

St Albans City and District Council

Walking Strategy

May 2009

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Walking is the most environmentally and socially sustainable form of transport. It is an integral part of living in towns, cities and villages as it is ideal for undertaking most short journeys. It also forms the link between other forms of transport for longer journeys. Walking is a good form of exercise for improving health and fitness and is an inexpensive leisure activity.
- 1.2 The average total distance walked by people in Great Britain has fallen from 244 miles per person per year in 1985/86 to 193 miles in 1996/98. This decline of 20% is mirrored by the fact that the proportion of journeys made on foot has fallen from 34% to 27% in the same period (National Travel Survey 1998).
- 1.3 Increasing the amount of walking journeys is achieved by improving access for people with sensory and mobility impairments (including wheelchair and mobility scooter users), improving access on foot or by public transport to employment areas, schools, healthcare and other services; ensuring that people do not feel obliged to use their cars and those without cars are not disadvantaged.
- 1.4 Making provision for walking should be made a priority when new developments are being planned.
- 1.5 Encouraging walking will directly benefit the health of people who increase their levels of walking, and indirectly benefit the health of others. Journeys undertaken on foot instead of by car do not contribute to air pollution and the increase in the number of walking trips should also have an impact on reducing congestion, especially at peak times and for specific activities such as travel to school and work.

2. Background – Why Walk

Sustainability

- 2.1 Walking is the most sustainable form of travel. It burns no fossil fuels, involves no harmful emissions and can accommodate peaks in use more easily and at less cost than any other mode.
- 2.2 The emissions from motor vehicles are a significant contributor to air pollution. A report by the Department of Health's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants concluded that air pollution in urban areas, in the form of particulate matter, is responsible for 8,200 premature deaths a year. In both rural and urban areas, ozone is responsible for 12,500 premature deaths a year. Both particulate matter and ozone pollution are estimated to create or bring forward an additional 20,400 hospital admissions for respiratory disease per year (Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health Report 1998).
- 2.3 Encouraging journeys on foot instead of by car may not have a significant impact on the overall number of vehicle miles travelled per year, as the journeys are usually short. However, short car journeys cause a disproportionate amount of pollution, as emissions are much higher at the beginning of a journey when the engine is cold. In addition catalytic

converters do not operate for the first few miles of the journeys and so emissions are more harmful. Local air quality will also improve where specific areas are targeted at certain times of the day, for example outside schools that have introduced measures to reduce the number of pupils arriving and departing by car. Reducing the amount of pollution will also make the environment more attractive to walk in and so a virtuous circle may be created.

Health

- 2.4 “Every day people are presented with opportunities to make decisions about how they will move around, as part of work, education or leisure, and these decisions have an important impact on health. As people increasingly choose to drive or take motorised transport instead of walking or cycling, the result is that physical activity is being marginalised; regarded as a leisure pursuit, or as a formal ‘exercise’”. (Health Education Authority 1999)
- 2.5 The amount of exercise that people take is decreasing. Physical inactivity may double the risk of coronary heart disease and may triple the risk of a stroke. Regular exercise may be linked to a 40% reduction in bowel cancer. Being physically active may also reduce the risk of accident and injury, especially falls by elderly people. Making time for physical activity and relaxation is also seen as a way to reduce stress and so contribute to mental health. (Walking the Way to Health, Sept 99).
- 2.6 Walking is an excellent form of exercise as it is inclusive, free to all users and can form part of normal daily activity. Its intensity can be varied allowing people of different levels of fitness to participate. Walking is an aerobic activity that exercises major muscle groups. As it is regular, rhythmic and load bearing, it strengthens bones and so is helpful in preventing osteoporosis. The Government recommends that people undertake 30 minutes of exercise, such as brisk walking, a day in order to gain these benefits (Saving Lives, Our Healthier Nation 1999).
- 2.7 In ‘at least five a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health’ (Dept of Health 2004) People who are physically active reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases – such as coronary heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes – by up to 50%, and the risk of premature death by about 20-30%.

Recreation

- 2.8 Walking is by far the most popular active recreational pursuit; it is free, requires little or no special equipment or training and can be carried out almost anywhere.
- 2.9 There are approximately 130 miles of footpaths and 32 miles of bridleways throughout St Albans District. These provide vital access to the countryside for informal recreation. They also form part of the highway network and, as such, will have an increasing role to play in the provision of a sustainable transport network by providing traffic-free alternatives. These footpaths and bridleways should be retained where possible and not diverted – their directness is part of their success.
- 2.10 Whilst many people walk purely for recreation, once a habit of walking has been developed, more transport journeys may be undertaken on foot, e.g. local shopping trips, travelling to work, rather than by private car.

