North Yorkshire Council

LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

Thirsk

FINAL REPORT
APRIL 2025

CONFIDENTIAL

North Yorkshire Council

LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

Thirsk

CONFIDENTIAL

PROJECT NO. 70121877

OUR REF. FINAL REPORT

DATE: APRIL 2025

WSP

Amber Court
William Armstrong Drive
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YQ

Phone: +44 191 226 2000

WSP.com

QUALITY CONTROL

Issue/revision		First issue	Revision 1	Revision 2	Revision 3
Remarks		Draft	Final Report		
Date		February 2025	April 2025		
Prepared by		DK	DK, AB		
Checked by		MP	MP		
Authorised by		PF	PF		
Project number		70121877			
Report number		DRAFT	001		
File reference		\\uk.wspgroup.com\central data\Projects\70121xxx\70121877 - HEDC20 - Thirsk local cycling and walking infrastructure plan\03 WIP\TP Transport Planning\05 Reports			

CONTENTS

APPENDICES

1 STAGE 1: DETERMINING SCOPE

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1. It is the ambition of North Yorkshire Council to encourage more people to walk, wheel and cycle in the County, with active travel being the natural choice for everyday short journeys. It is widely recognised that walking, wheeling and cycling more often is good for our health and wellbeing, the environment, and the local economy.

1.1.2. To encourage active travel, the Council has established a cycling and walking programme to identify, develop and secure funding to deliver infrastructure improvements. A key component of this programme is the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) which will identify and prioritise future improvements to the local cycling and walking network over the next ten years. LCWIPs have previously been developed for Harrogate, Scarborough, Selby district, Skipton, Malton & Norton, Northallerton, Ripon and Catterick. In addition to this Thirsk LCWIP, a further LCWIP is being produced for Whitby.

1.2 LCWIP PROCESS

1.2.1. LCWIPs offer a strategic method of identifying cycling and walking improvements required at a local level. They enable a long-term approach to developing networks and routes and form a vital part of the Government's strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle. LCWIPs will be instrumental in leveraging funding from national and local streams.

LCWIP Scope

1.2.2. **The LCWIP will provide:**

Plans of the proposed priority networks showing the most important routes and zones for further development, targeting short journeys (to school, work etc).

A prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future development.

This LCWIP report, setting out the evidence and work completed to support the development of the Plan.

A basis for securing government funding or developer contributions.

1.2.3. **The LCWIP will Not provide**:

- Exact details of the improvements on each route (these details will be developed as funding comes forward and will be subject to further consultation).
- Guaranteed funding for delivery, although it will put us in the best possible position to secure funding.
- Network planning for long distance routes.

1.2.4. For Thirsk, this process and the resulting outputs will represent an evidence-based approach to focus future investment over where the most benefit can be realised.

1.2.5. The geographical extent of this LCWIP includes Thirsk, Sowerby, Carlton Miniott and South Kilvington.

1.2.6. The Thirsk LCWIP will focus on everyday journeys to work and school, as well as unlocking the potential of more people visiting the area for recreational cycling and walking.

1.2.7. The Government has published guidance on the preparation of LCWIPs, setting out the following six stage process:

- **Stage 1: Determine the scope** – establish the geographical context and arrangements for governing and preparing the plan.
- **Stage 2: Gathering information** – identify existing walking and cycling patterns and potential new journeys. Review existing conditions and identify barriers to walking and cycling. Review related transport and land use policies and programme.
- **Stage 3: Network planning for cycling** – identify origin and destination points and cycle flows. Convert flows into a network of routes and determine the improvements required.
- **Stage 4: Network planning for walking** – identify key trip generators, core walking zones and routes, audit existing provision and determine the improvements required.
- **Stage 5: Prioritising improvements** – prioritise improvements to develop a phased programme for future investment.
- **Stage 6: Integration and application** – integrate outputs into local planning and transport policies, strategies, and delivery plans.

1.2.8. The remainder of this document details how the LCWIP has been developed and sets out a prioritised programme for its delivery.

Figure 1.1. Market Place, Thirsk

Figure 1.2. Cycle track at Sowerby playground.

2 STAGE 2: GATHERING EVIDENCE

2.1 ACTIVE TRAVEL CONTEXT

THE CASE FOR WALKING AND CYCLING

2.1.1. The Department for Transport (DfT) announced their Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) in April 2017, outlining the Government's ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey, including the aim to double cycling activity by 2025. The benefits of achieving this outcome would be substantial, supporting public health and wellbeing, more vibrant towns and public spaces, and low carbon travel patterns becoming commonplace. CWIS2 provided an update to this strategy in 2022, including an outline of the investment strategy that would realise these ambitious goals for the period 2021 to 2025, therefore a revision of this document is expected this year.

2.1.2. The DfT published guidance on the preparation of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) in April 2017.

2.1.3. In early 2020 the Government launched Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking, announcing a £2 billion plan to make England a great walking and cycling nation. Gear Change identified four key themes central to achieving this:

- Better streets for cycling and people;
- Putting cycling and walking at the heart of decision making (transport, place-making, and health policy);
- Empowering and encouraging Local Authorities - £2bn of dedicated new investment funding only schemes that meet the new standards; and
- Enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do through changes to the highway code.

2.1.4. This was supported by New Design Guidance - Cycle Infrastructure Design (Local Transport Note 1/20) (July 2020) which set out the framework for cycling to play a far bigger part in our transport system with the quality of cycle infrastructure to sharply improve to be consistent with national guidance. Routes should be:

- Coherent - part of a wider strategic network that provides access to key destinations;
- Direct - reach their destination as directly as possible;
- Safe - of a high quality and designed to standards that meet safety requirements;
- Comfortable - accessible and attractive for all abilities; and
- Attractive - contribute to good urban design by integrating with and complementing their surroundings.

2.1.5. The Government has a plan to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) sets out what will need to be done in order to deliver the significant emissions reduction needed across all modes of transport, putting us on a pathway to achieving carbon budgets and net zero emissions across every single mode of transport.

2.1.6. Active Travel England (ATE) was established in August 2022 as an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT) with the primary objective of promoting walking, cycling, and wheeling as the natural choices for everyday short journeys. ATE's remit includes leading the delivery of the government's strategy to transform England into a great walking and cycling nation by 2030, as outlined in the Gear Change. This involves working closely with local authorities to provide leadership and specialist expertise to enhance active travel infrastructure and ensure that half of all journeys in towns and cities are cycled or walked by 2030

2.1.7. Within Thirsk there are clear opportunities to better connect people and places with targeted investment in active travel infrastructure. North Yorkshire Council shares the CWIS ambition to provide more direct, convenient, safe, and attractive options for more local journeys.

2.1.8. Embracing new modes of sustainable transport, such as e-cycles and other emerging technologies will create opportunities to access longer journeys using active transport. LCWIP are an important component of using the built environment to promote health and wellbeing.

CREATING ATTRACTIVE PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK

2.1.9. Hambleton District Council's draft Local Plan (2019-2035) recognises the importance of active travel both as a part of tourism, leisure and recreation activities and in creating attractive and healthier places to live and work. Policies in the Local Plan highlight the need to promote sustainable modes in new developments, ensure new developments are well-integrated into footpath and cycling networks, improving access by sustainable and active modes to town centres and providing continuous, interconnected, safe and attractive walking and cycling networks.

2.1.10. The population of Thirsk and Sowerby built-up areas (BUAs) (2021 Census) is estimated to be 10,615, of which 5,140 (aged 16-64) are employed.[i] In the Hambleton District area, the total number of jobs is approximately 45,000 which comprises 39,000 employee jobs, as well as self-employed, government-supported trainees, and HM Forces. There are 5,275 businesses within the borough[ii]. The main economic sectors employing the greatest proportion of people in Hambleton are 'wholesale and retail trade' (17.6%), 'manufacturing' (15.4%), 'public administration and defence' (11.5%), 'human health and social work' (11.5%) and 'accommodation and food services' (10.3%), illustrating the diversity of the local economy[iii].

SUPPORTING HEALTH, WELLBEING AND ACCESS FOR ALL

2.1.11. Active travel can play a crucial role in supporting public health and wellbeing. It is one of the simplest and most effective ways to enable adults and children to meet recommended levels of physical activity. A lack of physical activity is the cause of one in six deaths in the UK and costs the country an estimated £7.4bn per year.[iv]

2.1.12. Data published by Public Health England covering the period 2021-2022 reported that 18.9% of adults in Hambleton are physically inactive. For the period 2019-2020, only 1.4% of adults cycle for travel at least three days per week while 9.3% walk – below the national averages of 2.3% and 15.1%, respectively[v]. North Yorkshire Council are encouraging more people to be active as well as using sport and physical activity to help address health inequalities, contribute positively to the economy, and raise the profile of the area.

2.1.13. Promoting healthier travel is one of the objectives included in the North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2016-2045. The importance of regular exercise for achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle is emphasised. It is recognised that the best and easiest opportunity for incorporating activity into people's daily routine is through active travel which has additional benefits such as reducing carbon emissions and contributing towards air quality improvements.

2.1.14. Focussing on inclusive design and ensuring Thirsk's active travel networks are accessible for all will be important when

developing and delivering schemes through the LCWIP process.

2.1.15. It is particularly important that the households in Thirsk without access to a car, in addition to those who frequently undertake journeys on foot, can access employment and education opportunities, key services and facilities (Walking and Cycling Statistics, England, 2015-2016). Delivering improved active travel connections between key destinations will be important in this regard. Reducing social isolation, especially for older people, and increasing levels of community engagement can be supported by active travel as a means for people to interact socially more often. With a higher number of such active travel infrastructure provisions, the percentages of adults cycling and walking can increase in demand.

2.1.16. The LCWIP also has a vital role to play in creating longer term behaviour change well beyond its ten-year delivery plan. European countries such as the Netherlands have only been able to facilitate mass cycling (27% of all trips are undertaken by bike) though long-term investment – the Dutch 'cycling revolution' can be traced back to a targeted political response in the 1970s. This has engendered generational change to the point where the bicycle is the clear mode of choice for journeys between 2km to 7km.

2.1.17. The Thirsk LCWIP, supported by local and national policy, guidance, and funding, presents an opportunity to start the process of creating real change for generations to come.

RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

2.1.18. The transportation sector is the second largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the UK, behind only the energy supply sector. Decarbonising our transport network is fundamental to ensure the country is working towards its target to be net zero by 2050.

2.1.19. The DfT's Decarbonising Transport (2021) paper states that passenger cars and taxis were responsible for 55 per cent of domestic greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, a share that remains almost unchanged from 1990. The paper also sets out a path to Net Zero, citing a reduction in emissions from domestic transport as essential to meet the UK's net zero targets. One way of achieving this is by facilitating a mode shift away from passenger cars towards zero emission modes like walking and cycling for shorter journeys.

2.1.20. NYC declared a climate emergency in July 2022 and pledged to play a full part in tackling climate change. The Council have produced a Climate Change Strategy (2023-2030) which outlines how the Council will respond to the Climate Emergency. The strategy outlines the ambition for the region to be net zero by 2034 and carbon negative by 2040. The strategy also highlights that the transport sector is responsible for 28% of carbon emissions in North Yorkshire. The strategy includes a target to increase active travel for short journeys, ensuring walking and cycling accounts for 17% of distance travelled by 2038. Increasing walking and cycling opportunities for shorter trips is identified as a means of reducing travel by carbon-emitting modes.

2.1.21. The former Hambleton District Council, in which Thirsk was located, declared a climate emergency in December 2021. The declaration emphasised the need to rapidly cut emissions across the district and accelerate the progress already made towards building a cleaner, greener, high-skills economy. The District Council published a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in 2022 and actions on emissions arising from transport form a major component of the strategy.

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

2.1.22. At local authority level, North Yorkshire is among the least deprived in England. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) identifies no Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within Thirsk which are amongst the 20% most deprived in England (see Figure 2.2). However, two LSOAs within Thirsk are more deprived than the average LSOA in England and much more deprived than the average across the Hambleton District area.

2.1.23. 12% of households in Hambleton are without access to a car. (Census 2021) and these households can suffer from social exclusion and transport poverty, struggling to access employment and education opportunities, key services, and facilities, as well as being isolated from support networks.

2.1.24. Cycling, and walking in particular, are generally affordable and natural modes of transport that can be made accessible to the majority of people. Enabling a greater number of people to walk and cycle to the locations they need to travel to can have significant benefits, not just in regard to health, wellbeing, and for the environment, but also in enabling social inclusion, helping connect people to jobs, education, and each other when other modes of transport aren't feasible options.

2.1.25. Transport for the North have developed a tool to measure the risk of transport-related social exclusion (TRSE) across England – analysing access to jobs, education, healthcare and key services, and the vulnerability of the population to social exclusion. In North Yorkshire, 116,843 residents (18.9%) live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE, which is comparable to the 18% of residents across England. Within the Thirsk study area, the majority of the neighbourhoods have a below average risk of TRSE, apart from two areas: one within central Thirsk and the other in East Thirsk (see Figure 2.1).

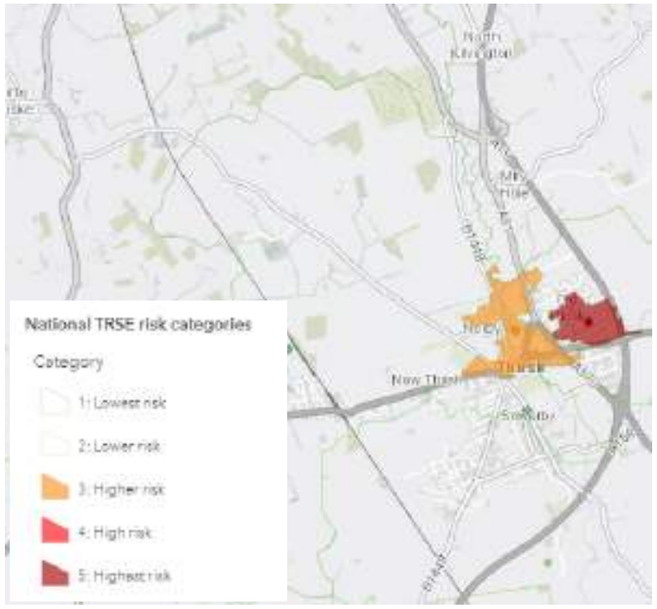


Figure 2.1. Transport-related social exclusion in Thirsk

IMPROVING THE TOURISM OFFER

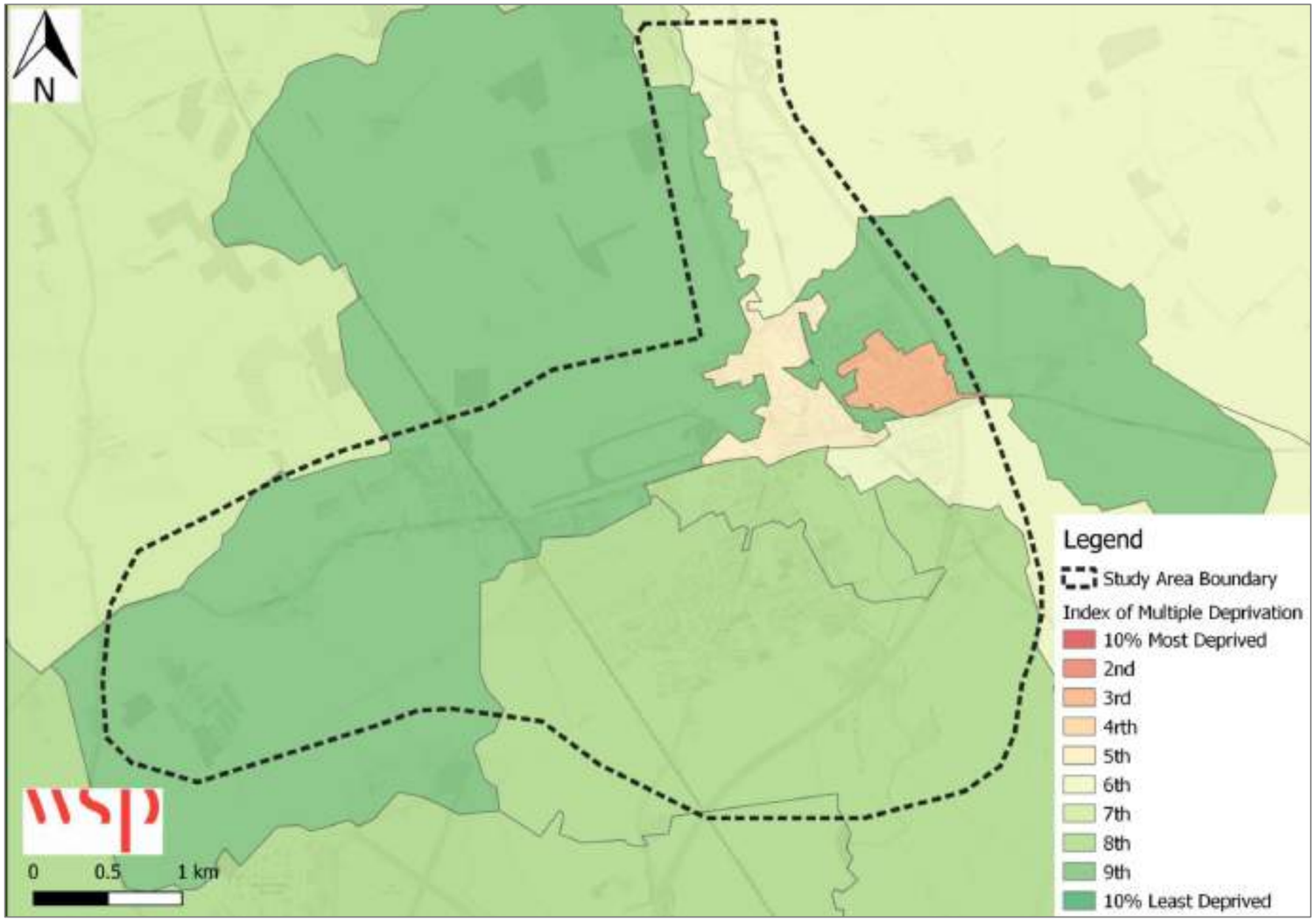
2.1.26. Tourism plays a key role in North Yorkshire's economy. Domestic tourism alone generates approximately thirty million day-visitors and three million staying visitors who spend £1.54 billion in the county each year. On this basis, and estimate would suggest that domestic tourism accounts for 11% of the overall economy of North Yorkshire. Tourism in North Yorkshire supports an estimated 41,200 jobs or 14% of all employment.[vi] Cycling and walking investment can play a key role in enhancing the tourism offer. It can increase the number of visitors for travel around the County and improved connections to existing networks can provide enhanced cycling and walking experiences.

2.1.27. In 2023, Thirsk had 1.2 million visitors, who spent an average of 1.5 days in the town. This generated an economic impact of £128.9 million and supported 1,086 full-time equivalent jobs in the tourism sector.

2.1.28. The tourism industry and accompanying leisure activities play a large role in the local economy in Thirsk, as visitors look to enjoy the local attractions and picturesque scenery. Investments in cycling and walking infrastructure can further enhance the area and tourism off by improving connections around the town and local destinations, as well as enhancing the visitor experience.

2.1.29. The North Yorkshire Moors National Park lies close to Thirsk and hosts a number of visitor attractions, particularly Sutton Bank, which is 9km to the east of Thirsk. As such, there is significant potential for increased walking and cycling journeys between the Park, with recreational users likely to constitute a large proportion of the trips. The proximity to the North Yorks Moors National Park to the extents of the LCWIP has a significant influence on the number of cyclists in the area, The implementation of active travel infrastructure in the area will increase the number of cyclists both within the study area and within the North Park itself.

Figure 2.2. Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)



2.2 POLICY CONTEXT

2.2.1. There are clear opportunities to support environmental, health, social, economic, and sustainable mobility goals that better connect people and places with targeted investment in active travel infrastructure. This is evident in both national and local policy that has guided and shaped the Thirsk LCWIP process. A summary overview is provided below.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking (DfT 2020)

2.2.2. Sets out Government's vision for delivery of far higher quality cycling infrastructure, focusing on segregated cycle routes with local authorities being expected to deliver a step change in the Level of Service for cycling and walking. It establishes "Active Travel England" that will assess local authorities' performance on active travel, with findings influencing the funding authorities receive across all transport modes. The accompanying Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design sets out new ambitious cycle design standards.

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2 (DfT 2022)

2.2.3. Aims to make active modes a natural choice by 2040, by doubling cycling levels and increasing walking levels. Locally targeted investment via LCWIPs assist to connect people with places – creating vibrant, healthier, and productive places and communities.

Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy (DfT 2019)

2.2.4. Nine principles to address the challenge of transforming towns and cities to meet current and future transport demands. Includes the principle that 'walking, cycling and active travel must remain the best option for short urban journeys.

Decarbonising Transport (DfT 2021)

2.2.5. Sets out the Government's commitments to reduce carbon emissions through investing in walking and cycling networks with the aim of half of all journeys in towns or cities to be walked or cycled by 2030. This will support their overall vision to achieve a NetZero transportation sector by 2050.

Everybody Active, Every Day (Public Health England 2014)

2.2.6. Indicates how the built and natural environment impact on the travel choices people make and highlights the necessity for effective urban design and transport systems which create 'active environments' to promote walking, cycling and more liveable communities.

Clean Air Strategy (DEFRA 2018)

2.2.7. Outlines how achieving modal shift is key to delivering emissions reduction. LCWIPs have a part to play in tackling the climate emergency by reducing emissions through the delivery of walking and cycling options for journeys.

Inclusive Mobility (DfT 2021)

2.2.8. This document outlines best practice on inclusive design of pedestrian and transport infrastructure. Inclusive design requires that the needs of all disabled people are considered from the outset of any transport and pedestrian infrastructure. LCWIPs identify improvements to build active travel networks and key routes fit for all users.

LOCAL CONTEXT

2.2.9. Local policy relating to walking and cycling is contained in a range of documents, outlined below. These policy documents show a strong level of support for cycling and walking. Several documents, including the Local Plan, are currently being reviewed, making this an ideal time to bring forward and integrate further cycling and walking proposals.

2.2.10. Key local policy documents include:

- North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan (2016-2045)
- North Yorkshire Council Economic Growth Strategy (2024-2029)
- York and North Yorkshire's Route map to Carbon Negative (2022-2027)
- North Yorkshire Council Climate Change Strategy (2023-2030)
- Hambleton Local Plan (2019-35)

2.2.11. Key relevant themes emerging from local policy are set out on the following pages.

Policy support for cycling and walking

2.2.12. Hambleton District Council prepared a Local Plan for the period from 2019 to 2035. There are strong levels of support for walking and cycling in the preferred options consultation documents. *Policy EG5 – Vibrant Market Towns* seeks to improve access to town centres for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. *Policy E1 - Design* states that development proposals that are accessible for all users by maximising opportunities for pedestrian, wheelchair and cycle links within the site and with the surrounding area and local facilities will be supported. Similarly, *Policy CI2 – Transport and Accessibility* specifies that developments that can be well-integrated with footpath and cycling networks and maximise walking, cycling and other sustainable travel options will be supported. *Policy CI3 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation* indicates that residential development proposals which are designed to encourage healthy lifestyles by incorporating cycleways, footpaths and other informal facilities.

2.2.13. The North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan includes an objective which aims to address the health aspects linked to transport, by encouraging healthier travel such as walking and cycling, and by reducing some of the negative effects of transport, such as air pollution. It is recognised that one of the best ways of achieving regular exercise is to incorporate it into the daily routing through active travel.

2.2.14. The North Yorkshire Council Economic Growth Strategy seeks to ensure the county's towns are sustainable settlements with significantly enhanced active travel options. Cycling and walking routes will be improved to connect town centres with homes, jobs and services. Increasing active travel is considered to be a priority as it can both provide health benefits and help to ease congestion. The Strategy states that new housing supply should have an increased focus on active travel and that new public spaces and active travel should be incorporated into developments and place making.

2.2.15. York and North Yorkshire's Route map to Carbon Negative includes an ambition to increase walking and cycling levels, including replacing some van traffic with cycle freight. Increasing active travel, especially for short journeys, is identified as a strategic priority for transport. Transport funding should be prioritised towards enabling low carbon travel choices, such as walking and cycling.

2.2.16. The North Yorkshire Council Climate Strategy includes an ambition to 'Increase active travel for short journeys, ensuring walking and cycling accounts for 17% of distance travelled by 2038'. The strategy commits to increasing walking and cycling opportunities for shorter trips through providing safer routes, local cycling and walking plans, training through Bikeability, and innovation through e-bikes, e-scooters and community-based projects in order to reduce travel by unsustainable modes.

Growth areas and local plan designations

2.2.17. The Local Plan sets out housing and employment growth areas in the Thirsk area which should be considered when developing active travel networks to ensure their sustainability. Although no key housing sites exceeding 5ha in the Thirsk area are identified in the Local Plan, two other major development sites are included, both of which are in progress:

- 'Sowerby Gateway' Employment Allocation / 11.6ha; and
- Sowerby Sports Village / 11.34ha allocated, 7.6ha safeguarded.

2.2.18. As a condition of granting planning permission to the Sowerby Gateway residential development (now completed), a Section 106 Agreement was negotiated, which included improved foot and cycle access to the town centre, to retail facilities on Station Road and to Thirsk railway station. A contribution of up to £250,000 for a cycleway/footpath link will be triggered upon the construction of the 500th dwelling.

Transport and placemaking schemes

Levelling Up Fund Bid

2.2.19. North Yorkshire Council were unsuccessful in their bid for Levelling-Up Fund Tranche 2 for Thirsk station.

Hambleton District Council Market Town Investment Plans (2021/22)

2.2.20. In 2021, Hambleton District Council commissioned the development of Market Town Investment Plans for Bedale, Easingwold, Great Ayton, Northallerton, Stokesley and Thirsk. The aims of the Investment Plans were to:

- Provide an up-to-date economic analysis of each town;
- Capture challenges and opportunities and define each town's ambitions;
- Review against local, regional and national economic policy priorities;
- Propose a series of interventions to ensure our towns' future prosperity and deliver on local ambition;
- Develop a capital project pipeline for Hambleton's market towns which can be used by the new North Yorkshire Council; and
- Work up priority projects to business case stage to maximise potential funding opportunities.

2.2.21. Two out of the four projects proposed for Thirsk are relevant to the LCWIP. These are "T1 – Market Place Enhancements" and "T4 – Cycling Infrastructure Enhancements".

2.2.22. The Market Place Enhancements project includes developing a masterplan of the better use of the square and improvements to pavement spaces which would enable spill-out retail activity, including a pavement plan for the square. This project provides opportunities for the improvement of walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure in the Market Place.

2.2.23. The Cycling Infrastructure Enhancements project consists of four proposed interventions.

- An improved link between Thirsk railway station and Thirsk town centre through a segregated pedestrian and cycle path that runs past Tesco and Lidl, through the castle gardens and into the town centre.
- A cycle hub at Thirsk station could be developed to enable visitor access to the town centre via cycle hire. Such a facility would also enable rail commuters to cycle to the station and park bikes securely and access suitable facilities. This facility could also help build the cycle visitor economy.
- Improve the National Cycle Route NCN 657 between Sowerby and Thirsk town centre, augmenting the safer route through Sowerby Flatts. Provide secure covered parking in Nursery car park enabling cyclists access to leisure centre facilities, as well as easy access to the town centre.
- Develop and provide trail information, in paper and digital form, showing routes around the local area and highlighting cycle-friendly accommodation.

North York Moors National Park Active Travel Study

2.2.24. An Active Travel Study for the National Park that borders with Thirsk is currently in development at the time of writing. The study will provide a similar output to an LCWIP, with an evidence-based study to identify active travel provision. The study is focussed on providing a strategic network of active travel corridors that connect key destinations and surrounding gateway towns using both established routes as well as new routes.

