

# Individual Executive Member Decision

---

## A4 Cycle Improvements - Newbury to Thatcham

---

**Committee considering report:** Individual Executive Member Decision

**Date ID to be signed:** 15 November 2017

**Portfolio Member:** Councillor Jeanette Clifford

**Forward Plan Ref:** ID3374

---

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To summarise the responses received to the consultation on proposed improvements to cycle facilities along the A4 between Newbury and Thatcham (National Cycle Network Route 422) and make a recommendation as to how to proceed with the project.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
- (1) The proposals advertised in the recent consultation are implemented, albeit with a number of minor amendments to address comments made by respondents;
  - (2) Further investigation is carried out in respect of the speed limit on the A4 and the need for further pedestrian crossing facilities;
  - (3) Traffic Regulation Orders required as part of the proposals are advertised in a separate statutory consultation, with any objections received being referred to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport in a further Individual Decision.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** If implemented, the measures recommended will cost approximately £305,000 and be funded from the Capital Programme using funds already received from the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- 3.2 **Policy:** None
- 3.3 **Personnel:** None
- 3.4 **Legal:** If implemented, the project will require new Traffic Regulation Orders to be advertised in a separate statutory consultation process.
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** If implemented, the project will be managed in accordance with the Transport and Countryside Service's approach to

risk management.

- 3.6 **Property:** To maximise the benefit of the proposals, some small strips of land will need to be purchased from properties fronting the A4 London Road. The land is being independently valued and informal negotiations have begun with the affected landowners.
- 3.7 **Other:** None

## 4. Consultation Responses

### Members:

- Leader of Council:** Councillor Graham Jones supports the recommendations of the report.
- Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:** Councillor Emma Webster has no objections to the scheme.
- Ward Members:** Councillor Dennis Benneyworth (Victoria ward) supports the recommendations of the report.  
Councillor James Frederickson (Victoria ward) declined to comment.  
Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter (Thatcham West ward) did not comment.  
Councillor Nick Goodes (Thatcham West ward) did not comment.  
Councillor Jeff Beck (Clay Hill ward) supports the recommendations of the report.  
Councillor Dave Goff (Clay Hill ward) supports the recommendations of the report.
- Opposition Spokesperson:** Councillor Lee Dillon did not comment (Councillor Billy Drummond is currently unavailable).
- Local Stakeholders:** Consulted in October 2017 via leaflet drop and online consultation. See Appendix C for a summary of the responses.
- Officers Consulted:** Mark Edwards, Jon Winstanley, Mark Cole, Glyn Davis, Peter Walker.
- Trade Union:** Not applicable

## 5. Other options considered

- 5.1 Alternative east-west routes were investigated along the canal towpath, Turnpike Road/Kiln Road and Hambridge Road (B3421). A fully segregated facility adjacent to the A4 was also considered.

Kennet & Avon Canal Towpath:

- 5.2 The proposed NCN422 is a direct commuter route and will provide an express route for cyclists travelling up to 15mph. To provide and maintain an equivalent facility on the towpath would not be feasible. Separately the Canal & River Trust (CRT) have received funds to upgrade the towpath east of Newbury, from Bull's Lock to Victoria Park. This will be a welcome upgrade for recreational cycling but does not solve the problem of cyclists and pedestrians living and working close to the A4 needing safe and direct routes to and from work.

Turnpike Road and Kiln Road:

- 5.3 Similarly if routed to the north, through Turnpike / Kiln Road, Shaw, the proposal is not on the desire line for the majority of commuter routes, and would take most cyclists away from employment centres and local destinations.

Hambridge Road:

- 5.4 Consideration was given to how the B3421 Hambridge Road could be improved, as it runs parallel to the A4 London Road. However the carriageway is simply not wide enough and any upgrades would involve extensive land acquisition either side of the road, involving too many landowners for it to be a plausible option. Further to the south, the new route through the racecourse is an option, but again is indirect and away from the majority of housing so would not serve as a direct commuter route.

