

September 2023

*Moving around Sandwell and  
Southampton*

Findings from a dialogue on walking and cycling



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# Executive Summary

## About the dialogue

In October 2022 Sustrans commissioned Hopkins Van Mil to design and deliver a mini-dialogue in two locations to find out more about why some people use their local area for everyday walking and cycling whilst others do not.

The dialogue’s workshops took place in two neighbourhood locations in England: Bearwood in Sandwell (West Midlands) and St Denys in Southampton (Southern England). These are marked on the map to the right-hand side of this page.



A total of 32 local residents took part across both locations, attending two full day workshops held four weeks apart in March and April 2023. Workshops comprised a range of activities including:

- Facilitated small group discussions
- Paired interviews
- Neighbourhood ‘walk and talk’ sessions
- Speaker presentations and Q&As

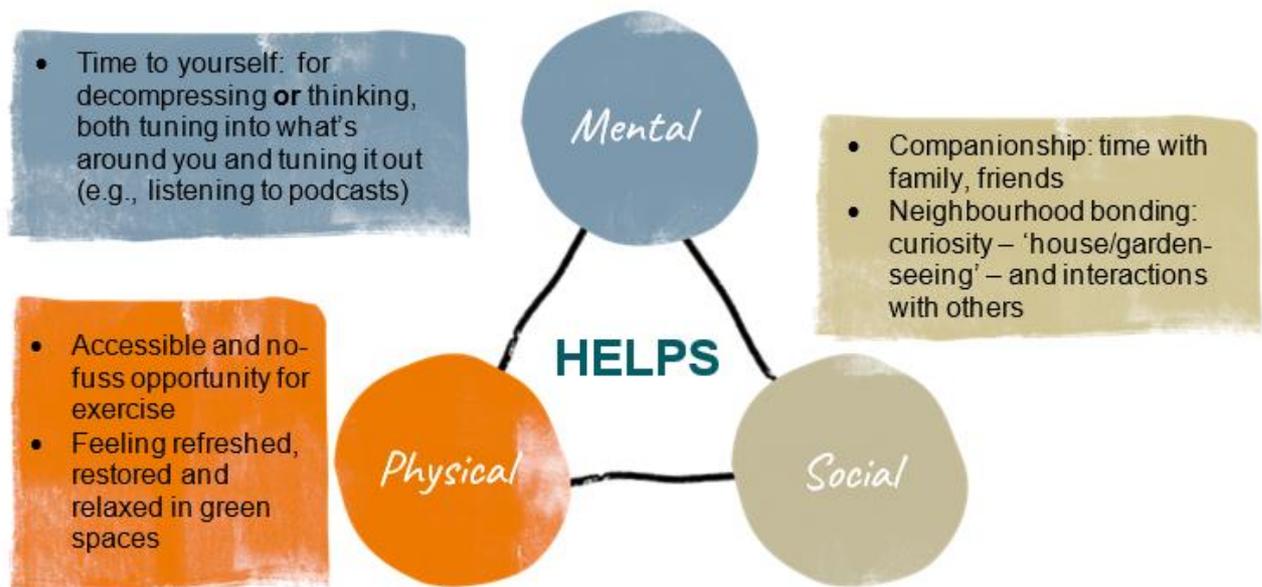
The figure below summarises who took part and what the participants did.



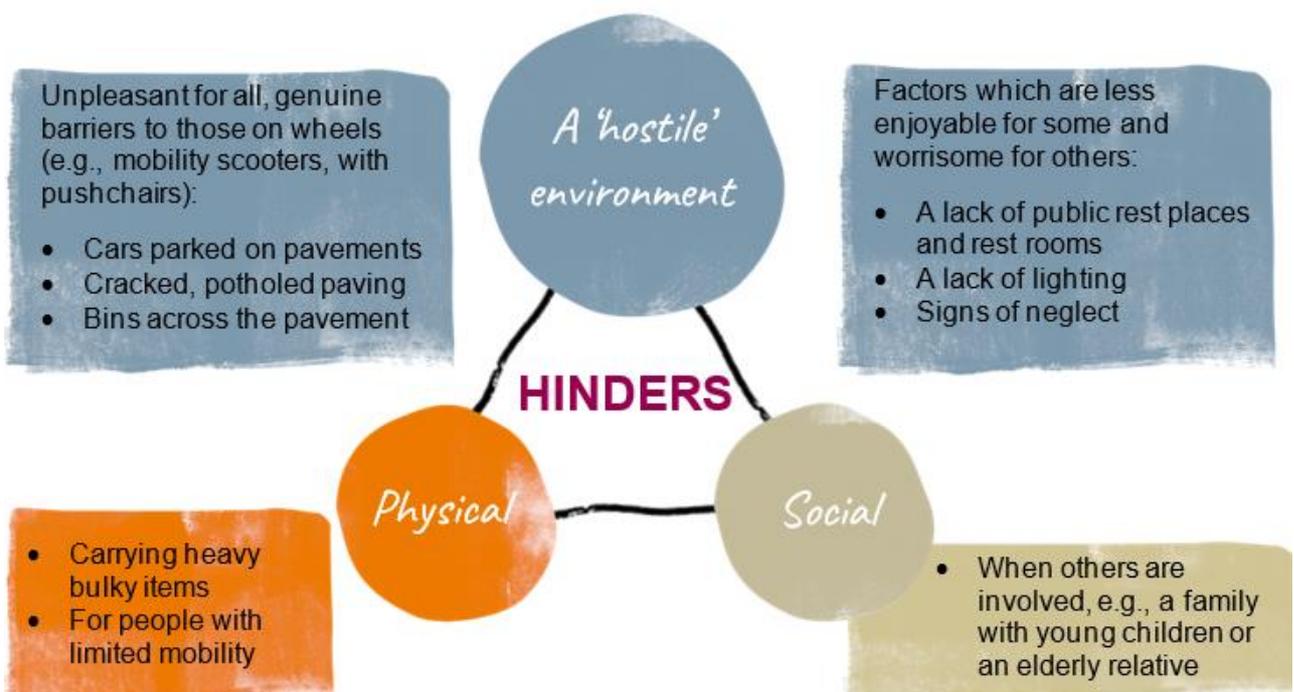
## Key findings

We summarise here the key points made for what helps and hinders walking, wheeling and cycling.<sup>1</sup>

### What helps walking

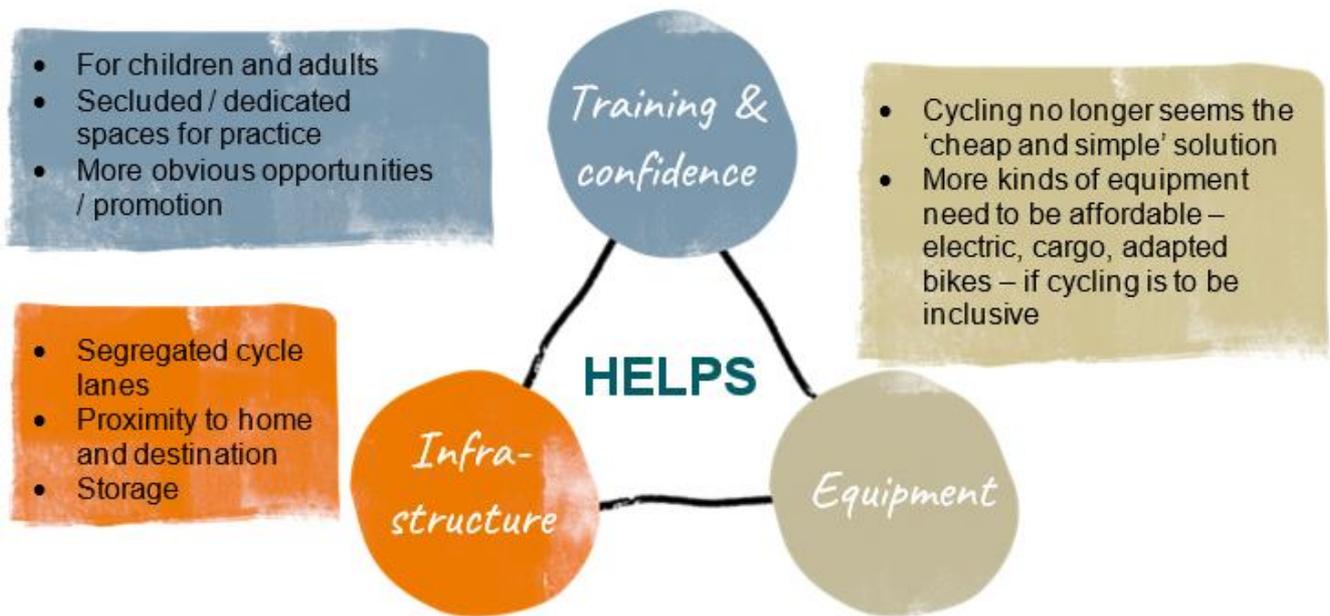


### What hinders walking

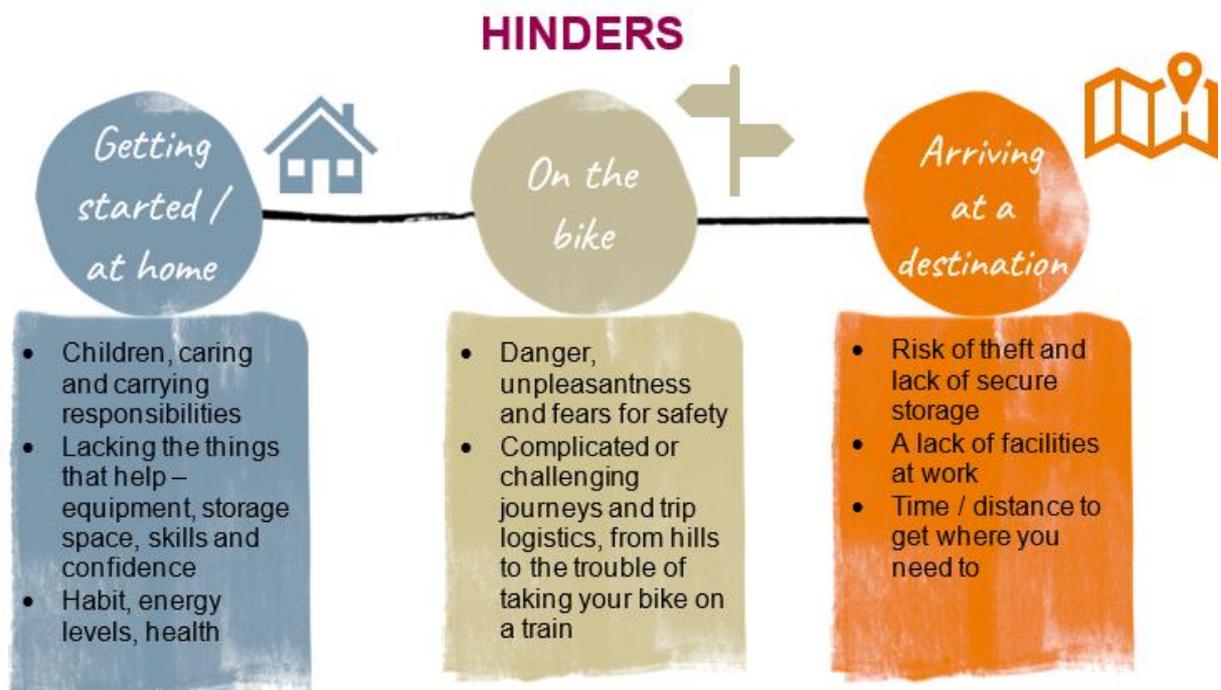


<sup>1</sup> Separate location focused summaries for Bearwood and St Denys have also been created, available from Sustrans upon request.

## What helps cycling



## What hinders cycling



## Considerations for Sustrans

Did this research uncover new insights? We are conscious that the considerations we share here are very likely not 'new', but we believe they are true and real.

### 1. You cycle? You're brave!

Cycling for most people has a fear factor. The response when people say they cycle of 'you're brave' is often said. It is unimaginable that the phrase 'you're brave' would be said in countries like the Netherlands. **We heard consistently from participants that the greatest enabler of cycling is dedicated, safe space.**

### 2. Cycling overshadowing walking

When cycling and walking are bound together in 'Active Travel Strategies', the mention of cycling can trigger the response of 'that's not for me'. Some participants suggested **treating walking and cycling separately to give each their own space to be explored, explained and supported.**

### 3. Cycling risks being seen as elitist

It may seem counterintuitive that a cheap mode of transport can be perceived as elitist, but by some participants it is. **Branding car use as a crime against the environment and harming your neighbourhood risks hardening attitudes and fuelling an 'us vs them' stand-off between cyclists and drivers.**

### 4. A more nuanced stance on car use

**Helping to reduce car journeys rather than car use by showing understanding that some journeys may need a car to be practical:** e.g. transporting equipment and doing multiple site visits, may be a more acceptable and helpful approach while the long journey of slowly adapting our environment to being less car-centric takes shape.

### 5. Continuing to encourage more pedestrian friendly spaces

Critical places in our neighbourhoods are not pedestrian friendly. The things that would make them more friendly are not rocket science: for example, pedestrian crossings with buttons that work and favour pedestrians, ensuring that at least one side of a pavement along a street is accessible and not obstructed by parked vehicles. **It should be a human right to walk a pram or take a wheelchair along a pavement and not be forced into the road.**

## A. Introduction

### *1. Background*

#### About Sustrans

[Sustrans](#) is a UK-wide charity whose mission is to make it easier for everyone to walk and cycle. It works for and with communities, helping them come to life by walking, wheeling and cycling to create healthier places and happier lives for everyone. Across the UK it involves communities in shaping our towns and cities and is custodian of the National Cycle Network. It campaigns for and creates spaces where everyone can move around safely and gives people the tools and confidence to get out of their cars. Sustrans seeks to inspire people to change the way we all travel every day, forging closer connections with our neighbours and reducing traffic to create a better environment and more sustainable society for everyone.

#### About Hopkins Van Mil

[Hopkins Van Mil](#) (HVM) is a social research agency that creates safe, impartial and productive spaces in which to explore and gain an understanding of people's views on the content which matters to them, to stakeholders, and to society. We work flexibly to build trust. HVM has extensive experience in preparing for, designing and facilitating effective deliberative processes. We hold a lens up to issues which are contentious, emotionally engaging and on which there are a broad range of viewpoints that need to be taken in to account.

#### The purpose of this dialogue

Sustrans aimed to understand, in more depth, what helps and hinders people walking, cycling and wheeling<sup>2</sup> in their neighbourhoods. Sustrans regularly engages with people who already use walking and cycling routes, including the National Cycle Network, but they are always learning and believe that making it easier for people to walk and cycle will benefit everyone. This form of deliberative research was chosen to hear from a variety of people, including those who don't walk and cycle as much, and so to uncover new insights. Sustrans will use the findings from these workshops to inform the kind of research they do in the future, the kinds of projects they seek funding for including to help shape the National Cycle Network to make it more accessible for all, how they work with communities, as well as to inform policy recommendations.

### *2. The dialogue process*

In October 2022 Sustrans commissioned Hopkins Van Mil to design and deliver this mini-dialogue in two locations to find out more about why some people use their local area for everyday walking and cycling whilst others do not.

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<sup>2</sup> This report follows Sustrans' use of the term wheeling to refer to modes of travel that use pavement space at a similar speed to walking, such as wheelchairs or mobility scooters. It is distinct from the use of e-scooters or cycles. Sustrans recommends using the terms walking and wheeling together, to reflect the fact that people may identify with one term, the other, or both. For more information see Sustrans' 2022 report "[Walking for Everyone](#)" (p.3).

A small-scale form of public dialogue was well-suited to conducting this research in local, community settings. Dialogue enables constructive conversations to happen on topics which are often complex or controversial and between people whose views and values may differ. Not only does it provide in-depth insight into people’s views, but it also goes beyond to explore the reasoning behind them.

Dialogue methods also help to ensure that participants are given time and a level playing field to discuss the issues that matter to them, their communities and society at-large. Key to this is that dialogue is both:

- **Facilitated:** the process is carefully structured to ensure that participants receive the right amount and detail of information, a diverse range of views are heard and taken into account and the discussion is not dominated by particular individuals or issues; and
- **Deliberative:** participants develop their views on an issue through conversation with other participants, policy makers and experts.

A total of 32 local residents took part across both locations, attending two full day workshops held four weeks apart in March and April 2023 (see figure 1 for an overview of the process).

**Figure 1: Workshop process**



Workshops adopted a range of methods of engagement and information-provision which reflected the overall aim of the dialogue. These included:

- **Facilitated small group discussions** giving space and structure for participants to share views in detail and over time, whilst hearing from and reflecting on the views of others. Active notetaking by facilitators meant participants could follow and challenge the record of what was said as

discussions were taking place. Discussions were audio recorded in full and later transcribed for the purposes of our analysis (see also 6. Analysis and Reporting, p.13).

- **Individual, paired and place-based activities** provided additional ways to prompt participants' thinking, as well as a variety of ways for them to input. This included:
  - **'Walk and talk' sessions** to explore local infrastructure and encourage participants to share immediate reflections on this and other aspects of the neighbourhood that matter to them.
  - **Paired interviews and discussion** provided participants with more time to delve into and share their own experiences or reflections with just one other person.
  - **Recording short news-features for local radio** to encourage participants to explore different roles and responsibilities and how they inform decisions about travel policy locally.
  - **Participant note-taking and map annotation** to share written reflections and make specific points in relation to their own neighbourhood.
- **Speaker presentations and Q&As** provided participants with evidence on key themes including cycling infrastructure, school streets and active travel zones, both locally and nationally. Facilitated Q&As ensured two-way dialogue took place between participants and speakers, allowing participants to discuss issues that matter to them with speakers.
- **Whole group briefings, summaries and conclusions** brought small groups together, giving participants insight into the discussions held in other groups, and ensured equal understanding about the overall purpose and structure of the dialogue.

Before and between each workshop, participants also contributed to a dedicated online space created for the project using Recollective.<sup>3</sup> Through this, participants took part in further activities such as mapping, journaling and interviews in their own time.

### *3. Locations*

The dialogue's workshops took place in two neighbourhood locations in England: Bearwood in Sandwell (West Midlands) and St Denys in Southampton (Southern England). These are marked on the map below (figure 2).

