

Sustainable Modes Strategy



2018 - 2026

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1. The purpose of the Strategy and the Local Transport Plan

This Strategy supports Bracknell Forest Council’s third **Local Transport Plan (LTP3)**, which sets out a 15 year transport strategy from 2011 – 2026. The LTP provides the framework by which the Borough’s transport system can be secured through investment; and appropriate management, maintenance, and monitoring so that the Council can keep pace of, and respond to, changing circumstances in the Borough.

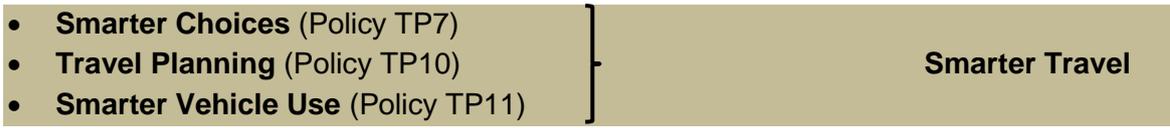
The environment and economy, alongside equality, safety and quality of life all depend on a robust and effective transport system. The Council therefore remains committed to continually improving the transport network to ensure our quality of life is built on and sustained. This ethos provides the backbone to the Local Transport Plan, by setting out how we can maximise the potential in our transport system in support of this much bigger picture.

The Local Transport Plan can be read in full [here](#)

The Sustainable Modes Strategy sets out the Council’s priorities and how we are working with our partners to deliver a safer, fairer and more environmentally responsible transport network for Bracknell Forest, and contribute towards the vision of the Local Transport Plan:

“To develop a sustainable transport system that supports the local economy, provides choice and improves quality of life in a safe and healthy environment”

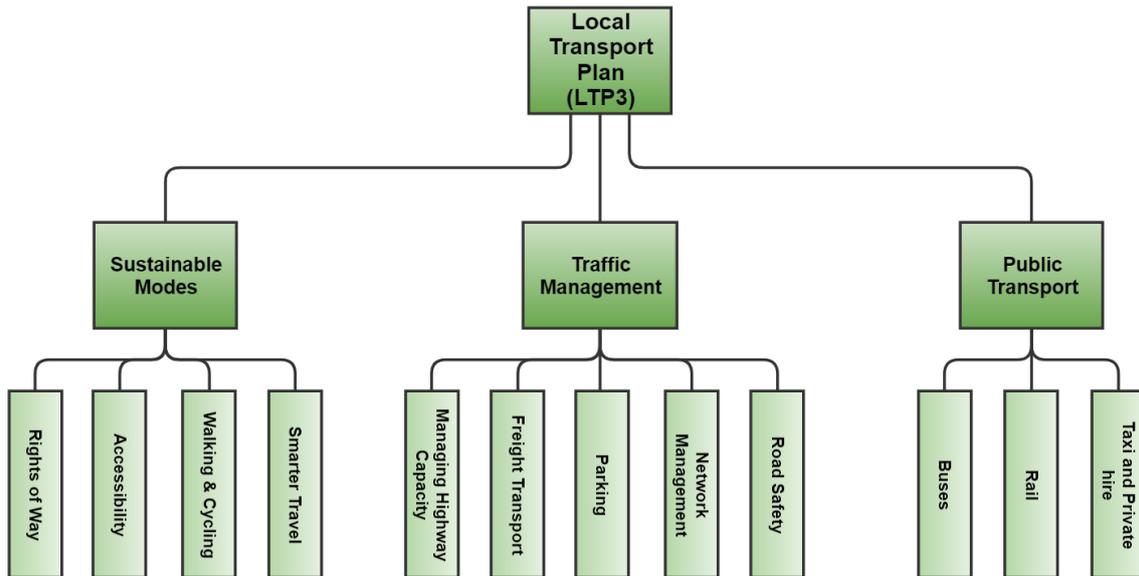
The individual policies of the third Bracknell Forest Local Transport Plan (2011-2026) are core to delivering on the Borough’s Transport obligations, and there are six specific policies which together set out the Council’s approach to sustainable modes:

