



**friends of
the earth
Portsmouth**

Walking in Portsmouth: A report summarising the comments of people who live, work or visit Portsmouth

1. Introduction

This report summarises comments on walking in Portsmouth made by a broad range of people who live, work, or visit Portsmouth on a regular basis. The comments were collected by Portsmouth Friends of the Earth (PFOE) in order to help inform a 'Portsmouth Walking Strategy'.

The comments fall into four broad areas plus a few additional comments about developing a walking strategy. The four broad areas are:

- Improvements to walking routes (including signs, more trees, seats, lighting)
- Strategies to reduce and slow motor vehicle traffic (including approaches to parking, bus service improvements, speed reduction and car-free zones)
- Pedestrian 'infrastructure' (including pavements and crossings)
- Education and enforcement (including parking on pavements, sharing pavement space, dog poo and litter)

The single issues that provoked the greatest number of responses were cycling, signage, pavements and crossings.

Most comments were collected at a public meeting, 'Walking in Portsmouth: learning from Winchester's walking strategy', held on 10th October 2016. Approximately 50 people attended. Participants were asked to write down their response to a series of questions about walking in Portsmouth on large sheets of paper:

Question a) What is your favourite walk?

Question b) Why do you walk?

Question c) Are there barriers? What?

Question d) What would encourage you to walk or improve the experience?

Question e) What is the best idea you have heard this evening?

A small number of comments were emailed to PFOE by individuals after the meeting. Others were submitted to 'The News' online forum in response to an article in the local paper¹ about the public meeting; and to an online discussion in StreetWise. These have been drawn upon when relevant to the questions above.

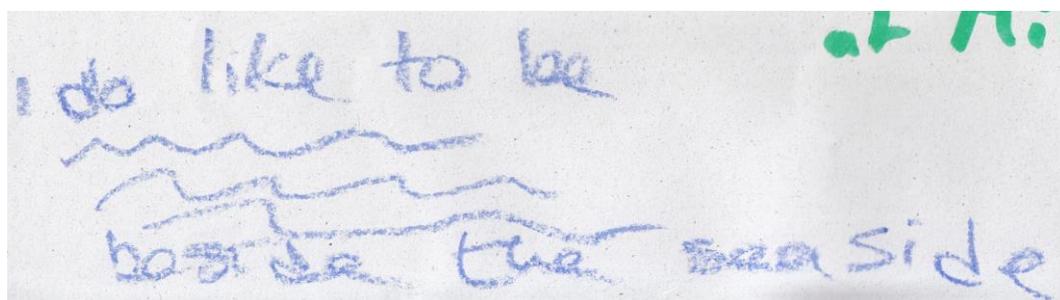
¹ The News Wednesday October 12, 2016, "Take a step in the right direction. Group leads calls for Portsmouth to become a 'walking city' to help fight congestion" (page 1) and "Group says plan will help city take big step forward in tackling congestion" (pages 4-5)

The remainder of this Summary will look at each of the four broad areas relating to walking in Portsmouth in turn.

2. Improvements to walking routes

People commented that they would be encouraged to walk in our city if there were signed walking routes, more trees and planting in our streets, more seats and lighting.

Signs: Several people wanted walking routes to be signed. Low-cost solutions were suggested eg *'routes painted on the pavements (theft proof)'; 'pavement markings';* using *'existing lampposts for signs';* and a *'blue line to show possible walking route from station to seafront'*. This last suggestion is a simple idea that could be used to encourage many more people from central neighbourhoods to find their way to the seafront and shoreline. These are favourite places for walking as indicated by responses to question a) and should be enjoyed by all residents.



Others commented that information on signs should give walking *'time not distance'*, and wanted *'routes that are signed the whole way'* so that people do not get lost or confused, and *'walking routes that meet up'*. The idea of a route *'pointing people to the seafront from [Portsmouth & Southsea] train station'* was particularly liked.

Trees and planting: Several people commented on the need for more trees and planting. It was pointed out that *'more trees by the kerbs absorb pollution, reduce noise'* and provide a *'much more pleasant environment'*. The need to find ways of making walking routes attractive is important, because the main reason people gave when asked *'why walk?'* (question b) was *'enjoyment'*.

Seats: Comments indicate that a *'lack of benches to rest'* puts people off walking, which means they miss out on the many benefits of walking such as *'health'; 'good for relaxing the mind'; 'thinking time'; appreciation of nature', to be sociable, say hello to passer-by'* and *'quality of life'* (all responses to *'why walk?'*, question c).

