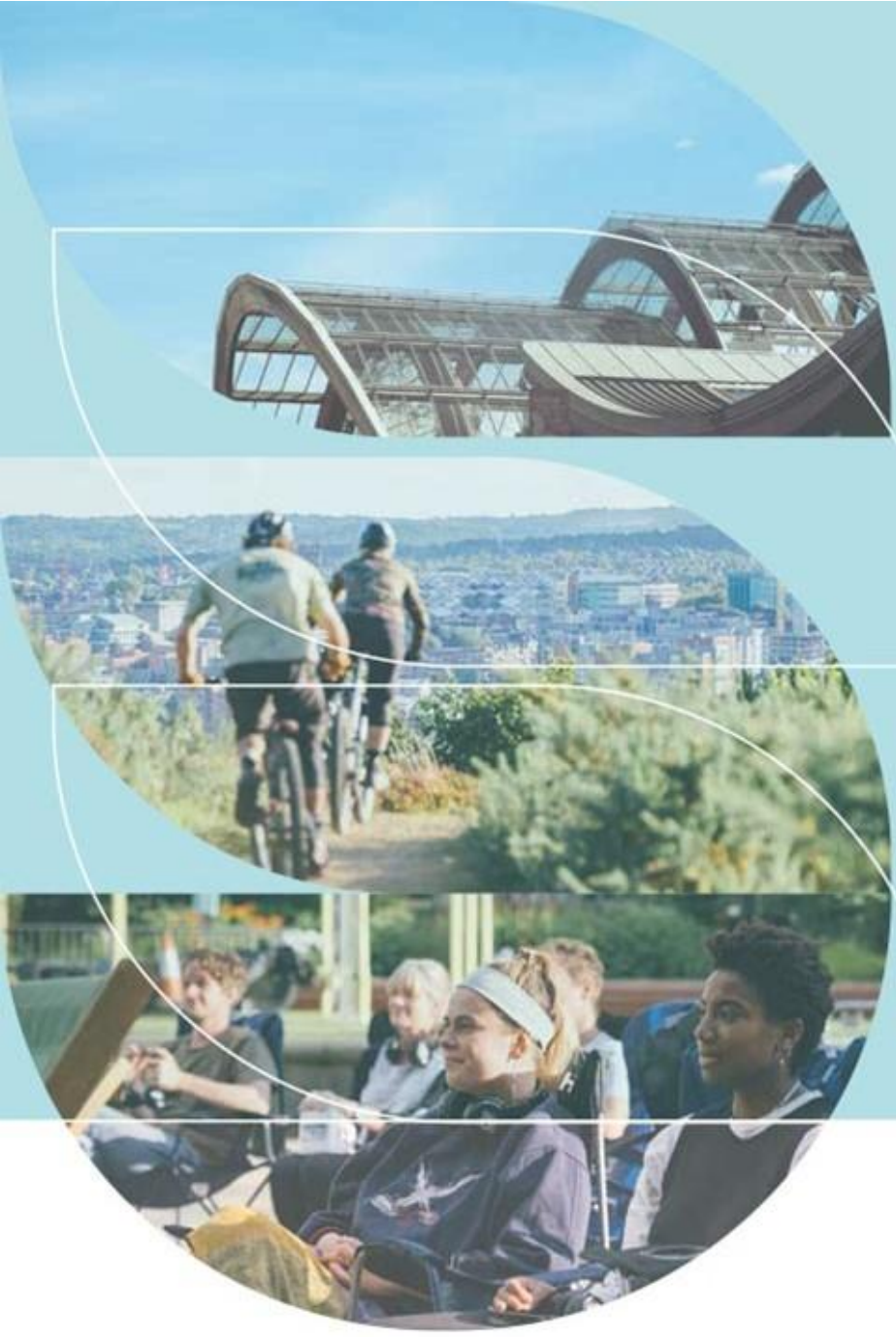


Sheffield City Council

Appendix C: Evidence Base

Date: April 2025

Contents

Introduction

The Sheffield WWCIP was developed with reference to a comprehensive evidence base containing quantitative information and high-quality research into Community Insights. The quantitative evidence base includes things we can count or measure:

- Information about the local context for developing cycling and walking networks in Sheffield (such as demographics, current travel behaviours, car ownership); and
- Information about the local transport network (such as bus routes, road classifications and traffic volumes) to support the development of the network plan and identification of strategic routes and neighbourhoods.

The Community Insight research combined our historic understanding of community wishes and then focussed on people who do not always respond to general surveys. We reached over 1,400 people from under-represented groups to learn more details about the needs and wishes of our population.

Triangulating these different types of data together gives us valuable intelligence about what we should do to improve options for walking, wheeling and cycling.

Quantitative data

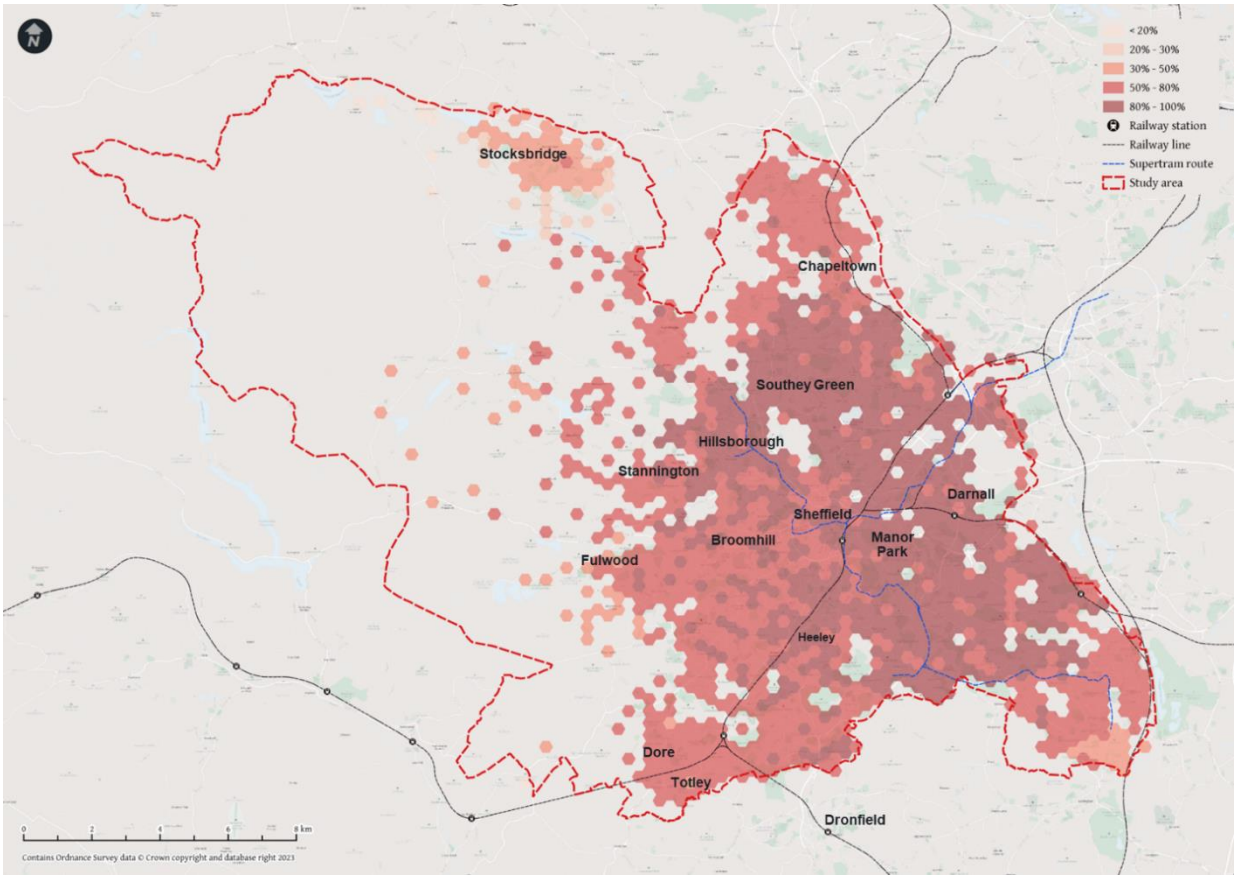
The need for a high-quality walking, wheeling and cycling network, and the potential for neighbourhoods where people want to do more walking, wheeling and cycling, are supported by the following quantitative evidence base. We have drawn out key categories of information and statistics.

