



Report to Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

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Title: Opportunities for Cyclists and Pedestrians in Buckinghamshire

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Establishing active travel as the first choice for local everyday journeys has potential to unlock major benefits including improved health, better air quality, improved place-making and town centre regeneration, boosted connectivity, strengthened local communities and economies and reduced congestion.
- 1.2 The Council has a strong record of investing in successful active travel infrastructure and initiatives across Buckinghamshire. However, local statistics also suggest a significant drop in active travel trips (up to 40%), against a flat-lining national picture.
- 1.3 A number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for active travel in Buckinghamshire are identified:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy. Adopted policies stress the need for walking and cycling, alongside other transport priorities. Aylesbury Garden Town Masterplan includes aspiration for 50% of all trips to be made by sustainable modes by 2050. - Infrastructure. Over £7.5m invested in new active travel infrastructure in Buckinghamshire over the last five years. Extensive list of aspirational schemes in partnership with local communities. - Promotion. The Council already operates several popular active travel initiatives, particularly within schools. Training and reward programmes aim to embed healthy travel habits at an early age, which can then be carried forward into adult life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy. Existing local policy is less ambitious than current national aspirations. and does not position walking and cycling as the <i>first</i> choice for local journeys. - Infrastructure. Existing active travel networks are patchy and are largely not in line with latest design standards, which have significantly progressed. No dedicated officer resource for active travel development. Local demand for increased footway maintenance and no planned funding for traffic-free route maintenance. - Promotion. Limited officer resource for promotion of new routes or supporting behaviour change outside schools. Limited engagement with employers and developers.
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy. Significant new national emphasis on the importance of active travel. Development of new Buckinghamshire Local Plan and accompanying Local Transport Plan by 2024. - Infrastructure. Development of a Buckinghamshire-wide Active Travel Strategy due to start in 2021, setting out future investment priorities for walking and cycling infrastructure. Anticipation of significant annual funding in future years from government. - Promotion. National surveys indicate strong public support for active travel schemes¹ including reallocating road space. Requirement for revenue investment in early stakeholder engagement and design to help develop local buy-in on new schemes. Promotional activities can help under-represented groups engage in active travel and several third-party organisations are keen to support. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to many people becoming more dependent on local areas and local businesses, with people forming new travel habits for local trips. Other modes such as e-bikes or e-scooters will become increasingly popular with reduced purchase prices and potential legalisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy. New national “Ofsted-like” body shortly to be established to assess performance of local authorities in delivery of active travel infrastructure. Failure to deliver to new standards will affect access to government grants for local transport projects across all modes. - Infrastructure. Some transformational schemes have previously proved to be locally controversial, with inconsistent support for active travel measures from current local ward councillors. No dedicated revenue budget allocated for development of walking and cycling schemes in Buckinghamshire. A predominantly rural geography makes network provision more challenging, with population dispersed across market towns. - Promotion. Limited dedicated officer resource for development of ‘shovel ready’ active travel priorities or promotion. Limited government funding available to support promotional activities. A firmly established ‘car use’ culture with high levels of car ownership makes promoting behaviour change challenging.

Figure 1: SWOT analysis for Walking and Cycling in Buckinghamshire.

2. Background

Active Travel – For Everyone

- 2.1 While often shortened to “walking and cycling”, active travel also includes other sustainable and active modes, such as scooting, running, horse riding and some mobility devices.
- 2.2 If active modes are to become widely used as the first choice for everyday trips, it is important to ensure that travel by these modes is safe, attractive and easy for all users. Existing networks and provision create barriers for several under-represented groups, including women, older people and disabled people. Active travel networks should accommodate everyday trips for all people and for all journey types.

The Importance of Active Travel

- 2.3 Increasing active travel can help tackle some of the most challenging issues faced in communities across Buckinghamshire, addressing several of Buckinghamshire Council’s key priorities.² Active travel can deliver:
- **Improved physical and mental health.** Physical inactivity is a growing public health crisis. It is responsible for approximately 1 in 6 deaths in the UK (equal to smoking), with an economic cost of £8.2bn every year. Almost 1 in 5 people in Buckinghamshire are physically active for less than 30 minutes per week.³



