

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL – 17 AUGUST 2023  
REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY RESPONSE

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Transport is a major source of carbon emissions in the UK and around the world. According to Government data, transport was responsible for 27% of total UK emissions. Of that figure, motor transport was responsible for 91% of the total, and passenger cars 61% of that.
- 1.2 One important way of reducing emissions from transport is to increase the uptake of Active Travel, namely walking, cycling and wheeling. Unlike a shift to electric vehicles, such an uptake would also reduce some of the other impacts associated with motor vehicles, such as congestion, and would also have health benefits for those travelling.
- 1.3 Active Travel has had an increased profile in recent years. Active Travel England were established in 2023 and are now a statutory consultee for planning applications above 150 homes, 7,500sqm of floorspace or an area of at least 5 hectares. In addition, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council worked with Hertfordshire County Council to produce a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which was considered by the Climate Change Sub Group in January 2023. Further to this, the County Council have undertaken significant works in Welwyn Garden City town centre in recent years to improve active travel provision.
- 1.4 Hertfordshire County Council are now consulting on their Active Travel Strategy This sets out a number of strategic objectives, then sets out a number of potential benefits of increased active travel and identifies potential barriers to greater uptake. Finally, it sets out the County Council's proposed approach along with a number of high level actions. The draft strategy is attached at Appendix A.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel respond to the consultation with the response attached at Appendix B.
- 2.2 That in the event that members wish to amend the response attached at Appendix B, that agreement of the final response is delegated to the Assistant Director (Planning), in conjunction with the Executive Member for Planning.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 Transport is a major source of carbon emissions in the UK and around the world. According to Government data, transport was responsible for 27% of total UK emissions. Of that figure, road transport was responsible for 91% of the total, and passenger cars 61% of that. Road transport has other negative outcomes as well

such as congestion which will not be addressed by the phasing out of petrol and diesel and transition to electric vehicles (EV's).

- 3.2 A significant number of journeys are of a short distance for which active travel, namely walking, cycling and wheeling, is a feasible option for many people. However, for a number of reasons, the uptake of this is lower than it might be. These reasons include needing improvements in infrastructure, the perception of safety (in particular from those cycling) and a lack of knowledge or confidence.
- 3.3 Active Travel has had a raised profile in recent years. A number of temporary projects were installed during the Covid pandemic including in the Borough, and some have subsequently been made permanent, funded by central Government funding. In addition, a new agency of the Department for Transport, Active Travel England, was formed in 2023 with the aim of transforming the role that active travel has in the UK and is now a statutory consultee for planning applications above 150 homes, 7500qm of floorspace or a site area exceeding 5 hectares.
- 3.4 Active Travel has also had a raised profile locally in recent years. The Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan sets out a transport hierarchy which seeks firstly to reduce the need to travel, but then prioritises vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists above other uses. Other local transport strategies are in line with this hierarchy and approach.
- 3.5 The County Council's draft Active Travel Strategy was published on 25 May 2023 and is open for consultation until 15 August (officers have negotiated a short extension to this deadline in order that the response can be considered by this committee). The key points of the strategy are:
  - A recognition that increasing active travel has a number of benefits, including reduction of carbon emissions, improved air quality, reduced congestion, health and wider social benefits.
  - The strategy identifies that there are a number of barriers to increased uptake of active travel and that these should be addressed where possible.
  - It identifies the benefit of having Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP's) across the county and says that these will be completed. The Welwyn Hatfield LCWIP was adopted in early 2023.
  - It sets an action for the County Council to work with Districts and Boroughs to identify funding opportunities and working together on securing funding, including from developers.
  - It sets out to improve joint working – for example on active travel and public transport projects, and adopting a “whole systems approach” so that engineering work is linked to behaviour and travel demand processes.
- 3.6 Whilst much of what is in the strategy is welcome, it is considered that there are other points which could help make the strategy more effective. This includes taking opportunities for planned maintenance to install new infrastructure, having a more pro-active programme of working with schools and business and working with communities on trials of measures to see if they work before permanent

installation. These points have been captured in the draft response to the consultation which is attached.

- 3.7 It is considered that the draft response, attached an Appendix B, summarises the Council's position in relation to the issue and the draft strategy. If members wish to amend the draft response appended to this report, this could be agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning in conjunction with the Executive Member for Planning.

## **Implications**

### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

- 4.1 The Climate Change Act of 2008 established a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 against 1990 levels. Increased uptake of active travel will help reduce carbon emissions from road transport.

### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council. Any work to increase active travel provision will be funded by Hertfordshire County Council, though Section 106 funds may be used for this where appropriate and justified.

### **6 Risk Management Implications**

- 6.1 The risks related to this proposal are:
- 6.2 Raising expectations. Whilst active travel has a higher priority now than in the past, projects – in particular the installation of new infrastructure – can be lengthy and expensive to deliver. The Borough Council's communications on such issues make it clear that we are not the highways authority so not delivering directly.

### **7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

- 7.1 There are no known security and terrorism implications in relation to the proposals set out in this report.

### **8 Procurement Implication(s)**

- 8.1 There are no known procurement implications in relation to the proposals set out in this report.

### **9 Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 9.1 The Climate Change Act of 2008 established a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 against 1990 levels. Increasing the uptake of active travel will help reduce carbon emissions from transport.
- 9.2 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and an increased uptake of active travel will help reduce emissions in the borough.

**10 Human Resources Implication(s)**

10.1 There are no human resource implications in relation to the proposals set out in this report.

**11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

11.1 An increased uptake of active travel in place of motor vehicles will also have a positive impact on local air quality and individual health as well as reducing carbon emissions.

**12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

12.1 This report summarises a strategy which Hertfordshire County Council are consulting on and appends a draft response to that strategy.

**13 Link to Corporate Priorities**

13.1 This work would directly contribute to the Council's Environment priority. It would also directly address an action point in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

**14 Equality and Diversity**

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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Appendix A - Hertfordshire County Council Active Travel Strategy (May 2023)  
Appendix B – Draft response to Active Travel Strategy consultation