

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

Assessment of Walking and Cycling Conditions at Carttsyke Apartments, Greenock (River Clyde Homes)



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.



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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. This report looks at conditions for walking and cycling around the River Clyde Homes property at **Cartsyde Apartments** (on Baxter Street), **Greenock**

Area context

This property consists of a high-rise tower block (with 12 or 13 storeys), which serves as accommodation for people over 60.

The project is providing parking/storage for mobility scooters.

The property sits in at the northern edge of an area of residential properties, typically of 2 storey detached or semi-detached (or equivalent) design. The area is bounded immediately to the north by Carwood Street, and a parallel railway line. An easily identifiable residential area stretches south for around 350 metres and on an east-west alignment over a much larger distance. In general the ground climbs significantly, and often steeply, to the west and to the south.

The area is physically mid-way between the centre of Port Glasgow and the (larger) centre of Greenock. To the north of the area (north of the railway) is a flatter low-lying area used for more industrial purposes, and which carries the east-west aligned A8 dual carriageway.

Audit context

This report highlights key observations and themes, and general observations, which will we consider to be helpful to the Registered Social Landlord and to Cycling Scotland in connection with the funding award. It also adds to knowledge on opportunities and barriers around cycling and walking in the local area. The Methodology for the audits is included in the separate document, '*Walking and Cycling Audits for Registered Social Landlords 2019-20: Methodology*'.

It is also helpful to read this document in conjunction with the accompanying '*Walking and Cycling Audits for Registered Social Landlords 2019-20: What Does Good look Like?*' which describes, using a set of key principles, the characteristics of a good walking and cycling environment.

Responsibilities and development

Our urban environments are defined by interrelated features under the influence of many different bodies. This report is about current conditions, whatever their cause. Registered Social Landlords have control of some aspects of the environment, may only be able to influence other aspects, and may in some cases have no direct influence at all, however this report may be useful in approaching those who do.

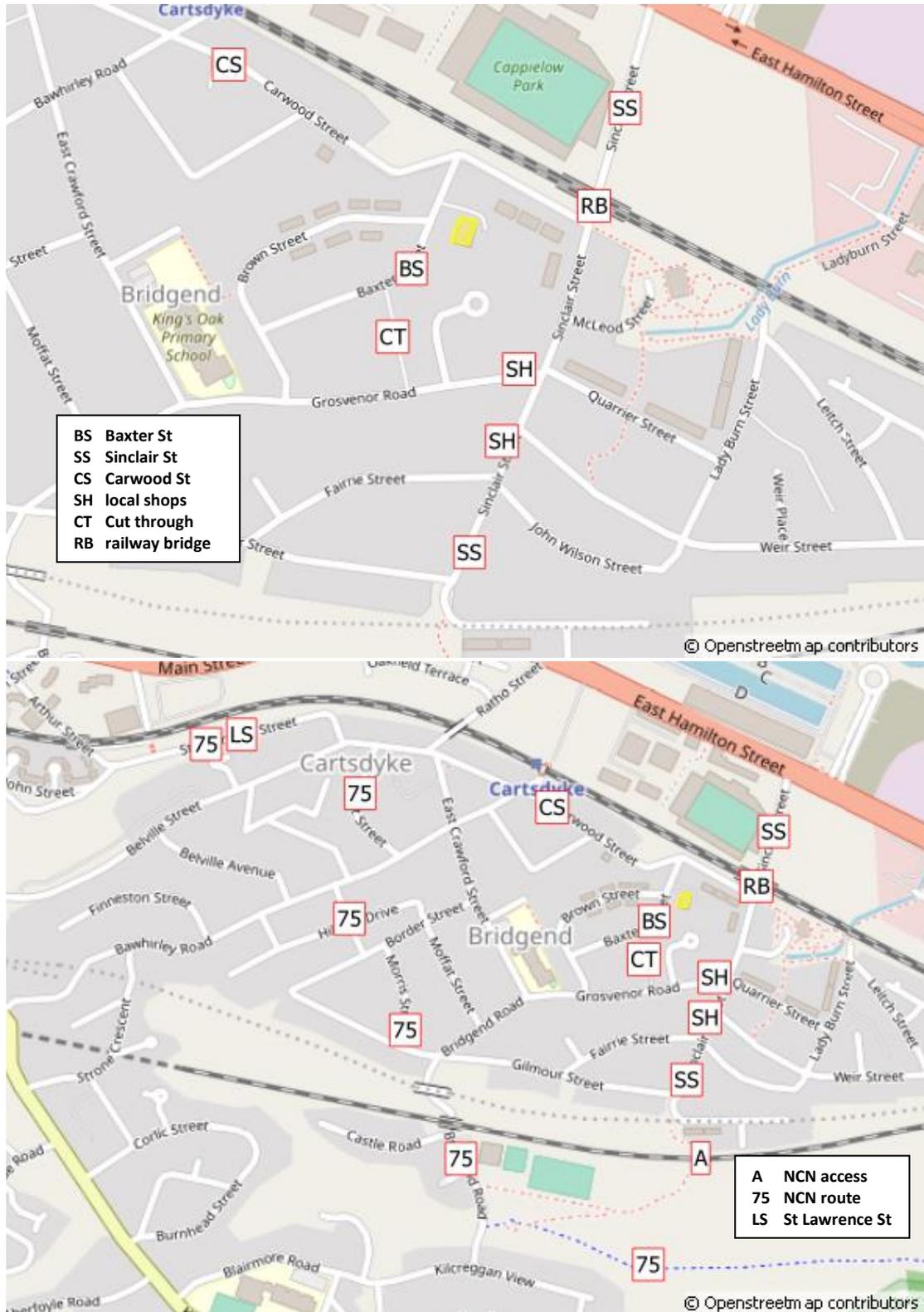
It is strongly recommended that the content of this report should be checked with local residents, who are the real experts on quality of experience in the areas where they live.

