

Liveable Neighbourhoods Handbook

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is for the public, local councillors, and stakeholder groups, and provides an overview of the design and engagement principles of Liveable Neighbourhoods. It is a living document that will be updated to incorporate learnings from: our pilot project in East Bristol, the second pilot as it comes forward, as well as examples from across the country.

In the handbook we set out a clear and consistent description of Liveable Neighbourhoods to enable local councillors and communities to have informed conversations about these projects and whether they are appropriate for their local areas.

The handbook is not intended to be used by groups to develop proposals for a Liveable Neighbourhood in their area without council input. Instead, it provides clarity on the necessary conditions for successful projects, to help set expectations and lay the foundations for how projects can be progressed.

A note on terminology: 'Liveable Neighbourhoods' are sometimes referred to as 'Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods', 'Mini Hollands' or '15-Minute Neighbourhoods.' While there are some slight and subtle differences, these terms refer to the same type of scheme that share the same overarching objectives.

What is a Liveable Neighbourhood?

We want our neighbourhoods to be 'liveable' - so that they are safe, healthy, inclusive, and attractive places where everyone can breathe clean air, have access to better quality green and play space, and feel a part of a community.

In practical terms Liveable Neighbourhoods seek to provide more space for community assets, such as trees, benches, cycle parking, and artwork, as well as high quality infrastructure for walking, wheeling, scooting, cycling, and sustainable transport.

This is achieved by removing traffic cutting through an area by the strategic placement of modal filters. Modal filters can be implemented using bollards, barriers, and planters. They generally seek to prevent access by private vehicles but allow other modes (walking, wheeling, scooting, cycling, buses) to filter through unimpeded. In all Liveable Neighbourhood projects access for residents, deliveries, servicing and emergency services is retained.

By reducing the number of vehicles in neighbourhoods, local streets can be redesigned from places that simply facilitate the movement of traffic to spaces that can cater for other uses

and users and are generally more pleasant and pollution free environments.

In terms of scale Liveable Neighbourhoods are typically a kilometre in size and bordered by A and B roads or other physical boundaries, such as rail lines, rivers, or green space.

Liveable Neighbourhoods will not necessarily trace ward boundaries.

Strong collaboration between the council and the local community to identify issues and co-design solutions is an essential feature of delivering successful Liveable Neighbourhood projects. This ground-up approach should be built into the foundations of meaningful and extensive engagement that seeks to raise seldom heard voices in the community so that all opinions are considered fairly. Engagement principles are described in more detail within this handbook.

Liveable Neighbourhoods are an area-wide treatment as opposed to a street level intervention. It is critical that the impact of these projects on private vehicle movements are considered in the round taking account of how neighbouring residential roads could be impacted by the displacement of vehicles from one street to another. With respect to this it is the role of the council as the highway authority to carefully balance the needs of the community with wider strategic considerations and objectives.

Why are Liveable Neighbourhoods being considered for Bristol?

Public support

In May 2022 the Bristol Walking and Cycling Index was launched based on a representative survey of Bristol's residents. The report found that more than 65 per cent support the creation of more Low Traffic Neighbourhoods with only 14 per cent opposing.

Recent surveying and consultations suggest that Bristol's residents are supportive of Liveable Neighbourhoods. For example, in 2021 the recommendations for Bristol's first Citizens' Assembly identified more than 90 per cent support for the statement that as a city we should be 'fundamentally reimagining the places we live so that they are people centred (i.e., create Liveable Neighbourhoods)'.

In 2020 the 'Your City, Our Future' survey polled more than 6,500 residents on their experience of lockdown conditions under the pandemic and found that more than 95 per cent of people liked or strongly liked that there was less traffic in the city and that the air was cleaner. Moreover, more than 80 per cent of people liked or strongly liked that there

were more people walking and cycling, and more than 65 per cent liked that they were driving less than usual.

Policy

The Bristol Labour Manifesto 2021 set out a commitment to promoting safer neighbourhoods by tackling through-and speeding- traffic and giving people more confidence to walk and cycle. The commitment extended to the rollout of at least two Liveable Neighbourhood pilots - the first of which, in East Bristol, is already in development.

Learnings from the East Bristol pilot will be incorporated into this handbook, which in turn will be used as the foundation for a Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy, to be developed once the pilot scheme has been delivered.

Liveable Neighbourhoods support several local, sub-regional and national policy aims, such as improving sustainable travel options, providing opportunities for more green and blue infrastructure, supporting better physical and mental health and wellbeing, and meeting the climate and ecological emergencies.

By promoting active travel, Liveable Neighbourhoods benefit people from deprived and low-income backgrounds who either don't have access to a vehicle or may find difficulty meeting the running costs. They can also be a tool in reducing inequality by improving the safety and convenience of alternatives, particularly important for people with disabilities and protected characteristics.

Relevant policy, strategy, and guidance to Liveable Neighbourhoods can be found here:

- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Local Transport Note 1/20](#)
- [Joint Local Transport Plan 4](#)
- [West of England Climate Emergency Action Plan](#)
- [West of England Bus Strategy](#)
- [West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)
- [Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan](#)
- [Bristol Transport Strategy](#)
- [One City Climate Strategy](#)
- [One City Plan](#)

Benefits

Although the improvements proposed in Liveable Neighbourhood schemes can be individually small and quick to deliver, their cumulative impact can be significant and help meet many of the goals that Bristol has set itself and are outlined in the One City Plan. There are more than 100 goals that are either directly linked to, or partially enabled by, the delivery of Liveable Neighbourhoods, and which cut across [the six themes that make up the One City Plan](#). These are Children and Young People, Economy and Skills, Environment, Health and Wellbeing, Homes and Communities, and Transport.

Evidence

Liveable Neighbourhood schemes can be controversial. Evidence from across the UK shows that schemes take time to bed in and benefit from being delivered at a pace that respects the principles of good engagement as set out below. Surveying shows most schemes are highly effective and popular once they are established. Evidence for Liveable Neighbourhoods can be found on the [Active Travel Online Portal](#) and the Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change 'Rapid Evidence Assessment: Liveable and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods'.

Scheme requirements

There are certain pre-conditions for proposed schemes coming forward to make sure they align with wider city plans and strategies regarding transport, housing, and planning. These include:

- **Community support:** There is evidence that there is appetite in the local community for change.
- **Strategic fit:** The scheme can be delivered alongside and complement citywide strategic transport schemes to deliver co-benefits and reduce disruption.
- **Network impact:** The scheme can be delivered without creating undesirable impacts on surrounding neighbourhoods.
- **Funding alignment:** The scheme must align with the requirements of the funding, with interventions delivering against the objectives.

All schemes will be overseen and assessed by Active Travel England and will be required to meet scheme criteria, funding requirements, and comply with minimum design standards. Schemes which do not align with Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) will not be

progressed or funded.

Approach

Liveable Neighbourhoods must be planned as an entire continuous area bounded by main/distributor roads. Attempts to reduce traffic in part of an area without regard to neighbouring streets can often result in the same traffic concentrating on fewer streets resulting in traffic merely being displaced.

Leaving in any through routes, unless they are very circuitous, simply focuses traffic on fewer streets, reducing the benefits of the scheme. When through traffic is completely removed, the experience in general is that main roads have far more capacity to cope than the residential side streets, so increases in motor vehicle volumes seen on main roads are low in percentage terms. Any proposed schemes which retain through routes would not meet funding requirements and would therefore not be progressed or funded.

Engagement principles

What is community engagement?

Effective engagement in the context of Liveable Neighbourhoods is about providing a platform for communities to help shape our neighbourhoods, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or want to identify and address issues affecting their wellbeing.

We want to understand the barriers to liveability in our communities and find out how they can be addressed to make sure everyone - residents, local groups, businesses, and educational institutions - is involved in developing their Liveable Neighbourhood.

As part of the pilot project in East Bristol we are trialling an engagement approach known as 'Co-Design'. The approach aims to ensure the Council works in partnership with everyone who lives, works, plays, or commutes through the area to co-design a scheme that has the communities needs at heart. Read [further detail regarding the project and co-design approach](#).

Why is community engagement important?

Our communities and residents are the experts in our neighbourhoods, as they know the barriers to liveability in their local area and will be able to support the development of

appropriate solutions. Involving communities in the design and development of Liveable Neighbourhoods will make sure schemes and interventions meet the needs of the people who live there, that they are tailored to the localised issues, and that they are developed with community-wide understanding and support.

It is important that councillors and communities are aware of the challenges and trade-offs associated with developing and implementing Liveable Neighbourhood schemes. Without broad local support for the types of area-wide interventions required, proposals will be more challenging to take forward.

What will communities be able to influence?

While local communities are the experts with regards to local issues, and it is the role of the local councillor to represent them, proposals for Liveable Neighbourhood schemes cannot be developed without council input. Council officers from across a range of specialist areas will need to work with local communities to make sure schemes are: technically and economically viable, meet funding requirements, and consider wider strategic objectives for Bristol.

Aspects of Liveable Neighbourhood design that communities can influence include:

- Giving local input into identifying streets for movement and place functions (as set out in more detail below under 'Design Principles')
- Identifying and co-designing solutions to local issues
- Having input into the selection and placement of the types of interventions from a pre-existing palette of materials and street furniture

How will we make sure the engagement is inclusive?