2.2.25. Opportunities will be identified to coordinate with the NYMNP active travel network proposals and seek improvements to connecting the Park with Thirsk, and vice versa. Thirsk is considered a key gateway town for the National Park, that can support journeys into the Park as well as enable more overnight stays. As well as the mutual tourism benefits, the local population of Thirsk form a significant proportion of users to the Park, therefore there are benefits to reducing the amount of car journeys into and around the National Park, whether they are for leisure, utility or even commuting trips.

2.3 EXISTING CYCLING AND WALKING TRAVEL PATTERNS

2.3.1. Levels of walking and cycling in Hambleton were affected by the COVID-19 lockdown. While the percentage of adults who walked or cycled for any purpose at least five times a week increased in 2020, the percentages who walked or cycled at least once per month, once per week and three times a week all declined.[vii]

2.3.2. However, the proportions of adults in Hambleton who walk or cycle for any purpose for at least once a month, once per week and three times a week have since recovered to pre-Covid levels. Moreover, the proportion who walk or cycle for any purpose at least five times per week has remained at the higher level observed in 2020. This indicates that there is growing demand for active travel in Hambleton, and people will choose these modes if the conditions are favourable. The improvements to infrastructure proposed in the Thirsk LCWIP could therefore help increase walking and cycling further.

2.3.3. Pre-Covid Census Journey to Work data (2011) shows that approximately 60% of working residents in Hambleton District work within Hambleton District itself (20,799 workers). There is, therefore, potential to encourage greater levels of commuting by bicycle. Of the 40% of workers who travel outside of Hambleton for employment, with Harrogate and York being the most popular work destination local authorities. The district also attracts a number of employment trips from outside, with 17,709 people commuting into the area, with York being the most popular origin local authority.[viii]

2.3.4. Over 27% of people in Hambleton District travel less than 5km to work (on average twenty minutes on a bike), demonstrating a high potential for active mode travel choices. Furthermore, over 20% of working residents in the district travel less than 2km from their place of work (on average twenty-five minutes on foot), highlighting that walking in particular could be a more viable and attractive mode for residents. Despite these short commuting journeys, 65% of residents travel to work by car, whilst 15% walk and 3% cycle (2011 Census).

2.3.5. Figure 2.3 illustrates that existing levels of cycling to work are greatest in Hambleton 009F LSOA which includes Back Lane, Croft Heads, Gravel Hole Lane and Thirsk School and Sixth Form College, with 2-2.5% of work journeys undertaken by cycle. Much of the centre and west of Thirsk has slightly lower levels of cycling to work. The lowest levels of cycling to work were recorded in Hambleton 009D and Hambleton 008E LSOA, where between 0.5% and 1%

2.3.6. Figure 2.4 shows that existing levels of walking to work are greatest in Hambleton 008B and Hambleton 009B LSOAs with between 15 and 20% of commuting journeys undertaken by foot. The former includes most of Thirsk town centre, including the Market Plance, while the latter includes Thirsk Community Primary School and the residential area around Hambleton Avenues and Dowber Way. The lowest levels of walking to work are found in Hambleton 008D, Hambleton 008E and Hambleton 009D, which are very rural LSOAs, with the exception of Hambleton 009D, which also includes Thirsk Industrial Park. In all three of these LSOAs, less than 5% of residents walk to work.

2.3.7. The topography in Thirsk and the surrounding area is generally very flat and, therefore, there is clear potential to build upon current levels of active travel to make cycling and walking more viable and attractive modes in the area for everyday journeys.

2.3.8. This is reflected in local policy and strategy, recognising the need to provide high quality safe active travel infrastructure to encourage a shift to healthy and greener modes, and to also ensure that future developments are integrated into and connected to these networks to ensure their sustainability.

2.3.9. Travel surveys were undertaken in the new Sowerby Gateway residential development by Optima in 2023 and 2024. The results of both surveys indicate that residents primarily use the car for journeys to work, with 78% driving without passengers in 2023 and 53% driving without passengers in 2024. Meanwhile, few respondents used active travel for commuting: Fewer than 5% walked or cycled to work in 2023 and around 12% did so in 2024. Respondents in both surveys identified improved cycling routes and protective infrastructure and improved walking routes as improvements that would encourage them to use an alternative mode to the car. Comments in both surveys mentioned improvements to walking and cycling links between Sowerby Gateway and Thirsk railway station. The existing path was considered to be overgrown and unsafe, and a way to access to the path from the western side of Sowerby Gateway was desired.

Figure 2.3. Residents that cycle to work (2021 census)

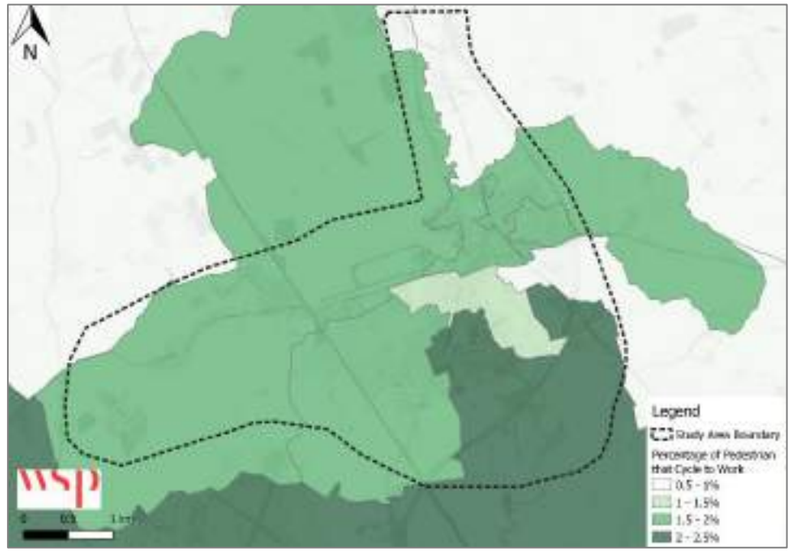
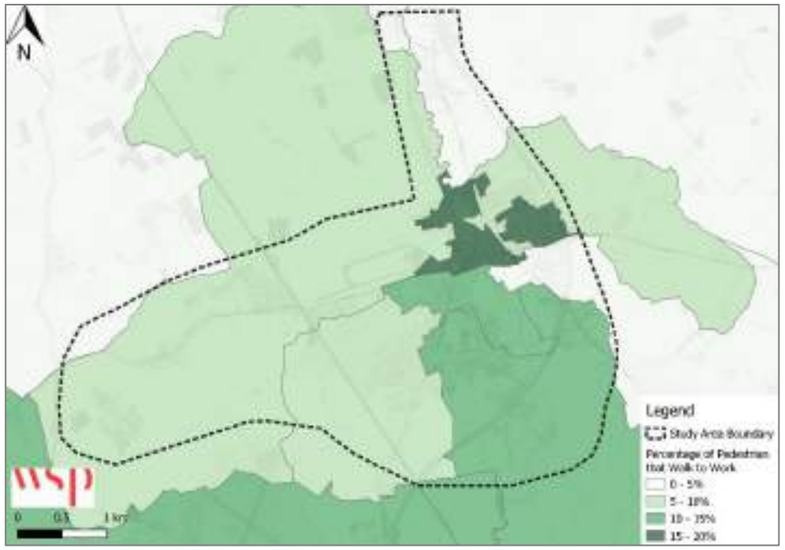


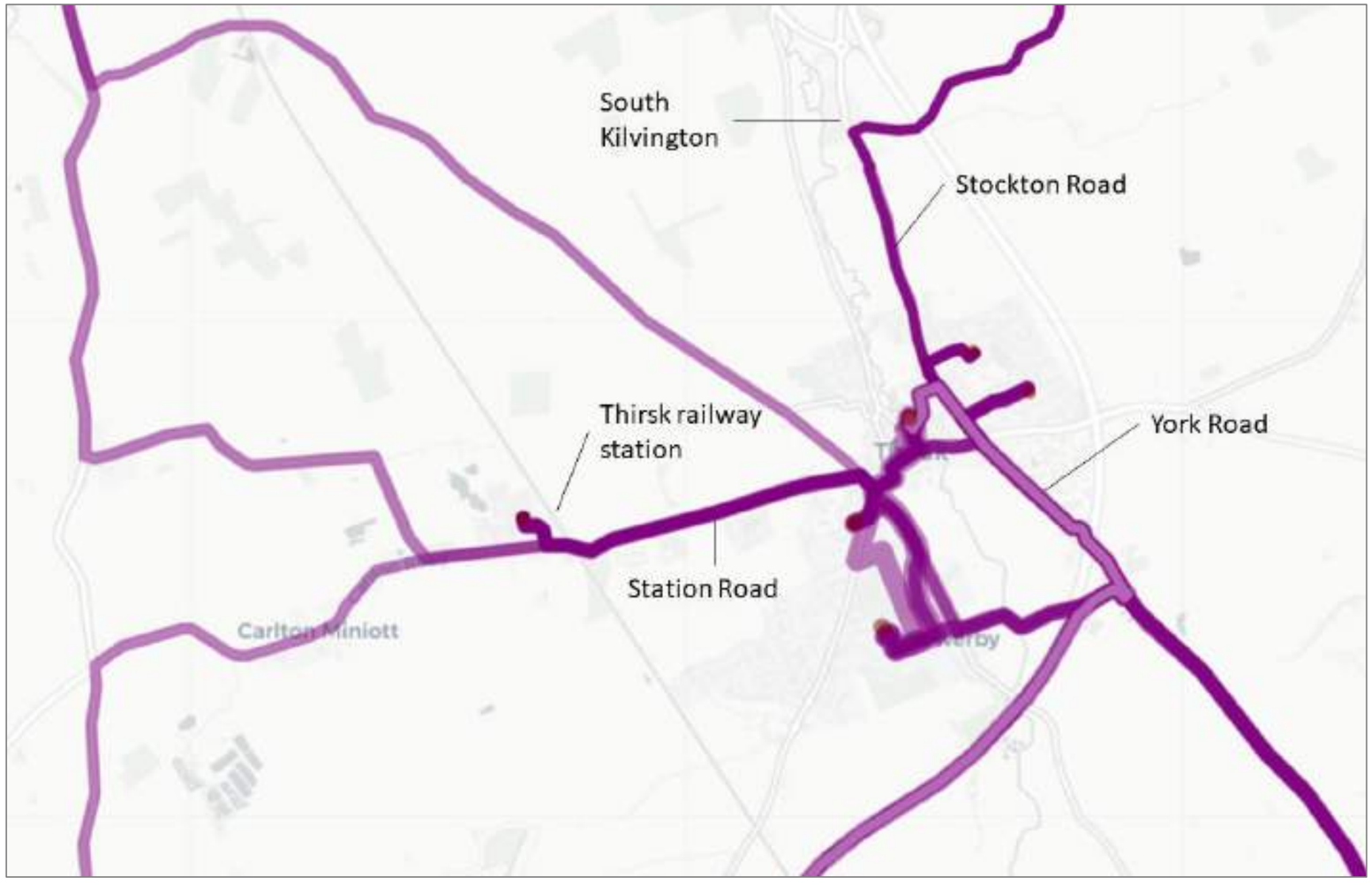
Figure 2.4. Residents that walk to work (2021 census)



Propensity to Cycle: Commuting

2.3.10. Figure 2.6 shows the top 30 most cycled routes taken by people cycling to work in the LCWIP study area in 2011. The data visualises the 'fastest route' scenarios of current users (Census 2011), thereby simulating the most heavily used routes within the study area. Routes into and around Thirsk town centre to be the most popular routes in all current and future scenarios in the Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT)[ix].

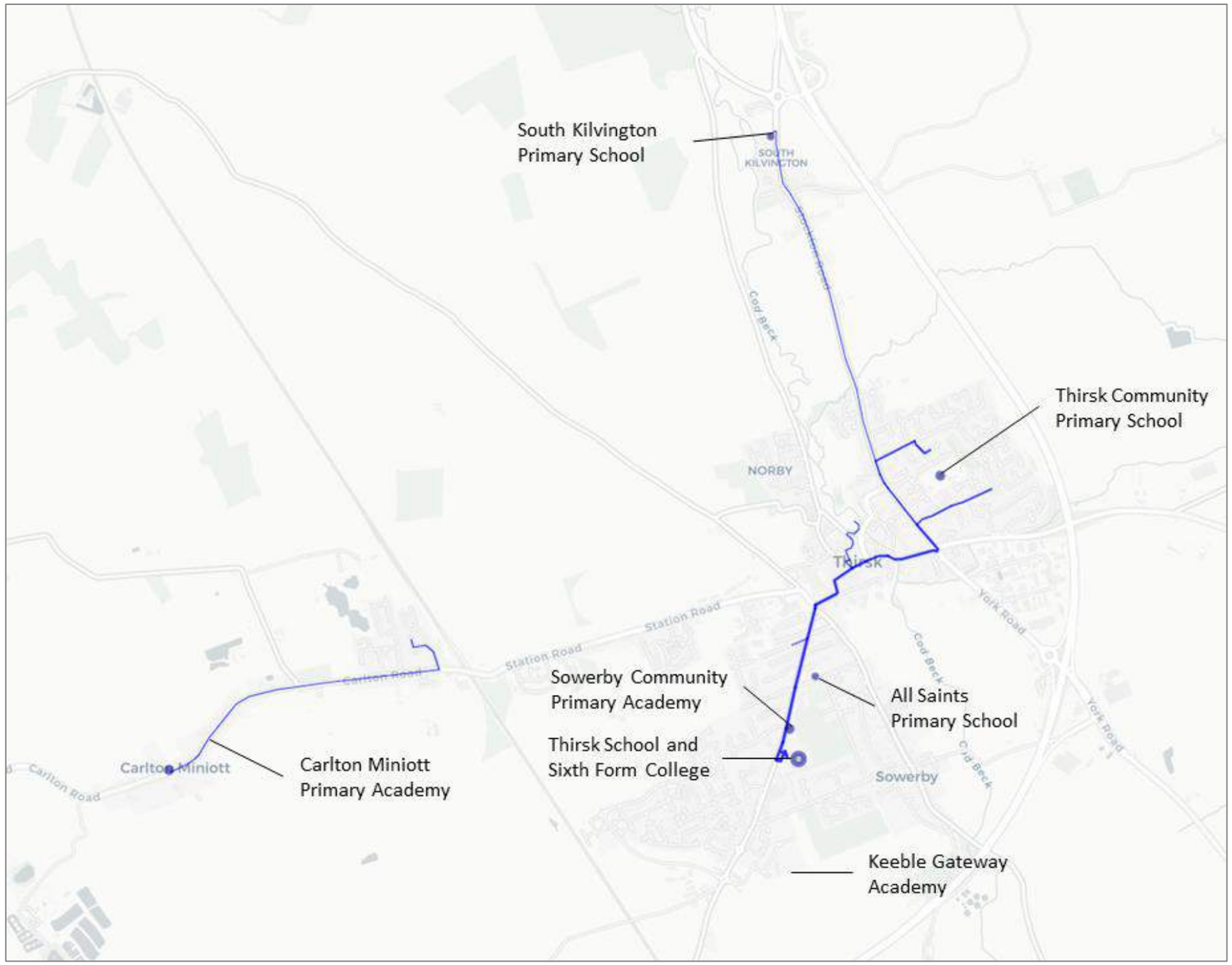
Figure 2.6. 2011 Commuter cycle flows. Increased width = increased usage (Source: Propensity to Cycle Tool)



Propensity to Cycle: School Journeys

2.3.11. Figure 2.7, right, shows the most appropriate cycle network to support cycling to school in the study area, based on the 2011 school census data. This network has some key differences compared to the network based on commuter data. In particular, the school network does not contain a link between Thirsk station and Thirsk town centre, a link along York Road and a link along Front Street in Sowerby. However, the school network does have an additional connection along Topcliffe Road, between Thirsk School and Sixth Form College and Thirsk town centre. It should be noted that Keeble Gateway Academy opened after 2011 and, therefore, it is not accounted for in this network.

