



York Civic Trust

A Walking Strategy for York

Summary Paper

April 2021

This is a summary of our report, *A Walking Strategy for York*. It is one of a set of seven modal strategy documents, written in the context of our earlier report *Towards a Transport Strategy for York*, and prepared as input to York's new Local Transport Plan, LTP4. We review walking for all purposes and for all users, but do not address walking for leisure beyond York.

The government has asked the Council to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). York has been slow to do so. Although the Council places walking first in its hierarchy of users, it does not have a programme of priority measures to support them. Our report suggests how the Council might develop a priority list, and hence contribute to the LCWIP. Walking offers access for the large majority of York's residents, enhances public health and liveability, and supports public space, heritage and the economy. By providing an alternative to the shortest car journeys, it can also help reduce carbon emissions, pollution and congestion, thus enhancing public health and safety.

There is little data on walking in York. The only regular counts are of pedestrians entering the city centre. Some data on the proportion of journeys made on foot and the frequency of walking are available from the government. Our own surveys of 2019 show that only 5% of residents never walk; 50% walk at least once a day, and 84% at least once a week. While the numbers walking appear to have remained fairly stable for some time, more information is needed to understand the role of walking in the city more fully.

In 2018, pedestrians accounted for 18% of all casualties in York, suggesting that it is a relatively safe means of travel. Of far greater concern is the quality of the pavements. Two thirds of respondents in the 2019 Age Friendly York survey were dissatisfied with pavement quality. Those who are disabled also experience difficulties, particularly where blue badge parking is restricted. Following the recent extension of the footstreets, 40% of disabled users considered that none of the alternatives offered was acceptable. We are also conscious that women, in particular, frequently feel insecure while walking during the day and even more so after dark, though there appears to be no data for York which quantifies these concerns.

We have proposed four specific targets to be achieved by 2027, and by 2037, when the Local Plan should be complete. They are: increasing walking overall by 40% (25% by 2027); sustaining the current proportion of journeys on foot, while increasing the percentage of

children walking to school to 60% (50%); reducing the percentage dissatisfied with pavement quality to 10% (20%); and improving public perception so that 75% (50%) of residents consider York a convenient and safe place to walk. We would also like to see a target set for satisfaction with the access provided for disabled people.

There is limited national guidance on design for pedestrians, but the 2015 report *Designing for Walking* offers helpful guidance. Based on it we have reviewed some 20 measures which the Council might consider. The Council should conduct a comprehensive review of the existing walking network, ensuring that all significant origins and destinations are served by direct walking links, and assessing the quality of provision using the *Pedestrian Environment Review System*. We suggest that these priorities might be further tested at ward level using the *Community Standards Audit*. We also encourage the Council regularly to consult on its proposals with WalkYork and the York Disability Rights Forum.

Action needs to be taken to tackle the backlog in footway maintenance, by developing a priority list for action and allocating an increased budget. All walking routes should be sustainably lit, and remedial action taken where there are concerns over personal security. Footway widths should be reviewed with the aim that all footways are a minimum of 1.8m wide, and 2.0m in and close to the city centre. When powers to control pavement parking become available, the Council should adopt a default position that pavement parking will be prohibited except where there is little alternative. We propose that the Council should review its standards for the provision of controlled crossings, its decision to use near-side signals at signalised crossings, and its provision of guardrails to restrict pedestrian movement.

Within the city centre, we recommend that the current extended footstreet network be retained, and in due course repaved, with all but light goods vehicles banned to reduce pavement damage and intimidation of pedestrians. We propose a green disability badge to allow those who are most disabled to pass automatically enforced access points. We would like to see the Council provide seating at no more than 50m intervals, and promote the Take a Seat initiative to extend the provision of toilet facilities. We welcome the proposal for a continuous riverside walkway, and suggest considering a new route from the station via Memorial Gardens and Museum Gardens to the city centre. The barrier which the inner ring road places on access to the centre needs to be reduced, by providing crossings in a single stage at all junctions, and allocating more time to pedestrians. Elsewhere in the city, pedestrians should be given priority at side road crossings and roundabouts, opportunities should be sought for more pedestrian streets in local centres and for additional orbital routes. Direct protected routes are needed from all villages and new developments.

Enhancements for pedestrians should prove popular, and need stronger political support. The Council should appoint a specialist Pedestrian Officer to oversee the programme. Given its cost-effectiveness, the Council needs to specify and support a revenue budget sufficient to enable the programme to be funded, maintained and effectively enforced.

Our companion strategy for managing the road network is crucial to enabling these improvements to be made. Our strategies for managing car use and for improving cycling and public transport need to be developed to complement our walking strategy, to ensure that each sustainable mode is as effective as possible in attracting people out of cars.