Trips can be switched to walking, wheeling and cycling

The proportion of short distance journeys to work is higher in Sheffield compared to the England average. These are trips that could feasibly be swapped to walking, wheeling or cycling.

- Based on the 2021 Census (recorded during a period when people were advised to work from home where possible as part of Covid-19 restrictions) approximately 13% of the population commuted less than 2km to their workplace, trips for which walking is a viable mode of transport.
- Around 20% of working people in Sheffield commute between 2km and 5km and 19% commute 5km-10km to work, trips for which cycling could be a feasible means of commuting.
- These statistics are reinforced by the higher numbers of short commutes recorded in the 2011 Census, where approximately 18% of the population commuted less than 2km to their workplace, 25% commuted between 2km and 5km, and 23% commuted between 5km and 10km.

Figure 1 -Proportion of residents travelling less than 10km to work



Opportunity to address poor health outcomes and health inequalities

There are notable disparities between parts of the city in terms of economic deprivation, life expectancy, and healthy life expectancy – the age at which we are still healthy as we age. More walking, wheeling and cycling could contribute to improved health outcomes. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show a healthy life expectancy of less than 55 in some eastern parts of the city, compared to over 70 in the southwest of the city. A discrepancy between life expectancy for men and women is usual across the UK, hence the healthy life expectancy of each is presented separately.

Figure 2 - Health Life Expectancy at Birth (Males)

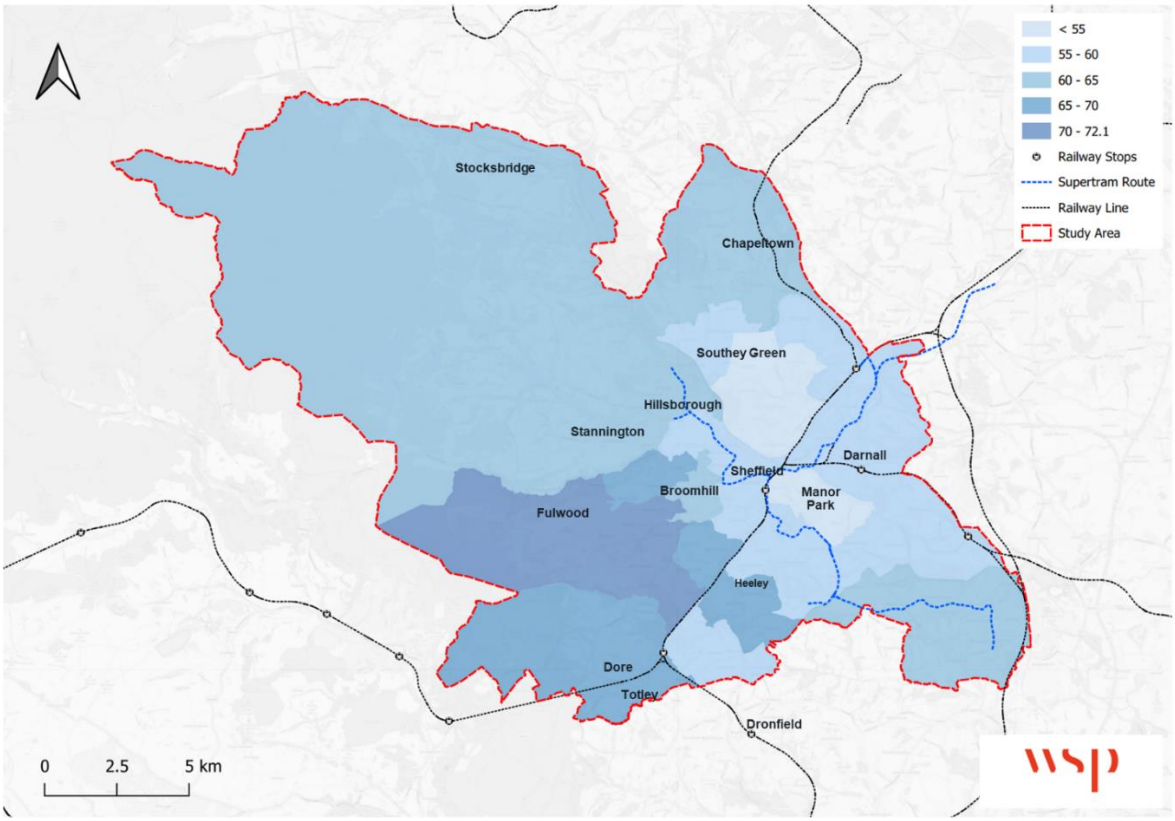
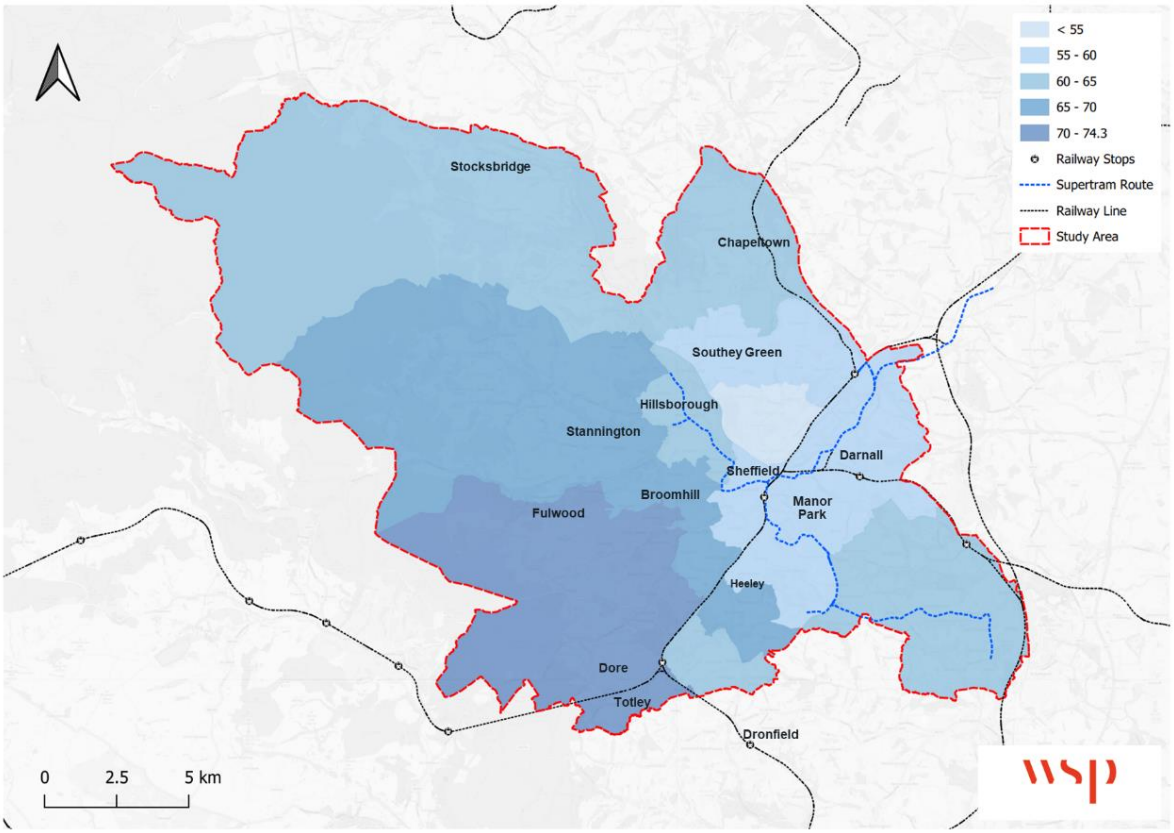


