

Agenda Item IMD19

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: IMD 2021/19

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council's Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 Scheme Proposals
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Pauline Jorgensen
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	8 July 2021 Council Chamber at 5:30pm
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

To summarise the findings of the initial consultation on Wokingham Borough Council's Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 Scheme Proposals, introduce the design options developed and agree on the chosen scheme(s) for implementation.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transport agree that Wokingham Borough Council continue to develop the Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route by completing detailed design for the route and utilising the DfT funding to implement an initial section (Woodlands Avenue between Woodley town centre and Bulmershe Leisure Centre).

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Wokingham Borough Council has secured funding through the Department for Transport Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 to improve walking and cycling provision within the borough and deliver such schemes within the 2021/22 financial year.

Prior to the development of the detailed design schemes included in the proposal, all relevant stakeholders have been identified and consulted on the council's plans for these schemes. This paper summarises the findings of the initial consultation and presents the outline design schemes. The Cycling Level of Service tool has been used to score the outline design schemes against the five design criteria in line with the LTN 1/20 cycle infrastructure design guidance whilst a Value for Money assessment has been undertaken to support the decision on which scheme to move forward.

BACKGROUND

The Department for Transport's (DfT) Active Travel Fund (ATF) supports local authorities in England to produce cycling and walking facilities. In November 2020 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) was awarded £576,650 (£461.32k capital and £115.33k revenue) through the ATF2 to improve walking and cycling provision within the borough. This funding will be used for the design and implementation of schemes that reflect the latest cycle infrastructure design guidance (LTN 1/20).

The locations considered in the proposals had been identified through the development of both the Wokingham Town and Reading BC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and are as follows:

- **Scheme 1:** Earley / Reading Active Travel Route – A4 London Road and connection to either Reading Borough Boundary (Suttons Seeds Roundabout) or Thames Valley Park.
- **Scheme 2:** Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route – Woodley town centre to Palmer Park either via Church Road / Anderson Avenue or Culver Lane.
- **Scheme 3:** Wokingham town centre / A329 London Road Active Travel Route – via Seaford Road, Denton Road and Luckley Path.

Initial Engagement

Prior to the development of the detailed design schemes WBC ensured residents, businesses and wider stakeholders have been identified and appropriately consulted on the council's plans for these schemes. Initial engagement on the outline proposals took place between 1st and 26th March 2021 mainly through Commonplace, (wokinghamactivetravelschemes.commonplace.is/) a designated interactive engagement platform.

The main findings of the engagement are presented in Table 1 below whilst the Engagement Summary Report can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1: Main findings of the Initial Engagement on ATF2 scheme proposals

Engagement Summary Analysis	Earley / Reading	Woodley / Reading	Wokingham town centre
No of responses	173	208	303
Respondents' Preferred Option	Connection to Reading; 55% Connection to Thames Valley park: 45%	Via Culver Lane: 54% Via Church Road and Anderson Avenue: 46%	n/a
Respondents' feelings towards the scheme	79% liked the proposals 10% disliked the proposals 11% neither liked nor disliked the proposals	76% liked the proposals 15% disliked the proposals 9% neither liked nor disliked the proposals	64% liked the proposals 22% disliked the proposals 14% neither liked nor disliked the proposals
Respondents' travel behaviour	The majority travel by car (alone or as passengers)	The majority travel by car (alone or as passengers)	The majority travel by car (alone or as passengers)

	44% followed by cycling 29%.	42% followed by cycling 27%.	42% followed by walking 32%.
Potential impact on respondents' travel behaviours	44% would cycle more often followed by 18% that would not change their travel behaviour.	45% would cycle more often followed by 21% that will drive a vehicle less often.	31% would cycle more often followed by 28% that would not change their travel behaviour.
Respondents' top measures to encourage cycling	Segregated cycle lanes	Segregated cycle lanes	Segregated cycle lanes

Respondents were not required to express preference between the three schemes but based on the responses for each proposal the Earley / Reading route appears to generate a higher proportion of positive feelings with 79% of 173 respondents liked the consulted scheme. This is followed by Woodley / Reading route with 76% of 208 responses and Wokingham town centre with 64% out of 303 responses. The scheme with the biggest impact seems to be the Woodley / Reading route as 45% of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to cycle more after the implementation of the scheme and 21% suggested that they would drive a vehicle less often. Both the Earley / Reading route and Wokingham town centre resulted in similar % in cycling uptake but did not have such a significant impact on the reduction of car use/dependency.

