

Blaby District Council

Cabinet Executive

Date of Meeting	24 June 2024
Title of Report	Active Travel Strategy This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
Lead Member	Cllr. Cheryl Cashmore - Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development
Report Author	Assets & Major Projects Group Manager
Strategic Themes	Keeping you safe and healthy

1. What is this report about?

This report provides Cabinet with a comprehensive overview of the proposed Active Travel Strategy, including a summary of the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and accompanying Action Plan. The report seeks Cabinet's approval for the Active Travel Strategy. The formulation of this strategy is a key component of the Corporate Plan and holds the potential to significantly influence broader agendas, such as improving air quality, achieving net zero emissions, promoting physical activity, enhancing planning efforts, boosting health outcomes, fostering community development and encouraging tourism.

2. Recommendation(s) to Cabinet Executive

- 2.1 To approve the Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan.
- 2.2 To delegate authority to the Assets and Major Projects Group Manager, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to oversee the implementation and development of the Active Travel Strategy and accompanying action plan.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 To enable the Council and partners to increase and improve Active Travel across the district.

4. Matters to consider

4.1 Background

Officers have been working on the development of an Active Travel Strategy, a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and an Action Plan. The development process for these documents has encompassed the following steps:

1. Appointment of Sustrans: Sustrans were appointed to assist in the development of the Strategy and LCWIP.
2. Resident Consultation: A consultation was conducted with residents, providing 300 responses.
3. Stakeholder Workshop: A workshop was held with participation from local community groups, neighbouring authorities, Parish Councils and the Portfolio Holder.
4. First Draft of the Strategy and LCWIP: This draft provided initial findings based on evidence gathered from site visits, surveys and software modelling.
5. Initial Stakeholder Feedback: Draft documents were shared with those who attended the initial Stakeholder Workshop for their comments and feedback.
6. Presentation to Senior Leadership Team (SLT): The findings and recommendations of the Strategy and LCWIP were presented to SLT.
7. Site Visits and Meetings: Additional site visits and meetings were held with interested Councillors to gather more insights.
8. Final Stakeholder Workshop: An additional workshop was conducted to offer stakeholders another opportunity to provide comments and feedback, ensuring broader engagement.

4.2 The Active Travel Strategy, LCWIP and Action Plan

The Active Travel Strategy (appendix A) outlines the challenges experienced across the district to meet the ambitions of active travel. The priority given to cars limits the use of other modes of transportation and has created significant long-term problems. Active Travel infrastructure in the UK, when it is built, is often an afterthought and of poor quality. Many routes are too short or are situated in inconvenient locations. Currently, the biggest obstacle to increasing Active Travel is the lack of safe and convenient infrastructure combined with an overreliance on cars.

Blaby District Council's Active Travel Strategy aims to address these issues. By working with our partners, communities and businesses it will be possible to help shift behaviours, increase investment in infrastructure and empower people to be more active. The Active Travel Strategy will compliment and support the delivery of new housing and employment developments in the District whilst providing strategic direction for investing in public realm and infrastructure to connect our conurbations.

The strategy also includes information from the LCWIP, a summary of which is provided as appendix B. The LCWIP produced a network plan for walking and cycling, incorporating priority routes and core zones for development, and a prioritised list of infrastructure improvements for future funding, underpinned by local analysis. The details of which are provided below. The Blaby LCWIP compliments the County Council's own LCWIP. This provides Blaby with the opportunity to work with County when active travel funds are available to ensure infrastructure funds can be capitalised upon and improvements made.

The Active Travel Action Plan, a summary of which is provided in appendix C, has been prepared to ensure Blaby District Council and our partners identify the activities required to deliver our strategic ambitions. It includes the outcomes we want to achieve and how these will be measured. The Action Plan is grouped into seven thematic areas, enabling the work to be coordinated and joined up to maximise impact.

Successfully delivering the vision set out in the Active Travel Strategy will require collaboration across Council departments and partners. A matrix approach to governance and multi-agency collaboration will be required to deliver the Active Travel Strategy objectives and the associated action plan. Resources will be identified from within existing teams initially, however additional capacity may be required as Active Travel projects and initiatives are developed. Future resourcing will be discussed when appropriate.

Priority Cycling and Walking Routes Identified

The LCWIP identified a total of 10 cycling routes and 5 walking routes, which are listed in Appendix D. From these, 3 walking routes and 3 cycling routes were prioritised. The selection of these routes was based on several criteria, including their potential impact on increasing Active Travel levels, proximity to jobs and schools, safety improvements, value for money and deliverability. Prioritised routes are shown below with indicative costs for the development of each route:

Walking:

1. Enderby Mill Lane – King Street – High Street - £1,370,000
2. Littlethorpe Warwick Road - £450,000
3. Glenfield Dominion Road - £980,000

Cycling:

1. Enderby – Narborough – Littlethorpe – Blaby - £5,500,000
2. Glenfield Dominion Road / Stamford Street - £3,625,000
3. B582 Next offices – Enderby – Blaby - £13,095,000

4.3 Relevant Consultations

In addition to the consultation process outlined in section 4.1, Leicestershire County Council's Active Travel Team has also been consulted, and a constructive relationship is in place. It is understood that the County Council

Active Travel department is currently undergoing restructuring to allow for a greater focus on Active Travel and improving their Active Travel England rating.

