

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

<b>TO:</b>	<b>TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>14 JUNE 2017</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>THAMES PATH CONSULTATION RESULTS - PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE LEGAL STATUS TO A JOINT FOOTPATH &amp; CYCLE TRACK</b>		
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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The opening of Christchurch Bridge has led to increases in cycle use along the Thames Path, which is currently designated as a right of way on foot only. This resulted in the decision to consult on the proposal to change the legal status of the Thames Path to a joint footpath and cycle track.
- 1.2 This report sets out the results of the consultation, undertaken between 27<sup>th</sup> April and 25<sup>th</sup> May, and seeks approval to refer the Cycle Track Orders to the Secretary of State for determination.
- 1.3 Appendix A - Thames Path Consultation - Summary of Objections
- 1.4 Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

## 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Members of the Sub-Committee note the results of the consultation.
- 2.2 That in consultation with the chair of the Sub-Committee, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to submit the Cycle Track Orders to the Secretary of State for determination, in accordance with the Cycle Tracks Act 1984 and Cycle Tracks Regulations 1984.

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a statutory document setting out the Council’s transport strategy and policy. Reading Borough Council’s third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for the period 2011-26 was adopted by the Council on 29 March 2011.
- 3.2 The Cycling Strategy 2014: Bridging Gaps, Overcoming Barriers & Promoting Safer Cycling, was adopted by the Council on 19 March 2014 as a sub-strategy to the Local Transport Plan. The strategy includes detailed policies regarding the design principles for delivering infrastructure and route improvements for cyclists on the public highway, as well as policies to encourage and promote cycling to different demographics, including the creation of off-carriageway facilities to cater for less experienced cyclists.

**4. THE PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 The Thames Path is legally classified as a public right of way by foot only. This results in cyclists being required to ride on-road, navigating busy roundabout junctions on Vastern Road and Caversham Road where there are high traffic flows, or to divert their journey to the north side of the river.
- 4.2 Despite the legal status of the Thames Path, cyclists have used the route in excess of 30 years. This led to the submission of evidence in 2007 illustrating cycle use along the Thames Path which led to the decision to initiate the process of converting the Reading to Caversham Bridge section to a cycle track. The consultation resulted in over 150 objections, including one from the local National Trails branch - Thames Path Management Group, and 29 letters of support. Objections related to concerns regarding the width of the footpath, the perceived threat to wildlife and conflicts between different user groups. The Council subsequently sought independent legal advice that led to the decision not pursue the Cycle Track Order further.
- 4.3 National transport policy has, over recent years, emphasised the importance of cycling for local journeys as an alternative to private car use and resulted in increases in the number of trips undertaken by bicycle both nationally and locally. During this time, the opening of Christchurch Bridge and the redevelopment of Reading Station have contributed to significantly increased levels of cycling in the vicinity of the Thames Path and throughout the Borough. Further anticipated increases in the level of cycling, led to the decision to undertake a new consultation on the proposal to change the legal status of the Thames Path to an unsegregated, joint footpath and cycle track for approximately 6,450 metres between Roebuck Cottage and Kennet Mouth. The consultation commenced on 27th April until 25th May 2017 and was advertised as three separate Cycle Track Orders consist with the existing Footpath Orders. These were:

Cycle Track Order	Proposed Cycle Track Width	Total Footpath/Cycle Track Width
Roebuck Hotel to Caversham Road	1 - 2.5 metres	2 - 5 metres

Caversham Bridge to Reading Bridge	1 - 2 metres	2 - 4 metres
Reading Bridge to Kennet Mouth	1.5 - 2.5 metres	3 - 5 metres

4.4 The consultation resulted in the submission of 858 responses of which 77% of respondents (664) were in support and 23% (194) were in objection to the proposed changes. A log of detailed objections, which highlights concerns about potential conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists, particularly children, the elderly and disabled, and footpath widths, is included in Appendix A. The objections were made up of the following:

- 145 respondents submitted specific comments in relation to Reading to Caversham Bridge.
- 11 respondents submitted specific comments in relation to Roebuck Cottage to Thames Promenade.
- 1 respondent submitted specific comments in relation to Reading Bridge to Kennet Mouth.
- 5 respondents did not provide any specific feedback; and
- The other 32 respondents provided general feedback or comments on multiple sections of the Cycle Track Orders.
- In addition, two respondents in support of the scheme objected to Caversham Bridge to Reading Bridge due to conflicts with landowners and a pinch point along the section.

4.5 Of the eleven organisations that are deemed as statutory consultees, only two submitted responses to the consultation - Cycling UK and the Ramblers Association, both of whom cascaded the information to local representatives. Other statutory consultees included utility companies, the Pedestrian Association, Friends of the Earth, the Committee on Mobility for the Disabled, the Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People. Feedback from landowners is incorporated within the detailed objections included in Appendix A. Other local stakeholders that collectively submitted feedback, included:

- **Sustrans** - the national walking and cycling charity, that were supportive of the proposal.
- **Mid-West Berkshire Local Access Forum**, who are an advisory body that supports 'responsible shared-use' where the width 'is sufficient to accommodate the volume of cycling', but the Forum has concerns regarding the width of the footpath between Roebuck Cottage to Thames Promenade.
- The **Thames Path Management Group** highlighted their recently adopted Cycling Policy that outlines factors for consideration when proposing shared-use facilities and the requirement for shared-use facilities to be a minimum of 2 metres wide.
- **Open Space Society** objected to the proposals based on narrow footpath widths.
- The **Ramblers Association (Berkshire)** also objected to the proposal based on narrow footpath widths between Roebuck Cottage and Thames Promenade. The Group did not object to the remaining sections, but highlighted DfT guidance on shared-use.

- The **Ramblers Association (Pang Valley)** highlighted national guidance recommending that shared-use facilities be constructed to 3 metres wide.

4.6 Of the 194 objections received, most respondents reported concerns about potential conflicts with other users. However, officers are only aware of three actual incidents between users along the Thames Path. However, if the Cycle Track Orders are confirmed, officers would recommend the use of considerable shared-use signing to highlight the presence of other users as previously highlighted through informal consultation and used by other organisations involved in the promotion of rights of way, including the Canals and Rivers Trust.

4.7 Other concerns highlight that footpath widths along the route do not comply with the Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 'Shared Route for Pedestrians and Cyclists' stating that shared-use facilities should be a minimum preferred width of 3 metres. It should be noted that this is guidance rather than a requirement and that the Note also acknowledges that Highway Authorities may need to consider whether a 'sub-standard facility is better than none'. Our Cycling Strategy acknowledges this guidance and outlines that shared-use facilities will be a minimum of 2 metres wide. The proposed widths of the Cycle Tracks are set out in paragraph 4.3.

4.8 Given that cyclists and pedestrians already share the Thames Path unofficially and the strong support shown for the proposal, it is our recommendation that the Cycle Track Orders are submitted to the Secretary of State for determination. Independent legal advice will again be sought as part of this process.

