

# Greenway Strategy for South Derbyshire District

## SECTION 1: Background

### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This strategy describes a study carried out by Derbyshire County Council to outline proposals to develop a strategic network of multi-user routes, or Greenways, for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with mobility difficulties, across the district of South Derbyshire.

1.1.2 The Countryside Agency has defined the term Greenways as “largely car-free off-road routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces in and around towns, cities and to the countryside; for shared use by people of all abilities on foot, bike or horseback, for car-free commuting, play or leisure.”

1.1.3 This report extends the area of research covered by the East Derbyshire Greenway Strategy, commissioned by Derbyshire County Council in 1998 and it can be seen as an extension to that report. The East Derbyshire Greenway Strategy identified that the multi-user network should consist of the following criteria:

- Provide a safe environment for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. An adequate network should be provided for all users.
- The provision of utility and recreational routes; used by locals for journeys to work, shops and schools and casual leisure use.
- Provide routes which link urban areas, within and surrounding the defined area with the rural environment and countryside attractions.
- Provide routes well served by the public transport system.
- Connect with routes in surrounding areas.
- Be developed with high priority for “Access for All”.

These criteria remain the focus for the South Derbyshire Greenway Strategy.

1.1.4 Greenways contribute towards a wider access network within the County comprising footpaths, bridleways, byways and restricted byways, trails, permissive paths and off road cycle tracks. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the County Council has a duty to prepare a strategic plan entitled the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). This Plan will assess the whole of the current access provision and demand within the

county and provide a statement of how the authority intends to manage and secure improvements to this wider network in the future. This Greenway Strategy will form a strand of the ROWIP for Derbyshire when it is produced in 2007.

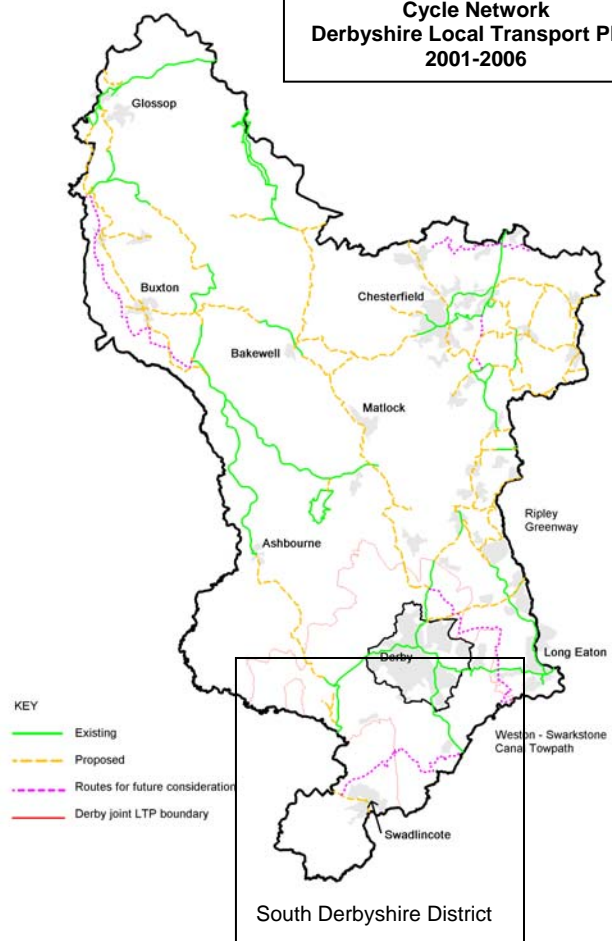
## 1.2 Purpose of the strategy

1.2.1 This strategy aims to provide the basis for a strategic and co-ordinated plan for the development of a network of Greenways throughout the District of South Derbyshire. It provides a proposals map, which suggest a series of recommended Greenway routes for further investigation, as a result of information gathered and initial consultations. The recommended routes are indicative only and demonstrate desirable positions on the most appropriate alignments found at the time of the research. Negotiations with specific land owners and access providers, as well as new opportunities through land use change and re-development may suggest alternative or more favourable connections. Further to the scope of this report, it is intended that the recommended routes are further examined on a project by project basis to formulate a provisional programme of delivery. No priority order for delivery has been set as it is recognised that flexibility is essential to maximise opportunities to respond to funding streams and other factors beyond the control of the Local Authority.

1.2.2 It is intended that the proposed routes identified in this plan shall be included on the county-wide Strategic Cycle Network in both the Derbyshire Local Transport Plan (LTP2) 2006-2011 and the Derby Joint Area Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (both in production at the time of writing). This shall update the proposals map shown in the current LTP1 2001-2006, shown in Figure 2 opposite.

