



Ashby de la Zouch  
Town Council

# **Cycling & Walking Strategy 2022**

# Contents:

3. Introduction

4-6. Background

7-11. Proposed Cycle and Walking Routes

12. Conclusion

# 1. Introduction

This cycling and walking strategy has been developed by Ashby de la Zouch Town Council (ATC) to support the economic growth of the area and maximise the tourism, active travel and recreational cycling opportunities for residents and visitors to the Ashby area. This document identifies potential cycle and walking networks in and around Ashby de la Zouch. The national cycleway associated with the Government's proposed High Speed Rail line (HS2) route through the district should connect to these local networks.

NWLDC adopted an Ashby Cycle Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2018. This was written around 2016. A cycle map of aspirations for the Ashby area together with costs of individual links were provided as Appendices to this document. None of the new routes suggested in that document have been implemented since adoption (though some already existed when it was adopted).

NWLDC is currently working on a new Cycling and Walking Strategy for the whole district to go alongside the revision of the Local Plan which is due to be submitted for examination in November 2022. A draft of that document was produced by consultants Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd in October 2021.

Given the significant development that has taken place in the last few years around Ashby and the planned developments at Money Hill, several aspects of the current SPD Ashby Cycle Strategy are out of date and in need of revision. This document identifies those areas and suggests appropriate revisions. It is not intended as a complete replacement of the existing SPD. Safe walking routes and possible upgrades to existing infrastructure are also highlighted.

The potential network of cycle links is designed to overcome current barriers to cycling and enable more people to cycle as a regular mode of transport. It is important that Ashby becomes connected to the Sustrans National Cycle Network. This would remove the need to access the National Network by car from Ashby and allow embarkation on longer cycling excursions. Implementation of routes highlighted in this document would connect National Route 6 to National Route 63, enhancing the overall National Network connectivity. This document should assist the District Council to secure investment for the implementation of infrastructure through the planning process and in making bids for funding.

**This document was produced by Ashby de la Zouch Town Council (ATC). Appropriate consultations would need to be undertaken with LCC and NWLDC should any of these proposals be developed. In addition, it should be noted that when developing any routes, a detailed account will be required to be taken of any coal mining risks which might impact upon surface stability or public safety.**

## 2. Background

Our roads enable people to get to work and access services and facilities such as shops and healthcare, enable children to get to school, and businesses to receive materials and distribute goods. By getting more people walking and cycling or using the bus we can help the local economy and environment by reducing congestion on our roads, and the negative environmental impact of traffic. The new routes must be safe for the cyclists, pedestrians and other road users.

Part 1 of the North West Leicestershire Cycle Strategy SPD has resulted in the implementation of a comprehensive cycle network in the Coalville area. In Loughborough (Charnwood Borough), where a similar network has been created, there has been a recorded 39.8% increase in the number of people cycling since 2012, approximately 1,500 cyclists (2013 LCC Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) Performance Indicator Data).

The Ashby area is home to the second largest proportion of the population of North West Leicestershire, approximately 12,500 people (2011 Census Data – medium super output area). Although there is some cycle infrastructure in and around Ashby, it is quite disjointed, with missing links which create barriers to connectivity of these routes. Ashby currently has no safe connection to the Sustrans National Cycle Network, though two National Routes run north-south a couple miles west (route 63) and a couple of miles east (route 6) of Ashby.

It is also important to keep in mind that a network of new cycle routes is not provided just for cyclists, and that the creation of good quality, safe and easily accessible routes can be beneficial for pedestrians, and particularly people with pushchairs, wheelchair users and those using mobility scooters. A cycling network will therefore help to maintain Ashby de la Zouch as an attractive place to live, work and visit, encouraging more residents to change to more sustainable travel modes, enable sustainable development and provide a high-quality environment that people feel safe to walk and cycle in.

The following are relevant extracts from the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan (2011 – 2031) which was made in 2018.