## 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Changing the legal status of the Thames Path to a joint footpath and cycle track will contribute towards the following strategic aims:

- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

## 6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 The consultation was carried out between 27<sup>th</sup> April and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

6.2 Respondents were able to respond and request further details on the consultation in writing, by email and via the online consultation web page. Details of the consultation were also published in the local media.

6.3 Statutory consultees were informed of the proposals in writing in accordance with the Cycle Track Regulations 1984. Other stakeholders and local interest groups were informed of the consultation through existing contacts or distribution lists, including the Mid-West Berkshire Local Access Forum, Cycle Forum and Older People's User Group.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Proposals relating to the conversion of footpaths to cycle tracks are advertised under the Cycle Tracks Act 1984 and Cycle Track Regulations 1984.
- 7.2 As there are objections to the Cycle Tracks Orders, the Council is required to refer the Orders to the Secretary of State for determination. Given the number of objections, it is likely that the Secretary of State will call a Public Inquiry.
- 7.3 The Council is currently liable for accidents that occur to pedestrians using the public footpath. If the footpath is converted, the Council will also be liable for any accidents that occur to cyclists using the Thames Path whereas these are currently the responsibility of the relevant landowner.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and is included in Appendix B.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Thames Path is currently designated as highway maintainable at the Council's expense (Sct. 36 Highways Act 1980) and it will continue to be maintainable by the Council if the Cycle Track Orders are confirmed by the Secretary of State.
- 9.2 The estimated costs associated with the Council referring the Cycle Track Orders to the Secretary of State, including a Public Inquiry and independent legal advice, is £8,000. Any such costs will be funded by existing transport budgets.
- 9.3 The supply and installation of shared-use signing will be funded by existing Transport Budgets, subject to the Cycle Track Orders being confirmed.
- 9.4 Any other future improvements to upgrade the Thames Path, such as widening and resurfacing, will be subject to the identification of external funding.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2016/17 - 15 June 2016.

- 10.2 Cycling Strategy 2014: Bridging Gaps, Overcoming Barriers & Promoting Safer Cycling.
- 10.3 Thames Path National Trail Cycling Policy 2017

**APPENDIX A - Summary of objections received to Cycle Track Order**

**THAMES PATH CONSULTATION - OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED JOINT FOOTPATH & CYCLE TRACK**

No.	Objections
1.	<p>As RBC acknowledged in 2007 the Thames Path is legally a footpath &amp; the 150 objections received then against a similar proposal will still be valid. I wish to object to the proposal on the following grounds: 1. The Thames Path in certain areas is not wide enough to allow passing in comfort nor is there enough space to allow it to be widened. 2. There are more cyclists that 10 years ago some of whom show little consideration for other users. 3. Speeding cyclists can be intimidating especially when coming up from behind with no warning. 4. Cyclists can damage unpaved footpaths e.g. between Roebuck &amp; Thames Side Promenade.</p>
2.	<p>I understand that it is your intention to change the use of the Thames Path 1 from a FOOTPATH to a shared Cycle/Footpath. I have already registered my opposition in an email to Giorgio Framalico.</p> <p>It is only 2 mts wide at Thames Side &amp; it is not possible to change the use from a FOOTPATH to a shared path as it is less than the necessary 3mts wide required to be a shared path !</p> <p>The land outside Regents Riverside Apartments is not maintained by any one &amp; the width of the path which should be 2mts is far less because of the blackberry bushes on the River's edge. In April I stopped &amp; spoke to a cyclist who was trying to squeeze past about 50 Foreign Students who were walking here, in an orderly fashion, 2 abreast, with a teacher at the front &amp; the rear. These children were visitors who hire boats from Caversham Boats &amp; this has happened every year for 30 years or more!</p> <p>If you proceed with this change of use proposal the situation will be made worse &amp; the Council will be responsible for any accidents or damage that occurs.</p> <p>Cyclists don't keep to the path &amp; the dangerous situation that exists will only be made worse by your proposal.</p> <p>Cyclists don't accept that the current status of the path is "No Cycling" &amp; become abusive when you confront them. I have been physically assaulted twice!!</p> <p>I am disappointed that the Council has not helped in the past with attempts to resolve the situation of cycling on this FOOTPATH &amp; the Council has been less than cooperative &amp; sometimes obstructive!</p> <p><b>YOU CAN NOT GO AHEAD WITH THIS PROPOSAL.</b></p>
3.	<p>I note that the proposal is to convert half the width of the footpath, which in my opinion is already only wide enough in places for two adults to walk side by side, into cycle track.</p> <p>Sorry to trouble you but I fail to see why very vulnerable elderly or disabled people should be put in serious danger (a loss of confidence from being slammed into by an adult cyclist can mean the elderly person then more or less being confined to their home) and be prevented keeping fit by taking short walks when a far better solution is to give cyclists their own path well away from very vulnerable pedestrians. The proposal as made just moves the motorist / cyclist problem into being a cyclist / pedestrian problem leading to exactly the same aggressor and victim situation.</p> <p>Additional, two-page response received highlighting concerns about vulnerable pedestrians, the need to provide dedicated cycle lanes for vulnerable cyclists rather than off-carriageway facilities, inappropriate cycling, inadequate footpath widths and potential enforcement of inappropriate cycling.</p>

4.	<p>Currently the Caversham side of the River Thames has a cycle path/footpath. This is also the case on the new Christchurch Bridge which was built on the understanding that this would direct cyclists to the station using the new bridge and a widened path beside the flats and the Covea Offices. Cyclists come down the ramp at speed and cannot see anyone coming along the footpath from this footpath. If cyclists also travelling at speed come along the current footpath from Caversham Bridge there is the strong possibility that a nasty accident could occur.</p> <p>The South side from Caversham Bridge to Christchurch Bridge is currently footpath only. There are two main reasons for this. The footpath is too narrow to be correctly designated as a combined pathway. As you can see from the attached photograph the pathway is only 5ft wide and at times this is narrowed down even more by foliage that grows across the footpath. The second reason is that this was designated footpath only by the Secretary of State on 10th November 1997.</p> <p>This footpath also has homes along it which are fronting onto the footpath. This is the only stretch of the Thames between the bridges where homes directly front onto the footpath. There are no run-offs for cyclists or walkers to use if the traffic is particularly heavy. This is always a problem during the Reading Festival in August where the festival revellers are using the riverbank to walk to and fro from the festival ground to Tesco etc. They are walking along with shopping trolleys laden with food and drink and the cyclists still try to use this bit of footpath.</p> <p>Cyclists are always telling us it is a cycle path even if we tell them otherwise. They have been known to knock into a pedestrian but cycle off without apologising or checking to see if we are hurt. We have no recompense as there is no form of identification on a bicycle. In the Spring young birds are killed by the cyclists when they feed on the small grass verges along this stretch of riverbank.</p> <p>Caversham Boat Services have to use the river bank so that their customers can access their hire boats. This can mean a lot of luggage and people milling around the end of Lynmouth Rd. early morning when cyclists are cycling to work.</p> <p>The Island Bohemian Bowls Club use the jetty at the end of Brigham Road and have to ferry people and provisions to the Island at various times during the day. Visibility there is already restricted by the Willow Tree and cyclists are very fast along this stretch of the pathway. An accident is always waiting to happen here and more cyclists would make this even more inevitable.</p> <p>I live in one of the houses along this pathway. When reversing our car to exit our parking spot we have to ensure that we check that pedestrians are not walking past as we would not want to accidentally hit them. However bicycles travel at such a speed that they come out of nowhere and often come off the footpath and onto our parking area to overtake pedestrians. We find this quite worrying and more cycle traffic could certainly exacerbate this problem.</p> <p>Cyclists travel at around 20+ mph whereas pedestrians are travelling around 4-5 mph and yet we get verbally abused by the cyclists for getting in their way. It is no hardship for the cyclists to travel along the Caversham side of the Thames and over Christchurch Bridge which was built specifically to accommodate cyclists. I also understand that there are plans to extend this bridge across to Reading Station once SEC move out of their premises. Cyclists are already well looked after by the Council and I feel it would be more beneficial to look after the Reading pedestrians after all most Doctors are saying that walking is more beneficial to people than any other form of exercise. It is important that walkers, runners, children and dogs have a safe river bank to walk along.</p> <p>Please consider the pedestrians after all as soon as a child can walk they are a pedestrian. There are far more of us than there are cyclists. All ages enjoy walking and we have to put up with uneven pavements, potholes, cyclists, mopeds, motor bikes, cars, buses and taxis. Please don't take away any more safe paths from us.</p> <p>Supporting images submitted with response.</p>
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5.	<p>I formally object to the above proposal.  RBC Transport Sub Committee Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016 Minutes: "The Thames Path is legally classified as a footpath over which the public has a right of way by foot only".  The national guidance for shared space is 2 metres. The path is only about 1.7 metres wide in places.  There it is only just wide enough for pedestrians to walk two abreast.  It is not possible on some sections for a cyclist to overtake two persons walking abreast. Cyclists continue to try to overtake pedestrians and do not ring a bell.  RBC has already acknowledged the "Health &amp; Safety" hazard by installing barrier pinch points to try to persuade cyclists to stop and dismount. Many do not do so and ride through the pinch points.  This will become an even bigger "Health and Safety" issue as the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists using the path and new bridge grow.  Swans nest beside the path and have had their nests vandalised.  During the 2007 consultation on a similar matter RBC took independent legal advice and did not proceed.  Please confirm that you will be seeking independent legal advice this time also.</p>
6.	<p>We walk the Thameside towpath regularly and even though cycling is supposed to be forbidden, we are often startled by cyclists overtaking from the rear without offering any warning.  With the purposed Thames Cycle Path, you are ignoring the pleasure of walkers using the towpath and in our opinion it should be for pedestrians only. Pedestrians are at risk enough on our pavements and tarmac paths within local parks by cyclists.  Byelaws could be passed to protect pedestrians, but who would invoke such a law.  How can the expenditure be justified to satisfy a few cyclists when our Council Leaders are telling us that essential services are to suffer because of Government cuts.</p>
7.	<p>Whilst the concept of a cycle track along the Thames Path might seem attractive, the path is not wide enough to accommodate both walkers and cyclists. In many places it is below the width deemed appropriate by Reading Borough Council and falls well below the National Guideline of 3.0 metres minimum width admitted in Reading Borough Council's Cycling strategy.  Problems will arise because cyclist do not give warning of their approach by use of their bell, cycle too fast and often do not consider the mobility of walkers. Widening the path is not an option in stretches of the path because of the close proximity of the river bank. Any proposals that Reading Borough Council might have to widen the path should have been included in the strategy document and stated in the notice and the conversion of the footpath should not have been proposed until those works had been undertaken.  Images also submitted with response.</p>
8.	<p>The XXXXXXXX objects to the proposal to convert the Thames Path to a joint footpath and cycle track between Roebuck Hotel and the mouth of the River Kennet because we consider it to be too narrow for walkers to be safe and able to enjoy the footpath. We consider that the quality of the national trail would be diminished.</p>
9.	<p>I am disabled by sciatica and also have Macular Degeneration Sight gone in one eye, thus see 2D in a 3D world. Cyclists are a hazard for me. If it is to happen - cyclists are hope popular with the Council than the pedestrian, a humane approach would be to have a sign (as in Winchester) 'PEDESTRIANS HAVE PRIORITY'</p>
10.	<p>This is to object to the suggested idea that the riverside path between the Roebuck PH and Caversham Bridge should be shared with bicycles.  1) It is far too narrow in several places.  There is already a very good route alongside Oxford Road, Portman Road and Richfield Avenue. The Borough keeps reminding us that it has no money so why is it considering a duplication.</p>

11.	<p>The Ramblers OBJECT to the designation of any portion of the ROEBUCK HOTEL TO CAVERSHAM BRIDGE section of the Thames Towpath (Reading BC Footpath 1B) between Roebuck Ferry Cottage and Scours Lane on the grounds that the available width is inadequate for its safe use as either a segregated or a shared use pedestrian/cycle path. The available width of the path is in places limited to less than 1.5 metres between a fence or wall and a steep drop into the river. Major engineering work would be required to improve this. The Ramblers notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The link path between the Thames Towpath and Oxford Road at the Roebuck Hotel (Reading BC Footpath 29, which is not included in the order) is not suitable for cycling as cyclists have to carry their bicycles up or down steps covering some 15 metres of height difference. It questions the wisdom of advertising the towpath here as a cycle path when many cyclists will perceive it as a dead-end section of route.</li> <li>• There is an alternative off-carriageway cycle route alongside Oxford Road between Tilehurst Station and Scours Lane that avoids any need for cyclists to carry their bicycles up or down the steps on Footpath 29 and use this section of towpath.</li> </ul> <p>In respect of the remaining sections of path covered by the orders, The Ramblers notes that the Council is proposing to designate half the width as a cycle track but does not specify which half. In view of the limited overall width generally available, it advises against any form of segregation and draws the Council's attention to the guidance proffered by the Department for Transport (Local Transport Note 1/12) and Sustrans (Segregation of Shared Use Routes, Technical Note 19), both available on the internet.</p>
12.	<p>I am worried about the danger to pedestrians. Cyclists are at present using the towpath and travel at a fast pace. They do not let you know that they are coming (no bell) and if you are hard of hearing or suffer from loss of balance you are in danger of being knocked over.</p>
13.	<p>I am astounded at this proposal having been raised let alone actually being considered. Is Mr Page, who seems to dominate the council, a cyclist by any chance? Surely it is not feasible for the council, having raised council tax to all residents, pay considerable amounts of money to finance laying a pathway for cyclists whilst walkers have had no issues for many, many years. The riverside walk has been used to walk and avoid the industrial nature of Reading historically whilst there is currently a cycle route already established in Oxford Road, Portman Road, Richfield Avenue, etc. through Reading - you are repeating yourselves but with a better view!! Flood levels would result in yet more cost for continual repair; the countryside landscape will be ruined and the quiet disturbed; cyclists do not consider pedestrians at any time and/or anywhere so to "legalise" access to cyclists in these areas will cause even more frustration - please leave us alone - this should be a cause of concern to the council on all areas where pedestrians are in close proximity to cyclists and you as council members will be adding to the problem yet again. Please put the needs of Reading and its residents into proper proportion when considering such a ludicrous suggestion as this and give back pedestrian access unhindered by cyclist.</p>
14.	<p>I regularly walk (my primary mode of transport!) along these sections of the Thames Path and already come into conflict with cyclists who seem to think that they have priority and that I should always get out of their way. This proposal will increase cycle traffic and make the situation worse. The path is too narrow in most parts to easily accommodate both walkers and cyclists. Will I as a pedestrian be expected to step out of the way of a cyclist every minute as I attempt to get from A to B? I anticipate that, at best, there will be altercations between pedestrians and cyclists and, at worst, accidents involving both.</p>
15.	<p>I frequently walk this path, in particular between Scours Lane and Caversham Bridge, but often on the other parts as well. There are already cyclists using it and they cause a lot of disruption to walkers simply because the path is not wide enough. To allow more cyclists on it without widening it would be dangerous and would discourage people from walking along the route, particularly people of my age group who are more vulnerable to being knocked over. It is important for our health that we are able to walk safely in traffic free areas. If the path were widened it would of course make it safer but it would lose some of its charm. It seems to me that cyclist would be better using the Portman Road, Richfield Avenue path with an improvement under the Bridges. Sure this will be taken into account when they are finished?</p>

16.	<p>I would like to be clear that I am not objecting to the scheme per se, neither am I supporting it. I would urge caution, however, because the needs of cyclists need to be evaluated in tandem (no pun intended!) with the needs of other path users, particularly those who are disabled, sensory impaired or older people. Cycles are, by their very nature, quiet and speedy, and so people may not hear their approach and be able to make way in a timely fashion. I have been looking at: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9179/shared-use-routes-for-pedestrians-and-cyclists.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9179/shared-use-routes-for-pedestrians-and-cyclists.pdf</a></p> <p>I would hope that this document (and its companions) has been taken into account, it definitely has information which should be considered before any alterations are made, particularly, as I have mentioned, regarding disabled and older people.</p> <p>In addition to my previous comments, I THINK that part of the path is obstructed for wheelchair users by a short of "chicane" for want of a better word, which is meant to be a deterrent to motorcyclists. The barrier is the subject of a complaint which is being dealt with now. I believe that it is unclear as to who is the owner of the land, which might mean that achieving a solution might be difficult, but it is important that people who wish to use the path legally may do so without hindrance.</p>
17.	<p>Leave it alone! Pollution levels are already too high by the roads, They're dangerous also. Let Reading have some nice areas where people are free to enjoy their leisure time. Cyclists cycling responsibly pose no threat to pedestrians so please let us to continue to enjoy what is left of the green space in Reading.</p>
18.	<p>The Thames Path over the proposed route is in many places only 1.7 metres wide against the stated minimum width of 3.0 metres in the requirements for the joint usage. This is particularly relevant on the section between the Caversham and Reading Bridges. Additionally there is much footpath side vegetation, and areas of riverside bank broken away which would require constant attention to retain safety for cyclists. The access at the Roebuck end is via several sets of steep steps over the railway which are not suitable for cyclists. The general surface over the whole length is gravel or uneven bare soil which gets very muddy and slippery in wet weather and in winter.</p> <p>There is already a metalled cycle track which avoids cyclists using the busy roads. This goes alongside the A329(Oxford Road) from Tilehurst Railway Station to Norcot Junction, from Norcot Junction to Cow Lane alongside Portman Road, and from Cow Lane alongside Richfield Avenue to Caversham Bridge. The section under Cow Lane Bridges is currently controlled by traffic lights, but will be regularised for cyclists when the bridges under the railway are finally constructed. There is adequate street lighting over this whole length whereas cycling the Thames Path would be unlit and extremely dangerous and isolated most of the time.</p>
19.	<p>The Thames Path is not a sufficiently wide pathway to accommodate both cyclists and walkers and there is a very real danger of serious accidents occurring unless the Council intends to widen the pathway to provide a clearly marked cycle path alongside the walkers path. If the proposal goes ahead without such improvements it will be extremely difficult for the emergency services to access any injured parties following an accident.</p>
20.	<p>It is not clear to me what the path is to be constructed of and how wide it would be. It is already used by many cyclists.</p> <p>It would also be useful for user cyclists to have and use bells especially as this area is used by lots of dog walkers</p> <p>I am against all above proposals until I can find out exactly what they mean to the existing footpath. And would like to point out that there is already a cycle path between Caversham bridge and Tilehurst station running alongside Richfield Ave, Portmond rd and Oxford rd.</p>
21.	<p>There is a perfectly good cycle track running from Kentwood roundabout to Caversham Bridge so I do not think it is necessary to convert the existing Thames Path for cyclists as well ( the slight problem at the Cow Lane bridges will be resolved when the new bridge is in place). The section from Scours Lane to The Roebuck calls for cyclists to carry their bikes up a large number of steps in order to reach the main road at the end of the path. If this path is to be made safe for pedestrians the path would need to be widened in various sections in order to accommodate cyclists. I think Reading Borough Council or the appropriate Authority could spend the cost for this work on more urgent projects elsewhere.</p>

Classification: OFFICIAL

22.	<p>the path is already used by cyclists , several who ride at too fast speeds and skim past pedestrians without giving any warning. There have already been accidents with pedestrians being hit by bikes.</p> <p>The path is too narrow to support both pedestrians and cyclists in the same space (approx. less then 3 metres wide and curved around walling). either land would have to be purchased from the present owners and their boundary rebuilt or the path widened into the river bank. The river bank has already collapsed in several places and is dangerous to present users.</p> <p>Why cannot the cycle path be placed on the north side of the river where there is already a much wider path available?</p>
23.	<p>The majority of the route, but in particular the section between Caversham and Reading Bridges, is too narrow to safely accommodate slow moving pedestrians, and cyclists travelling at high speed.</p>
24.	<p>I am a keen, regular walker and live very close to the R. Kennet path which is (unofficially?) used by cyclists as well as walkers. At weekends and holiday times walking this path is more a case of continual dodging as cyclists come past. Some are considerate and polite but many aren't and ride as speeds well over 15 mph. To allow cyclists to use the Thames Path through Reading is asking for accidents and danger at many points, in particular: the area near Caversham Bridge where there is a public car park - people gather here in large numbers with small children to feed the swans; also, the area close to Tesco at the eastern end where people park and walk. In short, the whole path is much too busy with pedestrians to allow joint use safely. You cannot rely on cyclists obeying any proposed maximum speed - some will, many won't - it is just TOO BIG A RISK to take with the general public paying the price of a misguided decision. I appreciate the dangers cyclists face on the roads but potentially endangering pedestrians is not the answer here.</p>
25.	<p>Needs a split cycle/pedestrian path on the north side of the river between the bridges and likewise near Rivermead. As cyclists will whizz past with little or NO warning to walkers in front of them. At least with designated cycle path no one can complain if it's clearly marked as such...</p>
26.	<p>I believe that we do not have to spend money and time changing a legal status that has served us well so far. Cyclists already use the Thames Path in Reading and there are other separate cycle paths they can use to cover the same distance and area.</p>
27.	<p>Given proximity of deep water, presents a danger to pedestrians who are walking with children. A small child tends move instinctively away from the path of a moving bicycle and they may step close to the water or fall. Countryside walks which permit cycles, in my experience, come to be dominated by the needs of the cyclist. The frequency with which we have to move at speed out of the way of a cyclist and usher our children close to us destroy the whole pleasure enjoying the walk in the first place. There is a culture of simply ringing a bell without changing your speed and expecting the pedestrians to scuttle out of your way and scoop their children up too</p>
28.	<p>We run a busy boatyard on the proposed route at Scours Lane. This is a busy enterprise where we have cranes, vehicles, boat movers and fork lift trucks in constant use. I don't see how this scheme can work when going directly through an business like this. It poses a significant danger and risk to cyclist themselves and will create issues ourselves running the business, should this proposal go ahead. I would also like to mention that our deeds state that "access across the boatyard is on foot only". I'm sure there is a way of going around the boatyard to mitigate the risks, we are open to discussion about this.</p>
29.	<p>There are two issues why this proposal should be rejected. First, the path is too narrow, in particular towards the Roebuck Hotel end. The first 0.5 km from the bridge at the Roebuck is under 2 m wide along most of it and has 1.3 m useable width in many places. Along one stretch there is 1.5 m between a fixed fence and the water's edge, and the edge shows signs of erosion. The Thames Path National Trails policy specifies an absolute minimum of 2 m width through enclosed sections. It is known that RBC do not intend to spend money to rectify current issues with the path. It should be noted that there is already a surfaced cycle track off road alongside the Oxford Road, continuing off road alongside Portman Road and Richfield Avenue to Caversham Bridge. There is no need for shared use.</p> <p>Secondly, there are already serious problems with cyclists and walkers sharing the same route. It has been suggested that cyclists should be asked to be considerate and use their bells, but very few cyclists have bells, and many cyclists are not considerate. While I understand that cyclists are at risk from cars, and that more dedicated cycle tracks are needed, walkers are at risk from cyclists, and the walkers' rights and health should also be considered.</p>

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30.	I use the Thames path from the Roebuck Hotel to Caversham Bridge regularly and the stretch between the bridges and to the Kennet Mouth occasionally. I am a little deaf so I don't hear when cyclists approach me from behind. They have almost bumped into me on a number of occasions as they expect pedestrians to jump to the side. In some places the path is extremely narrow and it is not possible for a cyclist to pass a pedestrian without the pedestrian stopping and squashing into the side. I therefore strongly disagree with the proposal to change the legal status of the path.
31.	The current path along the Thames, particularly the stretch between Caversham Bridge and Reading Bridge, is too narrow to safely incorporate both a pedestrian lane and a cycle path. Bicycles do sometimes use the path at present, which doesn't seem to cause problems, but the prospect of cyclists travelling on it at greater speed to commute does not sound like a safe proposition, particularly as many pedestrians who use this section of the path have young children or dogs with them. As it stands, cyclists have more space to travel safely along the north bank of the Thames and crossing the river at the new cycle bridge, so for those cycling into the town from the Caversham side, there would be little benefit to changing this part of the Thames path. The only potential benefit would be for the smaller number of potential cyclists living directly on the south bank of the Thames, on which there is not a large amount of residential property. As such, I'm not convinced that the benefit it might bring to these few would outweigh the greater risk to pedestrians that changing the legal usage of the path would cause.
32.	The path is too narrow at 2 metres wide. We are already in danger from the small percentage of cyclists who go too fast and show no consideration. If it becomes legal to cycle on this path, it will increase the number of cyclists and the danger. I have too artificial hips. I am not able to move as quickly as the cyclists believe I should. This worries me every time I leave my house. A lot of money was spent on the new bridge but we seem to have the same number of cyclists on the south bank. Instead of turning this footpath into a race track, steps should be taken to enforce the law, especially with the relatively small number of the cyclists who abuse it.
33.	I am retired and want to keep fit through walking. The biggest danger I face is from cyclists who give no warning they are approaching from behind. So far I have escaped injury but any accident could take some time to recover from as bones don't heal so quickly when you are older. This would then put pay to my fitness regime. This is why oppose shared walking and cycle paths except where the path is wide enough such as has been constructed on Christchurch Bridge.
34.	The path is quite narrow in places and when a cyclist is passing it requires us to walk in single file. This very pleasant path was a long time in coming and brings great pleasure to walkers but also is extremely busy at certain times of the day and even more so at weekends. It would be helpful to all users if there was an unwritten rule that required cyclists to overtake either nearer the water or further away so that we knew which way to step out of the way when cyclists approach.
35.	Without considerable civil works the path from the end of the Esplanade to the Roebuck is insufficiently wide enough to prevent nuisance interference to walkers. Past experience shows that many cyclists adopt a philosophy of precedence over walkers where the path is in joint use and many, not having bells give scant warning of their approach from behind. If this proposal is adopted there should be two separately designated parallel tracks with a minimal width of 1.5 meters each, bearing in mind that both groups tend to progress two abreast and that on the main road cyclists expect a car's width clearance between them another road users. It should be remembered that the proposals cover a stretch of the Thames Path, designated with walkers -not cyclists in mind. Sadly there are members of the cycling fraternity who regardless of the designation of footpaths as restricted to folks on foot frequently abuse walkers' priority.
36.	The area near Reading bridge and the new pedestrian/cycle bridge is heavily used by young families and to have bicycles whizzing past young children and walkers is dangerous. I use the new pedestrian bridge as a pedestrian to commute to the station and hate it as the dual use is dangerous especially when exiting the bridge onto the narrow side of the pathway. There will be an accident if there hasn't been one already!

<p>37.</p>	<p>I am lucky enough to live very close to the Thames Path &amp; use it daily. It is a pleasure to use and to see other people enjoying this lovely recreational area.</p> <p>I would like to register my objection to the proposal to re-designate the towpath on the south side of the Thames between Caversham Bridge &amp; Reading Bridge.</p> <p>At present the status quo just about works now that Christchurch Bridge is in use &amp; pedestrians are able to ask cyclists to slow down if necessary when they are cycling dangerously on the towpath. However if this changes and the towpath is re-designated as a shared cycling/pedestrian route this will not be possible.</p> <p>Many of the cyclists who currently use the Thames Path are recreational users who travel slowly and cause no difficulties. However there is already a significant number of "commuter/serious" cyclists who ride extremely fast along the towpath throughout the day and evening and have little or no care for pedestrians, causing difficulty and danger particularly for elderly &amp; disabled people and those with young children - in prams and pushchairs but also on small bicycles, scooters etc. who should also be free to use the towpath in safety. There will be nothing to protect leisure users from the risks that this will lead to - &amp; the situation is guaranteed to lead to accidents and injuries. For example a cyclist riding up behind someone ringing their bell to clear the way will not be heard by someone with a hearing impairment &amp; will not leave sufficient time to move aside by someone who is elderly or has a physical disability or learning disability but can instead cause fear and confusion at least &amp; injury at worst.</p> <p>The Department for Transport quotes:</p> <p>6.2.13 As shared use facilities are unsegregated by definition, they should generally be restricted to situations where flows of either cyclists or pedestrians are low, and hence where the potential for conflict is low. If flow levels are too high for the width available, unsegregated facilities are likely to discourage some categories of pedestrian from using the facility, especially older or disabled people. This is a particular concern on routes which were previously reserved for the sole use of pedestrians. Exceptions to this general rule are pedestrianised areas, historic features such as town squares, rural routes, parks and other vehicle restricted areas where it may be desirable to allow all users access to all parts of the surface, or where segregation would be an unnecessary visual intrusion.</p> <p>6.2.14 Shared use facilities have operated satisfactorily down to 2.0m wide with considerable use by pedestrians and cyclists (up to around 200 per hour). However, this width should be considered to be an absolute minimum, and the desirable minimum is 3.0m. The minimum widths should be considered as a starting point, with higher standards adopted if possible. Again, local conditions and opinion will need to be taken into account. This section of towpath (particularly the length from Thames Avenue to Christchurch Bridge) is busy, especially in the summer and at weekends. It is predominately less than 2 metres in width. It may be possible to cut back foliage and extend the towpath out but the cost of this will be great. At a time when the council is struggling to find money for social care etc. this cannot be good use of our money and is unnecessary as there is a free &amp; easily achieved solution at this particular point along the Thames Path.</p> <p>Now that Christchurch Bridge is in place (&amp; a considerable asset to the area) it is easily possible for the Thames Path to cross from the south to the north bank of the Thames on the already existing (seldom used) cycle path on Caversham Bridge then continue alongside the north side of the river through Christchurch Meadow which has plenty of width for everyone, returning to the south side of the river by coming back over Christchurch Bridge &amp; continuing on from there. These two bridge crossings would only add a minute or two to a cyclists journey, would allow the continuation of the Thames Path for cyclists but would not endanger either cyclists or pedestrians by causing them to have to mix together on the very narrow part of the towpath on the south side of the river at this point.</p> <p>PLEASE - do not let this re-designation of the towpath happen on the south side of the river between Caversham Bridge and Reading Bridge which is so well used now &amp; with a perfectly easy solution available at no extra cost or danger to anybody, as described above.</p>
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38.	I am an OAP and moved close to the river to make use of the footpath between the two bridges as an amenity. If you make it a cycle/pedestrian footpath I will feel forced to move out. Please don't do this scheme. Although at present this is designated as a footpath many cyclists make use of it regardless. It is too narrow for cyclist use and is dangerous to pedestrians. I and many others are forced aside by cyclists who insist on a right of way. I already do not go on the path at "rush hour" and feel that it is already too dangerous. It cannot be wide enough to make it a shared cycle and pedestrian footway. There will be a lot of bad feeling and arguments between cyclists and pedestrians. You will turn what should be a nice environment into an unpleasant one for everyone.
39.	Walking along these stretches of the river is already dangerous enough, due to its unscheduled use by cyclists. Making this use official is likely to worsen the situation and lead to injuries, both to pedestrians and cyclists.
40.	I object to this proposal. Pedestrians need to be protected from the dangers presented by the close proximity of cyclists. The footpath has been used for pedestrians to enjoy a quiet pleasant walk since time immemorial. This would be spoil if cyclists were allowed shared use. I object to this proposal.
41.	<p>I object to the path between the Roebuck and Caversham Bridge being converted to shared use because it is too narrow to share safely. At 1.5m in places it is narrower than the Sustrans recommended width for shared paths, and also narrower than the 2m width which I believe is the RBC minimum for shared paths. I believe there is an existing cycle route in parallel with this section of the Thames Path.</p> <p>The sections of the path through the bridge underpasses are narrow with poor visibility. I believe the underpass sections of the path need to be divided by a white line and appropriate signage, with the cycle section nearest the river to avoid collisions and conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. As an eastbound pedestrian I have nearly collided with a fast westbound cyclist as I was joining the path under Reading Bridge by Clearwater Court.</p> <p>The section between Reading Bridge and Kennet mouth is adequately wide for shared use, and indeed has been in shared use for at least the 11 years I have been using that path as a pedestrian.</p> <p>If the path along the river past Caversham Lock is made shared use, I believe anti cycling barriers should be installed on the path across the weir as cyclists routinely ignore the current "no cycling" signs. An alternative route for cyclists exists over the new shared use Christchurch Bridge. The weir path is barely a metre wide for a large part of its length with a narrow blind corner on the lock keepers island. My experience of using that path as a pedestrian is that many cyclists use it at inconsiderate speed and without bell warnings.</p> <p>I have found cyclists abusive if challenged.</p> <p>While reasonable and considerate cyclists are to be encouraged, I believe more should be done to ensure that cyclists comply with the regulations governing cycle use such as the Highway Code. Driving through Caversham at night I come across moving cycles with no lights or reflectors. These are a danger to themselves and other road users. Cyclists also ignore red traffic lights and one way street signs in my experience. I also find them using footpaths and pavements where they have no right of way, and they seldom use audible warnings approaching pedestrians from behind, sometimes preferring emergency brake applications as warning. Any measures you can take to improve cyclists' behaviour would be very welcome. Improved cyclist behaviour would mean that future cycling proposals might be more favourably received.</p>
42.	I am a pedestrian who lives in the centre of Reading. I use the Kennet and Thames footpaths on a daily basis. I have moderate hearing loss and cannot hear cycles approaching. Many do not give warning with a bell, even if they do I often do not hear this. Shared paths are a hazard for pedestrians who have hearing or sight loss (even slight impairment). If cycle lanes are introduced I would like to see clear signs placed asking cyclists to be considerate to pedestrians. I would like such signs placed on all Reading's cycle paths.
43.	Keep the Thames safer for all users. There are other cycling alternatives that are safe.

44.	The section between reading bridge and the Kenner mouth is already used by many cyclists. As a pedestrian, this section has become dangerous due to the speed of some cyclists and the inconsiderate way in which they use the footpath e.g.: riding up behind silently and at speed leaving virtually no time for pedestrians to move out of the way. I have witnessed one accident where a pedestrian was hurt, and quite a few near misses! Not to mention the dogs which are in danger. This has always been a footpath. Are pedestrians now to be disregarded in favour of cyclists?
45.	The recommendation for a shared footpath/cycle way is 3 meters. There are lengths of this proposal that do not meet this standard. I am of the opinion that to proceed with this idea is dangerous. Hence I register an objection
46.	The existing path is not wide enough or suitable for both cyclists and walkers. One only has to look at the path from Henley to The Flower Pot, which is much wider and still there are problems with cyclists and walkers. The cyclists often have no regard for the walkers, no warning of their approach as most cyclists do not have a bell and one takes one life in one's hands to walk along some of the path. Even if a warning (bell) is given one doesn't know which way to turn to stop as the cyclists often do not slow down. The existing path between The Roebuck and the bridges is quite narrow in places and I can foresee some nasty accidents occurring if the go ahead is given for cyclists and walkers to share the path.
47.	I frequently walk along the 3 sections of footpath under consideration. Much of the path is close to the waters edge and in many places insufficient room for cyclists and pedestrians to pass safely. Generally where the surface is poor there is little room for pedestrians to avoid cyclists that are often travelling at a speed in excess of 15 mile/hour One factor to consider is that there is already an existing metalled surfaced cycle track off road alongside the Oxford Road, continuing off road alongside Portman Road and Richfield Avenue to Caversham Bridge. Every effort should be made to segregate cyclists and pedestrians unless unsegregated shared use paths are available, ideally 3 m wide + 0.5 m on either side, with an absolute minimum of 2 m + 0.5 m on either side. The application of sanctioned and unsegregated shared use for a riverside path should not be sanctioned when there is a positive risk not only of injury by collision but also drowning.
48.	I note that for the first year in ages you have cut back the greenery on the Scours Lane to Roebuck section of the Thames Path, no doubt in support of your proposal. I walk this section regularly and already am intimidated by cycles; if you allow this to become a cycle track it will ruin the Thames Path. It is narrow - it appears just about wide enough for multi-user only because you have cut it back hard, but it has never before been like this and probably won't be again. Many cyclists on this path are considerate but there are enough who are aggressive - even before the change - if you make it legal for cycles it will be a nightmare for walkers. Why does no -one care about walkers? There are still more pedestrians than cyclists. Have you ever tried to use it in the commuter rush hour. And you have already provided multi-user along the Oxford Road - why do cyclists need this? Please, please don't do it.
49.	The path should officially be termed a towpath and be maintained as such through the historic legal framework set through the Thames Conservancy. If the path ceases to be a legal towpath, various historic documents may entitle all rights of passage to revert to the landowners. The towpath is narrow and would not accommodate both a footpath and a cycleway to any normal safe standard of design without encroaching on neighbouring land. In maintaining the towpath to meet the standards that would be required for cyclists, sections of the towpath may need to be maintained by replacing areas washed away by natural erosion. Any un-natural extension of the land into the river (as such maintenance may be regarded) could lead to ownership boundary changes that could lead to loss of valuable river frontage ownership. The towpath is currently clearly signed as a footpath. The police and/or council have failed to enforce this by challenging cyclists. I have personally challenged cyclists on my section of the towpath but following a serious assault on myself, the police advised to no longer challenge people for my own safety but to leave that task to themselves. This form does not allow the user to only challenge those bits of the proposal that are relevant to them without being 'in support' or 'against' other areas. Therefore any statistics derived from this consultation will be invalid.



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50.	Many times I risked injuries when I was walking on the Thames Path due to cyclists that run at crazy speed and they never use the bell. I find them really dangerous. Once I was with friend and his toddlers and we really risked serious injuries. I'm against for security and health and safety reasons.
51.	I feel that the current "footpath/Cycle" path for the Reading section of the route works fine as it is. It would be a very dangerous move for the cyclists to have their own section. This would encourage even faster use by cyclists of the cycle section of the path and unless you intend building a Great Wall between the two, this could lead to a nasty accident with toddler drifting into the path of a speeding cyclist or a pet dog. The fact that is is along the river and the wildfoul along the river won't understand the rules of the cycle path either. The fact that the path at the moment is used in equal measure by all means that cyclists have to be more wary of their speeds, so a good thing. If you section them off, it gives them to green light to speed away. All in one lane scenario was a carefully considered point on Christchurch Bridge, I know, I attended the meetings at the Library in Caversham so that consideration should also play a part in the rest of the cycle path. It has to be the same, it can't just switch at various points along the way. Also, where is the budget coming from this, CYCLE TAX??
52.	The path along the river side, particularly between the two bridges, has no barrier and is not wide enough to accommodate two way foot traffic and bike traffic.
53.	I am very concerned about the proposal for the above cycle path as published in the Reading Chronicle given that both I and my wife, both disabled and in my case also a pensioner, have in the past already been subjected to intimidating and bullying behaviour by adult cyclists (illegally?) using parts of the proposed path.

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54.

I write to object to the above proposed orders on the following grounds:

(1) The orders proposed converting half the width of the footpath to cycle track, but this width is in practice a fiction. The ground nearest to the river is susceptible to erosion, and in any case will be avoided by users for safety reasons. The beaten or surfaced track in most areas occupies only a central strip, and widening this to take in adjacent vegetation would be damaging both to amenity and to nature conservation. In practice, the proposal would require pedestrians and cyclists to share the path.

(2) They fail to strike an appropriate balance between the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and nature conservation.

(3) A cycle route on this alignment is not needed for practical access or leisure purposes, and better alternatives already exist in the central and western sections.

Leisure cyclists are not in a position to pay such close attention as walkers to the detail of their surroundings, so for them the attractiveness of a route is mainly about the wider landscape setting. In particular:

(4) The argument that cyclists already use parts of the route does not hold water: it could be used to justify conversion of footways to cycle paths almost anywhere.

For the above reasons, I urge councillors not to confirm the Orders, but to give consideration to ways in which links between the existing alternative cycle routes may be improved.

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As you will know we have leased the property since the 1980's and we do not accept that you have established a cycleway right and do not believe that you could do so beyond the extent of the leasehold title even supposed such a right could be established, the route has also been blocked off several times. This position also applied to the walkway and you will remember that this was objected to too, that gates were incorporated during part of the former period. Additionally we objected to the width claimed for the walkway, the current walkway demonstrates the previous width used and the claim of three metres was wrong and this could not be true along part of the course in any event due to width, part barely four feet wide. Additionally the tow path was extinguished many years before.

Having said that we may be able to agree to a scheme subject to safety issues, negotiated agreement and variance

Please note that pedestrians move at a slower rate than cyclists, that there are parts of the footway that cannot carry pedestrians and cyclists safely especially when both cyclists meet cyclists and cyclists meet pedestrians from each direction or in the case of cyclists and pedestrians in the same direction, needing to pass.

Whilst half of the route could potentially meet such a requirement the remainder could prove more difficult and if agreed we would want to see the same basic form and surface without serious disturbance of outlook following the current position with not more than double the current width.

55.

We would like to see that cyclists where, when necessary have to dismount, that pedestrians had priority in the interests of safety along the narrow section if such is to be incorporated, with signs at each end (Scours Lane and Roebuck Bridge Steps) denoting priority to pedestrians, that a third should be facing east just prior to the width of the course narrowing, that our rights, authority are unaffected ((It should be remembered that cyclists can sometimes be quite arrogant, menacing, intimidating, abusive and resentful and this should be accounted for) when cyclists are asked to dismount, told a walkway, private property).

In regard to Roebuck Bridge Steps to Roebuck Ferry Cottage, this leads to a dead end and in all the years we have been here we have never seen a cyclists try to use this and only the odd one or two on foot start to walk it annoyed only to have to turn back, well over twenty eight years. We ask that this section is removed from any footway, this has been leased a long time and should not have been party to the walkway. A foot path does not permit loitering much as we appreciate most people are genuine in their use of the footway on a nice summer's day but there is no justification for a cycleway or footway to this dead end where nothing else is public, loitering an offence, obstructs land owner security, a potential for damage, debris without true purpose except distress and detriment to lessees and we would like some security over this part of our property.

We should point out that we feel that Oxford Road adjacent to the Roebuck Hotel is a very busy road many times of the day for cyclists to egress from the bridge footway onto Oxford Road at the Roebuck Hotel and that there are many steps to the bridge before this which have to be encountered, that a far safer position to exit onto Oxford road and end the cycle way would be Sours Lane where steps would not be encountered. It is a genuine view where Oxford Road footway could also support cyclists. Despite how this could be seen, this is a genuine view, egress point Roebuck Hotel, Oxford Road could be a potential hazard for life, accident, the bend Oxford Road deceptive where traffic is on you very quickly, please check the traffic.

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56 - 60	No detailed comments submitted.
61 - 194	134 Signatures on Petition

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**Provide basic details**

**Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed**

Changing the legal status of the Thames Path to a joint footpath and cycle track.

**Directorate:** DENS

**Service:** Transport Planning

**Name and job title of person doing the assessment**

**Name:** Emma Baker

**Job Title:** Senior Transport Planner

**Date of assessment:** 05/06/2017

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**Scope your proposal**

**What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?**

The Thames Path is currently designated as a right of way by foot only. This proposal aims to change the legal status of the Thames Path to a joint footpath and cycle track in order to reflect how the footpath is currently used and has been in excess of 30 years.

**Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

If the legal status of the Thames Path is changed to a joint footpath and cycle track, cyclists will be able to use the right of way legally.

**What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**

The outcome will result in the existing footpath becoming a public right of way on foot and by bicycle where pedestrians and cyclists will share an unsegregated shared-use path.

**Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

The main stakeholders consist of users and landowners whose property extends to the river bank, including the public right of way.

**Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant**

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

Yes (delete as appropriate)

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

Yes (delete as appropriate)

If the answer is Yes to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Signed (completing officer



Date 05/06/2017

Signed (Lead Officer)



Date 05/06/2017

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**Assess the Impact of the Proposal**

Your assessment must include:

- Consultation
- Collection and Assessment of Data
- Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups,

but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

**Example:** A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

**Consultation**

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[My Home > Info Pods > Community Involvement Pod - Inside Reading Borough Council](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Older People's Working Group	An email was sent to members of the OPWG.	May 2017
Landowners	Letters were sent to landowners in advance of the consultation	April 2017
Local interest groups, including Thames Path Management Group, Cycle Forum, Mid-West Berks Local Access Forum, Open Space Society, etc.	Emails were sent to local interest groups informing them of the consultation, including a link to the press release.	April 2017

Statutory Consultees, including Pedestrian Association, Friends of the Earth, Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled, Joint Committee of the Mobility for Blind and Partially Sighted, utility companies, Ramblers Association, Cycling UK	Letters and/or emails were sent to statutory consultees, including national and local contacts.	April 2017
General Public	The Cycle Track Orders were advertised in the local media, on-site and through corporate media channels.	April 2017



**Collect and Assess your Data**

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups**

The proposal is not expected to impact on racial groups.

Is there a negative impact? No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)**

The proposal may impact on women who are pregnant and using the footpath as they will be expected to share the footpath with other users, including cyclists. They may be concerned about the increased potential for harm through collision with cyclists. However, it should be noted that cyclists are already using the route despite its current legal status.

It should be noted that there are other footways in the borough that are designated as shared-use that are of a similar width. However, there have not been any reported incidents on shared-use facilities in the vicinity of the Thames Path, on Christchurch Bridge or the northern bank. Officers are not aware of any reports of injuries to members of the public caused by cyclists sharing the space.

Is there a negative impact? Yes

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**

The proposal will result in all users, regardless of any protected characteristics that they have, being required to share the Thames Path. The proposal seeks to convert the existing width of the footpath that ranges from 2 - 5 metres wide to shared-use. This is in line with our Cycling Strategy, but slightly below national guidance, which recommends that shared spaces should have a minimum preferred width of 3 metres. However, it should be noted that cyclists and pedestrians are already sharing the space despite its current legal status.

Is there a negative impact? Yes

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**

The proposal is not expected to impact on sexual orientation.

Is there a negative impact? No

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Age**

The proposal will result in the provision of a traffic-free route for less confident and inexperienced cyclists, including children, families and older people. However the proposal is also likely to impact on older pedestrians who would prefer not to share a space with cyclists due to potential conflicts and injury. Officers are aware of three previous conflicts between users, including one involving a child.

Again, cyclists are already using the route so pedestrians and cyclists are already sharing the space.

Is there a negative impact? Yes

**Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?**

The proposal is not expected to impact on religious beliefs.

Is there a negative impact? No

**Make a Decision**

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you MUST assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Tick which applies (Please delete relevant ticks)

1. **No negative impact identified**      Go to sign off

2. **Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**

The Cycle Track Orders were advertised for consultation between 27<sup>th</sup> April and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017. Of the 858 responses, 78% were in support of the proposal to change the legal status of the Thames Path and 22% were in objection to the proposal. Respondents who objected to the proposal highlighted their main concerns as being footpath widths and potential conflicts with other users, particularly if they are vulnerable pedestrians (e.g. elderly, disabled or children).

Whilst the proposal is likely to have some negative impact on groups with protected characteristics, shared-use is already taking place along the Thames Path and has been in excess of 30 years. In order to mitigate the likelihood of conflicts occurring due to inconsiderate use of the proposed shared-use path,

the Council will highlight the presence of other users through soft measures, such as signing, and work in partnership with other stakeholders, such as Thames Valley Police.

If the Cycle Track Orders are confirmed, the Council will seek to upgrade the footpath within the widths set out on the existing Footpath Orders and address the concerns highlighted through the consultation. Improvements, such as widening and upgrading the surface and strengthening the river bank, are likely to benefit all users.

**3. Negative impact identified or uncertain**

**What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?**

**How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?**

If the Cycle Track Orders are determined, Officers will continue to monitor pedestrian and cycle use through the annual cordon counts and conflicts reported to the Council.

Signed (completing officer)



Date 05/06/2017

Signed (Lead Officer)



Date 05/06/2017