

Luton Local Access Forum (LLAF)

Meeting 2, minutes

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Version: 1.0 (final)

Last updated: 13 December 2024

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Date and time

Wednesday 11 December 2024 at 6.30pm

Venue

Luton Town Hall, committee room 4

Attendees

Russell Cartwright (RC)
Chris Godden (CG), Highway Development Control Manager (Planning), Luton Council
Councillor Javed Hussain (JH)
Mamnun Khan (MK)
Deni Krevesic, Principal Transport Planner, Luton Council
Roy Mccrudden (RM)
John Mardle (JM)
David Oakley-Hill (DO)
Graham Simpson (GS)
Chris Thom, Policy Team Manager, Luton Council
Michelle Titmus (MT)
Louis Upton (LU)
Sam Willis (SW)

Secretary

Sarah Smart (SS) (Luton Council)

Apologies

Mortuza Ali (MA)
Cherry Newbery (CN)
Abeda Uddin (AU)
Neville Williams (NW)

Objectives

To agree the minutes and terms of reference.

To discuss on-going rights of way and access matters.

1. Welcome and apologies

MK welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

2. Priorities and special areas of interest

Local Plan

Chris Thom gave a presentation on the Local Plan (LP), which is under review, a process which is planned to take four years and will align with the Council's 2040 vision. It will cover housing, green spaces, health and the built environment. It is a six-stage process involving data collection, consultation and calls for sites for development and for green spaces. We are about to begin a public

consultation phase on the community involvement paper. This consultation runs until February 2025. There will be a second 12-week consultation period from August 2025.

The presentation was followed by questions and comments, key points were:

- housing need is identified following a standard methodology set out by the government
- population growth will be considered
- the issues paper to be published shortly should cover areas of concern including:
 - parks and green spaces
 - developers who sit on land, but do not develop it
 - the impact of development on the River Lea
 - the council's net zero target
- the LP is vital and local views are important
- Luton is land-locked with very limited land available for development
- S106 agreements can ensure marketing targets local people first
- the LP can define the mix of housing to better meet local needs
- safeguarding green spaces is a requirement
- encouraging more walking and cycling to reduce car use are flagged in the document
- the Local Walking and Cycling Plan has been developed and the council are looking at radial routes

It was noted that the Council may attempt to put certain green spaces into 'Fields in Trust', which provides some protection for those spaces. This would be done on a rolling programme.

Chris Thom left the meeting.

Local Transport Plan

Deni Krevesic, Principal Transport Planner, Luton Council then gave a presentation on the Local Transport Plan (LPT). This is a statutory document that fits with the Local Plan and sustainable growth for Luton. It sets out transport policies for the next 15 years. An integrated impact assessment will take account of many green issues. There is a consultation steer running for eight months until March 2026, so the LLAFF can contribute at this point. Many journeys start and finish within Luton, so if we can improve the walking and cycling environment then we will encourage more green transport. Some wards have limited access to green spaces. The plan needs to be meaningful to the Luton population.

The presentation was followed by questions and comments, key points were:

- engaging the public is difficult and communication is critical
- people need to feel safe when walking and cycling (from traffic and in other ways)
- there is an engagement plan
- the survey is simple to use and most browsers have in-built translation facilities, making it accessible to the multiple languages used in Luton
- the first 300 responses indicated a lack of input from young people (under 16-year-olds)
- they are now engaging with schools to get young people's responses
- adults do not easily change their habits so influencing school children to develop active travel habits is vital
- strong leadership for change is vital; Nottingham is a good example of that, they used a parking levy to fund active travel
- the local environment is challenging for active travel, due to the steep hills, but electric bikes are one solution
- parking on pavements and the pace of vehicular traffic impact on the safety of active travellers

Action: SS to share both presentations

Action: LLAf to feedback to DK in February 2025

Action: All to complete survey and share it with others

Deni Krevesic left the meeting.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed without amendment.

4. Matters arising

The following actions have been completed:

- Teams was trialled as a means of communicating and sharing documents between meetings, but did not work for everyone. Other options need to be explored. It was agreed that we would continue to use email for the present.
- The Terms of Reference were amended and circulated.
- The survey of paths in the excluded area and a map of those paths, plus those already on the definitive map, was demonstrated via the council's Geographical Information System (GIS).
- It is still unclear why the previous map of the survey was removed from the website. CG agreed to reload it if possible.
- The notice for the Stanmore Crescent public enquiry was circulated.
- The forward work programme was amended and circulated.
- Most members have confirmed that they are happy to share their email address solely within the LLAf. Roy Mccrudden gave confirmation. We are still awaiting confirmation from Mo Ali and Abeda Uddin.
- Information about the football stadium (Power Court) plan was circulated and LAF members agreed on a letter of advice, which was submitted.

Action: ALL to investigate different platforms for sharing documents

Action: CG to upload the map of rights of way to the Council website subject to IT/Web limitations

5. Terms of reference

The terms of reference were ratified.

The privacy notice is being finalised for publication on the website.

Action: SS to circulate the privacy notice and all the confirm their agreement

6. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

The council have set up a small officers' working group with a view to preparing the next ROWIP. Parks officers have suggested groups to consult within its preparation and listed the current strategies that will feed into the plan, as follows:

- Luton Friends of Parks and Green Spaces
- Local Nature Partnership
- Tree strategy
- Green spaces strategy
- Green infrastructure plan
- Luton and Bedfordshire green infrastructure plan
- Local nature recovery strategy
- Local plan

- Local transport plan
- River Lea linear park

Funding means that the plan will need to be prepared by officers and use the Council's internal consultation process. If there are any groups you feel we should contact directly please pass on their details, we can ensure they see the consultation when it comes out. The budget of £8,000 available to cover all Rights of Way expense annually should be available for use on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

Action: CG to draft a ROWIP programme for the next meeting

Action: ALL to advise CG of any groups we should contact directly regarding the ROWIP

7. Public path orders (PPOs)

The order for the path from London Road and Newlands Road will be sealed when the contractor has formed the new route, probably in the spring.

