

TITLE:	Developing and commissioning high quality walking and cycling infrastructure in line with DfT policy, funding and design guidelines: Simon O'Brien, LCR Walking and Cycling Commissioner
DATE:	23 June 2021
TO:	Halton Council's Elected Members
FROM:	Simon O'Brien, LCR Walking and Cycling Commissioner, supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huw Jenkins (LCR CA Lead Officer, Transport) and • Mark Dickens (LCR CA Lead Officer Spatial Planning) • Barbara Wade (LCR CA LTP Development Manager)

1. Aim of Note

- 1.1 This note supports a brief update to elected members of Halton Council by Simon O'Brien, the LCR's Walking and Cycling Commissioner. This is on the importance of collective action to radically enhance our walking and cycling infrastructure, in response to guidance issued by Government last summer.
- 1.2 The note highlights the good practice that is already been taken forward across the LCR in embedding these principles across our collective work.
- 1.3 However, the note also reminds elected members of the need to further embed these principles into all aspects of funding, commissioning and delivery processes, and that include looking beyond direct, or traditional transport activities.
- 1.4 The note also highlights the importance of the LCRCA, as local transport authority, in leading by example in this respect, with clear expectations when it comes to commissioning schemes and interventions, or in allocating funding to partners.

2. Overview

- 2.1 Simon O'Brien is the Metro Mayor and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's [Walking and Cycling Commissioner](#). Simon was appointed to this role in the autumn of 2019 and his role includes, but is not limited to:-
 - Being an advocate for cycling and walking, working with officers and members to help to develop and deliver cycling and walking-related programmes;
 - Being a media figurehead to exemplify the city region's policy commitments on cycling and walking, to grow the levels of cycling and walking as a transport mode;
 - Promoting cycling and walking across the LCR and help represent the voice and enthusiasm of active travel promotion; and
 - engaging with government, agencies and other organisations to support the case for funding and support to help promote levels of cycling and walking.

- 2.2 The longstanding importance of walking and cycling in support of the city region's goals and ambitions is well documented and will be familiar to members. In July 2020, the critical role of walking and cycling was made abundantly clear in two related documents from Government / DfT:-
- [Gear Change](#): A bold vision for cycling and walking and
 - [Local Transport Note \(LTN\) 1/20](#) - Guidance for local authorities on designing high-quality, safe cycle infrastructure
- 2.3 Many transport professionals view the above guidance and standards as some of the most radical, far reaching and welcome ever developed on walking and cycling. Collectively, they seek to move beyond ambitions, platitudes or loose targets that typified earlier guidance and that lacked a clear mandate to local authorities.
- 2.4 However, notable extracts from Gear Change include the following requirements and statements, with emphasis added:-
- *“...cycling and walking measures are **no longer seen as an afterthought** but have moved to the very heart of considerations for all transport policy and planning, at all levels of leadership.”*
 - *“England will be a great walking and cycling nation Places will be truly walkable. A travel revolution in our streets, towns and communities will have made cycling a mass form of transit. **Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys** with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.”*
 - *“...There will be first hundreds, then thousands of miles of safe, continuous, direct routes for cycling in towns and cities, **physically separated from pedestrians and volume motor traffic**, serving the places that people want to go...”*
 - *“Cycling is or will become **mass transit** and must be treated as such. Routes must be designed for larger numbers of cyclists, **for users of all abilities and disabilities**.”*
 - *“**We will not fund or part-fund any scheme that does not meet the new standards and principles described in [the guidance]**. We will not allow any other agency or body to fund such schemes using any of our money. This includes schemes delivered through pots such as the Transforming Cities Fund...”*
 - *“...aspects of cost-benefit analysis may still undervalue cycle schemes' longer term benefits, such as journey quality benefits from segregated cycle lanes and health benefits. We will review and if necessary rewrite guidance to ensure that it does not disadvantage cycling schemes....”*

- “We will ensure that all new housing and business developments are built around **making sustainable travel, including cycling and walking, the first choice for journeys...**”

2.5 The strategy and related technical guidance recognise that traditional approaches to planning for and promoting walking and cycling must change to achieve this vision. The new design guidance sets out the much higher standards required if schemes are to receive funding, along with a number of failings which Government will either no longer allow at all, or will strongly discourage. The standards will be enforced by a new inspectorate, Active Travel England. The diagram below summarises some of the new approaches mandated in the technical guidance.

Key design principles

Cycling is or will become mass transit and must be treated as such. Routes must be designed for larger numbers of cyclists, for users of all abilities and disabilities.



- Cyclists must be separated from volume traffic, both at junctions and on the stretches of road between them.
- Cyclists must be separated from pedestrians.
- Cyclists must be treated as vehicles, not pedestrians.
- Routes must join together; isolated stretches of good provision are of little value.
- Routes must feel direct, logical and be intuitively understandable by all road users;
- Routes and schemes must take account of how users actually behave;
- Purely cosmetic alterations should be avoided.
- Barriers, such as chicane barriers and dismount signs, should be avoided.
- Routes should be designed only by those who have experienced the road on a cycle.

21

- 2.6 Significantly, it will be appreciated that Gear Change introduces a clear, and stark link between standards and funding; schemes that are delivered using DfT funding that fail to adhere to the standards will either not be funded, or else funding can be clawed back. The Transforming Cities Funding, that is available until the end of March 2023 is also explicitly subject to these requirements.

