

A Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan for Rutland (LCWIP)

Why is an LCWIP important?

In 2020, The Cycling and Walking Plan for England, 'Gear Change' set out government's vision for cycling and walking bringing a shift in transport policy to prioritise active travel over single-occupancy private vehicles.

For Rutland, the national plan aligns with our vision for travel as articulated in our Corporate Strategy and priorities of sustainable lives and healthy and well.

The Council recognises that cycling and walking as alternative choices to driving petrol or diesel cars will reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as providing more opportunity for our community to be active. By removing barriers and providing choices, our residents and visitors will benefit by increased options for how they can travel around the county.

An LCWIP helps us to identify the barriers to cycling and walking in Rutland and offers suggested future schemes for removing these. The removal of barriers to active travel will enable our residents and visitors to have realistic travel choices.

How can active travel support the County's growth?

The approval and adoption of the LCWIP as a policy document will help to prioritise improvements to the network to take advantage of funding opportunities and developer contributions for maximum effectiveness.

Government guidance highlights that Local Planning Authorities should consider incorporating LCWIPs into Supplementary Planning Documents where this would build upon and provide more guidance on the policies in Local Plans.

The Rutland Local Plan is still at its formative stages and so the LCWIP is useful as part of the evidence base for the preparation of the Local Plan and in forming planning policies for consultation. It also supports the development of the Local Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan which assesses the impact of planned development on existing infrastructure.

The existence of an LCWIP should also help the Council consider the impact of planning applications and other proposed land use changes on existing and planned cycling and walking infrastructure, and to identify sites that are well served, or capable of being well served, by cycling and walking routes. The existence of an LCWIP will assist developers in the preparation of Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements.

Summary of main points of the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan

The document is prepared as an LCWIP according to external criteria and as such is a technical document with details of tools and their outputs used to assess and analyse evidence of existing and propose prioritised future developments. In places it appears to state the obvious but it will have an external audience such as Government, as well as an internal one. It is worth noting that the data is based on the 2011 census

because the 2021 data are considered less reliable as we were still emerging from Covid. However, it is possible that work travel patterns may have changed significantly post covid so we will keep the data, and conclusions we draw from it, under review.

The document begins by looking at patterns of walking and cycling in the 2011 Census. For example although Oakham, Uppingham and Cottesmore (because of the army base) are the main in-County workplaces almost half (46%) of the working population travel outside the County boundary for work eg Stamford, Corby, Melton Mowbray, Leicester, Peterborough and even further afield. A similar percentage of Oakham residents in employment travel to work in Oakham yet of those 23% travel by car in a town which is only 2.5km across. There may be a variety of reasons for this decision. It is, however, a fact that Rutland has a lower level of utility walking and cycling than the East Midlands or England as a whole.

Conversely leisure walking and cycling are higher than the national average. There is a dearth of dedicated cycle routes in Rutland; the routes which are available are shared with walkers. Many cyclists, however, prefer to use the road system and there are a number of walking routes for leisure walking.

Having looked at the existing patterns the report attempts to predict how and where walking and cycling could be increased. Alongside the tools used to analyse the raw data the analysis works through four scenarios:

- a) hitting the Government target of doubling cycling trips;
- b) women being as likely to cycle as men;
- c) an increasing acceptance of cycling as in the Netherlands;
- d) increasing use of e-bikes.

It considers travel to work, school and everyday trips such as to the shops, doctors, visiting friends and family. The everyday trips were split into walking trips of 0-2km, shorter cycling trips of 2 – 5km and longer cycling trips of 5 – 10km.

Unsurprisingly the vast majority of walking clusters were found in Oakham although there was a strong east-west line in Uppingham centred on the High Street. The desire lines for shorter cycling distances clustered around the three centres and their close villages eg Gt Casterton to Stamford, Langham to Oakham and Lyddington to Uppingham plus access to Rutland Water. The longer cycling distances showed the same three centres but with destinations often beyond the boundary eg Corby although access to Rutland Water remained important.

Based on this analysis, background information, and stakeholder engagement, fifteen inter-town/village routes along with seventeen town routes were chosen for further audit.

A further tool was applied at this stage to the cycling routes. Each route was subdivided into shorter stretches and assess for directness, gradient, connectivity, comfort and critical junctions. The outcomes are shown as red, amber and green according to the scores achieved. Key themes were lack of dedicated cycling facilities, constrained road space and typology, junctions, high vehicle flows and inconsistency in provision around Rutland Water. (Appendix B to the LCWIP?)

The walking route audit tool assessed attractiveness, directness, comfort, safety and coherence. The key themes found here were junctions, lack of crossing provision,

missing dropped kerbs and/or tactile paving, missing or narrow footways, paths and alleyways, signage and wayfinding. (Appendix B to the LCWIP)

The report goes on to offer some strategic suggestions for the town centres such as implementing weight or through traffic restrictions, addressing certain critical junctions and parking. This is alongside certain other place-specific design recommendations. Finally, a suggested prioritisation of improvements is made judged against effectiveness, policy overlap and deliverability and a ranked table of suggested areas for improvement (p45-46 of the LCWIP)

This prioritisation will allow the County Council to bid for Government funding and direct spending in a targeted way to improve routes for maximum effect.