A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council’s

Sustainable Modes of Travel to School

Strategy Consultation
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Report produced 26 April 2018 by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, on behalf of Strategic Infrastructure, Cheshire East Highways. Please email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.
Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

During February and March 2018, Cheshire East Council consulted on a draft ‘Sustainable Modes of Travel to School’ (SMOTS) Strategy. This strategy aims to provide a framework to support schools to implement their own School Travel Plans.

Before adopting the SMOTS Strategy, the council sought feedback to find out if schools, residents and council partners agree with the document’s aims and content.

Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was promoted to the following stakeholders:

- Local schools, which were advised of the consultation via Cheshire East’s School Bulletin, and via email to school head teachers and via the Dioceses of Shrewsbury and of Chester
- Local cycling groups and regional representatives of national active travel groups, who were advised of the consultation by email
- The Cheshire East Countryside Access Forum, who was advised of the consultation in face to face meetings
- Town and Parish Councils, who were advised of the consultation via Cheshire East Council’s Community Resilience Manager
- Delivery partners, Parent Carer Forums and the Youth Council, who were advised of the consultation via email
- Cheshire East residents, who were advised of the consultation through the council’s Digital Influence Panel
- The general public, via a media release on 13 February 2018.

289 responses were received as part of the consultation, and these included:

- 284 consultation survey completions
- 5 formal written responses.

Reading this report

Section 1 contains results to the closed questions included in the consultation survey.

Sections 2 and 3 contain summaries of written comments made as part of the consultation survey.

Section 4 presents the formal written responses received as part of the consultation.
Section 1 – Overall views on the draft SMOTS strategy

Good overall, but is it deliverable?

Roughly 6 in 10 respondents agreed that the strategy was good (61%), clear (62%) and comprehensive (59%).

Just over half of respondents felt the strategy was ambitious (52%), with around 4 in 10 agreeing that it was deliverable (43%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How strongly do you agree or disagree the draft SMOTS Strategy is...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...good</td>
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<tr>
<td>...clear</td>
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<tr>
<td>...comprehensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>...ambitious</td>
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<td>...deliverable</td>
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Number of responses between 266 and 276

Encouraging sustainable travel

Fairly large proportions of respondents – around two-thirds – agreed that:

• The Modeshift STARS online system should be funded to enable schools to implement their School Travel Plans (69%)
• Current measures to support schools in encouraging sustainable travel should be continued (66%).

However, a significantly lower proportion of respondents agreed that current measures to support schools in encouraging sustainable travel are appropriate (43%).
The Safer Routes to School Programme

Large proportions of respondents agreed that a Safer Routes to School Programme should be established (89%), and that funding from the Local Transport Plan should be allocated towards it (83%).

Lower proportions of respondents were in agreement that the two-stage appraisal process is appropriate (62%), and that only schools with up-to-date travel plans should be able to submit requests for funding (61%).
Section 2 – Comments made about the strategy

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the SMOTS strategy within the survey. In total 167 respondents made a comment, making a total of 312 comments between them.

These comments have been analysed, counted, and are summarised under the headings below.

The strategy itself (61 comments)

The first group of comments were on the strategy document itself. Whilst a number of respondents praised the strategy, and were in support of it, there were a number of criticisms raised about it, including:

- That the strategy is not good or inadequate
- Some who felt the strategy was “tokenistic”, that it goes through the motions, is unrealistic or that nothing will come of it
- Others felt it was a “tick the box exercise”
- Others questioned how the proposals will be financed, and felt it would not be effective if it is not well resourced
- Others felt the strategy lacks measurable improvements, identifiable actions, responsible owners, milestone completion dates, and performance indicators
- Others felt it is too long – respondents said it needed to be simpler, and presented in a shorter format or as a summary
- Some felt the strategy did not fit into other council strategies well.

Some respondents were unclear as to who should have responsibility for implementing sustainable travel to schools. Some felt the council should take responsibility for it, as they felt schools should focus on providing education. Others felt the schools should be made responsible for children’s travel, and for sustainable transport, whereas others felt parents need to be responsible for travel, not the council or school.

Respondents also felt the social benefits of sustainable travel should also be promoted in the strategy more – benefits such as increased social interaction, and the health benefits helping to tackle obesity and air pollution.

The impact of school congestion (24 comments)

The remainder of the comments largely discussed issues surrounding sustainable travel to school.
A number of respondents highlighted the impact that school “drop off” congestion had on their lives, including that it:

- “Desperately” needs reducing
- Is a “free-for-all” outside schools at school drop off time
- Is inefficient
- Is environmentally damaging
- Is unsafe for road users and pedestrians
- Adversely affects all commuters, and the whole transport network
- Impacts on residential areas, and is socially unacceptable for local residents
- Causes “misery” to local residents, including from inconsiderate and abusive parents.

