Essex Walking Strategy

2021

Essex wants walking to be an

easy, safe and normal part of everyday life

Essex County Council

Foreword by Cllr Kevin Bentley

Leader of Essex County Council

Walking is the easiest type of travel, and yet many of us aren't walking enough. It is so natural that we often do not even consider it a form of transport. However, in our busy lives, we may have undervalued the most fundamental way of getting around. The Strategy is a plan for pedestrians, to get more of us walking on our network of footways and paths in our rural areas, towns, cities and neighbourhoods.

Essex Highways is motivated by the need to reduce congestion and improve the resilience of our transport networks. The benefits of making our towns more walkable will be a more active and resilient population and a safer, greener, healthier environment.

Introduction

Walking is good for individuals and for communities. It's free and almost universally accessible. It improves physical and mental health. And it reduces the pressures placed on our natural and built environments by other, mechanised forms of transport.

For journeys under 2km (equivalent to about 20 minutes' walking time), walking should be the natural option. But walking can also form an effective, beneficial and enjoyable part of longer, multipart journeys.

For much of the last century, walking has been overlooked in favour of superficially more convenient forms of transport. The aim of the *Essex Walking Strategy* is to reverse this trend . It seeks to raise awareness of the many benefits of walking, and to spotlight opportunities for local government to encourage and facilitate more journeys on foot. This strategy sets out objectives and priorities until 2025, in the hope of providing a policy framework that will promote more walking and better walking networks.

Note: Throughout this document, we use the term 'pedestrians' to refer to individuals travelling on foot or in/on a wheelchair, stroller or mobility scooter at or around walking pace (max. 4mph).

The purpose of the walking strategy

Walking should be the natural choice, whether for short trips or as part of longer journeys. But over the last 30 years it has become less popular. Today, approximately 60% of trips between 1 and 2 miles are currently by motor vehicle and could therefore be walked. This prompts an obvious question: why aren't people walking more?

This document seeks to answer that question by outlining the barriers that discourage people from walking, as well as by defining opportunities to reverse the trend.

Its ultimate aim is to help re-establish walking as the first choice for everyday travel wherever appropriate, while accommodating and even enhancing local plans for growth.

Benefits of walking

Transport Benefits	• Inexpensive • Often faster for short journeys • Convenient and accessible • Links other forms of transport
Health Benefits	• Helps manage weight • Reduces stress • Improves sleep • Reduces risk of chronic disease
Environmental Benefits	• Reduces traffic congestion • Reduces air and sound pollution • Enhances safety by increasing the number of people in public spaces
Social Benefits	• Reduces isolation • Encourages community connectedness • Provides easy, convenient access to services and jobs
Economic Benefits	• Encourages use of local high streets, businesses and services • Improves employee wellbeing • Good walking access helps attract and retain staff

Why does Essex need a walking strategy?

Section 1

The National Policy Context, part 1: **The Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans**

In 2017, the Department for Transport published *The Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS 2017),* which set out the government's ambition to "make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey".

The strategy represented the biggest development in Government policy towards walking and cycling in decades, thanks to both its statutory nature and the requirement it set out for long-term funding. The strategy proposed a vision up to 2040, stating that "The Government wants walking and cycling to be a normal part of everyday life, and the natural choices for shorter journeys such as going to school, college or work, travelling to the station, and for simple enjoyment. As part of our aim to build a society that works for all, we want more people to have access to safe, attractive routes for cycling and walking by 2040." (DfT 2017).

The CWIS was accompanied by technical guidance in *Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP 2017)* aimed at local authorities. This guidance provided a new, strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required in the longer term (10 years) at the local level.

In response to this, Essex County Council (ECC) has developed walking and cycling network plans for the five largest urban areas in the county: Basildon, Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Harlow. The next stage in the council's plans is to develop coherent walking networks across the entire county.

Government's objectives are divided into stages. The most immediate aims at the time of CWIS publication were to increase, by 2020, both walking activity (measured as the total number of walking stages per person per year) and the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 who typically walk to school.

Following this, the aim is to increase walking activity to 300 stages per person per year by 2025, and to increase the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 who typically walk to school from 49% (2014) to 55% over the same period.

By 2040, the Government's ambition is to deliver a suite of enhancements to the public realm that will make walking and cycling safer, easier and more enjoyable:

- **Better safety:** Whereby pedestrians feel safe and not out-of-place when walking in public spaces, even at slower speeds.
- **Better mobility:** Whereby more urban areas are considered walkable, more rural roads are made safe for pedestrians, busy roads offer safe walking paths, and more routes are accessible for those with disabilities or health conditions.
- **Better streets:** Whereby more streets are integrated into a wider network of green routes, designed to be safer, better connected and therefore more welcoming for people of all abilities and ages, so that they can walk or cycle with ease.

The national policy context, part 2: **National Planning Policy Framework**

The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018)* sets out a number of planning policies for England. Its purpose is to inform the way local planning authorities construct their own local plans – and the promotion of walking (as a key form of sustainable transport) is central to its aims .

The NPPF's proposals are intended to satisfy economic, social and environmental objectives, many of which are interdependent and must be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Well-designed walking and cycling networks can contribute to meeting these objectives in various ways – for example, by supporting local economic growth, promoting health as well as social and cultural wellbeing, and by assisting in the wider move towards a lower-carbon economy.

It's no surprise then that the NPPF positions walking and cycling as core considerations when designing new developments. By designing in favour of high quality walking and cycling networks, as well as supporting facilities such as cycle parking, local authorities can reduce car dependency and emphasise a 'people-oriented transport hierarchy'.

This latter point is important, and worth taking a moment to explore: it means that all applications for development are required to give first priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme itself and in neighbouring areas. Second priority is to facilitate access to high quality public transport.

The national policy context is therefore clear: both the NPPF and the CWIS emphasize the importance of walking (and cycling) in support of a number of interrelated and mutually supportive economic, social and environmental benefits. Designing for walking means designing for a smarter, cleaner and healthier future.

The *Essex Walking Strategy* isn't a standalone document. It's designed to inform and influence a number of other plans, policies and strategies – as this graphic shows.

The role of walking as part of the **Essex Transport Strategy**

Essex County Council's statutory umbrella transportation strategy can be found in its third *Local Transport Plan (LTP3),* which was formally adopted in July 2011. Often referred to as the *Essex Transport Strategy*, the LTP3 remains broadly relevant in terms of its vision, the challenges it identifies, the outcomes it seeks and the policy framework within which it exists. There have however been important changes at the council since the adoption of LTP3, with ECC now an outcome-led organisation. The council has since developed a new outcome led *Vision for Essex* that focuses on the people of Essex and the places where they live.

Reflecting this new outcome-led approach, the Council is also currently developing a new *Transport Vision*, which will show the various ways in which transport policy can help to deliver the objectives of Vision for Essex. The *Transport Vision* will also provide an updated strategic context for LTP3.

The new Transport Vision aims to achieve:

- A refreshed high-level strategy to better reflect wider Essex outcomes
- Sustainable Environment - address carbon generation and improve air quality
- Sustainable Communities - build new communities and reshape existing ones
- Healthy communities – encourage healthy lifestyles
- Sustainable Economy – a forward-looking economy with improved access to a wider range of opportunity
- Reflecting emerging Government policy
- Future of Mobility (Transport): Urban Strategy 2019 (and Rural Strategy in development)
- Road to Zero carbon reduction strategy
- New approaches to rail and bus service delivery
- More devolved and collaborative decision making
- Covid recovery – embedding positive change

Essex will need to:

- Focus on the efficient and effective movement of people, goods and information
- Reduce the carbon dependency of the transport network
- Promote smarter working and more sustainable forms of transport
- Focus on active travel
- Understand and implement new modes of travel and their supporting technology
- Make more effective use of data
- And integrate transport into people's daily lives

The role of local plans

In the provision of mixed-use development, Local Plans should seek to ensure that the design of development optimises the provision of transport networks, including walking and cycling.

- Local Plans should include policies that seek to provide for high-quality walking and cycling networks. These networks should be designed to provide safe and accessible routes to key facilities and services.
- Local Plans should look to incorporate the provision of supporting facilities as outlined in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).
- LCWIPs can support Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans by considering and enabling policies that encourage more walking and cycling; by seeking appropriate contributions towards the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure when drawing up the Regulation 123 list for the Community Infrastructure Levy; through seeking planning agreements in the form of Section 106 obligations; and through ensuring walking and cycling are key considerations during the making of Section 278 highway agreements.
- Planning policies should also identify places where new walking routes can be delivered by new developments, and ensure the protection of alignments for future planned cycling and walking routes.

Supporting ECC's Everyone's Essex - Our plan for 2021-2025

Local authorities have complex roles, but fundamentally they are there to support local communities and to plan ahead. Essex County Council's *Everyone's Essex - Our plan for 2021-2025* recognises that the role of the council is changing.

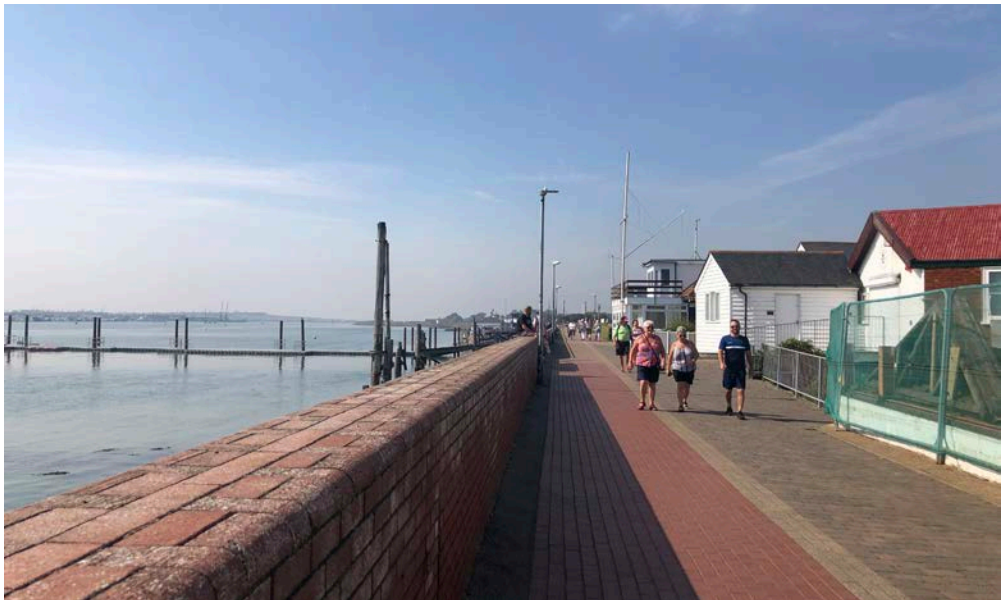
Now and in the future, ECC wants to be an enabler of communities and individuals, providing residents with information and options. The *Essex Walking Strategy* is part of this, and seeks to support the four aims of *Everyone's Essex - Our plan for 2021-2025* as outlined in the table below.

Strategic Aims	Plan for Essex Commitments	Walking Priorities
Strong, inclusive and sustainable economy	Good Jobs Infrastructure Future Growth and Investment	Improve access to Core Walking Zones, town centres and high streets
High Quality Environment	Net Zero Transport and Built Environment	Encourage leisure walks on the PRoW, country parks and coastal path Make walking the norm for short journeys Design-in walking to new communities and retrofit walking improvements in existing neighbourhoods Improve road safety
Healthy Lifestyles	Help to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly communities	Enable all residents to achieve two active 10s per day through everyday travel Encourage social walking to bond individuals and communities, and to reduce isolation Encourage residents to be active, resilient and independent
A good place for children and families to grow	Levelling Up Outcomes for Families Safety	Encourage residents to be active, resilient and independent Increase footfall on the walking network to improve natural surveillance

Walking in Essex: challenges and opportunities

Essex is a large and varied county with a strong rural character. It has large areas of beautiful countryside, remote coastal villages and island communities, while also offering vibrant, fast-growing towns and cities.

