

Active Travel Inquiry – Evidence Gathering Pack

- a. Inquiry - Terms of Reference
- b. Submission - Birmingham Livings Streets
- c. Submission – David Cox, Pushbikes
- d. Submission – Better Streets for Birmingham



Work Outline / Terms of Reference

Active Travel Schemes Task and Finish Group

Reporting to Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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| <p>Our key question:</p> | <p>How can Birmingham deliver Active Travel schemes quicker and make city roads safer for all users?</p> |
| <p>1. How is O&S adding value through this work?</p> | <p>Improving road safety is always a priority for communities across the city, however this has significantly increased in recent months. This follows several tragic incidents on Birmingham's streets where cyclists and pedestrians, both adults and children, have died or been injured, and resulted in strong public interest.</p> <p>Separately, the Council has been criticised for the time taken to deliver, and the design of, active travel schemes in comparison to neighbouring Local Authorities. If this is true, Birmingham residents will wait longer to enjoy the benefits of better cycling and walking infrastructure. In turn, the city will take longer to realise its ambitions outlined in the Birmingham Transport Plan to shift to a low traffic city.</p> <p>Through this inquiry, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee intends to understand if there are different and better ways for the Council to deliver Active Travel schemes and make recommendations to achieve this. This will also complement and feed into the new Road Safety Strategy for Birmingham, which is currently under development, as well as support the delivery of Birmingham's Transport Plan.</p> |
| <p>2. What needs to be done?</p> | <p>The Task and Finish Group will receive evidence from a range of stakeholders in order to consider the following key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do Active Travel schemes contribute towards achieving the city's Be Bold outcomes and priorities? • How are Active Travel schemes funded within the city? • What is the current size, scale and scope of the activity under development and being delivered including joint projects with the WMCA? • What is the design, development and delivery process? • How does the Council work together as a single organisation to develop and deliver Active Travel schemes? • How does the Council work in collaboration with other organisations, such as Transport for West Midlands? • What are the current barriers and challenges the Council is facing to deliver these schemes? • Where are the opportunities for acceleration and what would this require? • How do other Local Authorities do it differently? What can we learn from their approaches? |
| <p>3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?</p> | <p>The Sustainability and Transport O&S Committee will agree its recommendations on 12 October 2023.</p> |



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| <p>4. What outcomes are we looking to achieve?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Make Birmingham’s roads safer for all users • Outcome 2: Enable more efficient development and delivery of Active Travel Schemes • Outcome 3: Complement work on the Council’s new Road Safety Strategy and the delivery of Birmingham’s Transport Plan. |
| <p>5. What is the best way to achieve these outcomes and what routes will we use?</p> | <p>A Task and Finish Group is the recommended approach comprising cross party membership.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group will meet approximately 5 times. Initial scoping will take place at the Sustainability and Transport O&S Committee in July. The Task and Finish group will then meet to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 1: Carry out site visits to pending, current and completed Active Travel schemes within Birmingham (these will be identified in conjunction with the relevant service and may involve some/ all of the Committee). • Session 2: Consider evidence from stakeholders including Active Travel England; Better Streets for Birmingham; Birmingham Cycling Revolution; Urban Transport Group; WMCA, Travel for West Midlands and or other appropriate stakeholders. • Session 3: Consider evidence from Birmingham City Council services. • Session 4: Consider evidence from other Local Authorities – both locally and nationally and or other appropriate relevant public bodies • Session 5: Identify key findings and discuss recommendations. <p>The order of the sessions may not follow the above.</p> |

Member / Officer Leads

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| <p>Lead Member:</p> | <p>Chair: Cllr. Lee Marsham</p> |
| <p>Members of the Task and Finish Group:</p> | <p>Councillors Martin Brooks; Colin Green and Tim Huxtable.</p> |
| <p>Lead Officer and support:</p> | <p>Support for the Task and Finish Group will be provided by the Overview and Scrutiny team.</p> <p>This support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with members to agree meeting dates • Liaising with Council services to arrange site visits and evidence gathering sessions • Inviting people to give evidence • Agreeing the agenda with the Chair • Circulating agenda and papers in advance of the meeting • Producing a record of Task and Finish Group meetings that is agreed with the Chair / Task and Finish Group members • Producing the report for Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee |



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| | <p>In addition, the Head of Transport Planning and Network Strategy (Mel Jones) and Transport Planning Manager, Streetscape (Martin Rowe) will act as Council service support.</p> <p>This support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing evidence to the Committee• Liaising with other relevant services within the Council |
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How to.... Make Roads Safer for All Users

Overview of key issues

a) Wasted money/opportunities : Streetscape design standards for ALL road schemes need to align with the Strategy for C&W growth. We must stop 1960's, pedestrian- and cycle-hostile standards being (re-)applied routinely.

*b) Commitment from Partners : Road Safety Partnerships need equal commitment **and plain-speaking** to succeed. The WMP/WMPCC's (indirectly) discriminatory neglect of vulnerable road users needs on-going focus and challenge by BCC representatives on WMRoad Safety Strategy steering group and Police and Crime Panel.*

c) Better measurements - and leadership : standard road safety metrics , which ignore the huge levels of immobility our population, - mask the regions sky high levels of risk (by trip/mile) of road injury to vulnerable users.

A - Streetscape design standards are outdated

All road schemes need to align with active travel growth strategy, but this isn't happening due to outdated standards ...and, maybe, designers' 'driver convenience' fixation ?

