

Consultation response

About

Wheels for Wellbeing is an inclusive cycling charity based in south London. We are a grassroots disability organisation, running five sessions a week at our three inclusive cycling hubs. Using any of our fleet of over 200 cycles (handcycles, tandems, tricycles, recumbents, wheelchair cycles, side-by-sides and bicycles) disabled people of all ages can discover or rediscover cycling, whilst enjoying its health and wellbeing benefits. Every year around 1,200 disabled people, aged from 18 months to 99 years-old, cycle at our hubs. We are also a campaigning voice for disabled cyclists in London.

Response

Foreword

No comments to add.

Chapter 1 - Planning London's Future (Good Growth Policies)

1.1 We welcome the Draft London Plan's aim to build strong and inclusive communities. Central to this must be a plan that meets the needs of all disabled people, including disabled cyclists.

1.2 We recognise the challenges presented by an ageing population, including the barriers that prevent many older people in London from participating fully in their communities. Cycling offers one possible remedy for this as it not only connects people up socially, but it also provides a non-weight bearing means of active transport that is beneficial for people's physical and mental health (including those suffering from Dementia).

Furthermore, greater investment in e-cycles will go a long way towards supporting this ambition, as the technology provided by electrical assistance allows older people to cycle longer distances and in greater comfort by reducing the amount of physical effort required.

1.3 We agree with the Mayor's assessment that design plans must increase active participation and social integration, as well as reduce social isolation. Inclusive cycling hubs (places where disabled people can go to cycle in a supportive environment, away from traffic) address all of these issues by providing a space for disabled people to gain or regain confidence in cycling, develop social networks and enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits that cycling has to offer. Therefore, it is our belief that every London Borough should have an inclusive cycling hub, with

Boroughs being encouraged to seek out strategic partnerships with local cycling and disability groups to this end.

1.4 We strongly support the idea that London should be a place where disabled people can move around with ease. We would like to see this principle applied to cycling. Therefore, as ways of achieving this goal we would recommend that:

- Wherever new cycling infrastructure is built it takes into account the needs of disabled cyclists, by adhering to the guidelines laid out in the London Cycling Design Standards (LCDS) - which we would recommend be made mandatory;
- TfL continue to develop and pilot a disabled cyclists' 'Blue Badge' scheme, which would exempt those who use their cycle as a mobility aid from having to dismount in non-cycling zones (Wheels for Wellbeing is currently working with TfL in piloting a scheme of this nature, and are grateful for the continued support of London's Cycling and Walking Commissioner for this pioneering project);
- There are ample cycle parking facilities designed and allocated for use by users of non-standard cycles;
- Public transport, including the Tube and Overground, be made accessible to disabled people who use their cycle as a mobility aid (providing an attractive, whole-journey experience is crucial to encouraging more disabled people to cycle, who often rely on multiple modes of transport to get around).

1.5 We strongly support the Healthy Streets Approach, including the need to reduce health inequalities and promote active lifestyles amongst Londoners. Cycling, if made fully inclusive, can offer an excellent form of physical activity for disabled people who, as a group, are half as likely as non-disabled people to be physically active.

1.6 We support plans to maximise London's cycling network, but this must be done in a way that is inclusive of disabled cyclists, as well as others who may use a range of non-standard cycles (e.g. family and freight cyclists). A cycle network that meets the needs of disabled cyclists - by being step-free, barrier-free and spacious - is, by default, accessible to everyone.

1.7 We are strongly in favour of the Mayor's ambition for London to become a zero carbon city. Further, by increasing investment in cycling and taking measures to make cycling more inclusive, we are confident that the Mayor's aim of achieving a zero carbon city by 2050 can be reached sooner than expected.

Chapter 2 - Spatial Development Patterns

No comments to add.

Chapter 3 - Design

3.1 We support the idea that Development Plans should encourage and facilitate inclusive cycling routes and cycle parking. Connectivity is particularly important for disabled cyclists who, in order to complete a full journey, require step-free, door-to-door routes that are reliably and consistently accessible (which includes fully accessible, integrated modes of transport).

3.2 We support the Mayor's ambition for all developments to be inclusive of disabled people. However, it is currently the case that the needs of disabled cyclists are rarely catered for when it comes to the built environment. Therefore, in order to address this problem we recommend that planning authorities, architects and developers are urged to consider the following key points:

- Where new cycle parking facilities are installed, 5% of all spaces are allocated for use by disabled cyclists - matching equivalent provision for disabled car drivers;
- Where accessible car parking spaces are built, the co-location of inclusive cycle parking is also considered;
- When new offices, leisure and commercial spaces are built it is ensured that they accommodate inclusive cycle routes, inclusive cycle parking and accessible showering facilities;
- For local disability groups, including disabled cyclists, to be consulted during the preliminary stages of any new building development.

Chapter 4 - Housing

4.1 As well as providing safe storage and charging facilities for residents' mobility scooters, specialist older person's housing should also offer equivalent facilities for non-standard cycles, such as trikes, side-by-side tandems and e-cycles.

Chapter 5 - Social infrastructure

5.1 As already mentioned, inclusive cycling hubs provide an excellent form of social infrastructure. These can be provided out of a range of pre-existing sporting facilities, such as playing fields, sports arenas, velodromes, leisure centres and indoor sports halls. All disabled Londoners should have access to a local inclusive cycling hub, which will not only help to improve the physical and mental health of local communities, but will also help to reduce social isolation.

