

From: Neil Baker – Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport
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To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 19 September 2024

Subject: Kent Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan - Update

Key decision: No

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of report: None

Electoral Division: All wards

Summary: This paper provides an update on the development of the Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and identifies the next steps for the project.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and make any comments.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC developed and then consulted until January 2024 on a Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP). Since the close of the consultation KCC has been reviewing the feedback to finalise the Plan. The KCWIP forms an important part of KCC's portfolio for improving journeys for pedestrians and cyclists over time. The KCWIP has been developed so as not to pre-determine designs and solutions, but instead to identify opportunities and deficits.
- 1.2 The KCWIP is also compliant with the priorities in Securing Kent's Future. The KCWIP work is externally grant funded with its aim to prioritise and develop fit for purpose walking, wheeling, and cycling routes around the county to encourage active travel which in turn promotes public health. The team secured AECOM as lead consultants by using the Highways Professional Services Framework ensuring best value was obtained.
- 1.3 The KCWIP is also a step on the way to fulfilling the commitment in Framing Kent's Future, the Council strategy, which states "we will incentivise people to choose alternative travel options to the car by prioritising the maintenance and creation of safe and accessible walking routes and cycle lanes...." The KCWIP establishes the focus for where in Kent we aim to make progress through working with local communities on delivering this commitment, subject to funding we can secure for design development and construction.

- 1.4 These include the strong positive impact walking, wheeling, and cycling can have on public health given *Framing Kent's Future* commitment to improve the health of Kent's population and narrow health inequalities. The KCWIP supports delivery of Infrastructure for communities by providing a long-term plan for walking, wheeling, and cycling infrastructure that developers can understand and contribute to delivery of. The plan also helps KCC support rural communities by looking at improvements to inter-urban routes and connecting rural areas to local amenities. Lastly, as zero emission forms of travel, the KCWIP will help deliver the Environmental Step Change the council strategy aspires to.
- 1.5 The KCWIP forms an important plank of our draft new statutory Local Transport Plan, helping us to strike a balance across the transport mix in addressing the challenges in Kent and fulfilling the wider commitments that the Council has established in *Securing Kent's Future and Framing Kent's Future*.
- 1.6 This paper summarises the results from the consultation, and how KCC will use the KCWIP to prioritise and inform future efforts it undertakes to invest in the transport network. It should be noted that the final KCWIP will be presented to this committee in November for consideration in advance of the Cabinet Member taking a decision to formally adopt the plan. Additionally, individual projects will continue to be taken through the formal governance process. The portfolio or previous decisions are appended to this report for information.
- 1.7 Walking, wheeling, and cycling makes up part of an integrated transport package of measures and Local Transport Plan 5 will be our statutory approved approach.

2. Purpose of the KCWIP

1.8 The KCWIP was developed with the aim to deliver the following outcomes:

- A network plan for walking and cycling, which identifies preferred routes and core walking and wheeling zones.
- A plan for integrating the KCWIP into active travel planning policies, strategies, and delivery plans.
- A prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment.
- A robust, evidence-based document which sets out the underlying analysis conducted and provides a narrative which supports the identified improvements and network.

1.9 The KCWIP was developed in line with government published guidance. The status of Infrastructure Plans as an important mechanism for demonstrating ambition and commitment to improving walking and cycling has been recognised with Active Travel England having upgraded KCC's rating to 2 which is defined as having Strong local leadership, with clear plans that form the basis of an emerging network with a few elements already in place.

1.10 The content of the KCWIP has been built into the long-term capital plan that the new draft Local Transport Plan is establishing. This will help ensure we can aim

to secure sustained funding for walking and cycling improvements alongside those other network investments the Local Transport Plan proposes.

- 1.11 KCC always approaches its capital plans with flexibility, and therefore whilst the KCWIP provides well-reasoned focuses for locations to invest in improved walking and cycling infrastructure, if new opportunities arise KCC will take these into consideration and pursue their delivery where desired.
- 1.12 It is important to note that whilst the focus can often be on cycling, the KCWIP has a balanced set of proposals across walking and cycling. There are 15 walking zones identified where the pedestrian environment could be improved to help make journeys on foot or wheelchair easier, along with 15 cycling corridors. Investment in improving the pedestrian environment can be transformational for creating safer, more comfortable, attractive, and enjoyable places to travel through or spend time in – and form an important feature of supporting Kent’s town centre and visitor economies. Walking is also a form of transport that can be achieved more by those with some mobility issues when cycling is not an option.
- 1.13 The KCWIP is only one part of a programme of Active Travel interventions, infrastructure and training, and the wider programme’s details are in Appendix A to this paper including previous briefing papers submitted to ETCC on Active Travel Infrastructure and the Active Travel Team Business Plan.
- 1.14 The KCWIP also has links to and consulted with other teams throughout KCC including Major Projects, Highway Improvements, Public Health prevention agenda and Public Rights of Way.

