

Rights of way improvement plan

2007 – 2017



Coventry City Council

Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Improving accessibility	6
3	Reducing congestion and improving air quality	16
4	Improving safety	20
5	Improving quality of life	24
6	Recording	30
A	Glossary	34
B	Draft Statement of Priorities	36

1 Introduction

Legal background

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act) requires all highway authorities to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). The RoWIP must contain an assessment of the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public. It must address the opportunities provided by the network for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and enjoyment, the accessibility of the network to blind and partially sighted people and those with mobility problems. The term 'local rights of way' includes all the public footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways which are within the area of the authority, whether or not they are shown on the legal record of public rights of way.

In the light of the findings of this assessment, the RoWIP must contain a statement of action which it is proposing to take to manage and improve the local rights of way network.

Local rights of way in Coventry

The built-up area of Coventry is crossed by numerous paths which people use either on foot or bicycle, as traffic free routes and short cuts to reach facilities and services. In some cases these routes also provide convenient links to the canal, parks, open spaces and the countryside around the urban area, both within Coventry and to the surrounding areas of Warwickshire and Solihull. There are also many public paths within the green areas of the city that are used for outdoor recreation. All the routes within the city make up the local network. This RoWIP looks at these routes to see if they meet the needs of Coventry residents and visitors to the city and how they could be improved.

Coventry City Council, as the highway authority, is the body responsible for maintaining public rights of way¹ and keeping them free from obstruction. Also, as the surveying authority, it is the body responsible for the preparation and upkeep of the definitive map of public rights of way.

1. *The Glossary in Appendix A gives some definitions of the various rights of way and paths.*



Preparation of the RoWIP

The process of developing this draft RoWIP has been influenced by a number of factors, which include the statutory RoWIP guidance, guidance from the Countryside Agency (now Natural England), the authority's statutory duties and powers, national, regional and local planning, transport, community safety and other policies and a wide ranging consultation with interested stakeholders including the Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum, adjoining authorities and User and residents' groups, as well as individuals through a widely distributed Public Paths User Survey.

Themes

From the consultation there were five key issues established with respect to the use of the local path network which have been adopted as the themes for the RoWIP. The proposals will contribute towards the Transport Shared Priority objectives and wider Quality of Life objectives in the Local Transport Plan. The themes are:

1. **Improving the accessibility** of the network of paths and connections for anyone who would benefit from their use, to enable them to be able to walk or cycle between homes and facilities, such as local shops, schools, workplaces and recreational facilities and enjoy recreation in green spaces.
2. **Improving the quality of life** through the use of public paths, by encouraging people to walk, cycle or participate in horse riding to improve personal health, increase social interaction and reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.
3. **Reducing congestion** on roads and improving air quality by giving people an alternative to the car, especially for short journeys that are the most polluting.
4. **Improving the safety** of the use of public paths, by integrating with safety schemes, particularly where rights of way cross busy roads.

5. **Improving the recording** of the location of public paths and their various uses.

Each of these themes is dealt with in turn in the RoWIP, describing the national, regional and local policies, objectives and priorities which will drive their achievement.

Actions

The actions that are proposed to be undertaken by the Council and its partners to secure the achievement of the themes form the core of the RoWIP. In deciding on these actions, regard has been taken of practicality, value-for-money and affordability. The actions are described in the tables which follow the themes.

Implementation

This RoWIP is closely linked with the Local Transport Plan (LTP), since its implementation will help to achieve many of the objectives. The rights of way staff at the Council will work closely with transport planning colleagues and partners to secure the resources necessary to carry out the proposed actions.

An annual action plan will be written containing actions and costings to be undertaken over the year. This action plan will also identify the lead team within a directorate. An annual report will detail the progress that has been made towards the objectives in the annual action plan. It is anticipated that as the Plan will eventually be incorporated into the Local Transport Plan, reporting on delivery will be included within LTP Annual Progress Reports.

The next steps

This draft RoWIP will be available for public consultation for a period of 12 weeks. Stakeholders and the general public will be able to make representations and all of these will be considered carefully. The draft plan will be amended in light of the representations and published as the final Coventry Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

2 Improving accessibility

Public paths should be available for use by all people regardless of their mobility and includes:

- people with children and pushchairs
- joggers/ runners
- those who have sensory or intellectual impairments or mental health problems
- those who lack information about where they can go or do not have access to private transport
- people who do not have the confidence to use the path network to reach facilities or to enjoy the countryside.
- those with restricted mobility - using walking aids or with reduced agility
- children and young people

None of these factors should prevent people from gaining the benefits which the use of non-motorised routes can bring.

National Framework

National research has shown that certain groups are under-represented among users of the countryside. These include people from minority ethnic groups, disabled people, people who live in inner cities, people with low incomes and both elderly and young people.

National legislation, policy and guidance is directed at ensuring that people of all backgrounds are encouraged to benefit from access to the natural environment. The statutory guidance for the production of Rights of Way Improvement Plans recognises that there will always be barriers to some users on some rights of way, but in many cases it would be relatively easy and inexpensive to open public paths to everyone. Some possible actions include:

- physical improvements to paths, such as removal of stiles, clear signage, increasing path width, improving surfaces, removing steps, installing bridges
- improving the safety of paths



- provision of suitable off-road links as well as sustainable transport to reach routes
- better information, such as signage for paths with destinations and distances and making information available so that people know where they can go, what they can do and can make decisions about the suitability of paths for their journey
- organisation of a programme of events with clear dates and locations, careful selection of leaders and a good publicity campaign aimed at local people.

Enforcement of the Highways Act 1980 could assist routes being convenient to use and easy to find and follow. BS 5709 sets a benchmark for what could be viewed as a 'reasonable' endeavour to accommodate the less agile.

The Natural England publication *By All Reasonable Means* outlines a framework for improving accessibility. It encourages land managers to identify standards and techniques that are appropriate for each location. The guide is based on the principle of Least Restrictive Access – an approach that aims for the highest access standards possible for a particular piece of work, whether planned improvement or ad hoc maintenance. It also sees access as a chain of events that start, for example, at home, where a decision to visit a site or route might be made and where a visitor returns after experiencing the outdoors. It is clear that barriers to participation such as lack of time, fear of crime, feeling too tired from work and no motivation to take exercise are affecting different groups of people in different ways. Many of these barriers however, have been overcome in the best projects.

The Value of Public Space recognises the importance of access to open space and the Natural Environment for children's play. In *Child's Place* Demos and the Green Alliance found that the lack of access children from urban backgrounds have to natural environments is proving detrimental. In *Seen and Heard*, Demos stress that the freedom of children and young people to roam around and discover the world is crucial to their development. A significant portion of this takes place in public spaces from foraging adventures in the park to a simple walk to school. All children benefit from access to outdoor space.

Regional Framework

In the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, Coventry is identified as a Major Urban Area. This means there will be a focus on urban renaissance, to make the area an increasingly attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. Increasing accessibility and mobility is a key objective. The role played by the provision of good quality walking and cycling routes, available for use by people of all abilities and life-styles, is acknowledged.

