

Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee

14 June 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Response to Kent County Council's Active Travel Strategy Consultation Draft

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Steve Clarke: Principal Planning Officer Spatial Policy
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. Members agree the proposed response to the consultation set out in paragraphs 4.2.1 to 4.2.6 of the report and that it be forwarded to Kent County Council ("KCC") prior to the close of the consultation period on 13 July 2016.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all and;
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough –
The promotion of Active Travel and delivery of associated infrastructure has benefits not only in terms of public health through a potentially fitter and healthier population and workforce that is less reliant on medical services, for example, but also in supporting a greater choice of travel mode and a reduction in reliance on the use of the private car as a means of personal transport.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	14 June 2016

Response to KCC's Active Travel Strategy Consultation Draft

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 On Wednesday 18 May 2016, KCC launched a consultation draft of its emerging Active Travel Strategy. The consultation period runs until Friday 13 July 2016. The draft Strategy and appendices is attached at Appendix One. The accompanying Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is attached at Appendix Two.
 - 1.2 This report considers the draft Active Travel Strategy, its accompanying documents and questionnaire and proposes a response which Councillors are requested to approve for transmittal to KCC prior to the closure of the consultation on 13 July 2016.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In conjunction with stakeholders across the County, KCC has been developing an Active Travel Strategy for the promotion of physically active means of transport as part of its 'vision for making cycling and walking the preferred option for residents taking short journeys or as part of longer journeys that include public transport'¹.
- 2.2 The Strategy seeks to demonstrate how KCC will build on the existing network of cycle and walking routes in the County to maximise their use and to promote increased walking and cycling in a population with a growing reliance on cars. The aim is to promote a range of infrastructure and behaviour change projects via an implementation plan that will be finalised once the Strategy has been adopted.
- 2.3 Prior to the publication of the Strategy and to inform its content, KCC worked with various communities, stakeholders and the Kent County Youth Council across the County and also held two pre-consultation engagement workshops, as well as taking into account recommendations of health bodies, charities, central government departments and a range of other sources.
- 2.4 Active Travel has been defined as Walking or Cycling as a means of transport in order to get to a particular destination such as work, the shops or to visit friends. For example, in the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 an active travel journey is defined as '*a journey made to or from a workplace or educational establishment or in order to access health, leisure or other services or facilities*'².

¹ Foreword to KCC Active Travel Strategy Consultation Draft 2016

² http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/7/pdfs/anaw_20130007_en.pdf

2.5 It does not cover walking and cycling done purely for leisure, for health reasons or simply walking the dog and it can apply to a complete journey or parts of a journey.

2.6 There are both barriers to active travel and also benefits arising from it.

2.7 Barriers include:

- Lack of suitable routes between home and community facilities, work schools etc.
- Not enough promotion of existing routes
- Lack of facilities such as secure lockers and parking
- Obstacles in cycle lanes and on footways
- Lack of feeling safe when walking or cycling
- Convenience of using a car when carrying bulky goods or shopping
- The need to make linked trips such as dropping children to school on the way to work

2.8 Benefits include:

- Greater physical activity; this has clear health benefits through a reduced risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and other preventable conditions
- Active Travel is incorporated into and can be an integral part of a regular daily routine and thus reduces the need to find extra time or money for exercise
- Cheaper travel; saving money on fuel costs, parking charges and vehicle running costs
- A reduction in the number of vehicles on the road and thus an improvement in air quality
- Quicker journeys can be made as walkers and cyclists can use routes not available for motor vehicles

2.9 The draft KCC Strategy has one overarching ambition; to

'Make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent'

Delivery of the ambition will lead to improved health through an increase in physical activity, reduced congestion on the highway network by providing better travel choices and safer active travel.

2.10 Three actions seeking to deliver the above will be pursued:

1. Integrate Active Travel into planning
2. Provide and maintain appropriate routes for Active Travel
3. Support Active Travel in the community

2.11 In terms of Action 1, it is indicated that the Strategy will influence commissioning decisions and ensure walking and cycling are prioritised in future planning processes thus encouraging integration of all types of transport as part of the strategic (County) road network and will be delivered through current commissioning guidance and best practice, existing KCC, as well as key partners', policies and strategies and a commitment to encouraging Active Travel.

Delivery mechanisms include the following:

- Inform the development and application of KCC's transport policies through the Local Transport Plan
- Support district and borough councils to ensure that Active Travel is used to deliver sustainable growth and development through local plans and in determining planning applications
- Use the principles and ambitions of KCC's Active Travel Strategy to influence partner policies and strategies such as the Council's draft ITS and associated Walking and Cycling Strategy
- Work with developers to ensure Active Travel routes are a priority, both within developments and linking sites to other services, community facilities and transport hubs
- Work with developers to secure sufficient areas within developments for green spaces and attractive routes and environments that encourage Active Travel
- Work with strategic transport providers to deliver infrastructure that supports Active Travel.