1.2.4 This strategy may be used to inform planning decisions to maximise community access benefits through development schemes and post industrial site restoration proposals, to incorporate sections of Greenway identified in the strategy where appropriate opportunities arise. It may also lend argument to safeguard routes in other

Figure 2: **Derbyshire Strategic Cycle Network**  
Derbyshire Local Transport Plan  
2001-2006



Local Plans and strategies as well as support section 106 agreements, planning conditions and legal agreements through the planning process.

1.2.5 It is intended that this strategy meets the needs of the local area. The proposals are drawn from relevant studies already carried out in the area, including existing policy and planning guidance. It is anticipated that it will help to meet the targets of the South Derbyshire Community Strategy (at consultation at the time of writing) and the Local Strategic Partnership. It also considers the existing and proposed routes already identified within and neighbouring the study area. It draws on discussions with key stakeholder organisations and access providers, to create a valuable tourism asset that will encourage new investment, jobs and tourism related economic benefits to the South Derbyshire Coalfield.

1.2.6 The aims of this strategy are outlined in Box 1 below;

**Box 1: Aims of the Strategy**

1. To form the basis of a strategic and co-ordinated plan to assist the development of a Greenway network across South Derbyshire.
2. To extend the area of study of the East Derbyshire Greenway Strategy.
3. To inform the Local Transport Plan county-wide Cycle Network for LTP2.
4. To form a strand of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
5. To guide forward planning and local planning decision to deliver Greenways.
6. To encourage Partnership working.
7. To support funding bids to develop the Greenway Network.
8. To promote economic regeneration through provision of tourism infrastructure.

### **1.3 Background to the research**

1.3.1 Derbyshire County Council has been instrumental in developing some of the earliest multi-user traffic free trails in the country and over the last thirty years has continued to provide new Greenway routes as opportunities have arisen that provide safe and enjoyable access to the countryside. Many of these routes follow former transport corridors left as a legacy of previous industrial activity. They also follow improved existing public rights of way and new access provision through the reclamation of mineral and waste sites, housing and employment development sites and through private landowner agreements. Greenways have also been developed by district and borough Local Authorities, the Peak District National Park and corporate landowners, such as the Water Companies and British Waterways.

1.3.2 There are now a significant number of available Greenways across the county, totalling a distance of over 250km of traffic-free routes. In the past, these were created as fragmented lengths as opportunity arose, and often

did not connect directly to communities and are isolated from each other. In order to increase the value of these and improve their accessibility as a highway and tourism asset, the County Council is dedicated to the continued expansion of the existing routes to form a cohesive network. Fundamental to this is ensuring the routes link directly into settlements and to public transport interchanges, continue through communities to join other routes, and by seeking opportunities to create new routes to strengthen the integrity and viability of the network.

- 1.3.3 Further opportunities and desirable links have already been identified to create an inter-connected network across the county. As mentioned earlier in 3.1.1 an in-depth study in the east of the county was commissioned in 1998 to explore the possibilities for a Greenway network across the East Derbyshire coalfield area. The second phase of this research is to explore similar opportunities in the District of South Derbyshire. It is anticipated that a third phase will look more closely at West Derbyshire in the future.
- 1.3.4 The Countryside Agency promotes the use and creation of Greenways through their Wider Welcome initiative to improve access to the countryside.
- 1.3.5 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 stage three came into force in October 2004 to ensure that all reasonable adjustments are made to allow disabled access. Greenways link people to places by providing easy access routes for all abilities and particularly promote safe and continuous access for those using wheelchairs, motorised scooters and other mobility aids.
- 1.3.6 There also exists a national drive to promote healthier life styles through encouraging physical activity in leisure time and by building in activity to daily routines. This aims to improve general health and well being of all communities and also tackle the increasing national problems of obesity.
- 1.3.7 A further cultural philosophy aims to encourage and develop safer communities. Safe approaches to access design can attempt to reduce both personal crime and accidental injury. National schemes such as the Safe Routes to School campaign further supports the creation of Greenways.
- 1.3.8 The Department for Transport (DfT) has recently launched a national body called Cycling England, as a function of the review of the National Cycling Strategy. The new body will plan and co-ordinate the development of cycling across the country and has a budget of at least £5million/yr for three years to support investment in cycling. It is seen as a measure to contribute to a wide range of government objectives such as accessibility, sustainability, public health and reducing transport congestion.
- 1.3.9 The government recognises that much of today's traffic congestion and environmental concerns stem from modern transport choices and there is a climate to encourage a modal shift in local transport to non-car journeys, especially for short trips. Local Transport Planning also recognises the need to address accessibility to facilities and services. Many of the government's goals aim to encourage walking and cycling as alternatives to using the car.

