

Active Communities Executive Advisory Panel

2nd August 2024

Report Title	North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategy
Lead Member	Cllr Helen Howell – Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism
Executive Director	Jane Bethea, Director of Public Health
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Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix A: North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategic Masterplan

Appendix B: Consultation report

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report presents the final version of the North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategic Masterplan following public and further stakeholder consultation during late 2023 and early 2024.
- 1.2. It details the changes made to the draft document as a result of the consultation.
- 1.3. The Masterplan has been co-produced with the Council's strategic partners. The Greenway strategy provides a clear vision and definition for the Greenway and an evidence-based masterplan to shape investment and development over the next 10 to 20 years.

- 1.4. The report requests approval from Executive to adopt the Strategy.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. A report was brought to the Council's Executive on 14th September 2023, which introduced and sought approval to consult on the draft Strategic Masterplan for the North Northamptonshire Greenway, comprising over 350km of routes connecting settlements within North Northamptonshire and in neighbouring authorities with a combined population of 600,000.
- 2.2. Between 21st September 2023 and 1st November 2023 public and further stakeholder consultation was undertaken.
- 2.3. The key findings from that consultation are contained in the Consultation report at **Appendix B** and are summarised in the main body of this report.
- 2.4. The Developer Contributions formula which was introduced in the previous report to help inform future negotiations to secure funding through for example, Section 106 Agreements required further work
- 2.5. Once adopted, the Strategy will have weight in planning terms and can feed into other policies and strategies, including the emerging Strategic Plan for North Northamptonshire and for future negotiations with developers regarding planning obligations.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Active Communities Executive Advisory Panel:
 - a) Note the changes made to the final version of the Greenway Strategic Masterplan following public consultation; and
 - b) Provides any final feedback prior to submission of the strategy for adoption at the Executive meeting scheduled for 15th August 2024
- 3.2. Reasons for Recommendations: To support the Council and its partners to prioritise future routes for the Greenway and to inform future feasibility studies which will assist the Council to secure developer contributions and other external funding to deliver the programme.
- 3.3. Alternative Options Considered: The alternative option would be to not have a Greenway Strategic Masterplan However, this is not a recommended approach as the strategy clearly outlines what the priority routes are for North Northamptonshire, based on comprehensive data and evidence, will inform future feasibility studies, which are required to secure external funding and

developer contributions to enable the expansion of the Greenway across North Northamptonshire. It will also ensure a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the Greenway.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The background to the establishment of the North Northamptonshire Greenway Programme Board, all the partners involved, and its oversight of the development of the Strategy is set out in detail in the report to the Council's Executive dated [14th September 2023](#). (Full link in Section 8, Background Papers).
- 4.2. The September 2023 report also set out the methodology and processes the contracted Consultants undertook to develop the strategy, including policy reviews, data collection and analysis and a series of stakeholder workshops.
- 4.3. The strategy will provide:
 - a clear vision and definition for the Greenway;
 - an evidence-led masterplan to shape investment and development over the next 10-20 years;
 - a formula to calculate developer contributions;
 - further guidance on rights of way and their role in developing greenways and ensuring the greenways are designed to current national standards;
 - a clear link to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) process to bring these to rural areas;
 - a masterplan which will link to policies such as the Local Transport Plan and help shape and influence decision making.
- 4.4. The Greenway Masterplan will be the overarching document setting out the long-term strategy and the aims and objectives for the Greenway. In addition, it will have a series of individual dynamic plans or 'design recommendation booklets', detailing the network in manageable routes.
- 4.5. The design recommendation booklets will provide clear summaries of each route; length, surface, land ownership, costs, key stakeholders and route constraints.
- 4.6. The strategy explains how the Greenway will be delivered across North Northamptonshire by:
 - Defining the Greenway; what it is, how it can be used, who might use it and how it underpins other Council strategies and priorities relating to health and wellbeing, leisure, tourism and active travel.
 - Influencing and shaping policy as a potential Supplementary Planning Document.
 - Setting out how Biodiversity Net Gain can positively impact green infrastructure and wider natural capital

