

PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Our strategy to place active travel at the heart of everything we do.



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Foreword

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Our approach to creating **places for people.**

Introduction

Purpose Of This Document

This document sets out our strategy for change. Our ambition is to put walking, cycling and beautiful places at the heart of our communities, through smarter investment in better active travel infrastructure.

By placing active travel users at the top of our road user hierarchy, in line with the updated Highway Code¹, we have the potential to transform how we move and how we experience our local areas. This will create places where people and communities can flourish.

We recognise the role that cars and motorised vehicles play in the everyday lives of many of our residents. They provide liberty to move around our towns and residential areas freely, in comfort, and in relative safety, and play an important role in delivering goods and services. Cars can be especially relied on by those who live in areas with limited public transport provision.

However, the increasing number of vehicles and number of journeys being taken can have a negative impact on our neighbourhoods, with increasing levels of congestion, air pollution and traffic danger.

National policy supports the need to increase the number of trips we make on foot or by bicycle and is supported by a robust evidence base outlining the benefits that this will bring². Our strategy is aligned with policy, and is a reflection of our current position, why we must act now, and what our vision for the future is.

Current Position

One common factor that is stalling our progress is an increasing dependency on car use. Whether it is for the school run, our daily commute, trips to see friends and family, the weekly shop or to access leisure in our free time; we have become overly accustomed to just jumping in the car, with census data showing that almost half of all trips to work under 2km in Wirral are made by car³.

Our over-reliance on cars is having significant negative impacts on our health, local environment and economy. It is a central cause of physical inactivity, which is now linked to 1 in 6 deaths in the UK², and is exacerbating other poor health outcomes in Wirral, such as cancer and cardiovascular mortality rates which are significantly higher than the national average.

Our travel behaviours are also having a significant impact on the air we breathe. In Wirral, transport is responsible for around 30% of Carbon Dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions⁴, and across the UK it is estimated that as many as 36,000 deaths each year are attributed to human-made air pollution⁵. In many areas of Wirral, our infrastructure is poor and unwelcoming to pedestrians and cyclists. This encourages more car use as people do not feel confident to cycle due to safety fears, with over 40% of Wirral residents expressing safety concerns⁶. For many, this is so ingrained that cycling is not even considered as an option.

Many of our residents live on streets characterised by pavement parking, and fast cut-through traffic. This has created places with a reduced quality of life, and streets which are unsafe for children to play in or travel to school by independently.

Why We Must Act Now

By investing in streets and neighbourhoods, we will reduce our dependency on cars and bring transformational benefits to Wirral. Regular activity can cut the risk of early death from all causes by more than 30%⁷. We will improve equality and the health of our residents by making streets safer and welcoming to all.

Our residents want to be active and there is a strong appetite for better cycling infrastructure, which we must act upon⁶. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us just how much we value spending time outdoors. People want to be able to access their workplaces, parks and local centres without feeling the need to drive, but in order to do so people need to feel safe and to feel like they belong on our roads when not driving a car.

Our brownfield first approach to development will ensure that urban sprawl doesn't lock people into car dependency. Alongside this, creating dedicated active travel networks, including high-quality walkable streets and protected cycle lanes will change the way we move. It will also provide us with an opportunity to improve our communities, green spaces and economy.

By increasing the number of short journeys that are undertaken by active means, we can also promote more efficient highway conditions for those who need to rely on motor vehicles (i.e. emergency service, servicing vehicles and buses). We must build the right infrastructure to facilitate these changes. This won't happen overnight, but we must act now.

¹ The Highway Code

² Gear Change: a Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking


³ Office for National Statistics

⁴ UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics

⁵ Review of interventions to improve outdoor air quality and public health

⁶ Sustrans Wirral Bike Life Summary Report, 2019 (307 respondents)

⁷ NHS: Benefits of Exercise



We will deliver places that support happy, healthy and prosperous lives. This won't happen overnight, but we must act now.



The Roman Boathouse, Birkenhead Park

Targeting Local Trips

At present, around 70% of all trips within Wirral are less than five kilometres in length, yet around 50% of these are made by car despite being within a comfortable walking or cycling distance for most people⁸. This is a highly unsustainable pattern which is having significant impacts on the health of our residents, streets, places and local environments.

We must aim to make active travel the first choice for as many short trips as possible. To do this, we need to invest in well-designed and well-maintained streets and high quality dedicated cycleways. We need to re-think the design of the built environment to prioritise people and foster a culture for change which embraces active travel within Wirral.

It is important that we improve active travel access to harder to reach locations and key destinations and not only in places where it is convenient to do so. We need to improve equality of access to opportunities across Wirral by providing coherent and dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure to

key destinations and locations, such as hospitals, schools and employment sites.

At the Forefront of Urban Planning

Wirral has a track record of innovation and leadership in the built environment, and there are several examples of best practice within Wirral which have left a lasting impression on a global scale. We only have to look as far as Birkenhead Park, the inspiration behind Central Park in New York City⁹, or to Port Sunlight, to recognise the influence and inspiration that Wirral once had in designing great places.

We must channel our leadership and innovation again to create the best environment possible for people living in Wirral. We have an opportunity to set the standard for the region and beyond and, in alignment with national and regional policy direction, create places that welcome and value people on foot, bus, bike or scooter, as much as people in motor vehicles.

Wirral can once again act as a trailblazer and show that transformational change is possible.

By doing this, we will positively impact health and equality of opportunity for our residents, regenerate our local economy, and improve our local environment and biodiversity.

Quick Take

- 1 Wirral once led the way in urban planning and people-centric civic design. We must take leadership again and set the standard for active travel.
- 2 Almost 70% of trips within Wirral are less than 5km in length, yet 50% of these trips are made by car despite being within a walkable or cyclable distance⁸.
- 3 Our residents want to be active and to walk and cycle more. However, in a recent survey 43% of residents expressed cycling safety concerns as a major barrier to them⁶.

⁸Wirral Countywide Household Travel Survey
⁹A Brief History of Birkenhead Park

Delivering Our Vision

Our vision will be developed further through several strands of work, including:

- Design, development and delivery of Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) routes in Wirral as a part of Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's LCWIP Strategy¹⁰.
- Development of a detailed Active Travel Infrastructure Plan for Wirral.
- Development of a detailed Active Travel Strategy, in support of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework¹¹.
- Review of existing infrastructure to remove or adapt infrastructure that is non-compliant with the Equalities Act 2010.
- Developing Road Safety Plan for Wirral and Vision Zero strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all.
- Work with partners, including developers and the third sector, to deliver high-quality infrastructure and training.

Figure 1 (right) shows plans and policies underpinning safe active travel in Wirral. This includes the central themes of the Wirral Council 2025 Plan and various statutory responsibilities, development and regeneration themes, active travel strategy programmes, active travel schemes and road safety programmes.

¹⁰LCR: Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
¹¹ Birkenhead 2040 Framework



Figure 1. Active Travel in Wirral Activity Hive

Chapter 2

Creating a Fairer Transport Network

The **impact of car use** on **our communities**.

Creating a Fairer Transport Network

Road Safety Impacts of Car Dependency

Road safety statistics show that between 2015-2022, 35 people were killed on Wirral's roads, with a further 840 people seriously injured¹². We must take every possible step to reduce this figure and treat every death or injury as a preventable one.

Many of Wirral's most deprived areas, with the lowest car use, have the highest exposure to both poor air quality¹³ and road danger¹⁴. Studies have shown that children in the 10% most deprived wards are more than three times as likely to be pedestrian casualties than their counterparts in the 10% of least deprived wards¹⁵.

In the UK, the number of cyclists suffering serious injuries in road traffic collisions has grown faster than cycle traffic, with an increase of over 20% from 2008 to 2018¹⁶. Although we have seen a decrease in the number of cyclist injuries from road traffic collisions over the past two decades within Wirral, the number of those killed or seriously injured has remained largely unchanged over the same period¹⁷. This is an unacceptable statistic and one that significantly reduces people's confidence in walking, wheeling or cycling and their perceived safety of moving without a car.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of collisions where pedestrians and cyclists were struck by vehicles in Wirral between 2015 and 2020 and households with access to a car, indicating car ownership levels (Census 2011 data). The majority of collisions within this timeframe occurred in areas with the lowest levels of car ownership, particularly in areas of East Wirral.

