

Joint Transportation Board

29 November 2023

Subject: Gravesham AT2 West Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Route – consultation report

Director and Head of Service:

KCC: Tim Read Head of Transportation

Cabinet Member:

KCC: Neil Baker Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

Key or Non Key decision: Non Key

Decision Issues:

These matters are within the authority of the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

Gravesham ward(s):

Northfleet & Gravesend West ED

Northfleet & Springhead Ward

Rosherville Ward

Pelham Ward

Town Ward

Summary and purpose of the report:

This is a report summarising the public consultation that has been undertaken on a proposed walking, wheeling and cycling route connecting the Northfleet to Gravesend, and recommended next steps.

To Recommend:

Members of the Board to consider and make a recommendation to:

That, subject to the views of the Board, the active travel scheme described in this report are implemented using funding that has been secured from the Department for Transport, Active Travel England.

1.0 Introduction and background

1.1 The proposed scheme is funded by Central Government as part of Active Travel England Tranche 2 bid to provide walking, wheeling and cycling improvements. This scheme is part of a wider strategic plan to provide cycle routes and links across Gravesend and Northfleet.

- 1.2 The proposed scheme provides a vital link between the current Green Corridors routes and the National Cycle Route 1 and is also a fundamental link for the remaining routes identified as part of the Gravesham Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- 1.3 To date there have been 3 consultations on the proposals in Gravesham.
- 1.4 The initial preliminary design consultation between 13 December 2020 to 19 January 2021 focused on:
- New segregated cycle track along London Road between Springhead Road and St James Avenue
 - A cycle track along St James Avenue and St James Road
 - New One Way traffic system on St James Avenue and St James Road
 - Removal of parking along spaces along London Road to facilitate the new cycle track
 - Additional pedestrian crossings along London Road
- 1.5 As part of the consultation, a poster, postcard, and leaflet were developed to inform the public of the project objectives and wider benefits. 75 responses and an additional 3 written responses were received. These responses showed that the safe cycle routes are important as well as provision of crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. 69% strongly supported new facilities and 68% supported a new cycle route on London Road / Overcliffe.
- 1.6 Following a largely positive response to the first round of consultation, the plans were developed further and a second consultation was undertaken between 14th September and 25 October 2021. The consultation received 240 responses and 28 additional written responses.
- 1.7 Results from the second consultation were far less positive than the first. The results showed a strong disagreement to the overall scheme with the exception for the proposed crossing improvements. The key themes from the consultation show the least support were in relation to the removal of the parking and concerns about the proposed one way system.
- 1.8 Taking into consideration the key objections in relation to the layout, the scheme has been redesigned to address the key issues from the second consultation. A series of workshops and pre-engagement activities were held with local representatives, Gravesend Councillors and local KCC Members between December 2022 and August 2023. The Active Travel Team have listened to residents' concerns and developed a third outline design for a third consultation.

2.0 Consultation Summary

- 2.1 The consultation took place between 27 September to 5 November 2023. During the consultation a total of 2013 postcards were issued promoting the scheme and adverts

were placed online and through Facebook. Face to face meetings with the public were held in Gravesend 10 October, 12 October, and 17 October 2023.

2.2 In total there were **630** document downloads from the webpage. It was viewed **2,130** times with **45** new registrations. A total of **82** questionnaires were completed.

2.2 Full details of the consultation can be found within the Consultation Report which has been appended to this report. As part of the consultation questionnaire there were 5 key questions, a summary of these results is shown below:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed pedestrian and walking improvements along the route?				
Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree /disagree or don't know	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
27	12	9	6	28

In summary 48% agree, 41% disagree and 11% neither agree nor disagree.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed cycling improvements along the route?				
Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree /disagree or don't know	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
22	9	7	5	37

In summary 38% agree, 51% disagree and 11% neither agree nor disagree.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the additional option to make Rural Vale and Gordon Road a priority one-way system?				
Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree /disagree or don't know	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
20	15	18	4	25

In summary 43% agree, 35% disagree and 22% neither agree nor disagree.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for this section of the London Road and Thames Way?				
Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree /disagree or don't know	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
20	14	13	14	21

In summary 41% agree, 43% disagree, 16% neither agree nor disagree.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed active travel scheme overall?				
Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree /disagree or don't know	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
22	11	5	10	34

In summary 40% agree, 54% disagree, 6% neither agree nor disagree.