Social Inclusion

- 2.11 Walking is a form of travel available to the majority of people, regardless of age, gender, income or education.
- 2.12 Nationally 30% of households do not have access to a car. While fewer households in St Albans do not have access to a car (15%) this still represents a sizeable number of people who are reliant on public transport, cycling and walking in order to carry out their daily business. Making facilities and services easily accessible on foot is vital in creating an inclusive society and revitalising communities.
- 2.13 The 'Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health Report' highlighted that although households on lower income are less likely to have access to a car; they are more likely to live in areas of high traffic density such as urban areas, on main roads and at junctions. Thus they experience the health disadvantages of air and noise pollution with none of the advantages of access to a car (Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health Report 1998).

3. Barriers to Walking

There are a number of factors that present a barrier to walking:-

- 3.1 A poor quality pedestrian environment, for example
- Uneven footway surfaces
 - Vegetation encroaching on footpaths
 - Insufficient footway width
 - Litter and a general appearance of neglect
 - Dog fouling
 - Lack of benches and public lavatories
 - The absence of pedestrian signing
 - Steep gradients and / or steps
 - Lack of dropped kerbs at crossings
 - Obstructions on footways, roadworks, bins, poorly located traffic and parking signs, 'A' boards.
 - Vehicles parked on the footway
 - Poor re-instatements following roadworks
 - Untreated footways in icy conditions
 - Lack of easily available information on urban and countryside routes
- 3.2 Vehicle/pedestrian conflicts
- Danger from vehicular traffic
 - No footways
 - Inadequate pedestrian green time at signalled controlled crossing
 - More responsive pedestrian crossings
 - Noise, speed and volume of vehicles
- 3.3 Personal security fears
- The presence of beggars (some of them aggressive) and intimidating drunks
 - Illegal cycling on pavements

- Highly publicised personal assaults that have made some parents fearful of letting children walk unaccompanied
 - Lack of lighting
- 3.4 Land use patterns that are unsuited to walking
- Housing layouts that turn estates into mazes and increase walking distances to shops and other services
 - Some pedestrian routes are permissive. These routes can be closed or withdrawn at any time without notice.

4. Policy Context / Funding Opportunities

4.1 The Council recognises that any walking strategy should be integrated with other relevant strategies and policies at National, County and District levels. Outlined below are the relevant strategies and policies that link into the Walking Strategy for St Albans District.

4.2 It is vital that all funding opportunities are used to their full potential, to ensure the maximum number of quality facilities are introduced.

National Policy Context

4.3 At a National level, the government published its white paper on 'A New Deal for Transport: better for everyone' in 1998. This announced a change in focus in national transport policy, and included an emphasis on improving conditions for pedestrians.

4.4 'We are all pedestrians, even if we own a car. Nearly all journeys involve a walk and walking is still the main way of getting about locally. But all too often the things that make walking a more pleasant experience have not been given the proper attention, as can be seen in the way road space and priority is so often biased against pedestrians. Too often pedestrians are treated like trespassers in their own towns. We want streets that are decent and attractive to walk in.' DETR 1998a, Paragraph 3.1

4.5 The Government's 'Our Healthier Nation' strategy stresses the importance of environmental influences on health and the importance of routine physical activity in people's daily life. The document set a number of quantified targets where the promotion of walking and the improvement of walking conditions are particularly relevant.

4.6 "Be active, be healthy : a plan for getting the nation moving" establishes a new framework for the delivery of physical activity alongside sport for the period leading up to the London 2012 Olympic Games, Paralympic Games and beyond.

4.7 Policies influencing transport are outlined in the Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG13) (March 2001) which has as its objectives to 'integrate planning and transport at the national, regional and local level to: promote sustainable transport choices, and reduce the need to travel, especially by car'. This is reflected in the Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) (December 2000), which states in policy T4 that 'Walking and cycling should be vigorously promoted especially for shorter distances, as the most environmentally -friendly ways to travel.'

4.8 Currently, there is no National Walking Strategy, although in 2005, the DfT did publish 'Encouraging Walking' Advice for Local Authorities.

