

**PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) update and consultation report**

REPORT OF: Service Director - Regulatory

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Planning and Transport – Cllr Ruth Brown

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following public consultation of the draft North Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in the autumn of 2022, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has analysed the feedback and produced the attached LCWIP Consultation Report. HCC and North Herts Council (NHDC) officers have met with local groups and visited sites to discuss and review suggestions made through the consultation. All of this has informed some significant changes to the LCWIP, which are outlined in the attached LCWIP Changes Summary Report.

The next step will be for HCC officers to prepare a final draft of the LCWIP to present to HCC Highways and Transport Cabinet Panel. It is expected that this will be in September 2023 and that HCC will formally adopt the Plan shortly thereafter.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That the Cabinet note the attached LCWIP Consultation report at Appendix A.
- 2.2. That the Cabinet endorse, with any recommendations or comments, the proposed changes to the draft LCWIP, set out in the attached LCWIP Changes Summary Report at Appendix B.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. The LCWIP is a daughter document to Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan. Its adoption will guide and accelerate future investment in transport infrastructure that enables and encourages people to make more trips by active travel (walking, cycling, mobility scooter, and other legal low-speed mobility modes). This will help NHDC, HCC and the government deliver on their strategies for sustainable transport, public health and climate change; more specifically, to increase the modal share for active travel, and thereby to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions from motor vehicles.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1. Alternatives are not applicable in this case as the LCWIP is a policy document of HCC in its capacity as the Local Highway and Transport Authority.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1. HCC, assisted by NHDC, held a public consultation on the draft LCWIP between 26 September and 14 November 2022.
- 5.2. The Council's Senior Transport Policy Officer made a presentation on the LCWIP consultation to each of the Area Committees; delivered Town Talks in Hitchin and Baldock; hosted drop-in events in each town plus Knebworth; attended councillors' community surgeries; and presented to events organised by Knebworth parish council and NH50Plus. A full list of events is included in the attached LCWIP Consultation Report at Appendix A.
- 5.3. After the consultation ended, HCC and NHDC officers met with Knebworth residents and businesses, and with Letchworth Cyclists to gain greater understanding of their concerns and requests.

## **6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are a ten-year strategic approach to improving the safety and attractiveness of infrastructure for walking and cycling.
- 7.2. The North Hertfordshire LCWIP sets out a detailed plan for continuing to build such a network in North Hertfordshire, with new and enhanced paths, road crossings and traffic calming (principally speed reduction) measures.
- 7.3. The government's objectives for walking and cycling up to 2025, set out in the Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) are to:
  - *increase the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled from 41% in 2018 to 2019 to 46% in 2025*
  - *increase walking activity, where walking activity is measured as the total number of walking stages per person per year, to 365 stages per person per year in 2025*
  - *double cycling, where cycling activity is measured as the estimated total number of cycling stages made each year, from 0.8 billion stages in 2013 to 1.6 billion stages in 2025*
  - *increase the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 who usually walk to school from 49% in 2014 to 55% in 2025*
- 7.4. Beyond 2025, the following further government objectives reflect commitments originally set out in policy documents, Gear Change, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and the Net Zero Strategy to:

- *increase the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled to 50% in 2030 and to 55% in 2035*
  - *deliver a world-class cycling and walking network in England by 2040*
- 7.5. The Active Design guide, published by Sport England in May 2023, describes what this policy ambition requires: “A comprehensive network of safe, high quality and easy to find active travel routes should connect destinations and provide feeder routes to homes. This should create a range of clearly signed routes for all potential or existing users, including a choice between busy and quiet, leisure and utility focused options, and should limit conflict between different transport modes.”
- 7.6. The North Herts Climate Change Strategy states: “We recognise the many benefits of sustainable transport, both to individuals, places, and the environment more widely, and want to seek to reduce car use overall across the district in favour of public transport and active travel.”
- 7.7. The North Hertfordshire Transport Strategy (NHTS) principles include: “Reduce the demand for travel by encouraging sustainable travel (on foot, by bicycle, by public transport, or via shared mobility) as an alternative to the private car.”
- 7.8. NHTS policies include (with relevant extracts from the detailed explication):

***Deliver a step change in cycling and improved walking within the main urban centres through travel behaviour change and better facilities***

- *On relevant main routes, more segregation of cycling from faster moving through traffic (some highway capacity is likely to need to be reallocated);*
- *Quietways on other routes: these are continuous routes following quieter streets, parks and waterways and linking to key destinations. They overcome barriers to cycling by providing improved junctions and an alternative to riding on busy roads.*

***A ‘Sustainable Spine’ corridor along the A505 [and B656] with a focus on enhanced public transport and cycling connectivity between the towns.***

