

PUTTING LONDON BACK ON ITS FEET

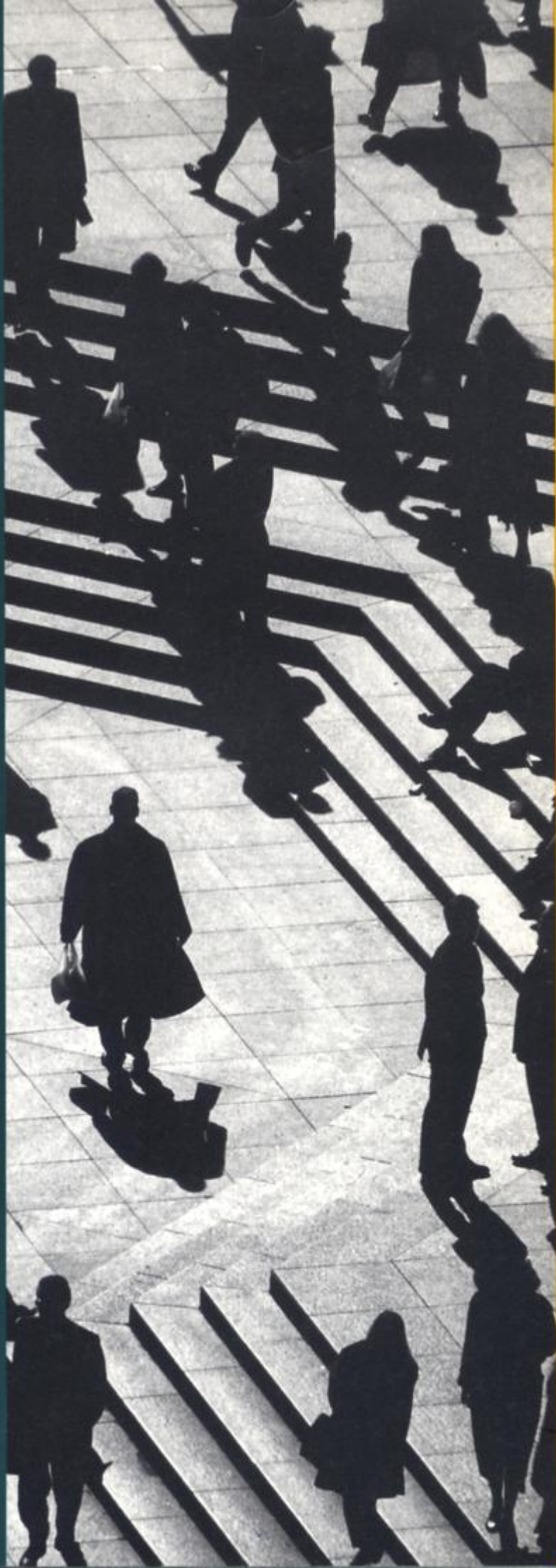
A strategy for
walking in London

LPAC



PLANNING FOR
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INTRODUCTION

Good conditions for walking



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Walking is so much a part of the way we carry out our daily lives that it is often taken for granted. Yet walking has a critical role to play in keeping London moving. More and more Londoners are starting to use their cars rather than walking for relatively short journeys - to the newsagent or the local leisure centre, for instance. But more road traffic makes walking feel unpleasant and unsafe, leading to a vicious circle of decline. If these trends are not tackled soon, they could create significant problems for London, starting with increased traffic congestion and pollution. These can be avoided if greater attention is paid to encouraging walking, and achieving the significant benefits it can offer to the environment and to the health of Londoners.

The London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) is developing a policy framework and advice for an overall strategy for walking in London. This would be implemented by the Government Office for London (GOL), the London Boroughs and the wide range of other relevant organisations involved in walking issues.

A draft version of this strategy is currently out for consultation with interested parties. It seeks to show that walking is an important means of transport that needs to be encouraged. It also aims to reverse the position where walking has been overlooked in transport policy and seen mainly as a safety or recreational issue.

