

Vicarage Gardens, South Marston

Operational Travel Plan

2025 - 2027



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Site Profile

Vicarage Gardens, South Marston, is a Bellway Homes site, comprising 70 dwellings.

Address

Old Vicarage Lane, South Marston, SN3 4FL

Website

<https://www.bellway.co.uk/new-homes/south-west/vicarage-gardens>

Main E-mail address: vicaragegardens@bellway.co.uk

Main Telephone number: 01454 451960

Main Contacts

Bellway Homes have opted to pay the “Residential Travel Plan Contribution” to Swindon Borough Council to resource the implementation of the travel plan. The contacts for the travel plan are as follows;

Name of Travel Plan Coordinator: Claire Fleming

Travel Plan Coordinator's Email Address: cflaming@swindon.gov.uk

Travel Plan Coordinator's Telephone number: 07584 151301

The Travel Plan co-ordinator will report to the developer, Bellway Homes as follows;

Senior Level Contact responsible for the Travel Plan: Lee Mullen

Senior Level contact details: Lee.mullen@bellway.co.uk

Name of Residential Travel Plan Framework (2015) Author: George Bailes

Company of Travel Plan Author: The transportation consultancy

Travel Plan Author's Email Address: info@ttc-transportplanning.com

Travel Plan Author's Telephone number: 01527 65318

Introducing the Travel Plan

Aims & objectives of Travel Plan

The Framework Travel Plan set out the following objectives:

- To encourage residents and visitors to travel by sustainable modes
- To support people wishing to travel more sustainably
- Reduce the environmental impact of the development
- Reduce single occupancy car travel to the site

The development was completed and fully occupied by 2022 but it is important to continue to integrate the new residents into the existing village of South Marston.

Many of the travel plan activities are open to current village residents in order to create a neighbourhood feel.

The life of the travel plan is 5 years from full occupation, so this operational travel plan covers the period from 2025 to 2027.

Site Audit

Location

The development is off Old Vicarage Lane, South Marston, Swindon SN3 4FL.

Site Plan



Site Occupation

The sales office opened in February 2020 and first occupation occurred in the autumn of 2020, due to the pandemic slowing down construction. Over the next 2 years, the site was built out, and has achieved full occupation during summer 2022.

Site size

The total site area is 2.49 hectares. There are 70 dwellings comprising a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bedroomed dwellings, with 7-8% social housing.

Local amenities

There is currently a primary school and 2 pubs in the village, with a 24-hour supermarket and a retail park within 2 kms of the site. There are allotments and green spaces within a walkable distance to the village.

Other site details

Planning applications for the New Eastern Villages parcels are in close proximity of the site, and South Marston will benefit from related upgrades in infrastructure. The primary school has a planned extension ahead of the forthcoming South Marston and Rowborough scheme coming forward.

The most significant development is the Rowborough and South Marston development, comprising up to 2380 dwellings north of the A420. As well as the residential dwellings, the development comprises a mixed-use local centre, 2 primary schools, community use and sheltered / care accommodation. The application was granted outline consent in August 2021.

At the time of writing (December 2024) there reserved matters application for the primary street and the first parcels (R6, R7, R8 and R9) that are still pending decision and the development has not commenced.

There is also a smaller planning application submitted for 57 dwellings on the former Crown Trading Estate on Thornhill Road. If approved, this will bring much needed pedestrian connection to the footpath that runs alongside Thornhill Road and has a missing link at the north end of the village.

Travel & Transport Infrastructure

Cycling Infrastructure

Cycle parking spaces for residents and visitors

Cycle parking is in line with SBC parking standards, with garages or stores being provided for each household.

Cycle access to site

There is direct access from the site to the bridleway that links the village to the Swindon Cycle Network. Within a five-mile radius of South Marston there are good cycling facilities and the site has access to a number of dedicated local cycle routes which provide access to Swindon town centre (via The Eastern Flyer) and St Margaret's Retail Park.