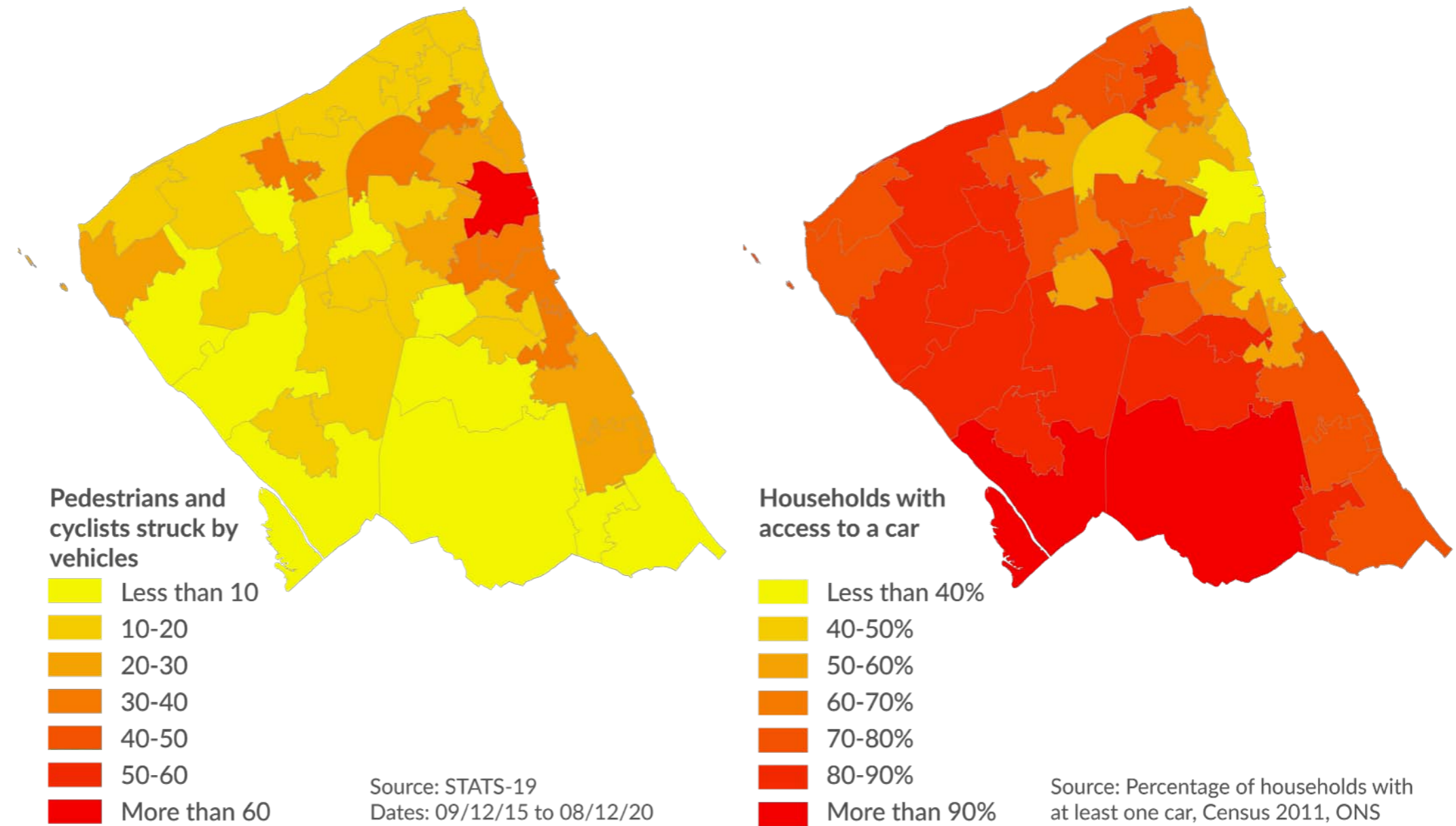


Figure 2. Distribution of Pedestrian & Cyclist Road Traffic Collisions (2015-2020) and Car Ownership

¹²Road Accidents Department for Transport

¹³Wirral Air Quality

¹⁴Wirral Road Accident Casualty Rate

¹⁵Streets Ahead: Safe and Liveable Streets for Children

¹⁶Walking and Cycling Statistics, England: 2019

¹⁷Wirral's Road Safety Plan

The Impact of Disparities in Car Ownership

There is a large disparity in car ownership within Wirral, with 2021 census data showing that in the most deprived ward 60% of households do not have access to a car compared to just 8% in the least deprived ward¹⁸. Research shows that in households without access to a car, 50% of all trips are taken through walking, compared to 23% of trips for those in households with access to a car⁹.

These disparities result in the residents of deprived communities feeling the impacts of others' travel more despite travelling less, as drivers from surrounding areas travel through their areas and neighbourhoods. This is evidenced through Wirral's road collision statistics which show that the majority of road traffic collisions are occurring in areas with the lowest levels of car ownership.

Providing the Right Infrastructure

To support safer travel for pedestrians and cyclists we must increase our investment towards segregated and protected cycle lanes on our roads and continue to work in partnership with Merseyside Police on targeted education programmes and speed enforcement campaigns.

This is aligned with Government requirements to secure funding for active travel infrastructure. Research has shown that protected cycle infrastructure can increase cycle safety by 40-65%, whereas painted lanes can actually increase risk by up to 34%¹⁹.

In line with national technical guidance^{20,21}, we must take the necessary steps towards creating a fully segregated cycle network in order to provide adequate provision for all cyclists. The positives of these measures are not only limited to cyclists – they will benefit entire communities by creating safer environments for pedestrians and children to enjoy.

The effect of infrastructure provision and quality has a disproportionate effect by age, gender and ethnicity. Nationally, women are almost three times less likely to cycle than men²², with safety the most commonly cited barrier.

Access for All

We recognise that there are also several barriers on existing infrastructure which are non-compliant with the Equalities Act 2010, and in particular affect accessibility for some disabled people. We will be undertaking a review process to remove these barriers. This will improve access across Wirral by ensuring inclusive access across areas and by removing the social determinants of disability.

¹⁸ Census 2021: Number of cars or vans

¹⁹ Cycling Injury Risk: Impacts of Road Characteristics and Infrastructure

²⁰ Cycle Infrastructure Design: Local Transport Note 1/20

²¹ Gear Change: a Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking

²² Why don't more women cycle?



Protected cycle infrastructure can increase cycle *safety* by 40-65%, whereas painted lanes can increase *risk* by up to 34%¹⁹.

The Impacts of Cut-Through Traffic in Wirral's Residential Areas

Cut-through traffic has become an increasing problem in residential areas. We are seeing more traffic than ever on quiet residential streets, and traffic is growing disproportionately fast on C and unclassified roads. Figure 3 (right) shows that since 2009, traffic on C and unclassified roads has grown at a significantly faster rate than other roads²³. In the north-west the vehicle miles travelled on these roads is now higher than on motorways and A-roads, bringing with it increased air pollution and road safety concerns. Many attribute this increase to online deliveries, satellite navigation systems and smartphone apps seeking shortcuts²⁴.

Implementing measures to reduce cut-through traffic is a core part of our active travel strategy. Initiatives that can target this growing problem include lowering speed limits and introducing speed-reduction measures, giving vehicles less priority in residential areas, and re-thinking the design of our suburbs to prevent short-cutting.

In many areas of Wirral the impacts of cut-through traffic are further exacerbated by traffic travelling through Wirral (e.g., from Chester to Liverpool) on minor roads. Most of this traffic should be accommodated by the M53 motorway; however, trips are often made via the A41 or A540, which have significantly less capacity and travel through residential areas. This influx of strategic traffic has a marked impact on localised air pollution and road safety in many of Wirral's towns and villages. We must implement measures to keep strategic traffic away from our towns and residential areas.

The School 'Run'

Taking children to school by car has become normalised for several reasons, but is in part the result of safety fears caused by a lack of safe and convenient walking and cycle routes, crossings, high traffic volumes, and speeding drivers. By creating safer and more walkable places, and implementing school streets and wider traffic reduction, we can move away from the congested and stressful school run that has become second nature to many of us. This will provide a safe environment for children and parents to walk and cycle to and from school safely.

We have seen a significant increase in home-working since the Covid-19 pandemic. Between October to December 2019 and January to March 2022, home-working in the UK more than doubled, and in Wirral almost 27% of residents in employment work mainly at or from home²⁵. This has had a lasting impact on the existing school-run dynamic, which has changed for many families as the school run is not being made as a part of a journey to or from work. This opens several opportunities for changing behaviours, reducing car-dependency and increasing the number of school trips that are made by active means.

