

## **Tools For Making London's Suburbs More Sustainable** **A Brief TCPA/URBED Survey**

The TCPA is working with URBED to help prepare the 'Sustainable Suburbs Toolkit' promised in the London Plan. This will bring together, in a convenient form, information on actions that can be taken – by public agencies, communities, businesses or individuals – to help make London's suburbs more sustainable. Sustainability is at the heart of the Mayor's vision for "an exemplary sustainable world city", and the Plan recognises that London's suburbs, not just its urban centres, will have to play an important part in achieving it.

The aims of the Toolkit are to:

- provide ready access to information on practical actions ("tools") that can be taken to improve sustainability in London's suburban areas
- give examples of projects that have actually worked somewhere
- contain simple information on each tool – a single page, or computer screen – with links to sources of further information and examples
- be capable of being put on a website that links to other information instantaneously. (See attachment for more details.)

Sustainability can be defined in many ways, but previous research has identified a number of issues that are particularly relevant to London's suburbs. These are main themes that the Toolkit will initially focus on:

1. Reinforcing the role of local centres
2. Making new development sustainable
3. Improving the existing housing stock
4. Promoting alternatives to travel by car
5. Improving environmental sustainability
6. Protecting and promoting suburban employment
7. Improving the quality of design and the public realm
8. Enhancing community cohesion and safety.

The Toolkit is in its early stages. To help ensure that it develops along the right lines, please take a few minutes to reply to the following questions (either directly by e-mail to [nancy@tcpa.org.uk](mailto:nancy@tcpa.org.uk), or if you prefer you can print a copy of this survey from [http://www.urbed.com/cgi-bin/main.cgi?org\\_code=fffeggretyuiop57&option=article&doc\\_id=221](http://www.urbed.com/cgi-bin/main.cgi?org_code=fffeggretyuiop57&option=article&doc_id=221) and post/fax it back to Nancy Easter Garcia, TCPA, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS, fax: 020 7930 3280). As you will see, there is an opportunity to win a prize!

With many thanks

Gideon Amos  
Director  
Town & Country Planning Association

# URBED/TCPA Survey

## Tools For Making London's Suburbs More Sustainable

Please type in your answers and return by 4<sup>th</sup> May 2004 to [nancy@tcpa.org.uk](mailto:nancy@tcpa.org.uk) (or by fax to 020 7930 3280).

Name ...>

Position ...>

Organisation ...>

E-mail address ...>

1. Do you think that a 'Sustainable Suburbs Toolkit' for London, as outlined above, would be really useful?

(a) to you Yes....> No....>

(b) to others you work with:  
in the public sector Yes....> No....>  
in businesses Yes....> No....>  
in community groups Yes....> No....>

(c) What use would you make of it?  
....>  
....>

(d) Do you have any major comments/reservations about it?  
....>  
....>

2. How important is it that the Toolkit should be available

(a) in hard copy?  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

(b) on the GLA's website?  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

(c) on an independent website?  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

(d) on a CD ROM  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

3. (a) Are the themes listed above the main ones to include? Yes..> No..>

(b) If no, what theme(s) should be omitted?

....>

....>

(c) and/or what themes should be added (2 maximum)?

....>

....>

4. Which projects (and/or specific policy statements) do you think it would be important to include as examples for the themes?  
(Please give name and location, which need not necessarily be in London, and the key reason why it works)

1. Reinforcing the role of local centres

....>

....>

2. Making new development sustainable

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3. Improving the existing housing stock

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....>

4. Promoting alternatives to travel by car

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5. Improving environmental sustainability

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....>

6. Protecting and promoting suburban employment

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....>

7. Improving the quality of design and the public realm

....>

....>

8. Enhancing community cohesion and safety

....>

....>

Please add projects/locations for any extra themes you added at Question 3(c).

....>

....>

....>

5. Which three of the above themes are the most important?

....>

....>

....>

Very many thanks for your help. If you would like to be included in our draw for £50 in books please mark 'X' below - and ensure that your name is included at the top.)

....>

(Note: Only completed forms received by May 4th 2004 will be eligible for the draw!)

