

Safer Travel Strategy Document

The following notes refer primarily to the Safer Travel Document, as published at:

https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/insights-service/local-transport-plan/supporting_documents/07%20Safer%20Travel%20Strategy%201.pdf

General comments

Positives

- Reference to the Safe Systems Approach and the pages defining it.

Could be improved

- The images on the cover and on the opening page features cyclists wearing helmets; the helmets should be removed. While a small and subtle adjustment to the document, this is a signal as to the type of network and environment that the Council should be working towards.

Helmet use for everyday cycling in The Netherlands, where high quality cycle networks and Safe Systems road design is long-established, is rare. Given it is so safe to cycle, there are minimal to no perceived benefits for wearing PPE. We should be aiming for the same result – a network that accommodates everybody but that is safe enough for people to cycle where they do not feel they need protective equipment just to go about their day-to-day activities.

- The final paragraph of the opening page talks first about encouraging public transport use, and then about pedestrian and cyclist routes. Firstly, these should be swapped to reflect the Transport Hierarchy. There needs to be a focus on first, providing for walking and wheeling; second, providing for cycling; and third, providing for public transport.

Similar to earlier comments, the use of the term “encouraging” needs to be replaced with “enabling”. See earlier comments for more detail on this point.

- On the Road Safety Overview, a chart shows a declining trend in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on Warwickshire’s roads. This is a positive trend to see, but it lacks important detail and nuance – this may (or may not) be skewed to effectively reflect only drivers, given the large number of journeys taken by car and where vehicle safety has improved over time. It would be useful to see this data broken out into different road users (pedestrians, cyclists, drivers), overlaid with data which shows the number of journeys taken by those different travel options.

This would then identify whether that downward trend is consistent for everyone, or whether there is a difference between various road users; and whether a downward trend in a particular category is also linked to a decrease in mode usage.

- In the Safe Systems section (*page seven*), the “engineering” bullet point lists a few examples of measures that can be taken in support of the approach. This list should incorporate appropriate road design on all new road schemes and road improvement schemes, to

ensure that this principle is adopted proactively (i.e., before issues occur).

The word “or” should also be removed from this list, where multiple options may be required to deliver the required outcome.

Negatives

- Whilst only a cover image, the picture on the front of this document features an inaccessible pedestrian crossing bridge. People who wheel would not be able to access such a structure. It should be removed, or changed to include accommodation for people who cannot use steps. This might be a subtle adjustment to the document, but it’s important to communicate that transport is for everybody, regardless of whether they walk, wheel, cycle, or drive.
- Under the Wider Transport Strategy (*page five*), the inference from the opening paragraph is that the Council see “road safety initiatives” as being motor vehicle safety related initiatives, and that these are separate to safety issues for other transport. This is motor-centric thinking.

The Council can have a very large, significant, and direct influence on safety for other forms of transport. It can do this through the provision of high quality walking routes, providing excellent cycling infrastructure, and using road design features that communicate and force drivers to slow down and pay greater attention especially at points of conflict with other road users.

It is essential that the Local Transport Plan, and the Council generally, does not view roads as the domain of cars. This has led to the historic domination of road space for motor transport to the detriment of anyone who wants or needs to travel via non-driving means. Roads are for the movement of people and goods. They are used not only by private drivers but also pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, and bus users.

- On the same page is the statement, “*If we are to tackle climate change...*” – **there is no “if” about tackling climate change**. It must be tackled. This therefore needs to be re-worded. For example, “*We must tackle climate change and as part of this, there needs to be a shift towards more sustainable forms of transport...*”.
- Still on the Wider Transport Strategy page, there is no mention of active travel beyond what can be inferred from the phrase “sustainable travel”. This is at the top of the Transport Hierarchy and must be given mention ahead of public transport.
- The image of a sports car on page eight is inappropriate, where these are closely associated with speed – a key factor in road injuries and deaths. It should be changed to reflect a more common, everyday vehicle.

Focus on: Safer Travel Policies

- The numbered Safer Travel policies suggests these may be in a particular order of preference or priority e.g., that ST1 is more important than ST5. It should be clarified whether this is or is not the case.
- **ST2** and **ST4** – These policies deal with interventions on existing roads and design standards for new roads respectively, however they are clearly separated in the policy order which leads to the inference that ST4 is of lower importance than other policies. Both should be positioned together as related policies.
- **ST4** – This policy makes no specific mention of adopting the Safe Systems Approach when it comes to the design of new roads and improvements to existing road layouts. It is essential to proactively incorporate the Approach at this stage, and not to rely on retroactive alterations only where issues are identified and exceed a specific threshold. Road design must be managed in a manner which:
 - **controls the types of vehicle able to access streets** (e.g., larger vehicles cannot access small streets),
 - **enforces clear separation between users and limits potential for incursion** (e.g., pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers have their own space and drivers are hindered from intruding on space not allocated to them),
 - **places a physical limit on driver speed** (e.g., through incorporating gentle chicanes, speed bumps, and bricked surfaces, drivers cannot physically achieve a speed faster than 20mph in urban environments; high speed driving on roundabouts becomes uncomfortable),
 - **and, limits the negative outcome of collisions when they do happen** (the outcome of a collision between a driver and pedestrian at speeds below 20mph is far less severe than speeds above 20mph).
- **ST3** – While education and engagement has an important role, it is important to recognise that this must come behind road and street layouts that are designed safe, as per the Safe Systems approach. Even with the best intentions, education, and experience, people will always make mistakes – a fundamental point acknowledge in the Approach – and road design should reflect that fact, ensuring that when errors occur, the outcomes are not serious.

Where education and engagement is used, it must not continue on the existing approach where the greatest responsibility is put on the most vulnerable road users (for example, “Be Safe Be Seen”). For active travel to be an attractive alternative to the car, it must be seen to be safe and convenient. Such messages perpetuate the idea that walking and cycling, especially after dark, is dangerous; telling people to dress up in specific clothing removes the convenience. It also risks perpetuating a victim blaming attitude where, in the event of a collision between a pedestrian/cyclist and driver, too much emphasis can be placed on what that pedestrian/cyclist was wearing at the time, minimising the responsibility of the driver to properly look and see, and drive at an appropriate speed where they can safely stop in the

space known to be clear.

- **ST5** – As noted elsewhere in this review, the word “seek” in this policy serves to weaken the objective. Personal safety is extremely important in achieving modal shift where people, especially vulnerable groups, must feel comfortable accessing non-car based transportation. The word “seek” needs to be removed from the policy in order to strengthen its objectives and ensure that personal safety is given utmost attention when evaluating public transport services or walking and cycling routes.

Examples of improvements should be provided, including: not routing primary walking and cycling networks through isolated spaces such as parks (regardless of whether they are lit); not installing obstructive barriers on routes which slow people down unduly, and lead to pinch points where people can loiter, trapping people walking, wheeling, or cycling; ensuring bus shelters are highly visible, well-maintained, lit, have CCTV coverage and good service communication etc.