

21st Century Way Cycle Route Consultation Report

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Originating Authority	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Final Decision Taker	Kent County Council
Exemption	Non-exempt
Classification	For Recommendation

Recommendation:

- That the Board support the project to be delivered in 2018/19

SUMMARY

The Borough Cycling Strategy, adopted in 2016, identifies the 21st Century Way cycle route between Tunbridge Wells town centre and the North Farm Estate as a priority utility cycling route. The route exists currently but requires further improvement to encourage more use.

The proposed designs for the route were published for a six week consultation beginning on 8th November 2017. Following the consultation it is now recommended that JTB agrees to support Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) in taking the scheme forward.

Route to Implementation/Timetable:

A timetable for implementation will need to be approved by KCC but it is anticipated that the cycle route will be delivered in stages starting in Autumn 2018.

The Traffic Regulation Orders are currently out for consultation. The closing date is 2nd July 2018.

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

1. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council adopted its Cycling Strategy in March 2016. The Strategy encourages active travel and identifies the shared commitment of TWBC and KCC to provide an enhanced cycle route network. It acknowledges that levels of cycling in Tunbridge Wells are relatively low at present, and that whilst the Borough has some cycle routes that link Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre to suburban areas, these are either incomplete or require further enhancement. The Borough Cycling Strategy is available to view on the TWBC website.

2. The Cycling Strategy identifies a network of routes within the urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook which require implementation and/or improvement.
3. The 21st Century Way links to several other cycle routes around the local area, as shown in the Borough's 2016 cycling strategy. Once completed, it is hoped that the route will link with Route 1, the Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells link via the A26, Route 8, A26 London Road to Dowding Way via Barnetts Wood and Route 2, Pembury to Tunbridge Wells via the A264. It will also link to the route along Longfield Road and then to the new A21 Non-motorised user route and the Tonbridge Road link to the Hospital.

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

4. Support is requested to take forward the 21st Century Way cycle route proposals and implement the scheme within the financial year 2018/19. By implementing this route it is hoped that this will encourage more local residents to walk and cycle, which has health benefits and provides an alternative to the private car.

WHO HAVE WE CONSULTED AND HOW?

5. The consultation programme started on 8 November 2017 and included a number of elements as follows:
 - Publication of the route proposals on the [Kent County Council Consultation Portal](#) along with a questionnaire for feedback.
 - A drop-in evening held at The Hub in Grosvenor & Hilbert Park on 22 November 2017 attended by TWBC officers and KCC cycling officer.
 - Promotion of the consultation via social media and via TWBC website.
 - Leaflet drop to all properties (residential and business) along the route between Goods Station Road and the North Farm Estate – with details of the drop in event and the online questionnaire.
 - Signs on lamp columns along the proposed route to inform about the consultation.
 - Direct mail-out to the cycling forum.
 - Officer attendance at the meeting of the Tunbridge Wells Access Group (27 November 2017)
6. The consultation closed on 20 December 2017. A statutory consultation on the Traffic Regulation Orders for aspects of the route is currently being undertaken. This started on the 8th June and will end on 2nd July.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAS BEEN RECEIVED?

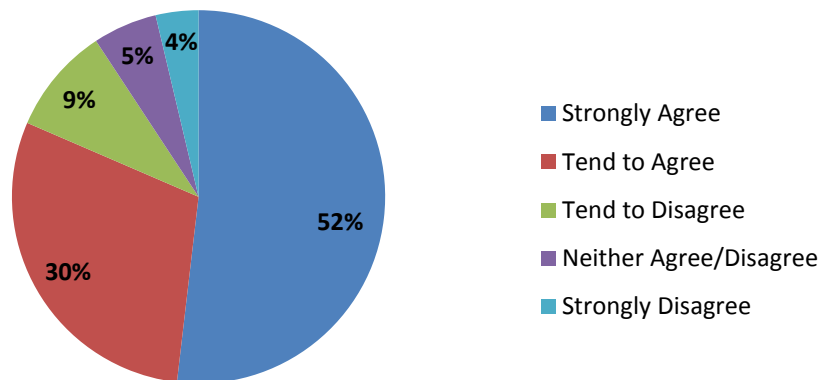
7. A total of 55 individuals responded to the consultation via the online or paper questionnaire. 3 letters were sent to the council.

6 responses were on behalf of organisations. These were:

- Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Club
- Tonbridge Bicycle Users Club
- The Tunbridge Wells Access Group
- Ramblers Association: Parish Footpath Warden

- Southborough Town Council
 - A parish council (unknown)
8. Overall the majority of people that responded either strongly agree or agree with the proposed route improvements at 82%. This compares with 11% of respondents that either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals and 6% that neither agreed nor disagreed.

Consultation Responses



9. There is a substantial level of support for the scheme amongst the respondents, but the consultation also raised a number of issues/concerns and these are set out in the table below. A response is provided to each of these.