**Reducing car usage (70 comments)**

**A dependency on cars**

Respondents suggested that the use of cars for dropping off children at school needs to be discouraged, and that people who don’t use cars should be rewarded.

Others felt that there is a dependency on cars within society, and that long term this needs to change. Respondents also felt that this dependency on cars isn’t tackled by council policy, e.g. new development does not encourage sustainable travel, but is built around car usage. Respondents felt that a dependency on cars was more of an issue in rural areas, and in primary schools.

**School catchment areas**

A number of respondents questioned why people need to drive if catchment areas are correct, other than those that have special requirements. Respondents felt that people should be encouraged to use their local schools, so that car use is not required, and that catchment areas should be reviewed.

**Changing behaviour**

Some felt convincing parents to use their cars less is the main challenge, though this would be difficult, particularly for those that are more affluent, or because modern family life is so busy – parents are dependent on cars.

Others felt it is difficult to control parents’ behaviour, but suggested this could perhaps be achieved by communicating about sustainable modes of transport, and communicating about the benefits of it for their children, for the community and for the environment. It was also suggested that non-car use should be a condition of children’s school admission.
Others felt that as well as parents, school staff and sixth formers should also be encouraged to travel to schools sustainably.

**Park and walk**

Some suggested that having "park and walk" drop off zones, provided some distance away from schools, could be introduced to keep traffic away from school entrances. "Walking buses" could then be utilised, and people could be encouraged to walk from half a mile away (for primary schools), and a mile away for secondary school children.

**Enforce highway regulations**

Respondents felt that highways regulations should be more stringently enforced, to help reduce the impact of school congestion. They felt that:

- Yellow line parking infringements should be punished more, perhaps with more traffic wardens at schools
- More yellow lines should be painted around schools
- More traffic calming measures are required, such as 20mph speed limits around schools, and 30mph speed limits on all walking routes
- Enforcement of speed limits needs improving
- Heavy Goods Vehicles should be banned from walking routes as they are dangerous.

**Increasing cycling (61 comments)**

Respondents were keen advocates of cycling as an alternative to car usage in the borough. They felt the benefits of cycling are that it is good for people’s health, it helps reduce motor traffic in towns, and helps lower pollution. They felt that cycling should be introduced at an early age, as it will then stay with people for life. They also felt targets for increased cycling need to be set.

As well as talking about the benefits of cycling, respondents also highlighted that there are a number of barriers to increased levels of cycling within the borough, including that:

- Cycling is unsafe, and needs to be made safer before more significant numbers of people will cycle to school
- More cycle paths / infrastructure is needed around the borough before cycling uptake will increase. This should be built during any new development but is not happening, as no cycle paths have been built during any of the new development than comply with regulations such as LTN 02 / 08
- Cycle facilities especially at schools need improving e.g. cycle storage, locks, covers, equipment hire
- Roads are not in good enough condition to cycle on.
**Increasing walking (55 comments)**

Respondents also felt that increased walking to school should be encouraged, but felt that pavements were a significant barrier to increased walking in the borough. They felt that:

- There are not enough pavements to enable walking, particularly in rural areas
- Not all pavements are continuous
- Some pavements are too narrow
- Pavements are often blocked by hedgerows or parked cars
- Pavements are in too poor a condition to be used.

They also felt there were a number of other barriers to increased walking in the borough:

- Many walking routes are too unsafe to use to get to school
- More road crossings are needed
- Some road crossings could be located better
- Some have fears about letting their children walk to school alone – more police, PCSO’s and lollipop people are needed
- Some walking routes are not well-lit enough to be used
- The weather in this country prevents year-round walking.

**Increasing public transport usage (27 comments)**

Respondents also felt that the use of public transport should be increased as an alternative to car use. They felt that:

- More buses transporting children to school are needed, and felt this has not been helped by recent bus service cuts
- Public transport such as school buses and trains need to be affordable/subsidised – respondents suggested that cars are cheaper to run than public transport
- Train fares and bus passes should be reduced/available for sixth formers too.

**Comments on the consultation process (14 comments)**

Finally, respondents raised a number of points about the consultation itself, including:

- That there should be more consultation on this topic with parents and other stakeholder groups such as cyclists
- That Cheshire East Council seems to be good at consultations, but not so competent at delivering outcomes
- That the questionnaire seems a little leading
- That the consultation seemed to offer no new solutions
- Questions about why it was conducted by consultants, and not in-house.
Section 3 – Submitting requests on infrastructure schemes

In the survey respondents were also given the opportunity to suggest how the council could make it easier for schools to submit requests for potential infrastructure schemes through the Safer Routes to School Programme.