### ***Traffic Management***

*The traffic situation within the Plan area has been identified as a significant issue for many involved in the development of the Plan, not only residents, but also employers, visitors and other interested parties. The road network in the Plan area has developed over many years, and much of it was not designed for, nor suited to, modern vehicular movements. At the same time, a significant and a growing amount of vehicular traffic, including heavy goods vehicles, passes through the Plan area. Therefore, many of its roads are congested, particularly along the A511 and the main roads into and through the Town Centre. This is one of the main negative aspects of living, visiting and working in the Plan area.*

*Whilst it is recognised that there has been significant investment in the transport network and further improvements are planned such as Junction 13 of the A42, there is concern that this investment in the transport infrastructure has failed to keep up with the growth of the Plan area.*

*In addition, planned and anticipated further development, if not properly managed and planned, will put the transport infrastructure, especially the road system, under even greater pressure especially along the A511 and in and around the Town Centre.*

*Improvements in access and safety on Nottingham Road, Wood Street and Market Street (including the potential introduction of a 20 mile per hour zone) have also already been highlighted as a priority should the Money Hill development scheme go ahead.*

*The need for a Zebra Crossing on Kilwardby Street, if there is further development off Moira Road; possible one way or cul-de-sac and safety measures at the bottom of Brook Street and improved pedestrian access to the Bath Grounds on South Street, if there are additional developments serviced by South Street or Prior Park Road, have also been highlighted as priorities.*

### **Promoting Travel Plans**

*Travel Plans are a commonly used and proven means to reduce travel by car and promote more sustainable means of travel especially by public transport. They are a package of actions specifically designed by, and tailored to, a workplace, school or location such as a new housing development.*

*Travel Plans generally include measures to promote walking, cycling and public transport, but can include car sharing schemes; cycling facilities; a dedicated bus service or restricted car parking allocations. There is an emphasis on reducing reliance on the private car, particularly single occupancy car travel.*

*It is considered that the characteristics of Ashby neighbourhood plan area, including higher levels of congestion especially at peak times and relatively poor public transport network (especially between the Town Centre and nearby residential and employment areas) mean that it is especially suited to a Travel Plan based approach to help achieve a shift to walking, cycling and public transport.*

### **Safer Routes to Schools Scheme**

*The consultation identified a need for school pupils to be encouraged to walk, cycle or use bus services to get to school.*

*This would help reduce the peak traffic volumes arising at the start and end of the school day and minimise the environmental, safety and accessibility issues arising from the high number of cars parking near schools, including at and close to the school gates.*

*This could include initiatives such as Safer Routes to School Schemes, or similar, which bring together a package of measures such as 20 mph zone, safer crossing points, cycle storage facilities and enhanced signing, lining and lighting in an area.*

**POLICY T3: SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOLS SCHEMES** – Ashby neighbourhood plan will encourage ‘Safe Routes to Schools’ schemes where appropriate. Development proposals for a new school or a significant expansion in an existing school’s capacity should be accompanied by a Safer Routes to Schools Scheme.

### **Promoting Walking and Cycling**

*Reliance on the car in Ashby neighbourhood plan area is very high and many of the journeys (even short ones) are made by car.*

*Encouraging people to walk or use a bicycle for short journeys and leisure purposes can bring significant benefits not only in terms of reducing congestion on roads, but also cutting carbon emissions and creating healthier communities.*

*Cycling and walking has great potential in Ashby neighbourhood plan area. It is relatively compact and has a reasonable network of footpaths and cycleways. There is some evidence that residents are increasingly taking up walking and cycle riding for leisure and other purposes.*

*The consultation has shown these footpaths and cycleways are highly prized and cherished by residents, who wish to see them protected and, wherever possible, enhanced. The consultation and the analysis undertaken as part of the development of Ashby neighbourhood plan highlighted some areas for improvement in the present network. Through this work, gaps in the network have become apparent; especially between residential areas and the Town Centre, as well as between residential areas the main employment sites, essential community facilities, such as schools, and the countryside. It has identified the desire and strong case for a dedicated joint footpath and cycleway that circumnavigates the Parish. Another significant area of improvement highlighted was the maintenance and condition of some footpaths and cycleways, which can hinder their use. Also, where possible cycleways should be made available for horse use. The Sustrans guidance on Horses on the National Cycle Network (Technical information note No. 28 September 2011) provides recommended design criteria regarding cycleways and the width needed to permit horses to safely share paths with walkers and cyclists.*

*An Ashby de la Zouch cycling strategy has been developed in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, North West Leicestershire District Council and the Heart of the Forest Forum 'Access and Connectivity sub-group'. This sets out proposals for promoting and supporting cycling in Ashby de la Zouch and the wider area; the findings of which the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan supports.*