Figure 2: Health Benefits of Physical Activity⁴

- **Improved air quality and climate change.** Emissions from road transport are the primary cause of poor air quality in Buckinghamshire and the largest sector contributing to UK greenhouse gas emissions. Buckinghamshire has at least 10 Air Quality Management Areas, where air quality is at or below the annual mean objective, primarily caused by vehicle emissions.
- **Place-Making and Town Centre Regeneration.** By reducing reliance on private cars, cutting congestion and creating a 'people-friendly' urban realm, a focus on active modes can help to create attractive and desirable town centres. For example, the Healthy Streets approach used extensively in London uses active travel design principles to create accessible, attractive and safe places.⁵
- **Improved connectivity.** At the last census, over 1 in 8 Buckinghamshire households reported not having access to a car⁶, with a further 1 in 3 households having only one car (typically meaning one or more adults within the household will not have access to a car for everyday trips). As with towns and cities across the country, much of the transport network in Buckinghamshire has been almost universally designed around the car, limiting access to services and opportunities for those without access to a vehicle. This disproportionately affects lower-income households, individuals with disabilities and younger people. The percentage of young people applying for driving licences in Buckinghamshire (and nationally) has been falling for several years.
- **Strengthened economy and COVID-19 Recovery.** Research has demonstrated that well-planned active travel improvements can increase retail sales by up to 30% and attract more customers for local businesses. Over a month, people who walk to the high street spend up to 40% more than people who drive.⁷ Cycling already contributes an estimated £5.4bn to the UK economy annually and supports 64,000 jobs.⁴ With more people are shopping locally and working from home following the COVID-19 crisis, walking and cycling are increasingly suitable modes for people's everyday local trips.
- **Cost to user:** active travel such as cycling is considerable cost beneficial costing on average £396 per year compared to ten times that for car driving. Walking is free.⁸
- **Reduced congestion.** Active travel infrastructure can facilitate the movement of more people in less space, reducing delays and boosting connectivity.



Figure 3: Spatial comparison of road space requirements for 40 car drivers compared to 60 people on a bus or on cycles.⁹

Recent Successes

2.4 Buckinghamshire Council and its predecessor authorities have delivered several walking and cycling schemes across the county in recent years, representing significant capital investment, whilst also delivering a number of programmes and initiatives to promote and support active travel choices. Some examples of this work include:

- Delivery of new walking and cycling routes, including the Waddesdon Greenway, A4 Taplow Cycleway, A413 Buckingham-Winslow Cycleway and a programme of temporary ‘pop-up’ trial schemes as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund. Buckinghamshire Council has secured and invested over £7.5m in new active travel infrastructure in the last five years, delivering routes which are well used and well loved by local communities across the authority area.
- Installation of secure high-quality cycle parking at Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough rail stations in partnership with Chiltern Railways. An electric bike hire has recently been launched between Aylesbury Vale Parkway station and Waddesdon Manor.
- Simply Walk, the Council’s health walk scheme, offers a programme of nearly 60 free, volunteer-led walks, which aim to help people get outdoors and be more active. Between September and November 2020, people undertook 3,973 walks through this programme.
- Active travel initiatives in school. Provision of Bikeability cycle training is currently available for primary and secondary school age children. The training equips children with the confidence and ability to cycle safely and confidently, as well as providing guidance and practice in planning routes. The Living Streets “Walk To”

project and Modeshift STARS school travel planning programme both encourage children and young people to use active travel to get to school.

- Buckinghamshire has an extensive public rights of way network, with over 2000 miles of public footpaths and bridleways. This network is an outstanding resource for everyone to access Buckinghamshire's exceptional natural environment and, particularly in urban areas, often forms key local walking and cycling links. In 2019/20, for example, £1.476 million was secured through planning gain for active travel improvements on the rights of way network. The adopted Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2020-2030) sets out the Council's goals and priorities for the management and development of the public rights of way network.

Active Travel Statistics

- 2.5 The majority of travel in Buckinghamshire is currently undertaken by private car, particularly for journeys over one mile long. At the last census, approximately 70% of people in Buckinghamshire travel to work by car, significantly higher than the national average.⁶
- 2.6 Nationally, the percentage of walking trips has been increasing since 2014. In 2018, 27% of all trips were made on foot, covering 3% of all distance travelled. The average distance cycled per person per year has increased by 50% since 2002, but the number of trips cycled per person per year has remained broadly constant at about 2% of trips. In comparison, more than a quarter of all trips made by people in the Netherlands are cycled.⁴
- 2.7 In contrast, available data from monitored routes, as shown in Figure 5 below, within Buckinghamshire suggests that the number of cycling trips in Buckinghamshire has been on a sharp decline of up to 40% between 2015 and 2019. Set against a flat-lining national picture, this ought to be significant cause for concern. Whilst the number of recorded cycling trips increased substantially under the Spring 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, even this increased figure represented a significant decrease on 2015 levels.
- 2.8 These statistics only refer to monitored routes, the majority of which are located in Aylesbury on shared use paths. Nationally, there has been a significant spike in cycling for leisure and sport during this period. These cyclists are less likely to use town centre routes (opting instead for long-distance rural trips) and are more likely to be confident in cycling on the road rather than using slower shared pavement routes. This data should therefore be taken to primarily represent everyday trips in towns and villages. Similar data on walking trips is not available.

