

Traffic Management Sub-Committee

27 November 2024



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Woodley Active Travel Scheme – Palmer Park Avenue Parallel Crossing
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	James Clements, Transport Programme Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis – Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Ward(s)	Park
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Sub-Committee notes the content of this report.2. That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultation/notification processes for the proposed changes on Palmer Park Avenue and Wykeham Road junction.3. Authorise the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood services to make minor amendments to the agreed proposals if required prior to the implementation and in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub Committee.4. That subject to no objections being received the scheme be considered as approved for implementation.5. That should the scheme receive objection(s) during the statutory consultation period, that these be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for consideration and decision regarding scheme implementation.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In November 2020, the Department for Transport awarded over £500k to Wokingham Borough Council through its Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 to improve walking and cycling within the borough. Following early engagement, the Woodley to Reading route was the scheme highlighted with the most significant impact on reducing car dependency and increasing bike use and this included a section within Reading Borough. In March 2022 the Department for Transport awarded Wokingham a further £2.95 million for the design and delivery of the Woodley to Reading Active Travel Route.
- 1.2. A section of this scheme falls within Reading borough and consists of the provision of a new Parallel crossing over Palmer Park Avenue at the entrance to Palmer Park and improved crossing facilities across Wykeham Road. The pavement is also to be converted to shared space on the south side of Culver Lane between its junction with Wykeham Road and the borough boundary.

- 1.3. Wokingham Borough Council is looking to commence construction on this scheme in Spring 2025. This report sets out the details of the scheme and seeks approval from the sub-committee to undertake the appropriate statutory consultation.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The proposals align with the principles of the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The parallel crossing proposals will complement the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by removing barriers to the greater use of sustainable, healthy transport options.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. In November 2020 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) secured funding through the Department for Transport's (DFT's) Active Travel Fund (ATF) Tranche 2 and 3 in order to improve walking and cycling provisions within the Borough and to develop and deliver such schemes.
- 3.2. WBC have agreed to use this funding to improve the cycling and walking connection between Woodley town centre and the Reading borough boundary at Palmer Park with the final section of this route being within Reading Borough Boundary on Culver Lane and Palmer Park Avenue
- 3.3. The overall scheme consists of the provision of a new cycle route connecting Woodley Town Centre and Palmer Park including an upgrade to the existing shared footway/cycleway sections, junction upgrades and priority crossing points. Part of Woodlands Avenue is to be reduced to 20mph as part of the proposal, with Palmerstone Road and Culver Lane proposed to form part of a wider 20mph Zone which is being delivered as a separate scheme. Church Road is to remain 30mph.
- 3.4. A section of this scheme falls within Reading borough and consists of the provision of a new Parallel crossing over Palmer Park Avenue at the entrance to Palmer Park and improved crossing facilities (including raised table/crossing) at the Wykeham Road junction with Palmer Park Avenue. The pavement is also to be converted to shared space on the south side of Culver Lane between its junction with Wykeham Road and the borough boundary.
- 3.5. The introduction of a raised table at the Wykeham Road junction will be implemented under Section 90C of the Highways Act 1980 subject to consultation.
- 3.6. The section of the scheme within the borough has been developed with the engagement and feedback from Reading Borough Council Transport Officers.
- 3.7. The design for the section within Reading can be seen in Appendix A - Woodley Active Travel Scheme – Palmer Park Avenue Section Scheme Design drawing.
- 3.8. This is one of the key routes which have been identified in the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The proposed link would create a safe, inclusive and direct access to Woodley town centre while connecting it to several schools and leisure facilities.
- 3.9. An independent combined stage 1 and 2 road safety audit (RSA) has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of the National Highways document GG 119 'Road Safety Audit'.
- 3.10. The RSA raised an observation regarding the width of the shared crossing as it below the minimum recommended width of 3m show in TSM Chapter 6. Officers from Reading Borough Council agree with Wokingham Borough Councils response to this, being that, "where feasible, crossings will be increased to 3m however in the majority of locations due to local constraints such as driveways and widths of proposed cycletrack it is not

possible to meet the minimum recommended widths". At Palmer Park Avenue crossing, due to these constraints, it has not been possible to increase this width.

- 3.11. The RSA did not raise any other safety issues regarding the section within Reading Borough

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. This proposal contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan Themes, as set out below:

Healthy environment

The installation of parallel crossings is expected to improve the experience of pedestrians in the area. They reinforce the spirit of the revised Highway Code in providing priority for pedestrians and require motorists and pedestrians to be more observant of their surroundings. Reductions in traffic speed and the potential reductions in cut-through traffic volumes as a result of traffic calming can lead to a nicer environment for cycling.