The West Midlands *Green Infrastructure Prospectus* recognises the importance of the network of open spaces to the economy, the environment and to the people. This network includes the waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, wildlife habitats, street trees and open countryside that intersperse and connect cities, towns and villages. Increased connectivity and interaction in the Region's green infrastructure, provided by an improved network of public paths, will help to ensure a greater and more sustained delivery of benefits.

In the West Midlands Local Transport Plan, the importance of accessibility is recognised and the Metropolitan Authorities aim to embed accessibility considerations within all their decisions to raise awareness of accessibility issues with all other key service providers so that they also consider the impacts on accessibility when developing their policies, strategies and initiatives.

Local Coventry Framework

The Coventry Partnership's Environment Theme Group supports 'Stepping out', a programme that helps informal carers of people suffering from mental ill health to explore and discover local green spaces and the local countryside through a variety of activities. The project is managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and is run in partnership with the Coventry Carers' Centre and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund who support the Asian Mental Health Access Project. The Equalities and Communities Theme Group has a priority to promote equality of opportunity so that people from different backgrounds have better access to similar opportunities in life. The Transport Theme Group's priority is to achieve easier, safer, sustainable and more accessible transport for everyone. The Community Safety Theme Group aim to achieve safer, more confident communities by reducing crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Coventry Development Plan has an overall objective for the safe, efficient and easy movement of people and goods throughout the city. It wants to see a network of pedestrian and cycle routes, made safer by design, with priority being given to routes to defined centres, local shopping areas, schools, transport interchanges, local social, community, leisure and indoor sports facilities, employment sites and green space areas, with special attention paid to the needs of disabled people. Green space will therefore need to be accessible to all sections of the community.

The Coventry Green Space Strategy recognises the need to connect and link the green spaces to the surrounding countryside by the use of public rights of way and to design facilities to meet the special needs of certain sectors of the community, including ethnic groups, elderly, women and disabled people. Rights of way need to be accessible, waymarked and linked to longer distance footpaths outside the city (A Coventry Way, Heart of England Way, The Centenary Way), including the rights of way network in the areas adjoining Coventry. The Coventry Green Space Strategy is currently being reviewed by the Council.

The city's walking and cycling strategies aim to improve the convenience and accessibility of walking and cycling.

The Council wants Coventry to be a growing, accessible city, where people choose to live, work and be educated and businesses choose to invest. Its Equality Strategy provides a single focus for the development of policy and activities to deliver the Council's commitment to equality. The Council believes that disabled people should enjoy the same civil rights as non-disabled people and be able to participate fully in society. Serious consideration needs to be given to the transport needs of older people.

The general condition of the network affects how well it is used. It is important that the basics are right if we are to encourage greater use of the network. The public path user survey showed that at least half the respondents would use paths within the built up areas of Coventry, in parks and open spaces and in the countryside areas, more if the paths were in a better condition. The survey also highlighted the need for more information about routes, and better signs and lighting in certain locations. Other desired improvements were more places to sit and rest, more stiles replaced with gates and more circular routes. Nearly half the people consulted thought they would use paths more if there were better links to the countryside in Warwickshire and Solihull.

The increased use of rights of way by “legitimate” users could help to deter anti-social behaviour, littering, fly-tipping, substance abuse, environmental crime, wildlife crime etc., as well as increasing the general awareness of environmental and country issues. In addition, an increase in path usage can simplify maintenance, as undergrowth gets trampled and disturbed surfaces re-consolidated.

Coventry’s Countryside Project has a responsibility for maintaining public rights of way in the rural countryside areas of the city. In other areas, Coventry does not currently have a comprehensive maintenance or inspection system of public rights of way in place and no formal process for the public to report maintenance issues. This can lead to public dissatisfaction, as well as little understanding of the conditions of the rights of way network and of improvement progress. Monitoring of the condition of rights of way and systems to report problems therefore need to be put in place.

Access to large parts of the path network by those with limited mobility is very difficult but accessibility improvements also benefit other sections of the population seeking an easy walking experience. There is no ready source of accurate information on the accessibility of routes, particularly for those with limited mobility, so research work needs to be undertaken to give a better understanding of what improvements are required.

The Council supports the central government’s E-Government Strategy, which will make a real difference to the experience of people dealing with all areas of government, central and local. Through its Customer and E-Government Strategy, the Council is looking to adopt innovative approaches to reaching people currently excluded from services and democratic engagement. This includes sharing information within and between the Council and other organisations so that services can be offered together, in ways that make sense to the public and offer services of greater variety, convenience and efficiency to users.

One of the greatest barriers preventing people from utilising the rights of way network is a lack of information on routes. Nearly 60% of people who responded to the user survey thought that they would use paths if there was more information on routes. Even more people said they would use paths if there were additional circular routes. There have been leaflets produced for the Canal Greenway, Coundon Wedge and Sowe Valley. A Coventry Way Circular Walks booklet has recently been updated and describes 21 circular walks linking to the A Coventry Way (four of the walks come within the Coventry boundary and four touch the boundary), the Coventry Walks Website (www.coventry-walks.org.uk) also summarises the many walks in Coventry and links to other walking related web sites. However the series of ‘Walking It’ leaflets which were produced a number of years ago, together with guides to walks in Keresley and Allesley Parishes, are now out of print. To increase the awareness and use of routes a co-ordinated approach to publicity is required, making use of innovative and creative approaches as well as printed material. Improved promotion of routes also requires information on accessibility.

Lack of knowledge about the rights of way network and other recreational opportunities in the green space network deters many potential users. This needs to be tackled in partnership with other organisations, through better promotion and with targeted network improvements.

To achieve connectivity and permeability it is desirable to connect/link all public rights of way with current routes and spaces within the city to ensure a network of movement.

Key references

UK Parliament (1980) Highways Act 1980

Coventry City Council (1994) Green Space Strategy for Coventry

Department for Transport (1996) National Cycling Strategy

UK Parliament (2000) Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, sections 60, 61 and 69

DETR (2000) Encouraging walking, advice to local authorities

UK Parliament (2000) Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Coventry City Council (2001) The Coventry Development Plan 2001 (1996 – 2011)

Department for Communities and Local Government (2001) Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport

Department for Communities and Local Government (2002) Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2002) Rights of Way Improvement Plans; Statutory Guidance to Local Highway Authorities in England

CABE Space (2004) The Value of Public Space

Coventry City Council (2004) Coventry Walking Strategies

Coventry City Council (2004) Coventry Cycling Strategies

Coventry City Council (2004) Equality Strategy 2004 – 2007

Action Plan: Accessibility

Ref.	Action	Baseline Position	
Path networks and connections			
2.1	Ensure that good quality cycle and walking access is given high priority in major and minor developments, regeneration schemes (both into and through sites) and New Growth Points initiative e.g. Arena Park, Swanswell, New Deal for Communities Initiative. Seek developer contributions	Few facilities coming through	
2.2	Where possible provide walking and cycling facilities that link green spaces, including where children play 1. Assess current provision and develop implementation plan 2. Implementation plan		
2.3	Undertake a strategic study of demand and opportunities for a series of Greenways in the city. (Include consideration of potential routes around the city e.g. River Sherbourne corridor)	Feasibility study of one route in North East Coventry, Wood End to Prologis Park	
2.4	Implement Greenway programme		
2.5	Adopt model bylaws to permit cycling on designated routes through parks	Likely to be adopted in 2007	
2.6	Cross county boundary routes 1. Identify all cross county boundary routes 2. Ensure consistency of route alignment and status		