- **Accessibility** (Policy TP1)
 - **Smarter Choices** (Policy TP7)
 - **Travel Planning** (Policy TP10)
 - **Smarter Vehicle Use** (Policy TP11)
 - **Walking and Cycling** (Policy TP8)
 - **Public Rights of Way** (Policy TP9)
- 
- Smarter Travel**

For simplicity, and given their close synergies, Smarter Choices, Travel Planning and Smarter Vehicle Use will now be grouped under the broader heading of ‘Smarter Travel’

Figure 1 shows the strategic fit of the Council’s transport strategies and policies, which together will address and deliver the elements of LTP3. The Sustainable Modes Strategy complements the two other overarching strategies, namely Traffic Management and Public Transport.

FIGURE 1: Strategies of the Bracknell Forest Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2026



Within the Sustainable Modes Strategy the four policy themes are closely linked. Each will have specific delivery measures and through analysis of the challenges and opportunities these will set out a range of short, medium and long term 'key actions' that the council will pursue.

In summary, the Sustainable Modes Strategy considers how people get around the Borough, the travel options that are available to them, and how policies and wider social changes might affect decision making on the mode of travel chosen. By 'Sustainable' we are generally referring to walking, cycling, public transport and car share, but increasingly it also encompasses emerging technology such as electric and autonomous vehicles, and the implications that these potentially have for our highway network in the future.

More broadly it considers resource requirements, current use of technology and looks to the future for ways of improving service delivery in line with the Council's priorities.

The following chapters will cover the four policy themes within the over-arching Sustainable Modes Strategy. These are structured in such a way to enable reference as stand-alone documents, and links are provided to the more detailed policy theme documents for further reading.

2. Introduction and Background

Sustainable modes means looking at alternatives to continued growth in car use. Making better use of existing infrastructure, increasing footpath and cycleway connectivity and providing an attractive public transport network is key. In turn, this will support Bracknell Forest Council's aim to provide a good quality of life for its residents and a positive experience for visitors.

The car is the dominant mode of travel in Bracknell Forest, even for short trips which could easily be walked or cycled. Education, incentives and ease of use of the alternatives can change people's travel behaviour and often a lack of awareness of the alternatives, and the benefits they can provide, contribute to people choosing to use the car.

The most recent census showed 86% of households in Bracknell Forest have at least one car, with just under half having at least two. Increasing car ownership and use has led to increased traffic levels on our roads, which in turn adds to congestion and pollution. However, over three-quarters of Bracknell Forest residents commute a distance of less than 12 miles, or regularly work from home¹. The scope and impetus for Smarter Travel, whilst encouraging an increase in walking and cycling, is therefore high.

Bracknell Forest is expected to grow rapidly over the next ten years, with the 2013 adopted Site Allocations Local Plan providing a further 11,000 homes by 2026. Therefore, it is essential that as the Borough grows, so does the transport choice available to residents and visitors alike.

Much of the success of this strategy will depend on behavioural change – getting people away from what they are used to, and changing their travel habits. The essence of Smarter Travel does not require a radical policy shift, as it considers and accepts that people will still use cars. Instead, this strategy details how we will encourage them to be used less, by highlighting and facilitating practical alternatives.



¹ 2011 Census data

3. Accessibility

The concept of Accessibility Planning surrounds the facilitation of access to key daily requirements such as:

- Education
- Employment
- Health Care
- Fresh Food
- Leisure, Cultural and Social destinations