Annual traffic by road type in North West

Traffic in Great Britain from 1993 to 2019 by road type in vehicle miles (billions)

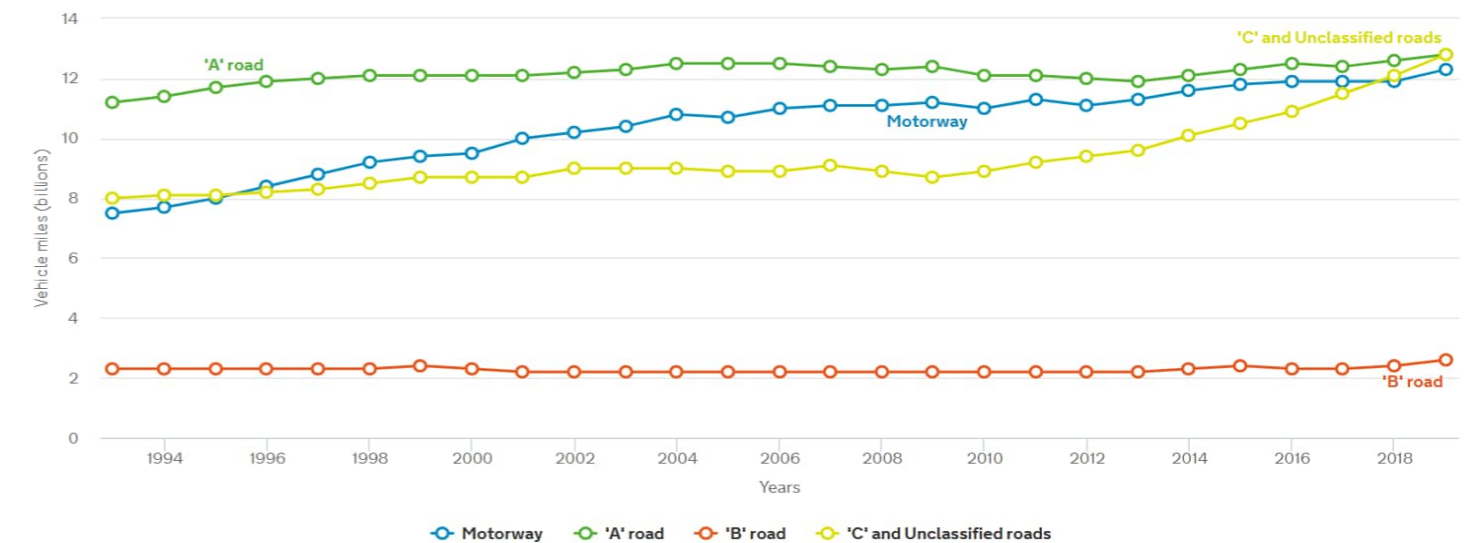


Figure 3. Annual traffic by road type in the North West (1993 - 2019)

Quick Take

- 4 Many of Wirral's most deprived areas with the lowest car use have the highest exposure to both air quality and road safety issues¹⁴.
- 5 Although we have seen a decrease in cyclist injuries from road traffic collisions over the past two decades on Wirral, the number of those killed or seriously injured has remained largely unchanged over the same period¹⁷.
- 6 To improve cyclist safety within Wirral we must build more segregated and protected cycle routes.
- 7 We must aim to reduce cut-through traffic in our residential areas to improve the safety of residents and the local environment.

²³ Road traffic statistics - North West region

²⁴ 'Rat-running' increases on residential UK streets

²⁵ Travel to work, England and Wales: Census 2021

Chapter 3

Which Street Would You Rather Live On?

Placing **people** at the **centre** of our streets and communities.

Which Street Would You Rather Live On?

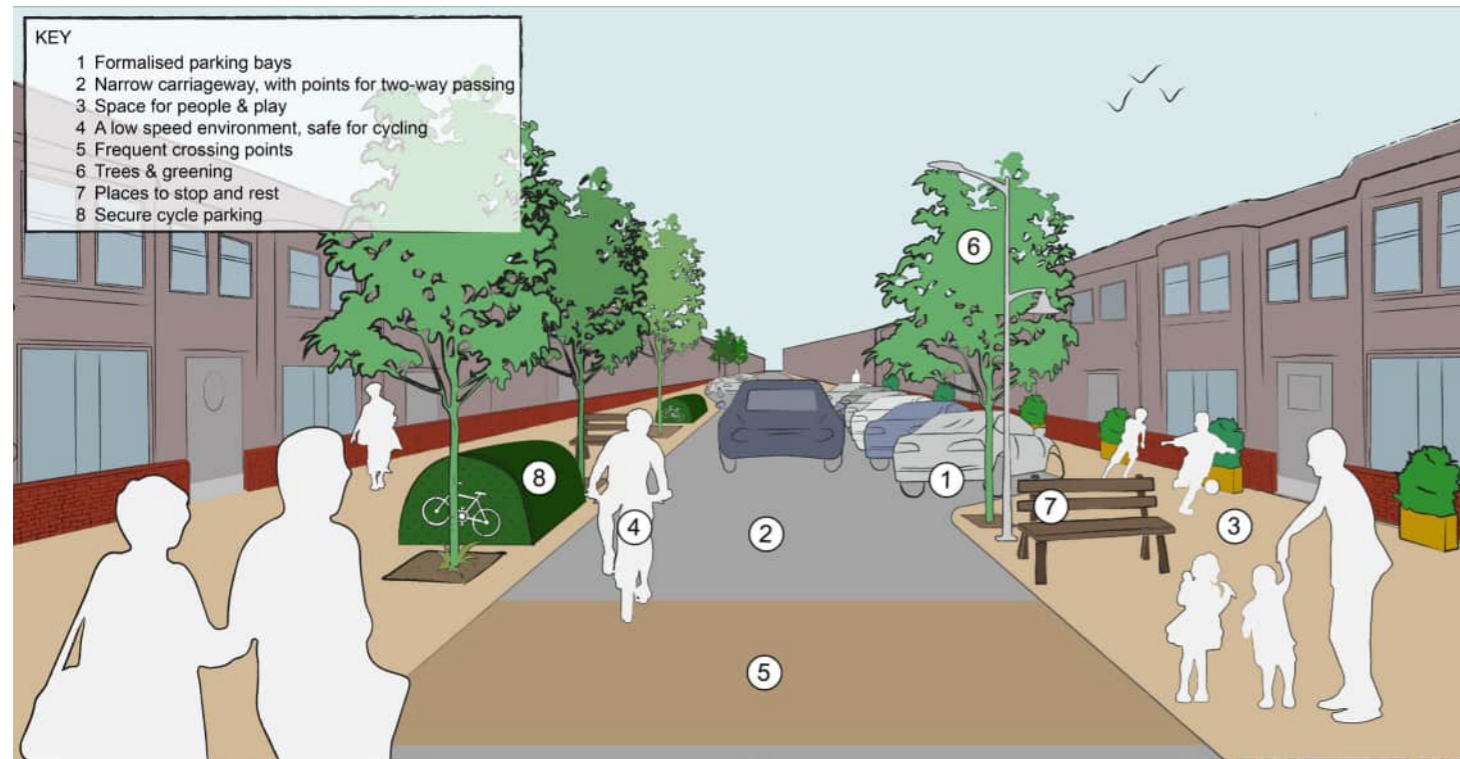
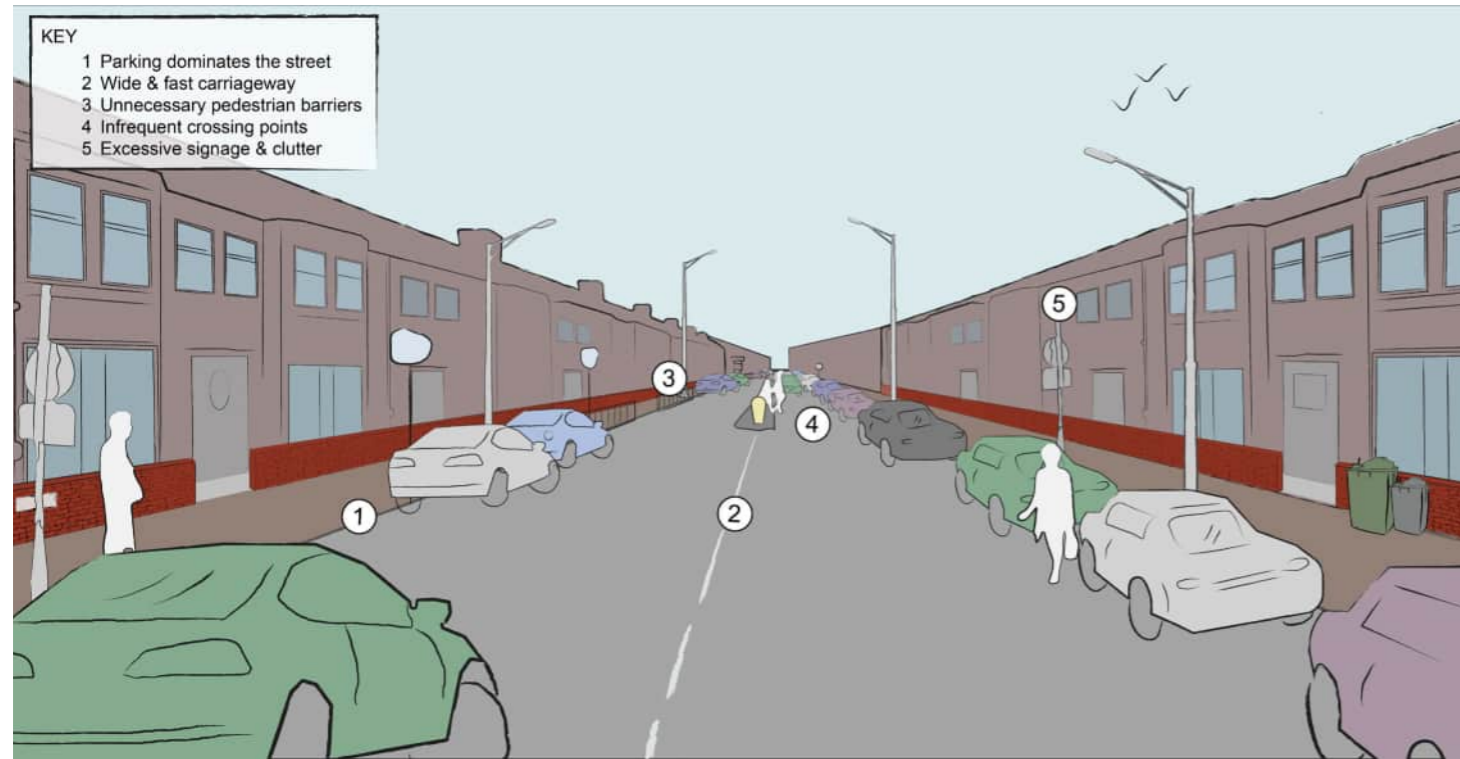


