



# Active Travel Strategy

2024 - 2034

Version 1.0



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# 1. Foreword



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**Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development Portfolio Holder**

Over the last decade, the Blaby District has undergone a huge shift in the ways that people work and live, meaning that we have come to demand greater options to travel sustainably around our district.

Blaby district's road network is already straining under the high volume of peak-time traffic on key routes. While the need to build new road infrastructure may be inevitable, the reality is the road network cannot simply keep expanding endlessly. Managing traffic flow and actively promoting space-efficient, sustainable transportation alternatives are becoming a necessity, not a choice.

We are nearing a tipping point where prioritising vehicle traffic is no longer tenable. Rising congestion and pollution levels require that we rethink mobility priorities for the long-term good of our community. Pursuing greener, smarter travel solutions that ease demand on Blaby's overburdened roads has become crucial to preserving what makes our district the place that it is.

Increasing cycling and walking presents a major opportunity to tackle some of society's most pressing challenges - enhancing air quality, combating climate change, promoting health and wellbeing, addressing inequalities and alleviating road congestion.

Well thought-out and strategically planned decisive action can catalyse the creation of a more vibrant community where people want to live, work and visit – a community that is better connected, healthier and more sustainable. This transition has the potential to drive clean economic growth by supporting local businesses and ensuring prosperity resonates across the district and levelling an unequal playing field.

The challenge is immense, but with a clear ambition, we have a once-in-a-generation chance to accelerate Active Travel and reshape how people move and leave a legacy for future generations to benefit from.

The increasing population and significant changes to Blaby District's demographics requires the strategic rethinking of transport. The current approach of aiming to accommodate all motorised trips without restraining traffic is no longer tenable. Instead, we must pivot towards actively encouraging space-efficient modes like cycling, walking and wheeling. Failing to make this shift will likely lead to worsening conditions.

If we are unwilling to embrace more sustainable transportation, we will find ourselves grappling with increasing traffic congestion and air pollution levels. This will diminish quality of life and eventually harm economic competitiveness as Blaby District becomes less attractive places to live and work.

Whilst significant change won't be easy, it is necessary. For Blaby District to remain a desirable place long into the future, we need updated policies and mindsets that restrain motor vehicle traffic and prioritise efficient mobility for people, not just cars. This recalibration is critical for the district's continued vibrancy and liveability.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Scope

This Strategy document lays out our vision for Active Travel in the district and connects to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Action Plan. The LCWIP is a comprehensive blueprint that outlines our methodology for identifying necessary improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure at the local level. The specific steps for implementing this Strategy are detailed in the accompanying Action Plan.

### 2.2 What is Active Travel?

Active Travel is a means of transportation which is undertaken by physical activity without the use of motorised vehicles. Active Travel can take many forms but primarily consists of walking, wheeling and cycling.

### 2.3 Our Vision for Active Travel

Like many areas across the United Kingdom, Blaby District faces unprecedented challenges to build resilience and overcome the risks posed by climate change. At the same time tackling a range of other challenges including improving its air quality and adjusting to the needs of an aging population. Now is the time for bold, courageous decisions to deliver the transformation we need.

In an era of close scrutiny over public spending there will be added pressure to achieve

exceptional value for money. Within transport, investment in walking and cycling are likely to provide low cost, high-value options for many local communities.

At its core, this requires a significant re-think of how the district's streets and places are used to make them attractive, healthy, vibrant and accessible places where people want to be. Drawing upon our uniqueness we will protect and grow the diverse uses of our towns and villages, which in turn will drive inclusive growth for the entire district.

Our ambition is for the transport network to be characterised by high-quality Active Travel infrastructure, focused on connecting people with places and activities via safe, direct, attractive and coherent routes. People across the district will be informed and aware of their options for walking and cycling locally. Active travel will be increasingly commonplace for everyday journeys, delivering greater economic prosperity, improved quality of life for all those who live and work within the district and supporting our pathway to net zero carbon emissions.

The Active Travel Strategy's vision is for walking, wheeling and cycling in Blaby District to be the first and natural choice for everyday journeys, for people of all ages and ability, to travel locally to schools, to shops, or to work.

We aim to connect our communities and places, through safe and accessible routes. We will achieve this by creating a sustainable transport network for commuting and leisure that supports physical activity for the health and wellbeing benefit of residents, where Active Travel is seen as the preferred mode of mass transit. Our plan involves transforming existing neighbourhoods and creating new ones that prioritise green, safe and active environments for residents, businesses and visitors in the Blaby District. We will focus on reducing traffic flows and promoting higher levels of walking, cycling and wheelchair access.

## 2.4 Strategy Development and Partners

Our strategy for promoting Active Travel has been developed through public consultation, stakeholder engagement and collaboration with organisations in our area, neighbouring authorities and public bodies. We value the input of walking and cycling groups, as well as other organisations, in creating new cycling routes and promoting Active Travel. These partnerships bring mutual benefits and allow us to identify new routes, suggest improvements and gather public feedback.

When working with other local authorities and public bodies, we will use our role as a consultee to ensure high standards for active travel infrastructure. We believe that engagement and consultation are essential and we have conducted extensive public and stakeholder engagement to support our sustainable transport studies and develop our Active Travel Strategy.

Our strategy serves as a framework for implementing actions and projects identified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. We consider all types of travel, including commuting, leisure and cross-boundary links to neighbouring authorities. By aligning with local policies, our strategy can help to deliver positive changes across the district.

## 3. Why do we need the Strategy?

### 3.1 Historical Context

Decades of prioritising cars and neglecting other modes of transportation in Britain's infrastructure has created significant long-term problems. Active Travel infrastructure, when it is built, is often an afterthought and of poor quality. Many routes are too short or in inconvenient locations. Currently, the biggest obstacle to increasing Active Travel is the lack of safe and convenient infrastructure combined with decades of ingrained behaviours. This, combined with the perception of the car as a symbol of status and freedom, has created significant barriers to progress.

### 3.2 National Policy Context

#### Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS)

In 2017, Government published its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) for England, this included an ambition to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey. The aim was to address challenges, such as air quality, physical activity, health and economic performance, by making walking and cycling an everyday activity for all.

#### **The strategy identified four broad objectives:**

- Increase cycling and walking activity.
- Reduce the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured on England's roads.
- Increase the percentage of school children that walk to school.
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

LCWIPs were introduced in the CWIS and are produced by Local Authorities to outline local cycling and walking improvements they would like to see over a set period. The key features include a network plan for walking and cycling, incorporating priority routes and core zones for development and a prioritised list of infrastructure improvements for future funding,

underpinned by local analysis. A Blaby District LCWIP will be produced to sit alongside this Walking and Cycling Strategy.

## Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP)

The TDP outlines what the government thinks it needs to do alongside business and society to reduce transport emissions as part of the target to achieve net zero emissions across all modes of transport by 2050. The plan highlights the role of walking and cycling and one of its six priorities is to accelerate modal shift to public and active transport.

Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking for 2020-25

Gear Change, also published in 2020, signalled a new level of government ambition for cycling and walking and was accompanied by a commitment to spend £2 billion on walking and cycling over 5 years. The document contains a wide range of proposals, including, strengthening the Highway Code to make streets safer and improving the National Cycle Network (NCN).

## Local Transport Note 1/20

Gear Change was accompanied by LTN1/20, which includes new standards for infrastructure design. It incorporates five core principles to support increased levels of walking and cycling, setting out that cycling and walking routes should be, coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive.

## Active Travel England (ATE)

Gear Change also announced a new government body called Active Travel England, led by a national Active Travel Commissioner, to oversee the £2 billion of investment and make sure projects across England are delivered are high quality and on time. ATE was established in 2022 and will work with Local Authorities to raise the standard of walking and cycling infrastructure.

## 3.3 Local Policy Context

### Blaby District Council Corporate Priorities

The Active Travel Strategy will directly contribute to the Council's ambitions for the Blaby District through improving options for daily travel. Developing and promoting footpaths and cycle ways and helping local people and organisations to benefit from these will contribute to a wide range of goals, including improving air quality and reducing traffic congestion. In doing so it will help to deliver the Live, Work and Visit strategic priorities.