Its eastern border consists of 350 miles of coastline – the second longest of any English county. To the north lie the counties of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire; to the west, Hertfordshire; and to the southwest, London.



Transport geography

We need to build upon the policy-led approach of LTP3 to include a more overt commitment to a sustainable and low carbon transport system that focuses on: reducing the need to travel, increasing the sustainability of travel, and finally decarbonising residual travel necessary to support economic activity and social interaction. In order to achive this we are developing a tiered approach to support the use of the most appropriable form of transport for the many different journeys related to the movement of people and goods.

- Strategic Connectivity to support trade
- Economic hinterlands - Growth Hubs connected to their rural hinterlands by rail and rapid transit and innovative bus services
- Connectivity within urban areas by public transport and sustainable modes – including garden communities
- Sustainable and active links within local and rural neighbourhoods

The Walking Strategy therefore has a key role in promoting the most sustainable form of transport for as many journeys as possible, especially with local urban and rural neighbourhoods. Walking and good walking routes have a clear role to play within this larger transport system, either as the main way to travel for shorter journeys or as a way of interchanging between other forms of transport.

The demographic context

In Essex in 2014, 58% of people took the recommended minimum amount of weekly physical activity – 2.5 hours. At least 33% of females were active once a week, compared to 38% of males.

In 2017, the *Active Lives Survey* found that 27% of people in Essex were physically inactive, with this lack of activity costing the NHS in Essex an estimated £58m per year.

These statistics must be viewed against the backdrop of a growing population, with around 100,000 new homes planned for Essex over the next Local Plan period (which runs to the early 2030s).

These statistics make it clear that:

- 1. There is a real and present need to encourage more physical activity in Essex.
- 2. Both individuals and the community as a whole will benefit significantly from the improved health outcomes that accompany increased physical activity.
- 3. Considered design and planning which prioritises high quality walking networks will be central to sustainable development growth, as well as improved health and wellbeing.

People and Projections

1,820,900 people in 2017 for Greater Essex. The county's population is expected to increase to 2,133,100 by 2041, with the greatest increases currently projected in Colchester, Basildon and Chelmsford.

Development Growth

In 2016, there were approximately 784,000 households across Greater Essex local authorities. Approximately 170,000 additional homes will be needed across the same area by 2036, many of which have already received planning permission and are being built.

Economy

Greater Essex currently generates £36bn Gross Value Added (GVA) per year and supports over 816,000 jobs. According to the East of England Forecasting model (2016 run), 79,000 additional jobs will be needed within the county by 2041.

Social and Health

In Essex, around 27% of residents are failing to meet the minimum recommended amount of healthy physical activity (around 2.5 hours per week). This county-wide average, however, masks large disparities between districts. Inactivity across Essex has been identified as a key issue by the county sports lead, Active Essex, whose objective is to get 1 million people active in Essex by 2021.(Active Essex: Our Strategy 2017-2021; Changing 1 million lives to get Essex Active, Active Essex 2017).

Increasing physical activity is a priority for the Joint Essex Health and Wellbeing strategy (2018-2022) with the Health and Wellbeing Board objective being to reduce the percentage of residents (aged 16+) who undertake less than 30 minutes physical activity per week (Sport England Survey).

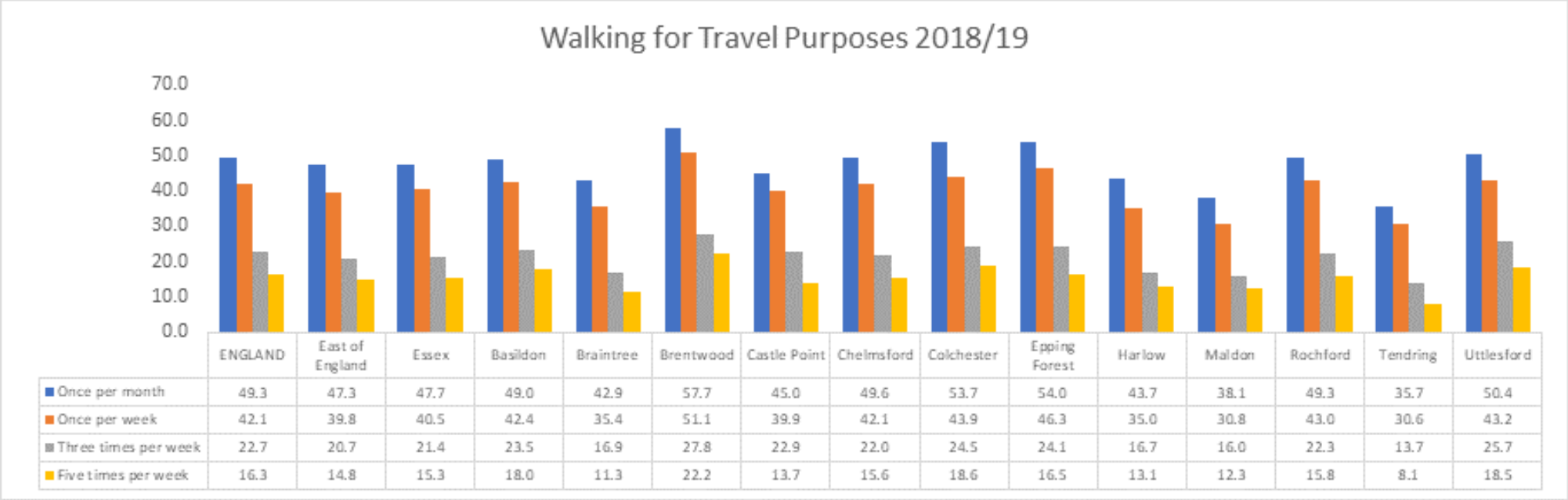
Walking for travel

The chart below shows the frequency with which Essex residents walked for travel purposes in 2018/19, divided by district. A trip was counted if it involved walking for 10 minutes or more.

- In 2018/19, Essex showed higher average rates of walking for travel purposes than the previous year across all frequencies.
- Braintree, Harlow, Tendring and Maldon had lower rates than the county as a whole for walking once a week 2018/19.

What does the data suggest?

Department for Transport data for England suggests that the decline in walking trips since 2002 may have plateaued, and that the number of walking trips is no longer declining. However, the ambition remains to increase the amount of walking for travel in Essex, primarily by reducing the number of short car trips in and around towns that could be switched to walking or walking and public transport (buses, rail and park-and-ride).



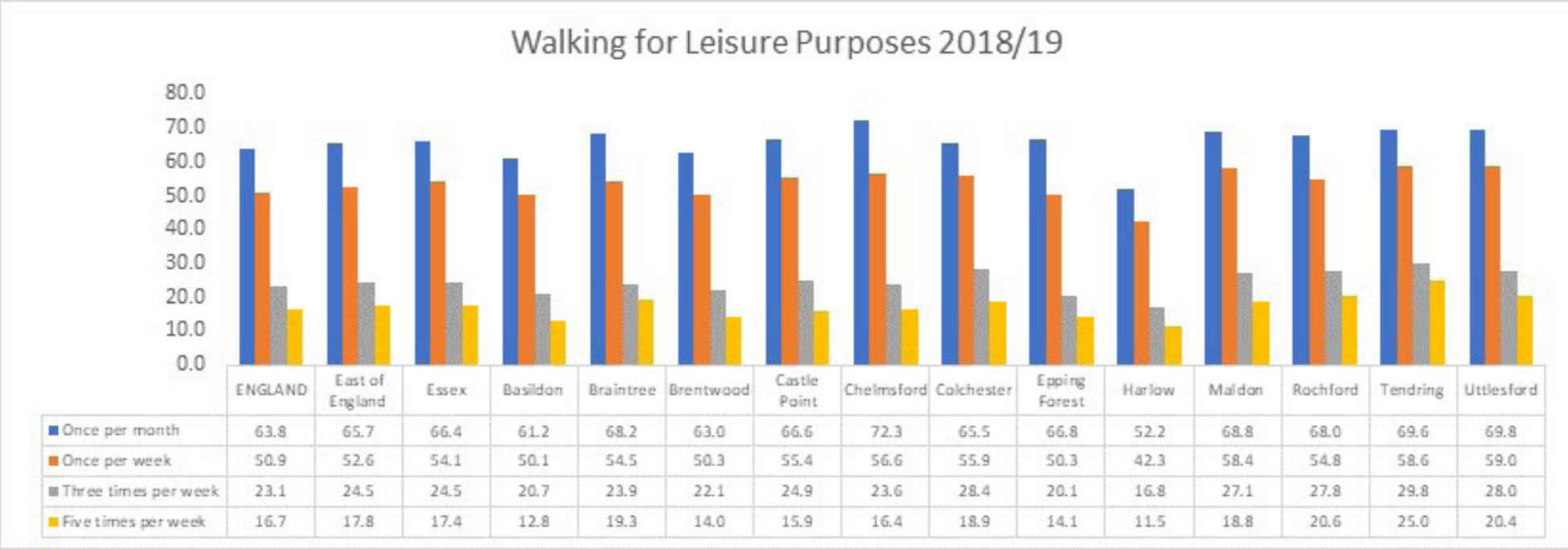
	ENGLAND	East of England	Essex	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Tendring	Uttlesford
Once per month	49.3	47.3	47.7	49.0	42.9	57.7	45.0	49.6	53.7	54.0	43.7	38.1	49.3	35.7	50.4
Once per week	42.1	39.8	40.5	42.4	35.4	51.1	39.9	42.1	43.9	46.3	35.0	30.8	43.0	30.6	43.2
Three times per week	22.7	20.7	21.4	23.5	16.9	27.8	22.9	22.0	24.5	24.1	16.7	16.0	22.3	13.7	25.7
Five times per week	16.3	14.8	15.3	18.0	11.3	22.2	13.7	15.6	18.6	16.5	13.1	12.3	15.8	8.1	18.5

Walking for leisure

Promoting leisure walking

The promotion of leisure walking and provision of high quality walking routes is central to the *Essex Walking Strategy.* Walking trips in Essex are not monitored and measured in the same way as other modes of travel, making it harder to know and understand route patterns and preferences.

We do however have some insight into the frequency of walking trips from the annual *National Travel Survey*. We also have data regarding the intensity and duration of physical activity from the *Active Lives Survey*. Taken together, we can build a useful picture of the current situation: that many journeys within Essex could be taken on foot, but aren't; and that many Essex residents aren't walking enough to maintain or improve their general health.



	ENGLAND	East of England	Essex	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Tendring	Uttlesford
Once per month	63.8	65.7	66.4	61.2	68.2	63.0	66.6	72.3	65.5	66.8	52.2	68.8	68.0	69.6	69.8
Once per week	50.9	52.6	54.1	50.1	54.5	50.3	55.4	56.6	55.9	50.3	42.3	58.4	54.8	58.6	59.0
Three times per week	23.1	24.5	24.5	20.7	23.9	22.1	24.9	23.6	28.4	20.1	16.8	27.1	27.8	29.8	28.0
Five times per week	16.7	17.8	17.4	12.8	19.3	14.0	15.9	16.4	18.9	14.1	11.5	18.8	20.6	25.0	20.4

The chart above shows the frequency with which Essex residents walked for leisure purposes in 2018/19, divided by district. Again, a trip was counted if it involved walking for 10 minutes or more.

- In 2016/17, Essex showed higher average rates of walking for leisure purposes than the previous year across all frequencies.
- Leisure walking is clearly important to a significant number of Essex residents. However, there are still large numbers of people in Essex who are not enjoying the benefits of leisure walking.

Barriers to walking in Essex

What stops people walking in Essex?

Physical barriers

Much of the fault may lie with problematic features in the physical environment. Put simply, people will walk more if there are safe, open, convenient, accessible and enjoyable routes available to them.

