



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER



**Healthy  
Active  
Cities**

# Active Neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester

## Qualitative insights into resident experiences

Harriet Larrington-Spencer  
Graeme Sherriff  
Alan Price



Transport for  
Greater Manchester

## Healthy Active Cities



**Healthy Active Cities** is a research group at the University of Salford that was formed in 2018 to bring together researchers and stakeholders to develop research on transport in Greater Manchester and beyond. The group has a particular interest in sustainable and active travel technologies and practices. It is based across the School of Health and Society and the School of Science, Engineering and the Environment.

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### Authors

Harriet Larrington-Spencer  
Dr Graeme Sherriff  
Dr Alan Price  
School of Health and Society, University of Salford

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on behalf of Studio Salford - <https://studio.salford.ac.uk>



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<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/62321> (executive summary and recommendations)

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# Foreword

Active Neighbourhoods are a core part of Greater Manchester's plans for an integrated, London-style public transport system. They help to enable the first and last step of journeys to be made on foot or by cycle to the local bus stop, Metrolink or train station. But they are so much more than just transport. They are an opportunity to ensure neighbourhoods are for living in, rather than racing through.

Compared to just ten years ago, the Department for Transport has found that about 20 billion more miles are being driven on minor roads, which means many more miles are being driven in areas around people's homes. The tech giants have provided devices that systematically steer traffic into our neighbourhoods taking absolutely no responsibility for the harm that that causes. Our streets are saturated by traffic, meaning people are being denied the choice of travelling without a car or simply to play outside their own home in safety.

The findings in this report show that there is a desire to reverse this trend. Reducing rat running and anti-social driving will result in parents having more confidence to

allow their children to play out or get to school on their own.

It also allows more spaces for play areas, green space, benches etc, and these elements should be shaped by the local community. Importantly, the study also shows that it is the often-overlooked elements of our transport network – the humble pavement and pedestrian crossings – that can make all the difference to people's ability to get on with their day.

Active neighbourhoods have the potential to transform communities, cutting air pollution, road collisions and rapidly increasing levels of physical activity. These outcomes can only be achieved by reducing through traffic but may only be accepted if pavements are usable and safety is improved on the road. I would urge everyone involved in the delivery of schemes that reduce through traffic in neighbourhoods to take note of these findings.

**Chris Boardman**  
Greater Manchester Transport Commissioner



# Executive Summary

Active neighbourhoods are being introduced across Greater Manchester as part of the Bee Network. These are places where people are prioritised over vehicles and are part of a policy landscape that seeks to connect people, place and mobility and to develop local neighbourhoods where people can enjoy walking and cycling with confidence. They are intended to support a shift away from high levels of private car use and a dependence on car ownership. Supporting active travel will have cross-benefits in terms of tackling climate change, reducing air pollution, cutting congestion, boosting social inclusion, and fostering physical and mental health benefits of physical activity in the population.

In this research, active neighbourhoods are a lens through which to understand the implementation of walking and cycling interventions from the perspectives of diverse communities; develop a qualitative baseline of perceptions of active neighbourhoods and behaviours relating to them; and add to the evidence base on effective strategies for increasing rates of active travel.

For this research four case study active neighbourhoods were selected, reflecting implementation in different districts, different funding sources and different timescales and processes. These were Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood (Salford), Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood (Manchester), Garside Hey Road Low Traffic Neighbourhood (Bury) and Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood (Stockport). Fieldwork was conducted from January to June 2021 and incorporated a number of methods, including walkalong interviews, conducted both in person and virtually, and focus group and reference group discussions. As the research was undertaken within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, methods were adapted to ensure that they adhered to relevant rules regarding in-person contact and social distancing. In total, 22 resident walkalongs were conducted across the four case study active neighbourhoods, as well as focus groups with older people and reference groups with active neighbourhood and public health professionals. Findings in relation to this research are discussed in terms of resident experiences (Chapter 5) and perceptions of active neighbourhoods (Chapter 6), processes of implementation (Chapter 7), monitoring and evaluation (Chapter 8) and processes of communication (Chapter 9).

## Experiences

The experiences of walkalong participants of their active neighbourhoods were discussed in terms of both active travel and the neighbourhoods themselves, contextualised within the context of Covid-19 and the sequential

lockdowns that occurred within Greater Manchester. What became apparent through these discussions is that, unlike the division that is portrayed within news and social media of a 'war' between a supportive cycling community and an unsupportive car lobby in active neighbourhood or low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) interventions, the reality is much more nuanced. For whilst people who participated in the walkalongs who both cycle and walk for local journeys were commonly supportive of active neighbourhoods, people who walk for their local journeys tended to be unsupportive or more ambivalent towards active neighbourhood interventions. Unlike the position that is purported on social media and elsewhere that people who are unsupportive of active neighbourhoods want to drive for local journeys, walkalong participants in this research who were unsupportive commonly did not own a car or had specifically moved to an area because of its walkability and did not use a vehicle for short journeys. This indicates either that there may be more recognisable benefits of active neighbourhood interventions – in their current form within Greater Manchester – to people who cycle or that people who cycle can more easily see benefits of active neighbourhoods to themselves and, potentially, to their neighbours.

## Perceptions

When discussing perceptions of active neighbourhoods, participants expressed a range of concerns in relation to potential inequalities. These included spatial inequalities related to the impact of active neighbourhoods on their boundary roads and specifically on air quality on these roads. The research also demonstrated the extent to which residents placed different values on the installation of planters and the implications for feelings of gentrification and ghettoisation. The contrast between these two perspectives was interesting and may reflect the extent to which residents engage with wider discussions on active neighbourhoods and LTNs using social media.

Disabled and older people reflected on mobility challenges and emphasised that active neighbourhoods in their current form do not necessarily improve pedestrian conditions. Concerns relating to this perception were compounded by the perception that active neighbourhoods are interventions that benefit those who cycle, rather than people who are interested in active travel in a broader sense. A further inequality discussed by participants was that the current approach to School Streets, which relies upon parent and guardian volunteers, will result in uneven implementation due to the social capital required to navigate the administrative processes, as well as the likelihood that volunteer labour would be

gendered, since women are commonly responsible for the school run. Concerns regarding inequalities were expressed across the participant group, irrespective of whether participants were supportive, unsupportive or ambivalent. Those who were supportive of schemes and identified inequalities tended to understand active neighbourhoods as a small part of an overall approach to supporting modal shift within Greater Manchester, with interventions necessitating an iterative and reactive approach. Monitoring and evaluation were considered particularly integral to this process.

### Processes of Implementation

Frustrations with processes of the implementation of active neighbourhoods across the case study areas were common to the walkalongs, irrespective of the participants' positions on the schemes. In general, participants expressed frustration with regard to what they perceived as poor implementation of active neighbourhood infrastructure, such as positioning that enabled vehicle drivers to use pavements to bypass filters, signage type (using 'Road Closed' rather than 'No Through Road', for example) or missing signage, or schemes undertaken despite the fact that navigation systems had not been updated. A related issue was authorities being slow or unresponsive in resolving issues that were resulting from the processes of implementation. An additional frustration was that, whilst participants recognised that statutory processes of consultation with emergency services were happening, emergency service personnel on the ground did not seem to know about the changes. Whilst wider evidence from London shows that LTNs do not necessarily extend emergency service response times, it should be recognised that many people rely upon swift responses from emergency services to stay alive and well and better communication is necessary to allay their fears. Frustrations with processes of implementation not only impacted upon resident experiences of active neighbourhoods but also influenced perceptions of active neighbourhoods beyond the area of each scheme. Additionally, they led to concerns amongst residents that the implementing authorities do not have the capacity or the commitment to successfully implement the schemes.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester was a concern raised by participants during almost all resident walkalongs across all four case study areas, irrespective of whether walkalong participants supported the implementation of their respective active neighbourhoods. Participants were interested in the impacts of active neighbourhoods, positive and negative, and sought data that would aid an understanding of the potential inequalities arising from their implementation and could be utilised to support iterative design processes to refine and improve interventions. What participants perceived as inadequacies in monitoring and evaluation, particularly

when they compared measurement methods with those undertaken for LTNs in London, further undermined trust in the capacity of councils and highways teams to both successfully implement active neighbourhoods and be able to assess whether they were a positive intervention for their local community.

### Communication

Processes of communication on active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester have involved formal communications by teams implementing the schemes – through mechanisms that include mailouts and social media – as well as informal communications, whereby residents have communicated among themselves, largely, within the Covid-19 context, through social media and a limited number of community engagement events. Resident communication on social media, particularly Twitter, has transcended the individual schemes: the use of Twitter has enabled discussions of experiences between and across the areas. With regard to formal communications, participants expressed concerns with their provision, particularly in terms of online methods, in relation to a lack of accessibility and processes of digital exclusion. Social media was seen by research participants to play a role in developing informal networks, in either support or opposition. However, many participants, particularly those who were ambivalent towards the implementation of active neighbourhoods, found the online environment 'toxic', and this both put them off using social media as a tool for accessing information and also led to drawbacks for active neighbourhoods as a result of seeing them, in a more general sense, as divisive interventions.

### Recommendations

A number of recommendations for the development and implementation of active neighbourhoods have been developed in relation to the research findings:

- Inclusive design
  - Engage with disabled and older people's groups
  - Prohibit pavement parking
  - Conduct inclusive walking audits
  - Provide School Streets as a local authority service
- Communication and engagement
  - Ensure consistent communication and engagement
  - Provide training for community groups on effective and inclusive engagement
  - Ensure information is inclusive and accessible
- Monitoring and evaluation
  - Develop and clearly communicate monitoring and evaluation plans
  - Create an active neighbourhood professionals' forum
  - Develop a research portfolio to support implementation and evaluation



# 1. Introduction

There is increasing policy interest in creating and shaping towns, cities, streets and neighbourhoods that are conducive to active travel. There are myriad social and environmental benefits that stem from creating places in which people can enjoy walking and cycling with confidence and use these forms of mobility to reach friends, family, work, education and other destinations. Tackling climate change, reducing air pollution, cutting congestion, boosting social inclusion and experiencing physical and mental health benefits of physical activity all follow from a shift away from both our high levels of private car use and our dependence on car ownership. Active neighbourhoods are one part of a policy landscape that connects people, place and mobility.

## 1.1 Greater Manchester

As part of its Transport Strategy for 2040 (TfGM, 2021a), the Greater Manchester Combined Authority is aiming to increase the proportion of journeys made by walking and cycling in Greater Manchester (GM), with walking and cycling playing a central role in ensuring that at least 50% of all trips in Greater Manchester are made by sustainable

modes of transport by 2040 (GMCA and TfGM, 2020). This reflects goals relating to public health, the climate crisis and the economy.

*To double and then double again cycling in Greater Manchester and make walking the natural choice for as many short trips as possible. We must do this by putting people first, creating world class streets for walking, building one of the world's best cycle networks, and create a genuine culture of cycling and walking. (Boardman, 2017:2)*

In order to achieve this modal shift in journeys towards sustainable modes of transport, the Bee Network is being developed. At a planned 1,800 miles of high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, it is intended to be the country's largest walking and cycling network (GMCA and TfGM, 2020). The network will consist of segregated walking and cycling routes on busy roads, signage and crossings on quiet routes and creating areas where people are prioritised to make streets safer and quieter (TfGM, 2021b). Spending on the Bee Network is currently £18 per head per year in Greater Manchester, which is higher than levels in any other city-region in the UK and almost



on a par with Dutch levels of investment (TfGM, 2021b), although it is recognised that Dutch investment is on top of existing extensive and high-quality infrastructure. More recently, Andy Burnham has announced the extension of the Bee Network name to cover Greater Manchester's public transport and active travel network, which will include the accelerated franchising of buses across the region, implementation of a cycle hire scheme and commencement of negotiations with Network Rail to make all stations within the city-region accessible by 2025 (GMCA, 2021).

Active neighbourhoods are a developing aspect of the Bee Network and are now being implemented in districts across Greater Manchester. Active neighbourhoods are places where people are prioritised over vehicles, using modal filters to prevent through traffic but still enabling all homes and businesses to be accessed by vehicles and emergency services. In doing so, active neighbourhoods should be safe and attractive spaces for people to walk and cycle through, as well as to spend time in, and for children to play in. The aim is for active neighbourhoods to provide *'new cyclable and walkable areas [that] will contribute to the wider Bee Network plans, creating a joined-up cycling and walking network for all residents across the city-region'* (TfGM, 2021d). Active neighbourhoods are a form of low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) that has been widely implemented within London, with evidence demonstrating positive contributions in terms of increasing walking and cycling levels and decreasing car journeys (Aldred et al., 2019; Aldred and Goodman, 2020, 2021) as well as having a positive association with declining car ownership (Goodman, Urban, et al., 2020) and lower levels of road traffic injuries (Laverty, Aldred, et al., 2021).

## 1.2 This research

In this research, active neighbourhoods are a lens through which to:

- understand the implementation of walking and cycling interventions from the perspectives of diverse communities;
- develop a qualitative baseline of perceptions of LTNs and behaviours relating to them;
- and add to the evidence base on effective strategies for increasing rates of active travel.

Fieldwork was conducted across four active travel neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester: Trinity and Islington, Levenshulme, Garside Hey Road and Cheadle Heath. Although Covid-19 restrictions limited the potential to meet in person, we were able to conduct walkalongs in the communities under social distancing guidelines. Walkalongs were used as a way of engaging with residents within their neighbourhoods and using the materialities of their local environment to discuss active travel, the active neighbourhood or planned active neighbourhoods and other issues and topics around this. As it was recognised that older people were not well represented in walkalongs, focus group discussions were used to ensure their inclusion. Further reference groups were also established to discuss active neighbourhoods from a variety of perspectives, including intervention, public health and academics.

This research was undertaken as part of a research post that has been jointly funded by the University of Salford and Transport for Greater Manchester. The authors are part of Healthy Active Cities at the University of Salford, a research group focusing on sustainable transport and active travel.

## 1.3 A note on terminology

Within this research we will use the term 'active neighbourhoods' to refer to interventions within Greater Manchester broadly, as well as specifically to three of our four active neighbourhoods, namely, Levenshulme and Burnage Active Neighbourhood, Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood and Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood. Whilst we do this and refer to GM interventions broadly as active neighbourhoods, we follow the naming of Garside Hey Road Low Traffic Neighbourhood when referring to our fourth case study as this is how it has been named and how it is known. When we discuss interventions outside Greater Manchester and engage more broadly with discourses around them, we use the term 'low traffic neighbourhood (LTN)', reflecting that this is the popularised term.

We also commonly use the terms walking and cycling. When using these terms, we do so reflecting inclusive definitions, Walking includes the use of mobility aids, such as wheelchairs and mobility scooters, and cycling includes non-standard cycles such as tricycles and handcycles.

# 2. Context

- **Active neighbourhoods are an element of the Bee Network, a programme of walking and cycling provision designed to increase uptake of active travel in Greater Manchester.**
- **The intention is that, by closing through routes in residential areas, motor vehicles are redirected onto main roads, leaving residential areas quieter and more conducive to walking and cycling and allowing more social use such as play areas for children.**
- **Active neighbourhoods and low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) have been subject to some vocal opposition in media and social media, but research has suggested that opinions are not as polarised as some high-profile coverage would suggest.**
- **The Covid-19 lockdowns have formed a fascinating time to investigate active neighbourhoods, with people spending more time at home and in their communities.**

## 2.1 Active travel in Greater Manchester

As part of its Transport Strategy for 2040 (TfGM, 2021a), the Greater Manchester Combined Authority is aiming to increase the proportion of journeys made by walking and cycling in Greater Manchester. This reflects goals relating to public health, climate change and the economy. The plan includes infrastructure developments that include a 1,800-mile network of cycle and pedestrian paths and 35 miles of Dutch-style cycle lanes, as well as improved access to cycles and the aim to reduce motor traffic, especially in residential areas. The plans include filtered neighbourhoods designed to reduce car use, increase walking and cycling levels and improve quality of life for residents.

Increased active travel and a decrease in the use of motor vehicles, especially privately owned motor vehicles, can be beneficial to individuals and communities for a number of reasons. Encouraging people to choose active travel over cars can lead to a decrease in sedentary lifestyles and associated conditions such as obesity and diabetes, while a reduction in cars and motorcycles on the roads can reduce injuries and deaths from road traffic collisions and can also reduce air pollution and associated respiratory diseases (Douglas et al., 2011). By facilitating alternative methods of transport, investment in active travel areas may also benefit those who are unable to drive cars or motorcycles. If active travel were increased across urban areas in England and Wales over the next 20 years – based upon an average cycling distance of 3.4 kilometres daily across urban areas, it has been estimated that the reduction in associated diseases could save the NHS around £17 billion (at 2010 prices) (Jarrett et al., 2012). There is a growing body of research that suggests that interventions to encourage active travel are effective (Aldred et al., 2019). These have included educational programmes to encourage walking in children (Carlin et

al., 2016), urban redevelopment such as cycle lanes and pedestrian footpaths, bicycle renting schemes, public health information campaigns and workplace interventions (Scheepers et al., 2014).

Interventions that promote active travel have been shown to lead to reductions in hypertension, diabetes and all-cause mortality and may lead to reductions in obesity although more high-quality evidence is needed on this (Saunders et al., 2013). Traffic calming measures, which reduce traffic flow and speed through urban residential areas while promoting outdoor socialising and play, have been shown to improve safety and perceptions of safety, increase rates of active travel and improve residents' opinions of the environment of those areas. It is feasible that such policies impact on obesity, but there is currently insufficient evidence to demonstrate a clear link (Brown et al., 2017). In terms of safety specifically, traffic calming measures have been shown to reduce child pedestrian injuries (Jones et al., 2005), vehicle collisions (Ewing, 2001) and injuries across all ages within residential areas (Elvik, 2001).

## 2.2 Interventions at the neighbourhood level

Part of the plan to reduce traffic in residential streets is a scheme that the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 refers to as filtered neighbourhoods, which are also known as active neighbourhoods and, more commonly, low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs). These are residential areas that have been closed off to through traffic of motor vehicles using bollards, planters or other barriers, collectively known as modal filters. Modal filters prevent access for motor vehicles while allowing people to cycle and walk through. Modal filters can be deployed within roads as well as at junctions, so that residences remain accessible by car while through traffic is restricted. This

creates streets and areas that allow social use, including play, and encourage more active travel such as walking and cycling.

LTNs are bounded by boundary roads, which remain open to through traffic, and are seen as a useful tool within a range of potential interventions for encouraging active travel. Alongside large-scale programmes such as urban redevelopment, LTNs are a relatively straightforward and inexpensive intervention that can have an almost immediate beneficial impact on residents (Laverty, Goodman, et al., 2021). Since the majority of residents in city-regions live on minor urban streets (91% in London; Aldred and Verlinghieri, 2020), rerouting traffic to major routes should be beneficial to most residents, especially if combined with interventions to reduce traffic generally so that those roads do not become overburdened.

Quiet streets in LTNs can become places to meet, play and socialise outdoors, and schemes can be supported by the installation of additional greenspaces to further improve residential areas (Aldred and Verlinghier, 2020). A 2020 poll of adults in England by the Department for Transport found that 78% of people supported a reduction of traffic in their neighbourhoods and 66% were in favour of reallocating road space for walking or cycling (DfT, 2020). Like other schemes that encourage active travel, LTNs can improve wellbeing by reducing inactivity and improving air quality, while they can also impact local regeneration by encouraging the use of local businesses as an alternative to large, out-of-town shopping centres (Mason, 2021).

The concept of traffic evaporation comes originally from work by Cairns et al. (Cairns et al., 2002). They looked at the reallocation of road space in 70 case studies across 11 countries and found that when road space is reallocated – away from cars and towards walking and cycling, for example – concerns expressed about predicted traffic problems were often ‘unnecessarily alarmist’ and overall reductions in traffic by significant amounts were commonly observed. Data from the Waltham Forest mini-Holland scheme showed considerable reductions in traffic on roads inside LTN areas and, whilst the boundary roads saw increases in vehicles, the increases did not account for full displacement of traffic, indicating that evaporation had occurred (Enjoy Waltham Forest, 2015). Air quality modelling of main roads within the schemes within Waltham Forest indicated no decline in air quality on main roads (Dajnak et al., 2018).

The Greater Manchester Streets for All Strategy, the draft of which has recently been published, is an approach that seeks to *‘make our streets easier for all to get around by putting people first as we shape and manage our streets’* (Streets for All, 2021:6). Within the strategy, active neighbourhoods have been identified as one of the five main street types within the city-region and as *‘places to live, where it is easy to make local journeys and connections to public transport by walking and cycling’* (Streets for All, 2021:15). Street type requirements for active neighbourhoods have been established in more detail within the Streets for

All strategy document. Active neighbourhoods are a developing aspect of the Bee Network and are now being implemented in districts across Greater Manchester. Active neighbourhoods, the strategy states, are places where people are prioritised over vehicles, using modal filters to prevent through traffic but still enabling access to all homes and businesses by vehicles and emergency services. In doing so, active neighbourhoods should be safe and attractive spaces for people to walk and cycle through, as well as to spend time in, and for children to play in. The aim is for active neighbourhoods to provide *‘new cyclable and walkable areas [that] will contribute to the wider Bee Network plans, creating a joined-up cycling and walking network for all residents across the city-region’* (TfGM, 2021d).

Funding for active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester comes from a variety of sources. The current main source of funding for active travel in GM is the Mayor’s Challenge Fund, a funding pot of £160 million allocated from the GM Transforming Cities Fund allocation, created with the aim of getting the Bee Network infrastructure within the city-region moving. Additional sources of funding include the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) and the Active Travel Fund (ATF). EATF funding was made available by the Department for Transport for the implementation of temporary projects in response to the Covid-19 pandemic that would support local authorities in implementing walking and cycling facilities. The ATF is the second tranche of funding made available within the context of supporting people to walk and cycle, recognising the reduced capacity of public transport. EATF funding was announced in May 2020, and bids had to be submitted in June 2020. Funding allocations were confirmed in July 2020 and had to be spent by the end of March 2021. ATF tranche 2 funding was announced in July 2020, and bids had to be submitted in August 2020. Funding allocations were confirmed in November 2020 and must be committed by the end of March 2022.

