



Active
Travel
England

A best practice guide to community consultation and engagement



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This document has been developed to help people involved in the delivery of major transport schemes, and particularly those with a focus on active travel. It has been designed to help with transport project engagement and consultation generally but also includes a step-by-step guide. The step-by-step section follows the project stages used by Active Travel England as part of the project management and delivery process.

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1. Introduction

Any piece of development, from changes to the layout of a cycle track to the masterplanning of a new town, needs to be informed by engagement. Good-quality engagement not only allows people to have their say – done properly, it can increase understanding of what’s working well for residents and users, and what’s not. In the long run, this can save time and money, as well as increasing quality of life and adding value to local economies.

A programme of engagement can provide insight and information which is useful well beyond the scope of the project. It may be the only opportunity for years to speak to people who live in a certain area, or businesses on a high street, about transport. It’s a chance to not only understand views about the proposal, but also to discover other barriers and seek information on other initiatives.

Creating meaningful community engagement and public consultation takes time and effort. But it shouldn’t just happen when change is proposed. There should be an ongoing dialogue between local authorities and the people who live, work, and study in or travel through the area. The more we understand how people travel now, how they would like to travel, and the issues and opportunities in an area, the better the proposals and projects will be.

1.1 Document purpose

The purpose of this document is to help people working on active travel projects produce the best quality engagement, which involves people meaningfully in the project development process. In addition to best practice, it will also look at the legal framework and where it needs to be included in Active Travel England (ATE) project stages.



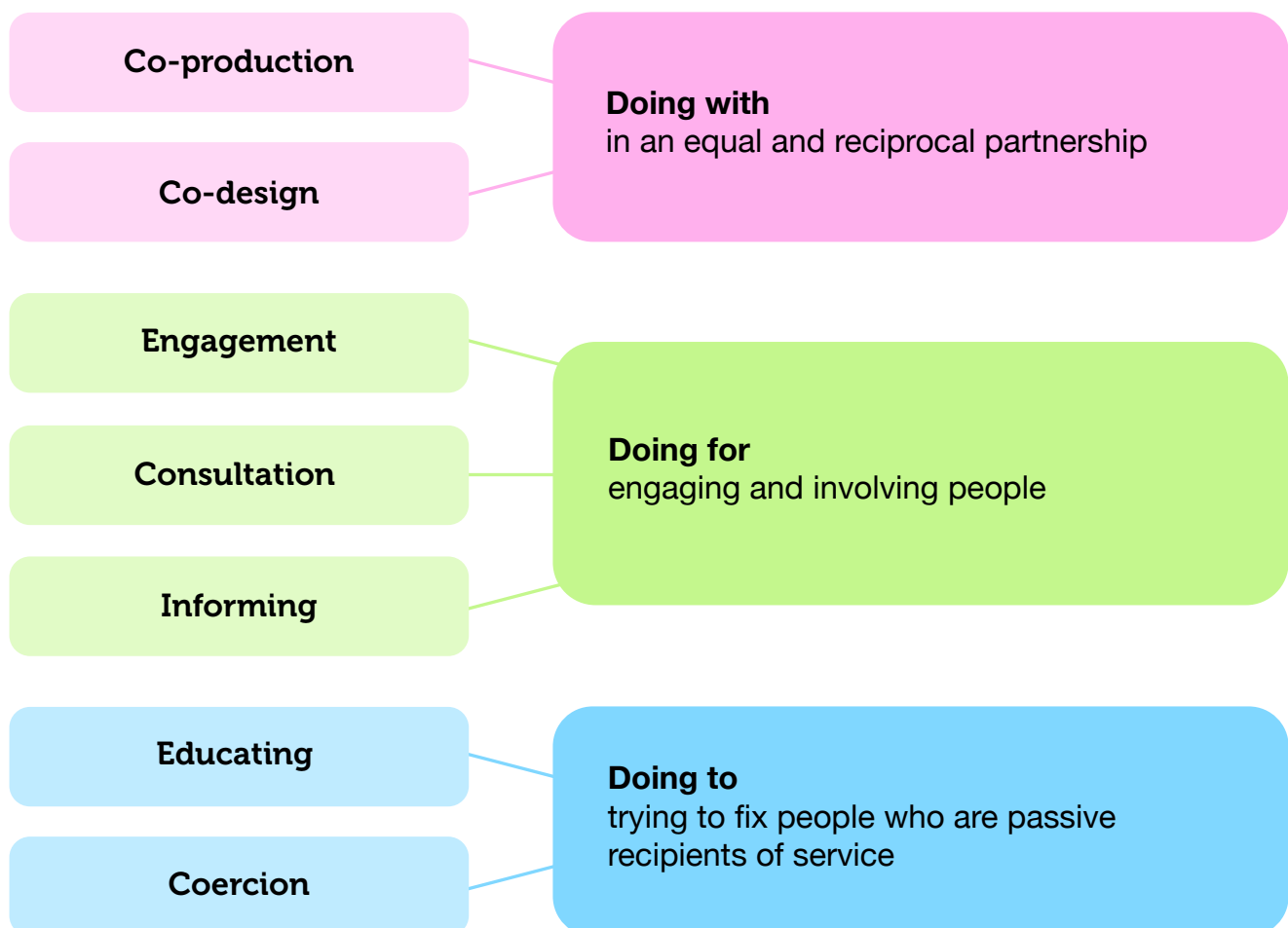
2. Engagement

2.1 Principles of good engagement

There are various principles that define good engagement. These include:

- **meaningful:** public participation must be able to influence decisions
- **timely:** happens early enough to influence major outcomes
- **informed:** provides participants with the information they need to give a considered response
- **respectful:** values the time and expertise of participants and recognises their contribution
- **transparent:** clear on what can – and cannot – be influenced
- **inclusive:** seeking out all those who will be impacted by a decision
- **responsive:** feeds back to participants so they understand how their input affected the outcome

Co-production ladder



The [Ladder of Co-production](#) is a tool to help understand the increasing stages of public involvement in decision-making, mapping levels from information sharing to working together with residents in partnership.

Credit: Think Local Act Personal and the National Co-production Advisory Group.

2.2 Approach to engagement

While approaches to engagement can differ in terms of size, scale or importance, the principles by which you engage should remain the same. It is best to be honest, open and transparent, and to enable anyone who wants to take part in the project development process to do so.

This means that while not everyone needs to take a central role in the decision-making process, they should have an opportunity at each stage to get involved in different ways.

2.3 Why engage

There are several important reasons for carrying out consultation and engagement.

Firstly, residents are experts in both their local area and how they travel around it. Although a transport decision can be complex, incorporating their views can result in better design decisions.

Secondly, involving the local community increases the likelihood that they will embrace the final design and enjoy the changes when implemented, potentially increasing the uptake of active travel.

In addition, for many schemes, some form of engagement or consultation may be a legal requirement.