- Detailing how contributions can be secured through Section 106 and other developer contributions, through a developed formula ensuring future developments in North Northamptonshire can link to the Greenway where appropriate.
- Influencing internal and external stakeholders to consider the Greenway programme in their strategic decision making.
- Outlining how the Greenway will be delivered through existing Rights of Way and the creation of new routes.
- Providing clarity on the maintenance, liability and ownership requirements when new sections of the Greenway are proposed and opened.
- Reflecting the government guidance provided by Local Transport Note 1/20 (regarding standards for cycling infrastructure) and Gear Change (which seeks to support a modal shift towards walking and cycling).
- Developing a template for the four local area “design recommendation booklets” which will be dynamic plans highlighting the completed, proposed, desired routes with GIS layers that will be able to be updated as required by Council officers.
- Placing the Council and its partners in the best position to bid for future funding from sources such as Active Travel England, the Levelling Up Fund and National Highways.
- Referencing the Sense of Place toolkit as developed by the Nenescape project which was Lottery funded for the 3 years up to end of 2022.
- Highlighting the advantages of the Greenway branding and route names to add a sense of place.

4.7. The key objectives of the North Northamptonshire Greenway are to:

- Enable people to choose to walk, wheel or cycle for a range of trip purposes including school, commuting, every day and leisure trips;
- Deliver an accessible, inclusive active travel network in line with current design standards in terms of coherence, directness, safety, comfort and attractiveness;
- Help to deliver North Northamptonshire’s Green Infrastructure network including the Ise and Nene Valley Corridors;
- Improve the tourism offer across North Northamptonshire, with connected market towns, nature reserves and tourism sites and circular routes;
- Improve the vitality of North Northamptonshire’s towns, aiding local businesses by improving access for commuters and shoppers;
- Provide safe routes to schools;
- Provide additional sustainable transport options for residents who don’t own a car.

4.8. Stakeholders examined the potential routes that were identified across North Northamptonshire following the data collection and analysis, and consideration was given to any routes that had not been identified. This led to two more being added to the proposed network, giving a total of 35 potential routes.

4.9. All routes were prioritised against the criteria, and because many scored the same, a decision was taken to weight certain criteria. Four routes were identified to include in the design recommendations booklet which accompanies this Strategic Masterplan (Appendix G to the Strategy). These have been informed by the prioritisation scores, which routes have existing feasibility studies, and stakeholder feedback. On this basis the following four routes have been selected:

- Rothwell to Kettering
- Wellingborough to Wollaston via Irchester
- Burton Latimer to Irthlingborough
- Kettering to Thrapston

4.10. A draft development contributions formula was also developed last year as part of the Strategic Masterplan to help inform future negotiations with developers. The formula was informed by the cost of the proposed network, the forecast development-related active travel trips and the cost per active travel trip, resulting in the following developer contributions formula:

Developer contributions = Active travel trips x cost per active travel trips

4.11. Further work is required on this approach as described in paragraph 5.18 of this report.

4.12. The purpose of the public consultation was to:

- Determine the level of support for the North Northants Greenway Strategy;
- Seek feedback on the S106 funding formula; and
- Understand the route prioritization criteria and identify if there are any gaps.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. During the Greenway Strategy consultation period, using the various means available to consultees, local people, interested parties and organisations contributed to the consultation 294 times. Nearly all of the feedback received was via the questionnaire, with 288 respondents participating via the questionnaire and 6 respondents submitting a written response.

5.2. When asked “Overall, do you support or oppose the creating of a Greenway for North Northamptonshire?” There were 208 responses to this question comments and 88.0% “strongly support” and 8.2% “tending to support. 1.9% “neither support or oppose”, with 1.0% “tending to oppose” and 1.0% “strongly oppose”