## 2.3 Historical context

The history of residential areas that prioritise active travel and play over motor vehicles is commonly traced to the Netherlands where, since at least the 1970s, ‘Woonerven’ (plural of Woonerf, meaning ‘living courtyard’) have been deployed in urban residential areas (Steinberg, 2015). Measures such as narrowed streets, tight corners, street play areas, designated parking areas, visible entrances and exits and street furniture ensure that people driving through feel like guests in an area that belongs to pedestrians. Cars are limited to a walking pace, and the streets’ use as a route for through traffic is infeasible (Steinberg, 2015). Urban roadways across the Netherlands have been increasingly prioritising active travel over cars since around the 1970s, and current developments are continuing this trend. For example, Merwede, a planned community that will be home to around 12,000 people just outside Utrecht city centre, will be completely car-free (Sawbridge, 2020).

Other European cities have also introduced car-free neighbourhoods. In a bid to reduce excess deaths linked to air pollution in Barcelona, the city converted several blocks of residential neighbourhoods into 'Superilles', or 'Superblocks', which prioritise active travel and eliminate motor vehicle through traffic, and plans to increase the scheme to cover a large part of the city (O'Sullivan, 2020a). Similar schemes have been introduced in several European cities including Paris (O'Sullivan, 2020b), Hamburg (Stewart, 2014), Vienna (Blumthaler, 2021) and Milan (Laker, 2020).

In the UK, there have been examples of traffic reduction in urban planning since around the 1970s. Newcastle-upon-Tyne's 'environmental areas' saw restructuring of some streets in low-income areas to allow safe play areas for local children. However, the process required a high level of physical development, which led in some cases to displacement of residents. The scheme was controversial but may have helped to inform more recent developments in the UK (Watson, 2021). In the late 1990s, the UK government funded a total of 68 schemes inspired by the Dutch Woonerven, which consisted of prioritised active travel and discouragement of motor traffic through the use of landscaping changes. Known as 'Home Zones', these schemes employed relatively inexpensive methods such as reduced speed limits and street furniture to good effect, and the project was conducted with ongoing community consultation (*reStreets*, 2021). Some UK projects have even been initiated or organised by residents, including one in the Northmoor area of Manchester, where residents pressured the local authority to develop a Home Zone (Oliveres, 2018). Similarly, 'Playing Out' is a community grassroots movement that aims to facilitate or advise any local groups seeking to introduce traffic calming measures in their local area. Residents are encouraged to apply for existing schemes or pressure their local authority to allow small, temporary road closures for single days or up to several months. Inexpensive methods are typically used, such as bollards or even wheelie bins as road blockers and resident stewards who can escort cars at a walking pace through the street (Playing Out, 2021).

## 2.4 Covid-19

Whilst not a focus of this research, Covid-19 was an inescapable context that had a significant impact on mobility practices and the ways in which people connected with their neighbourhood and other spaces. The period starting in March 2020 and continuing into summer 2021 was characterised by varying restrictions on freedom of movement, closures of social and educational facilities and, for those who could, working from home.

On 23rd March 2020 the government implemented Lockdown 1, directing people to stay at home except for essential purchases, essential work travel (if remote work was not possible), medical needs, one form of exercise per day (alone or with household members) and providing care for others. In May 2020 Lockdown 1 began to be eased, with restaurants, shops and some other non-essential facilities reopening. On 1st August 2020, Greater Manchester faced new restrictions banning separate households from meeting in homes or private gardens, as well as closure of restaurants and non-essential retail. On 5th November, England entered a second lockdown, followed by a third implemented on 5th January 2021, with similar restrictions to the first lockdown.

Public transport methods such as trains and buses in the UK were subject to social distancing restrictions. In Manchester, pop-up cycle lanes, such as that along the A56 in Trafford, were implemented to help accommodate an increase in active travel and to allow social distancing (Whelan, 2020). Travel was greatly reduced during this time, and the UK government was keen to avoid an increase in the use of cars at the expense of public transport once lockdown was lifted (Laverty, Goodman, et al., 2021). In May 2021, they announced £250 million of funding for local authorities to encourage active travel (UK Government, 2021). Within Greater Manchester, Safe Streets Save Lives (TfGM, 2021) was introduced as an emergency response to Covid-19 providing a £5m pot (£500k per district) from the Mayors Challenge Fund.

During Covid-19 restrictions, although many people began working from home, others still needed to travel, and the usually extremely busy underground rail system was not able to maintain anything like usual capacity with two-metre social distancing (O'Malley, 2021). Transport for London (TfL) invested more money into LTNs and other infrastructure such as cycle lanes to encourage active travel. This was in addition to the many LTNs and similar schemes in London, which TfL started introducing in 2014 in the form of mini-Holland schemes (Aldred and Goodman, 2020). A study of the impact of London's Covid-era LTNs found that they were leading to reduced car use and increases in walking, while perceptions of the new environment in terms of cycling were positive (Aldred and Goodman, 2021). When compared with London's established LTNs, the newer ones seemed to be equally effective although their costs were lower. The long-term positive impact of the existing LTNs was also shown to increase over time, suggesting the same will be true of the newer LTNs (Aldred and Goodman, 2021). It is important to recognise that LTN areas in London are also covered by pre-existing legislation banning footway parking (London Councils, 2021).

## 2.5 Media and social media coverage

The public and media response to LTNs has been mixed. Newspaper headlines have warned of '*worse and worse traffic chaos*' (Chillingsworth, 2021a) and of LTNs '*sweeping across Britain*' (Chillingsworth, 2021b) and have warned that they could prevent priests from delivering the last rites (Penna, 2021). Not all media reactions have been negative, with several Guardian pieces describing LTNs favourably (Boardman, 2020). Meanwhile, polling has suggested that people in the UK are broadly in favour of LTNs. In October 2020, YouGov found that 26% of people surveyed were strongly in favour of LTNs, 31% were broadly in favour of them, 27% were undecided, 8% were broadly opposed and a further 8% were strongly opposed (Walker, 2020).

LTNs introduced in the City of Oxford led to protests in 2021, with residents complaining that the schemes caused increased congestion, increased petrol costs and cut them off from friends and family. Oxford East Conservative Association Chair Mark Bhagwandin called LTNs '*lunatic schemes*' that '*damage the environment, hit struggling businesses, and risk workers' jobs*' (BBC News, 2021). Some LTNs in London have been accompanied by cameras, which spot motorists illegally driving through those neighbourhoods, leading to fines. A group of more than 2,000 protesters in Ealing, west London, marched on the town hall, citing the '*undemocratic manner*' in which the trial LTNs had been installed and especially the associated fines for drivers (Burford, 2021). The Evening Standard (Sherriff, 2018) reported that £14 million had been raised in fines related to LTNs in ten London boroughs and that schemes had been discontinued by local authorities in Ealing, Kensington and Chelsea, and Harrow following negative public responses (Burford, 2021). Strong negative opinions have been shared online, and the Metropolitan Police investigated two alleged death threats made towards local councillors, one of which was from a former UKIP candidate (Bowden, 2020; MacMichael, 2020).

As lockdowns related to Covid-19 have reduced the space for community engagement and discussion, social media has become an important forum for people to discuss LTNs and active neighbourhoods, as well as street changes more generally related to Covid-19. The debate on social media is also polarised, although Tidey (Tidey, 2021), for example, through an analysis of data collected through Twitter on LTNs in London, found that around

20 Twitter users (both supportive and unsupportive of the interventions) were responsible for half of the total activity on LTNs. Many of the criticisms of LTNs seem to be contradicted by evidence. For example, some have claimed that the schemes would slow emergency response vehicles, leading to potentially dangerous delays in urgent medical, fire or police assistance. However, data from the London Fire Brigade showed that, although fire officers reported concerns, there was no evidence that LTNs increased response times, either before or during the Covid era (Goodman, Laverty, et al., 2020; Goodman et al., 2021).

Another criticism has been that a reduction in motor traffic could lead to an increase in crime, but Met Police data from 2012–19 has shown that the introduction of LTNs in Waltham Forest was actually correlated with a reduction in street crime by 10% initially, increasing over time to 18% after three years (Goodman and Aldred, 2021). Moreover, according to police data, the Waltham Forest LTNs saw a threefold decrease in road traffic injuries between 2012 and 2019, with no increase in injuries on the surrounding major routes (Laverty, Aldred, et al., 2021). LTNs have also been accused of being implemented mainly for the benefit of wealthy, middle-class white people. However, a study on Covid-era LTNs in London found that most new LTNs were established in deprived areas and people from ethnic minorities were more likely to live near an LTN than white people. The same study noted that there was variation between different parts of London and that equity could be improved in some local authorities (Aldred et al., 2021).

A key issue in the debate around LTNs seems to be concerns around limited public consultation and the speed at which LTNs have been introduced, especially during the Covid era. Previous installations were accompanied by public information campaigns, polls and meetings to allow residents' input; schemes were gradually introduced with plenty of forewarning of any changes and the chance for local people and businesses to plan any changes needed to their travel practices. But the Covid-era LTNs were introduced under emergency legislation, and it has been suggested that this may have been the main reason for negative reactions (Lewis, 2020). Disability charity Transport for All has reported that, while disabled people hold a mix of positive and negative views on LTNs, three-quarters of their survey respondents were critical of the lack of communication between local authorities and the public (Transport for All, 2021).

# 3. Our Research

- The research was conducted across four active neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester: Trinity and Islington, Levenshulme, Garside Hey Road and Cheadle Heath.
- Walkalongs were employed as a way of engaging with residents in their neighbourhoods and exploring their concerns and experiences in an unstructured way.
- Focus groups enabled the inclusion of older people, and those working on active neighbourhoods and mobility policy were engaged through reference groups.
- Although Covid-19 restrictions limited the potential for meeting in person, we were able to conduct walkalongs in the communities under social distancing guidelines.

## 3.1 Introduction

The research was designed under conditions of lockdown during Covid-19 and had to meet legal guidelines on meeting non-household members, as well as the guidance provided by the ethics requirements of the University of Salford in the context of doing research during Covid-19. Within this section we discuss the four case study active neighbourhoods that were chosen for this research – Trinity and Islington, Levenshulme, Garside Hey Road and Cheadle Heath – and the research methods – walkalongs, focus group discussions and reference group discussions – that were employed.

## 3.2 Research areas

In this section the four case study active neighbourhoods chosen for this research – Trinity and Islington, Levenshulme, Garside Hey Road and Cheadle Heath – are outlined. These areas were selected to reflect implementation in different districts, using different funding sources and with different timescales and processes. They are discussed below.



**Figure 3-1** Locations of four case study active neighbourhoods/planned active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester. Source: Google Maps 2021

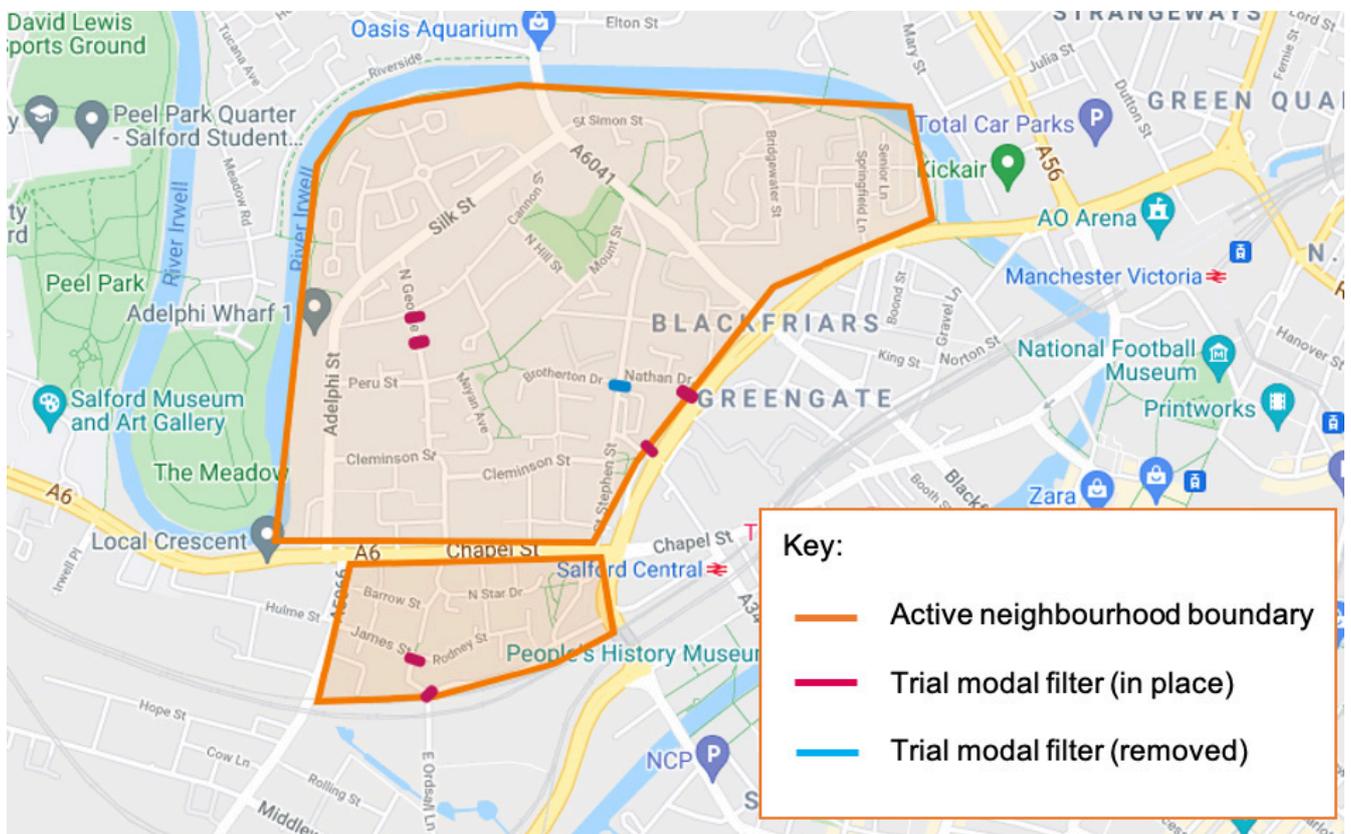
### Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood, Salford

The Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood trial was implemented across the Trinity and Islington neighbourhoods in Salford (Figure 32) in June 2020 under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. The trial was funded from tranche 1 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF), which was introduced in Section 2.2. The active neighbourhood utilises planters as modal filters. These create point closures, preventing motorised through traffic whilst maintaining permeability for non-motorised modes of travel, including walking and cycling. Motorised access to all properties within the active neighbourhood was maintained.

The trial was implemented after a two-week #SafeStreetsSaveLives public consultation in May 2020, in which residents across Salford were asked to identify transport issues and improvements that could

be used to support active travel across the borough. Feedback was categorised into short- and longer-term deliverables, and the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood was considered a rapidly deployable intervention (Salford City Council, 2021).

The initial trial was implemented with a six-month consultation period, with feedback received during the consultation period used to inform the development of the scheme. Figure 32 shows all the modal filters installed as part of the active neighbourhood in June 2020. In response to the feedback, as part of the original six-month trial the modal filter on St Stephen Street (blue, Figure 32) has been removed, whilst all the other filters have remained in place.



**Figure 3-2** Map of the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood, implemented June 2020. Source: Google Maps 2021

## Levenshulme (and Burnage) Active Neighbourhood

The Levenshulme and Burnage Active Neighbourhood was originally planned to be implemented across both the Levenshulme and Burnage wards in Manchester.

The Levenshulme Bee Network team, composed of a volunteer working group, wrote a bid and secured entry into the Mayor's Challenge Fund programme for funding of £2.4 million. The plan for the neighbourhood comprised a combination of modal filters and additional measures, including a parklet, a new crossing, additional cycle parking on the A6, the implementation of School Streets and Play Streets and the provision of cycle hangars across neighbourhood areas to provide storage for cycles and reallocate space from vehicles on roads (Levenshulme Bee Network, 2020).

As part of the TfGM #SafeStreetsSaveLives campaign beginning in April 2020 in response to Covid-19, the Levenshulme and Burnage Active Neighbourhood was identified as a project that could be brought forward more rapidly in order to support walking and cycling.

In July 2020, Manchester City Council decided to end its collaboration with Levenshulme Bee Network 'Our Active Neighbourhood' and manage the scheme itself (Levenshulme Bee Network, 2020).

In the original consultation, it was proposed that 25 modal filters would be installed in the first phase of the active neighbourhood. After a further consultation using Commonplace, the number of modal filters was scaled back to 14 (Figure 3-3, colour). According to Manchester City Council, modal filters receiving overwhelmingly negative feedback in the second consultation and modal filters that would have required alterations to additional roads were not installed. The scaled-down Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood was implemented in January 2021 (Manchester City Council, 2021). Shortly after implementation, the planters making up the diagonal modal filter on Gordon Avenue were vandalised by having their soil tipped out. This was quickly rectified by local residents.

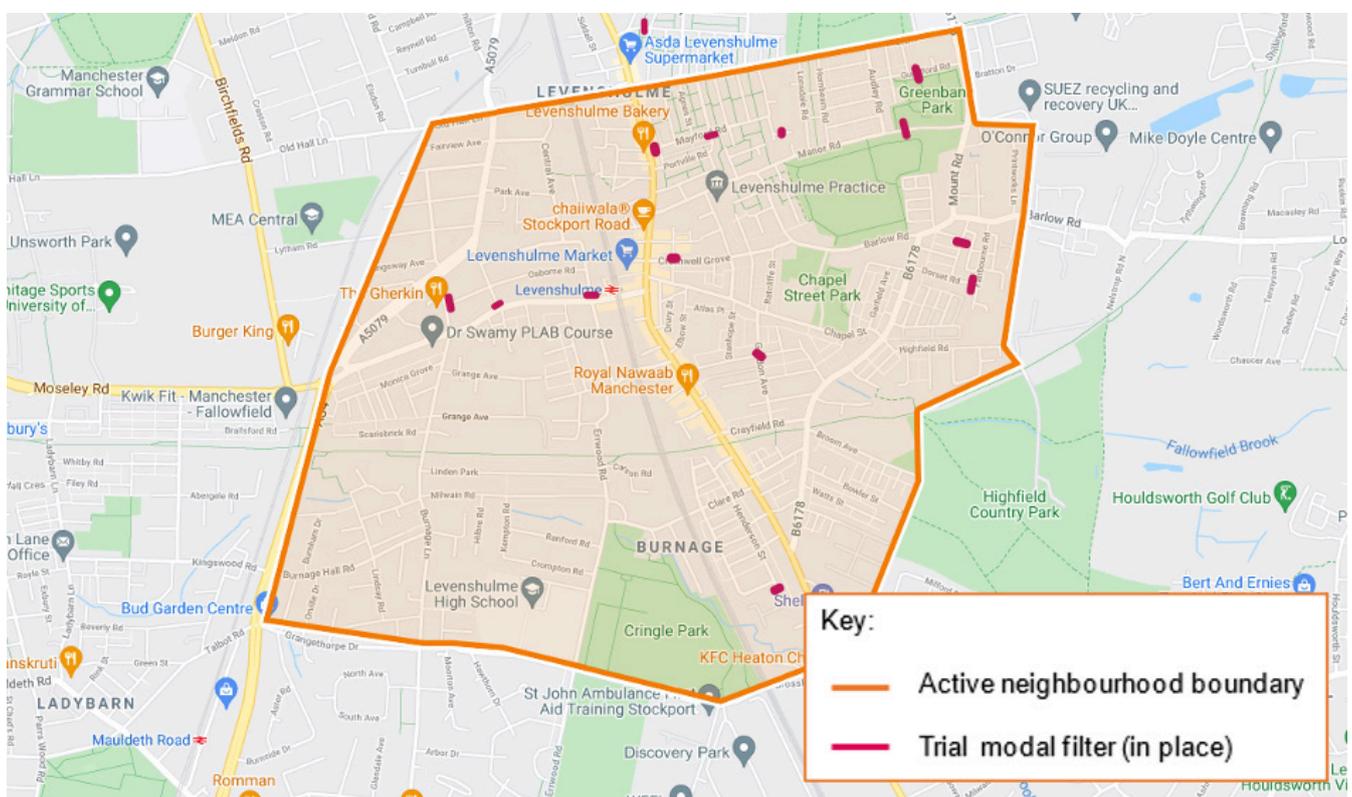


Figure 3-3 Map of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood. Source: Google Maps 2021

### Garside Hey Road Low Traffic Neighbourhood

Garside Hey Road Low Traffic Neighbourhood is a trial active neighbourhood implemented in Brandlesholme, a suburb in the north of Bury. Garside Hey Road LTN was implemented using the EATF. The trial consisted of modal filters on four roads (Figure 35) and the planned use of two modal filters to create a community area covering 25 metres of the road that could be used, for example, for street play by children. The first modal filters (on Toon Crescent and Collen Crescent, Figure 35) were installed in December 2020, and the second set of modal filters (Figure 35) were installed in May 2021 (Bury Council, 2021).

In addition to modal filters, Garside Hey Road LTN included additional measures within the LTN. These included placing benches along Garside Hey Road to provide rest points for residents walking in the local area and a picnic area to the west of Holme Avenue. Additionally, a zebra crossing was installed on an existing speed table on Garside Hey Road as a connector between the two estates that make up the active neighbourhood (Bury Council, 2021). Since implementation, modal filters on Holme Avenue and Birks Drive have been vandalised on two occasions, with planters tipped over. In both instances the planters were reinstalled by officials involved in the scheme.

