Planning Factsheet – Sustainable Transport and Decarbonisation

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This planning factsheet provides guidance for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and decision-makers in Wales when considering proposals for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in terms of sustainable transport and transport decarbonisation policy.

Where proposals involve the installation of EV chargers in existing car parks, concerns may be raised about the potential 'loss' of parking spaces. However, it is essential to first consider the permitted development (PD) fallback position. Under Welsh planning regulations, certain EV infrastructure may be installed without full planning permission, and this baseline must be acknowledged in decision-making.

In a typical case, two EV chargers proposed at a fast-food site raised concerns from the LPA and highway authority. However, the fallback position allowed for a greater number of chargers under PD rights, which was not fully considered. This highlights the importance of assessing the 'real prospect' of fallback development when weighing planning harm.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 both emphasise the importance of sustainable transport and decarbonisation. PPW defines sustainable transport as modes that reduce emissions and improve accessibility, including ultra-low emission vehicles. Future Wales supports the rollout of EV infrastructure as part of a low-carbon economy.

Material considerations that support EV infrastructure proposals include:

- The contribution to Welsh Government's net zero targets
- The role of EVs in reducing emissions in both urban and rural areas
- The alignment with placemaking principles and active travel objectives
- The improvement of air quality and public health outcomes
- The support for modal shift and transport decarbonisation

The Energy Saving Trust and Welsh Government guidance highlight the importance of EV infrastructure in rural areas where public transport options may be limited. In urban areas, EVs contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Planning authorities should give significant weight to these benefits and ensure that fallback positions under permitted development are transparently assessed. EV infrastructure proposals should be supported where they align with national policy and contribute to sustainable development goals.