



# **ACTION PLAN: WALKING PLACES PROJECT REPORT**

**Stow Action Plan Report**

Living Streets

April 2024

## Introduction

This report describes the findings of the Walking Places project in Stow, which was delivered by Living Streets.

The Walking Places project aims to support walking and wheeling, in Stow, with Stow Primary School as the centre of a 20-minute neighbourhood.

Living Streets is the UK charity for everyday walking. We want a nation where walking is the natural choice for everyday local journeys. Our mission is to achieve a better walking environment and inspire people to walk more.

The Walking Places project is funded by Paths for All through the Active Nation Fund.

Walking Places brings together Living Streets' expertise across our school programme and community work. It incorporates the following elements:

- **WOW – the walk to school challenge from Living Streets:** WOW sees pupils record how they travel to school. If they travel actively, they are rewarded with a badge at the end of the month. This has been launched with Stow Primary School to support walking to school.
- **Living Streets' Out & About approach:** This initiative helps people to remain or become more physically active in their community, to stay socially connected and to be active in improving the walking environment for everyone.
- **Living Streets' community and school street reviews:** Street reviews evaluate the walking quality of local streets and help build a case for improvement to the walking environment. Stow Primary School and members of the Stow community have participated in a community and/or school street review.
- **20-minute neighbourhoods:** This approach focuses on walkable neighbourhoods, where people can get most of their daily needs within walking distance. In this case, Stow Primary School is the focus for the 20-minute neighbourhood in Stow.

The following infographic shows which features should be found in an ideal 20-minute neighbourhood.





Fig 1.1 - an infographic showing the features of a 20-minute neighbourhood

Living Streets talked to lots of people in the local community about their views and experiences, asking what issues stop residents from walking more in Stow. This took place through street reviews, surveys and meetings with different groups.

## Local context and changes

Stow & Fountainshall have a Community Action Plan, separate to the Walking Places Action Plan, that links to similar issues and proposed solutions. This document allows residents to identify what matters most to them and find solutions for local issues. It includes creating a safer and more enjoyable walking experience for residents in the following way:

- **Improved pedestrian infrastructure**

The plan includes:

- A public awareness campaign to tackle dog fouling. It also enforces rules that require dogs to be on leashes in parks.
- Aims to fix bus shelters, benches and signposts.
- It also recognises challenges like narrow pavements due to parked cars, uneven surfaces and limited parking near schools, but solutions are being explored.

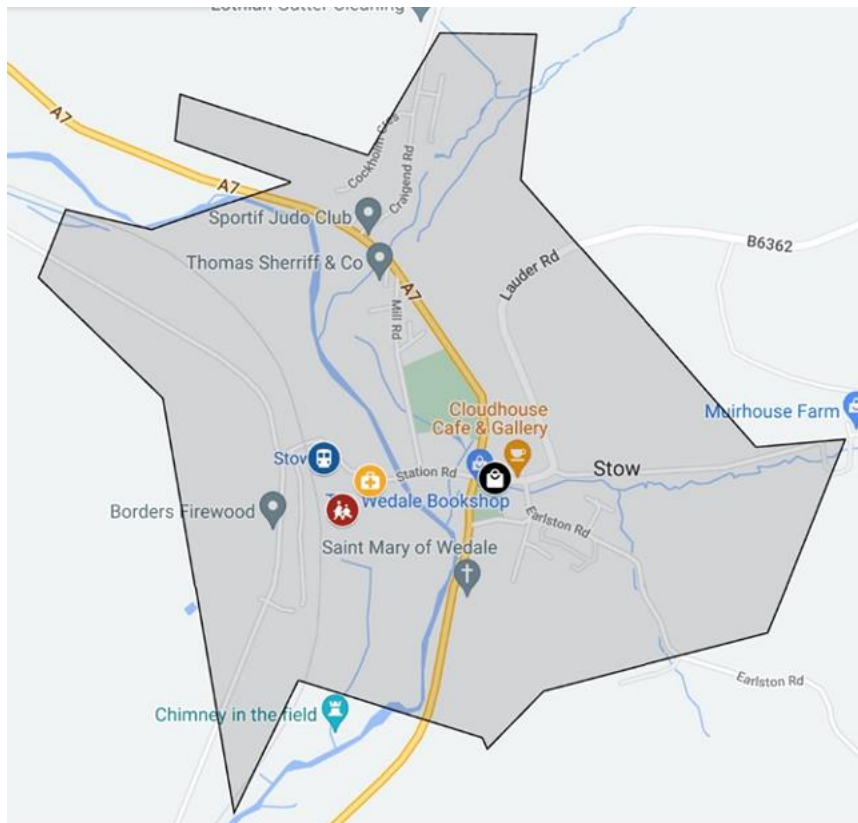




- **Safer roads and reduced traffic:**

The plan proposes:

- Measures to address the lack of a safe crossing point near the A7 garage, close to the north end of Mill Road.
- Measures to reduce traffic speed on the A7. Lower speed limits could also encourage more public transport use.
- Plans to investigate the increased collisions around the garage area, linked to congestion and illegal parking.
- Installing dog waste bins at both ends of Stow to tackle dog fouling on local streets and in local green spaces.



