

# *visions*

STEPS TO THE FUTURE



A WALKING STRATEGY FOR BIRMINGHAM



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## CONTENTS

**Visions - a Walking Strategy for Birmingham 3**

**Introduction 5**

**Walking Initiatives 7**

**Walking to School 7**

**Walking to Work 7**

**Walking to the Shops 8**

**Walking for Leisure 8**

**Walking to the Shops 9**

**City Wide Policies 9**

**Planning 9**

**Safety 10**

**Integration with Public Transport 10**

**Design and Maintenance 11**

**Equalities 11**

**Education and Promotion 12**

**Delivery 13-14**



# visions

## STEPS TO THE FUTURE

### A WALKING STRATEGY FOR BIRMINGHAM

*Birmingham is the country's second city, a regional capital and home to one million people. The City Council published "Visions", its 20-Year Transport Strategy in June 2000. Within that document was a commitment to produce a "Walking Strategy for Birmingham". This fulfils that commitment.*

*Our hierarchy of users within "Visions" places pedestrians first where there are choices to be made. Our research shows that there are lots of opportunities for converting at least part of many existing trips to walking. The City Council intends to build upon the growth in leisure pursuits to promote walking for its citizens and visitors.*

*Our commitment to walking and a quality pedestrian environment is reinforced by the views of residents. In repeated annual MORI polls of resident's views, street cleaning, road and footpath maintenance and street lighting consistently come out as key service priorities.*

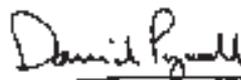
*The health benefits of increased levels of walking are at last being recognised. We have been pleased to work with our colleagues in the health sector and other agencies in developing this strategy.*

*Following widespread consultation on a draft strategy, we are pleased to present this final strategy, which is supported by a technical appendix providing more background detail. A Walking Forum will act as a focus for the development of walking in Birmingham and to drive the implementation of the strategy.*

*This strategy is the first step in making Birmingham a walkable city. It will be an ongoing process and we will continue to welcome further comments and suggestions. These should be sent to Transportation Strategy, 1 Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham, B4 7DQ (contact 0121 303 7485 / email [graham.lennard@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:graham.lennard@birmingham.gov.uk)).*



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## Introduction

Birmingham has already taken the first steps towards achieving a pedestrian friendly future. The extent and quality of the award winning pedestrianisation of the city centre is held in high regard nationwide. In 2001, Birmingham reached the finals of the National Transport Awards for the pedestrianisation of Lower New Street, High Street and the removal of the subways under the Bull Street "hump".

Of all the journeys made in Birmingham, 42% are under 2km. This is a distance that a person of average fitness can readily walk in 20-25 minutes. Car journeys account for 1/3 of these trips, so there is clearly potential for increasing the level of walking for short trips.

Approximately 20% of all journeys in Birmingham are walked. Whilst figures are not available, it is certain that walking has declined in recent years. Nationally, the distance walked by the average Briton has fallen by 20% since 1974. Rising levels of car ownership mean that many of the trips once walked will now be driven. This has impacted on traffic levels, air quality and noise in local areas, degrading the walking environment and leading to an ongoing decline in walking. Fewer people on the streets leads to heightened concerns for personal security and a greater chance that journeys will not be walked especially by women and the elderly. Getting people who have the option to travel by other means walking again will make our streets feel safer.

The state of health of people in Birmingham is of serious concern. In particular;

- ⦿ 20% of residents are obese compared with 16.6% nationally.
- ⦿ Stroke rates are 13% higher than national levels.
- ⦿ The death rate from heart disease is 15% above the national level and 26% higher for the 35-65 age group.

More walking, having the advantage of being free and readily integrated into daily routines, has a clear role to play in tackling these problems. Five, thirty minute sessions of moderate activity a week is

sufficient to maintain health, reduce the risk of dying prematurely and limit the onset of chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, osteoporosis and colon cancer.

This walking strategy sets out the combination of city wide policies and focussed initiatives that are required to bring about the “Visions” objective of providing safe, people friendly streets. “Visions” recognises that reliance on the car for many types of personal journeys is not always sustainable and that good quality alternatives for certain key journey types must be developed and promoted. For the first time in Birmingham, “Visions” presented a transport hierarchy headed by pedestrians, to be used where choices need to be made between priorities of transport

## Objectives

- ◉ To reduce the amount of short journeys made by private car through encouraging a modal shift to walking.
- ◉ To set out the role that walking can play in meeting the transportation needs of residents and visitors.
- ◉ To assist in meeting health improvement targets by developing walking as a key public health initiative.
- ◉ To promote the role of walking for leisure, environmental and personal security benefits.
- ◉ Through a linked action plan, to assist in the delivery of city and national strategies.
- ◉ To propose a methodology for setting targets, monitoring progress and reviewing achievements.

