



**SOLIHULL WALKING STRATEGY**  
2010 – 2015

## **Executive Summary**

Walking is the fundamental element that ties together the journeys we make every day. It is easy to forget the role that walking plays in how we move around, whether it be to walk to the shops or places of work, as a means of accessing public transport, or as the final part of longer journeys made by car.

Walking is a necessity; however it can also be a great form of recreation, which is free, open to all and easily accessible. The health benefits of walking should not be overlooked. Not only is walking a great form of exercise, it can also benefit our well being and quality of life through providing access to green open space and the surrounding countryside.

Solihull council actively promotes and engages with partners and local organisations to offer a range of activities and opportunities for people to enjoy the benefits of walking. Groups like the Solihull Striders and Strollers continue to have an important role in making the recreational aspects of walking available to all. This walking strategy looks to identify ways in which good work can be supported as well as new initiatives implemented.

The Council also recognise that the existing pedestrian facilities within the Borough need to be improved and in some locations ratified, if they are to meet the current and future needs of pedestrians.

Walking is now promoted under many banners by various organisations seeking to encourage and raise the profile of walking and its associated benefits. This work can be disjointed and the purpose of this new strategy is to bring this work together, taking into account new local, regional and national priorities, policies and best practice to move forward and develop walking as a viable choice for people when undertaking a range of journeys within the Borough.

At its heart are the links that the strategy and its action plan will need to make with current and future iterations of the Local Transport Plan, the existing Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the new Solihull Cycling Strategy, which is currently being developed. These links will assist in the future delivery and funding of the measures and projects identified within these documents, allowing them to work in unison to achieve real and noticeable benefits to sustainable travel options within the borough.

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## 1 Introduction

Walking is the most sustainable form of transport. It is universally accessible, allows opportunities for improving health, social inclusion, community development and, importantly, individual empowerment.

It is easy to forget that walking is part of everyday life. It is fundamental to every one's daily regime, whether it be walking to catch a bus, get to school or work, go shopping or simply taking your dog for a walk. A well laid and safe network of pedestrian routes connecting towns, villages and the surrounding countryside provides people with the opportunity and freedom to live a full and active life. It has an important role to fulfil nationally having the potential to make a positive contribution to many of the Government's key public policy priorities, including health, liveability and urban congestion.

Solihull Council recognises the importance of encouraging and developing walking opportunities within the borough and is committed to ensuring that ***'Solihull is a place where safe, convenient and attractive opportunities to walk for both local journeys and recreational activity are readily available for all'***.

Walking is promoted under many banners by various organisations seeking to encourage and raise the profile of the activity and its associated benefits. This work can be disjointed and this strategy seeks to bring this work together to move forward and develop walking as a viable choice for people when undertaking a range of journeys within the borough.

The new strategy will consider the role of walking now and in the future, how it is encouraged and developed nationally, regionally and locally, and looks at the policy context associated with this. At its heart are the links that the strategy and its associated action plan will need to make with current and future iterations of the Local Transport Plan, the existing rights of way improvement plan and the new Solihull cycling Strategy which is currently being developed. These links will assist in the future delivery and funding of the measures and projects identified within the Strategy's Action Plan.

Within the Strategy we have looked at the current state of walking provision within the borough and the works currently ongoing as well as the steps we need to take to make further improvements. To achieve this we have set out a number

of objectives and targets for walking within the document along with specific proposals on how these could be achieved.

Sections 5 and 6 of this document set out the Council's intended approach for drawing together and implementing this Walking Strategy. The specific detail within these sections, which include the Strategy's action plan, has been informed following public consultation with partners and stakeholders to encourage local ownership and ensure that the highlighted themes link and support the good work already being undertaken across the borough.

The Actions identified within this plan will be monitored and reviewed by the Council to ensure that where feasible the objectives and specific targets of the strategy are met.

## 2 Vision, aims and objectives

### 2.1 Vision and aims

Through this walking strategy, Solihull council is recognising the important role that walking has to play in delivering a sustainable transport network for Solihull, and illustrates its commitment to providing real walking improvements and opportunities for all.

Solihull Council's Walking strategy has the following vision:

***'To make walking an attractive travel choice for all in Solihull, through the creation of an environment and culture where walking is encouraged and considered first above other forms of transport'.***

The principal aim of this strategy and the actions set out within it is to:

***'Promote and increase the role of walking as a mode of transport when making local journeys and as a recreational leisure activity'.***

Linked to this principal aim, the council will seek to promote and encourage all forms of walking by working to:

- Provide attractive and well designed pedestrian friendly street environments, which give all users a greater opportunity to walk whilst reducing pedestrian casualties.
- Raise awareness and empower pedestrians to allow them to make confident and informed decisions on walking issues.
- Create barrier-free, high quality routes that provide convenient links to local community centres.

### 2.2 Themes and Objectives

Solihull Council has developed a number of objectives that have been broken into 6 themes, which seek to encourage walking in all its different forms and realise the vision of this strategy:

- **Education and Encouragement**
  - Publicise the health benefits of walking, and encourage a walking culture in the borough, particularly where possible in young people and other population groups that would gain the most benefit.
  - Support partner initiatives such as the Walking to Health initiative to promote the link benefits of walking, to health and well-being and to address inequalities in health across the borough.
  - Investigate new funding opportunities to enhance walking opportunities, particularly for priority groups.
  - Encourage walking to work to create a healthier workforce and reduce peak hour congestion.
  - Encourage schools to promote road safety and sustainable forms of transport, in particular walking, for students travelling to and from *school*.
  - *Publicise local routes through increasing the level of available information on the ground through appropriate destination and distance signposting.*
  - *Design and promote circular recreational routes, which will start and finish in towns and villages or transport nodes so as to maximise use, efficiency and maximise cost effectiveness.*
  - *Provide improved information online to promote the network and the benefits of walking.*
  
- **Infrastructure**
  - Develop walkable neighbourhoods that are easy and pleasant to use and which provide links to facilities and public transport.
  - Increase the number of pedestrian crossings within the borough with facilities for disabled people.
  - Develop programmes to reduce street clutter and improve accessibility.
  - Develop accessible circular recreational walks using where possible existing footpaths and other infrastructure such as the canal towpath network in association with partners.
  
- **Environments**
  - Improve the quality of the walking environment whilst protecting the existing network.

- Improve the quality of life and social well-being of local communities through the provision of improved routes which are accessible to all.
- Address the needs of disabled, mobility and sensory impaired people within the pedestrian environment.
- Work with public transport operators to ensure the needs of pedestrians are provided for at interchanges between transport modes.
  
- **Planning and Developments**
  - Ensure that all future developments provide convenient and attractive pedestrian access to local facilities and public transport interchanges.
  - Work in partnership to implement principles of inclusive design and user hierarchy, to ensure that pedestrians are at the heart of the design process.
  - Investigate new funding opportunities linked to proposed developments for initiatives to enhance the walking environment.
  
- **Key Links**
  - Develop a robust procedure to stop up unwanted paths in exchange for high quality and desirable routes for all between local and major centres and facilities.
  - Develop and implement with key stakeholders, the concept of Whole Route Studies (Smarter Routes) on principal routes within the borough.
  - Work with Sustrans and other key stakeholders to provide improved links to recreational routes *and circular walks*.
  
- **Safety and Security**
  - Provide a safe and secure walking environment.
  - Work with partners to improve safety and security for pedestrians.
  - Improve pedestrian security and reduce the fear of crime.



