

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 30 September 2021

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan

Purpose: To consider and approve the East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Cabinet is recommended to:

- (1) note the outcomes of the recent consultation and to approve the draft East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan; and**
 - (2) agree the actions necessary to maintain the Local Cycling and Walking Plan as a living document and develop a future pipeline of cycling and walking schemes as outlined in paragraph 2.13**
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1 Background Information

1.1 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan's (LCWIP), which provide a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at a local level, were identified within the Department for Transport (DfT) Cycling & Walking Investment Plan (CWIP), published in 2017. The CWIP states that whilst "the preparation of LCWIP's is non-mandatory, local authorities and their partners who have developed such plans will be well placed to make the case for future investment".

1.2 Alongside the CWIP the DfT published technical guidance setting out the stages that local authorities were recommended to take in developing their LCWIP. These stages are set out in Appendix 1

1.3 The DfT published a new Cycling & Walking Strategy, 'Gear Change', in August 2020 to accelerate their ambitions to increase levels of active travel for all or part of people's daily journeys. The strategy emphasises the need to re-allocate and prioritise more space for people cycling and walking. To support this new cycle infrastructure design guidance, Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20, was published in autumn 2020 which promotes the provision of more segregated facilities for cyclists.

1.4 As part of the Gear Change Strategy, Government announced the establishment of 'Active Travel England'. This new inspectorate, which has yet to commence, will be responsible for:

- enforcement of new cycling design guidance by local authorities,
- providing advice to improve scheme design, implementation, and stakeholder management,
- acting as a statutory consultee for planning applications for all developments over a certain, as yet unknown, threshold,
- considering applications for cycling and walking funding; and
- publishing annual reports on highway authorities, grading them on their performance on the delivery of active travel (similar to Ofsted)

1.5 The draft East Sussex LCWIP will be at the forefront of taking positive action to support several current and long-term challenges and opportunities at an international, national, and local level including climate change, economic recovery and supporting health and wellbeing. Locally it will be integral to the delivery of the County's Economy Recovery Plan, the Environment Plan, the East Sussex Climate Emergency Plan, the East Sussex Whole System Healthy Weight Plan, the emerging Bus Service Improvement Plan, and district and borough council Local Plans.

2 Supporting Information

Draft LCWIP

2.1 East Sussex's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has been developed in accordance with the Government's guidance set out in Appendix 1 and establishes an ambitious proposed network of preferred cycling and walking routes and measures in specific areas of the County. The DfT recommends that LCWIP's must be focussed on areas where there is the greatest propensity to increase levels of cycling and walking. Consequently, the draft LCWIP focusses on the coastal strip and larger market towns, with the greatest priority on the coastal strip. The broad geographical areas covered are outlined in Appendix 2.

2.2 The routes within each of the geographical areas were identified by working in partnership with Sustrans, who were appointed to undertake site assessments on the Council's behalf, the local district and borough councils as well as engagement with local cycling, walking and access groups.

2.3 It is important to note that the LCWIP will be an evolutionary plan and should therefore be treated as a 'live document'. The proposed cycling and walking networks indicated in the plan outline the potential alignment of a route or a measure at an early feasibility stage and should not be considered as detailed proposals. The delivery of the plan is dependent on East Sussex County Council and their partners ability to seek and secure funding to both develop and deliver future schemes. Once funding is secured for specific schemes these will then be subject to local consultation with members and the public before progressing to implementation.

2.4 The plan also recognises that people will often only change how they travel if it is convenient and easy, and that providing training, information and initiatives can help people to make this change. The plan outlines how working with our key partners, we will deliver active travel programmes which are linked with the infrastructure measures coming forward.

Consultation on draft LCWIP

2.5 The draft LCWIP was subject to a consultation with key stakeholders in summer 2020 and with the public in autumn 2020. As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, this was undertaken through remote meetings with key stakeholders and an online consultation with the public, which received 836 responses.