What TfL Design standards do - Side roads get standardised narrowed junctions and provision of level pedestrian surfaces visibly confirming pedestrian priority and, for cyclists, reducing 'left hooks' . **(Waltham Forest)**



What Birmingham does (A435 bus lane scheme, 2023 proposal) This £5m scheme proposes demolishing current kerb lines and relocating footways - **including re-building 1960's standards 'Bell-mouth' junctions** to encourage dangerous high speed turns (aka 'driver convenience')
...Safe for Hussein Bolt maybe, but hardly 'Everyone for 8 to 80" as per Strategy



Disregarding 'non Active Travel' schemes from consideration is a false dichotomy that wastes £m's and actually undermines Strategy progress.

B – Commitment from Partners

- WM Police road priorities. historically. were overwhelmingly driver safety/property focused. The major initiatives - Motorway Patrol Group (£5m pa), Camera vans on high speed A roads (c.£1m pa)and even the stolen prestige cars ‘task force’ (£80k pm) - contrast sharply with negligible enforcement of safety in neighbourhoods.

| 20 mph zone speed enforcement – Tickets issued | | | | | |
|---|-----------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------------|
| Force | Pop'n (m) | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | Enforcements per m. popn '21 |
| West Midlands Police | 2.8 | 251 | 394 | 224 | 80 |
| Avon & Somerset | 1.7 | 14,569 | 13,889 | 23,338 | 13,728 |
| Metropolitan Police | 8.9 | 47,137 | 53,213 | 85,820 | 9,643 |

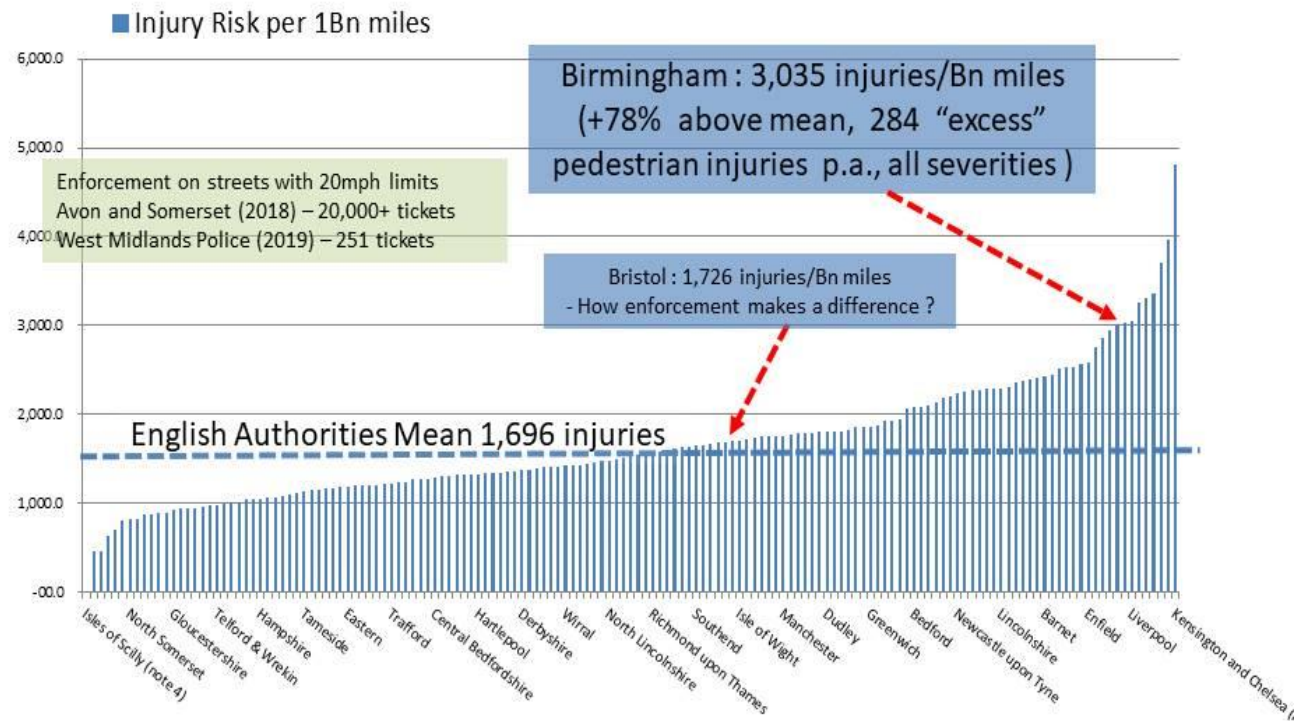
*- Those who can't / don't drive **disproportionately include** the very old, very young, visually impaired and many other types of disability, women and those from poorer demographic groups. Unbalanced road policing priorities constitute indirect discrimination.*

- Without on-going challenge from BCC's representatives we fear the (PR inspired?) Operation Triton will be a re-run of the disastrous WMRSS 2021 debacle, due to neglect.

C - Measurement and Ambition.....

- National Travel Survey data indicates we're a highly immobile region.
- Traditional roads safety statistics (injuries/deaths per popn. unit) therefore badly misrepresent the actual risk of injury to the C&W demographic in areas like ours.
- Creating injury risk per trip-mile reveals alarming poor VRU safety performance.
- We need also to use and set metrics and targets that more accurately show true performance against national/international best of class.

2019 Pedestrian Injury Risk stats : B'ham ranks 143rd worst performing LA of 152 authorities



English Local Authorities – Best to Worst , high tourist LAs (City of London, Westminster) not shown

Full table and data sources : <https://t.co/VNtxqw9GTY?amp=1>

Ambition.... and Leadership

We need leaders who set and explain a vision for our city to become a clean, safe sustainable ‘world class’ travel performer.

