



Report to: Cabinet Meeting – 4 November 2024

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Claire Penny - Sustainable Economic Development  
Councillor Susan Crosby – Health, Wellbeing and Leisure

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing  
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Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open Report, Key Decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Active Travel Feasibility Report
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To provide an update on the progress made on the feasibility report and gain approval to adopt the report as a formal component within the Council’s evidence base.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That Cabinet note the contents of this report and agrees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) to adopt the feasibility report (as at <b>Appendix A</b> which has been published separately to the main agenda) as a key component of our evidence base to support future funding applications; provide strength to our S106 pipeline of projects; enhance policy development, and heighten the role of NSDC and its ongoing commitment to the active travel agenda; and</li> <li>b) to endorse ongoing partnership work with Nottinghamshire County Council, Active Travel England and relevant partners to support early exploratory work through future feasibility studies within the recommended priority areas where funding for these has been secured.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	That the feasibility report is not formally adopted by Members. This approach has been dismissed due to the strength the feasibility report provides for future work on the priority areas (in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council as Highway Authority), and the strengthened position of the Council should future funding opportunities present themselves through the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) and newly appointed Mayor, by having a broad concept of projects at the ready for further feasibility work.

<p><b>Reason for Recommendations</b></p>	<p>Adopting the feasibility study will allow NSDC and partners to make informed decisions on shaping and enhancing the district through physical infrastructure improvements. This improved connectivity will not only enable communities to move more through walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities, in line with the Council’s Community Plan; but it will also support and improve the physical and mental wellbeing of our communities; and contribute towards the reduction in vehicular congestion and emissions across the district.</p>
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**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Active Travel project was formed following the successful allocation of funds from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to fund a feasibility study for partners across Newark and Sherwood (including NSDC) to identify opportunities to improve the district’s infrastructure, to enable communities to walk, wheel and cycle more often.
- 1.2 The brief for the feasibility report was developed through a partnership approach, with project team member’s including Active Notts, Active4Today, NHS, Canal & River Trust, Sustrans, Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham Disabled People’s Movement, alongside colleagues across NSDC from teams including Planning Policy, Health Improvement, Community Development, and Regeneration.
- 1.3 The purpose of the feasibility report is to strengthen our evidence base to support future regeneration activities, policy development and the agenda of long-term development plans produced by the Planning Policy team, such as the Local Transport Plan and Core Strategy. It will also underpin the identification of potential S106, EMCCA and other pipeline spend as a key piece of evidenced need.
- 1.4 Phil Jones Associates (PJA) were appointed as the consultant to undertake this piece of work and are one of the country’s leading authorities on Active Travel, having been a lead author on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) guidance and Local Transport Note 1/20 for the Department of Transport.

**1.5 Focus Areas**

The project team and PJA took an evidence-based approach to identifying the key focus areas, analysing a range of evidence and data available including: Travel to Work patterns; Distance Travelled to Work; Car Ownership; and Index of Multiple Deprivation, which presented the initial areas of focus for cycling and walking connections around Ollerton; Edwinstowe; across to Clipstone and Mansfield; down to Southwell; and across to Newark. Further linkages between Yorke Drive and the town centre were also included, aligning the key work strands of the wider Regeneration and Housing Strategy business unit and Community Plan, whilst offering a more holistic approach to connectivity.

- 1.6 Due to the existing focus and work being carried out in Newark’s town centre through the Town Centre Masterplan, Design Code, Newark Cultural Heart and other activities as part of the Towns Fund agenda (including Active Travel initiatives), it was agreed by Member’s to focus the energies of PJA (and avoid duplication), to the southern periphery of Newark instead, ensuring connectivity with the large strategic residential housing sites, as well as the proposed Southern Link Road.

## 1.7 Consultation and Engagement

To ensure the initial focus areas were correctly identified through the early evidence-based work, a range of engagement sessions were held to test and validate the emerging recommendations. This included:

- a) A Member's Briefing Session, September 2023. This session agreed the direction and focus areas for the feasibility work ensuring close alignment to the Council's strategic objectives.
- b) Online Stakeholder Session, December 2023. Recommendations were made on where improvements could offer the greatest benefit (based upon the local experiences and knowledge of key stakeholders, of problematic areas). The suggestions were captured within the emerging recommendations and refined accordingly. A list of the stakeholder attendees can be found at Appendix B.
- c) Community Survey, January 2024. The survey was available to all members of the community and received 612 responses. The responses confirmed PJA's recommendations. A summary of the responses received can be found at **Appendix C**.

1.8 It is also worth noting that through the Community Survey, due to the high level of responses received, we were able to capture the thoughts and views of communities far extending the tight focus areas, offering a real insight into the perceptions of Active Travel at a district level. It also provided information to enable the project team to verify anecdotal theories and gather qualitative data on how our communities perceive the notion of walking, wheeling and cycling more; whether it's important to them; and the impacts that physical movement has on their mental health. Overall, active travel was portrayed as a positive concept and a healthy lifestyle choice.

## 1.9 How Will the Council Use the Feasibility Study?

The long-term ambition for Active Travel is to create a network of new and enhanced cycling and walking routes across the district to enhance connectivity through improved infrastructure. New active travel infrastructure will be designed with the needs of disabled residents at the fore to ensure accessibility for all. It is important to note at this stage however, that this study represents an evidence base and is not a funded delivery plan. Whilst a degree of prioritisation of projects has been undertaken at a desktop level, a significant amount of refinement will be needed to progress any recommendation, alongside Nottinghamshire County Council who hold the statutory responsibility for Highways. Further work needed will include (to name but a few), community engagement/consultation; detailed feasibility and engineering work; and consultation with VIA. Costs for delivering the next step feasibility for any project can be estimated at least 5% of the proposed construction costs, detailed in **Appendix D** of the feasibility study.

