




2024

# Stowmarket Area Transport Plan





**KEY**

-  Area boundary
-  Built up areas
-  Railway station

# Introduction

Stowmarket is the largest town in Mid Suffolk and its functional area includes Stowupland and Combs Ford. Stowmarket is between Bury St Edmunds to the west and Ipswich to the southeast. It lies on the River Gipping, which is joined by its tributary, the River Rat, to the south of the town.

The plan area has a total population of approximately 23,600<sup>1</sup> residents. The town has expanded considerably in recent years, with the Cedars Park development to the east and the Chilton and Union Road schemes to the west. Significant employment growth has been earmarked at Gateway 14, to the south of the town, which is part of Freeport East.

Active travel options are in place for the newer residential and employment developments but there is a lack of connectivity between walking, wheeling and cycling routes in the town centre. There is a limited bus service provision connecting surrounding communities and other urban areas to Stowmarket. Rail services connect to Cambridge, Ipswich, Norwich, Bury St Edmunds, Peterborough and London on the Great Eastern Main Line. The train station is used by many commuters from surrounding villages

In the geographic area, at average cycling speeds, most households within the area can access the town centre within 10 minutes. A large proportion of residents can reach the town centre at average walking speeds within a similar timeframe<sup>2</sup>.



# Stowmarket population

# 23,600 residents

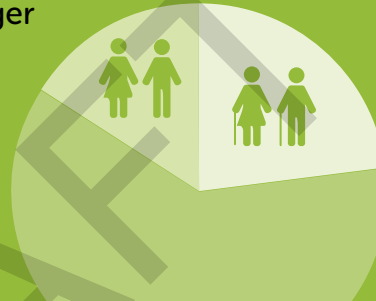


# 17%

of people are 15 years old or younger

# 19%

of people are over the age of 65



# 51%

of households are deprived in one or more dimensions



## Travel patterns

# 15%

of households don't own a vehicle



# 47%

of people travel less than 5km to work



# 11%

of people walk, wheel or cycle to work



# 24%

of people work mainly from home



## School travel



Pockets of

# 8%

of school children cycle to school in the Stowupland area.

Less than

# 5%

of school children cycle to school in other areas of Stowmarket<sup>3</sup>

Less than

# 1%



take the bus

Less than

# 2%



take the train



# 58%



drive a car or van to work

# Reasons for change



## Decarbonisation of Transport

In the Stowmarket area, 14% of commuters travel to work by walking, wheeling and cycling or by bus or train. In order to meet Suffolk’s pathway to net zero, the proportion of commuter trips across Suffolk undertaken by these modes should rise to 35%<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the government targets half of all journeys undertaken by active travel modes in towns across the country<sup>5</sup>. Existing infrastructure and sustainable transport services restrict people’s sustainable travel options.



## Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion

Increasing physical activity is linked to improved mental and physical health outcomes at all stages of life and prevention of chronic and acute health conditions. Increasing physical activity through walking, wheeling and cycling more trips will help to improve the health of the population in the Stowmarket area.





## A Strong, Sustainable and Fair Economy

Significant growth in housing and employment has taken place in Stowmarket over recent decades, including Gateway 14 which is part of Freeport East. This is the largest business, innovation and logistics park in East Anglia. This growth brings the need for investment in Stowmarket's existing transport network and connectivity to the town centre. There is an opportunity to encourage greater levels of sustainable travel.



## Creating Better Places

There are opportunities to enhance how people interact with the town centre. Improved provision for walking, wheeling and cycling in the town centre, most notably at Ipswich Street and the Market Square and connections to the railway station, will help to create healthier, more attractive and more accessible streets. The town's existing public rights of way network can help to provide access to green space.



# Summary of objectives

The Stowmarket Area Transport Plan will support the development of sustainable travel options for the town's residents and visitors, so they become more attractive and realistic choices for everyone.

