

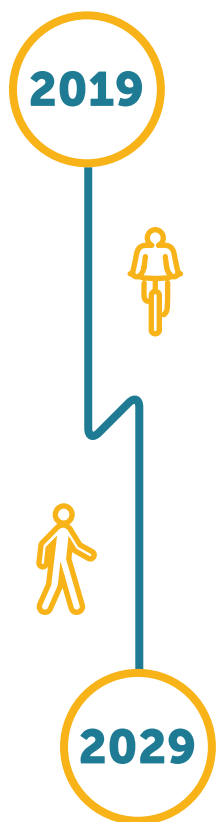


ASHFORD CYCLING & WALKING STRATEGY 2019-2029

OUR VISION

“ To encourage walking and cycling as the natural choices for shorter journeys in Ashford Borough – or as part of a longer journey – regardless of age, gender, fitness level or income. ”

OUR AMBITIONS



- Ashford Borough is recognised as a cycling and walking friendly borough
- Cycling and walking routes are high quality, safe, accessible, well maintained, integrated, signed and promoted
- More people are cycling and walking for everyday journeys
- There are more opportunities for sustainable travel to work, school and key services and reliance on cars is reduced
- Drivers are more aware of and considerate towards cyclists and walkers
- Cyclists and walkers are more aware of their rights and responsibilities to other road and path users
- Off road cycling and walking networks are maintained and improved
- Cycling and walking contribute to the visitor economy
- To secure a significant modal shift from cars to cycling and walking to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions and improve overall air quality.

OUR STRATEGY

The Ashford urban area is already served by an excellent network of cycleways and footpaths, many of which are based along existing river corridors and have been delivered as part of the green corridor project. The number of cyclists using the routes to commute to the station has increased significantly due to the extensive existing infrastructure in place, but the key challenge going forward is to increase awareness and promote its use to local residents and visitors to the borough, whilst also ensuring the infrastructure is improved and extended where possible.

The Ashford Cycling and Walking Strategy therefore brings together policies and related actions to promote walking and cycling and the delivery of related infrastructure around Ashford Borough with the aim of increasing the proportion of journeys made by these active travel modes.

The Strategy also seeks to increase cycling participation for recreation and leisure and daily journeys by promoting cycling as a key priority, providing new facilities, enhancing existing facilities and promoting local participatory events.

4% In 2013, 4% of UK residents said they cycled at least once a day

43% This compares to 43% in the Netherlands where 27% of all trips are made by bike

3% Currently only 3% of trips in Ashford are made by bike

6% The target for the Strategy is to increase that to 6% over its lifetime

POLICIES – LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS (LCWIP)

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP), as set out in the Government’s Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, are a new, strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at local level.

They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks and form a vital part of the Government’s strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by bicycle.

The Borough Council was part of a Department of Transport pilot project to trial the preparation of LCWIPs and received support from consultants to analyse local census data to establish the most heavily used cycling and walking routes where key improvements would secure the greatest benefits.

CYCLING TRENDS IN ASHFORD

In overall terms, in Kent the total number of residents cycling to work was second only numerically to Canterbury.

Ashford has one of the best developed network of cycleways in Kent with a mixture of off-road dedicated routes and segregated road space.



A PICTURE OF CYCLING AND WALKING IN ASHFORD TODAY

The Ashford Local Plan 2030 in policy TRA6 specifically seeks to improve conditions for cyclists through the following measures

- Promoting and developing a Borough-wide network of cycle routes
- Developments should, where opportunities arise, include safe, convenient and attractively designed cycle routes, including, where possible, connection to the Borough Wide cycle network
- Promoting and providing cycle parking facilities in town centres, 7 at railways stations and at major public buildings, and requiring new development to provide cycle parking facilities in agreement with the Council
- Taking opportunities to consider active travel when designing new routes and establishing connections with existing routes, encouraging journeys by bike.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?



The green corridor network of routes in the Ashford urban area has enabled the establishment of key pedestrian and cycleway links throughout the borough.



National Cycle Route NCN18 crosses the Borough, linking rural Tenterden to the Ashford urban area and then out to the north and Wye in the direction of Canterbury. National Cycle Route 17 is also within the Borough boundary.



There has also been significant provision of off-road cycle routes, which have helped to improve connectivity and accessibility. Principally, the South Willesborough Dykes route now links Park Farm to the International Station and in the rural area there is an off-road link from Godmersham and Chilham (part of NCN18).

The Council has worked closely with Sustrans, who have carried out an extensive audit of the existing routes in Ashford, Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye. Those audits form the basis of the proposed improvements and projects in the delivery plan.

THE BENEFITS

In towns and cities across Britain, cycling and walking are becoming increasingly popular modes of transport and are regarded as the preferred means of travel; they are quick, easy and green ways of getting around – whether for work, going to school or simply leisure and fitness.



HEALTH – by making cycling and walking the norm and incorporating it into everyday life, particularly in making short trips, this improves physical activity and fitness, and contributes to the promotion of healthy lifestyles.



ENVIRONMENT – cycling and walking are low impact, zero emissions means of getting from A to B and by replacing car journeys with trips by bike it will help to improve air quality and create a better living environment.



SUSTAINABLE GROWTH – building cycling and walking infrastructure into new developments can help to ensure that they are linked to the wider network of existing and proposed routes.



TRANSPORT – travelling by bike can help to reduce congestion and free up road space for businesses and other road users.



SOCIAL INCLUSION – cycling and walking provide an affordable way of getting around for people who do not have access to a private car.

SAFETY – the more people who travel by bike, the more it helps to change the perception of cycling as a means of travel.



TOURISM – promoting cycle tourism also has benefits for local businesses – local cafes, pubs and local attractions can all benefit from increased cycle tourism

OVERALL AIMS

1. PROVIDING AND IMPROVING THE CYCLING AND WALKING NETWORK

New routes will be provided as safe, continuous links between communities and popular destinations. A network of high quality cycling and walking routes will be completed or improved in Ashford borough, Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye.

2. CYCLE PARKING

Cycle parking needs to be convenient, safe and secure and there is a specific requirement in the Ashford Local Plan (Policy TRA6) that is provided as part of new development. Cycle parking/storage will be provided in all developments in accordance with this policy and at key public transport links and all public buildings.

3. MAINTENANCE OF THE EXISTING NETWORK

There is extensive existing network of cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the Borough that unless they are maintained to an appropriate standard will quickly fall into disrepair and will be difficult to use. The Borough Council will work with its partners to ensure the regular maintenance of all cycle tracks and pedestrian routes within the Borough.

4. SAFER CYCLING

A key barrier to the increase in cycling within the Borough is the perception of relative safety of bicycle users on existing routes and roads. The Borough Council will ensure that the safety of cyclists is considered as a priority in the provision of new routes and the adaptation and re-configuration of existing routes, including those around existing and proposed schools.

5. PROMOTING CYCLING AND WALKING IN ASHFORD

Ashford borough has one of the best developed network of cycleways/ footpaths in Kent that has developed over a number of years, but the perception is that the network is not as well used as it should be and is not being used to its full potential. It is essential therefore that there is more promotion of the positive benefits of cycling and walking as alternative means of travel, and that cycleways and pedestrian routes are fully advertised and appropriately signposted.

6. TOURISM

Cycling and walking can be an important source of tourism and in particular there are cycling opportunities within the Borough that could be exploited as part of an improved visitor offer. Ashford Borough Council is keen to work with landowners and stakeholders to ensure sympathetic and sustainable routes are created which will encourage healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities.