



accidents don't have to happen

Birmingham Transport Plan

RoSPA's Response to Birmingham City Council's
Consultation

Date: March 2020



Response to Birmingham City Council's Consultation, Birmingham Transport Plan

Introduction

This is the response of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to Birmingham City Council's consultation on the draft Birmingham Transport Plan.

Birmingham City Council are consulting on their draft Transport Plan 2031. The plan contains a set of principles that will guide investment in Birmingham's transport. The plan aims to create a better environment in which to live and work for everyone irrespective of age, disability or income.

RoSPA have no objection to this response being reproduced or attributed.



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Introduction

Question 1

Are you responding to this consultation as an individual citizen or a representative of a group or organisation (including elected members)?

RoSPA response

RoSPA is responding to this consultation as an organisation.

Question 2

What is the name of your group or organisation?

RoSPA response

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

Question 3

What is the postcode of your group or organisation?

RoSPA response

B15 1RP.

Question 4

Which of these best describes your organisation? (Charity or voluntary group, Developer (land and property), Educational establishment, Employer with staff based in Birmingham, Employer based elsewhere, Membership or campaigning organisation, Public sector, Service and logistics operator, Transport operator or other). Select all that apply.

RoSPA response

RoSPA can be described as a charity, employer with staff based in Birmingham and membership or campaigning organisation.



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Question 5

Approximately, how many people does your organisation represent?

RoSPA response

RoSPA has 120 staff across England, Scotland and Wales. Around 80 of these staff are based in the Birmingham office.



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Vision

The vision for Birmingham's transport is for a sustainable, green and inclusive, go-anywhere network.

Safe and healthy environments will make active travel – walking and cycling – the first choice for people making short journeys.

A fully integrated, high quality public transport system will be the go-to choice for longer trips.

A smart, innovative, carbon neutral and low emission network will support sustainable and inclusive economic growth, tackle climate change and promote the health and well-being of Birmingham's citizens.

Question 6

On a scale of 0 to 5, to what extent do you agree with the vision? (0 is strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree)

RoSPA response

5. RoSPA strongly agree with this vision.



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Big move: reallocating road space

The allocation of road space will change away from single occupancy private cars to support the delivery of a public transport system fit for a global city, fundamentally changing the way that people and goods move about the city.

Question 7

To what extent do you agree with the big move: reallocating road space? (0 is strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree)

RoSPA response

5. RoSPA strongly agree.

Question 8

Do you think the draft plan includes the right key delivery components for reallocating road space?

RoSPA response

Yes, partially.

Question 9

What would you consider the three most important delivery components for reallocating road space?

RoSPA response

Segregated cycle routes.

Remodelling urban centres.

Sprint rapid transport network.



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Question 10

Is there anything else which should be included in the delivery plan for reallocating road space?

RoSPA response

A number of important transport investment programmes are already taking shape, including the improvement of rail and bus services, the extension of the Midland Metro and the ongoing HS2 project.

RoSPA recognise that the growth in the number of vehicles on the road needs to be contained and managed. The increasing number of trips on the network contributes to increased congestion and poor air quality.

There is a limit to the amount of remedial and improvement activities that can be delivered on Birmingham's transport networks at any one time. Responding to the need to meet increased capacity therefore starts with making more of what is already available by re-balancing the way transport capacity is allocated. This process will need to be driven by the prioritisation of modes of transport that deliver most benefit in terms of efficiency, reliability, space and accessibility that support healthier, safer, more sustainable environments.

Many of our roads have been designed for cars and not people. Redressing the balance holds the potential to create environments where people come first and where travelling around is enjoyable not intimidating. However, attitude change towards active travel and public transport must be addressed to ensure that this reallocation of road space is successful.

A YouGov survey commissioned by RoSPA showed that in 2015, when asked how much they would like to cycle in the future, 36% of people said they would like to cycle more than they currently do, 44% said about the same as now, and 3% said they'd like to cycle less often. The main reasons given when asked what prevents them from cycling more often were "concerns around the safety of road cycling" (41%) and "concerns about drivers treating me badly when cycling" (31%). Other common reasons were "cycling not a realistic option for the journeys I make" (32%), "weather not good enough" (24%), "lack of motivation to cycle" (22%) and "a health condition" (16%). "I'd like to improve my cycling skills first" was cited by 7% of respondents, and another 7% said they couldn't ride a bicycle. Overall, 39% of respondents said they would cycle more often if cycling on the roads were made safer. These findings suggest that a perception that cycling is not safe is preventing many people from cycling, which means that they are not benefitting from the health improvements that cycling brings. This must be addressed if active travel is to be promoted.