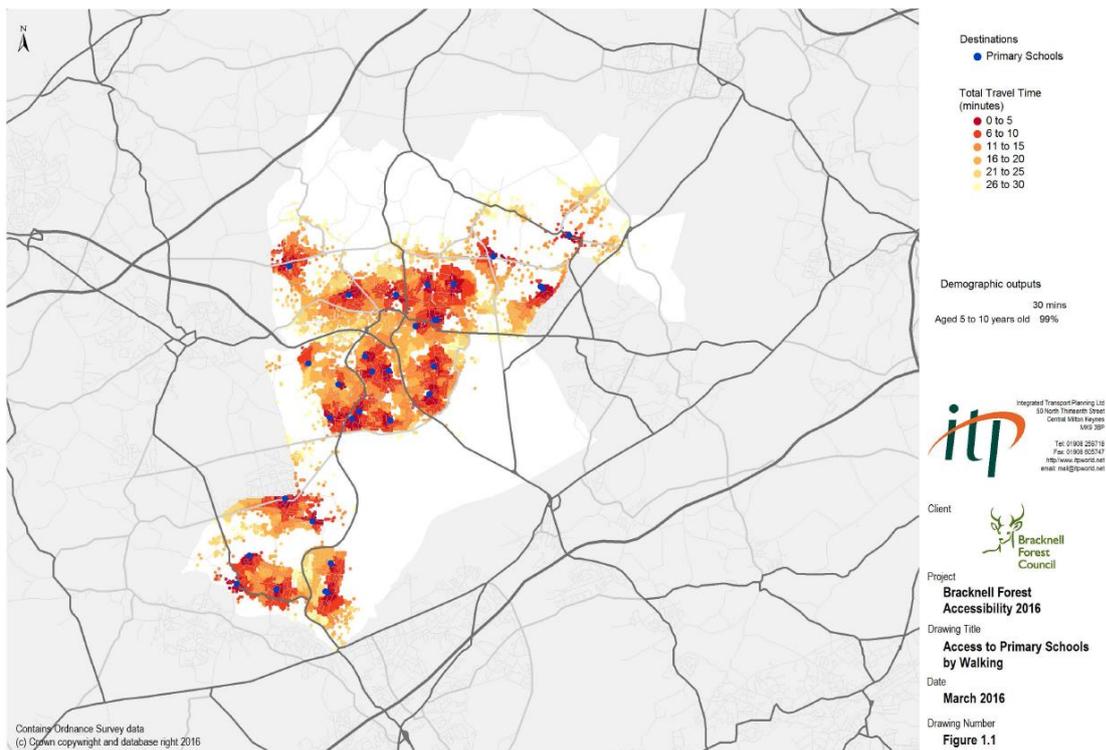
This Strategy focusses on accessing those services by public transport, walking and cycling, providing a holistic approach to considering the accessibility needs of different groups of people, and taking a wide range of factors into account, including journey times to key destinations, and bus service frequencies.

Whilst many of Bracknell Forest’s residents have access to a car, it is often those who do not who are most in need of the services and social aspects for which access is so important – particularly the young, and the elderly.

The Council periodically reviews the level of access that residents have to essential services by public transport, walking and cycling using maps which illustrate socio-demographic background data against journey time access to a particular service.

This method produces ‘heat maps’ (as in Figure 2, below) which vary in colour intensity depending on the level of accessibility – high intensity means good accessibility (likely around town centres, for example), whilst low intensity means less accessibility (likely in remote rural areas with limited public transport provision or walking / cycling facilities).

Figure 2: Example of an Accessibility heat map – travel time to Primary Schools



When compared with other authority areas in England, Bracknell Forest scores relatively well for overall resident levels of accessibility, due in part to its well planned development and previous investment. However, this does not mean we are complacent in our approach, and there are always ways we can look to improve access through new means and measures, increasingly driven by online technology applications.

The 2016 Bracknell Accessibility Report can be found [here](#).

In order to maintain and improve accessible routes to and from essential services, including Bracknell Town Centre, we will:

- Ensure that all footways and cycleways in the Borough are well maintained, adequately lit, clearly signposted and safe for all users, particularly those with impaired mobility. Annual maintenance will be prioritised based on regular inspections and audits, listening to public feedback;
- Identify gaps in the walking and cycling network and invest in new infrastructure through planned work programmes
- Work with bus operators to provide the most efficient and comprehensive bus network within the financial resources available
- Promote and market the alternative modes of travel into Bracknell Town Centre by working in partnership with The Lexicon, bus and rail operators, the Council's Public Health team, and with a particular focus on the benefits of doing so (e.g. healthier, cheaper, more time to socialise and enjoy leisure time)
- Work with the voluntary sector to ensure residents unable to access mainstream public transport have access to a community transport alternative.