3. The interface with District Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

- 1.15 The district developed Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans were considered as part of the KCWIP as it was developed and the walking zones and cycling corridors that will provide a focus for KCC’s future work can help to deliver LCWIP priorities. In this way, both local short distance trips within town centres and their connections to their suburbs can be improved along with ensuring that better connections exist between towns and to access destinations along the way including visitor attractions, schools, and other services.
- 1.16 LCWIPs remain in development for some Districts and will remain an important part of the framework for informing KCC’s future pipeline of works. LCWIPs still in development include Edenbridge, Rural Folkestone and Hythe, Dover, Ashford refresh, Thanet, Swale, Gravesham rural. They can provide a forensic assessment of local journeys in part of Kent that provides intelligence to KCC about the needs and opportunities for how infrastructure could be improved. This is informative to the future development and design of proposals which KCC can undertake, subject to funding, as it seeks to deliver improvements in the areas covered by the KCWIP.
- 1.17 It should be noted that the prioritised network presented in the KCWIP reflects scope constraints and strategic priorities. It is essential not to consider these routes and zones in isolation, as only a dense and coherent network will

maximise the benefits and facilitate significant mode shift towards sustainable travel. Future LCWIPs across Kent should refer to the identified desire lines and further develop them into routes. This approach will contribute to building a comprehensive active travel network that enhances accessibility, safety, and convenience for all residents and commuters. Regular updates and coordination between LCWIPs and the KCWIP will be crucial to achieving this long-term vision of sustainable transport infrastructure. Part of our next steps will be identifying how we do this.

2. Summary of consultation results

2.1 Engagement Stages:

- **Stage One:** Key stakeholders participated in online workshops to provide feedback on proposed walking zones and cycling routes.
- **Stage Two:** A public consultation took place between November 1, 2023, and January 10, 2024, to gather feedback on walking zones, cycling routes, and active travel improvements.

2.2 Consultation Methods:

- Interactive maps on the consultation webpage allowed comments on specific cycling routes and walking zones.
- A detailed consultation questionnaire was used to understand views on proposed cycle routes and walking zones.
- A Q&A tool and contact with the KCC Active Travel team were available for inquiries.
- In-person drop-in events occurred at specified locations and dates.
- Schools near the routes and zones were directly contacted to encourage community participation.

2.3 Promotion Efforts:

- KCC promoted the consultation extensively on social media and websites.
- Relevant stakeholders received emails encouraging promotion.
- A media release was issued at the consultation launch.
- Local District Councils and Parish/Town Councils participated in dissemination.
- Posters and postcards were displayed in libraries and gateways.
- Emails were sent to registered users and schools.
- Articles were published in KCC's communication channels.

2.4 For more details, please refer to the consultation report in the Appendix, or review the consultation information at www.kent.gov.uk/kcwip.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 Active Travel England (ATE) require all Local Authorities to agree a self-assessment rating with them, which affects how capital and revenue funding is awarded. KCC recently had their rating moved up from Level 1 to Level 2 on "capability and ambition", and to date we have secured a total of £14 million

funding from ATE. This investment funds infrastructure, facilities, promotion, and education.

- 3.2 The total revenue spend on the development of the KCWIP (Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) currently stands at £149k. This has been funded from both the Department for Transport grant for Local Transport Plan (LTP) development and Active Travel England grant for Capability building. The development of the KCWIP is a discretionary spend, but as outlined further on, will assist with future grant funding bids.
- 3.3 Of the £149k spent to date, AECOM consultancy fees account for £145707 with the remainder spent internally on creation of consultation documents, videos and paid social media to promote the consultation.
- 3.4 Going forward, additional funding to design and develop schemes will be sought through channels such as Active Travel England and developer contribution agreements. To maximise impact, the budget will prioritise routes and zones with an evidence base and initial community/local officer support. In addition, it will be important to develop a spatial/visual map of existing and proposed routes, their ownership and who has the maintenance responsibilities. This will aid our development planners in sharing intel and routes with developers to build into planning requirements.
- 3.5 The KCWIP's development is crucial for future KCC bids to secure not only active travel and highway improvement funding but also additional funding opportunities for funding through business/growth/tourism/public health/ social prescribing for example. In not doing this we would be at a disadvantage when applying for future funding. Revenue and capital expenditure for schemes identified in the KCWIP will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will consider feasibility, design, build and longer-term maintenance implications for each scheme through consultation with appropriate KCC colleagues.
- 3.6 Importantly, there are no revenue budget implications, and staffing needs will be met using existing resources and additional secured funding.
- 3.7 The KCWIP is an integral part of our Integrated Transport Plan and future scheme development and major project/development sites which feature in the overall spatial planning.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 The KCWIP forms an important part of our draft new statutory Local Transport Plan, helping us to strike a balance across the transport mix in addressing the challenges in Kent and fulfilling the wider commitments that the Council has established in *Framing Kent's Future*.

