

Feet First



Local Walking Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to encourage and enable walking within Wigan to become a desirable activity and take its place in a sustainable transport system. Walking is the key to sustainable travel both in its own right and as a means of interchange with other modes of transport. Walking should be the first choice for local access because it is direct, safe and pleasant.

“Walking is one of the first things an infant wants to do and one of the last any of us wants to give up doing”... (*The Magic of Walking*, Sussman & Goode, 1967), and yet we don't really give it any thought.

Walking seems too easy, too common-place and too obvious an activity to pursue as a way of getting to places and staying healthy. So why should we be concerned about walking, is it really important?

Most journeys incorporate walking, it can vary from a few steps to several miles. The distance walked can be a matter of choice, dependent upon the availability of a car or public transport and affected by the weather conditions, the environment surrounding the journey, personal health and financial limitations.

Today's lifestyle and the distances we travel to work mean that the convenience and the financial investment in the private car have led to its increased usage including short localised journeys.

There is a more recent awareness of the detrimental effect of motorised travel on our own personal health and on that of future generations. However, for some people, whether through disability, age or health, walking is not a choice, but opportunities for their personal mobility and access need to be available. Whether we walk, cycle, use a wheelchair, push a pram, catch the bus or travel by car, we will be in competition and conflict for space with other highway users.

Benefits of Walking

Walking is recognised as one of the best types of physical activity, it's simple to do, easy to regulate and gives the heart and main muscle groups a good workout.

Research has shown that around 60% of men and 70% of women aren't active enough to benefit their health, and yet we know that being physically active can help to reduce the risk of developing health problems such as coronary heart disease, stroke, obesity and osteoporosis.

There has been an apparent decline in activity levels related to the reduction in our walking habits as opposed to any other active pastime. There are fears that children's physical health and mental development could be affected due to the decline in walking levels amongst children.

Walking also has a social impact - towns and cities that encourage a walking culture may be more likely to have a better quality of life, compared with places that are car focused.

With a better environment for walking, residential areas will be safer, better places for all. There will be more room for children to play safely and the pavement can become a place to meet as well as a place to walk. Likewise, town centres and shopping areas can become more attractive places. Larger numbers of people regularly walking in an area can help to deter crime and vandalism.

Improving the walking environment can help to foster the sense of community and concern for other people that is important in building a better society.



Aim of the Strategy

To provide a connected, comfortable, convenient, convivial and conspicuous walking environment within Wigan borough in order to increase the number of people making journeys on foot rather than motor vehicles.

‘Climate change is one of the greatest environmental threats facing the world today, of which greenhouse gas emissions are considered as the main contributor.’ (“A New Deal for Transport: Better For Everyone”, DETR, 1998). ‘Carbon dioxide, (CO₂), the main greenhouse gas, has grown considerably from the increase in road traffic over the last 25 years. Up to 24,000 people are estimated to die each year, and similar numbers admitted to hospital because of exposure to air pollution, much of which is due to road traffic,’ (“Quantification of the Effects of Air Pollution on Health in the UK”, Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants, Department of Health, 1998). ‘Car drivers and their Passengers can also face pollution levels two or three times higher than those experienced by pedestrians’ (“Road user exposure to air pollution”, Environmental Transport Association, 1997 on behalf of DETR).

KEY OBJECTIVES TO THE STRATEGY



- To encourage everyday functional and recreational walking in order to encourage healthier life styles, improve the environment, (by reducing pollution and traffic congestion), and reduce energy consumption;
- To develop a transport infrastructure that makes walking safer, more convenient and attractive;
- To ensure the needs of pedestrians are integrated into the Council's planning and funding processes;
- To promote the benefits of walking, develop a pedestrian friendly culture and change attitudes amongst road users;
- To enable representation from all sections of the community that have an interest in the enhancement of the pedestrian environment and to the development of pedestrian policies and plans;
- To provide a framework for production of an action plan to address walking issues and to use as a tool to seek resources for implementation of the plan;
- To provide guidance to developers, and to strengthen policies for pedestrian provision within new developments;
- To ensure, through land use planning, that major developments are within easy access to pedestrians;

W1 Improvement of Physical Infrastructure

W1.1 Key places and key routes within the borough, will be identified by the Council. This will allow for the assessment of the potential for pedestrian route improvement within any proposal or development.

