

## Swale Cycling and Walking Guidance Statement 2018-2022

### 1. Introduction

An increase to the number of people choosing to cycle or walk in Swale has huge potential to boost the local economy and help residents safely commute to school, work or to leisure attractions in the borough.

There are already a number of shared use routes in Swale which are safe and attract interest from cyclists and walkers. Our long term aim is to build on these foundations and create a cohesive 'joined-up' sustainable travel network which residents can access. In addition, we wish to create improvements for residents which improve safety in order to encourage road users to consider switching to sustainable modes of transport.

Promotion of the infrastructure can encourage more people to walk and cycle to work or school, which has the added benefits of improving air quality and enhancing the local economy by reducing congestion on our roads. Physical activity has also been shown to have a positive effect on our wellbeing and health.

This guidance statement has been devised to help inform Swale Borough Council's decisions which relate to improving the cycling and walking network in the borough. The document has been created in the context of the current Swale Local Plan and Local Transport Strategy Reviews, and will in turn help to inform the emerging Local Plan and the next incarnation of the borough's transportation strategy. In addition, the guidance can assist more widely in helping to achieve our measures around the improvement of air quality and our aims around the cleansing of paths and routes.

In February 2018, we adopted *A Visitor Economy Framework for Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey 2018-2023*. We aim to increase the value of tourism to the local economy by 11.5%, and walks and cycle routes play an important role in broadening the appeal of our destinations. For example, new infrastructure can create opportunities for new and existing businesses to create facilities which improve visitor dwell time such as bike hire schemes or walker's cafés.

The priorities and actions contained in this statement cannot be delivered in isolation. As you can see from the action plan in appendix II, we aim to work closely with our partners at Kent County Council and local Parish Councils to work towards delivering a safe and connected network. We plan to work directly with community groups, businesses and campaign groups to ensure improvements are focused on areas where the greatest increases in the level of walking and cycling can be made. The action plan is a 'living' document as the context of infrastructure and funding opportunities can change rapidly, so we will update the template and report back at least annually on our progress.

**Cllr Mike Cosgrove, Cabinet Member for Regeneration**  
**Cllr James Hunt, Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning**

## 2. National and Local Policy Overview

This guidance statement has been created in the context of a range of national and local policies and strategies. These are:

The **Department for Transport's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy** (2017) is the main national strategic driver for this statement. The main ambition of the strategy is 'to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey.' The strategy emphasises a partnership approach to delivery and makes a commitment to supporting walking and cycling infrastructure improvements.

A number of KCC polices provide further guidance including:

- The **Active Travel Strategy** which will run until 2021. Active Travel refers to walking or cycling as a means of transport, in order to get to a particular destination such as work, the shops or to visit friends. It does not cover walking and cycling done purely for pleasure, for health reasons or simply walking the dog. The overarching ambition of the strategy is to 'make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent'. To achieve this, the strategy aims to enable the delivery of three outcomes: improved health through an increase in physical activity; reduced congestion on the highway network by providing better travel choices and encouraging safer active travel.
- The **Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031** which outlines the transport improvements proposed for Swale.
- The **Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan** which aims to increase the use and enjoyment of Kent's Public Rights of Way (PROW) and open green space. The plan is expected to be replaced shortly with the adoption of a new **KCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-2028**.

The Swale Borough Council policies (SBC) which provide guidance include:

- The **Visitor Economy Framework for Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey 2018-2023** which includes the priority to deliver public realm improvements which will lead to improved infrastructure and connectivity. Under this priority, there is also the action to increase destination infrastructure for shared use routes.
- The **Swale Active Lives Framework 2017-2022** where walking and cycling can contribute to the overall vision that, 'the residents of Swale are encouraged, motivated, informed and have the opportunity to be more active and healthier. Enabling them to live life to the full, be happy and well, reaching their full potential'.
- The **Swale Transportation Strategy 2014-2031** (draft) which aims to 'encourage the use of sustainable means of travel as an alternative to the private car'.
- The **Local Plan (Bearing Fruits 2031)** is the most significant SBC policy which considers cycling and walking routes. The key policies are:
  - **Policy Core Planning 2** outlines that all planning applications must provide 'integrated walking and cycling routes to link existing and new

communities with local services and facilities, public transport and the Green Grid network’.

- At the design level, **Policy Development Management 6** explains that location, design and layout for development proposals will demonstrate that, ‘priority is given to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, including the disabled, through the provision of safe routes which minimise cyclist/pedestrian and traffic conflict within the site and which connect to local services and facilities’.