- 4.9 The Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997 requires the local traffic authority (in the case of St Albans, Hertfordshire County Council) to set targets for reducing motor vehicle traffic, or to justify their reasons for not doing so. The reduction of motor vehicle traffic will improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, improve air quality and reduce accidents and the domination of public space by motor vehicles.
- 4.10 Safer Routes to School is a national project seeking to influence the transport choices of children and young people. It aims to reduce traffic congestion and to encourage children towards more healthy lifestyles by cycling and walking to school.

County Policy Context

- 4.11 The Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006/2007 – 2010/2011 sets the framework for achieving the vision for a better transport system for all. This plan builds upon LTP1 and focuses on delivering the shared priorities of tackling congestion, delivering accessibility, providing safer roads, improving air quality and improving the quality of life for residents.
 - 4.12 The vision of the plan is:
 “To provide a safe, efficient and affordable transport system that allows access for all to everyday facilities. Everyone will have the opportunity and information to choose the most appropriate form of transport and time of travel. By making best use of the existing network we will work towards a transport system that maximising the capacity of the network we will work towards a transport system that balances economic prosperity with personal health and environmental well being.”
 - 4.13 The LTP also outlines the LEARN strategy (Local Educational Access Route Network). The aim of this strategy is to deliver a network of safer and more sustainable transport links to all schools in Hertfordshire that can include cycle facilities.
 - 4.14 The Mid Hertfordshire Area Plan covers the settlements of St Albans, Harpenden and London Colney in this district as well as Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. The area plan approach has been adopted by the County so as to provide a greater opportunity for consultation with district and parish councils as well as local residents.
- Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011 (1998)
- 4.15 At a national level, Planning Policy Guidance 13 (Transport) advocates a reduction in car travel. Mindful of this the County Structure Plan promotes a role for walking through two of its key policies:
 - 4.16 **POLICY 22 : REDUCTION OF TRAVEL NEED AND CAR USAGE**
 The County Council will aim to reduce the growth in private motor traffic on roads and minimise its environmental impact. Total capacity of County roads will be stabilised at its current level, subject only to the increase attributable to planned development within Hertfordshire. The management of that capacity will be designed to create opportunities to increase the proportion of journeys made by walking, cycling or by passenger transport in the safest manner possible.
 - 4.17 The need to travel will be reduced, mainly by locating and planning development so as to require fewer and shorter journeys to be made.

District Policy Context

- 4.18 The national emphasis on cycling, walking, traffic reduction and air quality is reflected in the Council's vision and aims:

Historic St Albans district, a premier community

To safeguard the environment.

To build a community that is open, fair and inclusive.

To work in partnership for the health and well being of the community.

To cherish and promote our heritage, arts and culture.

To ensure the District is a desirable place to visit and in which to live, learn and work.

- 4.19 The District Council can provide funds for walking schemes from both revenue and capital budgets. There are opportunities to use a wide range of local authority budgets such as those for leisure, tourism or environmental schemes in ways which incorporate or support measures that encourage walking. Walking programmes can have a distinct advantage in that they are relevant to the wider objectives of planning, leisure and community services and therefore a single walking scheme can contribute to several services.
- 4.20 Town and Parish Councils may wish to support the provision of walking facilities as and when appropriate.
- 4.21 In certain circumstances, Section 106 planning obligation agreements can require the provision of improved pedestrian facilities in conjunction with development. Developer contributions can be sought particularly where a proposed development will create a need for a particular facility.

City Vision

- 4.22 The City Vision covers the social, cultural and economic development of the city over the coming decades. Within this project there are a number of links with the promotion of walking.

Local Development Framework

- 4.23 The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the spatial planning strategy introduced in England and Wales by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The LDF comprises a series of documents, which set out policies and proposals for future development within each local planning authority's area. SADC is still at an early stage in the production of its new style Development Plan documents.

Local Strategic Partnership

- 4.24 The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is an organisation made up of representatives from public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The LSP matches local authority boundaries, and aims to bring together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.
- 4.25 The LSP is key to tackling deep seated, multi-faceted problems, requiring a range of responses from different bodies. Local partners working through a LSP will be expected to take many of the major decisions about priorities for their local area.