Creating a safer cycling environment will help to improve the behaviour of all road users, by making it easier for them to behave responsibly and safely. Education (including training and publicity) and enforcement are also key approaches to improving road user behaviour, and to helping everyone share the road safely together. All road users must also take responsibility for their own choices and behaviour. Behaviour change techniques and interventions such as education campaigns may need to be deployed to persuade motorists out of single occupancy vehicles onto public transport and to walk and cycle where possible.

Well-maintained and safe cycle storage will also need to be considered if people are to increase their use of bicycles. This will need to be introduced in mass transit hubs such as rail and bus stations to facilitate the last mile commute.



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In RoSPA's view, the ambition to significantly increase the amount of walking will only be achieved if people feel safe when walking, otherwise the huge numbers of people who would walk more if they felt they could do so, are unlikely to be persuaded that it is actually safe and convenient enough for them. The key to increasing walking is to create a safe walking environment with safe and convenient crossing places, improve road user attitudes and behaviour towards each other, and safer vehicles that reduce the risk of collisions occurring and the severity of those that do occur and reduced vehicle speeds in areas with high pedestrian movement.

The needs of those with impaired mobility must also be considered, when moving away from single car occupancy towards public transport and active travel. A single payment system for multi-modal journeys and staff to support those with impaired mobility to complete their journey could be introduced.

When re-designing areas, the following should also be considered for pedestrians with special needs:

- Tactile paving at the edges of steps and pavements and safe crossing places
- Well-maintained, firm, flat and wide footways making the roads easier to navigate and safer to use for those with disabilities
- Tarmac, rather than paving stones, which reduces the risk of uneven surfaces and trips and falls, and makes the use of mobility scooters more comfortable and efficient
- Dropped kerbs to allow easier access for wheelchair users and;
- Safe crossings with signalling that can be detected by those with sight or hearing loss and longer crossing periods for people with mobility impairments to safely cross the road.
- Reduction in street clutter where it poses a danger to those with visual impairment

RoSPA are also interested in what the Council's plans are to tackle pavement parking. Parking on a pavement obviously obstructs the footway, causing inconvenience and risk to pedestrians, those with mobility issues and people pushing prams, who may be forced to walk into the road to get past the parked vehicle. This could result in the person being hit by a passing vehicle, resulting in injury or even death.

Vehicles parked on the pavement cause particular problems for people with visual impairments, people in wheelchairs or with other mobility difficulties and for parents pushing children in prams and pushchairs. They can also block sightlines, especially near junctions and driveways, making it more difficult for pedestrians to see traffic on the road and for drivers to see pedestrians waiting to cross. This is a particular risk for children, who are smaller and so more easily hidden by parked vehicles.

It may also present an obstruction to active travel, where shared cycle and pedestrian space is on a pavement.

Vehicles that are parked on a pavement also have to drive on and off the pavement, creating a risk of hitting a pedestrian, especially as the pedestrian quite reasonably might not be expecting the vehicle to mount the pavement. The danger of this practice was demonstrated when a 4 year old girl who was scooting on the pavement with her mother was tragically killed by a reversing van.

Driving onto and parking on the pavement also damages the pavement over time, which can create tripping hazards for pedestrians when the vehicle is not there.



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Big move: transforming the city centre

The city centre of Birmingham will be transformed through the creation of a network of pedestrian streets and public spaces integrated with public transport services and cycling infrastructure. Access to the city centre for private cars will be limited with no through trips. This includes looking at different options for the central section of the A38 including re-routing it to an upgraded ring road.

Question 11

To what extent do you agree with the big move: transforming the city centre? (0 is strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree)

RoSPA response

4. RoSPA agree with this big move.

Question 12

Do you think the draft plan includes the right key delivery components for transforming the city centre?

RoSPA response

Yes, partially.

Question 13

What would you consider the three most important delivery components for transforming the city centre?