Figure 2.7. School cycle flows. Increased width = increased usage (Source: Propensity to Cycle Tool)



Strava Heatmap

2.3.12. Data from the Strava global heatmap[x] show existing cycle demand collected from people using the Strava mobile app whilst cycling. While the results are typically more representative of more confident sports/leisure cyclists, the results not only highlight the importance of the key radial routes of Station Road, Stockton Road, Topcliffe Road and Sutton Road but also links that connect these routes, such as Cemetery Road, Green Lane East and Gravel Hole Lane.

Figure 2.8. Strava cycle flows. Blue colours = increased usage (Source: Strava, map data from Maxar, Natural Earth Data, Mapbox and OpenStreetMap)

ROAD SAFETY

2.3.13. Collisions involving pedestrians and cycle users can be seen as a barrier to taking up or continuing the activity, as they have a negative effect on both perceived and actual safety.

2.3.14. Figure 2.9 shows collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists across the LCWIP area, for the period 2018-2022. For every injury shown on the map, there will be additional injuries and near misses not reported. Table 2.1 presents this data numerically.

Table 2.1. Pedestrian and cyclist accidents by severity: 2018 to 2022

Severity	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Cyclist	Pedestrian	Cyclist	Pedestrian	Cyclist	Pedestrian	Cyclist	Pedestrian	Cyclist	Pedestrian
Slight	1	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	4	2
Serious	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	1	3	1	4	1	0	0	4	2

2.3.15. The data shows that over the five-year period there were no fatal collisions involving pedestrians or cyclists.

2.3.16. Plotting the location of collisions can help us to identify ‘hotspots’, where several incidents have been recorded in a small geographic area. This can help to identify those areas of the network where safety may need to be improved for pedestrians and cyclists.

2.3.17. Accident ‘hotspots’ are clustered in and around the centre of Thirsk. Several cyclist casualties are clustered on Station Road, close to the junction with Newsham Road, and Sowerby Road, while two serious pedestrian casualties occurred on Market Place, which is an area of high pedestrian footfall.

2.3.18. Improving infrastructure for cycling and walking within the study area could further reduce collisions in future.

Figure 2.9. Pedestrian & cyclist traffic casualties: 2018-22

EXISTING PROVISION

2.3.19. Figure 2.10 shows existing Rights of Way, including local and regional cycle routes within the study area. The map shows the fragmented nature of the cycle network and public rights of way, which is fairly typical.

2.3.20. NCN 657, an alternative to NCN 65 between Kirby Knowle and Easingwold, is currently routed through Thirsk and Sowerby along Front Street, Sowerby Road, Stockton Road and Upsall Road. However, for much of the route within the study area, NCN 657 has very limited off-road or segregated provision meaning that much of it falls below the level of provision recommended in latest national guidance.

2.3.21. Advisory cycle lanes are provided along Station Road between Newsham Road and Thirsk railway station. However, there is no cycling infrastructure beyond Newsham Road into Thirsk town centre.

2.3.22. The new residential development at Sowerby Gateway includes several shared use paths which provide a good off-road network within the confines of the development.

2.3.23. An assessment of the current provision was carried out to identify the condition and provision of the existing network. Figure 2.11, overleaf, highlights the various levels of provision across the study area.

Figure 2.10. Public Rights of Way and cycling routes

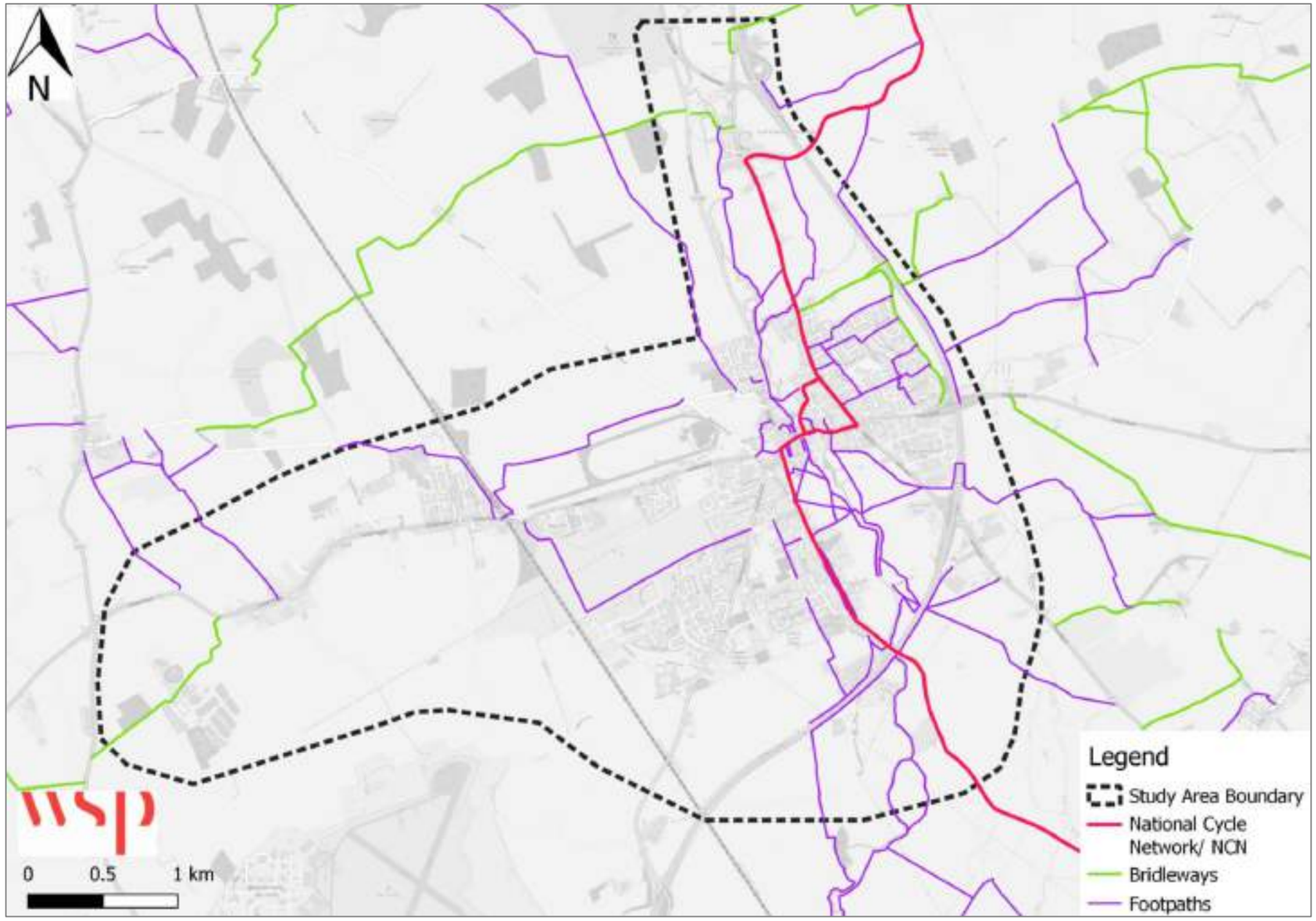
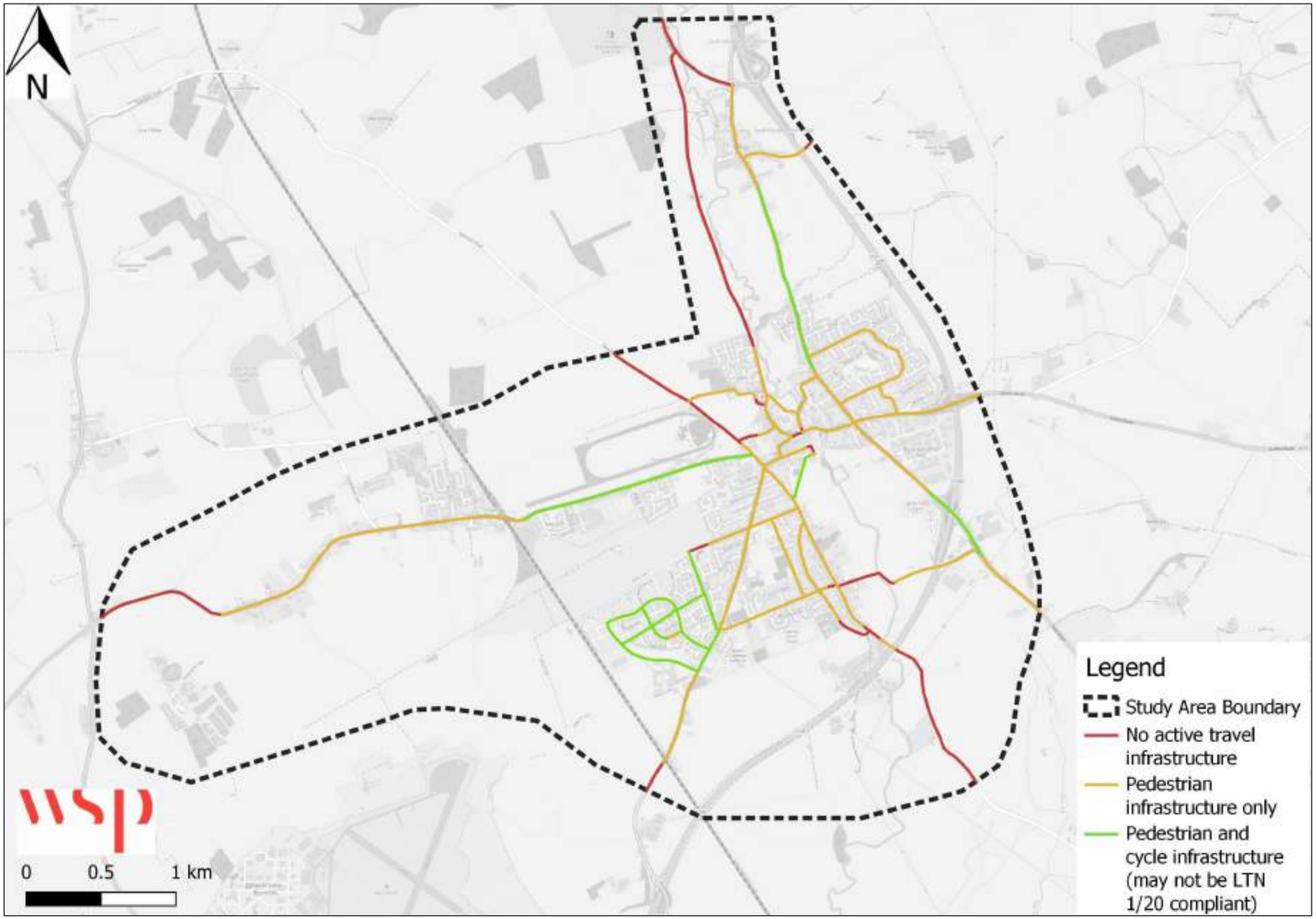


Figure 2.11. Analysis of existing active travel infrastructure



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

2.3.24. Three stakeholder engagement workshops were held at key milestones of the LCWIP development process. The first session is outlined below, with the summaries of the latter sessions included later in the report.

Stakeholder Session 1: Project Inception, Scope and Ambition

2.3.25. The first session was held on 30th April 2024 to seek opinions on the current issues and priorities for walking, wheeling and cycling in the Thirsk area.

2.3.26. The workshop focused on identifying existing issues and priorities for walking, wheeling and cycling in the area. The stakeholders were asked to consider the following questions:

- Are the proposed extents of the study area appropriate?
- Are there any existing schemes in development of which the LCWIP should be aware?
- What are the key issues concerning walking, wheeling and cycling in Thirsk?
- What are the main priorities for walking, wheeling and cycling in Thirsk?
- What else should be considered?

2.3.27. Stakeholders requested that the study area should be extended to include the garden centre and auction mart to the southeast, the Woodland Lakes holiday park to the west, and the Green Lane footpath to the southwest.