In the absence of clear, unapologetic statements by Leaders on what we have to achieve, and the public health, social & environmental drivers on why we must deliver ‘radical ...and unprecedented’ speed of change to behaviour, we encourage constant and endless debate and delay on all schemes that cause any level of inconvenience to any group.*

* WMCA’s 2021 5 year Climate Emergency plan

| Deloitte's 'Urban Mobility Index' - Trip Rates by Mode (2018/19) in major European Conurbations. | | | | | |
|--|---------|-----------|----------|-----|-------|
| | Pop/km2 | Walk/Bike | PubTrans | Car | Other |
| Bham+WMCA | 3,247 | 9% | 15% | 75% | - |
| Dublin Met | 1,515 | 25% | 15% | 59% | 1.00 |
| Amsterdam | 1,520 | 35% | 19% | 42% | 4.00 |
| Helsinki2018 | 1,953 | 29% | 30% | 39% | 2.00 |
| Grtr Manc'r | 2,202 | 30% | 18% | 52% | 4.00 |
| Copenh'n Met ²⁰¹⁸ | 436 | 47% | 27% | 26% | - |
| Rotterdam+Hg ²⁰¹⁸ | 2,323 | 44% | 10% | 43% | - |
| Warsaw2018 | 3,391 | 21% | 47% | 32% | - |
| Oslo2018 | 3,698 | 35% | 30% | 35% | - |
| Stockholm | 3,858 | 22% | 32% | 46% | 3.00 |
| Berlin ²⁰¹⁸ | 3,948 | 43% | 22% | 30% | - |
| Barc'a Met | 5,093 | 44% | 17% | 39% | - |
| London | 5,672 | 28% | 35% | 37% | 2 |
| Paris2018 | 8,845 | 46% | 25% | 25% | 4 |

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP INQUIRY INTO ACTIVE TRAVEL 2023

VIEWS ON THE KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY SUBMITTED BY DAVID COX CHAIR OF PUSHBIKES

We welcome this timely inquiry where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can make a significant contribution. I am writing from a user perspective as someone who has cycled regularly in and across this City since 1973 and has also been involved in very many cycling, active travel and transport Summits, Forums and Stakeholder meetings with the Council since at least 2002.

How can Birmingham deliver Active Travel schemes quicker and make city roads safer for all users?

We are pleased to see that Birmingham's Road Safety Strategy is to be reviewed. The current Strategy is out of date, inadequate in the face of current challenges and not ambitious enough. These points have been made very effectively by the Better Streets campaign in the face of recent tragedies which have been well publicised in local and national media and have generated widespread support. It is good to see that Birmingham Council, West Midlands Combined Authority and the West Midlands Police Force have promised combined urgent action to stop the epidemic of dangerous driving.

It is better to plan for Road Danger Reduction rather than "Road Safety". Removing the threats to life through better street design and effective enforcement of traffic laws. Every City should be aiming for Vision Zero in road deaths as achieved in Stockholm and not just a percentage reduction in deaths and serious injuries. This will not be achieved by corralling pedestrians behind barriers with complex diversions and two or three stage, slow to respond, pedestrian and cycle crossings just to achieve marginally faster journeys for motorists. Some people will take risks and many others will be put off walking or cycling which means that all the health and environmental benefits of active travel won't be realised.

All of this is well understood at a strategic level in the Birmingham Transport Plan. Reducing road danger and making walking and cycling a pleasant, safe and convenient form of transport is essential if we want to see more active travel for local journeys and reduced car use. It will also promote public transport if walking to the bus stop or train station doesn't involve crossing dangerous junctions or dodging badly parked cars on cracked pavements.

The Birmingham Transport Plan is ambitious and in line with best urban practice world-wide. It needs to be delivered quickly to effect a change that will benefit safety, health, business and the reputation of the City. There is funding available for the West Midlands cities and good guidance and support from Active Travel England. While there has been a lot of improvement and learning since 2012 our experience of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution, the Road Safety Scheme at the Priory Rd/Pershore Rd junction, the Emergency

Active Travel Fund Schemes and more recent Active Travel Fund schemes in the City is of frequent delay in delivery, a lack of attention to detail and some disappointing outcomes, a lack of quality control and remedial action.

While there has been a lot to celebrate about improvements in cycling across the City, whole areas have been left out, for example the Hagley Rd corridor or much of East Birmingham. We are a long way short of a well signed network which would enable a visitor to hire a West Midlands bike and cycle between the City's attractions, or major commercial, hospitality, educational destinations. In the City Centre walking has improved but cycling gets more difficult. Too often cycling routes are add-ons, diversions or compromises while much greater priority is given to the needs of the Metro system, motorists, developers etc.

Often final delivery is very slow as demonstrated by the decidedly sub-optimal route on Bradford Street which is apparently due to be revised but with nothing much happening.

What needs to be done?

Key lines of inquiry rightly focus on the process of funding, decision making, design, development and delivery. Other experts will be able to provide up to date information on these processes which should be well understood by now.

The Cycle City Ambition Grant funded the Birmingham Cycling Revolution and led the way in the West Midlands as intended while in Wolverhampton and Coventry progress had stalled. Birmingham led on LCWIPs and a Design Guide. It good to see recent progress in Coventry, Wolverhampton and now Sandwell. Having a Regional Cycling and Walking Commissioner has been beneficial as in London and Manchester.

Our experience suggest that the Active Travel Team have never had enough staff to confidently manage the complex processes involved from consultations, commissioning external consultants at the design stage and overseeing delivery.