## Live

Creating a better environment for walking and cycling will help everyone to lead healthier lives through increased levels of physical activity and improved air quality. Reducing the amount of vehicle traffic on our streets contributes to safer, calmer and more sustainable communities, creating places where children can play out and neighbours feel better connected to one another. Supporting and encouraging environmentally friendly travel options also reduces our carbon footprint and contributes to the Travel and Transport aim of the Blaby District Council Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030. Finally, improving conditions for walking and cycling also protects and supports the most vulnerable in society by supporting affordable and accessible forms of transport.

## Work

Places that are conducive to walking and cycling enable residents to access work in an affordable, healthy and sustainable way. Centres and neighbourhoods that are more walkable and cycle friendly also contribute to more vibrant and innovative local economies that can attract investment and increase spend with local businesses. Encouraging active travel also contributes to a healthy workforce and workplaces and supports employee wellbeing.

## Visit

Improved cycling and walking provision supports the visitor economy and helps to deliver the Blaby District Tourism Growth Plan by creating more attractive, less car dominated places and better-connected visitor destinations, including historic sites and green spaces. Walking and cycling are also popular tourist activities and well-connected walking and cycling networks enhance places and help to attract visitors.

## 3.4 Leicestershire County Council

### Local Transport Plan (LTP3) strategy 2011 – 2026

LTP3 is a vision for “a transport system that allows residents and business to prosper whilst minimising the impact on the environment”. The goals support economic growth, tackling climate change, contributing to better safety, security and health and promoting equality of opportunity and improving quality of life.

### Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS)

The plan sets out how Leicestershire County Council will deliver improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure and promote active travel over the period 2021-2031. Key objectives are increasing walking and cycling levels, improving infrastructure, enhancing public realm and promoting the benefits of active travel.



## Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

The document sets out an Enhanced Partnership between Leicestershire County Council, bus operators and other stakeholders to improve bus services in Leicestershire. The plan includes commitments to increase bus priority measures, invest in bus lanes, reform parking policies, upgrade bus shelters, introduce tap-on tap-off ticketing and transition the bus fleet to zero emission vehicles.

# 4. Where are we now?

Blaby District Council has set ambitious goals for sustainable economic growth and enhancing the well-being of all its residents, as outlined in the Blaby District Plan 2024-28. At the core of this plan lies a clear vision: to ensure that Blaby district is a great place to Live, Work and Visit.

Walking and cycling are widely recognised as the principal means by which individuals can incorporate physical activity into their daily lives, thereby maintaining good health, improving fitness levels and reducing the risk of developing various chronic conditions and diseases. These include coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, obesity and mental health problems. The health impacts of physical inactivity not only strain the National Health Service but also have far-reaching economic consequences, notably through increased absenteeism from work. Therefore, promoting a healthier population is crucial for a robust and prosperous economy.

## 4.1 Current Situation:

**Physical Activity Levels:** Adults in Blaby District have lower rates of participation in all forms of physical activity compared to both the national average and the rest of the East Midlands region. Consequently, the rates of inactivity are higher in the district.

- **Walking and Cycling for Travel:** The number of residents who walk and cycle for transportation purposes lags behind other local authorities, not just nationally but regionally within the East Midlands as well. Specifically, the proportion of residents who walk for travel is 30% lower than the national average.
- **Cycling Rates:** The number of residents who cycle is lower than the national average and while there has been widespread growth across England, uptake in Blaby has declined by nearly a third in the last five years.
- **Walking Rates:** The number of residents who engage in any form of walking is below the national average and is also declining, although at a slower rate than cycling.
- **Obesity Rates:** The district's population tends to have higher rates of obesity compared to the averages for Leicestershire, the East Midlands and the country as a whole.
- The costs associated with obesity and inactivity, including social care, NHS expenditures and other related expenses, can be easily avoided through proactive measures.

## 4.2 Public Support

Recent targeted surveys have revealed strong public support for initiatives aimed at promoting active living. Nearly 90% of residents support walking for travel and 65% support an increase in cycling. Furthermore, a significant number of residents actively desire increased infrastructure and behaviour change measures to facilitate an increase in these activities. With a clear vision, public support and a commitment to addressing the current challenges, Blaby District is well-positioned to become a leader in promoting active living and ensuring the well-being of its residents.