Swindon's cycle network connects to National Cycle Route 45, giving access for leisure or commuting to Cirencester and Marlborough.

Walking Infrastructure

Pedestrian access

There are good pedestrian facilities in and around the development; a footway provides access to the village centre and is located on the northern side of Old Vicarage Lane before switching to the Southern side of Old Vicarage Lane near the recreation ground.

Pedestrians are aided to cross safely by dropped kerbs and tactile paving and a traffic calming feature. There is street lighting throughout the village.

The bridleway to the south of the site links through to Morses Lane and Thornhill Road where pavements continue to the retail park and Eastern Flyer. In bad weather, the bridleway can get muddy.

Bus Infrastructure

Proximity to closest bus stops

Bus stops are located along Old Vicarage Lane, just 23m from the site, although no service currently uses them.

As part of the village expansion and redevelopment of South Marston and Rowborough, bus services are proposed to be reintroduced. In the meantime, buses run along the A420 between Oxford and Swindon approximately every 20 minutes, with bus stops at St Margaret Retail Park, and close to the Old Vicarage Lane junction (0.7m from site).

Bus services

The S6 runs from Swindon Bus Station along the A420 to Faringdon and Oxford every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday, and a half hourly service on Sundays.

As part of development proposals, a bus service is due to be reintroduced to the village. A “Try the Bus for free” scheme has been offered to new residents to make them aware of options for travelling by bus, but many feel that the distance to the bus stops on the A420 are too far and not convenient to access.

Train services

The closest train station is Swindon, 15 minutes by car / bus and 30 minutes by cycle from the development. Local and national rail GWR services run between Swindon, London Paddington, Cheltenham, Bristol, Bath, Cardiff, Reading, Westbury and Gloucester.

Car Travel

Resident car parking

The development accommodates 147 parking spaces for residents and 13 parking spaces for visitors, which is in line with SBC's parking standards. Now that the development is fully occupied, there appears to be no issues with overspill parking on the carriageway.

Whilst there are no dedicated electric car charging points on site, many homes have driveways / garages to enable householders to investigate a charging point at home if required.

The primary school next to the site will be gaining electric charging points in the car park as part of its expansion, and these will be available for villagers to use.

Car access to site

There is one point of vehicular access in to the site, which is via the existing access from Old Vicarage Lane. The access is to the LHA specification. There are additional accesses dedicated for pedestrians and cycles from the local bridleway, providing traffic free access to the site.

Sustainable / Smarter Travel Tools

Welcome pack for new residents (and travel information included)

Resident Travel Information Packs have been provided to all residents at the development. These were developed and distributed by the Travel plan coordinator in conjunction with the Parish Council's welcome packs.

The packs contained site maps showing nearby cycling, walking and bus routes, contact details for bus operators, car share information and details of the offers for new residents, such as the borrow a bike scheme, and free bus pass.

Suitable locations on site for promotional activities events identified

At the centre of the village, there are opportunities for events at the village hall, the school, as well as in the woodland gazebos.

The recreation ground has also been used for village events, such as Party in the Park, which the travel plan has been able to piggy back.

Detail on the travel plan activity during the previous year is contained in the monitoring report at Appendix One.

Travel Surveys

Until the site was occupied, the baseline travel expectations were based on 2011 Census data for the ward.

We ran a survey across the whole village of South Marston in March / April 2022, 2023 and 2024. The latest data is available at <https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Travel-Survey-Report-2024-1.pdf>

The breakdown of mode of travel data is as follows;

Historical Mode of Travel

	Bus	Car Driver on own	Car Driver with passengers	Cycle	Get a lift	Get dropped off	Other	Scooter/ Motorbike	Taxi	Train	Walk	Work from home
1st Jan 2011	3%	80%	0	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0	2%	5%	2%
March 2022	1%	35%	26%	1%	1%	0	0	0	0	0	15%	20%
March 2023	0%	44.1%	20.6%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17.6%	14.8%
March 2024	3%	46.9%	28.1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	9%

The pandemic had an effect, increasing the working from home to 20% in 2022, but as people return to the office, these rates have declined by half. Solo car driving has increased from a low point in 2022, but current solo car travel remains well below the target of 73%.