## 3 Why Walk? – A National, Regional and Local Context

### 3.1 Why is walking important?

Walking is widely acknowledged to be the most environmentally and socially sustainable form of transport. It is an important part of all journeys that we take, but is often overlooked. For those living in our towns and urban areas, it can be the quickest and most convenient way of getting around, ideal for undertaking most short journeys or forming the all important link between other modes of public and private transport when undertaking longer journeys. This is particularly relevant for Solihull and its urban areas. Located predominately on the boundary of the West Midlands conurbation, high density levels provide ideal conditions to develop public and sustainable forms of transport as the primary mode of travel choice for trips within this urban area.

Nearly all journeys will involve at least one part made as a pedestrian. Walking consequently is the central connecting theme that links the journeys that we make and is inclusive to all people. For this reason we must strive through working in partnership with residents and stakeholder organisations to ensure that: ***‘Solihull has a fully accessible pedestrian environment, tailored to our future needs and which features high quality routes, providing access to places of work, leisure and education for people of all ages and abilities’.***

Improved walking facilities, have the potential to enhance community involvement, encourage more children to walk to school and promote the benefits both physically and socially of walking as a means of transport.

The reasons for walking vary greatly from individual to individual and so the task of developing routes to encourage and develop walking offers many challenges. By attempting to identify *how and why* journeys are made, we can start to recognise and respond to areas where there is real need for improvement.

For some walking is a cheap and independent way to get to work, school shops or college; for others walking is chosen for health reasons, leisure or as a social activity.

We recognise that there are inherent differences between journeys taken out of necessity and those taken as, or part of leisure activities. The purpose for which a journey is taken will therefore strongly inform the requirements and focus of routes; including how they are managed and to what standard they are maintained. Section 5 of this report provides further detail on the existing walking environment within Solihull.

Whatever the reason, walking has many direct and indirect benefits to both the individual and to our society as a whole.

### **3.1.1 Benefits of Walking**

Regular walking can create many benefits to both the individual and to the wider community. It also contributes cost-effectively to national and local government priorities, such as improving accessibility and social inclusion, encouraging regeneration, reducing pollution and carbon emissions and helping to increase levels of physical activity.

Improving pedestrian infrastructure and access and promoting walking within Solihull form an important part of the Councils work towards achieving its overarching vision '**Where well being, pride and quality of life are enjoyed by all**'.

It links into work being undertaken across the Council and the actions and policies identified as part of this strategy have the potential to make a significant contribution to 7 of the Councils 10 priorities.

The benefits to exercise and health, social inclusion, local businesses and the economy, and the potential reduction in pollution are covered in more detail in the remainder of this document. Section 6 of this document includes the Action Plan, which forming the core of this Strategy goes into further detail and sets out specific actions identified to facilitate the benefits set out below.

- **Health** - Walking has many linked benefits. It can be easily overlooked but walking is particularly good for our health.

The National Health Service highlights walking as a good form of exercise that anyone can and should try and do more often. Walking and cycling offer the opportunity to build moderate exercise into your everyday routine. Recreational use of the countryside and particularly walking can make a positive contribution to peoples' health, well being and quality of life. This kind of exercise can help to counteract *specific* problems related to being overweight and obese as well as coronary heart disease, strokes, diabetes and cancer in addition to reducing stress.

- ***Social Inclusion and quality of life*** - Walking is '***an effective way of getting from one form of transport to another***' it contributes towards giving people the ability to choose how they get around and interact with other people and their local community.

Those who do not have access to a private car, choose not to drive, or are unable to drive can become excluded from many aspects of normal social life. Increasing walking and cycling levels will improve our public space, improve social interactions and reduce crime and the fear of crime.

They also provide for more pleasant and sustainable public spaces and serve to support local facilities.

- ***Economic*** - Walking is free to use, sustainable and, well designed, a safe and secure way of getting around. It is a cost effective means of providing transport links particularly between facilities and areas within a 2 mile radius.

The cost of putting in place pedestrian routes is considerably less than developing or altering roads, and once in place, their maintenance costs are also significantly less and there are no additional fuel costs.

Improving network links can have economic benefits to local businesses through tourism and increasing passing pedestrian traffic, particularly in urban areas where congestion and limited parking make vehicular use difficult.

A healthier nation will also place less demands on the health service. It is a well known fact that regular exercise could help reduce the number of

people requiring health treatment, whilst reducing the number of days spent away from work due to ill health.

- **Environmental** - Growth in car traffic has increased road congestion and environmental pollution, particularly in town centres and urban areas. Promoting walking and cycling in Solihull as a viable alternative for those trips where it is practical to do so is an easy and effective way of helping Solihull's residents to make a contribution to achieve a reduction in CO2 emissions. ***'The need for cleaner alternative means of gaining access to locations which generate trips must be viewed as a priority'***.
- **Road Safety** - Less traffic congestion can also improve public safety. ***'The safe, efficient and easy movement of people and goods throughout the Borough is the principal aim of the policies and proposals set out in this Plan'***.

Public transport has a key role to play in the local transport network because of its potential to encourage modal shift from the private car to more sustainable means of travel, and to benefit the local environment through reduced pollution.

Providing an efficient transport network is only part of the solution. Accessibility for people in Solihull, and indeed throughout the West Midlands region, is the factor that has the potential to make most impact on reducing traffic congestion across the Region.

### 3.1.2 Obstacles to Walking

There are many barriers to walking. Some of these are physical, whilst others are related to perception and have developed and evolved over a longer period of time and consequently will be more challenging to change.

The purpose of this strategy and the links it will create with the cycling strategy and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan are intended to break down these barriers.

The principles and priorities identified within these documents can play an important role in shaping the provision of a transport network for Solihull which meets the needs of local people now and in the future. This will be

achieved by providing sustainable forms of access to places of work and learning as well as for recreational purposes.

The importance of this work on a regional and national context must also not be overlooked, as it will contribute to overarching priorities which are set out in further detail in Section 3 of this report.

Some of the barriers which will be at the core of the work that the Council will need to tackle in the future to encourage a greater level of walking are detailed below. Measures to tackle the issues associated with these barriers are set out within the Action Plan element of this strategy document.

- **Physical barriers** – Manual for Streets identifies that ***‘networks should allow people to go where they want, unimpeded by street furniture, footway parking and other obstructions or barriers’***. (Department for Transport (2007) Manual for Streets - Section 6.2)

A lack of suitable crossing points, increased traffic density and speed, or a lack of available footway width all contribute to making routes difficult to use and consequently discourage and prevent walking opportunities.

Designing out such barriers from our existing network and preventing similar barriers from occurring in the future is and will continue to be one of our biggest challenges.

Looking at the role of our highways infrastructure and particularly our streets as ‘places’ which are part of the local community and not just traffic conduits, will help to focus the development and future maintenance of the network by designing out and reducing the influence that physical barriers play on our ability to use the network as it was intended.

Physical barriers are often cited by parents as a reason why their child can not walk or cycle to school. Through the implementation of School Travel Plans, Schools working with the Local Authority are able to develop Safer Routes to School schemes which target physical barriers, and provide improved and safer pedestrian and cycle routes for children and parents.

These schemes, and the invaluable work undertaken by our School Crossing Patrol operatives provide significant improvements to route safety, removing physical barriers and opening opportunities for walking to school.

- **Street Clutter** – This provides a significant barrier to many users particularly those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and push chairs. Ensuring that signage is erected where relevant and to the appropriate standards is important in ensuring the pedestrian routes are free from obstructions.

In order to tackle this issue, processes will need to be put into place to ensure that street signage is only erected where relevant and that its impact is considered from the position of pedestrians and cyclists as well as the car user.

Established best practice guidance can assist in this process and is being used in places already by the Authority. These tools must be more consistently applied in the future and disseminated to all relevant stakeholders to ensure that a joined up approach is realised across the borough.

