

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

## **Assessment of Walking and Cycling Conditions at Gulliver Street, Niddrie, Edinburgh (Link Group)**



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 Link Group property at **Gulliver Street, Niddrie (Edinburgh)**

## Area context

Gulliver Street is within a residential area in the east of Edinburgh. The area appears to have relatively ill-defined edges. There is parkland (and the Niddrie Burn [NB]) defining the eastern and southeastern edges of the area. Niddrie Mains Road [NM] could be seen to define the northern boundary – as it carries significant traffic through the area (including to the A1/bypass), and because in many places it lacks active frontages or is bounded by larger green areas or walls, or because buildings are set back from the carriageway.

There is a wide mix of housing styles in the area. While the local streets are clearly designed primarily to service the residential area, in general many also allow for through traffic, and there are few restrictions on this other than narrower carriageways. Entry/exit points to the area from Niddrie Mains Road are limited, but there is the potential for vehicle use through the estate in many directions.

Most obvious journey destinations (other than to neighbours) are outside the residential area. There is a low level of on-street parking in the area and many carriageways are mostly free from this.

The proposed scheme is to provide locked bicycle storage sheds at the rear of the properties.

## 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.

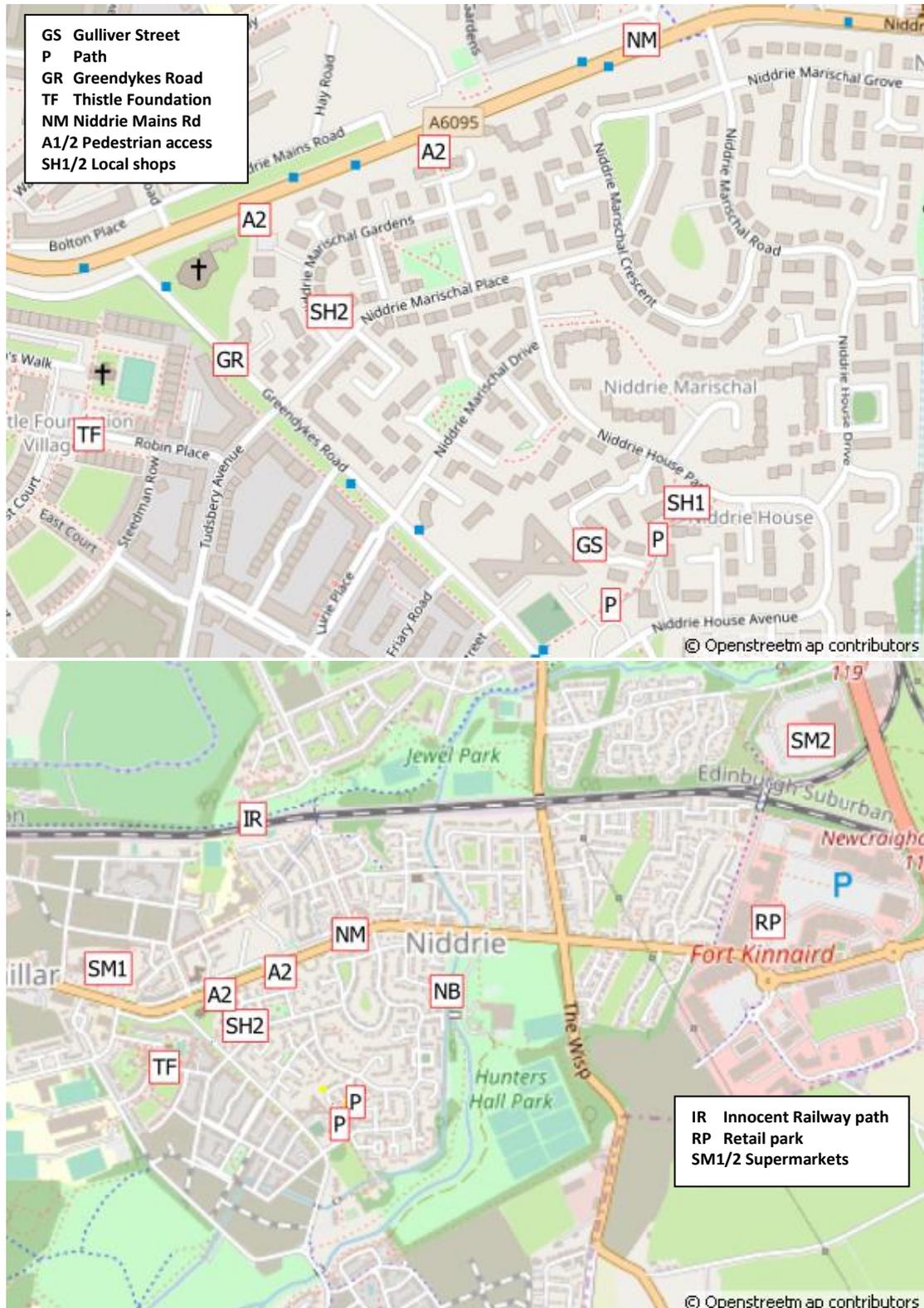
It is strongly recommended that the content of this report should be checked with local residents, who are the real experts on quality of experience in the areas where they live.