Figure 3 - Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth (Females)



Low levels of physical activity

Rates of physical activity amongst some of the Sheffield population are low and showing a downward trend.

Of respondents to Sport England's Active Lives 2022-23 Adult Survey[1], one in four of those residing in Sheffield noted that they are inactive (undertaking less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week). This an increase of 3.5% when compared to the 2021-22 survey: more people were inactive in 2022-23 than in 2021-22.

Making it easy to walk, wheel and cycle gives the opportunity to increase physical activity in this city famous for its appreciation of the outdoors.

Low levels of cycling

Overall, walking, wheeling and cycling levels are higher in Sheffield (61% of the population having walked or cycled in the last year compared to 57% in England) but there is a sizable portion of the population that does not walk (12%) or cycle (72%) at all.

When looking at utility cycling – journeys to work, shopping, accessing healthcare rather than for leisure – rates are lower in Sheffield (with 10.5% having cycled for travel in 2022-23) than in England (12%).

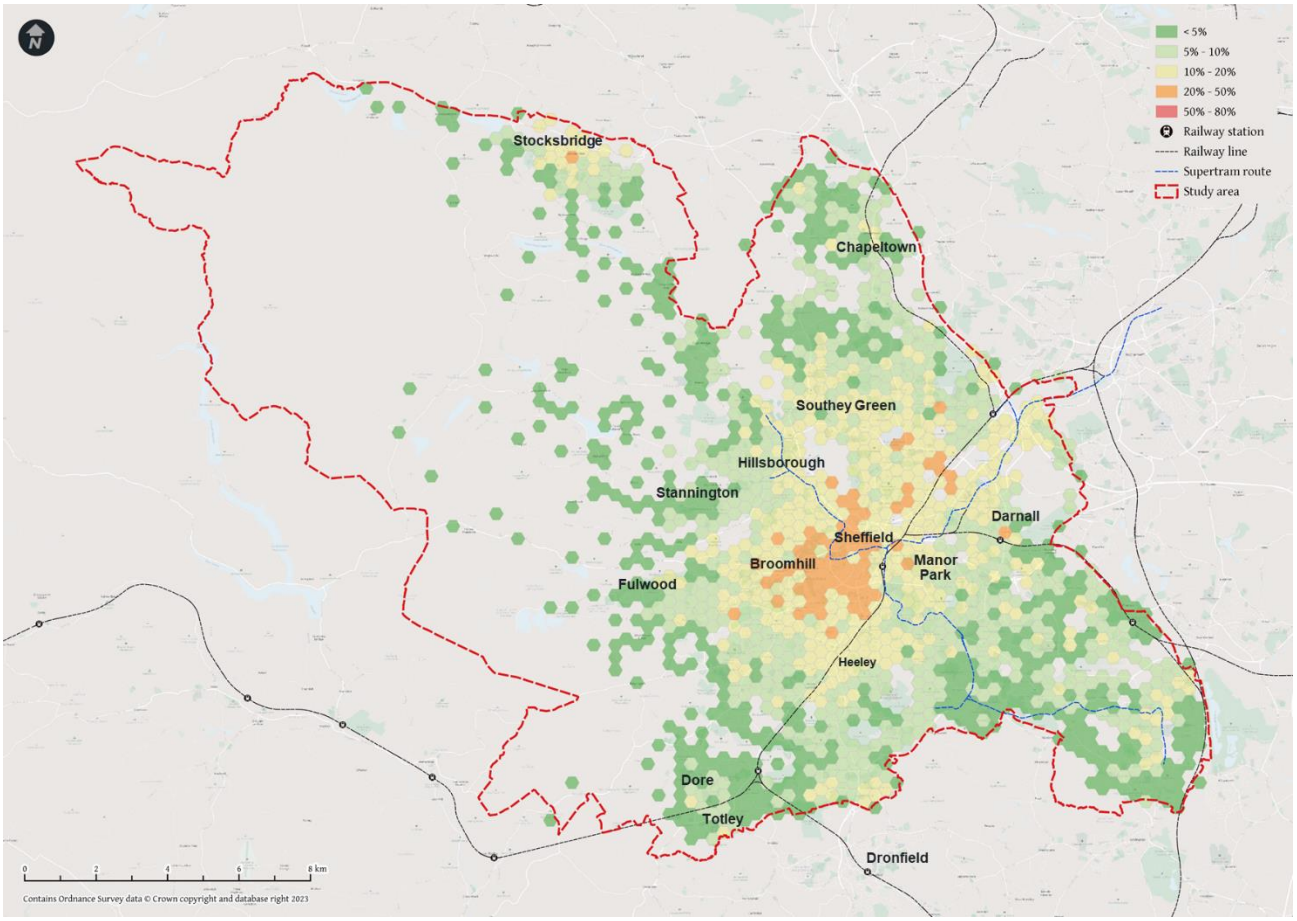
Potential to increase the current low mode share for commuting trips

In the 2021 census, 1.5% of the working population cycled to work, below the national average of 2.1%.

Walking to work in Sheffield (8.5%) was slightly above the national average of 7.6%.