Bad conditions for walking



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Walking in London - the current pattern

The overall pattern of walking in London can be split into four broad types, where people:

- walk all or most of the way between two places, for example home and the workplace, shop or school.
- walk to get to and from another means of transport, for example bus stops, stations or car parks.
- carry out a range of activities on foot in public spaces, including window shopping and meeting people in the street.
- walk for recreation and leisure, including long distance walking and local activities such as children playing in the street.

Accurate information on these types of walking in London is hard to find. However, the two main sources of data which are available - the 1991/92 London Area Transportation Survey (LATS) and the annual National Travel Survey (NTS) - clearly show how important walking is to the Capital.

The NTS shows that walking makes up over a third of all journeys in London. However, this proportion is gradually falling over time, albeit at a slower rate than in other British cities. Patterns of change have varied between different areas of London. Walking by residents of Inner London has recently increased by around 15%, whilst in Outer London, journeys by foot have declined by about 18%.

LATS indicates that even for the shortest journeys in London (those under half a kilometre) almost 20% were made by car. This shows that there is great potential to increase the amount of journeys carried out on foot by converting these short distance car journeys to walk trips.

The need for a strategy

Drawing up a strategy for walking can help to achieve the significant advantages which walking can bring to London. Unlike using the car, walking is environmentally friendly, something that most members of the community can do and is an enjoyable, healthy activity. It is also a reliable means of getting from door-to-door.

Promoting pedestrian activity means more people walking and less people in cars. This will make our streets feel pleasant, safer and more friendly, and help reduce traffic congestion. It will also help our local economies, making our town centres more lively by encouraging window shopping and other street activities.

In the past, attention paid to walking has focused at two levels - pedestrianisation schemes and safety improvements at a local level and metropolitan-wide walking networks (mainly for recreation, such as the work of the London Walking Forum). In between, there have been various policy initiatives like walk-to-school. Despite increasingly pedestrian-friendly central government policy, London Boroughs' planning and transport policies still lack a coherent approach towards walking. Clearly, there is a need for a comprehensive, strategic approach to tackle walking in London with the overall aim of encouraging walking as a means of transport. This will need to bring together the wide range of organisations involved in planning for walking.

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The London of the future should be a city which favours more walking by all age groups and where the proportion of journeys on foot is increasing compared to other means of transport. Relevant agencies, including the Boroughs, public transport operators and developers, should do all they can to promote walking and improve access to facilities by foot.

Types of walking -
the journey to school



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Types of walking -
link with public transport



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Types of walking - street activities



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Types of walking - recreation and leisure



Photograph by Downlands Countryside Management Project

This vision can be broken down into a number of objectives and be reflected in targets and policies for action. These objectives are to:

- increase walking as a means of transport within London.
- improve pedestrian safety and security.
- achieve convenient pedestrian access to key destinations, particularly schools, town centres, and public transport.
- improve pedestrian facilities and the general pedestrian environment, particularly making crossing the road easier and safer.
- ensure that new development is pedestrian-friendly.
- raise awareness about the valuable role of walking in London.
- integrate walking more effectively into Borough land use and transport programmes, and programmes to improve public transport.
- unlock financial and human resources to meet the strategy's overall vision.
- improve professional skills for planning for pedestrians.
- monitor the achievement of the overall strategy.

ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

The means of implementing a strategy for walking can be examined under three sub-headings: land use and transport planning; the quality of the pedestrian environment; and changing people's attitudes to walking.

Land use and transport planning

Planning for walking requires the careful application of land use and transport policies. The chances of people walking depend upon both the distance between activities and the quality of the pedestrian environment.

Some basic pointers are contained in the Government's Planning Policy Guidance in relation to Town Centres and Retail Developments (PPG6) and Transport (PPG13), as well as in 'PPG13: A Guide to Better Practice'. The main guidance centres upon densely developed areas, mixtures of different types of land use, concentration of activities around public transport nodes, and the development of complementary transport and traffic measures.

These measures are intended to reduce the distances people have to travel, making walking more feasible. Guidance is also given on techniques to create lively and safe streets in the Department of the Environment's Circular 5/94 'Planning Out Crime'. In terms of new development, LPAC's draft walking strategy proposes a 'travel audit' to ensure that any proposed development will not rely too much upon environmentally-damaging means of transport, whilst seeking to maximise access by foot.