38 respondents answered this question, and their responses are printed verbatim in the table below under various sub-headings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide officer assistance / guidance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A named person at CE council who is responsible for delivering improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire East Highways (and other) staff should assist schools in identifying and preparing infrastructure schemes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a council officer designated to visit schools to discuss with the schools travel coordinator how claims can be submitted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have an identified key coordinator.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve CEC resources to support and assist in preparation of Travel Plans and Safer Route proposals. This should result in more consistent proposals, fewer rejected assessments and counteract lack of expertise in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Highways Engineers into the planning stage so ideas are realistic &amp; deliverable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is my view that the council need to physically help those schools develop their Safer Routes to School Programmes, I think there is a lack of understanding about what is required to increase the uptake of cycling and walking to schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perhaps staff to visit schools and outline/ talk through with school staff how the Council can/ will assist with setting out/completion of any paperwork. Perhaps getting 3 or 4 local primary schools together to maximise staff input and encourage schools to work together on their plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide officer support to assist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools should be able to request support (inc funding as appropriate) to help them develop their travel plans as a one off. Then those who do should be the ones who are able to apply for additional funding to implement and sustain their plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The council could provide guidance through seminars and/or lead officers who could work with groups of schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Council should proactively suggest appropriate infrastructure improvements (particularly cycle paths!) to aid schools (who are not infrastructure planning experts) in their decision making processes.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keep it simple</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep everything short, quick to deal with simple, schools don't have any spare time!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep it simple, reduce garbage produced by CEC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online forms should be simple to fill out. Fast response time to applications will encourage use. Examples of realistic infrastructure changes with current budgets. Reduce stages and number of steps in process to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide online request portal to make the process easier to work with and encourage those schools who have and those that haven't submitted plans previously. The aim should be to</td>
</tr>
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</table>
drive adoption of local school plans.

I think if the online Modeshift STARS system is designed in a user friendly way, then schools can submit requests for potential infrastructure schemes easily through this application.

**Provide a template**

Provide a template and have a timescale commitment for response.

Provide a proforma with standard questions so applications can be compared on a like for like basis.

Provide proforma or sample request, so that schools know what information is required.

**Provide examples**

Give schools a list of infrastructure schemes that have been implemented or are planned to give them a better idea of what type of changes are currently being agreed.

Provide some example plans and a template / framework document that helps them to complete it. It should not be too onerous to complete as schools often do not have the resources to do these activities.

**Improve communication**

Better direct engagement with Heads as to their school/area needs.

Schools do not need accreditation scheme but assistance to ensure that adequate foot and cycle paths, safe crossing, traffic calming measures are put into place where needed otherwise none of this will have impact and will become a paper filling exercise which has happened in the past and has resulted in schools no longer maintaining their Travel Plans. The council must work with schools directly to ascertain local need and take action for any of this to be sustainable and for mindset re primary parents driving to school gates changing. Parents will not stop this is the footpaths and roads around schools are not made safe.

Perhaps the council could start to communicate effectively with schools and work together on an equal basis instead of deciding what they are going to do and pretending to listen by sending out surveys that are always designed in a way to promote what the council was intending on doing in the first place.

**Don’t add extra pressure onto schools**

I am concerned that schools such as those in my area are already under considerable stress and demands for the many reasons and this extra challenge needs to have the support of the Council, Highways and local police officers to both facilitate the potential requests and provide support with on going problems being experienced.

Inspect the surrounding roads/pavements/cycleways(if they exist) within the 1 mile radius at appropriate times and decide if you yourself would feel safe/would you let a 6 yr old walk it. If NO then make improvements. This is not the job of the school. The accreditation scheme is an irrelevance, even a joke. The Parish Council should be able to suggest improvements to safety.

Schools should focus on educating children not on submitting proposals for infrastructure schemes. This is the job for the Council's department that has responsibility for these issues.

It should not be the schools responsibility to provide modes of travel and infrastructure, that is the council’s responsibility.

**Prioritise those schools with up-to-date plans**

I agree that only schools with up-to-date Travel Plans should be invited to submit requests for capital funding through the Safer Routes however we must not lose sight of schools
that do not bother with such plans.