[1] https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives

Figure 4 – Proportion of residents travelling to work by active travel



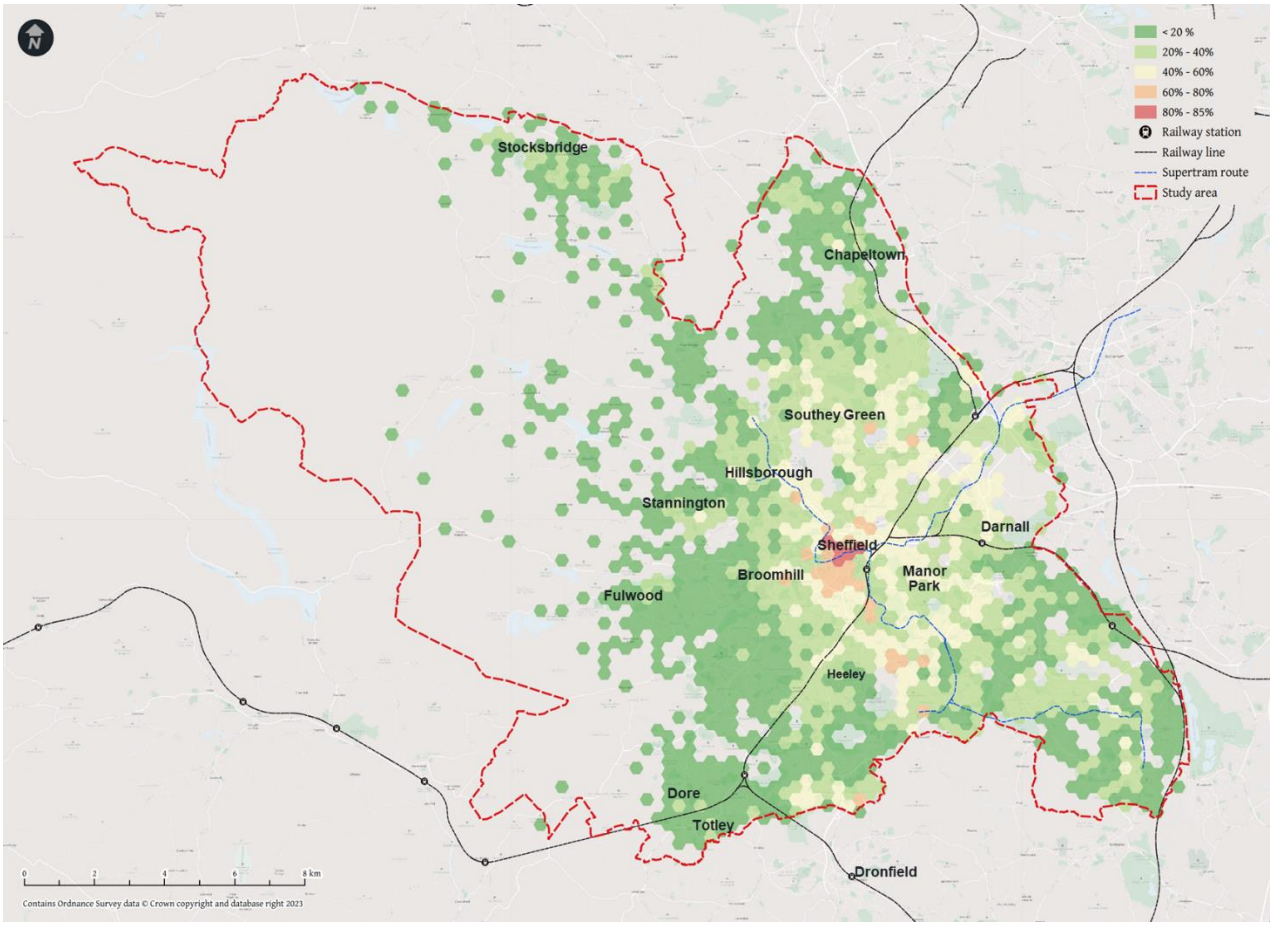
Low car ownership in many areas

There are areas of low car ownership close to the city centre and in areas of deprivation to the north and inner east of the city where people may be more reliant on active travel – especially walking/wheeling and to a lesser extent cycling - alongside public transport, lifts and taxis for local journeys. An enhanced walking, wheeling and cycling network increases travel options for households without a car.

People in deprived communities are more likely to face challenges in taking up cycling, including the cost of purchasing a cycle, difficulties in safely storing bikes in the home and cycle theft.

- Car ownership increased from 2011 to 2021; households with one or more car / van increased by around 25,000 but the city average remains below 1 car per household.
- 29% of households do not own a car or van but there are areas of inner Sheffield (particularly inner west) where over 50% of households have no access to a car or van.

Figure 5 – Proportion of households that do not own a car or van



Road danger

The proportion of road collisions resulting in fatalities in Sheffield is greater than the national average, indicating a requirement to improve road safety.

- Pedestrian and cyclist collisions are highest along radial routes into the city within 3km of the city centre, which are also areas of high existing, and high potential, active travel use.
- Collision statistics for Sheffield show that there were over 800 pedestrians and cyclists involved in fatal or serious collisions in Sheffield for the seven-year period between 2017-2023. This is a higher percentage of all fatal or serious collisions than should be expected given the relatively low number of commuting, and other, trips by walking and cycling (wheeling figures are not collected separately from pedestrians).
- The data also shows that the number of cyclist and pedestrian casualties (slight, serious and fatal) was greatest when there were no physical crossing facilities within 50 metres. The number of casualties significantly decreases as facilities become more comprehensive, with the lowest number of casualties being where a formal crossing point was present.

- On average in England, the proportion of casualties from Road Traffic Collisions that are Killed and Seriously Injured was 20% for the 5-year period 2019-2023. For all roads in Sheffield the proportion is 28%, indicating a need to improve road safety overall, a key determinant of whether people will choose to walk or cycle.

All road traffic collision data is from Road Safety Data provided by DfT.