To ensure that sustainable transport provision is delivered as an integral part of new development, and provides broader access improvements for local communities, we will:

- Work with developers to ensure an effective provision for sustainable transport is built in to developments linking to key services;
- Secure infrastructure improvements through developer contributions, working with Parish Councils to improve and add new footways and cycle routes that support their Neighbourhood Plans
- Work with bus operators to maximise the opportunity to link new developments directly with the bus network

Further information on Accessibility can be found [here](#)

4. Smarter Travel

The way people choose to travel in Bracknell Forest can collectively impact on quality of life, the local environment and strength of the economy. The aim of the council is to keep all modes of transport moving as effectively as possible. However, choosing an alternative, or using the car more efficiently can reward individuals, households and businesses with significant benefits.

Each weekday around 30,000 people commute into Bracknell Forest to work, while an approximately equal number commute out of the Borough². Car ownership levels per household are much higher than the national average with the result that 72% of local people travel to work by car, and 80% of these journeys are a single person in a car. The relative convenience, practicality, and indeed cost of using a car means that it continues to be the most popular mode of travel in the Borough.

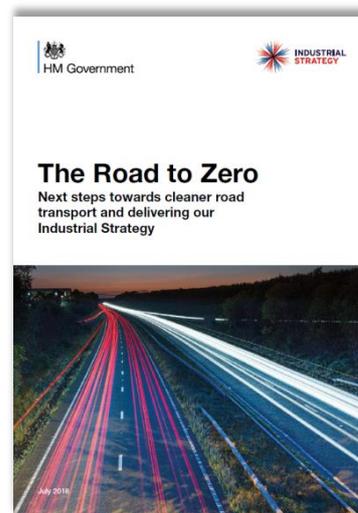
Electric and Autonomous Vehicles

Whilst we must increasingly focus on improving the quality and attractiveness of more sustainable modes, we also have to accept the reality of the car and its dominance, at least in the short to medium term.

In view of this, we need to embrace emerging technology that will make the car a much cleaner, quieter and more efficient way to travel. This should include the tools that are available to encourage smarter vehicle use day-to-day such as car sharing, and use this to complement investment in public transport, walking and cycling.

Sales of electric vehicles are increasing rapidly, and recent government announcements of a ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2040 mean that society now has a clear target and outcome to prepare for.

Central Government has outlined its plans for delivering cleaner road transport in its strategy document 'The Road to Zero'. It focuses on improving residential EV charging infrastructure, and will consult on proposals to; require all new dwellings to include chargepoints; require communal parking facilities to incorporate a degree of charging; and in areas with existing on-street parking, require new street light columns to incorporate charge points. There are also plans for requiring charge points at new non-residential buildings, funding for dedicated taxi chargepoints, and establishing a £400million fund to stimulate the private sector. Government also recognises the role that rapid charging hubs (similar to petrol stations), funded by the private sector, can play.



Our view, shared by the Local Government Association, is the private sector should be leading the way to deliver this infrastructure. Like other Councils, we have many competing priorities and statutory responsibilities across a range of services, while at the same time experiencing significant cuts to our budgets.

² 2011 Census travel to work data

Bracknell Forest Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document requires 20% of new houses be provided with passive electric charging infrastructure built in, and increasing numbers of residents are installing charge points in their garages and driveways. However, there are still a number of issues to overcome before the Council could consider installing an EV charge point in a residential setting. These include the provision of dedicated parking spaces in areas where parking is already at a premium, the safety issues associated with trailing cables and public electricity supply, obsolete infrastructure when EV owners move house, and the cost of implementation and on-going maintenance.

However, the Council does encourage the use of cleaner, less polluting vehicles and will continue to encourage commercial EV charging operators to provide charging points in suitable locations, including Council-owned facilities where practical, as well as supporting and encouraging charging provision at business, leisure and retail destinations across the Borough. There are currently charging points in the High Street and The Avenue multi-storey car parks in Bracknell town centre, as well as in the Waitrose store car park.