The objective was to hold workshops in places 'where living happens' – with housing, commercial, occupational and leisure infrastructure all in close proximity, such as potential '20-minute neighbourhoods'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [Recollective](#) is a qualitative research platform. It was used to provide an online space for participant discussion, share written and visual stimulus with participants before each workshop and invite participants contributions on the topic, including using comment boxes, mapping activities, reflective journaling and evaluation questions.

<sup>4</sup> A 20-minute neighbourhood is somewhere residents can meet most of their everyday needs via a short, convenient and enjoyable route, taking them no more than 20-minutes walking to and from home. For more information see Sustrans' 2020 publication [What is a 20-minute neighbourhood? - Sustrans.org.uk](#).

From the outset the intention was for these locations to have contrasting opportunities for walking and cycling. One location should demonstrate significant developments and support for walking and cycling as well as being located close to the National Cycle Network and the other location should be somewhere this was less clear. Choice of locations was informed by desk research conducted by Hopkins Van Mil in the first phase of the project, in consultation with Sustrans' project team and on-the-ground staff in each region.



**Figure 2: Workshop locations**

Avoiding the UK's largest cities, Southampton was initially identified as a good example of somewhere that has seen investment and support for walking and cycling in recent years. This is clear from the implementation of several Active Travel Zones<sup>5</sup> in the city and the ongoing development of a cycle network.<sup>6</sup> The St Denys neighbourhood was subsequently selected as an area of the city well-suited to recruit from and host the workshops. St Denys sits within the Portswood ward to the north-east of Southampton city centre. It was designated the first Active Travel Zone in Southampton and is intersected by multiple cycle networks, incorporating both the Southampton Cycle Network and the National Cycle Network.



Sandwell borders the north of Birmingham. It was identified as an example of somewhere which demonstrates less obvious investment for walking and cycling.



Sandwell Council has received funding from the Active Travel Fund and consulted communities on proposals for active travel schemes, however these developments are in their earlier stages compared with those in Southampton.<sup>7</sup> Within Sandwell, Bearwood was identified as a suitable neighbourhood in which to hold the workshops and recruit into them. At the time of research Bearwood and its surrounding areas demonstrated less evidence of existing

walking and cycling infrastructure when compared with St Denys. There are currently no clearly mapped cycle routes through Bearwood and the nearest National Cycle Network route is approximately 1.5 miles from the centre of Bearwood.

More detailed introductions to Bearwood and St Denys, including participants' perceptions as residents, are given in the location profiles below. More statistics on the local population and cycling/walking/wheeling rates are in our location recommendations in appendix A.

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<sup>5</sup> For a summary of Southampton's Active Travel Zones see the active travel section of the City Council's transport website, available online here: <https://transport.southampton.gov.uk/active-travel-fund/>

<sup>6</sup> For a summary of the Southampton Cycle Network see "Connection Southampton 2040" on the City Council's transport website, available online here: <https://transport.southampton.gov.uk/connected-southampton-2040/southampton-cycle-network/>

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of consultation activities relating to Sandwell's Active Travel Fund, including proposed interventions on Bearwood High Street see <https://sandwellwalking-and-cycling.commonplace.is/>.

## 4. Who took part

The dialogue involved 32 participants in total, 18 in Bearwood and 14 in St Denys. All 32 participants attended both workshops and took part in the online space. Participants were recruited using a combination of on-street, over the phone and online methods. Workshop flyers were posted on public noticeboards and in shops, cafes and venues including community centres, libraries and churches in both neighbourhoods. The flyer was also shared on community Facebook groups dedicated to St Denys and Bearwood. Additional local community groups and venues were approached directly by e-mail or phone to reach specific communities such as those with long-term health conditions or communities experiencing racial inequalities.

Participant selection followed a recruitment specification which aimed to broadly reflect the local population of each location in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and life stage. The specification also looked for a range of travel behaviours and attitudes. The full recruitment specification can be seen in appendix B.

The table below summarises the most frequent methods of travel among the final participants in each location.

<i>Method of travel</i>	<i>St Denys, Southampton</i>	<i>Bearwood, Sandwell</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Own car/another vehicle</i>	4	6	10
<i>Walking (on foot)</i>	2	7	9
<i>Public transport - e.g. train, tram, bus</i>	3	3	6
<i>Bicycle</i>	3	2	5
<i>Mobility aid</i>	1		1
<i>Moped</i>	1		1

**Figure 3: Participants' most frequent method of travel**

## 5. Speakers

At the workshops, participants heard from speakers who shared information about active travel approaches and priorities at both a local and national level. The design of the dialogue process sought to establish parity among speaker

contributions in both locations. Participants in both St Denys and Bearwood received a similar presentation from Sustrans which introduced the organisation and its wider work on active travel, such as through its strategic priorities and the Walking and Cycling Index. Participants also heard from an active travel officer based at the local authority responsible for their area, informing their understanding of the state of active travel locally. Participants in Southampton received an additional presentation from a researcher working on the city’s university on future possibilities for active travel in line with the theme of workshop two.

Where possible the project team established local contacts in both Sandwell and Southampton to deliver these presentations. All speakers were briefed ahead of the workshops on their role, the purpose of their presentation and how it connected up with the overall process. The full speaker schedule is summarised in the table below.

**Figure 4: Workshop presentations in each location**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Workshop 1</i>	<i>Workshop 2</i>
<p><b>St Denys, Southampton</b></p>	<p><i>Jenny Babey, Project Manager at Sustrans South</i></p> <p>Topics covered here included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing Sustrans</li> <li>• Sustrans’ national priorities for active travel</li> <li>• The Walking and Cycling Index</li> <li>• Community connections</li> </ul> <p><i>Carolyn Ireland, Project Lead on Transforming Cities Fund at Southampton City Council</i></p> <p>Topics covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on travel behaviours in Southampton</li> <li>• Local infrastructure, resources and strategy</li> <li>• Local initiatives, including active travel zones, school streets and cycle freeways</li> </ul>	<p><i>Rich McIlroy, University of Southampton</i></p> <p>Topics covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Solent Future Transport Zone</li> <li>• The ‘Breeze’ App in Southampton, using digital platforms to plan your travel.</li> <li>• Factors for how people travel in Southampton</li> </ul>

<p><b>Bearwood, Sandwell</b><sup>8</sup></p>	<p><i>Ruth Latham, Senior Business Development Officer (&amp; Dialogue project manager) at Sustrans</i></p> <p>Topics covered here included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing Sustrans</li> <li>• Sustrans' national priorities for active travel</li> <li>• The Walking and Cycling Index</li> <li>• Community connections</li> </ul>	<p><i>Active Travel in Sandwell - Susan Street-Hall, Active Travel Officer at Sandwell Council</i></p> <p>Topics covered here included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits of active travel</li> <li>• Local infrastructure, resources and strategy</li> <li>• Local initiatives for active travel, including at faith centres, schools and workplaces</li> </ul>
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## 6. Analysis and reporting

We have used qualitative research methods to review what participants told us. Transcripts were created from each of the consultation methods used. These were anonymised so that no one can be traced from the comments that are included in this report.

Qualitative research reports, including this one, do not report on the number of times something was said, but rather the strength of feeling expressed across the methods used. For this project we used grounded theory, which means we read, and re-read, the transcripts many times. We collated what was said into key themes and used those themes to draw out meaning from the discussions. We chose this approach to ensure the findings are rooted in what participants said, rather than looking for confirmation of preconceived ideas. Throughout the report terms such as 'a few', 'several', 'some' or 'many' are used to reflect particular areas of agreement and difference. Anonymised quotations are used to highlight points made by a number of participants and to underline points made by a range of people. They also highlight points of particular significance to participants. These quotations are provided verbatim in participants' own words. Filler words are removed but no other changes are made to quotes so as not to distort the speaker's meaning.

## 7. About this report

Our journey of understanding what helps and hinders walking, wheeling and cycling in these areas begins with the locations themselves. The findings section opens with *Profiles of St Denys and Bearwood*. They have been written based on what participants told us about living in each area, what they love and what frustrates them.

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<sup>8</sup> In Bearwood, a scheduling conflict meant participants were unable to hear from Sandwell Council at the first workshop. In lieu of this, participants carried out a fact-finding activity using printed copies of Sustrans' Walking and Cycling Index for the West Midlands, available here: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index/west-midlands-walking-and-cycling-index>

In the second chapter, we turn a corner and meet six *Travel Portraits*. They are drawn from participants accounts of how they travel.

The report then crosses into a space that explores *What helps and hinders walking, wheeling and cycling*. Both local and universal factors are mapped out.

Turning to look up the road at what could lie ahead, *Picturing the Future* tells how participants responded to the Liveable Town principles and applied them to where they live. A *Manifesto for Change* distils this into a wish list with suggestions for the changes participants would like to see made in their neighbourhoods.

Our journey concludes with our researcher reflections on what we heard and what we think are the significant considerations for Sustrans.

## *8. A note of thanks to the participants and speakers*

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all the participants in St Denys and Bearwood. They gave us two of their Saturdays and considerable time spent on the online space sharing their stories and those of their friends and families.

Everybody who took part had a different story to tell, whether they had lived in the area for six months or sixty years. They listened to each other and questioned each other and our speakers with respect and good humour. They showed us around their neighbourhoods even when the weather was what you would expect for an early spring day. Their pride in where they live is strongly felt and palpable. It was an honour for us as researchers to spend time with them.

Our thanks to our speakers who provided thought provoking information about travel and answered questions in ways that helped our discussions go to places that might otherwise have been overlooked.

St Denys



Bearwood



## B. Findings

### 1. Location profiles

With these profiles, we hope to paint a picture in readers' minds of the two locations for this research. We have drawn on what our participants think and feel about their areas – taken from our conversations during the workshops' small group discussions, our 'walk and talks' and the thoughts they shared in the online space.

#### St Denys

St Denys is named after the 12<sup>th</sup> century St Denys priory and is less than two miles north of Southampton city centre. Its distinctive features are its riverside setting, St Denys's<sup>9</sup> church and the railway line that arcs through the neighbourhood – crossing Adelaide Road.

The riverside and railway create distinct area with its own identity and sense of place. Participants are proud of the area's reputation as a friendly, supportive, creative community. They spoke about its food bank, Repair Café, annual open gardens event and its St Denys Rocks Facebook group with over 3,000 members.

St Denys has a couple of pubs and a corner shop and cake shop, but most local shopping is in Portswood - across the busy A335 Thomas Lewis Way<sup>10</sup> and up a short but significant hill. Participants who cycle like Portswood Highstreet for having a cycle lane and plenty of bike stands that help them access the wide range of shops and cafes. Some participants speaking as pedestrians wish there were more crossings to enable them to visit a range of shops because the road can be busy.

*"It's got a lovely selection of shops. It's got, you know, hardware shops and book shops. Fresh fruit and veg, stall where you can buy loads of stuff. But it's on different sides and getting across is a real pain."* St Denys Participant

The area has seen some traffic calming measures introduced in recent years. Including pedestrianising the end of Dundee Road between the popular St Denys Primary School and the church. This has created a space with multiple community benefits. It is a space for parents and children to gather and mingle at the start and end of the school day. It is also used by people visiting the local food bank. Sometimes food is left on the wooden block benches for people who don't feel comfortable going into the food bank. One participant spoke about an art project that featured small carvings of local animals to create a walking trail.

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<sup>9</sup> Appropriately for a research project focusing on what hinders & helps walking & cycling, St Denys was a French saint who was beheaded in Montmartre in 258. Legend has it that after decapitation, he scooped up his head and walked to north east Paris to a site that became a Benedictine abbey.

<sup>10</sup> Named after Tommy Lewis, a trade unionist and one of Southampton's first Labour MPs.

*"We did a local animal trail, our summer trail was local animals so a lady named Helen got the grant to do it. She cut out all the shapes and just gave them to different people to paint. Some were painted by kids, they're not all done by actual professional artists, so we just do little things like that, then she got the go ahead to just put them up around the community and the larger ones were auctioned off for a charity."*  
St Denys Participant



Other areas in St Denys have had planted boxes installed to close or reduce traffic flow. During our 'walk and talk' participants spoke about local people feeling unhappy at first about the traffic calming measures, but most had come to appreciate them. Some participants said they walked more because of their impact on making the streets quieter.

*"There are planters/modal filters stopping cars from going under the bridge. This has encouraged me to increase the number of walks I take in and around St Denys to get exercise, look at the river, view wildlife and feed the ducks."* St Denys Participant



The Priory Road/Horsebridge Road junction next to the community centre is a popular route to Southampton's football ground. It has had large wooden block benches installed, but these felt more like barriers that attempt to block traffic than a pleasant place to sit.

The Itchen riverside is loved for its green and peaceful walks. Because of railway and road bridges and developments, it can only be enjoyed in segments. To the north of St Denys the Saltmead area is well liked:

*"Saltmead is a nice quiet place to walk, away from traffic, and look at the wildlife on the river. I've seen seals, kingfishers and cormorants here."* St Denys Participant

One of the riverside segments is reached through the residential Jannaway Gardens. Because it is set away and slightly secluded, some participants talked about it previously being a little 'sketchy', with some anti-social behaviour. Older householders had been less inclined to challenge the behaviour, but this had changed when younger families had moved in. Now some participants use it as a green and pleasant walk to take after the school run.



Walking in the residential areas is pleasant along the wider streets but a challenge on the narrower streets where cars are parked on the pavement on both sides. Reflecting on Recollective, on St Deny’s Participant wrote:

*“1x inconsiderate/uninformed/twat parker a common problem for mobility scooters, mums and pushchairs, limited sight people. The good examples are my regular neighbours in past years we have chatted about these and they automatically adopt the 1/3rd rule<sup>11</sup>.”*



People with prams or mobility aids are forced onto the roads. At several pedestrian crossings, participants express their frustration at either a lack of ‘buttons’ or signals that take a long time to let them cross.

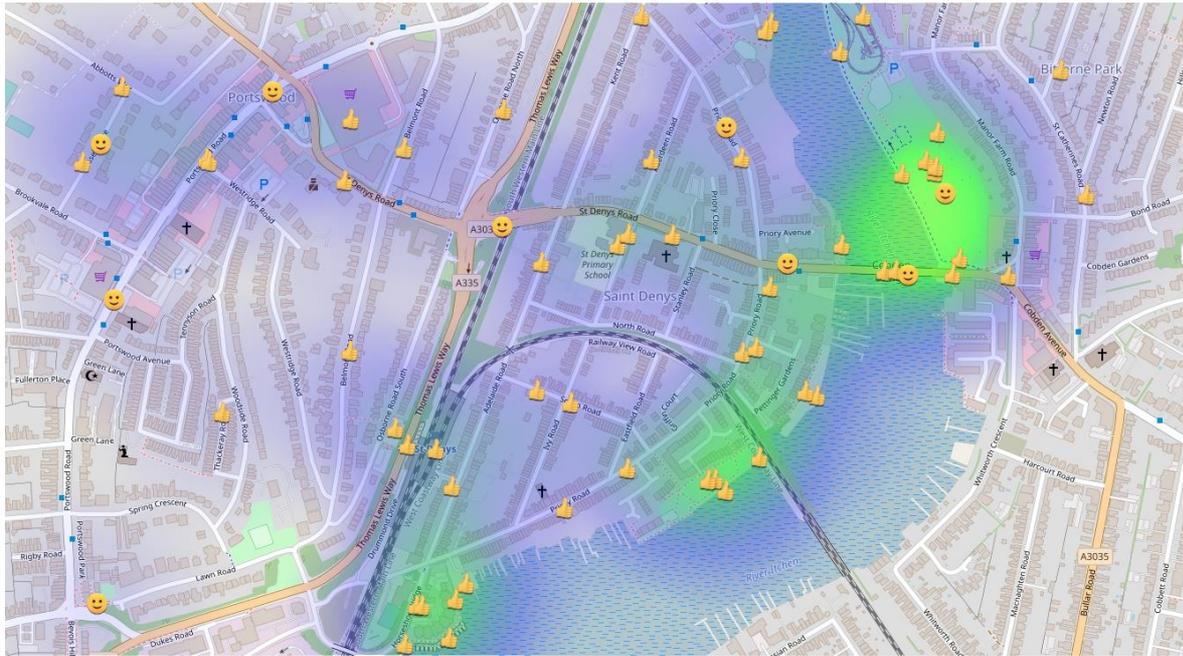
The St Deny’s area seems to suffer from a somewhat piecemeal approach to cycle lanes. They are welcome where they are, for example on Portswood Highstreet, but worryingly, particularly for non-cyclists, they disappear at the busy junction of St Denys Road and Thomas Lewis Way. Potholes meaning you have to watch where you are going rather than enjoying the view ahead as you ride and parked cars making it a single lane street are off putting.

Before the first workshop participants completed an activity on Recollective in which they annotated a map of St Denys with pleasant and unpleasant areas to walk, wheel and cycle. The frequencies of each type of annotation are summarised in the table below.<sup>12</sup> Points identified by participants as pleasant for walking, wheeling and cycling in St Denys are captured in figure 5, with points identified as unpleasant captured in figure 6.