Green Heart Partnerships

- 4.26 The Green Heart Partnership (GHP) is an initiative that aims to achieve growth and build capacity between the arts and environment sectors across Hertfordshire.
- 4.27 The focus of the partnership is on: -improving the quality of life for our communities - bringing tangible benefits to our artists and arts organisations -working towards the Government's vision for an urban and rural renaissance -combining resources for arts and the environment -promoting environmental sustainability -contributing towards high quality vibrant public spaces -creating a sense of place
- 4.28 Overall, GHP seeks to raise the profile and the value of the arts within Hertfordshire either through adding creativity to processes or by way of an end product. The environmental focus of Green Heart Partnership has been taken to reflect the national, regional and local agenda of creating and promoting sustainable development. This development is designed to meet people's need for homes, jobs and social & cultural growth, without the depletion of the earth's resources.
- 4.29 Entering into partnership agreements with public transport operators and local employers can offer opportunities to fund improvements to the pedestrians environment.
- 4.30 Walking is attractive to sponsors because of its healthy, environmentally friendly image. Opportunities may arise for partnership funding of initiatives or publicity, involving local government and the private sector

5. Objectives

The principal objectives of the St Albans and District Walking Strategy are to:

- Increase the amount of walking
- Improve facilities for pedestrians
- Promote a walking friendly culture
- Integrate walking into relevant policy initiatives and programmes
- Increase the number of walking trips

6. How St Albans District will encourage walking

- 6.1 Pedestrians have a wide range of needs and abilities. Commuters and shoppers require wide pavements for peak times, the partially sighted pedestrians require uncluttered surfaces and tactile surfaces, people in wheelchairs and with prams require ramps, not steps, and tourists need space to stop while they take photographs or consult maps. Fortunately it is usually possible to accommodate the needs of most pedestrians by providing for those with a mobility handicap; footway widths, gradients and surfaces suitable for wheelchair users will also be satisfactory for other pedestrians.
- 6.2 Encouraging walking: advice to local authorities (DETR, 2000a) recommends using 'the Five Cs' as a checklist to assess the overall quality of the existing environment for walking. Any measures introduced to improve the pedestrian environment should improve one of more of these 'C's'. The 'Five Cs' are
- Connected
 - Comfortable
 - Convenient
 - Convivial
 - Conspicuous
- 6.3 To achieve the walking objectives we will focus on a number of actions outlined below:
- 6.4 Work with partners in promoting walking as the most environmentally and socially sustainable form of transport.**

The promotion of walking is an integral part of the Walking Strategy. While engineering measures will make the environment more pleasant for walking, campaigns that highlight the benefits of walking are necessary in order to persuade people to forgo the convenience of their car.

Different aspects of walking appeal to different sections of society, therefore it is necessary to tailor information to suit different groups and target the information so that they get the message.

Walking is an important part of the tourist economy. According to a Countryside Agency Survey of 1998, visitors to the countryside spent £11.5 billion in 1998 creating 340,000 jobs in the United Kingdom. The promotion of walking is an important part of promoting tourism whether it is in towns or in the countryside. Provision of information on longer walks including details of places to stay and eat, sites of interest and public transport access will let visitors to the area plan a walking holiday. People may also want to incorporate a short walk while on a day trip to tourist attraction, or walk round areas of interest in towns. Opportunities should be taken to promote walking in these places.

6.5 Encourage schools to promote road safety and sustainable forms of transport, in particular walking, for students travelling to and from school

Many drivers do not fully understand the vulnerability of child pedestrians and cyclists. It is vital that this is taken into consideration when designing new environments or improving existing ones.

The provision of appropriate crossing places, school crossing patrols and reduced speeds can all help. Schools are encouraged to participate in the Safer Routes to School programme which involves the whole school community investigating the problems and contributing to the solutions.

The concept of the "walking bus" was launched in 1998 at Wheatfields Junior School in St Albans. Each bus has an adult 'driver' at the front and an adult 'conductor' bringing up the rear. The children walk to school in a group along a set route picking up additional 'passengers' at specific 'bus-stops' along the way.

6.6 Encourage walking to work to create a healthier workforce and reduce peak hour congestion

Pedestrian routes should be signed to inform people of the most direct routes to and from key points including railway stations, major bus stops and short cuts away from the road. Signing to, from and along recreational routes is also important. There should be a continuity of signing so that directions are easy to follow. Maps can be provided at information points that clearly show walking routes and key facilities.