Figure 6 - Collisions involving cyclists and ped. from 2019 to 2023

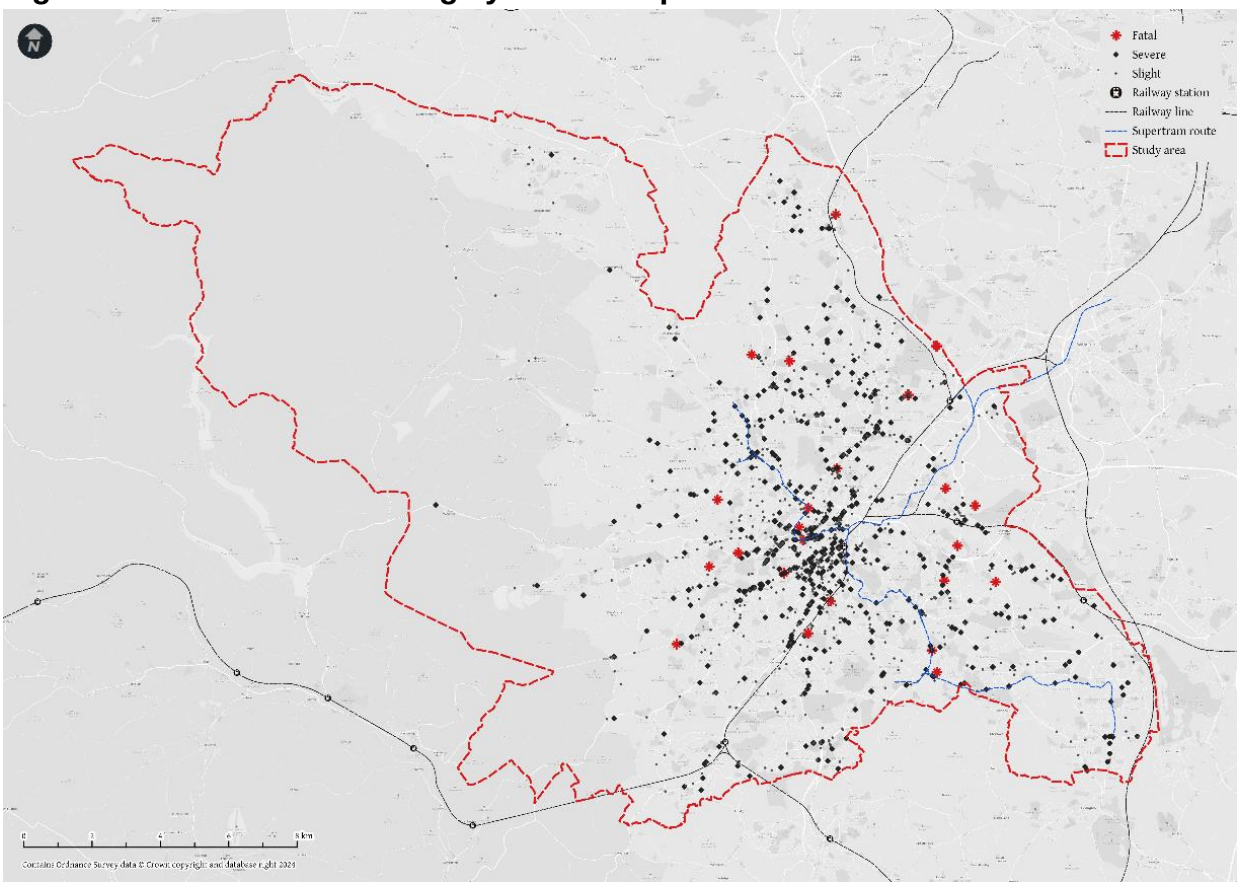


Figure 7 - Collisions involving all modes from 2019 to 2023

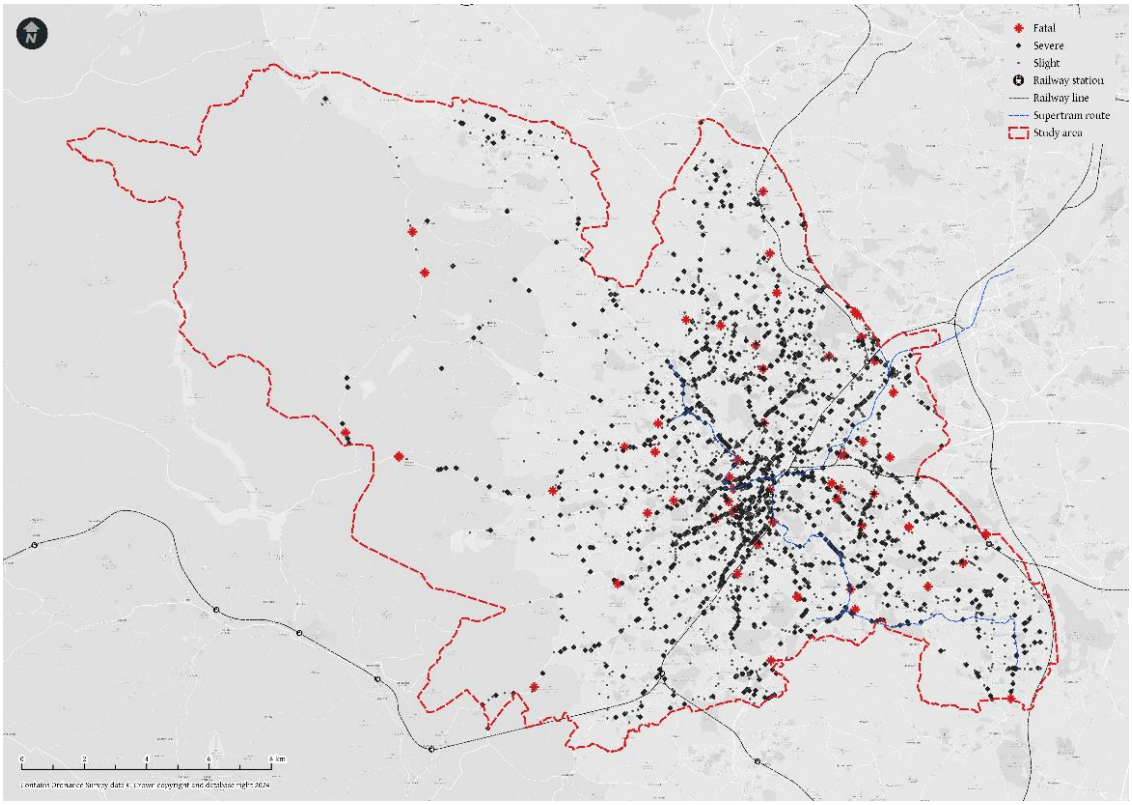
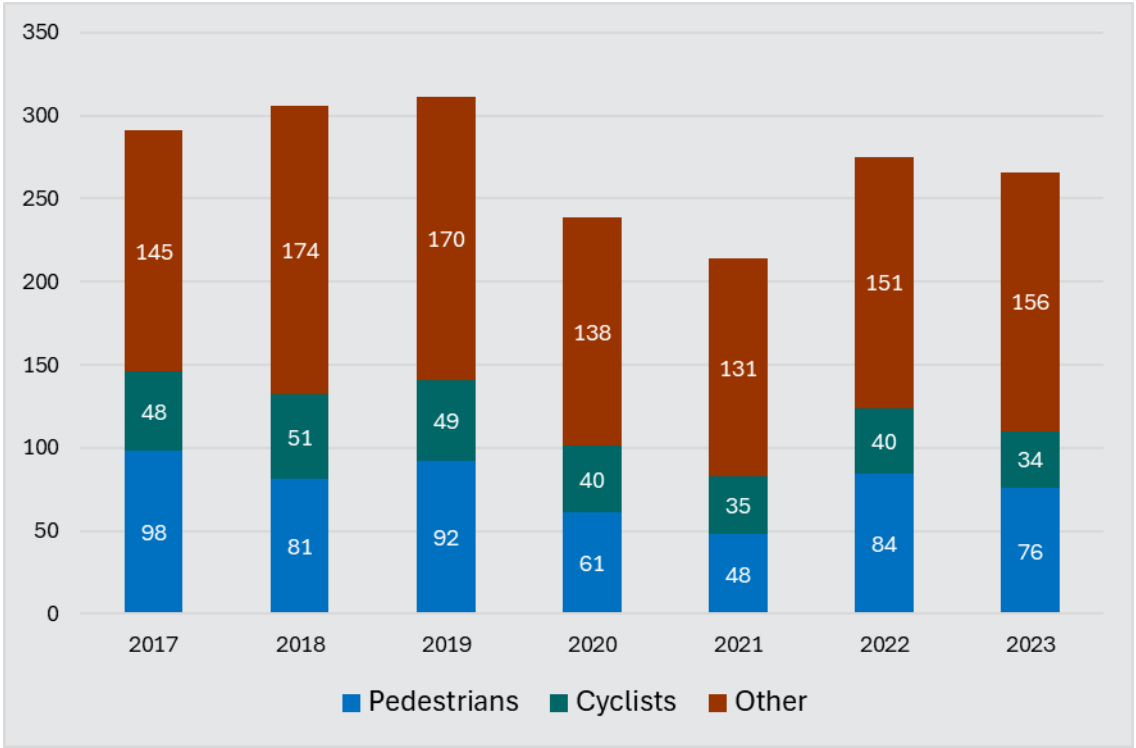


