

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

A response from Cycling UK to the consultation on the White Paper

INTRODUCTION

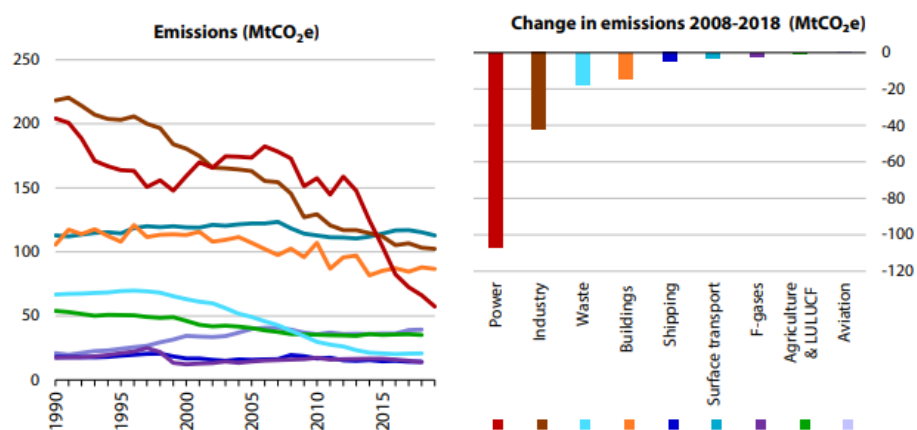
Cycling UK was founded in 1878 and has over 70,000 members. Historically known as 'CTC' or the 'Cyclists' Touring Club', Cycling UK's central charitable mission is to make cycling a safe, accessible, enjoyable and 'normal' activity for people of all ages and abilities. Our interests cover cycling both as a form of day-to-day transport and as a leisure activity, which can deliver health, economic, environmental, safety and quality of life benefits, both for individuals and society.

Our response starts by outlining the vital role of planning policy in tackling the environmental, health and other impacts of transport. It documents how the planning system currently fails to support cycling and other sustainable transport, and instead promotes car-dependent development, contrary to the Government's aim to decarbonise transport and its wider legal commitments to progressively decarbonise the economy. Although the White Paper's introduction sets out admirable ambitions for sustainability, we fear that its proposals contain serious gaps and flaws, making it impossible to be confident that they would achieve the stated outcomes. If anything, they could make the situation worse.

Our key recommendations are presented on page 5, preceding our responses to the consultation questions. They suggest how the proposed planning reforms could instead result in development whose location and design supports cycling and other forms of clean and healthy travel, thereby avoiding even greater car-dependence.

The need to decarbonise transport

Planning could play a vital role in fulfilling the Government's admirable aims to decarbonise transport, as set out on its document '[Decarbonising Transport: setting the challenge](#)' (n.b. this paves the way for a Transport Decarbonisation Plan, due out later this year). Cycling UK has strongly welcomed the document's 6-point vision for a zero-emissions transport system, and particularly its stated aim that: "Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less..."



Greenhouse gas emissions by sector 1990-2018 (source: [Committee on Climate Change \(2020\)](#), p72)

The UK's territorial emissions of CO₂ in 2018 (i.e. excluding international aviation and shipping) amounted to 365.7Mt. Transport accounted for 136.8Mt of CO₂ emissions by end user, i.e. 37.4% of all domestic CO₂ emissions. Road transport was responsible for 123.3Mt of CO₂ emissions (i.e. 90% of total domestic transport emissions, and 33% of all territorial emissions). Cars accounted for 74.8Mt of these emissions.¹

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875508/final-greenhouse-gas-emissions-tables-2018.xlsx, table 20.

While other sectors (notably energy) have made good progress in reducing greenhouse gases, the transport sector's emissions have changed little since 1990. Transport's share of total greenhouse gas emissions (by end user) has therefore [increased steadily](#), from 18% in 1990 to 31% in 2018.²

Other reasons to reduce car dependence

Other compelling reasons to reduce our dependence on motorised travel include:

- *Congestion*: This is estimated to cost the UK economy [£30 billion a year](#).
- *Air pollution*: Pollution, particularly nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is estimated to contribute to [between 28,000 and 36,000 early deaths annually](#) in the UK, at an [economic cost of £20bn or more](#). Road transport is a substantial contributor to these deaths. The UK Government has faced several [successful legal challenges](#) over its failure to reduce pollution to within legal limits.
- *Road danger*: 1,782 people were killed and another 158,596 were reported as injured (25,484 of them seriously) on Britain's roads in 2018. The economic costs of these casualties was estimated to be [£35bn](#).
- *Physical inactivity*: Around [11.8m women and 8.3m men are insufficiently active](#) to meet recommended guidelines. Physical inactivity increases the risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, dementia, fractures and depression, while increasing all-cause mortality by 30%. It is estimated to cost the UK [£7.4bn annually](#).

In response to the Government's recent consultation on its Transport Decarbonisation Plan, [Cycling UK's response](#) (see [full](#) and [summary](#) versions) therefore calls for policies aimed at:

- Reducing travel overall – e.g. investing in broadband to reduce the need to travel for business meetings etc; and...
- Reducing the lengths of journeys – e.g. by planning and locating new developments such that housing, employment and retail opportunities are closer to one another (i.e. “destination shifting”); as well as...
- Enabling people to switch from car travel to healthier and more sustainable alternatives (i.e. “mode shifting”).

