

Policy Development and Review Committee	
Meeting Date	12 September 2018
Report Title	Consultation to develop a draft Swale Cycling and Walking Policy Framework 2018-2022
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Cosgrove, Cabinet Member for Regeneration
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson
Lead Officer	Christopher Blandford and Lyn Newton
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. The Policy Development and Review Committee considers and responds to the consultation on cycling and walking in Swale, which seeks the public's view on ways to promote these forms of transport and suggestions to develop appropriate facilities in the Borough.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1. The report introduces and presents the current consultation on cycling and walking in Swale. The consultation commenced on the 10 August and will conclude on the 5 October 2018.
- 1.2 The findings of the consultation will be used, through consultation with the Swale Borough Council (SBC) Planning department and Kent County Council's (KCC) Highways department, to develop a new policy framework for cycling and walking in the borough.

2 Background

- 2.1 A *Swale Cycling Strategy 2013-2018* was prepared by Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council in 2013 with the support of the Swale Cycle Forum. The strategy set out fifteen cycle routes which subsequently supported the Swale Local Plan, through the *draft Swale Transportation Strategy*. As the cycling strategy is now reaching the end of its lifespan, it is an opportune time to update its content.
- 2.2 Swale Borough Council has influence over cycle route policy through the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) and in responding to consultations, whilst the construction of new routes and their long term maintenance is within the remit of Kent County Council. A policy framework would therefore establish a strategic direction for the next four years but will not constitute a commitment from the

Borough Council for incurring any costs for the construction or maintenance of potential routes.

- 2.3 Since the previous strategy was prepared, the Department for Transport has also indicated through its investment strategy (2017) that cycling and walking should be considered together where appropriate, potentially through shared-use routes.
- 2.4 The government also outlined that it will make over £1 billion available during the next five years to local bodies for investment in cycling and walking. A new policy framework will provide a basis, including plans for feasible routes, to bid for improvements, to walking and cycling infrastructure in Swale through the Local Enterprise Partnership (Local Growth Fund) and other transport funding awarded to Kent County Council (KCC) by the Department for Transport.
- 2.5 The development of a new policy framework is also a part of the *Visitor Economy Framework for Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey 2018-2023* which includes the action to increase destination infrastructure for shared use routes.
- 2.6 New walking routes are known to be in development as part of the *Visitor Economy Framework*, from Produced in Kent after a successful bid to the LEADER funding programme, and from Natural England who are seeking to improve coastal access. These potential new walks will be taken into account in the consultation, so as to ensure that opportunities to improve the connectivity of the network and partnership working are identified.
- 2.7 In order to complement other Council strategies and plans, the policy framework will be informed by both responses to this consultation and the policies in SBC's *Local Plan (Bearing Fruits 2031)*. Any actions in the framework will then contribute to the development of the next Local Transport Strategy which will support the implementation of the routes.
- 2.8 The policy framework will also draw on the findings of the 'Looking Ahead' consultation which is the earliest stage of public engagement on the next Local Plan and closed on Friday 8th June. The consultation included questions on a number of relevant areas including sustainable transport, congestion and air quality.
- 2.9 Going forward, the cycling and walking policy framework could potentially be an element of helping to develop, over time, more integrated cycling and walking routes. This could be achieved through helping to implement the policies in the adopted Local Plan in respect of designing new developments for cycling and walking; linking new developments to services and facilities; better links with leisure routes; and new ideas to promote cycling and walking in the town centres. It is anticipated that it would both inform and be informed by Local Plan and Local Transport Strategy Reviews, which in turn can provide the basis for funding bids.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 The Policy Development and Review Committee considers and responds to the consultation on cycling and walking in Swale, which seeks the public's view on ways to promote these forms of transport and suggestions to develop appropriate facilities in the Borough. The response will be used to help inform the development of the Swale Cycling and Walking Policy Framework 2018-2022.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 **Do nothing** – this is not recommended as potentially Swale could miss out on funding opportunities, which have the potential to improve cycling and walking in the Borough, both for the commute to work and school, and for leisure.
- 4.2 **Status Quo** – this is not recommended as the current strategy expires in 2018 but the Council could continue to rely on the proposed routes which accompany the current Local Plan (through the *Swale Transportation Strategy Draft 2014-2031*).

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The current consultation has been promoted through the [SBC website](#), social media, a press release, email marketing and through established walking and cycling groups. Copies of the consultation document have also been made available in public spaces such as local libraries. Efforts have also been made by SBC and KCC officers to contact cycling and walking stakeholder groups in Swale to get their informed view, including Natural England who are progressing their plans to improve coastal access in Swale.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>The proposed policy framework will contribute to the corporate priority of 'A Borough to be proud of', particularly the 'delivery of smaller-scale regeneration projects ... to improve the appearance and facilities of our towns and villages'. It will also contribute to creating 'a borough with a strong brand, which is recognised nationally and internationally for its advantageous business environment and for its wealth of visitor attractions.' Under this priority it will also contribute to the delivery of 'world-class multi-modal transport links which facilitate economic growth and enable residents from across the Borough to take advantage of it.'</p> <p>A contribution will also be made to the priority of 'A Community to be Proud of', particularly in a contribution to creating 'a community in which everyone plays their part in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing through healthy lifestyle choices'.</p>
Financial, Resource and	The proposed policy framework will not require any financial, resource or property commitments from Swale Borough Council as

Property	it seeks to create a basis to influence the development of a cycling and walking network in Swale. The routes identified will help to inform the planning process where developers fund routes as part of their section 106 commitments, for example, and to provide a basis for future bids for government funding and from other sources such as the Local Growth Fund which may be required for match funding.
Legal and Statutory	The provision of the consultation and the policy framework is not a statutory function of Swale Borough Council. Kent County Council has responsibility for the building of new routes, and SBC has influence through JTB, working in partnership and in responding to consultations. Any agreed plans for new routes will however form a part of the Local Plan which is a statutory document.
Crime and Disorder	The proposal does not have a direct impact on crime and disorder, but shared-use routes could help to tackle anti-social behaviour by creating a diversionary activity for young people.
Environmental Sustainability	None identified at this stage but an increase in the number of cycling and walking routes has the potential to decrease congestion in the borough and improve the air quality of Swale.
Health and Wellbeing	The policy framework will seek to develop the Swale cycling and walking network to provide more opportunities for residents to engage in physical activity either through their daily commute or leisure activities. In this way, the new facilities have the potential to contribute to the NHS recommendation that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity such as cycling or brisk walking every week.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified for the consultation stage. Proposals for routes will be tested for feasibility by SBC and KCC Highways, which by necessity will take into account health and safety considerations.
Equality and Diversity	The consultation will not exclude any group on the basis of equality and diversity.
Privacy and Data Protection	The consultation will follow data protection law. A privacy notice has been used which is compliant with the Council's policies, the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

7 Appendices

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

- Appendix I: *Developing a new Swale Cycling and Walking Policy Framework – Have Your Say*
- Appendix II: *Swale Cycling and Walking Policy Framework 2018-2022 – Consultation Questionnaire*

8 Background Papers

8.1 None.