*Fig 1.2 - Maps showing the 20-minute neighbourhood focused on Stow Primary school (grey area). Additional icons show the station and the location of shops in the centre of the village.*



## Community and school consultation

The following community consultation took place:

- An online survey was conducted between November 2023 and March 2024
- Residents attended a Street Review to identify issues while walking locally in April 2024.

The following school consultation took place:

- Stow Primary School participated in the Walking Places interactive school workshop with Junior Road Safety Officers in April 2024
- A school street review was conducted in April 2024
- A playground games session was delivered at Stow Primary School in February 2024. This event launched WOW – the walk to school challenge.

## Data analysis

The following section shows a summary of the key findings from the survey conducted in Stow between October 2023 and April 2024.

Stow is a community where walking is encouraged and safety is a priority. Residents currently walk often, but some express a desire to walk more if the weather and time permit it.

### Walking habits

- Safety is the top priority for Stow residents when choosing transport. 75 per cent of residents rank it as very important. 94 per cent feel very safe walking/wheeling in their community.
- 85 per cent of Stow residents walk to get around, which is more frequently than those in other areas surveyed. This high walking rate may explain why 19 per cent of residents have a low desire to increase their walking.
- While walking is common, 60 per cent of Stow residents also use cars regularly for longer journeys. Public transport use is moderate, with 33 per cent of residents using it regularly.

### Attitudes towards walking

- 93 per cent of residents say cost is an important factor when they choose transport, while 68 per cent say convenience is very important. However, 96 per cent of Stow residents highly value the health benefits and environmental impact of walking.
- Social interaction is a significant factor in transport choice for Stow residents, with 88 per cent of residents saying it is very important. This might explain the high walking rates for errands and leisure.



- While convenience is important, 40 per cent of residents are neutral on whether walking is more convenient than driving.

A lot of people in Stow saw the area as an attractive place to walk around, but some pointed out the significant problems of speeding traffic and a lack of crossing places, which make walking difficult for some residents. The following themes were identified from the survey comments section:

### Positive experiences

- Many residents find Stow to be a safe and friendly community, with comments such as "safe," "friendly," "good community".
- Some residents enjoy the social aspects of walking, with comments such as "always meet people I know".
- Several comments highlight Stow's attractiveness for walking, such as "attractive place to walk around".

### Challenges and safety concerns

- Speeding traffic and a lack of designated crossings are safety concerns for some walkers, particularly children, who made comments such as "cars drive too fast," and "no crossing places".
- Some comments suggest that there are limited walking options because of distance or bad weather, such as "too long of a walk to work," and "good, if it's summer".

### Car preference

- A few comments indicate a preference for driving because of time efficiency and a sense of safety, such as "prefer the car, quicker and safer".

## Consultation findings

The following key themes were identified through consultation with Stow community members:

### Traffic

The A7 Galashiels Road runs through the centre of the village of Stow. Participants expressed concerns about the limited crossing points, with only one set of traffic lights located at the crossroads in the village centre.

- At the north end of the village, near the junction of Mill Road with the A7, there is a crossing point marked on the pavement using bright visuals and the wording "stop, look, listen." However, there is little indication to oncoming traffic that this is a designated crossing point. This location lacks traffic



calming measures, and there is a blind spot where pedestrians cannot see what is coming.

- Safety concerns were raised regarding the local park situated on the opposite side of the A7. Given its proximity, it is likely that children will want to cross the road.
- Residents have pointed out that there is insufficient consideration for the north end of the village as a walking route. The lack of proper pavements forces pedestrians to walk too close to the road. Additionally, there are not enough safe places for pedestrians to cross.
- Frequent use of the road by large-scale vehicles has made pedestrians feel vulnerable and at risk. There have been several collisions and near misses, highlighting the safety issue.
- Residents have raised concerns about the weight of vehicles contributing to erosion on the hillside above the Gala Water. This erosion occurs as you leave the village from the north side.

