

West Sussex Cycle Forum

WSCF Response to WSCC (Draft) Walking and Cycling Strategy 2016 - 2026

People want to cycle – let's give them somewhere to do it safely

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1 Introduction / Objectives

- This document, authored by the West Sussex Cycle Forum (WSCF), reflects the views of the cycling community on the cycling elements of the West Sussex County Council draft 'Walking and Cycling Strategy 2016 – 2026'.
- The West Sussex Cycle Forum was established by WSCC in 2004 specifically to assist with writing the 'Pedalling Ahead in West Sussex' cycling strategy. In following years the Forum continued to meet regularly with successive County Cycling Officers to reflect the views of the various local cycling forums around the county. The WSCF has continued to reflect the views of the various local cycling forums around the county even though the WSCC no longer has a cycling officer and no longer offers support to the Forum. Its aim - as in its constitution is:

To work towards the creation of conditions in West Sussex so that cycling is perceived as a valid and reasonable choice of transport for both utility and leisure purposes.

- The underlying vision is to adopt a cycle-centric infrastructure to fully realise this aim.
- The WSCF is supported by local cycle forums, representatives of CTC and Sustrans, local access forums, as well as other non-aligned cycle sustainable transport campaigners. As such, the WSCF articulates the views of the cycling community in West Sussex.
- The local forums are supported by County, Borough and District Councillors through the roles of cycle champions.
- The local cycle forums are submitting separate comments on the Walking and Cycling strategy.

2 Chapter 1 - Introduction

WSCF welcome the development of a Walking and Cycling strategy by WSCC. The WSCF produced its own Cycling Strategy document in December 2013 which was widely shared with WSCC Councillors and Officers.

The primary objectives of the strategy are supported by the WSCF.

We would like to see explicit reference to WSCC adopting the Government's CWIS aims for West Sussex and the setting out of an action plan designed to achieve the targets.

1.3 Objectives

We agree the objectives but they need to include:

It should be a clear objective to implement the infrastructure necessary to make Cycling safer and, therefore, more attractive to more people

The objective: 'To increase the vitality of urban areas by improving access and footfall' would be better if it explicitly stated increasing access by bicycle and on foot.

3 Chapter 2 – Existing Situation

This section should refer to the main urban centres rather than just the coastal plain. There is pent-up demand in the existing towns before any growth materialises and it is there in places like Crawley, Horsham and Worthing (as just three examples) that the maximum benefit from investment in cycling can be realised in terms of increased numbers of cycle journeys.

There has been little or no cycling investment in the major towns in recent years. This is one of the major reasons why West Sussex is outperformed by other areas, as per the examples in the strategy document. The urban areas of West Sussex could achieve similar levels of cycling, to those cited, if adequate infrastructure was provided.

It is correct to say that currently the infrastructure is often sub-standard, in that it doesn't reassure people that using it will guarantee them a safe journey, and insufficient, in that the networks in most towns are incomplete. Poor results from recent schemes, for example in Horsham, do not give confidence that WSCC are learning how to deliver proper cycling facilities.

There is ample evidence of unrealised demand in the constant problems experienced in most towns as cycle users resort to using the pavement resulting in complaints etc.

2.1 Challenges and opportunities

One benefit that is often missed and is missing from the table is that people that cycle to work, or to other destinations, do not require a car parking space. In some towns e.g. Crawley, there is a chronic shortage of parking spaces in both the employment, residential and leisure areas. Solutions to this shortage are very expensive and cycling can reduce the need with commensurate benefits at low cost.

2.3 What people think

This data clearly shows that WSCC is generally only average or lower on most measures. And it should be noted that the overall figures are low illustrating the general problem across the nation. The figures for cycling related measurements are significantly lower than for walking; this should not be the case.

2.5 Sharing the network

The conflicts are caused by forcing cyclists and pedestrians to share the same space, particularly in well used facilities. This inevitably leads to conflict. In countries in Europe like Holland, Denmark and Germany there are separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians reducing conflicts to very low levels.

Conflicts on the Worth Way are due to the success of this route and the increasing numbers of people using it. This route is inadequate in places for the volume of usage it experiences e.g. near to Three Bridges. The path is also constrained by inadequate maintenance of both the surface and the vegetation at the sides of the path, effectively reducing its width.

4 Chapter 3 – Approach to Infrastructure Design and Safety

WSCF agree that it is people's safety fears due to lack of or inadequate facilities is the primary reason for failure to deliver increased modal shift to cycling in West Sussex and we agree that it is vital to improve both of these items.

The distinction of need between different usage classes is theoretically correct but, in practice, to increase the uptake of cycling significantly effort should be focussed on urban utility cycling as this is where the most pent-up demand is found. The needs of this larger group are similar and not unknown being mostly to have hard-surfaced paths separate from motor vehicles. This is recognised in London and evidenced by the success of the cycle super highways being implemented there.

It is agreed that the increase in cyclist KSI's is driven by increases in the number of people cycling but recognition needs to be made that car journeys are also increasing, and traffic policing reducing in response to central government funding cuts. This emphasises our view that more people want to cycle and would if it was both safer and perceived as safer. WSCF supports the Vision Zero objective and we have contributed to the safety work being done by WSCC.

3.2 Infrastructure design principles

These should recognise the Hierarchy of provision which is in simple terms provision of facilities for and prioritisation of:

- Pedestrians
- Cyclists
- Buses
- Cars
- Other vehicles

The way to do this is well understood and evidence is readily available of techniques etc. What is needed is for WSCC to take these approaches 'on board' and to integrate them into their approach to Highways design. This does require reviewing the current approach related to moving the maximum number of cars around.