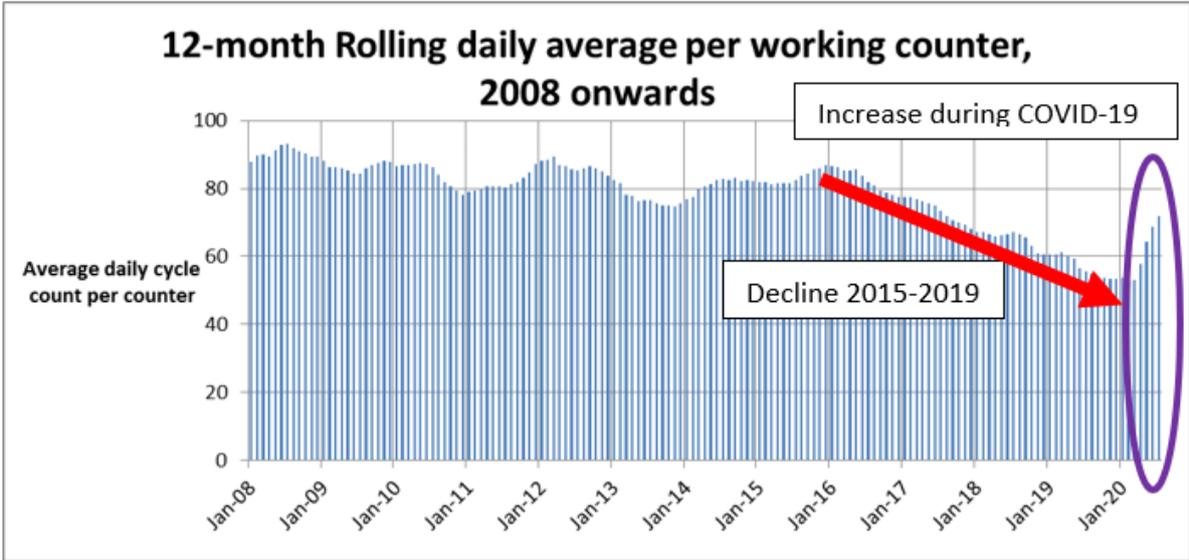


Figure 4: Daily average recorded cycle counts per counter in Buckinghamshire, 2008 to 2020.