Figure 4. The same residential street with a more balanced approach

²⁶ Census 2021: Number of cars or vans

Transforming a Typical Residential Street

The design of our streets and places has a significant influence on how we travel. Better pedestrian environments encourage less car use and create spaces which focus on social connection, people and fostering community. We must strive to create comfortable, walkable and welcoming places within Wirral which accommodate the needs of all.

The nature of the street that we live on influences our quality of life and even minor alterations to the built environment can improve liveability and accessibility. Providing better pedestrian spaces such as generous pavements, dedicated cycle lanes, cycle parking, benches and accessible green space will encourage people to walk and cycle more by improving their safety, and the attractiveness of their area. It will also provide safe environments in which children can play and interact and travel to and from school on foot or by bicycle.

Car ownership within Wirral also has a significant bearing on the liveability of our streets and the urban fabric of our towns and suburbs. There are large differences in the levels of car ownership in Wirral – on average around 25% of people do not have access to a car, but this rises to almost 60% in some parts of East Wirral²⁶. However, despite low ownership levels, East Wirral’s urban areas still exhibit high levels of vehicle priority in the design of streets – wide roads, lots of on-street parking, high rates of road traffic collisions, large spaces given up to surface level car parks, and limited dedicated cycling infrastructure. In addition to this, many areas have poor pedestrian

facilities, including a lack of high-quality pedestrian crossings, pavements, and tactile paving.

There is an opportunity to repurpose space and improve pedestrian infrastructure in these areas to create better environments for the people who live there. To ensure proposals are receptive to local needs and challenges, they will be co-developed and co-designed with residents.

Wirral’s regeneration programme will integrate best-practice street design principles into both existing streets and new developments. These design principles will promote community, pedestrian priority and safety and balance the needs of all road users to create more equitable and liveable and inclusive places.

Quick Take

- 8 We can improve the quality, safety and liveability of our neighbourhoods by rethinking how we want to use our streets.
- 9 In some areas of Wirral nearly 60% of households do not have access to a car²⁶, yet streets and towns are designed mostly around the needs of road traffic.

The removal of the Birkenhead flyovers is part of our strategy to create a more sustainable and liveable town, by actively repairing the historic car-centric approach to urban planning²⁷



²⁷Birkenhead 2040 Framework

Chapter 4

Supporting our Local Economy

The **economic case** for investing in **better streets** and **places**.



Frodsham Street, Chester

Award Winner: Healthy Street of the Year Award

CIHT Creating Better Places Award

TPM Urban Transport Design Award

Supporting our Local Economy

The Economic Case for Investing in Better Streets

The decline of the high street is a longstanding issue affecting many of Wirral's high streets, and one that has been compounded by the effects of Covid-19. There is a strong economic case for investing in better, more people-focused streets and places.

Good urban design will increase the viability of our town centres. Simply put – people like to visit attractive places. Case-study evidence shows that public realm and active travel improvements can positively impact footfall, retail spend, perceptions of an area and social inclusion²⁸. Research suggests those who walk and cycle more within their daily routines, spend more in their local areas²⁸.

There is a commonly held belief that taking space away from cars will have a negative economic impact on our places. However, the opposite has been observed and investing in improved and high-quality streets has been shown to provide a competitive return when compared to other transport projects, with 95p net benefit for individuals and society from each mile cycled instead of driven²⁹.

Other places have shown that a higher degree of pedestrian priority increases business activity and sales revenue:

- In Altrincham, pedestrian improvements led to more than a 20% reduction in shop vacancy rates and increases in footfall³⁰.

- In Shoreditch, London, a temporary parklet scheme designed to provide more space for pedestrians led to a 20% increase in takings in a shop adjacent to the scheme over a 3-month period²⁸.
- In Kirkby, Merseyside, footfall has increased by 160% across 2019-2022 aided by local regeneration and public realm improvements³¹.
- In Sheffield, the development of a new open space and public realm at Peace Gardens led to a 35% increase in shopping visits and a net increase in spending of £4.2m³⁰.
- Improving London high streets for walking and cycling led to a 216% increase in people stopping, sitting or socialising³².

Research has shown that many retailers tend to overestimate the importance of car travel for business, with a 2006 Sustrans study of 126 retailers in Bristol showing that retailers overestimated the importance of car-borne trade by almost 100%. Retailers had assumed 41% of customers arrived by car, when only 22% had done so³³.

²⁸The Pedestrian Pound
²⁹Bikelife 2019: Liverpool City Region
³⁰Economic Benefits of the Reallocation of Street Space
³¹Kirkby town centre regeneration, Knowsley

³²Walking & cycling: the economic benefits (TfL)
³³Shoppers and how they travel
³⁴Footfall report | Scottish Borders Council

After investment in pedestrian improvements...



The Sustrans study also discovered that retailers overestimated how far their customers travel, estimating that just 12% of their customers lived within half a mile radius and 40% lived more than two miles away. In fact, 42% had travelled less than half a mile and 86% less than two miles, showing that most retail customers were local residents³³.

In many cases increasing car parking has been perceived as a solution to the decline of our high streets and we have seen surface car parking increase and dominate many of our town centres. However, research suggests that cycle parking delivers 5x the retail spend per square metre than the same area of car parking³².

Attracting Talent

Creating better places will help to attract talent and creative industries to Wirral. Great places have a natural advantage in attracting creative people as they offer a lifestyle rather than just a residence.

Improving our streets and spaces, including high streets and green spaces, will help to create places that people appreciate and want to spend their time in. This will increase the attractiveness of places, encouraging more talent and creative industries to locate in Wirral.

Quick Take

- 10 Case-study evidence shows that public realm and active travel improvements can have stronger economic returns than traditional highway schemes.
- 11 Research has shown that many retailers tend to overestimate the importance of car travel for business.
- 12 Research suggests that cycle parking delivers 5x the retail spend per square metre than the same area of car parking.
- 13 Creating better, more beautiful places will help to attract more talent and creative industries to Wirral.



Great places have a natural advantage in attracting talent, as they offer a lifestyle rather than just a residence.

Chapter 5

Improving the Health of the Borough

Building active travel into our daily routines to **improve health outcomes** in Wirral and **reduce health inequalities**.

Improving the Health of the Borough

Public Health in Wirral

Data shows that on several health indicators - such as life expectancy at birth, mortality rates from cancer and cardiovascular diseases - we are performing significantly below the national average. In the most deprived areas of Wirral, life expectancy is twelve years lower than in the least deprived areas³⁵. This is a significant disparity and one that active travel can play a key role in reducing.

In some parts of Birkenhead, those living with a Disability or Long Term Health Condition make up almost 40% of the population³⁶.

Improving the Health of the Borough

Studies by the Department of Health and British Medical Journal have found that daily physical activity can reduce the risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease by over 30% and that regular cycling can reduce the risk of death from all causes by more than 30%³⁷.

The benefits are not only limited to physical health, with studies showing that walking for 20 minutes a day can reduce the risk of mental illnesses such as depression and dementia by up to 30% and increase workers' productivity³⁸. Access to green space has also been shown to improve mental health by providing us with space to breathe and destress in urban environments³⁹.

Building Movement into our Daily Routines

The easiest way for us to reap the benefits of exercise is to build walking and cycling into our daily routines. Most of the journeys we make are local trips and are within a walkable or cyclable distance for the majority of people.