Underpasses, blocked or discontinuous routes, wide roads busy with traffic – all can act as barriers to walking. Such features may disproportionately affect certain groups of pedestrians, including the elderly, those with impaired mobility, people with long-term health conditions or parents with young children.

Social barriers

Research by Lancaster, Leeds and Oxford Brookes universities (2011) has also identified several non-physical (or social) barriers to walking. These include fears around physical safety, discomfort (such as getting wet), perception of abnormality and complex family routines leading to increased car journeys.

Removing barriers

By removing both physical and social barriers to walking, we can enhance access, improve mobility and increase the permeability of neighbourhoods. This can be achieved while optimising the public realm and the overall attractiveness of public spaces.

This is particularly important in view of Essex's ageing population. By making walking a more convenient and natural choice, we can ensure all residents benefit from improved health and enhanced community connectedness – whatever their age.

Making walking the first, best choice

Section 2

Our Vision

Essex wants walking to be an
easy, safe and normal part of everyday life

Essex is set for huge changes over the next 15 to 20 years, not least in terms of the way we travel. The council's aim during this period is to unshackle us from cars and congestion by developing efficient, modern and sustainable transport networks alongside digitally connected homes and businesses.

Of course, change should benefit everyone. It's therefore vital that the different communities, groups and businesses within Essex have the opportunity to help shape the Essex of the future.

The good news is, Essex is well-positioned to make such a progressive leap. The county contains vibrant and growing urban centres, is home to world-class businesses, has universities carrying out cutting-edge research, and is linked to the wider world by international ports and airports. As an aspirational county, we need and deserve an aspirational approach to walking.

This section of the *Essex Walking Strategy* will provide a framework by which the council proposes to encourage more walking, both as a way to travel 'from A to B' and for leisure purposes. This strategy should be considered as a complement to the existing *Essex Transport Strategy* (LTP3) as well as other specific transport strategies, such as bus and cycle strategies.

Part of this strategy looks at how we can develop more coherent walking routes, giving people more choice as to how they access key destinations and town centres. Elsewhere, the strategy provides a framework for planning walking networks alongside delivery partners, and for prioritising future investment.

Nine walking objectives have been identified as part of this strategy, reflecting the fact that walking intersects with so many key aspects of development and planning – including Road Safety, Better Streets, Health, Accessing Schools, Leisure and Greenspace Economy, Planning New Communities and Changing Attitudes and Behaviours.

Objectives

Objective 1	Increase walking for everyday trips
Objective 2	Improve road safety for pedestrians
Objective 3	Better design and enhanced accessibility
Objective 4	Enable physical activity & walking for health
Objective 5	Enable more walking to schools
Objective 6	Promote walking for leisure
Objective 7	Support economic development
Objective 8	Improve neighbourhoods and supporting the development of new communities
Objective 9	Encourage walking by changing attitudes and behaviour

Objective 1
Increase walking for everyday trips

Walking for travel

Walking is the most sustainable form of travel, albeit one that is often overlooked. Walking is both a mode of transport and a critical way of accessing other modes – for example, a pedestrian may walk from their home to the bus stop, or from the park-and-ride to their place of work.

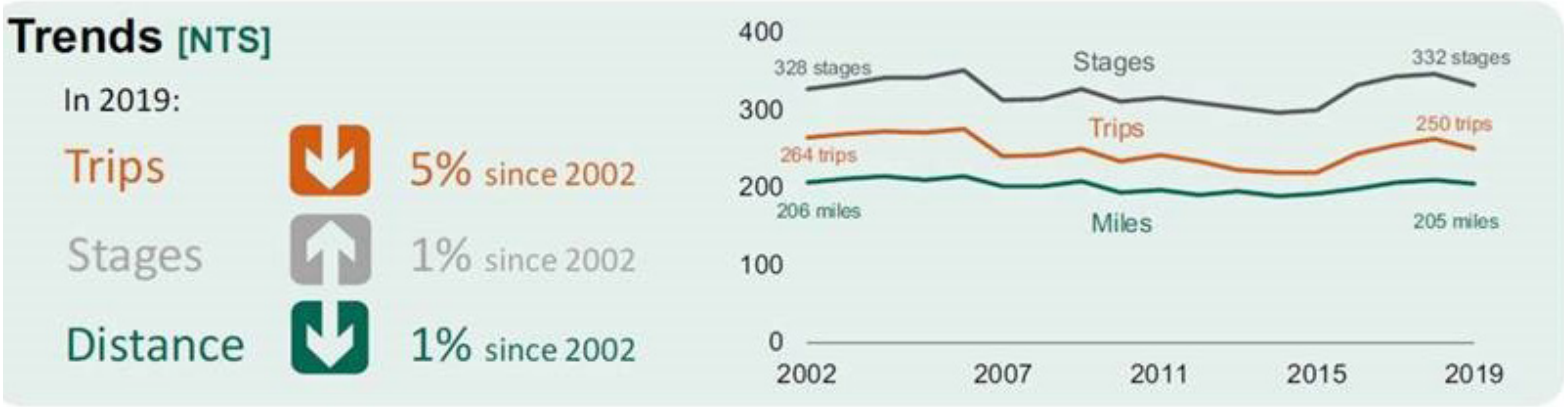
Department for Transport data from 2014 supports the view that walking is an important part of urban travel. In England as a whole, 22% of walking trips take place in urban areas – and given that these figures exclude trips that don't take place on public highways, it's likely that the significance of walking is being underestimated.

The collection of data around walking trips is limited, and this deficit needs to be addressed. We need more data about local walking trips, their frequency and duration, their origins and destinations. Such data will be vital in planning and prioritising both new networks and improvements to existing ones.

In Essex, the road network in our towns is approaching capacity. But there is still abundant capacity on the footway network, and a huge opportunity to transport high volumes of people in a relatively small amount of space, without significant infrastructure spending.

Walking is often the most direct, easy and affordable means of travel, especially for journeys of around a mile. For shorter trips within towns and cities, walking is often the fastest way of getting to a destination – and most journeys which involve bus or rail transport have a walking element.

It's clear therefore that walking must play an increasing role in the expansion and efficient functioning of our towns and cities. By improving walking networks and ensuring they have good links to bus and rail services, we can make our town centres and high streets more attractive – and save valuable land being given over to car parking.



Wayfinding

Wayfinding refers to the means by which people navigate streets and find their way around. Wayfinding tools and systems can support coherent walking networks by providing information that helps to orient pedestrians. They can also be helpful in demonstrating how easy and convenient it is to walk. One example of a wayfinding system that may encourage more people to walk: a map of an area showing key landmarks and destinations (such as rail and bus stations), along with the time it takes to reach them by walking.

Coherent walking networks

The walking routes and networks available have a direct impact on the number of people choosing to walk. It's therefore important to provide direct, coherent routes that don't cause pedestrians to deviate from their preferred path (or 'desire line'). Walking should be the most convenient way of accessing local neighbourhoods, high streets, key destinations and town and city centres – and high quality walking networks are a prime way to achieve this.

Walking as part of a longer journey

Journeys by bus or rail typically involve walking to and from stops, stations and/or interchanges. There is therefore a strong relationship between the use of public transport and the number of stages of walking that people undertake as part of their everyday life.

Walking may comprise a large or a small part of a longer journey – whatever the case, the provision of high quality interchanges will encourage more people to walk and use public transport instead of using a car.

Buildings that form part of interchanges should be easily identifiable and convenient to access. For example, with a new development, ensuring that a building's pedestrian access is sited near to a bus stop will make moving between the building and the bus stop more convenient. Encouraging people to walk to the bus stop is not simply a matter of reducing distance, though – it's also about ensuring a pleasant and safe environment along the way, ideally with places for people to rest or interact with others.

Walking along a tree-lined street with strong visual interest and other people present is a completely different experience from walking the same distance along a street with blank frontage, or with frequent interruptions from side turns or vehicles parked on the footway. As with stops and stations themselves, walking routes should be designed for use by people of all abilities (CIHT 2017).

Reducing congestion and emissions

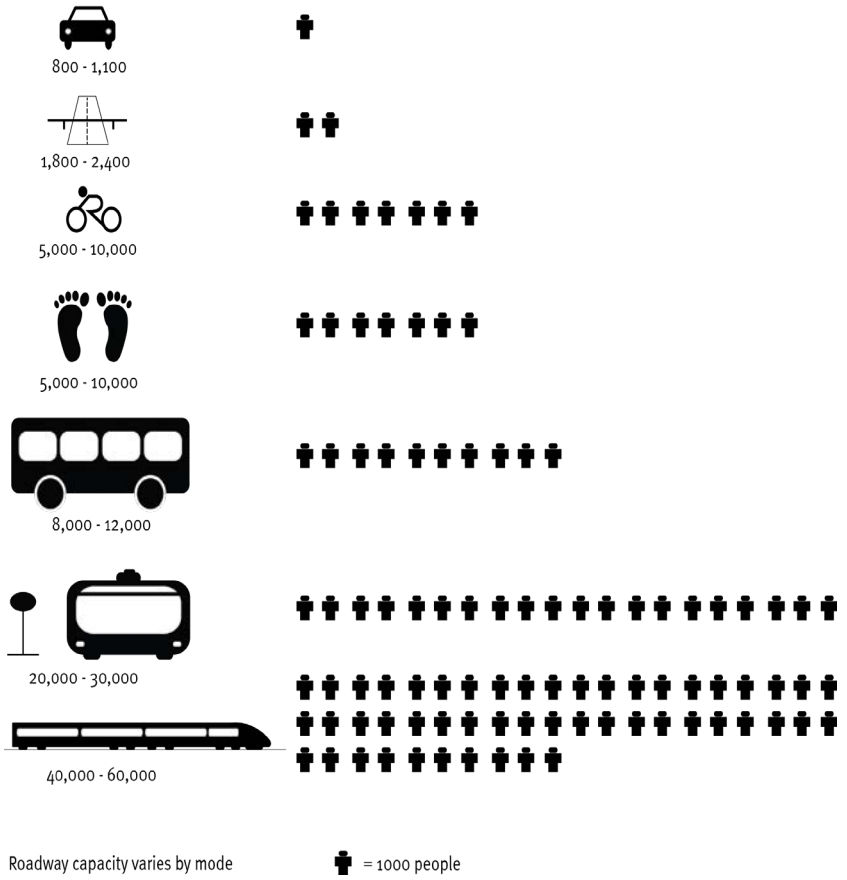
Walking and cycling are more space-efficient modes of transport than motorised vehicles – it's possible to move seven times more pedestrians/cyclists than car users along the average urban road. By choosing to walk, people free up scarce and valuable road space for those journeys where motorised transport is the only reasonable option.

Reduced congestion also lowers transport-related costs for road users, effectively bringing firms and workers closer together and generating productivity improvements through greater agglomeration economies. In this way, walking and cycling generates economic value not just for the individuals involved, but for wider society. Yet more value is generated by the decreased demand for expensive transport infrastructure, with reduced road maintenance leading to more efficient use of resources.

Finally, walking has a clear and positive role to play in reducing air pollution and creating Clean Air Zones – which can in turn encourage more local journeys on foot.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Aim for 400 walking trips (for travel) per person per year by 2025 (where the average trip is approx. 1km or 10mins).
Promote park-and-stride
Grow footfall on priority walking networks to improve natural surveillance.
Collaborate with partners and developers to maximise and optimise walking networks, including where appropriate those that connect with public transport services.
Implement a hierarchy system to allow greater focus of resources on the most used routes.

The average number of people that can be accommodated in a 4m-wide space by different modes of transport:



Objective 2
Improving road safety for pedestrians

Almost one-third of pedestrian injuries are either serious or fatal, and take place mainly in urban areas at a mix of junctions, crossing facilities and open roads.

Although walking is not inherently risky, unreported collisions, high-speed traffic and near misses (Aldred, 2018) are likely to increase the level of risk perceived by the public.