## Walking Initiatives

The following series of policies and actions are targeted at areas where it is believed that the greatest benefits can be achieved.

### Walking to School

#### Policy

The City Council will work to increase the level of pupils and staff walking to schools, at the same time ensuring that the safety of all pedestrians is not compromised.

#### Actions

- ⦿ Improve the pedestrian environment close to schools to reduce danger and make walking journeys more attractive than those by car.
- ⦿ Set up, in partnership with schools, specific practical walking initiatives, promotional campaigns and flagship events.
- ⦿ Continue road safety education and pedestrian training, starting with schools with a high child pedestrian casualty rate.
- ⦿ Encourage schools to draft School Travel Plans through the School Travel Plan Officer, with the intention of increasing walking trips rather than those by car.
- ⦿ Promote walking by school staff to act as role models.

### Walking to Work

#### Policy

The City Council will work with companies and employer organisations to encourage walking to and at work, and as part of commuter journeys by public transport.

#### Actions

- ⦿ Improve key pedestrian routes close to key employment destinations.
- ⦿ Work in partnership with employers and health professionals to develop walk to work initiatives as part of Company Travel Plans and health walk schemes within healthy workplace initiatives.
- ⦿ Prioritise pedestrian routes which have linkages to the public transport network in order to promote walking as part of public transport based commuter journeys.
- ⦿ As the city's biggest employer, the City Council will develop specific walk initiatives in order to lead by example.

## Walking to the Shops

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>The City Council will ensure that shopping areas and key pedestrian routes from residential areas, stations, and interchanges offer high quality provision for pedestrians, particularly taking into account the needs of those with mobility difficulties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⦿ Pedestrian reviews of local shopping centres will be undertaken over the next 3 years and a programme of improvements developed where necessary.</li><li>⦿ Key pedestrian routes from residential areas and public transport facilities to local centres will be identified and a programme of improvements developed where necessary.</li><li>⦿ Further pedestrianisation of major shopping centres and streets will be considered favourably where practical.</li><li>⦿ As the city's biggest employer, the City Council will develop specific walk initiatives in order to lead by example.</li></ul>

## Walking for Leisure

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>The City Council will work with tourism and leisure partners and user groups in ensuring that specific destinations and areas of the city popular with residents and tourists are convenient and attractive to access and explore on foot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⦿ The City Council will seek to promote walking for leisure and tourism in traffic free and attractive areas of the city.</li><li>⦿ A series of trails will be created through open spaces and high quality urban areas of particular interest.</li><li>⦿ A pedestrian review of existing tourist attractions and surrounding areas will be undertaken.</li><li>⦿ The City Council will prepare a "Rights of Way Improvement Plan" in accordance with the requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.</li></ul>

## Walking for Health

### Policy

The City Council will work with Birmingham's Health Services to promote walking specifically for health improvement.

### Actions

- ⦿ The "Walk 2000" programme will be developed city wide, in conjunction with the NHS and NHS trusts, to include on and off road routes.
- ⦿ We will work with Primary Care Trusts to promote walking through the "Exercise on Prescription" scheme.
- ⦿ We will jointly employ a walking officer with specific responsibility to help meet Health Service targets.

## City-Wide Policies

In addition to focused initiatives, walking will be promoted through the following city-wide policies and actions. These issues will be addressed through a series of wider strategies with objectives that support walking.

## Planning

### Policy

The City Council will work to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, through land use and development planning, thus promoting walking journeys.

### Actions

- ⦿ In accordance with national Planning Policy Guidance and City Council Supplementary Planning Guidance, embodied in the "Planning for Living" and "Planning for All" documents, ready access on foot to new developments will be ensured.
- ⦿ The recently published city centre pedestrian signing policy will be rolled out to other centres.
- ⦿ Training and employment policies will be used to encourage access to jobs and facilities close to home.
- ⦿ Walking will be considered a prime aspect of regeneration programmes.

## Safety

### Policies

- ⦿ The City Council will work with partners to reduce crime and lessen the fear of crime.
- ⦿ The City Council will seek to achieve a reduced level of road traffic pedestrian casualties year on year.
- ⦿ The City Council will reduce pavement parking where it is detrimental to pedestrian safety and convenience.

### Actions

- ⦿ Personal safety and convenience will be taken into account in the design of footpaths, footways and pedestrian areas.
- ⦿ It will be ensured that Birmingham's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and Community Safety Strategy will take into account the need for a safer walking environment.
- ⦿ We will continue a programme of replacing subways with surface crossings.
- ⦿ We will continue a programme of street lighting improvements and introduction of CCTV for key pedestrian links and areas..
- ⦿ A programme of highway engineering focussed on accident reduction will continue, with efforts concentrated at locations with poor accident records.
- ⦿ The City Council will, as far as is possible, tackle pavement parking where vehicles are causing a footway obstruction.

