



Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation

**Local living and 20-minute
neighbourhoods - planning guidance:
The Scottish Government
Consultation**

July 2023

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CIHT welcomes the Scottish Government consultation on 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' that aims to improve the quality of life, foster local economic activities, and protect the environment. We note immediately how well these aims chime with the strategic priorities of the current national transport strategy (NTS2).

As previously stated in the CIHT report [Fixing a failing planning and transport system](#), we believe sustainable neighbourhoods are achievable by better planning and transport integration. By ensuring that the location of developments fosters accessibility to active travel infrastructure and public transport networks, we can facilitate access to local services and achieve the objectives of '20-minute neighbourhoods.'

The response to the consultation is informed by data gathered during engagement with CIHT members, RTPi and TPS. CIHT ran an interactive webinar on 13 July 2023 that was attended by 109 delegates that involved a workshop with participants from this. The key findings from this are outlined as follows:

According to the CIHT survey results¹, 81% of respondents support the 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' initiative. The majority believes this initiative fosters social and economic opportunities, benefits the environment, reduces car use, creates safer and more liveable neighbourhoods, and improves the quality of life. However, 7% of respondents were against this initiative and 12% were unsure whether they supported it. They raised serious doubts that this initiative would work in rural areas without decent economic opportunities, healthcare facilities, or educational establishments.

The delegates at the workshop noted that the 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' initiative can bring certain benefits, including, but not limited to:

- Reducing carbon emissions and the wider negative environmental impact associated with private car use.
- Bringing more even spread of services, employment, housing, and green spaces.
- Creating a 'community' and the sense of belonging.
- Encouraging active travel and reducing car dependency.
- Bringing positive health impact, including less stress due to long commutes and improving mental wellbeing.
- Building more trust between dwellers and local government.
- Supporting local economic activities.
- Increasing accessibility to services.
- '20-minute neighbourhoods' can accommodate and satisfy the majority of living requirements at all stages of life.

¹ The CIHT had an online survey with 40 responses and ran a webinar with 109 attendees where the same questions were asked to gather feedback. Based on the total number of responses, CIHT conducted the analysis presented in this document.

- Promoting equality and equity.
- Supporting the complexity of people's everyday journeys and makes them more effective and pleasant.
- Reducing crime in the area and creating safer neighbourhoods.
- Bringing a better coordinated land use.

However, attendees at the webinar raised concerns around the realisation of this initiative in practical terms. CIHT would like to highlight some practical concerns that may impair the successful implementation of the 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' policy, such as:

- Difficulties with behavioural change – getting people out of the cars is challenging.
- Insufficient integration of sustainable modes of transport.
- Existing poor infrastructure or its absence is a barrier to active travel (i.e., roads designed for car users rather than walking and cycling).
- Privatisation of bus services that prioritises commercially attractive routes while completely ignoring the needs of the local population.
- Finding the right balance between commercial and community spaces is hard.
- Inevitability of unequal outcomes for urban and rural areas.
- Lack of understanding of this initiative among local communities that leads to misinformation on social media and conspiracy theories.
- Lack of financial resources and support for local authorities.

With regards to the last point, CIHT asked the audience whether they think local authorities have enough financial resources and government support for '20-minute neighbourhoods'. Less than 1% of respondents claim that there is enough support for local authorities, while 72% said they are sure local authorities should receive more guidance and help on this matter; the rest were not sure as they did not have enough data/experience on this question.

As this initiative takes place in Scotland, it is worth mentioning that the geographical context of Scotland is challenging due to numerous rural and island settings. According to our data, 78% of respondents think achieving 20-minute neighbourhoods in rural/island areas is impossible. A minority of respondents did however argue that rural areas have great potential for achieving '20-minute neighbourhoods' because they are already established as self-sufficient communities with some accessible facilities, that can be supplemented by digital accessibility.

Respondents raised a series of crucial points that need further consideration:

- Some small and remote areas might still rely on cars to commute, there is a need to think about options such as on-demand community taxi/bus services in addition to providing provision for walking and cycling.
- Focus should be on creating small local hubs and inter-community connections.
- Public transport coverage is insufficient for rural areas; thus, more investment is needed.