Demos / Green Alliance (2004) A Child's Place
 Department for Transport (2004) Delivery of the National Cycling Strategy, A Review
 West Midlands Regional Assembly (2004) West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
 Natural England (2005) Diversity Review Research Notes, CRN 94 & 95
 Natural England (2005) By all reasonable means
 UK Parliament (1995 and 2005) Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005
 Countryside Recreation Network (2005) A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise
 Coventry City Council (2005) Coventry Community Safety Strategy 2005/08

British Standards Institute (2006) BS 5709 Gaps, Gates, and Stiles - specification
 Coventry City Council (2006) Coventry Community Plan (2005 – 2010), revised 2006
 Department for Transport (2007) Manual for Streets
 West Midlands Regional Assembly (2007) Green Infrastructure A Prospectus for the West Midlands Region
 Coventry City Council (2007) Something to do. A strategy to improve play opportunities for children and young people in Coventry
 Demos (2007) Seen and Heard
 Coventry City Council Implementing Electronic Government Statement (IEG5)

Timescale (years)			Key Partners and stakeholders	Other strategy cross ref.
1-2	3-4	5+		
●	●		User and residents' groups Developers	Cycling Strategy 2.2.8
●	●	●	User and residents' groups Culture and Leisure Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate	Walking Strategy 2.7.1 Cycling Strategy 2.7.2 Culture and Leisure Service Plan Coventry University Hospitals Green Space Strategy Something to do.
●			User and residents' groups	Walking Strategy 2.2.5 Cycling Strategy 2.2.5 Coventry Community Plan
	●	●		
●			City Development Directorate	Cycling Strategy 2.7.1 Parks Strategy Green Space Strategy Coventry Development Plan
●	●	●	Warwickshire County Council Solihull MBC Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum Ramblers Association	Warwickshire Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Ref.	Action	Baseline Position	
2.7	Develop network of routes 1. Map rights of way, other paths, green space network 2. Investigate missing links 3. Produce programme to complete links 4. Implement missing link programme	Coventry Development Plan and Green Space Strategy contain maps of the green environment and links. Funding being sought to extensions to Sowe Valley footpath to New Deal for Communities area and Baginton Fields	
2.8	Develop horse riding routes 1. Assess potential, demand and priorities for horse-riding routes and toll rides 2. Develop programme 3. Implement programme	One bridleway	
Path Infrastructure			
2.9	Develop surfacing and Greenway guidelines for all users, include use of recycled, sustainable materials for maintenance/improvement works	Some Greenway guidance in the Pedestrian Design Guide	
2.10	Develop plan to remove stiles and unnecessary structures from rights of way, and replace with mobility facilities where appropriate, and implement. Seek to resolve conflict between users when this arises	Two-thirds replaced in rural countryside and green wedges	
2.11	Improve path network 1. Survey path network identified in 2.7 to determine areas and routes for improvement, paying attention to accessibility issues, including audit of signs and waymarks, accessibility of structures, provision of secure handrails for steps and bridges, surface improvements, the provision of seats and resting areas 2. Develop programme of path improvement, prioritise 1) promoted walking trails and routes (e.g. heritage trails, Sowe Valley, Canal) 2) key routes for accessibility improvements. Incorporate high quality soft and hard landscaping 3. Implement programme of path improvement		
2.12	Ensure that wherever owner/environmental constraints allow the option of 'least restrictive access' is applied whenever new path furniture is installed or existing furniture is replaced. Offer incentives to landowners agreeing to install least restrictive options		
Path Maintenance			
2.13	Develop and implement inspection programme for all promoted routes, other well used routes and all other routes	Limited inspection programmes in place	
2.14	Develop and implement a system for prioritising vegetation clearance and clearance of obstructions, and implement	Maintenance undertaken in response to complaints or feedback from users and farmers	

Timescale (years)			Key Partners and stakeholders	Other strategy cross ref.
1-2	3-4	5+		
●	●	● ●	Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum Landowners including farmers	West Midlands Green Infrastructure Prospectus
● ●	●	●	Culture and Leisure Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum British Horse Society Equestrian groups and stables	
●				Walking Strategy 2.2.5 Cycling Strategy 2.2.1
●	●		Culture and Leisure Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum User and residents' groups Landowners including farmers Parish Councils	
●	● ●		Culture and Leisure Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum User and residents' groups Parish Councils	
	●	●	Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum User and residents' groups	
	●	●	City Services Directorate Culture and Leisure User and residents' groups Landowners including farmers Parish Councils	
	●	●	City Services Directorate Culture and Leisure User and residents' groups Landowners including farmers Parish Councils	

Ref.	Action	Baseline Position
2.15	Produce guidance for public rights of way maintenance staff and others working on the network to ensure that maintenance of field-edge and cross-field paths conforms to best practice with respect to surface quality, drainage, fencing, hedging, re-instatement after ploughing and clearance of vegetation, taking into account the needs of the less mobile and people with impaired vision, and the bird nesting and breeding seasons	Some guidance in the Pedestrian Design Guide
2.16	Develop procedures for the use of recycled and sustainable materials for PRow maintenance/improvement works	
2.17	Develop network of path champions who report issues on 'their' paths, and undertaken basic upkeep. Champions to include local paths users, people from User and residents' groups, local community groups, local schools and children's environment groups.	Sustrans has rangers on their routes. The Coventry Way Association has a 'volunteer warden' system. In some areas dog walkers and other users remove litter and report problems to local residents' groups.
2.18	Make reporting defects and other obstructions as easy as possible for path users and Council staff	Web based Cycle Infrastructure Report forms being developed
Surveys and Monitoring		
2.19	Undertake an annual BVPI 1781 ² survey	
2.20	Establish a use monitoring programme for promoted and other well used routes	No monitoring at present
Targeting hard to reach communities		
2.21	Target initiatives and promotion of the use of rights of way at disadvantaged communities	Appendix 1 of the Community Plan lists priority neighbourhoods and city-wide communities that experience disadvantage
2.22	Special projects to encourage and inspire use of rights of way by non-users from disadvantaged groups	Appendix 1 of the Community Plan lists priority neighbourhoods and city-wide communities that experience disadvantage
2.23	Work with the ethnic and minority communities to identify and reduce perceived barriers of using rights of way	
2.24	Support the growth of the "Stepping out" programme	

2. BVPI 178 is the percentage of total length of footpaths and other rights of way which were easy to use by members of the public. In this context, "easy to use" means: a. signposted or waymarked where they leave the road in accordance with the authority's duty under s27 of the Countryside Act 1968, and to the extent necessary to allow users to follow the path; b. free from unlawful obstructions and other interference, (including overhanging vegetation) to the public's right of passage; and c. surface and lawful barriers (e.g. stiles, gates) in good repair and to a standard necessary to enable the public to use the way without undue inconvenience.