2.12 To achieve Action 2, the aim is for Kent to have fit-for-purpose Active Travel routes that people want to use. Existing routes have developed in a piecemeal manner over time as resources have allowed and are not always continuous or direct or may not serve important community facilities. This has disenfranchised some potential users. It is important therefore to provide, for example, pedestrian crossings along routes and secure cycle storage at destinations. Routes should also be well maintained.

Delivery mechanisms include the following:

- Give appropriate consideration to Active Travel when designing new routes and maintaining highway assets
- Maintain the public highway, Public Rights of Way (PRoW), and Active Travel resources such as signage to enable safe and effective Active Travel
- Work in partnership with key organisations both within and neighbouring Kent to identify and prioritise new Active Travel routes and any maintenance issues on the existing Active Travel network
- Ensure that Active Travel improvements to the highway and PRoW network are made in places where there is an evidenced need and where they are supported by local demand and resource
- Make reasonable adjustments to Active Travel route design to maximise the inclusivity and accessibility to all users
- Support improvements to the local environment in and around schools, hospitals and other public buildings to provide opportunities to cycle or walk all year-round, including appropriate surfacing, cycle storage and lockers
- Evaluate funding for Active Travel infrastructure and maintenance and proactively seek additional funding
- Support KCC's Casualty Reduction Strategy in delivering key routes to address road safety issues for vulnerable road users.

2.13 Action 3 would be achieved by encouraging and promoting Active Travel in the community and providing the motivation for people to make Active Travel their preferred choice.

Delivery mechanisms include the following;

- In schools, further and higher education:
 - support initiatives including School Travel Plans and other Active Travel programmes
 - support training for pedestrians and cyclists and support the development of independent travel training programmes.

- In workplaces:
 - support businesses in developing Active Travel plans and provide information to support Active Travel in the workplace
 - develop Active Travel provision within KCC to enable Active Travel by council staff; KCC should lead by example.

- In health services:
 - work with health professionals to promote Active Travel and provide support to increase levels of Active Travel
 - develop methods of including information on Active Travel in all physical activity advice given by health professionals
 - integrate walking and cycling for travel purposes into public health services and commissioning processes.

- In communities:
 - develop and maintain recreational routes as a means of introducing people to Active Travel
 - support road safety initiatives for all road users, especially the most vulnerable such as cyclists and pedestrians
 - promote locally-based programmes to encourage walking and cycling, and integrate Active Travel as part of longer journeys involving public transport.

2.14 KCC has also considered the issue of funding the strategy. It indicates that Active Travel initiatives are funded from a number of different sources and budgets with priorities set within the Local Transport Plan for Kent and other corporate strategies. It notes that Government funding allocated to KCC has decreased and is likely to continue to do so as government budgets are also under pressure.

2.15 However, it is anticipated that opportunities will arise. Previously, KCC has been successful with bids for specific government grants such as to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, through which grants have been made to schools and businesses. Recent announcements of further funding allocations and opportunities, as outlined in the National Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy³, will support the delivery of the Active Travel Strategy. These funding streams include Bikeability; the Access Fund; the Local Growth Fund and the Integrated Transport Block. It is also envisaged that the Strategy will also support the proposed development of Ebbsfleet as a NHS Healthy New Town.

³ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512895/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy.pdf

2.16 The Strategy itself is stated to be a key element in supporting the sourcing of external funding to promote Active Travel in Kent as well as seeking Active Travel network improvements through building development funding and also provide KCC with a platform to engage with partners and extend and support public/private partnerships that aim to promote and support Active Travel initiatives and investment. Working in partnership will be vital to the success of the Strategy.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There are two options open to Councillors: to either respond or not respond to the consultation.
- 3.2 Not responding will deny the Borough Council the opportunity to make its views known to enable them to be taken into account as KCC develops the Strategy further in the coming months.
- 3.3 Responding will, of course, provide the Borough Council with an opportunity to make KCC aware of its views.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is for the Borough Council to respond to the consultation.
- 4.2 In responding as an organisation, the consultation questionnaire requires responses to the following questions. The suggested responses are set out below each question:

4.2.1 Q: Was the Active Travel Strategy easy to understand? *Yes/No/Don't know*

A: Yes. The Strategy provides a high-level view of the issues and as such is not complicated or too detailed.

4.2.2 Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Active Travel Strategy's ambition to make 'active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent'? *Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/Don't know*

A: The Borough Council strongly agrees with the stated ambition of the Strategy. Not only would the result be improved fitness and health for the population engaged in Active Travel, but also there would be benefits for the local road network in the Borough as many short journeys currently made by the private car would be subject to modal shift towards walking and cycling. The promotion of Active Travel has a direct link with the objectives of the Integrated Transport Strategy and its associated Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. Through these documents, the Borough Council is seeking to encourage modal shift towards Active Travel modes and the use of public transport to promote sustainable development and transport in accordance with guidance in the NPPF and the NPPG.