W1.2 A pedestrian network will be developed by the Council consisting of on and off highway routes, with particular importance given to those routes serving key places. The following criteria will be taken into account in determining priorities:

- Policy, funding and development opportunities;
- opportunities to reduce accidents, crime and fear of crime;
- potential for encouraging alternative transport options and improving links to public transport facilities;
- clustering of key places and services;
- linkages between key places and key routes;
- levels of use;
- opportunities to influence behaviour;
- results of consultation.

W1.3 Improvements such as, better lighting, wider footways, removal of obstructions, installation of seating, better materials and traffic speed reduction measures may be made.

The following will be taken into account in determining priorities:

- type of route, (i.e. key route, secondary route, number of pedestrians using the route);
- condition/gradient of pavement, including type of material and state of repair;
- areas receiving high numbers of complaints;
- condition of street furniture;
- obstructions;
- areas with high accident rates;
- visual amenity/environmental quality.

W1.4 Wherever possible, the Council will review its existing highway maintenance budget to ensure the needs of pedestrians are accounted for and to improve standards of provision to take into account W1.2.

W1.5 Wherever possible, (and where budgets permit), existing street furniture and signage which causes unnecessary obstruction will be rationalised to provide an obstruction-free, attractive pedestrian environment. New schemes will only permit street furniture where essential, (i.e. to reduce vehicle/ pedestrian conflict), whilst at the same time, attempting to minimise the impact.

W1.6 The Council will continue to maintain and provide both permissive and definitive recreational routeways, with priority given to links between urban areas and recreational areas, (e.g. community woodlands and country parks), and within the Regional Park area. Wherever possible, suitable links will be made with similar routes in adjoining local authorities.

W1.7 The Council will include proposals from the findings of the best value review on the local 'streetscene' relating to environmental conditions within the Action Plan.

W2 Improvement of Safety & Personal Security

W2.1 Care will be taken by the Council in all developments, to ensure that an increase in the number of people walking does not result in an increase in pedestrian casualties. The Council, through monitoring of accident statistics, will identify particular areas where road safety is an obvious issue. This will enable prioritisation of resources to ensure existing routes are safer for pedestrians.

Specific measures may include:

- Traffic calming to reduce vehicle speeds in key pedestrian areas;
- new and/or improved crossing facilities; which provide greater pedestrian priority wherever possible;
- Road safety pedestrian training in schools, targeting of children aged 7 - 10, where child pedestrians are highest.

WHAT YOU CAN DO.

- Use the car less, especially for shorter journeys, this will benefit the environment, your health and your pocket! 1 in 12 car journeys are under one mile long, and 25% are less than two miles, (*"The Camden Walking Plan", London Borough of Camden 1999*);
- Walk to school with children/allow children to walk to school, this will ease some of the traffic conflict in and around schools;
- Consider walking to work occasionally, or incorporate walking and public transport in your journey - walking to and from work once a week will result in a 20% reduction in car usage;
- Remember! - the more people that walk will provide a better pedestrian environment, this in turn will encourage more people to do it!
- Your quality of life could improve !

W2.2 Where the following criteria are met, those sites will be considered as priorities for road safety measures by the Council:

- At least three recorded injury accidents involving a pedestrian during the last three years. These sites should be further prioritised in relation to the number and severity of pedestrian casualties, particularly involving children;
- inappropriate traffic speeds, (recorded 85th Percentile Speed greater than 30mph, i.e., 15% of vehicle speeds measured are greater than 30mph);
- the number of schools, shops and other generators of pedestrian activity;
- evidence of 'rat - running' by drivers through residential areas could also be used as a means of prioritising sites, (e.g. greater than 60 'rat - running' vehicles/hour during peak periods).

W2.3 In order to reduce the number of accidents between pedestrians and cyclists, the Council will not normally allow shared use paths along the public highway, (i.e. footpath and cycle paths).

W2.4 To increase community safety and reduce the fear of crime, attempts will be made to :

- ensure that developments do not isolate existing routes;
- create direct routes with good natural surveillance and generate high volumes of users. Routes should, wherever possible, be wide straight paths with clear sight lines;
- create livelier environments and public spaces by encouraging developments in accordance with DETR Design Bulletin 32;
- encourage GMPTE to provide effective CCTV monitoring systems at its public transport interchanges;
- improve lighting facilities wherever possible on off and on highway routes;
- ensure that paths do not become overgrown and ensure that new planting does not abut footpaths;
- ensure that landscaped areas are maintained and footpaths are cleared of overhanging vegetation, litter and glass;
- ensure, wherever possible, that footpaths are planned to 'Secured by Design' standards.

