



1) INTRODUCTION

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Options and Preferences Draft Plan for Tameside Council's Homes, Spaces, Places plan.

This response is on behalf of Walk Ride Tameside (a group of residents from the borough which formed with support from Walk Ride GM) and concerns the Walking, Wheeling & Cycling strategy as detailed on pages 131 and 132.

Walk Ride GM¹ campaigns to make walking, wheeling, cycling and other active travel modes the natural choice for short journeys and as part of longer journeys across Greater Manchester. We build relationships with GM's authorities at the local area and city-regional levels to inspire progress and positive change to the health and wellbeing of people across the region.

We welcome and endorse the Council's ambition that by 2042 the borough should be "a well-connected place, where active travel is the first and natural choice" but wish to underline that this ambition will only be realised with significant interventions that make roads in Tameside safe, welcoming and inclusive for people of all ages and abilities.

In particular, to realise the ambition the Council will need to formulate and then implement an Active Travel Network Plan to deliver the necessary changes to physical infrastructure to support the modal shift that would mean active travel is the first and natural choice. Moreover, in order to fit the desired 17-year timeframe, work on developing such a plan must begin at the earliest opportunity.

In summary, without significant policy drivers to back up the stated vision (including a Network Plan), as well as targets for implementation of infrastructure, the desired behaviour change is highly unlikely to be achieved in practice by 2042.

¹ <https://www.walkridegm.org.uk/>



2) CURRENT SITUATION IN TAMESIDE

a) *Low car ownership, high levels of car use:* As the Scoping Document for the Homes, Space, Places strategy² acknowledges, Tameside (62%), has a high level of car use as a percentage of all journeys, compared to Manchester, which is the lowest (45%). However, compared to the average for England and Wales there are more households without access to a car in Tameside (30% v 22%). This implies that car-owning households in Tameside are making a significant proportion of their journeys by car, and households without access to a car may be taking fewer journeys by any means, and that the present infrastructure privileges journeys by car over other forms of transport. It also provides firm evidence that the existing (and reasonably extensive) network of off-road greenways has minimal effect on walking, wheeling and cycling for transport, and that boosting active travel will require a significant reallocation of road space to meet current national (LTN 1/20) and regional (Streets for All) standards to enable active travel as the first and natural choice.

b) *Dangerous, car-centric infrastructure:* Tameside's current infrastructure is highly car-centric, with features such as motorways, dual carriageways, and complex junctions prioritising motor vehicle flow, and thus representing major obstacles to active travel (Denton and Hyde in particular are especially 'cut off' from neighbouring areas by the M60 and M67 motorways). Combined with aggressive and dangerous driving behaviour, a lack of enforcement of traffic violations, and excessive volumes of motor vehicle traffic, Tameside is an extremely hostile environment for people choosing to walk, wheel and cycle – and serves as a deterrent for many. Per the Scoping Document for the Homes, Space, Places strategy, casualties from road traffic collisions in Tameside are 75% higher than the Great Britain average, demonstrating the unsafe nature of current infrastructure.

² <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/getmedia/9d877a9b-75f1-4907-993b-e84beefec0ab/Homes-Spaces-Places-Document-2024-July-2024.pdf>



c) Current redevelopment plans at odds with stated strategy on active travel: It should be noted that current redevelopment plans for the borough are not only at odds with the stated goal of boosting active travel, but will actively bake in car dependency for years if not decades to come. For instance, the Droylsden Town Centre Masterplan³ appears to propose retaining almost all existing surface parking spaces, which already contribute to high levels of congestion in the town centre, in turn creating an unpleasant and oppressive atmosphere to anyone outside a car. In addition, the plans do not envisage any new on-road active travel infrastructure or reallocation of road space that would be necessary to achieve “a well-connected place, where active travel is the first and natural choice”. In addition, redevelopment plans for Ashton town centre include little or no extra dedicated on-street active travel provision to connect local communities to the town centre.

3) BENEFITS OF AN ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK PLAN

Creating an Active Travel Network Plan would help to demonstrate joined-up thinking and leverage funding for new schemes, so providing a clear vision for both the general public and authorities such as TfGM/GMCA.

Other benefits of an Active Travel Network Plan include:

Reduced car dependency: By providing more attractive and accessible options for active travel, such a plan would encourage residents to leave their cars at home and choose more sustainable modes of transportation.

Reduced traffic congestion: Alongside improved public transport provision, an Active Travel Network Plan is fundamental to achieving the Council’s stated ambition of reducing traffic congestion. Once in place, an active travel network will incentivise a shift from car travel to active travel modes, especially for short journeys.

Improved health and well-being: Active travel promotes physical activity and can contribute to improved health outcomes, reducing the risk of chronic diseases. This is

³ <https://droylsdentowncentre.co.uk/>



exactly what the Transport for Greater Manchester Streets For All Design Guide⁴ seeks to solve: embedding design that enables healthy choices so people can live healthily for longer. Active Travel England advisory panel member Sir Chris Whitty is clear on this: creating places to give people the opportunity to live active lives is key to solving inequalities in society, and relieving the pressure on the NHS by enabling proactive prevention, rather than relying on reactive cure.

Such an intervention would support the Council’s stated “People” pillar within the Homes, Spaces, Places plan “to reduce health inequalities, improve health outcomes and enable the provision of services and infrastructure to support new and existing communities”.