- **Lack of information** – A lack of understanding about where we can walk, the availability of routes and the links they offer into other forms of connecting transport modes can mean that walking is overlooked as a viable means of transport for certain journeys.

Issues relating to a lack of information, confidence or both can be difficult to resolve as they become ingrained over time. Ensuring that routes are adequately signed and that walking is properly promoted is an important component of our work to secure sustainable modal shift from vehicle use to walking and cycling.

This type of soft measure, supporting physical changes to the network, is intended to influence and alter peoples' travel behaviour. Often referred to as 'Smart Choices', these principals are set out in further detail within section 4.1.2 of this strategy.

- **Lack of empowerment and confidence** – This potential barrier is very much linked to issues related to physical barriers, maintenance, information and antisocial behaviour. Improving these areas will help to promote walking as a viable alternative for users who lack confidence currently in their ability to make a trip or part of a trip on foot. Providing a well signed and maintained network, free from obstructions and with reduced road crossings will help to encourage users to get out and carry out more trips on foot.

Issues related to user conflict, particularly between classes of users (e.g. motorists and cyclists or cyclists and pedestrian) is another barrier that affects confidence and our ability to use routes. Ensuring that routes are well designed and that users are educated on their responsibilities and impact on other users of the network is therefore key.

- **Connectivity** – As the borough adapts and evolves to our needs, the transport network and in particular off road pedestrian links can get left behind and cut off. Identifying this on the ground, and working to reconnect lost or missing links, through the stopping up of routes which no longer serve a purpose, and through the creation of new link routes, is vital to sustain and encourage greater levels of walking. This will require a holistic approach working in partnership to ensure that future projects knit together into existing infrastructure to provide convenient and safe pedestrian access to facilities and places of work.

Implementing the principles of 'walkable neighbourhoods' would be a positive step towards achieving improved connectivity between existing and new residential and commercial developments. A walkable neighbourhood is a place where people live within a safe and convenient walking distance to most places they want to visit, whether it is to their place of work, local shops or community and recreation services. The creation of a walkable neighbourhood reduces the dependency on private motor vehicles, therefore reducing traffic and the amount of space required to accommodate them.

Key to delivering walkable neighbourhoods is ensuring that developments are permeable and that key walking corridors are considered and set out from the beginning of a development project as they are often difficult to

create in established locations. Implementing these principles through partnership buy-in and developer obligations will be a key action for this walking strategy as a tool to tackle barriers to walking associated with connectivity.

Developing improved links with Policy IM1 of the Solihull Unitary Development Plan which sets out developer obligations will be central to this. This policy sets out that the Council, where appropriate, will seek to enter agreements with developers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 with the aim of securing obligations in respect of (i) the dedication of land to the Council, (ii) the provision of infrastructure, (iii) the making of financial contributions, (iv) the provision of affordable housing and (v) the regulation in the use of land. In appropriate situations, funding can be obtained from this source to realise improvement to the connectivity of existing and proposed pedestrian routes.

- **Maintenance** – A lack of regular maintenance can discourage or prevent use of a route by users or a class of users, particularly the vulnerable or those with specific access requirements. Regular maintenance on existing infrastructure and the design and implementation of cost effective low maintenance routes in the future is important to ensuring that the network of routes within the Borough is sustainable and can be accessed consistently and by all users. This is a particular problem on rural routes where seasonal vegetation growth can quickly cause the obstruction of routes. Careful provision of routes is key therefore to meeting this requirement.
- **Environment** – The quality of the environment through which our streets and pedestrian corridors run is an important factor in determining how well used routes are. A poor quality environment which discourage or make journeys difficult and unpleasant will typically be more susceptible to issues of antisocial behaviour, and require more regular and costly maintenance than routes which are well designed, used and fit for purpose. One of the issues highlighted as a key barrier within the consultation undertaken as part of the development of this strategy document related to dog fouling. Removing occurrences of dog fouling, providing suitable receptacles for its removal and educating dog owners is



one action that we will seek to tackle in partnership within the Action Plan element of this Strategy.

In order to encourage walking and break down barriers *generally*, we must consider the environments through which new and existing routes run, and not simple the quality of the route and its furniture. This holistic approach will help to create routes which are part of the local community, which encourage people to use them and which place a lower maintenance demand on the Local Authority in the future.

One such way of achieving this type of improvement is through ensuring close ties with the Green Infrastructure Strategy currently under development. This strategy will form an important part of and provide evidence for the Council's forthcoming Local Development Framework. It is intended that this will help to provide a more informed and systematic way to consider the competing priorities of green infrastructure within the spatial planning process. It is important that strong links are made between the Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Local Development Framework and the Walking Strategy so that high quality pedestrian routes can be created and maintained linking quality environments and important local facilities and points of interest.

- ***Antisocial behaviour*** – Antisocial behaviour and the fear of antisocial behaviour can discourage the use of important link routes which provide connectivity as well as in many cases an alternative route and mode of transport for trips currently made by car.

The issues associated with antisocial behaviour are often linked to maintenance issues, and in particular littering and graffiti. Managing these issues effectively can reduce the level of misuse of routes and consequently the impact that they have on residents living in the vicinity.

It is important that in the future schemes to develop and improve links consider these implications and therefore work to design out features that have potential to increase antisocial behaviour.

Ensuring that routes have good natural surveillance, are clear of vegetation, well lit where feasible, and have suitable widths and surfacing

all contribute to reducing antisocial behaviour by integrating routes into the local community, encouraging use and self maintenance.



*The adjacent photos illustrate the type of improvements which can be undertaken to tackle anti social behaviour issues, whilst retaining & improving access to facilities.*

**Green Lane, Smiths Wood –**  
*The alley had been the subject of persistent antisocial behaviour. Work was undertaken to improve visibility and the environment to make the route more attractive.*



These principles will apply strictly in the implementation of walkable neighbourhoods, which to be effective need to consider preventative measures related to antisocial behaviour as a key consideration so that routes are safe and convenient for all users as well as local residents.

The *standards* set out in Manual for Streets which are detailed in the following section of this report will inform future working practice to achieve this integration. Specific proposals are set out in the Action Plan attached later in this report.

- **Weather** – The impact of varying weather conditions can have a significant impact on pedestrian routes and therefore levels of usage both in the urban and rural environments. It is therefore important that pedestrian infrastructure is suitably designed and maintained to provide a consistent and usable network throughout the year.

Reducing journey times by creating convenient linkages with other forms of sustainable transport also have an important role to play in overcoming the hurdle presented by the weather.

- **Rest points** – The distance that a person is able to comfortably walk or wheel is dependent on a number of factors including individual ability, gradients, surface type, weather conditions, whether there are handrails etc.

The average trip length made entirely on foot is generally considered to be 0.6 miles. Walking distances for many users, including the mobility impaired are considered to be significantly less than this on average.

The 1992 report 'Inclusive Mobility - a guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure' provides the following advice of recommended walking distances without a rest:

User group	Recommended distance limit without a rest
Wheelchair users	150m
Visually impaired	150m
Mobility impaired using stick	50m
Mobility impaired without walking aid	100m

Clearly seating and rest points have a significant role to play in opening up routes to all users.

Working with developers and partners we need to ensure that seating is provided on primary routes at adequate intervals to offer rest points for users of all abilities when undertaking local trips. This is particularly significant for new developments on the edge of local communities or facilities accessible on foot.

Further research is required to develop this link and the feasibility of developing policy to encourage future developments where appropriate to invest in furniture that will create connectivity and increase pedestrian opportunities for users of all abilities.