2.4 Where to engage

While the engagement area for every project should be considered on a case by case basis, you can use the following scope as a starting point:

- large, area-wide schemes, across a borough, town or city. For example, town centres, major corridors, and borough-wide initiatives
- medium-sized schemes, for example school streets, local corridors, and neighbourhood schemes. These range from directly affected streets and buffer zones to wider impacted town centres or ward areas
- small schemes, for example storage hangars, electric vehicle charging points, and changes to waiting and loading restrictions. These include directly affected streets and buffer zones

To decide how large a geographical area you should engage with, you should consider the extent to which residents, local businesses or organisations will be impacted. This should be considered alongside the significance of the proposals and available budget and resources.



However, it's advisable to think about an area that should be directly involved, and a larger area that should be kept informed. For smaller schemes, these might be similar in size.

If you are including an entire city in your engagement strategy, this doesn't mean you expect a response from all residents. It might just be that your communications strategy is designed to make sure messaging is city-wide. This will be project-specific and dependent on a range of factors, from budget to timescales.

2.5 How much engagement is needed

The level of engagement, its duration, and the size of the engagement area are all questions to address as part of project engagement planning. A good start is to consider the significance of the project and whether due to budget or impact it will require a political decision or sign-off, and what is required to help inform that process.

When embarking on a new programme of projects or introducing an active travel scheme for the first time in a while, public engagement for a project also provides a much wider opportunity. It is a chance to promote active travel, engage individuals and organisations in a conversation about active travel and signpost them to complementary measures and behaviour change programmes. For this reason, it is always worth planning and ideally delivering more engagement than you think is necessary, wherever possible.

Engagement fatigue is a risk, particularly for a large project, but can be avoided by ensuring that the purpose of the engagement is clear, that the time and expertise of participants are valued and that results are fed back to them as an integral part of the engagement process.

It may be that once you have started to deliver a programme of active travel schemes and people understand the principles and how things work, project-related community engagement can reduce in scale.

2.6 Who to engage with

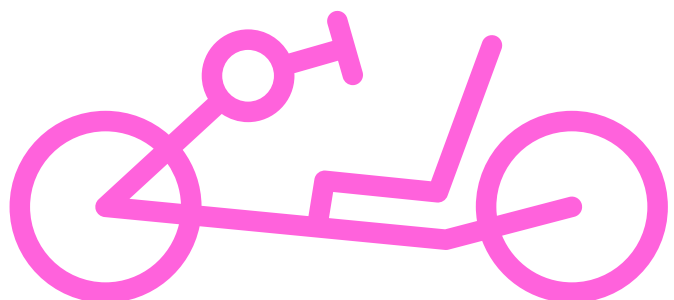
The extent to which you engage people and organisations in the process will often be clearly evident in the scheme proposal developed, the quality of scheme implemented, and how it is received once complete.

One way to start this process is to compile a list of those who will be interested or affected by the proposal. This will likely include people who live, work, study in or travel through the scheme area.

In addition, consideration needs to be given to whether particular groups – for example, those with a disability, women or people from specific ethnic backgrounds – may be particularly impacted by the plans. If so, targeted effort may be needed to ensure they participate and that the format and reporting of the engagement gives space for their responses to be heard.

This is particularly relevant for those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act. Carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment at the inception of the project will help to highlight who may be affected.

This aspect of engagement is considered in more detail in the stakeholder mapping section.



Case Study:

Islington Council: Engaging with disabled people in their communities

For a pilot project that took place in Highbury New Park, Islington Council wanted to incorporate the lived experience of disabled residents into their current, technical reports. This enabled the council to better understand the impact its work has on them, learn what they wanted to see from public realm improvements, and work alongside them in co-producing project outputs.

The pilot project focused on engaging 12 local residents with disabilities to capture their views and experiences in three stages. The first component of the work was an inclusive design and participatory methods workshop which informed and upskilled participants on principles of inclusive design and how to complete an accessibility audit. Additionally, project members and participants discussed the meanings of lived experience and the various methods of capturing experiential data.

The second component consisted of a 'walk-and-wheel-about' tour, where participants used their knowledge to conduct accessibility audits. Project members guided this tour, discussing and auditing the various barriers that inaccessible physical infrastructure caused them. The recorded barriers will supplement a map of the Highbury New Park area, outlining the various necessary public realm improvements identified by participants.

Accompanying disabled residents on the tour was incredibly important for council staff, providing a direct insight into the barriers faced on a day-to-day basis in the borough.

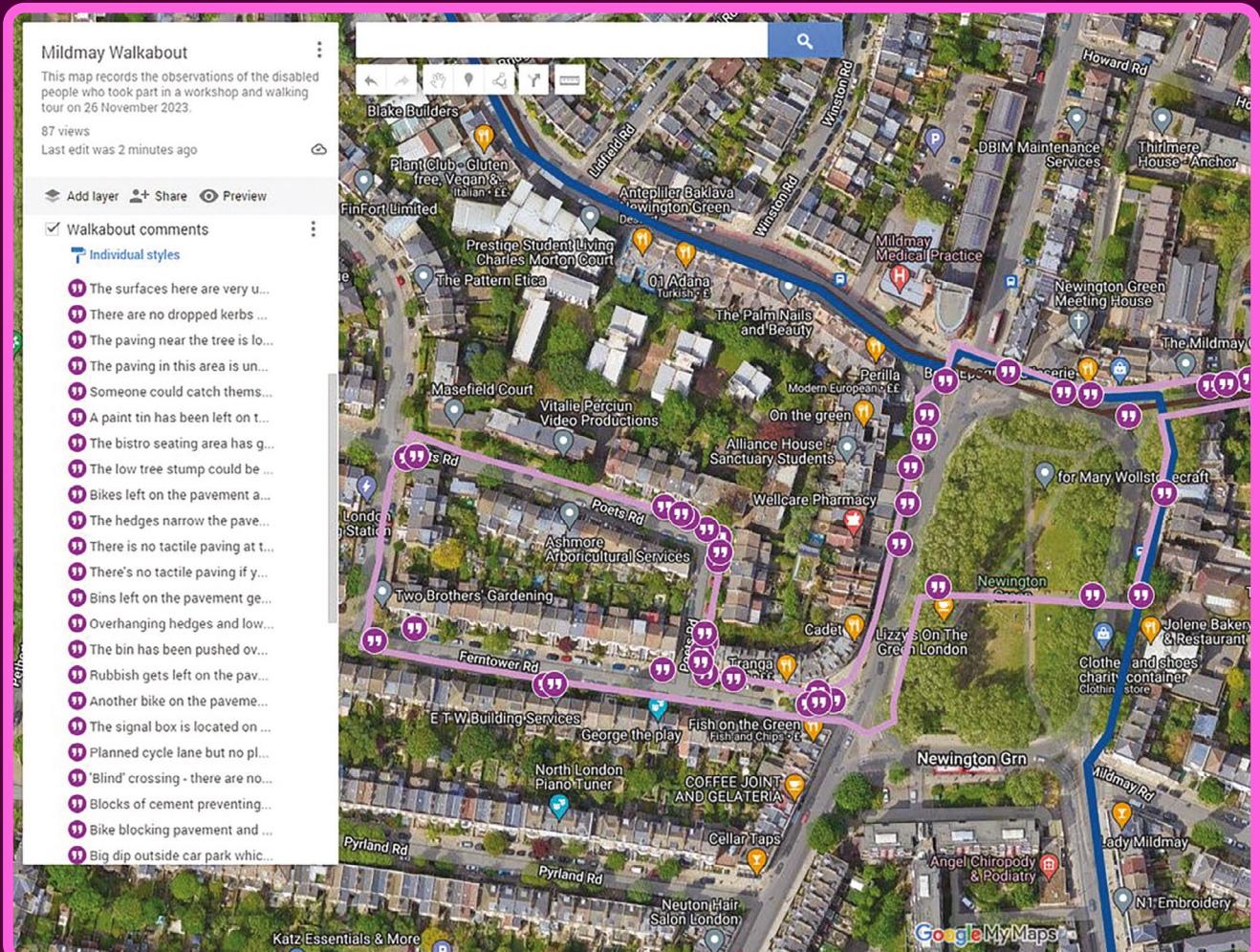
Additionally, the walk-and-wheel-about enabled both participants and project members to view physical space and point out barriers from a pan-disability perspective.

