

Summary of English Nature's response to Department for Transport's consultation on Natural green space and the walking environment ('On the Move by Foot' discussion paper).

English Nature recognises walking as an essential element of a healthy lifestyle, and as the basic mode people use to enjoy access to and contact with nature and green space. This applies both within local neighbourhoods and for longer-distance walks, which remain one of the most popular forms of outdoor recreation. Walking is also used as a means of getting around and the majority of trips under a mile are made on foot.

The main point of our response is the role that local natural green space and planting can play in creating an attractive walkable environment. This needs to be recognised as an essential aspect of providing a better physical environment for walkers.

Natural settings are important both as **destinations** that attract people out for exercise, informal recreation and community interaction, and also for creating pleasant walking and cycling **routes and networks**.

- **Home Zones and traffic calming** can integrate natural planting with benefits both to visual cues to reduce driver impatience and traffic speeds, and to
- supporting familiar wildlife in densely built-up urban areas.

- **Safe walking and cycling routes and crossing points to natural green spaces** should be identified as a high priority for walkable local neighbourhoods.

- **Only if the nearest patch of natural informal green space is within 300m (5 minutes walk) from home** are 7-8 year old children allowed freedom to get out for the active play needed for their normal healthy development.

- The **Rights of Way improvement plans** which all local authorities are, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW), required to produce can and should play a major role in improving walkability in urban areas, including improving links with the rights of way network and surrounding open access land.

3rd October 2003.

Contact: Judith Hanna, Social Policy Advisor, English Nature, tel. 0207 831 6922.