Recent research shows national government failure on active travel is widening health inequalities. Last year, a third of people in the most deprived neighbourhoods are considered inactive compared to a fifth of those in the least deprived. The number of people considered active in the most deprived areas has dropped by 2.5% in the last seven years.⁵

Reduced carbon emissions: By shifting from car journeys to walking, cycling, and public transport, active travel plans can help reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. This would support Tameside Council’s Climate Plan and is in line with its declaration of a climate emergency in 2020.⁶

Enhanced community spaces: Low-traffic neighbourhoods and well-designed active travel routes create more vibrant, inclusive and liveable communities, providing safe and pleasant spaces for residents to interact.

Economic benefits: Active travel can contribute to economic growth by creating new jobs in the construction and maintenance of active travel infrastructure, as well as promoting tourism and local businesses. As Manchester City Council’s Manchester

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https://downloads.ctfassets.net/nv7y93idf4jq/H8pRWpuOm0MDiZmjirqtW/aa9ec3471ea3b557007c0bb2c2d9212e/Greater_Manchester_Streets_for_All_Design_Guide_v1.1.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/government-failure-on-active-travel-is-widening-health-inequalities-says-ippr>

⁶ <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/cutthecarbon/strategy>



Active Travel Strategy⁷ acknowledges, better streets designed for people travelling actively have quantifiable economic benefits for businesses and communities, with examples across the City Region showing that this results in higher footfall, reduced vacancy rates and higher spend on our high streets. However, higher density, walkable neighbourhoods with thriving local shops and services can only happen if our reliance on private car trips to access them is reduced.

4) THE CASE FOR AN ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK PLAN

Evidence from around the world demonstrates beyond doubt that making active travel the first and natural choice for everyday journeys is only possible by reallocating road space away from private cars (including both vehicle lanes and parking spaces) and towards walking, wheeling and cycling.

In Paris, for instance, Mayor Anne Hidalgo, in office since 2014, has overseen significant transformation in the city's streets.⁸ Since 2020, 84 km (52 miles) of cycle lanes have been created and bicycle usage jumped 71% between the end of the COVID-19 lockdowns and 2023. Now, a vote is to be held on making 500 more streets pedestrianised, demonstrating the success of the changes and evidencing that initial resistance to positive change (which often comes from a noisy minority) can be overcome; once such changes are implemented people rarely want to reverse them. Quite the opposite: they create a clamour for an accelerated reallocation of road space in favour of people, not cars.

Closer to home, Trafford Council and Manchester City Council have been progressing active travel enabling schemes along key roads such as the A56 and Deansgate, respectively, implying such infrastructure enjoys public support. Indeed, a 2019 report

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<https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s38131/Appendix%201%20draft%20Manchester%20Active%20Travel%20Strategy%20and%20Investment%20Plan-compressed.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/paris-residents-vote-making-500-more-streets-pedestrian-2025-03-22/>



found two thirds of Greater Manchester residents support building more protected roadside cycle lanes, even when this could mean less space for other road traffic.⁹

Furthermore, in the article “Interventions to increase active travel: A systematic review”¹⁰, based on a review of 78 studies of interventions to increase active travel, the authors found that the greatest impact on active travel levels came from interventions combining infrastructure change with behavioural/social programmes, interventions involving e-bikes, and cycle-sharing schemes. They also concluded that multi-component interventions had greatest impact on active travel, and that social/behavioural interventions generally had little impact on their own.

In their conclusion, the authors also make the following remarks: “Policy makers and planners should ensure that interventions that only address behavioural or social aspects of active travel have long- not short-term funding. If population level change is to be achieved, such interventions should also be accompanied by environmental and infrastructure changes, including road space reallocation and access to e-bikes. This requires political buy-in and public engagement.”

Indeed, for a borough like Tameside, e-bikes provide a huge opportunity, as recent research into a mix of utility and leisure trips in the Lake District shows¹¹.

The importance of high-quality infrastructure is also emphasised by Chris Boardman, Active Travel Commissioner for England, in an April 2025 interview for Focus (the magazine of The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport). Commenting on the difference between simple painted cycle lanes and designs that meet the LTN 1/20 standard, he said: “Properly designed infrastructure reduces deaths and serious injuries by about 50% and increases usage by around 60% because people feel safe.”¹²

⁹ <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/download-the-bike-life-uk-report/>

¹⁰ Roaf, E et al (2024). "Interventions to increase active travel: A systematic review." *Journal of Transport & Health*, 38. [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2024.101860>]

¹¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S096669232400022X>

¹² <https://library.myebook.com/CILT/focus-april-2025/5958/#page/22>



5) KEY ELEMENTS OF AN ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK PLAN

Key elements of an Active Travel Network Plan include:

Connected routes: The plan should focus on creating a network of routes that link destinations, enabling people to travel actively for various purposes, such as commuting to work and school, shopping, leisure activities and other personal engagements. These routes need to be direct, safe, convenient and usable 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to encourage take-up.

Low-traffic neighbourhoods: These zones prioritise pedestrian and cyclist safety by reducing through traffic and creating more welcoming spaces for active travel, without the need for dedicated cycle lanes.

Safe crossings: The plan should include the implementation of safe and convenient crossings for pedestrians and cyclists, addressing potential barriers and making active travel more appealing.

Integration with public transport: Active travel routes should be designed to connect with public transport hubs, allowing for seamless transitions between different modes of travel.

Accessibility and inclusion: The plan should ensure that active travel is accessible to all, including young people, older people and disabled people, by considering the needs of diverse users. It also should consider the needs of women who may put off using poorly surveilled routes due to safety concerns.