EQIA-01174

# Action being taken

### EQIA Directorate

### EQIA Service

### EQIA Team

# Details of person undertaking assessment

### Your name
Daniel Ashman

### Your job title
Highway Records and Definitive Map Team Manager

### Your directorate
Place and Sustainability Directorate

### Your service
Infrastructure and Project Delivery

### Your team
Asset Management, Design and Delivery

### Proposal being assessed
Proposed introduction of Public Rights of Way maintenance hierarchy (EQIA v3)

### Business plan proposal number
n/a

# Proposal details

### What is the name and description of the policy being assessed?
The new policy is known as the Public Rights of Way Hierarchy. It is a system of ranking our Public Rights of Way (PROW) according to their importance to users. By ranking our PROWs in this way, we can understand which routes are most valuable to stakeholders, and in turn make informed decisions about how to prioritise our highway maintenance activities to best suit the users of the network.

The key objectives of the PROW Hierarchy are:
a) develop a County-wide dataset which ranks PROW according to spatial datasets (map-based data about our PROW) and stakeholder feedback,

b) incorporate the PROW Hierarchy rankings into the capital maintenance programme so that the most important PROW can be prioritised for investment where appropriate,
c) develop an understanding of what reactive maintenance measures could be introduced to ensure that priority PROW are maintained to a standard that is commensurate to their importance.

The PROW Hierarchy will form part of the Council's 'Active Travel Hierarchy', which applies to all roads, footways and cycle routes in Cambridgeshire.

The built environment can be both a facilitator and a barrier to those who wish to participate in society. Active Travel provisions are no different. For example:
- a footway that is insufficiently wide or obstructed may prevent people using mobility aids from reaching an essential service;
- trip hazards such as broken or uneven surfaces might discourage use by the elderly; and
- high speed roads might present a barrier for young children to access schools.

While the Active Travel Hierarchy does not set out to change the physical layout of the highway network, it can have an impact on issues such as the examples above by helping to ensure that existing active travel routes are maintained to a standard that is appropriate to their importance. For example, repairing a trip hazard on a high priority active travel route might improve accessibility for elderly or disabled users. By recognising the value of our most important active travel routes, the Active Travel Hierarchy will contribute to making decisions about proactive maintenance schemes, which could help to remove barriers to certain protected groups - such as resurfacing a cycle path leading to a school. There is a cumulative impact of improving accessibility by promoting well-maintained active travel infrastructure. There are benefits both to health and wellbeing, but also for access to employment and local facilities and services, which can bring benefits to all highway users.

Our PROW in Cambridgeshire form an essential part of the overall highway network. PROW offer an alternative to the road network, and in many cases provide more direct and safe routes. This allows car-free connections to be made across and between communities, workplaces, schools and facilities. PROW also play an important part in promoting countryside access, providing leisure and wellbeing opportunities that might not be present on other parts of our highways. PROW suffer from similar issues and constraints as outlined in the paragraph above and the PROW Hierarchy will support the Council in adopting maintenance strategies that will help to reduce barriers to access on our network.

### What type of policy is this?
New

### Is this EqIA supporting a committee paper/business case?
Yes

## Identifying impact on affected groups

### Is it foreseeable that people from any protected characteristic group(s) or people experiencing socio-economic inequalities will be impacted by the

**implementation of this proposal (including during the change management process)?**

Yes

**If no, provide an explanation as to why this proposal will not have an impact on each of the following characteristic/group of people**

## Affected groups and impact

### Age

Positive impact

### Disability

Positive impact

### Gender reassignment

Neutral impact

### Marriage/Civil Partnership

Neutral impact

### Pregnancy and maternity

Positive impact

### Race

Neutral impact

### Religion/Belief

Neutral impact

### Sex

Neutral impact

### Sexual orientation

Neutral impact

### Care experience

Neutral impact

### Other identified groups

Positive impact

### You identified positive/negative impacts – please explain each one and supporting evidence

The introduction of the PROW Hierarchy will be an important contributor towards the achievement of Cambridgeshire's Active Travel Strategy, through its delivery of an enhanced approach to the maintenance of PROW. Active Travel means the use of non-motorised transport methods (for example, walking, cycling or using mobility aids) to access services, workplaces and other

destinations. The intention of the PROW Hierarchy is to enable the County Council to better understand which PROW are most important to our communities, and therefore which ones require prioritisation for maintenance purposes. By prioritising maintenance on the most valuable and well-used PROW, we can maintain a network that is better suited to the needs of our stakeholders, thereby improving opportunities for, and the attractiveness of, active travel. This will in turn help to reduce road congestion and carbon emissions. The PROW Hierarchy also aims to understand which PROW are most valued for leisure and wellbeing purposes, so that we can take steps to ensure countryside access is protected where appropriate.