Label	Count	Percentage
  This is a pleasant place to walk or wheel	58	52.3%
  This is an unpleasant place to walk or wheel	31	27.9%
  This is a pleasant place to cycle	9	8.1%
  This is an unpleasant place to cycle	13	11.7%

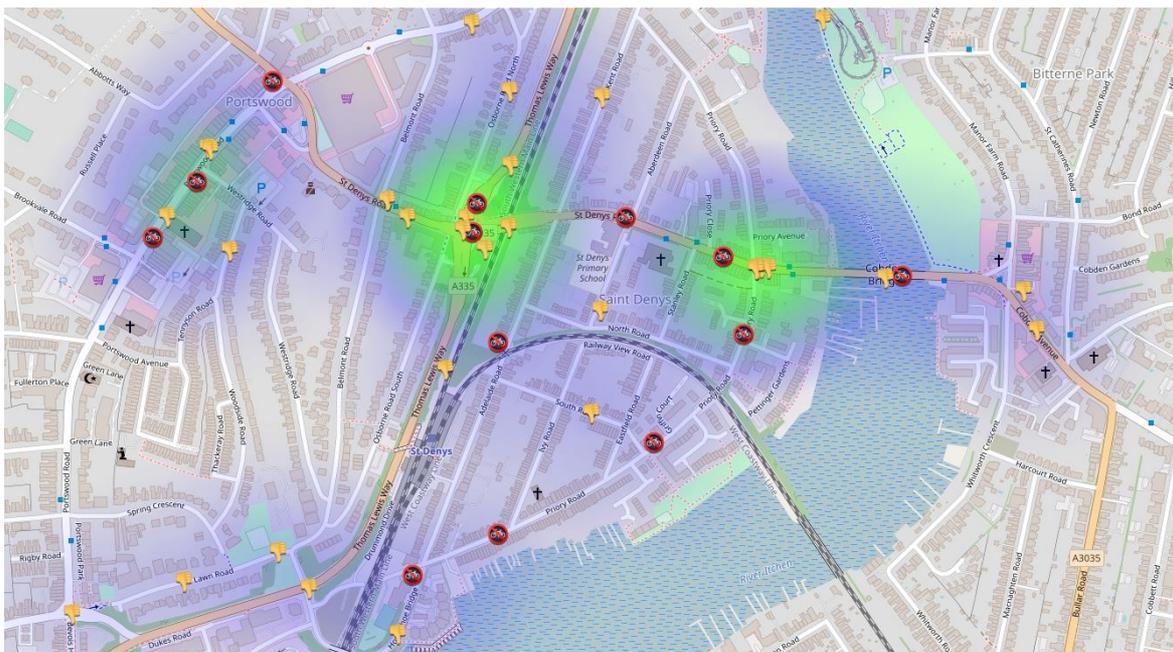
<sup>11</sup> The ‘1/3<sup>rd</sup> rule’ is not an official guideline or rule for parking on pavements in the UK. It appears to be a ‘rule-of-thumb’ sometimes followed by drivers when parking on narrower residential streets, including many in St Denys. It describes parking in a manner such that 1/3 of the car overlaps the pavement. with the rest of the car on the road, as depicted in the image above.

<sup>12</sup> There were no restrictions on the number of areas participants could highlight, either for individual categories or overall.



**Figure 5: Heatmap showing where in St Denys participants find it pleasant to walk, wheel and cycle. See Appendix C for enlarged versions of each heatmap.**

Key	
	This is a pleasant place to walk or wheel
	This is an unpleasant place to walk or wheel
	This is a pleasant place to cycle
	This is an unpleasant place to cycle



**Figure 6: Heatmap showing where in St Denys participants find it unpleasant to walk, wheel and cycle.**

## Bearwood

Bearwood is a neighbourhood in the southern part of Smethwick. It technically lies within the Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell, however it closely borders Birmingham, the centre of which is reached by heading east for about 3 miles along Hagley Road. This busy A-road, which participants frequently referred to in their discussions, marks Bearwood's southern border and is considered particularly unsuitable for cycling.

Heading north from this is Bearwood Road, the neighbourhood's focal point. This is a bustling high street, lined on both sides by the majority of Bearwood's shops and amenities, including an indoor market. At its northern end, Bearwood stretches towards Warley and the centre of Smethwick.

Despite its association with the larger town of Smethwick, Bearwood is unquestionably its own place, with distinct character and residents who call it home. Participants describe a strong sense of community in Bearwood, highlighting the close connections people have with the local area and other residents.



*The junction at which Bearwood Road and Hagley Road meet. Cyclists appeared more likely to dismount and walk their bicycles across the pedestrian crossings to avoid navigating the junction alongside other vehicles.*

*"I've lived in Bearwood just across the road for 69 years. So, there isn't a lot I haven't seen, but my biggest thing, not about green space, they're great, but it's the people, it's the community. It's access to everything I would ever want and I'm so grateful."*

Bearwood Participant

Participants' portrayals of Bearwood suggest it is a desirable place to live without being exclusive. A number of participants talk about moving to Bearwood because it offered more affordable housing compared with nearby areas such as Harborne. However, multiple participants' remarks about the growing number of rental and split properties suggest that this may be changing. Participants also refer approvingly to Bearwood's capacity to bring together people with varied cultural backgrounds and many appreciate the diverse experiences and interactions this opens up.

Participants take significant pride and pleasure in Bearwood's green spaces. To the south is Lightwoods Park and House<sup>13</sup>, which was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and under private ownership until it became a public park in the early 1900s. The park's area now covers approximately 12 hectares and includes a bandstand, playground, skatepark and sports courts. There is an additional small, secluded space, Shakespeare Garden, to the rear of the House which is also open to the

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<sup>13</sup> The first workshop was held in Lightwoods House and incorporated a walk and talk of Bearwood starting and finishing here.

public. Participants told us that the garden grows every herb mentioned in the works of Shakespeare.

The House and surroundings were recently restored via a combination of council and lottery funding.<sup>14</sup> This took place after responsibility for the park's managements transferred from Birmingham to Sandwell Council in 2010, despite the park always having been located in Sandwell. Indeed, participants' mention the potential impact Bearwood's proximity to Birmingham has on the management of infrastructure in the area. There is a perceived risk of maintenance issues falling into a void at the boundary between two local authorities.

*"It was, sort of, going from Birmingham City Council, to Sandwell, to Birmingham, nobody wanted it, because it's dead on the border of Sandwell and Birmingham. I think the border starts at The King's Head, that is Birmingham, and then the other side of the King's Head is Sandwell. So nobody, sort of, wanted it, and then the lottery money would have changed it, wouldn't it?"* Bearwood Participant

For another participant this concern extends to wider infrastructure and services:

*"I think that's why we didn't get the scooters or the bikes, because we're not in Birmingham. It's sitting outside, Sandwell."* Bearwood Participant



*Participants walk through Lightwoods Park, the bandstand in view, during workshop 1.*



*Shakespeare Garden, a quiet and seclude space behind Lightwoods House which is open to the public.*

Slightly further to the west of Bearwood is Warley Woods, a 100-acre public park consisting of parkland, woodland and a golf course, accessible from both Lightwoods Park and residential roads on the neighbourhood's western side. Participants consider Bearwood's easy access to green spaces such as these to be unrivalled by other neighbourhoods in the vicinity. No matter how long participants have lived in Bearwood, its green spaces factor heavily among their

<sup>14</sup> See 'Bearwood's Lightwoods House restored in £5m project', BBC News Online, 2018, available here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-42777563>

reflections on the area and inform portrayals of Bearwood as a very rewarding place to live.

*"I've lived in Bearwood four years, I think, maybe five. I think my favourite thing about living here is probably Warley Woods and getting the opportunity to go for walks most mornings."*

Bearwood Participant

*"I've lived in Bearwood, for 21 years, and I think the reason that we've stayed here, because we have looked at moving, is the green spaces."*

Bearwood Participant

*"I've lived in Bearwood for about six months now. My favourite thing so far is just generally how much greener it is and so, I enjoy walking around the local area."*

Bearwood Participant

*"I've lived here about 30 years, did take time out and I like it because it just feels slightly out of the city. It gives you that feeling of being a little bit countryfied sometimes. I like that."*

Bearwood Participant

Hagley Road stirs up polar opposite reactions from many participants. Participants highlight the volume of traffic, noise and air pollution. This became more apparent to one participant as the group explored the road during the first workshop:

*"I normally drive down. It's only when we were walking, it's so loud, I'm having to shout to be heard, we were bellowing at each other, weren't we?"*

Bearwood Participant

Walking to the side of the road can be an uncomfortable experience. Participants note the likelihood of being splashed on a rainy day. It is sometimes even necessary to step into the road to get around wheelie bins or parked cars that obstruct the pavement. These experiences inform some attitudes towards the idea of cycling on it too:

*"You felt, like, them all whizzing past you as you were walking, didn't you, never mind on a bike."*

Bearwood Participant

Whilst some participants could envisage cycling on Hagley Road, this usually depended on improvements such as in this exchange between two participants during the 'walk and talk':

*S1: "That could be developed though, because that is a wide space, isn't it? There could be a cycle lane there. I'd probably cycle the Hagley Road if it had a cycle lane. I could go in the bus lane all the way down the Hagley Road."*

*S2: "You can cycle in the bus lanes."*

*S1: "But then the buses are in there."*

*S2: "Let them go round you."*

*S1: "I wouldn't risk it, it's as simple as that."*

Navigating Bearwood Road – the high street – is a more pleasant experience for some participants who enjoy the shops and restaurants it has to offer. For others it serves a functional purpose but is not somewhere to enjoy:

*S1: “You get a very different vibe when you’re up at-, by the park or the woods.”*

*S2: “You just want to get in and get out of Bearwood Road don’t you?”*

*S1: “Yes.”*

*S2: “You do your business and you go don’t you.”*

*S1: “Yes.”*

*S1: “You don’t want to hang around do you?”*

Participants describe scenes of congestion on the high street, in which cars and buses are nose to tail, made worse by anti-social driving and poor parking. The road itself is narrow, with little more than enough room for vehicles to pass one another, and walking on the pavement can feel very close to the traffic. It certainly does not strike participants as a comfortable or safe street to cycle down.



*Two views of Bearwood Road – Participants appreciate the shops it has to offer. Less so the high volumes of traffic.*



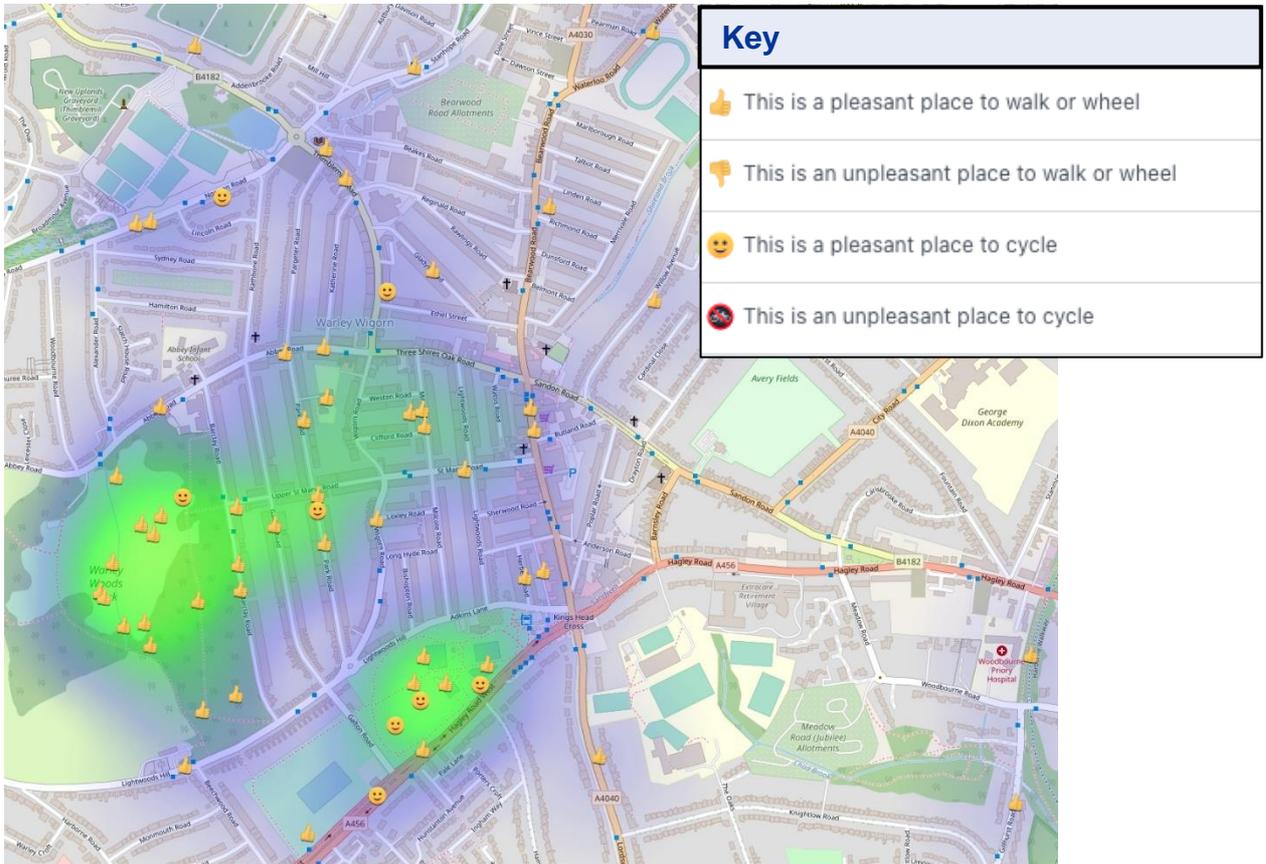
*Examples of Bearwood’s existing infrastructure for cycling – participants suggest it stops too short to make cycling down the high street any easier*

Heading north along Bearwood Road reveals some of the area’s existing cycling infrastructure. This includes bike boxes – or Advanced Stop Lines – by the traffic lights at the intersection of Bearwood Road and Sandon Road and a short stretch of off-road cycle track near Hadley Stadium. The latter was recently installed as part of a set of active travel interventions in the area via the Sandwell Active Travel Fund. For some participants these are encouraging developments but serve to highlight the lack of infrastructure elsewhere, as this comment on the junction between Bearwood Road and Sandon Road makes clear:

*“There’s no bike lane but then suddenly bikes have got priority at the lights. It’s like you’ve put a little bit of the infrastructure in but haven’t really thought it through.”* Bearwood Participant

As in St Denys, participants annotated a map of the local area before their first workshop, highlighting where in Bearwood they find pleasant or unpleasant for walking, wheeling and cycling. The frequencies of each type of annotation are summarised in the table below. Specific points identified by participants as pleasant for walking, wheeling and cycling in Bearwood are captured in figure 7, with points identified as unpleasant captured in figure 8.

Label	Count	Percentage
  This is a pleasant place to walk or wheel	53	52%
  This is an unpleasant place to walk or wheel	25	24.5%
  This is a pleasant place to cycle	8	7.8%
  This is an unpleasant place to cycle	16	15.7%



**Figure 7: Heatmap showing where in Bearwood participants find it pleasant to walk, wheel and cycle. See Appendix D for enlarged versions of each heatmap.**



**Figure 8: Heatmap showing where in Bearwood participants find it unpleasant to walk, wheel and cycle.**

## 2. Travel portraits

We created these travel portraits from the stories and experiences we heard from our participants in St Denys and Bearwood. They are not quantitative segmentations but rather illustrations of the choices made by a range of people with different lifestyles and at different life stages.

### Driving by default

Hannah is in her early 50s and works in a neighbouring city. She drives to work as there are no direct public transport options. The buses that serve her neighbourhood are irregular and go into the city centre rather than out of town.



Hannah's children are at university and she's got more time to enjoy her hobbies in the local area, particularly going to the local park to walk her dog and to the gym. Hannah will almost always take the car for these journeys even though it's close enough to walk. She loves her car and the convenience of being able to get to places quickly and directly.

Hannah has elderly parents who live five miles away in another suburb. Her dad is increasingly frail and the past few years have been dominated by many trips to the local GP and hospital – it falls on Hannah to take him as her other siblings live far away. These journeys are always by car and she can't imagine trying to navigate a bus or train with her dad in tow.

Hannah has never cycled and feels apprehensive about giving it a try. There are busy roads all across the neighbourhood and she wouldn't feel safe on two wheels.

She would like to walk more and is open to swapping some of her shorter car journeys. The idea of walking with friends appeals – the double benefit of socialising and exercising at the same time.

### Car owning busy family

Nicole has two young children at primary school and works three miles away. The family have two cars, and they can't imagine how to survive without them. Nicole's husband, Chris, commutes every day by car with a 20 mile round trip. He could get public transport but it would add an hour to each end of the day and he wants to have more time at home with the family.



Nicole or Chris take the children to school by car, as they feel it's just a

little too far to walk there comfortably. The pavements in their area are a nightmare to navigate with cars parked across them and bins in the way on collection day. It's not a pleasant walk and the children would complain all the way. After school drop off, Nicole drives to work, or if it's a day she's not working, she'll carry on by car to the local high street to do a few errands.

After school, the children have clubs and activities. These are all in the local area, and Nicole drives them to save time. In winter, when the weather is particularly bad, the idea

of walking with the children seems even less appealing.

Driving is the most pragmatic option for Nicole as she feels constantly time poor. She'd love to walk more

### Local cyclist and car borrower

Ameeta is in her late 30s and works in one of the shops on the local high street. She either cycles or walks



to work every day. It's a short journey, and she likes the chance to have some time to herself before the day properly gets going. There are a few junctions on the way that are busy as they intersect with a main road, and pedestrians have to wait a long time to cross.

Ameeta feels lucky that her work is on her doorstep, and she can do most of her shopping in the local area too. Ameeta has always cycled and enjoys it, but does worry that the roads are getting more congested

but the demands of family life often leave her feeling drained and low on energy. She used to cycle before having children but she's lost her confidence now and it would take a lot to get her back on a bike again.

and that car drivers can get impatient with cyclists. She probably would cycle less if she had to get into the city centre as it would be a less restful journey – competing with cars and other (faster) cyclists.

Ameeta and her husband decided to get rid of their car during the pandemic as they weren't using it. They don't miss it especially as finding somewhere to park on their street could be tricky. They will borrow a car from friends if they need to do a large supermarket shop to stock up on items they cannot easily carry on foot or on bike. If they're travelling out of the city to visit friends or family, then they will hire a car. They're keen to see more on-street car hire options in their area to make this option as easy as possible.

### No car, journey combiner

Jess and Nuru have three children – one is in nursery, and the other two go to the local primary school. They don't



own a car and get around mostly on foot or by public transport.

Walking is always their first choice. Nursery and school are only five minutes away and the parking pressure around the school gates means that it is far quicker to get there on foot, and much less hassle.

Trying to manoeuvre a buggy on the narrow pavements is sometimes

challenging. Jess often sees one of her neighbours out and about on his wheely scooter and fears he has an even worse time of it as the scooter is often forced out onto the road where there isn't room to squeeze through.

After dropping off the kids, Jess will walk to the bus stop and take the bus to work in the city centre. This can sometimes take longer than it should do due to bad traffic. She could get the train but the service into the centre is irregular and much more expensive than the bus. At the end of the day, Jess will fit in some shopping on the high street before doing school pick up.