W3 Promoting Walking

W3.1 As part of its ongoing commitment to the benefits of walking, the Council will positively promote the benefits for health and traffic reduction by:

- publicising the success of the School Travel Plans/Workplace Travel Plans;
- publishing increased pedestrian usage/reduced car usage (compared to baseline);
- encourage employers to publicise the benefits of walking within their workforce;
- monitoring air quality/pollution and producing figures indicating change.

W3.2 The Council will promote walking as a functional mode of transportation for short journeys through:

- targeted community initiatives, as part of integrated travel with public transport services;
- improved signage on key routes and map publication.

W3.3 Through publicity, make drivers more aware of their responsibility towards the safety of vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

W3.4 Increase the number of children walking to and from school by encouraging schools to produce Travel Plans that will identify personal and road safety issues that are of concern in their own area and will promote the wearing of visible clothing. As part of the School Travel Plan Strategy, perceived concerns that prevent walking should be addressed e.g.:

- Very few injuries actually sustained when travelling to and from school;
- School Crossing Patrols and Walking Bus initiatives that will prevent accidents and reduce personal security concerns.

W3.5 The Council will encourage implementation of Workplace Travel Plans which aim to incorporate transport and other issues in a co-ordinated strategy that also benefits the employer and employees. Some or all of the following may be considered in a travel plan:

- Journeys by staff to and from work;
- business travel;
- travel by visitors;
- fleet vehicles;
- deliveries and contractors.

W3.6 The Council will promote walking as a healthy activity and recreational pursuit through a series of initiatives:

- Steps to Health/Health walks;
- Guided leisure walks;
- Self guided trails;
- Signposting.

W4 Resources

W4.1 Resources will be sought by the Council to develop and implement the programme of work set out in an Action Plan. The Action Plan will set out the priorities for implementation in the light of the objectives and policies outlined in the strategy. The Action Plan will also set out the timescale for a programme of works taking into account budgeting priorities.

Principal sources of funds are likely to include:

- government funds, such as Single Regeneration Budget funding, (SRB) and European Regional Development Funding, (ERDF);
- funds available through the Local Transport Plan process, (LTP), for on and off highway measures and road safety;
- the activities and funding of other organisations such as health authorities, Countryside Agency, private developers through the incorporation and improvement of pedestrian facilities in new developments, and the Council itself.

W4.2 Within major new developments, the Council will seek to secure improvements by developers in line with the policies outlined above at the expense of the private sector developer.

W5 Partnership and Consultation

W5.1 At each stage in the process of formulating pedestrian policies and implementing the Action plans, the Council will consult widely and seek representation from all sectors of the community that have an interest in the enhancement of the pedestrian environment, including local residents, local businesses, interest groups and other agencies and bodies such as Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust, GM Police, Wigan Access Committee, Groundwork Wigan & Chorley, GMPTE and other similar organisations. Other methods of continuing consultation will be investigated by the Council.

W5.2 The Council will encourage key service providers to sign up to the Walking Strategy in order to integrate policies and form partnerships, aimed at improving the pedestrian environment and promoting the benefits of walking.

W5.3 The Council will produce a Pedestrian Charter which will set out the services relating to walking, for which the Council is responsible, the standards that it aims to achieve and procedures for reporting problems.

W6 Influencing Policy

W6.1 As identified in the Local Agenda 21 plan for the borough, walking is a totally benign form of transport and has positive benefits for the individual and the community. The Council will seek to undertake the action necessary to meet the targets set out in the Local Agenda 21 plan with regard to walking. In particular, it will seek to influence the agenda of other agencies and bodies e.g. Wigan Borough Partnership, Wigan Health Partnership and Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust, Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive etc., in order to ensure the integration of policies and promotion relating to walking.

W6.2 In undertaking the review of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), the Council will incorporate policies which comply with Government guidance as set out in the Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs), 1, 3, 6 and 13 to encourage sustainable environments and facilitate walking. The review will consider policies which:

- establish a local road user hierarchy to be applied in the consideration of the access requirements of planning applications;
- identify a network of key pedestrian routes and the improvement measures necessary to ensure such routes are safe, accessible and attractive to the pedestrian;
- require developers to provide a high standard of design and layout incorporating pedestrian facilities within development sites and where necessary providing improvements off site where a significant number of movements will be generated;
- seek to improve conditions and safety of pedestrians, to reduce walking times and to enhance the pedestrian environment, taking into consideration design, pedestrian access and security;
- increase residential densities, promote the best location for developments which generate large numbers of trips, promote mixed land uses and seek to retain existing facilities and develop new ones in local centres, as far as possible, so they are within walking distance of peoples homes;
- require planning applications for major new developments to be accompanied by a travel plan which includes consideration of access by foot.

