

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

Living Streets response to Leicester's local plan

Who we are

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. Since September 2012 we have been delivering a Walk to School Outreach project in Leicester to increase the number of children and parents walking to school as well as making improvements to routes to schools.

From April 2015 we will be working with Leicester communities and workplaces as well as schools, to support changes in people's travel behaviours leading to reduced congestion and an improved environment whilst also benefitting health and well-being. The project will particularly focus on short journeys of less than two miles (such as the trip to school, work or the shops), and the 'walkable components' of longer journeys (such as those by rail or bus).

Why we are responding

We want to use the opportunity of the development of the local plan to feed in our ideas and thoughts to help make Leicester a more walkable, healthy and economically prosperous city. The city council already has a good track record of investing in its public realm, for example, Streets and Spaces (2005-2008) and Connecting Leicester (2011) which aims to reverse the impact of the car. Many people walking and walkability are both indicators of a great city. Looking to the future, the redevelopment of existing spaces and provision of new locations for housing and employment offers an exciting opportunity to revitalise Leicester through the creation of quality places where people will want to live and work. This means getting transport right and putting people on foot first (see the road user hierarchy in the DfT Manual for Streets). The Local Plan must ensure that wherever development is planned, appropriate infrastructure is provided to give people a variety of transport choices – to walk, cycle and use public transport - to reach the places they want to get to (e.g. to school, to work, to the shops and for entertainment).

Comments on the proposal

A Strong Economy

We feel that the plan should ensure that any redevelopments should not create employment deserts. We think that any proposals to change the use of land should include a walkability audit of the local area to ensure access to employment, housing, shops and services is within walking distance.

A Thriving City Centre

We agree that housing should be encouraged in the city centre to create mixed use neighbourhoods to help ensure public transport and shops are more viable, closer to where people live and make it easier for local residents to walk more.

We believe that it should be more attractive to walk, cycle and use public transport to access the city centre to make it more appealing to visit. This can be done through improving walking and cycling routes, improving public transport provision and ensuring there is a good range of shops and services. We are pleased that work to improve walking and cycling routes and to improve the city centre bus station has started.

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One simple measure to improve the safety and attractiveness of walking is to introduce 20mph speed limits. We know that Leicester has introduced many 20mph zones across the city but we would welcome the Council exploring an area wide speed limit of 20mph.

We recommend the following actions:

- Assess the quality of routes to and from the city centre for walking.
- Prioritise and promote events to make the city centre as attractive and welcoming as possible
- Use community street audits to engage local communities, businesses and decision makers to identify improvements to the public realm to support footfall
- Implement 20mph as an area wide limit as we believe this is the single intervention with the most impact on civilising our streets.

Good Neighbourhood Facilities

To help encourage the local economy and encourage healthy lifestyles we agree that local centres should include a mixture of shops and services.

We advocate that any proposals to alter the location of local centres should undergo a walkability audit.

We recommend the following actions:

- Ensure housing, shops, schools and public transport stops are located and designed to that people can easily reach them on foot
- Safeguard important community services so that they remain within walking distance of people's homes and places of work.
- Recognise the importance of local centres with a stronger emphasis on local facilities in order to reduce the demand for car travel for work, school, leisure and retail trips.

Creating High Quality Places

We agree that street clutter can make a street look cluttered and untidy and cause problems for people with limited mobility.

We recommend the following actions:

- Design streets for people recognising that streets aren't just for transport but places for living, socialising, shopping and playing.
- Consolidate signage into legible signs to help with way finding and encourage walking.
- Conduct street audits with the local community to identify and then remove unnecessary street clutter.

A Healthy Active City

We strongly support the proposal to create a safe, attractive and well designed local environment which prioritises walking and cycling over cars and the other to ensure that local facilities offer a balanced food environment.

We think that the local plan should be considered as a whole. Ideas within this section of the plan contradict other ones elsewhere. For example to achieve a healthy, active city we believe that any

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proposals to change to local centres should include a walkability assessment. This would assess whether there is safe and attractive walking access to a mixture of shops and services, which provide a balanced food environment. It would analyse whether the city was age friendly for both the young and old. We think that streets which cater for the needs of the most vulnerable road users are better for everyone.

We recommend the following actions:

- Conduct a walkability assessment on the whole local plan
- Aim to reduce the number of motor vehicles as part of a strategy to promote alternative, more sustainable and healthier transport modes
- Provide an integrated, extensive and well-equipped public transport service with vehicles that are fully accessible and interchanges with easy, safe and convenient pedestrian access

Accessing the City

We strongly agree that all new housing is near to shops, schools, health centres and employment and that more linked cycle ways and footpaths are provided.

We think that streets should be designed with all road users in mind to improve perceptions of safety. Rather than discouraging cyclists and pedestrians from busy roads and junctions we advocate that the road layout is altered to improve actual and perceived safety amongst these road users in particular. We appreciate that there is a current consultation on improvements to the street environment on Belgrave Road and would welcome similar consultations for other areas of the city.

We agree that there should be a balanced approach to car parking standards. However, in order to encourage walking and cycling Leicester's plan should consider how the local parking policy can remove barriers to walking, such as pavement parking.

We understand that a pavement parking consultation was conducted earlier this year indicating that 80% of respondents thought it was a problem. We advocate that where reasonably practicable traffic regulation orders are implemented to stop pavement parking, which as the Council knows forces vulnerable people into the road and causes pavements to crack which increases pavement maintenance bills.

We urge Leicester City Council to consider the benefits of implementing an area wide experimental Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which Slough has implemented. This provides flexibility to make changes in response to issues raised by residents and a whole area approach. We feel this is more beneficial than street by street TROs, which includes statutory consultation and is likely to only displace the pavement parking problem.

We would like to hear more about what the task group has planned to tackle this issue.

Open Space, Sports and Leisure

The local plan could consider the way walking as a leisure activity or as part of a journey to local shops and services can help increase physical activity levels amongst Leicester's population. To help make this safe and attractive the local plan could identify new opportunities for walking routes for example on old railway lines or alongside canal paths.

We recommend that the local plan should consider identifying improvements, in consultation with local people, to walking routes to and from the city centre as well as open spaces to help encourage people to undertake physical activity on the way to a park or a sports centre.

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