



# 2023 Vicarage Gardens Monitoring report



November 2023



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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 2023.

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

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has eased on the development, the travel plan and the ability of the Residential Travel Plan Coordinator (RTPC) to fully perform their duties. Whilst increased numbers continue to work from home, the use of public transport has risen in the UK and car sharing is no longer discouraged as a consequence of the need for social distancing.

This 2023 monitoring report provides a review of progress of the third year of travel plan activity, along with outlining the plan for the following year.

# 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.

### New Year Walk

Our first event capitalised on the annual surge in post-Christmas pledges to get fit, and a family walk and treasure hunt was held for villagers on the first Saturday in January. Organised and led by local residents, we were 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 unkind, with dark skies and showers, but over two dozen people (and numerous four-legged friends) turned out. New friendships and connections were forged as Vicarage Gardens residents mingled with established villagers.

## Light Up Promotional bike event



We teamed up with Go Outdoors to provide a winter roadshow where we offered free bike security marking, and free maps and fluorescent giveaways, such as bike lights, slapbands and tags for children's clothing.

Flyers were posted through doors at Vicarage Gardens to promote the event.

### **Bike maintenance course**

The monitoring survey revealed that 14% of respondents would be interested in a basic bike maintenance course. Research shows that some people won't ride a bike because they fear a puncture or problems whilst riding. Others have bikes in the garage that aren't being ridden because they need small repairs.

We arranged for a free hands-on course to take place on the morning of Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Lewis Lawton, bike mechanic and trainer agreed to take the course, with a maximum of 6 delegates.

It proved difficult to fill the spaces, despite emailing all those who had expressed interest on the survey, and dropping flyers through all the front doors.

We opened up registration to other developments in Swindon, and filled the spaces that way.



**Saturday 24th**  
June 2023  
9am - 1pm

Eastcott  
Community  
Centre

**Would you like to learn  
some basic cycle repairs?**

We have limited free places on a morning course to learn how to do basic checks and minor repairs to your bike.

The course will cover:

- How to clean and lubricate the bike
- How to do pre-ride bike checks.
- Repairing punctures
- Brakes, adjusting cables and brake blocks
- Adjusting gears
- How to check the chain

SCAN ME



**Booking essential - visit website below or scan QR code above:**  
[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/basic-bike-maintenance-training-tickets-540881780967](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/basic-bike-maintenance-training-tickets-540881780967)



## 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 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023, the webpage had been visited 30 times.

## 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 baseline travel survey in March 2023, 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. Following the baseline travel survey in March 2023, we were able to identify 5 residents that were interested in bus travel, and sent them a follow-up voucher, but we have still not been invoiced. Whether this is due to the residents not using the voucher, or the bus company not invoicing is not clear.

## **Rail Incentives: Free taster tickets**

In 2023, 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, 5 households have applied. These applicants will be followed up in 6 month's to find out how they used the voucher and whether it has made any long term impact on their rail use.

## **Monitoring**

A travel survey was carried out across South Marston village during March 2023. 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 a disappointing 7.5% response rate (compared to 19.3% the previous year). The full survey findings can be found at <https://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Travel-Survey-Report-2023.pdf>



Thanks to sustained working from home rates, the car driver trips remain comfortably lower than target. Car driving rates were at 64% compared to 61% the previous year. The target is 74% maximum.

There was a desire for more walking events and mapping.

**Getting around South Marston**

South Marston Parish Council and Swindon Travel Choices are keen to hear residents' views on getting around the village and the wider area sustainably.

We would be grateful if you would take part in a short survey to help shape future activities. Follow the link below or scan the above QR code.

[www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SM2023/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SM2023/)  
**Closing date: 3rd April 2023**

Visit [www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk](http://www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk) to help you travel sustainably.

All responses will be entered into a prize draw to win a **£100 Sainsbury's voucher**

**SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**SOUTH MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**Be the Change**

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# Looking ahead (December 2023 – November 2024)

## Engagement events

Another **led walk** is proposed in the New Year to further encourage local residents to walk. At the same time, we can promote staying safe in the darker mornings and evenings. Headtorch lights, fluorescent slap bands and backpacks, plus reflectors and education for children and their parents will all be on offer.

**Bike Week 2024** provides an opportunity for further cycle promotion, such as roadshows, bike rides or training. The exact promotion will be defined by the results of the survey.

The South Marston Primary School is actively trying to reduce the number of cars dropping children at the school, so we are in discussions about holding a car share promotional event to match up drivers to share journeys. This could be opened up to residents from Vicarage Gardens as an opportunity to get to know their neighbours and investigate the possibility of sharing journeys together.

## Cycle incentives

We will intensify efforts to improve uptake of the Borrow a Bike Scheme, but springtime 2024 onwards is the optimum time for this.

## Bus 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 2024 survey follow up, and investigate whether any DRT services could be available until the Rowborough development comes forward.

## Monitoring

The annual survey will be repeated in March 2024. 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.

## Conclusion

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, all the travel plan elements have been put in place and have been implemented accordingly.

Take up to the schemes has been lower than anticipated, but promotion can now be intensified as restrictions ease further.