Funding for improvements to the urban environment might be available from a number of sources – and not only to a Registered Social Landlord or statutory authorities but also community led groups. Sources include:

- Places for Everyone - advice, support and funding for the creation of infrastructure that makes it easier for people to walk, cycle and wheel for everyday journeys
<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2019/scotland/places-for-everyone/>
- Awards for All - funding from £300 to £10,000 to support what matters to people and communities.
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/under10k>
- The Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities – funding for social housing providers for new facilities that make it easier, more enjoyable and more accessible for people to walk or cycle:
<https://www.cycling.scot/what-we-do/cycling-friendly/social-housing-fund>

Map

Where helpful the text refers - like this [SS] - to the points marked on this map.



Observations

Immediate area	Photos	Recommendations
The most prominent issue which relates to walking and cycling (and very much to the use of mobility aids/scooters) in this area is the steepness of Baxter Street [BS], from which the property is accessed (unless using steps toward the level of Carwood Street [CS]).	1,2	a
Access to footways from the property, using a mobility aid or a scooter, may be challenging, particularly if seeking to travel south (uphill). The dropped kerbs at the property entrance are approached at an angle to the incline, their line having been shaped apparently according to the line which might be followed by vehicles (rather than by the needs of pedestrians). Some upstand remains. If there are usually parked vehicles on Baxter Street then there is potential to widen the footway here, at its steepest point, without cutting the capacity of the carriageway. Access for larger vehicles could be improved, if required, by the prevention of parking against the opposite footway.	1,2	a
It may be that routes to the local shops which follow Carwood Street [CS] east are easier for those for whom level access is important. The footway on Carwood Street here is of a relatively high quality.	4	a
Good quality dropped kerbs are rare (or absent) in the area. There are many locations where kerb heights are relatively low (or poorer dropped kerbs are provided), or where private driveways drop the footway to the carriageway level.	3	a,b
At the entrance to some private driveways in the immediate local area the footway is designed with some a significant crossfall to facilitate vehicle access. This crossfall may be steep enough to make progress along these sections of footway difficult in a wheelchair using a mobility scooter, and to significantly increase the risks of slips (and falls) by pedestrians in winter weather. This is particularly obvious close to the property on the route uphill along the closest footway of Baxter Street	3	a,b

– which might otherwise be the simplest route to the most local shops (facilitated by a cut-through path [CT] to Grosvenor Road).		
It appears that very few of the streets in this area have any application of tactile paving (for any purpose). None was observed during our visit.		b,c
Routes to the west based on use of Carwood Street, toward Greenock, immediately encounter very poor footway surfaces, and relatively steep hill. Carwood Street immediately to the west of the property also has a short section where users of the footway may feel more isolated after dark (the significance of this is difficult to access).	5	b,c
Access to Cartsdyke Station's northern platform is by the use of a bridge with steps and no ramp access.		c
There are several convenience-style shops [SH] on Sinclair Street opposite Weir Street and at the beginning of Grosvenor Road, 200-300 metres from the property.	6	
There appear to be no obvious large areas where employment is likely nearby, other than alongside the A8 (or in roles as would be expected in primarily residential areas). There are no obvious larger shops in the immediate area. Key shopping areas for residents would appear to be in the centre of Greenock, or at the retail park in Port Glasgow.		c,d
Wider area		
In terms of conditions for cycling it is notable that both Carwood Street and Sinclair Street, which might at first be assumed to be local residential streets, actually would seem to carry through traffic. Our guess would be that they tend toward (or are beyond) the limit of what many people (who don't currently cycle) would judge to be feel to be safe conditions.	6,11	c,d
The physical geography of the area is a significant defining feature in terms of walking and cycling here. Generally there is flat land to the north of the railway, with more industrial land usage and the Firth of Clyde as a northern boundary to this, however there are no obvious east-west routes along this flatter land, other than by using the footway of the A8.		c,d

