

Report to: Lead Member for Transport & Environment
Date of meeting: 21 November 2022
Report By: Director of Communities, Economy, and Transport
Title: Bexhill-on-Sea Cycling and Pedestrian Route: Collington to Bexhill Enterprise Park, Worsham
Purpose: To consider the results of the public consultation on the proposed cycle route in Bexhill-on-Sea, and to recommend how the scheme will be taken forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the results of the public consultation on the Collington to Bexhill Enterprise Park pedestrian and cycle improvement scheme;**
 - (2) Agree that the scheme is taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements.**
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1. Background Information

1.1 The Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package comprises a package of pedestrian, cycle and public transport improvement schemes across Bexhill, Hastings and St Leonards. One of the identified schemes in the package is a shared pedestrian and cycle route between Collington and Bexhill Enterprise Park, Worsham in Bexhill-on-Sea. This is one of the principal routes identified in the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) adopted in September 2021. The LCWIP aims to promote a sustainable integrated package of cycling, walking and bus infrastructure, traffic management and public realm improvements.

1.2 This proposal is being funded by the Local Growth Fund secured through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), the County Council's capital programme for local transport improvements and development contributions. The scheme will support the Council's strategies and objectives relating to reducing carbon emissions, supporting economic recovery and economic growth as well as improving the health and wellbeing within the local community. The scheme will be added to county's highway asset register and the ongoing maintenance costs will be included in the Council's future highway maintenance programme.

2. Supporting Information

Scheme Proposals

2.1 The principal of the cycle route between Collington and Bexhill Enterprise Park in Worsham was initially identified through the development of the East Sussex LCWIP. A feasibility study was undertaken to determine the most appropriate route for the scheme which was informed by data collected in traffic, pedestrian and cycle surveys and an analysis of crash data in the wider extent along the proposed route over the last three-year period. The development of the proposed route also took into consideration the current use of the existing trip attractors such as the seafront, Collington Train Station, Bexhill Hospital, Bexhill retail superstores, industrial estates, schools, libraries, community centres, and open recreational spaces. The proposed route and further details on each section is shown in Appendix 1.

2.2 The proposed route largely consists of on-road facilities to allow cyclists to travel in either direction from Collington to Bexhill Enterprise Park. The route connects to the existing National Cycle Network Route 2 (NCN2) at the seafront and links to Collington station, King Offa Primary Academy, Bexhill Leisure Centre, Bexhill Hospital, and St. Mary's School. The proposal does not include any mandatory or advisory cycle lanes and will instead use a mixture of signs on the carriageway and shared footway/cycleway facilities.

2.3 Pedestrian and cycle crossing improvements will be introduced at a number of locations along the route. The existing controlled Puffin pedestrian crossing facility on the A259 Little Common Road will be upgraded to a Toucan crossing allowing cyclists and pedestrians to cross together

without the need for cyclists to dismount. It is also proposed to replace the existing traffic island on Wrestwood Road with a Toucan crossing to link into the existing facilities which serve the new residential and employment areas in north east Bexhill. Cyclists will be required to dismount on the public footpath which runs from north of King Offa Primary Academy to the subway under Coombe Valley Way.

2.4 The proposal includes the introduction of double yellow lines at various locations to facilitate the introduction of the route which would result in the loss of on street parking for around 51 vehicles. Space for around 31 vehicles would be lost on the section of route near Bexhill hospital, whilst another 18 spaces would be lost due to the introduction of the proposed controlled crossing on Wrestwood Road. The loss of on-street parking spaces equates to less than 7% of the total available space along the length of the proposed 4km cycling and pedestrian route.

Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Impacts

2.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the proposal, included at Appendix 2, has been undertaken to assess the potential impact of the route for all users. The assessment identified that a shared use path could have positive and negative impacts on children, older people, and people with disabilities or reduced mobility. To mitigate these potential negative impacts on other groups, a package of route improvement measures would be introduced, together with the design going through a rigorous, independent safety audit process to ensure all safety concerns raised in the audit are mitigated or removed.

2.6 The scheme would also help to reduce carbon emissions by encouraging more journeys in Bexhill to be undertaken on foot or by bike which might otherwise have been undertaken by car.

Stakeholder and Public Consultation

2.7 A consultation on the proposals was undertaken with key stakeholder groups in August 2021 including emergency services, local cycle groups, disability groups, walking groups, the Freight Transport Association, Local Bus Company (Stagecoach), landowners and the Road Haulage Association. No objections were received through this exercise.

2.8 A public consultation was carried out between 11 November and 16 December 2021. A leaflet together with the scheme plan was delivered to all properties and businesses within and along the vicinity of the proposed route. This also included St Mary's and King Offa Primary Schools. All consultation material was made available online and copies of the drawings were made available at publicly accessible community premises, such as local libraries and Rother District Council. Details of the consultation were also sent to all local County and Borough Councillors. A copy of the consultation leaflet, design plans, questionnaire, and a map showing the extent of the consultation, is contained in Appendix 3.