Schools with up-to-date Travel Plans should maybe be prioritised over those that don't, but I think all schools should be able to submit bids. To make it easier for schools located close together, they should be able to submit requests as a group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Involv parents</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the parents and local residents have an easy to use link so parents/residents can air their views.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Enforc it</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make it a requirement rather than optional.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Advertse the benefits</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure that the benefits to each school are highlighted e.g. funding benefits as well as highlighting how this can improve publicity. Is an appropriate logo is available for successful submissions on their website etc.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Involv schools in wider infrastructure planning</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make the schools aware of what is being done at a local level e.g. development of Town Cycling Plan, Footpath Group, so that they have an active input into potential infrastructure improvements.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Other</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Have a programme in place that is resourced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Promote to schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Invite any interested party in the wider public to submit a route improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Mandate that Ward Councillors promote the travel plan survey with the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Mandate that Parish &amp; Town Councilsl are asked for routes to school improvement list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate that Highways team check routes to school from all new housing development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be in the design and access statement on plans if they use Active design and then CEC will be joined up with planning highways schools all contributing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Have the highways and planning officers attended training on how to develop cycle routes as per the cycle strategy toolkit.</td>
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</table>

3.2.2 Until a pedestrian crossing is installed on Warmingham Lane, Middlewich, from The Sycamore Drive side, then this route is just too dangerous. Warmingham Lane could also benefit from traffic calming measures too. I have raised this issue with Fiona Bruce MP before, especially after a girl was recently seriously injured when crossing the road. Apparently one serious incident is not deemed serious enough for action to be taken by Cheshire East Council. Hundreds of new houses have been built and are planned to be built, yet no safety measures have been made. I am disappointed in the Council for now making the road safer? And for not insisting that safety measures be included when the plans were approved. Meanwhile, walking to school for those of us on the Sycamore Drive housing area has now become impossible. I don’t actually need the CEC or the school to tell me that it is healthier for my family to walk to school, it would always be our preference. What I need is for it to be made safe enough to do so.
Conclusions

Survey response

There were a good number of responses to the survey – 289 in total – which gives some validity to responses. A majority of these responses came via the council’s Digital Influence Panel (218 out of 289, 75%).

Overall reception of the strategy

Overall the strategy was well received by those responding to the consultation, with around 6 in 10 agreeing that the strategy was good, clear and comprehensive.

A lower proportion of respondents, around 4 in 10, felt the strategy was deliverable, and if there is an area for improvement for the strategy it may be here – some respondents were concerned that the strategy was a “tick the box exercise”, and were concerned that although it is well intentioned, without sufficient funding it may not be successful in delivering sustainable travel to schools.

Comments on sustainable travel to school

Within the consultation respondents commented on what they felt were the key issues surrounding sustainable travel to school.

Respondents felt that congestion around schools caused by parents dropping off their children had a significant negative impact on local residents, the surrounding area, on other commuters and the whole transport network – they felt it was a “free-for-all”, unsafe and environmentally damaging.

Reducing car usage was clearly identified as the ultimate solution, and respondents suggested this could be achieved in a number of ways, including by:

- Reducing dependency on cars
- Changing the behaviour of parents, school staff and sixth formers
- Ensuring children attend their local schools
- Implementing “park and walk” areas some distance away from schools, where parents can drop their child off for them to walk from
- Enforcing highways regulations e.g. parking restrictions, yellow lines and speed limits
- Encouraging more people to cycle to school
- Encouraging more people to walk to school
- Improving public transport.
Respondents also identified a number of barriers to reduced car usage, including that the current infrastructure doesn’t support increased cycling and walking, and that council policy is perhaps not conducive to reducing car usage in the borough, particularly planning policy.

**Increased council support for schools**

Around two-thirds of respondents agreed that current measures to support schools in encouraging sustainable travel should be continued, and agreed that the Modeshift STARS system should be funded.

A lower proportion, around 4 in 10, agreed current measures to support schools in sustainable travel were appropriate, perhaps indicating that schools require more support from the council in achieving sustainable travel to school.

Extra officer assistance / guidance was also the most common suggestion as to how the council could make it easier for schools to submit requests for potential infrastructure schemes.

**The Safer Routes to School Programme**

While large proportions of respondents agreed a Safer Routes to School Programme should be established and funded from the Local Plan annual budget, there was some disagreement that only schools with up-to-date Travel Plans should be invited to submit requests for capital funding.

**Overall conclusions**

It is clear that respondents are concerned about current travel to school arrangements and congestion around schools, and are supportive of sustainable modes of travel to school. They are also concerned that the strategy may not be deliverable, and feel a council-wide approach to reduced car usage is required. There is also a suggestion that schools require more support in implementing sustainable travel.
Appendix 1 – Formal consultation responses

The following formal responses were received as part of the consultation on behalf of organisations. Organisational responses are presented in alphabetical order, with anonymous responses presented at the end.