### **3.1.3 Overcoming Obstacles and Facilitating Walking**

The obstacles described above are not intended to be an exhaustive list and many of the challenges faced will evolve as the Borough grows and changes.

It is acknowledged that overcoming these will take time and each will present their own individual difficulties and potentially opportunities to make walking in Solihull more attractive.

There are many approaches that can be utilised and much good work has already been done. An aim of this strategy has been to pull together relevant policy and best practice so that it can be utilised in a co-ordinated fashion to establish and further encourage walking as a primary means of travel within Solihull.

The Policy Context and Walking Environment sections of this strategy document go into further detail setting out the policy and work which has informed and will shape how Solihull Council will seek to meet the objectives of this strategy.

## **3.2 *The National and Regional Picture***

Despite much good work undertaken to promote both walking and cycling over the last 10 years, the car remains the dominant transport choice across the country and in fact our level of dependence on it has increased during this time as we become more mobile. The choices we make about how we travel have more significance now than at any time in our past as existing modes of transport are unable to continue to absorb increased usage and therefore focus must turn to other sustainable alternatives. Between 1995/97 and 2006, the average time people spent travelling increased by 4 per cent to 383 hours per person per year.

Over this period, the average amount of time spent travelling by car increased by 4 per cent to 232 hours and the time spent walking decreased by 8 per cent to 67 hours. The amount of time spent travelling by rail and tube increased by 40 per cent to 28 hours.

In 2006, travel by car accounted for 60 per cent of time spent travelling, the same as in 1995/97. Over the same period, the proportion of time spent walking has fallen from 20 to 17 per cent.

Of the average 63 minutes spent travelling each day in 2006, 38 minutes were spent travelling by car and 11 minutes were spent walking.

These figures obtained from the 2007 National Travel Survey illustrate clearly the level of reliance our society continues to place on the car as its primary means of transport. It is not expected that walking will overtake the car overall, given the limitations associated with distance which restrict the type of journeys which can be undertaken on foot. Despite this, there is considerable opportunity to significantly increase the role that walking has in our everyday lives.

### **3.3 The Local Picture**

Solihull is a diverse borough as illustrated in its motto 'Urbs in Rure' meaning Town in the Country. Situated at the southerly edge of the West Midlands conurbation, the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull borders Birmingham in the north and west, Worcestershire in the south and west, Coventry to the east and Warwickshire in the south.

The Borough combines areas bordering Birmingham, which are highly urbanised with large areas of rural green belt, which provides excellent opportunities for walking and recreation.

The Borough is bordered by the M6 and the M40, whilst the M42 divides the urban centre of the Borough from the rural south and east. Similarly, the A45 divides the south from the north of the Borough. Due to its location between the two conurbations of Birmingham and Coventry, many people's perception of Solihull is that of an urban area, however, almost two-thirds of the Borough's area of 17,832 hectares is greenbelt.

Solihull boasts excellent established transport links that provide convenient road, rail and air links to throughout the country and further afield. Given its central location nationally, and the links to the motorway network, Solihull has established itself as an attractive location to businesses of national and international importance.

The 2001 National Census Neighbourhood Statistics identified that Solihull had a total population of 199,517 and that of this number there were 93,400 people in employment aged between 16-74 living in the Borough.

It is clear that this number of people travelling daily to their place of work places a significant pressure on our transport network and that it is unlikely that this pressure will have decreased over the eight years since the survey took place. Whilst the statistics from the National Census are now a number of years old, they remain a valuable source of information for the purposes of identifying access and travel choice patterns within the Borough, as information we are able to obtain from the data will be indicative of the trends and barriers which we still now face.

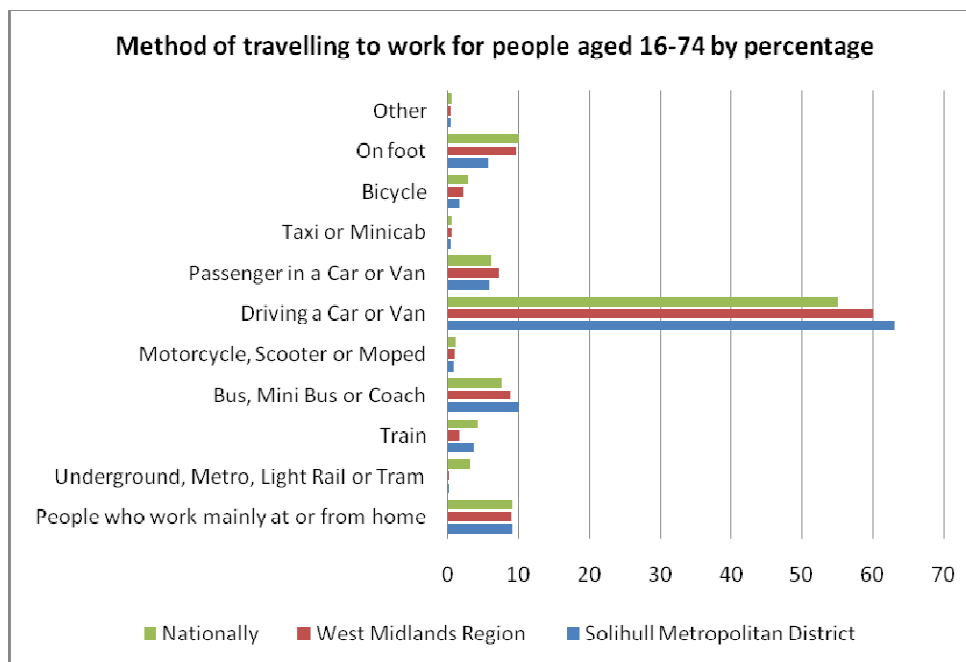
Whilst the Census showed that the average distance travelled by people getting to work was 12.12km, which typically would be considered too far to allow walking to be the primary mode of travel, it showed that 43% people needed to travel less than 5km to reach their permanent place of work.

The Census showed that just over 13,065 people lived within 2km of their place of work with a further 18,400 living within 2-5km from their place of work.

In the census 5,312 people indicated that they walked to work with a further 1,446 indicating they cycled. Combining these figures still only accounts for just over 50% of journeys to work when people live within 2km of their place of work.

It is generally accepted that walking is a viable travel choice for journeys up to 2km and it would seem clear that a main focus of this walking strategy must therefore be to identify the barriers which are prohibiting people from choosing walking and cycling within this band as a way to get to work.

The graph below shows as a percentage the methods by which people from and in the borough choose to use to get to work.



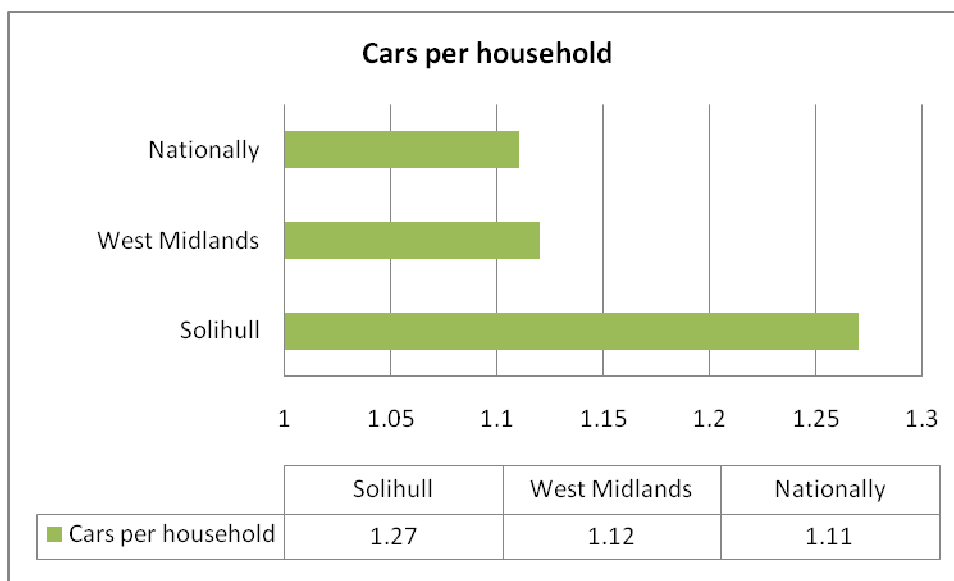
These figures clearly illustrate the dependence that we now all have on our cars. It appears that this is particularly the case for Solihull with the figures indicating that in Solihull 63% of people use a car to get to work, this is 8% more than the national average, whilst only 5.7% in Solihull compared to 10% nationally get to work on foot.