Any potential conflict between the environmentally-friendly means of transport should be avoided (particularly between walking and cycling). The complementary nature of walking and public transport should also be exploited. Here it will be important to develop new ways of combining bus and walking priority, especially in town centres.

The quality of the pedestrian environment

People will walk further and more frequently where conditions are favourable and take account of the principles of good urban design. These principles can be distilled into five general categories ('the Five C's') which highlight the need for conditions for walking to be:

Connected - easy to get from place to place without meeting dead ends; long stretches of road with no side turnings or busy roads that are difficult to cross; easy to get to the nearest station or bus stop.

Convenient - direct routes without unnecessary detours, restrictions, underpasses or footbridges.

Comfortable - smooth, wide and unobstructed footpaths; avoidance of steep hills and steps; no wind-tunnels or sun-traps; good lighting and safety from traffic.

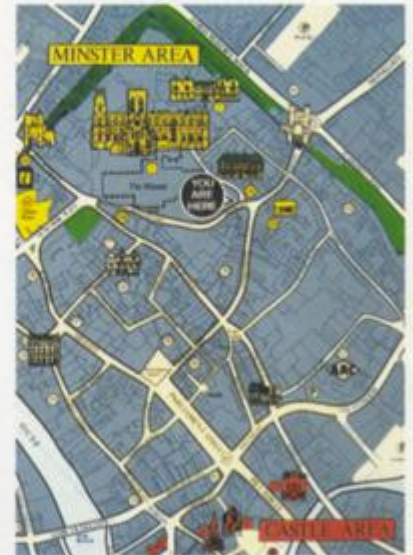
Convivial - friendly, busy streets which are interesting to walk in, meet people, go shopping or have a sit down.

Conspicuous - easy-to-read street and 'you are here' signs, clear bus stops and shop names.

To achieve an improved pedestrian environment will require bringing together the following key elements:

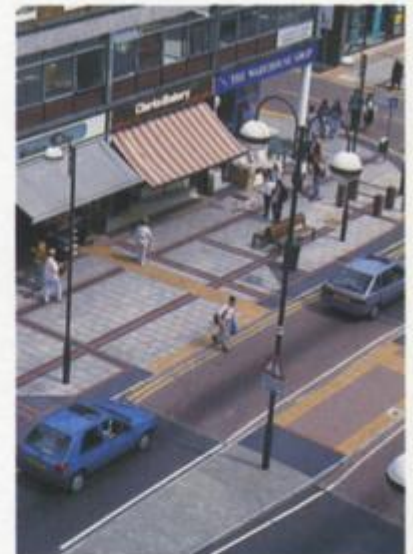
- setting standards for design and quality audits.
- identifying key walking routes (the 'network approach').
- identifying locations where facilities need improvement to ensure network continuity.
- identifying key destinations, such as rail stations and main bus stops, and auditing the quality of access by foot (the 'walking catchment approach').
- identifying local areas where pedestrians should be given high priority.
- improving the pedestrian environment by encouraging good quality urban design.
- selecting and developing demonstration projects to carry out experiments to improve the pedestrian environment.

Connected - York's pedestrian network



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Convenient - Borehamwood traffic calming scheme



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Comfortable - Horsham town centre



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Convivial - Stockholm street market



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

To assist with this approach, LPAC's draft walking strategy suggests that Boroughs use a 'walk mode inventory.' This would start by looking at the existing amount of walking in particular areas and the potential for any increase in the future. It would then identify how and where improvements to the pedestrian environment could be made.

Changing people's attitudes to walking

Walking is unlikely to fulfil its potential by the introduction of physical measures alone. It is also important to ensure that people realise that walking can be a practical and pleasant way of getting around, as well as being a natural form of exercise.

People's attitudes to walking can be changed by holding awareness campaigns amongst the public, and planning and transport professionals alike, as well as by providing more accurate information. Awareness campaigns need to stress the opportunities for and advantages of walking, and the disadvantages of using the car unnecessarily. Walking should no longer be taken for granted. It is therefore important to increase the input of resources to walking both in terms of finance, and local government staffing and organisation.