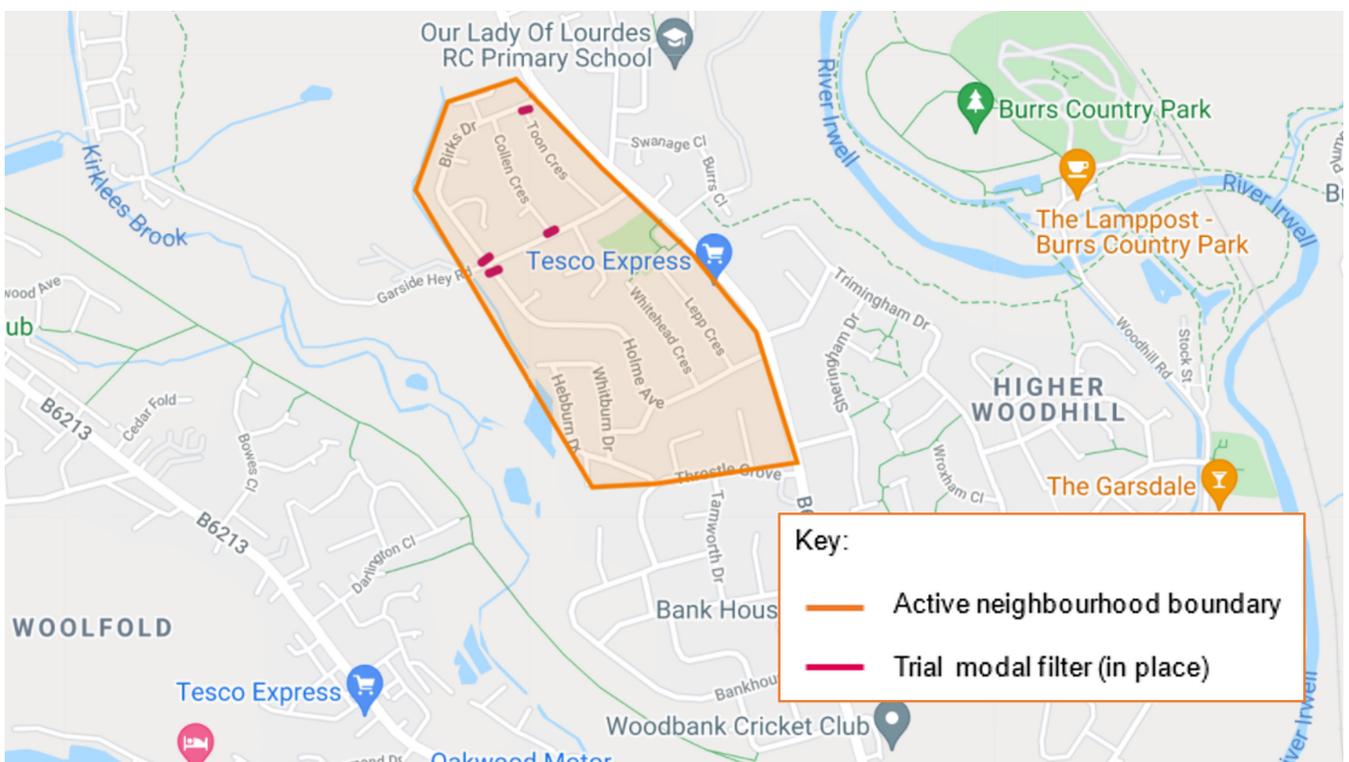


Figure 3-5 Map of Garside Hey Road Low Traffic Neighbourhood. Source: Google Maps 2021

## Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood

The Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood (which includes parts of Edgeley and Cheadle Heath, Cheadle Hulme North and Davenport and Cale Green) process began in January 2021. The active neighbourhood is part of a Mayor's Challenge Fund project in which Arup, in partnership with Sustrans and 10GM, is working with TfGM and local councils to implement 10 active neighbourhoods across the Greater Manchester city-region.

The Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood project has a three-phase engagement process, of which two phases have been implemented. In Phase One, residents were invited to 'have their say', in which they could tell the team about their street and area through a survey and an interactive map and by joining online workshops. In

Phase Two, the results from Phase One were analysed by the project team and information was shared with Stockport Council to pick up on issues that could not be addressed within the project. In Phase Two, a second workshop was held in which early findings were shared with residents and other interested people and participants discussed road classifications and suggested which roads should be allocated to the facilitation of traffic movement and which roads should be developed towards centralising the needs and uses of space of pedestrians. In the upcoming third phase, participants will come together to look at where it could be possible to place modal filters to create quieter, safer and more active residential streets (Sustrans, 2021).



**Figure 3-6** Map of the Cheadle Heath (planned) Active Neighbourhood area. Source: Google Maps 2021

### 3.3 Research methods and participant recruitment

#### Walkalongs

Walkalongs were undertaken within the four case study active neighbourhoods in order to understand diverse experiences and perceptions of residents. The walkalongs involved a researcher accompanying residents on a participant-led 'tour' of their local (or proposed) active neighbourhood. Walkalongs were selected as they support the generation of rich 'place-based' data due to the environment prompting discussions (Evans and Jones, 2011) and allowing the infrastructures of place to guide the conversation. The walkalongs were designed to enable adherence to rules on social distancing during the Covid-19 lockdown by being outdoors and socially distanced. In order to enable participation of residents who were not able to walk around their local area, an online version of the walkalong, developing methods devised by Pink (2009), was also used. In this, Google maps and photographs were used to enable a virtual walkalong using Microsoft Teams.

In addition to individual walkalongs, a walkalong was undertaken with a local councillor in Garside Hey Road LTN. The walkalong was an opportunity to discuss the scheme with the councillor and was also used by the councillor as an opportunity to hear the feedback of local residents on the scheme. Prior to commencing the walkalong, this councillor wrote in the local Facebook group that she would be in the area and that local residents were welcome to come and discuss their views. All residents were introduced to the researcher when discussing views with the councillor, and in any references

to this walkalong within this research it is referred to as 'councillor walkalong'.

Processes of participant recruitment for walkalongs were limited to what was allowed under both Covid-19 lockdown rules during the research and the research guidelines provided by the University of Salford. Reflecting the growth in social media use in the UK during the lockdowns (Marzouki et al., 2021; Ofcom, 2021a), as well as the prevalence of online discussions on active neighbourhoods and low traffic neighbourhoods (Tidey, 2021), we utilised social media, and specifically Facebook, to recruit participants. This involved posting an advertisement in relevant Facebook groups (Figure 37) local to each of the case study active neighbourhoods, outlining the research and inviting participants to join in walkalongs. The process of recruitment sought to ensure that diversity in terms of age, ethnicity, gender and disability was represented within the research. The recruitment process was iterative, with the research team periodically reflecting upon the characteristics of the walkalong participants over time and then seeking to actively recruit participants from underrepresented groups. An overview of the walkalong participants is provided in Table 1. Pseudonyms are used throughout this report. This protects the anonymity of the participants whilst avoiding the dehumanisation of making them 'a number'.

Whilst the process of social media recruitment was successful in reaching participants representing a range of factors, older people were particularly underrepresented within the sample, probably because of the reliance upon social media for recruiting and lower (albeit growing) levels of social media use amongst older people (Ofcom, 2021b).

#### Research on Active Neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester

Healthy Active Cities at the University of Salford are undertaking research on the perceptions and experiences of residents living in, or on the grounds surrounding, Active Neighbourhoods (or planned Active Neighbourhoods) across Greater Manchester. Active Neighbourhoods are schemes to minimise through traffic on residential streets.

We are looking for residents who are willing to participate in walk-alongs.

This will involve walking (or using any mobility aid you require) around your local

Active Neighbourhood or planned Active Neighbourhood and discussing your thoughts and experiences.

Walk-alongs will take up to one hour and can happen at a time suitable for you. If you would prefer remote/online rather than in-person participation, please let us know and we can make arrangements.

All participation will be anonymous.

If you have any questions and/or are interested in participating, please email: [h.m.larrington-spencer@salford.ac.uk](mailto:h.m.larrington-spencer@salford.ac.uk).

This research is funded by the University of Salford and TfGM.



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

Figure 3-7 Recruitment flyer used on Facebook to recruit research participants

The use of walkalongs within the research was a valuable method for developing people-centred understandings of active neighbourhoods, whether implemented or planned. This method is particularly useful in developing insights that are more nuanced than those delivered through some online approaches, such as social media. In the context of Covid-19 lockdowns, walkalongs provided an outlet for participants to discuss their active neighbourhood that, given the need for social distancing and the low number of in-person engagement activities, they would not necessarily have otherwise had. In contrast to interviews in the home or in university meeting rooms, walkalongs, both in person and using remote methods, enabled the use of the physical environment to provide reflections on active travel within the local neighbourhood. This afforded insights into aspects that would not necessarily have been mentioned if participants were not walking through the physical environment in question and actively experiencing the infrastructure. The practices of the walkalong participants and their neighbours provide prompts around how people are using the space, such as showing how they must cross over roads or move into the road to bypass cars on the pavement. The walkalong interviewer can observe the extent to which experiences and challenges differ in relation to how people are able, or unable, to navigate their local areas and how these experiences intersect with factors such as age, disability, impairment, and childcare.

### Focus groups

As previously mentioned, older people were largely absent from walkalongs within this research. In order to engage with older people within Greater Manchester, researchers undertook online focus groups. These discussions were facilitated through Age UK Salford and the GM Older People's Network, and in both forums older people were well represented, as were individuals who work with older people.

Focus group discussions differed from walkalongs in that participants in these discussions were not specifically residents of case study active neighbourhoods. Reflecting this, these discussions began with an introduction to active neighbourhoods and the types of infrastructures and processes being implemented across Greater Manchester. The discussion then turned to participants' reflections upon current and desired forms of active travel, the barriers to active travel for older people and the potential role that active neighbourhoods could have within this context.

### Reference group discussions

Three reference groups were established for the research: active neighbourhood, public health and academics. Each reference group comprised professionals who were involved in the implementation of active neighbourhoods (Active Neighbourhood Working Group) or for whom active neighbourhoods and/or low traffic neighbourhoods were relevant to their professional work (Public Health Working Group and Academic Working Group). The purpose of the reference groups was not only to provide insights into active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester but also to steer the research, discuss the findings from the research and begin to collaboratively consider what the findings were showing and what types of interventions and recommendations should be made.

The Active Neighbourhood Working Group was established at the beginning of the research and met four times over the research period, discussing a variety of topics including implementation, communication, and monitoring and evaluation. The public health and academic working groups were established towards the end of the research, and each met once. The Academic Working Group, which consists of academics from across the UK, will be continued into the future to provide mutual assistance and collaboration across neighbourhood-focused active mobility interventions.

**Table 3-1 Walkalong participants across the four case study active neighbourhoods (pseudonyms used)**

ID	Name	Location	Gender	Employment	Disability	Ethnicity	Adults in household	Children in household	Mode for local journeys	Cars in household	Position
1	Kevin	<b>Garside Hey Road</b>	M	Employed		White British	4	2	Walking	2	Unsupportive
2	Natalie		F	Employed		White British	2	0	Walking	2	Ambivalent
3	Anna		F	Employed		White British	2	0	Walking	2	Ambivalent
4	Derek	<b>Cheadle Heath</b>	M	Employed		White British	4	0	Walking Cycling	1	Supportive
5	Gareth		M	Employed		White British	4	2	Walking Cycling	1	Supportive
6	Ed		M	Employed		White British	4	2	Walking Cycling	0	Supportive
7	Andrea		F	Foster carer	Mobility impaired	White British	3	1	Walking	2	Supportive
8	Jane	<b>Levenshulme</b>	F	Employed		White British	1	0	Walking Cycling	0	Unsupportive
9	Jeff		M	Employed		White British	2	0	Walking Cycling	1	Supportive
10	Ellie		F	Employed	Disabled	White British	2	0	Walking	1	Unsupportive
11	Charlotte		F	Employed		Asian British	5	3	Walking	2	Ambivalent
12	Harry		M	Employed		White British	2	0	Walking Cycling	1	Supportive
13	Claire		F	Maternity/ redundancy		White - other	4	2	Walking Cycling	1	Supportive
14	Catherine		F	Employed		White - other	3	1	Walking Cycling	0	Supportive
	Ben	M	Employed		White British	Walking Cycling			Supportive		
15	Tara		F	Self-employed		Asian British	4	2	Walking	2	Ambivalent
16	Winston		M	Self-employed		Black British	2	0	Walking Cycling	0	Supportive
17	Terry	<b>Trinity &amp; Islington</b>	M	Employed		White British	1	0	Walking	1	Unsupportive
18	David		M	Employed	Blind	White British	2	0	Walking	1	Unsupportive
	Joyce		F	Employed		White British			Walking		Unsupportive
19	Alicia		F	Employed		White - other	3	1	Walking	1	Unsupportive
20	Stanley		M	Employed		White British	4	0	Walking Cycling	Access	Supportive
21	Rob		F	Unemployed		White British	2	0	Walking Cycling	Access	Supportive
22	Valerie		F	Retired		White British	1	0	Walking	0	Unsupportive

# 4. Experiences

- **Twenty-three walkalongs were undertaken across the four active neighbourhood areas.**
- **Walkalongs demonstrated diverse perspectives and experiences of active neighbourhoods ranging from supportive to unsupportive.**
- **Whilst people expressed support and opposition, a clear-cut division between a supportive cycle lobby and an obstructive car lobby, as perpetuated on news and social media, did not emerge within the walkalongs.**
- **Across the sample, those who walked as their primary mode of travel for local journeys, when compared with those who both cycled and walked, were more concerned about the intervention. People who cycled were more likely to see the benefits to them.**
- **Portraying a simplistic division between proponents and opponents may alienate residents, particularly those who are undecided upon the value of active neighbourhoods.**

## 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the walkalong participants, give an overview of their experiences of active travel prior to the implementation of their active neighbourhood and, where measures are already in place, to reflect on their experiences of the developments. These experiences are also contextualised within participants' reflections on lockdown and the influence of factors such as greater levels of working from home and reduced numbers of motor vehicles on the roads (specific to Lockdown 1) on active travel within their areas.

Walkalong participants represent a range of life stages and living situations (Table 3-1). Our conversations with them illustrate the numerous factors that shape experiences of mobility and, in turn, perceptions of and reactions to active neighbourhoods. Rather than simply dividing people into those in favour of or opposed to active neighbourhoods, we draw out the nuances of their accounts to provide examples of how active neighbourhoods have impacted them, how they have responded to developments and how they feel about the potential of this approach. Within this chapter we move through each active neighbourhood in turn. Many of the conversations highlight issues pertinent across neighbourhoods, whilst some provide more distinct or pronounced insights into the specific context.

## 4.2 Levenshulme

Nine walkalongs were undertaken in the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood: eight with individuals and one with a couple. Two participants within the walkalongs lived on boundary roads, and three lived on roads with modal filters. One participant identified as disabled, and four of the participants had children under the age of 18, for whom they had caring responsibilities, including getting

them to school (Table 1). Three of the walkalongs were undertaken virtually using Microsoft Teams, whilst six were in person.

Ellie (P10) lives with her partner in a house on a street just off one of the designated boundary roads of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood. Ellie has several medical conditions that cause significant mobility impairment and chronic pain, meaning she cannot walk long distances and relies upon her car for most journeys, and this will not change with the implementation of the active neighbourhood. Ellie is very concerned about the impact of the active neighbourhood upon her journey times and reflects that whilst she can accept the idea of a 15-minute time tax on journeys – *'We've all got to change our behaviour, and for the benefit of everybody, adding 15 minutes to each journey, I've just got to accept that'* – she is concerned that *'these are not going to be adding 15 minutes on to [my] journeys, they might be adding 45 minutes or more on to journeys, and that's the bit that's really difficult'*. The uncertainty that Ellie expresses above in terms of not yet knowing the impact of the active neighbourhood upon travel times is because she has been working from home during lockdown. This uncertainty and consequential speculation on potential impacts was a common trait in the production of anxieties around active neighbourhoods among walkalong participants. Discussions of the impact of changes in journey times are discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

Jane (P8) owns a terraced house on one of the boundary roads of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood. Jane lives alone, doesn't own a car and will walk and cycle for many of her local journeys, and she uses public transport to access Manchester city centre or Stockport town centre. Whilst Jane was initially excited about moving to Levenshulme and knew about the Bee Network,

she feels let down by the implementation of the active neighbourhood. She recognises improvements on the filtered roads in terms of reducing through traffic but feels that the benefits of the active neighbourhood will be unequal. As a result, she questions whether there will be a reduction in car journeys (traffic evaporation) or whether boundary roads, like her own, will see higher levels of traffic and greater levels of pollution (traffic displacement).

Tara (P15) and Charlotte (P11) have similar concerns regarding the potentially unequal impact of the active neighbourhood, although they both situate themselves in a more 'wait and see' position. Charlotte lives with her husband and three children on one of the boundary roads of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood and, although she does not have concerns regarding their road, is concerned for residents on Broom Lane. Charlotte and her husband have two cars for commuting to work, although they have used them much less during lockdown, and when moving round locally the family tend to walk. Although all family members can cycle, they have no space inside or in their small garden to store five cycles.

The family took advantage of quieter roads during the first lockdown, with Charlotte reflecting '*it felt really nice to be out on the road. It did feel safer, so we did like that*'. During term-time, Charlotte's oldest child walks to school independently, whilst the younger two still need to be accompanied. Working from home during lockdown has meant that either Charlotte or her husband have been able to walk the youngest two children to school. As the children enjoy this activity, they are looking into options to continue it in the future. Charlotte, however, recounts the difficulties in finding a solution that is both reliable and doesn't involve too much labour in terms of its organisation:

*There was a parent last year that was trying to set up a walking bus... Yes, so we were talking to her. The school put me in touch with her because I wanted to find out about the walking bus, but it seemed like it hadn't really gotten off the ground. And there is a mum that walks past our house, and she's got two children at the school. So, we might try and help each other out a bit. Yes, it's just whether we're willing to take it on. (Charlotte (11), Levenshulme)*



**Figure 4-1** Illustration based on the experiences of Tara (P15) taking children of different ages on the school run: '*This instance here, I couldn't go through there with a buggy, so I would send some [of the children] that way [indicating a narrow gap between a car and a wall]. I would have to go round here, but then you can't see what's happening on the other side... I have to take the buggy onto the middle of the road. Sometimes the children, because they have learned "Stay with me", follow me onto the road, and it just feels like you'll have a heart attack.*'

Tara lives on a filtered road within the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood with her husband and two children, running a home day care facility. As a full-time childminder, Tara often does the school run with up to six young children. During the walkalong, Tara retraced the school route and described the hazards she and the children face, commonly because of pavement parking:

*This instance here, I couldn't go through there with a buggy, so I would send some that way [indicating a narrow gap between a car and a wall]. I would have to go round here, but then you can't see what's happening on the other side... I have to take the buggy onto the middle of the road. Sometimes the children, because they have learned 'Stay with me', follow me onto the road, and it just feels like you'll have a heart attack. (Tara (P15), Levenshulme)*

As a result of the persistence of these conditions, Tara felt that it was safer to put the children into the car to do the school run. Tara did not perceive modal filters to have improved conditions for walking, as cars were still parked on pavements and, on her own road, she had observed car drivers cutting over the pavement to bypass filters and moped and e-scooter users going through the filters at some speed. Whilst Tara and her family do enjoy cycling, they will normally drive further out of Manchester to cycle together. They enjoyed cycling on local roads during Lockdown 1, but Tara felt that the active neighbourhood in its current form did not feel safe enough for her to cycle with her children.

Like Tara, Harry (P12) and Claire (P13) also both live on filtered roads within the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood. Harry lives in what they describe as a '*non-leaky pocket*': an area of about 1.15 square kilometres that, because of modal filters, no longer has through roads. This pocket is on the western side of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood (Figure 33). Harry lives with his wife and owns one car, but both currently work from home. Local journeys are walked, although they have also recently purchased cycles: '*We bought bikes during the lockdown to do our state-sanctioned exercise. Mix it up and, yes, it's great. I mean, if the roads are empty that feels much safer*'. Unlike Tara, Harry was very positive about his experience of living on a filtered road:

*It's hard not to love it massively, because it has been great that you've not got queues of traffic along here, and in particular you haven't got people racing along here at high speed... You used to see school kids walk to the corner and stop and peer around just to check that there wasn't a car coming down, whereas now they just stroll up and it's like it's great and nobody worries about it. (Harry (P12), Levenshulme).*

Similarly, Claire, who rents a house on a filtered road with her husband and two children, was positive about the impact of the modal filters upon local traffic:

*We love it because it's never the volume of cars but just the speed of cars, and especially walking to nursery or if people come to visit or getting in and out of a car, it was really dangerous. So, now it's so much safer. (Claire (P13), Levenshulme)*

Claire and her husband both cycle for travel, although this has been reduced because of both Covid-19 and lockdowns meaning a reduction in places to cycle to and Claire being on maternity leave, and they find the active neighbourhood '*much nicer*' to navigate than previous local cycling conditions. For local journeys, such as to school, nursery or the shops, Claire and her husband will generally walk but find that, whilst they *can* move the children round in their pushchair, they are constantly struggling against the lack of kerb drops, poor pavement quality and having to take the children out into the road because of parked cars. For longer journeys Claire notes that, whilst she often wants to use public transport more, Levenshulme train station is not accessible, and so any journey would involve getting a bus into the city centre to catch a train. This increases both the time and the cost of the journey and makes car use more convenient with two young children.

Within the Levenshulme walkalongs, positive perceptions of the active neighbourhood were not limited to those who lived on filtered roads. Jeff (P9), Winston (P16) and Jane lived on unfiltered roads and were all supportive of the intervention. Jeff owns a flat and lives with a lodger, and both predominantly cycle everywhere in Greater Manchester, having an '*as much as we can by bike*' approach. Whilst Jeff has a car, he generally uses it for leisure trips outside Greater Manchester and has such low mileage that he pays insurance according to distance driven. During the walkalong, Jeff described the difference that the installation of filters had made to some of his journeys through Levenshulme:

*It's great because I roll out here on the bike, I come to this filter, and this, straight away, for me – for my cycle route into work or anywhere in town – it used to be a conflict of cars coming the other way, speedy and rushing and not wanting to give you space. Then what you've effectively done here is create a bit here where kids can play out. (Jeff (9), Levenshulme)*

In addition to improving cycling conditions, Jeff also noted that for him filtered roads also meant an improved experience when walking: '*instead of uneven pavements and things, I can just walk straight down the road*'.

Winston lives with his partner and cycles as his primary mode of transport, as well as walking, using public transport and renting a motor vehicle when needed. Winston gave up owning a private car eight years ago, having often found that, given the time it took to park, driving had no time benefit over other transport options. When recounting experiences of moving through filtered parts of the scheme, Winston observed reductions in the number of vehicles using those streets and noted improvements in cycling conditions and the experience of cycling as a result:

*I've noticed it's a lot less traffic. When you've got parked cars there and cars are going to go up and down, on a bike sometimes it can be a bit narrow, and a lot of drivers aren't so good, so you end up being more nervous of them than... Yes, it's a lot easier... That makes it a better experience, more comfortable, more satisfying, yes. (Winston (P16), Levenshulme)*

Catherine (P14) and Ben (P14) live on the Levenshulme/Burnage border with their daughter and, like Rob, have chosen to live car-free. Their family walks and cycles as their primary modes of transport, as well as using public transport when necessary. During the walkalong Catherine and Ben described the value of cycling during lockdown: *'That kept us sane, didn't it? We used to just cycle, go and feed the ducks and cycle some more and have picnics.'* Their daughter expressed delight at having been able to spend more time riding her own bike, rather than being carried by her parents. Both Catherine and Ben described some of the *'treacherous'* encounters they had had with vehicles close passing whilst they were cycling, including during the school run and outside the school gates, and are hopeful for the potential of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood, in combination with the implementation of the Burnage Active Neighbourhood, to reduce traffic on local streets in order to enable safer active travel.