Whilst the initial engagement exercise provides a general idea of the preferred choices of the stakeholders there are certain limitations that should be considered in the decision-making process, including but not limited to the difference of respondents to each scheme, the number of questions answered within the same scheme and also noting that some questions allowed for multiple choice.

Outline design schemes

Scheme 1: Earley / Reading Active Travel Route

There is an opportunity to improve the cycling facilities along the A4 London Road between Pitts Lane and Suttons Seeds Roundabout or Thames Valley Park. A shared use route is proposed on London Road between Pitts Lane and west of Chiltern Crescent due to low traffic flows. A proposed 20mph zone is suggested on this section. Raised tables are recommended across the side roads, to slow traffic and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

An off-road cycle track is proposed between west of Chiltern Crescent / London Road and London Road / The Drive. This is a two-way, 3m wide (2m at constraints) cycle track. Options were investigated to improve the cycling and walking crossings at A3290 roundabout. Due to prohibitive costs involved with junction modifications and long timescales required, scheme 1 was not progressed beyond conceptual design.

With regard to the Thames Valley Park connection a signal-controlled parallel crossing is proposed at the existing Toucan crossings on A4 London Road / Shepherds House Lane. An on-carriageway route is suggested along Shepherds House Lane due to low traffic flows.

Scheme 2: Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route

A footway level cycle track with a raised trapezoidal strip separating cyclists from

Figure 1 Footway level cycle track with raised trapezoidal strip, London



pedestrians (see Figure 1, though note the proposed track in this case will be one-way) is proposed between Lytham Road and new Addington School Entrance. Outline design drawings can be found in Appendix B. Footway and cycle track widths have been kept at 1.5m each, this meets the LTN 1/20 guidance as the absolute minimum, though available widths mean that we are unable to exceed the minimum provision at this point. Different

surface materials on cycle track and footway are suggested to facilitate the movements of visually impaired people.

On-carriageway cycling is proposed for the westbound direction between Woodway and Fairwater Drive due to highway width limitations. On this section, cycle track is provided on the eastbound direction, however there is a transition to carriageway for the Howth Drive roundabout in absence of available space to provide a cycle track and suitable crossing. This is a short section which would not comply with LTN 1/20 in isolation, we would seek to improve the layout here and will assess further options at detailed design stage to try to improve the cycle provision.

Shared use facilities 3m wide are provided in the vicinity of the Addington School Entrance due to width constraints. Between west of the school entrance and Church Road 2m wide (minimum 1.5m at pinch points) cycle tracks are proposed along Woodlands Avenue. The proposal mainly consists of a stepped cycle track that changed at sections into a footway level cycle track separated from the footway by a verge.

Raised tables are proposed on side roads to slow traffic and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and bus stop bypasses are proposed where there are existing bus stop laybys.

With regard to the option for connection between Woodley and Reading via Church Road and Anderson Avenue, a 2m (minimum 1.5m at pinch points) stepped cycle track is proposed along Church Road. Street lighting columns and utilities will need to be assessed for impact on the proposal at the next design stage. Bus stop boarders are suggested at the existing bus stops and raised tables are recommended on side roads to reduce traffic speeds. Due to low traffic flows on Anderson Avenue, an on-carriageway option is presented with cycle markings to alert drivers of the presence of cyclists. If this option is implemented it would be beneficial to extend the facility to the School which is over the A3290 bridge, this has not been investigated as part of the ATF work to date.

The alternative option of connecting Woodley via Church Road and Culver Lane is comprised of a proposed 2m (minimum 1.5m at pinch points) stepped cycle track along Church Road. Raised tables on side roads and bus stop boarders at the existing bus stops are recommended similar to the aforementioned option. On Culver Lane due to width restrictions a 2m wide stepped cycle track is proposed for the eastbound (uphill) direction whereas a 2m wide advisory cycle lane is considered for the westbound

movement. The recommended option requires on-street parking restrictions due to prevalent on-street parking.

Both options then continue on Culver Lane under the railway and A3290 bridges joining Palmer Park with on carriageway cycling markings and hatching/coloured surfacing to discourage overtaking of cyclists.