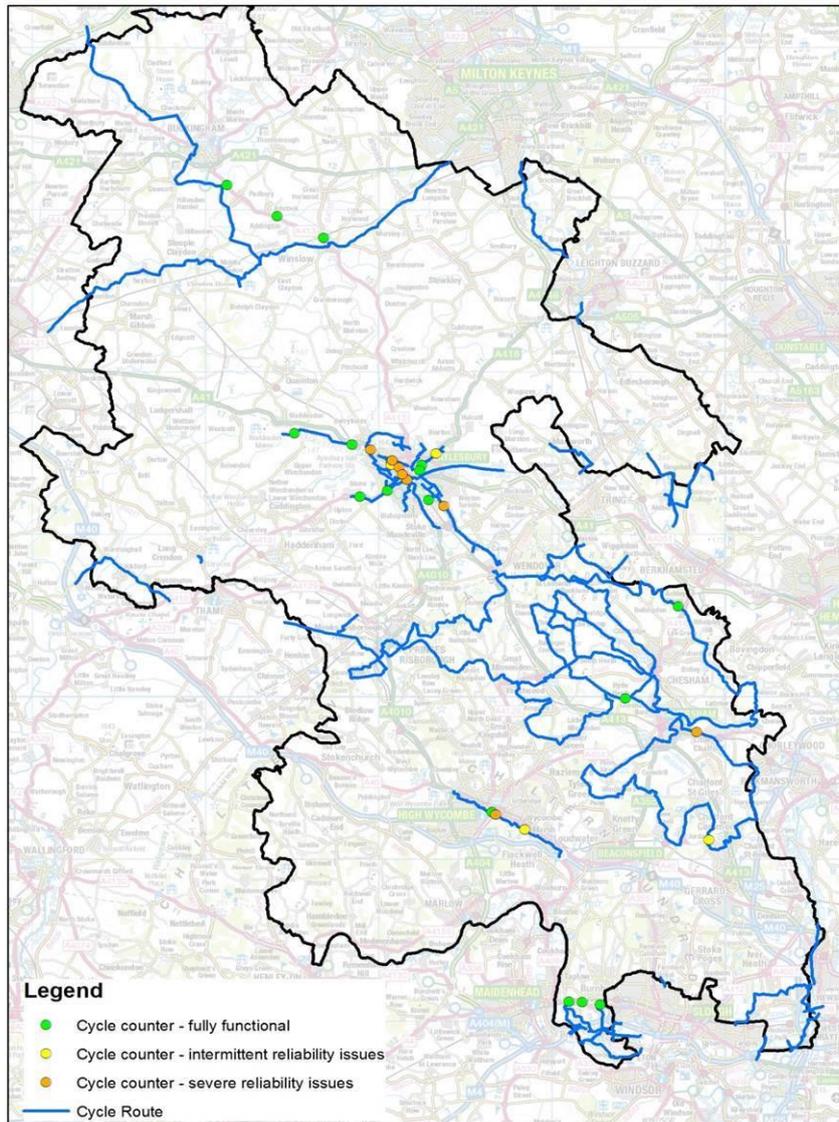


Figure 5: Buckinghamshire cycle counter location map.

- 2.9 The proportion of adults cycling once or more per week in Buckinghamshire is low compared to other local authorities (8-12%, compared with 27-57% in some London boroughs and Cambridge).^{10,11} Government statistics indicate that 36% of cycle trips are being taken for commuting/business, and 35% taken for leisure purposes.¹¹

Barriers to Walking and Cycling

- 2.10 No comprehensive local survey has been conducted to date to assess the factors which may have contributed to the observed significant fall in active travel trips in Buckinghamshire. However, for cycling, national literature suggests a number of 'barriers' which are likely to contribute¹²:
- Safety concerns – both road safety whilst cycling, high traffic speeds, driver/cyclist respect (including lack of suitable infrastructure and segregation from traffic)
 - Having the confidence to cycle
 - Cycle storage – both at home (particularly for flats) and at destinations
 - Living too far away from destination
 - Children, passengers or too much to carry
 - Cost of a suitable cycle and potential cycle theft
 - “Not for people like me”
 - Local topography and weather concerns
- 2.11 An online survey, which received almost 300 respondents, conducted in July/August 2020, as part of the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), echoed these national findings, with better separation from traffic, safer road crossings, more routes and improved driver behaviour identified as the top factors which would encourage people to walk and cycle more often within the town.
- 2.12 Addressing these barriers requires action across a range of areas. The following sections will consider opportunities and challenges for Buckinghamshire across policy, infrastructure and promotion and behaviour change.

3. Opportunities and Challenges - Policy

- 3.1 Increasing active travel can help tackle some of the most challenging issues we face as a society – reducing congestion, improving air quality, combatting climate change and improving health and wellbeing. Both walking and cycling play an important role across a wide array of policy areas, at both a local and national level.
- 3.2 Nationally, the Department for Transport's policy on active travel is set out in “Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking”⁴, published in July 2020. The strategy represents a dramatic shift in government focus on walking and cycling, seeking to put active modes at the heart of decision-making within the

Department. The policy sets out an ambition to establish walking and cycling as the first choice for local everyday trips, with an ambition for 50% of all journeys in English towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030.

3.3 Within Buckinghamshire, walking and cycling feature in a range of adopted and emerging policies and strategies:

- Buckinghamshire's Local Transport Plan 4 (2016)⁶ recognises that walking should be the best option for more short journeys in Buckinghamshire and commits to helping cycling to become one of the most convenient and well-used forms of transport for short journeys, although no timescales are given.
- The emerging Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision for 2050 includes a strategic ambition that 'By 2050, residents of Buckinghamshire will be able to live independent, healthy and connected lives in vibrant, resilient and low-carbon places that enable them to succeed and prosper locally'. To help deliver on this, the emerging vision sets out a need to provide 'sustainable travel opportunities and infrastructure around the county by making it easy and affordable for everyone to choose active travel and public transport in all locations and for all ages.'
- The Council passed a climate change motion in July 2020, which includes commitment to proactively providing for sustainable transport as part of achieving net carbon zero for Buckinghamshire as a whole by 2050 at the latest. A Buckinghamshire Climate Change Strategy will be published in due course.
- The Buckinghamshire Getting to School Strategy⁹ seeks to promote sustainable and active travel as the first and best choice for travel to and from education.
- Several local area transport strategies and LCWIPs (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans) have been produced or are in development, setting out aspirations for towns and villages across Buckinghamshire, including Aylesbury, Buckingham, High Wycombe and Iver.

3.4 Within Buckinghamshire, the most ambitious target currently adopted for active travel is set out in the Aylesbury Garden Town (AGT) Masterplan,¹³ which aims for 50% of trips originating within the town to be made by sustainable modes (including public transport, as well as cycling and walking) by 2050.

