



Bilbrook Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan

Policy BBO6 Active Travel

Additional Evidence and Rationale

Activities such as walking and cycling are universally recognised as improving personal health (**“Start Active, Stay Active - A report on physical activity for health”** from the four home countries’ Chief Medical Officers (Dept of Health 2008)). They can also contribute to the well-being of a community by allowing more opportunities for meeting and engaging with other people and fostering a greater awareness of the local environment. However, to encourage walking and cycling, routes need to be easy, safe and attractive to use (**“Ensure pedestrians, cyclists and users of other modes of transport that involve physical activity are given the highest priority when developing or maintaining streets and roads”** National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) **“Physical activity and the environment”** 2008).

The Parish has some major employers, for example JLR, Moog, Eurofins and Cargill, however most people commute to work via car.

The **Propensity to Cycle Tool Census figures for the area report (2011)** cites

- Total commuters: 2356
- Cyclists (baseline): 44 (2%)
- Drivers (baseline): 1688 (72%)

Many travel by car, since public transport is limited. Car ownership exceeded 90% of households in 2011, with more than half of households having two or more vehicles. Very few cycle to work, and there are minimal cycle routes to nearby towns, save the NCN 81 route and Wobaston Road shared path, leading to the i54 site and Wolverhampton. Those without cars face some elements of restriction to many educational and work opportunities.

Recent cessation (2023) of a bus route by the major local travel provider has caused a number of transport issues, resulting in an alternative “temporary” service provider offering a reduced service to the area. Commuter passengers transit is severely affected, as the current services offered do not operate within the commuter timeframe, which is reportedly increasing car use for commuters.

Train travel from Bilbrook Station is relatively regular and has a number of commuter services available, though journey times are being reviewed in summer 2024. There are minimal cycle parking spaces and the current provision is not suitable for some types of cycle. The steep ramped access to the platform on both sides of the station mean that this is not accessible for some users, particularly in manual wheelchairs or with significant mobility issues.



Bilbrook benefits from being on the Sustrans National Cycle Network 81, which progresses from Wobaston Road, south of the Village, east through Bilbrook Road and connecting with Codsall Parish via Church Lane to the north east of the Village. Cycle infrastructure exists at the Wobaston road, connecting to NCN 81 to Wolverhampton via Pendeford and to the i54 site and the route is clearly marked via quiet roads to Codsall. The route to Wolverhampton via NCN 81 is problematic due to the first 2km from Bilbrook to Pendeford being single mud track. Conversations with Sustrans and Canal and River Trust to explore this difficulty and potential for connectivity are ongoing.

There are currently no further cycle specific road or alternative infrastructure routes in the village.

A sense of place and identity relies partly on the quality of the public realm, which is also affected by the balance of users – drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. Traffic issues, particularly peak-time congestion through the Local Centre, specifically at Duck Lane and Woodman Junction as well as Bilbrook Road are noted to locally to be significant and that the amount of through-traffic needs reducing to promote safety and pollution levels. Such reduction in turn will enable improvements to reinforce its function as an activity focus.

Movement in local residential areas

Manual for Streets 2 (CIHT 2010) suggests there is a balance between the “route” and “place” function of a location, depending on its position in the hierarchy of roads. Within residential areas in Bilbrook, the aim is to make streets “places” for all users to enjoy and be safe. This approach would be particularly appropriate around the Local Centre where the spine route through the village makes the roads less safe for children and vulnerable adults to cross or play. A positive example of placemaking is on the corner of Bilbrook Road and Duck lane, where seating and planting have been put in place, creating a more positive environment and where visitors can rest on their journeys. Bilbrook Village Green is another example of placemaking conducive to local people’s transit and wellbeing.

In terms of the “20 minute neighbourhood” model, Bilbrook has an excellent local structure, with easy access to amenities such as shops, chemists, Doctors Surgeries, Vets, Schools, places of worship, takeaway food and hairdressers among other important community resources. Bilbrook, being adjoined to Codsall, further extends the resources such as Middle and High Schools, Community Library and other cafes etc. Walking and cycling connectivity to local towns such as Wolverhampton is possible by shared path routes, though residents living with altered mobility states would seek to travel by other means as the gradients out of the village are steep or inaccessible at present.

Provisional analysis of the pavements and walkways within Bilbrook show significant level of irregularity with the dominance of cars and other vehicles meaning pavements are regularly uneven, banked and have undulations from driveways or are narrow, meaning elderly, disabled or pushchair users have difficulty navigating around the area without issue. Better



pavement and crossing provision for such users is desirable in an aging population (shown in the demand for smaller properties with residents downsizing). Safe passage of cycles through many of the alleyways and paths is prohibited, meaning cyclists are forced onto main roads to navigate through the village.

Duck Lane and Wobaston Road are the main commuting and transit artery through the village, and can only be avoided by either a long detour onto the A449 and A5; or narrow (partly single-track) back lanes, through to Eliots Lane and round to the Bilbrook estate. Community feedback on social media often speaks of the road system and infrastructure as not being adequate for an increased population. In the **Bilbrook Neighbourhood Plan Residents' Survey 2022**, residents told us the following:

- When asked what additional facilities are needed in Bilbrook, the second most mentioned subject (segmented) was improved pavements, road-mending and traffic calming measures.
- 82% of respondents felt that safer street design, eg pedestrianisation, in Bilbrook was either important or very important.
- 88% of respondents felt that developments to include pathway and cycle networks as connecting corridors to schools, shops, and the village centre.
- When asked what residents believe is important for local transport in Bilbrook, the response were as follows:
 - 98% of respondents answered 'improvement / repair of roads and pavements.'
 - 67% stated 'provision of alternatives to car use'
 - 63% stated 'increase or improve cycling facilities, eg dedicated cycle lanes and parking racks in the village.'

At the time of the survey, 70% of respondents wanted provision of better transport links between Bilbrook, Bilbrook Station, Perton and the i54. With reduction in public transport services since 2022 it is believed that this percentage would now be higher.

Recent Development

On recent housing developments in Bilbrook, connecting paths which could be used for walking, wheeling and cycling are present, but lack thorough design with narrow paths, sharp turns and right angles and have poor kerb downs, meaning they will not be safely usable by wheelers, pushchairs or adapted cycles. A crossing from the Marshall Way development to the walking and cycle infrastructure opposite is poorly sequenced, meaning very long waits for crossing people. Non-Traffic connectivity between the Marshall Way development and Lane Green Road would be of benefit to decrease the need for car use, as many residents would be able to access local schools and amenities by foot or cycle easier.



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