

## **Tools For Making London's Suburbs More Sustainable**

URBED is producing a "Sustainable Suburbs Toolkit" for the Greater London Authority (GLA). This will bring together, in a convenient form, information on actions that can be taken – by public agencies, communities, businesses or individuals – to help make London's suburbs more sustainable. Sustainability is at the heart of the Mayor's vision for "an exemplary sustainable world city", and the Plan recognises that London's suburbs, not just its urban centres, will have to play an important part in achieving it.

The aims of the Toolkit are to:

- provide ready access to information on practical actions ('tools') that can be taken to improve sustainability in London's suburban areas
- give examples of projects that have actually worked somewhere
- contain simple information on each tool – a single page, or computer screen – with links to sources of further information and examples
- be capable of being put on a website that links to other information instantaneously. (See attachment for more details.)

Sustainability can be defined in many ways, but previous research has identified a number of issues that are particularly relevant to London's suburbs. These are main themes that the Toolkit plans to focus on initially:

1. Reinforcing the role of local centres
2. Making new development sustainable
3. Improving the existing housing stock
4. Promoting alternatives to travel by car
5. Improving environmental sustainability
6. Protecting and promoting suburban employment
7. Improving the quality of design and the public realm
8. Enhancing community cohesion and safety.

It may also include tools on the main 'process issues' involved in setting up and managing sustainability projects (see attachment)

The Toolkit is in its early stages. LSX would like it to be successful – as a practical resource for 'doers' as well as planners. To help that it develops along the right lines, please take a few minutes to reply to the following questions, either directly by e-mail to [vassiliki@urbed.com](mailto:vassiliki@urbed.com)

or by fax to URBED on 020 7436 8083

Very many thanks

**URBED Survey**  
**on**  
**Tools For Making London's Suburbs More Sustainable**

Please type in your answers and return as soon as possible to [vassiliki@urbed.com](mailto:vassiliki@urbed.com)  
(or by fax to 0207 436 8083)

Name ...>

Position ...>

Organisation ...>

E-mail address ...>

Website address..>

1. Do you think that a 'Sustainable Suburbs Toolkit' for London, as outlined above, would be really useful?

(a) to you Yes....> No....>

(b) to others you work with:  
in the public sector Yes....> No....>  
in businesses Yes....> No....>  
in community groups Yes....> No....>

(c) What use would you make of it?

....>

....>

(d) Do you have any major comments/reservations about it?

....>

....>

2. How important is it that the Toolkit should be available

(a) in hard copy?  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

(b) on the GLA's website?  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

(c) on an independent website?  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

(d) on a CD ROM  
Very important....> Quite important....> Not important....>

3. (a) Are the themes listed above the main ones to include? Yes..> No..>

(b) If no, what theme(s) should be omitted?

....>

....>

(c) and/or what themes should be added (2 maximum)?  
....>  
....>

4. Which three of the above themes are the most important?  
...>  
...>  
...>

5. Which projects do you think it would be important to include as examples for the themes?  
(Please give name and location, which need not necessarily be in London, and the key reason why it works)

Theme Number	Example(s)
...>	...>
...>	...>
...>	...>
...>	...>
...>	...>

(Please add in more spaces, if required)

6. How important is it that the Toolkit includes 'process' tools as well as 'action' tools?  
Very important...>      Quite important...>      Not important...>

7. Do you think that your organisation should be included in the Toolkit as a potential 'source of further information' in connection with any particular tool?  
Yes...>      No...>

If yes, please state:

Theme Number	Possible tool(s)
...>	...>
...>	...>
...>	...>

and make sure that your e-mail and website address are included at the beginning of this questionnaire.

Very many thanks for your help

Vassiliki Kravva (URBED)  
[vassiliki@urbed.com](mailto:vassiliki@urbed.com)

Toolkit Navigation Box

- Save this page in [shopping basket]

# Walking Bus

Walking Buses are groups of children who walk to school in ‘crocodile fashion’ escorted by trained adult volunteers along a safe route.

**Aim:** Walking Buses help to reduce rush-hour traffic congestion and pollution as well as school-gate parking problems. They also provide additional regular exercise for children.

**Key Factors:** Each Walking Bus must have at least two escorts, with a maximum of eight children for each escort. It follows a planned, safe route and has a set timetable for collecting children from specified stops along the route. Adults who volunteer as escorts have to undergo a police check. All children have to wear reflective vests. The Walking Bus is free.

**Policy Context:** Part of the [Government’s?] *Safer Routes to School* Initiative. Supported by all London Boroughs and encouraged by the Mayor’s Transport Policy (*Proposal 4G.9*). Progress will be shown by the London Sustainable Development Commission’s Headline Indicators 11 (*Travel to School*) and 16 (*Road Traffic Volumes*).

