



## **HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22 JANUARY 2026**

### **HEALTHY STREETS**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the Healthy Streets approach, its strategic alignment and practical applications for the benefit of Leicestershire communities and to seek the Committee's comments on these matters.

#### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Following the adoption of the County Council's Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS) and Action Plan in 2021, steps were taken to embed best practice by applying Healthy Streets principles in the design of active travel schemes. This approach has guided infrastructure improvements, informed Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP), and strengthened the Council's ability to secure funding through Active Travel England which increased its capability rating from 0 to 1. Active travel capability ratings are an assessment of how effective authorities currently are at planning, designing and delivering active travel schemes. Local authorities are rated from 0 to 4 on their capability to make schemes that will support the objectives set out in the CaWS. Capability ratings will be used to calculate multi-year funding allocations for local authorities within integrated and consolidated settlements. This will set local transport budgets up to 2029/30.
3. A key objective within the CaWS is:

*To enhance infrastructure that supports cycling and walking in Leicestershire by upgrading existing facilities and providing high-quality new segregated routes, cycle parking, pedestrian crossings, and traffic reduction measures to create healthy streets and spaces.*

4. The Healthy Streets approach aligns with key local strategies, plans and policies, including the Local Transport Plan 4, Multi-Modal Area Investment Plans, Enabling Travel Choice Strategy, Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Leicestershire CaWS, and LCWIP. Together, these frameworks aim to support travel choice, economic growth, and public health objectives.

5. The Department for Transport (DfT) has also commissioned the Healthy Streets Design Check for England and supported practitioner training nationwide to use this tool within the LCWIP programme. The Council ensures that the Healthy Streets Design Check Toolkit is applied to appropriate routes when developing these plans. The Council is in the process of developing LCWIP for market towns and the urban areas in surrounding Leicester City. LCWIPs have already been adopted for Loughborough and the South of Leicester. Plans are currently being developed for Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray, North of Leicester, Hinckley, and North West Leicestershire including Ashby and Coalville.
6. Healthy Streets has now been adopted into policy by authorities across the country and is shaping decision-making in transport and planning in Hampshire, Norfolk, Birmingham, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Liverpool City Region and Lancashire.

### **Background**

7. Healthy Streets is an evidence-based, human-centred framework that integrates public health considerations into transport, public realm, and planning decisions. It provides a structured approach to designing streets that prioritise people over vehicles, aiming to create fairer, sustainable, and attractive urban spaces where everyone feels safe and encouraged to walk, cycle, wheel, and spend time outdoors.
8. The framework delivers a wide range of benefits, including:
  - a) **Economic growth** – Healthy Streets can stimulate local economies by making streets more attractive and accessible. When people feel safe and comfortable, they are more likely to visit shops, cafés, and services, increasing footfall and dwell time. Vibrant, pedestrian-friendly streets also attract investment, raise property values, and support tourism, creating a positive cycle of economic activity.
  - b) **Health and wellbeing** – walking, cycling, and wheeling - reduces sedentary behaviour and improves physical fitness, lowering the risk of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Streets designed for social interaction foster mental wellbeing by reducing isolation and creating opportunities for community engagement, which can help combat loneliness and stress. At a public health level, these improvements can lead to lower demand on health services, reduced healthcare costs, and increased workforce productivity. They also promote health equity, as accessible, active environments particularly benefit disadvantaged communities who may have limited access to private transport and/or recreational facilities.
  - c) **Transport efficiency** – by prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport, Healthy Streets reduce reliance on private cars enabling travel choice, which can ease congestion and improve journey reliability. This benefits not only commuters but also businesses and logistics, as deliveries become more predictable. Efficient transport networks support

access to education, training, and employment, strengthening social and economic mobility.

- d) **Environmental improvements** – greener streets with trees and planting improve biodiversity, provide shade, and mitigate urban heat. Lower traffic volumes reduce noise pollution and create calmer, more pleasant environments.
- e) **Social inclusion** – designing streets that are accessible for all ages and abilities, including those with mobility challenges, ensures fairness and equality. Features such as dropped kerbs, tactile paving, seating, and safe crossings make public spaces usable for everyone. Inclusive streets can encourage participation in community life and reduce barriers for disadvantaged groups.

9. These benefits are underpinned by a clear set of Healthy Streets indicators (presented at image below). These indicators guide decision-making and ensure that street design addresses safety, comfort, and environmental resilience.

Healthy Streets Indicators



- Everyone feels welcome – Streets should encourage walking, social interaction, and physical activity for all, including children and vulnerable groups.
- Easy to cross – Streets must be safe and convenient to cross, reducing frustration and risk for pedestrians.
- Shade and shelter – Provide protection from weather (sun, rain, wind) to make streets usable year-round.
- Places to stop and rest – Seating and resting spots are essential for comfort, especially for longer journeys or those with mobility challenges.
- Not too noisy – Reduce traffic noise to improve well-being and create pleasant spaces for interaction.
- People choose to walk and cycle – Streets should make walking and cycling attractive and practical, with safe routes and good connections.
- People feel safe – Design streets to minimize fear of crime, accidents, and intimidation, using good lighting and visibility.
- Things to see and do – Streets should be visually appealing and offer points of interest to encourage engagement.
- People feel relaxed – Clean, well-maintained environments help people feel comfortable and willing to spend time outdoors.
- Clean air – Reduce pollution to protect health, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

10. Officers have continued to receive training to ensure that they have the skill set to implement the positive outcomes desired set through the framework.