2.6 The **key results which arose from the consultation questions** were:

- High proportion of respondents agree with the geographic extent of the plan – 72%
- Respondents reported that the highest proportion of trips undertaken by cycling and walking were usually for leisure 42%, 15% cycling – to access employment, 32% walking – for shopping trips.
- Highest proportion of barriers to people choosing to cycle and walk – focussed on safety issues - busy roads, quality of routes, feeling unsafe, difficult junctions to cross.
- Measures considered the most important to encourage cycling and walking – include direct cycle routes to destinations, for both cycling and walking - segregated routes from other modes of travel and greater and separate priority for both pedestrian and cyclists at junctions and crossings, also traffic free spaces in towns and neighbourhoods and initiatives to encourage walking.
- **General issues raised** by respondents: -
 - **Strategy** – not in alignment with recent DfT guidance, needs greater consideration of disabled people's needs, links should be made to local plan development sites, the plan should be linked to adjoining authority LCWIP's.
 - **Infrastructure & scheme delivery** - shared cycling and walking schemes are generally not supported, road space should not be allocated to active travel due to the risk of causing increased congestion, would like to see more traffic calming and 20mph speed limits, consideration should be given to equestrian users.
 - **Safety & training** – greater regulation of cyclists, greater training for drivers in relation to consideration of cyclists, more cycle training for people of all ages.
 - **Document specifics** – maps difficult to read and document too long.
- **Concerns raised in relation to specific geographic locations within the draft LCWIP** were highlighted as following: -
 - A259 Newhaven – Rottingdean - concerns about the re-allocation of road space to cycling and walking infrastructure on this corridor.
 - Croft Road, Crowborough – concerns raised about the options for pedestrianisation and impact on potential bus routeing/bus stop access, deliveries, and traffic flow displacement.
 - Broad Street, Seaford – concerns raised about potential pedestrianisation and impact on access for deliveries to shops and businesses.

Updates to the draft LCWIP following the consultation

2.7 Most of the consultation responses received were focussed on detailed comments related to individual schemes. These will be considered as the development of schemes come forward. However, many of the general responses raised formed under several similar themes which has enabled officers to make some updates to the plan, particularly to re-emphasise some of the existing information which respondents felt was not clear enough in the plan. A summary of the updates to the final draft LCWIP are:

- **Greater emphasis on walking** – reference to this included in the ‘What Next?’ section demonstrating ESCC commitment to review this, especially as part of potential new schemes which will look to re-allocate more space for walking and cycling.
- **Links to Local Plans** - greater emphasis on how the LCWIP will link with local plan development and the potential funding associated with this.
- **Links with Neighbourhood Plans (NP’s)** – greater information included on how the LCWIP links with NP’s, especially for more rural areas.
- **Inclusion of schemes that meet with new government strategies and guidance (Gear Change Strategy & LTN 1/20)** – updates to existing section ‘What Next?’ to re-emphasise ESCC’s commitment to review the opportunities to include future schemes as part of the LCWIP, which re-allocate road space within neighbourhoods, town centres, outside of schools etc. to enable more people to walk and cycle and to investigate potential locations in the county where segregated cycle routes may be feasible. Also highlighted that ESCC is already reviewing all programmed new cycle infrastructure schemes against LTN 1/20 and integrating the design guidance where this is feasible.
- **Electric cycles, e-cargo bikes, and cycle parking (especially for electric cycles)** - reference to this included within the ‘What Next?’ section.
- **Consideration to people with physical and hidden disabilities** – this is already included but emphasis is strengthened on how specific needs will be considered at the scheme design phase and that appropriate groups will be engaged with from the outset.
- **Links with leisure and tourism and open space** – greater emphasis on this is included within specific geographic areas and specific routes highlighted. However, acknowledgement is given that additional work will need to be undertaken to identify this, subject to funding.
- **Inclusion of maintenance for footways/cycleways**– this has been re-emphasised and an acknowledgement that more work will follow to enhance this aspect of the plan.
- **Funding the LCWIP** – whilst a section is already included, more information included up front in the document and refers readers to the relevant section.

A full summary of the consultation outcomes is outlined in Appendix 3 and a copy of the LCWIP is included in Appendix 4.

Key delivery challenges

2.8 Apart from the specific geographic locations noted in paragraph 2.6, the key delivery challenges will be: -

- The new government active travel strategy ‘Gear Change’ and ‘Cycle Infrastructure guidance LTN 1/20’, is recommending that local authorities re-allocate more road space for schemes which support more people cycling and walking. This is causing conflict between all user groups, with cycling groups lobbying for segregated cycle routes, people driving not wanting to see road space removed and access groups raising concerns about sharing space with people cycling. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that achieving full consensus on future scheme designs that embrace the new strategy and guidance will be challenging and likely impossible.
- ESCC is already reviewing all programmed new cycle infrastructure schemes against LTN 1/20 and integrating the design guidance where this is feasible. The challenge is that the guidance is significantly more suited to more urban and metropolitan areas, which the DfT has admitted. Therefore, where local authorities cannot conform to the guidance this can be departed from and funding is still likely to be awarded, subject to a robust case being developed to demonstrate the reasons for this. This is likely to be applicable to ESCC, where we often struggle with limited physical space for schemes or managing the restrictions of environmental designations and settlements being historic in nature.