The Local Strategic Partnership is actively working with employers in the District to develop and implement Travel Plans that offer staff more travel options and encourage them to leave their cars at home. In many cases this is being achieved by making a Travel Plan a condition of planning consent.

As well as provision for cyclists, users of public transport and car sharers, each company travel plan is expected to include, where practicable:

- Publicising information on pedestrian routes to the site for staff and visitors
- Provision of shower and changing facilities
- Well-lit and well-maintained site footpaths
- Provision of direct and convenient pedestrian routes to site exits and bus stops

Each travel plan includes its own targets, although these may not necessarily refer directly to walking. The health benefits of walking are emphasised during discussions with employers, and they are encouraged to promote this within staff publicity material.

The District Council has introduced Health Walks to encourage staff to increase walking. These walks are led by trained volunteers, and held on a regular basis. They are aimed at people who would like to increase the amount of exercise they take, but would not be attracted to more formal ways of getting fit such as going to a gym or swimming.

6.7 Promote walking as a leisure activity for residents and visitors

The aim is to create conditions in which people will choose to walk rather than walking only if there is no alternative. 'Recreational walking is often thought of as a purely rural activity, but people walk for pleasure in urban areas too, for instance around local parks or along waterways. Recreational walking benefits individuals, and helps build up a culture in which people walk from choice'. (DETR, March 2000)

Parks, open spaces, historical sites and wildlife areas within or close to urban areas provide opportunities for people to enjoy walking outside their usual environment. Creation of such areas if carefully designed can offer opportunities for regeneration of an area.

Routes that lead to recreational facilities or out to more rural areas should be identified and clearly signed so that they can be accessed by walking or cycling.

Promotion is an important part of encouraging walking for leisure and the District Council, working in partnership with various organisations, has produced a number of leaflets on a number of walking routes across the District.

6.8 Work with partners to improve safety and security for pedestrians

The provision and maintenance of street lighting is essential in enhancing an area and making pedestrians feel secure. It is especially important in urban areas, including urban footpaths, where people may want to access facilities on foot and around public transport interchanges where people may fear crime.

Lighting in rural areas can be controversial as it can detract from the rural environment and cause light pollution. It is therefore important to strike the right balance between aesthetic and environmental considerations and the needs of pedestrians.

Street lighting lanterns are designed to distribute a proportion of their light onto adjacent footways and verges to permit road users to see pedestrians and some of the street scene. In this way, the British Standards recognise the needs of the pedestrian and make recommendations for all categories of roads, paths, and pedestrian precincts.

If not planned and managed carefully, completely pedestrian areas can become solitary and threatening at night when shops are closed. The pedestrian environment should be designed so that there is good visibility and no opportunities for strangers to hide around corners. Encouraging mixed use in town centres helps to ensure that town centres are not deserted at night. CCTV cameras also play a role in ensuring that people feel secure in pedestrian areas. These should be conspicuous and well publicised so that people know that they are in place and how they operate.

6.9 Improve pedestrian security and reduce the fear of crime

Fear of crime, particularly personal assault, is a significant deterrent to walking. People will only choose to walk if they feel an area is safe and unthreatening, especially after dark. If people are to be encouraged to walk more they should not feel intimidated into staying away from an area or using their car because they feel that the area is unsafe.

Many factors can contribute to the perception that an area is unsafe – bad design including corners or recessed areas which can not be seen clearly, badly lit or secluded areas and poorly designed crossing facilities. Poorly maintained bus or train waiting areas can also be a deterrent to use, as they are perceived as places where personal attacks are likely.

In order to prevent and reduce the fear of crime the St Albans Community Safety Partnership identify areas where crime and the fear of crime deters walking and recommend actions that will contribute to community safety. These actions could include, introduction of CCTV, increased lighting, opening up of enclosed areas or more visible policing.

6.10 Improve pedestrian road safety

Reducing traffic dangers to pedestrians and their fear of accidents is important in order to enable more people to walk. The volume of motorised traffic, the percentage of large vehicles, its noise and its proximity to pedestrian routes, can be intimidating for pedestrians and make them feel uncomfortable.

The provision of a safe environment in which people feel confident to walk and cross the road without fear of being involved in an accident is vital. While all pedestrians require a pleasant and safe walking environment, two groups of people that are especially vulnerable are children and the elderly. Often members of these two groups do not drive or have access to cars and so their personal freedom is curtailed if they cannot access facilities safely on foot or by public transport.

