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Dear Sir

THE CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT ON TRUNK ROADS

Under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 the Secretaries of State for Transport and Wales have certain powers to give directions restricting the grant of planning permission for development on trunk roads. They may also offer views to local planning authorities on planning applications

involving such access. The purpose of the attached Guidance Note is to set out comprehensively for the information of authorities the policy and the principles which will guide the Departments in exercising their powers and in offering views on planning applications.

Note: Telephone enquiries except for distribution questions should be made to 01-276-2805; distribution enquiries should be made to 01-276-2703.

THE GENERAL POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AND
THE WELSH OFFICE ON THE CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT ON
TRUNK ROADS:
GUIDANCE NOTE

STATUTORY POWERS

1. Under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 the Secretaries of State for Transport and Wales have power to give directions to local planning authorities to restrict the grant of planning permission for development of land requiring a new or altered access to trunk roads with a speed limit above 40 mph in force, and to motorways. They also have powers in certain circumstances to give directions to safeguard the lines of proposed new and realigned trunk roads and motorways, and more generally they advise local planning authorities on the highway considerations to be borne in mind in deciding planning applications affecting trunk roads and motorways. By 'trunk roads' in this context are meant all-purpose trunk roads which are not motorways.

POLICY RELATING TO MOTORWAYS

2. The Departments have a strict policy of not allowing direct access from adjacent development to motorways or motorway slip roads unless the development relates to motorway service areas, road junctions or motorway maintenance compounds. This recognises the importance of motorways to the primary route network as high speed through routes in and between major conurbations; and the heavy investment in them. It is essential, if they are to realise their full design potential, for them to be kept relatively access free in order that road speeds may be maintained and the risk of accidents and interruption to traffic flows minimised. For these

reasons the Departments will direct local planning authorities to refuse planning applications for developments whose access arrangements breach this policy.

POLICY RELATING TO ALL-PURPOSE TRUNK ROADS

3. The Departments are concerned with development on trunk roads from two points of view - road safety and the capacity of roads and the kind of traffic appropriate on them. There are of course a variety of other considerations which bear on the determination of planning applications. In particular there is a general presumption in favour of allowing applications for development, having regard to all material considerations, unless that development would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

4. The following paragraphs set out the highway considerations to be borne in mind in deciding planning applications for development on trunk roads, and give guidance on the extent to which and the circumstances in which it is necessary for highway reasons to restrict development on them. The principles of the guidance also have a bearing on control of development on other types of principal roads but the balance of considerations will not necessarily be the same. This note is confined to roads within the Secretaries of State's direct responsibilities. More general guidance on highway considerations in development control is given in the Planning Policy Guidance Note published by the Department of Environment and the Welsh Office No 13. "Roads and Traffic in Urban Areas", which sets out current good practice for planning and developing highways and traffic schemes, is also relevant to development control.

THE UNDERLYING NEED

5. Trunk roads are roads with the primary purpose of facilitating the safe and expeditious movement of traffic over long distances, and the Secretaries of State have a general obligation to provide and maintain a network which is adequate in this respect. If trunk roads are to fulfil this function, regard must clearly be had to the consequences of allowing development which would either increase road accidents or create traffic congestion. In the case of trunk roads it has been generally accepted for more than 50 years that if they are to perform effectively, both the number of junctions on them and the number of accesses to them must be limited. That principle is of course reflected in the motorway network itself, where the strictest rules apply. Many trunk roads are currently being built to near motorway standards with extensive infrastructure to facilitate the safe and free flow of traffic, and keep obstructions and hazards to the minimum.
6. The formation of new accesses to trunk and other principal roads is liable to lead to a greater risk of accident for fairly obvious reasons. Vehicles about to leave the main road are bound to slow down in relation to the normally high traffic speeds of those staying on the road, and vehicles joining the road are bound to take time to accelerate to the speed of traffic already on it. Tailend collisions can take place in those circumstances. A more dangerous situation is an access which provides for a right turning movement across the opposing traffic flow. There is then the added hazard of collision between a fast moving vehicle with what is effectively a stationary vehicle in relation to the direction of the impacting vehicles.
7. Accident investigation demonstrates in general terms that accesses tend to lead to accidents. The research into this is summed up in the attached Annex. While not recent, it nevertheless remains valid. It indicates that accidents on main roads cluster significantly around road junctions and accesses, and that

there is a clear correlation between the total accident rate and the number of accesses permitted. The research also supports the view that the risk of accidents from a given number of joining or leaving vehicle movements is reduced if these are concentrated on a limited number of junctions and accesses. The commonsense explanation of this is that drivers take more care when confronted with an obvious source of interference such as an exit from a large service area than they would if confronted with a series of individual accesses. The research also provides support for the view that where a number of developments are permitted, it is less likely to lead to accidents if access is to a service road which then has a single point of access to the main road. Where accesses do have to be allowed direct to fast main roads, splays, and merging and diverging lanes will need to be considered in conjunction with the Department of Transport Standards (TA20/84).