77% of people who indicated that they used public transport have access to or live in a household with a car or van. Only 23% of those using public transport do not have access at any time to a vehicle. This indicates that within the Borough there is a willingness to utilise other forms of travel and indeed the percentage of public transport users in the borough who come from a household with access to a car or van is 10% higher than West Midlands average.

The census shows that in 2001 79.5% of households in the borough had one or more cars and that in total there were 103,991 cars in the borough.

Within Solihull there is a relatively high car ownership with on average 1.28 cars per household. This is above the figures for both the wider West Midlands area, as well as nationally as the graph below indicates.





2001 National Survey

Whilst car ownership within the borough is high, there are still some 16,663 households within without a car. Car ownership levels vary significantly from Ward to Ward within the borough and so a tailored area approach will need to be developed to ensure that suitable walking provision is delivered where it is specifically required and in an efficient manner. In addition to those households without a car, there are 31,465 people who travel to work each day within the borough who travel less than 5km to their place of work. Again here there are opportunities to develop and encourage journeys on foot and by cycle as a viable alternative to the car. These could be considered as quick win opportunities that it will be important for this walking strategy to target and encourage further walking and cycling take-up.

The implications of our travel behaviour identified above have consequences not just for utility journeys, but also for those journeys made for leisure purposes. Walking and car travel is intrinsically linked in many cases and this is particularly so for leisure walking where people will often travel many miles to a particular location or site before setting off on a walk. It is important that we understand this link and that local opportunities for recreational walking are appropriately identified and promoted to the correct audience and further that suitable associated infrastructure, such as parking, bins, and seating is made available where appropriate. This is particularly the case for family activities and dog walking when access via public transport is not always practical.



## **4 Policy Context**

This walking strategy acknowledges that considerable time and resources have previously been committed to the development of sustainable transport options including walking on a national, regional and local level. These works, along with the network of volunteer and stakeholder organisations who have detailed knowledge of our current pedestrian highways asset, have informed and assisted in the development of this document.

In order to be effective, the Walking Strategy must be set within the context of other relevant plans and strategies at national and local levels.

This section details the way in which national, regional and local strategies feed into the actions proposed later in this strategy.

### **4.1 National Policy**

#### **4.1.1 Walking and Cycling: An Action Plan (DfT)**

The government's action plan for increasing levels of walking and cycling aims to make a positive contribution to many key public policy priorities, including health, environmental and social quality and urban congestion.

Many of the proposed actions are relevant to the Walking Strategy. These include:

- improving access to town centers
- creating sustainable communities
- promoting health; and
- creating better routes and road crossings

#### **4.1.2 Smarter Choices**

'Smarter Choices' are techniques intended to influence people's travel behaviour to encourage the take up of more sustainable options, such as walking, cycling, travelling by public transport and car sharing. There is no hard or fast definition of what measures constitute a smarter choice but they may include local programmes to encourage school, workplace and individualised travel planning; improving public transport information and marketing services; setting up web sites for car share schemes and supporting car clubs; and encouraging teleworking and teleconferencing.

Solihull Council recognises that the principles of Smarter Choices as practical and cost effective travel planning measures have an important role to play in improving traffic flows, developing improved pedestrian environments and promoting walking and cycling as a viable travel choice.

The principles of Smarter Choices have been employed periodically by Solihull Council since their introduction in 2004. However it is recognised that a more consistent and Authority wide approach to identifying and implementing the 'soft measures' which constitute Smarter Choices is needed to ensure that they are utilised to their full potential.

Much good work in this area is already undertaken across the Council by various teams; however this work will need to be knitted together through the implementation of Council wide policies to ensure a consistent approach which delivers the maximum possible value and impact is developed.

Further specific opportunities to develop and utilise Smarter Choices across the Council will be identified in the Action Plan element of this strategy document.

#### **4.1.3 The Future of Transport: A Network for 2030 (DfT)**

This strategy builds on the progress made since the implementation of the 10 year plan for transport and outlines the governments' expenditure plans and longer term aspirations for transport in this country. Walking and cycling are a distinct theme within the strategy.

The government is hoping to tackle problems relating to social inclusion, congestion and public health by encouraging more people to travel on foot and by bike.

#### **4.1.4 Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier (White Paper) (DH)**

This plan identifies 'Increasing exercise' as one of its main priorities, and suggests that local authorities have an important role to play in increasing the number of people walking and cycling to school or work, especially by:

- providing information
  - making more routes for walking and cycling available
- and
- promoting professional training to encourage walking and cycling

#### **4.1.5 'Building Health 'Creating and enhancing places for healthy, active lives' (2005) (National Heart Forum)**

This document considers many of the barriers which we face when trying to promote and encourage the take up of walking and cycling nationally.

Understanding the actual and perceived barriers to walking and cycling is fundamental to developing strategies and associated actions to tackle these issues.

The plan sets out a number of successful projects which have been implemented to encourage cycling and walking in the UK and Europe as well as actions that can be implemented both locally and nationally to fund and instigate a change in travel habits.

#### **4.1.6 Physical activity and the Environment (2008) (NICE)**

This guidance set out the first national, evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the physical environment to encourage physical activity. It sets out 5 recommendations that are relevant to both Local Authorities and the National Health Service. 4 of the 5 recommendations set out actions relevant to this strategy, and these principals and methods are incorporated throughout this document as well as within the joint Walking and Cycling Action Plan that has been developed to assist us in achieving the objectives of the strategy.

Of particular note is Recommendation 2, which relates to ensuring that pedestrians, cyclists and users of other modes of transport that involve physical activity are given highest priority when developing or maintaining streets and roads. This is intrinsically linked with the principals of a 'user hierarchy' as set out by the Manual for Streets and it is clear that there is much cross over between this and other policy documents considered within and which have informed this strategy.

#### **4.1.7 Manual for Streets (2007) (DfT)**

Manual for Streets was published in March 2007. It sets out advice and guidance for practitioners in relation to the design of residential streets that typically have light traffic levels.

The central theme which runs throughout the guidance is a commitment to create sustainable and inclusive public spaces and access to public spaces.

The manual highlights the importance of the 'place' function of streets and considers the design process of development through to implementation.

Looking primarily at the needs of the pedestrian street user, the Manual will form a key guidance tool for Solihull Council when developing and addressing transport schemes in the future for the benefit of the pedestrian user.

The manual sets out a hierarchy of provision for pedestrians and cyclists, and it is proposed that this will be widely applied in future improvement schemes implemented in the borough.

Many of the principals from the Manual for Streets have informed and will be utilised within the Action Plan element of this strategy document.