3.5 A Buckinghamshire Local Cycling and Walking Plan will be developed that will enable a strategic approach to active travel provision. This will set out the Council's ambition for cycling and walking and its priorities for future investment in infrastructure and initiatives to make active travel the obvious first choice for everyday local journeys. This is also a requirement of the Department of Transport to access future active travel funding.

4. Opportunities and Challenges - Infrastructure

Active Travel Infrastructure – more than just wide pavements

- 4.1 Safety concerns and poor connectivity are commonly identified as barriers to increased levels of walking and cycling, indicating a significant infrastructure deficit in most UK towns, cities and rural communities.
- 4.2 For active modes to become the obvious first choice for local everyday trips, it is important to recognise that active travel infrastructure amounts to more than isolated cycle routes or installation of a pedestrian crossing. Facilitating trips by active modes means ensuring there is a coherent and connected network, parking and storage provision at new and existing homes, that new highways schemes are designed to standards which encourage trips by active modes and that adequate facilities are provided at end destinations. Transport planning in Buckinghamshire, across all modes, needs to recognise that any changes made to the transport network (such as to accommodate new development or alleviate congestion) have implications for how easy and attractive it is for people to get around by active modes. A Council wide network-based approach is essential to address this.

Gear Change and LTN 1/20

- 4.3 Published July 2020, the Department for Transport's "Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking"⁴ and supporting Local Transport Note 1/20¹⁴ represent a dramatic shift in government standards for new walking and cycling infrastructure. The policy is an attempt to establish walking and cycling as the first choice for local everyday trips in towns, cities and rural communities across the UK.
- 4.4 Key changes set out in the new policy are as follows:
 - Tough new design standards for infrastructure, barring the use of roadside shared paths and 'paint only' routes in most instances. Instead, segregated lanes (separated from both pedestrians and general traffic) and neighbourhood 'modal filters' (closures to motorised through-traffic) are favoured. In order to ensure infrastructure has the capacity for significant future growth in the uptake of active travel, the level of infrastructure provision required is not primarily determined

- by the number of cyclists currently using a route or the number forecast to use it, but by the speed limit and the concentration of motor traffic using the road.
- Establishment of 'Active Travel England,' a national "Ofsted-style" inspectorate for local authorities, which will enforce the new standards in all new schemes, including through the planning system, and monitor use of funding grants.
 - Tight new delivery deadlines on funding issued by the Department for Transport, with funding clawed back if these timescales are not met or if final implemented schemes do not meet the new design standards.
- 4.5 These standards set out represent a significant change to 'business as usual' for planning walking and cycling in Buckinghamshire. With the exception of traffic-free greenways, all walking and cycling schemes delivered by the council to date have been designed to previous standards and would not therefore meet these new requirements. Specifically, many of the routes constructed in recent years are shared pavements used by both cyclists and pedestrians, which introduce conflict between these two user groups and are no longer the supported standard.
- 4.6 Further central government funding will not be awarded to local authorities unless proposals meet these standards. This includes, for example, new road schemes that do not include a necessary level of segregated provision for pedestrians and cyclists where required, in line with the new standards.
- 4.7 A local authority's performance in promoting active travel will be a material consideration in assessing any future funding applications to the Department for Transport for local transport schemes (including schemes not solely for the benefit of active travel modes). While the Department recognises the need to reflect local circumstances, the new standards will therefore have implications on the design of all emerging transport schemes, even where this could increase scheme costs.
- 4.8 Accompanying the new standards, the government has announced it will be providing £2bn over the next five years for new walking and cycling infrastructure across England, representing a significant increase compared to previous years. The majority of this will be devolved to local authorities to support delivery of adopted local cycling and walking infrastructure plans. Buckinghamshire Council is expected to be awarded a total of £2.26m from this fund to date, to be applied to schemes which reallocate road space to walking and cycling.

[Network provision in Buckinghamshire](#)

- 4.9 The current active travel network provision within Buckinghamshire is patchy and is constrained by the historic nature of our towns and villages. Few have comprehensive or connected networks which are sufficient to make walking and cycling the obvious first choice for local trips. Where larger towns and villages have existing networks of pavements for walking trips, severance caused by major roads

with poor crossing facilities and inadequate wayfinding provision lead to streets which are primarily focused on vehicular travel.