2.3.28. The following schemes in progress or development were identified during the workshop:

- Provision of an upgraded public right of way between Sowerby Gateway and Thirsk Station is specified within the outline planning conditions for the residential development at Sowerby Gateway.
- Improvements to provide step-free access at Thirsk station is proposed as part of the DfT's Access for All Fund.
- Sustrans have proposed a new NCN route through Thirsk. The approximate route travels westwards into Thirsk along the A170 Sutton Road before turning northwards along the A61 Stockton Road.
- Resurfacing works have recently been completed in Thirsk town centre. Future resurfacing works are planned for Long Street, Stockton Road (up to Stoneybrough Lane), Station Road (between Town End roundabout and the railway bridge, and York Road (between the White Mare roundabout and the A19/A168 junction). Widening works are also planned for Town End roundabout.
- Improvements to the sandstone paving in Thirsk Market Place are proposed.
- Using Rotary Club funding, there are proposals to make the footpath along Cod Beck in Norby Park accessible for wheelchair users.

2.3.29. The following were identified as key issues regarding walking, wheeling and cycling in the Thirsk area by the stakeholders:

- Cyclists do not feel safe when cycling in Thirsk, with high traffic levels being a major factor. It was suggested that frequent observations of cycling on pavements were a result of feeling unsafe when cycling on roads in Thirsk.
- There is a lack of a safe route to and from Thirsk Community Primary School.
- To access Thirsk town centre from the A61 Stockton Road southbound, cyclists must negotiate the one-way system. This requires a difficult and dangerous right turn at the White Mare roundabout.
- Car parking in Thirsk is considered to be highly centralised, which encourages car dominance.
- The absence of a safe cycling route between Thirsk railway station and Thirsk town centre. The markings for the existing advisory cycle lanes have faded and are often ignored by motorists.

2.3.30. The following were identified as priorities or walking, wheeling and cycling in the Thirsk area by the stakeholders:

- A bi-directional cycle route along Bridge Street, St James Green and Stammergate.
- A cycle / shared-use path between St James Green and Marage Road including new or widened bridge over Cod Beck.
- A safe cycle route between Tesco and Thirsk station.
- Reallocation of road space on northward routes.
- A cycle route between Green Lane West and Thirsk station.
- An extension of the cycle path alongside Stockton Road to South Kilvington Primary School and Thornborough Grange Park.
- A 20 mph zone in South Kilvington.
- A pedestrian crossing in South Kilvington between the Old Oak Tree pub and the church.
- An LTN 1/20 compliant priority crossing over Shire Road.
- Dropped kerbs at St Mary's Walk and Alexander Close.
- New cycling infrastructure and road space reallocation along Long Street, including a new crossing and new cycle lanes to connect to existing cycle path alongside Stockton Road near the Esso garage, and improvements to White Mare roundabout, such as reducing the road width from three to two lanes.
- Narrowing the road width at St James Green to two narrow lanes or to one lane.
- Cycle paths in both directions along Finkle Street and Ingramgate.
- A cycle path along Topcliffe Road.
- Extend the existing 20 mph zone by joining the town centre zone to the zone at Sowerby Community Primary Academy and Thirsk School and Sixth Form.
- Extend the cycle path between Aldi and Campion Square.
- Safety measures (e.g., 40mph zones) to encourage cycling into Thirsk from the villages around it (e.g., Sessay).

3 STAGE 3: NETWORK PLANNING FOR CYCLING

3.1 CURRENT & FUTURE ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS

3.1.1. The LCWIP Technical Guidance for Local Authorities (DfT, 2017) notes that identifying demand for a planned cycle network should start by mapping the main trip origin and destination points (ODs).

3.1.2. Journey origins from existing residential areas are based on the centroids of LSOAs, except for large, rural LSOAs, where the centre of the main residential area within the LSOA has been used instead. Additional origins and destinations were identified as shown in Figure 3.1, including:

- Future housing and employment sites from the Hambleton Local Plan
- Principal retail areas;
- Employment concentrations;
- Large grocery shops;
- Hospitals;
- Tourist attractions; and
- Educational institutions.

Figure 3.1. Origin & Destination Points

3.2 CLUSTERING & DESIRE LINES

3.2.1. The guidance recommends that trip ODs in close proximity to each other are clustered together, providing an indication of significant OD areas which will be the focus for many trips.

3.2.2. Once OD clusters were determined, desire lines between every LSOA or allocated housing site and identified cluster were mapped; the lines represent the most direct route between these points, irrespective of the existing network and barriers.

3.2.3. For ease of interpretation, desire lines were aggregated to present the top 10% desire lines. These are used as the basis to inform a schematic network, referred to as the 'Suggested Cycle Network'.

3.2.4. The OD clusters and top 10% desire lines are shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2. OD Clusters and Top Desire Lines

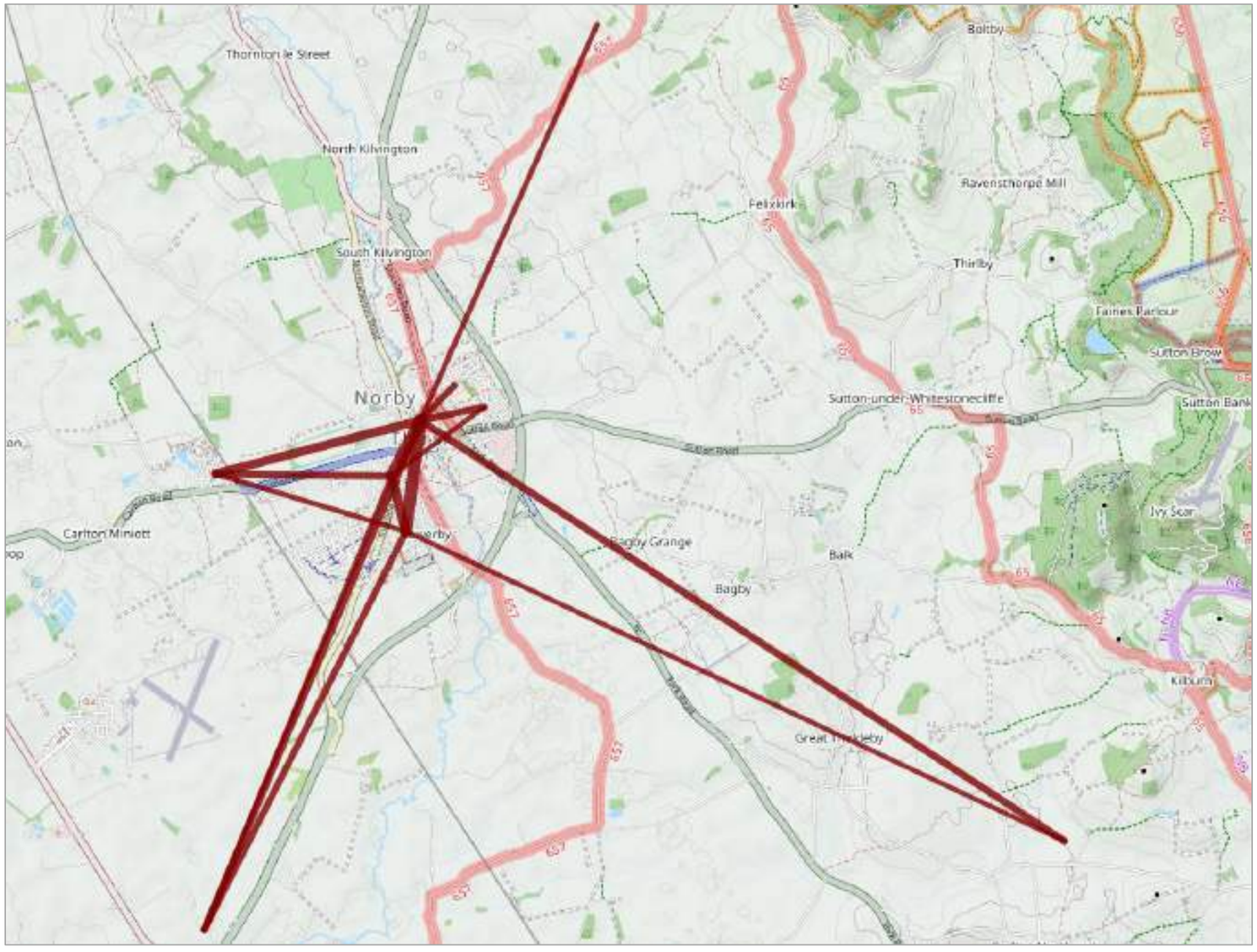
3.3 VALIDATION OF DESIRE LINES

3.3.1. The desire lines were validated using outputs from the PCT E-bike scenario and the Strava Heatmap, as well as through engagement with key stakeholders.

3.3.2. The desire lines were compared against the PCT E-bike scenario outputs, which models the additional increase in cycling that would be achieved through the widespread uptake of electric cycles. The top 15 commuting journeys from the PCT tool broadly reflect the identified desire lines within the study area. but suggest that there is also cycling potential to villages located outside the scope of the LCWIP. The desire line analysis, on the other hand, identify travel demand between the area around Thirsk railway station and Sowerby Gateway, which was not highlighted by the PCT E-bike scenario. It should be noted that the PCT is based on 2011 census data and that many of the origins and destinations at Sowerby Gateway were built after 2011 and, therefore, will not be represented in the 2011 census data.

3.3.3. The desire lines in Figure 3.2 were also compared against the Strava Heatmap data in Figure 2.8. The Strava Heatmap for Thirsk is in broad agreement with the desire lines. However, as with the PCT E-bike scenario outputs, the Strava Heatmap also does not identify demand between the area around Thirsk railway station and Sowerby Gateway. Meanwhile, the Strava Heatmap data additionally identifies Newsham Road, Northallerton Road, Stockton Road, Green Lane East and Gravel Hole Lane as popular routes.

Figure 3.3. PCT E-Bike Scenario



3.4 ROUTE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

3.4.1. Having determined the desire lines, the next stage of the process is to identify real world routes that can accommodate these desire lines. This could be through appropriate schemes to upgrade existing roads or paths to the latest standards or identifying opportunities to create new routes.

3.4.2. The first step in the process is to identify potential real world routes that might support the cycling desire lines. Potential route alignments were plotted which followed the desire lines as closely as possible. The routes selected follow existing infrastructure, such as roads, paths and structures, where these are available, but do not consider whether the infrastructure meets LTN 1/20 or if existing constraints that might preclude this.

3.4.3. Additional links were identified from the information gathered during Stage 2: Gathering Evidence, including from the stakeholder workshop.

3.4.4. The importance of each link and route should be understood in terms of their overall significance in the network. This primarily concerns the number of cyclists that would be anticipated to use each route / link in the future. The following hierarchy was therefore applied to the links in the network:

- **Primary routes** are generally those which align with the agreed desire lines and are therefore most likely to attract the highest number of cyclists. These are supplemented by the outputs from the PCT E-bike scenario and the Strava Heatmap, as well as local knowledge.
- **Secondary routes** are generally routes / links with lower expected flows of cyclists which connect to specific trip generators, such as schools, colleges and employment sites, or add to the 'mesh density' of the overall network.
- **Leisure routes** are those that do not align with specific destinations but are important routes in their own right for leisure or tourism purposes, supporting a vital part of the North Yorkshire economy.

3.4.5. This network is referred to as the 'Suggested Cycle Network' and should be the basis of any further route identification work. The routes displayed in the Suggested Cycle Network are those that cyclists would likely prefer to use if the right infrastructure for the conditions was provided and should always be considered as the first option for any route alignment, with other options identified using the DfT's Route Selection Tool (RST) or similar.

3.4.6. A draft Suggested Cycle Network was developed and presented at a second stakeholder workshop.

3.5 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: CYCLING

REVIEWING THE DRAFT LCWIP NETWORK PLANS

3.5.1. A second workshop was held on 24th June 2024 which provided an opportunity for stakeholders to review the draft cycling network. Attendees included representatives from North Yorkshire Council, South Kilvington Parish Council, Thirsk Town Council, the Thirsk Area Cycling Campaign and Sustrans.

3.5.2. The main questions posed in relation to the draft cycling network were:

- Whether any key routes or connections were missing; and
- Which routes were the most important for cycling.

3.5.3. The following comments were provided by the stakeholders during and after the workshop in relation to the draft cycling network:

- Include a connection between the primary route along Green Lane West and the secondary route along Oak Drive.
- Consider designating the cycle path across the Flatts as a primary route rather than a secondary route.
- Include a connection between South Kilvington and the leisure route at Stoneybrough Lane via public right of way and private track east of the A19.
- Extending a route to North Kilvington would provide access from other villages to Thirsk.
- The existing cycle route which provides access into Thirsk Industrial Park from Sutton Road should be included. It could also be improved and extended with a crossing of the A170, and cycle path connecting to Hambleton Place, and a link to a new cycle path on York Road.
- Include a route between Norby Front Street and Stockton Road, utilising the existing right of way that starts just south of Percy Drive, crosses Cod Beck and meets Stockton Road just north of Shire Road/Stoneybrough Lane. This would enable some users to avoid using the A61 at St James Green/Finkle Street.
- Ensure all 'wheeled' users (including disabled and trike riders) are catered for in designs.
- Improvements to the cycle path/route along Sowerby Road between Green Lane East and the cycle path across the Flatts. When approaching from Green Lane East, the current configuration requires travelling 20 m in the wrong direction (south) before performing a U-turn.