## Integration with Public Transport

### Policy

The City Council will consider pedestrian access, particularly to and from public transport as an integral part of the journey experience, in order to support an increase in the use of public transport.

### Actions

- ⦿ The City Council will work with Centro and public transport operators to ensure that pedestrian links to new or existing public transport services are improved to a high standard.
- ⦿ A review of pedestrian links will be undertaken and a programme to improve access and interchange between transport modes and/or services will be developed.

## Design and Maintenance

### Policies

- ⦿ When providing for pedestrians the City Council will design in accordance with best practice, eg Living Streets principles. Where choices in scheme design are needed, pedestrians will be given the highest priority.
- ⦿ Where appropriate, the City Council will advance principles of streets as public spaces, rather than simply thoroughfares for motorised traffic.
- ⦿ In deciding on maintenance expenditure the need for a safe, clean and comfortable walking environment will be given a high priority.
- ⦿ The City Council will encourage responsible cycling to minimise conflict with pedestrians.

### Actions

- ⦿ When assessing the quality of a walking route or environment, the “five C’s” will be used - is the walking Connected, Comfortable, Convenient, Convivial and Conspicuous?
- ⦿ Wherever possible, crossing points will reflect pedestrian desire lines and waiting times at controlled crossings will be reduced. All new highway schemes will be designed and existing schemes modified where practical to avoid the need for pedestrians to cross more than 2 lanes of traffic without a pedestrian refuge.
- ⦿ Footway maintenance and cleansing will be undertaken in accordance with Best Value targets.
- ⦿ As set out in the complementary Birmingham Cycling Strategy, The City Council will improve on-highway cycling conditions and promote child cycle training programmes to promote responsible cycle use.

## Equalities

### Policy

The City Council will, in making provision for pedestrians, reflect the needs of women, the old and the young, those on low incomes, the mobility impaired and black and minority ethnic groups, seeking to reduce inequalities.

### Actions

- ⦿ The design of pedestrian routes and facilities will take into account the needs of people for whom walking is a particularly important means of getting about.
- ⦿ We will continue a programme of footway improvements and pedestrian provision (eg seating) guided by consultation with disabled people and older people.
- ⦿ We will involve the full range of user groups in a Walking Forum.

## Education and Promotion

### Policy

The City Council will provide information to the public on walking in Birmingham and encourage walking as a mode of transport, for health promotion and for leisure.

### Actions

- ⦿ The City Council will produce information and promotional materials to support focussed walking initiatives.
- ⦿ Through School and College Travel Plans the City Council will promote walking with young people.

## Delivery

### Targets

Establishing specific targets for increasing walking in Birmingham is made difficult by the lack of detailed data on current walking levels. An annual household travel survey is undertaken in a different part of the city each year, however, more thorough surveys will be required to obtain a clear picture of walking in the city. One of the key objectives of the strategy in the short term therefore, must be to review walking in the city to establish the base situation from which we are working.

That said, proposing targets against which progress can be measured is a key element of any walking strategy. The following preliminary targets are proposed. It is anticipated that a more robust series of targets will arise from the walking review.

### Specific Walking Targets

- ⦿ To increase the number of schoolchildren walking to school through School Travel Plans and similar initiatives, year on year.
- ⦿ To increase the number of people walking as part of their journey to work, measured through Company Travelwise initiatives.

- ⦿ To increase the number of people involved in the Walk 2000 Health Walks programme with the aim of having a route in each ward by 2007.
- ⦿ To complete pedestrian audits for all significant shopping centres within 3 years.
- ⦿ To reduce the number of pedestrians involved in 'injury' accidents annually.
- ⦿ To increase the number of people walking for leisure each year measured on specific routes.

## Implementation

A strategy to increase walking in Birmingham will require implementation through a series of interconnected programmes and integration of a range of service areas. Pedestrian infrastructure improvements will primarily be funded through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Highways Capital Programme and regeneration programmes. Planning applications will be closely scrutinised to ensure they contribute to the enhancement of the pedestrian environment and help implement the walking strategy. Wider plans to address social exclusion, health improvement, community safety and the reduction of crime and disorder will also assist in delivering walking objectives.

The West Midlands Area Multi-Modal Study recommends an increased proportion of LTP spending be devoted to the 'slower' modes and this recommendation will influence future programmes.

A Walking Forum will be formed comprising relevant City Council departments, other agencies and user groups to guide strategy development and implementation.

## Review

The City Council views the preparation of this Walking Strategy as the first stage of an evolving document.

The Strategy will be updated as more detailed information on walking in Birmingham is collected and analysed.

A formal review of progress against set targets is proposed in 5 years time.