The A4

- 5.5 A fully segregated path on the south side of the A4 was also considered. However due to limited space on and off the carriageway, unless large areas of land were purchased, then creation of such a track would not be possible, and it would inevitably be disjointed where existing pinch points and/or land issues couldn't be resolved. Furthermore the budget is insufficient to fund extensive kerb realignment and construction of an off-road route for the entire distance and initial discussions with cyclists and local cycling groups indicated a preference for on-carriageway solutions.

## 6. Introduction/Background

- 6.1 Working with other unitary authorities in Berkshire, West Berkshire Council successfully submitted a bid for funding to the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership to improve cycling facilities along the Thames Valley corridor between Newbury and Windsor, with a particular focus on promoting cycling for journeys to work. £1.1m has been allocated to West Berkshire Council to deliver its part of the project. It is intended for the route to be of a suitable standard for inclusion in the Sustrans national network of cycle routes. Sustrans is an organisation which promotes cycling and works with local authorities to designate cycling routes across the UK; this route will be known as “NCN422”.
- 6.2 The section of the A4 between Newbury and Thatcham is the first phase of West Berkshire’s part of the route and further work will be done between Thatcham and Reading as the project progresses.
- 6.3 The A4 (known locally as London Road and Benham Hill) is the main route between Newbury and Thatcham. It is single carriageway for the most part but there are short sections at busy junctions where the road widens to six lanes to reduce congestion through traffic signals.
- 6.4 There are a number of existing cycle facilities on the A4 between Newbury and Thatcham, in the form of off-carriageway cycleways and “toucan” crossing facilities at the A4/Faraday Road/Newport Road junction. However the cycleways are discontinuous and include points of potential conflict between cycles and motor traffic (for example where the cycleways cross private driveways) and between cycles and pedestrians (for example at bus stops and where there is insufficient width for pedestrians and cyclists to share the available space).
- 6.5 Surveys have shown that currently many cyclists use the footway instead of the carriageway, even when not formally designated for use by cyclists, and can come into conflict with pedestrians or cars exiting driveways. The existing footway is particularly narrow in parts (less than 1.4 metres), making it difficult for pushchair and wheelchair users to use, or for two people to comfortably walk side-by-side, even without promoting them for use by cyclists.
- 6.6 This project aims to improve facilities for cyclists of all levels of ability and confidence. Confident cyclists tend to prefer to ride on the carriageway at higher speeds, whereas less confident, occasional cyclists usually prefer not to mix with motor traffic and stay off the carriageway, particularly on busy roads such as the A4. It is therefore the intention to improve both on- and off-carriageway facilities as part of this project.
- 6.7 Whilst improving conditions for cyclists, the needs of all road users have to be balanced and the proposals have been developed so as not to have an unduly negative effect on vehicular congestion or worsen the experience of pedestrians. In some locations, therefore, it has not been possible to achieve fully continuous provision for cyclists either on- or off-carriageway because to have done so would have compromised safety for pedestrians or capacity for motor traffic as there was insufficient space to provide a facility for all road users.
- 6.8 The proposals are shown on a series of drawings in Appendix D and are summarised as follows:

- (1) Introduce 1.5 metre wide cycle lanes on the carriageway;
- (2) Remove, or reduce the width/length of central hatching & right hand turn lanes where appropriate;
- (3) Remove traffic island 'pinch points' where possible to create the space for the on-carriageway cycle lanes;
- (4) Widen existing footways to allow shared pedestrian/cycle use;
- (5) Widen some existing foot/cycleways and convert from segregated to shared use;
- (6) Improve pedestrian crossing facilities by widening central traffic islands;
- (7) Remove "street clutter" and relocate bus shelters, lamp columns and sign posts to make more space for users of the off-carriageway facilities;
- (8) Improve facilities at the major traffic signal junctions with Hambridge Road and Lower Way (as part of forthcoming refurbishment projects);
- (9) Localised repairs to carriageway, footway and cycleway surfaces.