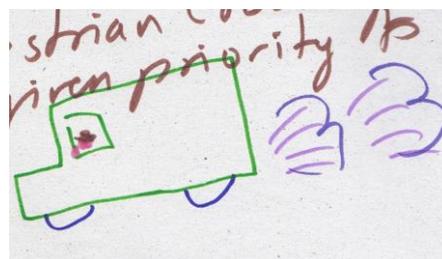
Lighting: *'Poor lighting'* is seen as a barrier to walking eg *'poor illumination for safety'; 'improve route from Milton to town centre esp along railway lines – too dark & gloomy. Need illumination.'* *'Lighting on walls'* was suggested in order to minimise cost and clutter.

Many of these improvements are relatively straight-forward to implement once key walking routes have been identified. The issue is whether there is a budget to pay

for them. It is noted that Flick Drummond, MP for Portsmouth South, has suggested that the Community Investment Levy might be a source of funding.

3. Strategies to reduce and slow motor vehicle traffic

It is clear from comments, one in the form of a sketch of a vehicle with exhaust fumes coming out of the back, that the volume of motor vehicle traffic in our city acts as a barrier to walking.



Suggestions for reducing traffic fall into four main areas: parking arrangements, bus service improvements, speed reduction and the creation of car-free areas. In addition, one person suggested a congestion charge

Parking: As one person said, *'for any policy to promote walking and cycling to work in Portsmouth, I think it is necessary to review the city's various parking systems'*. This view is echoed by others: *'one way of discouraging driving might be to end all FREE parking in the City, which would also help the Council generate more revenue'*; *'will soon happen if Portsmouth made the full city permit parking only, with the prices going up!'*. Others suggested that it would be helpful to *'limit parking'* and to move *'car parks away from the seafront'*. It was pointed out that *'poorly signposted off-street car parks'* leads to greater on-street parking in neighbourhoods such as North End. The idea of a *'Park & Stride'* scheme was welcomed. Primarily intended for schools, this scheme might be for appropriate in other situations.

Public transport: A walking-friendly city needs a cheap, convenient and reliable public transport system for the many occasions when distances are too great to walk and/or bags too heavy to carry. Comments indicate that providing a good bus service is perceived to be a key strategy for reducing traffic congestion and encouraging people to walk: *'If they had a better bus service or even had the foresight to introduce trams... maybe people would get out of their cars locally at least.'* *'Try reducing bus fares. They're extortionate.'* *'More people would get the bus if it was affordable. Instead of 4 quid a return.'*

Traffic speed: If traffic speed were reduced several people indicated that they would be encouraged to walk more. *'Making the city strictly 30 mph would make an enormous difference.'* *'Sadly, High Street in Old Portsmouth is one of the city's many 'fast roads.'* Suggestions for reducing traffic speed included *'vehicle activated signs'*; *'better 20 mph signage in general'*; and *'raised tables and road build outs'*. These comments on speeding traffic are also relevant to Section 5 of this report, 'Education and Enforcement'. As one person commented *'unfortunately drivers seem to ignore any signage'*.

Car-free areas: Several people felt that they would be encouraged to walk if there were *'more car-free areas'* in the city. It was suggested that we could *'have car free*

roads at weekends! No traffic allowed in certain zones. Zone specially encouraging cycling and walking.'

Strategies for reducing traffic in the city and providing cheap, convenient and reliable public transport are essential if people are to be encouraged to walk more. These should form a key part of a Portsmouth Walking Strategy. Although there are cost implications, the key is doing things differently and having the confidence to do so. Several practical suggestions for reducing traffic have been put forward and need serious consideration. A number of cities are experimenting with car-free days in central areas. We hope this city will join them. We recommend that those points relating to parking and its role in creating a walking-friendly city should be considered in the Council's 'Scrutiny Review of Parking' that is currently taking place. The idea of identifying zones that especially encourage cycling and walking is worth exploring.

4. Pedestrian infrastructure

Walking needs to be seen as a mode of transport, and therefore investment in walking infrastructure should receive its fair share of the city's budget for transport infrastructure.

Pavements: Good pavements and crossings are essential infrastructure for walking. Comments about problems with pavements included '*often pavements are too narrow*'; '*widen the pavement in Goldsmith Avenue*'; '*some places don't even have pavements*'; '*widening pavements*' is the best idea I've heard this evening; '*I don't like pavements with cambers (I need a level surface)*'; '*too many things on the pavements*'.

