

ACTIVE TRAVEL AND NET ZERO UPDATE

Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee - 14 March 2023

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning and Regulatory Services

Status: For information

Also considered by: N/A

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report updates members on the active travel initiatives that the District Council is engaged in, along with the funding opportunities that are being pursued in order to facilitate the delivery of specific projects, supported by the Movement Strategy (2022) and emerging Local Plan. It also updates members on wider Net Zero projects.

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Council's commitments to promoting better active travel and achieving Net Zero 2030.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Margot McArthur

Contact Officer(s): Emma Henshall, Ext. 7358; Margaret Carr, Ext. 7341

Recommendation to Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee:

To note this update report for information.

Reason for recommendation: Identifying opportunities for better active travel across the District is a key priority that can assist in reducing carbon emissions, improve air quality and result in positive health outcomes, as well as helping achieve the Council's Net Zero 2030 commitment.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Active travel has many benefits - walking, wheeling and cycling can all help to positively impact the health of the population and bring significant environmental benefits including improving air quality, reducing noise pollution and reducing traffic and therefore carbon emissions. The Council is committed to promoting and creating opportunities for better active travel in the District through its Movement Strategy (2022) and emerging Local Plan.

Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP

- 2 In January 2023 the District's first Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was completed covering Sevenoaks urban area. It is available online here:
https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/3677/sevenoaks_urban_are_a_local_cycling_and_walking_infrastructure_plan. LCWIPs are a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements needed at the local level, with a view to developing local cycling and walking networks over the longer term. The Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP identifies 8 cycle routes, mapped at Appendix A, and prioritises them in terms of benefits and likelihood of achieving modal shift. The top 3 prioritised routes are set out below, along with a brief explanation of progress made thus far towards delivering them.

Sevenoaks East to West Route (LCWIP route 3)

- 3 This route connects the east and west of Sevenoaks town, specifically connecting together 6 schools to provide a safe and accessible cycle route as an alternative to short car journeys. The route is mapped at Appendix A (route 3 - turquoise). We have successfully secured £1.2 million from Active Travel England to provide the route and are working in partnership with Kent County Council (KCC) to deliver it. The project is led by a member steering group and it is expected that public consultation on the details of the route will take place in June/July, before the final designs are agreed and the route is delivered on the ground by Spring 2024.

Sevenoaks to Otford Route (LCWIP route 1)

- 4 This route connects Sevenoaks town centre with Otford village centre including making significant improvements to the A225 and to the very busy Bat and Ball junction. This route was first identified in the Council's 2012 Cycling Strategy and a feasibility study was carried out in 2017. The route is mapped at Appendix A (route 1 - green). We have successfully secured £10,000 from Active Travel England to undertake scheme planning and design work in partnership with KCC and are in the process of putting forward a bid to secure further funding to deliver it. Given the previous work undertaken on the feasibility of the route we feel that we stand a good chance of securing the funding to deliver it, however whilst the Otford to Bat and Ball section of the route is fairly straightforward to deliver, the section from Bat and Ball to Sevenoaks town centre requires some further detailed consideration as it presents a number of challenges owing to the road's constrained nature. It is expected that expert consultants will be appointed to undertake the scheme planning and design work following the proper procurement process in the coming weeks.

Sevenoaks to Seal to Otford Route (LCWIP route 6)

- 5 This route connects Sevenoaks town centre with Seal and links through the proposed Sevenoaks Quarry development (conceptually at present) to connect through to the Riverside Retail Park south of Otford. The route is mapped at Appendix A (route 6 - pink). We have successfully secured

£10,000 from Active Travel England to undertake scheme planning and design work in partnership with KCC. A bid for funding to deliver it was discussed with KCC, however the route did not meet all the criteria to make the final selection (this time) as, quite understandably, we need to undertake the scheme planning and design work first. It is expected that expert consultants will be appointed to undertake the scheme planning and design work following the proper procurement process in the coming weeks.

Swanley Urban Area LCWIP

- 6 Following on from the success of the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP, we have secured a further £25,000 from Active Travel England to undertake a LCWIP for Swanley Urban Area in partnership with KCC. Subject to meeting procurement requirements it is hoped that Sustrans, the consultant that undertook the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP and the custodians of the National Cycle Network, will be able to complete the study. Swanley suffers from poor air quality and also has some of the most deprived wards in the country, and so boosting active travel opportunities in this area is key if we are to tackle these issues.

Carbon Reduction Plan

- 7 The Carbon Reduction Plan is nearly complete. Laser (a group of Kent-based energy and carbon reduction consultants) have carried out detailed surveys to assess whether the Council and its assets (Argyle Road, Dunbrik, the leisure centres in Edenbridge and Sevenoaks) can be converted away from fossil fuels to more sustainable energy sources such as solar PV and ground or air source heat pumps. It will also refer to plans for reducing emissions from the fleet. The Plan will provide estimates of costs necessary to achieve this and an indication of any grant funding that may be available.
- 8 Taking all these calculations together, it will provide a pathway to Net Zero for the Council, with an indication of how we should be reducing our use of carbon each year, together with an indication of how much we may need to offset.

District Emissions

- 9 The Plan will also look at what we can do about reducing the overall emissions in the District with partners including KCC. KCC has recently formed a Sustainable Energy Team looking at how the county can become more energy self-sufficient. They estimate that Kent will need three separate energy plans and have carried out geo-spatial mapping to understand where renewable energy sites currently exist. This data will be shared with District and Borough Councils in the coming weeks.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

- 10 Officers have commissioned an external consultant (Field Dynamics) to produce a report indicating where EV charging points could be located across the District. The report categorises the District into distinct areas,

allowing us to see where residents will be able to provide their own charging solutions and where public/on street solutions will be required. Officers will now be working to put together a priority list of potential charging locations; these will then be used to approach third party companies who may be able to provide the required infrastructure on our behalf. Field Dynamics will be providing a summary report within the next 6 weeks.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

The active travel initiatives referred to in this report have largely been secured and/or completed using external funding from Active Travel England and in partnership with KCC. We could choose not to engage in further active travel initiatives, through external funding streams or our own budget, however this would contradict the Council's commitment to promoting and creating opportunities for better active travel in the District, and therefore disadvantage our residents. This is not considered to be an acceptable approach. Further, the Council has made a commitment to Net Zero 2030.