## 7. Supporting Information

- 7.1 In October 2017, households and businesses on and adjacent to the A4 were consulted on the potential improvements by way of a leaflet drop delivered to approximately 700 addresses (the leaflet is included in Appendix B). The proposals, including the detailed drawings, were also publicised on the consultation section of the Council's website.
- 7.2 Fifty five responses to the consultation were received. There were twenty three responses in favour of the proposals and twenty three against, with nine responses making comments not specifically stating either support or objection. The responses are summarised in Appendix C, together with Officer's comments.
- 7.3 There were a number of recurrent themes in the responses, summarised below:
- Crossing Facilities:
- 7.4 One of the main areas of concern was regarding the loss of crossing points along the A4. For the most part residents were seeking clarification over which traffic islands were proposed to be removed, and objecting to any of the pedestrian islands being taken away. In recognition of the fact that the A4 has a high volume of traffic and is hard to cross during busy periods none of the pedestrian islands are to be removed. Instead the proposals make improvements to make it safer to cross. For example, the traffic island between Skyllings and Martingale Chase will remain and be upgraded to a pedestrian refuge of adequate width and with sufficient dropped kerb access. The pedestrian island west of Dorneywood Way will be widened so that it meets the minimum width requirement. The island on Benham Hill opposite Southdown Road will remain.

- 7.5 The only traffic islands that are proposed for removal are the two between the Swan Inn and the Newbury Business Park/B&Q roundabout, and the traffic islands outside the entrance to Tesco, none of which are designed for use by pedestrians crossing due to their size and/or location. Given the strength of opinion of respondents concern about safely crossing the A4 London Road further surveys and investigations could be carried out to assess the need for new controlled crossing facilities.

### Loss of Right Hand Turn Lanes:

- 7.6 Another popular objection was to the loss of right hand turn facilities, or concern regarding turning lanes being reduced in width and/or length. There was some confusion over exactly which are proposed to be removed; only the entrances to the Swan Inn and service road access to Ham Marina and Newbury Manor Hotel would completely lose their right hand turn facility. Those directly affected will be 10 properties, a hotel, three businesses and those accessing the marina. It is considered that these do not have enough turning movements to bear any significant impact on peak congestion. Westbound vehicles turning right into the pub have the roundabout 200 metres away which is not far for vehicles to u-turn and come back to make a left turn.
- 7.7 Between Skyllings and Martingale Chase the turning lanes will be reduced in width to allow continuation of the westbound cycle lane. It should be noted that the lanes in their current state are less than 2 metres wide; vehicle tracking and observations on the ground indicate that they do not pose a safety risk. The proposed cycle lane is advisory so traffic can enter it if necessary to pass vehicles positioned in the middle of the road waiting to turn right. The cycle lane, marked with frequent cycle symbols painted on the road, will alert motorists to the possible presence of cyclists and therefore serve as a reminder to always check before making a manoeuvre to enter the cyclists' space.

### Central Carriageway Hatching:

- 7.8 Similar to the above, residents expressed concern that the removal of hatching in the centre of the road on Benham Hill and London Road would prevent them from safely waiting in the middle of the road for a gap in traffic before turning right into their driveways. Vehicles approaching properties between the Hambridge Road and Lower Way junctions from Thatcham could, however, use Turnpike Road and Fir Tree Lane in order to make a left turn into the driveways. Vehicles approaching properties between the Lower Way junction and the Tull Way (garden centre) roundabout from Newbury could make a U-turn at the roundabout and turn left into the driveways. Drivers would be able to choose whether to wait in the road to turn right or to make the diversions and turn left, there is no proposal to formally restrict any turning movements.
- 7.9 The section between Hambridge Road and Lower Way was planned to change in any case in order to mitigate the extra traffic associated with the major residential development at Newbury Racecourse. This would have reduced the hatching in the centre of the carriageway to approximately 1.5 metres in width to enable provision of a third westbound lane dedicated for traffic turning left into Hambridge Road. This would not have been sufficient for a car to occupy, most cars are up to 1.8 metres wide. It is therefore considered that the 1.5 metres of road space is better utilised to provide an eastbound cycle lane on the northern side of the carriageway, with a

double white line instead of a hatched area. There will be a larger number of cyclists that benefit from the continuation of the on-carriageway route eastbound than the number making right turns into/out of the private driveways.