RoSPA response

Improving cycling and walking infrastructure.

Considering different options for the A38.

Introducing cross city buses.



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Question 14

Is there anything else which should be included in the delivery plan for transforming the city centre?

RoSPA response

Birmingham's road and rail networks are already at or near capacity during peak weekday periods and increasingly at weekends. Heavy road traffic congestion during peak weekday periods coupled with limited capacity on public transport networks is the current cause of disruption and variable journey times.

RoSPA agree that the city centre of Birmingham should be transformed through the creation of a network of pedestrian streets and public spaces integrated with public transport services and cycling infrastructure.

Cycling in Great Britain is increasing (although not uniformly across the country) because it is an excellent way to get about, and provides a wide range of health and environmental benefits. Unfortunately, it also carries a certain amount of risk because the road environment often does not cater for cyclists' needs well enough. The attitudes and behaviour of some drivers and cyclists also increases the risk of cyclist crashes and casualties. Improving the safety of cycling will reduce the number of cyclist casualties and encourage and enable more people to cycle more often. It will help people who want to cycle, but are deterred from doing so because they think it is not safe enough, and help to prevent the increase in cycling being followed by an increase in cyclist casualties. This, in turn, will increase the health and environmental benefits of cycling for those people who cycle and for society as a whole.

The government has just issued a consultation on micro-mobility and the outcomes of this must be reflected in the plan. For example, if the law is changed to allow e-scooters on the roads then this will have implications on the road maintenance budget as these vehicles are less stable when riding across potholes. Key corridors where e-scooters are most likely to be used should be identified and audited to ensure that they are fit for purpose, otherwise the casualty rate is likely to increase. If the Government changes the law, there is likely to be a large and sudden increase in the use of these vehicles.

It has been proposed that access to the city centre for private cars will be limited with no through trips. This includes looking at different options for the central section of the A38 including re-routing it to an upgraded ring road. This will not impact service vehicles. Access will need to be maintained for logistics and service vehicles and RoSPA agree that where possible it will be vital that freight journeys will be concentrated on out-of-hours periods. HGVS pose a particular danger for cyclists, especially in London where around 20% of cyclist fatalities involve an HGV; they often occur when an HGV is turning left at a junction.

These changes may prove unpopular or raise concern amongst those who currently use their car to commute into the city. Campaigns and other measures are likely to be required to persuade these motorists to move towards public transport and active travel. This will help ensure that public transport will be the preferred choice for most people travelling into and out of the city centre. Improvements and extensions to bus, bus rapid transit, train and tram networks including prioritisation over private car travel will reduce the negative impact that congestion and travel disruption has on productivity.

The transport network has a crucial role to play in delivering inclusive growth. Better public transport can help connect more people to employment opportunities, improve the viability of living in the city centre through



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releasing more land for homes from the loss of car parks and also crucially by helping people to lead healthy lives and function even as the city centre continues to grow.



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Big move: prioritising active travel in local neighbourhoods

Active travel – walking and cycling – will become how most people get around their locality most of the time. Cars will no longer dominate street life around homes and schools. A limit of 20mph will be standard on all local roads. Residential neighbourhoods and local centres will be places where people are put first.

Question 15

To what extent do you agree with the big move: prioritising active travel in local neighbourhoods? (0 is strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree)

RoSPA response

5. RoSPA strongly agree with this big move.

Question 16

Do you think the draft plan includes the right key delivery components for prioritising active travel in local neighbourhoods?

RoSPA response

Yes, fully.

Question 17

What would you consider the three most important delivery components for prioritising active travel in local neighbourhoods?

RoSPA response

School travel plans.
Introduction of 20mph limits in residential streets and local centres.
Updated residential planning guidelines.

Question 18

Is there anything else which should be included in the delivery plan for prioritising active travel in local neighbourhoods?



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RoSPA response

RoSPA agree that over-reliance on car travel, particularly for short journeys, is a contributor to physical inactivity which is linked to heart disease and cancer, the biggest causes of premature death. We believe that ending the dominance of cars on streets in residential neighbourhoods and around schools will increase active travel levels and improve air quality.

