

Living Streets: Shifting priorities and creating a pedestrian vision

Background

Living Streets welcomes the opportunity to feed into current Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) workstreams and construct a strong case for greater priority to be given to pedestrians, whether walking or wheeling. GCP is developing its Transport for All¹ approach and currently consulting on its Road Network Area Review² initial proposals for revising the Cambridge road hierarchy. The City Council has a Making Connections³ programme of work alongside this. The challenge Living Streets has responded to is twofold:

- In relation to the Road Area Network Review, how would Living Streets characterise the different types of streets across the city and what features for pedestrians would we expect to see embedded in each type?
- What is our 'ten year out' vision for Cambridge in terms of walking and support for pedestrians?

Characteristic street types and essential features for pedestrians

Living Streets focuses on pedestrians, who sit at the top of the transport hierarchy,⁴ whereas the current Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Road Network Area Review focuses on the road network and on vehicle flows, albeit public transport is seen as an essential part of these. GCP identifies six types of streets (primary distributor roads, secondary distributor roads, area access streets, local access streets, civic streets and neighbourhood streets).

Some of the categories are not clear-cut and from a pedestrian viewpoint the key distinctions are between a) arterial and main roads that carry the main volume of vehicular traffic and distribute it into, out of and round the city and b) various types of local road networks that provide access to particular areas and residential streets.

While there was particular interest in Living Street's views about 'neighbourhood streets' we would argue that pedestrians in fact have to access all six types of streets and our analysis reflects this view. The Review also has created a category 'civic streets', which we comment on as part of our ten year vision below. Reflecting on the two main types of networks as pedestrians, we could require as a minimum:

a) On distributor roads Cambridge Living Streets seeks to shift the overall balance towards more support for pedestrian movement. This reflects findings from our own 2021 survey of residents' views about walking⁵ plus evidence from the 2022 National Living Streets survey.⁶ We call for:

- Sufficiently wide pavements to enable pedestrians to walk safely without splashing and 'blowback' from large vehicles
- Well maintained pavements that are safe for all, whether walking or wheeling, including wheelchair, zimmer and buggy users

- Decluttering of pavements to ensure pedestrians do not have to step into the road at any point
- Safe and well signed pedestrian crossing points at all junctions with adequate time given to cross the road and short waits for the lights to turn red
- Security of pedestrian passage through regulations that prohibit pavement parking at all times and penalise e-scooters, bikes and motor scooters using the pavement
- Safe seating, shelter, access and exit at bus stops, with crossing points nearby to facilitate pedestrian movement
- Seating set back from the road, where feasible, to support frailer or heavily burdened pedestrians when using distributor roads

b) On the local road networks that enable access to areas, localities and residential housing Cambridge Living Streets calls for a major shift to prioritise walking and deliver economic advantages for localities by creating a more attractive walking environment.⁷ This involves all of the features set out for the distributor roads and in addition:

- Putting pedestrians at the top of the transport hierarchy (where they are supposed to be) eg. by siting crossing points at 'desire lines' rather than where it suits motor traffic best and use of diagonal crossings giving more time to cross
- Implementing government guidance to give priority to pedestrians at all junctions and developing resources/driver education/penalties to embed this approach⁸
- Reducing carriageway width wherever feasible so that narrow stretches of pavement can be widened
- Introducing a 'pedestrian priority' policy in narrow residential streets or in streets where permission for pavement parking cannot be removed
- Creating cycle racks at frequent intervals on alternating sides of the carriageway, not on the pavement
- If short-term parking is needed on a street, designing bays that support traffic calming as well as access
- Finding solutions for refuse collection that do not rely on large bins being left on narrow pavements
- More timely and effective regulation of overgrown hedges and damaged fencing so these do not impede pedestrian movement
- Creating safe routes for children on the most frequented roads from journey start to school gate and publicising these effectively
- Creating fully staffed local maintenance teams to repair pavements (and potholes near crossing points) quickly and effectively to minimise trip hazards
- Measuring kerbside pollution levels at more frequent intervals and posting the results
- Creating green enclaves with seating and shelter that are safe from vehicle fumes and allow less able pedestrians to complete local journeys in stages
- Moving all these networks into 20mph zones and narrow residential streets to 10mph maximum if motor traffic is allowed

- Clear and consistent signage of pedestrian routes in local areas and across the city, as has been emerging for cycle routes, with average timings to walk to different places