The planning system needs to support all of these aims. Development needs to be concentrated in places with good public transport provision, in order to avoid car dependence, and the resulting poor conditions for cycling and walking (as well as for public transport itself). Conversely, if development takes place in car-dependent locations (i.e. those without good public transport), this inevitably creates pressures for car-dependent design, e.g. with large amounts of land being given over to roadspace and car parking. This not only reduces the opportunities to provide greenspace and a pleasant urban realm, but it also results in lower residential densities. That in turn deprives public transport of the density of demand that it needs to be economically viable, while also increasing the length of walking and cycling journeys. It therefore becomes far harder to achieve the '[15 Minute City](#)' or the '[20 Minute Neighbourhood](#)' (where people can meet their main everyday needs within a short walk from home, with good options for cycling and/or public transport). These concepts are increasingly seen as being essential for creating sustainable, healthy and attractive living environments.

Car-dependent development has for too long been the norm. The Government's planning system reforms must instead seek to create low-carbon, healthy and attractive developments, thereby fulfilling the ambitions of the White Paper's opening chapter.

² www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-1990-to-2018, table 19.

Current failings of the planning system

For decades, local and national planning policies have ostensibly supported sustainable transport objectives. Yet a recent [report by Transport for New Homes](#) found that:

- Most housing developments are linked with road improvements– with locations often being chosen specifically to provide developer funding for roads. Road access is often seen as more important than proximity to town centre facilities or public transport.
- Large areas of land in new developments are given over to road and car parking, with little space left for tree planting, green space or an attractive public realm.
- As a result, residential densities are often as low as 20 dwellings per hectare. This worsens car dependence, by increasing the walking or cycling distances to key destinations, and by making demand for public transport services less concentrated.
- Conversely, walking and cycling routes, where they exist, are often out of the way, unlit and poorly surfaced. Good walking, cycling and public transport connections to other nearby destinations are even rarer.

Notable exceptions do exist, such as Leeds's [Climate Innovation District](#) and the [Marmalade Lane development](#) in South Cambridgeshire, showing what can be done. Yet the fact that they are exceptional proves the point.

Concerns about the White Paper

It is as yet unclear whether the White Paper's policies will address these endemic problems. However, there are good grounds to fear that, as things stand, it is unlikely to do so:

- It hardly mentions transport, and "sustainable transport" is not mentioned at all, despite its prominence in MHCLG's 2019 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (see chapter 9).
- It proposes removing local authorities' existing 'duty to cooperate', without giving any rationale for this, and without suggesting how else strategic consideration might be given to most appropriate development locations from a sustainable transport perspective.
- There is no certainty that the definitions of 'growth', 'renewal' and 'protected' areas will guide housing or other developments towards locations which support sustainable transport patterns, rather than car-dependence.
- Similarly, it is unclear how the proposed single sustainability test will reflect the likely transport patterns arising from a proposed development location, and whether these support or conflict with sustainability, health and other objectives.
- The reduced scrutiny of planning applications is likely to erode (rather than strengthen) the capacity of both local authorities and communities to ensure that developments are designed in accordance with sustainable transport principles.
- The White Paper's proposals for a new, simplified, 'Infrastructure Levy' could be highly beneficial, however it is unclear how much funding it is likely to raise, or whether it will be used to deliver sustainable transport provision or road schemes.

Without clarity about the proposed National Design Code, the proposed new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the national sustainability test, the infrastructure levy and the digital mapping process, it is impossible to know whether or not the White Paper's proposals will foster the sustainable transport needed for attractive, safe, healthy, sustainable and economically vibrant local communities.

However, the one tool that has been published – namely the proposed algorithm for allocating housing – does not inspire confidence. Its underlying assumption is that the need for increased housing in an area can be identified by comparing house prices and average earnings in that area. Where there is a high ratio of median house prices to median wages for employment, this is assumed to signify poor house price affordability, and hence a need for additional housing in the area, so as to bring down house prices.

This approach has faced strong criticism from groups concerned with the environment, planning architecture,³ and [from MPs](#) from across the political spectrum. It takes no account of the fact that high house prices in leafy green-belt areas reflect an environmental quality which needs to be protected for other reasons (e.g. the retention of protected habitats, landscapes etc). Nor is it reasonable to assume that people who live in these areas are earning wages in the local area – for instance, they may well be high-earners at London-based workplaces, or retired. Nor does this approach help to regenerate economies in left-behind towns, in accordance with the Government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda.

Above all though, the resulting developments would be highly car-dependent, due to a lack of sustainable transport options. Cycling UK believes it is critical to avoid this.

The role of cycling and walking

Cycling UK has given its strong backing to the Government’s recently published [‘Gear Change’ vision for cycling and walking](#), issued along with a new Local Transport Note LTN 1/20 on [Cycle Infrastructure Design](#). These admirable documents aim to strengthen progress on meeting the targets of the Government’s first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS1). Those targets include an aim to double ‘cycling stages’ by 2025 (based on 2013 levels – n.b. a ‘stage’ is either a whole or part of a journey made by one transport mode, so a ‘cycling stage’ could for instance involve cycling to a train station). It also aims to increase walking overall, and particularly walking to school. A second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) is due for publication in Spring 2021.

The section of ‘Gear Change’ relating to development planning is worth quoting in full:

***“We will ensure that all new housing and business developments are built around making sustainable travel, including cycling and walking, the first choice for journeys.*”**

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. We expect sustainable transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that opportunities to promote cycling and walking are pursued. Planning policies should already provide for high quality cycling and walking networks, green spaces and green routes, and supporting facilities such as cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans).”