We are committed to making sure our engagement is inclusive and therefore will be providing the following opportunities:

- Engagement materials in multiple languages and in accessible formats on request, such as easy read versions, braille, large print, and audio including both on and offline versions
- Engagement events at a variety of times and days
- One point of contact - **transport.engagement@bristol.gov.uk** and **0117 9036449**
- Dedicated officers who work with under-represented groups
- Training for ward councillors to enable them to support the process

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out for this handbook and each

scheme will be subject to further EqlAs to make sure we engage and understand diverse views of all our communities.

Design principles

The streets within our neighbourhoods are where a lot of interaction takes place, whether that is to travel to get places, to meet neighbours, to play, or simply watch the world go by. In many cases our streets are not suitable for all these functions simultaneously and Liveable Neighbourhood design principles need to consider how space is best used.

The function of places in our neighbourhoods

Each Liveable Neighbourhood will be designed within its own unique geographic context, built upon the functions of places and streets. To better understand how our neighbourhoods might develop into Liveable Neighbourhoods, we will consider these different street functions:

- The **place function** looks at the importance of static uses of the street, such as social interaction, shopping, and play.
- The **movement function** looks at the importance of a street in facilitating the through movement of people. Streets with a high movement function are often part of a network of main roads, enabling longer-distance travel.

Within the context of Liveable Neighbourhoods, two distinct categories of streets emerge from the place and movement functions:

- **Local access streets:** These are high place function streets that give access to residents whose journeys start, pause, or end in the neighbourhood and give opportunity for place making and improvements to increase social interaction.
- **Main movement streets:** These are high movement function streets that are used to facilitate the movement of people through the neighbourhood and are often important transport corridors and/or busy high streets.

Understanding the function of our streets is an essential step in designing our neighbourhoods to be more liveable.

Local access streets will allow friends to visit, deliveries to be made and residents to be picked up and dropped off. The design principles of local access roads will seek to reduce the opportunity for streets to be dominated by purely transport functions,

helping to achieve a greater sense of safety and community.

Main movement streets with high movement functions can also have high place functions, such as bustling high streets. Design principles for these streets need to consider the high levels of movement of people using all modes of travel as well as incorporating place making elements to create more balanced and people friendly environments. Engagement with communities will help to identify the most suitable functions for each street.

Design principles: Local access streets with high place functions

To respond to the challenges noted above we need to apply the following principles to local access streets, with high place functions, including:

- Prioritising place over movement to create spaces that people want to spend time in
- Maximising street activation and social interaction
- Increasing greenery and creating places to relax and enjoy the outdoors
- Improving accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport
- Reducing motor vehicle volumes and speeds to a level appropriate for the street
- Removal of traffic cutting through the neighbourhood

The most effective way to provide a safe environment for and improve placemaking is to take a neighbourhood-wide approach that allows anyone on foot, bicycle or public transport and emergency vehicles to travel through it in any direction, but preventing traffic that is not for local access from travelling through.

For local access streets residents, their visitors, and deliveries can access all properties on quieter, safer streets, allowing more people to feel safer to walk, cycle, or wheel around their neighbourhood and spend time enjoying the local environment. Traffic that currently passes through the neighbourhood without stopping will find that local access streets provide more circuitous routes than the more direct main movement streets that are intended to take larger vehicle volumes.

Design principles: Main movement streets with high movement functions

The streets in our neighbourhoods that have a high movement function play an important role to ensure efficient movement of people to and through the neighbourhood. Some streets with high movement functions are often local high streets (e.g., Gloucester Road, Church Road, Wells Road) providing vital services to our neighbourhoods and facilities that create high place functions. Where this is the case, engagement with communities will help to identify an appropriate balance between movement and place functions.

The following principles apply to main movement streets, with high movement functions:

- Prioritising movement of people by walking, cycling and public transport
- Providing crossing points to connect neighbourhoods and to enable residents to safely access the main movement streets for shops, services, and onward travel
- Maximising opportunities for greenery to enhance the local environment, increase biodiversity and provide sustainable drainage solutions
- Separating different modes of travel for safe and efficient movement

Read [examples of various types of interventions](#) that could be implemented as part of a liveable neighbourhood scheme to resolve issues.

Monitoring and evaluation

Throughout the design and delivery processes, we will monitor the success of Liveable Neighbourhood interventions to learn lessons and refine our approach as necessary. Our approach to this will be led by data, to enable communities to be well informed when developing Liveable Neighbourhood schemes.

What are we going to monitor and how?