Regular Stakeholder Meetings have been held throughout the last decade and we are very grateful for this. We have been kept well informed and been able to have input into plans and schemes. Push Bikes had endeavoured to respond to every consultation with expert user input.

However, too often Birmingham presents schemes in a top-down manner. Decisions have been made and proposals determined and then go out to consultation often in complex presentations which can be difficult for the general public to interpret or respond to. There are reasons for this - money has to be committed quickly e.g. with the Emergency Active Travel Fund, business cases prepared, consultants found etc. Brian Deegan now at Active Travel England developed a bottom-up "Beeline" approach in London and then Manchester where you start in the community and explore what would be needed in terms of filters and junction treatments to enable a trained 12-year-old to cycle to the main local destinations. This is an invigorating exercise although I don't know if it's been tried in the highly politicised context of 2022/3.

“Working as a single organisation” and in partnership with WMCA, WMPCC, Police, Health, Private Sector and Voluntary Organisations is a good principle which we would like to see put into practice. This is always difficult but essential. We don’t expect to see rivalry and tension between these public organisations and look for constructive relationships and shared delivery objectives for the public good. Recent official developments in response to the road violence epidemic are welcome and must be sustained with promises implemented and outcomes reported.

Every road and transport scheme should be supporting active travel. Too often as is shown recently in the Dudley Rd proposals a marginal improvement in a section of cycle infrastructure and bus lanes in accompanied by widening traffic lanes to accommodate more motor vehicles. In pursuit of marginal and temporary reductions in congestion. Quite dangerous junction “improvements” have been introduced like at the Longbridge roundabout and a cycle lane recently removed on the A47.

A comprehensive cycle network in a City of Birmingham’s size will take time but we have been waiting for a long while so we welcome the theme of “acceleration” in your Terms of Reference.

Certainly since 2013 with the Birmingham Mobility Action Plan and the publication of Changing Gear by a previous Transport and Connectivity Overview and Scrutiny Committee with cross-party support there has been no lack of ambition at a strategic political leadership level. The Birmingham Cycle Revolution and now the current Transport Plan embody Be Bold Birmingham. The election of a West Midlands Mayor in 2017 reinforced this consensus on the need for investment in public transport and active travel to improve safety, liveability and economic growth and prosperity across the West Midlands.

But the follow through to implementation often seems to be missing with a gap between the Council House and the officers working at Lancaster Circus or Woodcock Street. Ambition is fine but political will is also needed to engage with the public and staff and consultants through to delivery. This has improved under the last two Cabinet Transport Leads with better engagement between lead politicians and professional staff.

David Cox
Push Bikes

28th August 2023



**Better Streets for Birmingham
submission to the Sustainability and
Transport Overview and Scrutiny
Committee: How can Birmingham
deliver Active Travel schemes quicker
and make city roads safer for all users?**

Thursday 31 August 2023

Written by Martin Price,
Co-chair of Better Streets for Birmingham



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Introduction

About Better Streets for Birmingham

Better Streets for Birmingham campaigns for changes to our travel and planning infrastructure to improve the sustainability, efficiency and safety of our streets. By identifying, supporting and advocating for changes to our environment that enable car-free journeys, we aim to make active travel and public transport the default options for trips around our city.

We believe in a Birmingham where children can play safely in residential streets, where people improve their physical and mental wellbeing through active travel and where our environment is not sullied by acres of public space given over to private vehicle usage. By connecting this city to make car-free travel the easiest option, we will make it a more pleasant place to work, live and play.

We welcome and support the vision set out in the October 2021 Birmingham Transport Plan (https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/14861/birmingham_transport_strategy), which seeks to deliver “safe and attractive environments for active travel, and a high quality sustainable public transport system fit for all users.” We also support the 10 year plan set out in Birmingham’s 2020 Walking and Cycling Strategy (https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/27662/walking_and_cycling_strategy_year_3_-_2022_progress_report_with_lcwip), “to make walking and cycling the everyday choice for local journeys and leisure activities, as part of a safe and integrated transport network for Birmingham”.

However the experience of people who walk, wheel, cycle or scoot in Birmingham is that this is a city which is largely hostile to active travel. There are a handful of protected cycle routes, and certainly no integrated network which facilitates safe travel by bike across the city. Birmingham’s streets are dominated by vehicular traffic both on our roads, as well as parking on our pavements, forcing pedestrians including disabled and partially sighted people; parents with babies and children in pushchairs; the elderly and vulnerable to walk onto the roads. It is clear that not enough space, design, thought or funding is given to making streets safer for active travel. As the Transport Plan states, “we cannot tackle the climate emergency without fundamental changes to the way people and goods move around our city.”

There is a fundamental mismatch between what the Council states as its vision for active travel as opposed to what has been delivered. Excuses about lack of staffing, funding cuts are given as a reason for planned projects not being delivered on time, despite them already being fully funded by the Department for Transport. We have a Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport

who are both committed to active travel, yet the pace of change in Birmingham has been woefully slow as opposed to other cities in the region. Currently, the only project under construction is a long-running project on Dudley Road.

We hope this committee can identify why that is and recommend improvements in process and culture to facilitate change. The people of Birmingham deserve to be able to walk, wheel and cycle across our city without fear of being intimidated, maimed or killed on our roads.

Why we are submitting evidence

Our letter to the Council

In June 2023 we sent an open letter (see Appendix 1) co-signed by 16 community organisations, to Birmingham City Council's senior leadership team, the Council Leader and the Cabinet Member for Transport. We sent the letter following a spate of road violence which killed and seriously injured several people, including a four-year-old child. In the time between scheduling the letter and it being sent, news broke that 12-year-old Azaan Khan had been killed on the A45.