The final project component saw participants attend a workshop on survey design. The aim was to explore ideas for an accessible survey which would enable residents to carry out audits of their own local area to support future public realm improvements. The event consisted of a group discussion of accessible design principles and a consideration of what the survey needed to contain to ensure that the voices of disabled residents were fully heard when the council is considering improvements to the public realm.

By embedding the lived experiences of disabled residents into structural changes within the borough, Islington Council aims to ensure that future audits are more effective and genuinely cater to the needs of residents. The information and experiences produced as part of this project will inform future thinking and planning around Islington's public realm.

This approach of using maps and on-site engagement to evaluate a particular area through the lens of lived experience values the input of participants and is relatively straightforward to replicate. As such, it could be used with a range of other under-represented groups including young people, women and girls and older residents.





2.7 How to engage

Whatever audience you want to reach, participation needs to be both straightforward and rewarding for them – and the best engagement aims to be empowering and enabling, and ideally also fun.

It's also important to consider how you would like people to engage with the scheme. Do you want them to help you develop outline design ideas, or just give their views on the proposal once produced? Best practice suggests that a collaborative approach works best on active travel schemes, but for more infrastructure-heavy schemes with technical design elements, the potential involvement of the community may be limited.

There are, however, lots of opportunities for people to provide lived experience, aspirations, comments on design proposals, and choose options, aesthetics, and public realm enhancements. There are a wide range of options for how this can be done, from focus groups and detailed workshops to the use of technology, including social media, map-based engagement, design tools and virtual reality.

Any technological approach needs to be inclusive, with opportunities offered for face-to-face engagement or paper-based methods for those who can't easily access online content.

The cost of good engagement varies enormously in line with the scale and scope of a project as well as its duration, and will also depend on whether it is done in house or by external consultants. However, the value of well-designed engagement goes beyond the information it generates. Done early, it can save money by ensuring an effective design, but its worth can also include the creation of social value, helping ensure activation of new facilities and also creating community pride and 'ownership' of the final results.

2.8 Inclusive engagement

Active travel schemes, streets and places are only equitable and fair when they enable everyone to access them and move through them easily. Creating these kinds of spaces requires the approach to their design and development to be equally inclusive.

This needs to be considered at every stage of the engagement process and can take many forms. Some are straightforward, such as using plain English and ensuring that venues for events are accessible. The type, format and timing of engagement activities should be chosen to make sure everyone can participate. For example, taking into account those with caring responsibilities, a wide range of ways to participate should be offered.

Groups representing people with disabilities should be included in the design development process from an early stage and kept involved throughout.

Similarly, the differing needs of women and girls (for example, due to safety concerns, caring responsibilities and other factors) make their representation important.

It is also important to remember that inclusivity is a broad term. For example, it may be that the scheme you are developing will benefit children travelling to school, and engaging them in the design process will provide huge benefits to the scheme.

However, every place and project is different and so the unique circumstances and characteristics of the people there should always inform your approach.

Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIA) can be very helpful in considering who might be impacted by a scheme. They should be carried out as part of the development of major active travel schemes and the approach to engagement should be considered within this. A large engagement project may need to produce its own EqIA and it is always a requirement under the Equality Act to consider the needs of different protected characteristics.

Any online engagement or consultation materials should comply with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 to ensure they are accessible to disabled people.

2.9 Under-represented or seldom heard groups

These terms are used to describe sections of the population whose uptake of active travel may be less than average, and whose voices are not always represented in engagement or consultations.

The best way to address this in engagement is to identify the groups who currently have low participation rates in both active travel and engagement work and ensure that they can take part. This might include those from particular religious or ethnic groups, women and girls and people with specific concerns around safety, for example LGBTQ or refugee individuals. Including such groups may require specialist resources, including external support or partnership working with colleagues from other parts of your organisation.

Doing this is not only vital to ensuring open, fair and empowering community involvement, but may be necessary to meet the requirements of the Equality Act.

2.10 When to engage

Community engagement should occur throughout project delivery. While some projects may have defined engagement periods, it is likely that the conversation about active travel in the area you have been working will have started before the project and will carry on once the project is completed.

In general, the earlier that engagement starts, the better the results will be, both for the outcomes of the project and the experience of participants. As a minimum you should consider community engagement and involvement at the beginning of the project and during or between the design stages. There are, however, many other opportunities to get people involved in the development of active travel projects, as outlined in Stakeholder mapping section of this document, which covers project stages.

Spring into early summer and autumn tend to be the best times of the year to carry out community engagement. It is advisable to avoid school holidays and major events, where possible. Winter and the lead-up to the festive period is also a busy time for most people, and therefore not a good time to ask them to engage.



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Case Study:

A safer Camley Street

Safety, and the perception of safety can be a significant barrier to active travel for many women and girls, and engagement around this issue is crucial to making streets and other places more equitable.

As part of the redevelopment of Camley Street, just north of King's Cross, Camden Council and the developers, Ballymore, commissioned Social Place and In Her Place to work with young women and those of marginalised genders in order to understand where there were safety issues for women and girls on the street and in the surrounding area and to identify possible solutions, with a particular focus on the underpass beneath a rail bridge. As the development had not yet started, there was considerable scope for the information from the engagement to influence the design of public spaces in the new development.

