



PLEASE RESPOND TO THE COUNCIL'S PROPOSED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Tower Hamlets Council is consulting on its new transport strategy. Much stays the same, but we have noticed some changes that seem to signal a move away from prioritising safe, clean, and sustainable travel where people are walking, wheeling, cycling or taking public transport for more journeys.

If you, like us, believe that the future of transport involves supporting safer, healthier, sustainable approaches to transport, help our case by responding to the consultation.

This is **even more important than the Liveable Streets consultation** because it will shape council transport policy for years ahead. We need the council to know you're not happy with their backsliding.

HOW DO I RESPOND?

You can respond to three consultations, on the overall transport strategy; walking and cycling strategy and road safety. We would recommend prioritising the **transport strategy** but encourage you to respond to them all.

At the end of this note are some ideas for responses. **If you can, please choose the points that are most important to you and put them into your own words.** Copy / pasting would still be very helpful if you're short of time - thank you!

To respond you will need to sign up for an account with Talk Tower Hamlets which will take a minute or two. The forms are quick with mainly yes/no answers and space for further comments.

The consultation is here: <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/transport-strategy-update> and the deadline for responding is 28th April 2025.

You can find all the relevant documents at the side of the page. Paper copies of documents and the survey are available from the Tower Hamlets Town Hall foyer.

WHAT HAS CHANGED FROM THE LAST STRATEGY?

The new strategy removes or waters down several policies that supported safer, healthier, friendlier streets.

REMOVED: “Car use is reduced in favour of active, efficient and sustainable transport.”

Missing from the new strategy are:

- Plans to create 50 school streets
- Plans to reduce car parking in favour of other forms of transport.
- Plans to make new developments car free or car lite.
- Acknowledgement of the need to reduce the high levels of through traffic in the borough (vital to improving air quality and road safety).
- Infrastructure schemes that encourage walking, wheeling, cycling and taking public transport for more journeys. These are proven to make roads safer, air cleaner and encourage people to use healthier forms of transport.

DOWNGRADED: Plans have been watered down e.g. target number of trips to be made by walking/cycling by 2041 has dropped from over 90% to 89%.

ABANDONED: The new Transport Strategy no longer has an aim of aligning with the Mayor of London’s ‘Healthy Streets’ approach - with this gold standard approach to street design now getting only a passing mention. It has also dropped any mention of wanting to work with TfL to develop a borough-wide integrated sustainable transport network.

ARE THERE ANY POSITIVES?

- **Overarching vision stays the same:** “Our Vision is that Tower Hamlets has a healthy, safe and environmentally friendly transport system, accessible and affordable for all who live, work, study and do business in the borough.”
- **More clear, measurable targets** – But many of the goals for 2030 are so unambitious that they mean residents’ health and safety is still put at risk. Targets for air quality improvement are based on emissions rather than measures of air quality.
- **Some good targets for road safety** – But plans are proposing limited infrastructure interventions and a lot of the focus for road safety education work is targeting vulnerable road users and their behaviour which could be regarded as similar to victim blaming.
- **Council plans to stay aligned with the Mayor of London’s ‘Vision Zero’ goals to eliminate all serious and fatal injuries on the roads by 2041** – But the plans to support this are not as robust as they could be.
- **Freight traffic and noise are now mentioned** in Outcome 3 - Air Quality.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW STRATEGY?

1. The overall strategy has been watered down with key aims removed

No longer in the council's plans:

- **New developments to be car free or car lite** - this intervention costs nothing for the council, does not affect people currently living in the borough and would encourage developers and people moving into the area to walk, wheel, cycle and prioritise public transport.
- **Increased use of cargo bikes by local businesses** - even though this is a viable, proven and popular non-polluting way of working for many.
- **Introduction of 50 school streets** - the 33 we have are working and the council's own evidence shows that 50% of serious and fatal incidents involving children happen near schools.
- **Measures to tackle anti-social driving** - even though we know this is an issue in the borough and we have one of the highest rates of hit and runs in London.

There is now more discussion of car parking provision and enforcement and less focus on sustainable transport.

2. **Some plans retained but are less ambitious meaning they are less impactful**

- The previous strategy specified the development of five cycle routes with TFL. The new plan has no specific figure, just a general reference to new cycle routes.
- It also previously advocated for making some roads only accessible to cyclists. This has now been altered to include access for local traffic (p21), which will mean more motor vehicles on proposed quiet routes.
 - While any access restriction for motor vehicles is better than none, allowing all local traffic will reduce the impact of this type of scheme which is proven to make roads healthier and safer and encourages more people to walk, wheel and cycle.
 - Also, despite apparently planning to reduce vehicle traffic in local neighbourhoods in ways that are similar to existing LTNs, **the council is still planning to completely remove the LTNs in Brick Lane and Bethnal Green. We think they should be looking at adapting and improving these schemes to align with their transport strategy rather than removing them.**
- Outcome 3 (Air Quality) – where the old strategy specified “urban greening and drainage”, the new one refers vaguely to “nature-based solutions to help mitigate the local impacts of global warming”. This wording is very unclear and if it means simply planting more trees, it will not work. Strong, evidence-based schemes including SuDS drainage and pocket parks are needed to mitigate the impact of climate change.