We need to see a radical shift in how we design for these local trips. Studies have shown that people who cycle for travel purposes are four times as likely to meet physical activity guidelines than those who do not⁴⁰. Achieving this goal will see health outcomes improve dramatically across the borough.

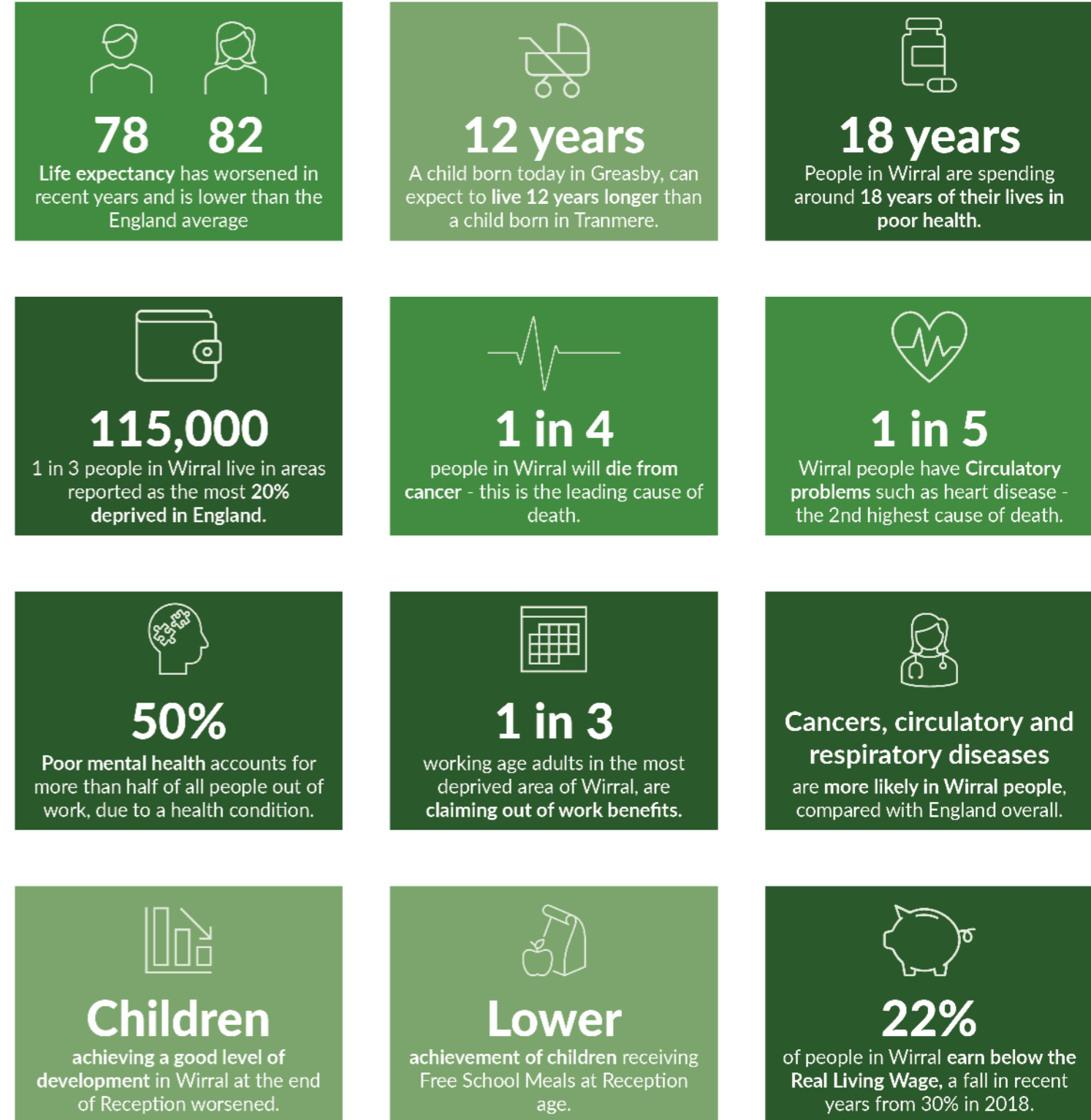


Figure 5. Wirral: State of the Borough (July 2023)

³⁵ State of the Borough - Wirral Intelligence Service

³⁶ Wirral 16E: Disabled under the Equality Act

³⁷ Association between active commuting and incident cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality: prospective cohort study

³⁸ Walking action plan: Making London the world's most walkable city

³⁹ Why urban green spaces are essential for mental health

⁴⁰ Working Together to Promote Active Travel: A briefing for local authorities

The pandemic has shown us that people have a desire to spend time outdoors and to walk and cycle. We must embrace these travel behaviours and create environments which people can take pride in and want to spend their time enjoying.



Wirral Circular Trail, Seacombe

Air Pollution is Impacting Our Health

Air pollution is having a significant impact on our health. In the average local authority, transport is responsible for 35.5% of all emissions⁴¹, around a third of nitrogen oxides emissions and over a quarter of particulate matter⁴².

Our transition to electric vehicles will not solve this problem alone, with the Government's air quality expert group having found that brake wear, tyre wear, and road surface wear make-up more than half of the particulate pollution created by vehicles⁴³. In addition to this, the potential air quality benefits of electric vehicles do not address congestion or safety issues caused by car dependency in Wirral.

However, reaching targets for active travel and changing our travel behaviour will reduce air pollution. If we reach the Government's targets for walking and cycling in the UK, we can save over £9 billion in the next 10 years through the avoided costs associated with poor air quality including NHS hospital treatment for respiratory diseases. We can reduce deaths from air pollution in the UK by more than 13,000 over the next decade⁴⁴ and make strides towards decarbonising Wirral's transport sector.

⁴¹ Net Zero Transport: The role of spatial planning and place-based solutions
⁴² UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics
⁴³ Non Exhaust Emissions from Road Traffic DEFRA 2019
⁴⁴ Air Quality Benefits of Active Travel

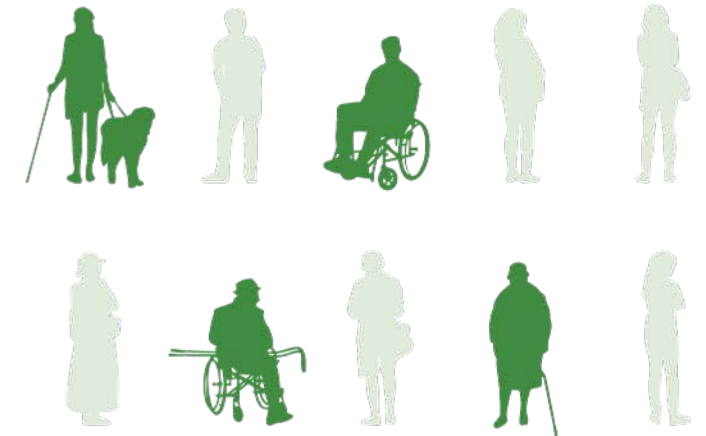
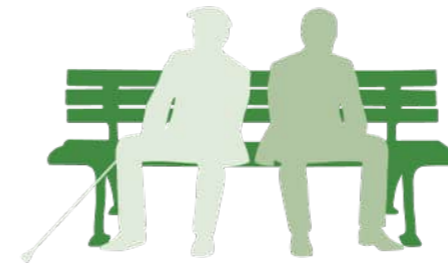
Quick Take

- 14 Physical inactivity is a significant problem in Wirral and is leading to premature deaths and higher than average rates of cancer and cardiovascular disease.
- 15 The easiest way for us to reap the benefits of physical movement is to build walking and cycling into our daily routines.
- 16 Electric vehicles will not solve air pollution. Particulate matter from brake wear, tyre wear, and road surface wear contribute to more than half of the particle pollution created by vehicles⁴³.
- 17 Reaching targets to increase walking and double cycling will improve our health outcomes significantly⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Gear Change: a Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking
⁴⁶ Wirral: Male life expectancy at birth (Census 2021)
⁴⁷ Health Survey for England, 2021 part 2

-15 years

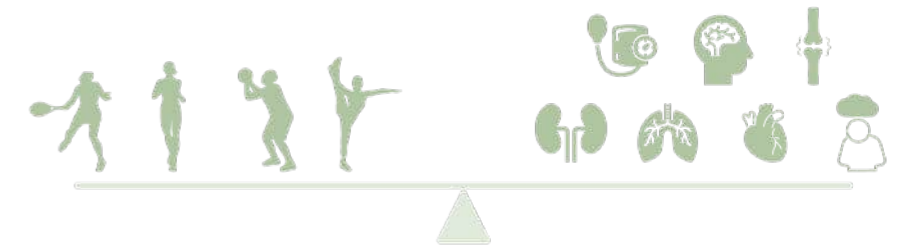
the difference in life expectancy at birth between the most and least deprived areas in Wirral⁴⁶



38%

Proportion of population with a registered disability in the most deprived areas in Wirral⁴⁰

Physical activity can help to manage over **20** chronic diseases⁴⁵



20min of walking per day can cut the risk of depression by more than **30%**³⁸

Only **58%** of adults in the North West meet minimum activity guidelines⁴⁷



Chapter 6

Build the Infrastructure and They Will Come

Removing the **barriers** to active travel uptake and **connecting** Wirral's communities together.

