

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 January 2023	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND TRANCHE 3 - CASTLE HILL AND BATH ROAD - TRAFFIC RESTRICTION PROPOSALS FOR STATUTORY CONSULTATION		
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Sub-Committee to undertake a statutory consultation for the implementation of traffic restrictions in the form of double yellow lines, reducing an existing bus lane and removal of the tidal flow lane on Castle Hill and Bath Road as required as part of implementation of the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 scheme.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the content of this report.
- 2.2 That the Sub-Committee approves the Statutory Consultation to take place.
- 2.3 That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order(s).
- 2.4 That any objection(s) received following the statutory advertisement be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The proposals align with the principles of the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by addressing safety and parking issues that can impact in pupils and parents during drops-off and picks-up. The resulting improvements can support improved traffic flow (including public transport) with reduced emissions and the removal of barriers to the greater use of sustainable, healthy transport options.
- 3.2 Creation of cycle facilities on this busy route between Southcote Lane and the Inner Distribution Road/Castle Street, to and from the town centre, resolves the current 'missing link' on the existing network, and will link with the new NCN route 422 and connect it with existing routes west of the railway bridge

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Following successfully securing Tranche 2 funding from the Active Travel Fund, in March 2022 the DfT awarded the Council £1.3m from the third tranche of funding to deliver a scheme of segregated cycle infrastructure and pedestrian improvements on the Bath Road, between the town centre and the junction with Berkeley Avenue. Funding for the scheme will also include £200k from the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) grant from DfT.
- 4.2 Initial consultation on the concept designs for the Bath Road scheme was undertaken alongside the other active travel schemes between 24th February and 23rd April 2021. This consultation resulted in strong support for the scheme, with 60% of respondents saying they supported or strongly supported the proposed segregated cycle lanes. A further consultation was undertaken between 7th July and 1st August 2022, including a public drop-in event at Reading Association for the Blind, Walford Hall, Carey Street on Wednesday 13th July. The feedback received through these consultations is currently being used to prepare the detailed designs for the scheme
- 4.3 The indicative timeline for the Tranche 3 programme is set out below:
 - Initial consultation - February to April 2021 - Completed
 - Initial consultation results review and recommendation for scheme(s) to be taken forward - Complete
 - Further consultation - Complete (July/August 2022)
 - Update designs and surveys - Complete (October 2022)
 - SEPT Committee scheme and spend approval - November 2022
 - Detailed designs complete - Winter 2022
 - Traffic Management Sub-Committee statutory consultation approval - January 2023
 - Traffic Regulation Orders statutory consultation - Spring 2023
 - Update scheme designs - Spring 2023
 - Scheme delivery - from Summer 2023 onwards

5 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 In order to progress this scheme, officers seek authority to undertake a statutory consultation for the implementation of traffic restrictions in the form of double yellow lines, reducing an existing bus lane and removal of the tidal flow lane on Castle Hill and Bath Road

Alteration to residents' parking bays on Castle Hill (Double Yellow Lines)

- 5.2 The existing eastbound lane on Castle Hill has two sections of residents' parking bays. These are approximately 27m and 15m in length and in theory provide up to 8 parking spaces. However, the existing bay of 27m includes dropped kerbs, providing access to 156 Castle Hill, and therefore reducing the useable parking space to approximately 6 or 7 cars.
- 5.3 The active travel plan for the segregated cycle track on the eastbound carriageway formalises the need for a gap for access crossovers and Officers are proposing that Parking Restrictions totalling 11m be implemented in the location identified in Appendix A. The result of which will be to reduce the overall capacity for Residents Parking from 7 to 6.

Alteration to eastbound bus lane on Bath Road.

- 5.4 The existing layout of Bath Road includes a bus lane for eastbound buses from 48 Bath Road to Janson Court, a distance of 535m. In order to accommodate two segregated cycle tracks at the west end of Bath Road it is necessary to adjust the bus lane to start at 40 Bath Road where the carriageway width becomes sufficient to provide a LTN1/20 compliant 'wide' combined bus and cycle lane. This reduces the length of the bus lane by 123m.
- 5.5 Due to the reducing width of Bath Road towards its western end junction with Berkeley Avenue, to keep the current length of the bus lane would require the bus lane to be made wider to safely accommodate the use of cycles in accordance with the current LTN1/20 guidance. This would have the effect of removing the ability to provide a westbound cycle track for the same approximate distance of 123m and across the two vehicular entrances to Benyon Court.
- 5.6 Provision of continuous cycle tracks segregated from traffic (or in widened bus lanes) is necessary to enable a safe cycle route to be provided to and from the Southcote Lane junction.
- 5.7 The proposed changes to the eastbound bus lane on Bath Road are shown in Appendix B.