Participants were recruited as community researchers and paid for their time at the London Living Wage, and sessions were conducted both in person and online, using a shared visual board. Over six sessions, they began by following a short curriculum of reading, videos and lectures, which included mapping techniques, information and discussion about gender mainstreaming and women's safety work, the importance of public space and current plans for the development. Participants then used a range of tools including photography, creative writing and video to map their experiences of the site and focus on particular barriers.

These thoughts were developed further into design ideas and interventions, which were presented to the council and architectural team working on the development for discussion. Final outputs included a report, a video and a manifesto for a better, safer Camley Street, as well as a wide range of detailed input into the design process and a presentation to the wider council.

This long-form approach as part of a wider engagement programme had a range of benefits for both the design team and the participants. These include:

- the community researchers felt that they had enough knowledge about the scheme and underlying issues to provide meaningful feedback
- the direct contact between the client, the architects and the group meant that the designers could gain detailed feedback and clarification from the researchers, while they in turn understood the design process and its constraints, as well as feeling that their voices had been heard
- the process provided detailed feedback on specific safety issues on Camley Street. These were not just fed into the development design – some, such as tree overgrowth masking street lighting, could be addressed immediately
- wider findings from the close examination of Camley Street could be applied across the borough and beyond
- the researchers gained skills, experience and built their CVs through the work placement, providing value for them as well as the development. They also found the sessions both empowering and fun to attend

More information and the full report can be found on the Social Place [website](#).



3. Stakeholder mapping

When planning who to engage with, it's helpful to identify the stakeholders for the project. There are always unique stakeholders wherever you are developing and delivering a scheme. Identifying them and ways to engage them in the project should be given the appropriate level of thought and scrutiny.

There are a range of broad stakeholder categories. These include:

- internal stakeholders
- external stakeholders
- local or specific interest groups
- transport user groups (including those representing people with disabilities)
- transport operators
- emergency services
- utility companies
- local residents and businesses

Projects near major developments or existing private residential or commercial estates may also need to include landowners or developers.

Mapping stakeholders along with any important local destinations or trip generators can help determine a good project engagement area. While not an exact science, the area to involve will usually be a bit larger than the area directly affected by the scheme.

'Affected' doesn't just mean the physical changes, but also where the impacts and benefits of the infrastructure may be felt. The wider area to keep informed might be similar, but for large schemes this might be the entire town, city or region.

One useful approach is to group stakeholders by the aspired or required level of involvement (for example, who should be commenting on the design, taking part in decision-making, or just be kept up to date with progress). This includes both internal and external stakeholders.



3.1 Internal stakeholders

Winning hearts and minds within the organisation is a vital part of successful project delivery. Active travel schemes often have far-reaching impacts, and understanding these is a key part of the journey. This includes colleagues who may face a higher workload or have to change the way they or their department operate.

Engaging with other departments of local authorities is another important part of stakeholder engagement. If done well, this strengthens project delivery and broadens the potential benefits while mitigating risks related to the delivery of services by local authorities and partners.

3.2 External stakeholders

Depending on the project scope, size and impact, external stakeholders can be an extensive list of very different individuals and organisations with a broad range of views, interests and circumstances. Some of the typical project stakeholders and their roles in scheme design development are discussed below.

a) Residents – People who live in the area in which the scheme will be delivered are a key part of the project, and one of the main audiences for community engagement. They will likely represent the origin of a large proportion of the trips that are taken along the route or in the area you are working. Being local to the area, they will also represent a main target group for mode shift to more walking, cycling and wheeling.

b) Businesses – Businesses are another stakeholder group that can play a central role in the development and implementation of an active travel scheme. Their requirements related to servicing and receiving deliveries at their premises should be a key consideration of design development.

The ability to service and load and unload should be maintained but must be done safely and in keeping with rules and regulations. Dialogue with local businesses on this should therefore be a core part of business engagement.

Business engagement should, however, be wider than loading. It is important to understand business views on the scheme proposal and, importantly, include and communicate elements that make improvements for businesses and their customers.

c) Local groups – Groups who represent local people or specific interests can be helpful to involve in the engagement process. You can work with them to learn more about the local area, including who you might want to speak to and where. They can also help promote the project and encourage local participation in engagement more generally.

However, it is very important that, wherever possible, you include a diverse range of groups, that individuals have equal opportunity to have their say, and that conversations are not dominated by groups or their representatives.

d) Road user groups – Road user groups represent specific people who travel on transport infrastructure. They can be a great engagement and consultation resource, providing access to expertise on subjects or localities and a specialist perspective. They can help you get the basics right at the beginning and with technical detail further down the line.

However, it should be remembered that these groups do not represent everyone and, while well intended, they can sometimes unintentionally misrepresent views.



For example, a local cycle campaign group may be useful in providing constructive criticism and expert local knowledge, but will provide a view skewed by the fact that its members already cycle.

Similarly, groups representing industry sectors, such as logistics or public transport, will provide expertise, but it will be informed by their perspective. To mitigate, include a range of road user groups in engagement wherever feasible.

e) Statutory consultees – Some organisations and individuals must be consulted as part of any statutory consultation process. Statutory consultees in the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process include:

- groups representing the freight industry
- bus operators
- ambulance and fire services
- chiefs of police
- utility providers or infrastructure owners

There is also a requirement to consult other organisations representing people likely to be affected by the proposal. This normally also includes neighbouring authorities. This means they must be sent details of proposals at statutory consultation stage as part of the formal legal process.

It is good practice to engage statutory consultees earlier in the process as part of issue identification and design development. It may also be worth keeping them up to date with wider programme objectives and plans, so they understand the wider reasoning behind scheme proposals and can inform you of any significant issues that may impact the project you are working on. There are significant benefits to having good relationships with all statutory consultees, and time and financial savings can often be found through working closely together throughout.



4. Doing engagement well

Good engagement leads to better results for the project overall, and there are a number of factors that contribute to this.

4.1 Skills and capability

Once you have worked out who you want to engage and have a plan for how and when you want to carry it out, it's worth considering whether you have the skills and experience in your team or whether you need to identify additional resources. This includes considering whether your communications team has capacity to help with the project. It may be that in addition to community engagement specialists you need to identify additional project communications resources.

4.2 Communications

Good engagement relies on good communications. It's crucial that you explain the scheme, its purpose and objectives clearly from the outset. It's also essential to notify people of key project stages and dates when things will happen and give plenty of notice. When communicating, use plain English and avoid using technical terms (or explain them if you do). Always try to present data and background information in simple ways, using images and infographics where possible in combination with well-written content.

Communicate everything well, even when you make mistakes and especially when things don't go well. We don't always know how a project proposal is going to be received, no matter how good the idea might be.

4.3 Approaches and tools

Positives for some can also be negative for others. It's important to think about who you want to speak to and whether the approaches will work for them. There are lots of different engagement approaches, tools and techniques available and using a variety can help schemes reach a diverse range of stakeholders.