TARGETS

LPAC's draft walking strategy puts forward a number of targets to promote walking in the future. The main target is to increase walking's share of all journeys in London from 34% to 39% over the next ten years. This will be done by encouraging Boroughs to draw up their own strategies for walking which reflect LPAC's advice and then act upon them.

dropped to 25% by 2007-9

Other targets cover increasing the awareness of walking issues, improving the pedestrian environment and ensuring that new development is pedestrian-friendly. The need to increase the amount of resources devoted to walking is highlighted, as is the improvement in professional skills needed to make walking issues better understood.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

To show how innovative schemes to promote walking can be tested and proven to be of practical benefit to Londoners, LPAC is seeking ideas for demonstration projects which will improve the pedestrian environment. Large-scale examples could include improvements to the approach to a main rail terminus, a town centre, residential area, a Central London square or a 'difficult case' (such as Vauxhall Cross). Smaller-scale projects, such as traffic calming, could either be included separately or within the larger-scale projects. LPAC welcomes any ideas for demonstration projects of this kind.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LPAC has set out a number of recommendations to Government, the Boroughs and other key transport agencies in London. The seven key aims are to:

- increase walking.
- raise awareness of the importance of walking.
- improve the pedestrian environment.
- make new development pedestrian-friendly.
- show what can be done by demonstration projects.
- devote more resources to walking.
- improve professional skills.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of walking in London should not be underestimated. It has a critical role in transport policy despite the low level of support it has received in the past in terms of research, policy development, scheme implementation and funding. This neglect is particularly clear when compared to other means of transport.

Developing a strategy to encourage walking will create significant benefits for Londoners. Such a strategy should revolve around relevant agencies being stimulated and encouraged to take a more positive approach to walking in the future. Facing up to the issues and actions outlined in this leaflet will help redress the balance in favour of walking in London. This in turn will bring significant benefits to the Capital.

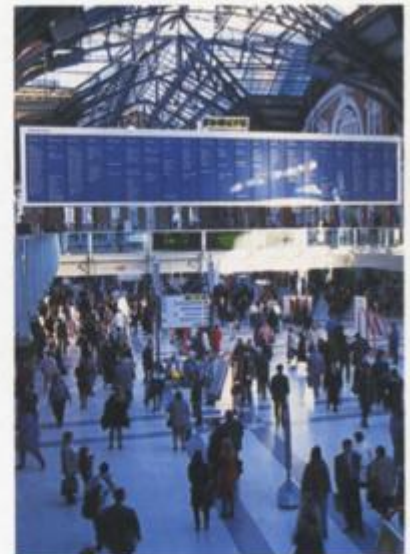
Walking is the most sustainable form of transport, it has a powerful and positive effect on the environment, on the health of Londoners, and on London's local economies. Achieving this vision will truly help in putting London back on its feet.

Conspicuous - helping the visually impaired in Amsterdam



Photograph by Tim Pharoah

Good design aids walking - Liverpool Street station



Photograph by London Transport

This leaflet is produced by the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) with support from London Transport Planning, Transport 2000 and consultants, Metropolitan Transport Research Unit (MTRU).

LPAC is the Boroughs' statutory planning committee for London. It was set up in 1986 by the Act which abolished the Greater London Council (GLC). Its main role is to give Londoners, through their Borough representatives, a say in the overall planning of London.

LPAC is currently consulting on a draft version of its 'Advice on a Strategy for Walking in London.' This leaflet provides a summary of this document. It also draws upon the report 'Putting London Back On Its Feet - the why, how and who of developing a strategy for walking in London', a study produced by MTRU for LPAC with financial co-sponsorship from London Transport Planning and Transport 2000.

The consultation on LPAC's walking strategy continues until Friday, 4 April 1997. The final walking strategy is expected to be agreed by LPAC in June 1997.

Further copies of this leaflet and the consultation document can be obtained free of charge from LPAC.

Copies of the MTRU report 'Putting London Back On Its Feet' can also be obtained from LPAC at a cost of £60 including postage and packing. Please quote reference number CON63. Public and voluntary sector organisations may qualify for a concessionary price.

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