Scheme 3: Wokingham Town Centre Active Travel Route

As part of the Wokingham Town Centre Active Travel Route a 3m wide two-way cycle track at carriageway level is proposed between Binfield Road and Barret Crescent. The proposal includes a buffer between the carriageway and the cycle track and is located on the southern side to avoid the camber and driveways on the north side of A329 London Road.

The proposal falls partly outside of the highway boundary (between Binfield Road and St Crispin’s School entrance) requiring internal agreement for the transfer of land. A shared use path is recommended between Barret Crescent and Seaford Road whilst a stepped westbound cycle track is proposed to the west of the petrol station. Redesigning options are considered to improve coherence and facilitate navigation through the network.

Seaford Road, Wescott Road and Goodchild Road offer a quieter alternative to the A329 London Road for cyclists travelling between the A329 London Road and Wokingham town centre. A set of options have been developed for this route, all including recommendations for 20mph zones and traffic calming measures. The main differences are presented in Table 2 whilst the plans are available in Appendix C.

Table 2 Differences in options for the development of a low traffic neighbourhood between Seaford Road and Wokingham town centre

	Option 1a	Option 1b	Option 2a	Option 2b	Option 2c	Option 3
Main concepts	No entry for motor vehicles at Easthampstead Road / Wescott Road	No entry for motor vehicles at Easthampstead Road / Goodchild Road	Clockwise one-way arrangement on Wescott Road, School Road, Seaford Road & Goodchild Road	Clockwise one-way arrangement on Wescott Road, School Road, Seaford Road & Goodchild Road. Two-way access on Wescott Road & Goodchild Road between School Road & Easthampstead Road	Clockwise one-way arrangement on Wescott Road, School Road, Seaford Road & Goodchild Road. Two-way access on Wescott Road between School Road & Easthampstead Road	Modal filter situated on Wescott Road arm of Seaford Road / Goodchild Road junction

Business Case (including Analysis of Issues)

LTN1/20 Cycling Level of Service Assessment

The Cycling Level of Service tool (CLOs) has been used to score the outline design schemes against the five design criteria (cohesion, directness, safety, comfort and attractiveness) as recommended in LTN 1/20.

According to LTN 1/20 only schemes with a minimum score of 70% under the CLOs, no critical fails and no red-scored turning movements under the Junction Assessment Tool (JAT) will generally be considered for funding. Where schemes are proposed for funding that do not meet these minimum criteria, authorities will be required to justify their design choices.

Table 3 below presents the scoring of the outline design schemes against CLOs tool.

Table 3 CLOs scoring

Woodley / Reading		Wokingham town centre
Church Road / Anderson Avenue	Culver Lane	
67%	71%	79%

The main difference between the options of Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route is the directness offered by Culver Lane compared to the alternative route via Church Road / Anderson Avenue.

All schemes present “critical failures” on the sections of shared carriageway with high motor traffic volumes (above 5000 vehicles per day). In addition, the Wokingham town centre scheme has highlighted potential issues with the transitions between shared use, two-way cycle track and stepped cycle track in the vicinity of Seaford Road / A329 London Road junction.

A number of scheme elements are being investigated further by WBC to eliminate critical failures and improve cycling experience. These include:

- Connection between Rances Lane and Binfield Road.
- Options for trees currently located on Woodlands Avenue between Lytham Road and Crockhamwell Road to be removed enabling cycling connection with Woodley town centre.
- Topographic surveys to confirm widths at pinch points along the schemes investigating options for improved continuity e.g. Woodlands Avenue between Woodway and Fairwater Drive.
- Removal of mini roundabouts and reinstatement of T-junctions to enable continuity of cycling facilities.
- JAT to be undertaken at key junctions during further scheme developments.

It is anticipated that with some further design work both routes will exceed the required 70% CLOs score whilst also minimising the extent of non-compliant provision.

Costs

A summary of the cost estimates for the developed scheme designs is provided in Table 4.