	Timescale (years)			Key Partners and stakeholders	Other strategy cross ref.
	1-2	3-4	5+		
	●	●		City Development Directorate Culture and Leisure	
		●	●	City Development Directorate Culture and Leisure	
			●	Culture and Leisure User and residents' groups Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate Parish Councils	
	●	●		City Services Directorate Culture and Leisure Web Services Team User and residents' groups	
	●	●	●	City Services Directorate	
		●	●		
		●	●	Culture and Leisure Community, disability and minority groups	Coventry Community Plan
			●	Community, disability and minority groups	
		●		Ethnic and minority groups	
	●	●		City Development Directorate Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Asian Mental Health Access Project Coventry Carers' Centre	

3 Reducing congestion and improving air quality

Traffic congestion on roads can be reduced if fewer journeys are made in motorised vehicles. Fewer vehicles mean less pollution of the air by exhaust gases and an improvement in the quality of the air. Actions which promote walking and cycling for access to facilities, including bus stops and railway stations and particularly for short journeys in urban areas, therefore greatly assist in the reduction of congestion and pollution.

National Framework

Relevant national legislation, policies and guidance includes objectives to reduce the need to travel (especially by car) and aims for a 60% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2050. Policies ensure developments comprising housing, jobs, shopping, leisure and services offer a realistic choice of access by public transport, walking, and cycling. This is to be achieved by creating more direct, safe and secure walking routes, particularly in and around town centres, local neighbourhoods and to schools and stations and by encouraging more use of public rights of way for local journeys, including the provision of missing links in rights of way networks.

Local air quality is a key consideration in the integration between planning and transport. Local authorities are required under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality in their areas, to designate air quality management areas (AQMAs) and draw up action plans where national policies and instruments alone appear unlikely to deliver the government's health-based national air quality objectives. These action plans will need to be closely integrated with and reflected in local transport plans and other local and regional planning and transport strategies, such as this Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

The Air Quality Strategy 2000 aims to provide a framework to help identify what we all can do to improve air quality. This includes the need to reduce motorised transport by providing safe and convenient walking and cycling routes.



Regional Framework

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy stresses the need in Major Urban Areas to restructure transport networks to improve environmental quality. Specifically the guidance requires the adoption of transport policies which reduce the need for motorised travel and so tackle congestion, by encouraging behavioural changes with the provision of good quality, well-designed walking and cycling facilities. Policy T3 in the regional guidance is particularly relevant: “Development plans and local transport plans should provide greater opportunities for walking and cycling by:

1. developing safe, secure, direct, convenient and attractive networks which connect town centres, local facilities, educational premises, public transport interchanges, residential and employment areas
2. giving pedestrians and cyclists priority in residential areas and town centres
3. providing links between smaller settlements and centres and development of greenways and quiet roads
4. developing the National Cycle Network
5. making the most effective use of canal towpaths
6. expanding ‘cycle & ride’ and cycle carriage on public transport
7. ensuring that new developments and infrastructure proposals improve walking and cycling access.”

The Regional Spatial Strategy also contains policies concerning air quality. Local authorities are reminded that they are required to review and assess air quality in their areas against objectives set out in the National Air Quality Strategy. Reducing the need for motorised travel will play a key part in improving air quality. The Transport Theme Group’s priority is to achieve easier, safer, sustainable and more accessible transport for everyone.

The West Midlands Green Infrastructure Prospectus recognises that sustainable urban transport networks support economic improvements and help to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions, while the West Midlands Local Transport Plan 2006 acknowledges that a greater use of rights of way will help reduce congestion and contribute towards cleaner air.

In The West Midlands Local Transport Plan, the importance of air quality is recognised and in particular how it affects everyone in the West Midlands whether or not they make journeys. Poor air quality not only degrades the overall quality of life but, more importantly, it undermines the national Shared Priority of promoting healthier communities and improving health inequalities.

It recognises that traffic is a major source of the gaseous emissions that contribute to poor air quality

Local Coventry Framework

The Coventry Partnership’s Environment Theme Group has a priority to see more people travelling in ways that are less damaging to the environment, including public transport, cycling and walking. The Transport Theme Group’s priority is to achieve easier, safer, sustainable and more accessible transport for everyone.

The city’s walking and cycling strategies aim to promote and encourage walking and cycling, and the city’s climate change strategy that is currently being prepared will emphasise the need to reduce travel by car.

The contribution that the rights of way network can make to assisting non-motorised travel is being increasingly recognised, although rights of way are traditionally regarded as a leisure or recreational resource. To address this, we need to promote a culture of using the rights of way network for ‘function’ as well as leisure, by identifying and protecting paths that connect people from the places where they live to the places where they want to go, such as shops, healthcare facilities, schools and employment sites.

The Public Paths User Survey showed the measures which people considered could be taken to make the use of paths more attractive to all sections of the community. These are discussed in the previous section of this plan. In particular, the provision of better lighting and surfacing of alleyways in built up areas, with more frequent removal of litter and rubbish, would encourage people to walk to facilities, rather than drive. The actions proposed in the previous section would also contribute to the reduction of congestion and improvement of air quality, by increasing the use of non-motorised modes of transport.

There was also a desire for improvements to encourage cycling, such as more cycle parking at key amenities, the segregation of cyclists and walkers and the clearing of broken glass from cycleways.

Key references

Department for Transport (1996)
National Cycling Strategy

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2000) Air Quality Strategy

Department for Transport (2000) Encouraging walking, advice to local authorities

Action Plan: Reducing Congestion and Improving Air Quality

Ref.	Action	Baseline Position	
Making shorter journeys easier on foot and cycle			
3.1	Identify paths that provide short cuts to school, commuter, shopping and bus routes	Limited number of RoW on definitive map	
3.2	Develop and implement a programme of path upgrade and improvements for paths that provide short cuts to school, commuter, shopping and bus routes		
Sustainable transport routes (walking and cycling)			
3.3	National Cycle Network 1. Carry out feasibility studies of missing sections for routes 52 and 53 2. Develop programme for completing routes 3. Implement	Route 52 (canal) completed. Sections of Route 53 (south) carried out in co-ordination with PrimeLines	
3.4	National Cycle Network Links 1. Carry out feasibility studies of links into routes 52 and 53 2. Develop programme for completing links 3. Implement	Windmill Road link National Cycle Network route 52 partly constructed	
3.5	Undertake an audit of urban public rights of way suitable for improvement and promotion as sustainable transport routes		
3.6	Promote recreational routes that are served by good public transport links		
3.7	Cycle parking at key amenities on paths such as visitor centres, cafes and shops 1. Review cycle parking 2. Produce a programme on installation 3. Implement Programme		

Department for Communities and Local Government (2001) Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport

Department for Communities and Local Government (2004) Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 23: Planning and Pollution Control

Department for Transport (2004) Delivery of the National Cycling Strategy, A Review

West Midlands Regional Assembly (2004) West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

Coventry City Council (2004) Coventry Walking Strategies

Coventry City Council (2004) Coventry Cycling Strategies

Coventry City Council (2005) Coventry Community Safety Strategy 2005/08

Coventry City Council (2006) Coventry Community Plan (2005 – 2010), revised 2006

West Midlands Regional Assembly (2007) Green Infrastructure A Prospectus for the West Midlands Region.