At weekends, Jess and Nuru like to make the most of the large local park and the free activities for children. Jess really doesn't like cycling but Nuru is keener and he's teaching the

eldest children to cycle – starting off in the local park. Jess might change her mind in the future but feels she'd definitely need some lessons herself to help overcome her safety fears.

## Cycling is a way of life

Andy is an avid cyclist. He owns two bikes and is passionate about the benefits of cycling for health, wellbeing and efficiency. He is in his mid 50s and works in the city centre. He cycles almost every day – the only thing that would put him off is snow or ice. He tends to cycle on the main roads even though the traffic is heavy as he's confident negotiating the space with motorists.



Andy feels there are quite a lot of practical things to sort out when cycling and he's lucky that his workplace has showers and a secure

place to lock up a bike. He feels less happy leaving his bike out on the pavement on bike racks as there have been quite a few bike thefts. He also has to store his bikes inside at home as he doesn't have a shed and there are no cycle parking hangars on his street. He's seen these in other cities and would apply for a place if there was a scheme locally.

At weekends, Andy will get out of the city and go for longer rides into the countryside nearby. Sometimes he will get the train back and it is annoying that the local train station has no lifts or easy way to wheel your bike up the stairs.

## Student walker cost saver

Megan is a student at the city's university. She lives in student accommodation just off campus and walks to her lectures and classes every day. This is primarily driven by cost – it's far cheaper than taking the bus. Sometimes she'll walk into campus with friends which is a good opportunity to catch up on the way.



Megan and her friends do their shopping locally in the big supermarket and will sometimes share a taxi so they can carry more. She doesn't explore much further than the high street as her social life is either on campus or in the city centre, so sometimes feels a bit

disconnected from the wider community.

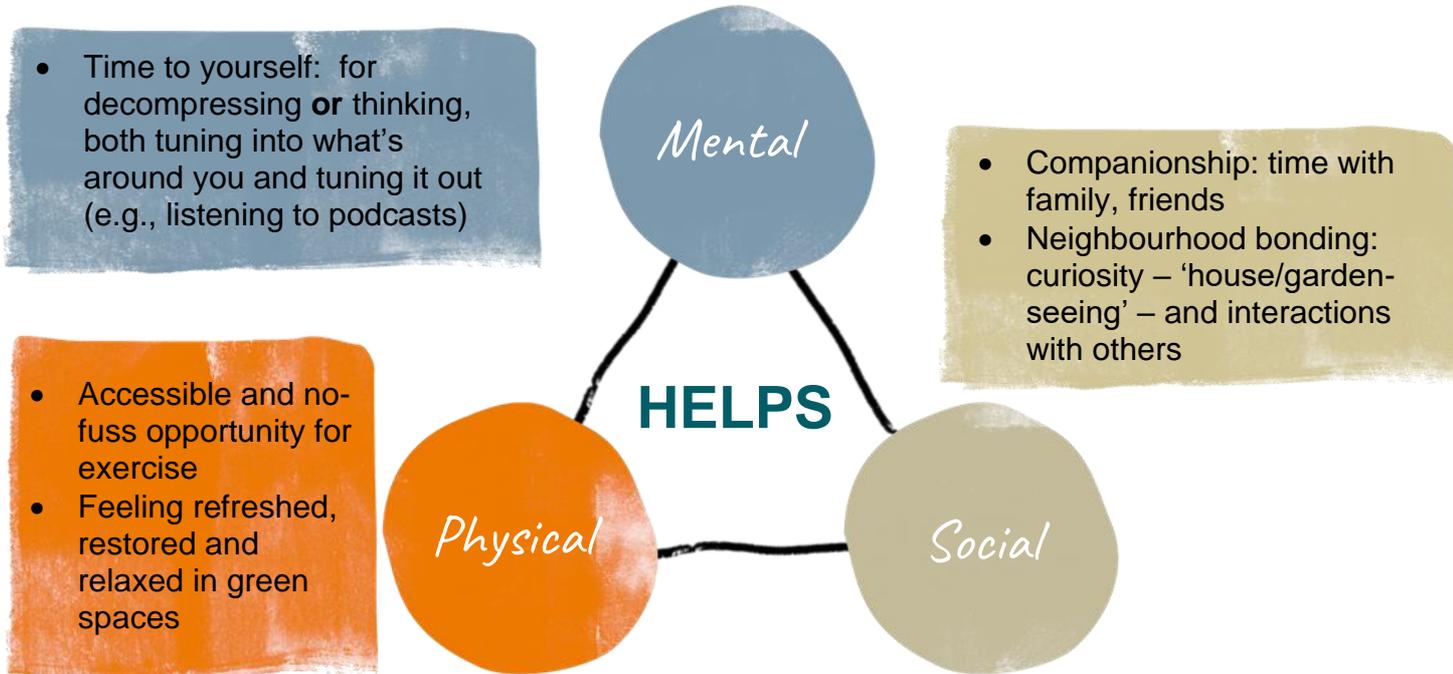
Megan has a part time job in the local hospital. This means she's often working night shifts and doesn't feel safe walking to the hospital late at night as there are some poorly lit stretches on her route. She'll take the bus for these journeys even though it takes longer and she has to carefully plan so she doesn't miss the one service an hour.

Megan cycled as a child and lived in the countryside growing up. She stopped cycling when she arrived at university as she found the roads too busy. Maybe next term she'll bring her bike with her and give it a go around campus to begin with.

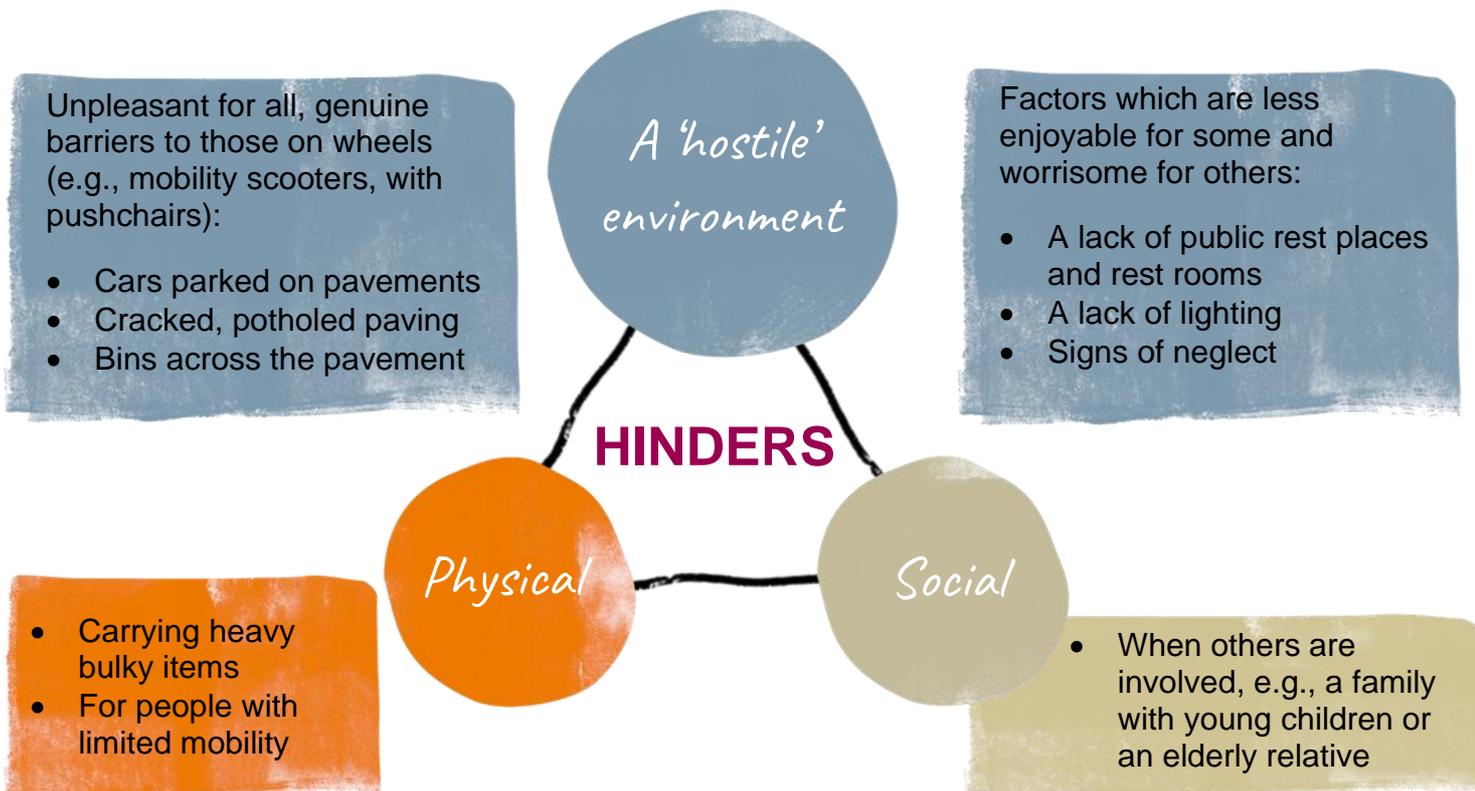
### 3. Perceptions of active travel: summary of key findings

#### Walking and wheeling

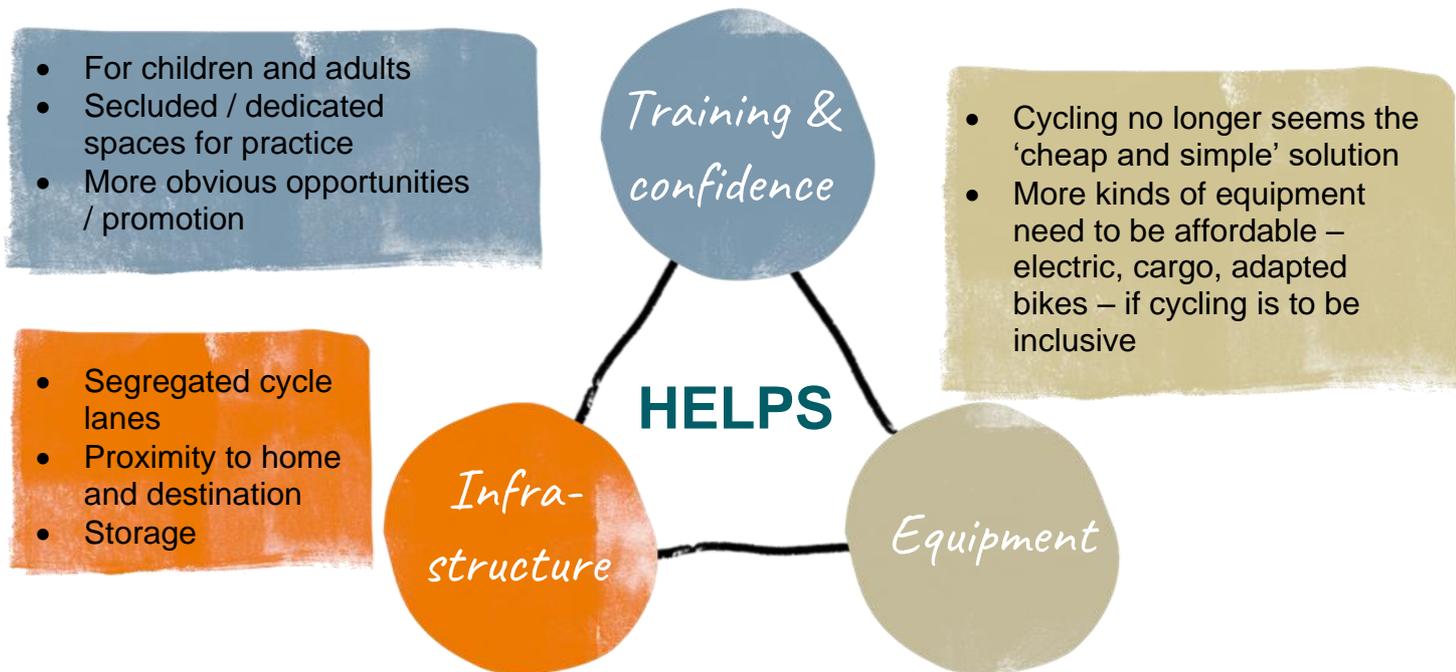
Participants associate walking with unique personal benefits, particularly when compared to cycling:



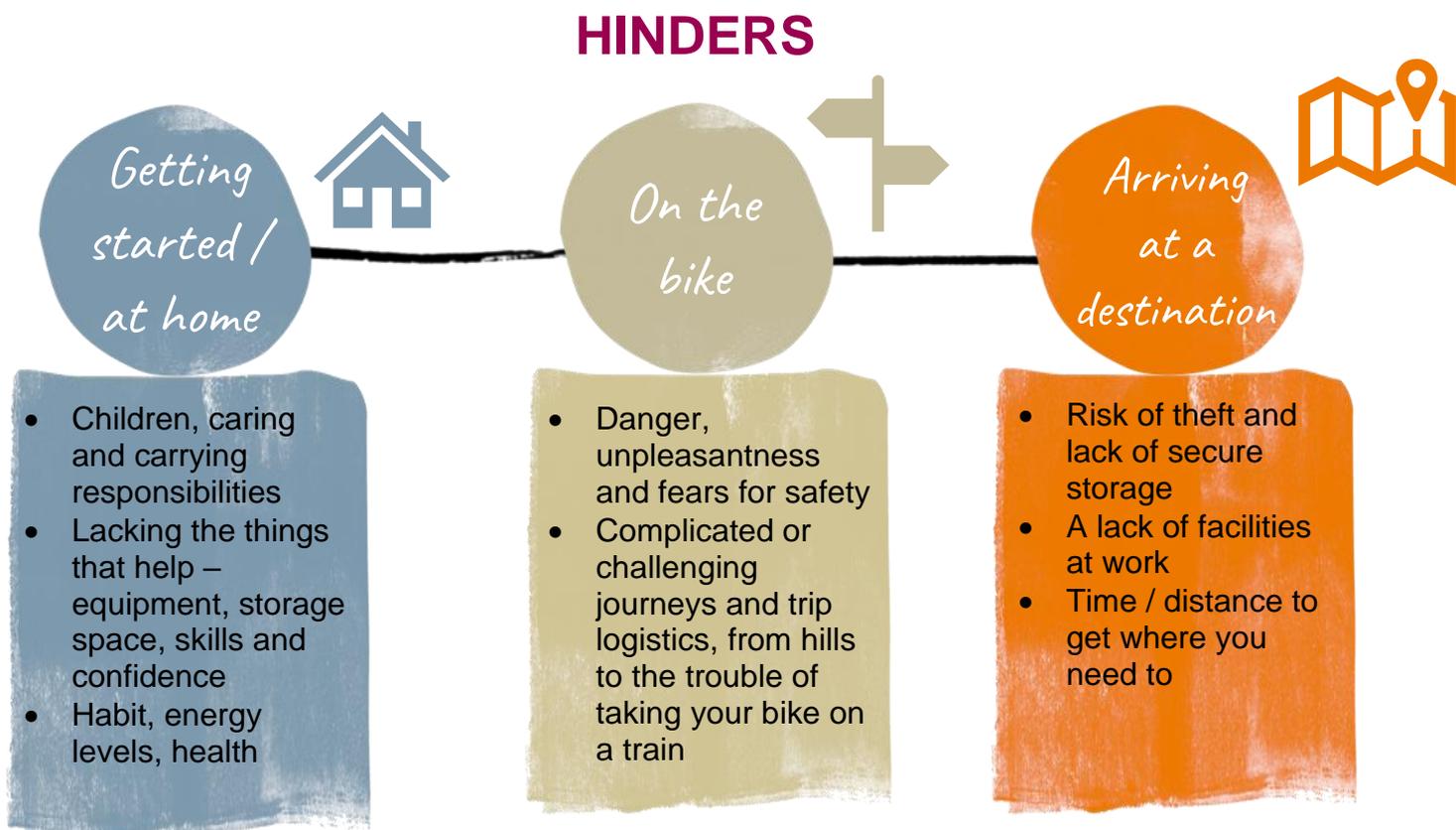
However walking becomes unappealing, worrisome or impractical, often second-best to a car, when other factors are in play:



For those who currently cycle, exercise, saving money and time, and connecting to or benefitting the local environment can all be key motivations for doing so. However, for the majority of participants, who don't cycle often or at all, the factors that are seen as helpful are more likely to be structural than straightforward personal or behavioural changes:



The factors that participants propose as hindrances or obstacles for cycling can be mapped like a journey, with various challenges cited at home, on route and to do with their destination:



## 4. Walking and wheeling: what helps and hinders?

Here we explore what participants told us about their experiences of walking and wheeling. Our conversations focused on walking/wheeling close to home and work for a variety of purposes, rather than long walks for pleasure e.g. countryside hikes.

We asked participants at the start of the workshops in St Denys and Bearwood to share three words they associate with walking and wheeling. It is striking to see how positive the concept of walking and wheeling is for almost everyone. The strongest associations across both locations are with exercise, fresh air and nature.

We then asked participants to share three words they associate with walking and wheeling in their own area.

In Bearwood, these positive associations mostly held true when thinking about walking there. As seen in the location profile chapter, there is strong appreciation for local parks and quick access to shops. The area's proximity to Birmingham's Hagley road, a major artery to the city, features in terms of pollution and risk.



*Words to describe walking/wheeling in Bearwood*

In contrast in St Denys, most comments about walking/wheeling in the area were either negative or included negative aspects, such as walking made less attractive by hills, traffic and obstacles on the pavement.



*Words to describe walking/wheeling in St Denys*

### Walking and wheeling: what helps

The strongest positive factors that participants associate with walking/wheeling are personal, with a few mentions of being better for the environment and time saving for some trips.