The cemetery route should be open now, the locks having been removed from the gates. The order is being brought back in house and notices should be published early in the new year. CG noted that some work is needed on the grassed surface as it is uneven. LLAF members requested the removal of the stile from the common area onto the path, as it is unnecessary, preferably leaving a gap.

Action: CG to investigate removal of the stile on the cemetery route

8. Public spaces protection orders (PSPOs)

Five footpaths in the town remain gated to limit anti-social behaviour, access is limited, usually to residents, under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

- Leyhill Drive to Homestead Way
- Whitwell Close
- Arthur St to Hibbert Street
- New Town Street to Surrey Street
- Beech Hill path between Dunstable Road and Ash Road

The Council should review PSPOs. The Whitwell Close PSPO could potentially be removed once Barnfield College closes, possibly at Easter 2025.

9. Definitive map modification orders (DMMOs)

The public enquiry for the Stanmore Crescent path was held last week and we await the outcome.

A footpath on the border with Hertfordshire, Offley 039, is being handled by Hertfordshire County Council. They have presented their decision report and CG will be submitting a report to the Administration and Regulation Committee to get delegated powers to finalise that DMMO. The DMMO will include Luton path L197, which runs from Offley path 039, via a wooded area to Crawley Green Road.

10. Registers

There have been no changes to the registers.

11. Planning applications impacting on rights of way

Strathmore Path

The developer applied for the removal of a planning condition relating to highway authority approval required for retaining wall design details. They mistakenly believed that this would remove the

requirement to maintain the route of the right of way. The authority objected to the removal of the condition and explained the situation.

Consequently, the developer requested highways to investigate the stopping up of the right of way. The highway authority is satisfied that there is still a need for the route and advised the developer that they would be unsuccessful in pursuing stopping up. They are seeking legal advice, but it is the highway authority that determines whether to pursue stopping up. Stopping up under the Town and Country Planning Act would not be successful as it is not necessary to stop up the path to permit the development.

A different developer previously tried to stop up this path in about 2010 and the highway authority gave it some serious consideration, but it was not pursued.

Weybourne Drive

This has gone to appeal.

Pre-applications

The head of planning confirmed that pre-application submissions for all major schemes are referred to CG. On minor schemes, referrals are made on a site-by-site basis, depending on whether there are access issues. In both cases, the details will need to be kept confidential and therefore cannot be brought to the LLAF.

12. Ongoing projects and consultations

Power Court (football stadium)

A letter of advice was sent by the LLAF to Luton Borough Council. The Council cannot force the contractor to bring the river to the surface, but can open up a discussion on changing the planning application.

13. Other items from the forward plan

State of the network

The highways team inspect public rights of way as part of their routine programme of work. This includes some rights of way that are not maintainable at public expense. SS reported that all paths she has visited in the last couple of months have been in an acceptable state. Others reported that some paths are non-existent. We need a list as a starting point. LU would like a template for logging issues. MT is able to seek information about the state of the network from local Scouts and Guides.

Action: SS to provide a template for logging the state of paths

Action: MT to collect information from Scouts and Guides

Definitive map

The excluded area project to record the public rights of way throughout Luton and add them to the Definitive Map and Statement, is underway. It is a long-term project with a six-year timeline. A fact sheet on the project has been drafted. Routes are being dealt with on a ward-by-ward basis.

- Beech Hill ward, which has three identified routes, has reached the informal consultation phase
- Biscot ward, which has four routes, is at the desk study phase

The GIS map of the wards was shared with the forum and the paths from the two wards were shown.

14. Any other business

Training

LLAF members, workshop or similar to develop their understanding of the legal process and how rights of way work. Possible Steven Sparshott can provide a layman's guide to the law.

Action: SS to ask ADEPT Rights of Way Working Group, Eastern Region about any training they provide to their LAF

Action: JM to ask East of England Local Access Forums group about any training they receive

Evidence

DM reported that evidence is key to managing problems. Google satellite images, incident numbers for anti-social behaviour, Love Clean Streets app, Fix-My-Street app records can all be used to record and log issues. The Love Clean Streets app is preferred by Luton Council. The e-Luton digital update could be used to communicate these messages.

Action: JH to speak to Communications and Marketing Team about promoting the Love Clean Streets app

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 12 March 2025 from 6:30pm to 8:30pm in the Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 8:40pm.

Actions

SS to share Local Plan and Local Transport Plan presentations

LLAF to feedback on Local Transport Plan to Deni Krevesic in February 2025

ALL to complete Local Transport Plan survey and share it with others

ALL to investigate different platforms for sharing documents

CG to upload the map of rights of way to the Council website

SS to circulate the privacy notice

ALL to confirm their acceptance of the privacy notice

CG to draft a programme for the next meeting

ALL to advise CG of any groups we should contact directly regarding the ROWIP

CG to investigate removal of the stile on the cemetery route

SS to provide a template for logging the state of paths

MT to collect information from Scouts and Guides

SS to ask ADEPT Rights of Way Working Group, Eastern Region about any training they provide to their LAF

JM to ask East of England Local Access Forums group about any training they receive

JH to speak to Communications and Marketing Team about promoting the Love Clean Streets app