

Health & Wellbeing

Active Travel – Our Considerations

1. Issues and Opportunities

- 1.1. [Public Health England](#) notes that taking physical activity is key to reducing poor health. In addition, there is growing recognition in government policy and guidance regarding the role the environment can have in helping people keep active, encouraging walking and cycling, and in designing beautiful places. This is sometimes referred to as ‘active travel’ and has a number of benefits wider than increasing physical activity, including its role in reducing vehicular emissions and contributing towards climate change goals. The concept of ‘active travel’ is summarised in section 2 below.
- 1.2. On the whole, the City Region performs poorly in terms of physical activity compared to the national average. Currently, 64.6% of adults in the City Region are physically active compared to the English average of 67.2%¹, and 62% agree that more cycling would make the City Region a better place to live and work². In addition, data indicates that residents of Knowsley and Wirral are less likely to walk than the national average, and that residents of Knowsley are less likely to regularly cycle compared to the national average³. Furthermore, motor vehicle and car use has increased over the last two decades and continues to rise⁴.
- 1.3. The City Region also faces a weight problem whereby almost every district has an obesity or overweight rate above the national average. In some areas obesity levels measured in year 6 children are as high as 30%⁵. Every district within the Liverpool City Region (except Sefton) between 2015/16 and 2017/18 had a higher obesity rate amongst children aged 10-11 than the national average⁶ (see Figure 1).

¹ LCRCA Evidence Research & Intelligence.

² (Sustrans BikeLike Project LCR, 2019), https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/5952/bikelife19_liverpool_web_updated.pdf

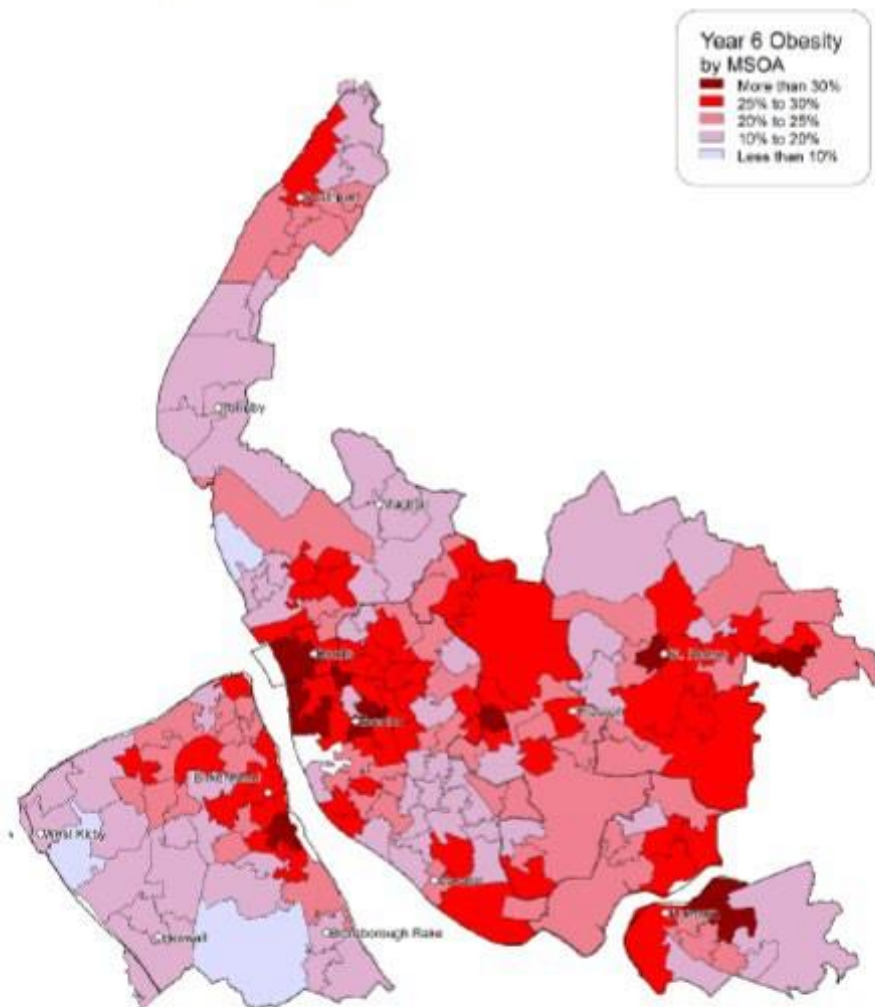
³ LCRCA Evidence Research & Intelligence.

⁴ LCRCA Evidence Research & Intelligence.

⁵ LCRCA Evidence Research & Intelligence.

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Prevalence of Obesity Among Year 6 Children (Aged 10-11) by Middle Super Output Area (MSOA), 2015/16 – 2017/18



Figures presented with 95% confidence intervals

Figure 1. Liverpool City Region Prevalence of Obesity Among Year 6 Children.