Bus use is low due to the lack of services serving the village, but this can be improved with the introduction of the new road and bus service serving the new communities as part of the expansion.

Similarly, cycle use is currently low, but the improvement of cycle paths and bridleways around the village offers opportunities for improvement.

Targets

A high-level target was been set to reduce solo car travel to 73% or lower by 2025. The target was hit and remains a realistic target to maintain until there are more options for residents in terms of safe cycle and walking routes and a better bus service.

Target	Due Year	Comments
Mode: Car Driver on own, 73%, Date added: 28/11/2019	2025	Target met - Retain
New target: Car Driver on own, Keep below 50%, Date added: 01/01/2025	2027	
Increase cycling, walking, working from home and public transport use by at least 7%	2025	Target met - Retain
NEW Target	Due Year	Comments
Achieve silver ("very good") travel plan accreditation	2024	Not met – We will need to demonstrate a reduction in solo car driving to hit this level, and until there are better bus and active travel connections out of the village we will not be able to achieve this.
New target: Retain bronze ("good") travel plan accreditation for the life of the travel plan.	2027	On target

Action Plan for 2025 - 2027

Action	Due Date	Monitoring	Reporting
Cycling			
C4 Cycle Hire / Bike Loan scheme in place Borrow a bike scheme in place - leaflet included in Welcome Pack	1 st occupation And ongoing	TPC to keep spreadsheet of participants	Scheme in place. Low take up. https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/borrow-a-bike-scheme/
C29 Other Provide summer cycle roadshow or bike maintenance course	Annual	TPC to note number of attendees	Roadshow held. Take up good. Repeat in 2025.
Monitoring Activities			
M5 Other Undertake baseline survey and follow up survey 1 year after 1st occupation and annually thereafter	March 2025, 2026 and 2027	Generate results on Starsfor	Next survey due March 2025
Promotion, Communications and Events			
PC9 Sustainable travel options promoted on websites Development site to have own section on STC website Work with Parish Council communications post to ensure information or links posted on Parish website.	Prior to 1 st occupation and ongoing updates	TPC to ensure the HIP and offers are loaded	Complete - https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/newdevelopments/vicarage-gardens/ 56 page views over past 2 years.
PB5 Personalised travel planning delivered	May 2025, 2026, 2027	TPC to send out personalised letters and supporting info following survey each year	
BP17 - Other promotion, communication or events initiative	Various	Articles on various initiatives go into Parish magazine	Ongoing
Public Transport			

PT10 Participate in Catch the Bus Month Run event or promotion in September for catch the bus Week.	September 2025, 2026, 2027	TPC to monitor response	Ongoing
PT8 Provision of public transport smart cards for residents Provide scheme for residents to try the bus for free	1 st Occupation	TPC to keep records of take up	Ongoing
Smarter Driving			
SD2 Carpooling/sharing scheme established Promotion of Car Share Swindon - leaflets in Welcome Pack	1 st Occupation	TPC to monitor take up from residents.	Ongoing
SD15 Other Car share coffee morning to introduce car sharers	From 2025 onwards	TPC to monitor take up – <i>Survey suggests take up will be low</i>	
Walking			
W7 Provide walking maps Update Get Walking magazine with walks specific to South Marston area as part of wider NEV work	2026 (subject to expansion)	Magazine available	
W5 Offer led walks Hold walking event annually	Summer 2025, 2026, 2027	TPC to monitor take up	



2024 Vicarage Gardens Monitoring report



November 2024

Bellway

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Introduction

This annual monitoring report has been prepared by Swindon Travel Choices to provide a review of the Residential Travel Plan (RTP) for Vicarage Gardens, Swindon for the past 12-months to November 2024.