1.3.10 The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has recently circulated a Draft Strategy for the Horse Industry 2005, recognising the potential for economic and social advantages of further growth in the industry. The strategy aims to encourage and enthuse young people into horse riding and wishes to build on the national success of the horse riding industry at local, international and Olympic levels. The draft strategy proposes specific actions to help achieve the following initial broad objectives which include; increasing participation, boosting the economic performance of equine businesses, raising equestrian skills, training and standards, increasing access to off-road riding and carriage driving and encouraging sporting excellence.

1.3.11 It is increasingly recognised that Greenway provision can create a high quality, attractive and safe leisure facility right from the community doorstep, whilst also providing a linear transport route from settlements into the wider countryside or to demand destinations. By linking visitor attractions and tourism facilities, Greenways can provide valuable infrastructure that promotes new growth in the tourism based businesses, bringing economic benefits to existing enterprises and generating demand for new business opportunities and new jobs across the specialist and general tourism industry. Well designed, located and marketed routes can help create a clear tourism product to encourage an increase in overnight stays and associated income generation from both the UK and overseas markets. The advantages of increasing tourism can trigger rural renaissance and sustainability.

1.3.12 The benefits of Greenway developments cut across many disciplines, and are generally accepted to include the functions shown in Box 2.

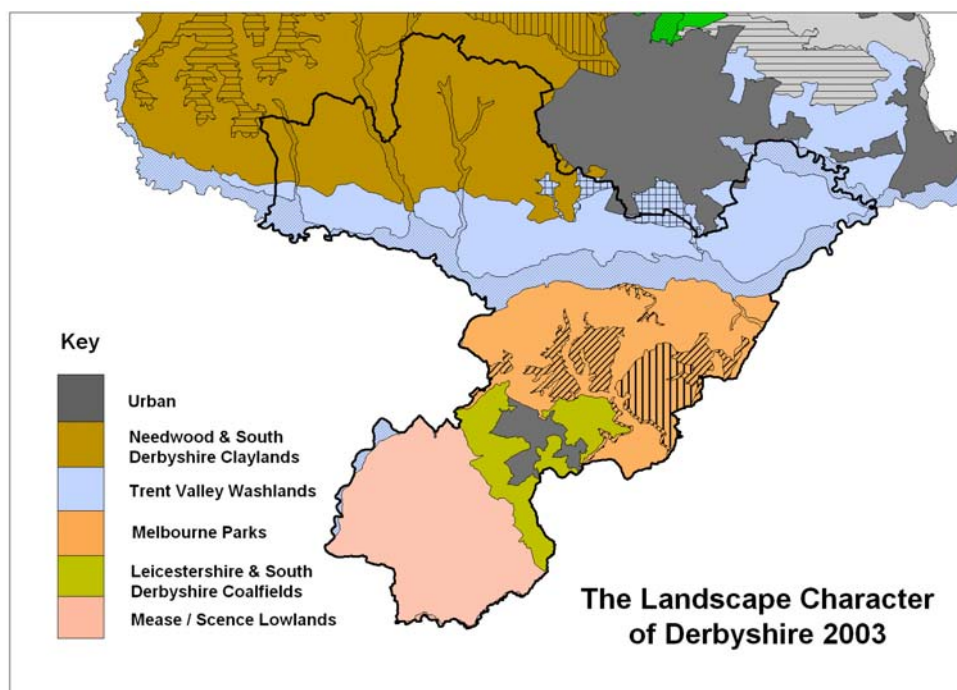
**Box 2: Benefits of Greenways**

1. To create new leisure facilities and links to visitor attractions or local amenities, for recreational enjoyment of the countryside.
2. To promote new and improved community access to schools, places of work, shops, town centre facilities & public transport interchanges.
3. To reduce community severance through improved accessibility.
4. To enhance and protect the natural environment, landscape and cultural heritage of the area.
5. To reduce traffic congestion and associated pollution by encouraging car-free and sustainable travel options.
6. To encourage healthier lifestyles through regular exercise, and interaction with nature and landscape.
7. To promote social inclusion through provision of alternative transport choices for low income families.
8. To provide Access for All opportunities to promote independence and improved quality of life.
9. To attract tourism to encourage neighbourhood renewal and economic regeneration.

## 1.4 Description of the Study Area

- 1.4.1 The district of South Derbyshire covers 130 square miles extending south of Derby City and lies between the towns of Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire and Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire.
- 1.4.2 The Landscape Character of Derbyshire 2003 records the district spanning five of the National Landscape Character areas. Future Greenway development would need to consider the character type and follow the guidance given to ensure that works are both appropriate and add value to the landscapes they cross. Benefits can be gained by ensuring routes sit well in the topography and provide opportunity for landscape repair and ecological enhancements.