Funding for Cycling and Walking

2.9 To support the delivery of its 'Gear Change' strategy, Government has allocated £2bn of 'Active Travel Funding' (both revenue and capital) over the next four years.

2.10 Revenue funding, to support the development of LCWIP's and to deliver cycling and walking initiatives in 2021/22 has been allocated to all local authorities. Following the submission of an application earlier this year, ESCC has secured £219,774 of revenue funding to deliver a programme of cycling and walking initiatives this financial year including active steps with workplaces and communities, cycle/electric cycle hire, 'walk once a week' programme' with schools and further development to the ESCC Cycle Hubs at Eastbourne & Peacehaven.

2.11 A key element of an LCWIP is the prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment which should be used to inform cycling and walking capital funding applications to Government (stage 5 in the development of the plan). ESCC has been invited to bid for capital funding in 2021/22 for spend by end March 2023. For East Sussex an application was submitted to Government in August 2021 to use these monies to support the delivery of Phase 1 of the Hailsham – Polegate – Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor Scheme and Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package Phase 2a, both of which are prioritised schemes within the Eastbourne & South Wealden area of the LCWIP, with a bid request for £1.8m. The outcome of the application is expected in the autumn. It is expected that further applications to Government will need to be developed and submitted to Government to unlock the further three years of revenue and capital Active Travel Fund monies.

2.12 Despite the prioritisation towards more urban and larger settlements in East Sussex, the draft LCWIP recognises the importance of opportunities for cycling and walking trips within rural areas. Working with our key local partners, the draft LCWIP will also be used to seek and secure funding from a variety of sources to deliver the infrastructure and measures identified in the LCWIP. Aside from Government funding referred to in section 2.9, which will be more appropriate for funding schemes within the priority areas as they are able to demonstrate greater value for money, other potential sources for more rural areas could include our Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements, development contributions, and other partners bidding for funding.

Future Actions

2.13 In accordance with the DfT guidance, the LCWIP will be a 'live document' and will need to be regularly reviewed and updated. With the recent changes to national policy and guidance on cycling and walking, alongside the forthcoming review of the current East Sussex Local Transport Plan, and with consideration given to the responses to the LCWIP consultation in relation to this, further assessments with stakeholders will be undertaken to support the potential identification of further schemes for inclusion in the LCWIP from 2022/23, which:

- strengthen the walking element of the plan,
- potentially identify cycling schemes which align with the new government Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 'Cycle Infrastructure Design', and
- potentially include schemes which will provide greater priority for people cycling and walking within neighbourhoods or key centres.

2.14 In order to respond to calls for future funding, schemes will need to be affordable, designed and consulted on and the relevant permissions sought to develop a pipeline of deliverable schemes. This may also include the identification of more schemes which are in alignment with emerging guidance from the DfT on active travel.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The development of the first draft East Sussex LCWIP, in line with Government guidance, establishes the strategic approach to identifying and delivering cycling and walking measures and initiatives across the County. This will support the case for future revenue and capital Government funding for cycling and walking and help meet with future requirements placed on local authorities by the new Government inspectorate, 'Active Travel England'.

3.2 The implications of the Active Travel Inspectorate are likely to be focussed on schemes requiring adherence to the new government strategy on active travel and supplementary scheme design guidance, to undertake thorough consultation that is representative of all local views and to fully monitor and evaluate schemes. The DfT has intimated that performance in relation to these areas will determine future funding.

3.3 The LCWIP will significantly contribute to supporting the County Council priorities relating to climate change, economic growth and recovery and health and wellbeing. The draft LCWIP will also be a supporting document to the updated Local Transport Plan.

3.3 Consultation on the draft LCWIP was undertaken with stakeholders and the public in summer and autumn 2020 respectively. The key themes arising from the consultation are outlined in paragraph 2.7. The draft LCWIP has been updated as appropriate to reflect the comments which arose through the consultation process.

3.4 The Cabinet is asked to consider and approve the draft LCWIP and the outcomes of the recent stakeholder and public consultation, as well as the future actions necessary to maintain the LCWIP as a living document and to develop a future pipeline of cycling and walking schemes and to provide their views on this.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None