### 4.3 Trinity and Islington

Five individuals and one couple participated in walkalongs in the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood. Four of the walkalongs were undertaken in person, and one was undertaken virtually using Microsoft Teams. Of the participants, five lived inside the active neighbourhood boundary and one outside the boundary (Table 1).

Joyce (P18) and David (P18) are a married couple and live within the boundary of the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood. David is visually impaired and uses a cane to support his mobility. Working from home since March 2020, and with the implementation of sequential lockdowns following his cane training, David has been taking a daily walk alone, developing his knowledge of local routes. David finds the area's built environment a *'mixed bag'* for navigating independently and has not found that the installation of modal filters as part of the active neighbourhood has automatically made it safer.

Outside Covid-19 conditions, David would commute to work using a taxi paid for through Access to Work<sup>1</sup>. Joyce works at a hospital within Greater Manchester and commutes by car, having to make the journey at any time of day when on call and needing to be on the ward within 60 minutes. Outside Joyce's commute, Joyce and David make all their local journeys on foot. They chose the area to live in because of its convenient location, being in walking distance of so many locations, including Manchester city centre. The walkability of the area was

mentioned by almost all the Trinity and Islington walkalong participants as a motivating factor for choosing to live in the area.

For example, Alicia (P19), who is married and has a young child, describes choosing the location because of its convenience for walking for local journeys: *'We didn't know this area, but when we saw it on a map, we said, "okay, that's wonderful, exactly what we want".'* Whilst currently working from home, Alicia would normally use public transport for her commute, whilst her husband would walk to work in the city centre. The couple own a car, but Alicia doesn't have a licence, and the car is used for occasional leisure trips, visiting friends and shopping. Alicia has tried cycling but, due to problems with her back, finds that walking is much more comfortable.

Valerie (P22) is retired, lives alone and doesn't have a driving licence. Like other walkalong participants, Valerie chose to live in the Trinity and Islington area because of its convenient location – *'I live on a nice quiet road, but you've got everything on your doorstep, which is, as I say, quite a unique thing'* – and the ability, through walking, to connect with public transport and easily access areas beyond Salford and Manchester:

*It takes me 20–25 minutes to walk to Piccadilly, and within an hour or an hour and a half I can be in Liverpool, York, Sheffield, Leeds. I've seen more of my own country since I've lived up here than I did in the 45 years before I moved up here. (Valerie (P22), Trinity & Islington)*

Similarly to the above participants, Terry (P17) chose to live in the Trinity and Islington area due to the convenient location. Terry lives alone in his two-bedroom flat and owns a car, which he uses to commute to work in Blackburn on weekdays. For local journeys within Salford and Greater Manchester more widely, Terry will walk or use trams, depending upon his destination. Like Ellie in Levenshulme, Terry speculates about the potential impacts of the active neighbourhood on his commuting journey time, voicing anxieties but unable to know the full reality, considering levels of homeworking at the time and uncertainty relating to whether working from home will continue at significant rates:

*It's added time now... it's adding maybe five, ten minutes, depending on how busy it's been or if I get in the lights and stuff, but if it's very busy, I think it'll take me an additional 20 minutes. (Terry (P17), Trinity & Islington)*

A commonality between Joyce and David, Alicia, Valerie and Terry is that, despite choosing to live in the area because of the possibilities it enables in terms of active travel, particularly walking, none of these participants support the implementation of the active neighbourhood. In general, they struggle to see how the active neighbourhood improves conditions for walking and feel that people living in the area would already be

<sup>1</sup> Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that provides practical and financial support to people with a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition to start or stay in work (DWP, 2021).

making local journeys by walking and cycling, whilst those who use cars for commuting do so, in their view, out of necessity and would be negatively impacted by longer journey times.

Conversely, Stanley (P20) and Rob (P21), who also both enjoy living in the area due to its convenient location, both support the implementation of the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood. Stanley lives in a house share with three housemates just outside the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood. Whilst one of his housemates has a car that Stanley occasionally borrows, his primary modes of travel are cycling and walking. Stanley is currently working from home but is looking into cycling from Salford to Sale when he must return to the office. Whilst always relatively active, Stanley took the opportunity during lockdown to explore his local area by both walking and cycling. On experiencing the active neighbourhood, he reflected on the improved experience for cycling:

*I would be lying if I said that I only felt like I could cycle because of the improvement in cycling provision... but it's definitely preferable and an advantage and much nicer... it's just so much nicer when you feel like there is provision for bikes. (Stanley (P20), Trinity & Islington)*

During the walkalong with Rob, he also described improved conditions within the active neighbourhood for walking and cycling, as well as for children who might be playing outside. Rob compared his experiences of the filtered roads before and after the changes. For example, in the case of Stevenson Street, which now has two modal filters creating a car-free area within which children can play (Figure 32), Rob mentioned that:

*A car came up here, sped up and up around, almost went into the school wall there because it misjudged the bend. I think he was travelling about 35 miles an hour in this 20 zone and just misjudged it. (Rob (P21), Trinity & Islington)*

Rob lives in a flat share with one housemate. His housemate currently has a car through the Motability Scheme<sup>2</sup>, which Rob can drive for caring activities. When the Motability lease finishes, Rob's flatmate does not plan to get another car but prefers to use his mobility allowance to pay for taxi journeys when necessary. Rob attributed this largely to the limited parking for their flat block. Rob, who has been cycling all his life, will continue with walking and cycling as his two main modes of travel.

## 4.4 Garside Hey Road

Three walkalongs with individuals were undertaken in Garside Hey Road LTN, as well as a fourth walkalong with a local councillor. All three walkalong participants lived with their partner, and one also lived with their children, who attended preschool locally (Table 3-1). During the

fourth walkalong residents from six different households across the active neighbourhood joined at different points to discuss the intervention.

Kevin (P1) lives in Garside Hey Road LTN with his partner and two young children. Kevin will generally walk for local journeys, such as taking the children to nursery or going to the local shops on Brandlesholme Road. Kevin uses his car for commuting, occasionally driving to locations outside Greater Manchester, but more often driving to Bury Metrolink station. For family journeys outside the local area, such as into Bury town centre, Kevin would normally drive as his partner has a mobility impairment that makes walking longer distances difficult.

For Kevin, the implementation of Garside Hey Road LTN was carried out for traffic redistribution. Talking about the logic for the implementation of the LTN by Bury Council, Kevin reflected that *'In their mind, they're trying to distribute the traffic. So, some traffic goes out that exit, some traffic goes out this exit'*. Whilst the scheme has a minimal impact upon Kevin, he perceives it to be unnecessary, considering levels of traffic to be minimal and any through traffic limited to when there are roadworks on Brandlesholme Road. From his experience of Garside Hey Road LTN, he also considers it to have reduced the safety of residents because of drivers cutting over the pavements to bypass the modal filters:

*Because of the way the barriers have been positioned, it's easier to just drive on the pavement and drive around them. You can pretty much guarantee that the cars at the top facing that way have all come in from the bottom, but they'll go out at the top. Like the cars parked on the pavement here, they'll go on the pavement like that, and they'll drive past the filters. (Kevin (P1), Garside Hey Road LTN)*

Similar perceptions of Garside Hey Road LTN as a method of traffic redistribution were held among people spoken with during the walkalong with a local councillor. This walkalong lasted two hours and was undertaken shortly after the modal filters had been replaced following the first time they were vandalised, as discussed in Section 3.2. When residents were discussing the scheme during this walkalong, they made no reference to the impact upon their own journeys but were upset by the failure of the scheme to achieve what they perceived its aim to be – the redistribution of traffic – evidencing the fact that vehicles would still use filtered roads and then cut across the pavements in order to bypass the modal filters. This was observed during the walkalong, with a consistent flow of vehicles, including cars, vans and small goods vehicles, bypassing the filters using the pavements and at relatively fast speeds. Residents felt that the implementation of the scheme had reduced the safety of pedestrians and of children in particular, as the pavements were no longer safe. In addition, spaces in which children had previously played, such as a cul-de-sac close to modal filters on one

<sup>2</sup> The Motability Scheme enables people with a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition who receive the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance or the enhanced rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment to exchange this payment to lease a car, scooter, powered wheelchair or wheelchair accessible vehicle (Motability, 2021).

of the roads in the scheme, had become a turning circle for drivers who had reached the end of the road and did not use the pavements to bypass the filters.

In contrast to Kevin and the residents who joined the walkalong with the local councillor, Natalie (P2) and Anna (P3), whilst not necessarily fully supportive of the LTN, could be described as agnostic towards its implementation. Natalie lives with her husband and dog in Garside Hey Road LTN, working in a local school, which she gets to by driving a seven-minute journey, and prior to Covid-19 her husband would commute to south Manchester by car. Since March 2020, Natalie's husband has been working remotely, and, if this can continue, they aim to become a one-car household. The couple walk for local journeys, such as to the shops on Brandlesholme Road, and chose to buy their house in this area because of the convenience of the location and proximity to amenities such as the row of shops located on Brandlesholme Road. Natalie said that for journeys such as into Bury she will drive, or when travelling into Manchester she will park at the tram station and get the tram, finding the different bus companies and tickets

difficult to navigate. So far, Natalie noted that there had been limited impact of the installation of the modal filters upon her everyday life, other than the '*drama*' that she was watching unfold on social media.

Anna has lived within the area of Garside Hey Road LTN since her now adult children were young. Anna has not been working after a serious illness and having to self-isolate during the pandemic. Whilst Anna and her husband each have a car, Anna has barely used hers over the past year. The couple walk for local journeys and, whilst they enjoy cycling, do not find the wider area conducive to nice cycling journeys. Anna was positive that the modal filters could have a positive impact upon car driving in the area, as when walking around she often experienced cars speeding down small roads, and she felt that they may prevent fast through traffic. However, she was uncertain how big an impact they would have, considering some of the antisocial driving to be the result of residents, as well as additional problems, having observed drivers cutting over pavements and existing problems such as pavement parking.



**Figure 4-2** Illustration based on the experiences of Harry (P12): '*I suppose my immediate experience [of the active neighbourhood], it's certainly had an impact, I think, in terms of people getting together and doing other stuff like the litter picks, and I think, psychologically, those planters create a sense of "this is my little patch in my immediate neighbourhood". I'm more invested in that.*'

## 4.5 Cheadle Heath

Four individuals participated in walkalongs in Cheadle Heath. The walkalongs were undertaken during the initial consultation phase of the active neighbourhood. All four participants were supportive of the scheme in the area. One participant identified as significantly mobility impaired. All four participants lived with their partners, two with their young children and one with their children who were young adults. One participant regularly fostered children (Table 1).

Andrea (P7) lives on a street within what will be the Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood trial area. Andrea is significantly mobility impaired and, like Ellie in Levenshulme, needs to use her car for all journeys, irrespective of distance. For Andrea, the potential of the active neighbourhood and modal filters is that they would prevent the area being used as a cut-through for car drivers and reduce the overall number of cars in the area. During the walkalong, Andrea described how much she enjoyed the reduced numbers of vehicles in the area during lockdown and the ability of residents to use the space:

*There were just people walking, kids on bikes, parents with kids on bikes. Yes, it was just really, really nice to watch because it takes me a while to do the garden at the moment because I struggle to stand, but to just watch them going, families doing stuff that we did when we were little. (Andrea (P7), Cheadle Heath)*

As lockdown conditions have changed over time and vehicle numbers on the roads have increased, Andrea expressed regret that her grandchildren are unable to continue to enjoy this freedom:

*I've been home schooling my grandchildren because the parents are working. The little one wants to bring a bike. I have to say, 'You can't ride a bike up here, darling, you can't.' My children learnt to ride their bike up here, but I can't let their children do it. (Andrea (7), Cheadle Heath)*

Derek (P4), Gareth (P5) and Ed (P6) all live in what will be the Cheadle Heath active neighbourhood trial area with their partners and children. Derek and Gareth both have one car in their respective households but identify walking and cycling as their primary modes of travel. Ed and his partner are car-free, walking and cycling for '99% of journeys' and using public transport for places



**Figure 4-3** Illustration based on the experiences of Kevin (P1): 'Because of the way the barriers have been positioned, it's easier to just drive on the pavement and drive around them. You can pretty much guarantee that the cars at the top facing that way have all come in from the bottom, but they'll go out at the top. Like the cars parked on the pavement here, they'll go on the pavement like that, and they'll drive past the filters.'

they cannot access by active travel. Like Andrea, these three participants expressed how much they enjoyed the experience of quieter local roads during lockdown. Derek described how he and his family walked much more in their local area – *'We walk all the time now. It's actually quite pleasant, let's have a walk into Cheadle, and that's the highlight of the week'* – whilst Gareth and Ed, who both have young children, both described how it was much more relaxing to cycle with their children and partners when there were fewer cars on the roads.

During the walkalongs, Derek, Gareth and Ed all reflected upon the fact that they were already confident in their cycling abilities and, irrespective of the implementation of an active neighbourhood, would continue to cycle for travel. What came out strongly was that their everyday experiences – particularly through walking and cycling with their children – led them to recognise the car-centric nature of their local area and to a desire for more equal space for people travelling actively.

## 4.6 Discussion

Within this chapter we have discussed the experiences of walkalong participants in relation to both active travel and active neighbourhoods. We have contextualised these experiences within the context of Covid-19 and the sequential lockdowns that have occurred within Greater Manchester.

What has become very apparent through this chapter is that, unlike the division that is portrayed within news and social media in the form of a 'war' between a supportive cycling community and an unsupportive car lobby, the reality is much more nuanced. For whilst, in our sample, people who participated in the walkalongs who cycle (as well as walk) for local journeys were supportive of active neighbourhoods, it was generally people who exclusively walk for their local journeys that were unsupportive or more ambivalent towards the implementation of an active neighbourhood.

Unlike the position that is purported on social media and elsewhere that people who are unsupportive of active neighbourhoods want to drive for local journeys, walkalong participants in this research who were unsupportive commonly did not own a car or had

specifically moved to an area because of its walkability and did not use a vehicle for short journeys (Table 1). This indicates either that there may be more recognisable benefits of active neighbourhood interventions – in their current form within Greater Manchester – to people who cycle or that people who cycle can more easily see benefits of active neighbourhoods to themselves and, potentially, to their neighbours.

This more nuanced perspective of active neighbourhoods is likely to be influenced by self-selection by residents to participate in the research and so does not reflect the extreme positions that are propagated on social media. Positions commonly evidenced on social media in terms of the rights of cars to drive on all roads, the rights of all people to drive for short journeys and the implementation of active neighbourhoods as an imposition on citizen freedom have not emerged in our walkalongs. This indicates that, whilst these positions may be loud on social media, they do not necessarily represent the views of the population and that such strong stances may not emerge amongst those who actively engage with and inform themselves about active neighbourhood processes.

However, we need to engage with those who are not supportive of active neighbourhoods and understand why. A reliance on social media positioning within local discourses – rather than exploring and addressing the concerns of residents – risks alienating residents, in particular, residents who are more ambivalent towards the implementation of schemes. Charlotte reflects upon this dynamic, for example, in her engagement with the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood:

*It's not because I love my car and I want to just be a petrol-guzzler or whatever that I'm saying, 'No'. I'm saying, 'No', because I actually think it's unfair to some people to potentially have to live with cars backed up outside their house. (Charlotte (P11), Levenshulme)*

Joyce also describes a similar scenario in the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood, where those who are pedestrians and speak out with concerns about the intervention are *'characterised as being pro-car if you are not in favour of the low traffic neighbourhood as described'*.

# 5. Perceptions

- **Participants expressed a range of concerns relating to inequality, and these concerns were not limited to those who opposed active neighbourhoods.**
- **Spatial inequalities related to the impact of active neighbourhoods on boundary roads and specifically on their air quality. Residents placed different values on the installation of planters and the implications for feelings of gentrification and ghettoisation.**
- **Disabled and older people reflected on particular mobility challenges and emphasised the importance of providing improvements to enable them to be active and pursuing a design that is inclusive for all.**
- **Participants noted that the implementation of School Streets in the current approach is uneven and therefore potentially entrenches existing inequalities.**
- **There was a perception that active neighbourhoods are intended to benefit those who cycle, rather than active travel in a more general sense. It is important to understand the ways in which messaging in the media and during consultation processes has created this impression.**

## 5.1 Introduction

In this section we discuss perceptions of active neighbourhoods that were evident during walkalongs in the four case study areas – Levenshulme, Trinity and Islington, Garside Hey Road and Cheadle Heath – and the themes that emerge from these perceptions. The aim of this chapter is not to quantitatively determine what factors are more or less important in the design and implementation of active neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester, but rather to demonstrate how these developments are perceived and received and therefore to add nuance to the discussion through a qualitative and experiential approach. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates several key themes emerging in relation to the implementation of active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester: 1) inequality, 2) the completeness of active neighbourhoods and 3) perceptions of who active neighbourhoods are for.

Through a discussion of these themes, and building upon Chapter 4, this chapter will develop the view that, whilst there are opposing positions on active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester among residents who participated in this research, these positions are much more nuanced than those commonly seen in news and social media. Instead, there are many commonalities in terms of what people want in their local neighbourhoods and for active travel, irrespective of whether they support, do not support or are more ambivalent towards the implementation of active neighbourhoods. Within this chapter we triangulate the themes emerging from the walkalongs with those discussed within the reference and focus groups.

Within this section we discuss perceptions of inequality in the implementation of active neighbourhoods that emerged during our research. Inequality with regard to active neighbourhoods is understood as interventions having unequal or unjust impacts across and between resident groups. Three primary concerns emerged in terms of perceived inequalities. These were:

- the impact of active neighbourhoods on vehicle levels and air quality on boundary roads;
- concerns relating to public imaginaries of the meaning of active neighbourhood infrastructures; and
- the impacts upon disabled people's mobility.

Perceptions of these inequalities resonated within different active neighbourhood trial areas and to different extents.

## 5.2 Boundary roads and air inequality

The implementation of active neighbourhoods and the use of modal filters to reduce through traffic are, as outlined in Chapter 3, based, at least partially, on the concept of traffic evaporation. The idea of traffic evaporation is that, by improving local conditions for active travel, the total number of car journeys will decrease. Concerns were held by several residents (Jane (P8), Ellie (P10), Charlotte (P11) and Tara (P15)) within Levenshulme, however, that rather than traffic evaporation, there would be traffic displacement. This occurs when, rather than reducing the number of car journeys, the filtering of roads results in the concentration of more vehicles on boundary roads, resulting in a decline in air quality in these areas.

It is important to mention that it was not only those walkalong participants in Levenshulme who did not support or were ambivalent towards the scheme who had concerns regarding the boundary roads and air pollution. Indeed, this was a concern raised during almost all the Levenshulme walkalongs, irrespective of participants' opinions on the active neighbourhood. The difference was that those who supported the scheme tended to incline towards the argument of traffic evaporation and also situate concerns regarding air pollution within a perception of the active neighbourhood as being an incomplete solution to modal shift within Greater Manchester.

For Jane and Ellie, inequalities perceived to be inherent within the implementation of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood were considered to be the outcomes of gentrification caused by growing numbers of younger professionals moving to Levenshulme: *'there's a lot of people moving into the area because, as I was saying, it's just, for some people it's more affordable and it has got that community'* (Ellie (P10), Levenshulme). The outcome of this in-movement was then felt to be that newer residents were co-opting active neighbourhood interventions to improve the living environment on interior roads at the expense of boundary roads and their residents. Jane described this during the walkalong as: *'I do think there's something about, "We don't want it on our street. We don't want that in our area"'*.

Irrespective of whether the implementation of the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood is the outcome of processes outlined by Jane and Ellie, it is taking place within the context of rapidly rising house and rental prices<sup>3</sup>. This growth in both house prices and rent in the area was referenced by Claire (P13), who recounted that recently the landlord of the neighbours opposite had increased their rent – *'the neighbours across the street have lived there for 20 years, and all of a sudden the landlord knocked on the door two months ago and said, "we're doubling your rent"'* – as well as her concern lest own family's rent increasing and the entanglement with the active neighbourhood: *'I love the filter, but at the same time I was like, this is more reason for our landlord to increase our rent'*.

The implementation of any measures to support modal shift and make significant changes in the area thus needs to be sensitive to these dynamics. For Jane and Ellie, the use of the term 'boundary road' within active neighbourhood design, for example, further exacerbated feelings of community division – *'straight away, that terminology suggests that you're on the edge of a community or a neighbourhood or you're an outsider'* (Jane (P8), Levenshulme) – and *'that's almost saying that all of us that live off it, on the other roads that come off, don't exist or don't matter, we're not part of Levenshulme'* (Ellie (P10), Levenshulme).

Whilst Jane and Ellie saw air inequality on boundary roads as an inevitability of perceived inequalities embedded within the active neighbourhood design process, the concerns of Charlotte and Tara were the outcomes of uncertainty about whether traffic evaporation would occur, particularly considering evidence on this concept is somewhat limited (Chapter 2). The significance of conditions on boundary roads in terms of air quality was of increasing importance to Charlotte, who had observed reduced symptoms of her children's asthma during Lockdown 1 with less traffic on the road: *'If certain residents are going to bear the brunt of it... I think that is unfair, and they shouldn't have to suffer.'* For both Charlotte and Tara, the implementation of the trial and the monitoring and evaluation were considered as important in enabling them to assess the benefits and disbenefits of the scheme. The role of monitoring and evaluation will be discussed further in the following chapter.

### 5.3 Diverse meanings of the planters

Whilst not articulated as strongly, the perspectives of Jane and Ellie on the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood resonate strongly with social media discourses on low traffic neighbourhoods, middle-class scheme capture and the use of modal filters to create gated communities, as discussed in Chapter 2. Similarities in discourses in Levenshulme by residents unresponsive of active neighbourhoods can be discussed in terms of the role of social media in cross-geography communication, information sharing and alliances, which will be discussed in Section 8.3. Interestingly, similar discourses did not emerge during walkalongs in the three other case study active neighbourhoods. In fact, the opposite position emerged within Garside Hey Road LTN, with the installation of the modal filters commonly perceived as a closing in of working-class homes, rather than creating a gated community of middle-class homes.