The key elements in the strategy are contained in the section beginning 'Routes and facilities in built up areas...' and we support these.

Issues related to inter-community routes are more complex due to the distances, cost and likely usage involved. The cost/benefit ratios of such routes are less beneficial and, although many such routes are justified and would be useful, the compelling need is in the urban context. It is important to remember that regular cycling will tend to be short distance, probably only a couple of miles in each journey, and will be undertaken in the vicinity of an individual's home/work/school/town-centre etc.

WSCF would like to see an approach to cycle parking included in the design principles to include both public and residential parking.

3.3 Inter-community Utility routes

For the reasons stated above we do not feel that these routes are lower priority than urban routes that benefit the most people for a given investment.

3.5 Built Up Areas

The main elements of this section are supported in that the key strategy that WSCC need to adopt to encourage modal shift to cycling in the urban environment is to recognise that road space must be shared

differently so that the benefits of the modes within the transport mix can be realised based on different priorities e.g. the hierarchy of provision.

The benefits of each mode of transport within the transport mix can only be realised by appropriate allocation of road space.

There are more techniques that should be included in the approach. It is particularly important to recognise that cyclists need most support at junctions which is exactly where most cycle schemes stop. It is also important to give pedestrians and cyclists priority at junctions – usually the opposite situation prevails at the moment.

The contents of this section are welcomed and supported although it is felt that there is a great deal more that could be added in order to arrive at a strategy that would really achieve the overall objectives of the strategy.

5 Chapter 4 – Supporting Activities

The activities in this section are useful but will always be ‘capped’ in their usefulness by the incomplete and inadequate nature of the infrastructure. For example it doesn’t matter how much Bike training you give to school children they won’t cycle to school unless there is a safe route and that their parents consider it to be safe.

We do not share the WSCC’s view of the maintenance levels of the roads and paths. Damage to a road that may be relatively minor to a vehicle i.e. below intervention levels, may be significant to a cyclist, particularly if the damage is towards the left-hand side of the carriageway.

Maintenance of pavements in West Sussex is extremely poor and we do not agree that they are well maintained – for example many pavements, and cycle paths, in Crawley are in very poor condition indeed.

Training is not the big answer to safety on the roads. Training is important in as much as people need to be aware of what is happening around them. What is more important is to provide an infrastructure that has safety designed into it. The Achilles heel of training is that you continue having to do it and it will not reach everyone, whereas a safe environment is always there and works for everyone.

6 Chapter 5 – Infrastructure Priorities

Local Planning Authorities are in the hands of WSCC Highways when it comes to negotiations with developers. What is needed is for WSCC Highways to call for more cycling infrastructure and better quality infrastructure from developers and in their TAD/S106 agreements. It is hoped that the development of the priority list will aid this process.

5.1 Priority List Development

WSCF welcome the WSCC initiative to create this list. It is felt that this has been a very useful exercise and that it has helped to drive out various issues and to inform the production of the WSCC strategy. But the work will have most use if the lists are continuously available to WSCC, the districts and boroughs and to the general public and that they are maintained properly. The system is particularly useful as it is based on GIS data and uses one set of evaluation criteria. It would be better if existing infrastructure could be entered and maintained so that overall pictures of the infrastructure provision could be made available.

5.2 Priority Schemes

The prioritisation criteria place inter-community schemes first and do not mention urban schemes. It is clear from our comments that we do not support this approach for the reasons above.

Sorting or sub-dividing the lists by infrastructure design priorities is not the most useful criteria and is not what has been done. They have been sorted by 'Route type' which is quite different. Consideration should be given to elements like:

- Which schemes would deliver the maximum regular increase in cycling
- Which schemes are the most feasible
- Which schemes have potential funding sources
- Consideration of cost/benefit ratios (business case)

The WSCF are of the opinion that WSCC should fund the priority schemes, from its own capital spending in addition to external funding, and that the strategy will be critically weakened if this does not take place.

The local cycle forums entered the scheme proposals into the RATE system and are the people that both support this initiative and have the best local knowledge of the relevant schemes. WSCF would suggest that both WSCF and the local forums should be included in the ongoing maintenance of the data and the prioritisation of the schemes.

7 Chapter 6 – Delivering the Strategy

Based on the evidence of our ability and willingness in the past, WSCF would like to be involved with the roll-out plan for delivering actions 1 – 10.

Action 1 should be strengthened to make clear that it is crucial to establish a basis for long-term, co-ordinated investment, and that this requires clearer accountability and a much stronger approach to co-ordination.

8 Omissions

8.1 Maintenance

WSCF recommend that attention should be given to the maintenance of the new infrastructure to ensure the longevity of the investment. In addition it would be reckless to ignore the existing infrastructure, much of which is either not up to standard and/or in need of maintenance.

8.2 Accountability at WSCC

The strategy needs to identify a WSCC Lead Councillor and Lead Officer for cycling within the organisation. Focussed leadership is needed in order to deliver this ambitious strategy.

8.3 WSCC Capital Funding

WSCF would expect to see reference to contribution of Council tax-payers funding for the WSCC Cycling strategy. WSCC should identify its own funding to demonstrate both commitment to the strategy and also to be prepared to contribute match-funding in order to secure external funding and to make up for any shortfalls in external funding. WSCF need to get away from a piecemeal approach to funding and delivery, which is sometimes driven by opportunistic external funding. There is no reference to match the government's published spending figure per head of population.

9 Appendix – Full list of schemes entered by Stakeholder

It would be helpful if each scheme had a unique identifier (perhaps a number) and if it was sorted by priority within the groups.

References and Evidence

1	West Sussex Cycle Forum Strategy Document 'Cycling Strategy' version 0.13 issued December 2013
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