Nancy Easter Garcia (TCPA) 020 7930 8903

and

Christopher Cadell (URBED) 020 7436 8050

# A Toolkit for Making London's Suburbs More Sustainable

## Project Summary

URBED (the Urban and Economic Development Group) has been appointed by the Greater London Authority (GLA), the London Development Agency (LDA) and the Association of London Government (ALG) to prepare a Toolkit to provide help to those who are trying to make London's suburbs more sustainable. This follows on from URBED's earlier report *A City of Villages*, which recommended over 70 policies under seven themes, many of which have now been incorporated into the Mayor's recently published *London Plan*.

URBED will again be working with the Town & Country Planning Association in order to involve interested practitioners and policy makers, and others with an interest in London and its suburbs. The project will draw on advice from a wide range of experts. It will include a number of discussion groups organised in conjunction with the TCPA. The work will also focus on a number of case studies, including at least one in each of London's sub-regions and covering the range of typical suburban situations. It is planned that a draft Toolkit will be ready at the end of May, and it is expected that the information it contains will also be made available on the internet.

## What Is the Toolkit?

The *London Plan* sets out a commitment that:

*“in collaboration with boroughs the Mayor will prepare good practice guidance and a ‘sustainable suburbs toolkit’ to guide development policies in suburban centres, employment areas, neighbourhoods and heartlands.”*

In this context, the Toolkit is intended to bring together, in a convenient form, information on things that can be done – by public agencies, communities, businesses, or individuals – to help make London's suburbs more sustainable, and so contribute to the Mayor's vision for London as “an exemplary sustainable world city”. Such a Toolkit could cover a very wide range of topics, and include a great deal of material. It could easily become unmanageable. However the over-riding aim of the proposed Toolkit is that it should **provide ready access to information on practical actions**. It is therefore proposed that it should:

- Concentrate primarily on the action-oriented issues set out in *A City of Villages: Promoting a sustainable future for London's suburbs* (SDS Technical Report 11, prepared for the draft *London Plan*)
- Include only basic information on each topic (including basic guidance on where or when it is likely to be most relevant), but provide directions on how to find further information and advice
- Include only topics which actually work in practice, i.e. where there is already an example of it having worked elsewhere – although not necessarily in London, or even in Britain. It will thus build on practical experience, and not just contain ‘good ideas’.
- Be informative, not prescriptive. It should help people develop ideas and find information about actions that can contribute to sustainability, not try to tell them what they must do.

Nevertheless, given the range of people who might use it, the Toolkit may still need to include a variety of different types of tool, including:

- **Policy tools** – when information is provided on specific policies that have, for example, been adopted in local UDPs or incorporated in Local Community Strategies
- **Action tools** – which describe practical actions or initiatives that can make a contribution to specific aspects of sustainability
- **Process tools** – which give information on key process issues, such as *defining and analysing suburban areas*, *diagnosing issues and actions*, or *securing resources*, which might be particularly relevant to making things happen in suburban areas.

Not everyone will be interested in all the tools in the Toolkit. It needs to be designed to be dipped into, not studied from cover to cover. It must be easy to navigate around, so that users can quickly find the tools, and further related information, that they need. There is nothing to stop a tool from appearing in more than one place in the Toolkit.

## What Should the Sustainable Suburbs Toolkit Cover?

URBED's research report *A City of Villages: Promoting a sustainable future for London's suburbs* divided London's suburbs into four types of area, for which different policies (and so different tools) might be appropriate. The *London Plan* has followed this principle - using the terms:

- **town centres** (but excluding Metropolitan and Major centres)
- **neighbourhoods** (the areas within easy walking distance of town centres)
- **residential heartlands** (residential areas further away from town centres) and
- **employment locations** (as there are places in the suburbs that have important concentrations of jobs).

*A City of Villages* also suggested a set of policies for each type of area under seven key themes for making London's suburbs more sustainable (and an extra theme has been added):

1. **Reinforcing the role of local centres**
2. **Making new development sustainable**
3. **Improving the existing housing stock**
4. **Promoting alternatives to travel by car**
5. **Improving environmental sustainability**
6. **Protecting and promoting suburban employment**
7. **Improving the quality of design and the public realm**
8. **Enhancing community cohesion and safety.**

These themes are positive and action-oriented, and in most cases success can be measured and mapped. Hence they provide a good starting point for developing tools and collecting examples. The next step is to build on the suggested policies under each of these headings and convert them into 'policy tools' and 'action tools' – and to add any 'process tools' which are appropriate.