Coventry City Council (2007) Draft Climate Change Bill

Timescale (years)			Key Partners and stakeholders	Other strategy cross ref.
1-2	3-4	5+		
●	●		User and residents' groups	
	●	●	Coventry Primary Care Trust	
●			Sustrans	Cycling Strategy 2.2.6
●	●	●		
●			Sustrans	Cycling Strategy 2.2.6
●	●	●		
	●			
	●		Coventry Primary Care Trust	
●				

4 Improving safety

Reducing the amount of vehicle use and congestion by providing people with an acceptable alternative mode of transport, and the inclusion of public paths in safety schemes, especially where they cross busy roads, will help to achieve road safety targets.

National Framework

The government's strategy for improving road safety during the period 2000-2010 is the document *Tomorrow's Roads: safer for everyone*. This includes a chapter on safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It is recognised that these people are vulnerable road users and improving their safety is very important. Local Transport Plans are the key to improving conditions for these users. Suggested measures are the provision of well-planned pedestrian routes, such as footpath networks linking housing to schools, shops and public transport, well-designed and positioned crossings, safe and convenient cycle networks and off-road horse riding routes. It is recognised that there can be safety conflicts between walkers, cyclist and horse riders on routes free of motorised traffic. The design of such routes as well as the education of users is relevant in reducing such conflict. Personal security is also a perceived issue on many urban rights of way.

To encourage walking and cycling, safety and convenience have to be combined. Solutions which satisfy one but not the other will not help in the long run. The Manual for Streets (MfS) approach is to improve safety through design and planning. Good planning and design can help to reduce the deterrent effects that traffic has on walking and cycling. Crossing roads should also be easier. The general approach outlined in MfS is to consider reducing the volume or speed of traffic first, before looking to provide formal crossings at street level which are safe, convenient and where people want to cross. People find bridges and subways unsafe, difficult or too time consuming and they are tempted to risk dodging the traffic. Where street level crossing is really not possible, good design is essential to encourage people to use bridges and subways.



The lack of a usable network for horse riders means that they must use roads where they are at more risk. Roads are increasingly dangerous to use due to the speed and volume of traffic, bad driver behaviour, the obstruction of verges, slippery surfaces and the failure to provide suitable crossings or horse margins.

In A Child's Place Demos and the Green Alliance highlight that children and young people say that they are concerned by traffic. The provision of road crossings and reducing the impact of traffic on our roads will help address these concerns.

Regional Framework

Policy T1 in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy states that measures will be taken to improve the safety of the transport system. These will include the provision of good quality, well designed walking and cycling facilities. It is stressed that pedestrians and cyclists are vulnerable to accidents, and it is therefore vital that action is taken to improve the environment for these users.

In the West Midlands Local Transport Plan, it is recognised that the safety of road users is of prime importance for all transport initiatives within the West Midlands.

Local Coventry Framework

The Coventry Partnership's Transport Theme Group's priority is to achieve easier, safer, sustainable and more accessible transport for everyone. The Coventry Development Plan has an overall objective to promote new roads and road improvements where they will increase safety. It recognises that green space is only accessible if it can be approached, entered and moved around in safety and with ease by pedestrians. The city's walking and cycling strategies aim to improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. This work will also support the Health and Wellbeing Theme Group with their priorities in relation to reducing accidents.

The rights of way network needs to become an environment in which people feel safe and comfortable to walk and cycle. The fear of the speed and volume of motor traffic, and the lack of crossings, deters people from making active travel choices, as well as reducing their quality of life in general. Issues surrounding road safety and personal safety, whether real or perceived, can make the use of the green space network unpleasant. The Ring Road and A roads in Coventry act as barriers to movement.

Something to do recognises that safeguarding the safety of children accessing the places to play is a very important of the local public agenda.

Safe traffic routes are a key requirement for all people who use the road network to reach connecting paths on the public rights of way network and to the natural environment.

The Public Paths User Survey showed that nearly a quarter of the people who responded did not feel safe using public paths and thought that using the paths is dangerous. Poorly lit and badly surfaced alleyways between houses were a particular cause for concern, with over half the people stating that they would use paths in the urban areas of Coventry more if they were better lit. The presence of groups of young people on paths at night deterred many people from using them. Cycling on footpaths was perceived as a hazard by walkers. The lack of completely off-road cycle routes, with the need to share roads with motor vehicles or cross busy roads, was thought to be a real safety problem and a deterrent to cycling. Horse riders thought that provision for safe riding was woefully lacking.

Key references

Department for Transport (2000) Encouraging walking: advice to local authorities

Department for Transport (2000) Tomorrow's Roads: safer for everyone

Coventry City Council (2001) The Coventry Development Plan 2001 (1996 – 2011)

Department for Communities and Local Government (2001) Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2005) Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales

Department for Transport (2003) Urban Safety Management Guidelines

Coventry City Council (2006) Coventry Community Plan (2005 – 2010), revised 2006

Demos / Green Alliance (2004) A Child's Place

Department for Transport (2007) Manual for Streets

West Midlands Regional Assembly (2004) West Midlands Spatial Strategy

Action Plan: Improving Safety

Ref.	Action	Baseline Position	
Making paths safer			
4.1	Work closely with Police to ensure effective enforcement to deter dangerous and/or illegal use of public rights of way (e.g. where motorised vehicular rights do not exist)		
4.2	Provision of lighting 1. Develop a plan to address the issue of providing lighting on routes in urban areas not adjacent to the adopted highways network 2. Implement lighting plan		
4.3	Through involvement with the planning system, encourage developers and planners to adopt 'design-out-crime' principles (e.g. access and movement, surveillance and community ownership) in the layout of new developments, including well-designed cycling and pedestrian routes		
Making links safer			
4.4	Crossing facilities 1. Identify where paths and links are disconnected by major roads and establish safer crossing facilities feasibility programme i.e. ring road, 'A' roads. 2. Undertake feasibility studies at crossing locations, taking into consideration the Manual for Streets philosophy 3. Implement safer crossings	Ring Road Crossing Assessment undertaken.	
4.5	Road links 1. Identify where links are joined by surfaced roads and establish safe highway verges and safe off road routes feasibility programme 2. Undertake feasibility studies at road links 3. Implement safer links programme		
4.6	Assess potential and implement "quieten the lanes" schemes	Quiet Lane study undertaken in 2007	
4.7	Make available advisory information of 'safe walking on rural roads'		

Timescale (years)				Key Partners and stakeholders	Other strategy cross ref.
1-2	3-4	5+			
		●			
●				City Development Directorate Chief Executive Directorate Culture and Leisure	
		●	●		
				Chief Executive Directorate	Coventry Development Plan BE 21
		●		Traffic and Network Management Highways Agency User and residents' groups	
		●	●		
		●	●		
		●	●	Traffic and Network Management Highways Agency User and residents' groups	
●	●				

5 Improving quality of life

Walking, cycling and horse riding can enhance the quality of life in many ways. Physical well-being is improved through exercise, both during recreation in quiet rural areas and while making journeys to shops, school, work and other facilities. Segregation of walkers and cyclists from traffic reduces the stress of noise as well as fears for safety through conflict with vehicles. It also makes journeys much more pleasant, and often quicker. Use of green spaces in towns and rights of way in the countryside makes people feel good, brings enjoyment of tranquillity, attractive landscapes, wildlife and historical associations, and often the benefits of social interaction. Both physical and mental health improves as a result. Everyone can benefit from exercise.