“While many local plans already say the right things, they are not always followed consistently in planning decisions. Developments often do little or nothing meaningful to enable cycling and walking. Sometimes they make cycling and walking provision worse. We want new developments to be easily and safely accessible and navigable by foot and bike, and to make existing cycling and walking provision better. We will work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and the Local Government Association to place cycling and walking provision at the heart of local plan making and decision taking for new developments. One of Active Travel England’s functions will be as a statutory consultee within the planning system to press for adequate cycling and walking provision in all developments of over a certain threshold, and provide expert advice on ways in which such provision can be improved.”

“We will work with Active Travel England and other key stakeholders to ensure that the importance of securing high quality cycling and walking provision is embedded within the planning system. We will also consider the role the emerging National Model Design Code and revisions to the Manual for Streets can play in delivering high quality, accessible, secure and safe cycle storage.”

‘Gear Change’ then goes on to say that:

³ See www.ribai.com/culture/planning-reform-white-paper-permitted-development-rights-riba-president, www.cpre.org.uk/opinions/planning-reforms-an-attack-on-local-democracy, www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2020/august/planning-reforms-could-slow-house-building-in-england-if-not-adequately-resourced-warns-rtpi/, and <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/planning-reforms-are-bad-news-communities-and-environment>

“Active Travel England will examine all applications for funding and refuse any that are not compliant with the new national standards. It will inspect finished schemes and ask for funds to be returned for any which have not been completed as promised, or which have not started or finished by the stipulated times. [It will] also begin to inspect, and publish annual reports on, highway authorities, whether or not they have received funding from us, grading them on their performance on active travel and identifying particularly dangerous failings in their highways for cyclists and pedestrians.”

This is all admirable, yet neither the Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance nor the proposed role of Active Travel England are mentioned in MHCLG’s Planning White Paper. Conversely, the White Paper does mention “our wider vision for cycling and walking in England” (see p46), but instead suggests that this will be supported by its proposed ‘National Design Code’ along with a revised ‘Manual for Streets’ – neither of which appears in either of DfT’s new cycling and walking documents. These inconsistencies appear symptomatic of a wider failure to integrate transport and planning policy.

Key points

Cycling UK believes the White Paper’s proposals need to achieve the following outcomes:

- Planning policy should take full account of the transport implications of proposed development locations, and their CO₂ and other impacts (environmental, health etc), with the aim of promoting sustainable travel and avoiding car-dependent developments. The proposed sustainability assessment should take account of accessibility to key destinations, making use of the Department for Transport’s [Journey Time Statistics data](#). Planning authorities should be mandated to refuse planning applications in locations that are likely to become car-dependent (see our response to proposals 3 and 4 / questions 7 and 8).
- The strategic objectives set out in Homes England’s [Strategic Plan](#) should include reducing the carbon and other adverse environmental impacts of house-building (see response to proposal 13 / question 19).
- The process for securing developer contributions should fully capture the increased value of the land to be developed. It should secure the funding for whatever sustainable transport provision is needed to prevent the development becoming car-dependent (see response to proposal 19 / question 22).
- The planning and design of developments should be guided by the concepts of ‘[15 Minute Cities](#)’ or ‘[20 Minute Neighbourhoods](#)’, with road layouts and other infrastructure seeking to maximise the use of walking, cycling, public and shared transport. Provision for private car parking should be minimised accordingly (see our responses to proposals 1, 3, 4, 9, 11, 15 and 18 / questions 5, 7, 8, 13 and 17).
- New development masterplans should, from the earliest design stages, incorporate cycling and walking networks planned and designed in the Government’s excellent new [Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance](#) (or the proposed new ‘Manual for Streets’, see White Paper pp46-48, if this incorporates or subsumes the CID guidance). Local streets should be designed on the assumption of a 20mph speed limit (see our response to proposal 11 / question 17).
- Ample, secure cycle parking provision should be made at all developments (including residential developments), for both their occupants (e.g. residents or employees, as appropriate) and for visitors (see our unnumbered response to proposal 18).
- Local authorities’ powers to enforce planning conditions should be strengthened, e.g. to ensure compliance with conditions relating to sustainable and active travel provision (see unnumbered response to proposals 23 and 24).
- Active Travel England should be a statutory consultee on significant new developments (see response to proposal 5 / question 9).

QUESTIONS ON PILLAR 1: PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Proposal 1: The role of land use plans should be simplified. We propose that Local Plans should identify three types of land – Growth areas suitable for substantial development, Renewal areas suitable for development, and areas that are Protected.

Question 5: Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals?

We are very doubtful of this proposal. If it is to work, the process and criteria for identifying 'Growth', 'Renewal' and 'Protected' areas will need to reflect the aim of reducing car dependence and supporting active and sustainable travel. There is a reciprocal relationship between promoting active travel and avoiding car-dependence. Policies to support high levels of cycling and walking can help minimise car-dependence. However the opposite is also true: wider planning (as well as transport) policies to avoid car-dependence are needed if the benefits of cycling and walking are to be maximised. These include:

- high residential densities;
- the availability of key services within short walking or cycling distances, in accordance with the '[15 Minute City](#)' or '[20 Minute Neighbourhood](#)' concepts;
- an attractive urban realm;
- access to green space (these not only foster a culture of cycling and walking but also provide opportunities for children to learn to cycle);
- the provision of good public transport services.

Local Plans need to reflect all of these objectives. It is unclear to us whether or how Proposal 1 can achieve this.

If it is adopted, 'Growth' areas would need to be limited to locations that have good accessibility to public transport, or where good public transport services can be provided as part of the development. In 'Renewal' areas, the level of development is unlikely to be sufficient to fund new public transport services, hence they would need access to good existing public transport services, and/or have very low impacts in terms of the travel demand they would generate. Both 'Growth' and 'Renewal' areas would also need to be within walking or cycling range of other key destinations in the surrounding area.

