

# **Draft Borough Cycling Strategy 2016-2020**

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A joint report by Bartholomew Wren (TWBC) to the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board on 15 February 2016.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Draft Cycling Strategy was published for 6 weeks in September 2015; feedback received from the consultation has been taken into consideration in preparing the final document.

Agreement is now being sought for adoption and publication of the final Strategy by TWBC Cabinet.

## **BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION**

1. Following meetings of the Joint transportation Board in July 2015 and TWBC Cabinet in August 2015, it was agreed that the Draft Cycling Strategy (including Equalities Impact Assessment) would be issued for a period of 6 weeks consultation.
2. The Draft Strategy was published on 17 September 2015 and was available online for comment, via the Borough Council's consultation portal until 2 November 2015. Promotion of the consultation included email communications to Borough Councillors, Parish Councils and members of the Cycling Forum. A press release was issued to local newspapers and the Times of Tunbridge Wells subsequently published information about the consultation. Information about the consultation was also issued using the cyclefriday twitter account.
3. Following the conclusion of the consultation officers have been working to refine the document in light of the responses received.

## **WHAT IS THE ISSUE THAT REQUIRES A DECISION AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PEOPLE OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS?**

4. Those who live or work in the Borough, as well as visitors, already face traffic congestion when travelling in and around the area, especially at peak times. The future growth of the Borough as proposed in the Local Plan, whilst needed, is likely to exacerbate this situation unless measures are taken to manage the existing transport network, encourage sustainable travel and provide new transport infrastructure. The promotion of cycling, for utility purposes in particular, is considered to be part of the solution to resolving congestion problems and will assist in improving air quality as well as encouraging active travel.
5. The Cycling Strategy sets out:
  - The national and local policy context;
  - The benefits of cycling – economic, social and health;
  - Proposals for establishing a priority cycle route network in the Borough and requirements for maintenance of these routes; and
  - Initiatives to promoting cycling in the Borough.

6. It identifies the following utility cycle routes (in priority order), most of which have yet to be implemented or are partly implemented.

- Route 1 - Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells via the A26
- Route 2 - Pembury to Tunbridge Wells via the A264
- Route 3 - Paddock Wood circular route
- Route 4 - Routes across The Commons
- Route 5 - 21st Century Way including Home Farm Lane link
- Route 6 - Woodsgate Corner to Vauxhall Lane via Tonbridge Road and A21
- Route 7 - Forest Road to Grove Hill Road via Farmcombe Road
- Route 8 - A26 London Road to Dowding Way via Barnetts Wood
- Route 9 - Langton Green to Tunbridge Wells including Rusthall and Speldhurst links
- Route 10 - Ramslye and Showfields links
- Route 11 - High Weald Academy to High Street

In addition, the following leisure routes are now included in the Strategy.

- National Cycle Route 18 through Royal Tunbridge Wells;
- Tunbridge Wells - Penshurst Route;
- Cranbrook – Sissinghurst Route, and the
- Hop Pickers Heritage Route.

## WHO HAVE WE CONSULTED AND HOW?

7. The Draft Strategy was prepared following engagement with relevant KCC officers and the Tunbridge Wells Cycling Forum.
8. The consultation programme included the following;

**Residents Questionnaire** - This was published online alongside the Strategy document and route assessments. Hard copies were issued by post to parties that requested these.

**Schools Questionnaire** - All primary, secondary and private school head teachers were contacted by letter during the consultation. A specific questionnaire for schools was issued.

**Written Responses** - A range of comments and feedback on the Strategy was received by email.

**Stakeholder Meetings** - Meetings to discuss the route proposals were held prior to and during the consultation period, with groups and organisations that will be directly impacted by the proposed cycle routes. In some cases liaison is ongoing. Stakeholders include Parish Councils and landowning parties as follows:

- Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators
- Inner London Road Residents Association
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Access Group
- Camden Park Residents Association
- Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council
- Rusthall Parish Council
- Paddock Wood Town Council
- Speldhurst Parish Council
- Southborough Town Council

## WHAT FEEDBACK HAS BEEN RECEIVED?

9. The following is a summary of the consultation feedback received. A more detailed analysis of the feedback can be found in the consultation feedback report.
10. **Residents Questionnaire** - 54 completed questionnaires were received. Whilst a higher number of responses would have been preferable, the feedback demonstrates a strong level of support for the Strategy amongst the respondents. There is clear support for the vision (98% of respondents supportive) and actions (94% of respondents supportive) as outlined in the Strategy, with no critical feedback received in response to these. Comments received regarding the route proposals have been considered where relevant, and appropriate minor alterations have been made to the Strategy and route assessments. These do not significantly alter the emphasis or proposals within the Strategy.
11. The resident's feedback identifies the most prominent reasons why they don't travel by bicycle. These include concerns of road safety (34%) and lack of dedicated routes (29%). The Strategy seeks to address these matters through its actions and route proposals.
12. **Schools Questionnaire** - Responses were received from 16 schools. Six identified that none of their children currently cycle to school. 8 schools identified that none of their staff currently cycle to school. Amongst schools that identified that some of their pupils or staff currently cycle to school, the number in each case is generally low. The average number of pupils cycling is 7.1 (excluding Kent Skinners Academy to which 50+ pupils currently cycle). The average number of staff that cycle is 1.6, with Tunbridge Wells Boys Grammar School having the highest number of staff (6) that commute by bicycle.
13. Six schools don't provide dedicated cycle parking. Amongst those that do, the number of spaces varies significantly from 6 to over 120 (Kent Skinners Academy). No school identified Bikeability training as a compulsory part of the curriculum.
14. All schools identified road safety as a barrier that prevents pupils and staff from cycling. The lack of cycle routes being identified by most as a key issue. A lack of confidence and bicycle ownership were identified as barriers by some.
15. All responding schools agreed with the Strategy vision and identified their support for the introduction of 20mph limits/zones. Most agreed with the route proposals. Comments were received requesting the widespread use of segregation. Negative feedback concerning the proposed route via Carriers Road in Cranbrook was received. This proposal is to be replaced with links over the A249 at the High Weald Academy and Weald Sports Centre following liaison with Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council.
16. The level of cycling amongst pupils and staff is generally low, primarily due to a lack of dedicated infrastructure and perceptions of road safety. The experience of Kent Skinners Academy demonstrates the potential to achieve a significant increase in the number of pupils who cycle to school, where a higher quality cycle route is provided that connects with surrounding residential areas, as well as provision of sufficient cycle parking facilities. The feedback received does not require any amendment to the Strategy, it is however, appreciated that the included route proposals will not meet the needs of all schools.
17. **Written Responses** - A number of written consultation responses were received from residents, members of the Cycling Forum and organisations including;