The report is submitted to Bellway Homes (the developer) as well as the Local Planning Authority, Swindon Borough Council (SBC), for information.

This 2024 monitoring report provides a review of progress of the fourth year of travel plan activity, along with outlining the plan for the following year.



The travel plan continues to have “Good Travel Plan” accreditation status, and the continued activity with the village means that we can reapply in December 2024 to retain the accreditation for a further 3 years.

Review of Progress

A review of the progress made in year three set out in the operational travel plan is provided in this section.

Engagement Events

The travel plan commits to two engagement events per year.

1) Treasure Hunt Walk

Our first event capitalised on the May Bank Holiday weekend, and a family walk and treasure hunt was held for villagers on Saturday 25th May 2024. Organised and led by local residents, the travel plan was able to support the walk with free maps, backpacks, magazines and pedometers.

We hired the village hall at the end of the walk to offer free refreshments and activities for the children.



The weather was kind, with blue skies, but unlike the previous year, the turnout was quite low with only 9 villagers turning up. We concluded that the May Bank Holiday was possibly not a good time for many people with too many competing priorities on people's time.

2) Railway Village Walk

In September 2024, a **guided walk** took place to encourage South Marston residents to come into Swindon Town Centre and explore the heritage on offer.

Piggy backing Travelwise Week and Catch the Bus month, the promotion offered a free bus trip from the village into Swindon town centre, utilising the free bus provided by the Harris Memorial Trust. This would be followed by a 45-minute guided walking tour of the Railway Village. Free refreshments were then on offer at the Baker's café, and the Railway Museum open to tour.

Postcard sized invites were posted through the occupied homes doors, which contained a link to online booking. The 20 places were quickly filled. The promotion was open to residents from the Bellway development, but the places were taken with more established villagers.

The weather was wet on the day but the pouring rain didn't dampen spirits as the villagers were taken down memory lane, learning about places some remembered from childhood, and introducing them to new places.

After complimentary coffee and cake, the free bus picked them up and dropped them back to South Marston Village.



3) Summer Trails

This challenge ran through the school summer holidays and we invited residents to participate by posting a leaflet through the door.

The challenge is Swindon-wide, where 6 walking trails were designed for families to explore over the summer holidays. For each trail completed, there is a badge to collect and an entry into the prize draw.

The trails, which are all between one and three miles long, take in great local arts, heritage, and historical sites, as well as places of natural beauty. We monitored take up via the prize draw entries, so we could calculate the number of adults and children that participated in each trail. The entries revealed that the trails were walked 1036 times – by 460 adults and 576 children under 16.

About the Swindon Summer Trails Challenge

We have designed 6 walking trails around Swindon for you to explore over the summer holidays. For each trail you complete, you can collect a badge and enter the prize draw.

The trails, which are all between one and three miles long, will take you to some great local arts, heritage and historical sites, as well as places of natural beauty. There's a limited edition badge available for the first 200 people to complete each challenge, while for every trail you complete, you will gain an entry into our grand prize draw.

Wherever possible, the routes have been designed to be accessible, with alternative suggestions provided if this is not the case. Details for getting to the start of each of the walks by public transport will also be provided.

Getting started

On Friday 26th July 2024, we will officially launch the 6 trails. There will be 6 different trail leaflets to pick up from Swindon's main libraries and our partner locations*. You can also download the trail leaflets from <https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/activeswindonchallenge/>

Complete the trails during the 6 weeks of the summer holidays, collecting badges and entering the prize draw as you accomplish each one.

The challenge will finish on Sunday 8th September 2024, with the grand prize draw taking place on Monday 16th September 2024.

***Our partner locations are**

- Central Library
- Old Town Library
- Coate Water café
- Forest café - Lydiard Park
- STEAM Museum

Prizes

One lucky winner will receive a £100 supermarket voucher in the grand prize draw, whilst 5 runners up prizes for each trail include t-shirts, STEAM family passes, walking books, and food hampers.

