

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	2nd March 2023		
TITLE:	ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND TRANCHE 3 - CASTLE HILL AND BATH ROAD - TRAFFIC RESTRICTION PROPOSALS - CONSULTATION RESULTS		
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Traffic Management Sub-Committee to implement new traffic restrictions on Castle Hill/Bath Road in the form of double yellow lines, removal of the tidal flow lane and reduction of the length of the existing bus lane.
- 1.2 This report is to also inform the Sub-Committee of objections and other feedback received during the statutory consultation. Members are asked to consider these objections and conclude the outcome of the proposal.
- 1.3 **Appendix 1** - Feedback received to the statutory consultation.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the content of this report.
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to approve the proposed traffic restrictions on Castle Hill/Bath Road in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 2.3 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order and no public inquiry be held into the proposal.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The proposals in this report 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 pick-ups. 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 the Bath Road and Castle Hill, between the Berkeley Avenue junction and the Inner Distribution Road/Castle Street Roundabout, 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. THE PROPOSAL

- 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 An 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 - February 2023
 - Update scheme designs - Spring 2023
 - Scheme delivery - from Summer 2023 onwards

- 4.4 A Statutory consultation has been 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'). The Consultation commenced on 2nd February 2023 and ended on 23rd February 2023.
- 4.5 Members are asked to note that at the time of writing and initial report publication, the consultation period has not concluded.
- 4.6 As of 17 February 2023, 109 responses to the consultation were received, of which 77.27% were in support of the implementation of traffic restrictions in the form of double yellow lines along Castle Hill between its junction with Russell Street with Jesse Terrace. 70.91% in support to alteration to the length of the existing eastbound bus lane on Bath Road. 67.27% in support of to the removal of Tidal Flow on Castle Hill. In summary of the objections, the common themes were:
- Strongly object to the removal of the tidal flow as it will result in a significant backlog of traffic which will negatively impact air quality in the local area. It works as it is.
 - Cycle infrastructure design LTN 1/20 does not increase cyclists but just increase traffic congestion affecting air quality.

A summary of the consultation responses can be found in **Appendix 1**

- 4.7 Officers will provide an update, which will be published, as soon as the consultation period has elapsed, and that further feedback has been collated and anonymised.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The creation of the cycle scheme contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan themes as set out below:

- **Healthy environment**

The implementation of cycle facilities can remove barriers to cycling and lead to an increase in uptake. This can lead to a reduction in motor-vehicle journeys, particularly short local journeys, which can be some of the most polluting, improving air quality by reducing emissions.

- **Thriving Communities**

Cycling is a lower-cost transport mode that also provides exercise. Providing cycle-prioritisation facilities and, therefore, removing some barriers that may exist toward cycling offers an appealing and beneficial transport option for our communities.

- **Inclusive economy**

The proposal in this report provides a useful link between destinations and other parts of the cycle network across the borough. With the addition of future schemes, they make Reading an increasingly attractive place in which to cycle

and visit sites of cultural significance, retail and entertainment venues and enjoy its geographical benefits (e.g. the River Thames and River Kennet).

- 5.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2022/25 is available on the Reading Borough Council website which includes information on the projects that contribute to the delivery of these priorities.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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 the target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 Proposals set out in this paper seek to support a step-change in transport infrastructure and services and cover perceived local safety, accessibility, and traffic flow issues that, once resolved, should improve traffic flow (lower emissions, improved flow for public transport) and remove some barriers toward increased use of sustainable and healthy transport options.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 A Statutory consultation was conducted between 2nd February 2023 and ended on 23rd February 2023 in accordance with appropriate legislation, including Traffic Regulation Orders as appropriate. Notices were advertised in the local newspaper and were erected on lamp columns within the affected area. The feedback received during this consultation, is set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 7.2 The Traffic Management Sub-Committee is a public meeting and the agendas, reports, meeting minutes and recordings of the meetings are available to view from the Council's website.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 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.

8.2 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant as the proposal is not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics and statutory consultation 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.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 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/revoked in accordance with the same regulations.

9.2 A Statutory consultation was conducted in accordance with this legislation, and this report seeks agreement for the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to conclude this process, in the making of the Traffic Regulation Order.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee 16 November 2022

11.2 Traffic Management Sub-Committee 12 January 2023