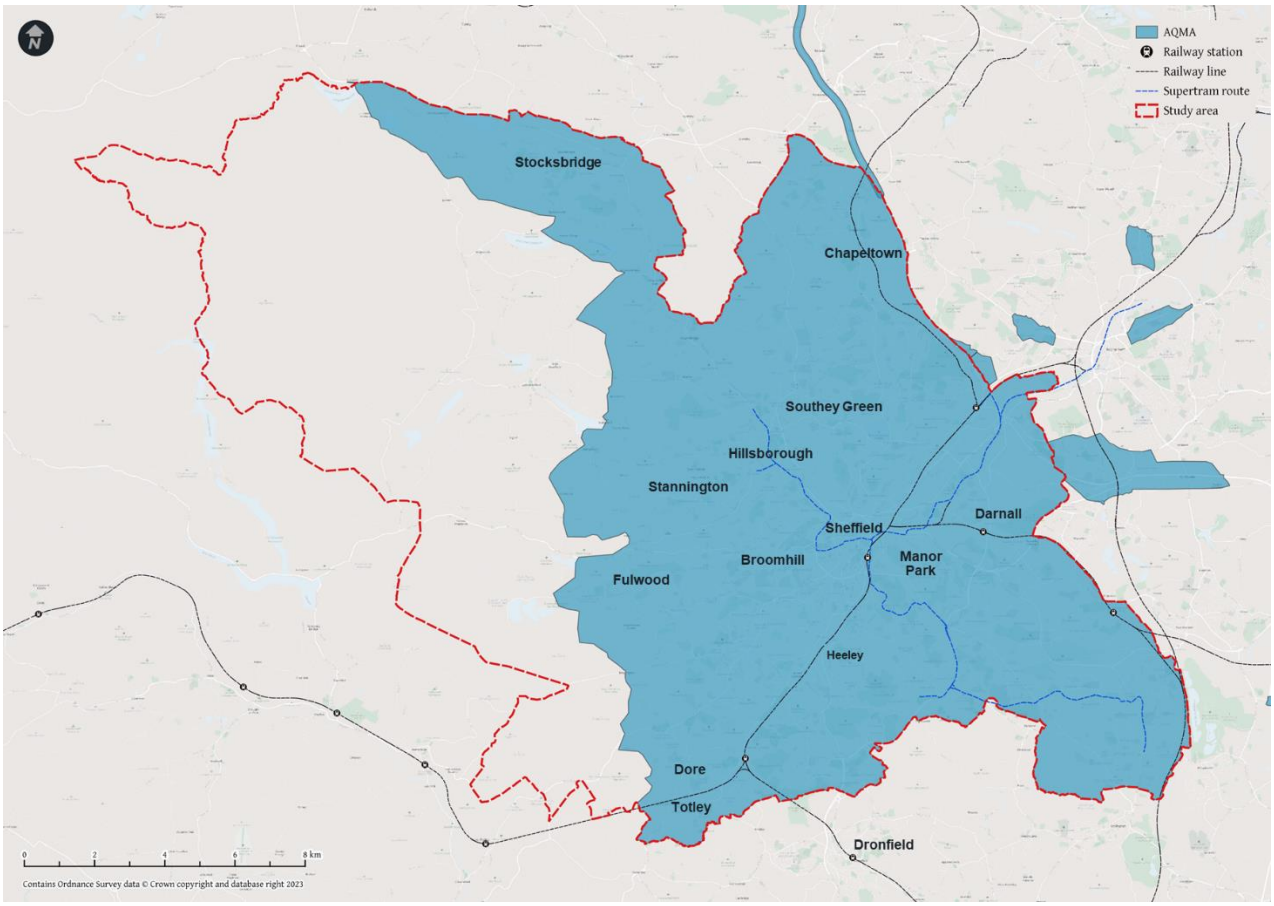
Figure 8 – Sheffield KSIs by user type, 2017-2023



Poor air quality in some areas

Sheffield has a city-wide Air Quality Management Area and city centre Clean Air Zone to mitigate poor air quality. Mode shift from car to walking, wheeling and cycling contributes to improved air quality. Figure 9 shows that the areas of concern for air quality cover the areas where most people live.

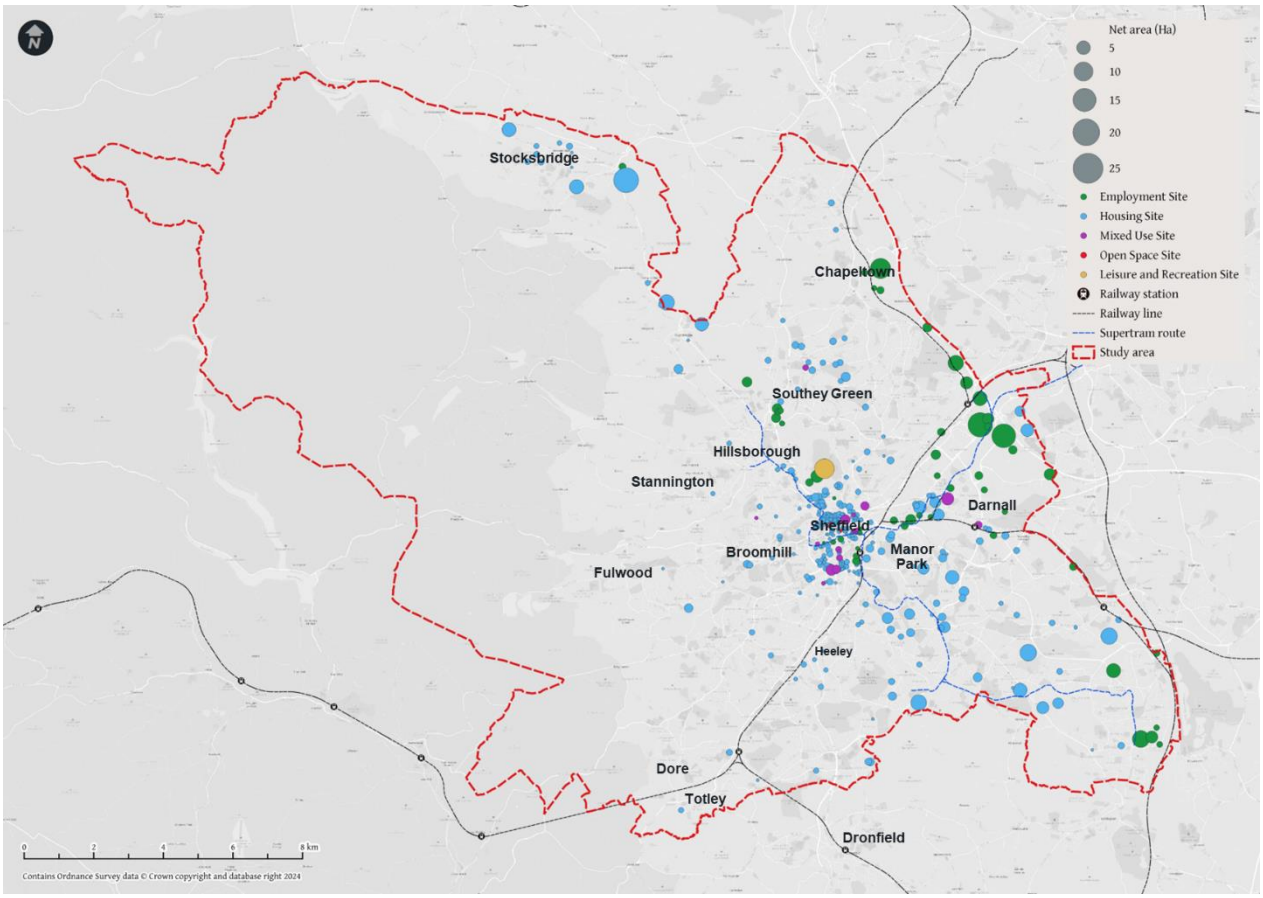
Figure 9 - Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)



Significant growth plans

In the Sheffield Draft Local Plan (2024), development sites are focused in the city centre where 20,000 of the 38,000 new homes are proposed, with further areas of growth to the east, north and south, and little development proposed in the western side of the city. These developments will generate demand for travel, some of which can be met by walking, wheeling and cycling, and by improving integration with public transport, if high quality infrastructure is provided.