- *More and better crossing points for walking/cycling to key destinations*
- *Cycling links on the corridor*
- *Speed of traffic and road space allocation*

- 7.9. Local Transport Plan contains the following policies (with relevant extracts):

***Policy 7: Active Travel - Walking***

*The county council will seek to encourage and promote walking by:*

- a) Implementing measures to increase the priority of pedestrians relative to motor vehicles, especially in town centres, and creating walking friendly town and neighbourhood centres.*
- b) Delivering infrastructure to provide safer access to key services, and pedestrian facilities to enable and encourage walking.*
- c) Identifying and promoting networks of pedestrian priority routes.*

### **Policy 8. Active Travel - Cycling**

*The county council aims to deliver a step change in cycling, through:*

- a) Infrastructure improvements, especially within major urban areas to enable and encourage more cycling.*
- b) Implementing measures to increase the priority of cyclists relative to motor vehicles.*

7.10. The draft Active Travel Strategy for Hertfordshire includes the following strategic objective: “Deliver infrastructure that meets the needs of our communities: Eight out of ten people support measures to reduce road traffic and two-thirds are in favour of reallocating road space for active travel.”

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1. In accordance with government guidance, the plan focuses on areas where interventions can make the greatest impact. This is predominantly in the most densely populated areas of Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock, Royston and Knebworth.

8.2. Some rural routes are included in the Plan – Hitchin–Stevenage, Ashwell–Ashwell & Morden Station, and in Pirton and Great Ashby. Others have been rated as of ‘primary’ or ‘secondary’ importance but have not yet been audited. When more resources become available, perhaps as part of the government’s forthcoming Future of Transport: rural strategy, HCC will consider additional routes, including in rural areas, to be audited and prioritised for investment.

8.3. The consultation elicited varying levels of interest and engagement across the district. The strongest response in terms of numbers was from residents of Ashwell, who lobbied for a safe route to Ashwell & Morden railway station. The strongest response in terms of sentiment was from residents in Knebworth, who were strongly opposed to most of the proposed interventions, in particular on the high street. Responses in Royston were polarised, in particular around proposed changes to Lower King St, Kneesworth St and Mill Rd. There were relatively few responses from residents in Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock, but these were broadly supportive of the plan.

8.4. The response to the LCWIP consultation has provided a broad range of local knowledge and feedback that we have used to help improve the LCWIP policies and proposals.

8.5. From the **1,239 responses** received we have identified approximately **48 changes**, which includes modifications to specific routes and proposals, updates to the LCWIP mapping, the addition of new policies (such as for equestrians), further information and clarity on key routes, and general changes to improve the overall presentation of information and accessibility of the report.

8.6. The feedback has also helped to identify future project validation work with detailed site investigations being carried out at the Ashwell/Ashwell Station route and Cadwell Bridge underpass (and detailed options developed), as a result of the strong response from the consultation. Further project validation work has also been prioritised in conjunction with the LCWIP feedback.

- 8.7. The most significant changes made since the consultation are:
- a. Addition of Ashwell to Ashwell & Morden station (which will need to be delivered in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council)
  - b. Removal of some proposed interventions in Knebworth, notably on the high street; scaling back of interventions on Gun Lane and Pondcroft; and additional detail on the main intervention under the railway bridge, to use one lane of the carriageway to widen the footway and to install traffic signals to alternate the flow of traffic in the remaining lane.
  - c. Scaling back of the interventions in Royston to allow for more option testing and consultation before fixing arrangements for Lower King St/Kneesworth St and the A10 gyratory.
- 8.8. These and other proposed changes to the draft LCWIP plan and maps are set out in the attached LCWIP Changes Summary Report at Appendix B.
- 8.9. In addition to the changes identified to key routes and proposals, a series of broader learnings and insights have been obtained from the feedback which will be used to inform future planning. The key insights included:
- 8.10. **Safety:** Many comments highlighted safety concerns and risks associated with walking and cycling within their local areas. This included accident-prone locations, difficult or unsafe road crossings, and areas where residents felt there was inadequate infrastructure. We also received several comments highlighting risky behaviours of people driving and cycling that deter others from walking and cycling.
- 8.11. **Accessibility:** Several comments were received from elderly residents and people with mobility impairments and disabilities, highlighting specific sites and general concerns within their local areas. These comments reinforced the importance of regular maintenance of footways and cycle tracks.
- 8.12. **Connectivity:** Local insights into the connectivity of existing walking and cycling routes were provided which has helped identify gaps in the network or insufficient connections to key destinations such as schools, workplaces, parks, and public transportation.
- 8.13. **Economic considerations:** Economic impacts of implementing walking and cycling infrastructure were highlighted, in particular the potential impact on local businesses, tourism, property values and transportation costs.
- 8.14. **Usage and demand:** Useful information was obtained on usage of walking and cycling infrastructure, including footpaths, bike lanes, and shared spaces.
- 8.15. **Health and well-being:** The consultation feedback provided information on people's walking and cycling habits, which has helped to provide some insights into the health and wellbeing and activity levels of people within the district.
- 8.16. **Environmental impact:** General concerns about the environment were evident in the feedback. There was a strong consensus about the need to reduce traffic congestion, noise pollution, and improve the overall sustainability of the transportation system.