### Speed limit

Speeding is another area of concern for pedestrians in Stow.

- The speed limit was lowered to 20mph as a trial, and this made residents feel safer. However, the limit was increased back to 30mph without consultation and car speeds are increasing. This impacts perceptions of safety and may be encouraging residents to drive for journeys that are walkable.

### Pavements:

Many participants expressed concerns about the poor condition of the pavements. Damaged elements and inadequate repairs contribute to the problem.

- The pavements at the north end of the village are very narrow, forcing people to step onto the road in some places.
- Dropped kerbs are not consistently aligned, causing issues for pedestrians. This misalignment makes people spend more time on the road, making them vulnerable.
- The design of wide sweeping junctions results in pedestrians spending more time on the road.
- Many parts of the pavement are not suitable for people with mobility issues or those using buggies. At certain points in the village, the pavement abruptly ends, leaving no walking option.
- Overgrown shrubbery, puddles and fallen leaves which become slippery in winter obstruct the pavement.



### Pavement parking

Some areas have a problem where cars park on the pavement instead of staying entirely on the road. This forces pedestrians to walk on the road, which can be unsafe.

- Near Millbank Garage, there are many cars parked on the pavement. This blocks the view of the A7 road even more, making it harder for drivers to see clearly.
- The roads near the school and surgery can get very congested due to parked cars on the pavement.

### Attitude to walking

- Participants said they would like to walk more and are aware of the health benefits of walking.
- Participants expressed that the walking route through the village isn't enjoyable or relaxing for pedestrians. They worry about their safety because of the fast-moving traffic, the high volume of cars, the absence of proper crossings or traffic calming measures, and the inadequate pavement provision.

### Public transport

- Participants were concerned that the bus services are restricted and not always reliable.

### Street cleaning

- Participants felt more could be done about litter on the pavement and dog mess in some areas.

### Local amenities

- Participants generally felt satisfied with the available amenities. However, they mentioned that for specific needs, they still have to travel a bit farther.

*I sometimes feel like I'm taking my life in my hands when I cross over the A7 to get to Mill Street. You can't see a think and it's a very busy road.*

- Community Street Review participant.

*The "stop, look, listen" crossing place towards the north end of the village is not suitable. It's putting pressure on the pedestrian. It suggests that if I get run over it's my fault – it's just wrong.*

Community Street Review participant.





*When you live somewhere rural like Stow you would expect to be able to walk kids to school safely and easily.*

Community Street Review participant.

## School engagement

Pupils at Stow Primary School shared their views during the Walking Places workshop. Key issues were:

### Narrow pavements

Pupils pointed out that the pavements were so narrow that sometimes they had to walk on the road. They noticed that it would be difficult to push a pram or buggy in places.

### Crossing the A7

- Pupils said that it can be quite scary to walk along the A7 with such fast traffic travelling through the village.
- They agreed that most children travelling to school from the north of village would cross the A7 and travel to the school via Mill Road, because this seems much quieter and safer.
- Pupils felt that the crossing point at Mill Road offered poor visibility and was dangerous.

### Pavement parking

Pupils said they encounter cars parked on the pavements on their way to and from school.

### Attitudes to walking

- Pupils said they enjoyed walking as it was good for their physical and mental health.
- Pupils indicated that walking to and from school with friends was fun.

*I really don't like how government have put up thirty signs when you go into Stow and it's annoying when I'm walking down to school, and cars just come speeding past.*

Pupil from Stow Primary School

*More parents are driving their kids to school again since they changed the speed limit from 20MPH to 30MPH because of safety concerns.*

Teacher from Stow Primary School



## Recommendations:

### Improve pedestrian infrastructure by:

- Reducing the speed limit to 20mph for all vehicles driving through Stow through:
  - Traffic calming measures (e.g. raised table)
  - Speed camera or radar speed sign
- Improving footways
  - Extend the footway on the A7 Gala Road beyond its current end in the northern part of the village, up to the houses located further north.
  - Widening pavements where possible (e.g. north of Mill Road)
  - General improvements to pavements, which are uneven and in need of repair in some places.
  - Ensuring dropped kerbs are in the correct location.
- Facilitating safer crossing points on the A7 for primary aged children walking to school (e.g. upgrading existing crossing north of Mill Road on A7).

### Improving walking experience by:

- Improving and tackling dog fouling in the village
- Reducing litter around footways and green spaces
- Ensuring that overgrown bushes next to footways are cut back
- Dealing with pavement parking, as this affects footways and sometimes means that pedestrians must walk in the road.