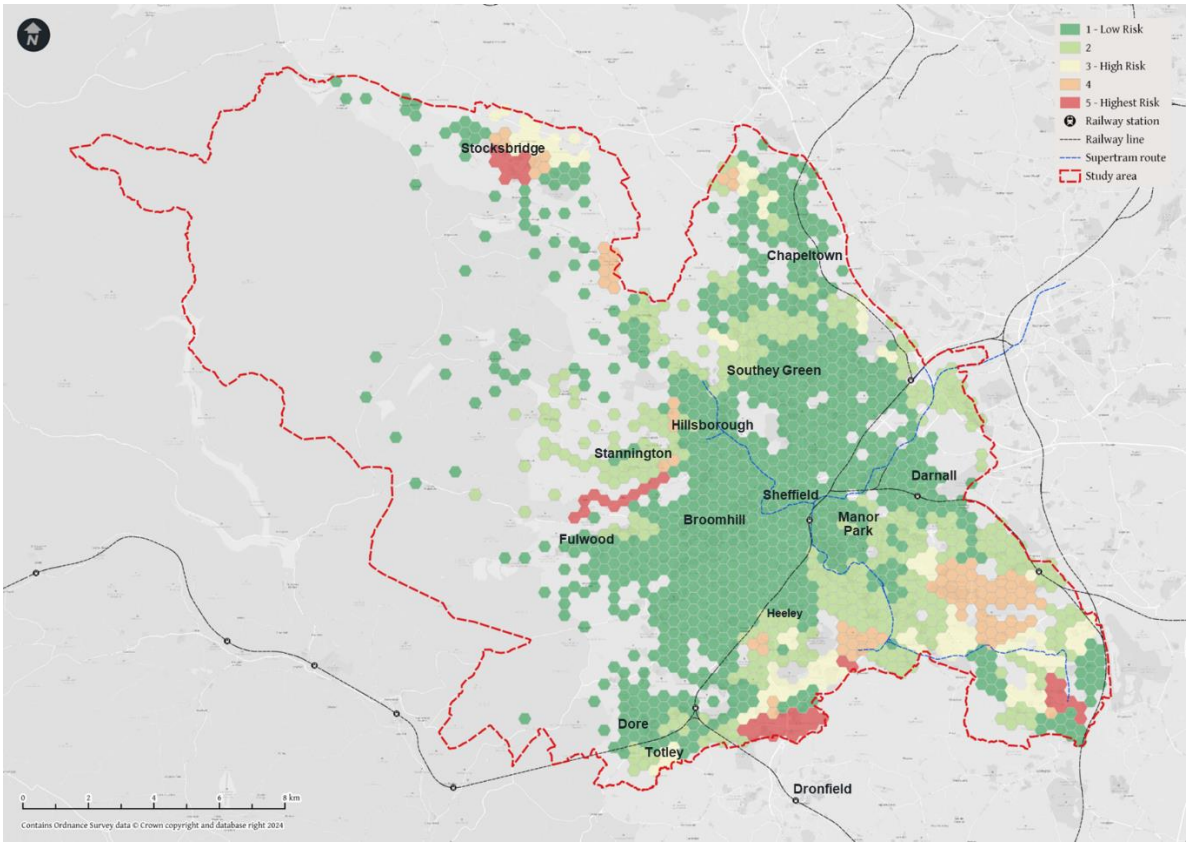
Figure 10 - Draft Local Plan Allocations



Transport-Related Social Exclusion on the edge of the city:

Improvements to walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure and services may mitigate the risk of Transport-Related Social Exclusion (TRSE), for example by enabling people to walk or cycle to more frequent public transport services or hubs. Using analysis undertaken by Transport for the North (TfN), the areas at greatest risk of TRSE in Sheffield are at the edges of the city, where provision of amenities and services may be more limited and involve longer journeys to access. The public transport network is also less comprehensive and frequent in outlying areas. However, TSRE remains lower in Sheffield than elsewhere across the North.

Figure 11 - Transport Related Social Exclusion



Community insight

Introduction: existing knowledge

A Community Evidence Base (CEB) was compiled to inform development of the WWCIP. To compile the CEB, the Council initially conducted a wide-ranging, cross departmental evidence review – the aim being to establish what information we already held about perceptions of walking, wheeling and cycling. A Council officer working group led by transport policy and involving officers from highways, public health, sports and leisure, forward and area planning, and parks, woodlands and countryside was established to pool this knowledge. This group has developed into the Sheffield WWC Strategic Group, facilitated by the Public Health team, and currently meets monthly to share news, experience, and input into developments such as this plan.

The primary conclusions we drew from drawing together our existing knowledge into an over-arching evidence base were that:

- There is significant community appetite to make a switch to walking, wheeling and cycling, especially cycling.
- A key barrier is safety, including personal safety. This is especially so for women.
- People favour walking, wheeling and cycling proposals in principle: however, there is a greater tendency for disagreement on the detail around what this might look like.

Furthermore, it was apparent that whilst we had received significant feedback from the public where projects had been proposed and/or constructed, the respondent profile for more generic surveys, such as the City Region interactive map 2019-2020, was not reflective of the wider Sheffield population. Respondents to such surveys were more likely to be older, male, white British and have higher education qualifications than the city at large. This meant that there was a gap in our understanding of the perceptions of people who did not respond to these surveys.

Rationale

Plugging this knowledge and demographic deficit was seen as essential to ensure that future projects both better understood (and therefore addressed) community need across Sheffield. Furthermore, such an approach would help to ensure a sound equalities foundation in readiness for future development and delivery of solutions with greater community involvement.

The quantitative data evidence base helped us to understand themes such as health, inequality, and access to public transport, employment and services. To complement this evidence, public engagement aimed to add a qualitative element – people's experience of what it was like to make short trips to local destinations by walking, wheeling and cycling and what would encourage them to do so more. Consultancy Systra was commissioned to co-ordinate community engagement.

The Transport Regeneration and Climate Committee was clear that future proposals for active travel should take advantage of community insights and be designed based on local needs and preferences and involve people in the areas selected for investment throughout the development of any proposals.

Engagement work undertaken

Close working with Sheffield's seven Local Area Committees (LACs – each comprising four electoral wards each and covering the entirety of the city) was undertaken. The purpose was to develop LAC-specific engagement plans, seeking out the voices we had largely failed to capture previously in our outreach on active travel.