Build the Infrastructure and They Will Come

Public Opinion Favours Change

In 2020, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) published a survey of public opinion on cycling across the city region, which more than 300 Wirral residents responded to. In that survey, 26% of people said they 'don't cycle but would like to', and 71% of residents 'support building of more segregated cycle tracks'⁴⁸.

This figure is exacerbated further in residents from more deprived socio-economic backgrounds, with almost two-fifths of residents in socio-economic groups D and E⁴⁹ stating that they would like to start cycling. Over 30% of Wirral's residents are classified as being in socio-economic groups D and E, so this amounts to almost 100,000 people.

Many Wirral residents are reluctant to cycle due to safety fears, with 75% of respondents stating that cycle safety needs improving. There is also strong support for more cycling infrastructure as 81% of respondents believe that it would be useful to have more traffic free routes and 76% believe it would be useful to have segregated cycle tracks⁴⁸.

Within the survey it was also revealed that more than half of respondents believe that cycling would make their area a better place to live and work and almost three-quarters believe space should prioritise people for socialising, walking or cycling⁴⁸. It is clear what people want and it is up to us to make it happen by building the necessary infrastructure.

Wirral Liveable Streets Consultation

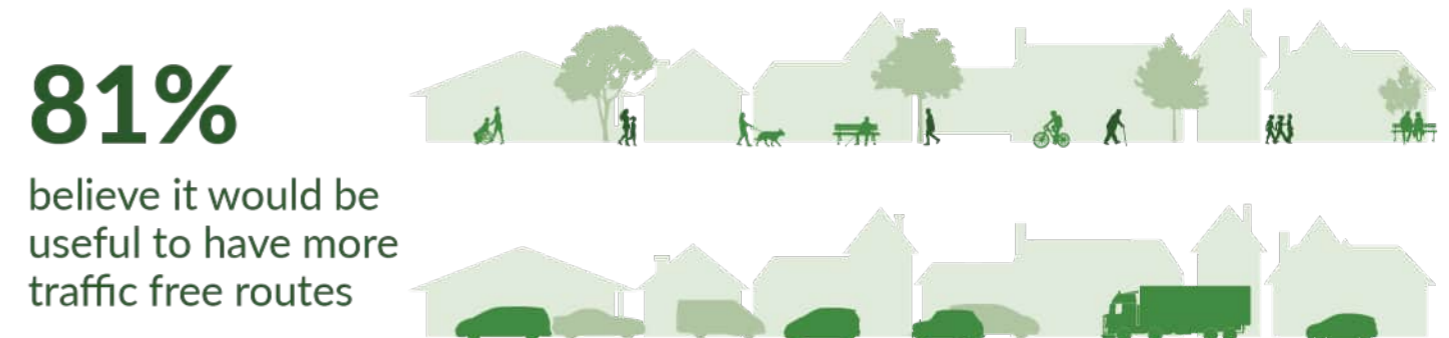
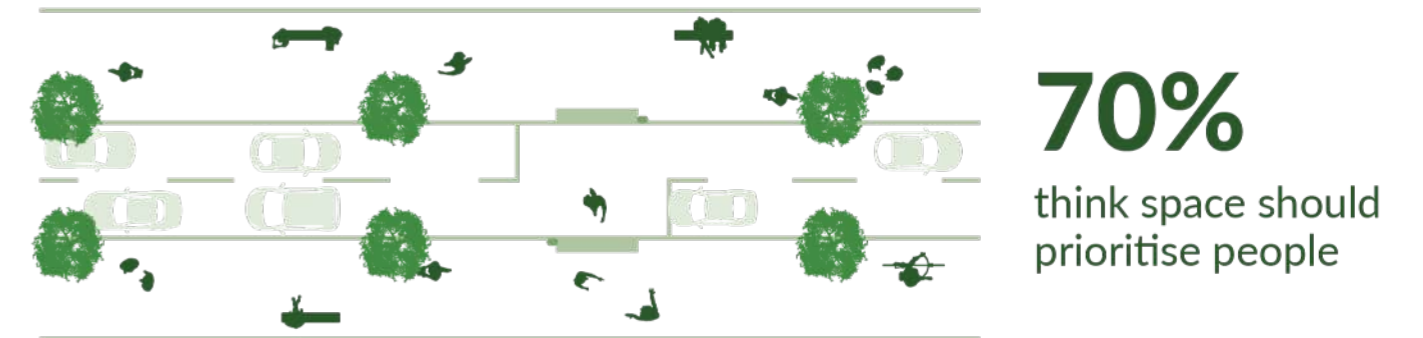
During May to October 2020, almost 1,500 individual contributions were submitted to the Wirral 'Liveable Streets' consultation⁵⁰. Comments often related to different features of the highway, such as crossings, cycle lanes and footpaths, and provided insights towards the main issues associated with active travel and of the barriers to increasing uptake.

The most cited issues for Wirral included a lack of adequate and safe walking and cycling facilities (43%), the behaviour of other road users (17%), and the inability to maintain social distancing (10%). When asked what will help to enable people to travel more actively, more responses included safer spaces to walk and cycle (47%), slower traffic (17%), and better crossings (10%).

Responding to Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic illustrated the public's desire to be more active. Studies have shown that national lockdown restrictions had a major impact on our mobility, with 34% of people reporting to cycle more and 38% of people walking more than before the pandemic⁵¹. We saw around a 100% increase in weekday cycling despite fewer journeys, and increases of up to 200% on weekends⁵².

The opportunity to capitalise on these travel behaviours and embed them into our routines is clear and, coupled with strong public support for investment towards active travel, provides us with the opportunity to deliver the necessary infrastructure across Wirral to make these changes permanent.



⁴⁸ Sustrans Wirral Bike Life Summary Report, 2019 (307 respondents)
⁴⁹ Social Grade A, B, C1, C2, D, E
⁵⁰ Wirral Liveable Streets Consultation
⁵¹ National Travel Attitudes Study (NTAS) - Wave 4

⁵² Gear Change: a Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking



Tower Road, Birkenhead

Connecting Our Communities Together

Many of Wirral's towns and villages have developed in isolation from one another and are primarily linked through key vehicle corridors. For example, in West Wirral the A540 links Hoylake, West Kirby and Heswall and in east Wirral the A41 links New Ferry, Port Sunlight and Bromborough.

There is a lack of high quality cycle infrastructure on many of these corridors and cyclists are relegated to the edge of the carriageway and forced into mixed traffic scenarios. This is not a safe or comfortable environment for cyclists and significantly reduces people's confidence to move actively between settlements and within urban areas on these corridors.

In addition to this, the Wirral Way and Wirral Coastal Promenades are our main active travel infrastructure but follow the coastline and edges of settlements, and do not provide direct access to urban centres (Figure 6). As such, they are not a convenient means for the majority of people to access key destinations on a daily basis.

Many areas of central Wirral are difficult and unsafe to access directly from the east and west on foot or by cycling and are highly dependent on cars in order to travel safely and quickly. Accessibility is further hampered by a prevalence of high-speed roads, narrow pavements and lack of cycling provision in these areas.