Complementing other Council initiatives, these measures will contribute to encouraging people to make healthy transport choices through the removal of barriers toward doing so. This will contribute toward the Council's goal of making the town carbon neutral by 2030, through reducing emissions by private vehicle use.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted, which considers a net 'NIL' impact as a result of the Sub-Committee agreeing to the recommendations of this report.
- 5.3. The implementation of this scheme, if agreed, will require a level of civil engineering work to be undertaken and the installation of electrically powered lighting for parallel crossings.
- 5.4. These will have a minor negative impact during installation and a very minor ongoing negative impact due to the continued energy use by the low-energy LED parallel crossing lighting. They will, however, be long-standing facilities and it is expected that the installation of these schemes will remove barriers that many people will have to walking and cycling, which will offset these impacts by a likely reduction in private vehicle journeys. While it is difficult to quantify, it is expected that the benefits will outweigh the impacts over time.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Wokingham Borough Council undertook an initial engagement exercise in spring 2021 on three schemes that were identified as strategic connections within the Wokingham's emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. According to the responses received, the Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route was highlighted as the scheme with the most significant impact on reducing car dependency and increasing bike use.
- 6.2. Based on the findings of the initial consultation and a Value for Money analysis, WBC made an [Individual Executive Member Decision \(IEMD\)](#) in July 2021 approving continued development of the Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route.
- 6.3. Following the first engagement exercise, preliminary designs for the Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route were developed in line with the aspirations set out in LTN 1/20 cycling design guidance and a further consultation was held in early 2022.

- 6.4. Due to the strong opposition received to the proposed one-way section at Woodlands Ave east, WBC looked at alternative design options. These were discussed with key local stakeholders and the Department for Transport, before determining which option to progress.
- 6.5. After reviewing feedback from all stakeholders and residents, WBC revised its plans and undertook a further consultation in August 2022.
- 6.6. Final detailed design drawings have been developed with due consideration on the feedback received and based on further engagement with Active Travel England to ensure compliance with the cycling design guidance.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.
- 7.2. 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, nor do they significantly vary existing operations. Statutory consultation processes will be conducted, where required, providing an opportunity for objections/support/concerns to be considered prior to a decision being made on whether to implement the proposals.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. None

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The Council may, under Section 23 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act establish or modify pedestrian crossings on roads for which they are the traffic authority, and may alter or remove any such crossings. Before establishing any pedestrian crossing the Council is required to consult with the chief officer of police about their proposal and give adequate public notice of that proposal.
- 9.2. Sections 90A to 90F of the Highways Act 1980 authorise the Council to construct traffic calming measures, such as raised tables, on public highways to improve road safety and manage traffic flow. When proposing to construct a raised table under Section 90A, the Council must comply with Section 90C of the Highways Act 1980, Regulation 3 of the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999, and Regulation 4 of the Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1999. These provisions require consultation with the chief officers of the local fire and ambulance services and any organisations the Council considers representative of highway users or those likely to be affected by the proposal.
- 9.3. Additionally, under Sections 90C(2) and (3), the Council must publish a notice in one or more local newspapers and display it at relevant locations on the highway. The notice must outline the nature, dimensions, and location of the proposed raised table, provide an address for submitting objections, and specify a minimum 21-day objection period starting from the notice's first publication date.

Network Management Duty

- 9.4. Part 2 Section 16 (1) of The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a duty on the Council as a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far

as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives—

- (a) securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
- (b) facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

(2) The action which the authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing—

- (a) the more efficient use of their road network; or
- (b) the avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority;

and may involve the exercise of any power to regulate or co-ordinate the uses made of any road (or part of a road) in the road network (whether or not the power was conferred on them in their capacity as a traffic authority). This duty places an ongoing obligation in ensuring overall traffic efficiency and network performance and not only applies to vehicles but to all pedestrians and cyclists.

Section 122 duty

9.5. Further Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 places a duty on the local authority so far as practicable to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. In carrying out this exercise the Council must have regard to the following:

- Desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises.
- The effect on the amenities of any locality effected and (without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph) the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the road(s) run.
- The strategy prepared under Section 80 of the Environment Act 1995 (the national air quality strategy).
- The importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles.
- Any other matters appearing to the local authority to be relevant.

9.6. This duty focuses on the making of individual traffic regulation decisions.

9.7. Each of these duties has been considered in detail in relation to the schemes identified in this report.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. The construction of the scheme is being fully funded by Wokingham Borough Council through its Active Travel Fund award from Active Travel England with no contribution required by Reading Borough Council.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Subject to approval being granted by this committee, the statutory consultation will commence shortly with the intention of reporting back to the sub-committee in January 2025, should objections be received.
- 11.2. Should the scheme be approved Wokingham borough Council is intending to commence construction Spring 2025.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. None.

Appendices

1. **Appendix 1 - Palmer Park Ave & Wykeham Rd crossing facilities**