In the letter, we outlined three measures we would like to see the Council take in order to speed up the provision of already-funded cycling infrastructure.

Our first proposal was to “empower the Council's transport project teams to be robust with consultancy partners when designing and implementing schemes, especially when defining timescales.” This is because we have seen grand plans being created by the Transport Planning side of the transport department: the Birmingham Transport Plan (BTP), which aims to be implemented by 2030, and Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) clearly shows there is ambition within the Council to rapidly provide active travel infrastructure. We also know there is money to be spent on plans and that there is a constraint with delivery.

The Council uses consultancy partners through the Council's framework. We encourage the creation of capacity through the use of consultancies. It is therefore, we would suggest, within the Council's gift to demand a faster pace of work from consultancies. We appreciate that schemes can be complex and have lots of considerations, however every scheme since 2021 has moved at a glacial pace.

Our second proposal was to “produce consultation reports faster. They can take six months to produce. This can and must be shorter. Consultations are an important part of scheme development, however, they can be made more efficient.” This evidence submission will largely centre around the consultation process and lack of communication from the Council. We want to

see more efficient consultation, not, as the Cabinet Member for Transport suggested, less consultation. The A34 and A38 blue route consultations had over 1,000 responses yet were summarised and published in less than six months. We are still waiting for consultations from 2021 to be published.

Our final proposal was to “Review internal council processes to improve efficiency. We were encouraged to hear at the Birmingham Transport Plan Delivery Plan launch that business cases will be combined into one Cabinet submission.” We appreciate there is a level of bureaucracy within the delivery of schemes and during our meetings with senior officers have been pleased to learn that the Council have been seeking to address this.

Ultimately, we will not achieve the Birmingham Transport Plan at today’s pace. We do not have confidence in the council’s transport project delivery function. As the Council appears to be bumbling along, passing funding deadlines as if they were meaningless, Birmingham will miss out on hefty funding pots.

Our letter to the Chair of this Committee

In conjunction with our letter to the Council, we wrote to the Chair of this Committee to request that the delivery of active travel projects be included as part of the Committee’s work programme. It is important that this is scrutinised properly and recommendations made for improving the Council’s delivery, from both looking inwardly and outwardly to other cities, regions and countries where active travel projects have been and are being delivered successfully..

In 2013, the then-Transport, Connectivity and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held an inquiry called: Transforming Urban Movement through Cycling and Walking in Birmingham. While we are in a different place in terms of funding and policy for active travel, it was concerning that much of the written evidence, particularly that submitted by Pushbikes (<https://www.pushbikes.org.uk/sites/default/files/ScrutinyCtteOct2012Submission.pdf>) rings true today. Meanwhile, other areas of the country, and indeed our region, far exceeds Birmingham for delivering active travel infrastructure.

We thank the Committee for selecting this topic for its work programme, as well as the Task and Finish Group’s member’s time and the time of officers. We look forward to hearing its recommendations and would encourage the Task and Finish Group to submit its report to Full Council.

Our evidence submission

Our evidence centres around the consultation and communication of schemes. This is where we directly experience the service the Council delivers.

Showing how schemes have been funded

There is a general misunderstanding with how things are funded because funding streams are too complicated. The Government is requiring a “Funded by UK Government” logo to help the public identify centrally-funded projects. When the UK was part of the EU, projects funded by them required a logo. See Appendix 2 for examples.

In Birmingham, for projects funded through the Brums Breathes Fund, the Council is requiring use of a new mark. It might be more helpful to directly associate projects with funding from the Clean Air Zone if the Brum Breathes Fund instead said “Funded by Birmingham’s Clean Air Zone”. This would create a direct link between CAZ monies and local infrastructure projects.

Similarly, branding the new package of schemes as the Birmingham Cycling Revolution 2 is a wasted pursuit. This is something pursued by every level of government but in practice just means they end up spending money marketing their pet project name when their residents just want infrastructure they can use.

Communication and consultation throughout the design and delivery of schemes

Communication of scheme updates

Updates about schemes are provided through:

- Cycle Stakeholders Group
- Birmingham City Council’s website
- Birmingham Connected newsletter
- Birmingham Be Heard consultation platform
- Birmingham City Council committee management information system (board papers)
- West Midlands Combined Authority committee management information system (board papers)

Cycle Stakeholders Group

Better Streets for Birmingham is part of the Cycle Stakeholders Group. The group met infrequently but several times a year and was given scheme updates from the Birmingham Connected team. For

example, a scheme might have been redesigned and about to have traffic regulation orders published online.

The meetings were generally a good source of information, however scheme updates were often already out of date and based on whether the Birmingham Connected team had managed to talk to project teams in the office. Any further questions from stakeholders generally could not be answered during meetings.

The last meeting of the Cycling Stakeholders Group was held on 14 December 2022. A subsequent meeting on 8 March 2023 was cancelled and no meetings have been scheduled since.

A stakeholder group workshop to review a refresh of the city's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan was held on 16 February 2023. The group was also invited to the Birmingham Transport Summit on 26 April 2023.

The stakeholder group was told that it would be involved in co-design workshops for major schemes like the A38 and A45, which are being delivered as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2022-27. This is yet to materialise and it is unclear as to whether this will be early public engagement or the chance to have a material impact on the design approach based on local knowledge.

Birmingham City Council's website

The Council website is not kept up to date with scheme updates. For example, the Bristol Road enhancement scheme (converting the pop-up cycle lane in Selly Oak to a permanent lane) still points users to fill in a consultation that closed in July 2022.

The website should be kept up to date with all funded schemes. This section of the website is also hard to navigate as schemes are not called the same thing depending on which system you look at.