National Framework

People in England are more inactive than they used to be, and their health is suffering as a result. A big part of the problem is our increasing reliance on motorised transport. The government has given strong support to improving people's health by increasing the amount of exercise which they take. In the 2004 White Paper *Choosing Health – making healthy choices easier*, it is recognised that over a third of people are not active enough to benefit their health and rates of walking and cycling have fallen over the last 25 years. It is stated that there will be new opportunities for people who want to be more active through cycling and walking, and improvements to the physical condition of rights of way and the promotion of their use will play a big part in this.

In the White Paper, *Saving Lives – Our Healthier Nation*, it is recognised that physical activity is one of the key factors of good health. A physically active lifestyle, including walking, cycling or participation in sport, reduces the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke and promotes good mental health.



It was concluded from the Countryside Recreation Network research published in its paper *A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise*, that engagement with nature can make positive contributions to our health, helps us recover from pre-existing stresses or problems, has an 'immunising' effect by protecting us from future stresses and helps us to concentrate and think more clearly. Nature is to be found not only in the countryside, but also in urban green spaces, beside streams, canals and rivers, and hedges and verges that run along town pathways. A fitter and emotionally more content population would clearly cost the economy less, as well as reducing individual human suffering. This increases support for, and access to, a wide range of green exercise activities for all types of people and should produce substantial economic and public health benefits. Improvements to public paths, such as surfacing, signage, and the provision of information, are among the measures which would be of benefit.

The 'obesity crisis' is now one of the most publicised threats to the nation's health. In *Seen and Heard*, Demos highlight that 20 per cent of 4-year olds are overweight, while 8.5 per cent of 6-year olds and 15 per cent of 15 year olds are obese. Children's play is recognised as an important part of a child's well being, healthy growth and development.

In *The Value of Public Space*, CABI stress that access to good quality open spaces and natural environment helps to improve our physical and mental health by encouraging us to walk more and to simply enjoy a green and natural environment. It can provide with moderating-intense activity that is seen as crucial to the development of good physical and mental health.

In the document *Encouraging walking: advice to local authorities* the government acknowledges that walking is good for people and good for communities. Walking can help improve personal health and fitness, which in turn can benefit business by reducing sickness absence and health care costs. Regular walking can help elderly people keep flexible and co-ordinated; particularly reducing the risk of falls. By increasing mobility, people remain independent, which is important in maintaining quality of life. We want to create conditions in which people will choose to walk rather than walking only if there is no alternative.

The National Cycling Strategy recognises that cycling is a healthy, enjoyable, economic and efficient means of travelling. In the review of the delivery of this strategy, the government re-iterates that it is committed to encouraging more cycling because cycling has the potential to contribute to the achievement of important objectives in the fields of transport, public health and liveability.

The Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales stresses that equine interests must work with government to develop the social, educational and health benefits of association with horses. While it is vital to increase participation for economic reasons, there are other very good reasons for drawing new people into riding, broadening its appeal, and increasing awareness of its potential contribution to wider social issues. These include educational attainment, personal and social development, sport and recreation, physical health and fitness, mental health, disability and social exclusion.

Regional Framework

One of the strategic objectives of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy is to make the Major Urban Areas increasingly attractive places where people want to live, work and invest. It is stated that access to quality green space can contribute greatly to the region's urban renaissance, improving the quality of life in urban areas by providing opportunities for sport and recreation and supporting biodiversity. Maintaining, enhancing and, where appropriate, increasing the amount of green space is, therefore, an important factor in considering the most efficient use of land. In doing so, regard should be paid to Natural England's guidelines of people in towns and cities having accessible green space on foot or cycle within 300 metres of their homes. Development plan policies should create and enhance urban green space networks, ensuring that adequate protection is given to key features such as parks, footpaths and cycleways, river valleys, canals and open spaces, identifying the areas where new physical linkages between these areas need to be made, and linking new urban green space to the wider countryside. The Regional Spatial Strategy emphasises that recreational resources are an important part in the overall quality of life of the region.

The West Midlands has one of the highest proportions of overweight or obese people. The West Midlands Regional Assembly recognises that ensuring the good health and well-being of the region's population is of paramount importance and cannot be achieved through access to good healthcare services alone. It is looking to increase the number of people using the region's countryside and green spaces, in particular to work to meet emerging standards for accessible local green space.

Local Coventry Framework

A key aim of the Coventry Partnership and the Community Plan is to improve the quality of life of everyone, particularly those living in priority neighbourhoods. In particular, the Coventry Partnership's Health and Well Being Theme Group has a priority objective to improve the health and well-being of people, focusing on those in most need. The Environment Theme Group has a priority to provide cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods and public spaces. To this end it wants the people of Coventry to see neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces as more attractive and enjoyable places to be. The Coventry Community Safety Partnership aims to reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. The local neighbourhood warden scheme flag up and address community concerns, and support the Neighbourhood Outreach Workers scheme; outreach workers aim to decrease anti-social behaviour through informal youth work. The Equalities and Communities Theme Group has a priority to increase the quality and choice of local facilities and local public services including cultural and leisure opportunities. One of the priorities of the Cultural Partnership Group is to ensure that Coventry's cultural life, including libraries, sport, physical activity, parks and open spaces, heritage and arts, fulfils the needs of communities.

Coventry's Green Space Strategy recognises the need to ensure that green spaces are enjoyed by all sections of the community, by making all local residents aware of the opportunities for recreation in Coventry's green spaces.

Coventry's Strategy for Parks recognises the significant role parks, woodlands and open space play in providing opportunities for relaxation and recreation, and their contribution to promoting good health as well as personal, social and family development.

The Quality of Life section in the Coventry Household Survey 2003 – 2005 notes that while the satisfaction level with the quality of access to parks and open spaces appears to be high, gaps have been observed between priority neighbourhoods and the rest of the city. Moreover, parks and open spaces appear as an issue in the top ten of “things that need most improving” in the neighbourhood. This is important given the relationship between quality of green space and quality of life overall, and suggests that more needs to be done, especially in priority neighbourhoods.

The city’s walking and cycling strategies aim to protect and enhance local and end trip facilities (such as cycle parking), and improve the attractiveness and quality of the walking and cycling environments.

The Coventry Community Safety Strategy 2005-08 has a priority theme of reducing crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, important issues if alleyways are to be kept open. As part of the responses to the Coventry Community Safety Audit 2004, the Strategy recognises the need to improve the local environment and people’s quality of life. This can be partly achieved by ‘designing in maintenance and designing out crime’.

Coventry’s Local Cultural Strategy: Vision, Themes and Priorities for the Improvement of Cultural and Leisure Opportunities in Coventry between 2004 and 2010, has as a priority the safeguarding, maintaining and improving of leisure land uses and facilities – green spaces, woodlands, footpaths, wildlife habitats, nature conservation and informal recreation.

To really target improvements for health effectively, we need to work with colleagues in the health service (e.g. Primary Care Trusts). There are a number of existing projects, strategies and initiatives in Coventry that we will be able to make connections with these groups to deliver improvements.