2.9 Due to the pandemic, no face-to-face surgeries took place where members of the public or stakeholders could ask questions or discuss the proposals. As an alternative, the East Sussex Highways customer contact centre answered any questions raised by members of the public and interested stakeholders. The public consultation was also advertised through social media, local newspaper media, and community advertisements online. Details were also placed on the respective East Sussex Highways website and the East Sussex consultation hub.

Consultation outcomes and commentary

2.10 A total of 64 questionnaires were completed through the consultation exercise which was an extremely low response rate. The results showed 42% (27 responses) of respondents supported the scheme and 58% (37 responses) opposed the scheme. Councillor Hollidge expressed his support for the scheme but commented that the design could have been more ambitious. The current design has sought to take a balanced approach by seeking to limit the number of on street-parking spaces that are removed and ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders are considered. A summary of the responses to the local consultation is provided in Appendix 4. A copy of the consultation information will be provided in the Members Room.

2.11 The main concerns that were raised through the consultation related to safety. On further analysis of the consultation comments, the influencing factors are not necessarily all directly attributed to the scheme itself, but the general perception of poor cyclist behaviour and the poor state

of the existing highways infrastructure. Four comments were specifically relating to concerns about cyclists using the carriageway which was felt to be dangerous, specifically around Bexhill Hospital (Holliers Hill and Chantry Avenue) during the daytime due to car parking congestion. Whilst consideration was given to an alternative solution, these were discounted due to carriageway and footway width restrictions and concerns raised by Safety Audit about ensuring a safe route for cyclists and pedestrians.

2.12 In addition, 14 comments related to the perceived danger of cyclists on the carriageway. The on-road cycle routes are only proposed through quiet residential areas where there are 85th percentile speeds of 30mph or less in both directions. Seven comments related to existing footways being too narrow, with concern for conflicts between cyclists and school traffic congestion and people with mobility impairments.

2.13 A number of responses requested that dedicated cycle lanes should be provided instead of shared pedestrian/cycle facilities. The County Council have introduced shared pedestrian/cycle facilities throughout the County – examples include the Bulverhythe Coastal link between Hastings and Bexhill and the Horsey Way in Eastbourne - and evidence indicates shared routes can operate successfully within their respective communities. Whilst it does not fully achieve all of the core design principles set out in Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20, the Government's revised guidance on cycle infrastructure design, the preliminary designs were reviewed to ensure that cyclists have the highest level of provision possible, whilst also considering other road users. This has included undertaking a retrospective Cycling Level of Service (CLOs) audit, as advised through the LTN1/20 guidance, to assess the coherence, directness, safety, comfort, and attractiveness of the design of this route. The scheme will proactively seek to influence the behaviour of all those using the route through the promotion of a code of conduct 'Share with Care' signs.

2.14 Comments were also made about the displacement of parking spaces because of the scheme. However, given one of the scheme objectives is to promote active travel journeys in place of car borne trips, the impact of the loss of on-street parking along the length of the route is potentially mitigated by the consequential reduced need to travel by car generated by the introduction of the scheme and ultimately reduce parking demand.

2.15 Concerns were also raised about the cost of the scheme and how the funding could be better spent repairing the existing roads in Bexhill. The capital expenditure for this scheme is ring fenced from the Local Growth Fund secured to specifically make capital improvements to walking and cycling in the Bexhill and Hastings area and therefore cannot be spent on highway maintenance.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The outcomes from the consultation indicate that there is a level of support locally for improved pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure in this part of Bexhill. The introduction of the scheme, which is identified in the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, will support the Council's strategies and objectives relating to reducing carbon emissions, supporting economic recovery and economic growth as well as improving the health and wellbeing within the local community.

3.2 Whilst concerns were raised about the safety of shared route schemes and on-road cycling, evidence from other schemes introduced in the county demonstrates these facilities can operate successfully by offering alternative low emission transport links within the communities they serve. In addition, although there were requests that dedicated cycle lanes should be provided instead, the scheme has been designed, taking account of industry best practice and guidance for inclusive mobility, to ensure that cyclists have the highest level of provision possible, whilst also considering the needs of other road users.

3.3 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to agree that the Collington to Bexhill Enterprise Park pedestrian/cycle improvement scheme is taken forward to detailed design as part of the 2022/23 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements, with construction to follow in 2023/24.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Ellie McDaniel

Tel. No.: 0345 608 0190

Email: Ellie.McDaniel@eastsussex.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Steven Ward

Tel. No.: 0345 608 0190

Email: Steven.Ward@jacobs.com

Project Manager & Report Author: Charles Emeanuwa

Tel. No.: 0345 608 0193

Email: charles.emeanuwa@eastsussexhighways.com

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Azad, Clark, Geary, Hollidge

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None