

Report to: Lead Member for Transport & Environment

Date of meeting: 20 May 2020

Report By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Hastings Western Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

Purpose: To consider the results of the public consultation on the proposed pedestrian and cycle route in Hastings, and how the scheme will be taken forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the results of the public consultation on the Hastings Western Pedestrian and Cycling Scheme;**
 - (2) Agree that the scheme is taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2020/21 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements, subject to any delivery risks and delays arising from the current COVID-19 pandemic.**
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1. Background Information

1.1. A shared pedestrian and cycle route between the Combe Valley Greenway and Silverhill in Hastings forms 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 (SELEP), the County Council's capital programme for local transport improvements and development contributions.

1.2 In October 2019 the County Council declared a Climate Emergency and set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050, in line with the target agreed by Central Government in 2019. The proposal will help to contribute towards achieving such targets by promoting sustainable modes of travel to access local services and amenities.

2. Supporting Information

Scheme Proposals

2.1 A feasibility study was carried out by East Sussex Highways (ESH) to identify potential routes for a pedestrian and cycle facility between Sedlescombe Road and Bodiam Drive/Queensway in Hastings. To determine the most appropriate route for the scheme, a series of traffic, pedestrian and cycle surveys were conducted, together with an assessment of the crash data over the last three-year period along the proposed route corridor. The proposed route also sought to link with existing trip attractors in the area such as the local Asda and Tesco retail superstores, industrial estates, schools, libraries, community centres, and open recreational spaces. The proposed route is shown in Appendix 1.

2.2 The proposed scheme is primarily to provide a shared off carriageway pedestrian and cycle route, with footway widening where possible. Where this is not feasible, cyclists will be required to use the carriageway of local, quieter roads where traffic levels are low. There are no proposals to remove existing on-street parking to enable these measures to be introduced.

2.3 The existing pedestrian crossing points along Ironlatch Avenue and at the Marline Road/Wishing Tree Road junction will be upgraded to toucan crossings to allow cyclists to use these facilities. The proposals also include upgraded street lighting along the route. To improve access for all pedestrians, particularly those with restricted mobility, improvements will be made to the existing ramp within the vicinity of Stonehouse Drive and Menzies Road. It is considered these measures will improve access for residents to the Silverhill area.

2.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment for the proposal has been undertaken to assess the potential impact of cycling along the route on other users. A copy of this is included in Appendix 2. The assessment identified that a shared use path 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, together with the provision of additional 'Share with Care' information signing.

Public Consultation

2.5 A consultation on the proposals was undertaken in November 2019, with key stakeholder groups, which comprised the 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 on the proposed scheme.

2.6 A local consultation was carried out between 11 November and 13 December 2019. A letter and scheme plan were delivered to all properties and businesses along the proposed route. This also included the Churchwood and Robsack Primary Schools. All consultation material was made available online and copies of the drawings were made available at the local Hollington Library. A copy of the consultation letter, plan, questionnaire and a map showing the extent of the consultation, is contained in Appendix 3. Details of the consultation were also sent to all local County and Borough Councillors. Councillor Evans expressed her support for the scheme.

2.7 As part of the consultation, two 'drop in' surgeries were held on the 22 and 23 November 2019 to allow people to discuss the proposals in more detail. The surgeries were advertised through social media, local newspaper media and community advertisements as well as on a local radio's online website. Details were also placed on the ESH and County Council websites. Councillor Scott attended and gave his support for the proposal.

Consultation responses

2.8 A copy of the consultation summary report is provided in Appendix 4. A total of 96 questionnaires were completed through the consultation exercise. The results showed 63% of respondents supported the scheme. The main concerns that were raised were on the grounds of safety. It is noted that in terms of responses, 44% were from people age 65+ and from this 74% had reduced mobility. Therefore, it became clear from the consultation responses that it is important to ensure footways are particularly accessible along the proposed route.

2.9 23 respondents did not support the proposals. Four of these responses were related to concerns about cyclist safety on sections of the route where cyclists need to use the carriageway, specifically along Bodiam Drive, during the school peak times. Whilst consideration was given to widening the existing footway along Bodiam Drive to provide a shared facility, this would require the removal of on-street parking to ensure minimum carriageway width was maintained for two-way traffic flow. Given Bodiam Drive already has traffic calming measures along its length and existing 85th percentile traffic speeds are 30mph in both directions, it was considered appropriate for cyclists to use the carriageway at this location.

2.10 Four responses related to the perceived danger shared cycle/footways might have for pedestrians, particularly those with restricted mobility or hearing or visual impairments. The County Council have introduced similar facilities throughout the county and evidence indicates these shared routes can operate safely, for example, the Bulverhythe Coastal link between Hastings and Bexhill and the Horsey Way in Eastbourne. The scheme being promoted has been designed in accordance with current design guidance and best practice for inclusive mobility. In addition, 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.

2.11 Concerns were also raised about the cost of the scheme and how it could be better spent repairing the existing roads. The cost of introducing the proposed pedestrian and cycle facility is ring fenced funding secured through SELEP specifically for improving walking, cycling and public transport use in the Bexhill and Hastings area.

2.12 Subsequent to the consultation exercise the County Council received a request from a member of the public to consider an alternative route for the Wishing Tree Road to Bodiam Drive section of the route. A review of this option has been undertaken and concluded it would not be viable as sections of the route were not sufficiently wide enough to accommodate a shared cycle/footway. The route review report is contained in Appendix 5.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The results of the public consultation on the Hastings Western Pedestrian and Cycle scheme show there is support for the proposed measures. Whilst there is concern about the safety of introducing shared route facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, evidence from other schemes introduced in the county do demonstrate these facilities can operate safely. The proposed shared pedestrian and cycle route aligns with the Walking and Cycling Strategy for Hastings adopted by the County Council in 2014 and will improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to key trip attractors in the western part of the Hastings area between Sedlescombe Road and Bodiam Drive/Queensway.

3.2 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to note the outcomes of the consultation on the Hastings Western Pedestrian and Cycle scheme and agree that the scheme be taken forward to detailed design as part of the 2020/21 Capital Programme for Local Transport, with construction following in 2021/22, subject to any delivery risks and delays arising from the current COVID-19 pandemic.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Clarke and Scott

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None