

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 Department for Transport consultation on a draft National Policy Statement for the National Road and Rail Networks**

### **Introduction**

We are 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. We work with communities, professionals and politicians to make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Since then our ambition has grown. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy the benefits of walking.

### **Q9. Please provide any further comments regarding any aspect of this consultation.**

The response of Living Streets to this consultation crosses a number of questions and focuses predominantly on the lack of consideration in the proposed NN NPS of the role of good walking environments to drive economic growth and to make the most of existing road capacity.

We believe the National Network National Policy Statement (NN NPS) should recognise the importance of improving the street environment for pedestrians for economic reasons and also in order to make the most of existing road capacity by reducing the number of short local journeys to locations such as schools.

Para 2.9 of the consultation document misses these wider points as it notes in the section regarding its policy on the development of networks that *'Whilst most schemes will be brought forward primarily for economic reasons, Government policy is also to bring forward schemes to improve safety, enhance the environment and improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.'*

Furthermore, the draft NN NPS document also misses these wider benefits by referring only to carbon reduction benefits where it states

*'The Government is committed to providing people with options to choose sustainable modes and making door-to-door journeys by sustainable means an attractive and convenient option. This is essential to reducing carbon emissions from transport'* (para 3.13).

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The importance of good quality public realm for a range of policy outcomes was outlined during a Westminster Hall Debate<sup>1</sup> on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014. During which Stephen Williams MP – the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government commented that ‘Walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities available to all residents that can be accessed comfortably on foot. Making the local environment convenient and attractive to walk in can help enhance the vibrancy of a community and reduce reliance on motor transport. So it is important that local highway authorities, which are responsible for footways, recognise the importance of keeping them in good order’.....People-friendly streets, including good cycling and walking networks, benefit everyone and provide benefits for our health, as well as boosting local economic growth. My hon. Friend mentioned the Olympics and Paralympics, and all of us still have different memories of those occasions that inspired us. One of the legacies that the Government definitely want to see from those events in London is that more children and adults should get active and become more healthy as a result. That is a cross-Government aspiration. Last August, the Department of Health announced a £5 million initiative to encourage children and families to exercise more. As part of that funding, £1 million is being provided simply for walking initiatives, to help people get more active.’

High quality streets for pedestrians also impacts on local economies. A review of the literature<sup>2</sup> regarding the business case for better streets and places undertaken by Just Economics and commissioned by Living Streets demonstrates that investment for walking can deliver a commercial return and provide a much needed boost for high streets and town centres. The review revealed that research suggests that making places better for walking can boost footfall and trading by up to 40 per cent<sup>3</sup>. For instance, a range of improvements to Coventry city centre, such as new pedestrian areas, a new civic square, clearer signage and better placement of street furniture, were credited with a 25 per cent rise in footfall in the town centre on Saturdays<sup>4</sup>. Many shopping trips are short and potentially walkable<sup>5</sup>. 92 per cent of British households are 15 minutes or less (on foot or by public transport) from a local shop<sup>6</sup>.

Walking is part of most people’s shopping experience and the obvious way to get around places. People also like to get together, socialise and be a part of a community. The importance of quality public places is widely recognised – see, for example, the Grimsey Review<sup>7</sup>. This is why improvements to the public realm matter – and they can deliver a much needed commercial return for our high streets and town centres too. Furthermore, international and UK studies have shown that pedestrians spend more than people arriving by car. Comparisons of spending by transport mode in Canada, New Zealand and Australia revealed that pedestrians spent 2-6 times

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140204/halltext/140204h0002.htm#14020485000001>

<sup>2</sup> [Pedestrian pound 2013](#)

<sup>3</sup> Burden, Dan, and Todd Litman. 2011. “America Needs Complete Streets.” *ITE Journal* 81 (4): 36–43.; Litman. 2002. “Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis.” *Techniques, Estimates and Implications, Victoria Transport Policy Institute*; Whitehead, Tim, David Simmonds, and John Preston. 2006. “The Effect of Urban Quality Improvements on Economic Activity.” *Journal of Environmental Management* 80 (1) (July): 1–12.

<sup>4</sup> NWDA/RENEW Northwest. 2007. “Economic Value of Urban Design Final Report.” [http://www.placesmatter.co.uk/webfm\\_send/23](http://www.placesmatter.co.uk/webfm_send/23).

<sup>5</sup> Department for Transport. (2011). Statistical Release - *National Travel Survey 2011*

<sup>6</sup> Department for Transport (2013). “Table NTS0803: Shortest journey time to local facilities on foot or by public transport: Great Britain, 2005 to 2012”. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/9976/nts0803.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9976/nts0803.xls)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.vanishinghighstreet.com/the-grimsey-review/>

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more than people arriving by car<sup>8</sup>. In London town centres in 2011, walkers spent £147 more per month than those travelling by car.