The pace of change in battery and charging technology means there is a risk of obsolescence very quickly after installation and adoption. We also believe the increasing number of rapid charge points, which deliver an 80% charge in around 30 minutes, could soon provide a viable alternative to overnight charging on-street. As such, the Council will continue to apply a logical, yet supportive role in facilitating electric vehicle use.

The Council will also maintain a watchful eye on other alternative fuel sources such as Hydrogen, and the development and adoption of autonomous vehicles. Whilst it may be some time until legislation and technology allows driverless vehicles on public roads, there is a growing consensus that they are the future of personal and freight transportation.

Walking, cycling and public transport

Increasing cycling and walking can reduce transport costs, save money and help the environment. Fewer car journeys, whether electric or combustion powered, can reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and improve the health of communities. The Borough's urban cycle and footpath network is particularly comprehensive, partly as a result of the 'new town' development of Bracknell meaning that provision was built in as part of the town's rapid growth from the 1950s, and also its relatively spacious green surroundings. *Walking and Cycling, and the measures and means to improve its appeal and uptake, are considered further in section 5 of this document.*

Bracknell Forest's residents have relatively good accessibility to public transport. There are four rail stations, in Bracknell, Crowthorne, Martins Heron and Sandhurst, which provide frequent services to London, Reading, Guildford and Gatwick Airport amongst other nearer destinations. Bus services cover much of the Borough's settlements, and link to surrounding towns in the region. Real time travel information is already made available by some transport operators and this increases the convenience and attractiveness of these modes. It is hoped the open data requirements of the Bus Services Act 2017 will further encourage third party software developers to provide innovative new tools which will make access to bus times, fares and real time information more readily available. The Council also continues to coordinate timetables for local supported bus services with rail services wherever possible, and supports government and regional initiatives for integrated smart ticketing.

The development of Travel Plans is encouraged, and in some cases legally required by the planning process for new developments. A Travel Plan is a package of measures aimed at promoting greener, cleaner travel choices and reducing reliance on the car. It promotes a choice of travel modes to and from a site and encourages more sustainable journeys (for example through a car share scheme). There are over 30 Travel Plans in place for businesses in Bracknell Forest, and every school has a Travel Plan. However, there is still a need to monitor and enforce these plans to ensure they are implemented and effective.

This overarching Strategy aims to explore opportunities, and set out measures to improve 'smarter', sustainable travel choices in Bracknell Forest, with the overall objective to benefit both the health and wellbeing of residents, and the wider environment of the Borough as a whole.

To encourage and facilitate smarter travel in the Borough, we will:

- Work in partnership with businesses to promote sustainable travel through information, support, partnership initiatives such as Lift-Share, the Travel Plan process and by seeking Government funding for projects aimed at increasing uptake in sustainable travel in Bracknell Forest's workforce;
- Require a Travel Plan for all new developments which generate significant amounts of movement, ensuring that specific, measurable and achievable outcomes are delivered which encourage and facilitate travel by means other than the car;
- Encourage schools to implement measures that promote sustainable travel, including developing a Travel Plan and reviewing it on an annual basis

- Make bus travel easier and more attractive by continuing partnership working with operators to improve the quality and comfort of buses, make contactless bank card the default for fare payment, improve on-board facilities to include audio and visual information, and expand real-time technology
- Promote sustainable transport modes through Council media, events and Personal Travel Planning initiatives, with an increasing focus on online social media content (reflecting the changing ways in which the public engage with the Council and obtain their information)
- Play a supportive role in the provision of EV infrastructure and emerging autonomous technologies, including increasing charging requirements in new developments



Further information on Smarter Travel can be found [here](#)

5. Walking and Cycling

On average, one in five of the trips we make are less than one mile in length, and two out of every five trips are less than two miles, a distance which can be cycled in about 15 minutes. Unlike other modes, walking and cycling are means of travel which can be undertaken for both utility and leisure purposes, these modes can be enjoyable, rewarding means of travel, with many benefits.

The Borough of Bracknell Forest is relatively flat, with few steep inclines, and the majority of physical characteristics needed to support walking and cycling already exist. Urban parts of the Borough have well-established traffic-free cycle networks which cater for many commuting and leisure trips. As a New Town, purpose built cycle tracks were included in much of the development of Bracknell, and there are many underpasses that avoid the need to cross busy roads.