- 4.10 Aylesbury has the most extensive cycle network in Buckinghamshire, with several radial 'Gemstone' routes connecting into the centre from the outskirts of town. However, this network was devised and installed over 10 years ago to now-outdated standards. As well as severed links, maintenance issues have arisen over time. Latest research demonstrates that these kind of shared pavement routes, without dedicated priority at road junctions are insufficient to make walking and cycling safe and attractive options for a wide cross-section of users. Aylesbury's radial network does not provide for trips to destinations outside the town centre. Buckinghamshire's largest town, High Wycombe, only has a single cycle route that is located along the valley floor and mainly consists of directional signage along quieter residential streets.
- 4.11 Major projects such as HS2 can sever existing links between communities and have significant impacts on the viability of local active trips. The Council has worked hard to lobby and protect existing and planned networks wherever possible. Early engagement with such schemes provides opportunities to ensure walking and cycling facilities are built into emerging designs from the outset.
- 4.12 Government emphasis on provision for active travel has significantly shifted and the £2bn funding promise represents an important increase in ring-fenced funding for walking and cycling. In recent months there has been significant demand from Community Boards for support in developing new local walking and cycling schemes. Work on a Buckinghamshire Active Travel Strategy setting out the Council's priorities for investment in new active travel infrastructure is programmed to begin this year. Unlike some other authorities, Buckinghamshire Council has no dedicated cycling and walking team or officers responsible for planning new active travel infrastructure. With the increase in the importance of active travel, additional resource dedicated to its design and delivery will be required.
- 4.13 Buckinghamshire Council has been awarded a total of £2.26m from the Government's £2bn Active Travel Fund this financial year, to be applied to schemes which reallocate road space to walking and cycling. An initial £514k has supported a programme of temporary 'pop-up' active travel schemes across Buckinghamshire as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Schemes are currently being prioritised in line with government funding requirements for a further award of £1.748m made before Christmas 2020.
- 4.14 Working with a range of strategic partners, the Council has a number of major active travel routes that have been delivered or are in development, including amongst others:

- The Buckinghamshire Greenway, a vision for a transformational north-south active travel spine through Buckinghamshire formed of a series of local links between neighbouring communities and business hubs. The first phase, the Waddesdon Greenway, opened in September 2018, and further sections in Aylesbury and between Wendover and Great Missenden are due to open later in 2021. An electric bike hire scheme on the Waddesdon Greenway recently began operation, giving more people the opportunity to cycle and opening up the potential for cycle-rail trips from further afield once coronavirus restrictions ease.
- The Aylesbury Gardenway and Aylesbury Garden Town LCWIP network. An orbital park with a walking, cycling and wheeling route circling the town and a town-wide walking and cycling network, building on the existing Gemstone routes.
- Thame-Haddenham-Aylesbury Greenway. A cross-authority priority route in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to provide connections to local services, a mainline train station and major growth areas.
- High Wycombe LCWIP network. An emerging infrastructure plan setting out a strategic, long term approach to improving walking and cycling networks in and around the town, including plans for links to nearby settlements such as Beaconsfield and Marlow.

Walking and cycling in town centres

- 4.15 There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that cycle and pedestrian-friendly streets can boost footfall and retail sales, helping to revive traditional high streets and town centres by creating more pleasant conditions.¹⁴ However, town centres are also often areas with particularly high pedestrian footfall, and potential or perceived conflicts with faster moving active modes such as cycles and scooters need to be carefully managed. Careful provision is also needed to ensure delivery access for local businesses, access from buses and access for people with mobility impairments.
- 4.16 Evidence from other areas of the UK has demonstrated that retailers consistently overestimate how many of their customers travel by car. Data on streets where the pedestrian experience has been improved shows footfall increasing 20-35% against a backdrop of a 22% decline in footfall across the UK between 2007-2017.¹⁵ Similarly, studies have shown that cycle parking delivers five times the retail spend per square metre than the same area of car parking.⁷
- 4.17 Provision for active modes in Buckinghamshire town centres varies considerably. Some towns (e.g. Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Chesham) have installed traffic-free areas in town centres and high streets – although some of these do not allow cycling. Other towns (e.g. Amersham, Buckingham, Iver, Marlow) remain dominated by motor traffic, leading to crowding, air quality issues and road safety dangers, as well as contributing to a less appealing local environment.

- 4.18 New town centre cycle parking has recently been installed in Aylesbury and Marlow as part of the Aylesbury Garden Town and Emergency Active Travel Fund programmes, in an effort to encourage cycling as a mode of transport to reach local community hubs.