**Getting Involved:** The first step in setting up a Walking Bus is to contact the school’s headteacher.

**Examples in Action:** Courtland Junior School, (Borough) [Reference: ]  
 St Peter Cofe Primary School, (Borough) [Reference: ]

**For Further Information:** Click on [www.walkingbus.org](http://www.walkingbus.org) or [www.walkingbus.com](http://www.walkingbus.com)  
 or visit [http://www.london21.org/articles\\_item.asp?id=153](http://www.london21.org/articles_item.asp?id=153) or <http://www.thecei.org.uk/GreenSchools/default.htm>

Sources:

**What for?**  
 Reducing car-dependency

**Who for?**  
 Families with children

**Where?**  
 Anywhere within walking distance of a school

# Tools for Making London's Suburbs More Sustainable

## 1. Introduction

The Mayor's vision is for London to be 'an exemplary sustainable world city'. Sustainability is therefore at the heart of his strategy, and to achieve it London's suburbs, not just its urban centres, will have to make a major contribution. There are many things that can be done, sometimes individually small but collectively important, by the many bodies involved in the suburbs – the public sector, community groups, businesses (especially developers) or individuals. To help provide ready access to information on a wide range of **practical actions for making London's suburbs more sustainable**, the Greater London Authority (with the LDA and ALG) has commissioned URBED (the Urban and Economic Development Group) to prepare a "Sustainable Suburbs Toolkit".

## 2. What will the Toolkit cover?

### 2.1 What is a tool?

Each 'tool' is a measure or an action that might be taken to improve some aspect of sustainability in suburban areas. In the Toolkit it is described on a **one-page** information sheet (or **toolsheet**) which shows at a glance:

- what the tool is (concise definition/description)
- what it aims to do (in improving sustainability)
- when and where it is likely to be most appropriate to use
- what its key factors are, and most importantly
- where further information can be found (preferably through web links, giving instant access)
- an example of where the tool has worked elsewhere (again with a web link, if possible)

Thus the Toolkit consists of a collection of easily understood, and quickly searched, information sheets, which lead directly on to, detailed information if required. An example of a draft toolsheet is attached.

### 2.2 Types of tool

The main emphasis of the Toolkit is on practical actions, but given the range of people who might use it, it will contain different types of tools, including:

- **Policy tools** – which cover specific policies that have, for example, been adopted in local UDPs or incorporated into Local Community Strategies
- **Action tools** – which describe practical initiatives that can make a contribution to specific aspects of sustainability

- **Process tools** – which give information on key process issues, such as *defining and analysing suburban areas*, *diagnosing issues and actions*, or *securing resources*, which might be particularly relevant to making things happen in suburban areas.

## 2.3 Types of areas

In general, suburbs are low-density residential areas located at a distance from major centres of employment and other facilities. Their main drawbacks in terms of sustainability are due to the fact that low-density housing is often inefficient to service and wasteful of energy. Residents often rely heavily on cars for their journeys, which not only uses fuel, generates carbon dioxide, and contributes to congestion, but also requires more space to be set aside for car-use, including parking. While it is not only suburban living that causes such problems, these are the very issues that the Commission for Sustainable Development highlights as requiring the most urgent action in the U.K.

However not all suburban areas are the same, and the *London Plan* divides London's suburbs into four types of area for which different policies – and perhaps different tools – might be appropriate:

- **Town centres** (the District and Local centres around which most of London's suburbs are built, but excluding Metropolitan and Major centres)
- **Neighbourhoods** (the areas within easy walking distance of town centres)
- **Residential heartlands** (residential areas further away from town centres) and
- **Employment locations** (places in the suburbs that have important concentrations of jobs).

Major change cannot, and should not, be expected overnight, and will often only be possible when major developments take place (and these are likely to be rare in many suburban areas). However the thrust of the Mayor's strategy for the suburbs is to look for intensification of development, and improvements to public transport, in and around town centres; to safeguard and expand jobs in employment locations within suburban areas; and to take steps to minimise resource consumption and waste, to encourage biodiversity, greener travel and environmental sustainability in all areas including the residential heartlands.

## 2.4 Key themes

While it is the intention that the Toolkit should provide information on all aspects of improving sustainability in London's suburbs, it focuses primarily on the 'action and planning themes' that were highlighted in SDS Technical Report 11 for the draft London Plan, *A City of Villages: Promoting a sustainable future for London's Suburbs*, as well as on key 'process themes'. The main themes covered by the Toolkit are:

1. **Reinforcing the role of local centres**
2. **Making new development sustainable**

- 3. Improving the existing housing stock**
- 4. Promoting alternatives to travel by car**
- 5. Improving environmental sustainability**
- 6. Protecting and promoting suburban employment**
- 7. Improving the quality of design and the public realm**
- 8. Strengthening community cohesion and security.**

These themes are positive and action-oriented, and in most cases success can be measured and mapped. Hence they provide a good starting point for developing tools and collecting examples. The next step is to build on the suggested policies under each of these headings and convert them into 'policy tools' and 'action tools' – and to add any 'process tools' which are appropriate. The process tools might be categorised under the following headings:

- A. Defining and analysing suburban areas**
- B. Diagnosing issues and potential actions**
- C. Reaching agreement**
- D. Involving stakeholders**
- E. Securing resources**
- F. Managing and monitoring.**

However the over-riding aim of the Toolkit is to provide easy access to practical information. Categorisation is less important – and an individual tool may be useful for more than one purpose.

Further information on the Sustainable Suburbs Toolkit project can be obtained from [vassiliki@urbed.com](mailto:vassiliki@urbed.com)

A List of Potential Tools (which provides an initial set of tools under each heading) can be found by clicking on:

[http://www.urbed.com/cgi-in/main.cgi?org\\_code=fffggretyuiiopef57&option=article&doc\\_id=221](http://www.urbed.com/cgi-in/main.cgi?org_code=fffggretyuiiopef57&option=article&doc_id=221)

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