Key Implications

Financial

Funding for the active travel initiatives referred to in this report has been secured through external sources and it is not expected that any top up will be required. Funding for the wider Net Zero 2030 commitment will be met from existing budgets.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

No legal implications have been identified.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero with regards to carbon emissions by 2030. This report is to inform members of the ongoing work to meet the commitment.

Conclusions

This report updates members on the active travel initiatives that the District Council is engaged in, alongside progress on other Net Zero projects. It is considered that progress so far is consistent with achieving Net Zero by 2030.

Appendices

Appendix A - Cycle Routes identified in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP

Background Papers

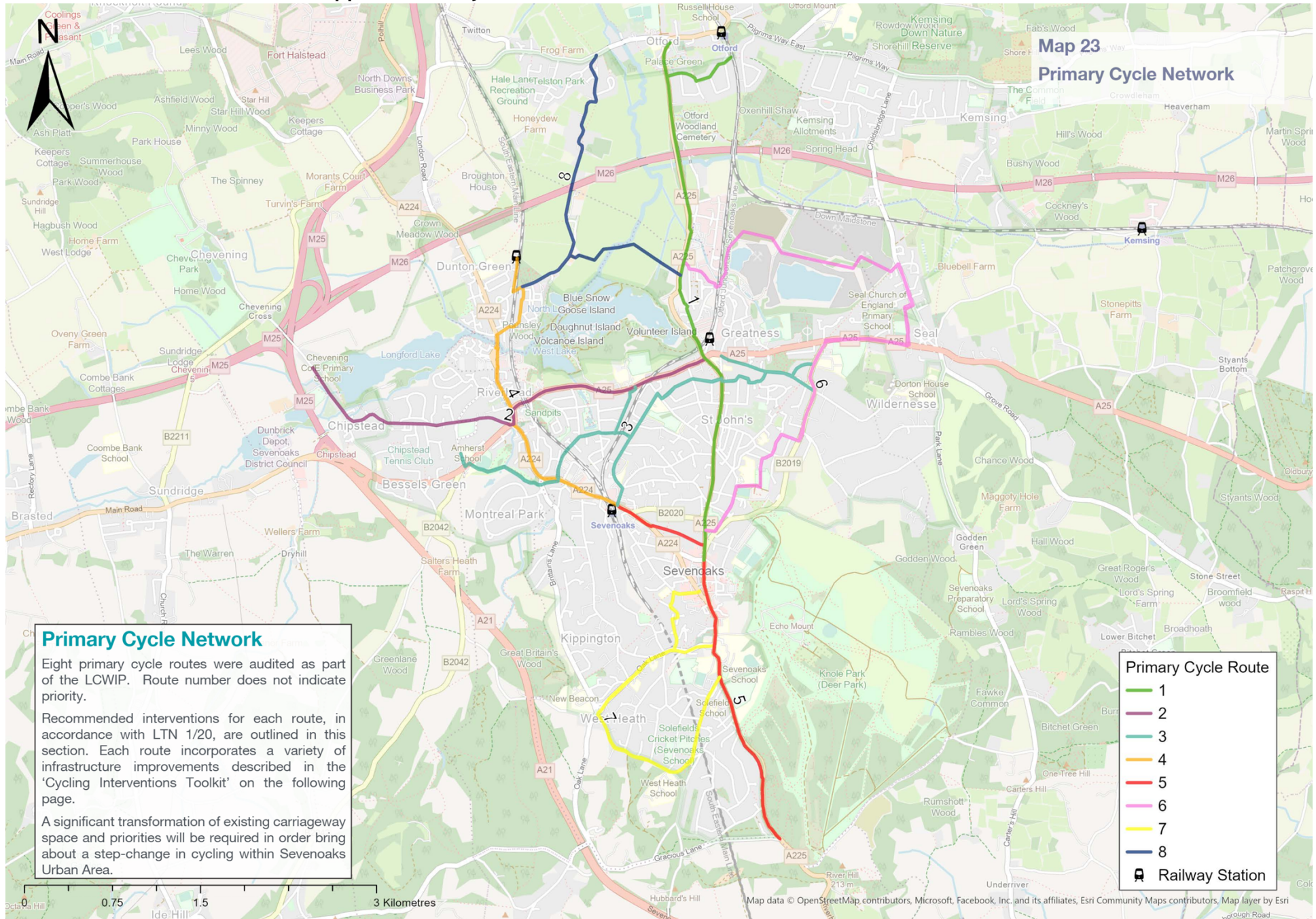
None

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning and Regulatory Services

Appendix A - Cycle Routes identified in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP

Map 23
Primary Cycle Network



Primary Cycle Network

Eight primary cycle routes were audited as part of the LCWIP. Route number does not indicate priority.

Recommended interventions for each route, in accordance with LTN 1/20, are outlined in this section. Each route incorporates a variety of infrastructure improvements described in the 'Cycling Interventions Toolkit' on the following page.

A significant transformation of existing carriageway space and priorities will be required in order bring about a step-change in cycling within Sevenoaks Urban Area.

Primary Cycle Route

- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
 - 7
 - 8
- Railway Station