Active Design ......................................................................................................................... 16
Congleton Tour of Britain Legacy Group ................................................................. 18
Twemlow Parish Council ................................................................................................. 30
Anonymous response #1 ................................................................................................. 33
Anonymous response #2 ................................................................................................. 34
**Active Design**

**Active Design at Active Cheshire Feedback on Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy – Cheshire East Council**

Active Cheshire support the creation of the Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy as this is the first journey of the day for many families and therefore, dictates their modal choice for the remainder of their day. SMOTS has taken a holistic approach which provides consideration of the health, socio-economic, and environmental benefits as well as the holistic approach required to initiate change. Below are some suggestions and questions that could help to further strengthen the strategy.

**Introduction 4th Paragraph:** This strategy should also provide the health benefits to the parents that are walking and cycling with their children. It is important to stress the health benefits the adults will receive e.g. a daily 10-minute brisk walk will reduce the risk of early death by 15%, which in turn means a greater chance to see their children grow up and have their own families.

**Section 3.1:** It is well accepted that survey response rates are normally lower than hoped. It could be an avenue of future investigation to assess the demographics of these non-responders to see if there are any similarities between them. Within research experience, the non-responders are often the people who are least engaged in the behaviours you are trying to promote and therefore, may require added support.

**Section 3.1.1:** Cheshire East have clearly illustrated that the strategy needs to address the current barriers that motor vehicles pose to sustainable modes of travel. Active Cheshire support the addressment of these concerns.

**Section 3.2.2:** What is the threshold distance that parents will start driving to school? Could ‘park and cycle’ schemes increase this threshold distance? What is the average time taken to drive to school and with heavy traffic would cycling be a similar time? These may not need to be in the strategy, but they are questions that could guide future interventions.

**Section 3.2.2. “57% are under one mile away from school” Paragraph:** Is there scope to add some examples to improve safety within this paragraph? Currently, this paragraph has fewer examples than the previous paragraph (park and stride) and therefore, it appears vague and may make readers think that there is a lack of plans to address safety.

**Section 4.2:** Please also mention the health benefits of walking for adults and children within the opening paragraph.
Section 4.2.2: Walking buses are an excellent suggestion, can data on the success of walking buses be provided to further strengthen the argument for a school to start a walking bus if they are reading the strategy.

Section 4.3.1: Is Bikeability being offered to parents for free in Cheshire East? If adults have safety concerns about cycling they will limit their child’s opportunity to cycle.

Section 4.9: In order to affect greater ownership and awareness amongst parents/carers, interventions could and or should target them as well as the children.

Section 4.10: Is there any physical information on streets and social spaces to promote active modes of travel? Having resources only available in certain domains can create an ‘out of sight out of mind’ mentality among the public. Active travel promotion comes down to marketing and advertising, have weblinks been sufficient to stimulate behaviour change in previous strategy adoption?

Section 6.2: The action plan ‘measures of progress’ do not appear to measure the outcomes in section 5.2. These listed outcomes in section 5.2 capture the holistic benefits of sustainable travel and would further strengthen the supporting evidence for the action plan.

Section 7.2: Are you using the World Health Organisation’s HEAT tool to assess the cost/benefit of cycling and walking to school? It would be useful to use as it can also predict emission and road traffic collision reductions. Brighton and Hove have previously used the HEAT tool to secure funding for cycling infrastructure.

Appraisal Stage Two: Are there any planned strategies for the schools who do not update their travel plans? Providing additional support to these schools will be essential to ensure every child across Cheshire East has the opportunity to benefit from the new strategy.

Overall, this strategy has highlighted that walking and cycling need to become more convenient modes of travel than private car. The strategy clearly indicates that a holistic approach is required to nudge modal shift away from private car. Active Cheshire support the adoption of such a strategy and would support the implementation through the Active Kids and Active Design pillar of our Blueprint.
**Congleton Tour of Britain Legacy Group**

**Congleton Tour of Britain Cycling Legacy Committee, which incorporates the Cycling Masterplan for Congleton**

Response to the consultation on Cheshire East’s draft Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools (SMOTS) strategy:

The information contained are the initial feedback on the SMOTS strategy. These concerns are throughout the whole of the cycle network in Congleton. The infrastructure does not work and until that is fixed no amount of website, leaflets, secure bike parking will encourage cycling.

We need signage, infrastructure that works and built in conjunction with cycling groups advice and guidance.


The Strategy and questionnaire can be found at the following link:


We are looking for feedback and comments from relevant parties to find out if you agree with the Strategy’s aims and content.