A number of allocations in the Local Plan also include consideration for cycling and walking provision, including:

- **Faversham:** the Oare Gravel Workings, Oare Road; land at Western Link, Faversham; land north of Graveney Road; land at Preston Fields and Perry Court Farm.
- **Isle of Sheppey:** land west of Barton Hill Drive, Minster.
- **Sittingbourne:** A249/Grovehurst Junction improvements; Iwade expansion; land at south-west Sittingbourne; land at Frogna Lane, Teynham; land at north-west Sittingbourne; Stones Farm, Canterbury Road; land at Crown Quay Lane and Milton Pipes, Mill Way.

### **Potential Funding Sources**

This guidance statement provides a basis for the making of bids for improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure in Swale through the Local Enterprise Partnership (Local Growth Fund) and other transport funding awarded to KCC by the Department for Transport. It has been informed by the Swale Local Plan and Local Transport Strategy Reviews, which in turn provide the basis for funding bids. Additionally, the policies and plans contained in this document could help to secure support for walking and cycling from other possible funding streams such as developer funding via s106 obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). In the past, funding has been used to make small interventions which help to improve the network such as cycle parking and new routes to schools and workplaces.

### **Health Benefits**

Cycling and walking have proven benefits for the health and wellbeing of those who travel in these ways. Research suggests that:

- Increasing evidence has been found for a link between adult obesity levels and the amount of physical activity undertaken when travelling. For instance, western countries with the highest levels of active travel generally also have the lowest obesity rates (Bassett et al 2008).
- Switching to active travel for short motor vehicle trips could save £17bn in NHS costs over a 20 year period (Jarrett et al, 2012).
- Sport England’s 2015 Active People Survey showed that people who cycle for travel are 4 times more likely to meet the recommended level of physical activity than those who do not.
- 30 minutes or more of commuting by foot or bicycle has a significant positive effect on mental health (Ohta, 2007).

*Source: Sustrans’ Active Travel Toolbox*

### 3. Cycling and Walking in Swale

#### Cycling Routes

Swale currently has three signed cycle routes

- National Cycling Route 1 passes through Faversham and Sittingbourne, partly following the route of the A2. The overall route connects Dover and the Shetland Islands;
- National Route 174 or 'The Sheerness Way' is a looped route which includes Barton's Point Coastal Park, the Queenborough Lines, and Sheerness Sea Front; and
- The Isle of Harty Trail is a flat, circular route which is mainly traffic-free. The route takes in local attractions such as Leysdown Beach and the RSPB Raptor View Point.

Cyclists can also legally make use of the PROW network as they can use Public Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic. However not all these routes are physically suitable for cyclists or may be inaccessible by bike at some times of year. It is important to state that users should always give way to more vulnerable users. Walkers and cyclists can also use a number of shared-use paths in Swale which are free of motor traffic.

Cyclists can also use cycle lanes signed on or off carriageway or shared use pedestrian, cyclist's routes and pavements. For further information about cycling on the road, please refer to the latest version of the [Highway Code](#).

#### Walking Routes

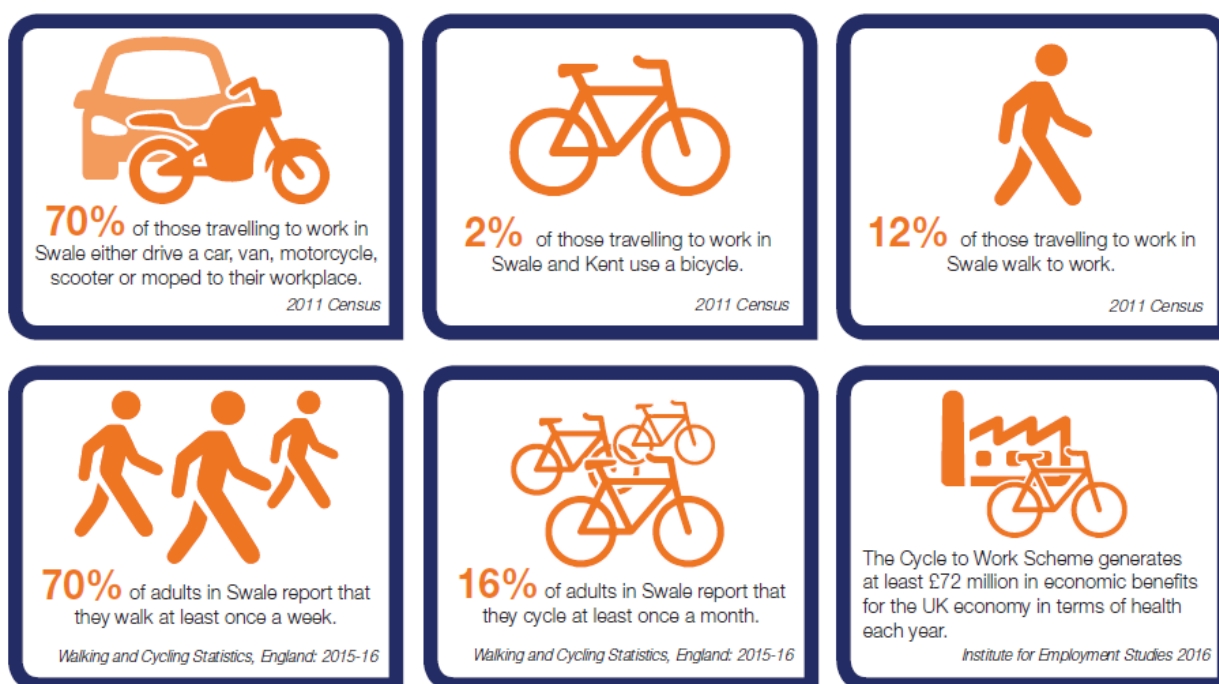
It is beyond the scope of this guidance statement to publicise all of the Public Rights of Way which are open to walkers in Swale. KCC publishes information on these routes using the Explore Kent Map on their [website](#), and residents can also request a definitive legal map from the authority.