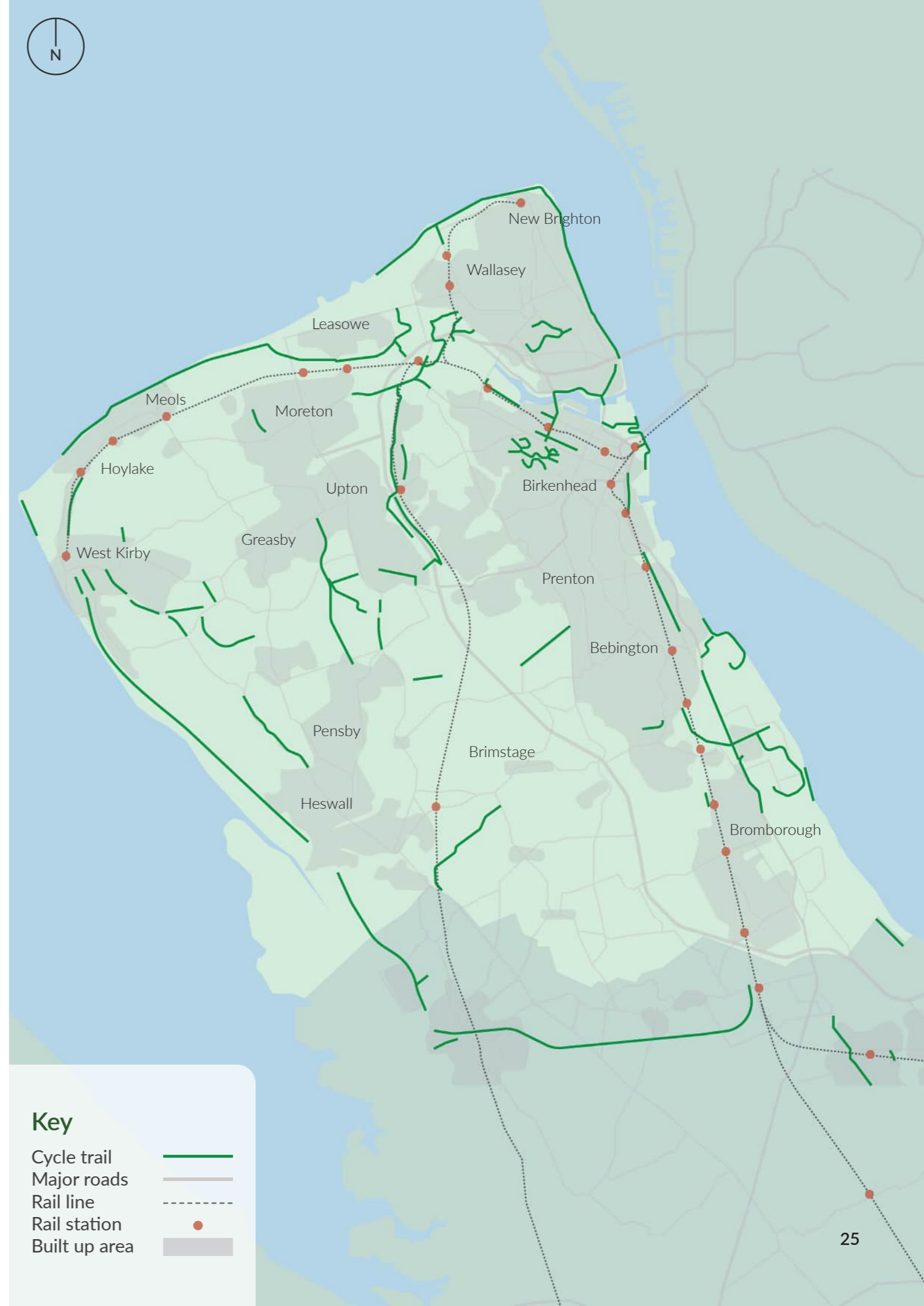
To overcome these issues, we need to create high quality and well maintained pedestrian and cycle routes that penetrate to the heart of settlements and provide real access to key destinations. In

many cases, this will mean providing protected routes for cycling along main roads and crossing facilities for both pedestrians and cyclists. In others, creation of a network of quiet streets away from main roads will be more appropriate, particularly where this provides more direct access to the heart of a settlement or to a school or workplace. Cut-through routes that provide visible priority and time savings for walking and cycling should be built into new and existing neighbourhoods.

Use of the Wirral Way and Coastal Promenades is also largely currently weather-dependent. The Wirral Way is prone to surface water build-up during wet weather due to inadequate drainage. As well as this a lack of direct lighting in stretches of the route can also deter people from using it at night and during winter months when daylight hours are limited. The Wirral Coastal Path is limited by the weather as it is fully exposed to strong winds, rain and wind-blown sand, leaving it nearly unusable for most people in extreme weather conditions.

To encourage active travel in all weather conditions and across the seasons we must ensure that active travel infrastructure is climate and weather resilient. There is a common misconception that we don't have the right weather for cycling in the UK and that it prevents us from attaining the levels of cycling seen in countries such as Denmark and The Netherlands. However, we have comparable levels of rainfall to these countries; what we are missing is the right infrastructure. Creating well-lit (where appropriate), all-weather paths with high-quality drainage will encourage active travel across the seasons and in all weather conditions.

Figure 6. Walking & cycling trails, major roads, rail, and built up areas in Wirral, 2023





For several reasons, routes like the Wirral Way and Wirral Coastal Path are indirect and often weather dependent. Some of our best infrastructure is only useable half of the time. We need to build more climate-resilient infrastructure that people can use every day irrespective of the weather.

Chapter 7

Climate Change

Our **responsibility to work together** to tackle the **causes** and **mitigate** the effects of **climate change**.

Climate Change

A Global Perspective

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. To overcome the challenges ahead we must act collectively and understand that our travel behaviours impact not only ourselves but also those around us. Transport is the largest emitter of carbon, and the sector has not seen the same gradual decrease in emissions as other sectors. Within the transport sector, road transport is by far the largest polluter and accounts for over 70% of greenhouse gas emissions⁵³.

The Climate Change Committee has advised the Government that surface transport emissions must fall by 44% by 2030 to keep the UK on track to meet its legally binding long-term climate targets⁵⁴. To achieve this, we must see an accelerated shift to low-emission mobility through encouraging people to walk and cycle more, an increase in ultra-low emission vehicles and more stringent restrictions on the most polluting vehicles.

The UK 'Decarbonising Transport' White Paper⁵⁵ was published in 2020 and outlines the Government's plan to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport. Within this, accelerating a modal shift to public and active travel is outlined as a key strategic priority.

What We Must Do in Wirral

In May 2019, Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency⁵⁶ and committed to action to address the ecological and climate crisis we face⁵⁷. The commitments are supported by Wirral's Cool 2 Climate Strategy, which recognises that clean travel is a key factor to achieving our climate goals. The strategy promotes increasing the proportion of local journeys made on foot, by bicycle or via public transport⁵⁸. We must see a reduction in our levels of car use and prioritise active travel, especially for local journeys. We can do this by providing safe, segregated cycle routes and making walking and cycling a bigger part of Wirral's transport culture.

Several other initiatives can play a role in the reduction of carbon emissions in Wirral and improve our places in the process. Investing in green infrastructure, such as increasing tree planting and integrating sustainable urban drainage into our built environment, will reduce localised air pollution and can aid carbon capture in built up areas⁵⁹.

⁵³ [Transport emissions | Climate Action](#)
⁵⁴ [Future Fuel Mix: Impact on the UK energy system](#)
⁵⁵ [Decarbonising Transport – A Better, Greener Britain](#)
⁵⁶ [Environment and Climate Emergency Policy Statement](#)

⁵⁷ [Climate Emergency](#)
⁵⁸ [Cool2: A strategy for Wirral in the face of the Global Climate Emergency](#)
⁵⁹ [What is green infrastructure and why is it important?](#)



Investing in green infrastructure in the built environment will play a key role in improving Wirral's flood resilience, mitigating extreme heat events and improving our biodiversity.

Chapter 8

From Plans to Projects

Realising and **delivering** our vision for change.

From Plans to Projects

A National Endeavour

Increasing walking and cycling in England is a key priority in Government policy and change is being pushed nationally. Significant investment towards active travel is underway and aims to build upon the increase in the number of people walking and cycling as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the policy paper 'Gear Change' was published as a part of the walking and cycling investment strategy. The paper outlines the Government's commitment to make active travel the natural choice for short journeys in England through a £2 billion investment plan. The plan proposes the creation of thousands of miles of new cycle lanes, a 'zero emissions' city and new powers for local authorities to try and discourage car use.

Additionally, the publication of new Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance⁶⁰ (LTN 1/20) has provided welcome clarity around the standard of delivery expected from investment. Within the guidance there are five principles which represent the core requirements for people wishing to travel on foot or by bicycle. Figure 8 (overleaf) describes these principles.

The £2 billion investment plan, made available through the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund (ATF) will support local transport authorities with active travel schemes across England and will be delivered in the form of several tranches.

The first tranche was focused on the installation of temporary projects to capitalise on travel behaviours during the pandemic. The second

tranche was focused around the creation of long-term projects and active travel plans to further embed these behaviours and to deliver more large-scale infrastructure projects. The third tranche, allocated in March 2022, provided funding for further improvements to walking and cycling routes.

Active Travel England (ATE) was established in January 2022 to deliver on the Gear Change strategy and build on the government's £2 billion commitment to boost walking and cycling. To date, ATE have assessed and awarded £161 million of funding for 134 Active Travel Fund projects, announced on 14 May 2022, which will deliver high-quality schemes in 46 authorities in England, outside London.

The Plan for Drivers⁶¹ outlines the Government's ambition for drivers, which include enabling smoother journeys and easier parking, stopping unfair enforcement, cracking down on inconsiderate driving, and helping the transition to zero emission driving. The plan recognises that active travel has a key role to play, and looks to work alongside this to facilitate more active trips.