# 5. What will the Strategy enable?

## 5.1 Sustainable Developments

A planning system that enables and supports walking and cycling journeys of 20 minutes to daily facilities such as shops, education, health services, post offices, public open space, leisure and entertainment facilities will reduce reliance upon a private motor vehicle.

## 5.2 Behaviour Change Programmes

Transport planning has traditionally focused on developing infrastructure for active travel, creating safe environments for movement. However, there is a substantial opportunity to drive change by offering incentives that encourage new habits and empower individuals with the knowledge, skills and confidence to choose active travel. Promoting a change to other modes of transport through increased walking and cycling is vital and alongside infrastructure improvements, implementing targeted initiatives and incentives can help our residents overcome psychological barriers associated with these activities, be it for short or long journeys.

These include initiatives like awareness campaigns and educational programs that highlight the health, environmental and economic benefits of Active Travel and providing information on safe walking and cycling routes to implementing workplace programmes that encourage employers to offer incentives or facilities that support Active Travel, such as secure bicycle parking, shower facilities and subsidised public transportation passes. Large employer in the district like Next and Fosse Park have already begun such programmes with incredible success.

## 5.3 Reduced Traffic Congestion

Traffic congestion can have a significant impact on the economic performance of places, including slowing economic growth. Replacing journeys taken by car with active modes such as walking and cycling can have a positive impact on congestion, reducing the associated negative economic and health effects.

## 5.4 Increased Physical Activity

Physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths in the UK and costs business and wider society £7.4 billion a year. The latest figures show that among both adults and children, rates of inactivity and obesity are slightly higher in Leicestershire than the national average. In the Blaby District 27.3% of adults are inactive. This strategy aims to increase levels of physical activity by creating the conditions to enable and encourage more people to walk and cycle for both essential journeys and leisure.

## 5.5 Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing

Evidence is mounting that physical activity generally and walking and cycling specifically, can have wide-ranging benefits for mental health and wellbeing, including helping to tackle depression and anxiety, which are experienced by around 20% of people in England according to the latest figures. Creating a better environment in the district for walking and cycling and supporting residents to walk and cycle more can support mental health and wellbeing in the district.

## 5.6 Improved Air Quality

Government identifies air quality as the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. Vehicle emissions make a significant contribution to harmful fine particles in the environment and, as such reducing the number of vehicle journeys and associated congestion can improve air quality. A recent You Gov survey, commissioned by Sustrans, which surveyed 1,305 UK school pupils aged six to fifteen years old across the UK found that almost half (49%) are worried about air pollution near their school.

## 5.7 Safer Streets

Create an infrastructure and social environment in which it is safe to travel by any mode of transportation, reducing the number of cyclists and pedestrians killed or seriously injured every year in the Blaby District.

# 6. What do we want to achieve?

## 6.1 Our Goal

Our goal is to create a transportation system that benefits both residents and businesses while also reducing its environmental impact. Our main priorities are to make transportation more accessible, lower carbon emissions, improve air quality, promote Active Travel options like cycling and walking, enhance road safety and maintain our transport assets. Our goals are to support economic growth, address climate change, improve safety, security and health, promote equality of opportunity and enhance quality of life.

**To achieve this, we will deliver the following five ambitions:**

### Better Infrastructure

To have delivered high-quality walking and cycling routes in the district as defined in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

More People Travelling Actively

We want to increase the number of residents using Active Travel in each of the following categories:

- Commuter walking.
- Commuter cycling.
- Leisure walking.
- Leisure cycling.

The current ambition set by National government is to double the number of all short journeys walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030. This would roughly equate to getting over 3,500 more residents cycling and 10,000 more residents walking.

## 6.2 Securing Investment

We will seek to secure investment in active travel from every major development in the Blaby District and seek to secure external funding opportunities as they arise. By producing an LCWIP with a comprehensive list of prioritised, clearly outlined projects, we will be in a strong position to secure funding from a variety of sources as they arise. These may include funds from Leicestershire County Council and Active Travel England or other external sources as they present themselves. These can be combined with Developer Contributions as is the norm in many other Councils.

