

Leicestershire's Active Travel Alliance Response and Briefing Document in response to Leicestershire's Enabling Travel Choice Strategy

Local Transport Plan Government Guidance

The Government's Local Transport Plan guidance requires active travel to be prioritised as part of creating healthier, more liveable communities. We have set out Leicestershire's approach alongside the government's Local Transport Plan guidance to highlight the differences.

General context

It is clear the road network cannot be increased to cope with forecast growth due to lack of funding available not to mention the environmental impact. Therefore with the current trajectory more traffic will use unsuitable routes making life increasingly unpleasant for local communities.

Leicestershire has below average levels of walking and cycling compared with the England average. Previous strategies have not remedied this and we do not believe this strategy is any different.

ETCS – Key observations

The ETCS appears to want to continue its traditional focus on traffic management, but as described above, this will no longer work and in fact we are seeing it damage our communities. We therefore believe this strategy is not fit for purpose.

It frames walking and cycling as 'optional' travel choices within a network primarily focused on resilience, movement, and growth. Creating healthier liveable communities appears to be a 'nice to have' lower priority than network movement. This imbalance and distortion of priorities is leading to increasing levels of degradation and dissatisfaction in our communities.

The strategy lacks vision, ambition and commitment to addressing that imbalance. It is trying to maintain its traditional focus on traffic management. With the increase in new developments in Leicestershire, without a change in direction, the current approach will continue to compound the issues and make things worse.

We strongly recommend Leicestershire adopts a new position that puts the liveability, health, safety and wellbeing of its communities firmly at the heart of its new strategy. This aligns more closely with government policy and will demonstrate greater ambition and leadership, resulting in increased levels of funding from Active Travel England. NB More ambitious local authorities similar to ours have received four times the Active Travel England level of funding.

ETCS Terminology

Rural county - Leicestershire describes itself as a 'rural' county. This is true for land, but not for the population and where they reside. The implication therefore is that active travel is not a priority in this county. 86% of the population live in urban areas or large rural settlements here. These urban areas are the places where active travel must be the primary focus as the journeys within them are very short. (For example, our largest town, Loughborough, has a population of around 65,000 and an urban area which is a distance of around 3 miles from one side to the other, so most journeys will be half of that). In addition, although more difficult, there does not appear to be a vision for rural active travel. "cycling and walking is...not ideal if you live in a rural hamlet" and yet it is likely there will be future opportunities for active travel using changes to public rights of way.

One size does not fit all – this terminology is repeated, however we do not agree with this. The same active travel principles apply to a) urban settlements and b) rural areas.

Behavioural change – Leicestershire is waiting for its residents to change of their own accord through softer behavioural change measures, which residents are slow to adopt. It does not currently appear to understand it must lead the change through a change in direction, which would include measures such as road classification and place making design.

The table below describes the divergence between government LTP guidance and the Leicestershire approach.

Government Local Transport Plan Guidance	Detail	Leicestershire's Interpretation	Why this matters
<p>1. Government says active travel must be “enabled, prioritised and integrated”</p>	<p><i>The Government’s LTP guidance says local authorities must: “set out how walking, wheeling, and cycling will be enabled, prioritised and integrated with other forms of local transport”</i></p>	<p>The Leicestershire strategy language is much softer: “Enable travel choice” “enable users to utilise the most appropriate form of transport for their unique needs”</p>	<p>Government guidance is asking councils to <u>actively prioritise active travel</u>.</p> <p>Leicestershire instead frames walking/cycling as just one optional “choice” among all modes, including continued car use.</p>
<p>2. Government prioritises healthier communities and liveable places</p>	<p><i>“Create healthier communities”</i></p> <p><i>“making healthy travel choices will be easy and convenient”</i></p> <p><i>It also says:</i></p> <p><i>“transport investment decisions will prioritise people and places”</i></p>	<p>Leicestershire’s wording instead repeatedly prioritises network operation and growth:</p> <p>“support the ambitions and health of our growing communities” and:</p> <p>“Provide a transport network which supports the delivery of new homes and jobs”</p>	<p>The emphasis is noticeably different:</p> <p>Government guidance = people, health, liveability, reducing car dependency</p> <p>Leicestershire = enabling growth and maintaining network movement</p>
<p>3. Government expects reduction in carbon through active travel</p>	<p><i>Government guidance requires authorities to explain:</i></p> <p><i>“how active travel delivery can help reduce carbon emissions from transport”</i></p>	<p>Leicestershire’s wording is broader and less specific:</p> <p>“enable travel choices which meet users needs and requirements whilst reducing carbon production”</p>	<p>The Government guidance directly links carbon reduction to active travel and reducing vehicle dependence.</p> <p>Leicestershire’s wording avoids explicit commitment to reducing motor traffic levels or car use.</p>
<p>4. Government guidance promotes integrated active travel networks</p>	<p><i>Government guidance says LTPs should include:</i></p> <p><i>“highways maintenance approaches that tackle key safety and accessibility issues for people walking, wheeling and cycling” and</i></p> <p><i>“plans to improve accessibility ... in line with LTN1/20”</i></p>	<p>Leicestershire’s core policy wording is vague and instead says:</p> <p>“viable transport alternatives to car-based journeys”</p>	<p>The Government guidance is specific about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Accessibility • design standards • walking/wheeling/cycling infrastructure. <p>Leicestershire’s wording remains high level and non-committal without strong policy language about reallocating road space or redesigning streets around active travel.</p>
<p>5. Government guidance says active travel should be “prioritised”</p>	<p><i>This is probably the single clearest contrast.</i></p> <p><i>Government guidance:</i></p>	<p>Leicestershire:</p> <p>“enable travel choice”</p>	<p>“Prioritised” implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hierarchy of road users • policy preference • reallocation of space/funding • reduced dominance of motor traffic

	<i>“walking, wheeling, and cycling will be enabled, prioritised and integrated”</i>		While “choice” avoids committing to prioritisation and treats all modes as equivalent.
6. Government guidance emphasises liveable places, Leicestershire emphasises resilience and movement	<i>“cleaner, quieter and more liveable places”</i>	Leicestershire strategy: “Have a well managed transport network” and “Enhancing our Transport Network’s Resilience” “we will continue to seek to make travel by car as safe, time reliable and delay free as is reasonably possible”	This reflects a traditional highways-management approach rather than a place-first or people-first transport philosophy.

In Summary

The draft ETCS currently lacks commitment towards active travel. This is a major concern as this is a divergence from government Local Transport Plan guidance. It also indicates a reluctance to move away from the current approach to traffic management and rebalance towards the needs of local communities.

We await to see Leicestershire take up its leadership role in a change that is clearly necessary. We understand this may not be easy, but we are looking to you to lead the change required to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of its communities. By continuing to resist this and take the traditional traffic management approach, this strategy will lead to further degradation right across Leicestershire. **It is quite clear to see with the challenges we are faced with, this strategy will only make things worse.**

We are in a period of change. What has worked in the past is no longer working and continuing to defend that position is becoming increasingly difficult for you. Our group observes this through the numerous conversations we have with your officers about different schemes. We are looking to you to rebalance needs and take up a new and indeed positively exciting future in creating safer healthier communities. What better challenge is there for a local authority? Leicestershire Active Travel Alliance is a willing partner in the change that is needed and would support a renewed vision and approach for the county. We believe this would be a hugely positive step forward for the county, significantly improving lives here.