5.2 Wheels for Wellbeing is a strong supporter of social prescribing. Through our regular inclusive cycling sessions we offer disabled, older people and people with mental health issues the opportunity to try cycling and enjoy the holistic benefits it has to offer – physically and mentally, as well as socially. Social prescribing should form a routine part of community support across London as it provides a way of

reducing pressure on NHS services. As ways of making the most of social prescribing, we would advise that:

- There should be signposting to the fact that disabled people can cycle (including better information about inclusive cycling for GPs, to help inform referrals);
- Funding and resources for social prescriptions be channelled to frontline services, in order to ensure the sustainability of community-based support (i.e. money must follow a person to the frontline, to provide funding so that grassroots organisations can continue running and keep charges to a minimum);
- Every Borough should provide an inclusive cycle hub, offering disabled people an opportunity to discover or rediscover cycling – and reap the many physical, mental health and rehabilitative benefits it has to offer;
- Partnerships be encouraged between inclusive cycling hubs, CCGs, Health and Wellbeing Boards, SEND schools and others so that all disabled, older people and people with mental health issues can be signposted/referred to inclusive cycling opportunities in their area.

Chapter 6 – Economy

6.1 As a member of the Beyond the Bicycle coalition (a steering group made up of disabled, family and freight cyclists), we would like to see greater efforts made to encourage and incentivise businesses to use cargobikes for last-mile deliveries. Not only would such a policy generate good PR for companies, but it would also offer a sustainable form of transport and give the environmentally-conscience consumer greater satisfaction whilst, crucially, tackling congestion and air pollution. Financial incentives and subsidies could be offered to those businesses that choose to shift their deliveries to cargobike.

Chapter 7 – Heritage and Culture

No comments to add.

Chapter 8 – Green Infrastructure and Natural Environment

No comments to add.

Chapter 9 – Sustainable Infrastructure

9.1 We strongly support the Mayor’s plans to improve air quality in London, which requires urgent action. Encouraging and supporting more disabled people to cycle will help in this regard, particularly when it is considered that disabled people otherwise tend to be more reliant for day-to-day travel on driving or being driven, either by door-to-door services, such as community transport services, or by taxis and private car hire.

Chapter 10 – Transport

10.1 We strongly support the Mayor’s strategic target of 80% of all trips in London to be made by foot, cycle or public transport by 2041, but would like to see stronger commitments made to interim targets. An inclusive cycling agenda must form a key part of any strategy aimed at increasing levels of cycling - the principles of which are outlined in our [Guide to Inclusive Cycling](#).

10.2 We support the Mayor’s aim to promote efficient and sustainable freight functions, including by cycle for shorter distances. As part of this it is important that businesses are incentivised to make greater use of cargobikes for last-mile deliveries (and crucially, that cycling infrastructure is built to accommodate the larger dimensions of such cycles).

10.3 We support proposals for cycle parking to be fit for purpose, secure and well-located, and that it should be designed in accordance with the LCDS. In particular, we are delighted to see the Mayor’s commitment 10.5.5: *“cycle parking and cycle parking areas should allow easy access and provide facilities for disabled cyclists. This could include identifying and reserving specific spaces which provide step-free cycle parking and opportunities for people using adapted cycles, as well as providing facilities for other non-standard cycles such as tricycles, cargo bicycles and bicycles with trailers, for both long-stay and short-stay parking”*

Wheels for Wellbeing would be happy to work with the Mayor and TfL to help implement this policy and to provide technical assistance on design solutions for inclusive cycle parking.

This policy marks a significant step towards achieving better recognition for disabled cyclists. Just like all other cyclists, disabled cyclists need to know that when they leave the house they can be confident of locating adequate cycle parking and storage facilities at their destination. However, we would like to see the Mayor go even further and commit to:

- Ensuring that where new cycle parking facilities are installed, 5% of all spaces are allocated for use by disabled cyclists - matching equivalent provision for disabled car drivers;
- Developing a disabled cyclists’ ‘Blue Badge’ scheme, which amongst other things could help in identifying cycles and cyclists genuinely entitled to park in specially reserved/allocated cycle parking bays.

10.4 We warmly welcome point 10.5.7, to ensure that accessible facilities for disabled cyclists are provided in places of employment. This cannot be stressed enough: without accessible facilities (e.g. inclusive cycle parking and accessible shower facilities) many disabled cyclists simply won't undertake a cycling journey in the first place.

10.5 Existing cycle hire facilities and schemes (e.g. Santander cycles) almost exclusively provide standard two-wheeled bicycles, which excludes many disabled cyclists, as well as families cycling with children and freight cyclists. At a minimum, we would recommend that all publicly-run cycle hire schemes in London should include at least e-cycles, which would dramatically broaden the demographic of people who can access cycling. To this end, we welcome steps already being taken by TfL to increase the availability of e-cycle hire.

We also recommend that cycle hire schemes partner with inclusive cycling hubs to widen their offer to include other forms of non-standard cycles through a personalised booking service (not through docking stations).

10.6 With regards to car parking for Blue Badge holders, thought should be given to the possibility of the co-location of disabled car and inclusive cycle parking bays. Similar considerations should also be made for the co-location of family car and cycle/cargo-cycle parking bays.

10.7 Whilst we welcome plans for all residential car parking spaces to provide infrastructure for electric or Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (including charging points), an equivalent policy must also be developed to encourage and support the use of e-cycles. Furthermore, we oppose provision of charging points which result in trailing leads and/or which are positioned on the footway, as these create hazards for disabled people.

10.8 It is welcome to see commitments to ensure the provision of disabled persons' parking bays for all new residential developments. As a way of encouraging and supporting more disabled people to choose physically active lifestyles (and reducing reliance on car use), however, we would suggest that all new residential developments should also provide inclusive cycle parking and storage facilities. To this end, we would like to see the development of Cycle Parking Design and Management Plans.

An equivalent policy should also apply to all non-residential developments, including commercial, hotel, institutional and leisure developments.

Chapter 11 – Funding the London Plan

No comments to add.

Chapter 12 – Monitoring

No comments to add.