

# Introducing Active Travel England and LTN 1/20

*The bar for Active Travel infrastructure has been raised. Towns and local authorities will need to respond to the demand for higher quality infrastructure in their strategy, plans and schemes. Exceptions will be very limited so Towns need to think hard about what they are delivering and ensure that this message is being heard clearly by all stakeholders as they bring forward projects. Active Travel England are there to help. Their role is to integrate, support and provide guidance on excellence. It will be crucial for Towns and Active Travel England to work together to deliver on the ambition for walking, wheeling and cycling across England.*

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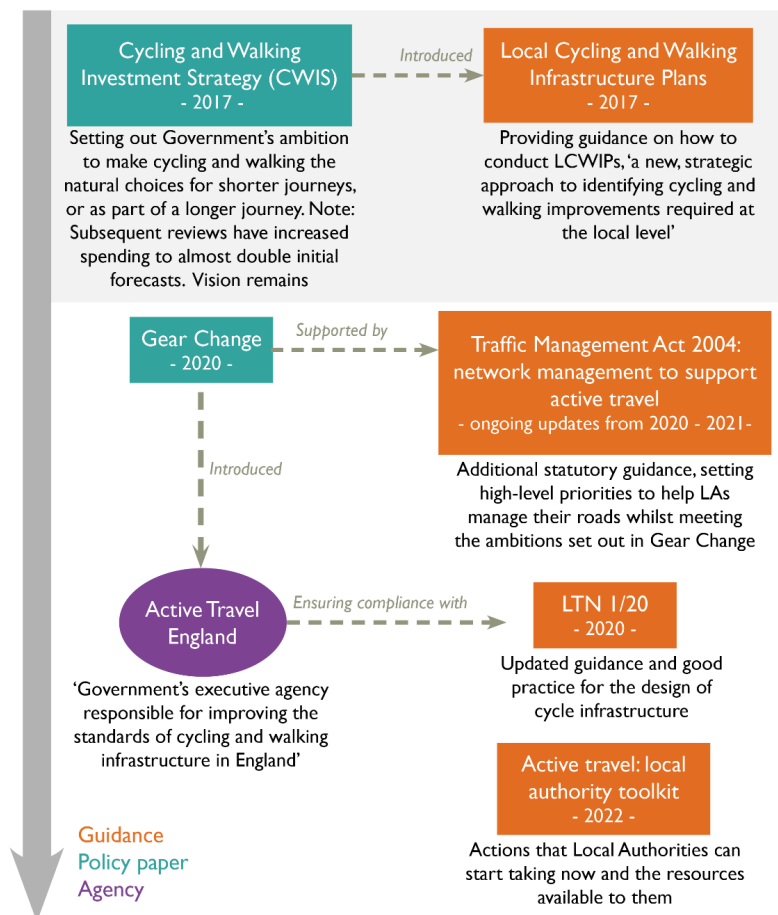
# Introducing Active Travel England and LTN 1/20

The provision of Active Travel infrastructure in our villages, towns and cities goes beyond just addressing mobility and connectivity challenges. In the words of Chris Boardman – interim Active Travel Commissioner for England - “There is no crisis today that would not be helped by increasing active travel.”

Getting more people walking, wheeling and cycling can help revitalise our town centres, bring economic prosperity, tackle inequalities, improve health and wellbeing, and put us further along the path to net zero. The case for investment is clear, and the government has made its intentions clear about pushing this agenda forward.

## What’s changed?

Active Travel (defined as walking, wheeling and cycling) has been gaining increasing traction in national policy over recent years. The figure below outlines some of the key policy, guidance and changes that have been introduced to ensure the realisation of the Government’s ambition for pushing the agenda on Active Travel. Higher-quality and better standard of walking and cycling infrastructure and Local Authorities taking a stronger role in the delivery of strategic and local improvements are cornerstones of this ambition. The newly established executive agency, Active Travel England, will play a key role in ensuring the delivery of this ambition through ombudsman-type role to ensure compliance with the new standards as set out within Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 and Gear Change.