Images are just as powerful as words and can be used to show people what change will look like. Showing people how things could look using renders and CGI visualisations of scheme proposals, as well as examples from elsewhere, are great ways to help inform the decision-making process.

4.4 Data

New technology also affects the ways in which background data can be collected, collated, analysed, and used. Recent advances in data collection allow us to show people the status quo, what's not working and what might happen if we change things, informing both scheme development and the wider conversation about streets and the potential for change. Issues like air quality or traffic conditions can be explained to people using local data and information.

While all of this can be a useful part of the engagement and consultation process, it's important that this data is then presented in ways that are easy to understand wherever possible.

It's also always a good idea to make sure you're aware of the data protection implications of this work and to let people know what data you're collecting, and how and why it is being collected.

4.5 Online engagement tools

Online engagement platforms are great resources for the development and delivery of active travel schemes. Many software applications in this field can be effectively used as project websites with background information, designs and opportunities for people to have their say and see what other people think too.

Any online engagement documents need to comply with the [relevant accessibility regulations](#) and you also need to be aware that some groups may not feel comfortable using them.

Case Study:

Greater Manchester: Use of CGI visualisations

As part of its launch of the Bee Network, Transport for Greater Manchester put a big focus on the proactive communication of active travel scheme proposals. This was seen as necessary because some of the schemes were complex and involved interventions that were technical and hard to visualise.

To help bring the plans to life, Greater Manchester used CGI visualisations to show the before and after of proposed changes. These were produced from authority plans and meetings with TfGM's design engineers.

At scheme consultation stage, the visualisations were used online as well as at community events and given to media and stakeholder groups. Feedback from consultations was that the visualisations helped people to better understand the changes being proposed and were a way of visually digesting complex technical language.

In many instances the use of the visualisations resulted in more positive feedback from the public, as they helped to take away the fear that the changes would result in negative impacts on the streetscape or that the changes would more drastically impact the environment.

Greater Manchester authorities were also given consistent templates to use for consultation documents using tailored branding and messaging. This meant that the language used was consistent, the consultation materials were of high quality and people became familiar with the brand, which signified that the schemes were about local transport choice.



Case Study:

York: Targeted interventions to get the views of under-represented groups

In York, a major review of transport policy had engagement at its heart, with a particular focus on reaching those who do not always get involved in transport consultation.

The Big Transport Conversation, the most far-reaching consultation on transport in York since 2010, consisted of 10 policies which between them had the potential to transform the city and how everyone moved around it. An essential part of this was a proactive campaign to reach all audiences.

York City Council's approach was two-fold. Firstly, an online portal was launched where people could view the full version of the consultation, as well as skip through areas they weren't as interested in. The council invited people to drop pins on maps to show specific areas of concern and offer their experiences of travel.

In addition to the online portal, the campaign visited rural villages, suburban areas and the city centre to get a real-life picture of current travel needs.

Assemblies in primary schools allowed pupils to share how they travelled and how they'd like to travel. The council also met with secondary school pupils gaining independence through cycling and taking buses, and talked with college students about some of the challenges they face in choosing apprenticeships when travel options are restricted.

Ward meetings were held and posters distributed across the city.

The campaign also held dedicated sessions with the disability community, including being welcomed into the York Deaf Café with an interpreter and going to visit adults with learning disabilities. Other work included sessions with taxi and bus operators to explain future plans, holding drop-in sessions in libraries and in the centre of town, and visits to the local cycling campaign. Riding along with York Explore's mobile library allowed the project to visit some of the more remote villages within the council's boundary and hear from older people about their experiences of using the bus network.

The feedback received has helped to create key documents for the way people in the area travel. In July 2024, York's new Local Transport Strategy was adopted, and the council is now progressing with an implementation plan to deliver the first two years, as well as a movement and place plan.



5. Policy framework

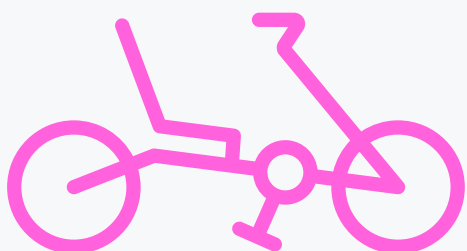
A significant driver for active travel schemes is the wider policy aims and objectives that they help deliver. This also has a bearing on scheme designs, what they should include, what they can include, and what they can't.

Introducing the wider policy framework to people is an important part of the engagement and involvement process. This includes explaining the design standards and tools that are used to assess existing conditions, and the impact design proposals may have.

To make sure active travel schemes provide for everyone, are of the highest quality, and that they deliver the objectives of ATE and the Department for Transport (DfT), schemes should meet all relevant current design guidance.

This includes [Inclusive Mobility](#), [Local Transport Note 1/20: Cycle Infrastructure Design \(LTN 1/20\)](#), [Manual for Streets](#) and [Manual for Streets 2](#).

Due consideration should be given to this guidance when designing new schemes and, in particular, when applying for government funding that includes active travel infrastructure. Where relevant, explaining these standards and how they have had a bearing on design decisions and outcomes will aid the community engagement and involvement process.



5.1 LTN 1/20

LTN 1/20 provides guidance and good practice for the design of cycle infrastructure, in support of the [Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy](#). The scope of the document is limited to design matters. This national guidance provides a recommended basis for those standards, based on five overarching design principles and 22 summary principles.

5.2 Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2

Manual for Streets sets out good practice advice and principles for the design of residential and quiet streets. Manual for Streets 2 extends those principles to busier streets such as high streets and town centres. Both advocate design that puts 'place' above 'movement' where appropriate, and include a hierarchy that puts consideration of the needs of people walking, wheeling and cycling first.



5.3 Local policy

It's likely that you will have your own strategies and policies that should help guide the project. Given the importance of transport in our lives, relevant policies may not just be related to transport but also engagement, communications, public health, spatial planning and environment and more.

An early part of major project development should be to create a policy framework to support, and in some instances, help justify decisions related to the development and progress of schemes. While most people aren't going to become experts in street design, it's important that they understand that schemes have been designed in a certain way for good reason.

This rationale along with robust background data is a good place to start the conversation with the local community. This is especially important when trying to improve conditions for all road users by using space differently, especially if the benefits to all may not be immediately obvious.

It should be remembered that the benefits active travel schemes can bring are wide ranging and vary depending upon location. This therefore means that active travel schemes can also help achieve strategic and policy objectives related to health, the environment and inequalities, to name a few.



Case Study:

Enjoy Waltham Forest: community and business engagement

The London Borough of Waltham Forest kick started its Mini-Holland programme 10 years ago, and has since transitioned into the Enjoy Waltham Forest programme.

Gaining acceptance for such a wide programme required in-depth engagement, which involved thousands of interactions with the community. Key to its success was the breadth of the engagement – and ensuring that the views, ideas and issues were considered alongside data and the aspirations for change in order to develop the best possible outcomes.