Proposal 2: Development management policies established at national scale [through the National Planning Policy Framework] and an altered role for Local Plans

Question 6: Do you agree with our proposals for streamlining the development management content of Local Plans, and setting out general development management policies nationally?

We are similarly doubtful of this proposal. It would depend entirely on the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the definitions of 'Growth', 'Renewal' and 'Protected' areas, to address the issues identified in our response to Proposal 1, in order to avoid car-dependent developments. Without knowing what the NPPF will say, or how these three land-types will be defined, it is impossible to be confident that this proposal would achieve the laudable aims set out in the White Paper's introduction.

Proposal 3: Local Plans should be subject to a single statutory "sustainable development" test, replacing the existing tests of soundness.

Question 7(a): Do you agree with our proposals to replace existing legal and policy tests for Local Plans with a consolidated test of "sustainable development", which would include consideration of environmental impact?

We are unsure about this proposal, as it depends entirely on whether the proposed new 'sustainable development' test proves capable of identifying truly low-carbon, resilient and sustainable locations for development, and preventing it in car-dependent locations. Without information on how the test will work, we cannot be confident of this Proposal.

Our wariness is heightened by concerns over the serious flaws in the proposed algorithm for establishing housing requirements (see Proposal 4 and our answer to Question 8(a)). If the 'sustainable development' test proves to be similarly flawed, we would certainly object to it.

Question 7(b): How could strategic, cross-boundary issues be best planned for in the absence of a formal Duty to Cooperate?

We do not support the removal of the Duty to Cooperate. We note that the White Paper offers no explanation for this proposal, nor any consultation question inviting comments on it.

The best way to plan for strategic, cross-boundary issues is to reintroduce a process for strategic planning at a city-regional level, perhaps under organisational arrangements such as those [proposed by the County Councils Network](#). These arrangements could complement proposals to replace two-tier authorities with unitary authorities.

Proposal 4: A standard method for establishing housing requirement figures which ensures enough land is released in the areas where affordability is worst, to stop land supply being a barrier to enough homes being built. The housing requirement would factor in land constraints and opportunities to more effectively use land, including through densification where appropriate, to ensure that the land is identified in the most appropriate areas and housing targets are met.

Question 8(a): Do you agree that a standard method for establishing housing requirements (that takes into account constraints) should be introduced?

We are very doubtful of this proposal, particularly in the light of the method proposed in the separate consultation on [Changes to the Planning System](#). This proposal ignores geography: i.e. it takes no account of where jobs are located, where there is good access to public transport and vital local services, and where space is available for development.

Instead, it works on the simplistic assumptions that the most suitable places for housing are essentially those which have the greatest gap between house prices and earnings, and consequently that increased house-building in these areas would improve the affordability of local housing. It therefore determines the affordability of existing housing in an area (and hence the need to build more homes in that area) using a ratio of median house prices to workplace-based median earnings.

This approach has been strongly criticised by MPs from across the political spectrum in a [parliamentary debate on the proposals](#) on 8th October. MPs cited examples relating to their constituencies to show how this formula would lead to increased house-building in the overheated economies of London and the south-east, while reducing it in northern towns and cities. As Bob Seely MP said in introducing the debate:

"If levelling up means anything, it surely implies an integrated plan for infrastructure, jobs and housing to revive overlooked northern and midland towns and to stop the endless drift of jobs and opportunities to the south, the shires and the suburbs. I support levelling up 100%, but broadly speaking, the danger in the way the new targets have been shaped is that the biggest housing increases will be in rural shires and suburbs, and the biggest falls will be in the urban north and midlands. The worst of all worlds would be to hollow out our cities, urbanise our suburbs and suburbanise the countryside, yet I fear that that is what we might accidentally achieve. That is not levelling up; it is concreting out, hence this debate."

Instead of strengthening local economies (and hence property values) in 'left-behind' areas, the White Paper effectively proposes to reduce house prices by building new ones in completely different parts of the country, mostly at the opposite end of it. This makes no sense, from either a social, economic or environmental perspective.

In many rural areas (particularly National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONBs), house prices are high exactly because these are areas with (a) fine natural environments and (b) relatively limited employment opportunities. Those who own expensive properties in these areas often do not work in them – this is particularly true in the National Parks and AONBs of the South East of England. Hence the ratio of median house prices to median workplace-based earnings is a very poor indicator of whether increased housebuilding would help people to afford both to live and to obtain work in these areas.

On the contrary, these are places where increased housebuilding would inevitably destroy high-quality rural environments that are valued not only by those who enjoy recreational cycling, but by all who appreciate the health and well-being benefits of our countryside. There is undoubtedly a need to increase access to the countryside, particularly for people from the most disadvantaged communities, where lack of access to green space is associated with high levels of physical and mental ill-health. The Environment Agency has recently [documented the value of access to green space](#), concluding (among other things) that *“Equality of access to, and connection with, a healthy natural environment would save billions of pounds in healthcare costs and reduced economic activity every year.”*

However, the way to increase access to green space is certainly not to build all over it.

This approach is even more problematic though in terms of promoting cycling as day-to-day travel, and thus as a means to reduce car-dependence. Rural areas are far less likely to support high levels of day-to-day walking and cycling, or to have good existing or potential public transport service provision. Hence the dispersal of housing and other development to more rural areas is likely to exacerbate car-dependence, and hence the climate and other crises (congestion, pollution, road danger and inactivity-related ill-health) associated with it.