## **Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20**

LTN 1/20 sets out the new standard best practice designs for cycling (note that there is forthcoming guidance on walking). This was adopted a couple of years ago, but with the emergence of Active Travel England as described, it is crucial that Towns are considering what this means for their plans, strategies and schemes. A few key takeaways that should be on every town's mind when considering guidance are:

1. Infrastructure should be designed to be accessible to everyone on a cycle from 8 to 80 including those with a disability; and you should consider those walking
2. Cycles must be treated as vehicles not as people walking, this means that where there is high demand, they should not share the same space. Protected, dedicated tracks for cyclists should be made, and shared-use routes used only where appropriate, e.g. in parks
3. Cyclists must be physically separated and protected from areas with high volumes of vehicles. There are many tools at your disposal from full segregation or light segregation through the use of kerbs to using bollards/planters to close roads to through traffic. Cycle routes indicated only with white paint and road markings will be perceived to be unacceptable for safe cycling and will fall foul of the high standard set out in LTN 1/20
4. Any future highway schemes will need to deliver or improve cycling infrastructure
5. Cosmetic interventions (improving footway or road surfaces), where little is done to restrict vehicular traffic or provide safe spaces for cycling will not be funded from cycling or walking budgets
6. Cycle infrastructure must be planned as a holistic network. Isolated stretches of provision in schemes are of little value. It is important to understand who currently cycles, where they go and why, and more importantly who does not currently cycle and why and design schemes to respond to this
7. Cycle routes must be direct and form logical routes. Doubling-back, unnecessary turns or longer routes compared to motor vehicles is unacceptable. Schemes should be based on how people actually behave rather than how they might be expected to behave
8. Schemes must be easy and comfortable to ride and should not include constant stopping and starting
9. Schemes should avoid inconsistent provision such as multiple transitions from tracks to roads to footways and back onto roads, or a track ends abruptly with no alternatives
10. The guidance also states that in rare cases, where it is absolutely unavoidable, a short stretch of less good provision, which is otherwise good will be appropriate, but in most cases this is not absolutely unavoidable and exceptions will be rare. This has been reiterated many times by Active Travel England as a key principle of the guidance

## **Active Travel England**

With the sponsorship of the DfT, Active Travel England (ATE) will be the agency in charge of overseeing the delivery of the ambitious vision set out in Gear Change and ensuring that infrastructure is delivered to the standards set out in LTN 1/20. Its role and how they would like to collaborate with Local Authorities have been summarised below from a briefing Active Travel England gave to Local Authorities on April 2022. You can find more information in the links provided.

## Active Travel England's Role

- **Integrational:** Working with Local Authorities, developers, government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders towards the delivery of schemes that are compliant with national best practice guidance
- **Sponsorship:** Active Travel England will hold the budget, fund and support the delivery of high-quality Active Travel infrastructure and behavioural change schemes.
- **Supporting:** In recognition of rising standards (as set out in LTN 1/20 for cycling and the upcoming similar guidance note for walking), Active Travel England has expressed commitment to support Local Authorities in delivering schemes of quality and of local appropriateness. They would like to become a 'centre of excellence', sharing best practice, successful case studies, assessment tools and other technical resources spanning across the stages of consultation, stakeholder engagement, design and implementation.
- **Delivering Best Practice:** Active Travel England and DfT are working to develop further guidance and tools which will build on the principles already stated in Gear Change and LTN 1/20. For that, it is key that towns take every possible step to make schemes compliant with these principles. Active Travel England has expressed an understanding that it will not be possible for every single technical detail to be feasible in all contexts, but it is determined to see the highest possible quality in schemes as defined by the Gear Change and LTN 1/20 principles. "We do not seek perfection – but we do demand adequacy" (Gear Change, 2020).
- **Technical advice and reviews:** Ultimately, Active Travel England will be applying its experience and technical expertise to influence funding. It will review and inspect key schemes, review major planning applications and provide technical advice. The level of influence it will have on schemes will vary, possibly with a final say on the approvals of some. Active Travel England has expressed their intention to be brought in at the earliest stage of major or complex schemes as it would like to support the process in order to avoid major surprises towards the end. However, it must be noted that as Active Travel England is a developing organisation and currently its resource capacity means that they cannot review all schemes. Local Authorities can start taking a proactive role by ensuring compliance with the principles in Gear Change and LTN 1/20 as well as any upcoming guidance and resources that Active Travel England will start sharing.

## Active Travel England

- hold the budget
- approve schemes
- inspect schemes
- training, good practice, knowledge sharing
- inspect highway authorities
- review major planning applications

Figure 1: ATE's functions. Source (Gear Change, 2020)

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