2. Why does the Spatial Development Strategy need to address this?

2.1. The role the environment can have in achieving healthy places is set out in a number of Government publications. Of particular relevance the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) sets out that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which include layouts that encourage walking and cycling, and should provide for high quality networks for walking and cycling. In addition, the [Manual for Streets](#) seeks to assign a higher priority to pedestrians and cyclists by setting an approach to residential streets that works for all members of the community.

- 2.2. The [Building Better Beautiful Commission](#) also recognise the importance of walking, noting ‘a beautiful place is a place in which people wish to walk, rather than a place that the car helps them to avoid’. Movement is also one of ten characteristics identified in the [National Design Guide](#) that make a well-designed place and determines the success of development. Amongst other street features, the Design Guide identifies that a well-designed movement network defines a clear pattern of streets that; is safe and accessible for all; limits the impacts of car use by prioritising and encouraging walking, cycling and public transport; and promotes activity and social interaction, contributing to health, well-being, accessibility and inclusion. Furthermore [Sport England’s Active Design Guide](#) recognises that the design of where we live and work can play a vital role in keeping active, and identifies 10 principles to inform the layout of cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, buildings, streets and open spaces to promote sport and active lifestyles.
- 2.3. In light of the above and the statutory duty to ensure that the SDS addresses health and health inequalities, there is a compelling case to consider a policy approach that supports active travel across the City Region. The need to increase physical activity across the City Region is particularly important in the context of the Government’s [Obesity Strategy](#) which highlights the link between obesity and the risk of becoming ill and dying from COVID-19.

3. What is being done by the Combined Authority?

- 3.1. As part of his Manifesto, the Metro Mayor proposes to tackle health issues in the City Region by:
- Integrating public health to encourage healthy and active lifestyles by promoting sport, walking and cycling, and delivering a strategy to make these sustainable and more healthy forms of transport safer and more attractive to all;
 - Delivering joined-up initiatives with local authorities and NHS Trusts that encourage healthy and active lifestyles across the City Region as part of an integrated public health strategy.
- 3.2. The City Region already has a number of initiatives and strategies that support active travel including the [Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) and the [Liverpool City Region Combined Authority](#)

[Local Journeys Strategy](#). The strategies promote and set investment priorities for region-wide active travel, and should challenge a number of health, climate and economic issues including physical inactivity, lack of access to local services, reducing levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and improving the air quality of our city region communities.

- 3.3. Of particular relevance, developing a mobility system that enhances health and wellbeing and boosting healthy forms of travel for short trips form part of strategic objectives identified in the [Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Plan](#). The importance of quality of place and placemaking is also recognised by being a priority action in the Transport Plan. This action sets out that plans, policies and programmes will be used to create high quality environments that encourage active travel, and which make walking, cycling and public transport more attractive, more convenient, and safer for all. An ambition to develop a Key Route Network for walking and cycling journeys is also identified as an ambition in the Transport Plan. In addition, as part of a series of actions to address poor air quality, the [Interim Air Quality Action Plan](#) seeks to boost active travel. A [people-powered future](#) is also envisaged for the City Region, which will enable people to get out of their cars and walk and cycle more.

4. What you told us

- 4.1. Of relevance to the topic of active travel, responses to our previous SDS public engagement highlighted:

- That health matters and that more could be done across the City Region to improve it.
- That roads and walkways should feel safer so people feel more confident to cycle or walk to work or to town centres.
- Poor connectivity for active travel is a major challenge.
- Better design of active travel routes and improved public realm could encourage uptake in walking or cycling.

5. How we could respond

- 5.1. We consider that a policy which embeds active travel into the design of new development could play an important role in addressing poor health and health inequalities across the City Region. We suggest a policy approach whereby:

New development would prioritise street design, and the creation of a good quality attractive and safe public areas that promote active travel (e.g. cycling and walking). Open spaces that encourages sport and active lifestyles would also be prioritised. Where possible, proposals would be required to connect to the City Region's walking and cycling network and green infrastructure.

- 5.2. We note that the Government's [Planning White Paper](#) envisages a move towards a map and rule based approach as opposed to vague statements of policy. The White Paper also sets out that a National Design Code will be published in due course. Once further details emerge regarding the White Paper and the National Design Code, we will review the above suggested policy approach. Should the White Paper proposals be enacted, we envisage that any subsequent design rules in the City Region for new development could have a strong emphasis on active travel. However, at this stage we are seeking views on the general principle of embedding active travel into the design of development. For clarity, green infrastructure is defined by the NPPF as 'a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. In addition, a map of the strategic cycling and walking network can be found on page 27 [here](#).

6. Which Objectives will this approach help to achieve?



Addressing health inequalities and creating a healthier City Region



Tackling Climate Change and creating a greener City Region



Creating high quality buildings and places that allow our communities to flourish



Delivering an Inclusive Economy



Embedding Social Value in all aspects of development

7. How can we make sure this approach would work?

7.1. We would monitor whether the suggested policy approach works around the following indicators:

- Obesity levels of children in year 6 and adults;
- Uptake of walking and cycling across LCR;
- Levels of physical activity; and
- Air quality in certain areas across the LCR.