21 February 2018.
Current Congleton Cycle Map.

There are no cycle links from Lower Heath/Rood Hill/Clayton Bypass/West Road/ A34/ A534/ A54 and in to and across the town centre. The Lamberts Lane track needs to be improved so that children can cycle to Mossley and Hightown.
A34/ A534/ A54 – up to Congleton High School from West Road needs infrastructure improvements. The ‘cycling infrastructure’ at the roundabout next to Tesco Express does not make it safe for children, young people and vulnerable road users to cross at these junctions. We need signage for drivers giving pedestrians and non-motorised users rights of way, we need zebra crossings to help people safely across the road. These improvements are crucial to creating Active Travel plans for schools.
Town Centre and from across town cycle routes - The cycling infrastructure at the Tesco/McDonalds roundabout again needs to be made safe for children, young people and vulnerable road users to cross at these junctions. We need signage for drivers giving pedestrians and non-motorised users rights of way, we need zebra crossings to help people safely across the road. In particular there needs to be a yellow crossed box at the exit to Barn Road junction and opposite. The lack of safety at these roundabouts in particular prohibit the uptake of cycling and inhibit children cycling to school.

A34/A534/A54 Roundabout
Fire Station Roundabout
Children cycling can wait for minutes before a lorry or car lets people cross the road
Clayton Bypass Roundabout
Rood Hill Junction
Mountbatten Way Roundabout

NB: There are no safe routes across this roundabout
Mountbatten Way – this roundabout is incredibly difficult to cross for anybody, there are no zebra crossings or facilities to help pedestrians or kids cycling to cross here. This lack of infrastructure prevents people cycling to school and work. Improvements to infrastructure here are crucial to creating Active Travel plans for schools as this is the main crossing from the north side of Congleton to the south side.
Priority 1 – Tesco/McDonalds roundabout

This junction is a major thoroughfare for walkers and cyclists who use this junction to cross from Belgrave Avenue to the cycle route on the northbound side of Clayton-by-pass, to McDonalds and Tesco. The speed limit is 40mph and children with bikes and walkers regularly struggle to cross over to McDonalds, which is very popular.

Cycling/walkway improvements to this junction are critical for the improvement of cycling infrastructure in Congleton.
Priority 2 – Clayton-by-pass cycle way

Cycle lane from McDonalds along the A34 to the fire station roundabout

The cycle lane that is currently in existence is not maintained. The grass verge needs to be pushed back, the white lines need to be repainted and the red tarmac needs re-doing so the cyclists/walkers know which section to keep clear. This is the only safe cycle route that children on bikes can use to help them travel to Congleton High School from the rest of Congleton. It is also used by adults travelling by bike and walking to West Heath and Astbury Mere.
Priority 3 – Cycle/walkway on the Clayton by-pass (southbound road)

Additional cycle lane from Belgrave Avenue along the A34 to the fire station roundabout

Improving this verge to create a brand new cycle lane, which is wide enough would send a strong message to all residents that we are serious about cycling improvements to Congleton and this would be quite easy to install. The grass has grown over the current pathway and this would enable cyclists and walkers (who don’t want to go to McDonalds or Tesco), to not have to cross the A34 at all at the roundabout creating a safe cycle route.
Priority 3 – Additional pictures to show overgrowth of the grass verge.
Priority 4 – Fire Station Roundabout

Creating radical improvements to this roundabout to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists have right of way would enable crossing the road easier. Many times children on bikes, parents with pushchairs, mobility scooter users and cyclists are stuck at this junction trying to cross over. All the crossing points need improvements to ensure the safety of non-motorised users.

Again this is a very important junction and because cars are slowing down anyway on approaching the junction, improvements to it would allow the cyclists and walkers to cross safely on their way from town to West Heath, Congleton High School, Astbury Mere and other cycling networks.

Installing signs such as ‘Give way to pedestrians and cyclists’ at the junctions would start sending the right messages to motorised users that they are not the priority at junctions.

Fire Station roundabout crossing infrastructure
Cycle lane improvements along West Road

The whole of the West Road cycle/walkway needs improving/upgrading to enable children and young people to cycle safely to school. The cycle lane ends where it directs you to cross over the A34. This is incredibly dangerous and needs looking at to improve it.

This road is a main thoroughfare for cyclists to the southside of Congleton and to be serious about supporting cyclists needs improvement to what is currently there and additional improvements to ensure it is a cycle lane that is usable. The fact that the bus stop is right in the middle of it is ludicrous infrastructure for cyclists and creates an opportunity for collisions between pedestrians and cyclists. Improvements along this road would ensure cyclists can approach the fire station roundabout safely, and with the additional improvements to the junctions at the fire station roundabout, with signage to ask drivers to give way to pedestrians and cyclists at junctions would clearly support what we are trying to do for cycling in Congleton. Again this route is part of the main cycle route to Congleton High School and other cycling networks.
Twemlow Parish Council

On the whole, Twemlow Parish Council agree with the broad aims of the draft SMOTS Strategy. Thus, the strategy recognises the benefits of alternative modes of transport to school (particularly, walking, scooting and cycling) as a means of creating a healthy lifestyle (physical and mental) for children and a cleaner environment for everyone.

