

**CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 27 APRIL 2017**  
**PROPOSED SHARED USE CYCLE TRACK- B481 AT SONNING COMMON**

**Report by Director for Infrastructure Delivery**

**Introduction**

1. This report presents responses received in the course of a consultation on a proposal to convert an existing footway adjacent to the B481 at Sonning Common to shared use footway/cycletrack.

**Background**

2. A proposal to convert the existing footway on the west side of the B481 between its junctions with Westleigh Drive and Birdwood Court as shown at Annex 1 was put forward in connection with an adjacent residential development to provide a safe and convenient link for pedestrians and cyclists to village amenities.

**Consultation**

3. The consultation on the above proposal was carried out between 27 January and 17 February 2017. Letters were sent to properties in the vicinity of the proposal, and an email was sent consultees, including Thames Valley Police, Sonning Common Parish Council and the local County Councillor, and Cycling UK.
4. Nine responses were received, as summarised at Annex 2 (copies of the full responses received are available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre).
5. The proposals were supported by Sonning Common Parish Council and the local member, subject to the facility being adequately demarcated and maintained.
6. Thames Valley Police raised no objection, but noted that the facility was isolated from any other provision for cyclists, and commented that this might lead to cyclists using the adjacent footways. The police response also noted that the consultation plan showed an amendment to the speed limit in the vicinity, for which no consultation had been received.
7. South Oxfordshire District Council expressed no objection, on the understanding that the proposal would not impair other aspects of the new layout, including for example the visibility plays at the new junction.

8. Three responses were received from members of the public expressing no objection, subject to the scheme being funded by the developer, but also making some additional suggestions, including that the current 40mph speed limit is reduced to 30mph, and that consideration also be given to extending the provision for cyclists both northwards into the village centre, and also in the long term southwards towards Reading. A comment was also made that the provision of the path should not compromise the existing trees and other foliage on the boundary of the development site.
9. One objection was received from a resident of Westleigh Drive on the grounds of a lack of usage by cyclists (although it was accepted that the footway required upgrading) and that the proposed cycle track was not acceptable on the grounds of pinch points at two locations, the lack of clarity on the proposed demarcation proposed and also the source of funding not being specified.
10. A further objection was received from a local representative of Cycling UK, on the grounds that the design of the cycle track was inadequate, and would not provide an adequate facility for cyclists.

### **Review of responses**

11. The responses of Sonning Common Parish Council and the local member are noted. The demarcation of the shared use track is as shown at Annex 1, and comprises the use of the signs in accordance with the Department for Transport guidance, and also the use of tactile paving. The maintenance of the track will be the responsibility of the County Council. The response of South Oxfordshire District Council is also noted and it is confirmed that the provision of the track will not impair any aspect of the operation of the new junction.
12. Thames Valley Police's concern that the proposed cycle track is not linked to other cycle provision is noted. However the development provides the opportunity for providing a safe route for cyclists that should encourage cycling to and from the new housing to village amenities, and potentially could be extended in the future to serve longer cycle trips. Experience of other locations where shared use cycle tracks are not continuous does not suggest that there is an undue risk of cyclists continuing to cycle on the adjacent footways. On the query on the possible speed limit change as shown at Annex 1, it is confirmed that no change is being progressed at this time.
13. The three responses from members of the public expressing no objection to the proposal are similarly noted, and it is confirmed that the cost of the works will be met by the developers of the adjacent land. On the request for replacing the existing 40mph speed limit with a 30mph limit, the new junction has been designed for a 40mph speed limit, and given that the proposed shared use cycletrack will avoid the need for local trips by cycle to be made using the carriageway, there would not appear to be justification for a review of the speed limit at present. The treatment of the vegetation within the development site is a matter for South Oxfordshire District Council.

14. The objections from the member of the public on various technical grounds (as summarised at Annex 2) are not based on a correct understanding of the legal status of the existing provision for pedestrians (which is a footway) and Annex 1 shows the demarcation of the proposed shared use provision; there is also no minimum threshold of use by cyclists, and one of the objectives of the provision is to facilitate new cycle trips by residents of the proposed development.
15. The objection from a local representative of Cycling UK focusses on a concern that the proposed provision is 'tokenistic'. It is accepted that the scope of the proposal is limited to the vicinity of the development site, and as such will only benefit a relatively small number of local cycle trips. However, this is still judged to be useful from a local transport perspective and in particular for trips by less confident cyclists including children, and there is the potential for the provision to be extended in the future. It is however accepted that some elements of the proposed design – and specifically the extensive use of 'cyclist dismount' signs – should be reviewed in accordance with national guidance on cycle infrastructure.