We would like to see a page for each scheme available on the Council's website, kept up-to-date with project updates as they become available. It would also help for the Council to have web content that explains the process of delivering a scheme.

Birmingham Connected newsletter

While a good update about transport in the city, this tends to promote consultations, roadworks, initiatives and finished schemes to the public. It is not so good for stakeholders who want to be closer to the details.

Birmingham Be Heard consultation platform

Consultations for schemes are published on the Birmingham Be Heard platform, which is a platform called Citizen Space developed by a company called Delib. Consultations become mixed up with other Council initiatives. Transport consultations are also for different reasons: strategy, scheme details, specific elements of in-progress schemes, statutory Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultations, or post-delivery feedback surveys. It is not unusual for one scheme to have several consultation pages throughout its lifecycle.

The Council does not utilise many of the functionalities available on Citizen Space. These include using mapping, publishing responses as they're submitted (and moderated). The platform provider has a demonstration website for these features: <https://uk-geo-demo.citizenspace.com/>. The Council uses Citizen Space to run survey-based consultations. We would urge the Council to review this approach.

It can take years for the summary of consultations to be uploaded, whereas it is much faster for other parts of the Council. It has previously been possible for the Council to upload a consultation report within two months.

Table: Schemes with active travel elements consultation turnaround time, data collated from Birmingham Be Heard consultation platform

| Scheme | Consultation deadline | Results published | Lead time | No. of responses | Scheme complete? |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| A38 Cycleway (Selly Oak to City Centre) | 24 March 2017 | 16 August 2017 | 5 months | 1,000 | Yes - June 2019 |
| A34 Cycleway (Perry Barr to City Centre) | 7 April 2017 | 27 March 2019, no details published | 23 months | 137 | Yes - June 2019 |
| Dudley Road Transport Improvements 1 | 31 October 2018 | 17 November 2020 | 25 months | 168 | Partially |
| Highway Improvement Scheme at Pershore Road / Priory Road / Edgbaston Road Junction | 09 November 2018 | 11 November 2021 | 36 months | 146 | Partially |
| A34 Perry Barr Highway Improvement Scheme | 2 August 2019 | 14 October 2019 | 2 months | 1,590 | Yes - July 2022 |
| Selly Oak Canal Ramp (Canals and Rivers Trust) | 16 August 2019 | Not published | | | Withdrawn |
| Birmingham Transport Plan | 9 April 2020 | 01 June 2021 | 14 months | 619 | N/A |
| Dudley Road Transport Improvements 2 | 15 December 2020 | 13 April 2021 | 5 months | 104 | Partially |

| Scheme | Consultation deadline | Results published | Lead time | No. of responses | Scheme complete? |
|--|---------------------------|--|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| Birmingham City Centre Segments | 10 September 2021 | Not published | | | Partially |
| A45 cycle lane | 30 November 2021 | 12 May 2022 | 6 months | 202 | No |
| A457 Jewellery Quarter to City Hospital cycle lane | 30 November 2021 | February 2022, PDF uploaded on 12 May 2022 | 6 months | 140 | No |
| Cannon Hill Park to Moseley cycle lane | 3 December 2021 | 11 February 2022 | 3 months | 546 | No |
| Lozells Places for People | 17 December 2021 | Not published | | | No |
| Kings Heath local centre public consultation | 10 June 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| Tangmere Drive - proposed controlled pedestrian and cycle crossing | 24 June 2022 | Not published | | | Yes - July 2023 |
| Selly Oak pop-up lane | 8 July 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - pink area | 22 September 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - light blue area | 26 September 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - grey area | 30 September 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| Moseley local centre public consultation | 30 September 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - west of High Street | 4 October 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - green and cream areas | 5 October 2022 | Not published | | | No |
| A435 Alcester Road South Bus Priority | 25 November 2022 | 14 April 2023 | 5 months | 1,164 | No |
| City Centre & Snow Hill public realm improvements - Phases 2 and 3A | 6 March 2023 | Not published | | | No |
| Bournville and Cotteridge Places for People (consultation) | 3 June 2023 | Not published | | | No |
| Bournville and Cotteridge Places for People (initial engagement) | August and September 2022 | Not published | | | No |

It is important that consultation analysis is uploaded quickly. It helps to show that residents responding have been acknowledged.

We would like to see a commitment that all consultation findings will be uploaded to Birmingham Be Heard and the Council's website within three months of a consultation closing.

Emergency Active Travel Fund online platform

This platform is now largely defunct but was previously used for engagement as part of Emergency Active Travel Fund tranche 1 and 2 schemes. This platform has more functionality and there appeared to be more engagement and regular updates through it.

Birmingham City Council's committee management information system (CMIS)

Formal board papers are submitted through the CMIS and this is what Better Streets for Birmingham has been relying on since stakeholder meetings ceased.

Sometimes it can be hard to interpret these documents as they are operational documents for the Council - so not written to be understood by the public - and incorrect interpretations can be made. Sometimes things are not well-explained and there are mismatches for what schemes are called.

West Midlands Combined Authority's CMIS

Regional updates on schemes are given via the WMCA's Transport Delivery and Scrutiny Committee. These are infrequent and often the information is out of date due to board paper governance.

While board papers are essential for decision-making and scrutiny, we ask that plain English versions are made available, ideally through regularly updated scheme pages on the Council's website.

Consultations

Consultations are critical for ensuring that views are heard about schemes. Schemes make changes to the city's communities and how residents navigate their everyday life.