The aim of planning policy should surely be to strengthen the economies of 'left-behind' towns – and hence to boost property values in those locations – by bringing sustainable employment opportunities to those communities. As well as strengthening community cohesion, this approach would be much more in line with the Government's vision for a net-zero transport future, in which “we will use our cars less”, because we live in places where we can easily walk, cycle or use public transport to reach employment, educational and other amenities in our local areas.

Question 8(b): Do you agree that affordability and the extent of existing urban areas are appropriate indicators of the quantity of development to be accommodated?

Regardless of whether housing is allocated by the standard method suggested in Proposal 4, we agree that the extent of existing urban areas should be an indicator of their capacity to absorb increased housing – though it should not be the only one.

We disagree though with using affordability as an indicator of how much housing should be provided in an area. As explained in response to question 8(a), this approach would result in the destruction of valued rural landscapes and habitats, while failing to regenerate the economies of 'left-behind' towns and cities, or to improve access to countryside for the benefit of the nation's health and well-being. It would also undermine the aim of reducing car-dependence, as part of a low-carbon transport future.

Proposal 5: Areas identified as Growth areas (suitable for substantial development) would automatically be granted outline planning permission for the principle of development, while automatic approvals would also be available for pre-established development types in other areas suitable for building.

Question 9(a): Do you agree that there should be automatic outline permission for areas for substantial development (Growth areas) with faster routes for detailed consent?

We are very doubtful of this proposal, as it rests on 'Growth areas' being defined in a way that supports reductions in car-dependence. It could work if 'Growth areas' were limited to non-car-dependent development locations. However, if their definition allowed the widespread continuation of development in car-dependent areas, then granting automatic outline planning permission in these areas would merely increase our rate of unsustainable development. This would be contrary to the aims of the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan and its aspirations for a 'net zero' economy by 2050.

We are also concerned that this proposal could undermine the commitment made in the Government's recently-published ['Gear Change' vision for cycling and walking](#), that the proposed new body 'Active Travel England', namely that *"One of Active Travel England's functions will be as a statutory consultee within the planning system to press for adequate cycling and walking provision in all developments of over a certain threshold, and provide expert advice on which provision can be improved."* This role needs to be incorporated into the process for determining planning permission.

Question 9(b): Do you agree with our proposals above for the consent arrangements for Renewal and Protected areas?

We are similarly doubtful of this proposal, as it rests on 'Protected areas' being defined in such a way that they support reductions in car-dependence. We reiterate our concern that this proposal could undermine the Government's 'Gear Change' commitments to make Active Travel England a statutory consultee for larger planning applications.

The proposed 'fast-track to beauty' in these areas (see also proposal 14) is superficially appealing. Yet, regrettably, we absolutely cannot support it, as it risks giving the green light to unsustainable developments in car-dependent locations, simply because they are deemed to be 'beautiful'. We obviously want to support 'beautiful' development, however this should not be used to justify fast-tracking developments in unsustainable locations.

Question 9(c): Do you think there is a case for allowing new settlements to be brought forward under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime?

We are similarly doubtful of this proposal, as it relies on the NSIP regime ruling out significant development in car-dependent locations. We are far from confident that this would happen, given the flawed thinking behind the proposed algorithm for determining housing requirements (see Proposal 4 and our response to Question 8(a)). We also highlight once again the Government's commitment to give Active Travel England a statutory consultee role in responding to larger planning applications (see ['Gear Change'](#) p26), and question how this would happen under this proposal.

Proposal 7: Local Plans should be visual and map-based, standardised, based on the latest digital technology, and supported by a new template.

Question 11: Do you agree with our proposals for accessible, web-based Local Plans?

Yes. The introduction of map-based digital tools following a standard template has the potential to greatly improve public access to, understanding of and participation in Local Plans – albeit with the caveat that they should not be undermined by Proposal 8. As it stands though, this is probably the most welcome proposal in the White Paper.

These tools should provide open source data in standardised formats, so that Local Plan proposals (such as the designation of land to 'growth', 'renewal' and 'protected' areas) can be assessed in a nationwide context. Currently, very little information is available nationally on spatial aspects of planning, such as the spatial distribution of sites designated for new homes. Neither is there is a nationally available source of data on planning applications. Standardised open source data on Local Plan policies, the spatial bounds of proposed 'growth', 'renewal' and 'protected' areas, housing targets, the results of sustainability tests, and plans for supporting infrastructure, would be invaluable, enabling better planning and engagement.

Digital tools should be used not only for the visualisation of Local Plan policies, but also for genuine public participation and engagement in the plan-making process. Examples from similar contexts of successful public engagement tools include the [Commonplace platform](#) and www.widenmypath.com.

It is important that maps should not be limited to a single Local Plan area, but should show the wider geographic context, including relevant features of neighbouring authorities. Providing the sustainable transport infrastructure and other services needed to enable high quality development will often mean looking beyond the boundaries of a given planning authority and cooperating with neighbouring authorities. A principle of cooperation must remain within the Local Plan process.

Proposal 8: Local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate will be required through legislation to meet a statutory timetable for key stages of the process, and we will consider what sanctions there would be for those who fail to do so.

Question 12: Do you agree with our proposals for a 30 month statutory timescale for the production of Local Plans?

We cannot comment on this from the perspective of planning authorities or other public bodies. However, we are very concerned that this proposal effectively involves removing the Examination stage of the Local Plan process, given that outline planning consents will generally no longer be required, and that the Local Plan will become the sole opportunity for formal public involvement in plan-making. We are particularly concerned that it would be up to the Inspector to decide whether objectors would have a genuine 'right to be heard', or whether this might merely involve accepting their written representations.