- 7.10 The removal of central hatching elsewhere on the scheme will similarly provide better use of road space in enabling the cycle lanes to be installed and will serve to slow down traffic by removing the buffer zone in the middle of the road and narrowing the traffic lanes.

Speeding:

- 7.11 There were several comments regarding the suitability of the 40mph speed limit on the A4 and requests to reduce it to 30mph. There was also a perceived lack of police enforcement of the existing speed restrictions.
- 7.12 The setting of speed limits is the responsibility of the Traffic Management and Road Safety team, who periodically review speed limits in consultation with the Police and a panel of Councillors known as the Speed Limit Task Group. The Task Group makes recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Highways and Transport in respect of which speed limits should be amended.
- 7.13 The possibility of reducing the speed limit on the A4 in light of the introduction of the cycle facilities could be examined by the next meeting of the task group.

Segregation:

- 7.14 A lot of cyclists requested that physical separation is installed between vehicular and cycle traffic with a white line not being seen as a sufficient deterrent to vehicles encroaching on the cycle lanes. However there is not enough space to construct physical barriers on the road.
- 7.15 A few comments alluded to the example of the cycleway on Lower Way. To construct a similar bi-directional segregated path along the length of the A4 from Newbury to Thatcham would involve realigning kerblines and purchasing land and would be hugely disruptive to build and far beyond the project budget (refer also to paragraph 5.5).

Parking Restrictions:

- 7.16 The most common complaint was about parked cars blocking existing cycle infrastructure. Almost a fifth of respondents suggested that cycle lanes across West Berkshire are inadequate as they are often blocked by parked cars. The concern is that this will happen in the advisory cycle lanes proposed on the A4; especially as the carriageway is unprotected by parking restrictions. The majority of the A4 between Newbury and Thatcham is clear of parked vehicles but it would be possible to prohibit parking in locations where there is the potential for the new cycle lanes (whether on- or off-carriageway) to be obstructed. This would require a Traffic Regulation Order to be made and double yellow lines installed.

Cyclists don't make use of existing paths:

- 7.17 A frequent complaint in the feedback was that existing cycle paths are not being used by cyclists. Examples cited were Lower Way, Turnpike Road, Heath Lane and Tull Way. This may be due to the discontinuous nature of the current provision and

it is anticipated that by providing well designed, more continuous infrastructure use by cyclists will increase.

## 8. Options for Consideration

- 8.1 In view of the consultation responses and the Officer comments in Appendix D, three distinct options have been identified:

### Option 1:

- 8.2 Implement the proposals unaltered.

### Option 2:

- 8.3 Implement the proposals, with the following amendments, which would address a number of comments raised in responses to the consultation:

- (1) Install additional dropped kerbs westbound prior to the signalised junction with Faraday Road;
- (2) Install additional dropped kerbs eastbound after the signalised junction with Rooke's Way (the hospital access) and before the incline on Benham Hill;
- (3) Amend the radius of the kerbline at the junction with Dorneywood Way in order to reduce the speed of vehicles entering the side road;
- (4) Relocate the westbound bus shelter between Hambridge Road and Dorneywood Way to reduce conflict between pedestrians and cyclists on the footway;
- (5) Pending the result of the planning application and subsequent changes to the road layout outside the former Narrowboat Public House, consider either amending the north side kerbline to continue the cycle lane further eastbound towards the roundabout or making the footway shared use;

- 8.4 Carry out the following further investigations for possible future projects:

- (1) Refer the issue of the speed limit on the A4 to the Speed Limit Task Group, with a view to reducing the speed limit to 30mph for the length of the scheme.
- (2) Undertake a survey to determine the need for further controlled pedestrian crossing facilities between the Hambridge Road junction and the Tesco access.