- 5.3. Respondents to the survey found most of the draft objectives relative to the Vision and that “helping to choose walking, wheeling and cycling” resonated the most with them.
- 5.4. Respondents were also asked “If you feel there are any key objectives that are missing then please tell us”. 64 responses were received, and from those comments the themes that emerged were safety, maintenance, inclusivity, deliverability and connectivity.
- 5.5. The questionnaire also asked for “Greenway Champions” to come forward who would raise the profile of the Strategy, the benefits of the Greenway network, advocate it to their community and generally spread the word. This yielded 3 individual responses.
- 5.6. Interested groups from villages and towns on the routes have come forward since the Consultation to both show their support and to work with us to help identify and scope the routes. These include Rockingham Forest Vision, the Slate Valley Greenway (Route 8), Wollaston and Irchester (Route 28), Great and Little Addington (Route 13) and Apethorpe for their part in routes 7 and 19.
- 5.7. In addition, scoping work is also taking place with Twywell, Cranford and Woodford through local interest on Route KT.
- 5.8. Since the consultation closed work with Braybrooke Parish Council and the local landowner has resulted in £100,000 being secured through a variety of external funding sources to deliver the section from Market Harborough to Braybrooke. This shows how effective working with interested communities and landowners can deliver the Greenway and will be used as an exemplar across North Northamptonshire to deliver further routes. Please note the primary focus of the Strategy is to deliver the Greenway within North Northamptonshire however opportunities to connect our residents to communities and services in neighbouring local authority areas will be pursued as appropriate when they arise.
- 5.9. This interest and support from local community members is key to the scoping and profile raising of each of the routes at a local level, to engage local landowners, helping overcome barriers and with the development of each route from scoping through to delivery. This local support provides the opportunity to access different funding streams that are not always necessarily available to local authorities. An example of this would be the Slate Valley Greenway Trail, currently at Feasibility Stage. The local interest group were able to apply to a local landfill site for the funds to commission their study.
- 5.10. In addition to the survey responses, there were 7 written responses received in relation to the North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategy consultation by email.
- 5.11. One came from a Town Council showing support for the North Northamptonshire Greenway development, and the other six came from stakeholders such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Ramblers, British

Horse Society, local developers and internal functions within North Northants Council.

- 5.12. These organisations have individually commented on the draft strategy and meetings with the respondents have taken place in order to incorporate their thoughts into the final version of the North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategy.
- 5.13. In March 2024 the Greenway Programme Board considered the outputs from the consultation and the comments received from specific organisations. As a result of the feedback received several changes have been made to the final document.
- 5.14. For uniformity it is proposed that it is now referred to as North Northamptonshire Greenway as opposed to North Northants Greenway (shown below). This will help with the branding, and the sense of place. It can be used where phases are developed in urban and rural areas with signage stating e.g. “Connecting to the North Northamptonshire Greenway”. This will give raise the Strategy and the network’s profile, heighten awareness, sell the ambition and encourage



- 5.15. The vision statement has been amended to:

The North Northamptonshire Greenway will be a strategic rural network of **safer**, largely traffic-free routes suitable for **walkers, wheelers, cyclists and equestrian users where appropriate**, connecting settlements, employment, leisure and tourism destinations across North Northamptonshire and beyond”.

to reflect equestrian users and their needs when developing the NNG network.

- 5.16. Environment Agency comments have been incorporated, referencing their involvement with routes close to rivers, and the need for flood risk assessments and adequate measures in place for disposing of waste when constructing. This has been added into Section 7.
- 5.17. The Planning Policy department wanted to ensure that enough weight and local support for the NNG is reflected throughout the Strategy. Several additions have been made throughout the Strategy. These include:
- Defining the North Northamptonshire Greenway as a Rural LCWIP and that by following LCWIP principals to determine the routes, they deliver the same objectives, and that both rural and urban LCWIPS are supported by the Council.
 - The approach to the priority routes has been softened to reflect that the focus is not just on those identified priority routes in 4.9 above, but all routes: section 1.18 of the Strategy document refers.

- How Neighbourhood Plans can support the delivery has been strengthened.
- Maintenance of existing routes came up a lot through the questionnaire responses, and it was specifically mentioned by a local landowner in their written response. It is now made clear in Section 7.4.3 and going forward, maintenance arrangements need to be agreed before any “spade in the ground” starts. This includes designation, bin emptying, bench maintenance for example.
- The themes that emerged from the survey regarding **safety, maintenance, inclusivity, deliverability and connectivity** have been addressed, as above and through the emphasis that there is not a one size fits all approach and through the change to the Vision and through consideration for installing appropriate ‘furniture’ for intended users.
- Added reference to Tourism and Leisure Strategies./

