



20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOODS

A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE >>

MARCH 2023



20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOODS A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE



THE 20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD IS THE IDEA THAT PEOPLE CAN MEET THEIR ESSENTIAL NEEDS WITHIN A 20-MINUTE WALK.

However, we define it as living locally, meaning that a person can reach all their essential needs on foot within a distance they are comfortable and willing to travel.

20-minute neighbourhoods are deeply rooted in Scottish policy. They are an important part of our plans for regeneration and our response to the climate crisis, and they are at the heart of the fourth National Planning Framework, which sets out the spatial vision for Scotland until 2045. They feature in the Programme for Government and are used by professional bodies and voluntary organisations in their policy and delivery work – from Architecture and Design Scotland to Sustrans.

Scotland's 20-minute neighbourhood vision is situated within an international context where Melbourne's innovation in the development of the 20-minute neighbourhood concept is joined by the Barcelona "superblocks" and mayor Anne Hidalgo's 15-minute city proposals for Paris. The idea of local living is a live international dialogue, with research and practice developing faster than most people can follow.

In developing our 20-minute neighbourhood work, we wanted to take a step back and look at the key concepts, the evidence behind them, and whether they are robustly applicable to Scotland.



"20 MINUTES"

"20 MINUTES OR 800M" IS OFTEN GIVEN AS THE KEY DURATION OR DISTANCE FOR PLANNING THESE NEIGHBOURHOODS.

This appears to come from research that looks at how likely a person is to walk to essential destinations, like shops. Distances are divided into "buffers". The buffers used in the research are 400m, 800m and 1,200m. These are close approximations for ¼ mile, ½ mile and ¾ mile (King et al., 2015).

The research found that 800m is the prime distance a person is willing to walk. It is worth noting that some findings (Manaugh and El-Geneidy, 2014) show that this is most evident for wealthier households. Poorer and middle-income households already tend to walk this distance and further.

A climate and social justice perspective might advocate for different approaches to developing 20-minute neighbourhoods in areas where residents typically have different incomes. From a long-term development perspective, these factors need to be considered in the areas of mixed housing that characterise the "ideal" 20-minute neighbourhood.



It is not clear when the 800m distance was converted into a "time equivalent" of 20 minutes, or what was used to convert the measurement of walking speed. It is worth noting that a measurement of "natural" walking speed is surprisingly hard to find.

Much of the academic research on walking speed is concerned with health and health conditions. They measure treadmill walking or other observed, non-naturalistic walking (Mohler et al., 2007). One frequently cited paper (Levine and Norenzayan, 1999) specifically excludes children and those accompanying them, as well as people using walking aids, from their observations of city walking speeds.

This suggests that the specific numbers noted should be taken with a pinch of salt, as they come partly from artefacts of measurement and may apply only loosely to the Scottish population going about their daily lives. We welcome the more inclusive use of "reasonable walk, wheel or cycle" by the Scottish Government for this reason. More specific research into how people walk and how fast, and in different conditions, would be favourable. An understanding of how differing circumstances affect people's perceptions of walkability would be equally valued.



“ALL THE THINGS WE NEED”



There are many designs of the 20-minute neighbourhood. The Scottish Government uses the wording “where people can meet their needs within a 20-minute walk from their house” in the Programme for Government. They also express that “all people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable walk, wheel or cycle (within approx. 800m) of their home” in the draft National Planning

Framework. Many organisations within and beyond Scotland have listed the destinations that should be included within the neighbourhood, with climate change providing an excellent summary of those within its report: 20-Minute Neighbourhoods in a Scottish Context. The key overlapping concepts are often expressed in this diagram from the Plan Melbourne document:



Diagrams reproduced with permission from Plan Melbourne

- HALLMARK 1:** Safe, accessible and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport
- HALLMARK 2:** High-quality public realm and open spaces
- HALLMARK 3:** Provide services and destinations that support local living
- HALLMARK 4:** Facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher order services
- HALLMARK 5:** Deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable
- HALLMARK 6:** Facilitate thriving local economies

However, Plan Melbourne and Scottish-specific policy documents do not provide a strong explanation of the features of the 20-minute neighbourhood, nor of the listed examples of “daily” or “everyday” needs, which tend to include food shopping, leisure opportunities, health services and education establishments.