The Liveable Neighbourhood objectives set the direction for what needs to be monitored to evidence the success of the implemented Liveable Neighbourhood schemes. The table below sets out the objectives, success criteria and examples of monitoring tools or datasets we could use to demonstrate the benefits of any given scheme against the baseline.

Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood Objective	What will be monitored?	Monitoring tool or dataset
Transform our neighbourhoods to places where people want to spend time, can interact with neighbours, and enjoy their unique identities	<p>Increased presence of people on residential streets</p> <p>Levels of life satisfaction</p> <p>Levels of loneliness</p> <p>Increased street play (children)</p> <p>Increased physical activity (walking, cycling and other)</p>	<p>Liveable Neighbourhood Community Survey</p> <p>Quality of Life survey Healthy Streets tools</p>
Reflect the needs and characteristics of the local community and increase the sense of pride and belonging	<p>Improved public perceptions of local environment</p> <p>Increased social cohesion</p> <p>Increased sense of community</p>	<p>Bristol Quality of Life Survey</p> <p>Liveable Neighbourhood Community Survey</p> <p>Healthy Streets tool(s)</p>
Improve levels of physical and perceived safety in our communities	<p>Perceived safety (using public space, active travel)</p> <p>Safety incidents (crime and collisions)</p>	<p>Liveable Neighbourhood Community Survey</p> <p>Healthy Streets tool(s)</p> <p>STATS19 database</p> <p>Crime statistics</p>
Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood Objective	What will be monitored?	Monitoring tool or dataset
Improve local accessibility and connectivity to shops, schools, services, and other amenities for everyone to move around safely and sustainably	<p>Mode shift and travel behaviour</p> <p>Bus patronage and service reliability</p> <p>Travel demand – trips by travel mode and route information (including origin and destination)</p>	<p>Liveable Neighbourhood Community Survey</p> <p>Quality of Life survey</p> <p>Mode Shift STARS</p> <p>First Move data</p> <p>ANPR sensors measuring origin-destination along key cut-throughs</p>

<p>Improve residents' physical and mental health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Level of active travel (as a contributing factor towards improved health and wellbeing)</p> <p>Health and wellbeing indicators</p>	<p>Liveable Neighbourhood Community Survey</p> <p>Travel to work data</p> <p>Quality of Life survey</p> <p>Traffic counts</p>
<p>Contribute to reducing inequality and opening opportunities for all in our communities</p>	<p>People able to access services in their neighbourhood easily</p> <p>People in employment and education</p>	<p>Liveable Neighbourhood Community Survey</p> <p>Quality of Life survey</p>
<p>Increase resilience and support the economy by improving local centres and high streets and access to jobs, skills, and training</p> <p>Improve local and citywide air quality and contribute to meeting the climate and ecological emergency</p>	<p>Reduced vacancy rates on local high streets (indirect)</p> <p>Increased footfall to the high street (direct)</p> <p>Increase in neighbourhood level economic activity (businesses opening, footfall, business revenue, etc.)</p> <p>Air quality</p> <p>Mode shift and travel behaviour (including carbon savings and air quality because of mode shift)</p> <p>Tree canopy cover</p> <p>Managing risk of flood-reducing volume and improving quality of surface water entering sewers</p>	<p>Air quality monitors</p> <p>Travel to work data</p> <p>Quality of Life survey</p> <p>Traffic counts</p> <p>Measurement of tree pits with a soil volume greater than two-thirds of the projected canopy area of the mature tree</p> <p>Monitors in sewers</p> <p>Number of permeable areas</p> <p>Fix My Street flood reports</p>

Evaluation approach

We will carry out the following for our evaluation approach:

Community surveys: Community surveys carried for each Liveable Neighbourhood area to capture public feedback and for monitoring travel behaviour and social impacts.

Traffic speed and volume counts: Automated traffic speed and volume on roads within and

adjacent to each Liveable Neighbourhood area to measure changes in motorised traffic in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Secondary data collation: Collation of information from existing datasets that are collected at regular intervals to report on progress against the Liveable Neighbourhood objectives.

Evaluation approach

We will collect data and report at key stages throughout the development of Liveable Neighbourhoods. Each of the data collection stages will provide a new set of data to be compared to all previous iterations to demonstrate changes over time, while noting the differing contexts of areas.

We will collect data immediately before and after the implementation of any new Liveable Neighbourhood and at additional intervals post-implementation. For schemes that have temporary measures, we will carry out robust monitoring before and after installation to test all necessary aspects of the experiment.

When planning data collection in each Liveable Neighbourhood, we will consider whether any other data collection is planned elsewhere within the council to avoid any duplication, overlap and potential survey fatigue or confusion in our communities.

We will develop progress reports to summarise the progress of Liveable Neighbourhoods across the city.