### **Moving Forward - Healthy Streets in Leicestershire**

11. Where the opportunity presents itself, it will be ensured that the Healthy Streets approach is embedded to business as usual schemes and programmes to maximise the benefits outlined above.

12. On 15 July 2025, the Cabinet approved for delivery capital schemes totalling £21,387,388 following external funding awards from Active Travel England, the DfT and the Local Transport Grant. All schemes will be designed using the Healthy Streets framework to ensure best practice and maximise benefits. The following provides examples of what this will mean on the ground:

- a) Active Travel Fund 5 - enhancing routes to schools by installing or upgrading crossing points to make journeys safer and more attractive. These improvements will reduce severance and better connect communities.
- b) Consolidated Active Travel Fund - delivering a shared-use corridor linking residential developments, the rail station, a primary school, industrial areas, and retail destinations. Using Healthy Streets indicators, enhancements will include optimising space, creating resting points, providing shade and shelter, installing priority crossings, and improving overall safety.
- c) Local Transport Grant and Maintenance Programmes - seeking opportunities to enhance existing infrastructure through:

- i. Engineering works – kerb adjustments, tactile paving, and removal of redundant street furniture.
- ii. Maintenance programmes – ensuring streets remain safe, clean, and accessible.
- iii. Education and Engagement - working with Modeshift and local schools across the County to train and empower pupils to assess and identify improvements that make walking, wheeling, and cycling more enjoyable and accessible for their routes to school.
- iv. Public Realm Enhancement - collaborating with local partners, district councils, and developers to deliver improvements such as seating, trees, cycle parking, and shade to encourage outdoor activity. The Council will also give consideration to decluttering, such as street signage.

### **Resource Implications**

- 13. Healthy Streets is being integrated into existing business as usual work streams and as such will be delivered in line with the agreed Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 14. Opportunities to secure specific external Government grant funding will also be explored and maximised to embed this approach into schemes and programmes.
- 15. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Summary**

- 16. The County Council will continue embedding the Healthy Streets approach into all relevant transport and public realm projects to maximise health, environmental, and social benefits. Following recent funding awards, several capital schemes will be delivered using Healthy Streets principles.
- 17. By taking these steps, the Council aims to create safer, more inclusive streets that encourage walking, cycling, and wheeling, supporting healthier communities within Leicestershire.

### **Background Papers**

Additional Highways and Transport Funding Awards 2025/26, Cabinet Report, 15 July 2025:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s190752/FINAL%20Additional%20Funding%20Post%20Agreed%20MTFS%20Cabinet%20Report%20150725.pdf>

Leicestershire's Cycling and Walking Strategy

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking>

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plans-lcwips>

Local Transport Plan 4

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/local-transport-plan/local-transport-plan-ltp4>

### **Equality Implications**

18. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as part of the individual projects.

### **Health Implications**

19. Healthy Streets interventions have significant positive health implications across physical, mental, and environmental health domains. By enabling more walking and cycling, they increase levels of routine physical activity, which is strongly associated with reduced risks of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. These everyday movements build population level resilience and help prevent long-term chronic conditions.
20. There are also important mental health implications. Streets that incorporate greenery, shade, comfortable places to rest, and opportunities for social interaction create calming, supportive environments. These features are linked to lower stress, reduced anxiety and depression, better mood, and improved cognitive function. The ability to engage with others in safe, welcoming public spaces also helps to reduce loneliness and social isolation, which are key determinants of mental wellbeing.
21. Environmental health benefits add further value. Reduced traffic volumes and improved street design lower exposure to air pollution, especially particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, which in turn supports better respiratory and cardiovascular health. Green infrastructure and tree canopy improve thermal comfort, reducing heat related illness, while also mitigating noise pollution - another factor known to affect sleep, stress, and heart health.
22. Finally, Healthy Streets help address health inequalities by improving access to safe, inclusive, and accessible environments for those most affected by poor urban conditions, including children, older adults, and disabled people. This contributes to fairer health outcomes, stronger community resilience, and long-term improvements in population health.

### **Human Rights Implications**

23. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**Other Relevant Impact Assessments**

24. Assessments for health and environmental implications will be carried out as part of the individual projects.

**Officers to Contact**

Ann Carruthers  
Director, Environment and Transport  
Telephone: (0116) 305 7000  
Email: [Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk)

Janna Walker  
Assistant Director, Environment and Transport  
Telephone: (0116) 305 0785  
Email: [Janna.Walker@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Janna.Walker@leics.gov.uk)

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