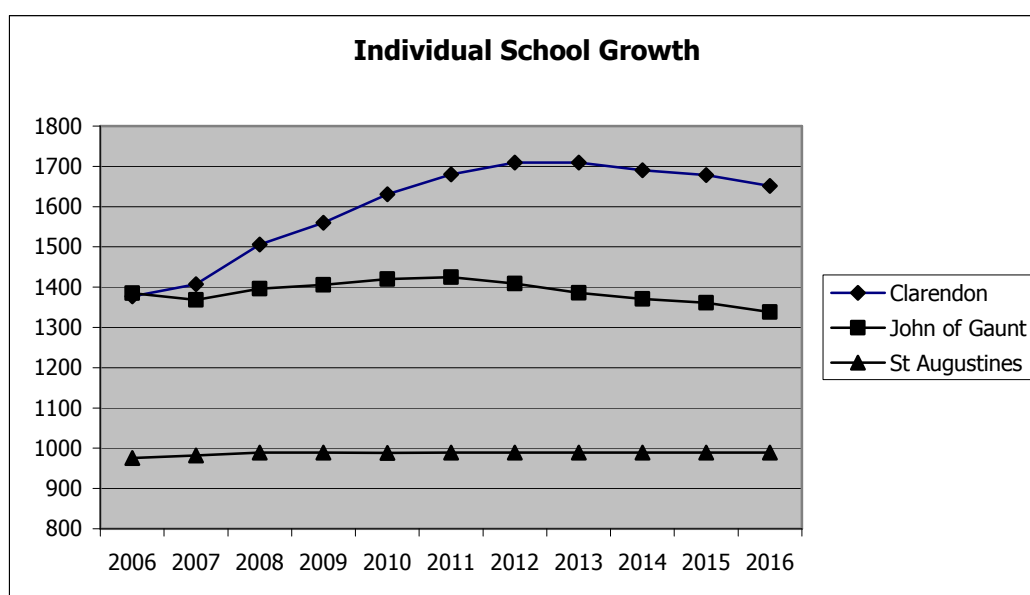
15. It is generally accepted that staggering the school start and finish times has had an effect on what might loosely be defined as congestion. Whilst there is no evidence to show that the total volume of traffic on the immediate network has reduced, the peak has spread over a longer period, thereby reducing queues and delays.
16. From a network management perspective the exercise has therefore had a positive outcome. However, in terms of sustainable travel the position is less clear. The primary purpose of School Travel Plans is to reduce the number of car borne trips, and if the outcome of the time change(s) has been to make car access easier and more attractive, it will be all the harder to persuade parents and students to change mode.

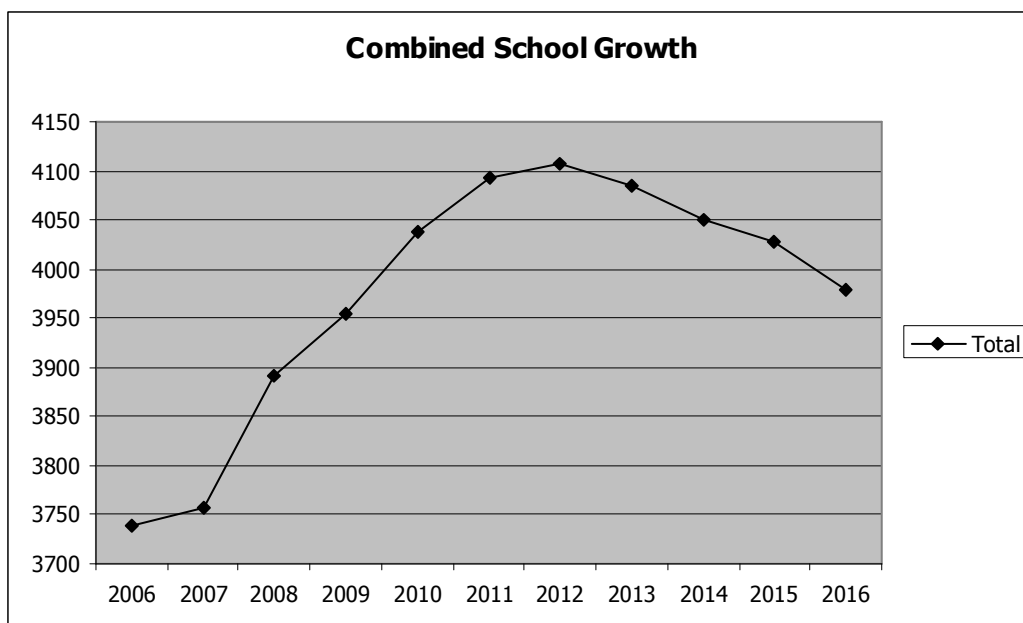
#### The likely impact of the New Education Act on passenger transport for schools

17. This issue is covered in the notes of the 19<sup>th</sup> July meeting (**Appendix 1**) paragraph 7 (b)-(e).

#### Up to date forecasts of pupil numbers for each of the schools

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
John of Gaunt	1385	1368	1396	1406	1420	1425	1409	1386	1371	1361	1338
Clarendon	1377	1407	1506	1560	1631	1680	1709	1709	1690	1678	1651
St Augustine's	976	982	989	989	988	989	989	989	989	989	989
<b>Total</b>	<b>3738</b>	<b>3757</b>	<b>3891</b>	<b>3955</b>	<b>4039</b>	<b>4094</b>	<b>4107</b>	<b>4084</b>	<b>4050</b>	<b>4028</b>	<b>3978</b>





18. The pupil forecasts allow for known changes in demographics – e.g. annual fluctuations in birth rate. They also allow for future housing developments which are on allocated sites. The School Buildings and Places Team is working with West Wiltshire District Council to assess the impact of the recently published draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy which indicates further housing growth will occur in Trowbridge to 2026. This may cause the peak on the above Combined School Growth graph to decline less rapidly.

### **Environmental Impact of the Proposal**

19. None.

### **Proposal**

20. That the Committee considers the progress so far made in discussing this issue and makes recommendations to further assist school travel planning matters for secondary schools in Trowbridge.

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None