The Council is committed to public consultations as part of its Constitution. There is no prescribed method or approach for consultation. The Local Government Association (LGA) has written guidance on how to run consultations:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/communications-and-community-engagement/resident-communications/understanding-views-2>.

Previously, the cabinet member for Transport has stressed the need for consultation as a democratic organisation. Better Streets for Birmingham agrees with this, however has argued that consultation must be far more efficient with a step change in how projects commission, run, report and respond to research. This is evidenced in the earlier table of consultation turnaround times.

The current administration has a democratic mandate to implement the Birmingham Transport Plan. Therefore, the question of whether schemes should happen has been answered. Consultations should now be used to understand problems communities face and for feedback to iterate designs based on lived experience.

Responding to a consultation

Responding to consultations can be difficult as it requires a level of skill to understand scheme drawings, associated standards such as Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20), as well as the constraints in place.

Schemes are usually poorly explained, which leads to confusion, rejection and sessions for questions being taken up by basic questions that could have been part of the accompanying information. In the Bournville and Cotteridge Places for People consultation, lots of people were confused about the scheme's aims, which led to opposition despite acknowledging the need for less through-traffic.

While most of the time there is an overview plan to point out the changes, it would be useful to have explanatory notes to explain why a design decision has been made. For example, a section is a shared path because the highway is too narrow at this point to continue the protected cycle lane.

There are drop-in sessions both online and in-person, but often the scheme designers are not able to answer questions about elements of the scheme. In Places for People drop-in sessions, many

residents noted that the people answering their questions were not familiar with the local area or streets they were changing. This is important to rectify as being able to discuss local needs can go some way towards persuading people about the benefits of a scheme. Often the timing of these sessions are inconvenient for workers and parents, though online consultations have made this easier.

Usually, consultations have designs that are far too developed for meaningful change. We tend to only see minor changes which materialise during the Full Business Case report or the Traffic Regulation Order statutory consultation. Any schemes put out for another consultation have a long delay between consultations and little communication as to why this delay has happened.

Alternative consultation models

We would like to see Birmingham City Council iterate its approach to consultation for transport schemes. We have looked at alternative models and provided a summary.

London Cycling Campaign report

In 2020, the London Cycling Campaign and Urban Movement made recommendations for improving consultations in a report called *How to Talk to People About the Future of Their Streets*: https://s3.amazonaws.com/lcc_production_bucket/files/13729/original.pdf?1596021956. The report likens current consultations as referenda given they essentially offer a vote on a single, or series of options. Their suggested approach is more collaborative with the public.

Their recommendation was to run design and consultation in ten steps:

1. Brief and purpose
2. The Team
3. Data, data, data
4. Ask the residents (and businesses)
5. Create principles
6. Create scheme options
7. Engage
8. Create a final scheme
9. Build, monitor, benefits
10. Rapid mitigation and roll-out

Representative opinion polling

Currently, the Council asks for public opinion on its presented schemes through the consultation platform. This enables people who are opposed to any active travel measures in the UK to create a national campaign to oppose local schemes, which skews the results. The same can be said for

pro-scheme campaigners. The question of implementing schemes in line with the Birmingham Transport Plan was answered in the 2022 local election.

Representative opinion polling, for example through YouGov, could help to understand the community's acceptance of the radicalness of a scheme. This could be done after a conversation is held with the community to understand its challenges and needs.

Engagement with stakeholders through the current scheme delivery process

We would like to see early engagement with stakeholder groups and road users. This could take place after the constraints are understood through surveys and be part of a collaborative workshop. By having early conversations, it would help to de-risk the project from being rubbished by both people sympathetic to the scheme and those opposing it because sticking points could be designed out early on.

Co-design is an emerging approach to consultation in the public sector, however to co-design is to have an equitable relationship between the scheme designers, funders and road users. Co-design decisions must be made in the room and there must not be a power imbalance during these workshops. Better Streets for Birmingham fears that the planned co-design workshops would not achieve this.

Community-led consultation

Better Streets for Birmingham has recently engaged with neighbourhoods by funding and taking ward maps to community events. Improvements raised are being sent to ward councillors and Birmingham Connected. This engagement helps officers and councillors to understand where the most pressing issues are for road safety and anti-social behaviour. However, Better Streets for Birmingham does not have the volunteer resource to visit all wards or be present at all local events.

During the pandemic, the Council opened an online map for residents to submit feedback about their streets. It was closed because the Council didn't want residents to feel that because the issue had been identified, they would be funded and fixed.

However, this is a useful mass engagement tool and would help councillors to identify improvements for the Minor Ward Measures Fund and Brum Breathes Fund. By building community interest in what could improve communities, especially the ability for residents to upvote or downvote each other's suggestions, it empowers the community to take ownership of local issues and is a good starting point for changes to neighbourhoods. This type of consultation

would also help the approach outlined in the draft Birmingham Road Safety Strategy, which takes a neighbourhood approach to road safety interventions.

We would urge the Council to reopen this type of online platform with a disclaimer that suggestions are not guaranteed to be implemented.

Digital consultation approaches in other authorities

Most authorities have developed different approaches using one of three platforms: Commonplace, Citizen Space (Delib) or EngagementHQ (Granicus). Birmingham uses Citizen Space, however previously used Commonplace for Emergency Active Travel Fund schemes.

Where this has been done well, authorities have provided a single webpage for the scheme, throughout its design, development and delivery lifecycle. This means that everything is in one place, not spread across several websites and systems.