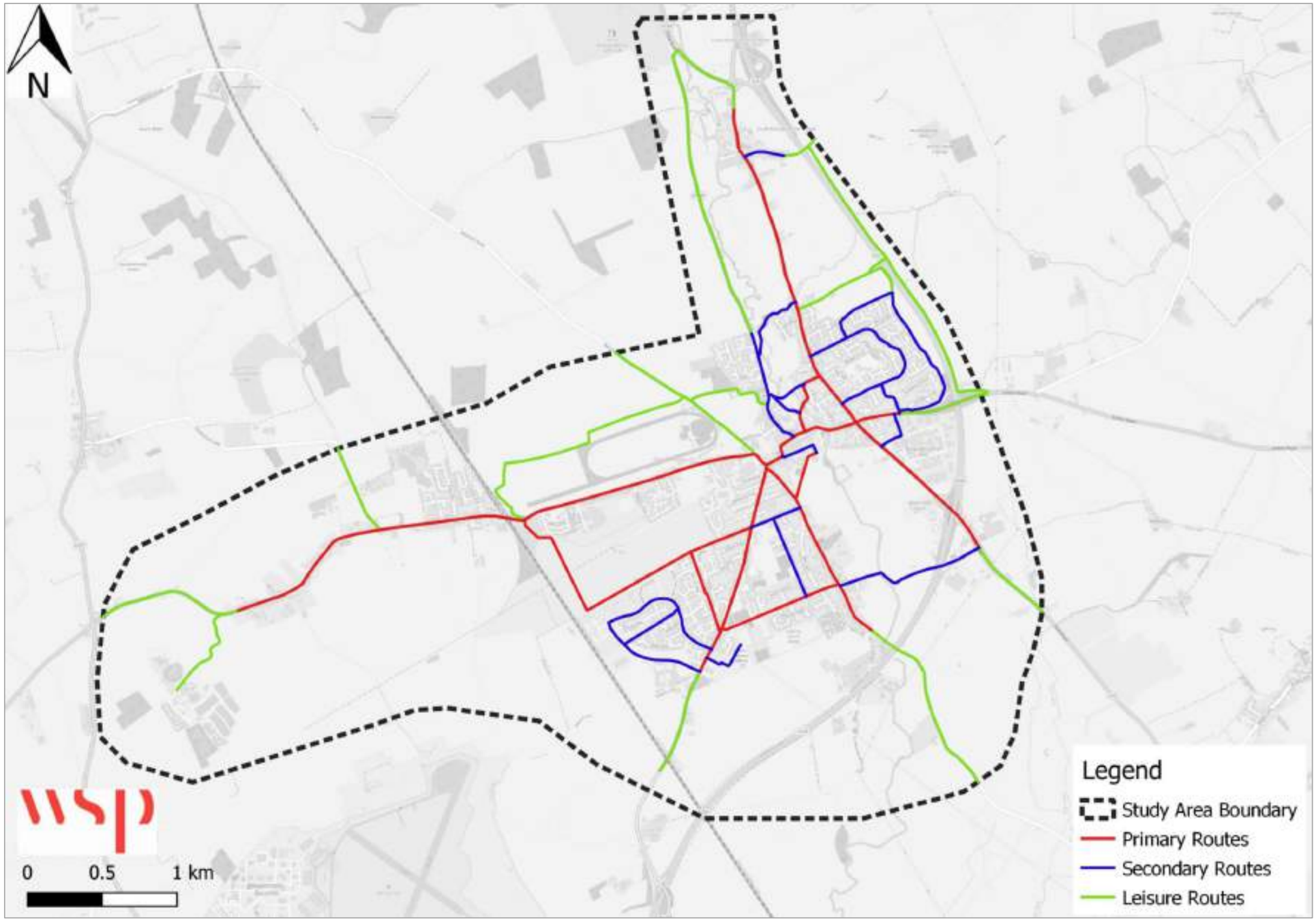
3.5.4. The following routes were identified by the stakeholders as being the most important.

- Between Thirsk station and the town centre.
- Between Thirsk station and Sowerby Gateway.
- Between East Thirsk and the town centre.
- Along Stammergate including the junction between Stammergate and Stockton Road.
- Areas around schools.

3.6 PROPOSED CYCLING NETWORK

3.6.1. The Proposed Cycle Network was updated after reviewing the comments during and after the second stakeholder meeting. The updated Cycling Network is shown in Figure 3.4, with a high-resolution image included in Appendix A.

Figure 3.4. Thirsk Proposed Cycle Network Map



4 STAGE 4: NETWORK PLANNING FOR WALKING AND WHEELING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1. Most roads in Thirsk have footways which allow people to walk and wheel segregated from traffic. However, the quality of footway provision varies greatly across the study area, with some areas having excellent provisions, others having footways of lower quality and in poor condition, and some areas with no footway provision whatsoever. Installing footways where they are absent and improving the quality of existing footways can encourage more residents and visitors to undertake journeys by walking and wheeling.

4.1.2. In this section, key improvements for walking and wheeling within the study area have been identified.

4.2 CURRENT & FUTURE ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS

4.2.1. The LCWIP technical guidance notes that identifying demand for a planned walking network should start by mapping the main origin and destination points. The same origins and destinations were utilised for developing the walking and wheeling network as for the cycling network, as shown in Figure 3.1.

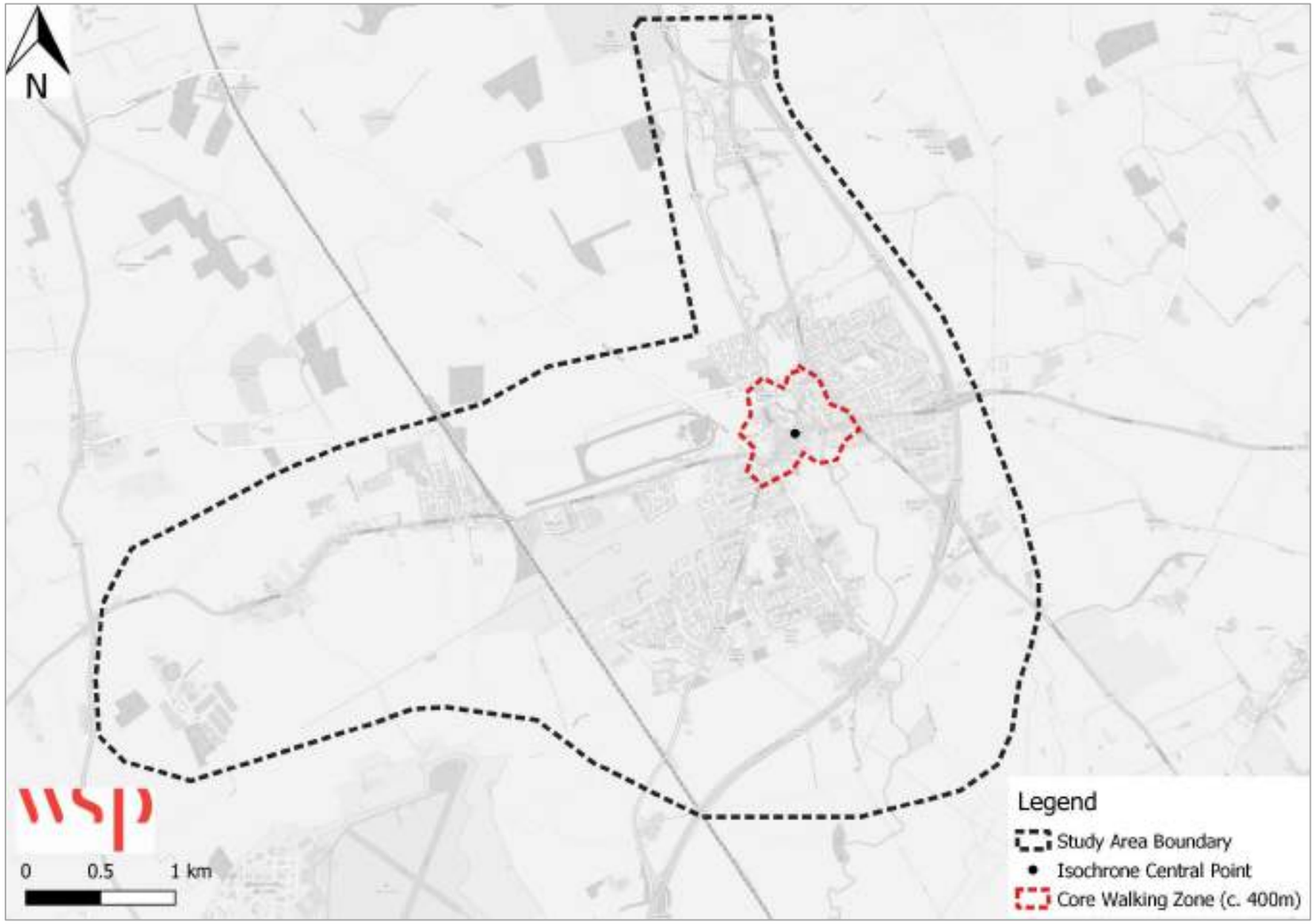
4.3 IDENTIFYING CORE WALKING AND WHEELING ZONES

4.3.1. The next stage of the LCWIP process is to identify Core Walking and Wheeling Zones (CWZs), normally consisting of walking/wheeling trip generators that are located close together – such as town centres or business parks. An approximate five-minute walking distance of 400m is used as a guide to the minimum extents of the Core Walking and Wheeling Zones.

4.3.2. One CWZ was identified in the study area through a process of GIS analysis and stakeholder engagement. The extents of the CWZ are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

4.3.3. Following the identification of the CWZ, key walking and wheeling routes connecting with the zone were then identified by mapping a 2km isochrone from its centroid of each CWZ; 2km being considered the maximum desirable walking distance from a CWZ.

Figure 4.1. Thirsk Core Walking and Wheeling Zone Map



4.4 PRODUCING THE DRAFT WALKING NETWORK

4.4.1. The key walking and wheeling routes that could serve the CWZs, which were identified using the 2km walking isochrones, were then rationalised to produce a draft walking and wheeling network map.

4.4.2. The initial step was to map out the main walking routes, which were those routes identified by the 2km isochrones that most closely followed the desire lines identified through the development of the cycling network, as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

4.4.3. The next step was to identify those additional routes that can support the main routes to create a comprehensive network.

4.4.4. The importance of each link and route was then considered in terms of its overall significance in the network. This primarily relates to the likely number of pedestrians that each link or route will serve in the future. As a result, the following hierarchy was applied to each link and route in the network:

- Prestige Walking Routes: Very busy areas in urban centres, with a high proportion of public space and signification contribution to the street scene;
- Primary Walking Routes: Main pedestrian routes linking key origins and destinations and connecting with the prestige walking routes; and
- Secondary Walking Routes: Lower usage routes through local areas, which feed into primary routes, local shopping centres, etc.

4.5 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: WALKING AND WHEELING

REVIEWING THE DRAFT LCWIP NETWORK PLANS

4.5.1. A second workshop was held on 24th June 2024 which provided an opportunity for stakeholders to review the draft walking and wheeling network. Attendees included representatives from North Yorkshire Council, South Kilvington Parish Council, Thirsk Town Council, the Thirsk Area Cycling Campaign and Sustrans.

4.5.2. The main questions posed in relation to the draft walking and wheeling network were:

- Whether any key routes or connections were missing; and
- Which routes were the most important for cycling.

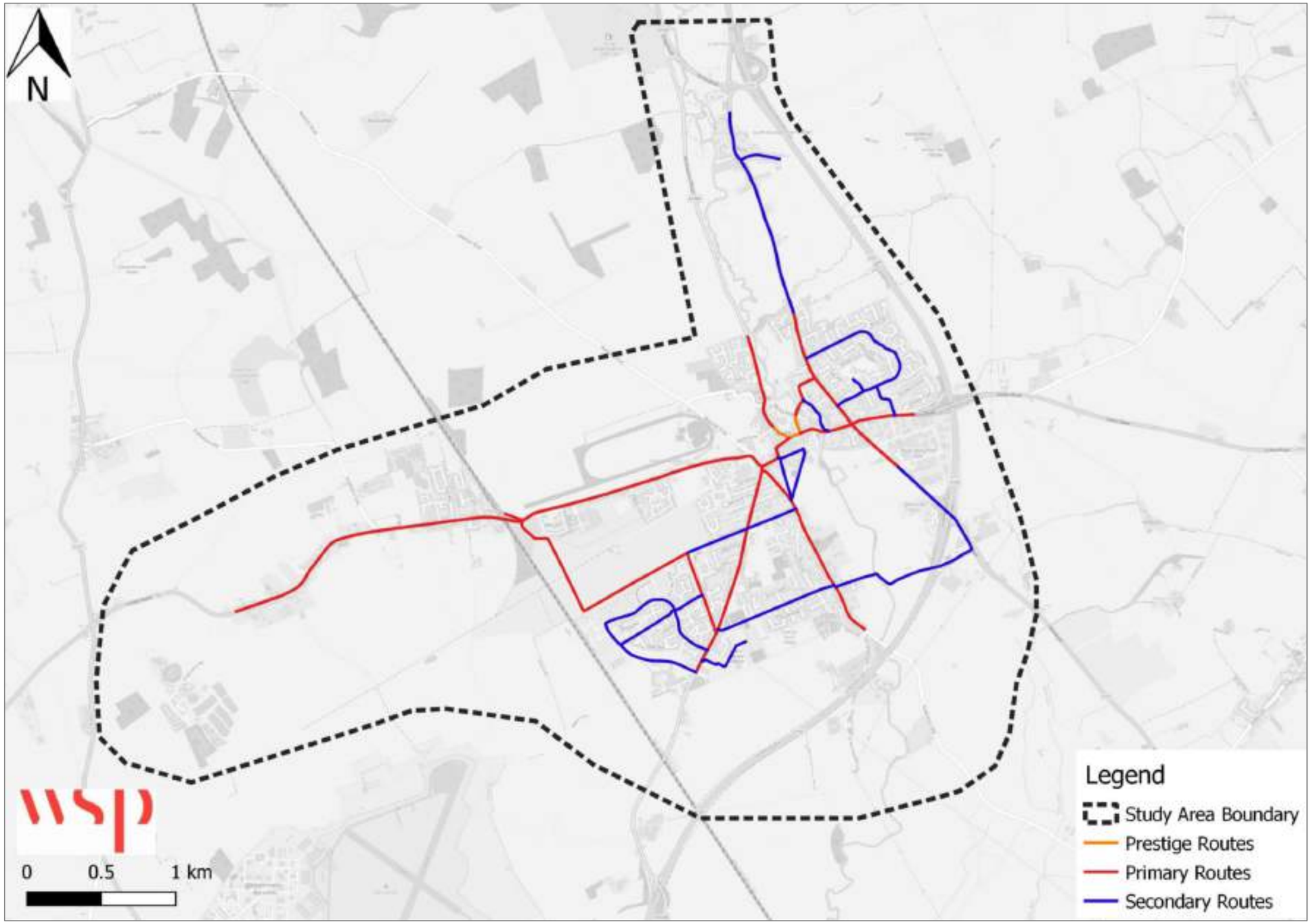
4.5.3. The following comments were provided by the stakeholders during and after the workshop in relation to the draft walking and wheeling network:

- Consider including schools and part of East Thirsk within the Core Walking and Wheeling Zone.
- The primary route between Thirsk town centre and the railway station should be extended to Carlton Miniott Primary School.
- Extend the primary route along Stockton Road to South Kilvington.
- There is broad scope to improve walking and wheeling provision in Thirsk town centre, including greater pedestrianisation, improved wheelchair accessibility, higher quality footways, formal and controlled pedestrian crossings, and improved visibility.
- Include Blakey Lane, which links Sowerby with the garden centre and auction mart.

