

1 GLA/TfL walkability queries - WfW response 09/2025

Author: Kate Ball 19/09/2025

11 How do street clutter, pavement quality and facilities affect pedestrians' safety, comfort, and willingness to walk in London?

11.1 General approach

We need all discussions about pedestrian facilities to directly address accessibility as well as safety. This means we need to explicitly acknowledge people who use wheeled mobility aids, by changing the term “walking” for “[walking/wheeling](#)”, and by replacing “comfort” with “accessibility” – including in documents such as the excellent TfL Pedestrian Comfort Guidance: the Pedestrian Comfort Guidance is an excellent, ground-breaking accessibility document that is largely unique in its approach to addressing crowding as an access barrier!

Comfort and willingness to walk/wheel will almost always be improved by accessibility and safety improvements, but the reverse is often not true. This means that decision-makers and designers need to prioritise and ensure just two interconnected things in every strategy, policy and scheme – safety and accessibility:

Even design elements which may seem at first glance irrelevant to safety and accessibility are actually intrinsically interlinked with it. For example, providing well-designed green infrastructure reduces crime and antisocial behaviour, reduces surface water flooding and more – providing huge safety and accessibility benefits for people walking/wheeling.

11.2 Pavement quality

Pavement quality is highly variable, with generous widths and excellent smooth asphalt or well-laid slabs in some area, but widths narrowed to the point of de facto obstruction, badly broken, potholed and lifted surfaces in others. It is notable that carriageways and separate cycle tracks often have much, much better surfaces and much more consistent widths than pavements for pedestrians, and contain far less street clutter (both fixed and moveable). This leads to understandable resentment of cyclists on the part of some people walking/wheeling, and to Disabled people being forced to give up on making journeys, or make journeys on carriageways and in cycle tracks, where we are likely to face hostility and hazard from faster users of the spaces who believe we should not be there, or simply don't notice us before hitting us.

Key measures to improve pavement quality must include a commitment to ensure sub-bases are of adequate resilience to cope with pavement parking (including of HGVs) and tree roots without suffering damage, to at least the same level as carriageways, and commitment to repair and/or widen usable surface spaces to meet TfL Pedestrian Comfort Guidance standards as a minimum. Without these minima, Disabled people and many others with protected characteristics, including those with intersectional protected characteristics, will continue to be excluded.

11.3 Street clutter

Both temporary and fixed street clutter presently have a serious effect on accessibility of pedestrian routes: If a route may or may not be obstructed, a person who can't get around an obstruction safely or at all is effectively barred from making a journey – even if the obstruction isn't actually there that day.

Some common footway obstructions include motor vehicles, advertising boards, bins and litter, badly parked cycles and e-scooters (including badly placed parking bays/stands on footways), EV charging cables, inadequately maintained hedges and trees, sett/cobble surfaces, badly-placed signage, poorly laid out temporary works including fallen barriers, badly-placed seating, including both fixed public seating and outdoor venue seating.

11.4 Facilities

Lack of facilities has a significant effect on Disabled people's ability to walk/wheel for journeys. Facilities including Disabled and Changing Places toilets at destinations, and seating and shelter along routes are absolutely essential, as is storage and parking for aids and for bags, coats etc at significant destinations: Walking/wheeling by definition means people are without a sheltered car to sit in or leave items in, so alternative seating and storage functions must be provided.

12 What are TfL and the boroughs doing to reduce street clutter and improve pavement conditions in London?

Elements of good practice are happening in many boroughs, with a number of borough teams that we are aware of taking a high-quality, integrated approach to ensuring accessibility of their areas for walking/wheeling, including improving accessibility of multi-modal journeys using walking/wheeling in conjunction with cycling, amplified mobility and public transport.

Some of the good practice measures being carried out by boroughs and TfL include:

- a) Reducing vehicle speed limits to 20mph;
- b) Repairing footways damaged by motor vehicles including HGVs (and enforcing or supporting enforcement against pavement parking/driving) and by factors such as utility works, tree growth and ground movement;
- c) Providing new and improved tactile dropped kerbs and/or raised table crossings that meet Inclusive Mobility guidance standards on walking/wheeling desire lines. This includes both uncontrolled crossings and controlled crossings as appropriate;
- d) Introducing modal filters to reduce through-traffic on residential and commercial streets;
- e) Mandating footway minimum accessible widths above national minimum standards, and using guidance such as the TfL Pedestrian Comfort Guidance to do so;
- f) Removing unnecessary vehicle crossover points, such as entrances into driveways that no longer exist, and replacing crossings over very low-flow sites with continuous footway;