Table 4 Cost Estimates for the ATF2 scheme designs

Item Description	Cost
Woodlands Avenue between Lytham Road and Fairwater Drive	£620,000
Woodlands Avenue between Fairwater Drive and Church Road	£1,640,000
Church Road / Anderson Avenue	£1,560,000
Church Road / Culver Lane	£1,450,000
Woodley / Reading via Church Road / Anderson Avenue	£3,820,000
Woodley / Reading via Culver Lane	£3,710,000
A329 London Road / Binfield Road junction	£160,000
A329 London Road between Binfield Road and Seaford Road	£530,000
Easthampstead Road between Goodchild Road and Wescott Road	£180,000
Denton Road and Luckley Path	£20,000
Seaford Road and Wescott Road – Option 1a	£180,000
Seaford Road and Wescott Road – Option 1b	£180,000
Seaford Road and Wescott Road – Option 2a	£190,000
Seaford Road and Wescott Road – Option 2b	£190,000
Seaford Road and Wescott Road – Option 2c	£190,000
Seaford Road and Wescott Road – Option 3	£180,000
Wokingham town centre	£1,070,000 - £1,080,000

A Value for Money (VfM) assessment has been undertaken for the outline design schemes, the findings of which are presented in Table 5. As many of the costs and benefits of each proposal have been quantified in monetary terms against 12 metrics (e.g. congestion benefit, infrastructure, accident, local air quality etc.) and the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) has been calculated. A BCR of greater than 1 implies that every £1 spent delivers at least £1 worth of benefits.

Table 5 ATF2 Outline Design Schemes - Value for Money Assessment

Scheme		Scheme Name	Final BCR	VfM ¹
Woodley / Reading	Option 1	Via Church Road / Anderson Avenue	3.5	High
	Option 2	Via Culver Lane	4.3	Very High
Wokingham town centre	Option 1	A329 London Road-Denton Rd (one-way movement option)	2.1	High
	Option 2	A329 London Road-Denton Rd (restricting motor vehicles option)	1.7	Medium
	Option 3	A329 London Road-Denton Rd (modal filter option)	2.1	High

Next Steps

Given the current timescales (scheme(s) to be delivered by March 2022) along with the cost limitations of the available funding and the outcome of the initial engagement and VfM assessment, the scheme which is most feasible to be delivered providing the greatest benefit is Woodley to Reading Active Travel Route.

It is recommended that this scheme is further developed by our in-house design team with both options investigated further before a decision on which to implement is taken. Further consultation is going to be undertaken at the detailed design stage of both options of Woodley / Reading route with all the involved stakeholders. Although Culver Lane appears to show greater VfM this does not account the added value of the route serving the school and enabling journeys to the University of Reading, and Lower Earley; it also does not take into account the difficulty and potential objections to the removal of on-street parking required on Culver Lane. Options are also being investigated to improve cycling continuity eliminating conflicts between different users.

The total available for the project (including existing S106 contributions for the area) is approximately £700k. There may also be an opportunity to use the existing capital programme to add to this, though there is clearly not sufficient funding to deliver the entire scheme thus an initial section should be considered for implementation.

It is suggested that the design for London Road and the Seaford Road area scheme further developed under separate future funding streams; they can be developed as two independent schemes, with the London Road work combined with the existing Congestion Management design plans. The Seaford Road area scheme could be studied further as a potential “liveable neighbourhood” scheme to trial the approach in the borough and assess the response to this from the public. The timing of this work and also further work on the Earley/Reading Active Travel Route will be dependent on future funding opportunities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£600,000 – 700,000	Approximately £700k (including £576,650 ATF2 from DfT)	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	(Delivery of the rest of the scheme will require additional funding in the future)	(Delivery of the rest of the scheme will require additional funding in the future)	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	(Delivery of the rest of the scheme will require additional funding in the future)	(Delivery of the rest of the scheme will require additional funding in the future)	Capital

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Due to funding limitations (cost of the Woodley / Reading Active Travel Route is approximately £3.8 million whereas the estimated available funding is approximately £700k) an initial section is recommended to be delivered with the rest of the scheme implemented at a later stage when further funding has been secured.

Cross-Council Implications

Positive impact on the Climate Emergency Action Plan aligning with the vision of the Corporate Delivery Plan to keep the Borough moving (enable safe and sustainable travel around the Borough) and enjoy a Clean and Green Borough now and for future generations to come.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed, there are no negative issues identified.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Director – Resources and Assets	No comment
Monitoring Officer	No comment
Leader of the Council	No comment

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

¹ *Source: Value for Money Framework, DfT, Box 5.1 Standard Categories

List of Background Papers
Appendix A – Engagement Summary Report Appendix B – Outline Design Drawings Appendix C – Wokingham ATF2 Concept Plans

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