

Report to: Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

Date of Meeting: 18 June 2018

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Alexandra Park and St Helens Road cycle route review

Purpose: To report the outcomes of a feasibility study to consider an alternative cycle route alignment on St Helen's Road, as requested by the Lead Member at his decision-making meeting on 20 March 2017, and recommend how the scheme will be taken forward.

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the recommendations made within the East Sussex Highways Alexandra Park and St. Helens Road, Hastings Cycle Route Review report dated December 2017; and**
 - (2) Agree that the proposal to progress the route through Alexandra Park be taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2018/19 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements**
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1. Background Information

1.1 Hastings Borough Council (HBC) is leading on the delivery of a shared pedestrian and cycle facility within Alexandra Park, with the County Council providing the necessary design support. The facility will form one of the principal routes identified in the Hastings Walking and Cycling Strategy approved by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment on 15 September 2014. The Strategy focuses on identifying a borough-wide network of cycle routes which will be developed and delivered using funding from various sources including Local Growth Fund monies secured through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP), the County Council's capital programme for local transport improvements and development contributions.

1.2 At the Lead Member decision-making meeting on 20 March 2017, officers presented a report setting out a proposed route alignment to run through both the Upper and Lower sections of Alexandra Park. The report can be found in Appendix A. The Lead Member resolved to defer a decision on the proposed route and requested that an alternative route should be investigated along St Helens Road in light of local Members' concerns expressed in terms of the potential for conflict between cyclists and pedestrians at popular areas of the park, in particular near the café and bandstand.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Following the Lead Member's decision, a study (Appendix B) has been undertaken by East Sussex Highways to investigate the feasibility of a cycle route along St. Helens Road from Queens Road roundabout northwards to the access point into Alexandra Park near the public toilet facilities. The study report also reviews both the upper and lower sections of the route through Alexandra Park for comparison. In addition, the report appraises the existing risks of both alignment options, identifies mitigating measures to reduce such risks, and then recommends an overall route alignment.

2.2 The report has identified various difficulties in introducing a facility along St Helens Road. In summary, the main risks include the fencing spikes running along the perimeter of park (which cannot be altered as they are protected under conservation regulations) and the resultant need to widen the footway to mitigate this risk.

2.3 The minimum highway corridor width needed to facilitate a shared cycle/footway on one verge along the road would be 12.6 metres. This comprises of a 7.3 metre carriageway; a 1.8 metre wide footway on the north side of St Helens Road, and a 3.5 metre wide shared cycle/footway running adjacent to the Park. If any on street parking is to be retained adjacent to a shared cycle/footway the minimum highway corridor width would need to increase by 0.5 metre to provide separation between the parked vehicles and shared route. As identified in the Route Review Study, sections of St Helens Road fall below these minimum corridor widths to accommodate a shared cycle/footway. In addition there is also the need to remove an equivalent of approximately 36 on-street parking spaces which are heavily used. Along the lower section of St. Helens Road at least 20 trees would need to be removed to enable sufficient width for a shared facility to be achieved. Finally, there are two bus stops along the southern footway which would increase the potential conflict between passengers, cyclists and pedestrians.

2.4 The study outcomes and associated risks identified in section 2.2 were presented to the local County Councillors in March 2017. At the meeting, they asked whether an alternative route along the lower section of the park could be considered. This is shown in Appendix C and retains the route through the lower section of the park, but promotes an alignment on an existing route away from the café and bandstand.

2.5 The revised proposal through the Park has subsequently been discussed with both County Councillors. With specific regard to the top section of the park, Councillor Clarke (whose ward covers this section) has confirmed his support for the route proposed. With regards to the lower section of the park, whilst Councillor Daniel's preference is for a cycle route outside of the park, he has indicated that the revised alignment is an acceptable compromise. Councillor Daniel has also requested that design consideration is made to further enhancing the entry and exit points at Dordrecht Way with surfacing and road markings. In addition, physical deterrents are required near the cafe to deter cyclists from deviating from the promoted route along with additional 'No Cycling' signage. These requested changes will be incorporated into the detailed design.

2.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the proposal has been undertaken to assess the potential impact of cycling through the park on other users. A copy of this is included in Appendix D. The assessment identified that a shared use path through the park could have positive and negative impacts on children, older people and people with disabilities. To mitigate these potential negative impacts on other groups, a package of route improvement measures would be introduced, as identified in the Route Review Study, which, together with the provision of additional 'Share with Care' information signing and a code of conduct to promote responsible use, should help to mitigate the negative impacts that have been identified.

2.7 Subject to the Lead Member's approval, the scheme would need extensive detailed design with close liaison with Conservation / Planning officers at Hastings Borough Council to determine construction materials. The design would also require a Stage 2 (detailed design) Safety Audit and, depending on the risks identified in the safety audit, any potential 'exception reports' (which set out responses to the safety audit should they differ from the safety auditors recommendations and our justification for such decisions) would need to be approved by the Directorate.

2.8 In addition, as Alexandra Park is of Grade II* 'Registered Status' approval from Heritage England (HE) is required. HBC has consulted them and HE has approved the principle of the scheme. However they have indicated the need for further approval during the detailed design stage as well as also seeking a Landscape Management Plan which will need to be produced by HBC prior to construction. As stated in the March 2017 report to the Lead Member, monitoring of the park would be the responsibility of HBC. The County Council would support the Borough Council on any matters arising through the monitoring process.

2.9 It is anticipated that subject to the detailed design process and any risks as identified in section 2.7, construction could commence from Spring 2019. This would need to be programmed carefully to cause minimal disruption to users of the park. It is anticipated that the lower section of the park would be constructed first during early Spring when use of this section of the park is relatively low, with construction in the upper section following on thereafter.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 Following the Lead Member's decision in March 2017, a route review study of an alternative shared pedestrian and cycle route along St. Helens Road has been undertaken. For the reasons identified in paragraph 2.3, it is recommended that this route option is not progressed. As part of the route review study and further consultation with the local County Councillors, it is recommended that a revised alignment through the lower section of Alexandra Park, as described in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 and shown in Appendix C of the report, is progressed.

3.2 It is therefore recommended that the proposal to progress the route through Alexandra Park as shown in Appendix C of the report be taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2018/19 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements

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LOCAL MEMBER
Councillor Godfrey Daniel and Councillor Martin Clarke

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
None