Walking and cycling in new development sites

- 4.19 To be successful, provision of walking and cycling infrastructure has to make active travel the most attractive and convenient option for the whole journey, from the front door to the destination. To achieve this, new developments should be designed to make walking and cycling the natural first choice for local trips, including requiring new sites to be based around a comprehensive active travel network and ensuring sufficient provision of cycle parking facilities. Local Plan requirements have a strong role to play in achieving quality places in new development sites.
- 4.20 Buckinghamshire has a mixed record in this regard. For example, the Fairford Leys estate in Aylesbury incorporates cleverly designed modal filters which ensure that walking and cycling are the most direct means of travel within the estate, while vehicular access is still available by more circuitous routes. Similarly, the newly developed Kingsbrook site has been positively received by some for its graduated provision of walking and cycling infrastructure, with segregated provision from traffic on main roads and shared space provision within the highway on less heavily trafficked residential areas.
- 4.21 Once established, the Department for Transport's new national "Ofsted-style" walking and cycling inspectorate 'Active Travel England' will act as a statutory consultee in major developments to promote best practice active travel design. This will form part of the assessment and rating of local authorities' performance, which will in turn affect future all-modes transport funding awarded by the Department for Transport.

Public and Political Support

- 4.22 All transport infrastructure schemes introduce significant changes to local urban realm environments, and as such have the potential to generate significant controversy and criticism and this has been experienced in Buckinghamshire. This can be the case with active travel schemes, which reprioritise the use of the public highway, with the aim of making active modes attractive options for mass transportation.
- 4.23 Introduced as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Emergency Active Travel Fund programme of pop-up cycleways and temporary modal filters has attracted criticism both nationally and within Buckinghamshire.
- 4.24 National experience of active travel schemes indicate high levels of support for radical interventions to promote walking and cycling, with 8 out of 10 people

supporting measures to reduce road traffic and two-thirds supporting reallocating road space for active travel.¹ However, when these schemes are first implemented, there is often a significant push-back from a vocal minority, with a tendency for supporters to remain quiet or neutral. In Buckinghamshire, a temporary walking and cycling route trial between Chalfont St Peter and Gerrards Cross ended early following significant local opposition in Summer 2020. Only once the scheme was removed did a number of local bodies and residents come forward to express disappointment with the decision and positive support for the scheme. Working with communities and political leaders to identify local champions for new active travel measures can help to address this issue by encouraging positive voices to come forward earlier.

- 4.25 The experience of implementing the Emergency Active Travel Fund programme has also put a spotlight on the importance of building local community buy-in to schemes from the outset, highlighting the need for early engagement in the design and development of new active travel schemes. It is important to be able to work with local communities well in advance of government funding announcements to design and develop meaningful plans with strong local buy-in. However, this requires up-front commitment of revenue resource and officer time. Upfront investment in plans and projects which have demonstrable local buy-in is essential in being able to demonstrate the case for new walking and cycling infrastructure.

Maintenance

- 4.26 Buckinghamshire Council's transport network already represents an extensive maintenance liability. The Council is responsible for maintaining over 3,200km of roads and 2,480km of footpaths across Buckinghamshire.
- 4.27 Maintenance of active routes is essential to all user groups, but particularly significant given Buckinghamshire's ageing population. Pavements and pathways which are not adequately maintained can increase the risk of trips and falls, particularly for older people. Recent public feedback as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund programme included widespread requests from residents for existing footpath and cycleway maintenance due to deterioration, potholes and other maintenance issues. Residents struggle to understand why ring-fenced government funding is available for new routes but there is insufficient funding for repairs to existing infrastructure.
- 4.28 As part of the latest round of budget setting, Buckinghamshire Council has budgeted to spend approximately £1.5m on footway maintenance in 2021/22 (subject to full Council approval), equivalent to a rate of approximately £605/km. Over the same period, £15.5m is due to be invested in strategic highways maintenance, equating to approximately £4,845/km. With schemes such as Aylesbury Garden Town having an objective for all residents to live within a ten-minute walk of town, local centres or neighbourhood hubs¹³, significant provision

and maintenance will be required to ensure active travel is a viable transportation mode for all Buckinghamshire residents in the future.

- 4.29 Although budget for footway maintenance has been increased, the current budget is insufficient to maintain the current condition of the county's footways and does not allow any budget for improving footways across the county. With national targets and objectives such as Aylesbury Garden Town's as mentioned above, maintenance budgets would need to be carefully considered to support such infrastructure.
- 4.30 The National Highways and Transport Survey 2020¹⁶ assessed public satisfaction on Highway and Transport Services in Local Authority areas. The most recent survey shows that in Buckinghamshire, satisfaction for the overall provision of cycle routes and facilities, is significantly below both the authority average (five points below) and authority high (10 points below) Buckinghamshire is also behind the authority average and authority high for the number of cycle lanes provided and the location of cycle lanes, and provision of cycle routes and lanes. Data is additionally provided from 2008 – 2020. The survey shows an increase in satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities overall in Buckinghamshire during the years Aylesbury was a Cycling Development Town, with a slow decline since funding ceased. Whilst satisfaction with the condition of pavements was increasing, 2020 satisfaction is now at the levels it was in 2008.
- 4.31 The vision for a Buckinghamshire Greenway is seeing increased roll-out of traffic free routes, set away from local highways. At present, Buckinghamshire Council makes no core contribution to the maintenance of these traffic-free greenway routes. Instead, rely on voluntary organisations, local landowners or community bodies, to manage ongoing upkeep. The expanding greenway network in Buckinghamshire represents significant investment of public funds and a forms critical infrastructure for local non-car journeys. As this network develops further in the coming years, the Council's role in maintenance provision would need to be reviewed to guarantee the ongoing benefits of this public investment.