We suggest that daily needs, which will differ significantly across the population, require further exploration. Men and women have different typical travel patterns, for example, related to differences in caring and household responsibilities. Disabled people, who are the most immediately affected by inaccessible infrastructure, may have different views on what the crucial elements of a community health service are, and what needs to be included within “daily needs”. Those with a religious, food or clothing culture that differs from the majority in their neighbourhood may not find it possible to meet those needs locally.

“THERE IS HUGE VALUE IN THE 20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD CONCEPT, BOTH IN ITS EASY UNDERSTANDABILITY AND IN THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY ITS BROAD ADOPTION WORLDWIDE”



More research is needed to explore what destinations people currently access as everyday needs, and what destinations they would access if they were available locally. This must have an emphasis on understanding how these needs and patterns of activity differ between and among groups of people.

However, there is huge value in the 20-minute neighbourhood concept, both in its easy understandability and in the opportunities offered by its broad adoption worldwide. It is a powerful tool for thinking about planning and community development, while addressing the challenges of climate change and the needs of diverse communities.

» In our work on this project, we look to strengthen the evidence underpinning the concept, as well as exploring the practicalities of its application in diverse parts of Scotland.



20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOODS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

LIVING STREETS SCOTLAND WORKED WITH COMMUNITIES IN STIRLING AND NORTH LANARKSHIRE TO FIND OUT WHAT A 20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD MIGHT LOOK LIKE FOR THEM.



Our earlier work with older people identified barriers to walking and established features that enable walking as a choice. The 20-minute neighbourhood community engagement project built on this earlier work.

We engaged people through community street audits, Survey Monkey questionnaires, youth workshops, meetings with partner organisations and disability groups, webinars, conversations, and discussions. Through these channels, we developed an overview of community perspectives of a 20-minute neighbourhood.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY

WHAT	WHERE	PARTICIPANTS
SURVEY MONKEY QUESTIONNAIRE	North Lanarkshire	53
STREET AUDITS	Airdrie, Caldercruix, Shotts, Dunblane, Bridge of Allan	30
CONVERSATIONS	All locations	100
YOUTH WORKSHOPS	Dunblane, Airdrie	20
2-PART WEBINAR – WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE	Open to all	6
		Total: 298



SURVEY MONKEY QUESTIONNAIRES

DUE TO THE CONTINUATION OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, FULL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY WAS NOT POSSIBLE THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT TIME FRAME.

A Survey Monkey questionnaire was sent out via partners and the Living Streets website to people across North Lanarkshire and this provides an overview of people's experience of place.



STREET AUDITS
Airdrie, Caldercruix, Shotts, Dunblane, Bridge of Allan.

CONVERSATIONS
Community representatives, Riverside Community Council, Riverside Street Closure, Riverside Parents' Council, Caldercruix Community Council, Shotts Tenants and Residents Association, Local Councillors (all areas), Partner Organisations.

YOUTH WORKSHOPS
Dunblane, Airdrie

WEBINAR
Walking infrastructure: two-part webinar

TABLE 2: PARTNERS/PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

NORTH LANARKSHIRE

- Airdrie Action Partnership
- Caldercruix Community Council
- Getting Better Together Shotts
- North Lanarkshire Councillors
- North Lanarkshire Community Capacity Building
- North Lanarkshire Tenants and Residents Participation
- North Lanarkshire Community Learning Youth Team
- NHS Lanarkshire Health Improvement Team
- Shotts Tenants and Residents Association
- Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire

STIRLING

- Dunblane Community Council
- Riverside Community Council
- Riverside Parent Council
- Riverside Primary School
- Stirling Council
- Stirling Councillors