In relation to the final point, Transport for the North² have found that more than 3 million people endure transport-related social exclusion due to poor transport services that results in restricted access to services and opportunities. Scotland shares many characteristics with Northern England and this issue will need to be addressed in any effort to implement.

In their consultation document, the Scottish Government underlined the role of digital accessibility in achieving 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods'. We understand digital accessibility as the process of removing barriers for everyone to access online platforms and designing them for people with different abilities.

The respondents feel that digital accessibility is an essential element for achieving '20-minute neighbourhoods' to reduce the need for travel and open greater economic and social opportunities:

- Reduce the need for travel (i.e., online deliveries, working from home, paying bills).
- It would help encourage sustainable transport use (i.e., reliable transport timetables, availability of e-bikes at docking stations).
- Foster quality and equity and give fair opportunities to people with disabilities.
- Digital services enable 'Local living' in rural areas: for example, the possibility to have an online doctor appointment.
- It should be noted that many opportunities are likely to arise from the re-modelling of existing neighbourhoods: many vacant premises and land uses are to become candidates for changed use. Special advice might be suggested that planning authorities recognise the community accessibility of premises such as failed businesses and churches when considering planning applications.

² Transport for the North Project 'Connecting Communities Strategy'. CIHT 'Research Initiative of the Year' Award Winner 2023.

Nevertheless, there is a risk of isolating elderly and those dwellers who do not have easy access to digital solutions (i.e., internet provision in rural areas might be limited or slow). What is more, as shown by the pandemic, there is a risk that digital services discourage people from leaving home and thus negatively affect mental wellbeing.

As stated in the Scottish Government consultation, 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' play an important role in addressing the challenges of the climate crises. The *Balanced Surface Transport Pathway* in the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) 6th Carbon Budget sets out an emissions trajectory that will allow the UK to meet its target of reaching Net Zero emissions by 2050 (2045 in Scotland).

The pathway and subsequent interventions by the CCC are clear that reduction in the demand for travel via internal combustion engine cars and vans must make a significant contribution to transport decarbonisation, particularly in the next decade when Zero Emission Vehicles will continue to make up a minority of the fleet. In this context, CIHT believes that 20-minute neighbourhoods clearly have a role to play alongside other interventions aimed at reducing demand and/or encouraging modal shift to public transport and active travel.

Consultation Questions

1. How helpful is part 1 of the guidance in furthering the understanding of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods in a Scottish context?

- Very helpful
- **Somewhat helpful**
- Not at all helpful

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

CIHT thinks that part 1 gives a good overview of the concept of 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods', including the benefits of this initiative and the Scottish context.

However, CIHT believes the following ingredients are missing:

- Information on how those '20-minute neighbourhoods' will be funded (including expanding the public transport networks in rural areas and providing more facilities).
- With our strong EDI vision, we believe that the section on qualities of successful places (healthy, pleasant, connected, distinctive, sustainable, adaptable) lacks the notion that places should be inclusive to people with all abilities. The additional point is to add resilience as an additional quality, given it was highlighted as a critical component multiple times throughout the consultation text.
- Potential challenges that need to be further considered by local authorities and communities.
- More practical guidance for local authorities on what should be done to enable 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' in rural/island settings.

- How helpful is the framework diagram in encouraging flexible, place-based approaches to support local living?



- Very helpful
- **Somewhat helpful**
- Not at all helpful

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

The diagram is a helpful illustration of what constitutes the 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods', including the need to consider the movement of people, the wise use of available space, and existing resources to support local living. However, it is not clear what is the role of technology that was mentioned later in the consultation document. Artificial intelligence and digital services can play an important role in supporting the 20-minute neighbourhoods (i.e., enabling people to work from home and have digital services like online delivery) – thus, we believe it must be added to the proposed framework.