Issue	Response
Cycle lanes should be physically segregated. In particular, a mandatory cycle lane on Goods Station Road should be provided.	It is not possible to provide a segregated route away from motorised vehicles. However, as far as is possible the route goes through park areas and along public rights of way (PROWs). There are also two 20mph zones proposed along the route which will provide a low speed environment. One zone is proposed around Goods Station Road (as there is insufficient road width for a cycle lane) and the other is around Oak Road/Clifton Road.
Concern about the use of shared pedestrian/cycle facilities.	Additional signage will be installed to highlight where paths are for shared use. Tactile paving is in place in the parks to help alert those with visual impairments that there may be potential conflict ahead. Any broken tactile will be repaired as part of the works.

	<p>In areas where the shared use paths are currently narrower e.g. around Dowding Way, vegetation will be cleared in order to increase the width of the path.</p>
<p>Concern about pedestrian/cyclist conflict particularly near The Hub in Grosvenor and Hilbert Park.</p>	<p>More signage will be installed throughout the park where there are high levels of pedestrian footfall, particularly around The Hub and the play area. This will highlight that cyclists and pedestrians should be aware and considerate of each other.</p>
<p>The Cycle dismount sign on Sandhurst Road area is unnecessary and the link should instead be re routed in order to avoid having to dismount and cross a busy road.</p>	<p>The routing of the cycle link along Sandhurst Road around the gas works site is temporary. The Gas Works site is allocated for housing development and access for cyclists/ pedestrians will be provided across the site.</p>
<p>It was suggested that the route should instead follow down Clifton Road rather than Oak Road as proposed in the plans.</p>	<p>Officially, the route will pass down Oak Road as there is a safer crossing point across Sandhurst Road. KCC are also investigating options to improve access into Colebrook Green from Oak Road. Clifton Road is also included in the 20mph zone so can be used instead if this is preferred.</p>
<p>Lighting of the route is poor and this should be taken into account in order to encourage usage of the route. This is especially the case throughout the park.</p>	<p>Additional lighting is proposed through the un-lit section of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park. Lighting is also proposed for the public right of way on Home Farm Lane.</p>
<p>General support was given to 20mph but concerns were raised about enforcement.</p>	<p>There are 2 proposed 20mph areas along the route. Both are already relatively low speed environments and residential neighbourhoods. Sign-only 20mph areas will initially be introduced.</p>
<p>The 21st Century Way should be linked up to other cycle routes in order to encourage people to use it, especially the new NMU link of the A21.</p>	<p>The route links to the A26 via the town centre. The route also links to the existing shared use cycle route along Longfield Road which then connects to the A21 NMU and the Tonbridge Road link to the hospital.</p>
<p>Safe crossing points should be provided across busy roads and cyclists given priority at the junctions along Dowding Way.</p>	<p>There is a toucan crossing at the junction of Lamberts Road / Dowding Way which cyclists can safely use. Vegetation clearance will also be done to widen the shared use footway between the park and Lamberts Road.</p> <p>It is recognised that there are wide junctions at several of the car showrooms along Dowding Way but it is not possible to provide priority for</p>

	cyclists along this stretch of the route. Cyclists will continue to share the pavement. Where it is possible to improve the cross-overs at the junction for cyclists this will be done. In addition, KCC has written to these businesses to encourage them not to park at these junctions. A safety audit has been conducted of the route.
Design improvements should be made to the route opposite Fountains retail park to the roundabout to increase cyclist safety.	This is challenging because of the location of utilities on the verge adjacent to the road. However, design work for this stretch of the route is underway.
Broken surfacing on Goods Station Road, particularly around the drains.	This will be addressed as part of the improvement to the route.
There should be better provision and higher quality cycle parking provided at High Brooms station with better access up to the platform with a bike.	Since the consultation has taken place, Southeastern (with help from a grant from KCC) has installed a two-tier cycling parking facility at the station, doubling the previous provision. Concerns about accessing the platform is outside the scope of this project but can be highlighted to the TOC.
Cars parking on the cycle route is an issue particularly in the residential areas of Addison Way / Temple Way	This issue is recognised and cyclists will continue on the carriageway as this is a low speed residential environment.

HOW WILL THE DECISION BE COMMUNICATED?

10. TWBC and KCC will communicate the decision to progress the scheme via social media, website and press releases as appropriate. A direct email alert to all those who responded will also be sent.

CONCLUSIONS

11. The consultation feedback has shown that there is significant support for improving the cycle route along the 21st Century Way.

APPENDICES TO THE REPORT

Appendix A – Route plans 1 of 4

Appendix B – Route plans 2 of 4

Appendix C – Route plans 3 of 4

Appendix D – Route plans 4 of 4

Appendix E - Portfolio Holder decision report for release of s106 funding

Appendix F – Consultation Document

Appendix G – Consultation Questionnaire

Appendix H – Consultation Postcards

Appendix I – Equalities Impact Assessment