Pedestrians *do* have a higher injury risk per mile travelled than car occupants, but this risk remains lower than for cyclists and motorcyclists. Such facts should however be viewed in a wider context: UK roads are amongst the safest in the world in terms of total fatalities per head of population.

In Essex, the majority of pedestrians injured during the period 2013-2017 were crossing the road at a point not designated as a crossing. One quarter of these collisions took place at T-junctions.

Both actual road safety issues and individual perceptions of compromised road safety are known to be key barriers to walking. Conversely, we know that more people choose to walk when they feel it is safe to do so.

It's therefore vital to ensure walking networks give people confidence about their safety in relation to other road users. This is even more important for the elderly and children, who often do not drive or have access to cars, and whose mobility is limited if they cannot travel safely on foot. Improving road safety involves educating both pedestrians and drivers, and introducing physical road safety measures (such as crossings and traffic calming systems) where appropriate.

Road collisions involving pedestrians in Essex, 2013-17:

54 pedestrians killed (11 per year)
515 pedestrians seriously injured (103 per year)
1,411 pedestrians slightly injured (282 per year)

Previous experience of road use is the most important factor in reducing an individual's risk. It's therefore vital to learn to use roads safely as a pedestrian in childhood.

Children require regular opportunities to practice skills such as the safe crossing of roads – and such opportunities are maximised in environments that are both perceived as safe and designed to incentivise safe behaviours.

The risk of an accident while crossing the road increases as people progress through old age, increasing rapidly during their mid to late 70s. Collisions are closely related to the times and places that older people most often walk, being more common during the day and within 1km of home (*National Travel Survey,* 2016).

The injuries older pedestrians suffer in collisions are also more severe than those suffered by younger people. Despite this, older people do not necessarily feel any more vulnerable than other pedestrians, and their concerns about pedestrian safety tend to focus more on the experience of walking on the pavement than on that of crossing the road. Problems can occur when habits (such as crossing the road at a place not designated as safe for crossing) don't change with age, even as the risks of an accident increase (*Transport for London older pedestrians research, 2013)*.

The single most effective way to improve road safety for older pedestrians is to provide a safer walking environment, designed for their needs. Essex has an ageing population, and such design will become increasingly important in the future.

Older pedestrians are particularly vulnerable at complex junctions and where traffic speeds are higher, as they often need more time to cross safely than other pedestrians. Giving pedestrians priority at such junctions, alongside clear visual cues to motorised traffic about pedestrian priority, is essential – and will both encourage walking and enhance pedestrian safety.

The national approach to road safety (CWIS)

Through its *Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy,* the Government hopes to promote a more holistic view of road danger reduction, in line with the Safe System approach. This approach recognises that there may be no single intervention which will transform road safety, but that many smaller measures can, together, make a difference.

The Safe System approach is advocated by the World Health Organisation and is fundamental to the objectives of Vision Zero (which hopes to reduce road fatalities and serious injuries to zero). It has already been adopted in countries including the Netherlands, Sweden and New Zealand, and elements of the approach have been adopted as part of the Safe streets for London Action Plan and Highways England's strategy. The Safe System approach can be applied to all types of road and road user. It recognises that people make mistakes, and promotes designing roads and vehicles so that such mistakes are less likely to result in death or serious injury.

A central feature of the Safe System approach is the separation of traffic – in particular the separation of more vulnerable road users from motorised traffic on high-speed roads. Where such separation isn't possible, the system recommends that roads be designed so as to reduce traffic speed.

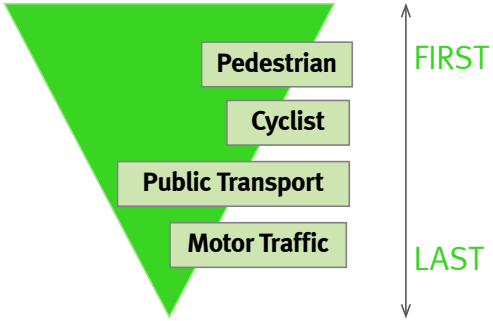
The safety of pedestrians must be central to any strategy that aims to increase the number of walking trips. In Essex in recent years there has been an increase in the number of recorded serious and fatal injuries to pedestrians. However, this increase is more than accounted for by changes in recording standards, increases in the population and increases in the average number of miles per year people walk. Therefore the average risk per mile to the individual has dropped slightly over recent years, but these changes are small and by no means guaranteed to continue without further intervention.

Busy urban roads, junctions and high-speed roads designed without adequate consideration for pedestrians increase the chance of accidents involving pedestrians, whether they're walking beside the road or trying to cross it. A 'Safe System' approach to road design could help Essex County Council to reduce the risk of road accidents involving pedestrians. When accidents do occur, their severity could be reduced.

Improving road safety: 1. The Road User Hierarchy

The main barrier that stops people walking is a lack of, or perceived lack of, safety – even though the number of pedestrians killed or seriously injured on our roads has plateaued. To overcome this, we need to ensure that pedestrians – including older people and those with impaired mobility – feel secure in their interactions with cyclists and motor vehicles.

The Road User Hierarchy can help here, and should be promoted in line with recent government guidance (LTN1/20). This well-established concept places the most vulnerable road users – pedestrians and people with disabilities – at the top of the hierarchy, followed by cyclists, users of public transport and, finally, users of motorised transport. The objective is not to give priority to pedestrians in every situation, but to ensure that the needs of vulnerable road users are considered first.



Decision-makers and local authorities should look to reinforce the Road User Hierarchy during the decision-making process, thereby ensuring that all road users' needs are met.

Improving road safety: 2. Footway maintenance

Poorly maintained footways can be a major tripping hazard for pedestrians. It's therefore important that they are regularly inspected and maintained to a good standard.

In April 2019 the Essex Footway Network was introduced. This is a tailored functional route hierarchy that organises the footways ECC manages into three tiers: Primary Footway 1 (PF1), Primary Footway 2 (PF2) and Primary Footway 3 (PF3). Combined, the PF1 and PF2 tiers comprise the County Route Footway Network – a high-footfall network. The PF3 tier comprises the Local Route Footway Network – which includes all low-footfall footways in the county.

Introducing these tiers has allowed ECC to ensure that it is addressing all areas of the network appropriately, based on their unique properties. This enables the council to take a much more targeted, local approach than would be possible using only the national classifications. It also makes it easier to evolve the network to reflect local priorities. The Maintenance and Inspection Strategy – Carriageways, Footways and Cycleways (May 2019) sets out this approach in more detail.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Explore the implementation of a Safe System approach as the founding principle for all infrastructure projects, using the Road User Hierarchy to ensure that pedestrian needs are prioritised.
Prioritise road safety engineering schemes which treat sites with a history of pedestrian casualties.
Support proactive policing, targeting driving offences that put pedestrians at risk and make roads less pleasant to use.

Improving road safety: 3. Traffic speed

One of the most effective ways to improve pedestrian safety is to reduce vehicle speeds. Even at relatively low impact speeds, pedestrians receive more severe injuries than many other road user groups because they are less protected. It has also been established that pedestrians find it harder to accurately judge vehicle speed when those speeds are higher. This is particularly true for the very young and the very old.

Speed determines the severity of injuries because at lower speeds drivers have more time to react and avoid collisions. Engineering measures can be used to reduce vehicle speed and thereby lower the number of pedestrian accidents. It is increasingly understood that the layout of roads is critical to creating safe environments for pedestrians.

Road Danger Reduction (RDR) has been a key policy area for over 30 years, and is now well-embedded in the work of the many bodies responsible for road safety. The strategy aims to develop road environments that enable people to travel by any mode of transport, while reducing or removing the risk imbalance caused by motor vehicles. The RDR approach recognises the needs of vulnerable road users in line with the Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy - Safety Review (2018).

Although infrastructure can improve the safety of all road users, most road accidents are at least partly caused by human error, which can range from simple mistakes and misjudgements to deliberately dangerous and illegal behaviour. Creating a safer pedestrian environment can help to improve the behaviour (and therefore safety) of all road users. Education (including training and publicity) and enforcement also play a role. Ultimately, however, all road users – including pedestrians, cyclists and drivers – must take some responsibility for their own choices and behaviour.

Objective 3
Better design and enhanced accessibility

Better Streets Design Guide

The *Essex Design Guide (EDG; essexdesignguide.co.uk*) focuses on street and road design, advocating for permeable layouts that link well to existing transport, walking and cycle networks, both inside and outside developments.

The EDG also identifies different types of road layout, speed limits, access considerations, lighting and parking information that should be provided to road users. The EDG provides an excellent framework for those looking to 'design in' road safety to new developments.

Improving the walking environment

Street design must also account for the needs of those with impaired mobility. Around one-fifth of people in the UK have a disability and may be at more risk on the roads than their non-disabled counterparts. The walking environment should be made safer and more accessible for disabled pedestrians by:

- Using tactile paving at the edges of steps and pavements and safe crossing places. Well-maintained, firm, flat and wide footways make roads easier to navigate and safer to use for those with disabilities.
- Avoiding unnecessary street 'clutter' such as advertising boards and bollards, which can prove particularly hazardous for the visually impaired.
- Using tarmac rather than paving stones, to reduce the risk of uneven surfaces, trips and falls, and to make the use of mobility scooters more comfortable and efficient.
- Installing dropped kerbs to allow easier access for wheelchair users.
- Ensuring safe crossings with signalling that can be detected by those with sight or hearing loss, as well as longer crossing periods that allow people with impaired mobility to cross the road safely.

Design principles

The Department for Transport has published guidance documents to help local authorities design safe road infrastructure, including *Manual for Streets 2*. The guidance states that walking routes should be continuous, direct and serve to join together residential areas, commercial areas and schools. Pedestrians need safe, well-designed footways, crossing facilities and walking routes that are:

- Direct – Shorter, quicker routes minimise delays.
- Safe – Routes must be safe and feel safe.
- Coherent – Routes should be joined-up and easy to follow.
- Attractive – Routes should enhance the existing streetscape.
- Comfortable – Routes should have clean, smooth surfaces in all weathers.
- Accessible – Routes should be designed for all users.

Good design is fundamental to the successful delivery of new walking infrastructure. It is essential that walking environments offer a pleasant, convenient walking experience, thereby reducing the barriers to walking and encouraging more people to walk.

Street lighting

Pedestrians often avoid unfamiliar streets, deserted public spaces and dark underpasses through a perception that such places are unsafe. This means that they may choose to take a route or cross a road in a location with higher risk of road accidents. Street lighting promotes a sense of safety in urban areas, increasing the quality of life by artificially extending the hours when it is perceived to be safe to be outside.

Walking and active environments

Planning for walking in new communities involves the strategic placement of key buildings (such as schools and other community assets) at the heart of safe, convenient and appealing walking networks.

Essex County Council is committed to improving existing walking networks, corridors and walking infrastructure through the implementation of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans. For new neighbourhoods and garden communities, the council will take an Active by Design approach, whereby the design of new residential areas will be strongly informed by the need to 'design in' walking and cycling as well as active environments. This is sometimes called Healthy Urban Planning.

Due to the scale of housing development in Essex, there is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to 'design in' new walking infrastructure so as to actively enable walking as the most natural way to travel.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Promote *Essex Design Guide* and *Garden Communities Principals* in new developments.
Review design standards for walking infrastructure to ensure they encourage safe behaviour and meet pedestrian needs (including provision for the elderly and mobility-impaired).
Enable walking networks for key towns through development of LCWIPs.
Enable more accessible network of walking and cycling routes in Essex
Support better wayfinding and legibility to encourage 'walking with confidence'.

Objective 4
Enabling physical activity & walking for health

Health challenges in Essex

In Essex, around 27% of residents are failing to meet the minimum recommended amount of healthy physical activity (around 2.5 hours per week). This county-wide average, however, masks large disparities between districts.