However, the Parish Council considers that both the wording and the content within the document should be strengthened, in order to become more ambitious. For example, within the Foreword, the document states: “Cheshire East is working to promote more physical activity, helping to create stronger, healthier and more vibrant communities”. This language demonstrates a satisfaction to ‘support’ or ‘actively encourage’ more physical activity. It is recognised that the draft strategy includes a target a) to ‘increase the number of schools participating in promotional campaigns’, and another target, b) to increase the ‘number of schools/colleges with bronze level Modeshift STARS accreditation’ [achieved by schools “that demonstrate a commitment to promoting sustainable travel by conducting an annual survey, identifying travel issues and solutions and delivering a range of travel initiatives”] (see Targets and Outcomes 5.1). However, the Parish Council considers a more ambitious target of ‘achievement’ more physical activity, with associated ambitious quantifiable targets alongside infrastructure and safety commitments would demonstrate genuine investment into the health, wellbeing and environmental objectives of the strategy. Thus, on page 1, the strategy states:

“Providing options to travel sustainably to schools can contribute to improving ‘Quality of Place’, both through offering high quality infrastructure and also addressing environmental issues associated with motorised traffic”.

The Parish Council considers that the inclusion of specific targets to ‘achieve’ ‘high quality infrastructure’ and specific measures to ‘address environmental’ [AND SAFETY] issues would strengthen the strategy and demonstrate Cheshire East’s commitment to producing a genuinely comprehensive and ambitious plan. The Parish Council also insist that sufficient resources must be allocated to enable scheme coordinators and their partners to achieve their objectives effectively.

On this basis, the Parish Council ‘tend to agree’ that the strategy is ‘good’ and ‘clear’, but ‘tend to disagree’ that the strategy is ‘comprehensive’ and ‘ambitious’. Given the language currently adopted, the Parish Council ‘strongly agrees’ that the strategy is deliverable but notes that the reason for this reflects the unambitious nature of the targets / objectives. Thus, distributing leaflets promoting alternative modes to achieve a healthy lifestyle would satisfy the ‘promotion’ criteria, as would increasing the number of children walking, scooting, and cycling to school from a base line of 0 to 1. Similarly, encouraging several children to use alternative methods on one promotional day of the year (for example, ‘cycle
to school day’), is not the same as achieving increases in children using alternatives regularly and consistently throughout the year(s). Consequently, the Parish Council considers the draft strategy does not go far enough, failing to guarantee the necessary infrastructure and safety requirements to transform the current rhetoric into reality.

As with the Parish Council’s response to the language in section 1, again, the language utilised in section 2 raises questions regarding whether the objectives of the strategy are sufficiently ambitious (‘encouraging’ rather than actually ‘achieving’). The statement above (p.g.1) additionally raises questions regarding the degree of responsibility and commitment of Cheshire East relative to their partners (particularly schools) in driving forward the strategy aims and objectives and securing concrete outcomes. Producing a ‘framework which supports schools’ appears to place the onus of responsibility upon schools rather than Cheshire East to achieve the objectives (the legislative framework places a general duty upon local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport, assess/audit transport needs and infrastructure and to develop an improvement strategy). The Parish Council notes that the current approach adopted by the draft SMOTS strategy not only delegates these duties to schools, but does so without committing the necessary resources, infrastructure, safety and traffic calming measures that would be vital to enable the strategy to be successful.

Consequently, Twemlow Parish Council considers that the current measures provided by the Council and other delivery partners to support schools in encouraging sustainable travel are currently inadequate with costs offset to partner budgets (e.g. Schools / Fire Service / Police), insufficient resourcing, infrastructure and traffic calming measures. Despite such concerns, consultation with the local school and parents provide support for the view that existing measures including ‘Bikeability’ and the road safety sessions provided by the Fire Service are very well received and therefore should be continued.

With regards question 3, Twemlow Parish Council note that given the restricted funding available, the two tiered appraisal process (required by schools seeking capital funding for local infrastructure measures), may well comprise a disincentive for schools, particularly in relation to the stage one criteria (Deliverability; Feasibility and ValueforMoney) which are likely to ensure that only the cheapest and easiest proposals are supported rather than prioritising health, safety and environmental objectives (which are assessed only during stage two of the appraisal process).