The promoted walks in Swale include:

- The Saxon Shore Way is a national recreational route which passes through Swale along the North Kent coast and marshes. The route runs for 160 miles from Gravesend to Hastings.
- There are also a number of locally promoted trails such as those covered by the Food Trails project in Faversham, Newnham, Sheldwich, Boughton, Oare and Teynham. There are also routes in Perry Wood, Elmley National Nature Reserve and Barton's Point Coastal Park. Some of the town centres have also created specific routes to encourage visitors such as the Sittingbourne Cats Trail and guided walks in Faversham.

Natural England is also progressing plans to improve access to the coast in Swale, including around the Isle of Sheppey, as part of their project to create a national trail, the England Coast Path. The latest updates about this project are available online at the [Natural England website](#).

## Overview



### 4. Improving and Maintaining the Swale cycling and walking network

New cycling and walking routes will need to be safe and provide a continuous link between communities and popular destinations such as shops, schools, leisure centres and workplaces. Proposals for new and improved routes to such destinations typically are also the most likely to receive funded support. Other considerations that influence which schemes are delivered include whether the area is an air quality management zone requiring improvements, if the scheme is located at a traffic accident crash cluster site with identified safety improvements and whether there is the potential to increase the proportion of sustainable transport trips.

We will ensure that all new and improved cycle and walking infrastructure meets Department for Transport guidelines and related local design guidance whilst also considering the need for design to be as inclusive as possible.

The infrastructure for cycling and walking should also where possible follow the Department for Transport's [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Guidance](#) (April 2017), and be assessed on the grounds of directness, gradient, safety, connectivity and comfort.

Cycle parking facilities need to be convenient, safe and secure. In addition, it is essential that new residential properties have sufficient storage for cycles and this should be managed through the development control process. Cycling can also play a part in longer journeys, where users combine modes of transport (such as cycling to a train station). High quality, secure cycle parking at railway stations and other key transport connection points is essential to promote this. Although some

provision exists opportunities to improve the cycle parking provision and facilities at the main train stations should be sought.

A key component of any public space cycle parking is that it should complement and enhance the local environment while remaining functional and within cycle parking best practice. Therefore, wherever possible new cycle parking will be designed to both enhance and compliment public spaces.

### **Maintenance**

It is essential that facilities and routes are maintained to an appropriate standard as, if not, users will not be encouraged to engage with these modes of transport. Regular street cleaning may keep footways running alongside motor traffic routes clear of debris and surface defects. The maintenance of off-carriageway routes is likely to be less extensive because of issues such as access and the pressures of limited funding.

Cycle routes require their own particular maintenance regime, including the regular cleaning of gullies and kerb lines as well as the cutting back of vegetation to maintain the width of the route and sight lines. Debris from road accidents, such as glass, overgrown vegetation and surface defects, can present a hazard to cyclists as it can lead to punctured tyres, disrupt the planned route or create obstacles. These issues may also bring cyclists into conflict with other road users.

KCC has primary responsibility for the co-ordination of highways and PROW maintenance. They work with third party landowners including SBC, where required, to achieve maintenance objectives. KCC determine maintenance on the basis of information from regular inspections, annual surveys using specialist equipment, and reports from councillors, parish councils, community groups, user groups and residents. KCC Highway Inspectors survey road surfaces in a manner which takes into account cyclist's needs such as giving appropriate attention to the two metre strip alongside the kerb line.

Where funding is available, KCC Highways will maintain off-carriageway routes to criteria which include the cutting of surface vegetation twice per year on the most well used routes. Maintenance is led by Swale's District Manager with support from the Cycling Transport Planner. The National Cycle Network can also be maintained in a number of ways by Sustrans Rangers, who can place temporary signs, report faults, undertake small-scale vegetation clearance and organise work days for the most ambitious maintenance projects.