Part of a child's development is to learn to negotiate the pedestrian environment at first with adult supervision and then on their own.

The Government's speed review has confirmed a strong link between vehicle speeds and the risk and severity of collisions. If a pedestrian is hit by a moving car it has been well established that the risk of being killed rises dramatically with a small increase in impact speed. Higher speeds on roads that were not designed for them are associated with both more accidents and greater injury severity. Education plays an important role in this process. Drivers need to take responsibility for their own actions and abide by speed limits. For this to become reality limits must be respected.

The District has one 20 mph zone in St Albans City Centre. The County Council has also introduced 'Home Zones' in other parts of the County although one has not yet been introduced within this district. 'Home Zones' comprise residential areas where pedestrians, cyclists and motorised traffic have equal status. The fundamental difference between a "Home Zone" and other traffic calming is that the demarcation between the road and the kerb is not normally present. This allows free pedestrian and cycle flow and ensures that car drivers do not feel they have priority in any area. The outcome is that car-borne traffic travels at the same speed as pedestrians and cyclists or avoids the area altogether.

Crossing facilities are a vital part of making walking environment safe and easy to move around in, by helping form networks and reduce severance. In order to be most effective crossings must be situated on pedestrian desire lines. They should allow pedestrians to cross in the most direct manner and respond quickly and safely to demands from a pedestrian. The crossing should be wide enough to accommodate pedestrian flow at peak times. There are various forms of crossing that are introduced to help pedestrians cross roads in Hertfordshire. They are installed in different locations depending on the traffic conditions, road type and pedestrian flow in order to ensure pedestrian safety.

6.11 Address the needs of disabled, mobility and sensory impaired people within the pedestrian environment

One in ten people have some degree of sensory or mobility impairment, therefore, it is important that all aspects of the highway are accessible to all members of the public. The term 'mobility impaired' covers a wide range of people from those with physical impairments to those laden with shopping. The term 'sensory impaired' includes people with sight and hearing impairments who may encounter difficulties in the pedestrian environment.

Most new signal controlled crossings in the District have been provided with audible or tactile signals. An audible signal is sounded when the green pedestrian signal is lit and is provided to assist visually impaired pedestrians. A tactile signal consists of a small rotating cone protruding from underneath the push-button box to assist visually and audibly impaired users. Audible signals are provided in preference to tactile signals, but tactile signals are provided at staggered crossings and junctions where an audible signal could be confusing and therefore dangerous.

Dropped kerbs are provided to assist pedestrians, especially people with mobility impairments, including those with prams or pushchairs, when crossing a carriageway. When any new crossing facility is provided dropped kerbs should always be installed. Dropped kerbs are also provided at junctions where there is no formal crossing facility to allow people in wheelchairs or those with prams or pushchairs to cross the junction. Dropped kerbs should be provided automatically when the footways along a road are renewed.

When any new traffic lights are provided or modifications to existing junctions take place the opportunity should be taken to provide tactile paving for visually impaired pedestrians to highlight

the presence of the dropped kerbs. Tactile paving acts as a sensory code that allows visually impaired people to navigate within the pedestrian environment, therefore, it is vital that it is installed correctly. The national guidelines on installation of tactile paving must be followed at all times.

Guard railing is used on traffic islands at staggered crossings to guide visually impaired pedestrians to the crossing point. The over use of guard railing can act as a barrier to pedestrians. It is important that crossings are placed on desire lines so that it is not necessary to use guard rail to force pedestrians to divert off their natural route in order to cross the road.

Any piece of street furniture located in the footway is a physical obstruction and should be located to maximise the amount of footway space available. A minimum number of signposts should be used and they should be positioned appropriately.

Vegetation should be kept cut back so that it does not intrude on to the footway. 'A' board signs outside shops can obstruct the footway and are particularly hazardous to people with visual impairments as they are not fixed so the layout of the pedestrian environment may vary from day to day and cannot be learnt. All efforts should be made to ensure that these signs are not placed on the footway.

A raised kerb height at bus stops makes access to the public transport network easier for mobility impaired people and they should be provided at all bus stops where highway alterations are being undertaken.