During a walkalong around Garside Hey Road LTN, Kevin (P1) was discussing council motivations for the implementation of the active neighbourhood. Kevin was unresponsive of the scheme, considering it to be unnecessary and an attempt by the local authority to use money for the sake of it: *'it doesn't feel like they're solving a problem so much as just trying to spend money that they've got to spend before the budget expired'*. In Kevin's view, the choice of Garside Hey Road as the area to implement the scheme – particularly when he and other residents considered an area on the opposite side of Brandlesholme Road to have more significant numbers of cars cutting through – was the outcome of a higher concentration of social housing and that, because of this, the council perceives residents should have less input into what happens in the area:

<sup>3</sup> The average price of a terraced house in Levenshulme (M19) was £29,453 in 1995 compared with £210,000 in 2021, an increase of 613% compared with an inflation rate of just over 60% (Home, 2021).

*I think the difference between there [on the opposite side of Brandlesholme Road] and here is that there you would be blocking off a fully private estate. I guess the perception is people who live in a private estate probably wouldn't stand for and allow anything like that to happen, full stop, whereas somewhere like around here – I don't want to use words that are belittling, but I guess that round here they think people have got less of a choice having stuff done. (Kevin (P1), Garside Hey Road)*

Similar perceptions of the use of modal filters to gate in social housing came out very strongly during the walkalong with a local councillor. This walkalong took place shortly after the second phase of modal filters had been installed as part of the active neighbourhood on Holme Avenue and Birks Drive (Figure 35-5) and so had significantly increased the number of residents living on filtered roads. During the walkalongs residents discussed their perceptions of the modal filters, considering the planters 'ugly' and as creating the perception that those in social housing needed to be 'penned in'. The perceptions by residents of the planters as ugly were interesting, considering that members of the Active Neighbourhood Working Group discussed choosing 'wooden planters, thinking these were better for aesthetics'.

For these residents, the combination of the planters and perceptions of being penned in felt stigmatising, as they perceived that they were already being judged for living in social housing. This feeling was exacerbated by the layout of the modal filters, which one resident described as 'keeping the council estate out of the way of the and creating a clean sweep down Garside Hey Road to the more expensive estate'. This perception seemed to stem from the way the filters were installed, which meant that most people accessing homes within the active neighbourhood area would not use Garside Hey Road and that Garside Hey Road would predominantly be used by those driving to Kingsbury Close (Figure 35-5). Residents participating in the walkalong were also concerned that creating this 'clean sweep' would impinge upon pedestrian safety as drivers would speed, knowing that vehicles were unlikely to pull out from the side streets due to the filters.

## 5.4 Impacts on disabled people and older people

Within the research, two participants identified as disabled, and one additional participant identified as significantly mobility impaired: David (P18), who lives in Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood, Ellie (P10), who lives close to Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood, and Andrea (P7), who lives in Cheadle Heath (planned) Active Neighbourhood. In addition to the walkalongs, we also conducted two focus group discussions to understand the perceptions by older people of active neighbourhoods, considering that they were underrepresented within the walkalongs, as previously discussed in Chapter 2.

### Active mobility

Findings from this research show how active neighbourhoods do not necessarily improve conditions for the active mobility of disabled people. Similar findings in terms of the active mobility of disabled people were also found in a review of LTNs by Transport for All (TfA, 2021).

For example, David described how, when he was on his solo walks in the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood, he could often hear drivers who had entered the active neighbourhood expecting to be able to cut through and getting stuck: '*You do hear people go down. They'll try Wellington Road [sic], then Nathan Drive, then here as they try and find their way out*'. Upon hearing this, David knows that he must then be additionally vigilant when walking: '*you have to be very aware that people are driving in a frustrated manner*'. David also identified increasing numbers of people cycling and using e-scooters as potential hazards within the active neighbourhood. He noted that, whilst cycles and e-scooters pose lower risks of injury than motor vehicles, they require the user to take early action rather than rely on evasive action by the pedestrian to get out of the way:

*They're [cycles and e-scooters] quiet. I know clearly they can't get up to a great speed compared to a vehicle, but they are moving at some velocity, and, because I can't tell until they're very near, evasive action is then not a thing I can do. (David (P18), Trinity & Islington)*

The impact of this situation stems from not only injuries suffered as a result of collisions but also the fear created by an environment that is perceived by blind and visually impaired people to be hostile. This fear can result in lower activity rates, with people staying at home rather than risk situations they perceive to be dangerous.

Across the two focus group discussions older people were receptive to the idea of active neighbourhoods, reflecting that older people, who were less likely to drive cars, would as a result be able to move around their local neighbourhoods more easily. The older people discussed doing their shopping, as well as exercising, with access to active neighbourhoods considered important for older people who did not have the mobility to access greenspaces further away from their homes: '*It's a positive experience to use your feet and to have nice places to walk*' (Participant, Older People's Focus Group 2). The importance of local areas for older people was considered particularly great as they had noticed the reduction in available greenspaces across Greater Manchester over time: '*It would be nice to have areas we can walk around. They [the council] built on greenspaces, developers have bought other greenspaces*'.

However, whilst older people saw potential in the implementation of active neighbourhoods, their primary concerns in terms of walking in the local environment were not being addressed through active neighbourhoods in their current form in the Greater Manchester trials. Older people's primary concern related to being able

to move actively within their local area was pavement conditions. Whilst a reduced number of vehicles on local roads was considered a benefit in terms of a more pleasant environment, older people still wanted to use the pavements. Whilst during a walkalong in Levenshulme, for example, Jeff (P9), who has no mobility impairment, noted that because of the modal filters *'instead of uneven pavements and things, I can just walk straight down the road'*, older people felt less able to do this as it would involve being constantly alert for vehicles and being prepared to move their position in the road in response. The importance of pavements was also highlighted by David, as well as during the discussion with RNIB North West, as many blind and visually impaired people use pavement kerbs for navigating with a cane.

Concerns expressed by older people during the focus group discussions were around the poor condition of pavements – which created trip hazards and a potential for injuries – a lack of dropped kerbs and routes being blocked by pavement parking. Participants in the focus group discussions described having to stare down at the ground as they walked to prevent tripping over. As one older person expressed: *'I am so sick of walking in my area looking at the pavements'* (Participant,

Older People's Focus Group 2), and another noted how pavement conditions contributed to her isolation: *'I don't drive, and it's impossible for me to walk to the shops because of the state of the pavements'* (Participant, Older People's Focus Group 1). The absence of dropped kerbs was also a factor inhibiting older people's mobility: *'my husband has an electric wheelchair, and he can't manage the pavements. He can't get on and off'* (Participant, Older People's Focus Group 1). Older people in the two focus groups noted that, in addition to wheelchair users needing such kerbs, they are also necessary for people with reduced mobility, as well as parents pushing prams:

*What I do find is there's not enough sloped kerbs. You get them for someone's drive and maybe at a corner, but if you've got a long street area there's no slope. They need to put a lot more sloped kerbs in, not just for wheelchairs, people with prams, people using walking sticks. (Participant, Older People's Focus Group 1)*

Older people within the focus group discussions expressed the necessity of dropped kerbs not only on corners – *'they shouldn't just be on corners as it's harder to cross the road on a corner, especially if there's no traffic lights'* (Participant, Older People's



**Figure 5-1** Illustration of modal filters in an active neighbourhood and the experiences of Lily, 7 (daughter of Catherine and Ben (p14): *'I like cycling because it doesn't hurt the planet and it gives you lots of strength. My favourite place to cycle to is school.'*

Focus Group 1) – but also at frequent points along pavements to enable them to cross filtered roads within active neighbourhoods and therefore be able to take the most efficient walking routes to destinations.

Pavement parking was considered by older people to further exacerbate their difficulties in walking in their local areas. Pavement parking commonly narrows available pavements, increasing difficulties in walking, particularly if older people must then navigate out into the road, an issue accentuated by a lack of kerb drops. Older people also attributed poor pavement conditions to vehicles parking on the pavements and expressed disappointment in their local councillors and councils for inaction around pavement parking: *'Parking on pavements? If the councillors aren't going to do anything then democracy isn't good anymore. Ears are deaf'* (Participant, Older People's Focus Group 2).

The importance of recognising the needs of older people within active neighbourhood interventions was considered by professionals working with older people as particularly integral, considering the lifting of restrictions on movement following lockdown. As one professional said: *'We're trying to get our older people out and about moving, and it's got to be in a safe way'* (Participant, Older People's Focus Group 1). The role of local neighbourhoods as a primary space to be active and integrate activity into everyday life, such as walking to the shops, is integral to this, and active neighbourhood interventions could play a role. However, they need to also involve improvements to pedestrian pavement conditions, and these are not currently evident in the Greater Manchester trials. This does not mean not implementing active neighbourhoods. As highlighted by Transport for All (2021:71): *'the "normal" we had before was not accessible enough either'*. Moving forwards, we need to recognise the specific needs of disabled people and older people to be active within their local area and centralise these needs in design. Additionally, the population cross-benefits of inclusive design are significant (Larrington-Spencer et al., 2021).

### Time tax

Research participants who lived in the case study active neighbourhoods and commuted to work using private vehicles commonly mentioned the inconvenience (or potential inconvenience if they were currently working from home) of having to take a more circuitous route because of the placement of modal filters (Joyce (P18), Terry (P17) and Ellie (P10)). This is understood as a 'time tax'. It is based upon the premise that, whilst the comparative change in journey times for longer trips is likely to be negligible, the increased time and greater inconvenience of shorter trips by motor vehicle seek to support modal shift. It is important to recognise, however, that time tax will not impact residents uniformly and that pre-existing differences and inequalities will result in differences in its implications. These are discussed for Ellie and David below.

Ellie is significantly mobility impaired due to multiple health conditions and has chronic pain. Ellie lives in Levenshulme and uses her car for commuting (prior to Covid-19 and when office working restarts), as well as to access her everyday activities, such as caring for her mother, going to the shops and going to healthcare appointments. Public transport is not an option as the bus stop is a significant distance from her home and the local train station is not accessible. Ellie is also immunocompromised and, both during and prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, tried to avoid closed spaces with many people. Whilst Ellie owns a tricycle, this is not a practical solution for everyday transport due to health and infrastructure issues and the lack of storage space in her home, which means that it has to be kept suspended from the ceiling on the ground floor, making it impossible for Ellie to independently access.

During the walkalong, Ellie discussed the already significant time tax she experiences because of her disability and how she already uses a significant proportion of her personal time to manage her health conditions to be able to work full-time:

*It's hard enough to manage the conditions that you have to manage and work full-time... Work don't suffer because of my problems, it's the rest of my life that suffers. Each morning, when I get up, I have to get hot and cold packs and I'm really stiff. My leisure hours are really compressed compared to other people. (Ellie (P10), Levenshulme)*

These additional time burdens upon disabled people compared with non-disabled people for everyday self-care activities, such as medical appointments and other health-related activities like going to the pharmacy and managing health-related admin such as future referrals and appointments, are well documented (Barnes and Mercer, 2005; Pagán, 2013; Hannam-Swain, 2018; Shandra, 2019; Jammaers and Williams, 2021). For Ellie, the intersection of her disability time tax with the potential time tax due to the active neighbourhood was causing her significant distress and concern about her ability to continue working and managing her health – *'I was getting on with my life, making the most of it, pleased I could hold down a full-time job. Suddenly, this comes in. I don't know what it's going to do to my life'* – as well as the potential for increased time being in a car to result in an exacerbation of some of her conditions, such as chronic pain.

Concerns regarding the intersection of the time-consuming nature of disability with active neighbourhoods were also expressed by David, who, outside lockdown, as mentioned in Section 4.3, commutes to work using a taxi funded through Access to Work. Changes in street design and access mean that David will then have the challenge of having to provide directions for drivers when navigation software has not been updated. David explained:

*One of the challenges is trying to explain to a taxi driver what you meant about how to enter an estate when you can't see it and you don't have a visual reference. And then you get the call saying, 'I'm here.' I say, 'Well, yes?!'*  
(David (P18), Trinity & Islington)

Whilst having to explain to taxi drivers where one needs to be collected may sound like a minimal activity, for David the potential for having to re-engage in these discussions once again after lockdown and every time he had a new driver and the implications for getting to work in a timely manner felt significant.

The time tax also has potential cost implications for disabled people, particularly in terms of taxi use. David, for example, was considering whether he needed to have his Access to Work budget reassessed if the trial continued, as his journeys would be slightly longer. Whilst for a one-off taxi journey the price difference may be negligible, twice daily for five days a week the cost difference would add up. During the discussion with RNIB North West, similar observations were made regarding taxi costs, as well as a consideration that for disabled people who rely on social care to get out of the house to go and do their shopping, for example, if there is a significant time burden, even in the short term caused by initial increases in traffic, this could reduce the amount of time available for these activities or increase the cost.

As previously mentioned, time tax will not impact disabled residents uniformly, and pre-existing differences will intersect and have different implications. Andrea, for example, who, like Ellie, relies upon her car for everyday mobility, is not concerned about any potential time tax on her journeys caused by the implementation of the Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood, if it includes modal filters. Andrea took early retirement to become a foster carer for teenagers and feels she is able to absorb any time additions to car journeys due to the benefits she perceives will result from modal filters in the area, as discussed in Section 4.5.

## 5.5 A focus upon cycling?

A common perception within the Levenshulme and Trinity and Islington active neighbourhoods, particularly amongst walkalong participants who did not support their implementation or who were ambivalent towards their implementation, was that they are an intervention for people who cycle. As discussed within Section 4.6, these participants most commonly walked for their local journeys, compared with participants supportive of active neighbourhoods, who cycled or walked for local journeys. As Garside Hey Road LTN was understood as a scheme of traffic redistribution by participants, rather than an intervention that could support active travel, participants did not have the same perception of schemes being implemented for people who cycle.

According to Charlotte (P11) in Levenshulme, *'it seemed like it was more geared towards cycling, the whole*

*thing. The leaflet that came through seemed like it was all geared towards that, so I didn't really get involved.'* Similarly, Terry (P17) in Trinity and Islington noted that *'we [Terry and his neighbours] assumed it was all to do with cycling at first'*, with Alicia (P19) identifying street changes as ways to make cycling safer: *'I think the reason why they want to close Mount Street is because the crossing with the Blackfriars Road is dangerous to bikes'*. This resonates strongly with the perspectives of older people within the focus groups, as discussed in Section 5.4, that active neighbourhood interventions do not target one of the most important infrastructures needed to support them to get active safely, namely, pavement improvements. Whilst this doesn't mean that active neighbourhoods are only geared towards the needs of people who cycle, if people consider this to be the case it does have implications in terms of their engagement, perceived ability to contribute and concerns regarding their voice within the scheme and support for implementation. For example, Charlotte *'didn't really get involved'* because she considered active neighbourhoods to be a cycling intervention, whilst Tara (P15) felt that *'pedestrians have got no voice, basically'*.

Within the walkalongs, participants who had this cycling-focused perception of active neighbourhoods discussed their reasons behind it. Terry identified a *'strong cycling community'* and that *'they were the only group on Twitter we found that was saying this is why it's [the active neighbourhood] there'*. Valerie (P22) and Tara similarly identified a strong cycling community, labelling it a *'cycling lobby'*. Whilst this can be interpreted negatively and resonates with the social media discourse previously discussed (see section 2.5), Valerie continued: *'they are very vociferous, and all credit to them. Maybe that's the trouble with pedestrians, we don't speak up often enough'*. This is an important point to consider. Many groups and individuals campaigning for better cycling infrastructure have a history of advocacy for active travel that precedes active neighbourhoods. They will often have knowledge and experience beyond an 'average resident' of where to find information and who to contact, and how, for more information and an established network through which to disseminate information. *'It's easier for the message to get out among cyclists'* is how this is interpreted by Terry in Trinity and Islington.

## 5.6 The absence of School Streets

School Streets are roads outside schools that have temporary restrictions on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times in order to create a pedestrian and cycle zone. The restrictions apply to school traffic and through traffic: residents and businesses within the scheme area, as well as blue badge holders and emergency services, will still be permitted to enter or leave the School Street for access purposes (TfGM, 2021c). Particularly in Levenshulme, School Streets – as well as measures surrounding them, such as walking

buses – were considered essential in enabling families to travel actively on the school run by participants who were both supportive, unsupportive and ambivalent towards active neighbourhoods. Claire (P13) is the parent of two children, the elder of whom is in nursery, and had recently found out what School Streets were: *'Yes, I love that idea, like closing a street during school drop-off and pick-up. I absolutely love that idea.'*

School Streets were possibly discussed more in Levenshulme due to the higher number of participants with school age children compared with the other case study active neighbourhoods, as well as parents and groups in the area, such as Clean Air Levenshulme, which has campaigned for School Streets for a number of years, and the original plans for the Levenshulme and Burnage Active Neighbourhood by Levenshulme Bee Network including School Streets and engagement with schools and children (Levenshulme Bee Network, 2020). Many participants within walkalongs within Levenshulme expressed disappointment that the trial did not have the extent of School Streets that had originally been planned and that School Streets weren't being considered as a priority by the local authority.

Levenshulme participants who joined the walkalongs and had attended a community meeting hosted by 'Streets for People Levenshulme' (07/02/21) were disappointed by the announcement from a local councillor that 'School

*Streets won't be delivered by the council as a service' and that as 'schools cannot afford the day-to-day activity of blocking off roads, so parents' groups need to be doing this'.*

The absence of a strategic approach to the implementation of School Streets, not only within Levenshulme but also across Greater Manchester, was considered problematic by the Public Health Working Group for two reasons. The first is that there is a childhood inactivity crisis in England, only 21% of boys and 16% of girls aged 5–15 achieving recommended levels of physical activity (PHE, 2014). Physical activity not only has benefits for children's current health but also has a biological and behavioural carry-over effect into adulthood, with childhood physical activity contributing to improved health status and activity in adults (Boreham and Riddoch, 2001; Telama, 2009).

The second problem with the current approach identified by the working group is that the reliance on parents to implement School Streets, as well as services such as walking buses, will result in them being unsustainable in the long term, as well as inequitable in their implementation. Similar concerns about the viability of this approach were also expressed by Ben (P14) and Catherine (P14) – *'it's like a lottery postcode, that if you've got a committed head or a school that gets it, at least you've got champions, somebody championing*



**Figure 5-2** Illustration of a School Street

for it' – as well as Charlotte, who said she would struggle to rely on a walking bus that was parent-implemented without wider support as she would not know whether it would be reliable enough to organise her working day round.

Taking a Greater Manchester perspective, schools in less affluent areas where parents are less able to provide the time for voluntary activities because of shift work or working multiple jobs, for example, are less likely to be able to provide the time needed for the voluntary running of School Streets, resulting in inequalities in terms of which children and which schools will benefit. Furthermore, the labour of School Streets is likely to be gendered, considering that women in the UK undertake a greater proportion of childcare, including the school run, so responsabilising parents for the management of School Streets and active travel projects such as walking buses will be likely to disproportionately burden women. Whilst simultaneously wanting School Streets without supporting the implementation of School Streets, councils will be contributing to women's unpaid caring burden and the known inequalities in terms of economic impacts. In addition, considering polarised responses that often happen with regard to active travel interventions in the UK, many parents may not want to get involved to avoid '*playground politics*' (Public Health Professionals, 09/04/21).

From the walkalongs, the absence of a strategic approach to School Streets within active neighbourhoods can be considered a missed opportunity as they are generally a common ground between groups that support and oppose the implementation of active neighbourhoods. The following quote from Ellie (P10) is particularly powerful as, whilst she is incredibly distressed about the potential implications of the local active neighbourhood for her mobility and ability to work full-time, as discussed in Section 4.2, it shows how she is actively considering changing her routines in her working day to accommodate School Streets:

*I think it's viable, and I think work would support me in the fact that if [that] street was shut off during school times and I had to set off – I couldn't set off before that because of everything I have to do to unstiffen myself and get me to the point where I'm mobile and can walk into the office. They'd probably let me start slightly later and work around that. I'd probably do an hour at home, and then I'd set off and go to work. (Ellie (P10), Levenshulme)*

## 5.7 Discussion

When discussing perceptions of active neighbourhoods, participants expressed a range of concerns in relation to potential inequalities. These included spatial inequalities related to the impact of active neighbourhoods on boundary roads and specifically on their air quality. They also demonstrated the extent to which residents placed

different values on the installation of planters and the implications for feelings of gentrification and ghettoisation. The difference in these two perspectives between active neighbourhoods was interesting and may reflect the fact that many residents within Levenshulme who opposed the implementation of the active neighbourhood utilised Twitter as a platform to have discussions about such interventions. This use of Twitter enabled the development of networks beyond their local area, extending particularly to London, where similar discourses are used within LTN discussions and opposition. Conversely, much of the online discussion of Garside Hey Road LTN takes place on local Facebook groups, not on Twitter, so it is more localised and less influenced by wider discourses. The greater use of Twitter for discussing the active neighbourhood in Levenshulme compared with Garside Hey Road is demonstrated by word counts from a Greater Manchester tweet database on active neighbourhoods. Within this database, Levenshulme is one of the most popular terms used within tweets, whilst Garside Hey Road does not feature (See Annex 1).

Disabled and older people reflected on particular mobility challenges and emphasised the importance of the provision of improvements to enable them to be active and pursuing a design that is inclusive for all. Their perception was that active neighbourhoods do not necessarily improve pedestrian conditions. Concerns relating to this perception were compounded by the perception that active neighbourhoods are interventions that benefit those who cycle, rather than active travel in a broader sense.

A further potential inequality embedded within the current approach and discussed by participants in the research was that the current approach to School Streets, which relies upon parent and guardian volunteers for the implementation of School Streets, will result in uneven implementation that will entrench pre-existing inequalities. This is because those parents and guardians who have both the social capital to navigate the required administrative processes and the time to volunteer are more likely to have the capacity to initiate and implement School Streets. Furthermore, as women are more commonly responsible for the school run, volunteer labour for School Streets would be highly likely to be gendered.

It was not only participants who were opposed to active neighbourhoods who expressed concerns about inequalities but also those who were broadly supportive. The research suggests that the difference in positions was that those who were supportive of schemes tended to understand active neighbourhoods as a part of an overall approach to supporting modal shift within Greater Manchester but considered the necessity of an approach to intervention that is iterative and reactive to ongoing findings within the active neighbourhoods. Monitoring and evaluation were considered particularly integral to this process.