Enable active travel to be the default choice for shorter trips

Improve bus punctuality and reliability

Improve the integration of modes

Maximise growth opportunities

Support town centre economies



OBJECTIVE

## Enable active travel to be the default choice for shorter trips

A network of key walking and cycling routes in Bury St Edmunds have already been identified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

We will implement the following initiatives to make active travel the default choice for shorter trips:

### Invest in a core walking zone

We will increase the number of residents walking by improving the condition and appearance of pedestrian infrastructure. Improvements include the layout of Ipswich Street, Market Place, Crowe Street and Wilkes Way. This will also improve accessibility as well as safety. Improvements will be developed in conjunction with relevant plans for the town centre area.

### Prioritise walking routes

We will improve footways, crossing points and wayfinding signage along key walking routes in the town. We will focus on linking the core walking zone as well as links to the railway station, Stow Health and residential areas and employment areas.

### Prioritise cycle routes

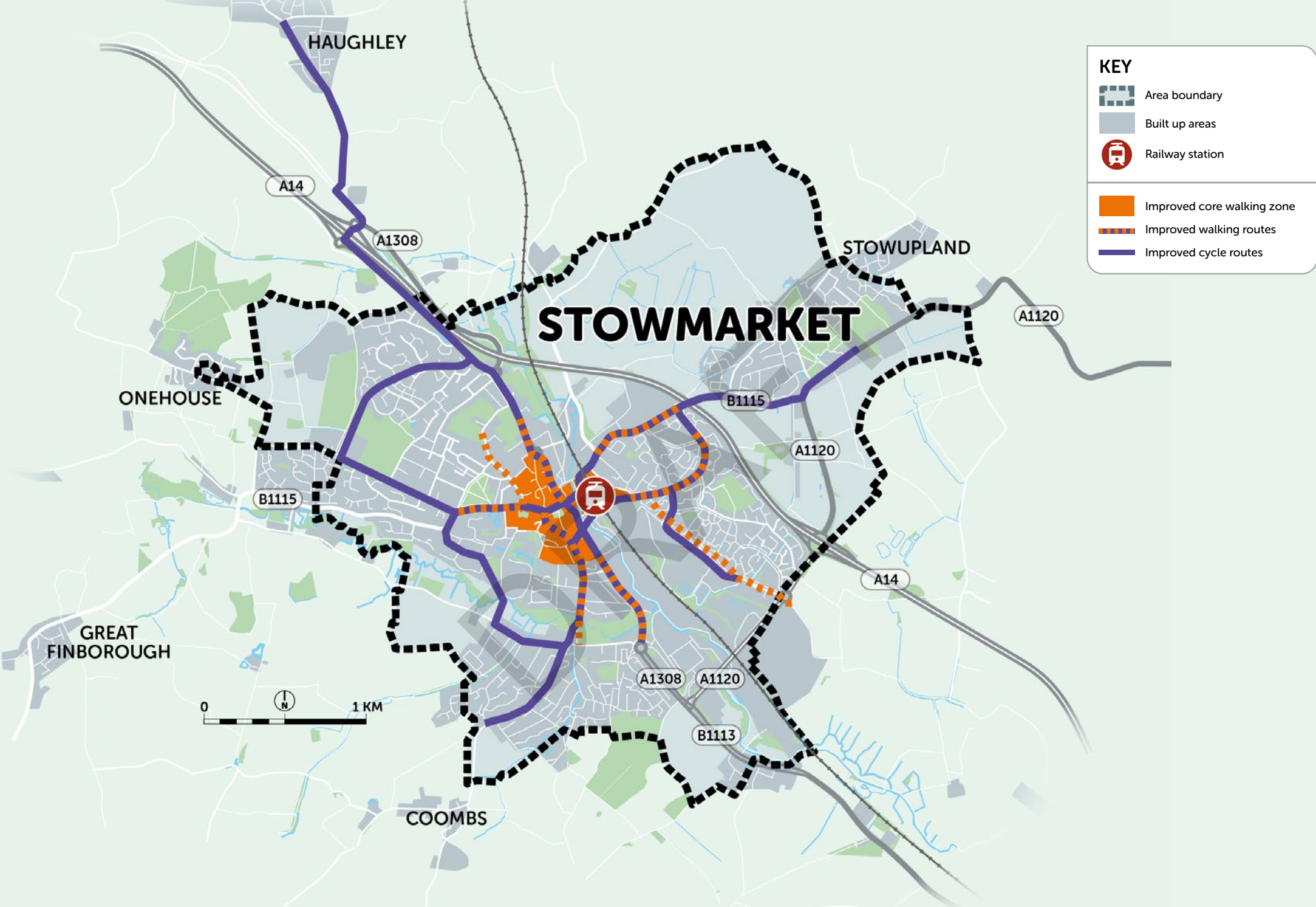
To encourage more residents to cycle for short and medium trips (under 5 kms) we will introduce a number of installations including high-quality segregated cycle paths, priority crossing points for cyclists, modal filters and other traffic-calming measures to reduce speed and make cycling safer. We will also increase the number of secure cycle parking options.