Walking as a form of exercise is an important attraction for several participants. For some it is the main form of exercise. It helps to meet fitness goals in an accessible way and can be combined with other tasks. One of the eight participants in St Denys who swapped a car journey for walking was delighted

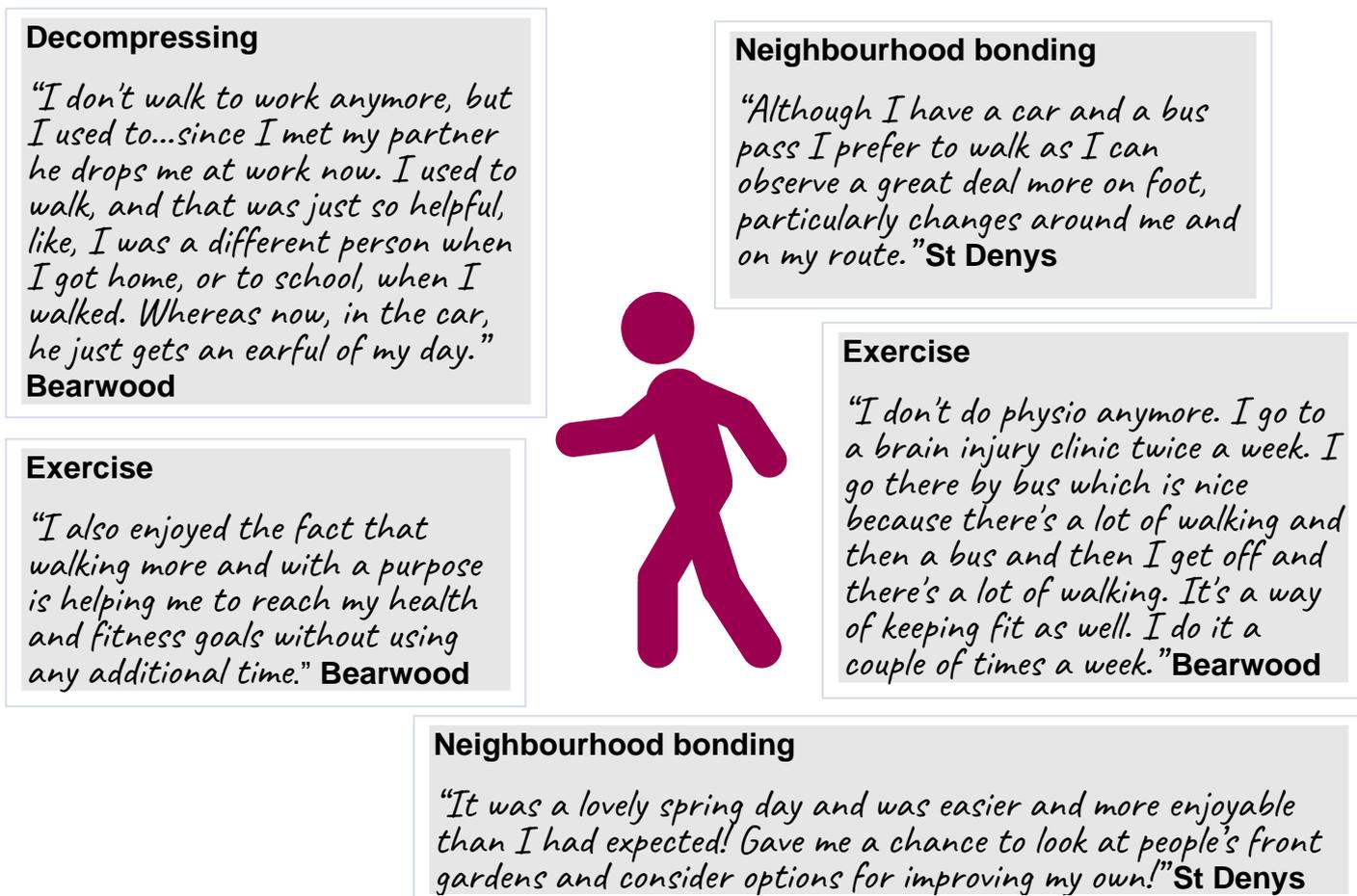
with how travelling on foot made her feel – to the extent of sharing how she felt with friends.

*“Felt like a good way to get fit as I don’t exercise much at the moment. I felt proud of myself for doing it and told a few friends as it felt like a real achievement!”* St Denys Participant

Walking as a way of feeling part of the neighbourhood is also important. Travelling on foot at walking pace gives the opportunity of noticing new things. This could be the way a neighbour has planted a garden or a new shop opening. This leads participants to talk about feeling a greater sense of connection with where they live.

For some, walking is an opportunity to decompress. It is a time in between work or caring responsibilities and home where you can process thoughts about the day that’s been. A slice of time to yourself, in the open air, walking with purpose, when you can put things into perspective and deal with frustrations by walking them out rather than laying them onto other people.

The graphic below illustrates the personal factors and stories we heard.



These are all factors that people enjoy and appreciate once they have started walking, but what helps to trigger a walk rather than a car journey? The immediate and obvious factors that participants point to are a reasonable distance to travel: 20-30 minutes and dry, preferably sunny weather.

The longer term factors that reduce car journeys and increase walking that participants refer to are life incidents and milestones. One participant talked about feeling guilty for some time about the environmental impact of her diesel vehicle. When it broke down, she saw that as an opportunity to get rid of it and walk or car share instead. This participant noted that this turn of events had had a marked impact on her son. He was less likely to ask for lifts and walked significantly more than before the vehicle broke down.

### **Walking and wheeling: learnings from the journey swap activity**

Between Workshop 1 in March and Workshop 2 in April participants had the optional activity of swapping a car journey with walking/wheeling, cycling or public transport. This coincided with the Easter break. The weather over this time was a mix of sunshine and rain and average temperatures of approximately 15 degrees.

19 of the 32 participants opted to make a journey swap. Of the 19, 14 were women. Walking or walking + public transport was the most popular form of journey swap.

In St Denys, of the eight participants who did the swap, one tried out the hire scooters and seven chose walking either on its own or with public transport. Five of these participants said they would be more likely to walk more in the future following this experience - some gave the proviso of daylight hours and good weather. Most said walking 20 or so minutes was as easy or easier than expected and enjoyed it as a chance to socialise, exercise or check out the neighbourhood.

*"I often go to visit my parents (about a 20 minute walk away from where I live). I sometimes get a lift home rather than walking to save time or if I have a lot to carry, or if it is late/dark or raining. Recently, I walked home and my mum joined me for the walk. We both really enjoyed it, as much as expected, as we got to chat while we were walking and enjoyed the sunshine, surroundings and exercise. It was easy, as we expected it to be, because I only live a 20 minute walk away. I would definitely be inclined to do this again but perhaps not if it was very late/dark and I was on my own."* St Denys Participant

In Bearwood, 11 participants did the journey swap. Again, most chose a combination of walking and public transport, with two people who already cycle quite often opting to swap a car journey for a bike.

For most, but not all, of the Bearwood swappers perceptions were largely positive with six saying they would be likely to swap out a car journey for walking/public transport in the future. Factors for this include saving money on parking, fine weather and the walk being easier and quicker than expected (particularly if public transport plays ball).

### Swap a journey: participant reflection, shared on Recollective

*Since becoming part of this workshop, I have been inspired to sell my car so now complete most journeys by foot or public transport.*

*When going to work the first time via bus, I found the casual timings of the bus unhelpful. I was also advised by colleagues that it is pointless checking the bus apps as they are inaccurate. This affected me being able to time my journey. I waited for about 12 minutes before a bus came. It was clean and very quiet which made the journey pleasurable. When I get off the bus it is about a 6 minute walk to my office. I found the opportunity to leisurely take in the scenery pleasurable and had a more relaxed journey as I didn't have to concentrate on anything. The use of the bus lanes made the high traffic areas quicker too. It was definitely less difficult than I had expected.*

*I also enjoyed the fact that walking more and with a purpose is helping me to reach my health and fitness goals without using any additional time.*

*I have continued to use the bus and train to travel and would only try to drive in an emergency or if I was running very late for a meeting. Also, I now save more money as I was paying £6.40 per day to park, plus petrol.*

**Bearwood Participant**

### Walking and wheeling: what hinders

The convenience, control and comfort of a car versus experiences of unreliable of public transport and the anxiety this causes are strong factors in hindering more walking amongst those with access to a car. Alongside this are a range of environmental and social factors that either individually or cumulatively serve to make walking on some occasions unappealing, worrying or simply impractical.

#### **Environmental factors:**

- A hostile environment for walking:
  - Cars parked on pavements
  - Bins blocking pavements
  - Roadworks signs obstructing pavements
  - Uneven paving stones/potholes
  - Pedestrian crossings with lengthy waits/traffic lights that put drivers first and T-Junctions with poor sight lines for pedestrians
  - Lack of benches/places to sit and rest
  - Lack of toilets open to the public
  - Lack of lighting
  - Areas with poor quality /neglected housing

#### **Social factors:**

- Family with young children of a range of ages

#### **Physical factors:**

- A job or task that requires transporting stuff
- A person with limited mobility

## **A hostile environment for walking: pavement obstacle course (but not fun)**

In both St Denys and Bearwood, participants shared numerous experiences of being forced to walk or wheel in the road because of cars parked on the pavement or bins pulled out for collection. The problem is felt most particularly by parents with young children in prams and people with mobility issues.

One participant in Bearwood spoke about her sister with her new baby. Her sister used to walk to most places, but since having a baby and using a pram, she had virtually stopped walking because of the worrisome obstacle course she faced. She felt unsafe having to push her pram into the road to navigate around cars parked on the pavement. On bin days, the problem of obstructed pavements was even worse. A parent in St Denys shared a similar concern:

*“On my street, with the bins, there’s more of an issue because houses don’t actually have front gardens. You know where the bins are in there, that’s how much we have in front of our house basically. So people just have their bins parked on side walk, which is a problem for, you know, disabilities or something. You just can’t pass them. Especially if there are cars also parked on the sidewalk.”* St Denys Participant

Another participant spoke about her elderly mother relying on a car for short journeys that she was, in fact, capable of walking. She chose not to walk because she was worried about tripping on uneven pavements or not being able to manage the extra distance if a pavement was blocked and she’d need to make a diversion. Her limited energy and mobility could be exhausted by something that would seem inconsequential to someone without mobility issues.

In both St Denys and Bearwood, participants identified road crossings in their neighbourhoods that frustrated them for putting drivers first. Pedestrians would feel a lifetime pass as they waited for lights to change in their favour. “Bring your sandwiches” a participant in Bearwood said on the walk and talk as we waited at a crossing. It gave them the sense that the car is ‘king’ and pedestrians’ needs were secondary.

Participants also expressed frustration with roadworks signs that warn drivers of work being carried out but serve to block pavements and make them impassable.

During the neighbourhood walk and talks – participants pointed out T-junctions with dropped pavement crossing areas set so far back along the minor road that it was impossible to see if a car was turning in. During our discussions on walking and junctions, the changes to the Highway Code were mentioned but very few had heard of them. Those that had felt that most drivers hadn’t heard of them or were ignoring them and not giving them right of way.

A lack of benches is seen as a hindrance to walking particularly for older people and those with mobility difficulties. Being able to rest and break up journeys into manageable chunks is important to making a walk possible and pleasurable rather than arduous and stressful. A lack of places to sit when waiting for a bus was also raised. It added to the view that travelling on public transport is somewhat of a trial.

*"If you arrive and your bus is not there and there's nowhere to sit, then suddenly you're just standing there and you might be tired. So, those sorts of things do make a difference."* Bearwood Participant

### The gamble of public transport

*"Everyone in my office said, 'Don't bother with the app,' because it will say 10 minutes and then you'll be there for half an hour. I've waited between, like, 7 minutes and 25, but I get the same time every day, so there's not really a regular pattern."* Bearwood

### The convenience of cars

*"Like most parents car owners, a lot of the time, she gives her children lifts to places, and she likes to drive because of the freedom that comes with it: going anywhere she likes, changing her mind about destinations on her list, carrying the shopping etc."* St Denys

### Traffic lights that put drivers first

*"The lights here don't seem to be set up for pedestrians who often have to wait a long time to cross. Not good in cold and rain."* St Denys



### Pavement parking: sensory issues

*"There were a lot of cars parked on the high street outside shops. A chap with, I don't know if he was blind or impaired sight, he actually hit the car because the dog got confused. The dog didn't want to go onto the road but he couldn't get around the car."* Bearwood

### Lack of lighting

*"If there's, like, lighting that they have out on there, I'd say that's probably a big factor in whether I'm walking or not just because I'm not really a massive fan of walking long distances in the dark. If I've, sort of, got places to be I tend to walk somewhere where it's well-lit and there are places I can go if I'm not feeling safe."* St Denys

### Walking route worries

*"My mother-in-law, she's got some mobility issues, and she says that the pavements and roads are so uneven and unpredictable. There's some journeys where she feels confident, because she knows what she's expecting there, but others she would just drive, because she knows exactly what she's getting from the car park to the venue. Even on the ones where she does feel like she knows what she's doing, she worries that there will be a road, or she would have to re-route, you know, some work going on that may block her path or the way that she's going so she has to change it again. You know, it might be simple to just, okay, change your route, if you've got full mobility, but if you don't, it's a big barrier, especially confidence wise.... She's, kind of like, going, 'Will I even get to where I'm going,' because she hasn't got that much range of walking."* Bearwood

Whilst participants spoke about the enjoyment of walking in their neighbourhood, admiring other people's homes and gardens they also spoke about being put off walking in other areas where homes were neglected and run down.

*"I think it makes a difference, about how tidy the area is, and clean, and well maintained it is, and for me, I see a difference say Galton Road, Park Road, Barclay Road, like, there's certain*

*roads where it's visually pleasing and it's well maintained, so I feel okay walking down those roads. It's a difference in terms of how well presented the area is, and that might make a difference in terms of what the home ownership is. It might be that actually there's more home ownership, people actually living in the homes in those roads that I've quoted, as opposed to maybe some of the roads in Bearwood, where it's being rented and people may not necessarily invest so much in the appearance of their front garden, or the visuals."* Bearwood Participant

**Social factors: families with young children**

Participants with babies, toddlers and primary school age children spoke of multiple challenges to journeys on foot (see Fig 1). Time is often at a premium, particularly with two working parents. The task of dropping off and picking up children from different after school clubs needed the instant availability and carrying capacity of a car.

*"When they've got a club. You have to, kind of, go right away. You've got to get ahead, you've got to get the time to get them back home, changed, fed. You just go, 'It's easy when I drive it.' Buses are unpredictable, so you can't really wait for them."*  
 Bearwood Participant



**Figure 7: Family challenges to walking**

Participants also talked about the ordeal of taking kids on a foot when out on several errands. On top of the hostile pavement environment described above, participants also described the stress caused by a lack of public loos. On the following page a participant in St Denys described their experience of swapping a car journey for walking:

### Swap a journey: participant reflection, shared on Recollective

*Giving up driving sounds great in theory but that day took me to a very dark place remembering how my mother struggled to do simple tasks such as grocery shopping and doctors' visits using poor public transport. Let alone getting my siblings and myself to school.*

*Going carless is a great idea for the young single child free healthy people but It is not plausible for me.*

*So, I needed to go to the pharmacy on Portswood high street so I chose to walk. Logistics isn't my strong point but this would have taken less than 20 mins round trip in the car. Instead it took 2 hours and 30 minutes and I had no energy left for the day.*

*For perspective I have chronic pain I use a walking stick I also have a 6yr old and a 2yr old who refuses to walk after 1/2 a block. We couldn't take the short cut through the train station because of the pushchair. So our route was Ivy Road South Road Adelaide road St Denys Road Portswood Highstreet.*

*Thus began my slow descent into madness. We got caught at the level crossing so had to wait for two trains to go by. 10 mins have elapsed. We get to North Road and 6yr old now needs the toilet despite going seconds before we left home. So we turn back wait for another train get home.*

*At this point I wanted to leave the kids but hubby had gone out. So we set off again. 2yr old does not want to ride in the pushchair so I now have to push and hold her hand which is very awkward with cars parked on the curb and dog poo everywhere.*

*Thankfully as predicted she gives up on walking by the time we reach South Road. So now I can speed up. We get to St Denys road within 20 minutes. We encounter a neighbour and their kids. The kids start begging for an immediate playdate which is out of the question for both groups.*

*I continue with a whiny kid clinging to me making walking pushing the chair and being observant of traffic difficult. It's been 30 mins and we finally make it to Belmont Road and it starts raining.*

*I realize my 6yr old has left her coat at home. It starts to hail so we dash into Trago to wait it out. Run into some friends there. Have a cuppa kids have a snack. Head out into the rain to check 3 charity shops for a coat and dry shirt for 6yr old. 2yr old is tired and cranky and wants to be carried...in the rain...while pushing the chair.*

*Get to the pharmacy and turn to leave. 2yr old has done a pooh and I forgot the nappy bag. Head to Sainsbury buy nappies change 2yr old. Head home. Get stuck at train again. Splashed by traffic. The weather has changed from boiling hot to raining sideways 4 times during this journey. I get home completely flustered kids knackered and upset and no energy left to do anything.*

*Will not be doing this alone with kids again. **St Denys Participant***

**Physical factors:** A job or task that requires transporting stuff.

Needing to transport things for work came up in conversations several times as a hindrance to walking or taking public transport. This is an issue for example for teachers carrying marking or materials and community nurses carrying equipment for their appointments. Some wanted to be able to walk more often but felt too encumbered to do so.

*“From the people I interviewed, they said, ‘Well, I need to carry a load of stuff for work.’ One of them is a music teacher and he has a bag full of instruments, so he just couldn’t take that on a bike or walk around with it.”* Bearwood Participant

*“I teach, so on certain days you have to take different things with you. I was walking along one day and I thought, ‘If I could just leave this bag in a hedge and collect it on the way back it would be so much better.’”* Bearwood Participant

### Thoughts on wheeling

One of the participants in St Denys is a mobility scooter user. During our walk and talks, he demonstrated how often he had to scoot onto the road because parked cars took up most of the pavement space. He also demonstrated how poorly planned some dropped curbs are. By not being opposite to each other, he had to scoot a considerable distance along a road to remount the pavement.



The numbers of people walking or standing on pavements absorbed by their mobile phones is an increasing problem as they don’t notice the mobility scooter approaching them. Our participant found he had to frequently give a friendly beep and a winning smile to pedestrians to help him travel through.

He also spoke about carefully planning journeys to avoid hills as they consume battery power and therefore cost him more to re-charge the scooter.

A desire to get out into the countryside was hindered by the rough terrain that his scooter couldn’t cope with.

During the first workshop participants took part in a discussion based around images of different modes of travel – including walking, wheeling and cycling – in different contexts, such as busy roads or recreational areas, pleasant or adverse weather. Participants were given time to identify images that most stood out to them, whether because they were appealing, off-putting or for another reason altogether. Participants took turns to share images with their small groups, their initial responses acting as prompts to stimulate participant-led discussion on the themes that were most important to them. Here we have picked out a handful of the images participants drew on in these discussions alongside comments to illustrate the key themes they raised.