# 6. Processes

- **Participants expressed frustrations with processes related to the implementation of active neighbourhoods and slow responses from the authorities in resolving issues.**
- **Emergency services were a particular concern, and, whilst many residents knew that a statutory consultation process with emergency services had happened, they sought reassurance that emergency response personnel were aware of the changes to street layout and access.**
- **It is important to take opportunities to share learning and practice between those involved with the implementation of the different neighbourhoods.**
- **Communications around active neighbourhoods should be contextualised within messaging on the Bee Network, therefore emphasising their connection with, and as part of, wider policy delivery focused on supporting active travel and public transport and on environmental and social goals such as tackling climate change, air quality and social inclusion. This should include online resources and other communication channels.**

## 6.1 Introduction

A theme cross-cutting all active neighbourhoods and all walkalong participants within Levenshulme and Garside Hey Road LTN, irrespective of their position on the intervention, is frustrations with the processes involved in the trials. This section has a strong overlap with communication and engagement, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 8. The focus in this chapter is frustrations with the implementation of trial infrastructure and the processes of emergency service consultation. An issue with these frustrations is that, as will be discussed later in the communication chapter, they are not only absorbed by residents within one active neighbourhood but also influence the narratives surrounding interventions in other areas. This co-constitutional nature of active neighbourhoods across Greater Manchester is significant. As reflected by one of the participants in the Active Neighbourhood Working Group: *'if we make mistakes on our scheme, then you might pay for it on yours'*. Similarly, if there are achievements in active neighbourhood interventions, these can (and should) also be used to inform discussions across active neighbourhoods.

## 6.2 Implementation of trial infrastructure

In Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood and Garside Hey Road LTN, frustration was a common feeling across participants with regard to the implementation of the trial infrastructure. By this we mean the installation of the elements of the active neighbourhood, such as signage and modal filters.

In Levenshulme, when the modal filters were first installed they did not have signage or reflective strips on them. In the Active Neighbourhood Working Group, this was attributed to trying to meet the target dates of the already delayed trial that they had committed to. On reflection, there was recognition that *'we should have said, "It's not ideal, but we're not ready. Give us another month"'*. The absence of signage on the filters combined with a lack of advanced warning signs and troubles with ensuring that satellite navigation software would have up-to-date road data. An additional unanticipated effect within the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood was the use of pavements by drivers to bypass modal filters and maintain cut-through routes in the scheme. Whilst this was resolved on some roads by using bollards, on others the issue was not resolved. For example, during the walkalong with Tara (P15) she identified how, on her road, she parks in front of the modal filter to prevent drivers going over the pavement. She noted that whenever a car is not parked there: *'I don't know where they see it from, but the cars know from a mile away there's no cars here, and they zip around so fast'*. For residents within Levenshulme, the uncoordinated nature of the trial implementation was a frustration, to some residents being an exemplification that the scheme was not fit for purpose, and by other residents it was taken as evidence that the council was not supportive of the implementation of active neighbourhoods.

In Garside Hey Road LTN, modal filters were initially installed on two roads – Collen Crescent and Toon Crescent – and a zebra crossing was built on Garside Hey Road. Additional modal filters on Birks Drive and Holme Avenue were installed closer to the end of the trial, along with additional benches alongside Garside Hey Road. The absence of these additional planned measures has meant

that residents, for a significant part of the trial, have been unable to assess for themselves what they think of it. This was considered particularly important for those who were more ambivalent towards the scheme but also gave people the opportunity to speculate about potential negative consequences that may or may not happen: *'You pre-empt it, and you're going, "Oh this might happen, that might happen", but they're going, "Well, no. It will be great". But until, like I say, I can't really know when it's not there yet'* (Natalie (P2), Garside Hey Road).

In addition to the delayed installation of a number of the modal filters, meaning the scheme was incomplete, Garside Hey Road LTN walkalong participants, like those in Levenshulme, highlighted issues with implementation around signage. An initial issue was an absence of signage:

*'We were told as well there would be signage to tell people. There's no signage still, and I've reported that a couple of times and spoken with the local councillor, and she's, 'Right, we'll get it sorted.'* (Natalie (P2), Garside Hey Road)

When signage was installed, it was employed incorrectly, with 'Road Closed' signs used at the top of Birks Drive and Holme Avenue after the installation of the filters. A number of participants reported that this impacted upon some residents who were reliant upon taxis for their mobility, mentioning that because of the signage some taxi drivers would not use Holme Avenue and used Garside Hey Road instead.

Additionally, as in Levenshulme, drivers were using the pavements to bypass the modal filters. During the walkalongs in Garside Hey Road LTN, in particular a walkalong after the installation of the modal filters on Birks Drive and Holme Avenue, a high rate of drivers of cars, vans and small goods vehicles bypassing filters was observed – a much greater rate than had been observed within, for example, Levenshulme. It was not only drivers from outside the area who had become lost who were bypassing the filters but also some residents and visitors.

The presence of cars being driven around the filters had implications for confidence in safety in the area. Walkalong participants discussed their fears with letting their children play outside and pointed out pavements and green areas that had once been considered safe spaces but were now unsafe for children to play in:

*'I didn't think it [Garside Hey Road LTN] sounded too bad, but this is just dangerous. (Garside Hey Road LTN resident, Walkalong 23)*

Unlike in Levenshulme, however, measures were not taken to prevent drivers bypassing modal filters using pavements, despite feedback from residents about the hazardous pavement conditions. Irrespective of whether the scheme was contentious (indicated by the planter filters being tipped over twice over the course of the trial, as discussed in Chapter 3), failure to prevent this behaviour by drivers meant that there was no equity

– compared with Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood, for example, where the issue of drivers bypassing modal filters was largely resolved through the installation of bollards – in terms of giving residents the chance to consider the scheme without having dangerous pavement conditions.

## 6.3 Consultation with emergency services

Concern about access into active neighbourhoods and low traffic neighbourhoods for emergency services is, as discussed in section 2.5, one of the discourses that are particularly strong on social media.

Whilst consultation with emergency services is part of the statutory process in the experimental traffic regulation order necessary for installing modal filters within active neighbourhoods, lessons from Levenshulme demonstrate that this process is not without issue. A Freedom of Information (FOI) request by Levenshulme residents showed that, whilst Manchester City Council (MCC) had contacted the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) to inform them of their active neighbourhood plans on 13th November 2020, the email had been sent to an unmonitored email address. According to the GMCA FOI response on 25th March, the issue was not resolved until 5th February, after which the GMFRS then gave feedback to Manchester City Council on the Levenshulme scheme.

During walkalongs, however, participants were less concerned about statutory processes of consultation with emergency services, recognising that they were happening, and more concerned with how information regarding the active neighbourhood trials and changed road layouts was or was not filtering down to responders on the ground. For example, in Garside Hey Road LTN, residents had contacted local emergency services to ask whether they knew about the filters and reported that the emergency services did not know. In Levenshulme, residents had asked on-duty emergency service personnel and had similar responses. In Salford, participants in the walkalongs described occasions when they had seen ambulances come across the filters and not be able to pass: *'The ambulance came up, couldn't get here because they [indicating towards the modal filters] were there, had to go back down, down, round, up, down, round. It added five minutes to the journey'* (Valerie (P22), Trinity & Islington).

Whilst not directly related to the implementation of active neighbourhoods themselves, but recognising similar problems in terms of the filtration of information to on-the-ground emergency services, Joyce (18) referenced a similar scenario when Deansgate, a major road in Manchester city centre, had been temporarily pedestrianised:

*When they did Deansgate, I was standing there going, 'oh.' There was a couple of coppers on the beat. I said, 'Oh.' 'This is the first we've heard about it as well.' When you don't even tell the police you've blocked off the main road through town then, come on. (Valerie (P22), Trinity & Islington)*

Whilst some people may co-opt and amplify the issue of emergency response times on social media and fail to contextualise response times in terms of other delays, such as vehicle congestion – which increasing modal shift to active travel could reduce – there are residents who rely upon emergency services or have particular anxieties around access to emergency services and for whom any changes will be of concern, and this should not be dismissed. Such concerns were given particular emphasis within the two older people's focus groups. A further example was Alicia (P19), who is a new parent and for whom discussions over response times, in particular, had fuelled her concerns regarding the Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood: *'I don't know, because I think in the end there's a difference between planning and implementing. Whoever considered that, they might have looked into that, but then when I call, is that specific person going to know the way in?'*

## 6.4 Connecting with the wider Bee Network

A further theme that emerged during walkalongs and other discussions regarding active neighbourhoods was their level of connection – or indeed disconnection – with wider systems that will support modal shift and reductions in car use. For participants in walkalongs this connection was significant as, whilst active neighbourhoods were considered by many participants as important for local journeys, they needed these local journeys and activities to connect with longer ones. This is also important in terms of supporting people to walk and cycle in their local area, but once individuals have been travelling actively locally there needs to be the infrastructure to begin extending and connecting their journeys.

A common discussion topic was the range and regularity of public transport, particularly buses. In Levenshulme, for example, whilst the area is well connected to Manchester city centre, participants noted that other areas were much more difficult to access by public transport. According to Jeff (P9): *'The moment I wanted to go anywhere else – east, west – forget about it. That doesn't work.'* Similarly, Terry (P17) reflected: *'there has been other bus*



**Figure 6-1** Illustration representing the experiences of families cycling during Lockdown 1 of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, when normally busy roads were extremely quiet: *'That was really good during lockdown. That kept us sane, didn't it?'* (Catherine, (P14)) and *'We didn't have roadblocks then, and it was quiet. We did do a lot of cycling then because there were hardly any cars, and it was great!'* (Tara, P15).

services that have provided some connectivity, that they've all been cut back and there's no tram going across from that area as well, unless you go into the city centre'. Participants in Garside Hey Road LTN, Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood and the two older people's focus groups also discussed the reduction in bus service provisions. According to Anna (P3):

*I used to be able to get on a bus all the way through. We'd go into Bury, and then we'd jump on another bus and we'd go to Manchester Airport on the 400 bus, or we'd go to Stockport for the day because it's the same bus, but sometimes we'd go to Stockport. Then we'd come back again. We'd spend a whole day. We'd travel everywhere on the buses. That's what it used to be like, but now public transport is absolutely dire. (Anna (P3), Garside Hey Road LTN)*

Additional barriers to using public transport were also outlined amongst participants. These included the lack of accessibility of forms of public transport, including stepped-only access at Levenshulme station. This not only prevents disabled people accessing trains, as mentioned by Ellie (P10), but also inhibits parents with young children from using the station: *'The other bugbear of mine is Levenshulme station. You can't get up there with a buggy at all, so that's like non-existent at all'* (Tara (P15), Levenshulme). Claire (P13) discussed this inaccessibility in relation to trying to visit her friends outside Greater Manchester with her two young children:

*Our train station isn't accessible, so with the kids I can't go, which is so annoying. If I want to go and visit my friend who lives in New Mills, I should be able to get on the train here. It takes 20 minutes. Instead, I have to take the bus to Piccadilly and then a train, which ends up costing me more, and it really adds 40 minutes to journey each way. (Claire (P13), Levenshulme)*

Many older people also noted that the accessibility of buses had decreased as a result of the removal of seating at many bus stops in order to prevent antisocial behaviour. This means that those who cannot stand for long periods of time and wait for a bus are excluded from using a service. The cost of public transport and the convoluted systems of multiple bus providers with different ticketing systems were also highlighted as barriers to residents connecting active neighbourhoods with wider forms of modal shift. Natalie (2), for example, had looked into using the bus and recounted the following:

*I looked into this one [indicating a bus stop we were walking past], and it seems really confusing, and it might just be me. It's probably just me being daft, but they've got different services now, and I just can't get my head round it, so I go, I'm just going to drive. (Natalie (P2), Garside Hey Road)*

A further theme of disconnection was in terms of active travel infrastructures beyond the active neighbourhood.

This was particularly relevant for cycling, as it is a mode suitable for longer distances, such as getting to work, compared with walking. Within Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood, Garside Hey Road LTN and Cheadle Heath (planned) Active Neighbourhood, walkalong participants drew attention to important connecting roads – the A6 for Levenshulme, Councillor Lane for Cheadle Heath and Brandlesholme Road for Garside Hey Road LTN – and the necessity for segregated cycle infrastructure on these roads to connect active neighbourhoods with wider facilities.

## 6.5 Discussion

Frustrations with processes of the implementation of active neighbourhoods across the case study areas were common to the walkalongs, irrespective of the participants' positions on the schemes. In general, participants expressed frustration with regard to what they perceived as poor implementation of active neighbourhood infrastructure, such as positioning that enabled vehicle drivers to use pavements to bypass filters, incorrect signage (using 'Road Closed' rather than 'No Through Road', for example) or no signage, and schemes undertaken despite the fact that navigation systems had not been updated, as well as slowness or unresponsiveness in resolving issues that were resulting from the processes of implementation.

An issue with these frustrations is that – as will be discussed later in Chapter 8 – they are not heard and absorbed only by residents within one active neighbourhood: they also influence the narratives surrounding interventions in other areas. Furthermore, they raise concerns amongst residents – both supportive and unsupportive – that the schemes will be unsuccessful, either because their implementing authority is not well equipped enough to implement an active neighbourhood or because it is not committed to the scheme.

An additional frustration was that, whilst participants recognised that within most cases statutory processes of consultation with emergency services had been undertaken, on-the-ground emergency service personnel did not seem to know about such changes. Whilst wider evidence from London shows that LTNs do not necessarily extend emergency response service times, it should be recognised that many people do rely upon swift responses from emergency services to stay alive and well and that often evidence is not enough to allay their concerns. In these cases, being empathetic to concerns is necessary, as well as making plans to ensure that official positions on the implementation of active neighbourhoods, as well as street changes in relation to active travel more generally, are clearly communicated to emergency services.

# 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Walkalong participants, irrespective of their views of active neighbourhoods, were concerned about an absence of baseline data and the apparent absence of criteria against which success would be judged. This had implications for their trust in councils and the teams implementing the schemes.**
- **Discussions within the Active Neighbourhood Working Group demonstrated difficulties in the implementation of monitoring, particularly with regard to its timing, and the perceptions of residents.**
- **Clear monitoring and evaluation plans with clear timelines, ongoing communication and consistency across the Greater Manchester active neighbourhoods are needed.**
- **There is an opportunity to develop a Greater Manchester evidence base and to engage with creative and innovative methods.**

## 7.1 Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation is understood as a combination of data collection and analysis to evaluate whether an intervention, such as an active neighbourhood, has achieved its objectives. The methods of monitoring used within the implemented active neighbourhoods (Trinity and Islington, Levenshulme and Garside Hey Road) are outlined in Table 7-2. Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood is not included as monitoring plans have not yet been confirmed there.

The monitoring and evaluation of active neighbourhood schemes within Greater Manchester was a concern raised by participants during almost all resident walkalongs across all four active neighbourhood case study schemes, irrespective of whether or not walkalong participants supported the implementation of their respective active neighbourhoods. Whilst details of monitoring and evaluation had not yet been confirmed in Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood, walkalong participants were keen that any lessons from other active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester should be integrated into decision-making. The concerns of walkalong participants will be

**Table 7-2 Methods of monitoring and evaluation of active neighbourhood trials**

Active neighbourhood	Methods
Levenshulme	Traffic counters – vehicle, cycle and pedestrian (permanent) Air quality monitoring Vehicle speed data
Trinity and Islington	Perception survey – 1, 3 and 6 month intervals ANPR surveys in December 2019 and October 2020 Turning counts and automatic traffic counts in October 2020
Garside Hey Road	Traffic counter – vehicle (one week, baseline) Vehicle speed data (one week)

discussed in Section 7.2, and in Section 7.3 we discuss the implications of these concerns, particularly with regard to walkalong participants who were ambivalent towards the implications of the active neighbourhoods.

In addition to discussions with walkalong participants, monitoring and evaluation was also a topic focused upon within one of the Active Neighbourhood Working Group meetings. This meeting was undertaken after walkalongs and involved reflecting upon resident perceptions, expectations and sources of information for monitoring and evaluation and the implications that this had within active neighbourhood schemes. This is discussed in Section 7.3.

## 7.2 Concerns regarding monitoring and evaluation

As previously mentioned, several concerns were raised in walkalongs across the active neighbourhoods, irrespective of participants' views on the schemes, with respect to the monitoring and evaluation of interventions. These were as follows and are discussed below:

- an uncoordinated and inadequate implementation of monitoring and evaluation;
- an absence of objectives; and
- the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown upon any data collected.

### Absence of baseline data and objectives

The first concern raised by walkalong participants across the Levenshulme and Trinity and Islington active neighbourhoods and Garside Hey Road LTN was that methods for monitoring the schemes had either not been implemented in a timely manner or had not been implemented extensively enough to gain a comprehensive overview of any changes that were happening in the area because of the schemes.

Whilst across these three active neighbourhoods methods of monitoring have been undertaken (Table 7-2), many of these methods followed the implementation of active neighbourhood infrastructures. In Levenshulme, for example, air quality monitors were not functional prior to the installation of the modal filters in January 2021, and in Trinity and Islington traffic counting was undertaken after the installation of modal filters. For walkalong participants the delayed implementation of monitoring meant that there was no baseline data within the areas prior to the implementation of the active neighbourhood interventions. Walkalong participants considered desirable baseline data to be counts of vehicles, cycles and pedestrians in active neighbourhood areas, including the boundary roads, as well as air quality monitoring.

Baseline data was considered important by all participants for understanding what changes have happened within their area because of the infrastructures of the active neighbourhood and mainly the impact of modal filters.

This was concisely explained by Charlotte (P11) in Levenshulme: *'You need to take account of the state of affairs before you do something. How can you ever say something has been a success or a failure if you haven't got anything to compare it to?'* Without having obtained this data to understand what has changed or whether there have been changes, participants were left wondering how councils and highways departments were going to assess what the impacts of active neighbourhood trials have been: *'Without any monitoring in place, other than people's opinion, how are they going to really judge it?'* (Claire (P13), Levenshulme).

A second concern raised by walkalong participants was that they did not feel that there was an established success criterion that would be used to evaluate any monitoring data collected as part of the active neighbourhood trials. Such objectives were considered important for understanding what councils wanted in terms of active neighbourhood trials and how they would evaluate success of implemented trials. According to Jane (P8): *'I don't know what the success criteria is, and I've asked, and I've asked and no one seems to be able to give me an answer'*, whilst Harry (P12) questioned: *'How do we judge the success of this, and why, as residents, can we not see that criteria, because [it] should be really open and obvious?'*

### Impacts of the absence of baseline data and objectives

In Levenshulme, the failure to capture baseline data and provide objectives for the active neighbourhood was frustrating to walkalong participants, irrespective of their views on the active neighbourhood. However, the reason for the absence of what participants perceived to be comprehensive monitoring and evaluation differed according to their perspectives. In general, for participants who supported the active neighbourhood, the absence indicated that the council and their local councillors were not fully behind the scheme.

For example, Catherine (P14) and Ben (P14) recounted a consultation event they had attended early in the process of Manchester City Council taking over Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood from Levenshulme Bee Network. During the event, several people had been asking about monitoring and evaluation, and the responses of the highways officer led Catherine and Ben to conclude that *'it came across so clearly that they didn't believe in them'*. Absences in monitoring were perceived as an intentional omission, considering that residents themselves were able to use research to understand monitoring happening in other similar interventions, namely, LTNs in London: *'You're looking at other schemes, and you're going, "Well, it's worked for these schemes, where they can measure it, and we haven't got it here." That is frustrating'* (Jeff (P9), Levenshulme).

For those who didn't support the scheme, the lack of monitoring and evaluation was perceived as further evidence of the sacrificing of boundary roads by councils for the sake of the inner roads of the active neighbourhood. For Jane (P8), this exacerbated feelings of mistrust of the council and the scheme by herself and other residents who had concerns about disproportionate impacts of the scheme on those living on the boundary roads:

*What does successful look like? They don't trust it because they don't know what evidence is being collected or they feel that there's gaps in that evidence collection. They don't trust it. You're never going to get people on board because people are always going to say, 'Well, you didn't collect the data for this. Where's the baseline?' (Jane (P8), Levenshulme)*

For participants who were more ambivalent towards the active neighbourhood within Levenshulme, as well as in Garside Hey Road LTN (there were no ambivalent walkalong participants in Trinity and Islington or Cheadle Heath), monitoring and evaluation was considered the most important element in swaying their decision-making. For example, Charlotte lives in Levenshulme on Slade Lane and, whilst she is supportive of the aims of the active neighbourhood and has observed positive elements of the scheme, such as children playing outside, she has concerns over the effectiveness of modal filters for traffic evaporation. For Charlotte, it is the provision of data that she wants to evaluate the effectiveness of the trial: *'I felt a bit saddened by that. I'm a data person. I use a lot of data in my job, and I felt like there hadn't been any data collection to give you the value of this'*. Considering that many participants who are agnostic towards the implementation of active neighbourhoods or do not support these interventions tend to not see benefits in the neighbourhoods beyond cycling and do not themselves cycle, such data tends to be important as it can demonstrate that, at the least, there are no negative impacts of the implementation of an active neighbourhood.

Within Garside Hey Road LTN, the absence of baseline data and the implementation of monitoring after the first phase of modal filters had been installed contributed to perceptions by many walkalong participants that the scheme was an attempt to *'grab'* available money (see Section 5.3), rather than an attempt to provide a useful service within the area. In general, residents who joined the walkalong with the local councillor in Garside Hey Road LTN considered that monitoring methods – namely, vehicle and speed counts – had only been implemented because of resident complaints, rather than as a result of a coordinated monitoring and evaluation plan. The same perception was echoed during the walkalongs with Kevin (P1) – *'I think, because people complained at first, they did put the black strips on the road to count cars'* – and Natalie (P2): *'We had to really mither quite a bit for them to do... They put in – you know the traffic counters? I don't know what came of it, but they put them in eventually.'*

## Impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on data collected

A final concern raised by a number of participants was the relevance of data collected during active neighbourhood trials because of the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown and higher numbers of people working from home. As articulated by Terry (P17), *'until Covid's over we're not going to know the real impact of this'*. Whilst this is a concern, it is unavoidable, considering that Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood and Garside Hey Road LTN have been funded through the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF), which was released because of Covid-19, and efforts to compensate for reduced capacity on public transport by enabling people to move actively.

However, although this issue is unavoidable, councils have not communicated to residents how considerations of lockdown will be integrated into monitoring and evaluation processes. Additionally, efforts could have been made to contextualise monitoring and evaluation within a recognition that, whilst vehicle levels on the roads during the first lockdown were significantly lower than pre-lockdown levels, 2021 has seen growing numbers of vehicles back on the road (with vehicle numbers close to pre-Covid levels, despite higher levels of working from home (DfT, 2021)).

