



**Manchester
and Salford
Ramblers**

Manchester Active Travel Strategy and Investment Plan: Our response

Who we are

We are the Manchester and Salford Ramblers. The local organisation of the national charity, the Ramblers, we open the way for everyone to enjoy the simple pleasures of walking, and we step up to protect the places we all love to walk.

Strategy aims and policy connections

We fully endorse the aims of the Strategy - to make walking, wheeling, and cycling more accessible and easier for everyone throughout the city. There is considerable evidence to show that active travel, and walking in particular, have positive benefits which impact on the City Council's wider policies for health, neighbourhood renewal and development, the environment and the climate emergency and it will be important that the strategy recognises this and provides a basis to influence those priorities and investment decisions.

The City Council also has responsibilities as a planning authority and we are aware that they are currently undertaking a review of the Local Plan that provides the framework that all planning applications from across the City will be assessed against. The key aims and objectives of this Active Travel Strategy must be embedded in that Local Plan to ensure that all developments going forward promote active travel.

Barriers and Opportunities

In the online consultation survey the City Council pose a series of questions on the barriers to active travel and what would be needed to improve matters and to provide more opportunities.

We agree that the speed and volume of current traffic on our streets – even on residential streets are a real disincentive to walking, cycling and wheeling. Linked to that is the issue of the nature and location of crossing points and the quality of our pavements. A major barrier is also the lack of maintenance of local footpaths and rights of way. They are too often overgrown and/or blocked by fly tipping. Lack of information on local footpaths and rights of way and inadequate signage are also issues.

The issue of personal safety is raised in the consultation and we recognise that it requires a wide range of responses including street design and policing. We are also aware of current projects supported by the Safer Streets Fund and would expect that the Strategy going forward would seek to incorporate the lessons from those projects. Measures to improve walking infrastructure and encourage greater usage will also contribute significantly to safer streets and routes.

The provision of protected space for walkers, wheelers and cyclists and a more sustainable allocation of road space are all needed. We would also welcome wider pavements, more frequent crossing points, side crossing zebras, appropriate use of dropped curbs and the provision of benches, shelters and trees. Street design however needs to be balanced to reduce pavement clutter and avoid creating further obstacles. Action on pavement parking is long overdue, including the need to put in place better regulations around the creation and use of driveways and forecourt parking by households and businesses. Permissions for the siting of advertising and EV charging points should take full account of the need to avoid pavement clutter and there should be effective enforcement. Areas where more bars and restaurants have opened pose a particular problem of businesses expanding onto the public pavement and arrangements should be made to ensure that the pavements remain clear.

We also recognise that the need to reduce excessive through traffic and improve road safety in residential areas through active neighbourhood design and believe that this should also be part of the strategy.

However, in addition we believe that it is vital that there is regular maintenance of footpaths and rights of way to make them attractive and easier to use and this should be awarded a much higher priority than is currently the case. The strategy should help to strengthen the business case for such investments by underlining the rate of return achieved and the contribution made to other policy imperatives such as climate change and health inequalities.

Network Proposals

The aim of the strategy is also to set out a network of active travel routes that would be candidates for future investment when funds are available. Our members have been encouraged to put individual comments on the online map and have also attended some the workshops.

We would make the following additional points:

South: The network proposals for the Wythenshawe area are helpful. We fully support the routes from the airport to the Civic Centre and suggest that a very useful pedestrian link would be provided by footpath, FP 250, which is currently in need of investment. The inclusion of a section of the 'Greenway' from Simonsway to Shawbury Road is welcomed. This route is now open due to the work of a number of local residents over recent times to rediscover and bring back into use green routes and pathways and we have argued elsewhere that the City Council should commit to provide the necessary support for their ongoing development and maintenance.

Given the growth of Wythenshawe hospital itself and the plans for a science park and health campus, there is a clear need for strong network connections. A walking and cycling route from Brooks Drive to Floats Road should be included using footpaths Alt 15 and Manchester 245 across Fairywell Brook, with enhanced facilities for safe walking and cycling along part of Floats Road to access the hospital site. There is also a real need to invest in attractive walking infrastructure from Roundthorn Tram stop, particularly at the junction with Hollyhedge Road where crossing times and sight lines need to be examined and made much safer for pedestrians.

We accept that this is a Manchester City network but there are important issues of connectivity across the city council's borders – to Brooklands and Sale to the west and the Heatons and Cheadle to the east that should be considered.

Central: The network proposals linking in with the committed Bee Network routes and the City

Centre Active travel plans make sense. However, the cross-border issues are very significant in this central area particular towards Pomona, Salford Quays and the River Irwell routes. The network should also recognise developing assets and destinations. The creation of the new Mayfield Park and it's associated commercial, entertainment and residential development is a case in point. The growing population of the City Centre and the communities of Brunswick, Ardwick, Ancoats and Beswick should be able to have safe and pleasant access on foot to this important green space and we believe there is a case for remodelling of the London Road/Mancunian Way junction and for improvements to crossing of the Inner Ring Road at Pin Mill Brow and across the top of Fairfield Street on the approach to the Hoyle St entrance to Mayfield.

North: We are disappointed that the Rochdale Canal Bee Network route is not being taken forward and have significant concerns at the early developments on the North Manchester General Hospital site. The Strategic Regeneration Framework for the site set the objective of improved access to green travel options including safe walking and cycling routes, however the very first planning application to come forward initially proposed a very unsatisfactory diversion of a right of way – a part of the Manchester Green Trail. The plans were subsequently amended, but it was a very regrettable beginning to what will be a long-term development. It illustrates a further dimension required of the strategy. It should help to embed a commitment to promoting active travel and valuing rights of way and walking, wheeling and cycling across the whole suite of the City Councils responsibilities and also send very clear messages to potential development partners.

Final Comments

In summary our main messages would be:

- The strategy should recognise the importance of walking to health, neighbourhood renewal and development, the environment and the climate emergency and should make the case for investments from those budgets as well as highways and transport. Its aims and objectives should be embedded in the Local Plan review.
- Encouraging more leisure walking leads to more everyday walking – reducing the need for short car journeys, and regular walking has well documented health benefits.
- The strategy should recognise the importance of footpaths and rights of way.

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