Walking and cycling are the healthiest ways to travel, either for entire local journeys or as part of longer trips involving other modes such as public transport. A key element of improving cycling and pedestrian infrastructure is to ensure connectivity to local access points for mass transit services including bus, tram and train. Improving walking environments make streets inclusive for all and help older people and people with disabilities travel around the city.

RoSPA agree with the main delivery components of the Birmingham Transport Plan for this move. However, we must ensure that more cycling and walking does not lead to more cyclists and pedestrians being injured on Birmingham's roads.

RoSPA advocates the Safe System Approach, which involves designing roads and vehicles to minimise the risk of crashes occurring, and ensures that when they do occur, they are unlikely to result in death or serious injury. 20mph schemes are a good example of the Safe System approach because lower speeds reduce the risk of crashes occurring and the severity of any that do occur. A Safe Systems approach should be adhered to as part of the Transport Plan. In general, the safe system philosophy identifies ways of separating traffic, and especially separating vulnerable road users from motor vehicle traffic on high speed roads, and where this cannot be achieved, designing roads to reduce traffic speed.

We would encourage the council to continue delivering cycle training at all ages and pedestrian training for children. Practical cyclist training schemes to the National Standards for Cyclist Training are an important way of enabling cyclists to stay safe and of encouraging more cycling.

In terms of pedestrian training, road safety education and training for children at Key Stages 1 and 2 should be conducted in real-road environments, not solely in a classroom or playground and should cover modern-day scenarios, such as distraction by mobile phones or MP3 players while walking, and crossing between parked vehicles. Road safety should also be taught as a spiral programme across all key stages in a way that ensures that what has been learnt is revisited, reinforced and extended in an age-appropriate way. In 2018, 28 child pedestrians were killed on Great Britain's roads. A further 1,417 were seriously injured.

Cycle infrastructure must be maintained to ensure that cyclists are able to use facilities such as cycle lanes.



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Big move: managing demand through parking measures

Parking will be used as a means to manage demand for travel by car through availability, pricing and restrictions. Where development potential exists, land currently occupied by car parking will be put to more productive use.

Question 19

To what extent do you agree with the big move: managing demand through parking measures? (0 is strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree)

RoSPA response

5. RoSPA strongly agree with this big move.

Question 20

Do you think the draft plan includes the right key delivery components for managing demand through parking measures?

RoSPA response

Yes, fully.

Question 21

What would you consider the three most important delivery components for managing demand through parking measures?

RoSPA response

Park and ride at suitable locations.
Parking enforcement.
Workplace parking levy.

Question 22

Is there anything else which should be included in the delivery plan for managing demand through parking measures?

RoSPA response

RoSPA has no further comment.



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Further comments

Question 23

Do you have any other comments about the draft Birmingham Transport Plan?

RoSPA response

RoSPA agree with the main components of the transport plan, but it must be ensured that safety measures are considered and that an increase in cycling and walking is not accompanied by an increase in cyclist and pedestrian casualties. Measures such as the provision of cycle training will need to be considered to improve the confidence of those who wish to cycle and to encourage safe cycling practice, which in turn could lead to a reduction in cycle casualties.

Question 24

Do you feel that the information provided has enabled you to make an informed comment on the proposals?

RoSPA response

RoSPA agree that the information provided was sufficient to make an informed comment on the proposals.

Question 25

What additional information would have helped you to comment on the proposals?

RoSPA response

RoSPA have no further comments to make on the consultation process, other than to thank Birmingham City Council for the opportunity to comment on the consultation. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.

Road Safety Department
RoSPA
28 Calthorpe Road
Birmingham
B15 1RP
www.rospa.com





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RoSPA Head Office

28 Calthorpe Road
Birmingham
B15 1RP
☎ +44 (0)121 248 2000

RoSPA Scotland

43 Discovery Terrace
Livingstone House
Heriot-Watt University Research Park
Edinburgh
EH14 4AP
☎ +44 (0)131 449 9378/79

RoSPA Wales

2nd Floor
2 Cwrt-y-Parc
Parc Ty Glas
Cardiff Business Park
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5GH
☎ +44 (0)2920 250600

General Enquiries

☎ +44 (0)121 248 2000
☎ +44 (0)121 248 2001
✉ help@rospa.com
🐦 twitter.com/rospa
📘 facebook.com/rospa
🌐 linkedin.com/rospa

www.rospa.com

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