*New developments should seek to promote and enhance the network of linked footpaths and cycle ways within Ashby neighbourhood plan Area. Using the opportunities created by developments to protect 'green lungs' that connect the Town Centre with the surrounding countryside.*

*A number of rights of way in Ashby neighbourhood plan area are affected by the planned route for HS2. The impact and implications of HS2 construction will be dealt with when the plan is reviewed.*

**POLICY T4: WALKING AND CYCLING** *The provision of new and/or the enhancement of existing footpaths and cycleways appropriately associated with new development will be actively encouraged in the designated area of Ashby neighbourhood plan. Where appropriate, priority should be given to (i) the creation or improved links between the main residential areas and the Town Centre, surrounding countryside and facilities such as schools (ii) creation or improved links between the main residential areas and the main employment areas; (iii) the joining up footpaths and safe cycleways into a comprehensive network.*

### 3. Proposed Cycle and Walking Routes

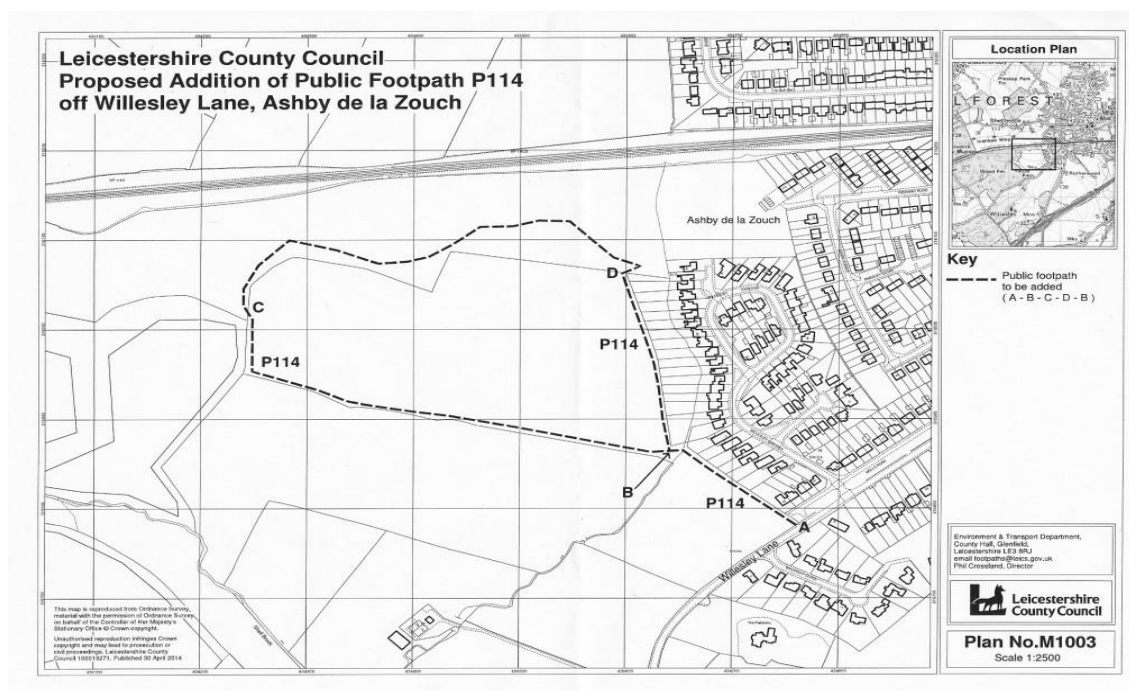
#### 3.1 Hicks Lodge connectivity

A major priority is to achieve a safe cycle route from the Town Centre to the Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre at Willesley Woodside. This is the western arm of proposed priority route 1 in the current SPD. This would also provide a connection to the National Cycle Route 63.

The current SPD includes two alternative routes. In either case, a safe cycle lane and sufficient new signage is required along Tamworth Road.

The Town Council's preferred route runs across fields from the end of Wells Road (see Figure 1). It was added to the SPD, due to concerns about the original route which could result in undue disturbance to residents on the Ridgway Road estate.

