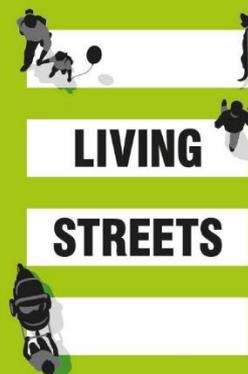


Walking and Cycling Audits for Registered Social Landlords 2019-20: Methodology

Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities 2019-20



We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a nation where walking is the natural choice for everyday, local journeys.



Introduction

Living Streets has received funding from the Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities, administered by Cycling Scotland. As part of this work we have reviewed and assessed conditions for walking and cycling around 29 properties owned by Registered Social Landlords across Scotland. All these sites are receiving grants to improve conditions for cycling or walking.

This document describes the methodology we have used.

The focus of each assessment was on the likely experiences of people resident in the individual properties. Inevitably most of what we have learned applies equally to the wider neighbourhood.

This document should be read alongside the accompanying document, “*Walking and Cycling Audits for Registered Social Landlords 2019-20: What does ‘good’ look like?*” which makes the following key points:

- Good urban environments for walking, cycling, and living, have a sense of place. It is possible to reach destinations which are important for daily life by walking or cycling to them, through places which are themselves good for walking and cycling.
- Good conditions for all pedestrians (including those using mobility aids) work for everyone, young or old, and irrespective of disability.
- Good conditions for cycling should be judged against what would be required for cycling to be an everyday normal method of transport, undertaken as part of daily life by a very wide range of people and a large proportion of the community.

It is impossible to completely standardise the approach used for audits of this nature, but we have found that the degree of standardisation outlined in this methodology is useful, and that this also makes it possible to develop an overall picture of walking and cycling across sites.

Assessment stages

This methodology has the following assessment stages:

- **Site Selection:** On this occasion we chose a selection of sites managed by Registered Social Landlords, where a project was to be funded from the Social Housing Partnership Fund. Sites were chosen so that they were geographically spread, within inner cities, more suburban areas, and outside cities.
- **Initial assessment:** Carry out a desktop evaluation of the location of the property, its immediate surrounds, and the wider area around the property, for the quality of its walking and cycling environment. The evaluation should use tools including crowdsourced (open data) mapping, commercial mapping, historical mapping, Google Streetview and equivalents, aerial imagery, and other relevant information in the public domain.
- **Planning audit visit:** Based on the need to validate (or reject) the initial assessment, identify key issues to investigate around the property and in the wider area surrounding it, and routes to be followed or evaluated during the audit visit.
- **Audit visit (and re-evaluation):** Carry out an audit visit. During the visit reassess conditions on the ground, comparing with the initial assessment, and record with photographs if possible.
- **Reporting:** Record findings on walking and cycling around each property in standardised report.

Assessment elements

The initial assessment is prepared by considering the issues below and is used as the basis of the final assessment, modified according to on-site observations. The approach assesses the immediate area around a property, the remainder of the residential area it belongs to (if any), and links beyond this to other areas and destinations.

1 Area context

Look for the character of the area that the property sits within. Consider, on the ground how local people are likely to relate to the area. Some resulting observations may be recorded as 'area context' in the report (subject to learning during the audit visit).

Consider answering the following questions:

- 1.1 What are the boundaries of the area (where people would consider they have left their home area).

Look for places where the residential property ends, or merges into areas with other uses, or are more definite - natural, parkland, industrial land, waterways, railways or canals, old railway land, or any larger road which can't immediately be crossed.
- 1.2 Is this a clearly defined residential area, or is there mixed usage?
- 1.3 If a clearly defined residential area, does this area have clear edges, or does it merge into less well-defined areas?
- 1.4 Is the area defined by a single style of property, or mixed styles?
- 1.5 How dense is the area in terms of population?
- 1.6 How dense is the area in terms of built versus open space? How much space is there between buildings in general?
- 1.7 In general are all pedestrian/cycling routes within this area immediately overlooked by neighbouring properties, and/or within hearing/sight of that property?
- 1.8 Is through traffic possible, encouraged, or discouraged? What are the speed limits? What speeds are likely in reality? Are the streets built around the idea that vehicle flow can be maintained, that it should be encouraged, or that it should be discouraged?
- 1.9 Is this an area which has been planned and built (recently enough that this planned approach is still evident in its design) or has it grown and adapted over a long period?
- 1.10 Where are the entry and exit points to the area, in a vehicle, on a bicycle, and on foot? Are the boundaries to the area permeable/crossable on foot and on a bike? And (bearing in mind the point about routes being overlooked) does it make any difference once it's dark or quiet?

2 Immediate area, footway quality and design

What is the quality of all of the footway and **pedestrian** focused infrastructure immediately outside the property, looking at the actual streets the property sits on and considering routes up to around 300metres away in all directions. The results of this assessment belong in the 'immediate area' section of the report (subject to learning during the audit visit).

On the audit visit footway surface quality should be assessed, at least superficially throughout this area but in more detail close to the property.