3. The city region's response to the new guidance

- 3.1 As noted, the LCR is responding well to the new guidance since it was introduced in July 2020. Examples include, but are not limited to:-

- a) The Government's strong policy framework has further validated earlier LCRCA policies and strategies including; the Local Journeys Strategy, the Transport Plan, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the Local Industrial Strategy and the Economic Recovery Plan. Mainstreaming walking and cycling as part of a clean, low carbon and inclusive recovery remains even more pressing in the circumstances that we face post-COVID;
- b) LTN 1/20 principles have been woven into the design of the bids for Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund being delivered by local authority partners;
- c) The LCRCA worked with WSP consulting on a *pro bono* basis in November 2020 to deliver a webinar on Gear Change and LTN 1/20 for LCRCA local authorities officers and members;
- d) The new LTN 1/20 standards are being woven into studies and schemes stemming through the Transforming Cities Funding, and which include plans for the new station at Headbolt Lane in Kirkby which will include the provision of new cycle links to the adjoining Knowsley Industrial Park. Other good examples in development include the "ERIC" interchange works planned at Lea Green in St Helens, that is seeking to make prominent provision for pedestrians and cyclists through an innovative European-style [CYCLOPS](#) junction.
- e) As part of the recent "LCR Listens: Our Places Engagement" on the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) there was a specific proposal for an Active Travel policy the principle of which was well supported. Some of the other comments relating to cycling specifically are set out below:-
 - "Make it a byelaw for cyclists to use bicycle bells. Best practice: Holland"
 - "Promote active travel"
 - "Incorporating bicycle spaces and bicycle sheds in new developments"
 - "Tackling air quality through reducing travel, particularly road travel"
- f) In addition, in responding to strategically significant planning applications, the LCRCA is supporting local authority colleagues through the development of multi modal transport responses. These are reiterating the need to adhere to

LTN 1/20 standards and to enhance walking and cycling provision where appropriate, in addition to technical requirements on the suitability of provision for public transport usage.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 Looking to the next steps, it will be appreciated the process of “changing hearts and minds” is vital amongst local authority officers, elected members, developers and the public at large.
- 4.2 Simon O’Brien is proposing a rolling programme of engagement with officers and members to communicate the core messages in the guidance and the good practice that is emerging, to raise the level ambition across the board. The groups that he will be seeking to engage with include:
- The Transport Advisory Group
 - The LA Heads of Planning
 - The LCR Growth Directors
 - The Housing and Spatial Planning Board
 - The Transport Committee
 - The Combined Authority and
 - Cabinet members from individual local authorities
- 4.3 However, the importance of leading by example is clear, and in ensuring that the LCRCA’s remit and responsibilities are aiding the delivery of Gear Change through means including:-
- a) The need to **embed Gear Change and LTN 1/20 guidance into all aspects of the LCRCA’s policymaking, commissioning and funding approval roles**. This includes ensuring that all of the CA’s strategies, funding bids, commissions or funding approvals give full consideration to, and make provision for walking and cycling in line with the standards set.
 - b) This should look beyond active travel schemes and programmes per se, and look for opportunities to **embed walking and cycling into all relevant programmes and into projects of all types**, e.g. gap or viability funding to support housing or employment sites, as part of the town centres programmes, as a component of enhanced training and educational provision, or as part of the delivery of services that involve the movement of people in some shape or form.
 - c) In transport terms, the principle of packaging up schemes into holistic schemes, with a focus on placemaking has been escalated through the recent pipeline refresh work (e.g. the TCF Runcorn Station Quarter Scheme). It will be important to ensure that **opportunities to enhance walking and cycling in bold and meaningful ways are woven into all transport schemes and programmes**. This should include highway maintenance schemes where “like for like” replacements all too often miss out opportunities to include simple or

low cost enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists. Funding conditions may be needed between the LCRCA and constituent local authorities to achieve this.

- d) As the government guidance escalates the role of walking and cycling as important forms of mass transit, this plays into the **business case process and the problem identification and options assessment processes**. An assumption that people will not walk or cycle can no longer be used to discount such schemes in preference to preconceived solutions. Equally, **mass transit schemes can, and must be integrated with walking and cycling**, and all schemes should give consideration to “last mile” links by foot and by bike. Finally, schemes that serve only the needs of vehicular traffic or tackle poor journey times alone are further weakened by the provisions of the guidance, and should be robustly challenged if they are proposed through the LCRCA’s pipeline and commissioning processes.
- e) Active travel considerations are featuring prominently within the development of the **Spatial Development Strategy**. Scoping work is progressing on a strong planning policy base for walking and cycling in new developments.
- f) Finally, and as noted, active travel considerations and technical guidance and recommendations will continue to be built into **LCRCA responses to planning applications**.

5. Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that elected members:-

- a) Note the significant change in direction and design quality stipulated in Gear Change and in Local Transport Note 1/20 and the examples of good practice as noted in para 3.1 above;
- b) Note the implications raised by the new guidance in respect of the LCRCA’s, and indeed other partners’ funding, commissioning and delivery roles and responsibilities. This is to ensure that every opportunity is made to implement the new guidance, and to mainstream walking and cycling into all aspects of our collective activities; and
- c) notes the intention by Simon O’Brien to continue to champion these requirements, and examples of best practice to external partners, to both raise the profile of the guidance, and the quality of active travel provision across the city region.