



## EXECUTIVE

### 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy</b>
<b>Lead Member</b>	Cllr Scott Edwards – Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills
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<b>Key Decision</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	N/A
<b>Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with?</b>	Green, sustainable environment

### List of Appendices

**Appendix A** – Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy

**Appendix B** – Climate Change Impact Assessment tool

### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Executive Members with an update on the progress of the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy, report on the findings from the public consultation and to seek approval for adoption of the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy.

## 2. Executive Summary

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2. The Education and Inspections Act (2006) placed a range of duties upon local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport, intending to support the choices and flexibility of educational provision across the country.
- 2.2 The Act outlines four main elements to promoting sustainable modes of travel, including the assessment and audit of sustainable travel options within the local authority, the development of a strategy for the promotion of sustainable travel to schools and other educational or training facilities. As such, North Northamptonshire Council is required to produce and publish its Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (SMoTS) annually.
- 2.3 In developing a strategy, the Council has a statutory duty to follow guidance issued by Government. The latest guidance was published in June 2023 and in which states, Local Authorities must publish a SMoTS for each academic year by 19<sup>th</sup> September.
- 2.4 The current strategy for North Northamptonshire is the Northamptonshire SMoTS, adopted by the former County Council in 2014/15.
- 2.5 The Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy has been produced in line with the requirements of the SMoTS to reflect the needs of the community, priorities and investment plans. The strategy has been developed in line with other strategic policies such as the Corporate Plan, Local Development Framework whilst being coordinated with emerging policies for example the Greenway Strategy and Local Walking and Cycling Investment Plans.
- 2.6 A formal public consultation was undertaken on the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy from 14<sup>th</sup> September until 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

## 3. Recommendations

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
  - i) Notes the findings of the public consultation analysis for the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy which forms **Section 7.5** of this report.
  - ii) Approves and adopts the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy which forms **Appendix A** of this report as a Council policy document.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations: The Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy has been prepared in line with the governments guidance and has been developed to enable the Council to:

- Assess and audit of sustainable travel options within the local authority,
- Develop a strategy for the promotion of sustainable travel to schools and other educational or training facilities.
- Identify prioritised cycling and walking infrastructure improvements for future investment.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered:

- While it would be possible to develop a Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy based on a different methodology to that contained in Government Guidance, this is not recommended as it would mean that the Council would be unlikely to fulfil its duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Not adopt the Northamptonshire Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

Neither of these options are recommended.

## **4. Report Background**

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4.1 North Northamptonshire Council are required to arrange free, suitable, home to school transport for children of compulsory school age, who are eligible, to their nearest suitable qualifying school in line with section 508B of the Education Act 1996 and the Government's statutory guidance 'Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2014'.

4.2 The Education and Inspections Act (2006) also places a duty on local authorities to promote the use of active and sustainable travel to education and further support the choices and flexibility of educational provision.

4.3 The Act outlined four main elements to promoting sustainable modes of travel, including the assessment and audit of sustainable travel options within the local authority, the development of a strategy for the promotion of sustainable travel to schools and other educational or training facilities. As such, North Northamptonshire Council is required to produce and publish its annually a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (SMoTS).

4.4 The Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) Home to School Transport Policy (April 2020) has been consulted to inform the acceptable walking and cycling distances for journeys to schools in the county. The Policy defines the appropriate walking distances for pupils under the Education Act 1996, stating:

*"Section 444(5) defines walking distance as 2 miles for pupils under 8, and 3 miles for older pupils, in both cases measured by the nearest available route."*

- 4.5 Post-16 students may be eligible for other sources of financial help, depending on household income, to help with education costs including travel. There is no legal obligation to provide free home to school or college transport to students over the age of 16 or for those who do not meet the statutory requirements through the Education Act. However, there is a requirement for the local authority to consider unmet demand through the Transport Act 1985.
- 4.6 Section 63(1)(a), explains that local transport authorities must: “secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the Council consider it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose.”
- 4.7 In developing a strategy, the Council has a statutory duty to follow guidance issued by Government. The latest guidance was published in June 2023 and in which states, Local Authorities must publish a sustainable modes of travel strategy for each academic year by 19<sup>th</sup> September.
- 4.8 In early 2023, the Council consulted on the Home to School Policy. As part of this consultation, the community provided views of possible travel options for the journey to school. This has been considered in developing the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy.
- 4.9 The North Northamptonshire Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy replaces the Northamptonshire SMoTS, (2014/15).