Our preferred route follows the southern section of P114 shown on Figure 1,



**Figure 1. Alternative cycle route to Hicks Lodge from Wells Road along P114.**

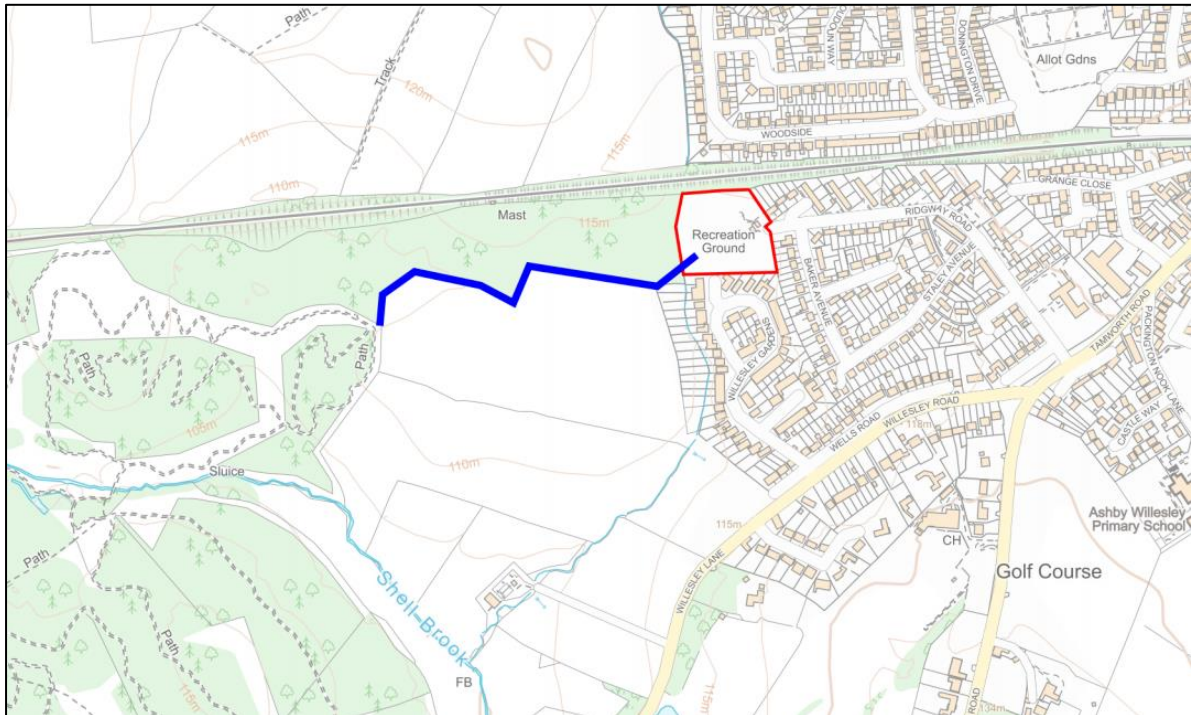
running from the western end of Wells Road along the hedge to join Hicks Lodge at approximately 43425E 31595N. There is an outstanding application for a public right of way which includes this route. It is awaiting a decision by the Secretary of State, as it was opposed by the landowner. If this were granted then it would make an ideal cycle track, but it would have to be converted to a bridle way first. This would involve a further application.

The route shown in the main SPD document (see Figures 2 & 3) runs from Ridgway Road on the Willesley/Ridgway Road estate through the woods beside the railway. This would involve laying a new pathway around the outer edge of the recreation ground and then following the railway line through the forest and connecting to the southern end of the Hicks Lodge trail near the Shell Brook.

That route has the problem of running through private land with no right of way.



Approximately 5 years ago the District Council had a budget of £40k to implement this but it didn't happen as agreement could not be reached with the landowner. The money was eventually used for a connection to Hicks Lodge from Moira.



**Figure 2. Ridgway Road route to Hicks Lodge (Plan)**



**Figure 3. Ridgway Road Route to Hicks Lodge (Aerial view)**



**Access to Hicks Lodge from the North.** It has also been suggested that the landowner might be persuaded to put a permissive path through the railway arch at 43360E 31610N to connect Hicks Lodge to definitive footpath P3. This would facilitate off road pedestrian access from the north side of Ashby and Ashby Heights. It also has the potential of becoming a cycle route from Shellbrook or even Woodside.