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

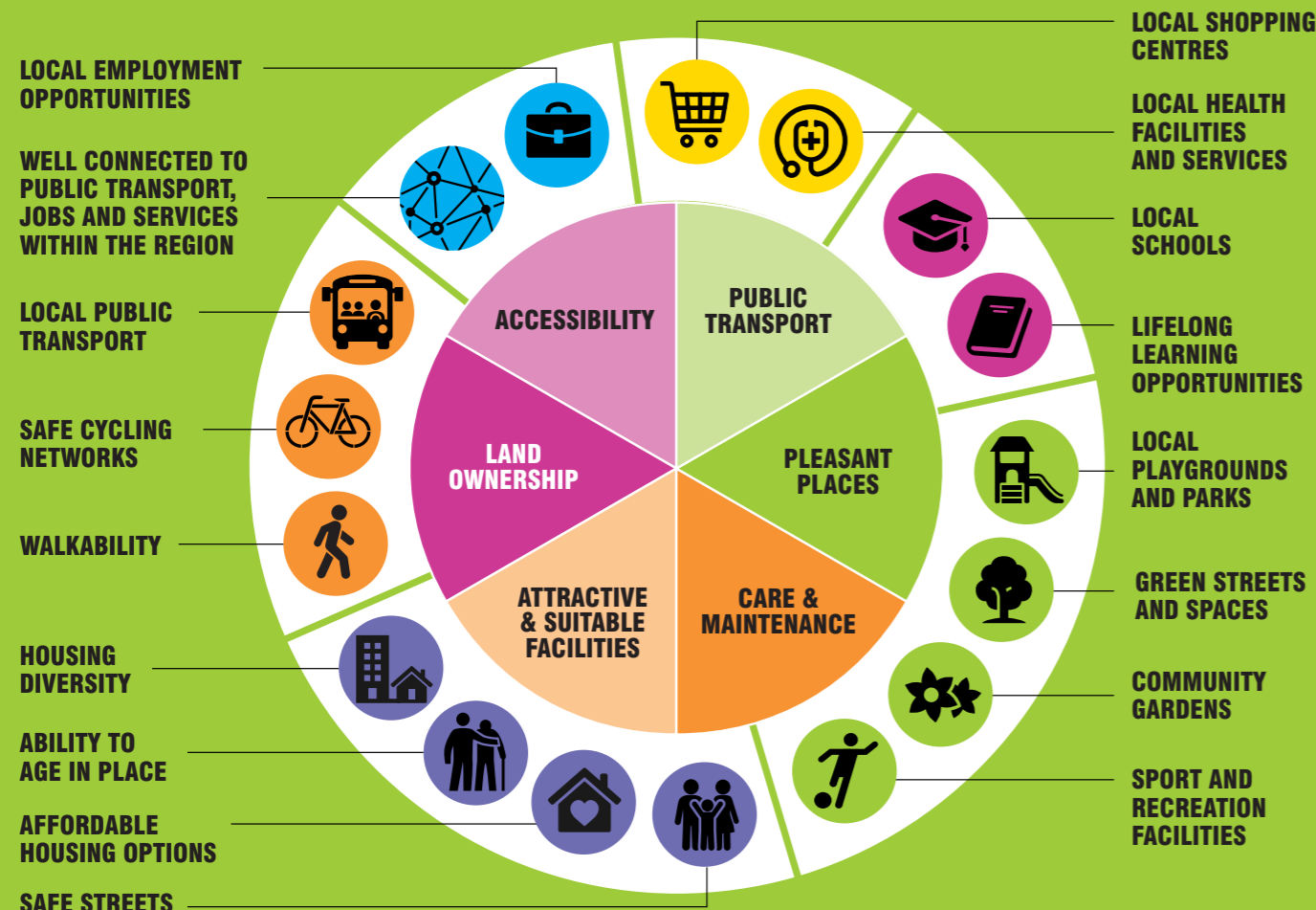


Key features or hallmarks of a 20-minute neighbourhood are that they must:

- be safe, accessible, and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport
- offer high-quality public realm and open spaces
- provide services and destinations that support local living
- facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher-order services

- deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable.
- facilitate thriving local economies.

While issues raised by communities relate to the Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood, it was apparent that their lived experience, and therefore the starting point of their discussion, was very different. The inner wheel of the graph below shows the primary issues or 'starting place' raised by the community. These issues need to be understood so that the concept of a 20-minute neighbourhood makes sense to a community.



Diagrams reproduced with permission from Plan Melbourne

HALLMARK 1: Safe, accessible and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport

HALLMARK 2: High-quality public realm and open spaces

HALLMARK 3: Provide services and destinations that support local living

HALLMARK 4: Facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher order services

HALLMARK 5: Deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable

HALLMARK 6: Facilitate thriving local economies

WHAT COMMUNITIES TOLD US:

“IF YOU CAN’T WALK THE WHOLE ROUTE, YOU CAN’T MAKE THE JOURNEY.”

Participant comment

This quote from a community member sums up the main findings of our initial engagement with communities on the benefits of a 20-minute neighbourhood.

The idea of living locally and meeting your daily needs within walking distance is a simple concept, and the communities we spoke to found it an appealing idea. The reality of walking as a form of transport is, however, more complicated.