Key links include from the north and the south to the centre of Stowmarket, including from Haughley, Combs and Needham Market. East to west, connecting Stowmarket High School to the town centre and along Church Road to Stowupland High School.

There are also active travel connections expanding from the current developments at Gateway 14 linking to residential areas and the town centre which incorporates Gun Cotton Way.







OBJECTIVE

## Improve bus punctuality and reliability

A range of bus services operate in Stowmarket including connections to Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich. A town circular connects communities with the town centre. A demand responsive service links passengers to villages on the outskirts.

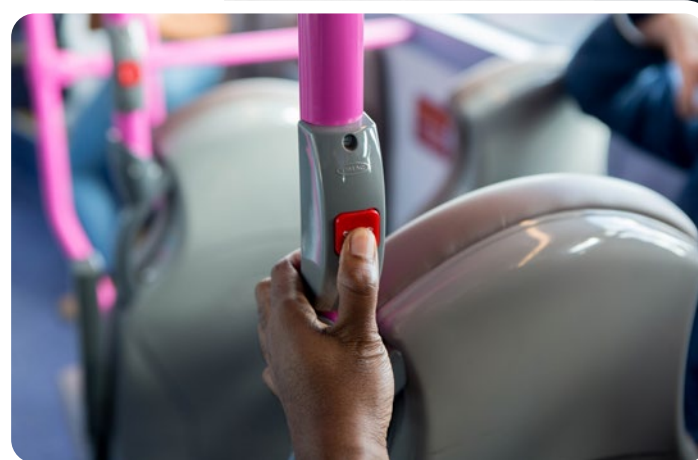
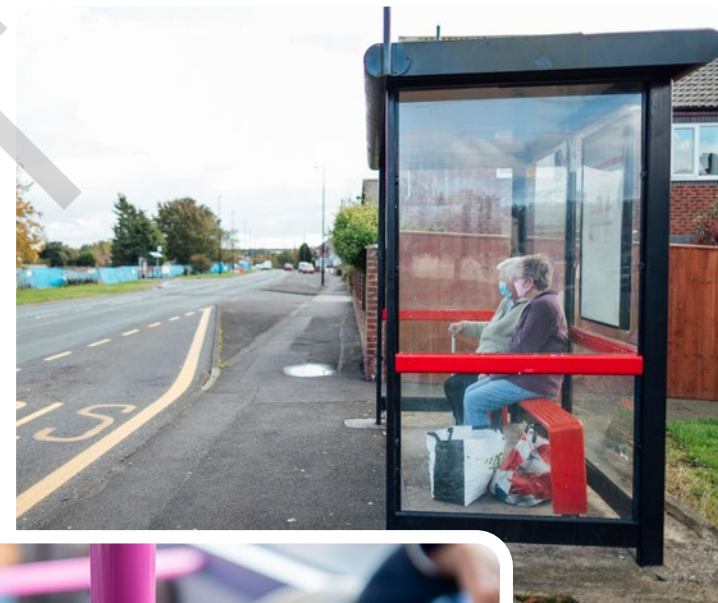
We will support greater coverage and frequency of services with an aspiration to achieve:

- Town service – half-hourly
- Interurban connections – at least 2 hourly with an aspiration of hourly
- Demand responsive services – daily connections

The current town bus services do not include a stop at the railway station. This service would benefit those travelling to the station for onward journeys. It would also create an opportunity to reduce car parking in residential streets around the station from commuters. We will look for a viable solution to provide a service to the railway station.

There is provision for a shuttle bus service for employees of Gateway 14 which will connect to the town centre and railway station as well as residential developments in the Stowmarket area.