4.2.3 Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the measures outlined in Action 1: Integrate active travel into planning? *Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/Don't know*

A: The Borough Council strongly agrees that Active Travel should be integrated into planning. The potential benefits of Active Travel for health and also its impact on movements on the local highway network generally are well recognised. The encouragement of modal shift away from reliance on the use of the private car which, through promotion, Active Travel can play a significant role in, is a vital component of a sustainable transport policy and the delivery of sustainable development.

As indicated above, Active Travel has a direct link with the objectives of the Integrated Transport Strategy and its associated Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. Through these documents, the Borough Council is seeking to encourage modal shift towards Active Travel modes and the use of public transport to promote sustainable development and transport in accordance with guidance in the NPPF and the NPPG. The commitment to 'support district and borough councils to ensure that active travel is used to deliver sustainable growth and development through local plans and in determining planning applications' is therefore also welcomed.

4.2.4 Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the measures outlined in Action 2: Provide and maintain appropriate routes for active travel? *Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/Don't know*

A: The Borough Council strongly agrees that appropriate routes to support Active Travel should be provided and maintained, for the reasons given earlier relating to the recognised potential health benefits and the potential relating to the encouragement of modal shift. The Borough Council is seeking to deliver key walking and cycling route improvements as part of the Integrated Transport Strategy in support of the submitted Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

4.2.5 Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the measures outlined in Action 3: Support active travel in the community? *Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/Don't know*

A: The Borough Council strongly agrees with the outlined measures. Encouraging Active Travel across as many sections of the community as possible and also in the workforces around the County will assist in increasing acceptance and take-up of Active Travel and the change in attitude/perception that is required.

For example, the Borough Council works and will continue to work closely with the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum as part of the actions set out in the Integrated Transport Strategy to promote cycling within the Borough.

All potential methods of encouraging Active Travel should be considered. A key to this is the need for partnership and close-working with other organisations that can promote the Active Travel agenda perhaps as part of a wider public health remit, for example. Organisations such as Intelligent Health ⁴ based at Reading University, promote physical activity on health grounds and can evidence the benefits of working with communities to encourage them to be more active. They organise a mass participation community event in the form of an interactive game called 'Beat the Street' which encourages people to get out and about and be more physically active in their communities. Evidence from the events held demonstrates that participants continue their activity after the game ceases and that there is a marked take-up in increased activity⁵.

It is important that KCC works with all partners to promote Active Travel in its many forms.

4.2.6 KCC has also asked for comment on the EqIA that has been undertaken. The document recognises that the promotion of Active Travel will not benefit all sections of the community equally, particularly the less mobile. It also recognises, for example, the need to promote the Strategy in such a way that is inclusive and will encourage all sections of the community, e.g. evidence suggests that fewer women cycle than men. The EqIA has not omitted any significant factor in its assessment and it forms a sound basis to test individual measure in the Strategy against.

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

5.1 The agreed response will be forwarded to KCC prior to the deadline of 13 July 2016.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The promotion of Active Travel and delivery of associated infrastructure has benefits not only in terms of public health through a potentially fitter and healthier population less reliant on medical services but also in supporting a greater choice of travel mode and a reduction in reliance on the use of the private car as a means of	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development

⁴ <http://www.intelligenthealth.co.uk/>

⁵ <http://www.intelligenthealth.co.uk/evidence/>

	personal transport.	
Risk Management	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Financial	No specific implications arise from this report	Head of Finance & Resources
Staffing	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Legal	No specific implications arise from this report	Kate Jardine Planning Team Leader Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An EQIA has been undertaken by KCC. This will be further reviewed during and following consultation as the Active Travel Strategy moves forward. The EqIA indicates that the less mobile sections of the population, such as older residents, may benefit less from the Strategy overall.	Anna Collier Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The promotion of Active Travel and delivery of associated infrastructure has benefits not only in terms of public health through a potentially fitter and healthier population less reliant on medical services but also in supporting a greater choice of travel mode and a reduction in reliance on the use of the private car as a means of personal transport.	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Community Safety	The promotion of Active Travel and delivery of associated infrastructure has benefits not only in terms of public health through a potentially fitter and healthier population less reliant on medical services but also in supporting a greater choice of	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development

	travel mode and a reduction in reliance on the use of the private car as a means of personal transport.	
Human Rights Act	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Procurement	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development & Head of Finance & Resources
Asset Management	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development

7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Kent County Council Active Travel Strategy Consultation Draft and Appendices
 - Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment of Draft Active Travel Strategy
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