The process tools might be categorised under the following headings:

- A. **Defining and analysing suburban areas**
- B. **Diagnosing issues and potential actions**
- C. **Reaching agreement**
- D. **Involving stakeholders**
- E. **Securing resources**
- F. **Managing and monitoring.**

## Next Steps

A **List of Potential Tools** will be accessible on URBED's website by clicking on:

[http://www.urbed.com/cgi-bin/main.cgi?org\\_code=fffggretyuiop57&option=article&doc\\_id=221](http://www.urbed.com/cgi-bin/main.cgi?org_code=fffggretyuiop57&option=article&doc_id=221)

The next part of the project is, with the help of experts in the various fields, to refine and if necessary extend the list (by adding extra tools that practitioners consider important), and to create a one-page information sheet (or toolsheet) for each tool.

Each tool needs to have a good descriptive name (as it is its name that will identify it and attract the user's attention). Apart from the name, each toolsheet needs:

- a clear, concise description of what the tool can be used for and what it can achieve, and a brief note of any steps that it is essential to follow in order to implement it successfully. (Not more than 250 words in total)
- an indication of the type(s) of suburban area (see above) and/or situation in which it is likely to be most useful
- references to sources of further information and contacts (preferably direct web links)
- an example of where it has worked already (with a reference – again directly to the relevant website if possible).

Given the power of the internet to make connections to other sources of information, it would seem sensible to set the Toolkit up in such a way that it could be web-based. Ideally each toolsheet would fit on to a single computer screen (without the need for any scrolling). Hence the information actually provided in the Toolkit (as opposed to what is referred to elsewhere) needs to be carefully limited. An initial draft of a toolsheet – on *The Walking Bus* – is attached.

For further details on this project contact:

Anna Hamilos, **GLA**, on 020 7983 4291 or [anna.hamilos@london.gov.uk](mailto:anna.hamilos@london.gov.uk), or  
Gideon Amos, **TCPA**, on 020 7930 8903 or [Gideon.amos@tcpa.org.uk](mailto:Gideon.amos@tcpa.org.uk), or  
Christopher Cadell, **URBED**, on 020 7436 8050 or [c.cadell@urbed.com](mailto:c.cadell@urbed.com)

Copies of *A City of Villages* can be downloaded from [www.urbed.com](http://www.urbed.com)

The London Plan is available at [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

Toolkit Navigation Box

## Walking Bus

**Walking Buses** are groups of children who walk to school in ‘crocodile fashion’ escorted by trained adult volunteers along a safe route.

*Aim:* Walking buses help to reduce rush-hour traffic congestion and pollution as well as school-gate parking problems. They also provide additional regular exercise for children.

**Key Factors:** *Each Walking Bus must have at least two escorts, with a maximum of eight children for each escort. It follows a planned, safe route and has a set timetable for collecting children from specified stops along the route. Adults who volunteer as escorts have to undergo a police check. All children have to wear reflective vests. The Walking Bus is free.*

**Policy Context:** Part of the [Government’s?] *Safer Routes to School* Initiative. Supported by all London Boroughs and encouraged by the Mayor’s Transport Policy (*Proposal 4G.9*). Progress will be shown by the London Sustainable Development Commission’s Headline Indicator *Travel to School* (Indicator X.YY).

**Getting Involved:** The first step in setting up a Walking Bus is to contact the school’s head teacher.

**What for?**

Reducing car-dependency

**Who for?**

Families with children

**Where?**

Anywhere within walking distance of a school

**Examples in Action:** Courtland Junior School, (Borough) [Reference: ]  
St Peter Cofe Primary School, (Borough) [Reference ]

For Further Information: **Click on** [www.walkingbus.org](http://www.walkingbus.org) or [www.walkingbus.com](http://www.walkingbus.com)

Or visit [http://www.london21.org/articles\\_item.asp?id=153](http://www.london21.org/articles_item.asp?id=153) or  
<http://www.thecei.org.uk/GreenSchools/default.htm>

Sources: