

Individual Executive Member Decision

A4 Cycle Improvements - Thatcham

Committee considering report:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date ID to be signed:	18 June 2018
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Jeanette Clifford
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	
Forward Plan Ref:	ID3437

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To summarise the responses received to the consultation on proposed improvements to cycle facilities along the A4 through Thatcham (proposed 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) 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 £115,000 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:** None

3.7 **Other:** None

4. Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council: Councillor Graham Jones was generally supportive but did not comment on the specifics of the scheme report.

Overview & Scrutiny Management

Commission Chairman:

Councillor Emma Webster did not comment.

Ward Members:

Councillor Richard Crumly (Thatcham Central Ward) has no objections to the scheme.

Councillor Marigold Jacques (Thatcham Central Ward) supports the proposals.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter (Thatcham West Ward) supports the proposals and gave the following feedback:

"I'm very supportive of the NCN422 scheme for several reasons: it will encourage more travel by cycle, with the associated benefits of improved health and wellbeing for cyclists. It will improve safety for cyclists (both the more- and the less-confident). It will also reduce traffic congestion and pollution by displacing some travel from car to bicycle.

While most A4 residents in W Thatcham have either adequate parking space for 2 vehicles in their property or on several wide stretches of tarmac (N side), I'm aware there are several properties on both sides who do not have this facility. It is important that a good solution is found for these residents – the parking bays you highlighted will be ideal where this is possible, and I very much hope that you'll be able to find alternatives where not.

I do think the cycle lane needs to be enforced with at least double yellow lines if the ideal white lined solution is not going to be possible. Otherwise the change in behaviour we need to see from a few vehicle owners who currently park on the cycle lane will not take place."

Councillor Jeff Brookes (Thatcham West ward) would like a new crossing facility between Henwick Lane and Tull Way but

did not comment on the recommendations of this report.

Councillor Rob Denton-Powell (Thatcham South & Crookham Ward) supports the proposals.

Councillor Jason Collis (Thatcham South & Crookham Ward) did not comment.

Councillor Sheila Ellison (Thatcham North Ward) did not comment.

Councillor Lee Dillon (Thatcham North Ward) did not comment.

Opposition Spokesperson:

Councillor Alan Macro gave the following feedback:

"I am disappointed that a segregated cycle lane cannot be provided, but understand the reasons.

One of the problems with "white paint" cycle lanes is that cars park in them. I am therefore disappointed that double yellow lines cannot be used throughout, though again I understand the reason. The times for the single yellow line restrictions must cover the entire commuting period. This means starting the restriction at 7am and finishing it at 7:30 or 8pm. This will probably not satisfy the residents who complained about the double yellow lines restriction."

Local Stakeholders: Consulted in April / May 2018 via leaflet drop and online consultation. See Appendix C for a summary of the responses.

Officers Consulted: Mark Edwards, Jon Winstanley, Glyn Davis.

Trade Union: Not applicable

5. Other options considered

Alternative east-west routes were considered but none were suitable as they lacked directness, coherence and did not connect to the shopping area or other local destinations. Further grades of separation were looked at, including a bi-directional fully segregated track but the frequency of driveways crossing the footway (both sides) made this option inadvisable as well as unaffordable within the budget.

Kennet & Avon Canal Towpath:

- 5.1 The proposed NCN422 is a direct commuter route that 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. The canal lies to the south of Thatcham and does not connect many houses or destinations so would be of limited usefulness neither for utility cycling nor as a direct commuter route. 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.

Lower Way:

- 5.2 There is already a cycle route on Lower Way that serves the south of Thatcham. However for residents who live elsewhere, especially to the north, this route is not on the desire line and would take most cyclists away from places of employment and local destinations within the town centre.

Tull Way

- 5.3 There is a quality segregated cyclepath on the orbital road but this skirts Thatcham to the north and, like Lower Way, does not link the majority of residents with places of employment or retail areas.

Bath Road (Other options)

- 5.4 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. Furthermore the budget is insufficient to fund extensive kerb realignment, new drainage and construction of an off-road route for the entire distance. Therefore if we attempted such a track with space / budget constraints it would inevitably be disjointed where existing pinch points and/or land issues couldn't be resolved, creating something that would not be used. 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 direct and to a suitable standard for commuters travelling at higher speeds than we would expect on a leisure route.
- 6.2 The section of the A4 through Thatcham is the second phase of West Berkshire's part of the route. Work has begun constructing the first phase, from Newbury to Thatcham, earlier this year. It is intended to be a rolling programme and continue on to Calcot, on the outskirts of Reading for phase three to be delivered in 2019.
- 6.3 The A4 (known locally as London Road, Bath Road and Chapel Street) is the main route through Thatcham. It is single urban carriageway and is fronted by properties and businesses and has numerous side roads, schools and play areas along its length. It is an arterial route and carries a high volume of traffic, including many HGVs.
- 6.4 There are a number of existing cycle facilities on the A4 through Thatcham, both on and off carriageway. Cycle lanes exist in parts but are not connected. There are advanced stop lines on some signalised junctions but not all. There are some shared use paths on the footways however they are discontinuous and include

points of potential conflict between cycles and motor traffic (for example across private driveways and request to dismount at all side roads). Shared footways also create conflict between cyclists and pedestrians (for example at bus stops and where there is insufficient width to safely 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 or at side roads. The existing footway is narrow in parts making it difficult for pushchair and wheelchair users to use, or for two people to comfortably walk side-by-side. Under existing conditions cyclists' needs on the carriageway are not provided for, or they tend to be abandoned at pinchpoints and junctions, so it is perhaps no surprise that they ride on the footway.
- 6.6 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. Road space is limited. 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 reduced capacity for motor traffic. These areas will need to be looked at in further detail as and when more funding becomes available.
- 6.7 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) New parking restrictions to prevent vehicles blocking the cycle lanes and to create safe space for cycling;
 - (3) Remove, or reduce the width/length of central hatching & right hand turn lanes where appropriate;
 - (4) Remove traffic island 'pinch points' where necessary to create the space for the on-carriageway cycle lanes;
 - (5) Improve pedestrian crossing facilities by upgrading puffin to toucan crossing;