## 7.3 Focus of monitoring and evaluation

Considering the importance that residents placed on monitoring and evaluation during walkalongs, it was designated as the discussion focus of one of the Active Neighbourhood Working Group meetings.

### Challenges in implementing monitoring infrastructures

Within the working group, members discussed challenges they experienced in implementing monitoring within active neighbourhood interventions. In schemes funded by the EATF, such as Trinity and Islington Active Neighbourhood and Garside Hey Road LTN, participants in the working group discussed the short timeframes of the funding. As schemes needed to be implemented within the timeframe provided by central government – EATF funding was announced in May 2020, bids had to be submitted in June 2020 and funding allocations were confirmed in July 2020 and had to be spent by the end of March 2021 – managers did not have the opportunity to implement monitoring to gain baseline data. Whilst the absence of this data was considered problematic, schemes may not have been possible without the funding, and so local councils had little choice if they wanted their areas to have the opportunity of trialling an active neighbourhood.

A more general challenge experienced within the implementation of monitoring infrastructures was that the time needed for procurement and implementation tended to be longer than anticipated. When planning for monitoring, timeframes often underestimated the

durations of different stages within the process, such as getting quotes for equipment, lead times and getting the equipment in place. In the case of Levenshulme, for example, because of these delays the active neighbourhood modal filters were installed before baseline air quality data could be collected. This was considered particularly significant as concerns regarding air quality on boundary roads are particularly pronounced in Levenshulme.

Members of the Active Neighbourhood Working Group had also observed the impression that the absence of monitoring and lack of baseline data gave residents: *'People feel like you are doing things sneakily. People often think we're doing things on a whim, and we're not'*. During the working group discussion on monitoring and evaluation, members took the opportunity to discuss the learnings from active neighbourhoods so far and how they would implement these in the future both to improve monitoring and evaluation and to support public trust within the schemes. Reflecting in hindsight, relevant group participants discussed learnings in terms of better incorporating the time required to organise monitoring equipment into active neighbourhood timelines, as well as sometimes having to admit delay and take more time to implement a trial in full from the beginning.

Participants felt that this distrust was contributing to a growth in Freedom of Information (FOI) requests by residents. Whilst FOI requests by residents were not limited to monitoring, this was considered by working group members to account for a significant proportion of the requests. For Active Neighbourhood Working Group members, whilst recognising the rights of the public to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the increasing demand of answering FOI requests was considered a strain on resources – *'I've spent so much time answering FOI requests'* – and was enabled by cross-neighbourhood communication (to be discussed in Chapter 8) and social media: *'One person sends a FOI request and gets a more tailored response and tells their mate, who tells their mate, and on social media the information passes on much quicker'*.

### Resident expectations of monitoring

During the working group meeting, members also discussed the level of work that residents are undertaking to understand active neighbourhoods and their potential implications, positive or negative: *'The general public are savvy, they are researching and they are asking the right questions, and we need to be able to give them the answers'*. However, members of the group noticed how residents tended to focus upon quantitative data and on vehicles in particular. Examples included vehicle counts and air quality indices. Whilst members recognised these as important factors within the monitoring of active neighbourhoods, they also reflected that active neighbourhoods are more than what is implied by low traffic neighbourhoods: *'LTN implies that you are just taking away the traffic and puts the focus upon air quality and traffic counts'*. For members,

active neighbourhoods meant that additional focuses of monitoring in the future needed to be the use of neighbourhoods, how residents use parklets, where children play, how space is used when it is pedestrianised and changes in pedestrian experiences in active neighbourhoods, for example. Members of the Active Neighbourhood Working Group also discussed how they were exploring how to integrate these forms of monitoring into future projects and the methods that could be adopted to achieve this.

A further benefit of expanding monitoring to integrate what one working group member described as *'experiences of active neighbourhoods'* was also considered to offer potential in terms of providing a more holistic approach to such interventions. The working group discussed how the focus upon quantitative methods commonly meant that *'everyone wants to know how it's going to affect my driveway or my front door'*, with requests for increasingly extensive traffic and pollution monitoring. However, not only is this not a possibility in terms of the budget requirement; it also propagates an individualistic perception of the issue, when the promotion of active travel and sustainable lifestyles needs to be undertaken at a community level because *'you don't solve problems using individual streets'*.

The issue, however, is that, by not providing transparent plans, a reinforcing cycle is produced in terms of what residents expect in terms of monitoring and evaluation. The absence of information means that residents, as previously discussed, seek out data on similar schemes in order to understand the forms of monitoring that are being undertaken on these schemes, as well as to learn what has happened in these schemes in terms of impacts. Most data that exists that bears similarity to data on active neighbourhoods is from low traffic neighbourhoods, and the research is almost exclusively carried out in London. This research, which has been reviewed in Chapter 2, is highly quantitative, and the absence of a robust monitoring strategy within Greater Manchester active neighbourhoods means that this is the data that residents use to understand what monitoring should be, thereby leading to a reinforcing cycle of perceptions of monitoring and evaluation.

## 7.4 Discussion

Monitoring and evaluation is the combination of data collection and analysis to evaluate whether active neighbourhoods are meeting their objectives, from which success would be judged. The methods of monitoring and evaluation used for the case study active neighbourhoods are presented in Table 7-2. The monitoring and evaluation of the schemes within Greater Manchester was a concern raised by participants during almost all resident walkalongs across all four case study areas, irrespective of whether walkalong participants supported the implementation of their respective active neighbourhoods.

Participants were interested in the impacts of active neighbourhoods, positive and negative, and sought data that would aid an understanding of the potential inequalities arising from their implementation (Chapter 5). Thorough monitoring and evaluation data would, they recognised, aid the identification of what is and is not working and what measures and iterative design processes could be used to refine and improve the schemes.

What participants perceived as inadequacies in monitoring and evaluation, particularly when they compared measurement methods with those undertaken for LTNs in London, not only contributed to the aforementioned concerns but also further undermined trust in the capacity of councils and highways teams to both successfully implement active neighbourhoods and be able to assess whether they were a positive intervention for their local community.

When discussing processes of monitoring and evaluation with members of the Active Neighbourhood Working Group, the challenges they were facing were discussed, with particular reference to the timely installation of monitoring equipment. A recognition of the necessity of clear monitoring and evaluation plans with clear timelines, ongoing communication and consistency across the Greater Manchester active neighbourhoods is needed in order to develop a Greater Manchester evidence base and to engage with creative and innovative methods. This requires expertise in such monitoring, as well as processes of cross-area learning on the relative efficacy of different approaches, as well as the timescales involved. Additionally, a balance needs to be maintained that does not create a focus on on-demand monitoring by limited numbers of residents of the impacts outside their doors, as ultimately active neighbourhoods are community interventions, and the impacts need to be understood holistically with a community focus, rather than a narrower street-level focus.

# 8. Communication

- **Whilst multiple forms of communication have been employed, there has been an evident focus on online methods, reflecting the Covid-19 restrictions on meeting in person.**
- **Participants raised concerns about the processes and, in particular, the reliance on online methods from the perspective of accessibility, such as digital exclusion and accessibility for blind and visually impaired residents.**
- **Communication of the plans by councils was considered to provide limited amounts of information, leading to some frustration and distrust amongst residents. A connected issue was the increased workloads of active neighbourhood teams, who found themselves with large numbers of Freedom of Information requests.**
- **Social media played an important role in developing networks around the initiatives and enabling the sharing of information but was also seen to contribute to a ‘toxic environment’.**
- **There are opportunities to develop best-practice guidelines for more inclusive and accessible communication resources and to share information between those working on active neighbourhoods across the conurbation. The inclusion of guidance and training around the use of social media would be an important component.**

## 8.1 Introduction

Within this chapter we reflect upon processes of communication around active neighbourhood implementation within Greater Manchester. In the first section we reflect upon communication processes around active neighbourhoods at the intervention level, discussing forms of communication between local authorities implementing active neighbourhoods and residents within intervention areas. In the second section we discuss the communication of residents within and between active neighbourhoods – both within Greater Manchester and beyond – and how positions on active neighbourhoods are networked with social media discourses. In the third section we reflect upon how active neighbourhoods are communicated and understood on the broader Greater Manchester scale.

## 8.2 Processes of communication

During walkalongs, participants commonly identified different ways in which they had received information from their council on their local active neighbourhood. These forms of communication are outlined below, and the accessibility of these methods is discussed according to participant experiences.

### Mailouts

The first form of information provision was by a flyer or letter delivered to people’s homes. Residents across the three implemented active neighbourhoods commonly

reported that they had not received letters that they had been told had been sent out by councils. Participants reflected that they often received a significant amount of leafletted mail, and so anything received through the door would have a risk of being missed, particularly if it came in a drop with multiple other leaflets. Tara (P15) noted that *‘I was told there was something that came through the post, but you get a lot of junk mail, and it goes, it gets lost, so you don’t really see it’*. Additionally, mailouts are not always an accessible form of information communication. For example, David (P18), who is visually impaired, must rely on his partner to share information from leaflets or letters from the council with him, or he can scan a letter to read it. The latter, however, would involve being able to distinguish active neighbourhood communications from other forms of letterbox communication.

### Social media

In the context of Covid-19 and multiple lockdowns, social media has had an important role in people’s lives, reflected by increasing use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK (Ofcom, 2021a). This dynamic was picked up on during an Active Neighbourhood Working Group meeting:

*There are people who would have been at work before, but now they’re working at home they may use social media more and would also want to use it to connect with the rest of the world.*  
(Active Neighbourhood Working Group)

In walkalongs, participants discussed how much of their information on their local active neighbourhood had come through social media: from council media accounts directly or through other personal and group accounts, largely across Twitter and Facebook.

Several concerns were raised during walkalongs with regard to the accessibility of current forms of communication. The first was that the focus upon online resources automatically excludes those with limited digital literacy or access to technology to enable them to access online resources. As put by Tara: *'If you don't do online, where are you finding your information? You're not getting it anywhere'*. Even when people were able to engage online and use social media, there was a perception – particularly in Levenshulme – that the use of social media gave an advantage to younger people to engage and influence. The use of social media was also a challenge for David:

*I can't use Twitter because it is not, you know, there's so much garbage around Twitter for a very short message in the middle. You have to listen to the number of likes, emojis, and you can't just filter that, unfortunately. (David (P18), Trinity & Islington)*

### Commonplace/ArcGIS Hub

A further form of communication that was used prior to Covid-19 but grew in importance during the pandemic within active neighbourhood interventions was the use of interactive online mapping tools, such as Commonplace (Trinity and Islington and Levenshulme active neighbourhoods) and ArcGIS Hub (Cheadle Heath Active Neighbourhood). These were used to engage residents and gain locality-specific information and feedback, as well as to provide information on active neighbourhood interventions to residents.

During the walkalong with David and Joyce (P18), David discussed the accessibility of these tools for blind and visually impaired users. Discussing the use of Commonplace with David, he said that, whilst it may technically meet accessibility standards, *'I don't think anybody actually tried reading a page using voice reader technology'*. Joyce and David, when using Commonplace, had decided to contribute separately on the map in order to not influence each other's perspectives. Joyce found, however, that on reviewing what David had put onto Commonplace they had missed areas where they would commonly walk.

### Perceptions of communication

The above forms of communication were generally one-way, featuring the council providing relevant information on schemes to residents, whilst social media accounts were used to disseminate information and link to online resources, such as Commonplace maps. However, as social media accounts are commonly managed by comms teams, rather than active travel teams, they are not the appropriate forums for responding to questions and complaints (Active Neighbourhood Working Group).

Additionally, this sets a precedent of individual responses, when the focus should be on the provision of more information in the public domain, such as through FAQs (Active Neighbourhood Working Group).

Across the three implemented active neighbourhoods – Levenshulme, Garside Hey Road and Trinity and Islington – there was general dissatisfaction with processes of communication, regardless of whether walkalong participants were supportive, unsupportive or ambivalent towards the implementation of active neighbourhoods. This cross-participant dissatisfaction was articulated by Harry (P12) in Levenshulme, who reflected that: *'I'm sure it's probably a similar experience on the other side, where people feel that they've just not been communicated to. I think that leaves everybody just feeling incredibly powerless and just not part of the loop'*. It's within this context that residents were using Freedom of Information requests in order to try and fill in the gaps in the information that they were receiving, and in turn, as discussed in Section 7.3, increasing the workload of highways teams implementing the trials.

Levels of frustration with communication were particularly great in Levenshulme, where walkalong participants, irrespective of their views on active neighbourhoods, found the provision of information with regard to the scheme lacking, particularly as the scheme had changed in scope in terms of the reduction in the number of modal filters and the reduction in geographical extent to Levenshulme from Levenshulme and Burnage, as well as changes in timescales (see Section 3.2), and residents felt like any changes had not been adequately explained or communicated. Residents described finding their local councillors reluctant to engage in conversations regarding the scheme and that requests for information to the scheme email address were commonly unanswered.

The communication process within the Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood had significant implications in terms of not only frustration of residents but also uncertainty with regard to the ownership of the scheme. Residents, particularly those who supported the trial, felt that to give it a chance of success the scheme needed to be owned and championed and that it should be the councillors and the highways team who needed to do this work. This was articulated by Jane (P8): *'Someone really does kind of need to champion it... And it's the project team and the councillors who should be really working to communicate'*.

Residents considered that councillors and council officers needed to provide information and also spend more time promoting the scheme – considering that it is being implemented by the council – and work to allay concerns regarding it. By councils and representatives not demonstrating ownership of the schemes, residents felt that the active neighbourhoods was being given less of an opportunity to succeed, further contributing to perceptions that officials were unsupportive (as discussed in Section 7.3). Residents also felt that this lack of ownership exacerbated frictions between supportive and

unsupportive groups within the community as residents stepped in to advocate for the scheme instead of councillors and council officers.

### 8.3 Communication between residents

Not only was the use of social media an important space for active neighbourhood management teams to disseminate information to residents; because of the restrictions on public events, many resident discussions of active neighbourhoods also went online. This will be discussed below in terms of interactions between social media users with opposing views on active neighbourhoods and interactions between social media users with similar views and the development of what we call 'networked opinions'.

#### Developing social media networks

Within walkalongs, participants – generally those who tended to either support or not support active neighbourhoods – commonly described networks they had established through social media with others who had similar opinions of the interventions to themselves. These networks extended beyond Greater Manchester and active neighbourhoods to other similar interventions, such as LTNs, liveable neighbourhoods and active travel neighbourhoods across the UK. Networks were considered by participants to be important for learning and information sharing across intervention schemes.

An interesting reflection on the use of social media derived from discussions with participants within walkalongs, as well as through scraping Twitter for discussions around active neighbourhoods across Greater Manchester (see Annex 1: Twitter scraping), is the social media platform used and the extent of the network developed. Twitter scraping is the mining of publicly available Twitter data, including tweets, as well as associated data such as likes, retweets and information about the tweeting account, such as its location (if provided) and number of followers.

In Levenshulme, for example, discussion was happening on both Facebook and Twitter, with networks developing beyond Levenshulme and Greater Manchester and into London. Within Levenshulme, discourses that were unsupportive of the implementation of active neighbourhoods commonly developed in tandem with critiques of LTNs in London, with similarities in discourses surrounding boundary roads, air inequality and active neighbourhoods as creators of vehicle congestion.

In contrast, much of the resident discussion around active neighbourhoods within Trinity and Islington and Garside Hey Road was undertaken on local Facebook groups, rather than on Twitter. This kept discussion more localised with less influence from an extended network, and this seems to be reflected, for example, in the very different interpretation of modal filters installed in Garside Hey Road LTN (as discussed in Section 5.3) compared with in Levenshulme and more broadly on Twitter. The purpose of

this observation is not to discount the concerns raised by those within Levenshulme Active Neighbourhood around the implementation of the trial but to recognise that the development of networked opinions through social media has the potential to override more localised concerns that could contribute to the development of a more appropriate active neighbourhood.

The influence of networked opinions on active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester was also reflected within the Active Neighbourhood Working Group, who noted how social media often becomes an '*echo chamber*' of polarised opinions (Active Neighbourhood Working Group), with residents having already developed pre-formed opinions prior to the beginning of an intervention. The group also observed how these opinions were often also influenced by the implementation of active neighbourhoods at different stages across the region and discussions about these on social media also contributed to opinions on active neighbourhoods, reflecting how '*if we make mistakes on our scheme, then you might pay for it on yours*' (Active Neighbourhood Working Group).

For example, the group discussed how in the consultation for Burnage Active Neighbourhood '*we've not even started it, and people already turn up with a negative opinion*' and '*we might break down some of those barriers, but it's difficult to change people's opinions*'. Similarly, during the walkalongs, early implemented active neighbourhoods – specifically Levenshulme – were commonly referenced within walkalongs in other active neighbourhoods. One notable example demonstrating the transference of mistakes across active neighbourhoods was given during the councillor walkalong in Garside Hey Road LTN. One resident was particularly distressed about emergency vehicles not being able to access her road because of the modal filters. Her concern was the result of events in Levenshulme she had heard about through Facebook. She had interpreted an occasion in which fire services were testing manoeuvres within the active neighbourhood as the fire services not being able to access a property during an emergency call.

#### Opposing opinions

In addition to the development of networks, many walkalong participants across case study active neighbourhoods considered the use of social media – Facebook and Twitter – to also contribute to growing tensions between residents with differing opinions in relation to active neighbourhoods. As a result of Covid-19 and multiple lockdowns, face-to-face meetings, such as community consultation events, were not held. Many residents considered that the loss of such meetings was problematic with regard to active neighbourhoods as the ability to meet would have enabled better communication and understanding of other residents' concerns. For example, Natalie (P2) in Garside Hey Road LTN felt '*having not been able to hear other people's thoughts and views has made it a bit more complicated*', and Jeff (P9) in Levenshulme expressed that:

*Then your schemes coming in and changing things, and we can't go and speak to anyone: we can't see the councillors at the surgeries, and we can't go into meeting; we can't all thrash this out and be civil about it. (Jeff (P9), Levenshulme)*

Walkalong participants also felt that the abstraction, as well as anonymity, that was enabled within online spaces further amplified tensions. For example, Harry described this anonymity during the walkalong in Levenshulme:

*I think the anonymity, it is a real issue in terms of just you can, the number of people who don't have their face on their Facebook profile; yes, they have their dog, and not even lovely dogs. They have their dog, or they have, like, a cat or something. It's like, do you just find this really easy to vent and then move on with your life? (Harry (P12), Levenshulme)*

For many participants, this contributed a '*horrendous*' (Anna (P3)), '*toxic*' (Jeff (P9)) or '*nasty*' (Charlotte (P11)) online environment that is not conducive to cooperation between residents when opinions differ. In addition to limiting cooperation and productive discussion, the creation of such an environment puts some people off engaging with processes. For example, Charlotte in Levenshulme felt that online discussion '*just went quite nasty, so I actually haven't looked at any of the stuff on Facebook for a little while*' (Charlotte (P11), Levenshulme).

## 8.4 Communication at a Greater Manchester level

Whilst the previous section focused upon the communication of active neighbourhoods as localised interventions, our discussions suggest that it is also important for active neighbourhood communications to more strongly connect to broader processes. The necessity of this has previously been discussed in terms of ensuring that active neighbourhood interventions are better connected to visions for public and active travel infrastructures as part of the Bee Network (see Section 6.4).

In the Public Health Working Group, members discussed the polarisation of opinions on active neighbourhoods and LTNs within social media and news media, as discussed in Section 2.5. Members also observed that discourses used against LTNs and active neighbourhoods within discussions tend to be highly emotive, discussing traffic displacement and health inequalities. However, within formal communications around active neighbourhoods, group members reflected that '*we have failed to show to the public that current car usage is unhealthy and it's not about moving cars [onto different roads], it's that we need fewer cars on the road. Full stop.*' (Public Health Working Group), thereby failing to connect to wider visions around active travel and reducing the number of private cars within Greater Manchester. The group proposed that active neighbourhoods

as interventions need to be more strongly and bravely situated within Greater Manchester's current environmental and health context: we have declared a climate emergency (GMCA, 2019), air pollution in the region contributes to up to 1,200 deaths per year (Clean Air GM, 2021) and levels of physical inactivity are significant, with substantial implications for health and wellbeing (Greater Sport, 2018, 2020).

## 8.5 Discussion

Processes of communication on active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester have involved formal communications with and from teams implementing the schemes – through mechanisms that include mailouts and social media – as well as informal communications, whereby residents have communicated among themselves, largely, within the Covid-19 context, through social media and a limited number of community engagement events. Resident communication on social media, particularly Twitter, has transcended the individual schemes: the use of Twitter has enabled discussion across experiences between and across the areas.

With regard to formal communications on active neighbourhoods, participants expressed concerns with their provision, particularly in terms of online methods, in relation to a lack of accessibility and processes of digital exclusion. Additionally, official communications were considered insufficient in terms of content and language, leading to frustration and distrust amongst some residents. Within the Active Neighbourhood Working Group, members discussed an important issue connected to information provision. This related to a growing rise in Freedom of Information (FOI) requests from residents with regard to active neighbourhood schemes. Growth in knowledge of how to undertake an FOI request was attributed to information travelling quickly across social media networks. The motivation to make FOI requests is related to frustrations with the existing information provision.

Social media was seen by research participants to play a role in developing informal networks, in either support or opposition. However, many participants, particularly those who were ambivalent towards the implementation of active neighbourhoods, found the online environment '*toxic*', and this both put them off using social media as a tool for accessing information and also led to drawbacks for active neighbourhoods as a result of seeing them, in a more general sense, as divisive interventions.

There are opportunities to develop best-practice guidelines for more inclusive and accessible communication resources and to share information between those working on active neighbourhoods across the conurbation. The inclusion of guidance and training around the use of social media would be an important component.

# 9. Conclusions

Active neighbourhoods are a form of neighbourhood-level intervention that is being implemented across Greater Manchester with the aim of providing safe and attractive spaces for people to spend time in, for children to play in and to enable walking and cycling. In doing so, they should contribute to the Bee Network – ‘*a joined-up cycling and walking network for all residents across the city-region*’ (TfGM, 2021d) – and ensure that walking and cycling play a central role in making sure that at least 50% of all trips in Greater Manchester are made by sustainable modes of transport by 2040 (GMCA and TfGM, 2020).