You can enter the prize draw online from the website <https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/activeswindonchallenge/> or by scanning the QR code on the trail leaflets, or by posting an entry form in the postbox when you collect your badge.

The Trails

- Trail One** (The Butterfly Trail) along Old Town Railway Path from Mannington to Old Town
- Trail Two** (The Fish Trail) A loop of Coate Water
- Trail Three** (The Bear Trail) around Swindon's Railway Village to STEAM
- Trail Four** (The Dragonfly Trail) along the canal from Wichelstowe to Swindon Town Centre
- Trail Five** (The Pig Trail) along the Eastern Flyer from Greenbridge to Swindon Town Centre
- Trail Six** (The Squirrel Trail) around Lydiard Park

Postcode data suggested that a handful of the South Marston residents entered the prize draw, plus the leaflet will have let them know about the opportunity to explore Swindon's green spaces throughout the challenge period and beyond.

Online information

A section of the Swindon Travel Choices website has been set aside for residents in new developments. For Vicarage Gardens, the information can be found at <https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/newdevelopments/vicarage-gardens/>

From here, residents can interact with the travel plan, and find further information on initiatives available to them, such as the “borrow a bike” scheme, free bus travel, the car share scheme and complete a monitoring survey.

In the period between 1st November 2023 and 31st October 2024, the webpage had been visited 31 times by 17 separate users (the same level as the preceding year).

Travel Information Packs

With the site now fully occupied there is no further requirement for hard copy packs for households. The information contained in the packs is available and maintained on the webpage mentioned above.

Cycle Incentives: Borrow a Bike Scheme

We offer the opportunity for residents to borrow a bike free of charge for up to six weeks to discover the benefits of cycling. If the resident is keen to continue cycling beyond the six weeks, we will help to signpost them to places to get bikes; such as their employer cycle to work scheme, Recycles (social enterprise that specialises in refurbished bikes) or a 10% discount voucher for Swindon’s bike shops.

There are four types of bikes to choose from: a standard hybrid, an open framed hybrid, an electric bike or a folding bike. Currently all the loan bikes are for adults, but we could extend to children’s bikes if this proves to be advantageous to promoting cycling. A small deposit is required for the bikes.

The scheme has proved popular when we ran it Swindon-wide in previous years, but to date, none of the residents at Vicarage Gardens have taken up this incentive. Following the travel survey in March 2024, we were able to identify the residents that were interested in the scheme, and sent them follow-up information, but this has not prompted anyone to take up the scheme.

Bus Incentives: Free taster tickets

To encourage travel by sustainable means each household is offered the opportunity to obtain free bus tickets. A voucher is included in the household pack and the voucher simply needs to be handed to the bus driver to exchange for a week’s bus pass. For every week’s pass that the developer provides, Stagecoach will match, giving the household two week’s travel.

To date, no vouchers have been invoiced by the bus company. Having engaged with villagers at events, we believe that the bus service is perceived to be too inconvenient. The bus stop is too far away from the village and accessed by unlit bridle path.

The offer will remain in place for the duration of the travel plan should any households want to take it up. Longer term, as the South Marston and Rowborough parcels come forward, a more convenient bus service will run closer to the village.

Rail Incentives: Free taster tickets

To encourage travel by sustainable means each household is offered the opportunity to obtain a free £20 rail credit. A brochure from Great Western Railway was posted to each homeowner at Vicarage Gardens with a bespoke flyer inside explaining how to apply for the free voucher.

To date, 8 households have applied. These applicants were followed up 6-months after being issued a voucher code to find out how they used the voucher and whether it has may influence future rail use.

The majority had used the voucher to make leisure trips to London, and when asked whether they would have made the journey without the free voucher, a third said they would have, a third said no and a third weren't sure. All of the voucher recipients had travelled by train in the last 6 months, with a quarter travelling by train in the last week.

From this first batch, it would seem the voucher was a perk and hadn't introduced a new audience to rail travel, nor encouraged an uptake in rail travel going forward.