7. Supporting Information

- 7.1 At the end of April / beginning of May 2018, households and businesses on and adjacent to the A4 were consulted on the potential improvements with pamphlets delivered to approximately 900 addresses (see Appendix B). The proposals, including detailed drawings, were also publicised on the consultation section of the Council's website.
- 7.2 Eighteen responses to the consultation were received. Of these four supported the proposals, eleven were not supportive, and three made comments that were neither in favour nor against. One of the responses was a petition with 43 signatures, from 35 different addresses, specifically opposing the introduction of the parking restrictions. There was some crossover in that a few of the petitioners also submitted individual representations, these have not been counted twice but instead

considered as a single 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:

Parking Restrictions:

7.4 The biggest issue concerned parking restrictions. Residents of Bath Road made representations about losing the facility to park on the A4 carriageway outside their properties, making it difficult to receive visitors and tradesmen. Some respondents claimed that the majority of the A4 on this section through Thatcham is clear of parked vehicles and didn't warrant the new parking measures. The parking provision for Tudor Court received a lot of attention; respondents felt that the new flats were built without sufficient parking spaces. Parking capacity and occupancy surveys showed that there is sufficient parking for residents and visitors under the new proposals. However we have revisited and reduced the restrictions to single yellow where appropriate. It should be noted that any parking restrictions to be introduced would require a Traffic Regulation Order and statutory consultation according to due process.

Segregation:

7.5 A few 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. There are options to introduce light segregation features and we will look into this in the future.

7.6 Cycle Track:

Some comments alluded to the example of the cycleway on Lower Way. To construct a similar bi-directional segregated track along the length of the A4 from through the centre of Thatcham would involve realigning kerblines and purchasing land, would be disruptive to build and cost far beyond the project budget.

Cyclists don't make use of existing paths:

7.7 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 then use by cyclists will increase. Cyclists are still welcome to continue to use the shared footways that currently exist on the A4 if they prefer to do so and these will be unaffected by the on-carriageway lanes proposed by this scheme.

8. Options for Consideration

8.1 In view of the relatively low consultation response rate it is clear that, parking issue aside, the proposal was uncontroversial and can go ahead with only a few minor amendments (refer to the Officer Comments in Appendix C). However the response to the parking proposal indicates that the scheme is likely to draw objections at the statutory consultation stage. Therefore a few options have been identified:

- (1) Abandon the proposal for parking restrictions, install advisory cycle lanes with no protection and accept that the infrastructure will be substandard as lanes will be blocked by parked vehicles.
- (2) Advertise the proposed restrictions in a statutory consultation and deal with any objections that may be made on their merits.
- (3) Reduce the extent of the proposed parking restriction and investigate alternative options for residents while maintaining the continuous cycle lanes. Then proceed to the statutory advertisement of a traffic regulation order showing the revised restriction.

9. Proposals

- 9.1 The majority of consultation responses were negative. A lot 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. Explicit efforts were not made to engage them via social media as this may be seen to have been soliciting for support and invalidate the consultation.
- 9.2 In light of this, and of the representations received, it is recommended that the Council proceeds with Option 3. This will require further liaison with affected residents to ensure that the compromise is an adequate solution.

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 Options 2 and 3 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:

Wards affected:

Thatcham West
Thatcham North
Thatcham South & Crookham
Thatcham Central

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:

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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.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	Approve the introduction of cycle lanes on the A4 and associated changes to road layout.
Summary of relevant legislation:	N/A
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?	No
Name of assessor:	Neil Stacey
Date of assessment:	24/05/18

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

1 What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To improve facilities for cyclists on the A4 corridor through Thatcham.
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve accessibility and safety for vulnerable road users. 2. Encourage more journeys to be made by bicycle.
Outcomes:	To provide cycle lanes on the carriageway and upgrade crossing.
Benefits:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduced conflict between cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles. 2. More attractive, safer conditions. 3. Sustainable transport.

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.

(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.)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Disability	With respect to the removal of the central island at the Crown Mead pedestrian crossing, there could be a perception that the increased crossing distance involved makes it more difficult for those with mobility impairments and the elderly to cross.	As it is located in close proximity to a health centre, several elderly and disabled people have been observed using it, often walking across the road slowly. Some pedestrians may prefer to cross two separate 3 metre wide carriageways than a single 9 meter wide carriageway. Others may have the opposite preference.
Further Comments relating to the item:		
Whilst it is true that the distance that pedestrians must walk in one movement to cross the road is greater, the crossing will be designed and configured to allow sufficient time for pedestrians to cross the road. Motion detectors will prevent traffic being shown a green light while pedestrians are in the carriageway. The re-design will remove the need for pedestrians to stand and wait in the middle of the road. The crossing will also be enlarged so that pedestrians crossing in opposite directions are less likely to get in each others' way.		

3 Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: The scheme does not contribute to inequality, instead it is hoped that by providing a safer space for cycling on the carriageway cyclists travelling at speed will no longer use the footway to the detriment of more vulnerable pedestrians.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: 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](#).

4 Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	N/A

Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	N/A
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Name: Neil Stacey

Date: 25/05/2018

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