18. Town Forum Transport Group - The Transport Group of the RTW Town Forum provided a detailed response. Whilst welcoming the initiative to improve cycling within the town, they had deep concern about the Cycling Strategy in respect of its focus, assumptions, effectiveness and implementation.
19. Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group (TWBUG) – TWBUG confirmed their support for the Cycling Strategy and the inclusion of reference to 20mph limits. They provided comments which include;
  - The Strategy needs full endorsement by the Borough and County Councils.
  - The Strategy will need to be updated as the Borough develops and demand for cycling grows.
  - Ambitious and time linked targets should be added.
  - Regular monitoring should be undertaken.
  - A detailed delivery plan should be included.
  - The Strategy should be seen as part of the wider policy framework.
20. Officers do not consider that time linked targets can be added to the strategy due to the uncertainties associated with implementation. Regular monitoring will be undertaken alongside the Borough Transport Strategy and its Implementation Plan.
21. Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons - The Friends are concerned by the extent of the routes that are being proposed and consider that this may be too challenging to achieve. They are aware of local concerns regarding potential impacts upon The Commons and consider that the introduction of pilot route could help demonstrate the benefits.
22. Comments have also been received from KCC officers. These relate to the text of the Strategy and are of a minor nature.
23. **Stakeholder Meetings** - The schedule included in the Consultation Report summarises the stakeholder meetings that have been undertaken prior to and following the publication of the Draft Strategy.
24. Whilst all stakeholders were supportive of the Strategy vision and actions, several had specific concerns and comments relating to individual route proposals. The feedback received from stakeholders has informed the following amendments to the route proposals:
  - Route 4 – Revision to the status of the Inner London Road Link (aspirational). Revision to the status of the link to the eastern side of The Commons (aspirational)
  - and inclusion of alternative alignments. Removal of the Cabbage Stalk Lane Link. Alteration to proposals for Major Yorks Road (on carriageway provision).
  - Route 5 – To include link along Longfield Road between the junction of Dowding Way and A21.
  - Route 6 – To include the alignment of the Non-Motorised User Route between Tunbridge and Pembury (part of the A21 dualling scheme).
  - Route 7 – To replace the alignment of the route through Camden Park, Camden Hill and Grove Hill, with an alternative alignment via Farmcombe Road, Claremont Road and Grove Park.
  - Route 9 – To include link between Langton Green and Speldhurst via Speldhurst Road (aspirational).

- Route 10 – To replace section of route between the junction of Broadmead and junction of Neville Terrace, with a link via Broadmead.
- Route 11 – To replace the proposal linking with Cranbrook Primary School with a route to the High Weald Academy.

25. It should be noted that liaison with stakeholders is ongoing. This is expected to continue as the preparation of detailed designs continues.

## **HOW WILL THE DECISION BE COMMUNICATED?**

26. The Cycling Strategy will be published on the Council's website. A press release will be prepared and information provided via Twitter (@TWcyclefriday) to highlight the publication of the document. It is understood that KCC will separately publish the Strategy on their website.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

27. The Borough Cycling Strategy is an important document for partners and the local community. It sets out a new vision for cycling in the Borough and identifies a network of priority routes, and will support the Borough in achieving the objectives set out in the Transport Strategy.

28. The consultation feedback received demonstrates a strong level of support for the Strategy and related cycle route proposals. The feedback has not identified any fundamental issues that require the review or alteration of the Strategy.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Joint Transportation Board supports the Final Draft Cycling Strategy for adoption by Cabinet of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

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### **Appendices to Report:**

APPENDIX A - Cycling Strategy

APPENDIX B - Route Assessment 1 - Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells via the A26

APPENDIX C - Route Assessment 2 - Pembury to Tunbridge Wells via the A264

APPENDIX D - Route Assessment 3 - Paddock Wood circular route

APPENDIX E - Route Assessment 4 - Routes across The Commons

APPENDIX F - Route Assessment 5 - 21st Century Way including Home Farm Lane link

APPENDIX G - Route Assessment 6 - Woodsgate Corner to Vauxhall Lane via Tonbridge Road and A21

APPENDIX H - Route Assessment 7 - Forest Road to Grove Hill Road via Farmcombe Road

APPENDIX I - Route Assessment 8 - A26 London Road to Dowding Way via Barnetts Wood

APPENDIX J - Route Assessment 9 - Langton Green to Tunbridge Wells including Rusthall and Speldhurst links

APPENDIX K - Route Assessment 10 - Ramslye and Showfields links

APPENDIX L - Route Assessment 11 - High Weald Academy to High Street

APPENDIX M - Consultation Feedback Report

APPENDIX N - Cycling Strategy EQIA