

LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL

Briefing for the Commons 2nd Reading: Wednesday 8 June

INTRODUCTION

Cycling UK was founded in 1878 and has over 70,000 members. Our central charitable mission is to make cycling a safe, accessible, enjoyable and ‘normal’ transport option and leisure activity for people of all ages and abilities. Our interests cover cycling both as a form of day-to-day transport and as a leisure activity, which can deliver health, economic, environmental, safety and quality of life benefits, both for individuals and for society.

Cycling UK is a member of the [Better Planning Coalition \(BPC\)](#) and a supporter of the [Nature for Everyone campaign](#), led by Wildlife and Countryside Link. We are also members of the Walking and Cycling Alliance (WACA, together with the Bicycle Association, British Cycling, the pedestrian charities Living Streets and the Ramblers, and sustainable transport charity Sustrans).

Cycling UK supports the [BPC’s 2nd Reading briefing](#) on the [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill](#) (LURB). This briefing provides some additional detail on two issues that are of particular concern to us, namely:

- **Ensuring that new housing and other developments are located and designed where they will support clean and healthy travel, so as to reduce car-dependence;** and
- **Providing good access to off-road cycling and walking opportunities, and green open spaces, within and around new developments,** to give people of all ages opportunities to cycle and walk both for day-to-day travel and for healthy recreation.

We would add that LURB needs to ensure that the above aims are supported by the processes for assessing the environmental impacts of new developments, and for securing developer contributions to community infrastructure.

THE LOCATION AND DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The transport sector is now the [biggest contributor to UK greenhouse gas emissions](#). In 2018, road transport accounted for 33% of the UK’s territorial CO₂ emissions (i.e. excluding aviation and shipping) by end user. Cars accounted for 61% of road transport emissions.

It is therefore crucial that the planning system plays a role in reducing society’s dependence on car travel, if the UK is to meet its net zero targets and carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act 2008. That means ensuring not only that **roads, junctions, off-road routes and other facilities are designed to be cycle-friendly** and people-friendly, but also that **the location of new developments supports active and sustainable travel**.

Yet research by Transport for New Homes has shown that, too often, new developments are located where they have little access to public transport, and are designed with ample car-parking space but little provision for walking and cycling. Such developments are detrimental to our physical and mental health and well-being, as well as to the local and global environment.

LURB therefore needs to ensure that the aims of **supporting clean and healthy transport and reducing car-dependence are integral to every stage in the planning system** – from national policy (including the proposed National Development Management Policies and the forthcoming revision of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), to Local Plans, to environmental assessment processes, and individual planning decisions. Crucially, paragraph 111 of NPPF needs to be revised, as the current version makes it **very hard for councils to reject car-dependent developments**. It needs to do the opposite – see [blog](#).

The planning system needs to incorporate the concept of [20-minute neighbourhoods](#), i.e. planning to ensure that people can reach key facilities (essential shops, schools, schools, banks, post offices and healthcare facilities) within a 20-minute walk or short bike ride.

LURB also needs to ensure **consistency of approach to active travel planning in two-tier areas** (i.e. those with both a county council acting as a highway authority, and a district council acting as a planning authority), by ensuring that planning authorities' Local Plans reflect the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) that are now being (or have been) adopted by most highway authorities, as [recommended by the Department for Transport](#) (DfT). LCWIPs are expected to be a key feature of the Local Transport Plan process which DfT will be reviving later this year, as part of the Government's [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#). Hence it is vital that LURB supports this coordination between land use and transport planning policies.

LURB also needs to **spell out the role that Active Travel England (ATE) in the planning system**, as set out in the Government's '[Gear Change](#)' [vision for cycling and walking](#). ATE was [recently launched](#) as a non-departmental body, to uphold [DfT's requirements](#) for roads, paths, junctions and other infrastructure to be designed to support cycling and walking. Gear Change stipulated that ATE would be a statutory consultee for 'major developments', yet this is not currently reflected in LURB.

ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE AND OFF-ROAD CYCLING AND WALKING OPPORTUNITIES

One of the silver linings of the pandemic was how many people took up cycling and walking for exercise, and how important they realised this was for their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The Environment Agency recently [reported](#) that *"Equality of access to, and connection with, a healthy natural environment would save billions of pounds in healthcare costs and reduced economic activity every year."* The Government-commissioned [Landscapes review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) (AONBs) urged the Government to *"Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes"*.

Yet too often, people feel that the only way they can safely get out into the countryside for a family walk or cycle ride is to jump in a car. Too many towns are cut off from the surrounding countryside by ring-roads or bypasses with no safe crossing points that are suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

The planning system could address this by:

- **Ensuring that Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) are reflected in Local Plans and new developments**, in the same way that LCWIPs should be (see above). In many rural areas, there is untapped potential to enable children to walk or cycle to schools in nearby towns (instead of being driven), using the rights of way network – as well as for families to get out into the surrounding countryside. Better integration of LCWIPs (which are DfT's responsibility) and RoWIPs (which are DEFRA's) would facilitate this.
- **Safeguarding disused railway lines and other linear features** that could be opened up as cycling and walking routes.

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