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1 Given the age of the current SMoTs, it has been evident since before the Council’s formation that it needed to be updated. The publication of the new Government guidance it is timely to prepare an updated Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy.
- 5.2 Public consultation is a necessary component of the plan’s development. The plan will also be subject to an Equalities Screening Assessment.

## **6. Next Steps**

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- 6.1. Assuming the approval of this report, the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy will be published on the Council’s website. The strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community.
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## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources, Financial and Transformation**

7.1.1. The Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy has been developed from using staff funded from existing budgets with its consultation funded similarly.

### **7.2. Legal and Governance**

7.2.1. As explained in section 4 above, the Council has a statutory duty to have a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy (SMoTS). The proposals in this report provide for implementing that duty.

### **7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.3.1. The proposal will assist the Council in meeting the priorities in the Corporate Plan around:

#### **Better, Brighter Futures**

- Support schools to provide physical activity programmes through our Healthier Schools Programme.
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#### **Safe and Thriving Places**

- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

#### **Green, sustainable Environment**

- Promote sustainable, active travel
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future.

7.3.2. The proposal will assist the Council in developing and delivering Council's Local Transport Plan, which the Council has a statutory duty to deliver. As well as the Carbon Management Plan in reducing the carbon impact of travel to education.

### **7.4 Risk**

7.4.1. If the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy were not to be approved there is a risk that the Council will not meet its obligations under the Education and Inspections Act (2006). A risk register will be developed as part of the deliver and implementation of the strategy and will ensure risks are identified, recorded and monitored.

## 7.5 Consultation

7.5.1 The formal consultation ran from 14<sup>th</sup> September to midnight on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

7.5.2 The consultation was hosted on the Council's [Consultation & Engagement Hub](#)

7.5.3 The consultation was supported by a briefing paper containing a clear outline of the proposed strategy.

7.5.4 Consultees were able to have their say by:

- Visiting the dedicated consultation webpage and completing the questionnaire or requesting a paper questionnaire
- Emailing [schoolconsultation.nnc@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultation.nnc@northnorthants.gov.uk)
- Writing to North Northamptonshire Council, Consultation: Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy Consultation, Bowling Green Road, Kettering NN15 7QX
- Accessing the questionnaire free of charge at any North Northamptonshire Council library. Alternative formats of the questionnaire are offered upon request

### 7.5.5 Formal Consultation Response

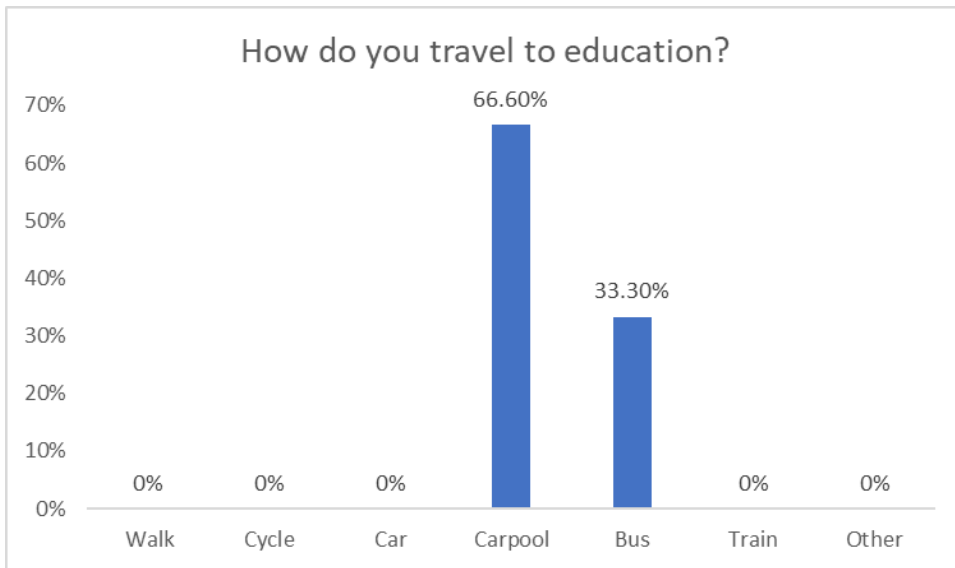
In total, 24 respondents filled out a questionnaire, either partially or fully: 14 complete responses and 10 incomplete responses. Respondents did not have to answer every question so the total number of responses for each question differs.