Proposal 9: Neighbourhood Plans should be retained as an important means of community input, and we will support communities to make better use of digital tools

Question 13(a): Do you agree that Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system?

Yes, neighbourhood plans should be retained. National policy (e.g. as set out in the NPPF) should encourage them to aim to create '[20 Minute Neighbourhoods](#)' or '[15 Minute Cities](#)', as appropriate.

Question 13(b): How can the neighbourhood planning process be developed to meet our objectives, such as the use of digital tools and reflecting community preferences about design?

The use of digital mapping tools has great potential to improve public understanding, participation and engagement in neighbourhood planning. The tools themselves should be open source, as this will allow the tools themselves to evolve in response to user needs.

It should also be made clear that existing Neighbourhood Plans will remain valid, given the progress already been made in many localities.

QUESTIONS ON PILLAR 2: PLANNING FOR BEAUTIFUL AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES

Unnumbered proposal: We will publish a National Model Design Code to supplement the guide, setting out more detailed parameters for development in different types of location: issues such as the arrangement and proportions of streets and urban blocks, positioning and hierarchy of public spaces, successful parking arrangements, placement of street trees, and high quality cycling and walking provision, in line with our wider vision for cycling and walking in England. It will be accompanied by worked examples, and complement a revised and consolidated Manual for Streets.

Proposal 11: To make design expectations more visual and predictable, we will expect design guidance and codes to be prepared locally with community involvement, and ensure that codes are more binding on decisions about development.

Question 17: Do you agree with our proposals for improving the production and use of design guides and codes?

We are unsure of this proposal. However, if adopted, the National Model Design Code and accompanying guidance must have sustainable transport, reducing the need to travel and urban realm place-making at their heart.

They should specify minimum development densities for housing, and requirements for proximity to local services, activity hubs and employment opportunities, reflecting the principles of '[20 Minute Neighbourhoods](#)' or '[15 Minute Cities](#)'. They should also support connected street patterns (which facilitate cycling and walking) and minimise the space given over to motor vehicles, including parking space. This would allow more space (including green space) for social functions and play, which in turn fosters more of a culture of active travel.

From the specific perspective of cycle-friendly design we would welcome an updated and consolidated Manual for Streets, on the assumption that this would incorporate material from the Department for Transport's recent [Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance](#) (Local Transport Note LTN 1/20, which we strongly support). We note though that the LTN 1/20 guidance may soon need updating, partly in the light of experience and partly to reflect proposals in the draft Highway Code which is now undergoing consultation. These updates could potentially precede an updated Manual for Streets.

We particularly highlight the following elements of LTN 1/20 that would need to be incorporated into any new National Model Design Code and/or Manual for Streets :

- The planning of comprehensive cycling and walking networks, following the [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan \(LCWIP\) process](#), with a typical spacing between routes of 250m to 1km (Section 3.1, p9);
- The criteria for determining what form of cycle provision is acceptable on a given road, depending on the speed and volume of motor traffic (Figure 4.1 and accompanying text, p33);
- Cycle lane and cycle track widths, additional width needed adjacent to vertical obstructions, and design speeds for off-carriageway cycle routes (tables 5-2, 5-3 and 5-4, and accompanying text, pp42-43);
- Steepness and maximum acceptable lengths of gradients (table 5-8 and accompanying text, p48);
- Criteria for determining when cycle and pedestrian users should be separated or may share space, and minimum widths for shared routes (table 6-3 and accompanying text p67-68);

- Minimum acceptable lane widths and other carriageway features if shared with cycle users (tables 7-2 and 7-3 and accompanying text, pp76-77);
- Criteria for what types of cycle crossing are acceptable, depending on the traffic speeds and volumes, and number of lanes, on the road to be crossed (table 10-2 and accompanying text, p99-104);
- Designs for creating cycle track priority at side-road junctions (p106-110);
- The use of ‘modal filters’ (i.e. cycle-permeable road closures using bollards etc), traffic calming features and sympathetic street design to create low traffic neighbourhoods and to avoid rat-running (see figures 1.3, 1.9, 3.6, 4.4, 7.1, 7.3 and 7.7, and text on pp77-82).

Having said this, we would caution against assuming that new developments will achieve high levels of cycling and walking, simply because the roads, streets, junctions and specific cycling and walking facilities within that development are designed to be cycle and pedestrian-friendly. Avoiding car-dependence, and thus achieving high levels of cycling, also involves locating developments where they have (or can be provided with) good public-transport services – see our responses to proposals 1 to 4.

Proposal 12: To support the transition to a planning system which is more visual and rooted in local preferences and character, we will set up a body to support the delivery of provably locally-popular design codes, and propose that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making

Question 18: Do you agree that we should establish a new body to support design coding and building better places, and that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making?

This seems to be a reasonable proposal. We assume the new body would form part of the wider “resources and skills strategy” described in Proposal 23. We therefore comment on it further in response to that proposal.

Proposal 13: To further embed national leadership on delivering better places, we will consider how Homes England’s strategic objectives can give greater emphasis to delivering beautiful places.

Question 19: Do you agree with our proposal to consider how design might be given greater emphasis in the strategic objectives for Homes England?

We would support this. However, we think it is far more important that Homes England’s strategic objectives should include environmental sustainability and tackling the climate emergency, not least by promoting homes in locations which reduce car-dependence. Homes England’s current [Strategic Plan](#) (and the objectives within it) contains nothing about minimising climate or other environmental impacts. This is a very serious omission and we strongly urge the Government to rectify it.