W6.3 In considering planning applications for new developments, pedestrian provision will be given highest priority within the transport hierarchy. This will include:

- Ensuring good pedestrian links between new developments and existing developments and facilities, including public transport;
- the Council will consult the Greater Manchester Police Community Safety Officer to ensure that all new off road footpaths are as wide as possible, have good natural surveillance, and have suitable lighting wherever possible;
- assessments will be carried out within new developments to ensure that schemes do not sever existing pedestrian networks without suitable replacements;
- all on/off road footpaths within new developments will have adequate lighting and will be formally adopted by the Council to ensure future long term maintenance;
- in major applications, the requirement for a travel plan which includes consideration of access by foot;
- incorporate needs of people with disabilities in new developments.

W7 Monitoring and Evaluation,

W7.1 Methods of monitoring and evaluation, including data collection, will be developed by the Council to monitor the effectiveness of the Walking Strategy. As a minimum, the information necessary to monitor performance indicators and targets will be collected and a baseline statement produced. The progress towards meeting the targets will be analysed each year, the Council will publish progress towards the targets and make any practical changes in an annual progress report. The Walking Strategy will be reviewed within 5 years, or in line with the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan.

Background



National policy

The Government's 1998 Transport White Paper, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better For Everyone' signalled a major change in focus in transport policy. It recognised the importance of walking for or as part of, all journeys and identified the problems that pedestrians can face.

The Transport Bill presented to the House of Commons in 1999 required local authorities to 'develop and implement policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities to, from and within their area', and to include services and facilities for pedestrians.'

In continuing its commitment towards creating a sustainable environment, the Government is promoting sustainable patterns of development through its Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs):

PPG1: General Policy and Principles seeks to minimise the need to travel altogether;

PPG3: Housing seeks to reduce car dependency by the introduction of more sustainable development and by promoting other modes of travel such as walking;

PPG6: Town Centres and Retail Developments highlights the need to access town centres by more sustainable modes of travel as well as raising awareness of mobility issues to allow disabled people to move freely;

PPG11: Regional Planning focuses on creating more sustainable patterns of development;

PPG12: Development Plans raises the need to consider the integration of Land Use and Planning;

PPG13: Transport contains the most advice on walking and states the need to give more priority to pedestrians including additional road space.



Regional policy

Regional Planning Guidance emphasises the importance of walking as a healthy, sustainable mode of travel, particularly for short journeys.

The **Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan** is produced by the ten Greater Manchester Authorities and the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority. A key element of the strategy is to encourage walking for short trips by the use of small scale measures to improve safety and influence choices at the local level.

The **Greater Manchester Walking Strategy** aims to encourage walking to become a desirable activity and take its place in the sustainable transport system promoted by the objectives of the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan. It acts as a framework for districts within Greater Manchester to prepare their own local walking strategy and sets targets for achieving this requirement.

Local policy

The Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) Plan for the Metropolitan Borough of Wigan was approved and adopted by the Council on 9 August 2000. It is one of a national network of plans which cover the whole of the UK. The LA 21 Plan for Wigan seeks to ensure a healthy, safe, diverse and prosperous environment and way of life for future generations.

One of the 26 key themes of the **LA 21 Plan** is to encourage other forms of transport. In particular, to increase the proportion of journeys made on foot, bicycle, motorcycle and by taxi, relative to journeys by private motor car is identified as an objective under this key theme. The preparation and implementation of a Walking Strategy is identified as a key action.

Wigan Unitary Development Plan, (UDP), was prepared in the early 1990s and adopted in January 1996. It is the development plan for all of Wigan Borough and provides the framework for development, development control and conservation.

The first stage of the preparation of a replacement plan has been undertaken which is a key issues approach and will identify the main matters and choices which need to be resolved by the plan. The first stage of the consultation process commenced in January 2001 and the encouragement of more sustainable forms of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling and the restraint of car use are identified as issues for the replacement plan.

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