If efforts to encourage people to take advantage of the network, particularly for health benefits, are to succeed, then ways need to be found to motivate people and give them a purpose to walk or cycle, such as to reach a desired location, or view something interesting. Some people may need supervised activities. In order to make exercise easy for people to fit into their lives, route development needs to focus on routes close to where people live so they can walk or cycle. Priority also needs to be given to maintaining routes which are incorporated in Travel Plans and Health Walks.

Key references

Coventry City Council (1994) Green Space Strategy for Coventry

Coventry City Council (1996) A Strategy for Coventry Parks

Department for Transport (1996) National Cycling Strategy

Department of Health (1999) Saving Lives – Our Healthier Nation

Department for Transport (2000) Encouraging walking: advice to local authorities

Department for Communities and Local Government (2001) Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport

Department for Communities and Local Government (2002) Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

Department for Transport (2004) Delivery of the National Cycling Strategy, A Review

Department of Health (2004) Choosing Health – making healthy choices easier

CABE Space (2004) The Value of Public Space

Coventry City Council (2004) Coventry Walking Strategies

Coventry City Council (2004)
Coventry Cycling Strategies

Coventry City Council (2005) Coventry
Community Safety Strategy 2005/08

Coventry City Council (2004) Coventry's Local
Cultural Strategy - Vision, Themes and Priorities
for the Improvement of Cultural and Leisure
Opportunities in Coventry between 2004 and 2010

Countryside Recreation Network
(2005) A Countryside for Health and
Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental
Health Benefits of Green Exercise

Department for Environment, Food and
Rural Affairs (2005) Strategy for the
Horse Industry in England and Wales

Action Plan: Improving the Quality of Life

Ref.	Action	Baseline Position	
Promotion and publicity			
5.1	Develop a plan for maintaining and promoting walking trails in an appropriate and consistent way	Varying levels of repair and methods of marketing to be identified	
5.2	Update and re-launch 'Just walk it' leaflets accompanied by orientation boards	Six leaflets produced giving ideas for walks, mainly in the North and West of the city	
5.3	Develop and promote a series of promotional leaflets for advisory cycling routes, linking to/from Coventry and taking in green spaces and corridors	Cycle map for Coventry mainly shows on road advisory routes	
5.4	Promote specific routes in innovative ways, including routes that link with public transport, publicity material for young people		
5.5	Develop and apply an accessibility 'grading' system for all paths, new and existing routes, and use in all information		
5.6	Support the development of the Coventry Walking Forum	Forum set-up in 2007. Two meetings held	
Web page development			
5.7	Develop and maintain website, containing general information, copies of leaflets, details, and progress on Public Path Orders and Definitive Map Modification Orders	Limited information on RoW pages but active webmasters	
5.8	Develop map based web pages with definitive map, routes, interactive path defect reporting, inventory, etc	None for RoW. Council web site has interactive maps for 2004 Indices of Deprivation and Street Works	
Health			
5.9	Support the development and sustainability of the Coventry Lets Walk project	14 weekly walks across the city	
5.10	Develop and promote lunch time walks, targeting employers who are part of the Travel Wise scheme or have travel plans and identify possible routes for lunchtime walks	CCC has a monthly series of lunch time walks	

Coventry City Council (2006) Coventry
Community Plan (2005 – 2010), revised 2006

Walking the Way to Health
Initiative: www.whi.org.uk

Demos (2007) Seen and Heard

West Midlands Regional Assembly
(2007) Healthy Choices? You Decide.
Developing a Regional Health and Well-
Being Strategy. Consultation Document

Timescale (years)			Key Partners and stakeholders	Other strategy cross ref.
1-2	3-4	5+		
●			Culture and Leisure Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum User and residents' groups	Walking Strategy 2.2.4 Coventry Development Plan AM 8 Coventry Culture Strategy Heritage Strategy
●			Culture and Leisure User and residents' groups	Walking Strategy 2.7.2
●	●		Culture and Leisure Sustrans	Cycling Strategy 2.2.20
●	●		Centro Bus operators Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate	
	●		Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum Disability Groups	
●			City Development Directorate Community Services Rambling groups	
●	●		Finance and ICT Directorate Coventry Walks Website Let Walk It team Walking Forum	Customer and E-Government Strategy
●	●		Finance and ICT Directorate Coventry Walks Website	Customer and E-Government Strategy
●			Community Services City Development Directorate Coventry Primary Care Trust Walking Forum Community Groups Walking Groups	Walking Strategy 2.7.1
●	●		Travel Wise	

6 Recording

The definitive map and statement are the legal record of the location and status of public rights of way. They provide the basis for all public rights of way work, so it is essential that they are kept up to date to allow accurate information about rights of way to be available to the public, planners, landowners and prospective developers. These documents are the source for the routes shown as public rights of way on Ordnance Survey maps. Much of the implementation of the Action Plans, under each of the themes described above, depends on having an accurate record of public paths.

National Framework

Legislation places a duty on the surveying authority, the Council, to keep the definitive map and statement under continuous review, and to make any changes which it finds are necessary.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW Act) 2000 introduced a deadline of 2026, after which all historic rights which are not recorded on the definitive map and statement will be extinguished. These could be rights over routes which are not shown at all on the map and statement, or higher public rights, such as horse riding or vehicular rights, over routes recorded as footpaths. Natural England is running a project called Discovering Lost Ways to systematically research relevant historical records to find evidence of unrecorded rights of way and to submit this to surveying authorities so that they can make definitive map modification orders to add the rights to the definitive map and statement.

Public paths can also be added to the map and statement in some circumstances if evidence of long-term use by the public is found.



Regional Framework

Progress in recording rights of way in the surveying authorities within the West Midlands is very varied. A few have an almost up to date record, but most have a backlog of applications of paths to add to their definitive maps and statements, as well as known anomalies in the documents. This is mainly due to years of under-resourcing.

Local Coventry Framework

The centre of Coventry was formerly a County Borough, and was previously excluded from the duty to prepare a definitive map and statement. However, following the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Council must now produce these documents, and keep them under continuous review. A start has been made on this with the publication of a map and statement which show around 200 rights of way within the former County Borough area. In 1974 the Council inherited part of Warwickshire's map and statement for the areas of Allesley and Keresley, which include 43 rights of way and small parts of the areas of Rugby and Bedworth, which include three rights of way.

The task ahead is to prepare a complete map and statement for the whole of the Council's current area. This will involve:

Researching the evidence for the existence of unrecorded rights of way within the former County Borough area. A start has been made on this, with the collection of evidence for around 80 rights of ways. The necessary legal orders, called definitive map modification orders, must now be made to add these paths to the map and statement, such orders are advertised and there may be objections made to them, in which case Public Inquiries may be held. There are possibly around 300-400 further paths which might be public rights of way and, if they are, should be shown on the map and statement. The evidence for these needs to be researched and assessed before Definitive Map Modification Orders can be made. The Natural England Discovering Lost Ways project may also find additional rights of way within Coventry, which will need to be recorded.