There were particular concerns about drop kerbs: '*When they place drop curbs for wheelchairs, mobility vehicles & pushchairs/prams could they place one on both sides of the road instead of 2 on one side, have found this to be very hard work in a heavy wheelchair, prevented me being able to get to the shops independently ☹*'; '*I would say wheelchair access needs a whole lot of work around the city centre – just saying ;)*'. '*Yes, you're right about drop kerbs. I notice when have shopping trolley with me – it seems a bit random and chaotic getting over the road and looking for them*'. The idea of '*step-free kerbs*' at street entrances and in shared spaces was considered '*very valid*'.

Crossings: '*Poor or dangerous crossing points*' are seen as a barrier to walking, whilst '*more places to cross the road*' would encourage people to walk. There were some strong feelings on this topic. For example, having to wait for ages for pedestrian crossing lights to change has caused much frustration: '*Road junctions could be improved to equalise the priority. For too long motorists think they have greater rights. Which came first? Walking or Driving? Pedestrian Crossings can be given priority to pedestrians. Many times have to wait until the road is clear before the crossing lights change. Defeats the object.*' Safety is a major concern too: '*The Anglesea crossing is a very dangerous crossing, if there is a large amount of people in the middle island they can overflow onto the road. What is the council prepared to*

do to improve the safety of the public using the crossing?’ ‘As for crossings, could do with a decent one to get over the Eastney Road to Tescos, busy road and quite a few do risk their health trying to get over!’

A recent report published by the Department of Transport (2014)² highlights the considerable financial benefits (in the order of 4:1) arising from the physical and mental health benefits of investing in walking and cycling. A report commissioned by Living Streets (2013)³ includes several case studies showing that pedestrian improvements lead to increased footfall and consumer spending.

In order to ensure that investment in pedestrian infrastructure is well spent, the city will need to be strategic rather than ad hoc in its approach to making improvements. A good starting place would be to identify key walking routes to the city centre and improve those. Routes to other major destinations such as schools, hospitals/ treatment centres, sports and retail centres should also be given priority.

5. Education and enforcement

There is great concern on the part of pedestrians, already squeezed by traffic onto narrow pavements, about people parking vehicles on pavements and problems arising from sharing pavement space. There is some concern about dog poo and litter on pavements. Together these act as considerable barriers to walking.

People parking vehicles on pavements: Many concerns were expressed about *‘cars parked on pavements’*: *‘Stop cars parking all over the pavement including motorcyclists; ‘Parking on pavements is a bit of an issue on Heidelberg Av, must admit – what with overgrown bushes and cars halfway on pavement (over the permitted line) it’s hard for a pedestrian to get through let alone a mobility scooter, no chance!’*

Sharing pavement space: Pavements are shared between people on foot, children in pushchairs, children on scooters, people in wheelchairs, people on mobility scooters and, sometimes, people on bicycles, skateboards and rollerblades. Ideally, people want to travel at a regular pace but where pavement space is limited differences in speed can cause problems. Average walking speed is 3 mph, but can be 1-2 mph if people are ‘strolling’. Comments indicate that even these small differences in speed on busy and/or narrow pavements can cause walkers to feel frustrated with *‘other pedestrians using mobile phones’*; *‘oh yes, start walking and end up stuck behind the dawdling ...constantly fiddling with their mobile phones!’*

The legal speed limit for mobility scooters on pavements is 4 mph, although as one person says, *‘mobility scooters on pavements – some are dangerous’*. The

² Davis A (2014) *Claiming the Health Dividend: a summary and discussion of value for money estimates from studies of investment in walking and cycling* Department of Transport: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371096/claiming_the_health_dividend.pdf

³ Lawler E (2013) *The Pedestrian Pound: the business case for better streets and places* Living Streets www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/1391/pedestrianpound_fullreport_web.pdf

difference in speed between cyclists and walkers is greater, as the average speed of cyclists in urban areas is 9-10 mph. Skateboarders and roller-bladers also move at a similar speed. A variety of comments make it clear that problems are arising on pavements, only some of which are meant to be cycle paths: *'Too many cyclists on pavements that are not cycle paths'; 'I am at an ever increasing risk walking as there are so many cyclists (mostly grown men) riding too fast on the pavements'; 'Here here! [sic]'; 'agree!'; 'Too many cyclists riding illegally on pavements!'; 'Cyclists can be a problem'; 'I'm just worried will forget to check for bikes both ways and get hit one day!... I just don't want to be walking anywhere near cyclists these days 😊'.*