A scheme consultation page tends to include:

- Different stages of consultation: discuss [the challenge], consult [on plans], inform [on progress] - this helps to have different types of conversations and sets expectations for respondents
- A named officer with project email address
- A project timeline with plain English stage labels, kept up-to-date with progress
- The ability to publicly ask questions at any point
- Easy-to-understand maps and explainers
- Accessible documents, including BSL videos
- The ability to plot feedback directly onto maps and plans

This level of information and interaction would greatly improve the Council's consultations and delivery process.

Conclusion

In this response, we have focused on consultation as this is where we mainly interface with scheme development. Consultation is a communication exercise and we find the Council's communication to be insufficient: schemes go into a black box and some come out of the other end with spades in the ground.

The Council must greatly improve its approach to communicating about schemes and initiatives, as well as become far more collaborative with neighbourhoods when redesigning travel. This is crucial for delivering the changes needed to achieve the aims of the Birmingham Transport Plan by 2030.

We ask the Task and Finish Group to consider recommending:

1. The Council revises their consultation approach to allow for meaningful input, a quicker pace and more informed officers and contractors for engagement events
2. Greater transparency from the Council on scheme progress, published online and kept up-to-date
3. Clearer communications about the details and benefits of schemes, written in plain English

As we have stated throughout this document, we want to see the full implementation of the Birmingham Transport Plan. This is necessary and urgent. We now need to see a comprehensive and new approach from the Council to speed up delivery.

We stand ready to help in any way we can.

Appendices

Appendix 1: 2025, not 2027 open letter



hello@betterstreetsforbirmingham.org

Councillor John Cotton,
Council Leader, Birmingham City Council

Deborah Cadman OBE,
Chief Executive Officer, Birmingham City Council

Cc: Councillor Liz Clements,
Cabinet Member for Transport, Birmingham City Council

Craig Cooper, Paul Kitson, Dr Justin Varney and Richard Brooks,
Directors on the Management team, Birmingham City Council

Sent by email

9 June 2023

2025, not 2027: Accelerating delivery with a Games mindset

Dear all,

We are writing following more incidences of road violence with three cyclists and a four-year-old child being killed, as well as two other cyclists being seriously injured.

We know that preventing road violence and improving air quality requires better cycling and walking infrastructure. This must happen concurrently with the vision for fewer cars.

In recent years, consultations have been and gone with a response time of years. For example, the Bradford Street scheme, Bristol Road (Selly Oak) enhancement scheme, and Places for People

schemes are all now overdue for delivery. When updates are shared, the schemes have barely moved forward. We need an urgent and robust assessment of the Council's delivery capacity, including for often smaller measures such as Traffic Regulation Orders.

We cannot afford to wait for new infrastructure. They are critical interventions.

We share the widespread concern that the delivery of funded schemes is not quick enough. We have listened to the capacity issues, but can no longer accept this as an excuse for delay.

While the Council has published several laudable and ambitious strategies and visions for a low-traffic future, we have seen that there is a severe operational constraint within transport project teams and their consultancy partners.

The Council was able to deliver collaboratively with partners before and during the Commonwealth Games. This Games mindset needs to be harnessed again for the delivery of our shared transport ambitions.

We cannot view funding delivery deadlines as implementation dates: they must be worst-case scenarios. Schemes must be delivered by 2025, not 2027.

We challenge you, your officers and your project teams to accelerate the delivery of currently-funded schemes to 2025 at the latest.

We have three initial proposals for how timescales can be reduced:

1. Empower the Council's transport project teams to be robust with consultancy partners when designing and implementing schemes, especially when defining timescales.
2. Produce consultation reports faster. They can take six months to produce. This can and must be shorter. Consultations are an important part of scheme development, however, they can be made more efficient.

The London Cycling Campaign [published a report](#) that provides alternatives to current long-loop, summative consultations, which could further reduce timescales.

3. Review internal council processes to improve efficiency. We were encouraged to hear at the Birmingham Transport Plan Delivery Plan launch that business cases will be combined into one Cabinet submission.

The Department for Transport's 'Once in a Programme' rebaselining provides an opportunity to bring forward delivery timelines on City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) schemes

and their associated spending profiles. This is outlined in [section 10 of a report at today's WMCA Board](#) and needs to be completed ahead of September's WMCA Board meeting.

Finally, we are writing separately to the Chair of the Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee to request the inclusion of active travel schemes within the Committee's work programme. This will increase transparency and provide more comprehensive updates on the progress of schemes and, ultimately, the Birmingham Transport Plan.

We continue to advocate for the Birmingham Transport Plan and have been impressed by future visions, schemes and strategies. However, this must rapidly translate to delivery.

We need our funded schemes delivered by 2025, not 2027.

Kind regards

Martin Price and Mat MacDonald, Co-chairs, **Better Streets for Birmingham**

David Cox, Chair, **Pushbikes - The Birmingham Cycle Campaign**

Denis Murphy, **Living Streets Birmingham Group**

Shivaji Shiva, **Cycling Works Birmingham**

Birgit Kehrer, **ChangeKitchen CIC**

Naomi Fisher, **ROAM**

Extinction Rebellion (XR) Birmingham

Michael Bryant, **Moseley Missiles Cycling Club**

Fabio Henriques, **Biclas B12**

Rob Anderson, **More Than A Cyclist**

Tim Wall, **Cycling UK Local Representative for Sutton Coldfield and Erdington**

Libby Harris, **Birmingham Friends of the Earth**

David Isgrove, Chair and Radley Russell, Vice Chair, **Moseley Forum**

Steve Halliday, Chair, **Better Streets for Moseley**

Huw Davies, Chair, **Better Streets for North Moseley**

Kevin Carmody, Chair, **Better Streets for Harborne and Quinton**

Appendix 2: Funding brands



**Funded by
UK Government**



Co-funded by
the European Union