We will continue to promote bus travel as a more sustainable way of connecting into Stowmarket as we transition away from diesel buses to our Zero Emissions Bus Plan. This move will help alleviate local air quality issues, particularly around schools at drop off and pick up times.



OBJECTIVE

# Improve the integration of modes

There is not a bus station in Stowmarket. The main two bus stops in the town centre are on Bury Street and Market Place. We will support new facilities at these bus stops to include adequate waiting facilities inclusive of shelters, passenger information (preferably real-time) and sufficient high-quality cycle parking.

The railway station in Stowmarket is on Station Road East. The station layout was enhanced in 2022 via a bridge with lifts to provide access for all at the station to both platforms. We will support the railway station becoming a transport hub with cycle parking, access to electric charging points for a variety of transport modes, as well as the option of a bus service.

We will continue to support Mid Suffolk Council with the installation of electric vehicle charging points, with more charging at places people visit regularly. This will include maximising opportunities at district owned carparks as well as improved installations of a fast-charging hub at Gateway 14, Stowmarket Town Football Club, Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and Chilton Fields Sports Club.

We will support measures to improve the wider active travel network which connects to the railway station especially linkages to the town centre area.

Electric Vehicle car clubs will be delivered and promoted throughout the course of the plan, the first of which is proposed on Crown Street in Stowmarket.



OBJECTIVE

## Maximise growth opportunities

In recent years the key expansion in the Stowmarket area has been employment land at Gateway 14, off the A1120, which is part of Freeport East. The provision of a greater number of jobs in the town, to match the housing expansion should increase the opportunities for trip internalisation within the local area, increasing the potential for sustainable transport to increase its share of the overall trip profile.

Off-site improvements to key active travel corridors, which include Gun Cotton Way, Kestrel Drive and Creeting Road East, will improve active travel options between the site, local destinations such as the town centre and railway station, and residential areas.

In addition to the existing shuttle bus service, greater provision of public transport options for employees and visitors to the site will help to achieve sustainability for the site into the future.

Through the Local Transport Plan, the priority will be to mitigate the impact of new developments through careful consideration with the Local Planning Authority over spatial planning and a shift to active and sustainable modes. However, where severe impacts cannot be mitigated through sustainable travel measures alone, capacity improvements may be required to fully mitigate new developments. Analysis of forecast growth on the transport network indicates that the A14, junction 50 – interchange with Gateway 14 is likely to require additional capacity as a result of new developments.



OBJECTIVE

# Support town centre economies

We will support improvements to Stowmarket by enhancing the attractiveness of streets and spaces within the town centre to draw shoppers and visitors in.

The core walking zone includes the Market Place, Wilkes Way, Ipswich Street, Bury Street and Tavern Street and the alleyways that connects the retail environment with the carparks and railway station. We will support giving greater priority to pedestrians in this area by reducing/ removing traffic and parking. In particular along Ipswich Street for certain periods of time such as market days. We will look at the use of increased seating and social spaces, more trees and planting and co-ordinated and accessible signage and lighting.

We will help to remove barriers to access the core walking zone by creating a clear, safe and direct pedestrian and cycling routes. This will help to encourage new residents moving into Stowmarket to live, work and shop locally, therefore reducing the need to travel by private motor vehicle