The PROW Hierarchy has been developed via a two-stage approach:

· The first stage was through assessment of spatial data (mapped datasets) to establish an understanding of which PROW are already considered to be high profile or high priority routes. An initial statistical assessment resulted in hierarchy rankings being skewed markedly in favour of urban-area PROW. This was a result of focusing heavily on urban-centric datasets, such as population density, proximity of services, and indices of multiple deprivation. This approach risked de-valuing the great majority of the length of PROW across Cambridgeshire by failing to recognise rural leisure routes and PROW that provide utility purposes and connectivity in rural and semi-rural settings. It was decided to reduce reliance on the urban-focused datasets for the PROW Hierarchy, in order to promote more equal outcomes countywide. Typically there are far fewer datasets relating to rural areas and the types of use attracted by PROW (eg, an attractive and locally-valuable leisure route does not necessarily generate any readily-available statistical measurements; nor do their locations correlate to standard socio-geographic datasets such as population density, etc), so a less data-heavy approach was adopted. This instead took into account: (i) promoted walking routes on Ordnance Survey mapping and in other published materials, (ii) routes prioritised in the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP), (iii) routes identified by CCC as promoted off-road active travel routes. We then apportioned points to the PROW that fell into these criteria, with those attracting the most points being higher ranked in the Hierarchy. Recognising that urban routes will naturally attract greater levels of use, we then added further points according to the proportion of a PROW that fell within an urban area, but weighted this criteria to ensure it did not overwhelm other scores. We also integrated feedback gathered during a public consultation in 2024, to recognise community commentary that had been provided in relation to over 400 PROW. All of this work allowed a ranking score to be developed for each PROW, forming the basis for a draft PROW Hierarchy.

· The second stage was engagement with critical stakeholders. Once the Hierarchy had been created as a draft 'desk-based' exercise, we wrote to key PROW stakeholder groups in our communities. This included: all parish councils in Cambridgeshire, County and District Councillors, PROW user-groups (such as the Ramblers' Association and the British Horse Society), and residents' associations in non-parished areas (Cambridge). We also invited our stakeholders to contact other key groups that they felt may wish to contribute, such as local walking or cycling groups, or horse-riding schools. The engagement exercise lasted from June 6th 2025 until 31 July 2025. During the month of August, the stakeholder feedback was reviewed and evaluated. The methodology for assessing feedback and updating the Hierarchy scores is outlined in Appendix 1 part 2 to the Committee Report. This methodology took into account feedback given relating to safety, importance and levels of use of individual PROW, as well as any reported equalities concerns such as barriers to use or the importance of a given route to those with protected characteristics. For instance, this enabled

certain key PROW that provide walking access to schools to be identified, or those that reduce the impact of rurality by providing a connection to local facilities. This will ensure that community feedback about which PROW are most valuable to those with protected characteristics is taken into account in developing the final Hierarchy. It will also help to ensure that any key routes which may have been overlooked by the spatial datasets are accounted for, such as bridleway routes that are well-used by local equestrian businesses and therefore perform a local economic function.

The outcomes of this work will be part of the considerations made by the Highways and Transport Committee when determining the adoption of the PROW Hierarchy.

As part of our continuous review of the Active Travel Hierarchy (of which the PROW Hierarchy is a constituent part), it is intended to reach out to specific stakeholder groups based on protected characteristics. This will include disability groups and representatives of those in care. This will enable the Hierarchy to be adapted to better suit specific needs of those groups, for example by giving us the ability to identify priority access routes which can be ranked more appropriately in the Hierarchy. This work will be ongoing and any changes will be incorporated as part of a two-yearly process of updating the Hierarchy via stakeholder engagement.

EQUALITY ACT 2010.
The equality objectives established by s149 of the Equality Act 2010 state that any organisation with a public sector equality duty must have regard to the need to:
1) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The PROW Hierarchy does not seek to change the PROW network; rather, it will introduce a framework for prioritising maintenance of existing routes that are used for active travel journeys or leisure/wellbeing purposes. This will support the County Council in reducing barriers to accessibility by seeking to ensure that the most important routes are maintained suitably to the demand and type of use they attract, thereby contributing to the achievement of the equality objectives outlined above. Prioritising maintenance on the most important routes will reduce discrimination against groups with protected characteristics who use these routes, by ensuring they are safe and accessible to all users. In turn this will make the highway network a more equal environment, without the need to implement mitigations which may adversely impact highway users who do not share the same protected characteristics. The Council retains its statutory duty to maintain all highways and there is no intention to dilute this responsibility for routes that have a lower priority in the PROW Hierarchy. However it must be acknowledged that prioritising maintenance interventions on a small number of highly-ranked routes could impact our responsiveness to maintenance concerns on low-priority routes. Any safety concerns on low-ranking routes will still be responded to within established service-level timeframes.