5. Opportunities and Challenges – Promotion & Behaviour Change

[“Build it and they will come”? is not enough – Arup inclusive cycling, Aylesbury Cycling Demonstration Town¹⁷](#)

- 5.1 The establishment of safe and attractive walking and cycling networks is essential to unlocking the potential benefits of walking and cycling as the first choice for local everyday trips. However, national research demonstrates that infrastructure alone is generally insufficient to achieve wide-scale uptake of active modes of travel. Revenue measures in promoting active travel modes and networks are also crucial.

- 5.2 Active travel promotion is much more than advertising available routes and networks. It aims to support culture and behaviour change by helping people to recognise that walking and cycling are viable options for people like themselves. Particularly in under-represented demographic groups such as women, older people and disabled people, the perception that walking and cycling are “not for them” can be a major barrier to uptake of these modes.¹⁸ Many people lack the confidence to cycle, perhaps having not ridden a bike for many years, or are unaware of the availability of equipment such as electric bikes or cargo bikes which might make active travel more viable for them.
- 5.3 Furthermore, the best walking and cycling routes may not always be the same routes as those a person would typically use if driving to their destination. Promotion of new routes and networks are crucial to ensure active travel is continually regarded as a viable way of travelling for local trips. Promotional work is important in helping people to “think again” about their travel habits for local trips. Not only does active travel promote social distancing during times of a global pandemic, but it encourages people to take regular exercise that may not otherwise have been considered.
- 5.4 Whilst Buckinghamshire Council has challenges with budget and resource constraints to promote active travel and to develop and implement new initiatives, the hard work and determination of Officers has supported the successful application of funding bids and implementation of many successful routes and projects over recent years. This includes the Waddesdon Greenway and the £2.26 million secured for Active Travel initiatives in 2020 and 2021.
- 5.5 The Council currently undertakes limited promotional work, primarily focusing on schools (for example the Living Streets “Walk To” project, school travel planning work and ‘Bikeability’ training). These schemes are extremely popular but much more promotional work could be done to reach out to local employers and community groups and work with them to identify measures which can make walking and cycling more attractive for employees and residents. We engage with organisations such as LEAP (a Buckinghamshire social enterprise focused on increasing physical activity) through the Bucks Physical Activity Steering Group Forum, in partnership with our Public Health colleagues and National Governing Bodies such as British Cycling are keen to support such initiatives wherever possible.

6. The Way Forward for Buckinghamshire

- 6.1 Buckinghamshire Council and its predecessor authorities have delivered several walking and cycling schemes in recent years, representing significant capital investment. The council has also delivered a number of programmes and initiatives to promote and support active travel (walking and cycling) choices, particularly with schools. Examples of these are found in this report.
- 6.2 We will soon be commencing work on the development of a Council wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which will, through local engagement, identify and assess priority strategic and aspirational walking and cycling routes across the county. This plan will help to guide future investment decisions and ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to the promotion of active travel across the county. It will help to focus priorities for funding while ensuring that it contributes to wider objectives of increasing accessibility, reducing carbon, improving health, and supporting town centre regeneration. This would be a key document in support the emerging Local Plan and Local Transport Plan 5.
- 6.3 It is not just the physical infrastructure on our highway that is going to create safe active travel improvements, it is also the soft measures. Buckinghamshire Council needs to continue working with schools to create a mode shift from private car to walking, cycling and scooting to school. Consideration should also be given to other initiatives such as school streets, play streets, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and rural Quiet Lanes.
- 6.4 Buckinghamshire Council needs to embrace the need for a significant change in how we plan for active travel, adopting the new standards set out in the Department for Transport's "Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking" and supporting Local Transport Note 1/20.^{4,14}
- 6.5 A combination of these actions, developed into an Active Travel Strategy, will enable Buckinghamshire Council to work towards establishing active travel as the obvious first choice for everyday trips.

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