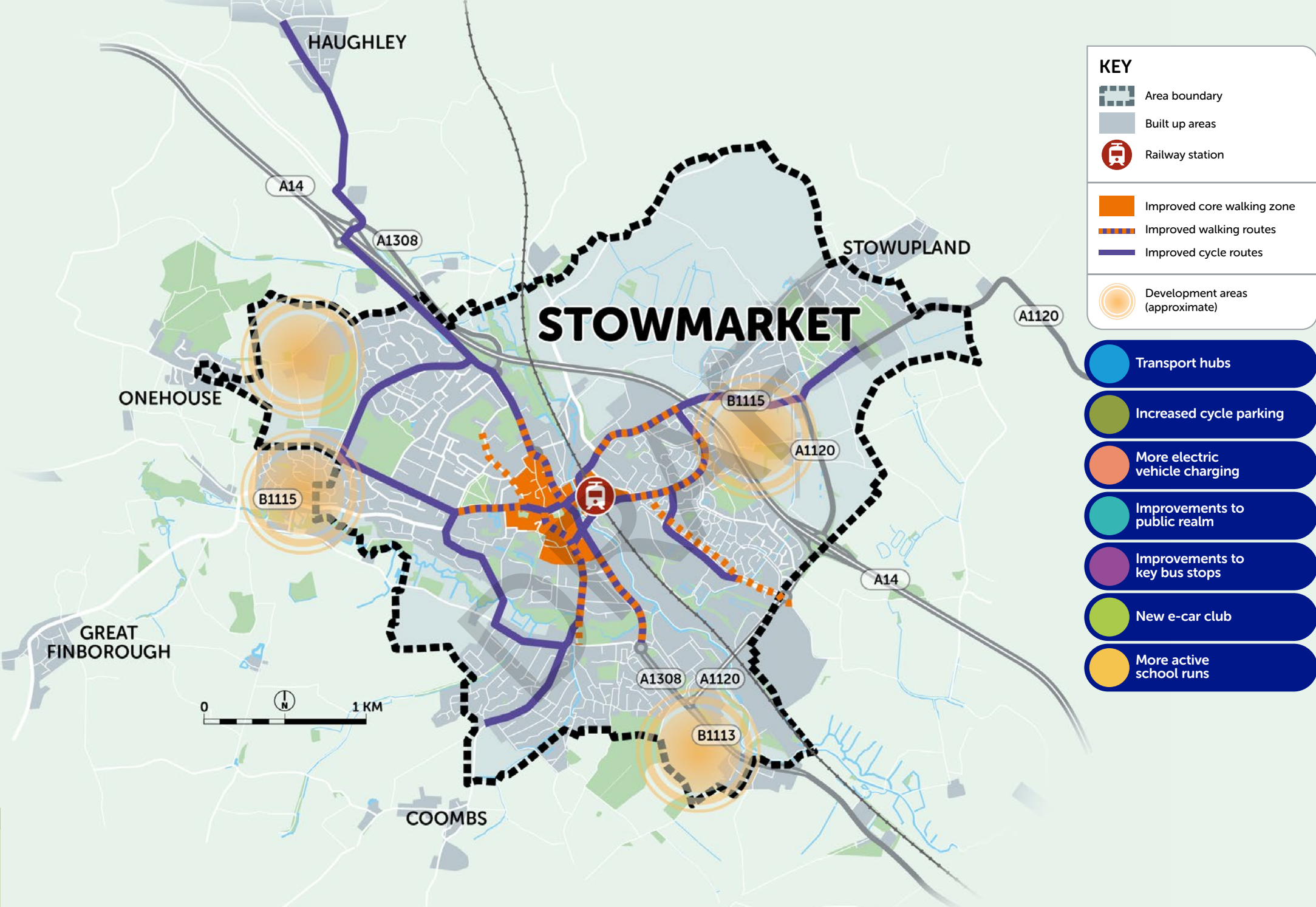
We will also support the delivery of a town-wide wayfinding project with Babergh Mid Suffolk to help people in Stowmarket navigate the surroundings and local spaces easily.



# Our plans for Stowmarket

The development of the Area Transport Plan has identified a number of areas to improve sustainable travel movements. These areas, together with improvements to the wider public realm, offer the opportunity for Stowmarket to meet the ongoing and future needs of its population, and those who visit and work in the area.





# Implementation plan

The table below indicates the county council's priorities for investment over the next five years including schemes funded through the county council's budgets, government funding and developer funding. The table does not include schemes delivered by 3rd parties:

Location	Description	Indicative Capital Investment
Stowmarket	LCWIP high priority routes	£250,000
Stowmarket	Town centre walking and cycling improvements	£100,000
Stowmarket	Modal integration at transport hubs	£200,000

## References

- Office for National Statistics, Census Data (2021)  
[www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/)
- Travel Time  
<https://app.traveltime.com>
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[Propensity to Cycle Tool - Suffolk \(pct.bike\)](#)
- Climate Emergency Plan  
[Climate Emergency Plan v2 2023-10-18 \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](#)
- Gear Change. A bold vision for cycling and walking  
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>