*“I picked this one in the rain, for 6 months of the year this is just what I imagine leaving the house is in my head, even when it’s not raining, if it’s warm or calm, I’m like, well that’s the weather so we go in the car, that’s the option, so. And that was my life before I met my partner, as a single parent I don’t drive so it would be battling the elements, with an umbrella, with a pram, with all of those things. And we talked a little bit about, as teachers, if we cycled to work in the morning and it was raining and then I’ve got to teach a whole day and you’ve been drenched and cold, obviously I imagine you would wear waterproofs but that thought of the English weather impacts on a lot of journeys, doesn’t it?”* **Bearwood Participant**



Image credit (above): Aliaksander Karankevich / Shutterstock.



Image credit (left and right): Brian Morrison / Sustrans



*“There were a few local primary schools in London where they changed the roads where you couldn’t drive down the during certain times, like during the school run, 8:30 to 9:30 there was absolutely no cars, and it was annoying for us because a lot of them are short cuts to avoid the main road, but then you just, as a driver you adapt, and then you forget that you ever used to go down that road eventually, and you can see the children walking in the roads, pushchairs in the roads, it was really nice to see. So it can work well, but you’re never going to please everyone.”* **Bearwood Participant**



Photo credit: Jon Bewley / Sustrans

*“You’re not always thinking about how there’s a lot of crossover between different – you know... this would be this person’s personal mode of transport and it’s not just the, when we were talking about what journeys can we opt to use a bike for, this person’s got to use, got to wheel for all their journeys and they don’t have an option of going ‘not this one but that one’, everything about their life is put around being able to wheel there, so there’s a lot more pressure for this person to find accessible, or ways that are passable for them to get to what they want to do.”* **Bearwood Participant**



For a number of participants having **access to equipment** and opportunities to develop **cycling confidence** are seen as key to supporting people to start cycling or take it up again. This is discussed in connection with both childhood and adulthood.

For some, helpful access to equipment goes beyond bicycle ownership and includes access to cycle hire schemes and more affordable ways of using other kinds of bicycles, such as electric, cargo and adapted bicycles. Access to equipment such as this is seen as a way to enable people to make different kinds of journeys via bicycle, particularly those which involve taking young children somewhere or carrying heavy shopping.

*“I also drive for errands that need a car, taking rubbish to the tip, shopping for large items and transporting others. If I were to replace one of these journeys with a wheeling option easy access to cargo bikes locally would make this possible.”*

Participant

A perceived lack of equipment such as this informed some people’s views that there is a need to make cycling more accessible to a wider variety of people and also able to cater to different kinds of journeys.

**Socioeconomic factors** such as levels of disposable income inform a number of participants’ perspectives and relationships with bicycle ownership. For some participants, cycling is seen as an easier choice for people with a higher socioeconomic status and the benefits that may come with this, such as better bicycle storage at home or at work.

*“For me I see that throughout Birmingham, certain areas, cycle users, from my example, they tend to be those that have a higher disposable income that will be cycling. It may be that they’re also car users but they are choosing to cycle more, they’ve potentially got places where they can keep their bicycle more safely, maybe given employment where there’s space for them to have their bike in their workplace. So many people I know take their bike into their office, or their workplace has special, designated cycling areas.”*

When it comes to actually making a journey via bicycle, the factor that participants consider most helpful is **infrastructure**. For some, having spaces dedicated to cycling appear to be essential for them to feel safe whilst on a bicycle. Segregated cycle lanes, in which cyclists are separated from drivers by a physical barrier, are seen as especially likely to encourage people who don’t currently cycle to feel confident doing so.

The proximity of this infrastructure to someone’s home or the places they want to go also appears to be a significant factor that can determine whether or not cycling becomes habit. One participant in Bearwood described how their opportunities for cycling shrunk after they moved from an area of Birmingham with better access to the city centres via cycle lanes. This comment from another participant in Bearwood similarly suggests their opportunities for cycling dropped-off after they moved to Bearwood:

*“I cycled most often when I lived in a flat near to Cannon Hill Park in Birmingham, before moving to Bearwood. I lived near to a cycle path which I could take into the city centre, so I was able to cycle to work.”* Bearwood Participant

Beyond infrastructure, **less traffic** and **improved shared use** of the roads are also considered helpful factors in the longer term for supporting people to take up cycling. In Bearwood, participants anticipate there being greater safety in numbers. They suggest drivers are far less used to sharing roads with cyclists and the idea of doing so can be daunting – for cyclists and drivers alike. From here, participants envisage a ripple-like effect occurring if cycling became more widespread, as others might feel more comfortable about taking it up if they could share the road with other cyclists.

Some **motivational factors** are perceived as being helpful for choosing to cycle, most obviously cost, speed and exercise. However, whilst these motivations did emerge in workshop discussions and on the Recollective space, they were not typically framed by participants as factors that would help them to cycle. When motivating factors were mentioned in this context, often they were mentioned by those who already cycle regularly and consider these helpful reasons for doing so. For one participant in St Denys, who is a frequent cyclist, the challenge it can present for fitness is appealing, however for those who are less likely to cycle this portrayal of cycling is more likely to be considered a barrier.

*“It’s a way to challenge yourself in terms of fitness whilst enjoying the environment.”* St Deny Participant

It may be that factors such as exercise, efficiency and cheapness provide important motivation for people who do cycle regularly. However, it was less apparent from our group discussions that potential benefits such as these will motivate people to start cycling without other significant support factors being in place.

### Access to equipment

*“We’ve also done Bikeability in our school but then they, kind of, learn to ride a bike but they never end up with a bike. So it’s almost like supporting them to, how can we access, or, you know, a recycling scheme or something, because they learn to ride, but then if you can’t afford a bike you’re never going to ride a bike are you.”* Bearwood

### Motivational factors

*“It makes a real big difference if you’ve got a lot of people cycling with you.”* Bearwood

*“It’s a way to challenge yourself in terms of fitness whilst enjoying the environment.”* St Denys

### Cycling confidence & training

*I’d always want to have a practice before I was going to pay for a bike, like does this work for me? Is this doable?* Bearwood

### Infrastructure

*I don’t think I would be on a bike unless you have segregation.* St Denys

*I like the idea of more paths and areas dedicated purely to walking and cycling, you know, because they mentioned the National Cycling Network, so more dedicated spaces like that.* St Denys



## Cycling: what hinders

Discussions highlighted many challenges which make cycling less feasible or prevent some participants from doing it altogether. In our analysis we sorted these challenges into three categories reflecting different stages of any potential bike journey:



### Getting started/at home

For a number of participants – particularly parents with young children, but also those caring for elderly parents or other adults and others who empathise with scenarios like this – the responsibility of caring for others and the requirements this places on travel represent a significant barrier to cycling. Multiple reasons for not cycling emerge in this context. These include the busyness of life with small children and the physical challenge or concerns for safety associated with actually cycling in their company.

It is clear that having children can signal a significant shift in travel behaviours. Even among people who previously cycled frequently, a car can quickly become more convenient or essential for journeys of a similar length when children are involved.

*“Before we had the kids we were, most of the time, on the bikes, I would say all the time. We got the car when my older son was 1 year old, and we started to use it to take him to nursery because the nursery from our house is quite far, and it’s convenient when you are in a rush.”* Bearwood Participant

*“It’s that element of having to factor other people, so your children, your husband’s needs, into the decisions you’re making around getting around, it’s kind of significant.”* Bearwood Participant

For some participants it is not impossible to imagine making journeys with small children via bicycle, however a combination of factors often gets in the way. One participant in Bearwood described how, in the week leading up to the workshop their partner had been on annual leave and so they had been able to take their son to nursery by bicycle. However, the following week the same journey would most likely need to be done via car because they and their partner would both be going to work. In the quote below the same participant notes the extent to which doing a journey with a child on a bicycle can become more difficult or unsustainable even when the motivation to attempt it is there.

*“Yes, I think what he does, he does in the pathway, because in the roads is quite risky. So, I think he-, I did it a long time ago, I think that, but I felt very insecure, and also, ‘Oh my god, this kid is so heavy.’”* Bearwood Participant

Understandably, a lack of the things that participants consider helpful for cycling is prevalent among the factors that prevent or hinder people from cycling too. Participants describe these barriers to getting on a bike in the first place below.

### Bikes and equipment

S1: *“It’s all the equipment you need with it as well.”*

S2: *“Yes exactly”*

S1: *“I think in the winter as well, you need lights and a fluorescent jacket or something so the cars can see you.”*

S2: *“Yes, you’re right. It’s an extra expense, isn’t it, and I think it’s, the only it would be cheaper is if I got rid of my car, but there are certain trips I do just need a car for.”*

### Exchange between participants, Bearwood

### Storage space at home

*“A lot of these streets, some of them have got entries that are just for 2 houses, but some of them have entries that run for 8 houses, so it just becomes laborious to get your bike somewhere safe.”* Bearwood

*“Mine’s in the bottom of the garden shed, which means that, even if I do want to hop on it, I’ve got to get it all out. I occasionally use it, but not very often.”* Bearwood

### Skills and confidence

*“I wouldn’t personally cycle along St Denys Road for example to get to Portswood to use the shops, as the traffic is so busy and I’m not a confident cyclist (I would stick to parks and cycle paths mainly for leisure rather to get to work or run errands).”* St Denys



### Support and maintenance services

*“When I do bring my bike from London up here, I wouldn’t, for example, just easily know where to get it checked. Like if it was more widely advertised or as accessible as possible, then I’d feel like ‘Oh, it’s just at my local park. Now I’ll definitely get my bike next weekend.’ But it just all seems like a big deal.”* Bearwood

*“In a dream world, there would be somewhere that was there all of the time or most of the time and you could just go in with the bike and they would sort it out for you and you wouldn’t have to try and figure out which day in the month they were going to be in the park or something.”* Bearwood

Participants also mention wider factors relating to physical health or lifestyle which prevent them from cycling to begin with. For some, it's a question of habit and not being a part of a cycling culture.

*"I think there's something about habit. I'm just not in the habit of cycling at all, and so it just feels that much harder to do it, whereas I suppose once you have your routines. My bike's under a tarpaulin in the garden, so I'd need to check it, make sure it was alright. But if you keep everything maintained, it's easier to keep doing it."* Bearwood Participant

For others, it is the intensity of other aspects of their life – such as being at work, looking after others, or both – that makes the prospect of cycling more unappealing.

*"In terms of physical work and time, it's very inconvenient, because you also save energy for when you go back with the kids to play with them, and doing all this going up and down, it's quite demanding, in the end you feel tired."* Bearwood Participant

Whilst for others still, cycling is either not possible because of their health or made more difficult by it, as described by someone interviewed by one of the participants in St Denys as part of an activity between workshops:

*"To be honest I would walk and cycle more if I didn't have type 1 diabetes which requires careful planning and a lot of preparation, such as reducing medication a few hours before exercising, in order for me to be able to exercise without having a serious hypo. I still walk quite a lot considering this but would be less likely to cycle as this is a more intense exercise with less predictable results. Type 1 diabetes is unpreventable and incurable so no amount of lifestyle changes could have prevented me from getting this condition and this will always be something that I have to bear in mind when exercising."* St Denys



## Travelling by bike

Participants describe several factors which put them off cycling more often or altogether. Some of those most strongly felt relate to being on the road and interacting with other road users, causing danger, unpleasantness and fears for safety.

For some participants this is based on personal experience or anecdotes of accidents or near-misses:

*"For someone who has had 3 bicycle accidents in the last 7 years, resulting in hospital treatment including an operation, I don't think that cycling is particularly safe in Bearwood (one of my accidents happened in Bearwood)."* Bearwood Participant

*"But there is that lack of awareness of drivers giving enough space to cyclists. I'm quite confident, I used to compete and*

*things like that. My partner, she won't get on a bike for that reason and I think she was also knocked off near the university once and that's knocked her confidence so she won't get on a bike, regardless of what cycle routes have been put in place. It got too close and clipped her."* St Denys Participant

Heavy traffic, cars that are designed to be larger than they used to be and driver behaviour are all considered by participants to be sources of danger.

*"Car drivers – if they are good, you don't notice them. If they are bad, you do."* Bearwood Participant

This is especially apparent to participants in Bearwood. For them the prospect of cycling on nearby Hagley Road, which provides the main route into the centre of Birmingham, is particularly worrisome:

*"There are no cycle lanes anywhere around here, when I cycled into Birmingham on Wednesday, halfway there I thought, 'I'm going on the pavement', because I just didn't feel safe. And because Hagley Road's so narrow, you only need 2 lorries or a van and a lorry and there's literally nothing they can do."*

Bearwood Participant

Being seen as a nuisance to other road users and pedestrians is a contributing factor against cycling for some.

*"It feels like 'Car Central' here. You can tell they are frustrated because they are right up your arse and I'm thinking 'I'm going as fast as I can'. It feels quite intimidating"* Bearwood Participant

*"When you have lots of people on the bus, I always feel that I'm the one slowing them all down."* Bearwood Participant

Some would like to cycle on the pavement for safety but are worried that pedestrians will be put out or made nervous. Some reflect on how their attitude has changed over time, with a tendency to feel more risk averse with age:

*"When I was younger I was less careful about myself. It was quite an adrenaline ride through there. As I get older I think 'I don't need to die here today – I've got stuff I've got to do. I've got to get the tea, I've got to do the ironing. I can't die this afternoon'."* Bearwood Participant

For multiple participants in Bearwood the prospect of a bicycle journey may be palatable when going in one direction but not the other due to inadequate infrastructure or the time of day. This can force them to cycle on the pavement in order to feel safe or not cycle at all.

*"But on the way back, I would always cycle on the pavement, I wouldn't cycle on the road, because there's no bus lane that way, and I feel a lot safer cycling on the pavement than I would on the road."* Bearwood Participant

*"I think I'd love to cycle to work because it's early in the morning. So it's quite like early, half-seven, but it's like on the way back when it's rush hour. Five or half five I just definitely would be too scared at that point. And that's probably the most important thing is I'd actually be just too scared to cycle."*

Bearwood Participant

Beyond interacting with other road users, several other conditions can impact whether or not participants feel safe or able to enjoy cycling. These include road surface quality, the weather, terrain and lighting. Road surface appears to be a particular hindrance in Southampton, as these comments from participants in St Denys indicate:

*"Actually, one of the biggest concerns is pot-holes because actually once, it was dark, my lights didn't catch it and I was probably going fast enough that I hit the pot-hole, flew off the top over my handlebars and hit the road, and, you know, cuts and bruises, cracked my helmet. Luckily enough, that saved me to a degree. So, I think there are a lot of pot-hole issues in Southampton and the surrounding countryside."*

Participant

*"There are still short local journeys that I would do by car because the roads are dangerous and full of potholes and footpaths are difficult to navigate on a bike. I could do two smaller shops in a week by bike rather than one large shop but the state of the roads and no direct cycle routes to the shops mean I would prefer to do one big shop by car."*

Participant

Bearing in mind the wider active travel interventions St Denys has received, it could be that concerns about road surface become more significant when other standards improve and more people are either cycling or actively considering it. While some participants in Bearwood do highlight the poor quality of the road surface, there are more pronounced structural factors that overshadow this.

When it comes to weather, terrain and lighting, whilst some participants can see themselves cycling in most conditions, for many others windy, wet and cold weather are extremely off-putting. Often, it's not just the weather that is relevant but the way it interacts with things like work, appropriate clothing and health:

*"As teachers, if we cycled to work in the morning and it was raining and then I've got to teach a whole day and you've been drenched and cold, obviously I imagine you would wear waterproofs but that thought of the English weather impacts on a lot of journeys, doesn't it?"*

Bearwood Participant

*"I've picked up in a few of the interviewees, a sense of needing to be quite well prepared and have-, if you're thinking about cycling for the first time, having, you know, accessibility of all these things, but also being well-prepared for the elements-, being prepared to do that."*

St Denys Participant

*“In the winter cycling was something I didn’t do a lot of as well. Because I get asthmatic cold every day.”* Bearwood Participant

Two more practical challenges participants associate with making journeys by bicycle are to do with the logistical complexity or physical challenge that using a bicycle can involve. For participants in Bearwood who frequently travel into the centre of Birmingham but consider the main route via Hagley Road too dangerous to cycle, the option to combine cycling with public transport is unlikely to be an appealing or achievable alternative to travelling by car or public transport only. There is a clear sense the region’s infrastructure is not set up to support this, requiring additional preparation and bringing added complication to people’s journeys. Participants compare it, unfavourably, to London, which is considered better for integrating bicycle journeys with public transport:

*“But for example London overground trains, you don’t have to book to take the bicycle on those trains, you can just take them, so obviously Birmingham is very much a bus city, anyway. But then it’s not as easy to take your bike and travel around that way here as it is outside of Birmingham.”* Bearwood Participant

In St Denys, which unlike Bearwood has its own train station, the prospect of combining a bicycle journey with public transport is not much more appealing. Although participants mention Southampton’s city centre being more well-adapted for cycling, it appears that at stations further out like St Denys a lack of bicycle storage or the need to carry equipment up and down flights of stairs to cross platforms can prevent people from travelling by bicycle in the first place.

Cycling can be further hindered by the need to carry belongings or shopping on many of the journeys participants make. Several participants’ professions – or the professions of people they know – involve carrying more than themselves to work. The idea of being able to cycle into work with little more than lunch or a change of clothes in a backpack is not a luxury everyone can enjoy:

*“It’s all very well having cycle to work schemes, but when you’ve got stuff to take with you, what’s the solution.”* Bearwood Participant



### **Arriving at a destination**

The final set of hurdles participants refer to when it comes to cycling relate to the prospect of actually getting where they need to go in a comfortable and timely manner. For some participants many of the trips they make simply appear to be too far for them to consider cycling, including regular journeys such as commuting. There are also journeys which appear to be on the borderline: participants can imagine doing these by bicycle, but habit and confidence make this more challenging.