A number of solutions were proposed involving education, better designed shared paths, education and enforcement of relevant legislation: *'Discourage cycling on pavements (shared walkways)'; 'Signage very vital. When I was nearly involved in accident with speeding cyclist outside University Library told (when complained) that this was joint space – Toucan crossing at Blackwells.'* *'Stopping cyclists to ride on the pavements at great speed'; 'Off road shared cycle/pedestrian paths. Despite the seemingly anti-cyclists comments on these charts, blending the two makes it safer for both'; 'University should educate students on cycling and pedestrian rules in UK.'*

It is Portsmouth Friends of the Earth's view that strategies to make Portsmouth cycling and walking friendly go hand in hand. Our group is very supportive of cycling and of the 'City to Share'⁴ cycling strategy that has been developed by Portsmouth Cycle Forum. As 'A City to Share' states:

"Creating space for cycling will reduce levels of motor traffic. These measures will benefit not only cyclists but also those who need to drive, who will face less congestion, and pedestrians, who will enjoy cleaner, quieter and safer streets." (A City to Share, p8).

Many cyclists are afraid of fast-moving motorised traffic so cycle on footways, which is very much against the law. PFOE welcomes the Council's plans for clearly signed 'quiet-ways' offering alternative routes to cyclists, away from busy roads.

Dog-poo and litter: A small number of people indicated that dog-poo and litter on the pavement makes walking unpleasant: *'If I had to name a barrier...I would say dog's fouling...I mean it's everywhere'; 'That was mentioned at the school I work at today, it's a huge problem for school trips, Waverley Road is terrible for it'; 'Yep I do find litter upsetting when walking about'.*

Clearly all pavement-users, including cyclists, people on motor-scooters, dog-walkers and people using mobile phones or eating & drinking need to show consideration to other pavement users. Both education and, where relevant legislation applies, enforcement can help. But in the end, the main problem is too

⁴ Portsmouth Cycle Forum (2014) *A City to Share: cycling strategy for Portsmouth*
<http://acitytoshare.org/>

many cars in our streets with other users feeling unsafe and confined to a narrow strip at the edge. The balance is wrong and needs changing.

6. Developing a Portsmouth walking strategy

A few people made suggestions for ways in which the city might develop a walking strategy: *'Use experts to work with organisations & PCC and engage community participation so that public have ownership'; 'PCC to consult & engage effectively with the community. Discover the real issues from those that live & work here'; 'Be Brave. Have vision. Make big decision to make change that makes a difference.'*

We couldn't have put it better. Organisations such as 'Living Streets' have great expertise and much experience in working with communities to help them make their streets more walking-friendly. We recommend that PCC work with Living Streets to engage with local residents, traders and other key stakeholders to identify key walking routes across the city and how these might be made more walking-friendly. Experiments with ideas such as car free days and zones and temporary planting and seating can be helpful to see their impact. But in the end, we need the vision of 'a city for people not just for cars' embedded in our Portsmouth Plan. All developments should flow from this.

7. Conclusion

Walking is an important mode of transport. It benefits our environment, health and well-being, creates a sense of community and place, and brings increased footfall and 'the pedestrian pound' to our highstreets and city centre. It has a vital role to play in the future of Portsmouth as a vibrant and resilient city. Portsmouth Friends of the Earth proposes that a vision of Portsmouth as a city for people, not just for cars, should be central to the new Portsmouth Plan. A Portsmouth Walking Strategy should be developed in tandem with the adoption of the 'City to Share' cycling strategy. Both should consider all people who use our streets, including those with mobility disabilities and visual impairments and families with young children. The walking strategy should be developed around the four areas identified in this summary:

- Improvements to walking routes (including signs, more trees, seats, lighting)
- Strategies to reduce and slow motor vehicle traffic (including approaches to parking, bus service improvements, speed reduction and car-free zones)
- Pedestrian 'infrastructure' (including pavements and crossings)
- Education and enforcement (including parking on pavements, sharing pavement space, dog poo and litter)

Wherever possible, people who live and work in Portsmouth should be consulted and engaged with ideas for developments in their area.

Portsmouth Friends of the Earth, 5 November 2016