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## **5. Measures to improve safety**

A key concern for many residents which prevents them from undertaking active travel is the perceived safety of routes, be it near or on a busy road or difficult routes which may be beyond their current ability. Measures to tackle this currently include:

### **Cycling Training**

National Standard Cycle Training (Bikeability) is provided across Kent by KCC, predominantly to school children. Bikeability comprises three levels of competency-based cycle training:

- Level 1 is aimed at the basic bicycle control skills that are required to cycle safely in any environment and is delivered in an off-road environment such as a playground.
- Level 2 is delivered on quiet roads and teaches participants the skills necessary to take a basic on road journey and includes a variety of junctions.
- Level 3 tackles busy traffic situations and complex junctions.
- Levels 1 & 2 are offered to Year 5 & 6 school children. Level 3 is only offered to Year 7 and above.

Importantly, participants must demonstrate competence at each level before they progress to the next.

KCC also offers cycle training for adults at five venues across Kent, at which cycles and helmets can be hired. The courses range from 'Learning to ride' through to 'Advanced' level, and are largely based on the Bikeability levels. The nearest venue to Swale for this training is currently Maidstone.

### **Walking Road Safety**

Road safety education appears within the national curriculum requirements to help reduce the number of accidents on roads. In addition, the [Road Safety Team](#) at KCC provide a number of campaigns to help children to cross the road safely by using the Kent Road Safety Code which is to:

1. STOP before the kerb
2. LOOK and LISTEN for traffic
3. THINK about what to do
4. CROSS the road safely with an adult, looking and listening all the time.

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## **6. Promoting cycling in Swale**

Without the promotion of cycling and walking routes in Swale the uptake of these modes of transport will not increase in the borough.

- KCC and SBC websites need to be maintained to enable residents and visitors to easily access the latest information about walking routes and cycle paths (including Explore Kent, Visit Kent and Visit Swale websites).
- All routes should be fully signposted for the benefit of new walkers and cyclists and visitors who may be unfamiliar with the area.
- Local clubs, ramblers associations, stakeholder groups and cycle shops can, where possible, help promote routes to their members.
- Local authority and other public sector staff such as the NHS can also, where possible and appropriate, promote walking and cycling opportunities to residents.

## 7. Priorities

Further to the previous sections of this statement, the priorities of SBC and its partners' approach to cycling and walking can be outlined as follows. The reference column relates to the relevant section numbers of this document.

Ref	Priority	Delivery Partners
4.1	To have a network of high quality shared use routes in the urban and rural areas of Swale to provide safe and convenient access to shops, schools, leisure centres and work places. Where possible, plans will also incorporate connections to the nearby countryside.	KCC and SBC
4.2	Where appropriate seek contributions towards the delivery of the action plan through developer contributions.	KCC and SBC
4.3	Wherever possible measures will be provided in all traffic management/improvement schemes which give cyclists and walkers priority over motorised traffic in terms of accessibility and journey time.	KCC and SBC
4.4	KCC will work with partners to ensure the frequent and regular maintenance of all cycle tracks, walking routes and shared use paths within the borough where funding is available. SBC will monitor and with Parish Councils report maintenance issues as and when they are identified.	KCC, SBC and Parish Councils.
5.1	KCC to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Year 5 &amp; 6 children will have the opportunity to participate in Level 1 and 2 Bikeability Training.</li> <li>b) Children in years 7 to 9 will have access to Level 3 training.</li> <li>c) Adult cycle training will be available via work place travel planning initiatives.</li> </ul>	KCC
5.2	KCC Highways will continue to monitor cycling collision hot spots and pedestrian accidents with road traffic vehicles. The data will be used to, where possible and funding allows, design and implement measures to improve the safety of the routes.	KCC
5.3	A key priority area will be to ensure that the journey to school is safe for pedestrians and where possible, cyclists.	KCC
6.1	Ensure all cycle and pedestrian routes are fully advertised and signposted within and around Swale using both online and offline promotion.	SBC and KCC
6.2	In conjunction with the Swale Visitor Economy Framework, a map will be created for cycling and walking routes in Faversham, the Isle of Sheppey and Sittingbourne.	SBC and Explore Kent



## **8. Monitoring the guidance statement**

The outcomes will be delivered over the next four years through the priorities (section 7) and action plan in appendix II. Progress will be reported through:

- An annual update report to SBC's Cabinet outlining progress against the action plan. The action plan will also be updated as and when necessary on the SBC website with a RAG (Red, Amber and Green) status to show progress.
- The results from traffic and user surveys of cycling and walking within the Borough potentially carried out by a range of organisations including the Department for Transport, KCC, SBC and volunteer organisations. The data collected through these sources will help any applications for funding by providing information for economic appraisals and health impact assessments.

It is expected that the guidance statement will be revisited by the end of 2022 in order to inform the next version of the document.