Inactivity across Essex has been identified as a key issue by the county sports lead, Active Essex, whose objective is to get 1 million people active in Essex by 2021.(*Active Essex: Our Strategy 2017-2021*; *Changing 1 million lives to get Essex Active*, Active Essex 2017).

The issue of physical inactivity is compounded by the issue of excess weight levels in the community (i.e. individuals medically defined as either overweight or obese). Obesity is a leading cause of increased morbidity and mortality in the United Kingdom, and can lead to physical, psychological and social ill health.

The most recent available data for Essex (2012-2014) shows the proportion of adults classed as having excess weight as 67% – higher than neighbouring authorities and higher than the England-wide average.

The challenge of sedentary lifestyles and physical inactivity

We know that much ill health could be prevented if people were to increase their overall levels of physical activity. Physical inactivity costs the NHS an estimated £1 billion per year, with approximately 20% of the population thought to be less active than the general population of England in the 1960s. This figure is projected to rise to 35% of the population by 2030 (*Physical activity: applying All Our Health, PHE 2018*).

Differing levels of physical activity are associated with health inequalities. Health inequalities are differences in levels of health between groups within a population that are considered to be both unfair and avoidable. *Everybody active every day* (PHE 2014) identified inequalities associated with lower levels of physical activity related to age, geography, disability, race, sex and sexual orientation.

The relationship between health, place and travel

Health and wellbeing are primarily determined by factors other than healthcare. Essex County Council is committed to playing a positive role in influencing the health and wellbeing of Essex residents. Active travel offers a potentially transformative solution to the challenge of sedentary lifestyles (*Physical activity: applying All Our Health, PHE 2018)*. Walking and cycling can be incorporated into daily routines, either as main modes of transport or as part of public transport journeys, improving health outcomes while remaining accessible, inclusive and applicable to all age groups.

A growing body of evidence supports the view that active travel produces positive benefits to health and wellbeing (*Spatial Planning for Health: An evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places, PHE 2017*). This evidence highlights the positive impacts of active travel on physical health and mental wellbeing, as well as on other, social determinants of health such as the economy, air quality and community safety.

Social determinants of health relate to the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work and age. Having access to a job, housing and education is key to health and wellbeing. And a key part of that access is access through the transport system. Good local walking networks encourage active travel to access jobs, learning and skills opportunities, as well as local services – all of which can contribute significantly to reducing health inequalities. Access to a high quality walking environment is therefore a key enabler and determinant of health.

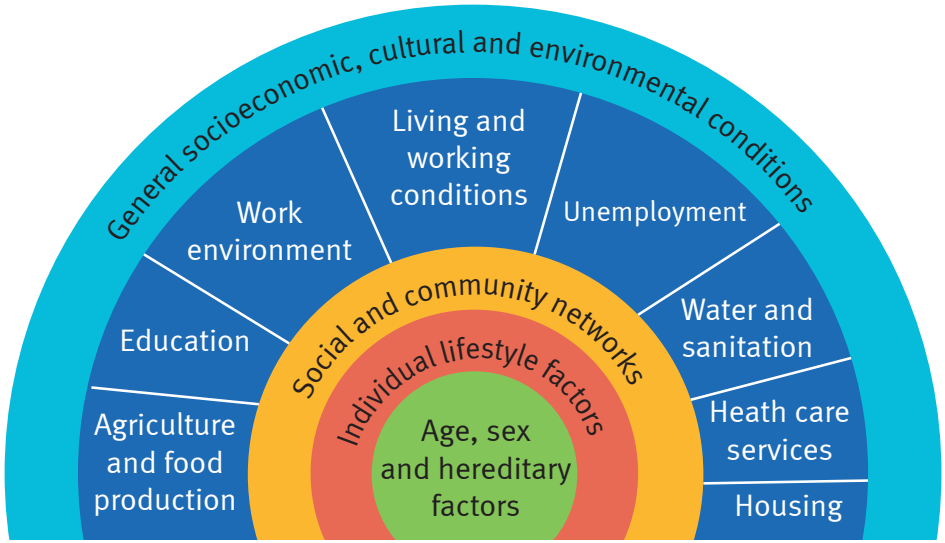


Image: *The Determinants of Health (1992) Dahlgren and Whitehead*

Walking and health

Walking is an accessible everyday activity that is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of individuals and their communities. Both active travel and leisure walking have vital roles to play in enabling people to achieve the recommended 2.5 hours of physical activity per week *(Physical activity fact sheet 4 adults aged 19-64, CMO 2011)*.

Walking is the easiest and simplest way to incorporate physical activity into our everyday lives. If more people were to walk short journeys of up to a mile each day, the health benefits would be considerable – as would the positive effects on congestion and air pollution.

Regular walking can help to reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancers, stroke and mental illness. It can also encourage people to socialise through informal or more organised interactions (such as walking groups), thereby improving wellbeing and reducing loneliness and social isolation *(Physical Activity: applying All Our Health, PHE 2018)*.

The health benefits of walking

Walking for shorter trips of up to a mile or 15 minutes is a great way to build physical activity into daily routines. This applies whether the walk comprises a whole journey or part of a longer journey involving public transport.

Walking as part of daily travel either circumvents or helps to address many of the barriers to physical activity, including lack of time or money, poor health or physical limitations. Walking is free and accessible to those groups who most benefit from being more active – such as older people or those on low incomes. Walking requires no special equipment, training or membership fees. Walking is also a moderate, low-impact activity, unlikely to cause injury.

You can walk almost anywhere and at any time. You can start slowly and easily and build up gradually – ideal if you are very unfit, have a long-term condition or are on a rehabilitation programme. For some people, walking even becomes a gateway to more vigorous activities.

Prevention

Moderately intense physical activity is that which increases the heart rate and causes faster breathing. Just two bouts of brisk walking a day, each lasting around ten minutes, is an easy way for adults to introduce moderately intense physical activity into their day, and can reduce the risk of early death by up to 15% (PHE). Walking as a means of commuting to places of work or school can fulfil this function, while supporting wider societal benefits such as reduced congestion at peak times, improved air quality and an enhanced sense of community.

As the following graphic shows, physically active people can reduce their risk of a range of health conditions:

Image: *Walking Works (2013)*

Health condition	Reduced risk from being physically active
Coronary heart disease and stroke	20 – 35%
Type 2 diabetes	30 – 40%
Colon cancer	30%
Depression	20 – 30%

The health benefits of walking for older people

Walking is an accessible form of physical activity for older people with long-term conditions, mobility challenges or low levels of fitness, or who simply find other activities too challenging. Walking is an important way to counter-balance the tendency for physical activity levels to decrease with age. Age UK's Walking Tips (2020) recommends walking as a key way for older people to stay healthy. With an ageing population in Essex, walking is a key tool to prevent ill health (physical, mental and social).

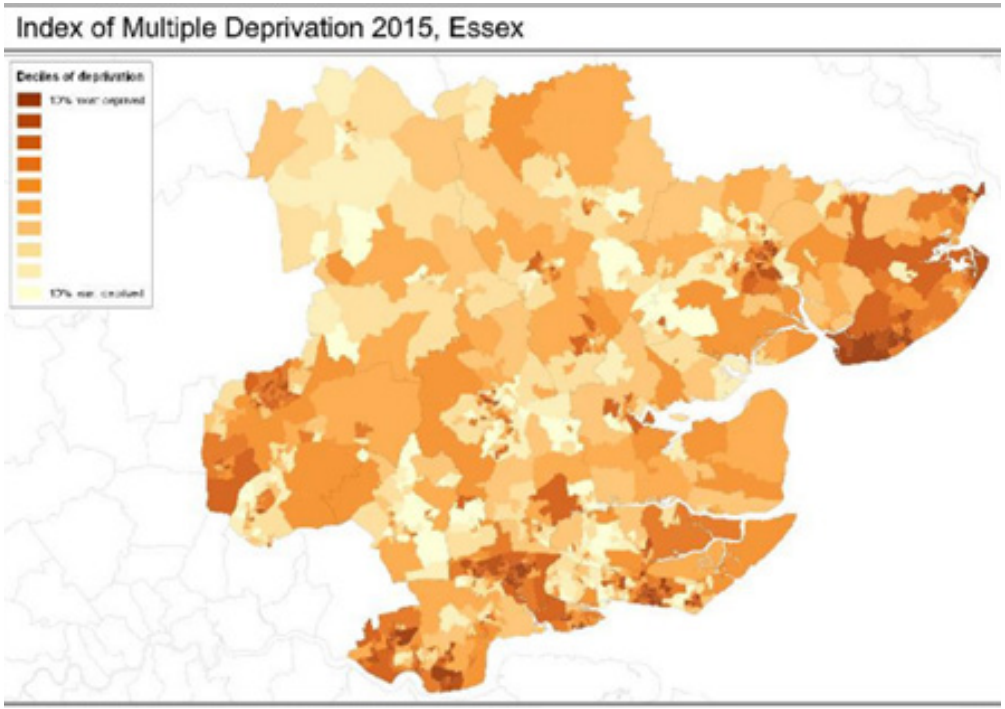
Reducing health inequalities - The role of walking

The *Marmot Report* identified active travel, including walking, as a key means not only of improving health but of improving the wider determinants of health inequalities.

Essex is no stranger to health inequality. Some of the most deprived 1% of nearly 33,000 areas in England are within Essex: six in Tendring and two in Basildon. Uttlesford is the only local authority in Essex that contains no areas among the most deprived 20% in England (JSNA 2016).

The *Marmot Review – Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, *the Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post 2010* states: "In order to reduce health inequalities, universal action is needed, but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage – this is called proportionate universalism."

Walking is broadly a universal activity, open to most people. It therefore plays an important role in reducing health inequalities, both by contributing to increased physical activity and by enabling better access to jobs and services – both of which are key determinants of health.



Strategy Walking Proposals
Enable residents to achieve two 10-minute sessions of physical activity per day via active travel
Collaborate with public health practitioners and stakeholders to raise awareness of the benefits of walking for health.
Create and improve walking networks for key towns through development of LCWIPs.
Support social prescribing to encourage walking as part of good mental health.
Promote the *Active Essex Strategy.*

Reducing inequalities - Essex Local Delivery Pilot

To address the challenge of health inequalities, Essex is participating in a Local Delivery Pilot with Sport England which looks to tackle the issue of physical inactivity in Essex head-on.

The Essex Local Delivery Pilot (LDP) is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a difference to the people of Essex, addressing the high levels of inactivity in our most deprived communities. It will supercharge the delivery of Active Essex's strategy to get 1 million people active.

The Active Essex approach entails delivering 'system change', and is focused on Basildon, Colchester and Tendring. However, the intention is for the pilot to serve as a prototype; if successful, the same system change approach can be rolled out to the rest of Essex.

This project will go a significant way towards increasing physical activity in Essex, and will include projects which will increase both the frequency and duration of walking trips.

Objective 5
Enabling more walking to schools

Both Government and Essex County Council want to encourage more children to walk to school, while recognising that child pedestrians are more vulnerable road users. It is therefore vital that the safety of children is considered when designing new environments or improving existing ones.

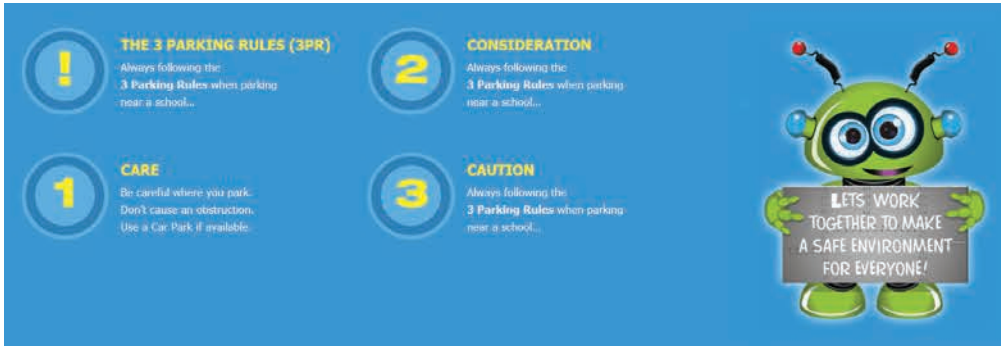
Traffic calming measures, speed reduction and 20mph zones can all help to create protected areas for children – as can the provision of appropriate crossing places and other schemes, such as safer drop-off points.