Officers have also engaged with the Council's Scrutiny function, holding a workshop to gather feedback from Scrutiny members on Thursday, 6th June. It was agreed at this meeting that a progress report will be brought back to Scrutiny in 6 months time.

4.4 Significant Issues

There are no adverse impacts expected relating to Human Rights, Legal Implications, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities or Climate Local.

5. **Costs / Funding / Deliverability**

Costs:

The implementation of the Active Travel Strategy and the associated action plan will aim to utilise existing resources to deliver on the proposed actions where possible. However it is noted that additional capacity may be needed as plans are developed and iterated. Should additional resources be required for specific projects, schemes or programme oversight, these will be identified and agreed through the appropriate governance routes.

While the costs associated with the LCWIP walking and cycling scheme proposals are substantial, the outlined routes are not a commitment to build but rather an evidence base of where routes could be developed when and if funding becomes available.

Funding:

All walking and cycling routes would need to be externally funded. By having a list of 'shovel-ready' projects, we increase our chances of obtaining funding from the County Council, Active Travel England, and S106 Developer Contributions. An example of successful funding is the Lubbesthorpe to Meridian Leisure Park to Leicester City route, which is currently being developed.

Deliverability:

Should funding for a walking or cycling scheme be secured, detailed design and feasibility work will be conducted for each scheme. The majority of proposed routes involve improvements to the highway. Currently, our close alignment with the aspirations of the County Council's LCWIP has led to the prioritisation of two of our routes in their plans: the B582 Corridor and the proposed new walking route on Warwick Road. However, the timescales for these schemes have not yet been confirmed.

6. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

6.1 The key risks are shown in the table below:

Current risk	Actions to reduce the risk
Ability to secure external funding to deliver local route improvements.	Having an Active Travel Strategy and LCWIP puts BDC in the best possible position to secure external funding (when the opportunities arise).
County Council Active Travel Rating.	The County Council has been awarded the lowest (worst) ranking by Active Travel England. The County Council is working to improve this rating, and Active Travel England has indicated that improvement is likely. These ratings may impact the amount of funding received from Active Travel England for local schemes.
Recognition of the Blaby District Active Travel Strategy & LCWIP by the County Council	The County Council have confirmed they will recognise and use the Blaby District Active Travel Strategy & LCWIP as part of their evidence base.
Resources to deliver the action plan	Where possible, actions will be delivered through existing resources. Should additional resources be required, these will be identified, and appropriate actions will be taken to address the resource gap.
Changing government policies and funding priorities.	Regular monitoring of government policies and maintaining flexibility in the strategy to adapt to new priorities and opportunities. Continuous engagement with policymakers to stay informed about potential changes.
Delays in project timelines due to unforeseen circumstances.	Establishing a robust project management framework with contingency plans to address potential delays. Regular progress reviews and adjustments to timelines as needed.
Coordination and collaboration with multiple stakeholders.	Implementing a matrix approach to governance and fostering multi-agency collaboration. Regular stakeholder meetings to ensure alignment and address any issues promptly.

7. Other options considered

7.1 The alternative option is to not develop an Active Travel Strategy & LCWIP, this option is rejected as it will limit future funding opportunities and investment into the district.

8. Environmental impact

Active Travel is widely recognised for its positive environmental benefits. The Active Travel Strategy, LCWIP and Action Plan have the potential to deliver significant environmental advantages by encouraging more people to choose Active Travel for commuting and leisure activities.

Promoting walking and cycling over car usage can lead to substantial reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the district's efforts to improve air quality and meet net-zero carbon targets. By providing safe, convenient, and attractive routes for Active Travel, the strategy supports a shift away from fossil fuel-dependent modes of transport, thus reducing the overall carbon footprint of the district.

Additionally, increased Active Travel can help alleviate traffic congestion, leading to smoother traffic flow and less idling time for vehicles, further reducing emissions. The reduction in vehicle usage also means less wear and tear on road infrastructure, decreasing the need for frequent repairs and the associated environmental costs.

The strategy also aligns with broader environmental goals such as preserving green spaces and enhancing biodiversity. Well-planned Active Travel routes can integrate with natural landscapes, providing corridors for wildlife and contributing to the ecological health of the area. The promotion of green infrastructure, such as tree-lined streets and greenways, can enhance urban environments, making them more resilient to climate change impacts like heatwaves and flooding.

9. Appendix

Appendix A – Draft Active Travel Strategy (see attached)

Appendix B – LCWIP summary (see attached)

Appendix C – Active Travel Action Plan summary (see attached)

Appendix D – Full breakdown of the walking & cycling routes identified in the LCWIP (see below)

10. Background papers

Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

11. Report author's contact details

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