Proposal 14: We intend to introduce a fast-track for beauty through changes to national policy and legislation, to incentivise and accelerate high quality development which reflects local character and preferences.

Question 20: Do you agree with our proposals for implementing a fast-track for beauty?

We would gladly support this, but could only do so if it was subject to criteria to prevent trip-generating developments from being ‘fast-tracked’ in car-dependent locations. A beautiful development that generates significant car travel would still undermine the over-riding need to decarbonise transport and progress towards a net-zero economy. See also our response to question 9(b).

Proposal 15: We intend to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that it targets those areas where a reformed planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and maximising environmental benefits.

Proposal 16: We intend to design a quicker, simpler framework for assessing environmental impacts and enhancement opportunities, that speeds up the process while protecting and enhancing the most valuable and important habitats and species in England.

Proposal 18: To complement our planning reforms, we will facilitate ambitious improvements in the energy efficiency standards for buildings to help deliver our world-leading commitment to net-zero by 2050.

Unnumbered question: Do you have any comments on proposals 15 to 18?

Proposal 15: We strongly urge that the amended NPPF should prioritise tackling car-dependence by guiding developments which generate significant travel to locations with good public transport provision (or where this can be secured). Its definitions of 'growth', 'renewal' and 'protected' areas (if these categories are used) should reflect this over-riding necessity. The NPPF should also require developments to be planned so that key destinations are within reasonable walking or cycling distance of homes - in accordance with the '[15 Minute City](#)' or '[20 Minute Neighbourhood](#)' principles - and that these should be connected by comprehensive, safe, high-quality walking and cycling networks.

Proposal 16: This quicker, simpler process for assessing environmental impacts must be capable of screening out locations that will worsen car-dependence.

[N.B. We have no comments on proposal 17]

Proposal 18: As well as promoting energy efficiency, the NPPF should require the availability of ample cycle parking at new developments, both for residents or employees (in housing and workplace areas respectively), and for visitors or customers (e.g. at retail or leisure destinations, or local amenities). Cycle parking should be conveniently located, secure and sheltered. Security and shelter are particularly important where people are expected to park their cycles regularly and/or for long durations, including overnight, whereas convenience and the security of being overlooked are more important for short-stay users.

Cycle parking should be designed so that pedal cycles of all kinds can be locked securely, including regular cycles, tandems, recumbents and cargo-bikes (n.b. this is relevant for compliance with the Equality Act, given that many disabled people rely on non-standard pedal cycles as mobility aids).

QUESTIONS ON PILLAR 3: PLANNING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTED PLACES

Proposal 19: The Community Infrastructure Levy should be reformed to be charged as a fixed proportion of the development value above a threshold, with a mandatory nationally-set rate or rates and the current system of planning obligations abolished.

Question 22(a): Should the Government replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 planning obligations with a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy, which is charged as a fixed proportion of development value above a set threshold?

Question 22(b): Should the Infrastructure Levy rates be set nationally at a single rate, set nationally at an area-specific rate, or set locally?

Question 22(c): Should the Infrastructure Levy aim to capture the same amount of value overall, or more value, to support greater investment in infrastructure, affordable housing and local communities?

Question 22(d): Should we allow local authorities to borrow against the Infrastructure Levy, to support infrastructure delivery in their area?

In response to question 22(c), we agree that, if Proposal 19 is adopted, it must increase the funding available for sustainable transport infrastructure. Our answer to Question 22(d) is also “yes”.

However we would caution that, if poorly implemented, Proposal 19 risks undermining the funding for sustainable transport and other infrastructure supporting new homes. The current system of section 106 (s106) agreements requires developers to make agreed payments to the planning authority to fund designated projects, regardless of what they eventually earn from the development. The developers therefore bear the risk of lower-than-expected sales or profit margins (e.g. due to changing market conditions or unforeseen site problems). Renegotiation of s106 agreements is possible where viability concerns arise, however a proportion of the financial risk associated with uncertainties in sale values remains with the developers.

The proposal for Infrastructure Levy contributions to be calculated as a fixed proportion of development value (above a minimum threshold), paid at the point of occupation, appears to transfer these risks to the planning authority. It also creates uncertainty over the timing of when Infrastructure Levy payments would be made.

These risks and uncertainties could in turn undermine the ability of planning authorities to borrow against future payments, or to do so at reasonable rates. This would make it more difficult for the authority to predict what funding will be available – or when – to invest in active and sustainable transport schemes and other community infrastructure. These facilities therefore risk not being in place when the development starts being occupied.

To prevent this, the designation of growth and renewal areas during the Local Plan process could go hand in hand with the planning of necessary supporting infrastructure, both within and beyond the sites (perhaps via Local Development Orders or Development Consent Orders). There could be mandatory commitments for developer contributions to fund the construction of this supporting infrastructure, or commitments that construction will not proceed without it in place. The measures to be funded should be guided by sustainability assessments, ensuring that sufficient provision is made for sustainable transport (including active travel) to avoid the development becoming car-dependent. Some flexibility may be required to allow for changing needs in the years between Local Plan adoption and the commencement of works.

Proposal 20: The scope of the Infrastructure Levy could be extended to capture changes of use through permitted development rights

Question 23: Do you agree that the scope of the reformed Infrastructure Levy should capture changes of use through permitted development rights?

We support the conversion of offices to homes, if these are in locations which support access by walking, cycling and public or shared transport, and are well designed (including ample cycle parking for both residents and visitors, which is conveniently located and secure). Given that offices are generally in urban locations, well-designed conversions of surplus office space (particularly in the aftermath of Covid) can help meet

the country's housing needs while promoting environmental sustainability, reducing car dependence and avoiding the destruction of valued green space.

