



“I believe that on this occasion the applicants have demonstrated that they have a robust case to justify the provision of an increase in on-site parking as proposed.”

Local Council's Planning Officer

Keeping Good Hope Hospital flowing

Royal HaskoningDHV is a great believer in acknowledging that any travel plan should accommodate the necessity of car travel, rather than addressing purely non-car solutions. This was demonstrated in 2005 when we were asked by Sutton Coldfield's Good Hope Hospital NHS Trust to provide a mid-term assessment of its 1999 Green Travel Plan. The brief threw up an additional challenge when we discovered that our assessment was to accompany the hospital's planning application for a 350-space multi-storey car park.

On the face of it, our task might have proved to be a difficult one. On the one hand we had to show that the hospital's senior management and staff remained completely committed to the sustainable principles and operational requirements of their existing travel plan; on the other, we had to make a robust case for a new facility that could only ever be used by car users.

What we had to do was convince the planning authority that car use is an important part of any travel plan and that it is necessary to provide sufficient parking where car travel is essential and unavoidable.

We knew that the hospital had already had numerous complaints about overspill parking from local residents, so much so that it was generating a lot of interest from the local council. Also, the hospital was concerned that it was losing key staff and unable to attract new staff because there was no guarantee of a parking space. To compound this, our forecasts showed that the increase in demand for services in the future would put even more pressure on a parking resource that was already struggling to cope.

Our research showed that the hospital was doing all that it reasonably could – parking restrictions were being enforced, car sharing was encouraged, bus services and a park-and-ride service had been introduced, a cycle user group and covered cycle racks had been established, and the Green Travel Plan was being constantly marketed both internally and through the media. In short, we showed that travel by other non-car means had been promoted rigorously.



↑ EMERGENCY
→ AMBULANCE

Keeping Good Hope Hospital flowing

We also showed that the Government's own guidelines – Planning Policy Guidance 13 – acknowledged the importance of accommodating car use and demanded that health facilities in particular offer adequate parking provision for car users.

Our mid-term assessment was completed and submitted alongside the planning application. The local council's Travel Plan officer said that the assessment was "...excellent and well written", with the planning officer adding in his report to the Planning Committee: "I believe that on this occasion the applicants have demonstrated that they have a robust case to justify the provision of an increase in on-site parking as proposed."

The application was subsequently approved.

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