For example, detailed engagement work was done with businesses in areas that were subject to design proposals, often involving the introduction of cycle infrastructure, reallocation of road space and parking and loading provision. One example is a series of targeted surveys of businesses and shoppers on Lea Bridge Road.

The Lea Bridge Road project team, working with the programme engagement and behaviour change teams, delivered a wide range of activities to involve the local community from the very beginning.

These surveys were completed through face-to-face visits to businesses, with all public-facing addresses on the road visited during the engagement period. Shoppers were surveyed on the street and also encouraged to complete the survey online.

The results were used in a variety of ways – not least to inform the design, but also to help the local community understand the priorities for people who lived and shopped there, as well as what was required for businesses to operate on the road. This included the production of a series of infographics to show the suggested results of the various community engagement exercises. The graphics showed what shoppers said they wanted included in the redesign of Lea Bridge Road versus what businesses thought they wanted.

There were significant differences between the two, with businesses thinking more car parking provision would best support their customers while shoppers actually wanted infrastructure for people walking and cycling.

Other business-focused engagement activities on main road schemes included advice on green travel planning, cycle training for employees, HGV driver training for fleets based in the borough, cargo bike loan schemes and a cycle parking programme for businesses.

6. Project engagement through project delivery

6.1 Project delivery process

Most transport-related projects go through a series of stages from inception to delivery and post-implementation. These stages and tasks are described using different terminology depending on the type, scale, focus, impacts and outcomes of a scheme.

In line with ATE projects, these stages have been defined as follows:

- baseline
- feasibility design
- preliminary design
- detailed design
- strategic outline business case
- pre-outline business case design review
- outline business case
- full business case
- statutory consultation
- construction/implementation
- post-implementation monitoring and review

Outlining what happens at each stage and, importantly, how people can get involved, is a key early stage in engagement.

There are other stages and tasks that some transport schemes may include and some projects may have significant amounts of work done at each stage, but most projects follow these steps.

6.2 Step by step

It's important that we deliver the right schemes in the right places for the right reasons. Engagement and consultation play a vital role in successful project delivery in several different ways. This starts before project initiation and should carry on after the project has finished. However, each stage has its specific requirements and challenges.

Firstly, it's important that you communicate background information related to the scheme and why it is happening.

Secondly, it's important that you understand how people feel. It's very hard to know how people will react to something that is new. It is also likely that you may not know what the scheme proposal will include at this stage.

You can, however, ask them how they feel about transport, streets, and places in lots of other ways and use this information to help shape outline scheme ideas and strategies.

6.3 Before (baseline)

The baseline stage for a project is about understanding the existing situation, gathering project data, and preparing for project development and delivery.

Alongside other data it's important that you gather information related to people's perceptions, travel patterns and priorities for improvements.

There are a number of things you can do to understand the project area and how people feel about transport and streets. In addition to surveys and data collection, you can use maps for people to identify issues or opportunities the scheme could address, as well as hold walking street audits and attend community meetings or councillor surgeries.

If you want to involve more people at this stage, hosting a survey online or using a purpose-built engagement software platform is a good idea, especially for larger projects. The baseline stage should also be about setting up the project. This should mean project and financial management as well as engagement and communications.

If you haven't done so already, now is the time to consider the 'who, when, how, and how much' questions related to engagement and consultation.

Understanding this at baseline stage will help you plan for later stages of project delivery but also understand what resources you might need, where you might find them and how much it might cost.

While not strictly engagement and consultation, messaging about the project and its benefits will depend on your ability to tell the story of before and after the scheme. To do this you need to know how many people are travelling through the scheme area and on what modes of transport, how much time they're spending there, whether they're crossing the road and so on, before you start the project.

As with all other project tasks, it's important that appropriate levels of funding are allocated to engagement and communications if it is to be done well. It may also be that the project team requires additional resources specialising in engagement, consultation and communications, either from internal or external sources.

For larger projects it is worth considering the development of specific engagement and communications strategies for the projects.

6.4 Communications at baseline

At baseline stage you begin to communicate the reasons for a proposal for change. This includes the important message that the status quo isn't working or needs to change to accommodate something new.

This needs to be communicated well from the outset. If it is part of a wider programme of works or delivering towards wider objectives, this is the time to start explaining this to people. This includes communicating background data and information in easy-to-understand ways using non-technical language wherever possible. This might be through using infographics, plans and images in addition to text. People won't always agree, but they will begin to understand the reasons and associated aims and objectives.

Baseline is also the right stage to set up a place where people can go and find out about the project. Building a place for people to find the latest news on a project means you will keep them engaged in the process.

For larger projects this might mean dedicated pages on the council website, or even a standalone website.



6.5 Feasibility design

Feasibility design is about understanding what is possible.

Depending on the scheme and the location, this may mean exploring different options. While you may have an idea of the issues and key design elements to address, you may be less clear on the additional features the scheme should include.

This is the time to get others involved, including decision makers and key stakeholders. Start with an update on the project scoping and discovery stages and what the related background data suggests.

If you didn't do this at baseline, the feasibility design stage is a great time to get your communications and engagement officers involved in the project. They should be able to assist you with developing communications and engagement elements of the project.

There are a number of engagement-related tasks that can be undertaken during feasibility design. This will vary depending upon your chosen engagement but at feasibility stage, it is time to get a much richer understanding of the local area and how the project will impact it.

A good approach at this stage is to adopt an objective to discover the local area in partnership with the local community. This can be thinking about the existing connections or those that the project will provide. The connections and relationships formed with the local community at this stage can last throughout the project and beyond.

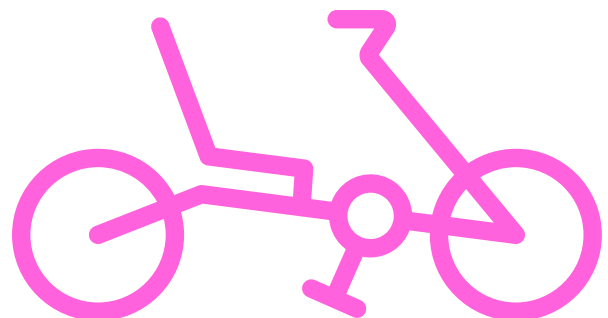
Conversations should include how people and businesses will be able to benefit from the project, and who could be involved longer term in elements such as local ownership of infrastructure, new spaces and planting.

It's also important to understand people's experience of moving through the area, or what they would like to see along the route or in the area. This information combined with professional expertise, technical knowledge and robust design standards will make the best scheme designs.

Approaches you can use to discover the project area with the community include walking audits, workshops, presentations, individual and group creative work and discussions.

If the scheme outline design is refined enough, it is a good time to start getting a view on the ideas and options available. This should always be carried out with the idea that the scheme is to help achieve objectives and aims related to active travel. At this stage there may be a series of robust proposals that include some design options that can be discussed, evaluated and prioritised for progression collaboratively.