### Option 3:

- 8.5 Do not proceed with any of the improvements and return the funding to the Local Enterprise Partnership.

## 9. Proposals

- 9.1 The consultation responses were split half in favour and half against the proposals. A lot of the negative responses queried the justification of the scheme, and cycling in general, rather than engaging with the detail. It is usually the case in consultations that respondents are more likely to be motivated to object to a proposal than support it. Furthermore those who would be expected to be in favour of the scheme – cyclists travelling through the area on a regular basis – are in this case a transient population that might not have been engaged by the letter drop / website consultation.
- 9.2 In light of this, and of the representations received, it is recommended that the Council proceeds with Option 2.

## 10. Conclusion

- 10.1 By listening to the feedback and making the above amendments to the scheme we are confident that what is proposed is the best possible solution for improving cycling conditions on the A4 and therefore work towards the Council's aim to encourage sustainable modes of transport.
- 10.2 The delivery of Option 2 will require new Traffic Regulation Orders, to give effect to the proposed parking restrictions. Statutory consultations must therefore be held as part of a separate legal process, with any objections received being reported back to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport for Individual Decision.

---

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>

---

### Wards affected:

Victoria  
Clay Hill  
Thatcham West

---

### Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aim:

☒ **HQL – Maintain a high quality of life within our communities**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priorities:

☒ **SLE2 – Deliver or enable key infrastructure improvements in relation to roads,**

---

**rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy**

☒ **HQL1 – Support communities to do more to help themselves**

---

**Officer details:**

Name: Neil Stacey  
Job Title: Principal Engineer (Projects)  
Tel No: 01635 519113  
E-mail Address: [neil.stacey@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:neil.stacey@westberks.gov.uk)

---

## **11. Appendices**

- 11.1 Appendix A - Equalities Impact Assessment
- 11.2 Appendix B – Consultation Leaflet
- 11.3 Appendix C – Consultation Responses and Officer Comments
- 11.4 Appendix D – Detailed Drawings of the Proposed Scheme

## Appendix A

### Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- “(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:***
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;***
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:***
    - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;***
    - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;***
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.***
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.***
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.”***

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

<b>What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:</b>	Approve the introduction of cycle lanes on the A4 and associated changes to local road layouts
<b>Summary of relevant legislation:</b>	N/A
<b>Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?</b>	No
<b>Name of assessor:</b>	Neil Stacey
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	26/10/17

<b>Is this a:</b>		<b>Is this:</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>New or proposed</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Already exists and is being reviewed</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Function</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Is changing</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Service</b>	<b>No</b>		

<b>1 What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?</b>	
<b>Aims:</b>	To improve facilities for cyclists on the A4 corridor between Newbury and Thatcham.
<b>Objectives:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve accessibility and safety for vulnerable road users.</li> <li>2. Encourage more journeys to be made by bicycle.</li> </ol>
<b>Outcomes:</b>	To widen the footway and provide cycle lanes on the carriageway.
<b>Benefits:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduced conflict between cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles.</li> <li>2. More attractive, safer conditions.</li> </ol>

<b>2 Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</b>		
(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
<b>Group Affected</b>	<b>What might be the effect?</b>	<b>Information to support this</b>

Disability	Disabled people (people with impaired mobility)	<p>The widened footways would be of particular benefit to young, elderly and disabled pedestrians.</p> <p>If the scheme does not proceed, no such facilities will be provided, but conditions for disabled pedestrians will be no worse than in the current circumstances.</p>
<b>Further Comments relating to the item:</b>		
None		

<b>3 Result</b>	
<b>Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b> The proposed scheme will reduce, rather than contribute to inequality, as explained above.	
<b>Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b> The project aims to improve conditions for road users.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the [Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template](#).

<b>4 Identify next steps as appropriate:</b>	
<b>Stage Two required</b>	No
<b>Owner of Stage Two assessment:</b>	N/A
<b>Timescale for Stage Two assessment:</b>	N/A

**Name:** Neil Stacey

**Date:** 26/10/17

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) ([rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk)), for publication on the WBC website.