About the respondents:

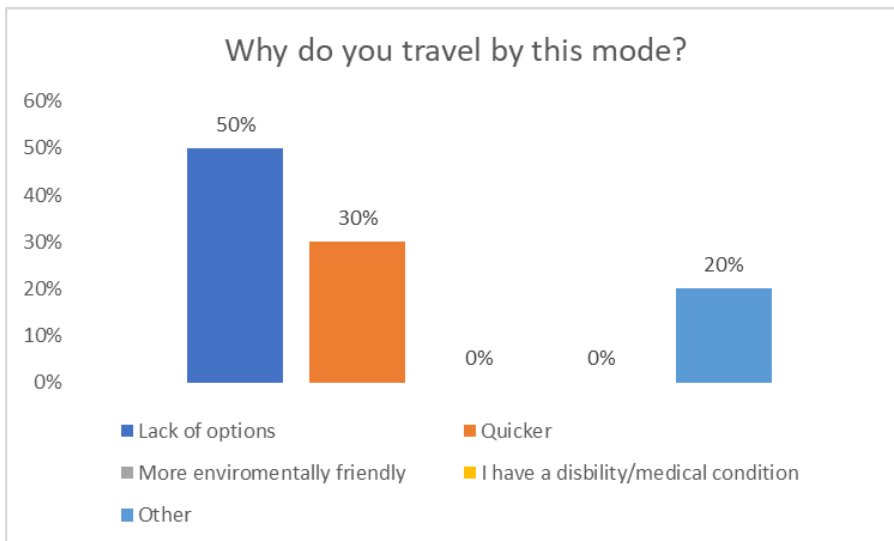
Respondents were asked in what capacity they were responding to the consultation.

	<b>Response number</b>
A parent/guardian of a secondary school pupil	8
A parent/guardian of a primary school pupil	3
A young person currently of school age	1
A provider of services to schools	0
A voluntary, community or charitable organisation	0
A North Northamptonshire Councillor	0
A Town or Parish Councillor/Council	3
An educational professional	3
Community/residents organisation	0
Other	6
	24

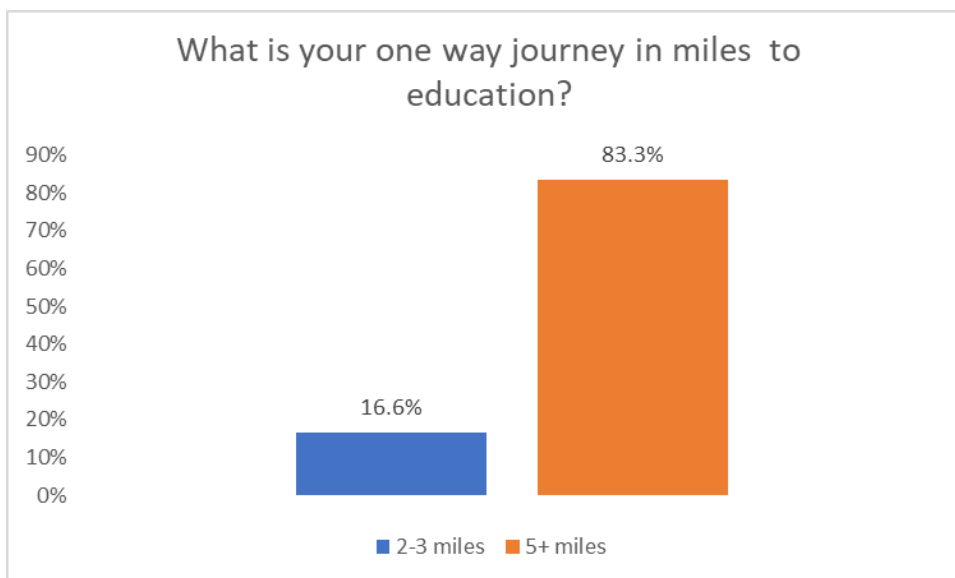
Respondents were invited to share how they currently travel to education; 9 respondents answered this question.