4.6 SUGGESTED WALKING AND WHEELING NETWORK

4.6.1. The resultant draft Walking and Wheeling Network Map is shown in Figure 4.2, with a high-resolution image included in Appendix A.

Figure 4.2. Draft Walking and Wheeling Network Map



5 STAGE 5: PRIORITISATION

5.1 PRODUCING THE PRIORITY ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK

5.1.1. Whilst the Proposed Cycle and Walking Networks presents the basis for a comprehensive network, an overlying priority network of schemes is recommended to focus on routes that would best serve the local area, balancing value for money and deliverability. The guidance states that priority should be given to improvements that are most likely to have the greatest impact on increasing the number of people who choose to walk, wheel and cycle, and therefore the greatest return on investment. Other factors may also influence the prioritisation of improvements such as the deliverability of the proposed works or opportunities to link with other schemes.

5.1.2. Therefore, a two-stage prioritisation process was adopted whereby priority corridors were first chosen based on:

- Deliverability;
- Connections with local points of interest, particularly schools and the town centre;
- Existing demand, or
- Demonstrable uptake in demand.

The second stage of the prioritisation would utilise at typical multi-criteria assessment template consistent with NYC's LCWIP programme.

5.1.3. From the feedback received in the stakeholder workshops and the results of the Early Assessment and Sifting Tool and Walking Route Audits, nine Priority Active Travel Corridors were identified.

5.1.4. Following the stakeholder engagement programme, a Priority Cycling Network Plan was agreed and approved by the Thirsk LCWIP Project Delivery Group. This plan is presented in Figure 5.1, with a high-resolution image included in Appendix A.

5.1.5. The Priority Cycling Network has been designed to prioritise connectivity for commuting and leisure, with the aim of increasing active travel in order to reduce car journeys. The network presented provides key connections in and around the Thirsk LCWIP study area, recognising that it is not possible to connect everywhere, but focusing on the routes with the greatest potential volumes of pedestrians and cyclists.

5.1.6. The priority cycling network provides connectivity between settlements with a focus on educational establishments and workplaces.

5.1.7. The proposed improvements include junction and crossing enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists; the development of traffic-free shared-use and segregated paths; and upgrades to footways.

5.1.8. The combination of new cycling routes and improvements to existing routes, alongside existing provision, will provide a coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive cycle network for the Thirsk area.

The routes have been developed taking into account updated guidance on Cycle Infrastructure Design. The new standards of design are much higher than in the past and look to include cycle provision that is physically protected from traffic, as well as the separation of pedestrians and cyclists on main routes.

Figure 5.1. Priority Active Travel Network Map

Table 5.1. Active Travel Priority Corridors – Route Descriptions and Rationale

ID	Corridor or area description	Rationale	Length
1	**Thirsk Town Centre** This area comprises Market Place, Castlegate, Kirkgate, Chapel Street, Westgate, Millgate, Finkle Street, Bridge Street Marage Road, Masonic Lane, the eastern end of Station Road, the northern end of Topcliffe Road, and the northern end of Sowerby Road.	▪ This is the area with the highest footfall (assumed) and the area with the greatest demand for walking and wheeling infrastructure. ▪ It is key destination for cyclists, as well as pedestrians due to the concentration of local shops and services. ▪ Most north-south and east-west cycling routes pass through this area. ▪ The quality and provision of the walking and wheeling infrastructure was raised by stakeholders. ▪ Aligns with the "T1 – Market Place Enhancements" project included in the Thirsk plan of the Hambleton District Council Market Town Investment Plans. ▪ Carlton Miniott Primary Academy is located in this corridor.	0.27 km^2
2	**Thirsk Town Centre – Thirsk Station – Carlton Miniott** This corridor connects Thirsk town centre and Carlton Miniott via Thirsk station.	▪ The route between Thirsk town centre and the railway station has been identified as having the potential for high demand from cyclists. ▪ The need to improve active travel infrastructure along the route was frequently raised by stakeholders. ▪ An improved link between Thirsk town centre and the railway station forms part of the "T4 – Cycle Infrastructure Enhancements" project in the Thirsk plan of the Hambleton District Council Market Town Investment Plans.	3.7 km
3	**Thirsk Station – Sowerby Gateway – Sowerby** Connects Sowerby Gateway and Sowerby to Thirsk railway station.	▪ This route was identified as having the potential for high demand from cyclists and pedestrians. ▪ Currently, the only route between Sowerby Gateway and the station avoiding Thirsk town centre is an unlit public footpath across fields. ▪ The route was frequently mentioned by stakeholders as needing improvement. ▪ An improved route to/from the station was raised by respondents to travel surveys in Sowerby Gateway.	2.8 km
4	**Sowerby Gateway – Thirsk Town Centre** This corridor connects Thirsk town centre and Sowerby Gateway along the B1448 Topcliffe Road.	▪ This route was identified as having the potential for high demand from cyclists. ▪ Four schools – Thirsk School and Sixth Form College, Keeble Gateway Academy, Sowerby Community Primary Academy, and All Saints RC Primary School – are located on or close to this corridor. ▪ According to the Hambleton Local Plan, new residential and employment developments are planned at Sowerby Gateway.	1.5 km
5	**Sowerby – Thirsk Town Centre** This corridor connects Thirsk town centre and Sowerby along Sowerby Road.	▪ This route was identified as having the potential for high demand from cyclists. ▪ Issues around existing cycle infrastructure along this corridor were raised by stakeholders. ▪ Improving the NCN 657 route between Sowerby and Thirsk town centre forms part of the "T4 – Cycle Infrastructure Enhancements" project in the Thirsk plan of the Hambleton District Council Market Town Investment Plans.	1.3 km
6	**Thirsk Garden Centre - Thirsk Town Centre** This corridor connects Thirsk Town Centre and Thirsk Garden Centre via the A170.	▪ This route was identified by stakeholders as requiring infrastructure improvements.	1.5 km
7	**East Thirsk - Thirsk Town Centre** Connects Thirsk town centre and East Thirsk. This could comprise several routes in parallel: Ingramgate-Sutton Road-Hambleton Place, Ingramgate-Long Street-Hambleton Place-Dowber Way, and Stammergate-Long Street-St Mary's Walk.	▪ This route was identified as having the potential for high demand from cyclists and pedestrians. ▪ Stakeholders raised the need for improved active travel infrastructure along this corridor. ▪ Thirsk Community Primary School is located in this corridor.	1.0 km
8	**South Kilvington – Thirsk Town Centre** Connects Thirsk town centre and South Kilvington.	▪ Sections of this route were identified by stakeholders are requiring improved active travel infrastructure. ▪ NCN 657 is routed along this corridor. ▪ South Kilvington CofE Primary School is located in this corridor.	2.2 km
9	**Norby - Thirsk Town Centre** This corridor connects Thirsk town centre and Norby.	▪ This route was identified as having the potential for high demand from pedestrians.	0.5 km

5.2 AUDITING PRIORITY CORRIDORS

5.2.1. Once the corridors have been identified, the next step is to audit the existing walking infrastructure to determine where improvements are needed.

5.2.2. At this initial stage in the design process, the proposals identified sit within a package of 13 typical improvements.

These include:

- Attractiveness:
  - Maintenance;
  - Increase surveillance; and
  - Place-based interventions (greening, streetscape, seating etc).
- Comfort
  - Footway widening; and
  - Parking controls.
- Directness
  - New crossing point on desire line;
  - Improve Junction (widen refuge, improved timings, fewer refuges); and
  - New access point to buildings / car parks.
- Safety
  - Speed reduction scheme.
- Coherence
  - Drop kerb;
  - Reduced radii;
  - Blended footway; and
  - Wayfinding.

5.2.3. The assessment particularly considers the needs of vulnerable users who may be elderly, visually impaired, mobility impaired, hearing impaired, with learning difficulties, buggy users, or children in order to ensure that any proposed schemes comply with the Equality Act 2010.

5.2.4. The results of the audits have been mapped out on a route by route basis (including the Core Walking Zone). A summary of the overall package of interventions (the 'scheme') for each route is provided for the purpose of engagement with key stakeholders and the general public.

5.3 SITE VISIT

A site visit was carried out in September 2024 to gather information and first-hand knowledge of the priority corridors.

The outcomes of the site visit include:

- Identifying existing walking and cycling patterns and potential new journeys.
- Reviewing existing conditions and identifying barriers to walking and cycling.
- Gathering evidence to support the development of the LCWIP.
- Investigate the deliverability of schemes and proposed interventions.

5.3.1. A summary of the key observations is outlined in figure 4.4, below.

5.4 LIST OF IMPROVEMENTS

5.4.1. The nine corridors provide the basis for developing the list of priority improvements. While it is the intention of the LCWIP to deliver the entirety of the network, this will be subject to the availability of suitable funding opportunities. This may result in phasing or combining the delivery of improvements where necessary.

5.4.2. Table 5.3 lists each of the priority improvements identified, detailing:

- Route description – explanation of the proposal;
- Route type – infrastructure type proposed;
- Total Cost – estimated costs including indirect costs.

IMPROVEMENT DESCRIPTIONS

5.4.3. It should be noted that the improvement descriptions and type provide an indication of the type of improvement that it may be possible to deliver on each route based on the opportunities and constraints present. However, this is subject to further design work, engagement, and consultation to determine the best improvement that can be delivered in each location.

5.4.4. The implementation of improvements is also subject to the securing of sufficient funding.

IMPROVEMENT COSTS

5.4.5. The cost estimates presented here are 'total costs'. These are developed through 'direct' and 'indirect' costs'.

5.4.6. Indicative cost estimates for each improvement have been developed based on individual unit and per metre costs. These are referred to as 'direct costs' (i.e. the actual cost of construction materials).

5.4.7. The improvements are currently at a very early stage of development and may change as the designs are developed further; this is recognised through the application of 'uplift costs', which are typical percentages applied to the base cost to represent unknowns and less tangible costs.

5.4.8. Key costing assumptions applied include:

- Work by Statutory undertakers and others: 20%;
- Preliminary work, traffic management, overheads, and profits: 45%;
- Surveys, investigations, design, procurement, supervision, management, and liaison: 20%;
- Risk and contingency: 30%; and
- Inflation: Costs are presented as 2022 Q1 prices and should be adjusted for inflation once the delivery timescales are confirmed, nominally 0.5%.

5.5 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: WALKING AND WHEELING

5.5.1. A third stakeholder workshop was held on the 22nd January (2025), the purpose of which was to review concepts for the scheme corridors outlined in the LCWIP. Scheme concept designs were sent prior to the meeting, so that attendees had opportunity to review and prepare feedback.

5.5.2. In general, the content was well received, with a number of suggestions for improvements proposed, including:

- Suggestion of secure cycle parking
- Consider routes adjacent to Cod Beck to avoid busier routes on Bridge St.
- The pinch point on the railway bridge on the A61 will cause deliverability issues, therefore a number of options should be identified to develop this route.
- Similarly, the bridge at Blakey Lane has a history of issues and the group were keen to see an alternative to this crossing point.

Figure 5.2. Site Visit – Summary of Observations

Mowbray Tce: On the main approaches to the Town Centre, routes are busy with vehicles and in some cases, on-street parking. Footways are narrow and puts pedestrians in close proximity to traffic.

Sowerby Flatts: A shared path with separate cycle facility runs through the park to connect Sowerby to the town centre. Off-road routes and the numerous shorts away from traffic are well used in Thirsk.

A170 at the A19 Roundabout: Existing footways have deteriorated but could be upgraded to enable a range of users.

Market Place (at A61): Navigating the Town Centre can be difficult- pedestrian space is wrapped around the perimeter of the Market Place, with a mix of traditional surfaces and an accumulation of street furniture.

Topcliffe Rd/ A61 Roundabout: As with a number of the key junctions approaching the town centre, there are few opportunities to cross the road safely for no-motorised users.

Station Rd: There is clear demand for small pedestrian improvements such as path widening.

5.6 SCHEME COMPARISON USING THE MULTI-CRITERIA PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK (MCAF)

OVERVIEW

5.6.1. Following the development of the LCWIP Priority corridors, further assessment of the schemes is carried out and scored against a range of criteria that are based on NYC's strategic ambitions.

5.6.2. A prioritisation framework has been produced to ensure consistency when prioritising walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure improvements. The framework includes the following criteria:

- **Effectiveness** - based on the potential number of walking or cycling trips that might use the route.
- **Alignment with policy objectives** – relevant local plans and strategies (North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan (2016-2045), York and North Yorkshire's Route map to Carbon Negative, North Yorkshire Council Climate Change Strategy 2023-2030, Scarborough Borough Local Plan Review (2023-2040), North Yorkshire Council Economic Growth Strategy (2024-2029), Hambleton District Council Market Town Investment Plans (2021/22) and alignment with ongoing workstreams.)
- **Economic factors** - including scheme cost, value for money and likelihood of attracting funding.
- **Deliverability issues** - including engineering constraints, land ownerships and level of stakeholder support.

The full assessment criteria and scoring methodology applied is provided in Table 5.2, with the completed scoring overleaf on Table 5.3.