5.18. It has become clear from Planning Policy officers that more work is needed on the Developer Contributions formula. Any formula needs to be embedded in the new Local Plan and be compliant with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 201 to ensure that developer contributions must be (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, (b) directly related to the development, and (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. At present the Strategy and its supporting documents do not suggest that the routes are required to support or unlock growth. Therefore, there appears to be limited justification to suggest that any contributions would be required to make developments acceptable in planning terms or directly related to the vast majority of developments. Therefore, NNC should consider alternative funding arrangements which could potentially include the use of Community Infrastructure Levy.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. As the North Northamptonshire Greenway is a long-term ambition, it is recommended that a web page or site is developed to demonstrate all routes and track progress for all North Northamptonshire residents, stakeholders, local interest groups, Greenway Champions.
- 6.2. Continue to recruit Greenway Champions. A role profile has been developed to provide clarity around what being a champion means.
- 6.3. Four Ward Councillor Local Area leads have been allocated and they are developing positive relationships with landowners, stakeholders and Council officers to scope and progress any opportunities for the Greenway programme in the 4 locality areas.
- 6.4. Bi-annual meetings with local interest groups will be held to share successes, overcome barriers and to continue raising the profile of the Greenway.

- 6.5. Continue to work with the Nene Rivers Trust to engage with landowners, and foster closer working with Active Travel England to share the vision and ambition.
- 6.6. Increase the promotion of the existing greenway routes, working with the Discover Northamptonshire team. This includes developing an online interactive map, route brochures and attending external outreach events
- 6.7. Continue to work with Planning Policy experts and other stakeholders on the Developer Contributions formula and the best approach to secure developer contributions.
- 6.8. There will be ongoing engagement with stakeholders to produce further design recommendation booklets.
- 6.9. Continue to explore all opportunities to secure external funding to deliver phases of the Greenway programme.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. The strategy development has been funded through external funding from the Shared Prosperity fund. It does not include specific saving targets or future expenditure proposals at this stage. However, the strategy will inform future capital investment in the Greenway through developer contributions, external funding bids and any capital investment the Council may or may not choose to consider.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. The Report seeks adoption of the Greenway Strategic Masterplan. The securing of access rights across land that is not owned by NNC will need to be reviewed at a later date. Third Party land in the ownership of Stakeholders may be available for the route but any third-party land will need to be secured by legal agreement and easements or permanent rights granted through dedication by the Owners.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. The North Northamptonshire Council's Corporate plan adopted in 2021 has key commitments which are key to this project. These include:
 - Active, fulfilled lives: supporting people to live healthier more active lives. Active travel schemes and use of our green spaces supports commitment.

- Safe and thriving places: thriving economy that shapes great places to live, learn work and visit which can be achieved within this scheme.
- Green, sustainable environment: the vision is to develop a green infrastructure for walking, cycling and use of our waterways.

[Corporate plan | North Northamptonshire Council](#)
[\(\[northnorthants.gov.uk\]\(http://northnorthants.gov.uk\)\)](http://northnorthants.gov.uk)

7.4. **Risk**

7.4.1. The template for design recommendations provides the Council with the basis for future feasibility studies for proposed routes of the Greenway. Without such studies the risk is future funding applications will be unsuccessful.

7.5. **Consultation**

7.5.1. The strategy has been co-produced with a range of stakeholders and has been subject to public consultation as set out in **Appendix B**.

7.6. **Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

7.6.1. This report was considered by the Active Communities Executive Advisory Panel during the consultation period, comments received were fed into the consultation. The report is before the Panel again at its meeting on 2nd August 2024 to provide an update on progress made and to seek final comments.

7.7. **Consideration by Scrutiny**

7.7.1. This report has not been considered by Scrutiny, but will be subject to call in.

7.8. **Equality Implications**

7.8.1. The proposals set out in the strategy respond to the need to ensure that equitable access to jobs, services, leisure and other opportunities are provided for all North Northamptonshire residents, workers and visitors. The Strategy aims to improve walking, wheeling and cycling in North Northamptonshire to enable travel choice and reduce short journeys by car, with resulting improvements in emissions, health and wellbeing.