Using these methods takes time and commitment from officers and those asked to take part. Realistic expectations of how many people may be involved should be set for these activities but, equally, adequate importance and resources should be allocated wherever feasible.



6.6 Communicating messages

At feasibility design the project team will be learning as much as anyone else. It may be that at this stage options are deemed not viable for a range of reasons. This can be a difficult message, especially if options including maintaining the status quo are popular.

It is often just as important to communicate the reasons why certain options are not being taken forward as it is to communicate the benefits of the preferred option. This of course includes why things can't stay as they are. Another key message at feasibility stage is to explain the next project steps, key dates and how people can get involved in the project in the following stages of project development.

6.7 Preliminary design

Preliminary design is the stage at which your scheme is beginning to take shape and the conversation with the community needs to step up a gear. The first things to do include notifying stakeholders that the project is moving to preliminary design, what the next steps will be, what is expected of them and how they can input into design development.

This will of course vary depending upon the stakeholder, but the focus of community engagement should be on increasing the amount of people involved, whether through design activities, exhibitions and drop-in sessions, or surveys.

It's important that you update those who will be directly affected by the proposal – particularly those living, working, and studying in the project area – providing them with information on the project to date, next steps and when and how they will be able to have a say.

It is likely that at the end of preliminary design you will engage the local community in the project area to understand their views on the final proposal or proposals. There are different ways to go about this, but this normally involves a survey or opportunity for people to comment.

It's important that this isn't a referendum of the scheme progressing but an opportunity for people to positively input into the design development and project delivery process.



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6.8 Detailed design

Detailed design is all about finalising the scheme proposal and putting the finishing touches to the design.

At this stage, it is likely that you have asked people for their views on a project and will be making amendments to design proposals. There may be a number of reasons why you are making design changes, and this could include where feedback was received during previous engagement stages. It is important to communicate these decisions and reasons for them.

Keeping people engaged and involved in this stage of project delivery is vital if you want the local community to feel they have ownership of the scheme and fully embrace the new infrastructure.

As with all other stages, it is important to keep the local community and project stakeholders updated on scheme progress and raise awareness of the next steps towards statutory consultation and construction.

6.9 Business case

Project business cases are developed in parallel with the scheme concept and design and, depending on the funding programme, submitted at various stages of project development and delivery.

The first stage is the strategic outline case, where an initial assessment of the scheme proposal is undertaken. This includes scheme justification, with the outcome used to support the case for change. The business case is then developed, refined and updated as the scheme is developed through to the point where schemes are approved for funding.

Similarly to other key project stages and gateways it is important that the process, outcomes and decisions are communicated to stakeholders and more widely when significant.

6.10 Statutory consultation

Many, but not all, elements of an active travel scheme will have some form of statutory consultation associated with implementing them. These include vehicle access restrictions, parking restrictions, cycle tracks and speed limits. You should make sure you are familiar with the processes required for your proposals.

Statutory consultation should not be the only form of engagement carried out during scheme development. It represents the bare minimum and should be seen more as a way to confirm what will go forward, following engagement with communities.

The most common process is likely to be that associated with making a TRO, used for many traffic management restrictions.

There are various types of TRO but the most relevant are permanent and experimental ones. Both must be made following the processes set out in the [Local Authorities' Traffic Orders \(Procedure\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 1996](#).

For permanent orders, which make a lasting change to the road network, the process includes advertising the proposal in local newspapers and making the plans available to the general public to view. There are 21 days for people to respond to the proposal, including by raising objections. Following the 21-day period, representations are considered and a decision is made as to whether to make the proposed changes. In some circumstances, there can also be a public inquiry if any objections cannot be resolved. Once agreed, the scheme proposal can proceed to implementation.

The following groups must be consulted as statutory consultees:

- groups representing the freight industry
- bus operators
- ambulance and fire services
- chiefs of police
- utility providers or infrastructure owners

There is also a requirement in the regulations to consult other organisations representing people likely to be affected by the order, as the local authority sees fit.

There is no fixed list, but this can include road user groups, local accessibility groups and groups representing local businesses and services, as well as taxi and private hire operators. The process and ways for people to provide feedback needs to be communicated effectively.

For experimental TROs (ETROs), the process is different. These can be put in place more quickly than permanent orders, as they have only a 7-day notice requirement before they can be made. This is then followed by a statutory objection period of 6 months. During this time, statutory consultees must be consulted as per the TRO procedure regulations, and schemes should be monitored and evaluated to help make decisions as to whether the scheme should be made permanent and, if so, in what form. An ETRO can last for a maximum of 18 months, after which they must either be made permanent or revoked.

This approach can be used to good effect in the right circumstances and for the right projects. The temporary nature of features means schemes can be modified in light of experience and feedback, which can lead to a better scheme overall and help address community concerns about impacts.

Given the short lead-in time, ETROs should not be used to circumvent prior engagement by relying on the objection period. To provide the best outcomes, community engagement and involvement should still be a key feature of project development prior to making any ETRO. The need for extra monitoring and consultation can make ETROs a more onerous process overall.

If they are not implemented following the principles of good engagement outlined in this guidance, ETROs may prove unpopular and open to challenge.

The British Parking Association has also produced a [guide to TROs](#) which provides useful background.



6.11 Construction and implementation

Communication and engagement during implementation is just as important as at any other project stage. While the main engagement and consultation stages may have passed, good communication during construction is crucial to ensure it runs smoothly with the local community, especially those living on roads directly affected by the scheme.

It is the culmination of an entire project and the stage at which people see the outcome of their input and involvement in the project to date. It can therefore often be an exciting time for people who are pleased to see the change.

For those who are less pleased with the change, or even those who don't have any interest or see any direct benefit for them, implementation of changes to the highway are an inconvenience or annoyance. Even relatively temporary works can clash with an important date for a local business or family.

It is therefore really important that people in areas affected by works are given advance warning. This is particularly the case in shopping, commercial and retail areas where construction may temporarily adversely impact businesses and their customers accessing them.

It is important that any temporary changes are communicated along with final designs or layouts.

6.12 Post-implementation

The first thing to do post-implementation is to go through the snagging and scheme finalisation processes. It may be that there are some things that still need finishing off. This is a really important time to make sure your communication with the community is clear. If things need finishing off, let people know.

If there are still appealing features to do – the planting, trees, cycle parking and street furniture – make sure it's going to get done and let people know.

It can be very disappointing for the local community if these finishing touches appear to have been forgotten. If there is planting and other scheme elements that require some ownership or input from the community, make sure you get the agreements and relationships in place.

Once the project is complete, it's time to celebrate. Don't be afraid to collectively mark this moment with local people, businesses, decision makers and, crucially, the team who have delivered the scheme.

This also provides the platform for scheme activation. There are lots of different ways you can do this, from pop-up market events to celebration cycle rides. Wherever possible involve the local community in developing it with you.

