

Active Travel Projects Update Report

For Joint Transportation Board on 15 January 2024

Summary

Lead Member:	Councillor Peter Lidstone, Walking & Cycling Champion and Councillor Jayne Sharratt, Cabinet Member for Sustainability
Lead Director:	Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development (s151)
Head of Service:	David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Property
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Classification:	Public document (non-exempt)
Wards Affected:	Speldhurst & Bidborough, Rusthall, Culverden, Park, Pantiles & St Marks, St John's, St James', Sherwood, Southborough & High Brooms

For Information

1. This paper provides an update on two current active travel projects that TWBC and KCC are working on together, funded by Active Travel England.
2. This paper is for information only.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 In 2022 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council submitted a number of projects to Kent County Council (KCC) to be considered for Active Travel England (ATE) funding. Two Tunbridge Wells projects were selected for submission by KCC and awarded funding by ATE in 2023 as follows:

- Langton-Rusthall-Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Cycle Route Design; and
- Better Streets Pilot Project for St John's and St James' Areas Community Engagement and Design.

1.2 The progress on each of these projects to date is outlined below.

2. Langton-Rusthall-Town Centre Cycle Route Design

2.1 This project is funded through Active Travel England's *Capability Fund* (via KCC) which is aimed at providing support for planning cycling and walking networks and/or route design.

2.2 The route linking Langton Green – Rusthall – Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre was included in the Tunbridge Wells Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Phase 1 which was published as part of the evidence base for the Submitted Local Plan.

2.3 Consultant Phil Jones Associates (PJA) was appointed last year to undertake feasibility work and prepare a high-level design for the route.

2.4 Early engagement was undertaken with both Speldhurst and Rusthall Parish Councils and meetings have also been held with the Commons Conservators.

2.5 Following this engagement and site visits, PJA has undertaken a route options appraisal and is now preparing an initial plan with measures identified to support both walking and cycling between Langton, Rusthall and the town centre.

2.6 Further engagement will take place on these plans with the Commons Conservators and the Parishes between January – March 2024.

3. Better Streets for St John's and St James' Areas

- 3.1 This project is funded through Active Travel England's *Tranche 4* which supports both the development of designs for, and the delivery of, cycling and walking infrastructure.
- 3.2 The Council regularly receives feedback from residents about traffic-related issues affecting the streets in which they live, and a decision was made to undertake further work to fully understand these concerns and develop options to create better streets for residents and other users.
- 3.3 A pilot study area was identified as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Phase 2, which was published as part of the evidence base for the Submission Local Plan. The study area covers mainly the wards of St John's and St James' but also smaller parts of Culverden, Park, Sherwood and Southborough & High Brooms.
- 3.4 Phil Jones Associates (PJA) was appointed to take the Better Streets project forward and a Working Group comprising TWBC Councillors and local residents has been supporting this work.
- 3.5 Significant engagement with local residents has been undertaken including:
 - An online engagement via Talking Point platform (581 respondents)
 - A Community Street Audit (4 November 2023) with the consultants and local residents
 - A Drop-in Workshop event in the Hub at Grosvenor & Hilbert Park (18 December 2023) – with approximately 50 attendees
- 3.6 Some of the key issues identified at specific locations through this engagement have included: uneven or damaged footways, speeding traffic, dangerous and/or inconsiderate parking and poor lighting.
- 3.7 PJA has prepared a Draft Vision Report which will be shared with the Working Group in this month. Following this, specific design interventions will be identified that would make the streets in the study area safer and more pleasant for residents and other users.
- 3.8 Engagement work with local residents will continue throughout the course of the project.

4. Recommended Course of Action

- 4.1 That Members of the JTB note the information in this paper.
- 4.2 That a more detailed report on these projects is brought to the April 2024 meeting of the JTB when further work has been completed.