

ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE

Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee – 12 March 2025

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Planning and Regulatory Services

Status: For information

Also considered by: N/A

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report updates members on the Council's work to develop and deliver safe and attractive opportunities for active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) across the District, in partnership with Kent County Council.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Promoting and facilitating low carbon travel and sustainable movement across the District, and tackling the challenge of climate change.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Roy

Contact Officer: Emma Henshall, Ext. 7358

Recommendation to Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee:

To note this update report for information.

Reason for recommendation: Identifying opportunities for better active travel across the District is a key priority that can assist in reducing carbon emissions, improve air quality and result in positive health outcomes, as well as helping to tackle the challenge of climate change.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Active travel has many benefits – walking, wheeling and cycling can all help to positively impact the health of our communities and bring significant environmental benefits including improving air quality, reducing noise pollution, easing levels of traffic congestion and reducing carbon emissions. The Council is committed to promoting and creating opportunities for better active travel in the District through its Movement Strategy (2022), Climate Change Strategy (2024) and emerging Local Plan.
- 2 Over the past few years the Government has launched a series of funding opportunities via Active Travel England to develop schemes that would boost

walking, wheeling and cycling. The District Council has been successful in bidding (through Kent County Council) for funds to deliver a number of projects it has prioritised. Full details of these projects, along with funding allocations and timelines, are set out in Appendix A. Key project updates are highlighted below.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

- 3 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks and form a vital part of the Government's strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle. In particular LCWIPs:
 - Identify and prioritise walking and cycling infrastructure improvements to be delivered over the next 10 years;
 - Ensure that consideration is given to walking and cycling in local policies; and
 - Make the case for future funding for walking and cycling infrastructure.
- 4 To date, LCWIPs have been completed for Sevenoaks Urban Area (January 2022) and Swanley Urban Area (February 2024), identifying and prioritising active travel networks for each area. They are available to view at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/wwc.
- 5 A LCWIP for Edenbridge is in progress and expected to be completed in Spring/Summer 2025. Stakeholder consultation was undertaken in December 2024 to gather views and experiences of walking and cycling in Edenbridge via an online map, to see where improvements could be made. 114 comments were received from residents and stakeholders and these are instrumental in developing the network of routes. Once the walking and cycling routes have been drafted we will undertake further stakeholder consultation to seek views on which routes should be prioritised, before finalising the plan.

Sevenoaks East to West Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Route (Sevenoaks LCWIP route 3)

- 6 Following a second public consultation in June 2024, construction of the route began in October 2024 for 28 weeks. So far the works have been completed along London Road, Brittain's Lane and are in progress along Bradbourne Vale Road, with the remainder scheduled between March and May. The latest updates are available at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-projects/in-progress-road-projects/sevenoaks-east-to-west-active-travel>.
- 7 Positive discussions are ongoing to install dedicated cycling access into Sevenoaks Education Campus at the bottom of Seal Hollow Road, at the far

eastern end of the route. We will continue to work with KCC and the schools involved to finalise an option and identify funding opportunities to deliver this additional measure.

Sevenoaks to Otford Route (Sevenoaks LCWIP route 1)

- 8 The outline designs for the Sevenoaks to Otford route are awaiting ATE sign off and work has started on the detailed designs. The detailed designs will require completion of technical surveys to fully consider the achievability of the proposed improvements, which will inform the construction plans and associated costs. As part of this work we will undertake further stakeholder engagement, following initial engagement undertaken in October 2023. The work also builds in a design review with Active Travel England.
- 9 It is anticipated that the detailed designs will be completed towards the end of 2025, in advance of further funding opportunities through Active Travel England to progress the route to construction.

Sevenoaks to Seal to Otford Route (Sevenoaks LCWIP route 6)

- 10 The outline designs for the Sevenoaks to Seal to Otford route have been completed. The route was split into three phases (through Sevenoaks Quarry, through Seal along the A25, and Sevenoaks Education Campus to the town centre) recognising the different elements, landowners and challenges along the route. The stretch of A25 in particular presents a challenge in that the highway simply isn't wide enough to accommodate walking and cycling safely. The report contains a number of recommendations for progressing the route further and officers will investigate these over the coming months.
- 11 The additional add-on piece of work to link Kemsing into the route has also been completed. This Route Development Plan sets out, at a high level, a series of measures that could be implemented to improve the walking and cycling experience, along with an indication of the likely feasibility of each intervention.

Sevenoaks Town Centre Walking Improvements

- 12 The Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP identified a number of common themes that contribute towards a poor experience of walking and cycling in Sevenoaks town centre, such as narrow pavements, the impact of guard railing, large junctions, limited pedestrian crossing provision, and high levels of air pollution. These issues are common across many town centres. But in respect of air pollution our 2024 Air Quality Annual Status Report confirms that NO₂ concentrations in this area are considerably below the annual mean AQS objective of 40µg/m³, and are falling year on year. A further piece of work has been completed that considers, shortlists and prioritises a series of

interventions that would help overcome these issues and enhance the walking and cycling experience in the town centre.

- 13 Officers intend to use this piece of evidence to support future funding bids to implement the interventions, and also to embed the prioritised improvements into the emerging Local Plan and through the Development Management process to influence future development proposals that come forward in this location.

Swanley to Hextable Walking Route (Swanley LCWIP route 4)

- 14 Following completion of the Swanley LCWIP a feasibility study is being undertaken to progress the walking improvements identified that will make walking a more attractive and safer experience between Swanley and Hextable (walking route 4). The study will also consider where the route overlaps with cycle route 3, which relates to the section through the Avenue of Limes and along College Road and Rowhill Road in Hextable, ensuring that any required cycling infrastructure is included to future proof any improvements that are later implemented. A site visit was undertaken in Autumn 2024 which provided an opportunity to also road test a new 360-degree camera.
- 15 The technical assessment is underway and it is anticipated that the options and recommendations will be available in Summer 2025, in advance of further funding opportunities through Active Travel England to progress the route to design stage.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

The active travel projects referred to in this report have largely been secured utilising external funding from Government (Active Travel England) in partnership with KCC. We could choose not to engage in further rounds of funding, nor dedicate our resources to managing these projects, however this would contradict the Council's commitment to promoting and creating opportunities for better active travel in the District and therefore disadvantage our residents. This approach would also be at odds with our Climate Change Strategy (2024), Movement Strategy (2022) and emerging Local Plan, and as such, is not recommended.

Key Implications

Financial

Funding for the active travel projects referred to in this report has been secured through external sources and it is not expected that any top up from the Council's reserves will be required.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

No legal implications have been identified.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Climate Change Implications

The projects discussed in this paper, once delivered, will improve opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling across the District, as an alternative to using the car for shorter journeys. This, in turn, will improve air quality and contribute towards a reduction in carbon emissions in the District, helping the Council to achieve the priorities set out in its Climate Change Strategy, and in particular Action MOV1 – promoting and facilitating low carbon travel and sustainable movement.

Conclusions

This report updates members on the Council's work to develop and deliver safe and attractive opportunities for active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) across the District, in partnership with Kent County Council. Delivery of these projects supports the Council's Climate Change Strategy (2024), Movement Strategy (2022) and emerging Local Plan.

Appendices

Appendix A – SDC Active Travel Projects February 2025

Background Papers

None

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Planning and Regulatory Services