#### **4.1.8 Towards a Sustainable Transport System (2007) (DfT)**

This document sets out how the Government is responding to the recommendations made in the Eddington study to improve transport's contribution to economic growth and productivity, and how it is ensuring that transport will play its part in delivering the overall level of reductions in carbon emissions recommended by the Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change.

It sets out the Department for Transport's policy and investment plans for the period to 2013-14 and proposes a new approach to longer term transport strategy. Solihull Council is currently in the process of considering the implications of our future transport system in the borough and working on a Carbon Reduction Programme which will look at among other things the implications of our travel choices on our environment.

#### **4.1.9 Planning Policy Guidance 13 – Transport**

It is acknowledged that effective land use planning can be a key driver in realising local, regional and national transport aims.

This Planning Policy looks at ways Local Authorities can influence and shape patterns of development to ensure that the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses, help to reduce the need to travel, reduce the length of

journeys and make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking, and cycling.

Consistent application of these planning policies will help to reduce some of the need for car journeys (by reducing the physical separation of key land uses) and enable people to make sustainable transport choices.

The objectives of this guidance are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level to:

- promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight
- promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling
- reduce the need to travel, especially by car

## **4.2 Regional Policy**

### **4.2.1 West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (2004)**

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy provides the regional planning framework for the West Midlands. It provides the detail of policies to ensure that physical development in the region will deliver renaissance for both urban and rural communities in the West Midlands.

Planning decisions (including planning applications) must be made in accordance with both the West Midlands Regional Strategy and the Solihull Unitary Development plan that together make up the Solihull development plan.

*Development Plans have a fundamental role of balancing the pressure of development against the need to protect the environment. It is intended that this walking strategy should inform the regional planning process and the local planning process through the Local development Framework, to ensure that walking is considered as a primary travel mode in new developments."*

The RSS is being partially revised in three Phases. Phase One covered the Black Country and was incorporated into the RSS in January 2008. At the time of writing, the Phase Two Revision is also nearing completion having gone through an Examination in Public and the publication of the Panel Report. With regard to walking and cycling, Policy T3 of the RSS sets out the

ways in which greater opportunities for walking and cycling should be provided.

#### **4.2.2 Local Transport Plan**

Local Transport Plans set out highway authority's policies, strategies, objectives and targets for improving transport in their communities. The overarching objectives are to improve safety, to promote accessibility, to contribute to an efficient economy, to promote integration and to protect the environment. The seven Metropolitan Authorities (including Solihull MBC) within the West Midlands and Centro produce a joint Local Transport Plan.

The new West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 focuses on congestion, accessibility (to jobs, learning, health facilities and fresh food), safer roads, and air quality and on improving quality of life. There are ongoing opportunities to develop new and improve existing walking routes utilising LTP funding, and it will be a challenge for the Action Plan element of this strategy to identify and prioritise projects for implementation utilising this funding.

### **4.3 Local Policy**

#### **4.3.1 Solihull Unitary Development Plan (UDP)**

The purpose of the UDP is to identify land within the borough to meet future housing and business needs. It contains policies to guide transportation, shopping, recreational development and measures to protect the Green Belt and countryside from speculative development, as well as ensuring that nature conservation interests are protected. The UDP is therefore an important document in terms of shaping future walking provision as well as placing additional requirements on existing facilities and routes within the borough.

Walking and sustainable transport are identified in two of the eleven principal objectives (P14 – UDP 2006 written statement) including the key development principal that states:

“To consider opportunities for the development and redevelopment of existing urban sites before further green field land is released for development, and ensure that new developments are appropriately located and designed to

minimise the need for travel and enable access by public transport, cycling and walking.”

**Policies T1 – ‘An integrated and sustainable transport strategy’, T2 – ‘Accessibility to new developments’, T3 – ‘Design for all means of travel in new developments’ and policy T17 – ‘Walking’, all highlight the importance that the Council places on ensuring that the development and restructuring of sustainable transport links are seen as a core consideration of determining future planning and redevelopment applications.**

The UDP sets out a commitment that the Council will support proposals that contribute towards the achievement of the existing Walking Strategy for Solihull and provide increased opportunities for people to walk. It is expected that this commitment will be extended in the Solihull Local Development Framework to this revised version of the strategy.

#### **4.3.2 The Solihull Local Development Framework and Core Strategy**

The Solihull LDF will replace the UDP, which is due to expire in April 2011. The LDF together with the RSS will be the key policy documents that will shape the future of Solihull to 2026. The LDF aims to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes.

The LDF is made up of a number of documents, the most important of which is the Core Strategy. At the time of writing, the Core Strategy is still in preparation, however, it will establish the key elements of the planning framework for Solihull and set out the vision for the future development of the Borough to 2026.

The need to provide safe, pleasant and convenient routes to encourage access to local services, facilities and employment opportunities by foot] has been identified as a key issue that the Core Strategy will need to address.

The Walking Strategy will inform the development of the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy will seek to deliver the aims and objectives of the Walking Strategy by providing an appropriate policy framework.

### 4.3.3 Community Strategy/Local Agenda 21

Local Agenda 21 came about as a result of 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Over 120 nations including the UK, signed up to this agenda to support sustainable development.

The Council is committed to the principles of sustainable development and Agenda 21 and in 1997 produced its own Local Agenda 21 that highlighted the impact of transport on the environment and specifically the benefit that walking could have to meet the objectives of Agenda 21. As a result the following aim was made:

***"To reduce threats to the environment by transport in Solihull"***

The Agenda set out that this would be achieved by:

- reducing the need to travel where possible
- encouraging environmentally friendly means of travel by public transport, cycling and walking
- encouraging reduction in car use
- reducing accidents
- improving health
- raising awareness of transport and environmental issues

It went on to highlight specifically walking in section 4.1.3 of the plan outlining an intention to promote walking as a mode of travel by:-

- pedestrianisation scheme
- provision of safe and direct routes on recognised desire lines in urban and rural areas
- reviewing traffic signals with respect to pedestrian needs
- providing drop kerbs in appropriate locations
- providing appropriate street furniture in correct locations
- ensuring adequate standards of maintenance of surfaces
- promoting health benefits and environmental benefits of walking

The principles of Agenda 21 are now embodied into Solihull's Unitary Development Plan and its '*Sustainable Community Strategy - a Place for People*'. Sustainable Development forms part of the remit of the Community Strategy's Place to Live theme group.



Within the Community Strategy there is a strong environmental focus with a core aspiration to implement “the ‘Environment Strategy’ and ‘Local Agenda 21 Plan’; reviewing the UDP; ensuring that new development protects and enhances the quality of the environment and working for integrated transport strategies.

More specifically it is set out that the development of “wider surface and air transport choices to improve accessibility to work, education, key services, to minimise congestion and improve accessibility for business, leisure and tourism” should be a priority to achieve the aspiration of ***‘making Solihull a place that's good for everyone to live and work in’***.

#### **4.3.4 Green Travel Plan 2000 - 2005**

The Council as a major employer within the borough has developed a Green Travel Plan which intends to look at ways of reducing the impact that the Council has on the environment in undertaking its function through identifying and implementing where feasible more sustainable modes of transport for its staff and the services that it delivers. The Green Travel Plan sets out that the Council will 'Publish a Walking Strategy, reflecting the aims of the National Walking Strategy'.

This objective has been met through the implementation of this Strategy and it is further intended that the strategy will seek to put in place implementable actions to remove obstacles faced by pedestrians and make it easier to reduce conflict between cars and pedestrians.

#### **4.3.5 Solihull Walking Strategy (previous version)**

Developed in 2001-02 the previous version of the Walking Strategy for Solihull identified the important role that walking could play in creating a safer and more attractive environment, whilst reducing traffic, noise and pollution and contributing to healthier lifestyles.