Monitoring

A travel survey was carried out across South Marston village during March 2024. The purpose of the survey was to understand what villagers needed in order to make their everyday journeys more sustainable.

A survey postcard was posted through every occupied dwelling door, inviting the resident to go online to complete the survey. The annual prize draw will take place from the survey respondents, and the prize is a £100 Sainsburys voucher.

As there are only 70 dwellings in Vicarage Gardens, we worked in conjunction with the Parish Council to include the entire village (of 500 homes) in the survey, but ensured we had a mechanism to segment the respondents from the Bellway development.

The survey achieved 32 responses; a response rate of 7%. This was 2 respondents fewer than the previous year's survey. The full survey findings can be found at

<https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Travel-Survey-Report-2024-1.pdf>

Within the travel plan, a high-level target has been set to keep car travel below 73%; a baseline that had come from the 2011 census data for the area. We can see that single occupancy car use was well below that figure, at 46.8%, although if the car sharing drivers are added in, the total does come up to 75%, just above target and over 10 percentage points higher than the previous year.

The number of people making walking trips was encouraging at 9.3%, although this was nearly half of that from the previous year. The bad weather through March (when the survey was being conducted) could account for the preference not to go out on foot.

There is room for improvement with more journeys needed by cycle. The village has no bus service, so it is unsurprising to see that bus trips accounted for just 3% of journeys.

We asked what villagers wanted to see through the travel plan, and there was a desire for more walking events and enhanced mapping of the local area.



Our survey winner receiving her £100 Sainsbury's voucher

Looking ahead (December 2024 – November 2025)

Engagement events

Another **walk** is proposed at Christmas to further encourage local residents to walk and integrate with each other in village life.

**Twelve days of Christmas
Illuminated Walk**

Saturday 21st December 2024
Event starts at 4.30 pm

Carol Singing with the Church Choir
Illuminated Walk around the wood
Children's Elf Hunt
Santas Grotto until 6.00 pm

Q Come and join us for a short festive walk, depicting the twelve days of Christmas!
Complimentary light refreshments available

PLEASE NOTE – The car park will be closed to vehicles during the event

Main car park at St Julian's Wood,
St Julian's Close, Off Thornhill Road, South Marston

Please bring a torch if you can! 🔦

  **SOUTH MARSTON
PARISH COUNCIL**  **SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

At the same time, we can promote staying safe in the darker mornings and evenings. Free bike lights, fluorescent slap bands and backpacks, plus reflectors and education for children and their parents will all be on offer.

Walking incentives

The survey revealed that the villagers wanted more maps and inspiration of places they could walk, so in the coming year we will map out some local walks on the free app “Go Jauntly”. This app curates walks using step by step instructions, a map and photographs. The app will be advertised to villagers with a bespoke leaflet.

In addition, we will look to update the “Get Walking” magazine to be more specific to the areas east of the A419. Currently our “Get Walking East Swindon” magazine covers Dorcan, Liden, Eldene and Coate, but nothing east of the A419. Two further magazines – “Get Walking North East Swindon” (covering Highworth and South Marston) and “Get Walking South East Swindon” (covering Rowborough and the New Eastern Villages area) will be developed over the next couple of years as other housing developments come forward.

Cycle incentives

Despite the survey giving us an indication that there is little appetite for cycle interventions, we will intensify efforts to improve uptake of the Borrow a Bike Scheme, but springtime 2025 onwards is the optimum time for this.

Bus / Rail incentives

Interest in bus travel remains low due to the lack of bus services in the area. We can remind residents about this again as part of the 2025 survey follow up, and investigate whether any DRT services could be available until the Rowborough development comes forward.

We will continue to offer the rail vouchers and monitor uptake and feedback.

Monitoring

The annual survey will be repeated in March 2025. A survey postcard will be posted through every occupied dwelling door, inviting the resident to go online to complete the survey. The prize draw will take place in April and the prize be a £100 Sainsburys voucher.

The results can be compared with the Baseline and follow up survey.