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 [GS] - to the points marked on this map.



# Observations

Project	Photos	Recommendations
Access to the proposed cycle parking is smooth unless cars are parked in front of the access points. Both feel protected and out of the way, yet still accessible, although a lack of lighting may cause issues.	1,15	a
<b>Immediate area</b>		
Gulliver Street [GS] is designed without footways (pavements). Where vehicle use is rare, parking levels low, and speeds very slow, such a design might provide for a pedestrian friendly environment, but these forms of street can also easily be dominated by vehicles. It is difficult to determine how conditions in Gulliver Street change during the day, or according to the behaviour of individual people driving. This environment might be extremely challenging for a person with a visual impairment. The surface is of a high quality here, presenting few obvious trip hazards (far fewer than typical footways).	2,16	
The street layout provides for very gently curved driving lines from Niddrie House Park (road). There are clear sightlines, and few physical features more severely restricting speeds (given the lack of footway it would seem reasonable to expect design aimed at slowing vehicles to a walking speed). However, as there is no separation between pavement and road, dustbin day creates an obstacle. The relatively high-speed table at the entry from Niddrie House Park may initially slow vehicles, but we observed relatively fast speeds despite the presence of the auditor on the carriageway.	2,16	b
The corner properties where the street meets Niddrie House Park had cars parked on the pavement when we visited.		
There is a surfaced footpath [P] at the end of Gulliver Street. This can be accessed from Gulliver Street, and links Niddrie House Park (road) to the north and Greendykes Road to the southwest, potentially shortening pedestrian journeys to these	3,4	c

<p>significantly. South is a well surfaced and overlooked section with low walls. The shortcut via the convenience store (north) feels less overlooked, and the section joining the housing to the park (via the burial ground) has a slight slope with no easily accessible handrails if icy. A mother and two children reported they never felt safe when taking this (quicker) route to her house. The accumulation of rubbish along this section would not make a pleasant experience for those walking.</p>		
<p>Within the immediate residential area most streets have footways on both sides. Crossing these streets, or side road entrances, is made easier in many places by the provision of raised tables on the carriageway – meaning that pedestrians do not need to descend to carriageway level. This is likely to support access for those using accessibility aids.</p> <p>Some streets in the area have parking space designed to be effectively off the carriageway, which while providing more car space, makes cycling feel safer around the narrow roads (for example Niddrie Marischal Drive).</p>	5	
<p>There are areas of footway where the wish to smooth vehicle access into private property means that the footway has a significant crossfall (slope) toward the carriageway. This is likely to make footway use much more challenging for people using wheelchairs, other mobility aids, or who are less steady on their feet, with this being problematic for everyone in slippery conditions. While many sections are for the provision of driveways, some such treatments exist despite no driveways being present.</p>	6	d
<p>There are two small local 'convenience' style shops within the local area – one around 100 metres away [SH1], and the other around 300 metres away [SH2]. These can be accessed along footways without crossing any more major carriageway. There is parking for vehicles at both shops, but nothing designed for bicycles. Around the further shop there are desire lines across the adjoining grass, and the main pavement in front of this shop is uneven with a narrow-curved road in front, narrowed further by many parked cars.</p>	7,8	e
<p><b>Wider Area</b></p>		
<p>Many daily trips from this area could be for shopping at larger stores (Lidl / Tescos / Fort Kinnaird), visits to amenities such as Craigmillar Library, bus access, the Geendykes Child and Family Centre and local cafes.</p>		

<p>There is a supermarket approximately 700 metres to the northwest of Gulliver Street (Lidl) [SM1]. There are three cycle racks by the entrance and three access points to Lidl from the main road: steps, a slope (next to the traffic lights), and the side road with a pavement – opposite Greendykes Rd. Each then joins a zebra crossing across the car park.</p>	9	
<p>There is a large retail park [RP] approx. 1km to the east – and a large supermarket on the far side of this (around 2km away) [SM2]. This can be accessed using footways on Niddrie Mains Road, which are wide enough for most normal uses. However, walking along these footways may be much less pleasant because of levels of traffic on the adjacent carriageway. There are some areas of this footway which are not well overlooked from adjacent property, and which may be unwelcoming for some at quieter times after dark. Walking distance to the retail park is around 1.5-2km – which would be a distance much more quickly covered by bicycle, however there is no obvious route to this avoiding Niddrie Mains Road – which few people seem likely to consider provides safe conditions. A route exists through the housing to an access to parkland at Niddrie Burn [NB], which would marginally shorten the use of Niddrie Mains Road. This route is convoluted, and unobvious. It could feel unsafe at night as passes through quiet green space and is set back from the sports centre.</p>	10	f
<p>Along Niddrie Main Road are four main access points to the residential area. Two accesses are via ordinary roads, and the other two are not available to vehicles - but allow people to avoid walking the length of the main road. One is a gap in the wall which seems popular, but use of this means crossing a badly lit empty car park and weaving round a seemingly underused community centre. The second is a short cut through houses which has low fences and feels safe for walking and cycling.</p>	11	
<p>A higher proportion of journeys towards the Lidl supermarket to the northwest can be completed on the streets of the residential area – which may offer conditions many more people would consider acceptable. Journeys on foot or by bicycle in this direction are likely to use Greendykes Road [GR] – which in places is not well overlooked (and thus might be more welcoming after dark on a bicycle than on foot). This road has a very straight design, and it is possible that conditions here vary considerably over time or in different weather. Parts of the road are potholed and it is busy, as one of the main bus routes from the Royal Infirmary with traffic (we consider) not always observing 20mph despite the high-density housing. It was observed that cars were parked on the corners of side roads adjoining Greendykes Road creating hazards for pedestrians. Stretches of pavement are bumpy and sloped, although there was one section of smoother path.</p>	12	g

<p>Longer trips from this location using bicycles on quieter roads or paths, to many locations, are likely to be relatively easy to accomplish (in comparison to typical experiences elsewhere in Scotland). There are relatively dense areas of residential property surrounding this area, and networks of paths within green areas. Some of these routes are inefficient due to their indirect nature, and others unwelcoming after dark where they rely on paths in green areas. There is a path through green space [IR] which passes around 750 metres to the north of the properties, and which will facilitate many longer journeys by bicycle, including toward the city centre. This can be accessed mostly by using quieter streets (comparable to those local to the property). This path ends around 1km from the city centre, and most ongoing journeys are likely to require the use of city centre streets.</p>		
<p>Sections of Greendykes Road and Niddrie Mains Road can be avoided by walking through the Thistle Foundation property [TF] (potentially to cut through to the nursery). The Thistle Foundation has cycle parking but out of sight at the back of the building. Before reaching the Foundation there is a large protective structure for residents' car parking – potentially a missed opportunity for cycling storage.</p>	13	
<p>There is a cycling route signed through the east of the residential area (on the residential roads). Although there are three signs indicating this, there is not an official route number, and some are misaligned (so it may thus be impossible to follow). Southwards it links to the traffic free route toward Roslyn (useful mainly for leisure). Northward it joins the innocent cycleway [IR] – which is clearly useful in linking toward the city, although crossing Niddrie Mains Road remains a challenge.</p>	14	h

# Recommendations

	<b>Project</b>
a	The association should monitor whether additional lighting may support use of the bicycle parking.
	<b>Immediate area</b>
b	The association could potentially highlight issues with the shared space approach (lack of footways) on Gulliver Street.
c	The association could suggest to partners, such as the local authority, that improvements might be made around the burial ground site and including an improvement plan for the walkways.
d	The association could choose to make itself aware of the impact of issues on residents on foot.
e	The association could discuss barriers connected to path quality with the convenience stores and look into their impact / potential mitigation.
f	The association should choose to make itself aware of the general barriers to walking and cycling that residents face, on the basis that it can add weight to their wishes or could choose to speak on their behalf in pursuing improved conditions.
g	The association should take note that the barriers to walking and cycling in this area, and the potential difficulties faced in accessing key community amenities except by car and bus which may have consequences for the daily life of residents. This includes the busy Niddrie Mains Road (with no cycle lane) and Greendykes Road.

# Supporting photos

<p>(Some minor details have been deleted from this version of the report to safeguard the privacy of residents.)</p>	
<p><b>1: Access to cycle parking at western property</b></p>	<p><b>2: Pedestrian/vehicle surface, Gulliver Street</b></p>
	
<p><b>3: Slightly sloped path</b></p>	<p><b>4: Section of path by convenience store</b></p>
	
<p><b>5: Raised table</b></p>	<p><b>6: Sloped pavements</b></p>



**7: Parking at the closer shop**



**8: Rough pavement in front of second shop**



**9: Lidl access Niddrie Mains Road**



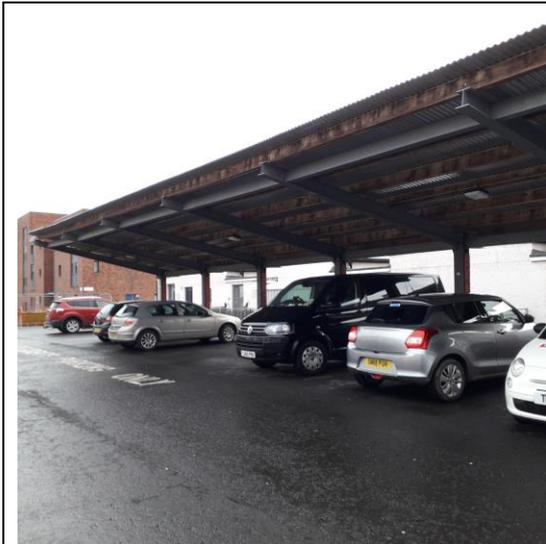
**10: Niddrie Burn pathway (© Google)**



**11: Short cut to the residential area**



**12: Greendykes Road**



13: Car parking structure



14: The second cycle sign

(Some minor details have been deleted from this version of the report to safeguard the privacy of residents.)

15. Access to cycle parking at eastern property



16. Lack of footway on Gulliver Street