Figure 3: Landscape Character of Derbyshire



i) *Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands*

In the north of the district and west of Derby City, the claylands are described as; “A settled, pastoral landscape on gentle rolling lowland that is deeply rural and cut by numerous streams.” The region has winding lanes, many footpaths and green lanes connecting scattered villages and farmsteads. Land use is predominantly dairy farming.

ii) *Trent Valley Washlands*

Running across the breadth of the district the washlands follow the River Dove and River Trent corridors and are described as; *“An agricultural landscape set within broad, open river valleys with many urban features.”* The area is dissected by the A50 and A52 major transport corridors as well as the Trent and Mersey Canal (once a key industrial transport route). Land uses include mixed agriculture, mineral extraction and power stations.

iii) Melbourne Parklands

Lying to the south of the washlands, the parklands rise gently to form; *“An undulating mixed farming landscape with country houses, landscaped parks and estate plantations.”* Two river valleys have been dammed to form reservoirs and there are two larger towns of Repton and Melbourne.

iv) Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield

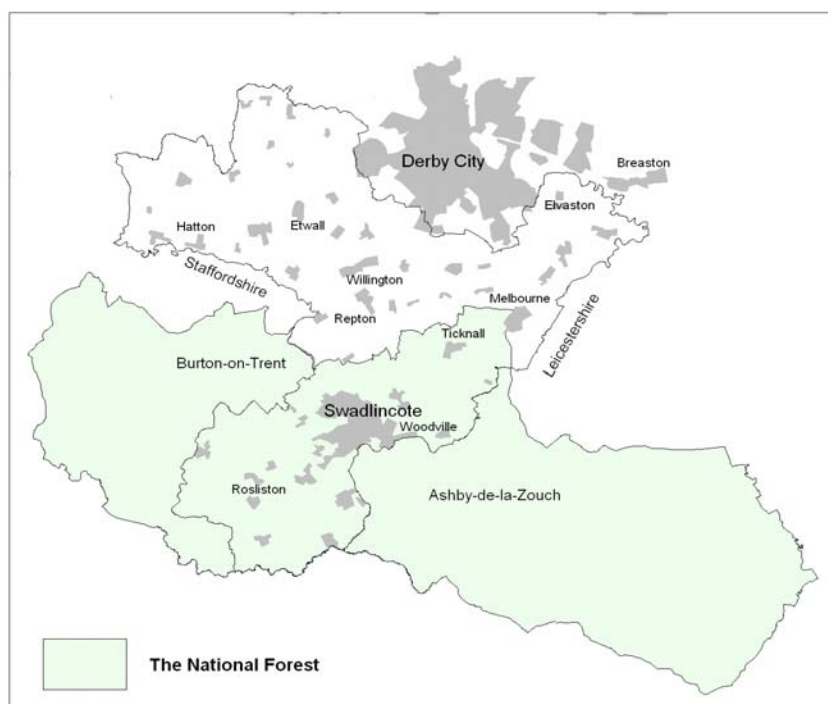
Further to the south, surrounding Swadlincote, the coalfields are described as; *“A gently undulating landscape of shallow valleys and ridges dominated by mining and urban features.”* It forms an open landscape with large arable fields and little tree cover.

v) Mease / Scence Lowlands

In the far south, these lowlands follow the Rivers Mease and Sence and are described as; *“A gently rolling agricultural landscape with scattered villages and occasional country houses.”* The intensive agriculture with medium to large fields leaves an open aspect with little tree cover away from the river corridors and winding lanes with broad grass and scrub verges.

1.4.3 The southern half of the district falls within the boundary of the National Forest. The National Forest covers all but the Trent Washlands and the Claylands and provides an opportunity to improve the tree cover and countryside access across much of the district. The restoration of aggregate extraction sites and the re-development allocations of former land uses within the washlands and the coalfield have created opportunities for access and biodiversity improvements in Swadlincote and the surrounding villages.

Figure 4: South Derbyshire District and the National Forest



1.4.4 The land features of South Derbyshire have undergone tremendous change through the removal of clay for the pottery industry, coal for power generation and currently sand and gravel extractions for construction works. Former industrial transport routes have left a patchy scattering of canals, tramways and railway lines, many of which are now lost to agriculture or other land uses. Some however remain and may also offer opportunities as traffic-free access corridors to serve the growing industry of tourism. There are many sites of interest, historic homes and visitor attractions within the district set amongst scenically beautiful countryside to explore that will benefit from the proposed improved access infrastructure.

## **1.5 Layout of this report**

1.5.1 The report is presented in seven main sections to discuss;

Section 1: the background information to identify what the report is about

Section 2: the policy context to provide valid argument

Section 3: the market to demonstrate a demand and a need for the plan

Section 4: the methodology to show how the information was achieved

Section 5: the analysis and conclusions of the findings

Section 6: the strategic network mapping to illustrate the final proposals

Section 7: the resources to suggest how the proposals might be achieved

1.5.2 Finally, the appendices contain additional and supportive information.