

Transport Briefing Note

# Gear for Change.



# Briefing note authors.

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**The Gear for Change document issued in late July clearly builds on the PM's experience of delivering cycling schemes as the Mayor for London and reads alongside a series of recently published transport and highway design guidance, setting out a radical change in the way transport infrastructure and transport users are considered in England, in a clear move towards a Dutch-style Active Travel approach to our roads.**

The document provides a compelling and comprehensive answer to the current main barriers to walking and cycling, and addresses those through a menu of policies, funding options and enforcement organisations which could deliver a large scale and lasting set of health, economic and community benefits.

Momentum has summarised the proposals in this short briefing note, as highway and public realm proposals will no longer be considered through the same 'motor centric' lens, which will fundamentally change the way case officers will receive planning applications. We overall welcome and strongly support this change of direction which is more aligned with the 'Healthy Streets' and 'Vision Zero' policies in London that came forward in the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2018.



**The current pandemic has accelerated long term trends affecting the way we plan and design the built environment. Among these important accelerations, transport has been at the forefront, and particularly active travel modes such as walking and cycling.**

Whilst in recent years there has been a timid shift with a 50% increase in the distance cycled since 2002, the slow delivery of schemes has meant that, at national level, the overall number of cycle trips remains stable (only 2% of all trips), while in 2018 we had 58% of car journeys that were still under 5 miles.

At the core of the recent Department for Transport 'Gear for Change' vision is the recognition that walking and cycling provide multiple benefits that can assist with recovering from the pandemic, and which can be summarised in three broad categories:

**Health** benefits such as better air quality, improved mental health and also improved fitness (**physical inactivity** in the UK is responsible for 1 in 6 deaths). These three factors alone have negatively contributed to the scale and range of impacts of the Covid 19 throughout the country and GPs will now be encouraged to recommend cycling wherever appropriate.

**Economic** benefits such as cost savings on health, support to a cycling industry which currently provides 64,000 jobs, and increased footfall and spend in shops.

**Community** benefits including improved road safety and place-making opportunities



**Branded as a 'once in a generation opportunity' by Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport, the Gear for Change document seeks to shift the balance between schemes for motorised traffic towards schemes for walking and cycling.**

Through its ambitious £2bn funding across the next five years, the document sets out a series of new policies, standards and decision-making processes and organisations to step up transporting goods and people safely, efficiently and in a way that addresses climate change.

Gear for Change fits into a wider set of governmental guidance, including substantial proposals for updates to the Highway Code, and a new Local Transport Note (LTN 1/20) on Cycle infrastructure design:

The proposed changes to the **Highway Code** are also radical in the way that it creates a hierarchy of road users which puts the responsibility on drivers for avoiding collisions with cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders as the more vulnerable road users.

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The new **LTN 1/20** is twice as long as its predecessor, and covers a wider, and higher, range of design aspects for cycling, from planning stages through to construction. It aligns with other regional (London Cycle Design Standards) and international cycling standards (such as the Dutch CROW), and also with existing junction and cycling level of service (LoS) tools developed by TfL.



## A holistic approach to improving walking and cycling

**There are nine design principles in the Gear for Change document. These follow a well-known, yet sometimes poorly implemented, approach which can be summarised as follows: safety, coherence, comfort, attractiveness and directness.**

Importantly, for the first-time, cyclists are to be categorised as ‘vehicles’ and whilst they need to be segregated from traffic, the document clearly sets out that they should be using distinct networks from pedestrians. Furthermore, the document establishes clear principles that cycling and walking are not just about transporting people – cargo-bikes for ‘last mile’ deliveries, alongside consolidation strategies for deliveries and waste collection will go hand in hand with this new approach to improving walking and cycling.

Another way in which Gear for Change is a progressive document is that it outlines different geographic scales for action and funding including main travel corridors, low-traffic neighbourhoods and schools streets at local level. At neighbourhood and city level, the document sets out to fund 12 non-London ‘Mini-Holland’ schemes, as well as a small/medium size city Zero Emission transport system. Interchange capacity, such as the ability to bring bikes on trains and buses as well as ‘Park & Pedal’ schemes are also proposed.

Finally, at national level, the document sets the ambitious target of developing a national cycling network which is 100% off road or traffic calmed by 2040. The document recognises it is not all about infrastructure, and a number of additional policies seek to address the main, and well documented, barriers to walking and cycling, including providing training, new safety standards for lorries, safe storage in existing neighbourhoods and as part of new schemes, and also considers subsidies and/or loans for e-bikes. Legal changes are also being suggested to protect vulnerable road users such as introducing the offence of causing serious injury by careless or inconsiderate driving and also increasing severity and/or length of sentences.

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### Key design principles

Cycling is or will become mass transit and must be treated as such. Routes must be designed for larger numbers of cyclists, for users of all abilities and disabilities.

- Principle 1:** Cyclists must be separated from volume traffic, both at junctions and on the stretches of road between them. (Icon: Car and cyclist on a road)
- Principle 2:** Cyclists must be separated from pedestrians. (Icon: Cyclist and pedestrian on a path)
- Principle 3:** Cyclists must be treated as vehicles, not pedestrians. (Icon: Cyclist and pedestrian with a red 'X' over the pedestrian)
- Principle 4:** Routes must join together; isolated stretches of good provision are of little value. (Icon: Three road segments meeting at a junction)
- Principle 5:** Routes must feel direct, logical and be intuitively understandable by all road users. (Icon: A winding road with a green 'X' at the end and a red 'X' on the path)
- Principle 6:** Routes and schemes must take account of how users actually behave. (Icon: A road with a green arrow indicating a path)
- Principle 7:** Purely cosmetic alterations should be avoided. (Icon: A paintbrush)
- Principle 8:** Barriers, such as chicane barriers and dismount signs, should be avoided. (Icon: A blue sign that says 'CYCLISTS DISMOUNT' with a red 'X' over it)
- Principle 9:** Routes should be designed only by those who have experienced the road on a cycle. (Icon: A person on a bicycle)



A funding boost... under strict monitoring.

Perhaps one of the most crucial point of the document is how this new approach is envisaged to be delivered, funded and monitored. A new agency, Active Travel England, is to be set up, with a dedicated programme and budget to ensure lasting funding.

The image on the right sets out the responsibilities of this new agency.

The document explicitly sets out that schemes where walking and cycling are not the main focus, or which provide sub-standard 'cosmetic' improvements will not be funded, and that funding will be withdrawn if start and finish dates for schemes are not complied with.

To complement the new agency, Local Authorities are to receive new powers, such as the enforcement of traffic offenses as is largely the case already in London, as well as more newly trained officers. It is also the intention of the document to increase Mayoral authority over strategic roads to deliver Active Travel improvements over their key route networks.

## Active Travel England

- hold the budget
- approve schemes
- inspect schemes
- training, good practice, knowledge sharing
- inspect highway authorities
- review major planning applications