### **3.2 Nottingham Road and to the East.**

**Nottingham Road.** A safe cycle route is required along the line of Nottingham Road to connect the eastern side of Ashby to the town centre and towards Lount and the Cloud Trail (National Cycle Network route 6) in the opposite direction. This is the eastern arm of proposed route priority 1 in the SPD. The current Nottingham Road pathways are narrow and would not support mixed use by pedestrians and cyclists, though in some places, the grass verge is wide and could be modified. The current situation, with faded painted cycle signs on the road itself at sections where the road narrows due to central reservations, is considered unsafe.

The Money Hill housing development is expected to provide a good quality walking and cycle track along footpath O89 parallel with Nottingham Road. It would seem sensible for priority route 1 to be diverted to use this cycle track, feeding onto the Tesco retail/industrial park and/or continuing along Featherbed Lane (O91) to the bypass (section 35a of the current SPD proposed route priority 2). This would resolve the dangers of cycling along Nottingham Road.

However, careful consideration will be needed on feeding two-way cycle traffic onto and off the O89 route at its junction with North Street, which is a one-way road, particularly for school children using the route to cycle to Ivanhoe school, currently in the wrong direction along North Street. This problem could be reduced by provided a direct cycle and walking entrance into the school at this point.

Also, a designated cycle route into the rear of the school grounds directly from the Money Hill estate is required. Currently only a pedestrian route is included in the plans.

**Safe Cycle Route to Cloud Trail.** If, as proposed above, footpaths O89 and O91/O92 become a proper cycle way to the A511 Ashby Bypass, then it would not require much additional work to ensure a safe route along the bypass through to public footpath M30 on the south eastern side of the A42, some of which is already designated as a traffic free cycle way and some as a permissive bridle way. However, a potential problem with this section is interference from HS2 construction.

Alternatively, according to the first draft of the NWL Walking and Cycling Strategy produced by Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd in 2021, a route is being “explored by a local interest group” following a currently undesignated track along the north western side of the A42, past Lount tip. This could join up with the SPD’s Route 35 (a and b) to avoid Nottingham Road and would have the advantage of not being affected by HS2.

Either of the above routes could connect to the Cloud Trail from Melbourne Road by following the disused railway line from Smoile Farm to Worthington.

**Abbotsford Road Estate to Tesco.** The absence of any walkway from the Abbotsford Road estate through to footpath M60 or Coalfield Way is a major disincentive for residents to walk to Tesco for shopping, leading to many driving who may have walked or cycled.

### 3.3 Smisby Road and Hood Park

Whilst some parts of the North - South route from the A511 Ashby bypass along Smisby Road and thence beside the Gilwiskaw and through Hood Park to the Town Centre have been implemented, some parts remain outstanding or unsatisfactory. For instance, the northern part of Smisby Road to the bypass is used by many HGVs and the cycle track is not well signed or delineated. Also, the path through Hood Park is sufficiently wide for mixed use, but a dedicated cycle lane would help define the route. This needs to be extended down to North Street, which could be achieved by installing new signage and/or painting a defined user route.

### 3.4 Town Centre

**Bottom of Kilwardby Street.** Many people try to cross the road between the La Zouch Restaurant/ Shoulder of Mutton pub & North's Deli and also between the entrance to the Co-op Superstore and Bainbridge Court (Assisted Living). With traffic accelerating up the hill from the double mini roundabout, this crossing manoeuvre is dangerous. As highlighted in the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan, a pedestrian crossing is required at the bottom of Kilwardby Street, set a safe distance back from the roundabout.

**Market Street.** Consideration should be given to a cycle lane or lanes along Market Street and potentially a 20mph speed limit with appropriate traffic calming. However, there are many difficulties associated with providing a safe cycling route along Market Street without major changes to vehicle flow and parking arrangements. Possible alternatives include using North Street, connecting to the O89 cycle way mentioned in 3.2 above, and/or South Street connecting the route through the Castle Field and Bath Grounds as outlined in 3.5 below.

There are currently four bike racks at the bottom of Market Street outside SOUK. There is a need for more cycle racks at other locations within the town centre and possibly within the car parks.

In 2019 four new map locations with way finders were installed in Market Street, North Street, South Street and Coxons Mews. These signs point pedestrians in the direction of the Bath Grounds, Public Toilets, Castle and Leisure Centre. These are great additions to the town and it would be good to extend signage further around the town.