Make sure you keep people updated with snagging and provide ongoing feedback on the impact of the scheme. The amount you do this and your ability to do so effectively will be dictated by the amount of monitoring you are planning to undertake.

This is particularly important with businesses. If you have made changes to car parking and loading, it's sensible to check it's working for everyone. It's best practice to continue monitoring post-implementation for 12 to 36 months, and ideally longer. This depends on the type and size of scheme and the aims and objectives.

It may also be that an official review of the scheme is planned which this monitoring should help inform. Will people want to know how many more people are walking past the shops or cycling down a new cycle track?

Post-implementation is not the time to realise you didn't get baseline data, so if you're reading this at project planning stage, please turn back to the section covering baseline, make sure your monitoring framework is in place, and you have the required consents before data collection in your project plan.

7. Closing remarks

Good engagement on active travel isn't always easy but when done well it can be powerful, effective and empowering, both for participants and those working on the project.

Getting it right requires the right team and supporting resources, the time to have a good conversation, and a project process that enables the team to listen to feedback and make changes where necessary. It needs to be started before schemes begin and continue after they have been completed, and should reach every group who might be affected, even where this requires extra investment of time and resources.

It is, however, important to remember that you are delivering schemes that, while complex and sometimes difficult, are going to make it easier for everyone to get around safely, and for active travel to be the obvious choice for short trips. And the more that the wider community and stakeholders are involved in that process from the start, the better the end results.



Case Study:

Bradford: A consistent engagement approach to city-wide plans

Future Bradford is an £80 million Transforming Cities Fund project to completely overhaul the city centre and reimagine it as a place for people.

Health and economic benefits have been a key part of the plans from the start. The new journeys that will be enabled have been carefully planned to make them manageable and enjoyable for all, building in accessibility from the start, and bringing 1,000 new homes to the city centre as part of another project – Bradford City Village.

Bradford Metropolitan District Council put early resource into engagement – sending out nearly 120,000 consultation pieces to residents and businesses during the course of scheme development, as well as holding a host of events.

The council also undertook considerable preparation to make sure the scheme gave as accurate as possible representation of the highway network, including 6 months of computer modelling work where the authority's traffic manager and principal urban traffic control engineer both spent considerable time with the modelling team working through traffic flows, individual signal timings and reality checking.

Bradford also had a rolling approach to engagement during its city centre work, providing weekly updates on feedback as opposed to infrequent, lengthy and formal reports. This afforded the ability to allow flexible changes to the work programme, if required, which was especially useful during the unforeseen closure of the city's main bus station.



8. Further resources

Further guidance on good engagement includes:

[Seven Steps to Successful Consultation](#)

[Code of Practice for Community Engagement](#)

[Voice Opportunity Power \(youth engagement\)](#)

[Leonard Cheshire \(engaging with people with disabilities\)](#)

[LGA New Conversations 2.0](#)

It's usually most effective to deal with local organisations if you are looking to engage with particular groups, but other organisations may also be able to provide insight and help. These include:

Age UK – www.ageuk.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society – www.alzheimers.org.uk

Disability Rights UK – www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Guide Dogs – www.guidedogs.org.uk

Living Streets – www.livingstreets.org.uk

Mencap – www.mencap.org.uk

National Autistic Society – www.autism.org.uk

RNIB – www.rnib.org.uk

RNID – www.rnid.org.uk

Scope – www.scope.org.uk

Thomas Pocklington Trust – www.pocklington.org.uk

Transport for All – www.transportforall.org.uk

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust – www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk

Wheels for Wellbeing – www.wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk

Whizz-Kidz – www.whizz-kidz.org.uk



9. Appendix: Design review stage gates

The following design stages or stage gates are used throughout the lifespan of the scheme design and mark key points for design assurance.

Stage	Definition	Funding programme
Baseline	This is the current layout of the path or street, before the proposed design is put in place. Critical issues identified at this stage should be removed through later stages of the design process.	All
Feasibility design	Feasibility is the initial stage of a project where the primary focus is to determine whether the proposed project is technically, economically, and environmentally viable. During this phase the practicality of the project, considering factors such as site conditions, potential risks, available resources, and regulatory requirements is assessed. Feasibility studies often involve preliminary cost estimates and high-level technical assessments to decide whether it is worthwhile to proceed with more detailed planning and design.	Active Travel Fund
Preliminary design	Preliminary design stage is where the preferred scheme option is developed, resulting in sufficient design to inform costings and stakeholder engagement. Initial engineering concepts and drawings are developed to outline the project's fundamental structure and functionality. The project's scope, layout, and overall design concept are defined during this phase. Preliminary design helps stakeholders visualise the project's form and function while providing the basis for more detailed technical and financial assessments.	Active Travel Fund
Detailed design	Detailed design is the phase where comprehensive, detailed plans and specifications for the construction or implementation of the project are produced. This stage involves producing detailed drawings, technical specifications, and engineering calculations. Specific design and construction issues, such as material specifications, structural integrity, environmental considerations, and safety measures are addressed. Detailed design aims to provide all the necessary information for contractors to carry out the construction or implementation phase accurately and efficiently.	Active Travel Fund
Strategic outline case	The strategic outline case (SOC) is the initial phase of the business case development process. It involves a high-level assessment of a proposed project. The primary purpose of the SOC is to establish the case for change and to provide a preferred way forward for senior management approval before progressing to more detailed planning. During this stage, the strategic context is reaffirmed, the case for change is made, and a preferred option is identified.	Major Road Network programme Levelling Up Fund City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Transforming Cities Fund
Pre-OBC design review	The pre-outline business case (OBC) design review applies to MRN schemes at the request of the DfT Major Roads team, rather than a defined funding decision point. This is an opportunity for the authority to contact ATE to get feedback on their proposals prior to committing to producing the OBC.	Major Road Network (MRN) programme

Stage	Definition	Funding programme
Outline business case	Outline Business Case (OBC) is the second phase in the business case development process. It entails a more detailed analysis of the project, focusing on its feasibility, affordability, and deliverability. The OBC further refines the preferred option identified in the SOC and includes a comprehensive assessment of costs, benefits, risks, and management arrangements. The OBC is used to determine whether to commit resources to develop a Full Business Case (FBC) and proceed with project implementation.	Major Road Network programme Levelling Up Fund City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Transforming Cities Fund
Full business case	Full Business Case (FBC) is the final phase in the business case development process. It involves a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of the proposed project. The FBC provides detailed information about the project's costs, benefits, risks, procurement strategy, and delivery plan. It also includes a robust financial appraisal, including sensitivity analysis. The FBC serves as the basis for making the final investment decision, committing resources, and proceeding with project implementation. It ensures that all aspects of the project are well-defined and that it represents value for money.	Major Road Network programme Levelling Up Fund City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Transforming Cities Fund





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