Consider answering the following questions:

- 2.1 Can the footway (and any other paths) outside the property be accessed directly from the property?
- 2.2 Is there footway at all outside the property?
- 2.3 Are footways (and any other paths) well surfaced (smooth), particularly very close to the property?
- 2.4 In this area are footways generally level across their surface (relative to the carriageway) or is there often significant crossfall?
- 2.5 In this area are footways (and any other paths) wide enough for basic uses (at least pushing a 'double buggy')?
- 2.6 In this area are footways wide enough (considering only the level area) for the degree of pedestrian usage they are likely to receive, so that people almost never need to walk on the carriageway, or is the carriageway space so safe to walk on that doing so is not an issue?
- 2.7 In this area do dropped areas of footway narrow the footway?
- 2.8 In this area are there interruptions in the footways (for very minor entrances or streets)? Does the footway quality take priority over minor access for motor vehicles, to minor side roads, private driveways, or private accesses?
- 2.9 Are there obstructions on the footways (including but not limited to lighting columns, signposts, rubbish, bins) and what is their character (in particular asking how they would be encountered by people with disabilities)?
- 2.10 How difficult is it to cross the carriageways of the streets in this area, can we quantify this, and to describe where it can be crossed?
- 2.11 Is there dead carriageway space on streets in this area (reserved for vehicle use, but rarely used)? Could carriageway space be reclaimed to significantly narrow crossings required by pedestrians, particularly at junctions?
- 2.12 If streets are residential in nature are opportunities taken to slow traffic by narrowing the carriageway, or by making residential junctions have no priority for one street over another?

3 Residential area, general environment

Look at the whole of the residential area (assuming this is wider than the approximate 300metre limit above). What is the quality of the experience for people trying to **walk and cycle** within this area (ignoring most of the more detailed issues around footway surface quality and design considered in element 2 above). The results of this assessment belong in the 'immediate area' section of the report (subject to learning during the audit visit).

On the audit visit a general inspection of most of this immediate area is important, although more detailed observations can be restricted to representative locations.

Consider answering the following questions:

- 3.1 Do the streets in this area have footways?
- 3.2 Are there separate surfaced or unsurfaced paths which are useful for practical journeys on foot or on a bike?
- 3.3 Are the footways and paths in this area overlooked (as defined above)?
- 3.4 How easily are busier carriageways crossed?
- 3.5 Are footways and carriageways designed so as generally to be pedestrian focused, with regular crossing points where minimum carriageway/maximum footway is provided?
- 3.6 Can pedestrians cross carriageways in all directions, at most street junctions within the residential area, without needing to walk between parked vehicles, with clear views available past parked vehicles being available without leaving the footway.
- 3.7 Are the carriageways within the area safe for cycling ('safe' enough as defined in an accompanying document – to the extent that ordinary members of the public would consider cycling there).
- 3.8 Do the carriageways which are safe (or relatively safe) connect to one another (without needing to use other carriageways)?
- 3.9 Do paths in this area connect to one another without needing to cycle on sections of carriageway which aren't safe, or to walk beside busier carriageways?

4 Wider area

Consider journeys of up to around 3km from the property. Assume walking as the primary mode for journeys of less than 1km, and cycling as the primary mode for anything greater than 2km. Learning belongs in the 'wider area' section of the report (subject to learning on an audit visit).

On the audit visit several of these routes should be inspected, either by following them, or by visiting representative locations on the routes. It may be apparent that many routes encounter the same issues, or that some routes offer a much better experience than others. The audit may focus on those routes which are particularly problematic (with less detail about routes which are easy).

Consider journeys to and from:

- north, south, east and west (or substitute other equivalents if appropriate);

This may be particularly helpful if the property is in a very mixed area (where journeys in each direction are likely).

- larger areas of potential employment;
- the town or city centre (or neighbouring town centre if more appropriate);
- larger shopping streets, centres, retail parks, or similar;
- schools (taking note of catchments and likely age of students);
- local convenience shops (and other wider shop types if available); and
- larger (food) supermarkets.

For each of these consider the following questions:

- 4.1 Do routes on foot involve difficult or time-consuming crossings of carriageway space, or are they simple and direct?
- 4.2 Are there safe routes by bicycle?
- 4.3 How easy is it to cycle to signed/waymarked cycle routes, and/or any other special routes intended to support cycling?
- 4.4 How obvious are signed/waymarked cycle routes?
- 4.5 Are routes (for both walking and cycling) overlooked, so that they remain useful at night, bearing in mind that a higher standard is required for the routes taken on foot.
- 4.6 Are routes (for both walking and cycling) pleasant, quiet, interesting, and through areas dominated by human activity (rather than vehicles)?

Limitations

The approach used assessed properties owned by Registered Social Landlords across Scotland based on the expert knowledge of our Technical Coordinator (Scotland). The assessments are based on preliminary desktop research, and on-site observation.

It produces a high-level overview which aims to report on some very local details, but also the broader picture in less detail. The following limitations should be appreciated:

- The process does not attempt to provide a comprehensive audit of issues or details at each property.
- Where possible research and observation is backed up by conversations with local people to validate observations, but this process is not intended to be a community-based audit or consultation.
- Before acting on the audit observations it is advised that their accuracy is checked and validated with relevant officers from the Registered Social Landlord and residents at each property.
- Even when focusing on the residents of one building it is not practical to analyse all the details which might affect all likely walking or cycling journeys, and these reviews did not try to do so.
- Fine details, such as kerb heights or surface quality, matter a lot. These cannot practically be assessed in a short time over a large area, and these reviews did not try to do so.