Time impacts participants decision-making too. Sometimes due to the length of the journey but also because of additional adjustments cycling involves, as this person interviewed by a participant in St Denys describes:

*“Time - it’d take ages to cycle in to work, and the thought of having to cycle home after a day at work - no way!”* Even if

*there was a shower at work, that would be half an hour earlier that I'd need to get there.”* St Denys

This comment also points to a key barrier participants consider when it comes to cycling to work: either the complete absence of facilities or a lack of cycling culture among fellow employees. Some participants challenge the assumption that it is easy to cycle to work because many employers do not provide showers or changing facilities. This can make cycling appear daunting or unpleasant for participants who are concerned about arriving sweaty or on time.

*“When I did cycle to work, one of the things that I was maybe hesitant to begin with was I didn't know many people who did cycle to the office so I didn't really know what to do about having a shower or getting changed, bringing a change of clothes. And it was a little bit of a sort of unusual thing to do. Some people would find it a bit weird. But once I doing it I was fine. It was just psychological.”* Bearwood Participant

Likewise, a lack of secure bicycle storage, both at work and out and about, is a concern for many participants. Participants struggle to identify any obvious places to secure a bike on Bearwood Road, for example. The risk of theft weighs heavily on participants' minds too. Bike thefts are perceived to be common, even likely, in both locations and several participants recount either direct or indirect experience of it. This issue is compounded by a strong impression that bike theft is not taken seriously or poorly followed-up when it does happen, to the extent that it can impact participants' perceptions of the cost-effectiveness of cycling overall:

*“Because if every time you have to assess risk, every time I want to travel somewhere on your bike to save you money, or exercise. It, kind of, puts you off.”* St Denys Participant

*“So, is there somewhere I can put my bike without it getting stolen is generally a consideration. Whether I go for jobs, or just pop to the city for a bite to eat or meet friends, or, you know, go to the gym or something. Yes. I would prefer to cycle than drive because it's cheaper, but there's always that risk of safety I need to consider. It's, you know, more about cost saving and exercise.”* St Denys Participant

### **A few words about e-scooters**

Around the time of our workshops, both Southampton and Birmingham had e-scooter hire providers in town. Only a handful of participants had ever tried them and they thought they may not get the chance because they had heard that the schemes were withdrawing.

One participant in Bearwood spoke about hiring an e-scooter when on holiday in Madrid but didn't feel like hiring one in this country. When on holiday, there was more of a sense of 'anything goes.' But over here, there is uncertainty about the legal status of scooters and where you can legitimately ride them. When asked what might encourage her to try an e-scooter in the UK, she said that 'learner areas' e.g., in a park or car park with space, would allow potential users to get the hang of the controls and steering and have a quick intro to the rules of the road, before being allowed to hire a scooter and ride.

The activity task of interviewing a friend/family member brought out this conversation about the plus sides of using an e-scooter, including the 'short cuts' it offers vs bikes and no sweaty clothes concerns.

#### Swap a journey: participant reflection, shared on Recollective

1. What was the journey, how would you normally do it and how did you do it this time?

*I have injured my foot running of all ways so I've not been cycling as this would be the main mode of transport I would use for the past month. I have been trialling the use of the public Voi electric scooter and have been using this to travel from near the university to the city centre via the avenue for errands. I travel to London sometimes for work and would have liked to use Voi scooter to travel to Southampton airport parkway however it's outside the travel boundary. I also have been using it to travel to the docks via Winchester Road some Sunday mornings. I would usually cycle or drive if I have a hire car.*

2. What, if anything, felt good about walking/cycling/wheeling this journey? What, if anything, felt difficult about it?

*Quite pleasant, surprisingly fun and reasonable speed of 20mph so I would do it more often. Only trouble is car/van drivers can get annoyed if you use it during peak travel times. I had an issue with someone beeping their horn at me on Burgess Road (A35) from hill lane roundabout.*

3. Would you do it again?

*Absolutely, however it is weather dependent and feels awful in the rain. I am considering investing in my own scooter in the future as an alternative method of transport. **St Denys Participant***

#### On e-scooters: a participant-led interview, shared on Recollective

*I use my e-scooter to get around because its quicker than taking the bus and sometimes you gotta go so far to catch the bus and walk out of your way. So yeah it's quicker cause there's short cuts and that saves me time. I can get to work I can nip up the shops, nip out and see my mates. But now there's the worry about them being unregulated and all that and you worry about being knocked off but it no different than riding a bike only I'm not sweaty when I get there...*

*[On what would help you to walk/cycle/wheel more?] Well today it's the weather ... I can't...see. I gotta be careful which roads I go on because they flooded and you can't really manoeuvre. I don't know what that's like on my battery but I don't want to risk it. Sometimes I'd like to go a bit further but the charge might not get me back up. Be nice if I could pop it on a charging Dock in town you know like a bike rack. Lock it up and come back and it's charged. **St Denys***

## 6. Picturing the future

Sustrans has developed five principles for a liveable town. These reflect the ambition to create places that connect people to each other and where everyday needs can be met in the local area.

### A liveable town:

- Has social connection at its heart.
- Has clean air and green space for all to live and play in.
- Has most of what you need a short walk away.
- Has roots and celebrates its unique character.
- Is easy for everyone to move around in safely and healthily.

In the workshops, participants were introduced to the five principles for a liveable town and given the chance to engage with these in small self-facilitative groups. The discussions focussed on each principle in turn and involved looking at: what gets in the way of the principle in the local area; what supports the principle in the local area; and what success would look like in ten years' time if the principle had come to life.

This chapter presents the insights from St Denys and Bearwood on how to bring Sustrans' principles for a liveable town to life, drawing out common ideas, as well as location specific reflections. There was some natural overlap between the discussions, particularly around social connections, green spaces and the unique character of places.



### Principle 1: Social connection at its heart

Social connections are seen as being an important part of a local area. These are fostered through opportunities for neighbours to interact informally and get to know each other in different public spaces. In a compact geographical area this could be as simple as talking to a neighbour over a fence, and dog walkers chatting whilst out and about, through to being motivated to attend local community events.

Participants in both Bearwood and St Denys felt that there is already a good existing community spirit but with some caveats. In Bearwood, the large roads that cut through the neighbourhood are regarded as a barrier to people meeting up. In St Denys, there is a contrast between the two halves of the neighbourhood. One side has established community initiatives such as street parties, neighbours exchanging goods and plants, and live music in front gardens. In contrast, the area nearer the station is seen as less socially connected, in part linked to the challenges of narrower streets and congested pavements. Student participants in the workshops acknowledge that they could often feel more distant from the local community.

Across both areas, participants feel that there is a lack of relaxed, calm and informal space in the urban environment (beyond designated parks, and community centres) that would encourage people to stop and take the time to socialise. The noise and volume of traffic on Bearwood High Street and Portwood High Street are not conducive to enjoying the environment, and side streets do not tend to have benches or anywhere for people to sit down.

*“You can’t sit down and say, ‘How are you doing?’ and all that, because you just don’t want to hang around there do you? So, you haven’t got that social interaction.”* Bearwood participant

Participants feel that closing streets to traffic and hosting community activities help to encourage different social connections and bring people from different backgrounds together from across the local area. Both areas already have a successful track record of community festivals and markets.

Many of the ideas for the future focussed on how to facilitate social connections in a more spontaneous and subtle way, through the ‘contagious energy’ of a quieter, calmer, local area with fewer cars.

#### **Social connections - ideas for the future:**

- Pedestrianised local high streets with cafes spilling out onto the pavement, more outside seating and space to leave bikes – all encouraging people to meet up and spend time together.
- Things of interest to stimulate conversations at pedestrian crossings as people wait for the lights to change.
- Benches around trees and on side streets to support people to stop more informally and talk to neighbours.
- More local events, markets and activities that foster cohesion between different parts of the community.

#### **Principle 2: Clean air and green space for all to live and play in**

Participants associate cleaner air with a more enjoyable neighbourhood environment as well as promoting better health outcomes – namely, preventing respiratory diseases such as asthma and COPD. Green spaces could encourage people to lead more active lifestyles and combat the effects of conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

Bearwood and St Denys are described as suffering from air pollution due to the current traffic levels. However, residents are positive about existing green spaces - in Bearwood, Warley Woods and Lightwoods Park are well maintained, appreciated and used by the local community. St Denys did not have equivalent large green areas close by, but the river is described as a valuable local asset, as well as smaller community parks, verges and gardens that are hidden away on side streets.

*“When you’ve got that enjoyment level and there’s something beautiful to look at, it makes a difference.”* Bearwood Participant

In the future, participants feel that a cleaner and greener neighbourhood will involve seeing visible changes such as children playing out in streets that had

been cut off to traffic and more green spaces throughout the neighbourhood. Electric cars would also be more common where people did still own cars, with incentive schemes to make these more affordable.

#### Clean air and green spaces - ideas for the future:

- More tree planting to make the environment more pleasant and to help mitigate some of the effects of climate change.
- Greening small pockets of land - for example, former car parks that would not be needed anymore. These could be used for people to meet, as well as informal sports areas.
- Green features throughout the neighbourhood such as living walls.
- Scheduled road closures near schools so that pupils arriving and leaving are not subjected to harmful pollutants from cars.
- Restrictions on emissions from cruise and container ships in the port (St Denys).

#### Principle 3: most of what you need a short walk away

Participants in both areas define 'most of what you need' as relating to food shopping, as well as local amenities such as schools, leisure centres and health services. Bearwood participants particularly value the library and swimming pool being close by. Overall, people identify many benefits of being able to walk and shop locally without needing to go to the city centre.

*"The smell of freshly baked bread also wafts in from the small local bakery set up in the shops on the corner. With people not wanting to travel so far for essentials the local shops have changed and now a greengrocer, a refill shop with Post Office and a bakers are all supported by the local St Denys community."* St Denys participant

There are some common barriers to being able to shop locally. Many participants feel it is easier to go to a large supermarket and buy what you need all in one go without then having to carry it back on foot. This is also seen as being a cheaper option than shopping in the immediate local area across many different independent shops. Whilst people appreciated local businesses, they also felt that they could not always get everything they needed locally, and that some shops had closed down recently.

#### What you need a short walk away - ideas for the future:

- A range of local shops and hospitality that cater to different groups and needs.
- Maintain affordability in the local retail offer - by ensuring that it is not skewed towards a particular demographic.
- Improve accessibility to local shops with cycling rickshaws to help people transport their purchases back home in the local area.
- Schemes from the Council to support new businesses – for example, help to make business rents more affordable.

## Principle 4: has roots and celebrates its unique character

There were participants in both workshops who had lived in the area all or most of their lives, as well as people who had moved in more recently. Discussions on this principle centred on physical aspects (buildings and the environment), as well as social aspects (overlapping with the social connections principle), both of which contribute to a valued local identity.

St Denys and Bearwood have historical and heritage connections that participants felt needed celebrating. In St Denys there is an 800-year-old priory, a Roman site near the river, and the history of the docks in Southampton. In Bearwood participants talked about the Black Country's heritage and important local sites such as Lightwoods House and the different roles these buildings had played in the past. Participants also feel that the diversity of both areas is reflected in local shops and amenities on Bearwood High Street and Portswood High Street.

St Denys and Bearwood are described as neighbourhoods that are attractive to local creatives. St Denys has known musicians, artists and photographers who are part of the local community fabric. In Bearwood, several streets are singled out for having colourful front doors and plants in the garden which encourages a vibrant and creative feel when walking around, as well as enhancing valued existing architecture.

*"There's a festival in the summer, it's called All Aboard, where people get on their boats and they go up and down the river playing music, and they have things on here like storytelling, and music, choirs, singing sea shanties and all that sort of things."* St Denys participant

Encouraging a sense of pride, care and ownership is also highlighted as a key component of the character of an area. However, there were discussions in the Bearwood group about issues with littering and rubbish that could quickly change the feel of a local environment and create an anti-social atmosphere. Participants generated many ideas for the future to help celebrate local roots and character. Ideas acknowledged that it could take a lot of time and energy to get involved in local initiatives with people juggling work, family and other commitments.

### Roots and celebrating local character - ideas for the future:

- Communication channels so people know what is happening locally and can get involved – through social media, newsletters and posters.
- Community champions that help to encourage participation and raising awareness of what is going on.
- Heritage volunteers to encourage people to respect local architecture and buildings (Bearwood).
- Education campaigns to stop people littering.
- More civil enforcement action against people who litter or leave their bins out on the pavement alongside community volunteering litter picking days.
- Local gallery on the high street which could showcase local art, heritage and stories in residents' own words (St Denys).
- Bringing more colour to the area through solar lighting, colourful zebra crossings, night glow paint, and murals from local artists/photographers (St Denys).

## Principle 5: easy for everyone to move around in safely and healthily

Given the context of the wider workshop discussions, this principle is primarily seen as being connected to reduced car use and measures to make walking and cycling easier which have been outlined earlier in this report.

In St Denys some participants feel that the neighbourhood has already benefitted from becoming a lower traffic area with the modal filters and traffic calming having an impact. Bearwood's parks are again highlighted as a key local resource that encourages people to move around safely and healthily.

*"The area feels quieter and the air feels cleaner. My walks to the area have increased as a result. I can imagine these measures benefitting other areas of the city in the same way."*

Both areas have locations where people do not feel safe, particularly in winter or where physical measures such as lighting are inadequate. There are also more subtle ways that people talked about feelings of safety - connecting this to a sense of responsibility for each other. Safety could be about feeling that you have a community around you and that people would stop and help you if needed.

There is recognition that making it harder for people to drive around a neighbourhood has to be balanced with a range of measures and alternative options.

### Moving around safely and healthily - ideas for the future:

- Improve public transport – more routes across the city reflecting the fact both areas are outside the centre, and more stops.
- Buses using different power sources such as biogas.
- Trialling closing some roads for set parts of the week to give people time to adjust and see the benefits.
- Introducing more traffic calming, one-way streets, and cycle lanes.
- Street lighting on renewable energy sources with movement sensors.
- Bringing back a water taxi in Southampton.
- Pedestrian and cycling bridge over the river in St Denys.
- Incentive schemes such as the 'Beat the Streets' initiative in Birmingham which encouraged school children to walk to school and logged how far they had walked.

### Reflections

What do these discussions about the principles tell us?

- There is enthusiasm for some for 20 minute neighbourhoods – though not everyone is aware of the concept.
- Trade-offs came up, with participants wary of knock-on effect of any measures that 'send the problem elsewhere'.
- However, there is also awareness that you might not please everyone and should be bold.
- Overall, these discussions seem to imply that people do find it relatively easy to picture a future with fewer cars and where these principles come to life and there is an excitement about some of the ideas for the future in terms of noticeable positive benefits for the community.

## 7. A Manifesto for Change

Just before the end of the second workshop, we asked participants to share ideas for changes to their neighbourhood to make walking, cycling and wheeling safer, more enjoyable and more convenient and encourage fewer car journeys. These are the ideas they shared.

### St Denys

#### Ideas for cycling:

- Segregate cycle lanes that fully connect residential areas and destinations such as high streets.
- Reckless driving: better drivers and more enforcement by the Council.
- Greater use of the River Itchen and riverside:
  - For travel into Southampton.
  - More cafes and seating areas along the riverside to encourage more community use.
  - Pedestrianisation of some bridges over the river to make them more pleasant to walk across.

#### Ideas for walking & staying local

- Pedestrianisation of some parts of Portswood Road shopping area to create spaces for cafes and make it easier to walk between shops on either side of the road.
- More public toilets available along and in walking destinations such as parks and high streets.
- Junction improvements: for example putting traffic below ground to create a more pleasant space for pedestrians at important junctions such as Thomas Lewis Way & St Denys Road.
- Create a floating café and arts space: potentially using the Hythe Ferry
- Enliven the local area through more local history/information signs and boards and commission local artists to add interest to areas such as railway underpasses.
- Encourage a weekly street market on Ivy Road.
- Bandstand in Jannaway Gardens.
- Create more resting places: benches and seating areas.

#### Ideas to encourage fewer car journeys

- Community car parking areas (one suggested at the St Denys Community Centre could be possible location) that would have the benefits of reducing pavement parking and being a safer space for cars – the trade-off being it would be a short walk from your home.
  - This could encourage people to think twice about making a car journey and opting to walk or cycle instead.
- St Denys Train Station: situated at the centre of the community, but it needs a lift, toilets and a café to make it an accessible community asset.
- Better lighting in some areas to make them feel safer.

## Bearwood

### Ideas for cycling

- Provide secure cycle parking on the high street, helping to move away from the current reliance on railings.
- Introduce segregated cycle lanes on local and major routes connecting Bearwood with other parts of the region. Named priorities include:
  - Hagley Road and Wolverhampton Road (nearby dual carriageways – routes connecting Bearwood with Birmingham and the western side of Sandwell respectively).
  - Norman Road, Abbey Road and Sandon Road (where parked cars force cyclists further into the road).
- Develop a cycle route to connect up with Harborne Walkway, a 1.5 mile path already suited for cycling to the east of Bearwood. One end of the Walkway's is close to an entrance to Birmingham Mainline Canal towpath, which in turn offers a cycle route into the city centre.

### Ideas for walking & staying local

- Free, outdoor seating options beyond Lightwoods Park, such as pleasant places to stop and sit on/near the high street.
- Pavements that prioritise pedestrians:
  - Safe for use by those with wheelchairs, other mobility aids or pushchairs at a minimum.
  - Tighten parking restrictions near blind spots and traffic lights, ensure pavement parking doesn't inconvenience pedestrians.
  - Introduce rules to minimise bins on pavements, for example so that they are not left out more than a day before collection.
- Pedestrianisation of school streets at peak periods, if not all the time.
  - Drawing on the idea that schools are a good place to introduce change: educating and engaging children can bring parents and the wider community on board too.
- Trial closing the high street to cars on weekends, drawing on successful one-off attempts such as past community festivals. See this as an opportunity to bring the local community together.
- Encourage interaction on these issues between central government, the council and the community, for example via consultation.

### Ideas to encourage fewer car journeys

- Promote benefits of less heavy traffic locally – such as reduced noise and air pollution.
- Take a mixed approach to car use that doesn't place stress or guilt on the driver, potentially alienating some people entirely. Recognise that it is acceptable or essential to do some journeys by car.
- Share people's stories of local travel – what goes well when people walk/cycle to the shops or to work, what goes wrong. Enable people to access advice through community groups/spaces such as the gym, library, swimming clubs – who know the local area and local people best.
- Appoint 'community champions' for active travel who promote change and raise the profile of local issues.