The results of this consultation illustrate the ongoing tension between providing better facilities for active travel and the existing situation. To make walking and cycling more attractive it is necessary to build a network of routes that users are prepared to use to make journeys for all purposes, of which this scheme is one part of the overall network.

3.0 Finance

- 3.1 KCC was successful in bidding for 5 projects via the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2. The funds from the Department for Transport provided £4,878,440 of Capital Grant and £1,219,610 of Revenue Grant for all the 5 named projects. This specific project was allocated £631,524 of combined Capital Grant and Revenue Grant.
- 3.2 To date £123,000 of the £631,524 allocated Capital/Revenue Grant has been spent.
- 3.3 The scheme will require additional funds to complete in its entirety, and if the scheme was to proceed it will be delivered in phases as more funding is made available. The First Phase will be the cycle and pedestrian improvements between Vicarage Drive and Thames Way. The Second phase will consist of the Thames Way / London Road Junction improvements and the Third Phase will be the remaining stretch between Thames Way and St James Street.
- 3.4 The current funding allocation may allow delivery of the first phase. The detailed design

stage will include an overall scheme cost estimate and in the case that the existing budget is insufficient the project will be tailored to fit the budget envelope subject to further approvals.

4.0 Programme

- 4.1 Should the Joint Transportation Board support the officer recommendation to proceed to detailed design, a further report will be prepared for KCC’s next available Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee.
- 4.2 The Department for Transport (their executive Agency - Active Travel England, was set up to oversee the Active Travel agenda) will need to agree to an extension to the funding programme. They have already agreed to extend to 15 January 2024.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the design stage will take three months and procurement of the contract for construction a further 2 months.
- 4.4 Once a contractor is on board, KCC Officers will work closely with the contractor to understand the construction programme and available road space. See Table 2.

Activity	Anticipated programme
Joint transportation Board recommendation	29 November 2023
Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee	Earliest January 2024
Department for Transport (Active Travel England) approvals for extension of time for Grant spend.	January/February 2024
Detailed Design period	January – April 2023
Construction contract procurement period	April - June 2024
Construction Period	June 2024 – October 2024

Table 2 – Estimated programme

5.0 Options available with reasons for suitability

- 5.1 Members of the board can recommend to:
- a) Proceed with the detailed design of the scheme taking into consideration the feedback from the latest consultation and continue to work with key stakeholders,

advertise any Traffic Regulation orders (TROs) and proceed to construction provided there are no significant alterations to the advertised scheme.

- b) Abandon the scheme and move allocated funds to another Active Travel project (this may have a revenue liability for KCC and other Active Travel Projects across the county).
- c) Take forward aspects of the scheme that were supported, such as the pathway improvements for pedestrians and the one way system on Gordon Road and other aspects to be discussed at JTB. To take these recommendations to the DfT for approval.

6.0 Officer recommendations

- 6.1 The current funding allocation is ringfenced for Active Travel improvements in this area. Whilst there is support for pedestrian improvements and not cycle improvements it will not be possible to deliver one without the other due to the funding constraints from ATE.
- 6.2 In addition, the scheme provides a vital link between the Green Corridors route and the National Cycle Route 1 and is also a fundamental link for the remaining routes identified as part of the Gravesham Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- 6.3 It is recommended that option (a) should be progressed.

Contact and report author: Sebastian Bures – Active Travel Infrastructure Team
Leader - Active Travel: email: activetravel@kent.gov.uk; Phone: Contact Centre:
03000 41 81 81

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

- 1. Consultation Report
- 2. Scheme Plans 1-9