

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CLIMATE CHANGE PANEL – 18 JANUARY 2023
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PLACE)

LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Increasing the uptake of active travel such as cycling and walking, primarily for local journeys, is seen as one of a number of important ways to help address climate change. However, the patchy coverage and quality of dedicated infrastructure, particularly for cycling, is often cited as a barrier to greater uptake.
- 1.2 A Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) sets out, in detail, required improvements in the active travel network in an area which would enable projects to be brought forward more quickly than would otherwise be the case, by providing evidence of need and having the principle of the improvements agreed in advance. It would also act as a ready-made evidence base for any funding opportunities. An LCWIP for both Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield is specifically identified in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan, and over time will enable Hertfordshire County Council as highways authority to help deliver or facilitate an improved active travel network with a consequent increase in use.
- 1.3 An LCWIP for Welwyn Hatfield has been led by Hertfordshire County Council, who have also provided the majority of the funding, though Welwyn Hatfield have worked with the County Council on it, and provided a contribution of £10K from the Council's Climate Change Fund.
- 1.4 The LCWIP has involved extensive work including two sets of stakeholder workshops, detailed on-site audits of the existing active travel network, and public consultation. The completed document is attached at Appendix A and includes proposals for a significantly enhanced active travel network.
- 1.5 The final document will be taken to Hertfordshire County Council's Environment and Transport Panel on 31 January 2023 for adoption, so that it will become official policy. In order to demonstrate support at Borough Council level, the County Council have asked that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council support the document to demonstrate local agreement, and to support the vision of implementing cycling and walking schemes across the Borough

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Climate Change Panel note the proposed final Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) document and the results of the consultation.
- 2.2 That Climate Change Panel recommend that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's support for the final Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan document is agreed by the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change using his

delegated powers, to enable it to be used as an evidence base for delivery of future active travel schemes.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 Increasing the uptake of active travel such as cycling and walking, primarily for local journeys, is seen as one of a number of important ways to help address climate change. According to the National Travel Survey, 59% of car journeys are less than five miles, where more active modes are feasible options for many people. However, the patchy coverage and quality of dedicated infrastructure, particularly for cycling, is often cited as a barrier to greater uptake.
- 3.2 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP's) are a relatively recent development, being introduced by the Department for Transport in 2017. Their purpose is to set out, in detail, required improvements in the active travel network in an area which enables projects to be brought forward more quickly than would otherwise be the case, by providing evidence of need and having the improvements agreed in advance. The outcome is a strategic network plan setting out required improvements to both walking and cycling networks as well as a prioritised list of improvements. This could include both "quick wins" and longer term projects. It should be noted that whilst information in the LCWIP is quite detailed, the locations in the document would still require detailed design work in order to install proposed improvements.
- 3.3 LCWIP's are being prepared across the county: one for Watford was completed and adopted in January 2022; St Albans and North Herts are due for completion shortly and others are underway. Undertaking Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for both Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield is specifically identified in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.
- 3.4 An LCWIP should help access funding when opportunities arise by providing an evidence base, direct any such funding, and demonstrate that broad agreement exists around projects and interventions. This should also hopefully remove some of the sort of opposition which has arisen to short term cycle improvements delivered by the County Council in the recent past through the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF).
- 3.5 The documents are heavily evidence-based and look at where people cycle and walk, including the "Propensity to Cycle Tool" which maps actual journeys using Census data supported by numerous other more up-to-date data sources. Walking assessments consider core walking zones based on key destinations and consider crossing points, the needs of those with mobility impairments etc. This technical evidence was supplemented by two rounds of stakeholder engagement in November / December 2021 and March 2022.
- 3.6 A public consultation took place for six weeks from 07 July – 19 August 2022. This was led by Hertfordshire County Council but was also promoted by the Borough Council using social media etc. A number of identified stakeholders were contacted directly, the information was shared on the County Council website and through the local press and social media, and posters were put in libraries, cycle shops etc.
- 3.7 The consultation material was divided into two parts: the main report, and a storyboard which enabled people to look at suggested measures in particular areas.

- 3.8 The public consultation received 189 responses. A summary of the findings are below:
- A total of 99 people responded to the questionnaire and 77 comments were posted on the story board. We also received 12 e-mail representations from Parish Councils, departments at Hertfordshire County Council and other organisations. We also received one mailed response from an interest group representative.
 - 69% of those responding said that they regularly walked within the Borough and 61% said that they regularly cycled within the Borough.
 - The primary reasons for walking were to access amenities and for leisure purposes. Most people who travelled by bike said that they did so for leisure purposes but travelling to work and access to amenities were also popular reasons.
 - Of those expressing a view, 74% said that they supported the vision of implementing cycling and walking schemes across Welwyn Hatfield, with 26% not supporting the vision.
 - A range of comments were received to the questions in the consultation, both positive and negative. These comments have been considered carefully and amendments made to the document where necessary. Some other comments were detailed points on very specific locations or issues which were deemed to not require a change to the report itself, but these have been fed back to relevant teams at the County Council.
- 3.9 The consultation report, which sets out the consultation process and the responses received, and considers whether amendments are necessary, is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.10 As a result of these findings, modifications have been made to the document and the revised LCWIP is attached at Appendix B.
- 3.11 Whilst this is a highways document and will be adopted by Hertfordshire County Council, they have asked that it be agreed or endorsed by the Borough Council in order that local support can be further demonstrated.

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. An increase in active travel will be one of a number of measures to help deliver this.
- 4.2 The Council has a legal duty to seek, through the planning system, to deliver sustainable development. Increased uptake of cycling and walking would help ensure existing and new developments were made more sustainable.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 A contribution of £10K was provided by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council towards total project costs of £40K, with the remainder being funded by Hertfordshire County Council.
- 5.2 Agreeing the LCWIP and a subsequent adoption by Hertfordshire County Council will not incur any direct costs for the Borough Council but will be used to direct Section 106 funds or other developer contributions towards active travel schemes.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The risks related to this proposal are:
- 6.2 Reputational Risk. There is a risk that having this work in place may unduly raise expectation of work to deliver identified improvements being undertaken quickly. However, part of the LCWIP work involves prioritising identified improvements and this is clearly communicated within the final document.

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. The delivery of any schemes set out in the LCWIP would be by Hertfordshire County Council or developers.

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. An increase in active travel will be one of a number of measures to help deliver this.
- 9.2 Delivering LCWIP's for both Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield is specifically identified in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

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 Enabling better quality walking and cycling infrastructure in the borough can help health and wellbeing outcomes by more easily enabling residents to walk or cycle to work, school or leisure activities. Increased active travel should also mean reducing the level of motorised traffic and the consequent impact on air quality in the borough.

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

12.1 Partners and local stakeholders were engaged with as a part of this work and there was a public consultation undertaken on the final document, and the Council's Communications team helped promote this.

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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Background Papers: National Travel Survey 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2020>

Appendix A – Welwyn Hatfield Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Consultation Summary

Appendix B – Welwyn Hatfield Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (final draft report)