- 8.17. **Implementation and funding:** The feedback will help HCC develop detailed implementation plans and support future funding applications through local support and buy-in for specific areas/proposals.
- 8.18. **Stakeholder engagement:** While the LCWIP consultation received a large response, some groups were nevertheless under-represented, in particular people under the age of 30 (4.3% of respondents). 86% of respondents identified as white (87.5% of North Herts residents identified as white in the 2021 Census), 6% other and 2% preferred not to say. There was an even split of male to female respondents: 49%/49%, with 2% preferring not to say. The consultation elicited a poor level of response from schools despite proactive efforts to engage with them.
- 8.19. **Future consultations:** Significant learnings have been obtained from the consultation process which can be applied to future consultations.
- 8.20. Delivery of the LCWIP will enable more people to access a wider range of education and job opportunities, and to lead a fulfilling social, active and cultural life without needing to own a car. In the 2021 Census, 15.5% of households in North Herts did not have access to a car or van (8,781 out of 56,732 households).

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. NHDC's role in developing the North Herts LCWIP is as a consultee to HCC, and therefore governed by the Duty to Co-operate in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Part 2 Section 33A (introduced by the Localism Act 2011).
- 9.2. The Duty to Cooperate is the mechanism for ensuring the right issues are addressed, in the right way, and with the right partners to maximise the effectiveness of policy and plan-making. The Duty to Cooperate is a requirement of the Localism Act 2011 and the duty requires the Council to cooperate with other local planning authorities and other public bodies in preparing and developing development plan documents and other local development documents so far as it relates to a strategic matter.
- 9.3. Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that to maximise effective working on strategic matters, the local planning authority is under a duty to co-operate with the county council in engaging constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the preparation of local development documents.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are no financial implications for NHDC arising from this report. NHDC contributed £15,660 towards the preparation of the LCWIP, which was funded from the GAF Revenue reserve budget, with HCC funding the other two thirds of the costs. The consultation on the draft LCWIP was fully funded by HCC.
- 10.2. The LCWIP creates no financial commitments for NHDC or HCC, but will be used to guide future investment, primarily from government grants and Section 106 contributions from developers.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. There are no risk implications arising from this report.

- 11.2. Development and adoption of an LCWIP by HCC and endorsement by NHDC will greatly reduce the risk of missing out on future funding opportunities to deliver improvements for active travel. It will also assist NHDC in achieving its stated objectives within the North Herts Climate Change Strategy and North Herts Transport Strategy.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. HCC is undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), which is expected to conclude that some positive and minimal negative equality impacts are likely to result from the North Hertfordshire LCWIP being adopted. The full EqIA will be reported to the HCC Highways & Transport Cabinet Panel.
- 12.3. Each scheme that is developed will be assessed in detail for its equality impacts and any necessary mitigations.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

## **14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1. Implementation of the LCWIP is expected to have a positive impact on air quality by enabling and supporting a mode-shift from cars to walking and cycling, reducing the vehicle-mileage by cars in our towns.

## **15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1. There are no human resource impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

## **16. APPENDICES**

- Appendix A: LCWIP Consultation Report
- Appendix B: LCWIP Changes Summary Report

## **17. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## 18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Draft North Hertfordshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) (2022)
- [North Hertfordshire Transport Strategy](#) (2017)
- [Second cycling and walking investment strategy \(CWIS2\)](#) (2022)
- [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans – Technical Guidance for Local Authorities](#) (2017)
- [Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan](#) (2018)
- [Gear Change – a bold vision for cycling and walking](#) (2020)
- [Decarbonising Transport – A Better, Greener Britain](#) (2021)
- [Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener](#) (2021)
- [Hertfordshire Active Travel Strategy](#) (2013)
- [An Active Travel Strategy for Hertfordshire](#) (draft in consultation, 2023)
- [Active Design – Creating Active Environments through Planning and Design](#) (2023)
- [Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle infrastructure design](#) (2020)