- g) Improving bus stops, with raised kerbs, improved information provision (both at stops and on-bus), new and improved safe road crossing points near to bus stops, and by removing formal or de facto shared space at bus stops with improved cycle track provision;
- h) Creating and enforcing controlled parking zones with marked parking bays, so that drivers are less likely to obstruct footways, crossing points and sight lines that are essential for safety;
- i) Installing public realm improvements such as sustainable drainage green infrastructure and street trees, benches, play spaces etc into former carriageways including by removal of parking bays and pedestrianisation of areas;
- j) Providing good quality, safe, protected cycle infrastructure that separates cyclists from both pedestrians and drivers and reduces temptation for some people to cycle on footways (including by creating cycle tracks and quiet carriageways with modal filters);
- k) Installing new EV charging points in carriageway buildouts, or at least ensuring they do not narrow footways below good practice accessible widths. Not allowing cross-pavement charging, including in channels, as these harm footway accessibility and create de facto privatisation of the public highway;
- l) Providing accessible, safe, on-carriageway cycle and mobility scooter parking options, and enforcing their use including by micromobility hire companies. This makes cycling and micromobility more accessible for Disabled users and reduces inaccessibility caused by footway clutter;
- m) Consistent, co-ordinated wayfinding measures within areas (but rarely between areas).

13 How effective have measures to improve walkability been, and what challenges remain in managing street clutter across London?

13.1 We need joined-up schemes across boroughs, TfL-managed areas and areas managed by other organisations (e.g. royal parks, crown estate)

While measures have been effective in specific areas, there is currently not a consistent, joined-up approach to improving walking/wheeling accessibility and safety.

Schemes often end abruptly and with no ongoing accessible routes when they reach the boundaries of areas managed by different organisations such as boroughs, TfL or the crown estate. This limits the effectiveness of otherwise often excellent measures.

13.2 We need better data on walking/wheeling accessibility

A key issue with improving walking/wheeling accessibility and safety is that there is no London-wide (let alone national) data collected on it. This is badly limiting our ability to identify which accessibility measures have been effective or ineffective, and why – and it is limiting the ability of local authorities and TfL to plan effective future measures.

[London Healthy Streets Scorecard Coalition](#), of which Wheels for Wellbeing are a member, have been trying to set up pavement accessibility metrics for a number of years, as have other Disabled People's Organisations, but our efforts have been frustrated by the lack of data.

[All classified road carriageways are automatically measured for defects](#) using vehicles designed for the purpose. This means we have data on issues like potholes, which encourages reporting, strategy development for improvements and allocation of funding: It is often said, you measure what you care about, and care about what you measure. We don't have anything comparable for footways.

Possibly the biggest step the Greater London Authority and TfL could take to improve accessibility of the pedestrian realm in London would be to give equality of importance to footway continuity (including crossing points) to that already given to carriageway continuity. This could be achieved by developing footway-sized vehicles capable of automated defect detection using the same kinds of technology which have already been used for decades on our carriageways, and by publishing the results of all surveys annually.

14 How have issues with street clutter, pavement quality and facilities contributed to the lack of progress towards TfL's target to increase the number of walking trips by more than 1 million per day by 2024?

We know that Disabled people report their ability to make walking/wheeling trips is being harmed by street clutter, pavement quality and lack of facilities including crossing facilities, seating, public toilets and accessible public transport and micromobility options.

However, as stated in the previous question (response 3.2), we don't know how big this impact is or could be, because the data simply isn't being collected.

We suspect the impact of pavement inaccessibility on both Disabled and non-disabled people's ability to make walked/wheeled and multi-modal journeys is huge: Almost a quarter of the population are Disabled, and many non-disabled people also rely on good-quality, accessible and safe pavements and pedestrian spaces to make journeys.

We consider that TfL's ambition to increase numbers of walking/wheeling trips would be much more likely to be met if a coherent, London-wide plan to improve safety and accessibility of the pedestrian realm was put in place. This plan would need to include or be aligned with plans to improve accessibility of public transport and comprehensive, London-wide measures to reduce numbers of private motor vehicle journeys being taken while simultaneously improving options for Disabled people to make private motor vehicle and private hire/taxi journeys.

15 What improvements could be made to walking and wheeling routes to make them more attractive and accessible?

See question 2 – TfL and many boroughs are already demonstrating good practice – generally best practice nationally! The good practice just needs to be made comprehensive across all areas, including in boroughs which presently are not taking action, and ensuring schemes are joined up.