TRAFFIC MOVEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8. Access is liable not only to increase risk of incidents but to cause interference with the free movement of traffic, sometimes to the point of creating congestion. This is primarily though not exclusively a problem on urban trunk roads. In relation to London's trunk roads in particular, and the other designated roads in the capital, it is necessary to take into account the traffic generating capacity of riparian development before deciding whether to allow it. The evolution of urban areas may suggest that in some cases the best course is to plan for a change of function in the road, but this is only practicable if through traffic can be dealt with in some other way. Even within urban areas traffic needs to be able to move expeditiously from one locality to another, which is liable to become impossible if there is an unrestricted approach towards the generation of accesses.

CURRENT TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

9. Traffic has increased in total by over a third during the last 10 years, with the main growth being concentrated on motorways and trunk roads. Our expectation is that there will be further substantial growth by the year 2000. This points to two needs which have to be reconciled, one being to provide the services necessary to cater for this growth, and the other being to ensure that the capacity of the road system to accommodate it safely and expeditiously is not prejudiced.

10. It is also relevant to take into account wider trends in relation to the provision of services for trunk road users. There has been an increasing trend to concentrate provision of services on key sites with substantial diversification. The bypassing of large and small communities can deprive trunk road users of current facilities; and even though vehicles today can go much longer distances without refuelling there may be a deficiency of facilities in particular areas, including catering, toilets, picnic areas, and parking for heavy lorries. The sporadic growth of often unsightly mobile snack bars in laybys suggests that some needs are not being effectively met in other ways, including those of the long distance lorry driver.

THE GENERAL POLICY APPLYING

11. If trunk roads are to continue to perform their function as routes for the safe and expeditious movement of long distance through traffic, it is clearly necessary in general to restrict the formation of new accesses to them. A particularly strict policy is appropriate to fast stretches of rural trunk roads and to trunk roads of near motorway standard inside and outside urban areas.

12. In the case of roads already subject to numerous direct accesses in urban areas, urban fringe areas, and the more substantial villages, it may be reasonable to allow additional accesses, particularly if building plots would otherwise be sterilised. If splayed accesses cannot be incorporated because of site limitation the access should be permitted if and only if there is no significant road safety hazard involved. (Department of Transport Standards TA20/84). More substantial developments will need service roads, and it will be necessary to take into account the general effects of the new access on traffic capacity and flow. It is desirable for local planning authorities, with county councils, to formulate a general policy for dealing with these situations. Where roads are likely to be detrunked, either because of the provision of a bypass or for other reasons, this will of course have a bearing on the extent to which it is justifiable to restrict development on them.

13. Trunk roads may pass through some open areas which are scheduled for growth. In that event it is essential that local planning authorities should plan from the outset the way in which traffic needs will be met and the best ways of feeding traffic onto the trunk road where this is necessary. Early consultation with the Regional Office of DTp or the Welsh Office, Highways Directorate, is essential.

14. Where the development proposed is primarily designed to meet the needs of trunk road users, special considerations apply. Road safety and traffic movement considerations will necessitate limiting access from such developments. But there is a clear need at intervals along trunk roads for fuel, parking, toilet and refreshment facilities, including picnic areas. From the point of view of both the safety and convenience of travellers there is clear advantage in the grouping of such facilities at appropriately sited and spaced locations, and without need and without opportunity for crossing of traffic flows to reach them. Sometimes, sites with direct accesses to roundabout junctions may be acceptable and at points near to junctions where traffic will

usually be proceeding at reduced speeds, but normally locations in close proximity to junctions are not desirable. There may also be suitable sites in urban fringe areas where traffic movement is speed restricted. In general, the aim should be to avoid the need for travellers to divert into by-passed communities to reach facilities which they require. However, there may in some cases be amenity or other objections to developing new facilities on the line of the new road; in those cases or where there is in any event inadequate provision for facilities on the trunk road itself, it may be appropriate to sign traffic off to existing facilities on bypassed roads.

15. County and District/Borough Councils are encouraged to join with the private sector in exercises to identify locations on trunk roads where there do not appear to be adequate facilities. Assessment of demand for such facilities is for developers themselves in the first instance. Current and forecast traffic levels have to be taken into account as well as the effect of road improvements in prospect and other developments. Hence the value of a coordinated appraisal of needs. Since needs are contingent on traffic volumes and other individual factors, and since planning constraints will vary from case to case, there can be no standard rules on spacing. Half an hour's driving time (or 25 miles) should be regarded as the maximum which any driver should have to travel without availability of fuel, refreshment, toilet and parking facilities, including parking for heavy goods vehicles. However on trunk roads where high average speeds normally obtain, it will not in general be unreasonable to expect a driver to travel at least 12 miles before reaching petrol filling and related facilities. Shorter intervals may be warranted in the case of older urban trunk roads and other stretches of trunk road which already have a multiplicity of accesses (and are accordingly speed limited). There may also be justification on road safety grounds for allowing replacement of

unsuitable existing facilities. The facilities available need to be accessible without dangerous right turning movements across traffic flows.

16. Finally, development control issues also arise in relation to safeguarding the lines of proposed new and realigned trunk roads. The Departments will seek to restrict development which would be incompatible with future alignments, where these have been identified in plans for the purpose of public consultation or in draft or approved Orders. The Departments will also wish to see the prospect of future schemes taken into account where plans are less well developed, though the less firm the plans, the less weight safeguarding considerations can have.

17. Regional Offices of the Department or the Welsh Office, Highways Directorate, will be happy to give further detailed advice which may be sought on the application of these policies in particular areas.

Department of Transport
Welsh Office

30 November 1988