POSITIVE IMPACT – AGE. The Active Travel Strategy identifies that the younger demographic in particular is less likely to have access to a private car: “active travel can improve social mobility and

equality of access to services for those people". In particular, the Joint Specific Needs Assessment highlights that 30% of all 10 and 11 year old children in Cambridgeshire are overweight or obese. It is therefore important that we offer improved opportunities for physical activity for younger age groups. The Active Travel Strategy targets journeys to school as an area where improving our rates of active travel can make a positive impact. The PROW Hierarchy will help to promote more active travel journeys to school by ensuring higher standards of maintenance for important routes, such as those leading to services like schools. This measure also supports delivery of positive impacts related to PREGNANCY/MATERNITY, by aiming to make access to facilities for children easier for parents. The Active Travel Strategy also identifies that safe and accessible non-motorised user routes are important in encouraging all age groups, including the elderly, in being mobile and travelling independently of their cars. The PROW Hierarchy will contribute towards this by prioritising maintenance on important routes that connect to community services, making these routes a more pleasant and accommodating environment for everybody. Furthermore, by identifying key PROW within our communities, the Hierarchy ensures that routes used by elderly residents for leisure or to access local facilities are given appropriate priority. This will help to reduce age-based isolation and promotes active lives. As part of our ongoing review of the Active Travel Hierarchy, we will engage with stakeholders related to different age groups (including CCC's Education team in relation to safer routes to school) to identify whether particular routes should attract a different ranking in the Hierarchy.

POSITIVE IMPACT – DISABILITY. The Active Travel Strategy outlines that "there is a wide range of physical and mental disability which impacts on how people can travel". The PROW Hierarchy will help to reduce the effect of people being disabled by their environment, by prioritising maintenance of the most well-used routes. A broad network of well-maintained PROW will also facilitate improved access to the countryside, so supporting mental wellbeing by providing better opportunities to interact with the natural environment. As part of our ongoing review of the Active Travel Hierarchy, we will engage with stakeholders related to disability groups (including CCC's Sensory Services team) to identify whether particular routes should attract a different ranking in the Hierarchy.

POSITIVE IMPACT – OTHER GROUPS. It is possible that the PROW Hierarchy will have a positive impact for lower income groups. These groups are less likely to have access to a private car and are therefore more reliant upon public transport and active travel methods to reach services or places of employment. When considering how to prioritise routes on a spatial basis, the PROW Hierarchy includes routes that have been identified as key active travel links in the LCWIP, including for off-road cycling, which provide access to key destinations. This ensures that routes can be prioritised in areas where access to high quality non-motorised user routes could be most valuable.

More work is required to understand this assumption in greater detail and to enable us to maximise the possible benefits to those in our communities who are in lower income groups. As part of our ongoing review of the PROW Hierarchy, we will work with the Cambridgeshire Insights team to identify key locations where the Hierarchy could be most beneficial to lower income users.

Rurality is identified as a form of geographic inequality. The PROW Hierarchy recognises that most of Cambridgeshire's PROW are in rural locations and has deliberately been structured to ensure that an

unfair skew in favour of urban PROW is avoided. Rural viewpoints have been considered by seeking input from key stakeholders in our countryside, including parish councils and PROW user groups. This will help us to recognise the importance of non-motorised journeys within and between rural communities, in turn having a positive impact on rural inequality.

# Evidence and analysis

**State if any mitigating actions are required to alleviate negative impacts. If positive equality impacts have been identified, consider what actions you can take to enhance them. If you have decided to justify and continue with the policy despite negative equality impacts, provide your justification. If you are to stop the policy, explain why. Briefly describe the actions then please insert actions to be taken on to the given action plan**

# Action plan

### Identified Impact Protected Characteristic or non-legislative factor

Positive impact – younger people
Action to enhance - Work with Road Safety Education Team and Public Health service to identify key school routes that could be considered for extra prioritisation
Officer responsible for action - Active Travel Team / Road Safety Education Team

Positive impact - elderly people
Action to enhance - Work with Cambridgeshire Insights to identify areas with elderly demographic and consider prioritised maintenance for key active travel routes in these locations
Officer responsible for action - Active Travel Team / Cambridgeshire Insights

Positive impact - disabilities
Action to enhance - Identify key stakeholders such as representative groups, charities or service providers to understand key maintenance requirements to support mobility for disabled groups
Officer responsible for action - Active Travel Team / Public Health

Positive impact - low income groups
Action to enhance - Work with Cambridgeshire Insights to identify areas with lower income demographic and consider prioritised maintenance for key active travel routes in these locations. Consider engagement with social housing providers/district councils
Officer responsible for action - Active Travel Team / Cambridgeshire Insights

Positive impact - rurality
Action to enhance - Work with parish councils to identify priority routes in rural areas and consider whether they are appropriately prioritised
Officer responsible for action - Active Travel Team / Asset Data Team / Asset Strategy Team

Positive impact - all groups
Action to enhance - Use condition and/or survey data for active travel routes held by the Asset Strategy Team to highlight prioritised routes that require enhanced intervention
Officer responsible for action - Asset Data Team / Asset Strategy Team

### Action

Outlined in box above.
Actions intended to be undertaken as part of 3-year review of Active Travel Hierarchy - in line with recommended policy review timelines established by Code of Practice for Well Managed Highways Infrastructure. While individual service areas are identified as being responsible for certain actions, the Asset Management, Design and Delivery service will consolidate actions to make alterations/enhancements to the Hierarchy.

### Expected outcomes

### Officer

Daniel Ashman to act as convener to enable actions to be progressed

### Completion date

2028-03-31

### Did you engage with an EqIA super-user when developing your EqIA?

Yes

## Approval details

### Head of service

Joshua Rutherford (he/him)

### Head of service email

Joshua.Rutherford@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

### Status

Approved