6.12 Work with public transport operators to ensure the needs of pedestrians are provided for at interchanges between transport modes

Most journeys by public transport involve walking stages, therefore making walking easier is a key to an effective integrated transport system. High quality pedestrian networks linking to public transport facilities make the journey to the interchange safe and attractive. The walking element is an important part of the whole journey experience and should always be included in the planning process for existing and new developments. Footways linking facilities and residential areas should be as direct as possible.

Nationally recognised standards for catchment areas for urban bus stops are a walk of 400 metres or five minutes, and of 800 metres or 10 minutes for railway stations. Where there are gradients on the footways, the recommended walking distance to a bus stop or railway station is reduced by 10 metres for every 1 metre rise or fall.

Pedestrian route desire lines should be developed so that routes to/from bus stops and railway stations also serve local centres or shops. There should be no obvious obstructions to reach key destinations. For example the route should avoid a badly lit subway or a busy road to reach the bus stop. These routes should be well sign posted and clear attractive information provided at bus stops and interchanges.

Improving the environment for pedestrians should consider the needs of people with a mobility or sensory impairment to access public transport. This includes providing facilities at railway and bus stations, including audio information and encouraging the use of low floor buses. St Albans District Council will continue to seek opportunities to joint fund schemes with the County Council and train operating companies to comply with requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995).

6.13 Work with Hertfordshire County Council to maintain and enhance the Public Rights of Way network

Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority has a legal duty to maintain all definitive Public Rights of Way, ensuring they are available for use, free from obstruction, clearly signed and that farmers/landowners have carried out their responsibilities. In addition, the County Council maintains the Definitive Map, the legal record of all Public Rights of Way.

The Countryside Agency is now actively encouraging the development of a network of 'Greenways' throughout England. Greenways are defined as 'a network of largely car-free, off-road routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces in and around towns, cities and to the countryside. They are designed for shared use by people of all abilities on foot, bike or horseback, for commuting, play or leisure'.

6.14 Work with Hertfordshire County Council to maintain and enhance the quality of the walking environment

If people are to be encouraged to walk, their surroundings must be pleasant and safe. Unlike car drivers and passengers, who are isolated from the environment in which they are travelling, pedestrians are exposed to all aspects of their surroundings. If the walking environment is perceived as safe and pleasant, people will be tempted to walk and the streets will become a place where people want to be. If footways are damaged and dirty, lighting is inadequate and ill maintained, and the traffic is intrusive, people will be deterred from walking.

The pedestrian environment must be more than functionally adequate, it needs to be of a high quality, so that the walk is a pleasant experience. This will require sustained partnership working in a number of areas such as frequent street sweeping, prompt footway repairs to a high quality standard, removing graffiti and chewing gum and the provision of benches.

Work undertaken by utilities is governed by the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. Pedestrians should be given high priority and their safe passage ensured where there are street works. This is particularly important when considering those with a disability. The Institute of Highways and Transportation states that good signing is of paramount importance and requires;

- Adequate advance warning
- Allowance for the use of footway facilities by visually impaired people and protection accordingly
- If footways are to be closed or suffer major disruption, alternative routes are provided which are clearly marked and maintained during the duration of the works. These routes must be accessible for people with sensory or mobility impairments
- Remedial work to reinstate the footway should be undertaken as soon as possible
- All signs and works equipment to be removed on completion of works

Pavements are constructed and provided for pedestrian use. Parking on the footway creates problems for pedestrians, especially those with mobility or sensory impairments. Vehicles parked on pavements are:

- a hazard to pedestrians causing an obstruction which may result in them having to step off the pavement onto the highway thus putting themselves in danger.
- a hazard by restricting the width of the pavement making it difficult for someone with a pushchair or wheelchair to pass safely - again this person may have to step into the highway to avoid the obstruction.

- a hazard due to the damage caused by driving on and off the pavement. Paving slabs can be dislodged and kerbs damaged, which can cause pedestrians to trip.

Parking on footways outside London it is not an offence in itself and so is difficult to eliminate. The Council acknowledges that footway parking occurs, particularly in areas of older housing where there is no scope for residents creating their own off-street parking facilities. Traffic restrictions such as waiting restrictions may be imposed on a length of road to make parking an offence. However, the problem of illegally parked vehicles is likely to move to a neighbouring street. The most important factor in permitting footway parking is the need to protect enough footway for pedestrians and in particular those with any form of disability. Bollards or kerbing may be required to protect the reserved footway.

Pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority schemes can provide a pleasant and safe environment in which pedestrians can go about their business without coming into conflict with traffic. If well designed they can help with the regeneration of commercial areas by making an agreeable and attractive place in which people can shop. There is however potential for problems to arise if the issues of commercial viability, accessibility and pedestrian security are not addressed in the right way.

Pedestrian areas should also be supplied with appropriate seating so that people have the opportunity to rest before carrying on with their journey. Street furniture in general should be well designed and kept to a minimum allowing free pedestrian flow along a route.

A major contribution to the attractiveness of an area for walking is the absence of litter. Street cleaning within our District is undertaken by St Albans District Council and is monitored by the use of Best Value Performance Indicators.

6.15 Introduce and maintain walking as the primary mode of transport where appropriate, and incorporate this principle within all relevant policies and strategies

New developments should be encouraged so as to enable people to access services and facilities without having access to a car. When major new developments (or extensions to existing developments) are proposed the developer is expected to provide for pedestrian, cycling and local transport facilities as appropriate. These facilities should be integrated and link with existing facilities to provide an environment which is conducive to walking. Developers may also be required to upgrade existing facilities, for example the addition of lighting to a footway or the upgrade of an existing crossing. Agreements and conditions should be arranged as far as possible so that facilities for pedestrians will be implemented before the development is occupied. The District Council should discuss pedestrian, cycling and public transport provision at any pre-application discussions held with prospective applicants.

6.16 Ensure maximum provision and safeguarding of walking facilities as part of new developments

Within new residential and mixed use areas pedestrian movement should be convenient, safe and pleasant. The aim is to discourage the use of the car for local trips and to encourage walking between homes and local facilities that residents need, or wish to use regularly.

In new developments the best way to encourage walking is to plan for pedestrians from the very first stages of design of the development. There are two key aspects that must be considered in terms of walking, these are:

- The accessibility of the development by sustainable modes of transport to local amenities and job opportunities, mixed development is important in achieving this;

- The ease with which people can walk within and through the development.

Developers are expected to ensure bus stop and footway locations are identified at the earliest opportunity of the highway design of new developments. Pedestrian route desire lines must be incorporated into the position of bus stops and any key stops identified. Bus stops in new developments would be expected to be at intervals of 300 metres to minimise the walk times within the overall 400 metre catchment. Contributions from developers should be sought for public transport facilities including walking and waiting areas as part of the Section 106 planning obligations.

The key considerations are: -

- The provision of good quality footways and footpaths for use by all people regardless of their ability and level of mobility.
- An awareness that people prefer to walk along streets where they can be seen by drivers, residents and other pedestrians.
- If segregated footpaths are provided, they need to be well-connected and overlooked by houses and other buildings.
- Direct routes to be provided to local facilities, adjacent neighbourhoods and public transport services in such a way that it is more convenient and attractive to walk than to drive to such destinations.
- All measures that slow down traffic help pedestrians feel safer.

Internal roads within developments should be designed so that traffic is obliged to travel slowly. This design will result in narrower slower roads, which force drivers to keep their speed below 20 mph (30 kph) and promote a more pedestrian friendly environment. Lengthy segregated spine footpaths can present opportunities for crime against pedestrians if poorly designed. While in many cases pedestrian routes will be situated along residential roads, with occasional short links to give pedestrians a preferential direct route, the integrity of Public Rights of Way should also be preserved.

It should be possible for pedestrians and cyclists to move freely and safely between all parts of a development. A permeable layout should be designed which offers pedestrians a choice of routes. The layout should result in greater visual interest and so generate a higher level of pedestrian activity, and thus security. Incorporating central, overlooked play areas within residential areas encourages children to 'play out' and so take exercise and walk more often.

6.17 Minimise conflict between walking, cycling, and people with disabilities

Both walking and cycling are healthy, sustainable, cheap and efficient means of travel, and they are both available to a wide range of people. However, pedestrians and cyclists have different needs. In some cases the provision of facilities for cyclists can cause conflicts between the two groups, with people being visually impaired often particularly concerned about shared use facilities.

New cycleways can be useful to pedestrians, and shared use facilities have a place in providing for both walking and cycling. Where pedestrians or cyclists gain a new single use facility, rather than sharing an existing one, objections are less likely. Where an existing path is converted to shared use, segregated facilities are likely to be the preferred method provided there is space to separate the two modes.

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