The Parish Council notes the inclusion of positive benefits detailed within the ‘Outcomes’ section of the strategy to ‘reduce congestion’, ‘vehicle emissions’, to ‘improve air quality and road safety’ ‘health and wellbeing’ and ‘increased educational attainment’. However, the Parish Council remains concerned that these currently remain unquantified within the draft strategy. The Parish Council considers that an evidence base and associated ambitious targets should accompany the strategy objectives in order to generate data to enable
monitoring and assessment regarding the impact of the strategy to be measured and evaluated [prior and following the implementation of the strategy].

While certainly viewed as beneficial, the Parish Council notes that the Safe Routes to School Programme must be accompanied by adequate financial resourcing, infrastructure investment and traffic calming measures.
Anonymous response #1

Dear Sir / Madam

I am prompted by a recent missive from the school where my girls attend XXXXX Primary Academy. The school has already advised children not to cycle to school – indeed there are no cycle racks at the school.

SCOOTERS / BIKES

We have had a few near misses over the last few weeks with scooters and children. For the Health and Safety of all children on the school grounds we ask that NO scooters are used inside of the school gates and on the pavements outside school.

Having been prompted to sense check local ambition I was pleased to see the publication of the SMOTSS.

For my part of am a XXXXX so I am well versed in, and have previously led major transformation around, the need for modal switch and attitude change. I write however in a private capacity.

Against a back drop of issues associated with air quality, obesity and ever rising congestion I do find it most surprising that the school would offer such poor leadership on this matter. It is notable that no such edict has been issued in terms of the daily illegal parking on the zig-zags which are convenient drop off for the lazy parents who ignore the statutory lines and plates.

I do feel rather constrained personally allocating significant time to this but I do feel that the above message is something that can’t be left to rest. I am naturally constrained as to the level of commentary I might personally voice in terms of Local Plan development in XXXXX but it is notable that demand for travel will increase, and it must surely be incumbent on all major centres of demand to play their part; as it is CEC to support through appropriate infrastructure. Equally, I cannot leave unsaid the very poor level of maintenance of the fabric of roads and pavements in the immediate vicinity of the school – the number of repeat visits to the same defects is simply not consistent with best practice; it is shoddy and falls below what I would expect and does discourage walking. That said I must congratulate CEC for installation of the yellow flashing school sign.

Of course this school is an Academy which does complicate matters further so I would particularly welcome reflection on this.

Kind regards and best of luck with SMOTSS.
Anonymous response #2

The Safer Routes proposal has several issues that concern me.

It has failed to look at existing problems and solve them, before moving on to other more ambitious schemes.

3.1.2 Very small number of schools responded on which to base findings. How about contacting parents directly and fining out?

Some data quoted as successful examples is flawed.

4.21 The A523 Silk Road crossing is not used by any children whatsoever walking to school from Bollington and is generally seen by local residents as a huge white elephant. The cycle route is not safe or complete to the school, and is therefore not suitable to quote as successfully providing an alternate means. The existing cycle way itself that does connect Bollington to Tytherington goes another route entirely.

4.2.2. Walking buses are generally not suitable for working parents who need to get their children to school quickly or safely under supervision in rural areas. Perhaps in inner cities these may be more applicable or for primary schools in areas of dense population.

4.3.2 Cycleways across Macclesfield to and from one of the largest secondary schools, Tytherington, do not exist. These do not need another study or proposal as any pupil or parent at this school could advise where they should be to allow a lot of the pupils to cycle in safety from the three largest residential areas that fill the school. (Hurdsfield, Higher Hurdsfield and the new Tytherington development). I am certain that this school is not alone and consultation with the pupils themselves would be more beneficial.

4.4 Bus Services. The bus service running from Macclesfield along Rainow Road and stopping outside Rainow Church, next to Rainow Primary School is unusable by children and the bus company ensures that the bus arrives 10 minutes after school starts and has done for the past 5 years. Yet at one point over 20 children daily could have used this bus service safely and under supervision had the bus company agreed to change their timetable which they refused for “commercial” reasons. A large number of school pupils still live along this route but are unable to use the bus to school.

Summary

Quite often “encourage” is used in this document but this is seen by residents as “penalise”, as with the current initiative to “encourage” recycling which prevents householders from responsibly tipping household waste and has therefore seen an increase in fly tipping.
No further housing developments should be approved in CEC unless providing full width, pavements and cycle ways for sustainable transport and the safe use of children for school. It is disgraceful that yet another housing development within walking distance to Tytherington school has been built in Tytherington, Macclesfield without any pavements, as an “aesthetic”. But whoever in CEC was responsible for sustainable transport failed to see that it is unacceptable for parents, children or cyclists to walk in the road.

Fix the problems that exist at the moment before adopting a grand plan and ignoring the things that can be easily addressed now for next to no cost.