



## **Merton Centre for Independent Living's Response to Merton Council's draft Walking and Cycling Strategy, 8 December 2025**

### **About Merton CIL**

Merton CIL is a user-led Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation (DDPO). We are based in the London Borough of Merton and work with Disabled adults (18+). 87% of our trustees, 69% of our staff, 81% of our members, and 100% of our service users are Disabled people with lived experience of the issues that we aim to address.

We all deserve to live free from discrimination, poverty and exclusion. However, many Deaf and Disabled people experience structural inequalities that impact our ability to live independently and have choice and control over our lives. Due to marginalisation and disadvantage, we navigate barriers and work to create a community that is truly inclusive and equitable.

We envision a society where Disabled people can live as full and equal citizens in all aspects of life and lead systemic change.

We believe that society disables people with impairments and health conditions. Therefore, we work within the Social Model of Disability and an [Independence Charter](#), co-designed with Disabled people, to ensure that we can influence key issues affecting our lives in a variety of ways.

## **What We Would Like the Council to Consider**

We are pleased to see that the draft Strategy:

- (a) makes several references to accessibility and inclusivity;
- (b) highlights the Council's engagement with our organisation;
- (c) includes, in Action 2, 'seating and rest areas', as this is essential for many people, yet is all too often left out of discussions about active travel.

We would like the Council to consider making four changes:

- (a) Whilst we acknowledge the statement that

'For the purposes of this Strategy, references to pedestrians and walking also incorporates those wheeling, which includes those using mobility equipment, including self-propelled wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters' (p.7),

we feel strongly that renaming the Strategy either the 'Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy' or the 'Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Strategy' would send a much clearer and more powerful message to those who live, work and study in Merton that the Council is committed fully to accessibility and inclusivity. Realistically, the statement quoted above is a detail

that a lot of people will not end up encountering. Hence, a title that spells out what the Strategy is about is imperative.

- (b) On p.9, we are referred to as 'Merton's Centre for Independent Living'. It would be good if that could be changed to 'Merton Centre for Independent Living'.
- (c) On p.12, the phrase '1 in 7 residents report that they have a disability' is used, which is language that attributes disability to an individual, not to society, and is, therefore, arguably outdated. For context, there is a difference between the Social Model of Disability and the Medical Model of Disability. The latter focuses on how a physical or mental impairment or health condition limits an individual. It seeks to 'cure' or 'fix' people. The former does not deny that an impairment or health condition impacts an individual. However, its central tenet is that this is not in itself disabling, and that what disables people are social barriers created by, for example, the design of a built environment, the way that a public service works, a policy, a person's attitude, and so on.
- (d) On p.14, 'equality act' should be 'Equality Act'.

Thank you for reading our submission. If you have any questions, please contact our Policy and Campaigns Manager, Dr Pippa Maslin, at [pippa@mertoncil.org.uk](mailto:pippa@mertoncil.org.uk) or on 07884 232391.