Three parking rules (3PR)

Communities around schools often experience challenges around parking and access, which can result in barriers to walking to schools. The Essex Parking Partnerships have recently developed a new initiative called 3 Parking Rules, or 3PR – Care, Consideration and Caution. It is hoped that the 3PR approach will help to tackle some of the parking problems outside and around schools, actively engaging with the local and school community to better understand, promote and answer local needs.

The approach features a character called 3PR, who has been designed to help deliver positive messages about school parking. 3PR provides advice and guidance to children, parents and local residents about safe and considerate parking practices, as well as promoting alternative modes of travel. The initiative is easily tailored to suit each school's individual needs and includes a reward element to encourage children to use active travel to get to school.

Schemes such as 3PR help to encourage walking by making changes to the social environment around a school as well as by providing incentives for behaviour change. Social environment responses may include developing an advisory no-parking zone outside the school, marked by lamppost signs. Tailored maps can be created to highlight the zone, and may include pictures of common parking problems (parking on the pavement, parking on the zig-zag lines etc.) 3PR Patrols – often children with a teacher, parent or other volunteer – may stand at each end of the 3PR Zone, handing out tokens to children who walk, scoot or cycle into the zone.



Park-and-stride

If a suitable location can be found for parents to park their vehicles, park-and-stride schemes can enable children to walk a portion of the way to school. This can be a good way of encouraging physical activity while reducing congestion and the risk of accidents nearer to schools. This approach may be complemented by a 'walking bus', whereby a group of children form a 'bus', and walk a risk-assessed route with the help of volunteers who 'drive' and 'conduct'. Schools may designate 'pick-up' and 'drop-off' points, and sometimes even stops along the route to and from school.

Community-led street design

If there is strong community support, another way to improve access to schools, encourage walking and reduce localised congestion and emissions is through community-led street design (CLSD).

A CLSD approach may use time-limited interventions to slow traffic and transform the space around schools. Temporary barriers, painted signs or street markings and scheduled activities can lead to a better alignment between road use and the needs of road users.

The goal is for the community to explore and recommend possible strategies and ideas for increasing the use of more active travel modes. Community ownership of both the engagement process and its outcome (proposals shortlisted for the county council's consideration) are therefore of paramount importance.

Those living in a community have the greatest knowledge of the transport network in the area. Living, learning and working in the vicinity also provides an insight into the thought processes affecting their community's travel decisions. This in turn enables the community to propose ideas to mitigate road traffic and safety issues which fit how the community functions, and avoids a less effective 'top-down' approach prescribed by local authorities.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Encourage more walking to schools through behaviour change programmes such as 3 Parking Rules (3PR).
Develop a pilot study linking community physical and marketing approaches.
Support education initiatives to increase the skill and confidence levels of young pedestrians throughout their school years.
Enable more accessible walking environments
Support better wayfinding and legibility to encourage 'walking with confidence'.

Objective 6
Promoting walking for leisure

The coastal path

Essex has one of the country's longest coastlines stretching for over 350 miles. The many different uses of the Essex coast all exert varying pressures on this sensitive and highly valued natural resource. Much of the Essex coast is also particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including the loss of saltmarsh (which is itself a natural form of coastal sea defence) and the increased risk of coastal erosion and flooding.

The Essex Growth Commission highlights coastal regeneration as an important theme, including a focus on tourism and opportunities to promote culture, outdoor recreation and the Essex landscape. Essex Highways is developing a plan for a coastal path in Essex, working in conjunction with Natural England – which is itself determining the route of an England Coast Path.

In 2014, Essex County Council launched the Thames Estuary Path, funded by the Veolia North Thames Trust and the Maxi Green project. The Thames Estuary Path is a walking route that explores the fascinating South Essex Marshes, from Tilbury Town all the way to Leigh-on-Sea, passing through an historic industrial and settled landscape with a wealth of green heritage and biodiversity. The path is easily accessible by train, linking six local train stations on the London Fenchurch to Shoeburyness line, and can also be enjoyed as any of five smaller walks starting and finishing at these stations. The path is clearly signed and waymarked with a distinctive logo.

The establishment of a county coastal path will provide an opportunity for seaside tourism and coastal regeneration, and will help to leverage the many health and environmental benefits that leisure walking can offer.

Natural England is also implementing an extension to its England Coast Path in Essex, running from Burnham-on-Crouch to Maldon. The same body is also now looking to improve access to its England Coast Path along a 70km stretch of the Essex coast between Tilbury and Southend-on-Sea.

Walking for leisure

While walking for travel is a central part of this strategy, walking for leisure purposes is also significant – especially in a largely rural county like Essex. Many residents who cannot reasonably walk for travel purposes (such as going to work or shopping) still enjoy walking during their leisure time.

Walking for leisure can be a personal activity, where we take time to gather our thoughts. It can also be highly sociable, involving walking with family, friends and in groups. Whatever the case, it's important that walking for leisure is both enabled and promoted, especially for those who are unable to achieve their 'active minutes' as part of their other daily journeys.

Essex is fortunate to have a beautiful natural environment, one that enables people to interact with culture and history through an extensive network of public rights-of-way, country parks, coastal paths and working farmland.

There is increasingly strong evidence to show that time spent in green space is good for both physical and mental health. Parks, green spaces and coastal and rural paths should therefore be accessible and welcoming to everyone. The most successful green spaces attract a wide range of people and activities.

Promoting rural walking networks is a key aspiration of this strategy, not just because of the personal benefits but because such networks promote closer connection with and better stewardship of important community assets. Essex County Council must be a key enabler of rural walking networks, enhancing access for all users.

Green infrastructure

There are over 6,000 kilometres of public footpaths, bridleways and byways throughout Essex. These provide vital access to the countryside for informal recreation. They also form part of the highway network and, as such, will have an increasing role to play in the provision of a sustainable transport network by providing active travel networks.

Essex County Council administers 13 country parks and open spaces covering 1,266 hectares as well as 41 areas of woodland totalling 236.2 hectares. In addition, there are number of parks administered by district and town councils. Essex County Council makes contributions to Thames Chase Community Forest and the Lee Valley Park.

Enjoying green spaces is likely to involve walking, whether that is to a country park, coastal path or on the public rights-of-way (PROW) network. However, it is also important to recognise that walking should be considered and encouraged as part of accessing and improving connectivity to green spaces (Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2020).

Nature can be an excellent motivator for walking, and biophilic design should be incorporated into streetscapes to create diverse, living natural features which enhance the character and attractiveness of streets. Trees, plants and shrubs can be integrated into the urban street environment and designed to fulfil many practical functions as well as adding character, providing shade and helping to create a sense of place.

Trees can provide shade from the sun or rain, as well as creating oxygen and absorbing pollution. Well-designed planting areas can absorb water and fulfil a natural sustainable urban drainage function. Green infrastructure will be ever more important in the future as we strive to adapt to climate change – and good design is key. ECC's *Tree and Woodland Strategy – General Principles* identifies how the council will assist in the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the county's trees, and in promoting the many benefits they provide.

The public rights-of-way network

The PROW network in Essex comprises approximately 6,300km of footpaths (84%), bridleways (12%) and restricted byways (4%). There are many interesting walks via PROW around picturesque locations across Essex, with the PROW network at its most comprehensive in the south of the county. This green infrastructure is not just an attraction or key destination; it's also an attractive through-route that links places and communities.

To maximise the opportunities for leisure walks, the Essex County Council will seek to identify how to improve access to the PROW network; in particular those PROW that are near to our main settlements and urban areas.

There are also many long-distance trails that pass through Essex, including the Essex Way, the Flitch Way and the aforementioned Thames Estuary Path. Other routes include those promoted by organisations like the Ramblers (the Saffron Way and those promoted by ECC:

- The Forest Way
- The St Peter's Way
- The Roach Valley Way
- The Stour Valley Path
- The Saffron Way (promoted by the Ramblers)

The PROW network is therefore a key asset – one which can help to encourage leisure walking. While long trails offer the more experienced walker an opportunity to enjoy the Essex countryside, smaller routes provide opportunities for those new to leisure walking to explore both their abilities and their environment.

As well as improving linking paths from urban areas for leisure and recreation, it's also important to encourage communities to create and use a greater variety of short routes. These can be enjoyed by people with different levels of ability, and may include circular walks around towns and villages, or walks to places of interest.

ECC will explore innovative ways to maintain and enhance the PROW network. This may include liaising with neighbourhood plans, which can seek funding for PROW improvements and require that information about local walking routes be distributed to new housing.

Volunteers have an important role to play in leading walks within communities, and to keeping paths in a good condition. The council will seek improvements for access through development opportunities and S106 funds, and will continue working with the Local Access Forum and representatives of user groups to improve services and promote access.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Encourage social walks in greenspace to link individuals and reduce isolation.
Promote use of PROW, coastal paths and country parks including links to rail and bus operators
Support community involvement in maintenance of PROW.

Objective 7
Supporting economic development

Walking supports the economy

Four key ways in which walking (and cycling) can enhance economic performance:

- Keeping traffic flowing by reducing congestion (encouraging people to walk and cycle who would otherwise drive).
- Supporting town centres and high streets by encouraging high levels of footfall and good access (often when combined with park-and-ride and public transport).
- Increasing productivity and reducing absenteeism through a healthier workforce.
- Increasing leisure and tourism opportunities through people visiting businesses and attractions e.g. on the coastal path.

To ensure that the county can recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic, and to build a stronger, fairer and more dynamic economy for the future, Essex County Council has identified several strategic priorities through its Economic Recovery Strategy. These include a focus on employability and skills, regenerating our town centres, identifying key growth sectors and stimulating green growth. Our strategy also focuses on securing and delivering investment – including inward investment and turbo-charging capital investment to unlock growth. Through this strategy, the council is seeking to deliver an ambitious programme of initiatives to increase skills levels, develop our sectors and regenerate key localities in the county, and will work with internal departments and external partners to deliver on these priorities.

In its simplest form, an increase in accessible walking routes would support increased access to jobs and would enhance employer PROW network is most comprehensive in the south of Essex access to labour markets.

An Essex Growth Infrastructure Framework (GIF) was developed to provide a view of emerging development and infrastructure requirements that can support growth across Essex. The GIF provides a strategic framework across the county for identifying and prioritising investment across a range of infrastructure, for planned growth up to 2036. It presents an overview of growth patterns and the infrastructure projects needed to support such growth, their costs, how much funding has already been secured or is expected toward their delivery, and the funding gap.

The framework report draws together information and data from a range of sources, including district local plans and Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs), and covers all forms of infrastructure that support the economic, environmental and social needs of the study area. The framework recognises the impact of growth in population and jobs.