### **How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives**

16. The proposals would help facilitate the safe movement of traffic.

### **Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)**

17. Funding for the construction of the shared use cycletrack has been provided by the developer of the land adjacent to the B481 at Sonning Common.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

18. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposals as advertised.**

OWEN JENKINS

Background papers:            Plan of proposed restrictions  
   Consultation responses

Contact Officers:                David Tole 07920 084148

April 2017

CMDE8



RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
(1) Thames Valley Police	<p>I have visited the location. The new development I note is situated on the southern outskirts of Sonning Common village. From the drawing and from what I witnessed on site the proposed shared use facilities appear very isolated from the rest of the village and I see no justification or need.</p> <p>They do not appear to link in with any other cycle infrastructure and I fear they could encourage greater cycling on the foot way in other parts of the village.</p> <p>I am also slightly confused by mention of the current speed limit signing or should I assume in due course you will be consulting on a speed limit alteration as well.</p>
(2) Sonning Common Parish Council	The Parish Council support the combined footpath and cycleway provided that there is adequate demarcation along the length and that it is well maintained to prevent encroachment from vegetation.
(3) Local County Councillor	My views are in accord with those of the parish council.
(4) South Oxfordshire District Council	No objection, providing the works do not compromise the required safety/details measures being implemented for the Lea Meadow development (visibility splays, crossings, widening of the road etc.)
(5) Resident, (Bird Wood Court)	<p>The conversion of the pathway into a shared-use path and cycleway seems eminently sensible, however, I would like to make a suggestion regarding these proposals, and in particular, the new road layout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The present pathway from Westleigh Drive to Bird Wood Court is in fairly constant use throughout the day by pedestrians and dog walkers accessing the 'Millennium Field' (to the south of Bird Wood Court) for</li> </ul>

CMDE8

	<p>exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peppard Road is increasingly busy with vehicles travelling in both directions, so the widening of the road to allow vehicular access into Lea Meadow from the north using a central access lane will be very necessary.</li> <li>• Vehicles travelling at 40mph at this point will pose a serious danger.</li> <li>• The 'Thames Valley Gymnastics Club' is also generating extra traffic at certain times of the day, and is accessed via Bird Wood Court from Peppard Road.</li> </ul> <p>Bearing these points in mind, and as a matter of safety, a speed limit of 30mph should be in place throughout the length of the pathway, but especially adjacent to the entrance of Lea Meadow.</p> <p>I therefore suggest that the present 30mph speed limit is extended to the south of Bird Wood Court, and preferably continues to the junction of the Peppard Road with Kennylands Road.</p>
<p>(6) Resident, (Westleigh Drive)</p>	<p>We strongly object to the above proposal on the following grounds:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your definition of "Footway" should be Footpath as it is not used as a Carriageway.</li> <li>• Plan does not detail whether change is to be segregated or unsegregated.</li> <li>• Conversion of footpath is not viable as it is used by less than 10 cyclists a day, although the footpath does need up grading due to the large amount of elderly residents walking to the Millennium Green.</li> <li>• Width of footpath from Herb Centre to Westleigh Drive not sufficient to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. Dept: of Transport recommend a minimum of 3 metres, at one pinch-point the width is 1.8 metres narrowing to 1.6 metres in Westleigh Drive</li> <li>• No indication has been given as to who is going to pay for the work involved, as I believe, this was included in the original planning application it should be Bewley Homes who pay for the work and not the Council.</li> </ul>

CMDE8

<p>(7) Resident, (Bird Wood Court)</p>	<p>If Bewley Homes are paying for this work then I have no objection, but if OCC are paying, would object most strongly, as only Bewley Homes will really benefit and it would appear the work is just to appease them. Would prefer the existing 40mph speed limit to be reduced to 30mph, and for a pedestrian crossing to be provided.</p>
<p>(8) Email response</p>	<p>We support the proposal in principal, and have the following comments :-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) Traffic along the path, both pedestrian and cyclist should be relatively light enabling shared use.</li> <li>2.) The new path should not in anyway compromise the existing tree and foliage screening along the North eastern side of Lea Meadow. This serves to protect views from the neighbouring AONB.</li> <li>3.) Consideration should be given to extending the pathway into Sonning Common. One of the main uses of the path will be for people from Birdwood Court and the new development in Lea Meadow travelling to the shops in the village centre.</li> <li>4.) Longer-term there should be consideration to run a cycle path alongside the Peppard Road into Caversham/Reading. That current section of the Peppard Road is not safe for cyclists due to vehicle speeds and the bends / narrowness of the road.</li> </ol>
<p>(9) Cycling UK campaigner</p>	<p>The facilities for cycling, as added to this proposed development, are entirely inadequate. They inappropriate, incoherent, uncomfortable, bitty, full of 'cyclists dismount' signs, and in all are approaching no more than a tokenistic response to a demand to enable cycling to be a transport choice.</p> <p>I object to these incoherent and faulty designs</p>