**Brook Street.** As highlighted in the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan, the junction between Brook Street and Market Street is a pedestrian safety hazard and also creates congestion due to traffic turning right into Brook Street from Market Street and sometimes turning right from Brook Street into Market Street. This junction requires some imaginative thinking and improved design for the mixed use of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

The favoured solution would be to make Brook Street one way (north to south) with no right turn onto Market Street, but a complete closure of the Market St junction might also be worth consideration.

This potential solution would provide opportunities for improving the public space in this area., potentially providing additional car parking and/or a dedicated events space. Delivery facilities for the existing shops would still be required. The area could be well designed to incorporate cycle racks, boot scraper, water refill station and benches. Part of the area could be landscaped to support the Forest town concept and connection with the National Forest. There is even the possibility of opening up part of the Gilwiskaw Brook here.

## **Derby Road**

The Derby Road pedestrian crossing between the Co-op and Ask should be relocated closer to the Market Street junction. Currently it is so far away from the junction that pedestrians wishing to cross between Kilwardby Street and Market Street do not use it and attempt to walk between the traffic instead.

## **Bath Steet**

Conversely, the pedestrian crossing at Bath Street is too close to the Market Street junction, causing traffic congestion on the mini roundabouts.

## **3.5 Bath Grounds and Castle**

Ideally a safe, properly designated cycle route is required from Ashby Castle to Station Road, via the Castle Field and Bath Grounds. Most of the route would be on land owned by the Town Council once purchase of the Bath Grounds is completed.

**Bath Grounds.** As highlighted in the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan, the South Street entrance to the Bath Grounds requires better connectivity to Bath Street to make it safer and easier for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the junction at the bottom of South Street, possibly a crossing to the Loudoun memorial.

Most of the current footpath (heritage path) from the South Street entrance to Prior Park Road is insufficiently wide for mixed cycle and pedestrian use. For a designated cycle route, the narrower section (South Street entrance to the Bowls Club) would need widening or a separate cycle track installing. However, an additional path alongside the railway line on the southern boundary of the Bath Grounds is being considered for the future, in order to provide access around the entire perimeter of the grounds. If implemented this could be designed for mixed use from the start and it would be easier to light this route than the heritage path.

It has also been identified that the security of users at night would be enhanced by installing lighting along the current path at the rear or the Bowls Club.

**Castle Field.** Now in the ownership of the Town Council and with a definitive right of way (O107) established, there is no impediment, other than finance, to providing a properly designated, signed and surfaced mixed use path across the field from the Bath Grounds to the Castle.

**Castle Entrance.** The driveway entrance to the Castle from South Street (Part of O107) is in a very poor state of repair with many dangerous potholes. Ownership of the drive needs to be established and the castle access brought up to an acceptable standard for mixed use. Consideration could also be given to improving the lighting here.

## **3.6 Other Ashby Footpaths**

**Allotments.** It is surprising that the path from Moira Road beside the cemetery and through the allotments to Wilfred Gardens is not a public footpath. The Council could look into establishing this, as the land is probably all in the ownership of the Town Council. This would also have potential to be upgraded for cycle use.

**P5.** This definitive footpath appears to run through the middle of houses on Highfields Close. This needs to be removed or diverted.

**P19.** This seems to have been diverted unofficially by Scam Hazel Farm. They should be encouraged to open it back up or apply for an official diversion.

**O71.** This path is very difficult to follow along both sides of the A42 and requires attention.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion it is recommended that Ashby de la Zouch Town Council supports and promotes both cycling and walking in and around the town as it not only provides users with health and wellbeing benefits but it also reduces emissions and highlights green tourism, helping us to reduce our carbon footprint.

The Town Council should adopt this document, submit it to both the District and County Councils and seek to work with those bodies and other relevant organisations and groups to improve the walking and cycling infrastructure in and around the town.

The rise in E Bike popularity has become apparent with more towns and cities installing areas to rent bikes to simply explore or navigate the local areas. Investigations to bring a small selection to Ashby could be pursued.

Promotion of tourism is a priority for Ashby de la Zouch Town Council and as such we should welcome all visitors to the town. A “Walkers Welcome” or “Muddy Boots” would be a good campaign to get behind to encourage visitors from further afield.

Further investment to improve the infrastructure is required so the Town Council can open up new cycling and walking routes and ensure the relevant links are maintained for all users.

Author Stuart Benson

1<sup>st</sup> March 2022