## Next Steps for Walking Places

The Walking Places project's main focuses are based on the findings from the consultation. These focuses are outlined in the table below, known as the Walking Places Action Plan.

### For schools:

- Continue participation in the WOW programme to encourage active travel to school.
- Facilitate workshops with pupils and their families/carers to raise awareness and develop understanding of active travel.
- Collaborate with Stow Community Council and Scottish Borders Council to safeguard children walking to school along the A7.

### For the local community



- Advocate for a reduction of speeding on the A7 Galashiels Road, including traffic calming measures.
- Advocate for an improvement in walking infrastructure for pedestrians along the A7. Improve or introduce safer options to cross the road, especially around Mill Road junction with A7.
- Advocate for improved public transport services, particularly buses.
- Identify the stakeholders who should be part of a working group responsible for addressing issues and continuing the work once the Living Streets Walking Places project concludes.

### **For the local authority**

- Collaborate with Scottish Borders Council to address traffic calming measures and maintenance issues including litter, dog fouling, clearing leaves, cutting back protruding greenery (shrubs, trees), and puddles.
- Investigate pavement parking policy and enforcement.



## Stow Walking Places Action Plan table

Action	How	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
<b>Aim to establish a working group with relevant parties to help ensure actions are taken forward</b>	<p>Conduct stakeholder mapping and contact identified stakeholders to determine makeup of working group for this action plan</p> <p>Attend Stow Community Council meeting and arrange a Q&amp;A session focused on the action plan. Discuss next steps and explore who will be responsible for tackling the actions outlined many of which seek to support previous work</p> <p>Distribute the Walking Places Stow Action plan to current partners.</p>	Living Streets LS Technical Team and Stow Community Council.	Living Streets Stow Community Council	June 2024
<b>Feedback the safety concerns about the speed of traffic and the need for traffic calming measures on A7</b>	<p>LS to work with Stow Primary to lobby the SBC for 20MPH limit on the A7.</p> <p>Request explanation for the trial speed limit changing back to 30mph from SBC and Police Scotland.</p>	Stow Community Council Living Streets Scottish Borders Council	Stow Community Council Scottish Borders Council Living streets	December 2024



Action	How	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
<b>Feedback the safety concerns about the speed of traffic and the need for traffic calming measures on A7 (cont...)</b>	Investigate the Transport Scotland A7 Action Plan. (This pre-appraisal study aims to help determine the future transport needs in The Borders). Establish if any elements of this document relate to the WP Stow Action Plan priorities and link in with these if so.	Living Streets Transport Scotland Stow Community Council	Living Streets	June 2024
<b>Continue to explore potential partners to work with and remedy road safety, prioritising the A7 road</b>	Set up face-to-face meetings to discuss road safety concerns and establish how to move forward with reducing road speed and introducing traffic calming measures within an agreed timeframe.	Scottish Borders Council - Roads Planning Service Scottish Borders Council - Road Safety Working Group Police Scotland BEAR Scotland Transport Scotland	Living Streets Stow Community Council	July 2024
<b>Share information with relevant local partners about issues raised during Community Street Reviews for maintenance and improvement</b>	Share the WP Stow Action Plan with relevant partners and meeting face to face, if required.  Identify who is responsible for street maintenance, this includes cleanliness, shrubbery, gritting etc. Once established, arrange meeting to discuss next steps.	Scottish Borders Council Stow Community Council Living Streets	Scottish Borders Council Living Streets	December 2024



Action	How	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
<b>Share information with relevant local partners about issues raised during Community Street Reviews for maintenance and improvement (cont...)</b>	<p>Convey the need for the improvements to walking infrastructure including widening streets, introducing dropped kerbs and making repairs to pavements etc. Liaise with SBC and arrange a face-to-face meeting to discuss next steps.</p> <p>Look at the potential for local community to carry out on-going Community Street Reviews to keep on top of these issues and have a direct contact within the council. Living Streets to provide some support</p> <p>Investigate current SBC pavement parking policy and enforcement/deterrents. Contact person/department responsible and to highlight issues. From here arrange a face-to-face meeting.</p> <p>Investigate public transport concerns further. Find out about current service provision and discuss findings with service provider.</p>	<p>Scottish Borders Council Stow Community Council Living Streets</p>	<p>Scottish Borders Council Living Streets</p>	<p>December 2024</p>