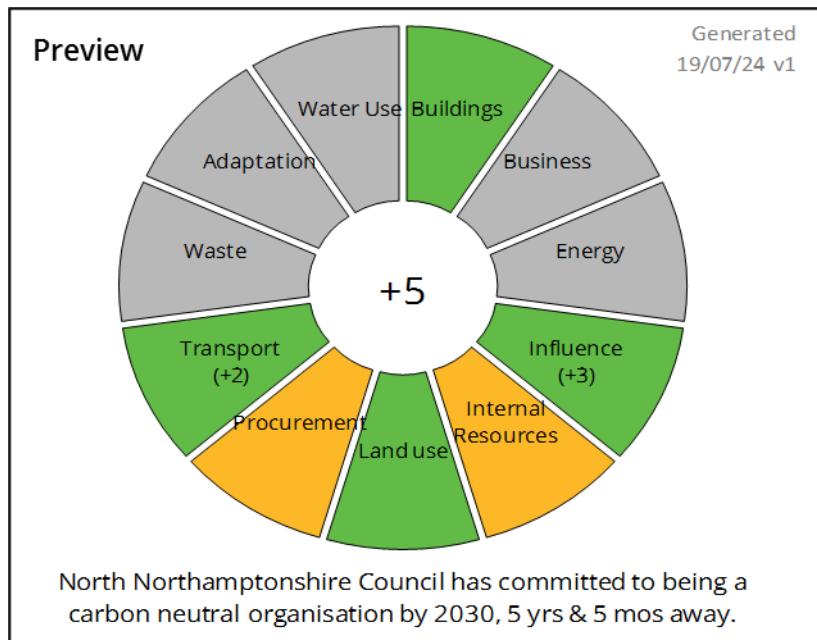
7.8.2. The development of the strategy followed current best practice and guidance including Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan guidance and Local Transport Plan 1/20 Cycling Infrastructure including accessibility considerations such as distance, gradient, safety and providing smooth surfaces to ensure the

proposed network is accessible for all users including pedestrians, cyclists, e-scooters, pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

- 7.8.3. Individual schemes will be developed in more detail in line with strategy and relevant guidance and be subject to consultation, including with groups representing protected characteristics such as disability groups.

7.9. Climate and Environment Impact

- 7.9.1. The Greenway and North Northamptonshire's green (and blue) infrastructure network are inextricably linked. One of the key objectives of the Greenway is to enhance the green corridors, for example through enhancing verges along new and improved traffic-free routes with trees, grassland and wildflower planting or even swales.
- 7.9.2. The Strategic Masterplan also recommends that proposals use Natural England's Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide in the development of designs for traffic-free sections of routes particularly where these follow identified Green Infrastructure Corridors, are close to water or Special Protection Areas. Natural England should also be treated as a key stakeholder throughout the design process.
- 7.9.3. The strategy also addresses flood mitigation. Much of the proposed network follows the Nene and Ise Valley Corridors which are Environment Agency Main Rivers and it is important that a balanced approach is taken to the design of these sections of the network. The Masterplan recommends that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) such as swales and rain gardens are incorporated into the design of the route, particularly in areas at risk of flood. SuDS and tree planting have the dual benefit of reducing flooding and contributing to biodiversity.
- 7.9.4. It also contributes to the Council's Carbon Management Plan for example through reduced use of motor vehicles and the promotion of active travel.



7.9.5. The Climate Change Impact Assessment tool as shown above indicates that the adoption of the North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategy is scored a +5. This score reflects that the Strategy is being adopted.

7.9.6. The implementation and the delivery of the 33 identified routes within the Strategy will be scored through the Climate Change Impact Assessment Tool individually. The adoption of the Strategy and the implementation of the routes will score differently as the adoption of Strategy is not the actual effecting of the routes.

7.10. Community Impact

7.10.1. The Masterplan highlights the need to maximise the value of the Greenway through additions which enhance economic and community benefit, such as sites for cafes and other appropriate businesses, or for community initiatives which enable and encourage people to use the network, especially those from more deprived communities who may struggle to access or afford bicycles.

7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1 None identified

8. Background Papers

8.1 Greenway Strategy Executive report 14th September 2023
<https://northnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s19490/North%20Northamptonshire%20Greenway%20Strategy.pdf>