

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 20 March 2017

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Alexandra Park, Hastings. Proposed designated shared pedestrian and cycle route – consultation results

Purpose: To consider Hastings Borough Council’s Cabinet report and recommendations, and determine whether the introduction of the shared pedestrian and cycle facility should proceed to detailed design and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Consider the recommendations made within Hastings Borough Council Cabinet report dated January 2016 and subsequent design considerations regarding the introduction of a shared pedestrian and cycle route in Alexandra Park; and**
- (2) Agree that the proposal should be taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2017/18 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements.**

1 Background Information

1.1. Hastings Borough Council (HBC) is leading on the delivery of a proposal to introduce 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. The scheme cost estimate is £150,000. This will be funded from a combination of a local development contribution from the Asda development in Silverhill (HS/09/0284 - £49,749 available) and Local Growth Fund monies for the Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package (£1.5m available in 2017/18).

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The proposed 3 metre wide shared pedestrian / cycle route will join the Silverhill area with Bethune Way, running via Beaufort Road and then utilising the existing paths through the lower section of Alexandra Park. See Appendix 1 for scheme proposal plans.

2.2 Alexandra Park is designated by Historic England (HE) as grade 2* registered status due to its historic significance. Whilst confirmation has been obtained that the scheme does not require planning permission, HE has been consulted on the proposals. They consider that the proposals have the potential to cause some harm to the naturalistic and verdant character of the park. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 132), any harm to a heritage asset requires a clear convincing justification and all ways of minimising the harm should be pursued. This includes referring to the ‘Streets for All’ document in designing the routes, including making them as natural and informal in character as possible, with minimum widths, minimal lighting, signage and appropriate surface treatment, verges and landscaping.

2.3 Between April and August 2015, HBC (as the project lead) undertook a staged consultation exercise. HBC determined that this consultation was not about the principle of a route through the

park as this had already been established through the Hastings Walking and Cycling Strategy published in May 2014.

2.4 The staged consultation therefore focused on the detailed implementation of the route. As a first stage of the consultation, HBC set up a Reference Group of interested parties (Friends of Alexandra Park, The Greenway Group, The Ramblers Association, Hastings and Bexhill Disability Forum and Hastings Urban Bikes) in April 2015 to assess the initial proposals and give early feedback to ESCC and their design consultants prior to the public consultation exercise. This feedback was then considered in the design process where appropriate.

2.5 As a second stage, a public consultation took place between 15 June and 21 August 2015. HBC invited comment through its website, in person at the Community Contact Centre and via a dedicated consultation event in Alexandra Park on 28 June 2015, at which officers from both Councils and the design consultants were available to discuss the proposed route. There were 177 responses to the public consultation. 82 responses were identified as 'for' and 84 'against' the proposals. A petition with 63 signatories against the proposal was also submitted to HBC. The petition did not contain a single statement for signatories to acknowledge and add their signature against but was a collection of various comments against the proposed route. Specific concerns raised included issues of safety, signage and enforcement, as well as opposition to the principle of introducing cycling in the park.

2.6 The public consultation comments received were assessed and reported to HBC's Cabinet in January 2016 (see Appendix 2). HBC agreed in principle to a shared cycle route through Alexandra Park subject to ESCC removing the section of the proposed route in front of the park's café, and following a review of the consultation results, where practicable, maximise the number of signs, bollards, and finger-posts and introduce coloured surface markings. In particular, signage would be required where the route merges or crosses with existing footpaths as well as ensuring 'cyclists dismount' signs are introduced at appropriate locations. It was also requested that cycle racks be provided at appropriate locations within the park.

2.7 Following HBC's Cabinet resolution, the County Council commissioned further design work to consider both the comments submitted as part of the consultation process as well as the Cabinet's recommendations in order to ensure that the safety of all users of the park was paramount in the design, with coloured surfacing and signage now proposed in those areas with potential conflict points or reduced visibility. In addition, an independent Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been conducted to ensure the safety of all users of the park is considered within the design. The proposals shown in Appendix 1 reflect the consultation comments, HBC Cabinet recommendations and recommendation of the Stage 1 Safety Audit. A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit will be conducted when the detailed design is complete to provide further safety assurance and compliance.

2.8 Should the proposal be implemented, HBC will be responsible for the long term maintenance of the cycle route. HBC will also be conducting post-opening monitoring and enforcement within the park to further ensure the safety of all users. HBC officers will instruct their Rangers and Wardens to have a heightened presence in the park at specific times and to engage with cyclists where appropriate to deter unsafe cycling. Cyclists riding outside the designated route would be potentially liable to Fixed Penalty Notices for contravention of the bye laws. It is anticipated that this proportionate approach combining education and enforcement will encourage appropriate behaviour by all park users.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The proposed shared pedestrian and cycle route through Alexandra Park accords with the Walking and Cycling Strategy for Hastings adopted by the County Council in 2014. As scheme lead, HBC has carried out a staged public consultation exercise process to establish local views on the proposal. The design has been shaped by the comments raised and reflected in the consultation, and in HBC's Cabinet's recommendations, to ensure the route can operate as safely as possible for all users. In addition, HBC has presented a post-implementation strategy for monitoring and enforcement within the park.

3.2 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to agree that the scheme be taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2017/18 Capital Programme for Local Transport

Improvements, subject to any minor modifications which are identified during the detailed design stage.

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LOCAL MEMBERS
Councillors Daniel and Rogers

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
Alexandra Park Cycling Consultation Collated Results – 15th June to 21st August

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