Respondents were asked why they travel by their current mode of transport; respondents answered this question.



Respondents were asked about their one-way travel journey to education; 6 respondents answered this question.



## 7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. The Future Communities, Executive Advisory Panel will consider the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

## 7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1 Any requests from the Scrutiny Commission will be responded to, and formal engagement or presentations required will take place.

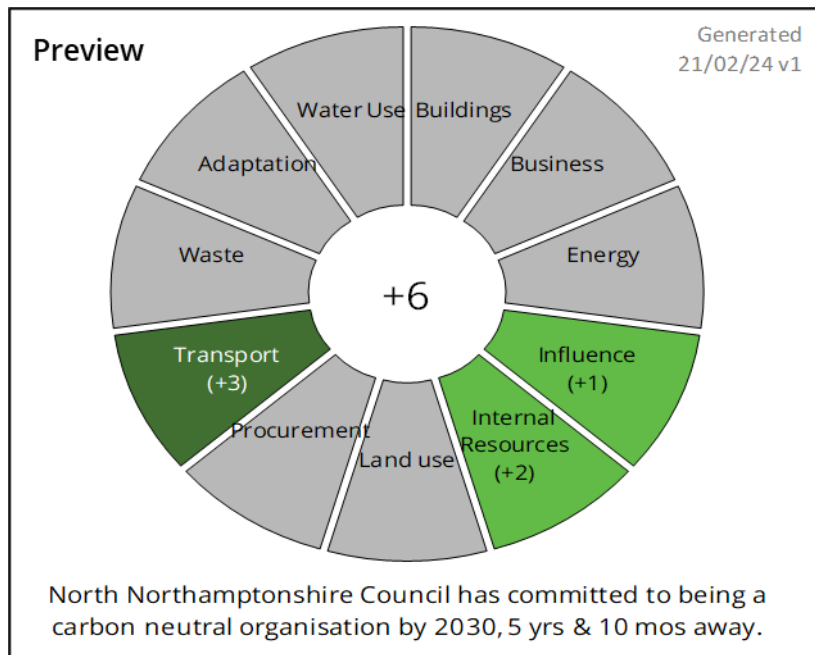
## 7.8 Equality Implications

7.8.1 The Equality Screening Assessment has not identified any adverse impact on individuals with protected characteristics.

## 7.9 Climate Impact

7.9.1 This strategy encourages people to the take up of active and sustainable travel to education and introduces measures to support their usage and is a refresh of work undertaken under the Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy 2014.





7.9.2 Overall the policy has an overall positive impact, the elements which have been scored are as follows:

- Internal Resources (+2): The proposal uses grant funding which has already been obtained.
- Influence (+1): The proposal works with partners and the community to encourage and promote active and sustainable travel to education.
- Transport (+3): The proposal has benefits in terms of promoting and improving facilities for active travel and sustainable transport whilst supporting shared mobility.

## 7.10 Community Impact

7.10.1 The Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy will improve sustainable and active travel, which have benefits for health and well-being as well as supporting low cost and environmentally sensitive modes of transport.

## 7.11 Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1 There are no specific impacts relating to the recommendations in this report.

## 8. Background Papers

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8.1 Travel to school for children of compulsory school age (June 2023) [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181183/Travel-to-school-for-children-of-compulsory-school-age.pdf)

8.2 Equalities Impact Assessment