



Response to Government Consultation

‘A Safer Way’ - July 2009

Walking and cycling must be encouraged, not merely accommodated. Both are important components in delivering the five key goals stated in 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System'. Vulnerable road users (VRU) must be given higher status and protection. Policy must ensure that we are all more attentive when in charge of ourselves and of vehicles.

'Road safety' needs to recognise and reflect the wider roles of streets as places - not just as links in a travel network. The act of 'walking' describes the activity of being outdoors, not necessarily for travel. The role of streets is for more than just travel - they are places where social interaction occurs, and where communities develop.

Safer streets need to enable the activity of walking to be undertaken at all times; and safer streets need to be walkable by everybody. There are no age or competence limits for walking, and it should be made available 24 hours a day, 365 days each year.

The pedestrian must no longer be considered a 'secondary' participant in the activities that take place in the street. Accepted practices such as the pedestrian having to seek permission to cross the road at light controlled signals, or pedestrian diversions at urban mini roundabouts reflect out of date attitudes that the pedestrian has lower status than the motor vehicle user. The government's 'Manual for Streets' confirms the higher status of the pedestrian and the cyclist. The law needs to reflect that.

Key changes to road safety culture and law are needed to ensure that walkability is enshrined within design guidance, as opposed to simply 'provision of walking facilities'. In particular:

1. The law needs to reflect the considerable potential for a motor vehicle driver (an adult who has passed or is training for a competence test) to injure or kill a VRU (of any age and untested competence). **In a collision between a vehicle and a VRU it should be for the motor vehicle driver to demonstrate that liability was not theirs,** rather than for the VRU to demonstrate that liability rested with the driver. This is necessary to underpin encouragement of walking and cycling, and to strengthen a culture of responsible driving and traveller behaviour.

2. **Twenty miles per hour limits are needed in more streets than those described as 'residential'.** Many streets are 'mixed priority streets' and many are bus routes. Most pedestrian activity takes place on such streets, and it is there that most street crossing activity takes place. They are the streets where the heaviest vehicles and the more complex vehicle movements - acceleration, braking, parking, loading, side road movements etc - are witnessed most. Not only is the kinetic energy of a vehicle at 30mph about twice that at 20mph, and the potential to injure or kill correspondingly greater; it is in such streets that drivers can be easily distracted, and where the ability for VRUs to assess drivers' intentions is so important in avoiding collisions.