Below is a summary of the issues identified by communities.



1. SHOTTS

LACK OF CONTINUOUS PAVEMENT.

The steps on the alternative walking route from Shotts Health Centre make it inaccessible for those with wheelchairs, mobility scooters or those unable to use stairs.



“IT’S SO FRUSTRATING THAT WE HAVE LOVELY WALKS, BUT I CAN’T USE THEM BECAUSE OF THE STEPS, I WALK MY DOG AROUND THE PARK, BUT THE STEPS ARE TOO MUCH SO I CAN’T GET TO THE HEALTH CENTRE.”

Participant comment.

2. CALDERCRUIX

NETWORK RAIL CAR PARK IS UNDERUTILISED AND SITS ALMOST EMPTY.

Pedestrians would like to cross the car park to get to the train station rather than walk all the way round, but it has been fenced off and is privately owned, so they have no influence or control.



3. AIRDRIE

PEDESTRIAN AND DISABLED ACCESS CAN FEEL LIKE, "AN AFTERTHOUGHT"

Even when the building is the home of services for disabled people. Walking is seen as a "poor man's option, it takes second place to cars."



4. CALDERCRUIX

MAINTENANCE AND CARE

of an area are key issues for communities. Damage caused through the anti-social behaviour of a few, if not addressed, can leave the walking environment looking unsafe and unattractive for communities.

"THE QUAD BIKES HAVE RUINED THE AREA WHERE ALL THE BULBS WERE PLANTED."

Participant comment.

5. CALDERCRUIX

A LACK OF SAFE CROSSING POINTS

intensified by a lack of visual cues informing that the 30mph road meets the junction of a 60mph road. A wide-angled curve allows drivers to maintain higher speeds as they enter Main Street. Pedestrians travelling to the village must contend with extremely fast traffic. Cyclists must cross here to re-join the N75.

"CROSSING THE B825 DOESN'T FEEL SAFE, AND MANY OF THE OLDER PEOPLE STRUGGLE"

Participant comment.



6. CALDERCRUIX

THE AREA AROUND THE MAIN SHOPS IS HAZARDOUS,

unattractive, and difficult to navigate. The Community Centre requires a major upgrade and suffers frequent flooding.

"SHOPPING SO POOR ACROSS NLC - BOOKIES, PUBS, CAFES OF SORTS, NOT GOOD ENOUGH AND WILL NOT BRING PEOPLE IN OR ENCOURAGE THEM TO STAY LOCAL."

Participant comment.

"I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE MORE SHOPS AROUND THE VILLAGE."

Participant comment.



7. CALDERCRUIX

LACK OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT

means there is no realistic option to get to or from work when finishing outside "office hours". The choice to walk to the bus stop becomes invalid.

"THE 212 BUS FINISHES AT 6.30PM, AND NOW THE 312 WON'T COME INTO THE VILLAGE, THERE ARE NO BUSES IN THE EVENING. AND IT'S QUITE A LONG WALK FROM THE STATION AND UPHILL."

Participant comment.

8. CALDERCRUIX

"WE NEED THE CLEARANCE OF AREAS WHICH HAVE BEEN LEFT TO OVERGROW AND CREATE A BAD LOOK FOR THE COMMUNITY."

Participant comment.



YOUTH WORKSHOPS

DUNBLANE

8-12 YEAR OLDS AT A YOUTH CLUB

The “Where have you been this week?” activity involved labelling a map of the local area with coloured dots or letters to indicate where participants had been and the mode of transport they had used to get there.

In almost every case, the answer to “Where have you been this week?” was “Only to school and the youth club”. Almost all participants walked to school and were driven to the youth club. Those who had attended other activities, such as rugby and swimming, were also driven. For other journeys including dog walking, after-school care and visits to friends, most participants had walked or cycled. When asked why they went to organised activities by car, answers focused on a lack of time in a family context.



AIRDRIE

13-19 YEAR OLDS AT A YOUTH CLUB

Answers to “Where have you been this week?” greatly differed to the younger group at Dunblane. Participants recorded almost no car transport and there was a greater diversity of destinations – shops, food outlets, sports events, friends’ homes, school, college, work, and the youth club. Most travel was on foot, with some cycling and train travel.



