

London's Olympic Games 2012

The 2012 Games will provide an opportunity to regenerate large areas of run-down London in the Lower Lea Valley, as well as showcasing Britain as a whole. The original bid won because it stressed the importance of regeneration, sustainability, and good public transport.

However, previous Games have shown that good intentions sometimes go wrong. People-friendly public space, which will also be successful after the Games have gone, needs a commitment from start to finish. In the inevitable pre-games hype about state-of-the-art transport networks, attention to the needs of pedestrians, and the creation of successful and long-lasting public spaces, could be forgotten.

Our policy

Living Streets welcomes the successful bid, and calls for walking to be prioritised, both as a mode of transport and as a vital element of sustainable communities, in the Olympic Transport Plan. This is for 5 reasons:

1. Providing a role model for active travel

Games organisers want to improve UK exercise levels. Encouraging walking and cycling to Olympic events is in keeping with this aim. Currently less than half the population do enough exercise. The Sydney Games were hailed as the first car-free games. London should have the first **Active Travel Games**, where visitors, athletes, and organisers are encouraged to walk or cycle where they can.

2. Investing in a better quality of life locally

The Games bring a 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity for infrastructural changes in a very deprived part of the country. Improved local walking networks must be central to that work.

3. Implementing the London Walking Plan

Ken Livingstones Walking Plan wants London to be the most walking-friendly city in the world by 2015 - just 3 years after the Games. All Olympic work must be walking-friendly.

4. Building a sustainable future

Walking is the measure of sustainable communities - and the Games should be a showcase of sustainability. Walking and cycling should be the norm for people travelling within the Olympic Park - both during and after the Games. Walking, cycling and public transport should be the norm for people travelling across London to reach the Park, with good walkable connections at transport hubs.

5. Planning for the threat of terrorism

During the recent terrorist bombings, many Londoners reached their destinations on foot. The more walking-friendly the Games are, the lower the threat of terrorist disruption.

Living Streets say the Olympic Transport Plan should contain 7 clear walking commitments:

Commitment 1. To consult local people before plans are finalised

Local people know the importance of existing walking routes, and those features of streets they treasure or would want to lose. They should be involved in drawing up the plans.

Commitment 2. Encourage walking

The Plan should demonstrate that the needs of pedestrians will be met, and that walking will be encouraged both to and within the

Olympic Park. There should be a commitment that public space will be designed first and foremost for people.

Commitment 3. Clear pedestrian routes

Unbroken pedestrian routes and the permeability of developments needs to be prioritised. The large stadia will inevitably cause severance, so action needs to be taken to minimise the effects. Subways, pedestrian bridges and raised paths with railings, or paths with walls on either side, should be avoided. The new Stratford City also needs to be designed for people, with a mix of office, retail, leisure, residential and other uses so that it is lively in the evening as well as the day, and permeable - lots of easy walking routes which feel safe day and night - like medieval street patterns.

Commitment 4. Accessibility

London will also be hosting the Paralympic Games. London should be accessible to everyone, regardless of disability. Roads, streets, pavements, transport facilities etc. all need to be designed for use by disabled people. If they meet the needs of people with disabilities, they will meet everyone's needs. London should set a target for ensuring that all key pedestrian routes through the city are wheelchair accessible in time for the Paralympic Games.

Commitment 5. High quality furniture

Signs and maps for pedestrians, good lighting, and high quality, clutter-free street furniture - benches, seating, trees and green space should be part of the plan.

Commitment 6. Slower traffic speeds

20mph should be made the default speed limit in built-up London. This would do most to reduce casualties, make urban streets vibrant and bring a modal shift from driving to walking, cycling and public transport use.

Commitment 7. Better walking friendly-public transport infrastructure designs

All new public transport infrastructure should ensure that the needs of passengers as pedestrians, at the start, middle and end of their journey, are taken into account. There have been recent exam-

ples of new public transport hubs (such as Vauxhall Cross in London) where pedestrians' needs were not properly considered.

Fact Stats - other Olympics

1. A former Beijing construction minister has warned that its transport infrastructure is being built solely for the Olympics - leading to obsolete systems afterwards - with little attention being paid to the detail of schemes and the needs of pedestrians.

2. The infrastructure for the Athens Games included many new roads and car parks! Athens main river was covered over to form an urban motorway, and 40 flyovers were constructed. Trams were built on green space not road space. Metro station entrances blocked pavements.

3. The Sydney Olympics was one of the most successful for pedestrians. In 1993, Sydney committed to host a car-free Games. The number of car parking places was dramatically cut, and there were total car-free zones. A network of cycle paths was created to and around the site (but there were only 130 cycle parking spaces).

4. The Barcelona Games were the catalyst to regenerate an entire city. Hundreds of new public spaces were created. 5km of derelict port separating the city from the sea was reclaimed as a beach.



Badly planned pavement improvements for Athens Games - leads disabled people straight into a tree! Opportunities to widen the pavement weren't taken.



Athens - the metro system was upgraded for the Olympics, including new entrances for stations. Above is the new wider entrance to Victor Square station. But it takes up most of the pavement, leaving just 80 cm to get past. Pedestrians are forced to walk in the road during busy times - an example of how pedestrian facilities can be forgotten when constructing new transport infrastructure. In this example, there would have been room to widen the pavement. How do we avoid similar mistakes being made in the construction projects for the London Olympics?

For further information

Contact Living Streets' hotline (020 7820 1010) or visit our website www.livingstreets.org.uk