Dealing with formal applications made to the Council that rights of way should be added to the map and statement. There are currently 26 such applications outstanding and more are expected to be received. It is however likely that many of these paths are included in those already researched.

Preparing modification orders to show on the map and statement legal changes, such as diversions, which have been made to public paths in the past. These modification orders are called legal event modification orders, and they are not advertised since the legal changes to the paths have already been confirmed. There is a backlog of more than 100 of these changes.

Preparing one definitive map and statement which is an amalgamation of the documents for the former County Borough, Allesley, Keresley, Rugby and Bedworth areas which are now within the city of Coventry. This will be called a Consolidated Definitive Map and Statement. This process cannot be carried out until all the outstanding Legal Event Modification Orders have been made, but a working version has been prepared.

The very large number of unrecorded public rights of way means that it is essential to prioritise this work. A draft priority statement has therefore been prepared and approved by the Council's Cabinet. This is attached in Appendix B, and will be adopted as the formal priority statement following any changes agreed following the receipt of any comments.

Access for the public to information about the definitive map and statement should be improved. It would benefit the public if other access rights, including permissive paths, could be recorded and made available alongside the definitive documents.

Key References

UK Parliament (1981) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

UK Parliament (2000) Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Natural England (2006) Discovering Lost Ways project (www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Access/DLW)

Coventry City Council (2007) Draft Statement of Priorities for Making Modification Orders to Amend the Definitive Map and Statement (Appendix B)

Action plan: Recording

Ref.	Action	Baseline Position	
Recording			
6.1	Employ a full time rights of way officer to oversee the production of an up to date consolidated definitive map and statement	Appointment has been approved	
6.2	Agree a priority statement and matrix for making Definitive Map Modification Orders	Statement of Priorities produced (Appendix B)	
6.3	Produce an action plan for the production of an up to date consolidated definitive map and statement	Very incomplete documents	
6.4	Implement the action plan for the production of an up to date consolidated definitive map and statement		
6.5	Identify and establish a map/register of existing permissive routes	No register produced	
6.6	Establish a map of other paths that need to be maintained at the public expense and kept open		
6.7	Develop system so that Planning Department consults with the Rights of Way officer on all planning applications which might affect a public right of way whether or not shown on the definitive map.	Ad hoc consultation at present	

Timescale (years)				Key Partners and stakeholders	Other strategy cross ref.
1-2	3-4	5+			
●	●	●			
●					
●			User and residents' groups	Walking Strategy 2.3.1 Cycling Strategy 2.3.1 Green Space Strategy R28	
●	●	●	User and residents' groups Landowners including farmers		
●					
●			City Services Directorate		
●					

A Glossary



Bridleway

For pedestrians, horse riders and bicyclists (who must give way to people on foot) or on horseback

Byways open to all traffic (BOATs)

Carriageways over which the right of way is on foot, on horseback and for all vehicular traffic (including mechanically propelled vehicles), but which are used mainly for the purposes for which footpaths and bridleways are used (i.e. by walkers and horse riders).

Canal towpath

A towpath is legally a part of the navigation of a canal or navigable river. It may or may not also be a public right of way. Sometimes a public right of way runs over a part of the towpath but it is now British Waterways Board policy not to dedicate towpaths along its canals as public rights of way, although it generally allows the public to use them.

Cycle Track

A way over which there is a right of way on pedal cycles and possibly also on foot. Cycle tracks are not recorded on the definitive map and statement and, if a footpath or bridleway is legally changed to a cycle track, it should be removed from the definitive map.

Footpath

The right of way is on foot only

Permissive path

A permissive path is a path which the landowner permits the public to use, with the intention that it should not become a public right of way. A permissive path may be no more than a way, the use of which is not normally objected to by the landowner. But it may also be a way that has been the subject of a formal agreement between the landowner and a local authority, such that the agreement or licence might provide for the way to remain available to the public for a stated period (e.g. five years) after which it may lapse or be renewed.

Quiet Lanes

Quiet Lanes are a Natural England initiative, which has the support of the Department for Transport.

Quiet Lanes are minor rural roads which are appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorised users. They should have low traffic flows travelling at low speeds. Cars are not banned from Quiet Lanes and the use of Quiet Lanes is shared. Measures such as lower speed limits and discrete road signs aim to encourage drivers to slow down and be considerate to more vulnerable users who can in turn use and enjoy country lanes in greater safety, with less threat from speeding traffic.

Restricted Byways

Carriageways over which the right of way is for all types of traffic except mechanically propelled vehicles. Currently most of these are former Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs) re-designated on masse, by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, on 2 May 2006. Part 6 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, will curtail the recording of public rights of way for mechanically propelled vehicles on the definitive map and statement. However the Act makes it possible for many rights of way that would formerly be recorded as byways open to all traffic to in future be recorded as restricted byways instead.

Sustrans

Sustrans is one of the UK's leading sustainable transport charities. It co-ordinates the development of the National Cycle Network. It also promotes cycling and walking as healthy forms of transport.

Toll Route

Horse riding route through farm land for which a toll is paid by the horse rider.

B Draft Statement of Priorities

Draft Statement of Priorities for making Modification Orders to amend the Definitive Map and Statement

Background

The Council has a duty under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to continuously review the Definitive Map and Statement to ensure that they are a correct legal record of all public rights of way.

Errors in the Map and Statement are corrected by making legal orders called Modification Orders. The effects of such orders when confirmed can be to:

- Add a previously unrecorded right of way
- Upgrade an already recorded right of way when it is found to have higher rights e.g. a footpath upgraded to a bridleway
- Downgrade an already recorded right of way when it is found to have only lesser rights e.g. a bridleway downgraded to a footpath
- Remove a route which is found not to be a public right of way
- Correct other errors in the Map and Statement

Anyone may apply to the Council for a modification order to be made, or the Council may initiate an order itself if it believes this to be necessary. Each case requires extensive research to collect and assess the available evidence, which can be documentary, evidence of use of the route, or a combination of both. This process is very time-consuming.

The majority of the Council's area was previously excluded from the duty to maintain a Definitive Map and Statement, and therefore there is a large back log of routes to be investigated to see if they are public rights of way and if proved should be added to the Map and Statement.

It is therefore necessary for the Council to have a system of prioritising the necessary work.



Principles

The highest priority will be given to those cases which would produce the most benefit for local people if the rights were correctly recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement.

Prioritisation scheme

An application to make a Modification Order or the discovery by the Council of the need to make such an order will be given the highest priority if correctly recording the route of the Map and Statement would:

- Substantially improve public safety
- Improve access to the green areas of the Coundon Wedge and the Sowe Valley
- Improve links from urban areas to the surrounding countryside
- Improve links to the long distance paths which run near to Coventry such as the A Coventry Way, the Heart of England Way and The Centenary Way
- Safeguard rights which would otherwise be lost through development
- Enable enforcement action to be taken more effectively
- Improve non-motorised access to facilities
- Assist the achievement of actions specified as a high priority in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Other factors which would increase priority are:

- Where a case involves substantially the same evidence as for a route already under investigation or about to be investigated or
- Where significant costs incurred in other functions of the Council would be saved

Further copies of this document are available from:

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This document can also be downloaded from
Coventry City Council's website at
www.coventry.gov.uk/rowip

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