

Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan Consultation Comments

Cllr Susan van de Ven, Melbourn and Bassingbourn Division – 8 July 2021

The draft Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan is introduced under the vital and compelling case for the health benefits of active travel to the individual and society at large, and quantified in savings for the NHS. Seizing the health benefits of active travel is long overdue, but now with learning from the pandemic is publicly recognized.

The Plan conveys an ambition for culture change in active travel behaviour, citing active travel modes to school and work as measurable indicators of progress.

Active travel for leisure purposes is not so easily measured but by being encouraged and facilitated this will help generate culture change.

Understandably the Plan focuses on largest population centres as a means of generating positive change through infrastructure development for the greatest number of people.

However, the Plan for mainly rural South Cambridgeshire focuses on a limited geography, which while highlighting important potential links leaves many villages without ways and means of facilitating active travel in their communities. The Plan could support those other communities by:

1. Encouraging communities to identify key local areas for unlocking active travel, to stand ready for unforeseen opportunities.
2. Encouraging cross-county border collaboration, to help push forward opportunities for improving everyday realities in administrative border areas.
3. Providing an advice kit for communities interested in lowering speed limits, as a means of encouraging active travel to school and including examples of good practice.
4. Allocating some resource to mapping existing cycle links which may be discernible on an Ordnance Survey Map but otherwise not well-known. A South Cambs example is the cycle-friendly bridleway link from Church Street Thriplow to Heathfield, linking onto the Imperial War Museum and A505 cycle links eastward.

Aspirational links connecting communities to existing active travel networks and transport hubs should also be more fully mapped as part of the LWCIP.

Path design and maintenance

Since 2013 South Cambridgeshire has seen the introduction of some new cycle infrastructure along the A10 between Trumpington and Melbourn. Lessons learned include:

1. Multi-use paths are not always safe for more vulnerable users and should be designed to allow separation.
2. Build maintenance plans into new infrastructure spend. Otherwise new assets will deteriorate prematurely and the culture change opportunity will be undermined.

Melbourn and Bassingbourn Division: active travel to rail stations and employment

The draft Plan presents a compelling methodology around plotting home to rail station journeys, which reflects dynamics seen in the Melbourn and Bassingbourn Division.

The division comprises four villages, each in very close geographic proximity to rail services. Only two, Melbourn and Meldreth, have safe active travel access to Meldreth Station, and even so more work is needed. Whaddon and especially Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth are particularly cut-off from their nearby stations in terms of active travel.

Figure 7 illustrates the strong suppressed demand for safe active travel connections between Melbourn and Royston, and Bassingbourn and Royston. In both cases the destination of Royston Station offers short journey times to London. Royston is also a major employment centre for these South Cambridgeshire villages.

A Melbourn-Royston pedestrian/cycle link is due to be provided in the next few years via the Melbourn Greenway scheme.

But no plans are in place for much needed active travel links between Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth and Royston. The following would require cross-border cooperation with HCC.

- A safe physical route already exists in the form of a Hertfordshire County Council owned farm bridge (Ivy Farm Bridge) over the A505 but this has no public Right of Way status. Efforts by HCC to introduce a public Right of Way across the bridge seem to be underway and would greatly benefit communities in both counties, but it is unclear how strongly this figures in HCC's priorities.
- A safe active travel crossing at the A1198/A5055 roundabout would unlock cycle, scooter and pedestrian journeys. This falls just inside the Hertfordshire border but is critical to the area, as indicated in Figure 7. Cross-border communication is needed.

Whaddon's nearest station is Meldreth, however the lack of a footway along the winding link road, along which visibility is poor, dissuades active travel. A recent speed limit reduction to 40MPH is welcome but a dedicated path is also needed if vulnerable road users are to be made safe. The route is not suitable for young children and those using mobility scooters.

Meldreth's access to Shepreth Station and the A10 multi-use path network is impeded by a link road to Shepreth that lacks a pavement and is windy with poor visibility, dissuading active travel. The route is not suitable for young children and those using mobility scooters. A dedicated path is needed.