A notable omission for practitioners is the absence of general guidance on funding. While there is a Resource category, there is little steer on potential funding sources, which would, of necessity, be local/central government, private sector sponsorship, developers, and (increasingly) social enterprises. The role of 'planning gain' and potential community benefits (social value) are worth mentioning. While the proposed guidance is primarily based on spatial planning and design principles, the emphasis on collaboration can benefit from a clear understanding that funding is fundamental to the realization of the whole initiative.

3. Looking at part 2 of the draft guidance: how helpful are the 'categories' and 'key considerations for local living' that are captured within this part of the document?

- **Very helpful**
- Somewhat helpful
- Not at all helpful

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

Part 2 of the consultation page focuses on active and sustainable transport, which is crucial to fulfilling the daily needs of dwellers. As previously mentioned in the [Better planning, Better transport, Better places](#) report, CIHT supports the need to ensure transport needs are considered from the earliest stage of the development and the transport is safe and accessible for everyone – the same idea is mentioned by the Scottish Government in the abovementioned section of the text. It is also good to see an emphasis on digital accessibility and its role in opening up greater social and economic opportunities.

It is very helpful to see the section on Stewardship since sustainability of new facilities is vital for the neighbourhood pride. There is a possible link here with Public Service Reform (mentioned in Part 1) where there is sporadic evidence of communities undertaking local maintenance activities (i.e., litter picking, snow clearing) in the absence of the full service from local authorities. This devolution of certain service can help reinforce community spirit and ownership.

4. How helpful is the proposed 'structured approach' for use?

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not at all helpful

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

We have no further comments on this question.

5. Does part 3 of the guidance clearly communicate the importance of both qualitative and quantitative data in establishing a baseline for a place?

- **Very helpful**
- Somewhat helpful
- Not at all helpful

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

CIHT believes it is a good emphasis on the need to use both qualitative and quantitative data to understand the context of the place, which is important for the development of the plan to achieve 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods.' For instance, in one of their latest studies that won the CIHT 'Initiative of the Year' Award 2023, Transport for the North have found that more than 3 million people endure transport-related social exclusion due to poor transport services in their areas, which leads to restricted access to services and opportunities. Scotland shares many characteristics with Northern England and this issue will need to be further addressed. Nevertheless, part 3 of the current consultation gives a good initial guidance for those who are engaged in the practical implementation of 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' on what should be assessed by stakeholders involved in the delivery of the plan.

6. How helpful is the 'collaborate, plan, design' section of part 3 in supporting collaborative practices?

- Very helpful
- **Somewhat helpful**
- Not at all helpful

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

CIHT worked on the report '[Our future town](#)' in collaboration with the Royal College of Art (RCA) on planning and design of community spaces and transport. We believe it is essential to follow the *listen, learn, imagine, and change* approach while designing spaces for people. One of the main takeaways from the report that the CIHT wants to emphasise is that 'Sustainable transport cannot exist in isolation from community place-making and many of the key features of more active and effective travel can only happen if our towns are vibrant places to live.' One of the identified costs of our current lifestyle is the cost of poor neighbourhoods – not only do they negatively impact the wellbeing of dwellers, but they also increase costs for healthcare and crime rates. As previously stated, we believe one of the potential benefits of 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' is the opportunity to create healthy, safe, and vibrant places to live if they are designed and planned properly. Examples may include creating a neighbourhood mobility hub, sharing bikes, creating green walkable spaces, and using buildings for multiple purposes (i.e., schools during the weekend are empty and can serve the community's needs).

7. How helpful is the 'implement and review' section of part 3 in assisting the delivery of collaborative approaches to support local living?

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not at all helpful

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

We have no further comments on this question.

8. Looking at part 4 of the draft guidance: do the case studies provide a useful and appropriate range of examples of good practice?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

Yes, but there needs to be an ongoing review of the performance of completed projects in order to share emerging good practice (in the manner of the 'Understand, Collaborate, Implement' cycle recommended in Part 3).

9. Looking at the impact assessment update report: do you have any views about the initial conclusions of the impact assessment update report that accompany and inform this guidance?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your response by adding what else could be helpful:

We have no further comments on this question.