Much good work has come out of this previous version of the strategy which identified 4 key themes with which have been targets over the last 7 years.

These 4 themes of, ***Engineering, Enforcement, Education and Encouragement*** along with the Strategy’s vision ***‘to create an environment and culture, where walking is regarded by everyone as the primary means for making local journeys and a recreational activity which leads***

*to a healthier, more enjoyable and sociable lifestyle'* are still very relevant and at the heart of this renewed strategy.

The work which has come out of and been linked to the measures identified as part of this strategy, along with any lessons learned will be used to inform and shape this latest version of the strategy.

#### **4.3.6 Solihull Cycling Strategy 2009**

The revised Cycling Strategy for 2008/2009 forms part of the overall transport strategy for Solihull and will have close links to this walking strategy. It provides detail on cycling in our borough and the context set at a national level and by other local policies and strategies. It establishes a structure for the design and implementation of infrastructure and measures to encourage cycle use throughout Solihull.

The overall vision for cycling in the Borough of Solihull is to promote cycling as a viable transport choice. It is recognised that there is a need for effective communication of the benefits of cycling to Solihull's residents, to encourage people who do not currently cycle to change their travel mode for at least some of their local journeys.

The Cycling strategy will have a number of important links with the Walking Strategy, and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, and the three documents will work together to develop and implement sustainable transport opportunities and improvements across the borough.

#### **4.3.7 Rights of way Improvement Plan**

The rights of way network plays an important role in providing sustainable access to facilities as well as offering a recreational facility in its own right.

Within Solihull there are currently over 210km of registered public right of way offering a network of off-road routes for walkers, cyclists and mechanically propelled vehicle users.

Public rights of way are an important local resource for people to gain fresh air and exercise, to walk the dog, take the children to school, travel to work, or to reach local shops and services. Their role in providing local leisure activity and access to the countryside should not be underestimated. It is an important goal of the Plan to encourage and facilitate opportunities for

recreational walking on the network, which will contribute towards meeting associated health and well being targets.

It is recognised that there are further opportunities to provide important pedestrian links from the urban fringe into the countryside and connecting areas. By utilising the existing established pedestrian highway network, making improvements where needed to surface condition, road crossing points and street lighting and by developing connecting routes where necessary, we can make significant improvements and begin to build a network that will meet the current and future needs of the borough as it evolves in the future.

This will only be achieved through developing close working ties with the Local Transport Plan, stakeholders and colleagues within planning to ensure that development opportunities are identified and secured. These principles, along with how it is proposed that the rights of way network within the borough will be developed are set out in further detail within the Solihull Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the Solihull Cycling Strategy.

It is intended that the Walking Strategy will function alongside these plans with a focus on improving pedestrian accessibility within the urban environment. Inevitably there will be cross over between the plans as they come together to promote a cohesive and reinforced vision for walking and cycling provision within the borough.

Specific opportunities and projects to support the work of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Cycling Strategy will be included where appropriate within the Action Plan of the Walking Strategy to develop link opportunities from the urban fringe.

#### **4.3.8 Physical Activity Strategy**

It is intended that this strategy will work to provide "joined up" strategic direction for the development of services and facilities for both providers and enablers of physical activity.

The strategy looks at the joined up approaches which can be taken borough wide to promoting physical activity. This will be based on an analysis of need, evidence of what works and will have ownership by a wide range of stakeholders.

The walking strategy will look to tie into and assist meet the 7 strategic objectives of the physical activity strategy and will have a number of joint action points which will form part of the walking strategy's action plan.

## 5 The Existing Walking Environment

The needs of rural and urban areas may overlap in many respects, but also have very different problems and opportunities that need to be considered and actioned as part of this walking strategy.

This section of the strategy considers the measure and projects that Solihull Council has already delivered and is in the process of implementing in order encourage and develop walking options within the borough. Many of these initiatives and schemes will form the basis for our future work surrounding walking provision, and so it is important to consider these in more detail within this document.

The focus of this walking strategy is intended to consider primarily the urban environment, where there is a greater demand from and opportunities for pedestrians. Issues related to walking in rural areas are of course relevant to Solihull given the large areas of countryside which border the urban areas. These rural areas provide an important green belt buffer between the west midlands conurbation and the City of Coventry. The Council is committed to providing improved opportunities for walking in these areas and these issues are considered and actions set out in more detail within the Solihull Rights of Way Improvement plan.

Much of the Borough's population of 206,000 centres in the north on the communities of Castle Bromwich, Chelmsley Wood, Fordbridge, Kingshurst and Smith's Wood and to the south in the towns of Solihull and Shirley and consequently it is in these areas where our work to encourage walking and develop walking infrastructure will have the greatest impact and value.

These urban areas, and particularly the largely purpose-built urban communities within the north of the borough, are well served by a network of off-road footpaths and linking public paths. This gives access on foot to a major centre no more than 1 mile away from most dwellings.

Improvements are needed however to ratify this network, and ensure that high quality and safe routes are available. Whilst the existing network provides an excellent basis from which to develop this, the density of routes has meant that many are no longer used or needed and have consequently deteriorated.

Typically, these routes become a burden on the local communities as well as the

Council in terms of maintenance. They are no longer seen as assets and indeed the level of requests for the closure of this type of route has risen considerably over the last 5 years. An important focus of our work, in conjunction with our partners working on the North Solihull Regeneration project, must be to reduce the density but increase the quality of routes within this area. Well designed routes, which have appropriate surfaces, furniture, lighting and crossing points, which are designed to discourage antisocial behaviour and provide links to local facilities and communities must be a priority. There are opportunities within the regeneration projects currently in place to implement the principals of walkable neighbourhoods to add value to the newly created neighbourhoods, whilst creating improved connectivity for the existing environment.

Whilst the North of the Borough sustains the highest population density, much of the Boroughs physical area is covered with a number of rural and semi-rural villages of differing sizes. The most notable new community in the Borough is just to the west of Shirley, where the new village of Dickens Heath has been built.

By contrast, the southern urban areas do not typically have a network of off-road routes available to the same extent as those seen in the north of the Borough. The dispersed nature of the area means that the distance between local and major centres is extended to between 2 and 3 miles. Issues of poor accessibility are therefore often more noticeable in rural areas where distance between facilities, places of work, schools etc are greater. This can be a significant barrier for people which can affect their quality of life. This is particularly the case for low income, elderly and disabled people.

The scope and number of opportunities to make significant improvements within these areas is more limited due to the and will focus more on improvements to existing routes and the development of new routes associated with future development schemes.

*Within this area there is opportunity to take advantage of the rural setting to enhance existing and develop opportunities for new recreational and leisure walks. It is therefore important that this Walking Strategy supports the objectives and specific actions identified as part of the boroughs Rights of Way Improvement Plan.*

The remainder of this section sets out in further detail some of the major schemes which are currently being implemented across the borough and which have potential to make walking easier and more attractive in Solihull.

### **5.1.1 Regeneration projects**

Solihull Council is committed to close the gap on inequality and improving the quality of life for everyone living and working in the borough.

One way that the Council is attempting to do this is through the implementation of large scale community and economic regeneration projects. These projects have significant implications on existing available walking routes and offer an important opportunity to redesign and provide improved pedestrian infrastructure in the identified areas on a much larger scale than would normally be feasible. Consequently these areas offer prime opportunities to put in place show case pedestrian and sustainable transport links which are socially inclusive and meet the needs of current and future users travelling within and through the areas in question.

Currently there are three regeneration projects ongoing within the borough. These are:

- Regenerating North Solihull.
- Chelmsley Wood Town Centre Refurbishment.
- Shirley Town Centre.