5. Equalities implications

- 5.1 Promoting walking, wheeling, and cycling is likely to improve access and health for all groups.

- 5.2 In general, all protected characteristics are expected to experience positive impact from walking, wheeling, and cycling proposals identified in the KCWIP. This is because one of the core objectives of the KCWIP is to propose attractive, comfortable, direct, coherent, and accessible interventions, which will benefit all. The proposals will be Local Transport Note 1/20 compliant where possible. There may be groups impacted by certain designs such as a shared footway, however this is an accepted design within LTN1/20, and mitigation measures will be further investigated as part of detailed design and consultation for each specific route or zone.
- 5.3 The KCWIP Draft EqIA is included as Appendix B to this report and will be updated in light of the consultation feedback.

6. Governance

- 6.1 The Active Travel Team will follow the appropriate processes when progressing schemes from feasibility to design to build in line with ETCC Key Decisions and funding agreements.
- 6.2 Whilst not a formal governance group, the cross-party Members Walking and Cycling Group provide guidance to officers in the decision-making process.

7. Conclusions and next steps

- 7.1 The KCWIP analysed the current active travel conditions across Kent and developed a cycling and walking network along with interventions to encourage a modal shift towards sustainable modes, thereby supporting healthier and more sustainable lifestyles. The prioritisation of the KCWIP network resulted in 15 cycling routes, 15 walking zones, 343 cycling interventions, and 215 walking interventions shortlisted to be implemented over the next ten years, making walking, and cycling more attractive options for everyday leisure and commuting trips.
- 7.2 Active Travel England are looking for Highway Authorities to have comprehensive plans in place with strong local leadership¹. The KCWIP shows Kents ambition in moving towards having a significant walking, wheeling, and cycling network and therefore showing we have long term plans for a coherent, walking, wheeling, and cycling network which has been prioritised and consulted on and will help support KCC in applications for further funding.

7.3 Next Steps

- To formally adopt the KCWIP.
- Decide how we review and update the KCWIP, how often and how this will be funded. To date most grant funding for active travel schemes has been via the Active Travel Fund bid through Active Travel England.

¹ Active Travel England Summary guidance on local authority active travel capability ratings https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1141355/local-authority-active-travel-capability-ratings.pdf

- Continue to work with districts and boroughs on their priorities alongside the work of the KCWIP. We need to review how we ensure fairness across schemes, and this may mean that we develop prioritisation processes which consider KCWIP/LCWIP schemes and any new schemes which are put forward.
- Explore opportunities for districts and boroughs to rationalise and prioritise key routes or schemes. This could take place via existing committees.
- We recognise that projects must undergo detailed and rigorous community engagement at all stages of their design and development and we need to pilot and develop a process for this. The use of focus groups and community engagement should shape the look and feel of new active travel projects to uncover what each aspect will look like for day-to-day users. Setting up local workshops with representatives from the local community should be a key part of project development and engagement. It is important that these focus groups include voices from a range of backgrounds, including those who represent disabled groups, business representatives and families.
- Develop a spatial masterplan on a mapping system to include all walking, wheeling, and cycling known infrastructure (existing and proposed/planned) and officer training.

9. Recommendation (s)

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and make any comments.

Appendices

- App A - Active Travel Team Portfolio of work: Key Decisions:
 - [Decision - 23/00099 - Active Travel Capital Funding Grant update \(Tranches 2, 3 and 4\) \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
 - [Decision - 22/00022 - Active Travel Capital Funding Grant Tranche 2 \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
 - [Decision - 21/00118 - Canterbury: Littlebourne to City Centre Active Travel Project \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
 - [Decision - 21/00066 - Kent Active Travel scheme - Cinque Ports Phase 5 - A259 Palmarsh to Dymchurch Redoubt forming part of the proposed Cinque Ports cycle path between Folkestone and Lydd](#)
 - [Decision - 21/00002 Active Travel Tranche 2 Funding \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- App B - KCWIP Equality Impact Assessment

10. Contact details.

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