Nonetheless, we do not support the retention of the policy of facilitating these and other conversions through permitted development rights. This undermines the ability of planning authorities to secure good design and adequate supporting infrastructure, including cycle parking. We are even more wary of the proposed use permitted development rights to allow buildings to be demolished and new ones built on their sites.

However, if these new permitted development rights are created (preferably with robust conditions requiring certain standards to be met), we strongly urge that the Infrastructure Levy should secure sufficient funding to include whatever provision is necessary to minimise car-dependence, by ensuring as far as possible that journeys the development can be made safely and easily by cycling, walking and shared or public transport.

Proposal 21: The reformed Infrastructure Levy should deliver affordable housing provision

Question 24(a): Do you agree that we should aim to secure at least the same amount of affordable housing under the Infrastructure Levy, and as much on-site affordable provision, as at present?

It is important to have a funding source available to secure affordable housing provision, so that people who work in low-paying employment in high living-cost areas can still afford to live within easy reach of their work, without having to travel long distances (usually by car) to get there.

As noted previously (in answer to Question 22), Cycling UK does not have a view on Proposal 19, i.e. replacing the parallel systems of s106 funding and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), with a single 'Infrastructure Levy'. However, if the s106 process is to be abolished, it would clearly be essential that the new Infrastructure Levy replaces, and preferably exceeds, the s106 process in the funding it yields for investment in both affordable housing and local infrastructure. The latter must also include infrastructure for healthy and sustainable travel. Other, non-financial planning conditions replacing those currently expressed in s106 Agreements should carry the same legal weight.

We have no comment in answer to questions 24(b) to 24(d).

Proposal 22: More freedom could be given to local authorities over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy

Question 25: Should local authorities have fewer restrictions over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy?

No. It is surely important that developer funding (whether from the existing s106 and CIL processes, or the proposed new Infrastructure Levy) is used to deliver visible benefits to the community that help it respond to any pressures created by the new development. Therefore, if the Infrastructure Levy proposal is adopted, it would be wrong for the money raised simply to disappear into the local authority's general funding. We believe it should be ringfenced for the provision of affordable housing and for local infrastructure – and that this should include infrastructure for healthy and sustainable travel.

DELIVERING CHANGE: QUESTIONS ON CONCLUDING SECTION

Proposal 23: As we develop our final proposals for this new planning system, we will develop a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector to support the implementation of our reforms. In doing so, we propose this strategy will be developed including the following key elements:

- The cost of operating the new planning system should be principally funded by the beneficiaries of planning gain – landowners and developers – rather than the national or local taxpayer
- Planning fees should continue to be set on a national basis and cover at least the full cost of processing the application type based on clear national benchmarking.
- If a new approach to development contributions is implemented, a small proportion of the income should be earmarked to local planning authorities to cover their overall planning costs, including the preparation and review of Local Plans and design codes and enforcement activities.
- Reform should be accompanied by a deep dive regulatory review to identify and eliminate outdated regulations which increase costs for local planning authorities, especially to the decision-making process.
- Some local planning activities should still be funded through general taxation given the public benefits from good planning, and time limited funding will be made available by the Government in line with the new burdens principle to support local planning authorities to transition to the new planning system as part of the next Spending Review.
- Local planning authorities should be subject to a new performance framework which ensures continuous improvement across all planning functions (...) and enables early intervention if problems emerge with individual authorities.
- The Planning Inspectorate and statutory consultees should become more self-financing through new charging mechanisms and be subject to new performance targets to improve their performance.

Proposal 24: We will seek to strengthen enforcement powers and sanctions

Unnumbered question: Do you have any comments on proposals 23 and 24?

Proposal 23: We support the first three bullet-points of this proposal. As regards the final bullet-point, the proposed charging mechanisms should also provide funding to enable Active Travel England to fulfil its role as a consultee on major developments, as proposed in the Government's [‘Gear Change’ vision for cycling and walking](#).

Proposal 24: We strongly agree that local authorities need stronger enforcement powers and sanctions against developers, especially where they fail to adhere to conditions relating to provision for healthy and sustainable transport. This must include the provision of cycle-friendly road, street and junction layouts, and cycle-specific infrastructure, designed in accordance with the Government's [Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance](#) (Local Transport Note LTN 1/20).

Question 26: Do you have any views on the potential impact of the proposals raised in this consultation on people with protected characteristics as defined in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010?

Traffic conditions in Britain deter most people from cycling: cycling accounts for less than 2% of trips in Britain. This compares poorly with many of our European neighbours, particularly Denmark (19%) and the Netherlands (26%). However, the demographic profile of Britain's small cycling population is also skewed, being dominated by young to

middle-aged white males – by contrast, the majority of cycling trips in the Netherlands are made by women. There is good evidence that unsafe cycling conditions disproportionately deter cycle use by women, children, older people, people with disabilities and people from black and ethnic minority communities. Ironically, many of these groups also suffer disproportionately from poor health, which is closely correlated with lower incomes, high pollution and lack of access to green open space.

Providing equitable access to the health and other benefits of cycling is therefore an equality issue, as much as it is a health, environmental and economic issue.

It is vital for compliance with the Equality Act that the Department for Transport's [Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance](#) (Local Transport Note LTN 1/20) is incorporated into the proposed National Model Design Code and/or the revised 'Manual for Streets', as well as future revisions to the National Design Guide. As LTN 1/20 itself states (see section 2.4), compliance with its guidance is important for compliance with the Equality Act, so as to create the conditions which allow people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to cycle, and feel safe and confident when doing so.

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