Removal of central peak traffic flow reversible lane.

- 5.8 The existing central lane at the foot of Castle Hill is squeezed into a highway width that is very narrow for a third lane and attempts to provide additional capacity for the peak traffic flows. As a result, there is no safe space for cyclists to use in the narrow lanes and due to the narrow footways it is also difficult to walk a cycle up the hill.

- 5.9 The scheme for promoting Active Travel on this route removes the centre tidal-lane (Appendix C) and redistributes the space to provide two cycle tracks at the edge of the highway. This will allow cyclists to cycle up or down the hill in a space that is segregated from traffic.
- 5.10 As part of this scheme, further works will be undertaken on the Castle Hill roundabout to reduce the impact of the loss of the tidal flow lane, including keeping the two-lane entry onto Castle Hill and to allocate lanes around the roundabout to guide traffic onto Castle Hill. Once past the narrowest section of Castle Hill the scheme provides for two westbound lanes to the traffic-light junction with Russell Street.
- 5.11 Provision of safe segregated cycle tracks is fundamental to the active travel scheme and to promoting increased cycling and walking on this route.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 This proposal contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan themes as set out below:

Healthy environment

- 6.2 Waiting restrictions can assist in preventing obstructive, hazardous or nuisance parking. In some situations, inconsiderate parking can compromise safety or result in difficulties for residents and businesses. Many parking issues can create delays or accessibility obstructions for users of the network such as pedestrians, cyclists, domestic vehicles, delivery vehicles, emergency services and public transport.
- 6.3 Proposals for this Castle Hill and Bath Road scheme can help to reduce some of these parking issues. They can lead to more efficient traffic flow, clearer footways, improvements to perceived Highway safety and greater containment. These can lead to lower vehicle emissions, and removal of barriers to active travel.
- 6.4 The overall scheme will contribute to the Council's goal of making the town carbon neutral by 2030.
- 6.5 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan are available on the website and include information on the projects which will deliver these priorities.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25, this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions. However, significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

- 7.2 The Climate Impact Assessment tool has been used to assess the proposal as set out within this report, resulting in an overall Net Medium Positive impact. This is due to the programme being focused on encouraging the use of sustainable transport, walking and cycling as attractive alternatives to the private car. The programme will enhance facilities to encourage more use of sustainable transport and active travel options, and therefore reduce the use of the private car and resulting congestion, carbon emissions and other air quality issues. There are inevitably emissions associated with the construction of these major schemes, however we are working to reduce these short-term impacts in order to achieve the longer-term modal switch benefits.
- 7.3 In addition, the delivery of the major transport schemes as set out within this report form a vital part of our overall transport and climate emergency strategies, which has achieved considerable success in recent years including bus usage in Reading being the second highest in the country outside of London, having increased by 23% since 2010, and around 35% of trips into Reading town centre being made by pedestrians and cyclists.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 8.1 Any Statutory consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, advertised on street, in the local printed newspapers and on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub').

Notices of intention will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and will be erected on lamp columns within the affected area. The Police are a statutory consultee and will be directly notified. The consultation will be hosted on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub'), where details and plans will be available.

- 8.2 Traffic Management Sub-Committee are public meetings. The agendas, reports, meeting minutes and recordings of the meetings are available to view from the Council's website.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must 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, and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 9.2 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant as the proposals are not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics and statutory consultations provide an opportunity for the content of objections/support/concerns to be considered prior to a decision being made on whether to implement the proposals.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 New, or changes to existing, Traffic Regulation Orders require advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The resultant Traffic Regulation Order will be sealed in accordance with the same regulations

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Castle Hill and Bath Road scheme is included in the Council's Capital Programme.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Strategic Environment, Planning And Transport Committee 16 November 2022