Table 5.2 – LCWIP Prioritisation criteria and scoring

	Category	Criteria	Description	Source
1	Effectiveness	**Increase in cycling**	Forecast number of journeys to work using the corridor in the Government Target Near Market scenario (LSOA)	PCT (2011 Census)
2		**Average daily pedestrian demand**		Datashine (2011 Census)
3		**Strava**	Existing active travel demand based on Strava datasets	Strava
4	Policy Alignment	**Schools**	Number of schools within the corridor (a 500m radius)	WSP OD mapping
5		**Scheme alignment**	Does the route connect with any parallel schemes or other planned transport improvement?	NYC
6		**Safety**	Number of accidents involving pedestrians or cyclists in the previous 5 years within the corridor (500m radius)	DfT (STATS19)
7		**Visitor attractions**	Does the route improve connections to key visitor attractions?	NYC
8		**Carbon / Air Quality**	Does the route travel through an Air Quality Management Area?	DEFRA
9		**Development sites**	Scale & proximity of sites with planning permission and/or allocated development sites	WSP OD mapping
10	Economic	**Cost of construction**	Total scheme cost estimates for package of interventions	Cost estimates
11		**Value for money**	Assessment of scheme benefits vs costs	AMAT
12		**Scheme feasibility**	Known land ownership issues or scheme dependencies	NYC
13	Deliverability	**Stakeholder acceptability**	Likelihood of support or opposition for the scheme	NYC
14		**Funding opportunities**	Likelihood of the corridor to receive funding (including private sector funding)	NYC

Table 5.3. LCWIP Corridor Prioritisation Summary

					Scheme Prioritisation					
ID	Improvement Name	Suggested Improvements	Improvement Type	Indicative cost	Effectiveness	Policy	Economic	Deliverability	Total Score	Rank
1a	Area 1 Thirsk Town Centre (DO SOMETHING)	New crossings and small interventions focussed on improving the visitor and pedestrian experience.	Walking	£1,153,891	5	5	5	3	**18**	1
1b	Area 1 Thirsk Town Centre (DO MORE)	As above, with additional footway improvements around the periphery of the Market Place.	Walking	£1,380,918	5	5	5	3	**18**	1
1c	Area 1 Thirsk Town Centre (DO MAX)	Significant upgrades to the Market Place, with new crossings and public realm enhancements..	Walking/ Cycling	£9,830,066	5	5	4	2	**16**	5
2	Thirsk Town centre to Carlton Miniott	Widening of footways to create 3m shared use path, accompanied by crossings	Walking/ Cycling	£6,931,303	5	8	3	2	**18**	1
3	Sowerby to Thirsk Station	Footway and crossing improvements on Gravel Hole Ln and Blakey Ln connecting with existing paths. New path to the north of Sowerby Gateway along field edge to connect to Thirsk Station.	Walking/ Cycling	£5,143,515	3	5	2	3	**13**	7
4	Thirsk Town Centre to Sowerby gateway	Widening of footways to create 3m shared use path along Topcliffe rd, accompanied by new crossings.	Walking/ Cycling	£1,683,620	5	6	2	1	**14**	6
5	Thirsk Town Centre to Sowerby	New crossings along Sowerby Rd, accompanied by small improvements to the road and parking layout will encourage on-road cycling to connect to existing paths at Sowerby playground,	Walking	£382,744	5	6	5	2	**18**	1
6	Thirsk Town Centre to Blakey Lane	Reallocating road or verge space and widening the east side of the footway on the A170 to create a shared use facility to Blakey Lane. Upgraded crossings on the A19/ A168 roundabout to Toucans.	Walking/ Cycling	£4,616,212	3	1	2	2	**8**	11
7	Thirsk to East Thirsk	A segregated cycle way on the east side of Long St connect to a shared use path on Sutton Rd where space is limited. Residential streets will be improved with dropped kerbs, tactile paving and new formal crossings.	Walking/ Cycling	£7,035,632	3	2	2	2	**9**	9
8	Thirsk to S Kilvington	Pedestrian improvement and crossing upgrades to complement the existing path that connects South Kilvington to Thirsk	Walking/ Cycling	£3,185,328	4	3	3	2	**12**	8
9	Thirsk to Norby	Upgrading existing paths to create a shared use facility along Northallerton Rd.	Walking/ Cycling	£744,596	3	2	3	1	**9**	9

6 STAGE 6: INTEGRATION & APPLICATION

6.1 INTEGRATING THE LCWIP

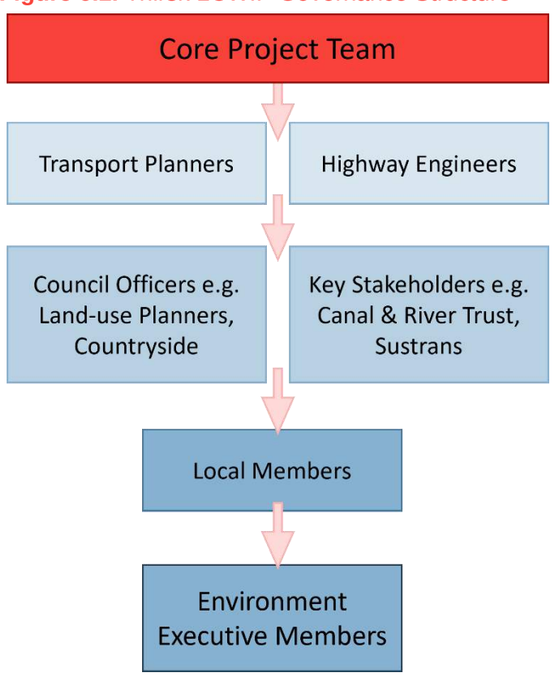
6.1.1. The final stage of the LCWIP process considers how the LCWIP should be integrated into local policy, strategies and plans, as well as practical applications of the outputs of the LCWIPs.

GOVERNANCE

6.1.2. A Core LCWIP Project Team has been established to produce the LCWIPs, consisting of officers from North Yorkshire Council's Transport Planning team and the Highways Area Team. Technical assistance was provided by WSP in the development of the Thirsk LCWIP between 2024 and 2025.

6.1.3. The governance structure for the Thirsk LCWIP is presented in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1. Thirsk LCWIP Governance Structure



6.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:

6.2.1. Effective engagement with stakeholders is integral throughout the development and delivery of an LCWIP to provide the opportunity for local people to express their views and input to the proposals. It is also imperative to engage with more vulnerable user groups, in particular those with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010. This will ensure that all relevant issues are considered when identifying interventions and it should increase support for the LCWIPs.

6.2.2. As part of the development of the Thirsk LCWIP, a number of stakeholder engagement exercises were undertaken to seek opinions on the emerging walking network.

Key consultees include:

- County Councillors;
- North Yorkshire Council Officers;
- Town/ Parish Councils;
- Local businesses
- Education providers;
- Police;
- Cycle and walking clubs and organisations; and
- Disability groups.

6.2.3. These groups will be engaged as priority schemes are developed following identification of appropriate funding opportunities. Community input will be central to the development of LCWIP proposals.

INTEGRATION

6.2.4. The LCWIP Core Project Team are responsible for the integration of the LCWIP into local policy. This will help ensure that emphasis is given to cycling and walking within both local planning and transport policies, strategies, and delivery plans. Reflecting the LCWIP in local policy will also help to make the case for central Government funding.

6.3 SECURING FUNDING & SCHEME DELIVERY

6.3.1. The LCWIP sets out the case for future funding for cycling and walking infrastructure. As set out in the section above there are several compelling reasons for central Government to invest in active travel infrastructure in Thirsk.

6.3.2. Further funding will be required to further develop the schemes proposed within this LCWIP, to ensure feasibility and deliverability. This is also an opportunity to re-engage with local stakeholders mentioned above.

6.3.3. The LCWIP Core Project Team will seek to identify appropriate funding sources to deliver the aspirations of the LCWIP. This will include local contributions, developer contributions, central Government and the York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority funding opportunities and other innovative funding mechanisms as appropriate to the scale of improvements.

6.3.4. There are a number of factors which strengthen the likelihood of increased central Government funding for active travel across the York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority:

- Increased overall funding for active travel, with £300m walking, wheeling and cycling schemes announced and further spending announcements likely over the lifetime of this LCWIP.
- Recognition of the need for increased funding and regeneration outside London and core cities to "level up" the country, especially to regenerate town centres and seaside towns.
- The need to tackle the climate crisis.

6.3.5. The priority improvements identified will deliver a range of benefits to public health, local economy and tourism, land value uplift, decongestion, road safety and carbon savings – all of which are expected to be significant.

6.3.6. These schemes will help to deliver significant local benefit and align with wider investment in strategic routes across North Yorkshire.

6.4 REVIEWING & UPDATING THE LCWIP

6.4.1. It is anticipated that LCWIPs will be reviewed regularly to reflect progress made. LCWIPs may also be updated if there are significant changes in local circumstances, such as the publication of new policies or strategies, major new development sites, or new sources of funding.

6.5 PROMOTION AND BRANDING

6.5.1. Opportunities to support the North Yorkshire LCWIP programme via a package of marketing and promotional activities will be sought to maximise awareness and usage of our active travel networks.

6.6 SCHEME MAINTENANCE, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.6.1. Existing walking and cycling networks, as well as any extensions to these, need to be maintained and looked after

appropriately to ensure continued use and accessibility throughout the year.

6.6.2. With an expected rise in the number of people wishing to walk and cycle, arrangements should be put into place to ensure that there is an ongoing and enhanced programme of maintenance activities for footways, cycle routes and the Public Rights of Way. This will include regular removal of undergrowth and maintenance of hedges sweeping, surface repairs, gritting in cold weather, drain clearance and lighting repairs.

6.6.3. Monitoring and evaluating the benefits of investment in delivering the LCWIP schemes will be critical and will enable NYC to develop a business case for future investment in its streets. A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed for each route as it is progressed, and for the wider programme of network improvements as a whole to help gauge and assess their value and success.

Appendix A

LCWIP NETWORK PLANS

Confidential

Thirsk Walking Network

N

0 0.5 1 km

Legend

- Study Area Boundary
- Prestige Routes
- Primary Routes
- Secondary Routes

Thirsk Cycling Network

N

Legend

- Study Area Boundary
- Primary Routes
- Secondary Routes
- Leisure Routes

0 0.5 1 km

Thirsk Active Travel Priority Corridors

N

Legend

- Study Area Boundary
- 1. Thirsk Town Centre
- 2. Thirsk Town Centre – Thirsk Station – Carlton Miniott
- 3. Thirsk Station – Sowerby Gateway – Sowerby
- 4. Sowerby Gateway – Thirsk Town Centre
- 5. Sowerby – Thirsk Town Centre
- 6. Thirsk Garden Centre – Thirsk Town Centre
- 7. East Thirsk – Thirsk Town Centre
- 8. South Kilvington - Thirsk Town Centre
- 9. Norby – Thirsk Town Centre

wsp

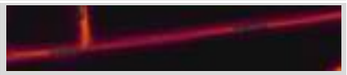
0 0.5 1 km

Appendix B

MULTI-CRITERIA ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

CONFIDENTIAL

THIRSK LCWIP PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

	Ref	Criteria	Description	Source	Low (0)	Intermediate (1)	High (2)
EFFECTIVENESS	1	**Increase in cycling**	Forecast number of journeys to work using the corridor in the Government Target Near Market scenario (LSOA)	PCT (2011 Census)	<10	10-50	> 50
	2	**Average daily pedestrian demand**	Method of travel to work (Datashine) LQ is the Location Quotient and describes how far from the national average (LQ =1) the measure is.	Datashine (2011 Census)	LQ <=1	LQ 2-3	LQ 4 +
	3	**Strava**	Existing active travel demand based on Strava datasets	Strava			
POLICY ALIGNMENT	4	**Schools**	Number of schools within the corridor (a 500m radius)	WSP OD mapping	No schools	1 schools	1+ or more schools
	5	**Scheme alignment**	Does the route connect with any parallel schemes or other planned transport improvement?	NYC	No	Connects to or overlaps with one other planned scheme / project	Connects to or overlaps with more than one other planned scheme / project
	6	**Safety**	Number of accidents involving pedestrians or cyclists in the previous 5 years within the corridor (500m radius)	DfT (STATS19)	< 5 accidents	5 - 10 accidents	> 10 accidents , 1 or more Fatal accidents
	7	**Visitor attractions**	Does the route improve connections to key visitor attractions?	NYC	0 visitor attractions	1 visitor attractions	1+ visitor attractions
	8	**Carbon / Air Quality**	Does the route travel through an Air Quality Management Area?	DEFRA	No (or no route option will travel through the AOMA)	----------	Yes
	9	**Development sites**	Scale & proximity of sites with planning permission and/or allocated development sites	WSP OD mapping	No site with planning permission or allocated sites	Includes a housing site with 0-100 units that is < 500m from the network Or Includes an employment site that is between 250m & 500m from the network	Includes a housing site with 100+ units that is <500m from the network Or Includes an employment site that is <250m from the network
ECONOMIC	10	**Cost of construction**	Total scheme cost estimates for package of interventions	Cost estimates	> £5 million	£1 - 5 million	< £1 million
	11	**Value for money**	Assessment of scheme benefits vs costs	AMAT	Low value for money (BCR of <1.5)	Medium or high value for money (BCR between 1.5 and 4)	Very high value for money (BCR of 4+)
DELIVERABILITY	12	**Scheme feasibility**	Known land ownership issues or scheme dependencies	NYC	Land ownership, environmental or other issue unlikely to be overcome	Dependent on another scheme or third party land, or environmental constraints, likely to be overcome	No issues, scheme feasibile to be undertaken
	13	**Stakeholder acceptability**	Likelihood of support or opposition for the scheme	NYC	Likely to be opposition	Neutral / unknown	Likely to be supported
	14	**Funding opportunities**	Likelihood of the corridor to receive funding (including private sector funding)	NYC	No funding opportunities currently identified	Potential funding opportunities identified	Funding secured

Amber Court
William Armstrong Drive
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YQ

wsp.com

CONFIDENTIAL