Walking infrastructure is a fundamental part of building communities and ensuring resilience for the future. Walking (and cycling) infrastructure planning and delivery is therefore essential to underpinning future sustainable economic growth – as well as to reducing some of the future burdens on other forms of infrastructure, such as highways and health (*Greater Essex Growth and Infrastructure Framework: 2016-2036; ECC, 2017).*

Overall increased business productivity

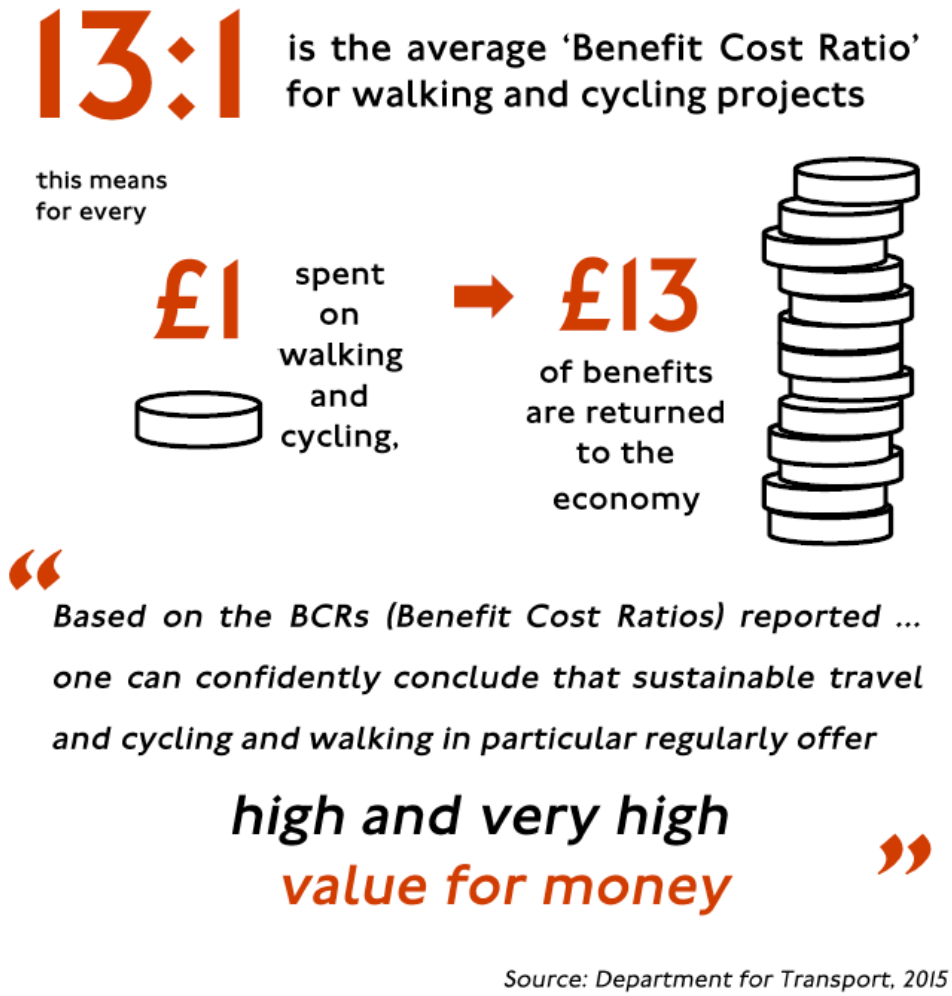
- Increased footfall around retail and leisure businesses
- Improved health and wellbeing of staff
- Improved employee productivity

Essex Growth Commission - walking and economy

The Essex Growth Commission was set up in 2016 to help shape inclusive growth in Greater Essex. Essex has a strong entrepreneurial culture with a high number of smaller businesses and a good record of new business start-ups (EGC 2018). Essex is home to some important economic corridors, which are based upon good strategic transport links – however, economic performance is not as strong as other parts of the southeast England economy. One challenge is to improve access to markets and jobs through enhanced transport connectivity.

While there are major ongoing projects to improve key road corridors, there is also a recognition of the important role of walking alongside public transport, which together can help to take pressure off of roads, easing congestion and keeping the economy moving.

Encouraging more people to use public transport will also involve encouraging walking journeys or 'walk stages'. Some industries, such as those in the digital, creative, business and finance sectors, tend to cluster in towns. Good walking (and cycling) networks, well-connected public transport and park-and-ride areas within employment areas and town centres are therefore key to the successful delivery of local plans for growth.



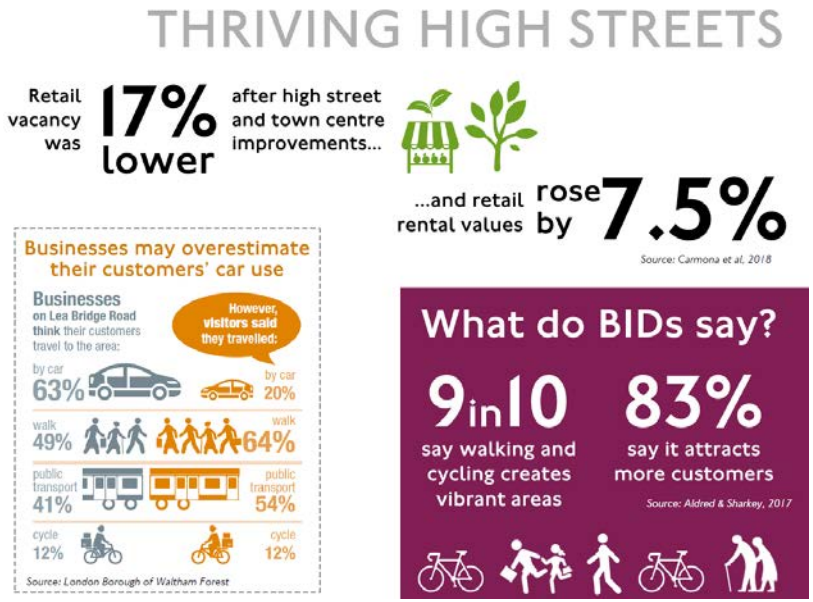
Town centre, high streets and local regeneration

Town centres are essential to the fabric of a place and are key attractors, offering public sector, service, retail, leisure, employment and residential opportunities for both locals and visitors. They often serve as transportation hubs, connecting parts of our towns together.

The fundamental function of town centres has changed from places for goods-based transactions to places for consumption of food and experiential services, such as health and entertainment. This has fundamentally altered the role that town centres play in shaping a sense of place.

Technology is having a similarly major impact on our high streets. Research by the sustainable transport charity Sustrans shows that on average there were 177 shopping trips per person in 2015 compared to 216 in 2002. Internet spending has increased but 87 % of potential shoppers live within a five-mile radius of their nearest high street, and 38% visit their local high street several times a week (Sustrans, 2018). It's clear that the function of our high streets and town centres is changing, and they are no longer primarily retailed.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Support enhanced walking infrastructure in town centres, as well as high street regeneration.
Enhance walking infrastructure, including wayfinding, in key economic centres
Work with large employers including business, hospitals and universities to create walking champions, and to provide information on walking to work.



Local regeneration schemes that focus on improving high streets and town centres often require significant investment in the public realm, including pavements, footways and other walking infrastructure (e.g. seating, lighting and green infrastructure). Enhancing pedestrian access and fostering a good walking environment is key to supporting a more mixed-use approach to such areas as they evolve to serve as destinations for shopping, leisure and enterprise.

Visitors to town centres and high streets expect a good street environment and are concerned with the attractiveness of the environment. Enhancing walking routes through Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans will improve access to key attractors and destinations – walkable street locations have actually been proven to increase shop footfall by 20-40% (Walkanomics, 2012). In this way, a good walking environment fosters economic and social benefits that in turn make for a more vital, successful and attractive sense of place – thereby encouraging more walking.

Objective 8
Improving our neighbourhoods and supporting the development of new communities

Walkable neighbourhoods

Walkable neighbourhoods have the potential to increase walking for short journeys or as part of a journey involving public transport. Most people would be happy to walk 10-20 minutes to access local shops, GP surgeries, dentists, schools and other local amenities such as bars, restaurants and pubs.

However, a high number of such journeys are still undertaken by car. The volume of traffic and pollution generated on main roads can often feel excessive, and can impact negatively on those pedestrians and cyclists who share the space. This can also negatively impact on the level of interaction within communities located in these areas. Those who live on streets with higher traffic levels are likely to have fewer social interactions within their neighbourhood.

Improved opportunities for walking will enable people to access local shops and businesses, supporting the viability of these services. Providing parking alternatives (such as park-and-ride) outside of central areas, or encouraging people to walk reasonable distances via park-and-stride schemes can reduce the number of cars and support the rebalancing of the road network. Improving the street environment for all road users will ensure our urban areas are safe, attractive, vibrant places to live, work and visit.

Walking also has a role to play in promoting community resilience and helping to reduce isolation and loneliness. It cannot solve such problems on its own – but it can make a significant positive contribution.

Active by design: NHS Healthy New Towns

The NHS Healthy New Towns (HNT) programme launched in 2015 and encourages local areas to work together to promote health and wellbeing through the design of the built environment. New developments provide an opportunity to test new ideas, to promote active travel and to innovate new ways of designing health and wellbeing into spaces (TCPA 2016).

Walkable neighbourhoods are linked to improving long-term health outcomes, helping people to live and age well. Improved street connectivity, mixed land use, access to green space and active leisure spaces, walkable connections to key destinations such as shops and schools, and compact residential design are all important features of walkable neighbourhoods (Hajna et al, 2015).

Healthy Streets framework

In London, a concept called Healthy Streets has been developed which includes a framework used to assess the functioning of streets according to various criteria. This framework is becoming increasingly popular across the UK and abroad as a way of determining the quality of the streetscape.

In Essex, we can draw upon the Healthy Streets framework as a set of useful principles to guide the development of better streets, balanced in their appeal to all users. The Healthy Streets concept provides a holistic way of exploring issues of safety, noise, clean air and the walking environment – including the role of trees and the needs of users. Ultimately, the Healthy Streets framework prioritises and promotes walking as a mode of everyday travel.

Source: Lucy Saunders

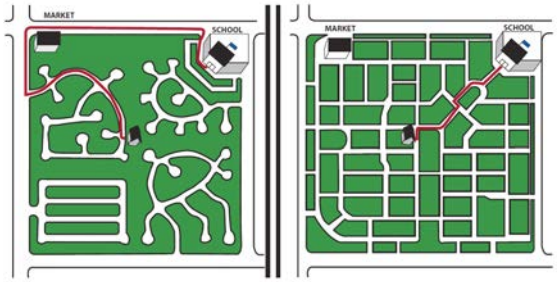
Designing walking into new communities

For new neighbourhoods and garden communities, it is essential that walking and cycling are designed in at the planning stage, to ensure that residents have a real choice regarding how they get around and how they access services.

A settlement that favours active walking (and cycling) with access to good public transport will provide the best possible opportunity to create a distinctive an attractive public realm, with a reduced amount of land set aside for car-based infrastructure. More land should instead be set aside for green space, development and useful amenities.

Key to such schemes are dense networks of high-quality walking and cycle routes that connect to important destinations both within new developments and in their pre-existing surroundings. Such networks enable residents to walk (or cycle) to jobs, leisure and other services. For longer journeys, public transport becomes the default choice of travel, linking as it does to key destinations and transport interchanges.

Pavements and footways should be aligned as directly as possible between the main trip origins and destinations. Most walking journeys begin or end at a person's home, workplace or a transport hub or car park.



Pedestrian connectivity: cul-de-sac and grid layout

Essex Design Guide

The *Essex Design Guide (EDG)* has pioneered local design, creating space for innovation and encouraging high-quality development. The EDG aims to create distinctive places where people want to live, to build communities and to ensure that infrastructure and facilities are in place at where and when needed.

The EDG focuses on street and road design, considering how best to design permeable layouts that link well to transport, walking and cycle networks both inside and outside of a development. The EDG also identifies types of road layout, speed limits and access considerations, lighting and parking information that should be provided to users of a space.

The EDG provides an excellent framework for 'designing in' road safety to new developments. This has been supplemented by guidance (in an appendix to the EDG) on how to prepare a Health Impact Assessment. Such assessments are gradually becoming part of both developers' and planners' toolkits, and are intended to ensure that walking is designed in as an integral part of new communities.

Essex Garden Communities

The *Garden Communities Principles* provide a good starting point for designing and developing sustainable new communities centred on high-quality places, where people and their needs are at the heart of all development. Garden communities represent a change in the traditional approach to delivery of large-scale development. The concept of the garden community was founded on the principles of community inclusiveness and walkable, sociable and liveable neighbourhoods.

