

# **Active Travel in Tavistock – evidence from Neighbourhood Plan work to date**

## **Briefing for West Devon LCWIP July 2023**

### **Local context (Census 2021)**

Car ownership in Tavistock (parish) is slightly higher than Devon or South West but lower than West Devon. A significant minority (18% of households) have no car or van. This is a slight drop from 19% in 2011. Since then the number of households in the parish has grown by 6%, with higher proportion (38% vs 35%) having 2 or more vehicles.

56% of people in employment travel to work by car (similar to Devon / W Devon), with 14% commuting on foot (more than Devon / W Devon) and 1% by cycle. 26% work from home (less than Devon / W Devon).

### **Views from Neighbourhood Plan consultations**

#### ***Transport issues overall***

“Transport / connectivity” was one of three main themes emerging from the spring 2022 [initial survey](#) (distributed to all residents, 14% response). Within this, the main source of concern was the impact of expansion of the town through recent developments on the edges, which are perceived as the source of increased traffic and resultant congestion, exacerbating the problems arising from traffic on the A386 passing through. Many respondents made comments on the lines of “No further expansion without transport (and other, eg health / schools) infrastructure in place first”. While respondents were not asked how long they had lived in Tavistock, information in comments suggests that this view may be stronger among long term residents, while some of those more recently arrived see it as a location with relatively good transport links.

In suggesting policies to address this, survey respondents recognised the value of better public transport and of enabling active travel to reduce car use and so help address congestion. For example, the many (unprompted) calls for a restored rail link tended to cite the benefit as reduced traffic on the roads, rather a personal travel need.

#### ***Current positives***

The aspects of living in Tavistock which people value include green spaces and attractive walking routes within the town as well as access to nearby moorland and valleys and to off-road cycle routes, with town facilities within walking distance and a compact centre. It is seen as a friendly, generally safe, town with close connections to nature. Several people had chosen it as a place to move or return to later in life where they could manage without, or be less reliant on, car use.

#### ***Concerns / ideas for improvement – general***

Survey respondents rated “Cycling and walking routes” as very important within a list of community infrastructure and transport policies, with most seeing this as a priority for improvement (Report Figs 8, 13). A number of free text comments called for better provision for walking and cycling, without being specific on what or where. In the NDP Town Hall consultation event (Feb 2023) there was positive support and no opposition to the draft NDP Aim that “ Getting around Tavistock on foot, by bicycle or using mobility aids is an attractive and convenient option”, particularly for supporting objectives on connecting new developments, improving and adding paths and cycle routes, and protecting existing ones. Also relevant to LCWIP scope is the support (under the aim that “Negative

impacts of transport, including traffic congestion and pollution, are minimized”) for the objective of reducing the need to travel and community action to encourage travel planning by organisations.

Particular issues raised (combining survey and consultation events) were:

- Path / footway maintenance issues – eg potholes or overgrown vegetation
- The need to calm traffic / reduce speeds in some locations. (These comments may not all be related to active travel – also a concern about risk of collisions between vehicles.)
- Conflict between cyclists and pedestrians on shared paths
- Importance of public toilets
- Lighting to improve safety
- Enhance / increase natural / passive supervision on viaduct & alley routes

### ***Concerns / ideas for improvement – walking & wheeling***

The survey identified “footpaths” as important to consider in policy on new housing, “open spaces” and “parks” as important environment policies (survey report Figs 5,6), with a large majority seeing scope for improvement (Figs 10,11). Comments covered:

- Call for wider pavements and more step-free routes to allow better access for people with disabilities or families with pushchairs.
- Uneven pavements.
- Obstruction on footway - eg pavement parking, inconsiderate placement of café tables.
- There were several comments suggesting additional pedestrianisation of the town centre, suggesting this would make it a more attractive location to visit / spend time in. (But see end note re parking.)
- Signage of the network of paths/alleys/twittens within the town, to encourage use by residents and visitors, and help people with dementia.
- Suitable locations for dog walkers to let dogs off the lead without having to go onto moorland – eg designated fenced area within a park.
- Potential to make more of the riverside
- More extensive / frequent round town buses for walking (eg to return uphill after shopping).
- Encouragement to walk to school

### ***Concerns / ideas for improvement - cycling***

While policies to support “cycling and walking” were well supported, there were fewer comments specific to cycling than to walking or access for people with disabilities. Points made:

- Cycling infrastructure including safe routes to surrounding villages
- Safety of on-road cycling due to width or traffic levels.
- Easier / shallower gradient cycle routes
- More cycle parking including lockers.

### ***Particular locations mentioned***

- ❖ As valued for walking: Meadows, Whitchurch Down, Canal Walk,
- ❖ Lack of footway on Launceston Rd, Green Lane
- ❖ Inadequate pedestrian access to Butchers Park development (Emden Grange)
- ❖ Speed in Anderton Lane, Whitchurch Rd, Tiddybrook estate, Mount Tavy Rd

- ❖ Garden Lane – private road in town centre which could be much more attractive pedestrian route if adopted and maintained.
- ❖ Potential for footpath link between Tesco and Whitchurch Rd
- ❖ Connection to the main cycle track from residential areas in north west (eg St Maryhay, Broadleigh Park)
- ❖ Brook St, Duke St, West St as potential pedestrian areas – at least for daytime.
- ❖ Market Road as potential location for secure cycle parking.
- ❖ Need for convenient car-free access to proposed new station

### **A note on parking**

The word cloud in the survey report identified “parking” as a frequent topic in the comments. Fuller analysis shows that this arises from several different (and conflicting?) viewpoints:

- Residents of specific parts of the town centre (Bannawell St, Chapel St & West St) where homes have no off-street parking, concerned that spaces outside their homes are all taken the working day due by visitors or people working in the centre.
- People asking for reduced / no car park charges and/or free on street parking in town centre to be kept.
- People pointing out the negative impact of on street parking – seen as clutter and unsafe narrowing of the road (plus the issue of pavement parking listed above).
- Concern that new developments should have sufficient parking for their residents.
- Comments about the appearance / state of particular car parks.
- Demand for more town centre parking – though not specific as to where this is required or for what length of stay.

Initial analysis of 2022/23 Tavistock car park data provided by WDBC indicates that there is normally spare capacity in both short and long stay car parks within 5 minutes walk of the town centre, even in peak months. Of the 8 WDBC car parks concerned, those with the highest number of ticket purchases / space are the small, relatively central, ones in Bank Square and Russell St. The Tavistock Town Council owned Guildhall Car Park also gets high use. This suggests that there may be scope within the behaviour change element of the LCWIP to encourage people who decide to drive into the centre to accept / welcome a short walk from a car park as part of the journey. Low cost infrastructure interventions – eg signage, lighting, location of seats, could assist this.

### **Neighbourhood Development Plan draft content and future liaison.**

Key documents are [here](#), including latest public version of the draft [Vision, Aims and Objectives](#). The Steering Group look forward to continued collaboration with the LCWIP team. In particular, it would be helpful to:

- draw on LCWIP survey results to add to our local evidence record
- discuss any emerging LCWIP proposals for Tavistock which could involve planning consent so that we can consider how the detailed policies soon to be developed for the NDP might support these
- co-operate in publicizing, and if timetables fit, engaging in, further consultation stages.

*Briefing prepared by NDP Steering Group Transport Lead, 21/7/2023*

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