More recently, shared footway and cycle tracks have supplemented the segregated routes. Cycle routes have also been constructed in Sandhurst and Crowthorne, and whilst these networks are less comprehensive, they still provide useful links to jobs and leisure opportunities.

In total, there are 13 kilometres of purpose built cycleways, and over 100 kilometres of shared use and leisure routes – see figure 3. The cycleways offer a network of safe paths to cycle through populated areas, away from the road traffic. Over 5km of shared footway / cycleway has been added to the network in the last 5 years.

Figure 3: Extent of cycle routes in Bracknell Forest

Route type	Total Length (Miles)	Total Length (KM)
Shared Footpath / Cycleway	52.2	84.1
Purpose Built Cycleway	8.4	13.6
Off Road Route	3.5	5.6
	64.1	103.3

Although Bracknell Forest has a relatively large and comprehensive pedestrian and cycle network, census and travel survey results suggest levels of cycling and walking are similar to the national average, and actually lower than across the South East.

Through various surveys, feedback and anecdotal evidence, we have built up a picture of the main reasons and factors influencing peoples decisions not to walk or cycle. These can be summarised as;

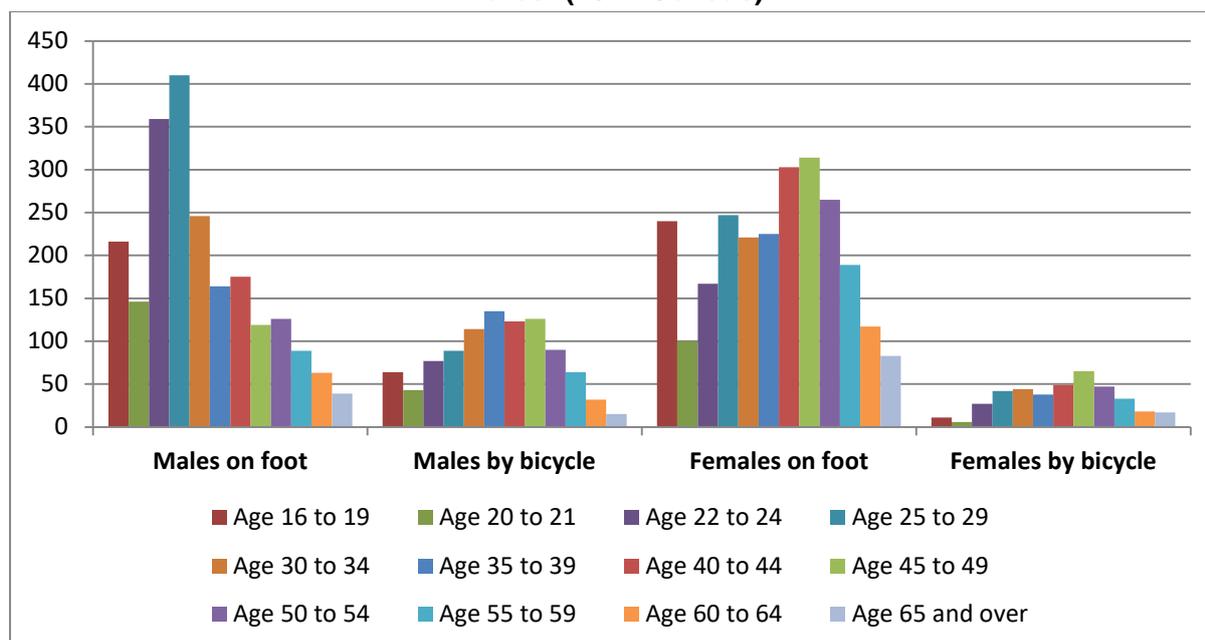
- Speed and convenience of car or other modes
- Safety concerns – on roads, or fear of anti-social behaviour on quiet routes and underpasses at night
- Lack of routes knowledge
- Time and practicality – too many tasks to walk or cycle (e.g. school run, after-work commitments, shopping)

It is clear that to encourage people to walk or cycle more often, building more infrastructure on its own is not the solution. To complement the existing network of cycleways, a

programme of promotion and targeted marketing is required. Whilst a greater shift towards active travel modes such as walking and cycling, especially for short local journeys, will take time, a comprehensive programme of information and encouragement (embracing social media platforms), will help create the environment for change.

