

# Tactical update notes to the Secretary of State

Dear Ellie,

Please see below a tactical update note (as requested) on published DfT policy documents on Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

## **Roads and Local Group – Local Transport: Low Traffic Neighbourhoods**

You asked for a summary of policy documents from DfT that encourage/ commit to more LTNs and these are listed below. (There are other documents which include advice on how to restrict traffic, but these are not included here):

1. **The 2020 strategy for walking and cycling “Gear Change”** said we would “consult on creating a community right to close side streets and create low-traffic neighbourhoods, with groups of residential side streets able to petition local authorities for rat-run closures”.
2. **The 2021 Transport Decarbonisation Plan** said: “Low Traffic Neighbourhoods can provide clear, direct routes for cyclists and pedestrians that promote cycling and walking, significantly reducing accidents, noise, and air pollution for local residents.”
3. **Network Management Duty (NMD) Guidance to support active travel (updated in 2022)**. This included a reference to modal filters to create ‘low-traffic or traffic-free neighbourhoods’ as one measure for LAs to consider.

Following our earlier submission on Gear Change (Annex A) you agreed to drop the LTN commitment, but that you would like to review any announcement on this. If you are content, we could make this announcement as part of the Plan for the Motorist.

Removal of the NMD guidance has also been recommended as part of the Plan for Motorists work and we are awaiting a steer.

## **Clearances**

Cleared by	Detail (name of who provided clearance, or short explanation why not required)
Policy [SCS] (mandatory)	<b>Rupert Furness</b>
Finance clearance	<b>N/A</b>
Legal clearance	<b>N/A</b>
Analytical clearance	<b>N/A</b>
Press	<b>N/A</b>
DG/Perm Sec	<b>N/A</b>

**Timing:** Routine.

**Background:** In addition to the submission at Annex A, you should also refer to the advice from Anthony Ferguson (1 August) on the proposed next steps for the LTN review. This was provided on very limited circulation and is not therefore reattached here.

**Annex A: copy of 17 April submission on Gear Change**

Annex A: copy of 17 April submission on Gear Change

17 April 2023

**For consideration by Jesse Norman,  
Richard Holden and Secretary of State**

**Lead official:**  
Rupert Furness

## Active Travel: Gear Change commitments

### Issue

1. Updating Ministers on the delivery of the commitments in the 2020 Gear Change plan and seeking a steer on whether some should now be deprioritised.

### Recommendation

2. That Ministers:
  - a. **Note** that many of the headline commitments in the plan have been delivered;
  - b. **Agree** that some should now be scaled back or dropped altogether.

### Background

3. The Gear Change plan came out in July 2020, at the height of the COVID pandemic, at a time when the Government was encouraging local authorities to introduce emergency pop-up cycle lanes and pavement widenings to enable greater social distancing. It set out a bold vision for delivering a permanent and long-term increase in cycling and walking; committed the Government to spending £2 billion of dedicated funding over the period to 2025 to enable this; and included many commitments, including the establishment of Active Travel England to transform the delivery of cycling and walking schemes across the country.
4. Much has changed since then, and this submission asks for permission to drop some commitments which no longer seem to chime with current priorities.

### Considerations

5. Many of Gear Change's headline commitments have now been delivered. Active Travel England is up and running; the publication of the new cycle infrastructure design guidance has helped raise safety and accessibility standards; and around £850 million of dedicated investment has gone into active travel since 2020, helping deliver improvements in towns and cities across England. Changes to The Highway Code to improve the safety of people walking and cycling came into effect in January 2022; social prescribing pilots are underway in several local authorities; and the numbers of children receiving Bikeability training is higher than ever before.
6. Gear Change included some commitments which were a response to the pandemic, and which no longer feel appropriate. Its focus on the rapid rollout of low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), for example, no longer reflects current political priorities. In practice, things have already moved on and Active Travel England have made very clear that none of its funding can be used to introduce LTNs.
7. The funding landscape has also changed, and funding reductions both in SR21 and more recently mean that the amount of dedicated funding is now more like £1 billion over 5 years. We still estimate, however, that total funding from wider funding streams will be around £3 billion over the five years to 2025, and have used this line extensively in PQs and Ministerial correspondence.
8. There are also a small number of commitments which no longer feel appropriate, and, if Ministers are content, we propose quietly to drop these to allow a continued focus on the core elements of the plan. The commitments that we would propose to drop include:
  - a. To "*consult on creating a community right to close side streets and create low-traffic neighbourhoods, with groups of residential side streets able to petition local authorities for rat-run closures*".

- b. To “*pilot compulsory freight consolidation schemes in one or two small historic city centres...and conduct further pilot projects to allow local authorities to franchise certain delivery and waste management services where appropriate*”
- c. To “*establish a national electrically assisted bike support programme which could include loans, subsidies, or other financial incentives*”. We launched a pilot e-cycle support programme in June 2022, but recent funding reductions mean that it is unlikely it will be able to continue beyond its first year. Active Travel England will be making recommendations on the future of the scheme in due course.
- d. “*To inform decisions on reallocation of road space, we will conduct street by street audits of a number of key routes, including in smaller towns*”.
- e. “*Low-traffic neighbourhoods will be created in many more groups of residential streets by installing point closures – for example, bollards or planters – on some of the roads*”. Decisions on how to manage their streets are matters for local authorities, but neither the Department nor Active Travel England will use language which promotes LTNs as a concept and ATE has ensured that no LTN schemes were funded in its recent ATF4 funding competition.

## **Presentation and handling**

- 9. We would not propose to make any public announcement to this effect. There is no formal requirement to report on progress against the Gear Change commitments, as Gear Change (unlike the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy) has no statutory status, although the Government did publish a “one year on” report on progress in July 2021. In practice few stakeholders are likely to be surprised by the dropping of these particular commitments. The Department gets regular questions on the delivery of various cycling and walking commitments, and if pressed we would say that wider financial pressures and other competing priorities had made it necessary to deprioritise some of the Gear Change commitments.