Finally, the NN NPS discounts the role of increasing local walking journeys in making the maximum use of existing road capacity '*the Government has considered a number of alternatives to development of the national road network and concluded that they are not viable or desirable*' (para 2.16). Paragraph 2.20 the NN NPS notes that '*across Government, policies are being implemented and considered which encourage sustainable transport modes including public transport, cycling and walking. However, it is not realistic for public transport, walking or cycling to represent a viable alternative to the private car for all journeys, particularly in rural areas and for some longer or multi-leg journeys.*' In fact, walking is part of every journey and is a key part of multi-leg journeys which can present a viable alternative to the private car.

The challenge and opportunity is highlighted in the National Travel Survey which has revealed a dramatic fall in walking trips by 8% compared to the previous year. This is part of a more rapid longer term decline in walking trips since the mid 1990s compared to other private travel modes which has seen walking journeys decrease by 28% compared to 1995/7. For example, in 2012, 47% of trips to and from school by primary school children (aged 5-10) were made on foot compared to 1995/97 when 53% of trips were made on foot whilst for secondary aged children (aged 11-16) 38% of school trips were on foot and 26% were by car, compared with 42% and 20% respectively in 1995/97<sup>9</sup>.

The NN NPS must consider the potential impact of a decrease in walking to school on local journeys leading to increased congestion on local roads with knock on impacts on capacity of the national network. However, there is a real opportunity to make a significant impact on reducing congestion and carbon emissions. Over 30% of primary aged children live less than half a mile from their school and a further 20% travel between 0.5 and 1 mile<sup>10</sup>. 16% of school journeys under a mile are driven to school, a distance that could be walked within 20 minutes<sup>11</sup>.

Encouraging a modal shift from travelling by car to walking can have a significant effect on congestion, journey times and access to local economic centres (e.g. retail and industrial). Hertfordshire County Council conducted school traffic flow analysis comparing traffic flow during the year against school holiday times which showed an average traffic reduction of 15.5% during the am peak flow. In some cases this rose to 46.5%.<sup>12</sup> In terms of tackling congestion the Department's own research reveals that the daily school run is a major contributor to congestion and carbon emissions and journeys less than 2 miles contribute over two million tonnes of CO<sup>13</sup>. Increasing the percentage of people walking between one and two miles can deliver significant

<sup>8</sup> Wooller, L. (2010). *What are the economic and travel implications of pedestrianising a roadway in Takapuna's shopping precinct?*. AUT University

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-travel-survey-2012>

<sup>6</sup> Department for Children, School and Families, 2009

<sup>11</sup> DfT, 2009

<sup>12</sup> Living Streets Local Sustainable Transport Fund proposal

<sup>13</sup> Department for Transport (2009) Delivering Sustainable Low Carbon Travel.

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reductions to these challenges. Nationally, the ‘school run’ now accounting for nearly a quarter (24%) of car driver trips by residents of urban areas during term time.

Whilst we welcome the Government’s policy to *‘provide people with options to choose sustainable transport modes, and make door to door journeys by sustainable means an attractive and convenient option. This includes addressing the needs of cyclists and walkers in the design of new schemes and tackling existing problems on the national road network where the network acts as a barrier to cycling and walking’* (2.12). This position should be much stronger and should not just address the needs of pedestrians (a better phrase than walkers as more inclusive) but actively seek to improve routes and facilities for pedestrians as a pre-requisite for new road schemes. This is in addition to pedestrian proofing the strategic road network. This issue also appears in paragraph 3.14 of the draft NN NPS. We welcome the reference to considering the effect of the national road network in severing communities and the measures suggested to mitigate this.

*‘As part of the Government’s commitment to sustainable travel it will invest in developing a high-quality cycling and walking environment - There is a direct role for the national road network to play in helping walkers and cyclists. The Government expects applicants to address the needs of cyclists and walkers in the design of new schemes. The Government also expects applicants to identify opportunities to invest in infrastructure in locations where the national road network severs communities and acts as a barrier to cycling and walking, including by correcting historic problems, retrofitting the latest solutions and ensuring that it is easy and safe for cyclists to use junctions.’* (para 3.14).

The NN NPS must also widen the requirements of the Highways Agency Safety Framework to include reference to reducing fear of traffic in paragraph 4.59. Given, the current document highlights the positive role of sustainable transport modes, such as walking, measures should be taken to help increase positive physical activity choices. Evidence suggests that reducing fear of traffic as well as reducing traffic danger can positively help encourage people to choose to travel on foot or by bike.

The positive health impacts of improving facilities and building more routes for pedestrians and cyclists should be noted within the NN NPS. In section 4.74 to 4.77 a reference could also be made to the Government’s policy paper *Moving more, living more: the physical activity Olympic and Paralympic legacy for the nation* which highlights the importance of walking in delivering an Olympic physical activity legacy.

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