Action	How	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
<b>Investigate the possibility of improving crossing located at Mill Road on A7 and make improvements on Station Road</b>	<p>Use the WP Stow Action plan to make partners aware of concerns.</p> <p>Pinpoint which organisations/departments within the SBC are responsible for crossings and arrange a meeting to show findings. Seek advice from the Living Streets Technical Team on possible solutions.</p> <p>Establish a course of action, give responsibility to key partners to action</p>	<p>Scottish Borders Council</p> <p>Stow Community Council</p> <p>Transport Scotland</p> <p>Living Street (Technical Team) see appendix</p>	<p>Scottish Borders Council</p> <p>Living Streets</p>	December 2024
<b>Promote benefits of walking, and improvements to walking infrastructure through local media channels.</b>	<p>Provide articles promoting active travel along with press releases of local walking activities, campaigns and community events.</p> <p>Build understanding of walking motivations in Stow based on survey results and any required, additional primary research</p> <p>Determine what activity should take place in Stow to support walking, based on motivations for Stow residents (e.g. activity, event, paper resources) and launch with residents.</p>	<p>Stow Hub</p> <p>Stow and Fountainhall Community Web</p> <p>Borders Telegraph</p> <p>Living Streets</p>	Living Streets	On-going until March 2025



Action	How	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
<b>Promote benefits of Walking, and improvements to Walking infrastructure through local media channels. (cont...)</b>	Continue to recruit new/other members of the community who would like to be involved and are not represented in the current work, for example older citizens and groups that would benefit from starting to walk local journeys. Dependent on Living Streets future funding for Walking Places	Stow Hub Stow and Fountainhall Community Web Borders Telegraph Living Streets	Living Streets	On-going until March 2025
<b>Investigate expansion of schools programme to include neighbouring communities such as Heriot and Fountainhall.</b>	WOW Travel Tracker  Dependent on Living Streets funding	Living Streets Fountainhall and Heriot Primary School Head Teachers and class teachers.	Living Streets	December 2024





## APPENDICES

### **A7 crossing point near north end of Mill Road in Stow**

Close to the garage and north end of Mill Road is a key crossing point across the A7 for children and community members coming from the north of Stow accessing the school and train station at Stow.

Drivers along the A7 may not be aware of the crossing as there is no signage or road markings to indicate that the informal crossing is at this location. There are pavement markings showing an elephant to indicate to schoolchildren to cross at this point as well as striped bollards, but without signage and markings drivers may not change their behaviour, accordingly, to children and local community members crossing here.

Living Streets suggests that a more formal crossing with road markings and signage be placed at this crossing to make it safer for the local community, especially schoolchildren. The crossing point needs to be much more visible; improvements could include creating a raised table equal to the height of the pavement and visual prompts such as painting it different colour; a raised table with a zebra crossing; a zebra crossing or a pedestrian traffic light crossing. Traffic lights would be the ideal solution to cross this section of the road. A traffic island would be unsuitable here, due to the width of the road in Stow. Further safety measures could be introduced including tactile pavement beside the crossing. The pavement build out on the road is ineffectual as cars are parking on the chevron markings, obscuring the view for pedestrians. A potential solution would be to remove the chevrons and replace them completely with a build out to give pedestrians more visibility and to narrow the road for vehicles, encouraging slower speeds.

Alongside this, some work around reducing speeding and pavement parking in the village is also required, to support pedestrians going about their daily business, which is already set out in this action plan. Reduction of the 30mph speed limit would be strongly recommended. The increased speed limit (after a trial period lowering it to 20mph) has seen an increase in the volume of traffic as more people are using cars to commute to school as they don't feel safe walking next to fast traffic. Added to this the road would benefit from speed indication radar signage to alert drivers to their speed entering Stow and other traffic calming measures and alerts to highlight children and pedestrians crossing.

A longer-term proposal would be to consider closing Mill Road and make the area a pedestrian/public space. The corner section of the pavements could be better utilised as a public area rather than having cars parked there. This would also see Mill Road become pedestrianised which is a frequently used route to Stow Primary



School and nursery. Car access could be by permit only for residents of the road making it a much safer and pleasant route to walk.



#### **Walking access to Stow Primary via Station Road:**

This is a route that is frequently used by parents and pupils to access Stow Primary School. The pavements are narrow and there can be an issue with parked cars causing blockages and lack of visibility. This road would benefit from the introduction of more crossing points. The current crossing point needs upgrading to include tactile paving (at either side) and a raised table, painted a different colour, or made into a zebra to make it stand out to traffic. The introduction of signage to alert traffic to pupils and pedestrians crossing would also be recommended.

N.B The teacher also noted on the CSR that staff feel very vulnerable when taking children on school outing by foot as the pavements are too narrow to accommodate everyone.





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