Regional Plans

At a policy level, the region is supporting active travel more than ever. In May 2019, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) declared a Climate Emergency, and a programme of investment is underway to facilitate an increase in sustainable journeys. Key publications include the LCR Transport Plan⁶², Local Journeys Strategy⁶³, and Rights Of Way Improvement Plan⁶⁴.

In addition to this, the LCR Local Transport Plan

4 (LTP4) is under development and will set out plans, policies and ambitions for transport services and investment across the city region until 2040. Within the first stage consultation draft of the plan⁶⁵ there is a strong focus on creating places and movement designed around the need of people, rather than vehicles, and creating safer, more attractive streets and places.

LCRCA is also the custodian of the 'Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan' (LCWIP), a three phase investment programme in priority routes across LCR⁶⁶. In Wirral, they are:

- Leasowe – Seacombe Ferry Terminal
- New Brighton – Birkenhead
- Birkenhead to Junction 5/Eastham

Some of these routes are receiving funding through the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF), including a £14m investment in Wirral. ATF funding will also be important in the delivery of early active travel projects in LCR, with almost £10 million of funding allocated across tranche one and tranche two⁶⁷.

Quick Take

- 18 National Policy is supportive of increasing active travel and is readily investing in infrastructure and other strategies to increase uptake.
- 19 The Gear Change policy paper outlines the Government's commitment to make active travel the natural choice for short journeys in England through a £2 billion plan of investment.
- 20 The Government are committed to making substantial investment in our roads alongside public transport and active travel options⁶¹.
- 21 Within LCR, increasing active travel is a key foundation of transport policy. There is a programme of investment in place to improve active travel infrastructure across the region⁶² and the upcoming LTP4⁶⁵ will set the foundations for further growth.

⁶⁰Cycle Infrastructure Design: Local Transport Note 1/20

⁶¹The Plan for Drivers

⁶²LCRCA Transport Plan - June 2019

⁶³LCRCA Local Journeys Strategy

⁶⁴LCRCA Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-2028

⁶⁵LTP4 Consultation

⁶⁶LCR: Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

⁶⁷Active travel fund: final allocations

When people are walking and cycling, they need networks and routes that are:

Figure 8 LTN 1/20 Core Design Principles

Safe

Not only must cycle infrastructure be safe, it should also be perceived to be safe so that more people feel able to cycle. Safety and environmental improvements for all road users can be achieved by reducing motor traffic volumes and speeds.



On busy strategic roads where a significant reduction in traffic speeds and volumes is not appropriate, safety will need to be achieved by providing dedicated and protected space for pedestrians and cyclists.

People should have access to training and support to use the infrastructure and help build confidence, road safety programmes should also support active travel and education for all road users within the hierarchy.

Direct

Routes should provide the shortest and fastest way of travelling from place to place. To make walking and cycling an attractive alternative to driving short distances, routes should be at least as direct – and preferably more direct – than those available for private motor vehicles.

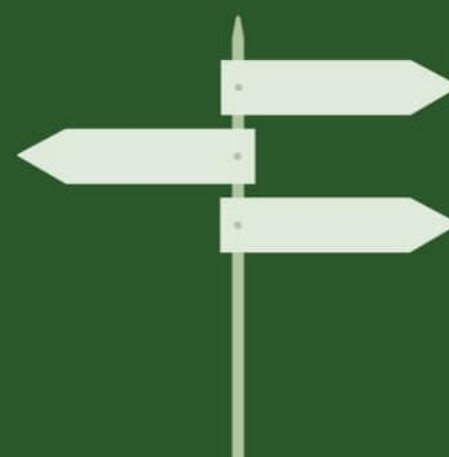
Area-wide schemes and new developments can enable filtered permeability, allowing cyclists and pedestrians to take more direct routes than motorised traffic.



Coherent

Walking and cycling networks should be planned and designed to allow people to reach their day to day destinations easily. They must be high quality throughout and safe, attractive and comfortable to use.

The connection between successive sections of routes should be obvious. Direction signs, road markings and coloured surfacing in combination with physical design features can all help to provide coherence.



Attractive

Walking and cycling provide a more sensory experience than driving. People are more directly exposed to the environment they are moving through and value attractive routes.

The environment should be attractive, stimulating and free from litter or broken glass. Cycle infrastructure should help to deliver public spaces that are well designed and finished in attractive materials and be places that people want to spend time using.



Comfortable

Comfortable conditions for walking and cycling require routes with good quality, well-maintained smooth surfaces, adequate width for the volume of users with minimal stopping and starting. Adequate width is important for comfort.

Cycling is a sociable activity and many people will want to cycle side by side, and to overtake another cyclist safely. Designers should consider comfort for all users.



Local Direction

The Wirral Council Plan⁶⁹ sets out the council's commitments up to 2027. The main relevant ambitions put forward in the plan are:

- To deliver **high quality efficient universal services** to all residents
- To **prioritise** those with the greatest needs
- To deliver council services within the means of the council **budget**
- To be prepared to **innovate** and face the future
- To play our part in addressing the **climate emergency** and protecting our environment
- To work across communities with community, voluntary and faith organisations and partners to improve all residents' **life chances**
- To deliver our ambitious **regeneration programme** through increased investment, jobs and new businesses throughout the borough

The Plan ambitions a healthier, safer and greener Wirral where people can lead active lives. Investing in active travel infrastructure is central to achieving this ambition.

Other key publications relating to active travel in Wirral include the emerging Wirral Local Plan⁷⁰ Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan⁷¹, Active Travel Strategy, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy⁷² and the Birkenhead 2040 Framework⁷³.

These plans outline ways in which active travel can be increased and integrated into our travel routines and propose several active travel projects and routes across Wirral.

The Active Travel Fund, Transforming Cities Fund and City Region Sustainable Transport Fund are being used to develop and deliver on this policy across Wirral. Additionally, the Future High Street Fund will also be used to deliver better streets that support the regeneration of our local economy.

Realising Our Vision

We have an opportunity to radically change the way we move and travel in Wirral. We want to see a healthy and active population, with a better quality and length of life. We want to create streets and places that promote community, cohesion and connectivity; not car dependence, severance and isolation.

The best way to encourage this is to create environments which are usable by all, ensuring accessibility, walkability and safety. We are well positioned to make active travel the first choice for local journeys and in Wirral the support exists across all levels to build more active travel infrastructure. As evidenced in recent surveys, Wirral's residents want to walk and cycle more, and it is up to us to deliver on this by building the necessary infrastructure and support.

The Covid-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on our lives. Some peoples travel patterns have changed significantly since March 2020, with increased numbers of people now still working from home more days a week and/or not travelling as much or travelling in different ways. Hybrid

working has provide increased opportunity to consider journeys differently e.g. more flexibility with time to walk or cycle children to school.

The evidence for investing in active travel is clear. Physical inactivity, car dependency, poor road safety and social exclusion are having a detrimental impact on our physical and mental health, places and communities. By investing in people and communities through creating better streets and places, we will make Wirral a better place to live and work, a safer place to travel and a better environment for businesses and communities to thrive.

We will place local communities and people at the heart of our engagement process. We will consult residents and businesses at all stages of design and delivery and together we will co-develop plans for improving communities to create safer, healthier and more liveable places and a more active population. We will work closely with key stakeholders to deliver connectivity and safer environments in Wirral.

This strategy provides the policy context and justification for investment in active travel infrastructure across the borough. Delivering increased active travel will require investment in new and improved infrastructure. The infrastructure required will be set out in an Active Travel Infrastructure Plan (ATIP) which provides the delivery plan for a future Active Travel network.

The ATIP is the delivery part of the Active Travel Strategy. It will show where infrastructure is needed, what type of infrastructure and priorities for delivering it. The ATIP will be a flexible,

evolving document that responds to changes in policy, opportunities and demand but will always be focused on achieving the same outcome. Together, the Strategy and ATIP will provide the framework for investment decisions.

Quick Take

- 22 At a local level, increasing walking and cycling and reducing car dependency is a priority for the Council.
- 23 Tackling the environmental emergency, promoting healthy and active lives and creating safe and vibrant communities are key ambitions of the Wirral Council Plan⁶⁶.
- 24 Several funding streams will be used to support active travel in Wirral, through delivery of high-quality streets and infrastructure.
- 25 Local communities and people will be at the heart of the engagement process and we will co-develop plans for improving communities.
- 26 The infrastructure required will be set out in an Active Travel Infrastructure Plan (ATIP), which will show where infrastructure is needed, what type of infrastructure, and priorities for delivering it.

⁶⁹Wirral Plan 2021-2026

⁷⁰Wirral Emerging Local Plan 2021-2037

⁷¹Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (Draft)

⁷²Wirral Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

⁷³Birkenhead 2040 Framework

Credits

Page 4: Tower Road, Birkenhead (Pedestrian Environment). *Source:* © Wirral Council

Page 5: The Roman Boathouse at Birkenhead Park. *Source:* © Wirral Council

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