<p>The A8 is a dual carriageway, which appears to carry very significant amounts of traffic – being designed to try to facilitate the flow of four lanes of traffic. We judge that almost nobody would consider cycling on this road – although there may be a few people who are experienced in using a bicycle on local roads who do so. There are some signalised crossings in the area which are part of signalised junctions. While the A8 has associated footways this is not a friendly environment for walking. A local man described to us his walk to Port Glasgow to work. He said that there were places where it was possible to cut through the industrial estates to get away from the A8, which helped significantly, however that in wet conditions there was significant spray from the road, and when it snowed he would be showered with slush from passing vehicles. We note that routes cutting through industrial estates will be unwelcoming to many people after dark.</p>	7	c,d
<p>Sinclair Street is bridged by the railway [RB], but the tunnel beneath this is very narrow and lacks footways. This is not a quiet street – vehicles were continually using it when we observed it in the middle of a working day. Between the railway and the A8 however, this street is very wide, and of an industrial nature, with no properties overlooking it, and is presumably therefore fairly unwelcoming after dark. There are bus stops on the A8, with this route as the main access.</p>	8,9	c,d
<p>Routes to the east or west by bicycle, keeping to the quieter residential and semi-residential streets to the south of the (northern) railway line, are hilly enough to make cycling very much less welcoming.</p>		c,d
<p>There is an east-west aligned signed cycle route in the area. This is route 75 of the National Cycle Network [75]. Access to this at its most local point, at the south end of Sinclair Street, requires climbing around 40 metres (in around 550 metres). This is definitely steep enough to put many people off trying to cycle (particularly on cheaper bicycles). To the west, the route follows an old railway line, generally staying above the urban area with little interaction with it (so that access to this requires descending the hill again from a specific access point). Once accessed, this route may provide a pleasant environment for leisure trips. It is unlikely to be attractive for journeys after dark, and it is noteworthy that even access to the route itself is through relatively isolated parkland. Journeys east on this route toward Greenock immediately join the ordinary streets, descending to cross the A8 near the centre of Greenock. There seems nothing to recommend the use of this route in such a journey over a more direct equivalent using alternative residential streets.</p>	10	c,d
<p>Eastward routes to the main central area of Greenock, avoiding the A8, would most obviously use the most northern, and lowest, available streets. The distance, which is of the order of 2 km, could in theory be covered very quickly and easily by</p>	11,12	c,d

<p>bicycle. This route climbs significantly to the east, then descends steeply to Greenock. Parts of this route (including the National Cycle Network route where it utilises a section of Carwood Street [CS]) appear to exhibit traffic levels and speeds which we would guess would be significant enough to put most people off considering using a bicycle. This suggests that the route might be more welcoming on foot, however there are some significant stretches which are very isolated, and which many people may find unwelcoming after dark. St Lawrence Street [LS] in particular, is both steep and isolated, being bounded by a green area with significant undergrowth.</p>		
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Recommendations

	Project
a	The association should investigate how users of mobility scooters negotiate the footways immediately around the property.
	Immediate area
b	The association, as a stakeholder in the area, should seek improvements in the conditions experienced by footway users, both in the short and long term, in the immediate area. These improvements could include re-surfacing and the provision of good quality dropped kerbs and associated tactile paving. It could also include the levelling of footways at private driveways - with a ramped access to a level footway, rather than with sloping footways being used as a ramp facilitating access between carriageway and private property.
c	The association could choose to make itself aware of the general barriers to walking and cycling that residents face in the wider area, on the basis that the association can add weight to their wishes or could choose to speak on their behalf in pursuing improved conditions.
d	The association should recognise that the significant challenges to residents in regard to access by bicycle or on foot (and using mobility scooters) to major areas of employment or to larger facilities (such as supermarkets) from may have consequences for the daily life of residents.

Supporting photos



1: Property entrance (uphill footway)



2: Property entrance (uphill footway)



3: Footway with crossfall (driveway access)



4: Carwood St, east of property



5: Carwood St footway surface/isolation to west



6: Sinclair Street (shops and conditions)

	
<p>7: A8 at Sinclair Street junction</p>	<p>8: Railway bridge [RB] over Sinclair Street</p>
	
<p>9: Sinclair Street immediately south of A8</p>	<p>10: Isolated access [A] to National Cycle Network</p>
	
<p>11: Carwood Street (looking east toward property)</p>	<p>12: St Lawrence Street (looking toward Greenock)</p>