We can attain a clearer picture of residents' walking and cycling activity if we look at census data on travel to work by age and sex, as shown in **Figure 4**. This shows young males (22 – 30) walk more than more mature males, yet females between 40 and 55 walk more than younger females. This also shows there are more than double the numbers of male cyclists than female cyclists.

Figure 4: Age and sex of those travelling to work on foot and by bicycle in Bracknell Forest (2011 Census)



Given the relatively low overall levels of walking and cycling in the Borough, this Strategy will aim to target all ages and sexes, and all levels of experience.

Whilst we have a good urban network of cycle routes in Bracknell, we acknowledge there are still some missing links, and rural areas in the Borough which are not particularly well served.

Additionally, with significant housing developments planned for the borough, additional cycle infrastructure will be required to link these sites to the existing cycle network.

Therefore, the Council continues to undertake a gap analysis of the existing network and identify routes for further investigation, with input and advice from local Parish and Town Councils. There is a need to consider feasibility issues such as land constraints, gradients, trees, achievable widths etc, and generally routes which are provided away from the road are preferred by more vulnerable cyclists.

To encourage more people to walk and cycle we will:

- Determine the demographic groups who are most likely to benefit from walking and cycling promotional campaigns aimed at providing information about the local and Borough-wide networks alongside the group and support networks to help those not familiar with cycling;
- Coordinate marketing and promotional activities alongside the delivery of cycle infrastructure projects to raise awareness and publicise new cycling opportunities;
- Support businesses, employers, schools and colleges to install facilities which will help encourage walking and cycling as a practical means of travel, such as showers, lockers, changing facilities, sheltered secure cycle parking;
- Engage with schools to monitor and update their Travel Plans, encouraging parents and children to take part in Bikeability cycle training, and engage with annual initiatives such as 'Walk to School' and 'Cycle to School' week.

To further improve the network of footways and cycleways, we will:

- Continue working with the Department for Transport (as a pilot authority) to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the Borough, which will produce a prioritised list of evidence-based infrastructure and which *may* give the Council preferential access to future central funding opportunities
- Work with Town and Parish Councils to identify gaps in the pedestrian and cycle network and determine shared priorities for investment, with a particular focus on routes which are most frequently used and offer the greatest potential for growth in pedestrian and cyclist numbers;
- Work with developers to support the coordinated delivery of new cycle facilities as part of major new development and regeneration initiatives, including new safe routes and secure sheltered cycle parking or storage
- Work with developers to support the coordinated enhancement of existing cycle facilities where new cycle facilities are not required, including greening measures such as hedgerow creation and tree planting to improve the appeal and use of the network.
- Monitor the condition of routes and identify priority maintenance measures to ensure they remain safe, attractive and accessible for all users

Further information on Walking and Cycling can be found [here](#)

6. Public Rights of Way

A public right of way in the form of a footpath, bridleway, restricted byway, byway open to all vehicular traffic or a public road is a route that can be used by all members of the public.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are important to our heritage and a major recreational and transport resource. Bracknell Forest's 77km of PRoW are an integral part of the sustainable transport network, by encouraging alternative modes of transport for short journeys and offering a safer, often more convenient alternative to main roads away from traffic congestion and harmful emissions.

For many people they are an important element in their daily lives, providing connections between rural communities to access facilities and by offering links from urban areas to gain access to the countryside, and 244 hectares of the Borough's Open Access Land, for the purpose of tranquillity or exercise, by bicycle, on foot or on horseback.

The management and maintenance of public rights of way are dealt with through Rights of Way Improvement Plans, which are intended as a mechanism for improving the local network of public rights of way with a view to the needs of all users, that is walkers, cyclists, horse riders, vehicular users and those with mobility problems.