## 6.3 Strong Collaboration

We will work with Leicestershire County Council, neighbouring authorities, Active Travel England and partners to identify funding opportunities and submit bids to deliver the key priorities.

The Blaby LCWIP already has significant overlap with the County Council LCWIP and this alignment and synergy are recognised by the County Council in their own South of Leicester Area LCWIP - Sections 2.2.2.2 (p12) and 8.3 (p122 & P123).

Blaby District Council already has a strong working relationship with Active Travel England and they have recognised the strong work being undertaken by the district.

## 6.4 Liveable Neighbourhoods

Liveable neighbourhoods offer a great opportunity to create more peaceful, safer and greener communities. By implementing traffic filters on residential streets, adding infrastructure for walking and cycling, introducing more greenery and creating social spaces, we can encourage active travel, reduce traffic and carbon emissions and enhance outdoor spaces for residents.

Blaby District Council has already committed to delivering a net-zero district and making long-term green investments to transform our society and build a wellbeing economy by 2050. This aligns with the 'Place Principle,' which combines people, location and resources to create a sense of identity and purpose, addressing the needs and realizing the full potential of communities.

The goal is to rebalance the way streets are designed and used, prioritising Active Travel and public transportation while still meeting the district's transportation needs. By promoting mixed-density urban growth, we can alleviate urban sprawl and maximise land efficiency, creating fairer, more inclusive, healthier, happier and greener neighbourhoods.

Liveable communities are characterised as safe, attractive, socially cohesive and inclusive, with affordable and diverse housing, supporting public transportation, walking and cycling to employment, education, public open spaces, local shops, health and community services and leisure and cultural opportunities.

The Action Plan will cover detailed approaches and tactics to achieving these goals.

# 7. How will it be delivered?

## 7.1 Creating an evidence base

A Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has been produced for Blaby District, following national guidelines. The LCWIP will sit alongside the strategy and give the district a clear and robust basis on which to seek funding for and implement a programme of cycling and walking infrastructure programmes.

## 7.2 Active Travel Action Plan

An Action Plan has been created that outlines an approach to implementing the prioritised routes identified in the LCWIP. The action plan provides details about how the vision for safe and accessible walking and cycling routes within a sustainable transport network will be delivered. The Action Plan will also identify work to be undertaken to change people's behaviours and encourage more walking & cycling, such as working with schools and businesses to promote active travel.

The action plan includes activities that will be delivered over the short, medium and longer term. This will require a mix of resources including Blaby District Council teams and partners. Over the life of the strategy detailed implementation plans will be produced. This will include the identification of resources required to enable delivery.

## 7.3 Working Group

A Working Group will be established to develop, oversee and monitor the Active Travel Action Plan.

## 7.4 Planning System Integration

We will use the planning system to ensure that future developments take account of sustainable transport and is leveraged to support our ambitions to increase and improve local cycling and walking provision. Making active travel a more convenient and appealing option for residents and people visiting the district for work or leisure.

## 7.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Blaby District Council will implement a monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress over time and help identify potential problems before they become too serious. These will measure the effectiveness of our Active Travel programmes, determine whether

objectives are being met and identify areas for improvement while ensuring resources are used efficiently.

The Working Group will undertake Annual Reviews to review progress being made in delivering the Action Plan and realising the vision of the Active Travel Strategy. This will ensure the Strategy, LCWIP and Action Plan remain current and ready to identify future opportunities. The process should measure not only modal shift, but also attitudes to and awareness of any Active Travel provisions and interventions that are implemented. We will collect data using two methods, existing data sources and surveys.

## 7.6 Existing data sources

There are several sources for existing data, all of which give an overview of modal share. These work well for getting a broad picture of where we are, but due to delays between the surveys and their publication, cannot be relied on for in depth, targeted or immediate data. These sources would be:

- National Travel Attitudes Study
- Sport England Active Lives
- National Travel Survey
- The NHS

## 7.7 Surveys

Where more direct data is needed, i.e. on a specific new walking or cycle route, Blaby District Council will conduct its own surveys. They are generally used to assess a project's effectiveness.

### **These should include:**

- Route user intercept surveys.
- Vehicle flow counts.
- Manual cycle and pedestrian counts.

*All data will be collected in accordance with the DfT Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Guidance (2020).*