## 8. Considerations for Sustrans

This research heard from a variety of people, including those who don't walk and cycle as much, to uncover new insights into what helps and hinders people walking, cycling and wheeling in their neighbourhoods. Did this research uncover new insights? We are conscious that the considerations we share here are very likely not 'new', but we believe they are true and real.

### 1. You cycle? You're brave!

Cycling for most people has a fear factor. The fear stems from seeing cyclists in close quarters with heavy traffic or from their own or other's experiences of being clipped by cars or knocked off. The response when people say they cycle of 'you're brave' is often said. It is unimaginable that the phrase 'you're brave' would be said in countries like the Netherlands. We heard consistently from participants that the greatest enabler of cycling is dedicated, safe space.

### 2. Cycling overshadowing walking

When cycling and walking are bound together in 'Active Travel Strategies', the mention of cycling can trigger the response of 'that's not for me'. This causes messages and interventions on walking to be overlooked. Some participants suggested treating them separately to give each their own space to be explored, explained and supported.

### 3. Cycling risks being seen as elitist

It may seem counterintuitive that a cheap mode of transport can be perceived as elitist, but by some participants it is. To be clear, it is not that cycling itself is seen as elitist, but rather those who position it as saving the world from a population accused of 'car dependency'. Branding car use as a crime against the environment and harming your neighbourhood risks hardening attitudes and fuelling an 'us and them' stand-off between cyclists and drivers.

### 4. A more nuanced stance on car use

Showing understanding that some journeys may need a car to be practical: e.g. people transporting equipment (builders, health practitioners, teachers etc), people doing multiple site visits and time pressure e.g. carers, people with mobility issues and young families. Helping to reduce car journeys rather than car use, may be a more acceptable and helpful approach while the long journey of slowly adapting our environment to being less car centric takes shape.

### 5. Continuing to encourage more pedestrian friendly spaces

If our walk and talk outings with participants underlined one thing very clearly, it was that critical places in our neighbourhoods are not pedestrian friendly. The things that would make them more friendly are not rocket science: pedestrian crossings with buttons that work and favour pedestrians, benches to take a moments rest for pedestrians with mobility challenges and young children, ensuring that at least one side of a pavement along a street is accessible and not obstructed by parked vehicles – it should be a human right to walk a pram or take a wheelchair along a pavement and not be forced into the road.



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Hopkins Van Mil**

# APPENDIX

## Appendix A – Location rationale

### 1. Identifying regions for the workshops

#### Objective

The public dialogue will be held in two distinct geographic locations with contrasting opportunities for and/or participation in active travel. The expectation is for these to be urban, or possibly suburban, places ‘where living happens’ – with housing, commercial, occupational and leisure infrastructure all in close proximity, such as potential ‘20-minute neighbourhoods’ ([Sustrans 2020](#)).

#### Southampton, an example of somewhere with active travel infrastructure in place:

Southampton City Region is one of eight cities or regions in England included in Sustrans’ [Walking and Cycling Index](#), which supports authorities to understand and improve walking, wheeling and cycling locally. [Active Travel Zones](#) are continuing to be implemented and its cycle network is several years into development ([Connecting Southampton](#)). The ‘[My Journey Planner](#)’ tool has also been designed to inform residents about opportunities for active and sustainable travel. Significant data on active travel practices and perceptions has already been generated via surveys to understand population-based views, including evidence to suggest perception of cycling safety has improved in recent years ([Walking and Cycling Index 2021](#)). This is an example of a location with current investment and understanding of active travel practices which might benefit from in-depth, qualitative input in the form of public dialogue.

#### Sandwell<sup>15</sup>, an example of somewhere with below-average walking and cycling rates:

Sandwell (near Birmingham) was third lowest amongst local authority areas in England for both cycling at least once a week (3.2% of the population – cf Southampton 12.9%) and cycling & walking at least three times a week (32.7% of Southampton 44.5%).

Sandwell’s population is 341,900, compared with 261,729 in Southampton (going up to 429,985 in the wider Southampton City Region<sup>16</sup>). Population density is broadly similar: in Sandwell, 29 people live on each football-pitch sized area of land, in Southampton, it is 34.<sup>17</sup> Looking at propensity to cycle regional stats for Southampton (Hampshire)<sup>18</sup> and Sandwell (West Midlands)<sup>19</sup>:

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<sup>15</sup> Sandwell is part of the West Midlands region included in Sustrans’ Walking and Cycling Index: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index/west-midlands-walking-and-cycling-index/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/10489/southampton-city-region-walking-and-cycling-index-2021.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E06000045/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.pct.bike/m/?r=isle-of-wight>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.pct.bike/m/?r=west-midlands>

- Average hilliness in both areas is also comparable: Sandwell = 2%; Southampton = 1.6%
- As are expected commuting cycle rates, based on the distance and hilliness of commutes in the region using the baseline model for England and Wales: Sandwell = 3%; Southampton: 3.2%

In recent years Sandwell Council has received funding from the Active Travel Fund and has been consulting local community members on proposals for various active travel schemes.<sup>20</sup> Importantly, the public dialogue workshops will involve those who wouldn't necessarily be signposted towards or respond to consultations such as these. Responses to the consultation could provide useful local context from which to draw upon when designing the dialogue workshops.

## *2. Proposed neighbourhoods for venue and recruitment*

### **Southampton: St Denys (Portswood)**

St Denys is a neighbourhood within the Portswood ward to the north-east of Southampton city centre. It was designated the first [Active Travel Zone](#) in the city.

National Cycle Network's [Route 23](#), which runs from Reading to Southampton, passes through St Denys.

[Southampton Cycle Networks](#) routes 6, 7 and 9 all take in parts of St Denys.

St Denys case study featured in a report on 20-minute neighbourhoods by the Town & Country Planning Association, showcasing recent attempts to improve infrastructure and engagement.<sup>21</sup> This includes:

- funding provided by Nesta allowing a community project called 'Breathing Spaces' to start conversations with residents about cleaner air and healthier streets, through pop-up '[Clean Air Cafés](#)' and community street events (2019).
- A local evidence base on air quality was also developed by both the universities in Southampton, using data from sensors installed across the neighbourhood.
- In March 2020 the City Council took notice of the strong community buy-in and air quality issues in St Denys and allocated funding from the Department for Transport to develop the Active Travel Zone. Collaboration was key, with residents being invited to work with engineers and council staff in co-designing workshops to develop ideas and solutions for the neighbourhood, including the design and location of modal filters.

According to 2021 [census data](#), 4.2% of people 16+ and in employment travel to work by bicycle; 11.7% walk; 7.2% take a bus; 29% work from home; 38.4% drive a car or van. Summary demographics for St Denys include:

<sup>20</sup> <https://sandwellwalking-and-cycling.commonplace.is/>

<sup>21</sup> [https://tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final\\_20mnguide-compressed.pdf](https://tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf) (p.43)

- 7956 persons per square kilometre
- 76.2% aged 16 to 64 years.
- 42.2% households not deprived in any dimension.
- 73% White; 15.7% Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh; 3.3% Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African; 4.6% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups; 3.4% from any other ethnic group.

E.g. community group networks:

- [St Denys Community Centre](#)
- [Home | St Denys Church, Southampton](#)
- [St Denys Activity Group | Healthwatch Southampton](#)
- [St Denys Rocks! | Facebook](#) (3.1K members)

### Sandwell: Bearwood (Smethwick)

Bearwood is a neighbourhood within the Smethwick ward to the south-east of the metropolitan borough of Sandwell. It is served by far less active travel infrastructure than St Denys in Southampton. Earlier this year, as part of a consultation for Sandwell's active travel fund, proposals for improvements to [Bearwood High Street](#) for walking and cycling received 180+ responses (more than any other location). There is little evidence of existing walking and cycling infrastructure in the area. It has a series of shopping parades along Bearwood Road, including a small indoor market, and a number of other local amenities including banks, supermarkets, pharmacies, opticians and an NHS dental practice.

National Cycle Network's [Route 5](#), which runs from Reading to north Wales, is the closest part of the network to Bearwood (approximately 1.5 miles, 30-minute walk).

According to 2021 [census data](#), 2.0% of people 16+ and in employment travel to work by bicycle (slightly higher than surrounding areas); 6.2% walk; 13.3% take a bus; 32.7% work from home; 38.3 drive a car or van. Summary demographics for Bearwood include:

- 5684 persons per square kilometre.
- 67.6% aged 16 to 64 years.
- 49.8% households not deprived in any dimension.
- 65.6% White; 14.7% Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh; 8.8% Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African; 7.2% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups; 3.8% from any other ethnic group.

E.g. community group networks:

- [The Bearwood Page | Facebook](#) (23.7K members)
- [Covid19 mutual aid Bearwood Sandwell \(West Midlands\) UK | Facebook](#) (1.3K members)
- [We Are Bearwood - Home | Facebook](#) (2.9k followers)
- [Bearwood Community Hub | Family Information Service Hub \(sandwell.gov.uk\)](#) (link broken)
- [Bearwood Chapel - Sandwell Council](#)

## Appendix B – Recruitment specification

### 1. Recruitment summary

There will be 32 participants involved in this public dialogue, split equally between the chosen locations Sandwell (16) and Southampton (16).

Each group of 16 will broadly reflect the demographics of the local population, sampling for age, ethnicity, gender, life stage, disabilities and socioeconomic group. We intend to purposefully boost the recruitment for some people in recognition of different barriers to participating in active travel practices:

- those experiencing racial inequalities
- those with physical and/or mental health disabilities, and/or chronic health conditions
- those with caring responsibilities

Summary of engagement:

- Participants will attend two workshops at an accessible venue (to be confirmed by Hopkins Van Mil) within ~ 20-minute walk from their home.
- They will also contribute to an online space in between workshops.
- Incentive: £275 for attendance at both whole-day workshops and some online responses before and between these workshops.
- Support will be provided for participants who need either equipment or data to take part in the online space, they will not be excluded for not having access to a laptop or iPad.
- Approximate dates and times for key events including workshops (specific dates to be confirmed):

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Recruitment completed so as to ask for pre-workshop tasks to be completed	By 17 February 2023
Distribution of participant workbook	By 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2023
Workshop 1: Southampton (venue TBC)	Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Workshop 1: Sandwell (venue TBC)	Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Workshop 2: Southampton (venue TBC)	Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
Workshop 2: Sandwell (venue TBC)	Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2023

## 2. Proposed approach

In our original proposal, we suggested working with our fieldwork agency Roots Research on the basis of a recruitment specification designed by HVM in consultation with Sustrans. Given the hyper-local nature of the recruitment to this dialogue – participants should live within a 20-minute walk of the venue – we now propose carrying out recruitment entirely in-house. We have the available lead time to identify and communicate directly with community networks in both Sandwell and Southampton. This may include utilising resources such as:

- [Next Door](#), a neighbourhood app for posting notices and engaging in local opportunities.
- Local community Facebook groups and mutual-aid networks

We will continue to recruit on the basis of a recruitment screener designed in consultation with you (see below for draft). We will ask respondents to complete a questionnaire using the survey platform Qualtrics, using the responses to ensure we meet our objectives for this recruitment. We might request responses on some of the following:

- Full name
- Gender
- Age and/or life stage
- Ethnicity
- Physical and/or mental disabilities, and/or chronic health conditions
- Working status, including total weekly working hours
- Carer responsibilities to others
- Car ownership

We will also ask people to respond to various statements about walking and cycling, to ensure a balance of views and preference those who are doing less walking/cycling than they would like to/ have done in the past. Such as:

- “I would like to cycle/walk/wheel more but don’t feel like I am able to”
- “I occasionally cycle/walk/wheel but would like to do more”
- “I have no interest in changing the way I travel”
- “I cycle/walk/wheel never/occasionally/most days/every day”

This can also be split into multiple questions, one for functional cycling / walking / wheeling (e.g., commuting) and one for leisure.

We also propose including a question on recent experiences of market research/ public consultation to ensure we are reaching those who have been less well-heard, such as:

- Have you shared your views about travel practices as part of a public consultation, focus group or similar in the past 12 months?

### 3. Draft recruitment screener

#### Southampton

<i>Criteria for 16 participants</i>	<i>Target – broadly reflective of local demographics</i> <b>Note: These targets are intended to be indicative and the make-up of our actual participant cohort may vary in some respects.</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Appropriately balanced mix of people who identify as male / female / non-binary.
<b>Age</b>	Good age distribution across age groups from every adult life stage from 18 upwards.
<b>Life stage</b>	A broad range of life stages from students, young professionals, raising young children to empty nesters and those who are retired
<b>Ethnicity</b>	A boosted sample of 6 participants who are from communities experiencing racial inequalities (CERI) above current census data.
<b>Disabilities / long term chronic health conditions</b>	A minimum of 4 participants with physical and/or mental disabilities, and/or chronic health conditions.
<b>Current working status and type</b>	A range of people who are employed (part-time/ fulltime/ self-employed) and unemployed, plus those who are retired.

#### Sandwell

<i>Criteria for 16 participants</i>	<i>Target – broadly reflective of local demographics</i> <b>Note: These targets are intended to be indicative and the make-up of our actual participant cohort may vary in some respects.</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Appropriately balanced mix of people who identify as male / female / non-binary.
<b>Age</b>	Good age distribution across age groups from every adult life stage from 18 upwards.
<b>Life stage</b>	A broad range of life stages from students, young professionals, raising young children to empty nesters and those who are retired
<b>Ethnicity</b>	A broadly reflective sample of 8 participants who are from communities experiencing racial inequalities (CERI).
<b>Disabilities / long term chronic health conditions</b>	A minimum of 4 participants with physical and/or mental disabilities, and or chronic health conditions.
<b>Current working status and type</b>	A range of people who are employed (part-time/ fulltime/ self-employed) and unemployed, plus those who are retired.

Appendix C – Heatmaps of St Denys, marked up by participants before the first workshop using Recollective.



Figure 5: Heatmap showing where in St Denys participants find it pleasant to walk, wheel and cycle.

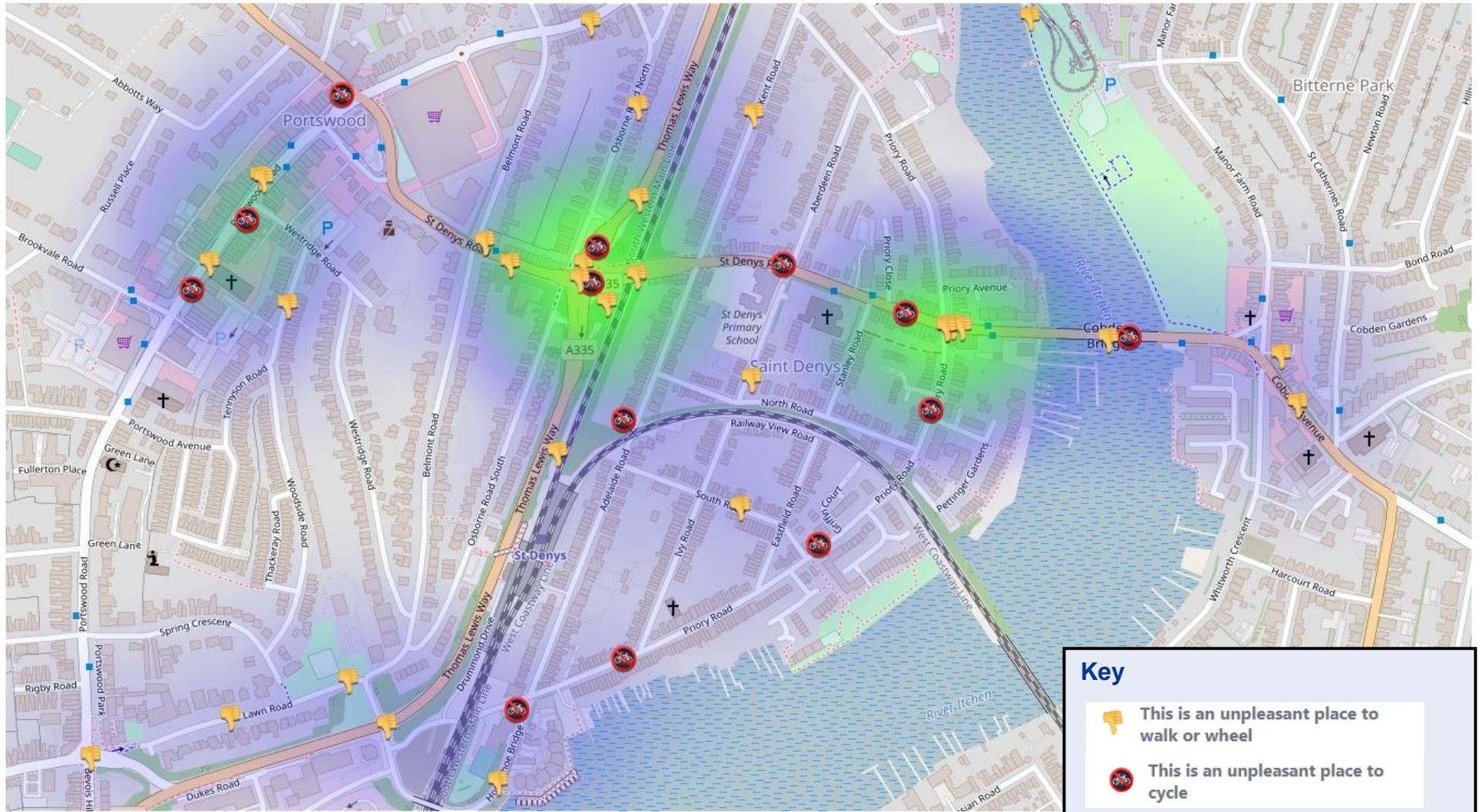


Figure 6: Heatmap showing where in St Denys participants find it unpleasant to walk, wheel and cycle.

Appendix D – Heatmaps of Bearwood, marked up by participants before the first workshop using Recollective.



Figure 7: Heatmap showing where in Bearwood participants find it pleasant to walk, wheel and cycle.

**Key**

-  This is a pleasant place to cycle
-  This is a pleasant place to walk or wheel



**Figure 8: Heatmap showing where in Bearwood participants find it unpleasant to walk, wheel and cycle.**

**Key**

-  This is an unpleasant place to walk or wheel
-  This is an unpleasant place to cycle