Phased redevelopment of larger areas offers an opportunity to design out many of the historical problems created by the proliferation of poorly designed pedestrian walkways. The development of key pedestrian corridors providing links from residential areas to places of work and local facilities offer a real long term solution to the problems now seen, and highlight the importance of ensuring that a considered and appropriate sustainable transport infrastructure is a core requirement of all future planning proposals.

### **5.1.2 BIA/NEC Integrated Public Transport Access Scheme**

The Birmingham International Airport / National Exhibition Centre Integrated Public Transport Access (ANITA) scheme is currently ongoing. This scheme seeks to improve public transport links and enhance connectivity to the East Birmingham/North Solihull Regeneration Zone.

The scheme is intended to encourage the use of public transport, increasing public transport modal share and will improve access to/from/within the North Solihull Regeneration Zone for residents whilst providing improved access to employment.

Whilst the scheme focuses predominately on improving public transport connectivity within this area, which is of key regional significance due to the proximity of Birmingham International Airport, Birmingham International train station and the National Exhibition Centre, a number of important improvements and links will be made to the pedestrian and cycle network within the area that will improve both accessibility and user safety. Given the economic importance of the area, developing sustainable transport links including pedestrian access particularly for local people to places of work is a priority. The development and implementation of the ANITA scheme is therefore an important objective for Solihull MBC. Further details on this are provided within the Action Plan section of this Strategy.

### **5.1.3 Whole Route Studies (*Smarter Routes*)**

Solihull Council is working in partnership to develop a series of transport improvements along the A34 Stratford Road and the A452 Chester Road corridor. The aim of the project is to make the most efficient use of the route as a key transport corridor for all users whilst at the same time recognising that people live along the route and the strength of local centres is critically important for the sustainability of local communities.

This scheme has the potential to make significant improvements to walking routes leading to and through these important local centres. Consultation with local residents and users will be essential to informing this process which will inform intended improvements to routes within these areas.

### **5.1.4 Access and travel to schools**

The promotion and implementation of sustainable modes of travel to and from schools have the potential to make a significant contribution to the walking agenda within Solihull.

It is apparent that to ensure modal shift continues and more children travel to school in a healthy and sustainable way, schools require ongoing support and encouragement.



Solihull Council is committed to moving forward the 2006 Education Act which is a duty to “promote Sustainable Travel to School”. The Council have already produced a strategy for this which is currently being implemented.

Solihull Council is working with Schools within the borough on a number of initiatives to encourage walking. These include;

- School Travel Plans
- Safer Routes To School
- Walking Buses / Park and Stride etc
- Links to Schools
- School Travelwise/walkit information portals
- Annual school census monitoring mode of travel to school

### **5.1.5 Travel Plans**

Travel Plans are working documents, designed to address an organisations particular travel and transport needs. Each plan is tailored to the individual needs of the organisation, but all look to lower the dependency and number of private car trips made and work towards promoting and encouraging alternative forms of travel, such as walking, cycling, use of public transport and car sharing.

Travel plans are being widely implemented across the borough and have the potential to contribute positively towards the objectives of this Walking Strategy.

### **5.1.6 School Travel Plans**

The principals of School Travel Plans were introduced by the Local Government Act 2003, which established a duty for all Local Authorities to promote sustainable modes of travel to school.

School Travel Plans have been actively promoted and supported by Solihull Council since 2004, and to date the Council has worked with and assisted 84 schools in the Borough to put in place School Travel Plans. It is the Councils target to ensure travel plans are in place for all 94 schools in the borough by 2011.

School Travel Plans aim to promote safe, sustainable access to schools and should assist all children in being more active and healthy. They promote

safe, sustainable travel, and with their associated programmes like 'Safer Routes to School', have an important role to play in fulfilling the goals of this walking strategy and developing walking as a viable travel choice for local and recreational journeys.

### **5.1.7 Active Workplace**

In 2009 Solihull Council appointed an Active at Work project manager to work across the borough with organisations and groups promoting opportunities for healthy living. Working with partners and volunteers the immediate impact of the Active Workplace project has been significant and is helping to bring opportunities for health and well-being to employees across Solihull.

Central to the Active Workplace project is the encouragement of walking and cycling. This is achieved through a number of soft measures such as the promotion and support of organisations in taking up Company/Workplace Travel Plans. These travel plans are implemented in partnership with Solihull Council officers working as the TravelWise representatives for Solihull. These measures support and the Smart Choice's measures that we will look to implement and will play an important role in removing barriers both real and preconceived to walking and cycling in the borough.

### **5.1.8 Walking the way to health**

Natural England's 'Walking to Health' initiative continues to gain momentum in Solihull. The scheme which encourages people to get out and explore and enjoy their local natural spaces is the largest national body promoting and setting standards for led health walks.

Within Solihull, the Solihull Striders and Strollers health walks scheme works closely with local organisations, including Solihull Primary Care Trust, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Seeds of Hope Project in Kingshurst, as well as local GPs, park rangers and volunteers to provide walks which are open to all ages and abilities.

There are six regular led walks in the borough, at Dorridge, Kingshurst, Central Solihull, Shirley and Chelmsley Wood. A linked programme called Solihull Discovery Walks has also been developed which uses walks to bring people together to enjoy the natural and local history.

This project is an integral part of the work that the Council is doing to promote walking as a health lifestyle choice. It is an important step in breaking down barriers and empowers people to introduce, in a safe environment, exercise into their daily routine as well as building confidence.

### **5.1.9 Shopmobility/Parkmobility**

These services provide an important resource by promoting and enhancing the independence of individuals with limited mobility through the use of mobility equipment.

The services provide a sustainable means of access into Solihull Town Centre and the boroughs parks by offering wheelchair hire from just £3 a day. The service is available for anyone who finds it difficult getting around because of illness, age, accident, injuries or disability.

This strategy recognises the importance of providing suitable facilities for all users regardless of their physical condition. It is important that through this strategy we encourage people to get out to utilise and enjoy the benefits of walking, exercise and the open space it allows us to access.

## **6 Targets and action plan**

Within this strategy 6 key themes and a number of associated objectives have been identified for walking.

These themes and objectives have been used in conjunction with feedback from the consultation exercise on the draft strategy to develop an Action Plan.

The Action Plan sets out specific actions, on how the themes and objectives of the strategy will be targeted and achieved.

In order to ensure joint working, the Action Plan has been developed in conjunction with the Cycling Strategy. This joint Action Plan sets out Actions that benefit both forms of travel as well as joint initiatives to maximise efficiency.

It is proposed that the Action Plan will sit as an annex to each strategy. In this way, the Plan can be reviewed and updated annually as necessary to ensure that it continues to meet the objectives of both strategies and that resources can be appropriately targeted and priorities set.

Achieving the specific proposals set out within the Action Plan will be dependent on suitable funding being identified though primarily the Local Transport Plan budget allocation, but also through our ability to work closely with partners and to align our objectives and targets so that our joint resources can be used as efficiently as possible.

## **7 Monitoring**

The strategy will be reviewed and updated within 5 years of publication.

Feedback from the development of this Walking strategy and the new Cycling Strategy has identified that our key stakeholders wish to see increased joint working between the two strategies. We have attempted to create strong ties through the development of a joint Action Plan. It is proposed that future reviews of both documents will look at the feasibility of combining the two strategies and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan into one document which considers all elements of sustainable travel provision within Solihull.

The action plan contains timescales which set out when the various proposals within the plan will be actioned. This plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that these timescales are achievable, and so that available resources can be appropriately matched to the actions to ensure that the principals of 'lean working' are met.