10 Year Vision

- In ten years time Cambridge will have reduced motor traffic by 50%, partly by restricting access, introducing low traffic neighbourhoods⁹ using 'last mile' delivery strategies, supporting shared car use and rapidly increasing safe and speedy travel for pedestrians, public transport users and cyclists.
- In ten years time pollution monitors will demonstrate very low pollution levels and the decline in motor traffic will reduce pollution from tyre abrasion. Pavement, walkways and infrastructure improvements plus greater tree coverage and more green spaces will encourage safe walking to increase, with a target of 30% increase in daily walking over 2022 levels.¹⁰
- In ten years time the priority given to walking will have transformed all our streets, as pavement decluttering, safe crossing points, pavement widening and good maintenance will re-create walking as effective and pleasurable for work and leisure.¹¹ Local centres, including shops, libraries, health centres, public transport facilities, will be fully pedestrian accessible, with well signed, well lit and well surfaced access.
- Parks and public green spaces, including their footpaths, will be well maintained, with strong community involvement. The existing network of footpaths away from the roadside (eg. through housing estates and public rights of way) will be well signed, appropriately surfaced, drained and lit enabling full year round use by pedestrians of all ages and abilities.
- In ten years time walking – as an activity that almost everyone can enjoy even if over very short distances or with assistance – will become the default mode for local journeys and population health will show signs of improvement. The ubiquity of walking will improve safety for all groups, especially children and women (see <https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk>). Public Health and community groups will expand their work on 'Walking for health'. Walking to school initiatives¹² will encompass popular walking routes, not just school streets, and more social prescribing by GPs will promote the evidenced health benefits of walking.¹³
- In ten years time, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) will have re-envisioned Cambridge - enlarging the scope of central Cambridge to take pressure off a tiny, overwhelmed central core. It will accept that its 'Civic streets' category in the Review, characterised as 'mainly small streets in the

city centre, is too limited to cope with Cambridge growth and will identify what potential there is to build on that.

- Re-thinking what constitutes the 'city centre' will enable a sharper focus on other inner areas of the city (eg. parts of Hills Rd, Mill Rd, Chesterton Rd and Mitcham's Corner) to attract larger numbers of locals/visitors. GCP will increase its focus on their 'area access' street category, streets that include significant retail, hospitality, historic buildings and open spaces, to investigate how they could attract more visitors and investment.
- Focusing time and resources on these 'not quite central' areas, North and South, will change thinking about access and help to promote greater social cohesion and inclusion.

Living Streets, 30.6.22

¹ Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Sustainable Travel Programme at <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/greater-cambridge-sustainable-travel-programme>.

² GCP *Road Network Area Review*, includes *A new Classification for Cambridge* –at www.greatercambridge.org.uk/RoadClassification2022. The consultation can be accessed at <https://consultcambs.uk.engagemthg.com/road-network-hierarchy-2022>.

³ Cambridge City Council *Making Connections* see <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/mqIssueHistoryChronology.aspx?IId=28212&Op=2>.

⁴ For the Highway Code user hierarchy see <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-Highway-Code-Review-Consultation-Response.pdf>. Cambridgeshire County Council's *Road User Hierarchy* places pedestrians in the highest priority category but investment has largely focused on motor vehicle management and infrastructure.

⁵ *From Risky Streets to Living Streets* June, 2021. This Cambridge survey produced over 300 responses and highlights narrow and poorly maintained pavements, traffic danger, and a range of pavement obstructions. See the full report at <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/6429/from-risky-streets-to-living-streets-survey-findings.pdf>.

⁶ *The National Living Streets Survey of Walking* May 2022 identifies key barriers to walking, including safety, lack of suitable walking routes and dangers from traffic, e-scooters and parked cars. See also *Living Streets 'Cut the Clutter'* campaign launched on 11th July 2022. It can be found at <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/how-we-can-cut-the-clutter-together>.

⁷ *The Pedestrian Pound Report*, Living Streets 2013, updated 2018 highlights the economic benefits in local high streets which had created walking infrastructure and wayfinding and restricted motor vehicle access, with a 30% or greater growth in footfall and retail sales (p35). It also reports that retailers consistently overestimated the importance of car access and underestimated the economic impact of pedestrian

access to retail. The report (p41) suggests using S106 funding for public realm pedestrian improvements. Available at <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf>.

⁸ *Sharing Our Roads Safely: Report of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings*, Department for Transport, Feb 2021, found a high level of support for equal road sharing and support for pedestrian priority at junctions and crossings, resulting in changes in government guidance. See <https://www.snapacc.com/blog/0108-Sharing-our-roads-safely-in-2021>.

⁹ *Low Traffic Neighbourhood Survey*, Department of Transport 2021, demonstrates that reducing traffic results in higher rates of walking in local neighbourhoods, with high levels of local support for increasing road safety and action to reduce congestion, pollution and traffic noise. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004948/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-residents-survey.pdf.

¹⁰ *Healthy Streets: Making Streets Healthy Places for Everyone*, Jan 2021, UCL/Tranquil City analysis and scoring system to enable judgments about the 'health' of a street is one tool in use to assess the need for improvements. Available at <https://www.healthystreets.com/>.

¹¹ *Street Appeal: The Value of Street Improvements*, Transport for London, 2021 highlights the strong impact of improving safety, ease and comfort for pedestrians, boosting walking in the improved areas by 93% and 'static street behaviour (standing, sitting), with an uplift in office and rental values. It recommends creating adequate space for pedestrians as the first priority. Available at <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/street-appeal.pdf>.

¹² *Gear Change: One Year On*, Department for Transport 2021, reported on investment made in Living Streets for a Walk To School Outreach programme. It found that on average walking rates had increased by 23% and congestion outside the schools in the programme had decreased by 30%. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gear-change-one-year-on-review>.

¹³ Many publications cite the importance of walking for health. For a summary of key health benefits see Lee and Buchner's article at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18562968/>.