Emphasising the importance of the 'walkable neighbourhood' – the origin of most walking trips – helps designers to prioritise and meet the needs of local populations when planning for walking. The walkable neighbourhood is a place with which people interact daily, and is assumed to be where most walking for transport occurs. It is also crucial in the development of building a community.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Promote Active by Design principles – make walking the most convenient way to get around local areas.
Develop a framework for improving walking at a neighbourhood level by drawing on Healthy Streets Principles.
Develop a framework for working with developers to ensure that walking (and cycling) is designed in to new housing and communities, and provides links to existing destinations.
Create better links to walking corridors between local neighbourhoods and new communities.

Objective 9
Encourage walking by changing attitudes and behaviour

Creating new social norms

Social norms are the unwritten behaviours or codes deemed acceptable by and within society. There is a common conception that people are responsible for the decisions that impact their health – not least how much physical activity they undertake. However, this idea omits to account for the degree to which individuals are influenced by both social norms and their environment.

...changing behaviours is challenging, as the contexts in which they occur are complex, involving the interaction of people's individual characteristics, social influences and physical environment – among other things. (*A healthier life for all*, Dr Lidice Tombor and Professor Susan Michie).

To encourage more people to walk for shorter journeys, either within their neighbourhoods or to bus stops and rail stations, we must ensure walking is accessible and convenient. In this way, it will become the natural choice.

Over recent decades, people have become more reliant on their cars for almost all journeys, and this has been reflected in urban planning. It's now imperative to reverse this trend at the planning level. When development prioritises active travel and public transport, driving stops being the norm and is replaced by healthier, more socially positive forms of travel.

However, broader social attitudes change for the better, and norms and expectations can differ between and within specific communities.

The influence of social networks highlights the limitations of individually focused approaches, and shows the need for systems-based thinking that seeks to influence habits and norms across entire populations. Behavioural insights studies have shown that most of the decisions people make are fast, instinctive and automatic rather than slower, considered and logical (Thinking Fast and Slow, Kahneman. To create the conditions for walking to be seen as 'normal' as well as easy and convenient, we need to focus on both the social and physical environments.

Walking and the social environment

While the physical design of streets and spaces has a strong influence on the amount of active travel people undertake, social factors play an equally important role. Perceptions of risk and safety, for example, have a significant effect on whether and how much people walk.

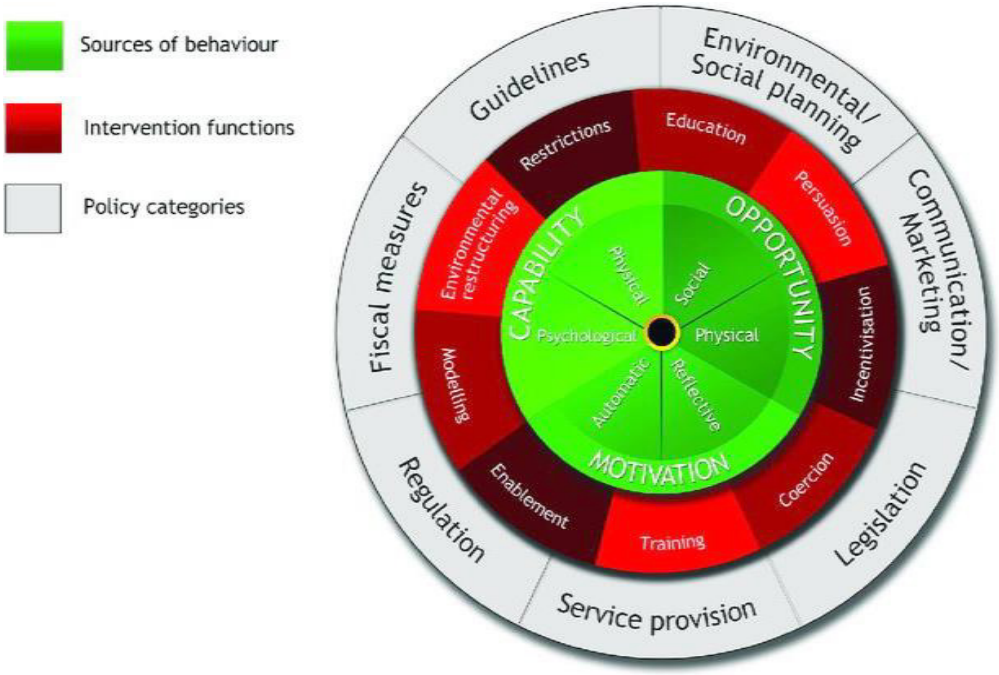
A range of opportunities exist to promote behaviour change with regard to walking. Existing and new social networks can be used in line with marketing and communications strategies. Community champions or ambassadors can play a key role by organising walking groups. Experience from the South Essex Active Travel Programme has demonstrated that providing better information on walking (and cycling) via a strongly branded website, as well as targeted and personalised travel planning with key employers and organisations, can change attitudes towards walking. As more people walk and a critical mass of people walking develops, the activity becomes a regular part of people's routines and thereby becomes a social norm, especially for shorter journeys.

The whole-system approach

A whole-system approach recognises that societal problems such as physical inactivity are part of a wider ecosystem of causal factors, which extend far beyond personal barriers (such as cost, time and confidence).

The whole-system approach aims to tackle the root causes of inactivity by addressing the determinants of inactivity at an individual level (e.g. attitudes, beliefs and needs), a social environment level (e.g. families, local community), an institutional level (e.g. schools and employers), a physical environment level (e.g. transport links, place and access to nature) and a policy and regulation level (e.g. laws, regulations). Whole-systems theory proposes that all causes are interconnected and must be addressed together to bring about behaviour change.

Strategy Walking Proposals
Develop a behaviour-change programme using a whole-systems approach with proven systems-thinking techniques.
Develop frameworks that incentivise partners to deliver walking support.
Continue to develop travel planning for workplaces, schools and communities using innovative communications and marketing techniques.
Develop a marketing plan for walking, including new products and information that can be used in/with apps.



The behaviour change wheel; Susan Miche, Lou Atkins and Robert West (2014)

The nine walking objectives and the strategy priorities are summarised below. The priorities will be delivered via the Action Plan included in Section 3.

Objective 1: Increase walking for everyday journeys

- Aim for 400 walking trips (for travel) per person per year by 2025 (where the average trip is approx. 1km or 10mins).
- Promote park-and-stride.
- Grow footfall on priority walking networks to improve natural surveillance.
- Collaborate with partners and developers to maximise and optimise walking networks, including where appropriate those that connect with public transport services.
- Implement a hierarchy system to allow greater focus of resources on the most used routes.

Objective 2: Improve road safety

- Explore the implementation of a Safe System approach as the founding principle for all infrastructure projects, using the Road User Hierarchy to ensure that pedestrian needs are prioritised.
- Prioritise road safety engineering schemes which treat sites with a history of pedestrian casualties.
- Support proactive policing, targeting driving offences that put pedestrians at risk and make roads less pleasant to use.

Objective 3: Enable more walking to schools

- Promote the Essex Design Guide and Garden Communities Principles in new developments.
- Review design standards for walking infrastructure to ensure they encourage safe behaviour and meet pedestrian needs (including provision for the elderly and mobility-impaired).
- Enable walking networks for key towns through development of LCWIPs.
- Enable more accessible networks of walking and cycling routes in Essex.
- Support better wayfinding and legibility to encourage 'walking with confidence'.

Objective 4: Better design and enhanced accessibility

- Enable residents to achieve two 10-minute sessions of physical activity per day via active travel.
- Collaborate with public health practitioners and stakeholders to raise awareness of the benefits of walking for health.
- Create and improve walking networks for key towns through development of LCWIPs.
- Support social prescribing to encourage walking as part of good mental health.
- Promote the Active Essex Strategy.

Objective 5: Enabling physical activity & walking for health

- Encourage more walking to schools through behaviour-change programmes such as 3 Parking Rules (3PR).
- Develop a pilot study linking community physical and marketing approaches.
- Support education initiatives to increase the skill and confidence levels of young pedestrians throughout their school years.
- Enable more accessible walking environments
- Support better wayfinding and legibility to encourage 'walking with confidence'

Objective 6: Promoting walking for leisure

- Encourage social walks in Greenspace to link people to groups and reduce isolation.
- Promote use of PROW, Coastal Path and Country Parks including links to Rail and Bus Operators.
- Support community involvement in maintenance of PROW.

Objective 7: Support economic development

- Support enhanced walking infrastructure in town centres, as well as high street regeneration.
- Enhance walking infrastructure, including wayfinding, around key economic centres.
- Work with large employers including business, hospitals and universities to create walking champions, and to provide information on walking to work.

Objective 8: Improve our neighbourhoods and supporting the development of new communities

- Promote Active by Design principles – make walking the most convenient way to get around local areas.
- Develop a framework for improving walking at a neighbourhood level by drawing on Healthy Streets Principles.
- Develop a framework for working with developers to ensure that walking (and cycling) is designed in to new housing and communities, and provides links to existing destinations.
- Create better links to walking corridors between local neighbourhoods and new communities.

Objective 9: Encourage walking by changing attitudes and behaviour

- Develop a behaviour-change programme using a whole-systems approach using proven systems-thinking techniques.
- Develop frameworks that incentivise partners to deliver walking support.
- Continue to develop travel planning for workplaces, schools and communities using innovative communications and marketing techniques.
- Develop a marketing plan for walking, including new products and information that can be used in/with apps.

Monitoring, funding & delivery

Section 3

Monitoring methods

- Through safety data collected while recording collisions and casualties on the network
- Through the *Active Lives Survey* and *National Travel Survey*
- Using lessons learned and results from the Active Travel Fund
- Using data from the Essex Local Delivery Pilot

Funding sources

Capital funding for infrastructure improvements will be sought via developer contributions and external sources.

Potential sources of funding include:

- Local authority regeneration schemes
- Department for Transport Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) funding
- The Active Essex partnership
- The High Street Fund
- Developer contributions (funding that forms part of the planning requirements for new developments)
- Local Growth Funds
- Network Rail and other rail operators
- Local Highways Panel funding for district road safety schemes
- SELEP Local Growth Funds for Local Sustainable Transport Programme

Delivery and governance

The Walking Strategy is an overarching document which seeks to provide a framework for the planning of walking networks and routes, encouraging more walking for travel across Essex, and encouraging more physical activity to ensure that all residents can enjoy the benefits of walking. Walking is foundational to the planning of the Transport System and urban development and will influence local plans and the next iteration of the Essex Local Transport Plan, as along with cycling will be the priority for short journeys and as part of a longer journey stage. It is anticipated that there will be an increased focus on ride sharing and multi modal journeys in future, walking has a key role to play in enabling future transport choices.

In support of this goal (not to mention the ECC Strategic Outcomes and the Essex Walking Strategy's detailed objectives and proposals) a draft action plan is being developed. This plan will inform a programme of activities in support of walking that will be delivered by the council and our partners up to 2025/6, in alignment with the CWIS 2.

Delivery of the action plan (along with the Essex Cycling Strategy) will be overseen by the Active Travel forum.

Draft action plan

1. Appoint a Walking Champion.
2. Count walking - measure, monitor and share information about walking, exploring the use of new technologies to do so.
3. Develop a network of walking advocates and stakeholders.
4. Develop a campaign to make walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or to access public transport.
5. Reduce obstructions to walking.
6. Deliver behaviour change through partners (supported by a Walking Grant).
7. Deliver Better Streets and Corridors (LCWIP Priorities, Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester).
8. Provide better information about walking and walking networks (for example, legibility and apps).
9. Develop Walkable Communities/Localities Pilot (seeking DfT support).
10. Walking Networks Refresh for Harlow and Basildon.

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