Active neighbourhoods are a form of low traffic neighbourhood that has been widely implemented within London, with evidence demonstrating positive contributions in terms of increasing walking and cycling use and decreasing car journeys (Aldred et al., 2019; Aldred and Goodman, 2020, 2021, 2021), as well as having a positive association with declining car ownership (Goodman, Urban, and Aldred, 2020) and lower levels of road traffic injuries (Laverty, Aldred, and Goodman, 2021). Within the media and on social media the focus upon active neighbourhoods and low traffic neighbourhoods tends to be upon division and a polarised construction of angry drivers and militant cyclists.

Within this research, we have implemented qualitative methods, namely, resident walkalongs across four case study active neighbourhood interventions within Greater Manchester, as well as focus group and reference group discussions, to understand lived experiences of active neighbourhood interventions. The findings from this research have been discussed across five themes within this report: experiences of active travel and active neighbourhoods (Chapter 4), perceptions of active neighbourhoods (Chapter 5), processes of active neighbourhood implementation (Chapter 6), perspectives on monitoring and evaluation (Chapter 7) and perspectives on communication within active neighbourhood processes (Chapter 8).

Across the research there was some evidence of a positive impact on active travel, making active travel a more enjoyable experience. This would imply that in the longer term such developments will help to increase levels of walking and cycling. What became evident throughout the research was that, whilst divisive positions are perpetuated within news and social media, on-the-ground perspectives provide much more nuanced perspectives on active neighbourhoods. For example, based on those who participated in the walkalongs within the research, those who are broadly in favour of active neighbourhoods often have very similar concerns to those who are not, such as concerns regarding inequalities (Chapter 5), frustrations with the processes of implementation (Chapter 6) and worries regarding processes of monitoring and evaluation (Chapter 7).

Perhaps the most pressing finding of this research was that those participants who did not support the implementation of their local active neighbourhood were not, as is commonly portrayed on social media, people who want to drive for short journeys or who believe they have a right to access all roads by motor vehicle by the shortest route. Instead, our unsupportive participants were often people who walked for all their local journeys. In comparison, those who were supportive of active neighbourhood interventions both walked and cycled for local journeys. Generally speaking, for those who walked, the implementation of active neighbourhoods in their current form was not perceived to improve walking conditions, particularly in terms of the poor condition of pavements, cars parking on pavements and the lack of dropped kerbs, which would help to enable inclusive active mobility.

Similar concerns were expressed by older people in the research. They had comparatively lower levels of car ownership and tended to recognise the local neighbourhood as the closest and (theoretically) easiest place to be outside, exercise and socialise but also felt that the local neighbourhood was often inaccessible (and unsafe) as a result of poor pedestrian conditions.

It is also apparent that aspects of the communication processes had resulted in participants who primarily walk for local journeys perceiving active neighbourhoods as interventions aimed at cycling and people who cycle. This observation relates to both formal communications on active neighbourhoods by local councils and informal communications on social media around active neighbourhoods. It appears to be compounded by a perceived lack of interventions that would benefit pedestrians, particularly pedestrians who need pavements, such as older people and blind and visually impaired residents, who may need to use the kerb for navigation purposes.

Generally speaking, those who did not support the implementation of active neighbourhoods perceived those who cycle to have a strong presence on social media and, in turn, to have a disproportionate influence on planning processes. This is an observation that needs careful consideration, and the presence of active cycling campaign groups in Greater Manchester would indicate that many people who cycle and are active in local processes will have had experience of being involved in consultations and other street changes before. They therefore have the social capital, as well as the connections and networks that enable faster dissemination of information to like-minded people. Whilst people who cycle will often walk as well for their local journeys and are contributing to active neighbourhood processes as people who walk and cycle, their presence on social media tends to emphasise cycling: they will often have profile photographs of themselves with a bike, for example, but rarely as a pedestrian.

# 10. Recommendations

## ■ Inclusive design

- Engage with disabled and older people's groups
- Prohibit pavement parking
- Conduct inclusive walking audits
- Provide School Streets as a local authority service

## ■ Communication and engagement

- Ensure consistent communication and engagement
- Provide training for community groups on effective and inclusive engagement
- Ensure information is inclusive and accessible

## ■ Monitoring and evaluation

- Develop and clearly communicate monitoring and evaluation plans
- Create an active neighbourhood professionals' forum
- Develop a research portfolio to support implementation and evaluation

## 10.1 Inclusive active neighbourhood design

### Engage with disabled and older people's groups

Active neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester offer an opportunity to build – from the neighbourhood scale up – inclusive environments for living, moving and being. The deployment of modal filters incorporates the use of a time tax to disincentivise particular journeys. Recognising that this can compound pre-existing time burdens that many people already experience due to disability, illness or age, the needs of disabled and older people must be more centrally positioned within the development of active neighbourhoods. Doing so also recognises that many disabled and older people want to access their local areas actively but that the current urban environment is often not conducive to this (see recommendations 1.1.2 and 1.1.3). Groups and organisations made up of and representing older people and disabled people should be engaged with throughout the development of active neighbourhoods, recognising that inclusive and accessible active neighbourhood design will benefit all residents and society more broadly.

Example: A collaborative project in Whalley Range, Manchester, between residents, the **Age-Friendly Whalley Range and Chorlton Forum** and the City Council saw the installation of 12 benches. The locations of the benches were chosen in consultation with older people to ensure that they are in locations that both support activity and provide social seating.

### Prohibit pavement parking

Walkalongs and focus group discussions highlighted the continued importance of pavements for walking within active neighbourhoods, including on filtered roads. The importance of pavements was particularly central to the mobility needs of disabled, mobility impaired and older people. However, the continued presence of pavement parking creates obstructions and reduces the viability of active neighbourhoods for making local journeys on foot. A lack of action on pavement parking also contributed to perceptions that active neighbourhoods are cycling interventions, with many participants perceiving them to improve road conditions for people cycling but not pavement conditions for people walking. Pavement parking should be prohibited within active neighbourhoods in order to ensure that all forms of active travel are supported.

Example: Pavement parking is prohibited across the 32 London boroughs, and the City of London and all councils in London can enforce this. When enforced, this ensures that pavements within active neighbourhoods/LTNs retain their role as a walking infrastructure. Traffic regulation orders (TROs) can be implemented by local authorities within Greater Manchester – from street level up to the city-region scale – to prohibit pavement parking.

### Conduct inclusive walking audits

The vision behind active neighbourhoods was often well received by participants, with the local neighbourhood considered to be an essential space not only to access services but also to exercise and socialise. However, many participants, particularly older people and disabled people, reported that walking infrastructures – including poor

pavement conditions and a lack of dropped kerbs – were physically preventing them from safely accessing their local area. This reduced their ability to benefit from active neighbourhoods and further contributed to perceptions that active neighbourhoods are cycling interventions. Implementing authorities need to integrate a robust process of auditing into active neighbourhood design that takes account of the diverse challenges that existing walking infrastructures pose to residents and seeks to resolve accessibility issues within design and intervention.

Example: Transport for All – a pan-impairment organisation focusing on the right of disabled and older people to travel with freedom and independence – is working with Living Streets to audit **Footways**, a network of quiet and interesting streets for walking in London. Accessibility audits establish how well a particular environment works in terms of access and use by a wide range of potential users, such as disabled and visually impaired people.

### **Provide School Streets as a local authority service**

School Streets have had demonstrable success in supporting parents and children to undertake journeys to and from school actively. Supporting children to be active will have positive outcomes for their current and future health and wellbeing. School Streets can be an element of an active neighbourhood, as well as a conceivable stepping-stone within their development, since they allow residents to experience road space reallocations and street closures. Current approaches to School Streets, both within active neighbourhoods and across Greater Manchester, are limited in scope and risk inequalities in provision when emphasis is placed on voluntary efforts by parents and schools. Local authorities and transport authorities need to work with schools to develop a programme of School Streets as council-run services.

Example: **The Waltham Forest School Streets project** has 10 School Street zones covering 43 roads. Waltham Forest Council has committed to only introducing School Streets when they use automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) camera enforcement. Whilst this increases the cost of scheme implementation, it reduces reliance on volunteers and school staff to manually implement schemes using barriers. **Granted from December 2021**, Greater Manchester authorities now have the power to use ANPR to enforce School Streets, and there is potential, if School Streets are provided at an area level, to reduce costs by moving ANPR cameras between streets.

## **10.2 Communication and engagement**

### **Ensure consistent communication and engagement**

The climate crisis, air pollution and declining levels of physical activity are growing challenges within the city-region, and current levels of car use across Greater Manchester cannot therefore be sustained. Active neighbourhoods have a significant role within Greater Manchester's Bee Network and Transport Strategy 2040 in moving towards the goal that 50% of all journeys are made by walking, cycling and public transport by 2040. Current processes across Greater Manchester, however, do not adequately connect active neighbourhoods to these wider challenges or to the physical infrastructures across the region that will support these changes, for example, protected and networked cycle lanes or upcoming bus franchising. Additionally, as road space reallocations necessitate changing the way people use space and our confidence in doing this intersects with experiences, opportunities and multiple forms of privilege, this needs to be accounted for in processes of communication about, and visioning of, what active neighbourhoods will look like.

TfGM, local authorities, council officers and local councillors need to ensure consistent communication and engagement across Greater Manchester on the vision of active neighbourhoods and their importance for walking, cycling, health and placemaking. This should also include understanding and responding to the concerns of residents, an example being working with emergency services to ensure that TROs and official positions relating to active neighbourhoods – and road space reallocations more broadly – filter down to people-facing staff and responders.

Example: **Our Streets Chorlton** worked with residents on two streets in Chorlton, Manchester, to create a week of open streets in which a full programme of activities was developed in order to gain support from local residents and communities by supporting people with reimagining alternatives that could be achieved if streets were closed to through traffic.

### **Provide training for community groups on effective and inclusive engagement**

Community groups within Greater Manchester have a significant role in the development and communication of active neighbourhoods across the region. Recognising this role, TfGM and relevant partners should work with communication and engagement professionals to develop a training workshop that can be used to empower community groups to inclusively engage with their local communities across all stages of active neighbourhoods, from conception to post-implementation. This workshop should include training in social media, considering the role that it has in facilitating the dissemination of information by implementing authorities and providing a space for

community engagement and discussion. Such training would also be of value to local authorities, transport authorities and other delivery organisations.

### **Ensure information is inclusive and accessible**

Access to information on active neighbourhoods is important for engagement in consultation processes, as well as enabling residents to understand interventions in a timely and comprehensive manner so that they can plan and manage any changes that are necessary. The central focus upon online resources – recognising that this has been an outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic and reflects the necessity of limiting non-essential contact – excludes those who do not have digital access or are not digitally literate. Online resources that were provided, however, were commonly considered by research participants as problematic for multiple reasons, including being limited in scope, not being updated, the use of technical language, not being accessible in terms of use with screen readers, and the provision of scheme maps without written descriptions. Implementing authorities and organisations need to recognise the existence of digital exclusion and ensure that information is provided offline. Online resources will continue to be important, but these need to be comprehensive, timely and accessible.

Example: **Scope** is a disability equality charity in England and Wales, and website accessibility is embedded within the charity's everyday equality strategy. Scope's website has been developed taking into account best-practice web accessibility guidelines – **WCAG 2.0**, **WCAG 2.1** and **BS 8878** – and is tested for accessibility every three months. Additionally, clear instructions are given to support users with how to adapt their own technology settings to better access the website, provide an overview of known accessibility issues that are in the process of being resolved and give updates on recent accessibility problems and their resolution. A contact form is also provided to support user feedback on accessibility.

## **10.3 Monitoring and evaluation**

### **Develop and clearly communicate monitoring and evaluation plans**

Monitoring and evaluation of active neighbourhood trials is important in order to demonstrate the impacts of interventions, as well as to provide insights into what is and is not working in order to develop and refine interventions. Concerns regarding the monitoring and evaluation of active neighbourhood schemes within Greater Manchester were raised by participants irrespective of their position on these interventions, with perceptions of uncoordinated and insufficient implementation of monitoring methods and an absence of objectives considered central to these concerns. Moving forward, active neighbourhoods need to have timely, clear and well-communicated monitoring and evaluation plans that are consistent across Greater Manchester. The approach to monitoring should be expanded to

incorporate more experience-based perspectives, as discussed within the Active Neighbourhood Working Group, recognising the tendency of current methods to focus upon vehicles rather than human-centred experiences of the neighbourhoods.

Example: The Inclusive Transport Strategy was launched by the Department for Transport in 2018 with a **framework for monitoring and evaluation**. The framework was established recognising that monitoring and evaluation is essential to learn lessons, understand changes and demonstrate results. The framework consists of metrics and methods of measurement and evaluation. The framework itself is publicly available to ensure understanding of, and accountability to, monitoring and evaluation processes.

### **Create an active neighbourhood professionals' forum**

Within Greater Manchester, active neighbourhoods are a neighbourhood-level intervention that will contribute to the Bee Network, as well as working towards the goal of the Transport Strategy 2040 that 50% of journeys in Greater Manchester will be made using sustainable travel modes by 2040. Whilst active neighbourhoods are being implemented by their respective local authorities, their success is connected to being part of a networked approach to supporting active travel. A Greater Manchester-wide active neighbourhood professionals' forum should be established that will allow the development of best-practice approaches to interventions.

Example: Within this research a small active neighbourhood reference group was established to share learnings and experiences between those working on active neighbourhood interventions. This group should be continued, and its membership extended as appropriate.

### **Develop a research portfolio to support implementation and evaluation**

Research is important not only for understanding the impacts of active neighbourhoods but also for understanding processes involved in consultation and implementation. In developing such insights, research can contribute to the iterative development of interventions to ensure they meet the needs of residents and contribute to wider active travel goals and healthy placemaking. Moving forward, research should seek to understand not only experiences of the active neighbourhoods themselves but also those of any complementary infrastructures that may be introduced: for example, side road zebras. Research should also follow interventions that seek to support people to be active within their local neighbourhood, recognising that the provision of infrastructures to support this is just one element in getting people walking and cycling for transport. Such research should recognise the lived inequalities in gaining access, specifically those related to gender, ethnicity, age and disability.

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# Abbreviations

<b>ANPR</b>	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
<b>ATF</b>	Active Travel Fund
<b>DfT</b>	Department for Transport
<b>EATF</b>	Emergency Active Travel Fund
<b>ETO</b>	Experimental Traffic Order
<b>FOI</b>	Freedom of Information
<b>GM</b>	Greater Manchester
<b>GMCA</b>	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
<b>GMFRS</b>	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
<b>LTN</b>	Low Traffic Neighbourhood
<b>MCC</b>	Manchester City Council
<b>MCF</b>	Mayor's Challenge Fund
<b>RNIB</b>	Royal National Institute for Blind people
<b>TfGM</b>	Transport for Greater Manchester
<b>TfL</b>	Transport for London
<b>TRO</b>	Traffic Regulation Order

# Glossary

## Active neighbourhood

Active neighbourhoods are places where people are prioritised over vehicles. They are part of a policy landscape that seeks to connect people, place and mobility and to develop local neighbourhoods where people can enjoy walking and cycling with confidence. They are intended to support a shift away from high levels of private car use and a dependence on car ownership.

## ArcGIS hub

ArcGIS hub is an online mapping platform. It is utilised by Sustrans for community engagement within active neighbourhood consultation processes. The platform can be used by residents to comment on a map of their local neighbourhood in order to contribute to the active neighbourhood process.

## Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) is the use of cameras that can read and then check a vehicle registration plate against database records. Within the context of School Streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, ANPR is deployed by local authorities – currently mainly within London – to ensure that drivers using a road have an access permit. If the registered keeper of the vehicle driven is not eligible to use that road, they will be sent a fine.

## Bee Network

The Bee Network, as unveiled in 2018, is the emerging network of walking and cycling routes to support making active travel the number one choice for travelling for as many journeys within Greater Manchester as possible. In 2021 it was announced that the Bee Network will be extended to incorporate the vision for Greater Manchester's integrated transport system, joining together buses, trams, cycling, and walking by 2024.

## Boundary roads

Boundary roads are roads that make up the boundaries of active neighbourhoods and LTNs and which remain open to through traffic.

## Commonplace

Commonplace is an online platform that can be used for community engagement. It has multiple functions including an engagement site, a community heatmap, surveys, and ideas wall.

## Digital exclusion

Digital exclusion is the recognition that some communities and groups have unequal access to or capacity to use communication technologies, such as smart phones, computers, and the Internet.

## Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF)/Active Travel Fund (ATF)

The Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) was a fund released by the Department for Transport (DfT) which local authorities could use to support people travelling actively, reflecting the reduced capacity of public transport. Tranche 1 was to support the installation of temporary projects whilst Tranche 2 (termed the Active Travel Fund (ATF)) was to support the creation of longer-term projects.

## Experimental Traffic Order (ETO)

An Experimental Traffic Order is a type of traffic order that does not require traffic authorities to undertake a consultation. Once the ETO has been implemented, there is a six-month period within which objections must be considered. The decision over whether changes will be made permanent should be taken within 18 months.

## Home Zones

Home Zones are residential areas where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles share street space on equal terms and the focus is upon quality of life rather than the movement of motor traffic.

## Low traffic neighbourhood (LTN)

Low traffic neighbourhoods are residential areas that have been closed off to through traffic of motor vehicles using bollards, planters or other barriers, collectively known as modal filters.

## Made to Move

Made to Move, published in 2017, outlined the goal to double and then double again cycling journeys within Greater Manchester and make walking the natural choice of transport mode for as many short trips as possible. Made to Move involves a 15-step plan to achieve this.

## Mayor's Challenge Fund (MCF)

The Mayor's Challenge Fund is the pot of money allocated by the Mayor of Greater Manchester to support the development of the Bee Network and achieve the goals set out in the Made to Move strategy (2017).

## Modal filter

A modal filter is a single point closure that prevents the access of some modes of transport whilst allowing movement of others. Within the context of active neighbourhoods and low traffic neighbourhoods, modal filters are the use of bollards, planters, or other barriers, as well as ANPR, to restrict motor vehicles, whilst allowing people walking and cycling to pass through.

## Motability

The Motability Scheme enables people with a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition who receive the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance or the enhanced rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment to exchange this payment to lease a car, scooter, powered wheelchair or wheelchair accessible vehicle.

## Play Streets

A Play Street is a short road closure – normally a few hours – to enable children to play freely outside their homes. These are commonly enabled by a Play Street Order, which is a form of Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).

## #SafeStreetsSaveLives

#SafeStreetsSaveLives was introduced as an emergency response to Covid-19 providing a £5 million pot (£500k per district) from the Mayors Challenge Fund to support active travel.

## School Streets

School Streets are roads outside schools that have temporary restrictions on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times in order to create a walking and cycling zone. The restrictions apply to school traffic and through traffic: residents and businesses within the scheme area, as well as blue badge holders and emergency services, will still be permitted to enter or leave the School Street for access purposes.

## Traffic evaporation

Traffic evaporation is the concept that by improving local conditions for active travel, the total number of car journeys will decrease,

## Traffic Regulation Order (TRO)

A traffic regulation order allows local authorities to regulate speed, movement, and parking of vehicles, through mechanisms such as double and single yellow lines, bus lanes and on-street parking restrictions.

## Walkalong

A walkalong is a research method that involves the researcher accompanying residents on a participant-led 'tour' of their local (or proposed) active neighbourhood. Walkalongs support the generation of rich 'place-based' data due to the environment and infrastructures of place prompting and guiding discussions.

# Annex 1: Twitter scraping

Twitter scraping is the mining of publicly available Twitter data, including tweets, as well as associated data such as likes, retweets and information about the tweeting account, such as its location (if provided) and number of followers. Twitter was the only social media platform from which data was scraped in this research. This method is fully in line with research ethics: upon registration to hold an account with Twitter, users are asked to give consent for their information to be collected and used by third parties. Reuse of this data is then permitted by Twitter's terms of service and privacy policy when scraping is undertaken using an approved Twitter developer account, as was the case in this research. In order to protect the anonymity of Twitter users, user handles are not reported within this research and tweets are not quoted verbatim (Ahmed et al., 2017).

From September 2020 to May 2021, Twitter was scraped by researchers using the 'rtweet' R package and method (see Kearney et al., 2020) for the following terms: LTN(s), Low Traffic Neighbourhood(s) and Active Neighbourhood(s). In total, a database of over 90,000 tweets was produced for this time period. From the total database of scraped tweets, a smaller database was created. This includes only tweets related to Greater Manchester in terms of the content of the tweet or because the location of the tweeting account was within Greater Manchester. This smaller database consists of only 1,515 tweets. The database is small as it only contains tweets that specifically contained the aforementioned terms and not tweets that were, for example, in response to tweets that contained these terms. Section 12.1 looks at the Twitter users producing this data set, and Section 12.2 at the most common words within these tweets.

## Twitter users

The 1,515-tweet database was produced by 316 Twitter users. Table A-3 shows what types of users these Twitter accounts represented. From analysing the contributions of Twitter accounts to the database, 8% of the accounts (25) produced 50% of the tweets.

**Table A-3 Types of Twitter account**

Account type	No.
Individual	269
Community	37
Council/TfGM	6

When looking at individual accounts only – as official accounts tend to be information provision and community accounts, and in the case of organisations it is difficult to know whether they are representing a community or the views of one person managing the Twitter account – there were 269 accounts responsible for 1,140 tweets. A total of 8% (21) of these accounts produced 50% of the tweets.

## Common word use

Table A-4 shows the 44 most common words found within the GM tweet database for low traffic neighbourhoods/active neighbourhoods. Stop words – common words such as 'the' and 'and' – user handles and the search terms used to scrape the original database were excluded before the count.

**Table A-4** Top 44 most commonly used words within GM LTN/active neighbourhood tweet database

	Word	Frequency		Word	Frequency
1	road(s)	380	23	safer	52
2	levenshulme	238	24	filters	51
3	cycle/cycling	224	25	travel	51
4	people	209	26	school	48
5	streets	180	27	council	45
6	car(s)	195	28	london	45
7	burnage	105	29	evidence	44
8	scheme	104	30	measures	44
9	local	103	31	boundary	43
10	residents	102	32	plans	43
11	manchester	98	33	street	42
12	trial	88	34	trials	42
13	project	82	35	councillors	39
14	consultation	77	36	lanes	39
15	walking	71	37	emergency	34
16	support	69	38	safe	34
17	pollution	66	39	proposals	33
18	live	64	40	data	32
19	air	63	41	drive	32
20	time	62	42	feedback	32
21	planters	59	43	start	32
22	community	57	44	walk	32



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