RoWIPs are required to assess:

- The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public;
- The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the area;
- The accessibility of local rights of way to the blind or partially-sighted people and people with mobility problems

Bracknell Forest's current RoWIP covers the period 2017 - 2026, and builds on the first version which covered 2006 – 2016. During that time, there has been a Government shift to better integrate RoWIPs and Local Transport Plans in order to help deliver a more streamlined and further coordinated approach to sustainable transport in rural and urban areas, recognising the role of active travel solutions such as walking and cycling. For that reason, this strategy considers the broader ways in which rights of way, and the RoWIP can deliver and complement the 'Sustainable Modes' theme.

For its size, Bracknell Forest has a very diverse character. This is due to the change in geology between the north and south. The northern parishes of Binfield, Warfield and the northern part of Winkfield are located over London clays; this area is characterised by small fields used for pasture and paddocks with hedgerows and small copses. The southern part of the borough's geology is over the sand and gravel Bagshot beds; this acidic geology supports heathland and conifer plantations.

The Borough enjoys permissive public access to over 950 hectares (2,348 acres) of Crown Estate land and a further 79 hectares (195 acres) of land (in various ownership) that is accessible under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as Access Land. This equates to almost 10% of the Borough's total area.

The Rights of Way network helps to deliver some of the core principles of the Sustainable Modes Strategy by facilitating travel for both leisure and work, regardless of whether the user requires a mountain bike or walking boots to do so, and may indirectly encourage people to travel more sustainably day-to-day by providing a pleasant introduction to active travel. It is also highly important in delivering health objectives, meaning people live more fulfilling lives, are at less risk of illness or injury, saving both themselves and the health service money in the long term.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan aims to ensure that, above all else, the Borough's Rights of Way network is maintained in legal status and condition, with new routes and links added where possible, and is effectively mapped, marketed and promoted with improved accessibility for all users. Partnership working with land owners, parish councils and user groups will be key to delivering the Plan's objectives.

Given the Rights of Way Improvement Plan has its own detailed individual action plan, those actions are not included in this strategy summary, but can be found at <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/rights-of-way-improvement-plan-rowip2.pdf>



7. Delivery

Implementation

The implementation of this strategy will require a partnership approach bringing together Borough Council functions and responsibilities such as Highway Engineering, Rights of Way, Planning, Education, Communications & Marketing, and Public Health. Local Members, Town and Parish Councils and local residents and neighbourhood or interest groups also have a part to play.

Partnership working is key in effective implementation given the cross-cutting benefits, and implications of sustainable travel, facilitating growth within Bracknell Forest, and the wider Thames Valley will require a sharper focus on the opportunities for travelling more sustainably and the need to co-ordinate infrastructure delivery.

Funding

Historically the Council's overall Integrated Transport Capital Programme has been funded from the Integrated Transport Direct Grant from Government, Borough Capital and S106/CIL developer contributions towards transport related improvements. The funds will continue to support sustainable travel initiatives.

To further support this the Council has, in recent years, secured additional funds from Central Government towards more strategic schemes aimed at unlocking growth. To date this has contributed over £25m of further capital investment towards transport improvements. Much of this funding has been secured through Government Initiatives such as the Local Growth Fund and the National Productivity Investment Fund. The Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership awarded £4.2 million to the Authorities of West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest in 2016 to deliver a National Cycle Network Route (NCN 422) across Berkshire, and due to open fully in 2020.

Monitoring

Monitoring progress will be an important part of ensuring the objectives of the strategy are being met. There are a range of publicly available data sources alongside that routinely collected by the Council which will be used to provide a measure of our progress. This data is used to inform Key Indicators, annual progress reports, DfT returns, evidence in reports etc.

The Annual Travel in Bracknell (TiB) report is a yearly analysis of the changes in travel in and around the Borough. Data is captured from a range of sources to inform on rail and bus use, cyclist and pedestrian movements, and traffic flow. By reporting on changes in rail, bus, cyclist, pedestrian and vehicle travel, the Council can assess the progress being made towards delivering on the vision outlined in the Local Transport Plan.