1.10 The immediate value of the feasibility study is in a strengthened evidence base to support regeneration activities, policy development and the agenda of long-term development plans produced by the Planning Policy team. It will also support the identification of potential S106 pipeline spend as a key piece of evidenced need. NSDC

are keen to continue working with NCC (our Highways Authority), to bring forward shared priorities, but also to enable NSDC the opportunity to help lobby, influence and shape areas that are variants of the D2N2 priorities. Continued collaboration and communication is vital to ensuring the Active Travel Report remains a consideration of NCC.

- 1.11 Having a robust feasibility study will also support NSDC in applying for potential future funding streams as they present through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. We are in a strong position now to act quickly to these opportunities, which will provide confidence to grant providers that we are committed to deliver against our ambitions and aspirations. It is important to note, that NCC are the Highways Authority and have the ultimate decision-making power in advancing any future routes and/or improvements. Of particular interest and where support would be most favourably provided by NCC, is where the recommendations for both NSDC and D2N2 align. Within the Active Travel Report, **Appendix E** Route Prioritisation – Scoring, highlights the recommendations that best align with NCC’s ambitions and priorities, and ultimately, would be most supported for further feasibility work (as and when funding sources become available). The recommendations that do not currently align with the D2N2 priorities will be amongst the more challenging routes to progress.
- 1.12 As routes are brought forward, the council will work with local groups and representatives with local knowledge to explore the proposed and potential alternative route options available for any one destination journey.

## **2.0 Proposal**

The strategic, high-level recommendations for network implementation, presented in the feasibility report (subject to more design work to confirm their engineering feasibility), and detailed within Appendix C of the study, are:

- a) Stronger east-west links between Ollerton and Edwinstowe – especially for school travel and links to retail and employment opportunities.
- b) Greenway links especially around the Sherwood area aim to provide improved active travel connections for leisure activities, particularly linking Ollerton and Edwinstowe to the Sherwood Pines area – reducing the need for people to drive to the forest.
- c) Improved connections to the popular Southwell Trail, especially from Newark, via a new bridge connection over the River Trent at Farndon. This link would also significantly benefit access to the Staythorpe Power Station from Newark, allowing workers to use a much more direct route from residential areas south of Newark.
- d) Improved orbital connections around the south of Newark, linking key amenities, schools and providing for short local journeys.
- e) Improvements of radial routes to the south of Newark, particularly Farndon Road and London Road, bringing cycle infrastructure up to a higher standard. A new bridge over the A1 to link to the Fernwood development would reduce severance and bring the local amenities of Balderton within easier reach of Fernwood residents.

A full copy of the report and appendices are located in Appendix A (published separately to the main agenda).

## 2.1 Support from Nottinghamshire County Council and Active Travel England

The Active Travel Feasibility Study has been developed in accordance with the D2N2 Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan and officers within the Local Transport Plans and Programme Development Team at Nottinghamshire County Council have been involved throughout the process, adding valuable commentary and guidance towards the emerging recommendations.

## 2.2 The Transport and Environment Cabinet Member at County Council is supportive of the NSDC Active Travel Report, with Nottinghamshire County Council providing the below supporting statement:

*“The County Council supports Newark & Sherwood District Council’s aspiration to increase levels of active travel (which aligns with the Nottinghamshire Plan), and (as and when funding becomes available) will continue to develop those routes within Newark & Sherwood which have been identified as priorities within the D2N2 LCWIP 15-year programme, but at this stage the County Council is unable to comment on, or offer a view around, the other (non-D2N2 LWCIP) prioritised schemes until further feasibility work has taken place.”*

## 2.3 Active Travel England were also involved in the development of the feasibility report, including their role as ‘critical friend’ on the draft report. Their feedback was very positive, and included recognition of the report as:

- I. Comprehensive LCWIP with a strong evidence base;
- II. Well balanced between modes suitable for walking, wheeling and cycling;
- III. Positive links to large development sites;
- IV. Good links to areas of higher deprivation and lower car ownership;
- V. Vital to link in with the Highways Authority; and
- VI. Active Travel expected to form a key part of the EMMCA.

## 2.4 A full copy of the Active Travel England statement can be found at Appendix D.

## 3.0 **Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

### Equalities Implications

## 3.1 The Active Travel project identifies a range of opportunities to increase physical connectivity and support accessibility for all, through walking, wheeling and cycling. When referring to ‘wheeling’, as defined in Sport England’s latest Active Design guidance (May 2023), it includes ‘assistive wheeled mobilities such as wheelchairs, mobility scooters or similar. It can also include pushchairs or buggies for children.’

- 3.2 As PJA are amongst the country's leading authorities on Active Travel, having been a lead author on the Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 for the Department of Transport, which is the current design guidance for England and Northern Ireland, accessibility for all has been at the forefront of all their work. LTN 1/20 sets out clear criteria that explicitly supports the need for inclusive and accessible design for cycle infrastructure.
- 3.3 LTN 1/20 is clear in its aim to provide accessible active travel for all, recognising cycles as mobility aids, referring to all cycle types and ensuring that designs and management cater for a full range of users.
- 3.4 All considerations and recommendations made by PJA in the Active Travel Report are compliant with standards and guidance set out in LTN 1/20.

#### Environmental

- 3.5 The Active Travel project will support the net zero and nature recovery objectives by identifying opportunities to improve the cycling and walking offer across the district, helping the Council to tackle some of the most challenging issues: improving air quality and reducing congestion and noise pollution on our roads.

#### Financial Implications FIN 24-25/870

- 3.6 There are currently no direct financial implications arising from this report. Future financial implications will need to be assessed once proposals for the next stages of the feasibility study, and the community engagement/ consultation process, have been defined.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None