RIVERSIDE CONSULTATION EVENT: NEIGHBOURHOOD ADULT PASSERS-BY

THIS GROUP WERE SELF-SELECTING IN THAT ONLY THOSE WHO WERE WALKING WERE GOING TO SEE THE CONSULTATION STALL AND TAKE PART.

With that proviso, all participants had exclusively walked when their destination was within the Riverside neighbourhood. Destinations included local shops, the park, the school, and leisure walks. For destinations outside the neighbourhood, car journeys were the majority, and the supermarket was the most common destination. Other driven destinations included workplaces, children’s activities, church, and friends’ homes. Some people walked to workplaces and shops

outside the neighbourhood, and a couple used buses and trains for leisure activities, like attending the theatre and visiting friends. While they live in a neighbourhood with several food shops and a “foodie” market, all participants did their main food shopping at the supermarket. The range of products and competitive prices were listed as the reasons.



SUMMARY

The two biggest promoters of car travel that carry across these three diverse groups were supermarkets and children’s non-school activities. While a huge amount of discourse surrounds “the school run”, the findings from this small sample backs up the abundant data from the Living Streets Travel Tracker that the majority of school journeys are walked.

While this sample group was small, we also found that the availability of grocery shops within walking distance does not lead to the majority of food shopping taking place there. Changes other than planning would be needed to address some of the issues raised.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT HAS COMMITTED TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE AND THE QUALITY OF AREAS WHERE THEY LIVE:

“We will apply concepts such as 20-minute neighbourhoods across our cities, towns, and rural areas so that the places where we live and work are more resilient and sustainable.”

For communities, it is as much about the continuing care and maintenance of the areas where they live and work as it is about new developments. Issues of land ownership, responsibility for looking after common grounds and ensuring high-quality public realm are a high priority.

The behaviour change required for the mode shift from cars to walking is a significant change. Without extreme situations such as the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, most people who drive report that the main reasons for doing so are the convenience of using their car, lack of time to make another choice, or the necessity of using their car because the walking route is unattractive,

challenging or simply non-existent. While they like the idea of living locally and walking more, they still choose to drive. For 20-minute neighbourhoods to work, walking needs to become the easiest choice.

This one-year project can only make some initial findings about neighbourhoods and how people travel within and beyond them, but it points to the numerous aspects of life which are involved in these choices, particularly as new neighbourhoods are planned and existing ones are “retro-fitted” towards the 20-minute aim.

How can a small local premise supply a range of goods that are as affordable and varied as a neighbourhood might need? This question could be a profound challenge to economic policy. The same question might be applied to local sport and recreation facilities which seek to provide for a whole community.

While the vision for a 20-minute neighbourhood usually includes mixed housing types, the majority of people will continue to live in places where housing has existed for some time and will often have a fairly uniform housing type and pattern of ownership. What policies could defend against a tendency for “living locally” to ossify income differences and their associated health and cultural differences? Do we seek to diversify the social mix within existing neighbourhoods?

In beginning to explore the different requirements of different neighbourhoods and different people within those neighbourhoods, it becomes clear that planning and community development cannot be “one size fits all”. There must be awareness of diversity between and within neighbourhoods.

Another key insight from this work, and our decades of expertise on walking and walking environments, is that walking is literally a street-by-street issue. Every pavement, every crossing – the entirety of each route – must be joined up for any of it to be accessible, particularly to disabled and older people. How do we embed local people’s understanding of their

environment and enable them to meet their needs for their local infrastructure? Currently, this is a complex, bureaucratic, centralised (at a local authority level), and non-standardised (at a national level) affair that is beyond the reach of many individuals and small groups.

As a final consideration:

what cannot be local? Which needs, and perhaps most pertinently whose needs, cannot be met within this model? In our explorations of people’s existing journeys and aspirations, these currently include religious worship, children’s activities, hospital visits, and work.



Living Streets wants to focus on diversity as we continue to develop our work on 20-minute neighbourhoods – diversity of the places we work in and of the people who live within them. We seek to answer questions about what people want and need, and what will enable and encourage them to move towards living locally and meeting the health, economic and climate challenges that face us.





 **LIVINGSTREETS.ORG.UK**

 **SCOTLAND@LIVINGSTREETS.ORG.UK**

 **CALL: 0131 573 7500**

We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking.

Living Streets (The Pedestrians' Association) is a Registered Charity No. 1108448 (England and Wales) and SC039808 (Scotland), Company Limited by Guarantee (England & Wales), Company Registration No. 5368409.