Figure 12 - Sheffield Voices artwork on barriers to walking and wheeling

Case study: Sheffield Voices
7 attendees aged between 25 and 60 years of age

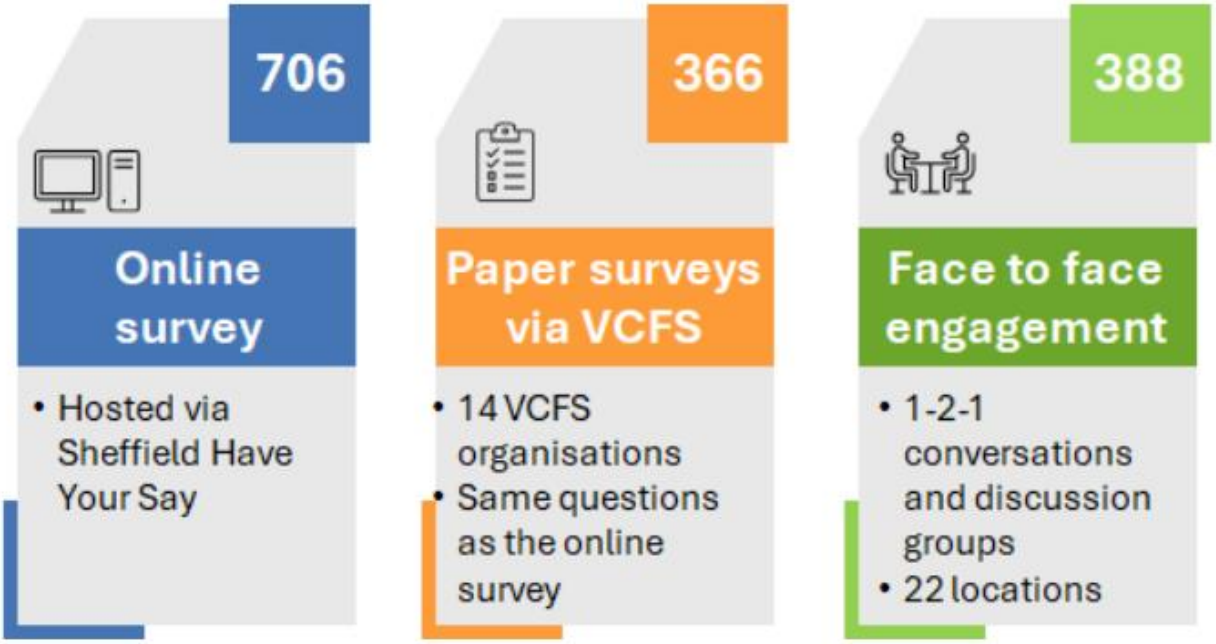
SYSTRA researchers attended an online social event, hosted by Sheffield Voices. Through discussions it was apparent that the group felt that vehicles parked on footways was a key barrier to walking in the local area. Participants discussed the challenges they face around navigating narrow footways with mobility scooters and the subsequent restrictions this places on their ability to travel independently

Community groups, events (such as lunch clubs and festivals) and areas of high footfall locally were all pinpointed for face-to-face engagement by deploying research fieldworkers.

Alongside this, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) organisations city-wide were invited via an Expression of Interest to submit proposals for paid engagement in their localities and with respective client groups.

Some 13 organisations successfully responded across a range of LACs and covered groups we specifically wanted to hear from including young people, Black, Asian, minoritised Ethnic and Refugee (B.A.M.E.R.) people (especially women), disabled people and older people.

Figure 13 - Summary of responses by method of engagement



To assist engagement, paper versions of the online summary on our '*Have Your Say Sheffield*' engagement platform were made available. This meant that, in addition to encouraging their networks to complete the online survey, there were opportunities for face-to-face engagement. 331 surveys (of 1460) were completed face-to-face.

VCFS organisations supported the research in multiple ways. As well as distributing the survey through their networks, they spent time engaging with group attendees and helped them to complete paper versions of the survey. In some cases, groups provided the survey in different formats such as "Easy Read" versions to help individuals access the questionnaire. This helped to maximise feedback received and complemented the outreach conducted in the localities.

To take another example of the valuable work done by a community-based organisation, engagement by the Sheffield Young Explorers, a group dedicated to empowering young people and families in the Darnall and Tinsley areas, brought in nearly 50 responses. They shared the online survey via social media and with other local organisations and mosques and paper surveys directly with women at coffee mornings, walking groups and community spaces where they felt comfortable. It showed, for example, problems faced by women from Black, Asian, Minoritised Ethnic and Refugee (B.A.M.E.R.) backgrounds in public spheres and their concerns about personal safety.

Key findings from targeted outreach

- Road safety is the biggest concern for people walking, wheeling and cycling.
- For walking trips, people consider that the speed of traffic presents a potential danger, most obviously when crossing the road.

- For cycling the message is similar except safety is an even greater concern, especially for women, with a view that specific measures such as protected bike lanes are necessary.
- In addition to road safety there were also significant concerns about personal safety when walking/wheeling, again a greater factor for women, but also especially for people of B.A.M.E.R. background.
- Obstacles on paths and pavements, especially parked vehicles were also raised along with overhanging vegetation.
- For cycling specifically, fewer people overall expressed a desire to cycle or cycle more. Safety - busy roads and heavy traffic - was a barrier and, to a lesser extent not owning a bike, hills, cycle parking and the lack of joined-up routes.

Some sample comments are provided in Table 1 to illustrate the types of barriers to walking, wheeling and cycling identified through the engagement.

Table 1 - Sample comments from the community engagement

Topic	Comment	Respondent
Barriers to walking and wheeling	“I have a friend who uses a mobility scooter who has to go up the centre of many roads because of obstructions on the pavement e.g. bins, parked cars.”	Aged 35-54, East, online survey
Barriers to walking and wheeling	“Locally I'd love to walk more, but there are no crossings and it is unsafe to cross at a busy junction with cars coming from all ends with small children in tow.”	Female, aged 35-54, East, online survey
Barriers to cycling	“I would cycle, but I have kids and I don’t want anything to happen to me whilst they are young.”	Female, aged 35-54, Central, F2F
Barriers to cycling	“When cycling I have nearly been hit by [*drivers of*] cars who either weren't looking, or driving too fast and/or passing too close multiple times.”	Female, aged 35-54, South, online survey

Useful information was also captured about journey patterns in local areas and key destinations people go to, and would like to go to, by walking and wheeling. This information will be valuable in guiding further engagement to develop proposals for the medium-term pipeline.

The community insights gained also brought to light some significant pointers for future approaches to ensure equalities factors are fully addressed:

- **Disability**: disabled people were significantly more likely to see 'poor quality or condition of paths' as a barrier compared to those without a disability (42% compared to 26%)
- **Ethnic group**: Responses varied significantly by ethnic group, with B.A.M.E.R. groups more likely to select 'poor air quality' as a barrier to walking/wheeling compared to White respondents (31% vs 7%). The most frequently selected barrier for those describing themselves as Asian was 'personal safety and security concerns e.g. antisocial behaviour'. This was selected by 63% of Asian respondents compared to 24% of other groups.
- **Local Area Committees**: Significant differences were also noticed by LAC. Respondents in the North East LAC were significantly more likely to report that 'personal safety and security' concerns were a barrier compared to other LACs (46% North East vs 26% overall). Similarly, respondents in the North East also were significantly more likely to report 'poor quality or condition of paths' (44% North East vs 30% overall).