

Report to Economy, Skills, Transport & Environment Scrutiny Board

11 July 2024

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| Subject: | Planning & Delivery of Active Travel Projects (walking & cycling) |
| Director: | Executive Director - Place Alan Lunt |
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1 Recommendations




- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the Council's approach to the planning and delivery of active travel projects.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board requested a report from officers that sets out how the Council has developed its active travel strategy and its supporting network, the process by which it is determined where new active travel infrastructure is required and the guidance and standards that are used when designing projects.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

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|  | <p><i>People live well and age well;</i> Well designed cycling and walking infrastructure will enable our residents to live more active and healthy lifestyles. In addition, such infrastructure will assist in reducing the number of killed and seriously injured casualties on our highway network.</p> |
|  | <p><i>Strong resilient communities;</i> Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. The transport network is an important enabler of this and for shorter, local trips, cycling and walking routes are a key component.</p> |
|  | <p><i>A connected and accessible Sandwell;</i> The provision of a high-quality transport network that caters for all modes is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education and services both within and beyond the Borough's boundaries.</p> |

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Increasing the number of trips made by cycle or through walking is a key element in the WMCA and Council's ambitions around reducing congestion, improving air quality and achieving carbon reduction. In addition, the benefits of physical activity to people's health and wellbeing are well known and evidenced.
- 4.2 The Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy was published in April 2017 with the aim of making cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey. The strategy seeks to double the 2013 number of journeys, or part journeys, made by cycle by 2025. It recognises that achieving this will require a sustained investment in cycling infrastructure by Central Government, Local Transport Authorities and third parties. The Government anticipated that Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) would be the principal vehicle for targeting this investment.
- 4.3 The West Midlands Combined Authority developed an LCWIP that identifies and enables a plan to develop strategic cycling and walking networks throughout the West Midlands up to 2028.
- 4.4 To complement the WMCA LCWIP Sandwell MBC developed a Sandwell LCWIP that identifies a plan to develop local cycling and walking networks



throughout the borough till 2030. The Sandwell Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP) was published in January 2020 subsequently to cabinet approval and consultation with the public, interested parties and members, including two presentations to this Board. The SCWIP effectively constitutes Sandwell's cycling strategy as well as being a delivery plan for the various projects that support it, as well as the walking strategy.

4.5 A further tier will shortly be introduced. Black Country Transport, a joint transport planning team that works on behalf of all four Black Country local authorities, is shortly to consult on a Black Country LCWIP which will pick up those routes of more than local significance, but which do not form part of the West Midlands strategic network.

4.6 The cycling network in Sandwell is therefore comprised of the following;

- **National Cycle Network** – identified and funded by Sustrans (a cycling charity) and originally delivered in the late 1990s/early 2000s. The NCN is made up of predominantly long distance 'off road' routes that make use of canal towpaths, bridleways etc. There are two NCN routes that pass through Sandwell.
- **The West Midlands Strategic/Regional Network** – known as the 'Starley Network' and will ultimately provide segregated routes between all the region's main centres and trip attractors. The network is identified in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan and further detailed in the WM LCWIP.
- **The Black Country and Sandwell local networks** – this tier is identified in the Development Plan, which is currently the Black Country Core Strategy and Sandwell Site Allocations Plan, both of which will be replaced by the Sandwell Local Plan next year. The SCWIP and BC LCWIP provide the detail on the delivery of this network.
- **Canal Towpath Network** – this network is owned and maintained by the Canal & River Trust. The intention is that all towpaths deemed suitable will be resurfaced to enable their use by cyclists and people in wheelchairs etc.

4.7 Most walking projects are very local in nature, and many of them contribute towards the delivery of the complementary Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). The SCWIP, and the soon to be consulted on Black Country LCWIP, include 'Core Walking Zones' where investment will be targeted across an area rather than a single route.



4.8 Funding for active travel comes from multiple sources. These include;

- Local Sustainable Transport Fund (now closed)
- Active Travel Fund
- Capability & Ambition Fund
- City Region Sustainable Transport Fund
- Towns Fund
- Major Route Network (MRN) Funding

4.9 All of these funding sources are grants from Central Government. Other than the last two, they are allocated to the West Midlands Combined Authority. Individual schemes must pass through the CA's assurance processes before funding is released to the local authority for delivery. Towns Fund project funding is awarded directly to the Council, whilst the MRN funding is allocated directly from the Department for Transport (DfT) but is subject to its assurance and evaluation process.

4.10 Regardless of which body allocates the funding, or from which source, projects aimed at cyclists must, as a condition of their grant agreements, be developed in accordance with the DfT's guidance for cycling infrastructure design LTN 1/20. In effect LTN 1/20 envisages that cycle routes should;

- Take the most practical direct route between the destinations it is intended to serve.
- Be usable at all times of a day, and throughout the year.
- Be segregated from traffic and pedestrians wherever practicable, preferable at different levels differentiated by a kerb.
- Only include shared sections, where cyclists and pedestrians use the same space, in circumstances where the alternative is either prohibitively expensive or not practical.

The provision of cycle lanes on highways delineated simply by a white line is no longer supported.

4.11 In summary, the planned cycle network in Sandwell has been developed to meet the policy objectives of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan, Sandwell's Development Plan, and those of the Government. The network itself has been developed through a number of strategy and delivery plans which have been subject to consultation since 2016, and it is being



designed and delivered in accordance with national guidance which is a mandatory requirement for funding.

5 Implications

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| Resources: | The report is for information and comment only. There are no implications for council resources arising from its recommendations. |
| Legal and Governance: | The report is for information and comment only. There are no legal or governance implications arising from its recommendations. |
| Risk: | The report is for information and comment only. There are no risk implications arising from its recommendations. As individual projects are developed, they will each be subject to a risk assessment and Road Safety Audit as appropriate. |
| Equality: | The report is for information and comment only. There are no equality implications arising from its recommendations. As individual projects are developed the implications for equality (all aspects and characteristics) including how meeting Equality Duty, are addressed through the project's equality impact assessment. |
| Health and Wellbeing: | There are no health and wellbeing implications arising directly from the recommendations contained in this report. The health and wellbeing benefits of walking and cycling are well documented and form part of the overall justification for the supporting strategies at national, regional and local level. |
| Social Value: | There are no implications for social value arising directly from the recommendations of this report. |
| Climate Change: | The provision of safe networks to encourage walking and cycling as automatic modes of choice, especially for short trips, is a key component in enabling the transport system to achieve the Council's objectives around climate change and achieving carbon net zero. |
| Corporate Parenting: | There are no implications for Corporate Parenting responsibilities arising from the recommendations of this report. |



6 Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Sandwell Cycle Network Presentation

7. Background Papers

- Gear Change; a bold vision for cycling and walking, 2020 (Dept. for Transport/HMG)
- West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan: Movement for Growth (LTP5), 2016 (WMCA/TfWM)
- Draft West Midlands Local Transport Plan 6 Core Strategy, 2023 (WMCA/TfWM)
- West Midlands Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan, 20XX (WMCA/TfWM)
- Sandwell Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan, 2020 (Sandwell MBC)
- Draft Black Country Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan, 2024 (Black Country Transport & joint Black Country Local Authorities)
- Draft Sandwell Local Plan, 2023 (Sandwell MBC)
- Local Transport Note 1/20 – Cycle Infrastructure Design ,2020 (Dept. for Transport/HMG)
- Report to ESTE Scrutiny Board – 10:10:19
- Report to Cabinet – 22:01:20