3. **Strategy lacks the detail needed for it to achieve its aims**

- No details of schemes to target the specific areas most affected by poor air quality.
- No recognition that particulate air pollution is caused by all motor vehicles, electric or otherwise, meaning helping people walk, wheel, cycle or take public transport for more journeys is vital to improve air quality and health.

- No targets for the level of pollution, only emissions levels, so it will be hard to know if the strategy is working.

4. Barely any mention of disability or accessibility for disabled people

No mention of dropped kerbs and other accessibility measures in the main transport strategy and probably no specific funding for accessibility measures. Given the high level of disability in the borough, this needs to be integrated into the strategy.

5. Very skewed representation of the Liveable Streets schemes (p7)

Fails to recognise strong evidence of the benefits these schemes bring and misrepresents the “problems”.

THE CONSULTATION - SUGGESTED RESPONSES

12. Are you happy with the outcomes stated in the transport strategy?

NO

13. Does the Transport Strategy update cover everything it needs to?

NO

14. Is the Transport Strategy Update presented in a clear and accessible way?

Fill in as you feel is appropriate. You could point out it is mainly online and there are no in person or online events. Also no easy read versions or alternative languages.

15. Do you agree with the future planned works that are planned to be delivered over the next 5 years?

NO

16. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions for the Transport Strategy Update?

We need to encourage sustainable forms of transport which are better, safer and healthier for all. While the strategy goes into detail about the needs of the borough, I am concerned that in key areas, the council is moving backwards in the policy they are proposing, removing popular evidence-based ideas and approaches that improve transport sustainability and would make travelling in this borough healthier, safer and greener.

Key concerns include:

- *Why have you given up trying to reduce car use? Currently car use is increasing in the borough even though the large majority of residents don't own a car. Cars cause air pollution and road collisions and put people off walking, wheeling and cycling as the roads are too busy to feel safe. Encouraging people to walk, wheel, cycle and take public transport for more journeys is one of the main ways to improve the borough's transport systems and will also improve residents' health and safety - particularly those who are most marginalised and economically disadvantaged.*
- *Why have you abandoned the target of 50 school streets? The Mayor promised to focus on young people and it is acknowledged there is room for more work in this area. In addition, your own evidence shows that the number of children being killed and seriously injured on the borough roads has increased since 2019 and over 50% of these incidents happen near schools.*
- *What about the needs of disabled people? LBTH has a high percentage of disabled people, many of whom don't drive and need accessibility interventions such as dropped kerbs and tactile paving. Why are there no specific targets, deadlines or funding for accessibility interventions?*
- *Why aren't you working with TFL to deliver a borough-wide integrated sustainable transport network, or aligning all interventions with the Mayor of London's healthy streets approach? This is a disappointing lack of ambition. We want Tower Hamlets transport to be integrated with the rest of London.*
- *What will you do to help improve the air quality in the areas where it is worst?*
- *The strategy needs to recognise that particulate air pollution is caused by all vehicles, electric or not. Air quality will not meaningfully improve unless people walk, wheel, cycle or take public transport for more journeys.*
- *Targets for air quality improvement are based only on emissions rather than measures of air quality. Your policy also shows a disconnect as although it recognises the significant contribution made to pollution from motor vehicles, you have removed the target of reducing use of vehicles.*
- *It is very disappointing to see ambitions such as the 2041 target for increasing walking and cycling downgraded from over 90% to 89%.*
- *Anti-social driving is a huge problem in the borough and puts lives at risk. Why are you no longer trying to specifically address it in the main transport strategy?*
- *Why are you misrepresenting the Liveable Streets schemes and outcomes of the consultations? This strategy claims downsides but doesn't mention the many benefits and majority support for these popular schemes.*
- *This strategy clearly plans to introduce areas where cycling and walking is made safer by limiting access to local vehicles and cycles only. Yet you still plan to remove the schemes in Brick Lane and Bethnal Green rather than adapting them. Wouldn't it be more aligned to this new policy and financially prudent to adapt the schemes allowing local access but not through traffic in the way you are planning to do in other areas rather than ripping them out? The wards which these schemes are in are, according to your own data, the most dangerous for road safety in the borough - isn't it better to look for ways to keep the safety benefits which you clearly support in this strategy?*