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HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE SERVICE

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**DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT EMERGENCY ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND – TRANCHE 2
PROPOSED CYCLE SCHEME – EASTON LANE, CHIPPENHAM**

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the results of the public consultation and technical assessment on the Tranche 2 Active Travel cycle scheme at Easton Lane, Chippenham (linking Chippenham and Corsham) and recommend a way forward.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The use of consultation to help inform decision making aligns to the Business Plan – Strong Communities. “We want people in Wiltshire to be encouraged to take responsibility for their well-being, build positive relationships and to get involved, influence and take action on what is best for their own communities - we want residents to succeed to the best of their abilities and feel safe where they live and work”.

Background

3. In May 2020 the Secretary of State for Transport announced additional statutory guidance under the Traffic Management Act in response to Covid-19 and stated the Government's expectation that traffic authorities make significant changes to road layouts to make more space for pedestrians and cyclists.
4. It was announced that there would be funding to introduce such measures to enable social distancing and to encourage and sustain the increase in active travel as we emerge from the Covid-19 restrictions. This was initially called the Emergency Active Travel Fund. The fund was split into two tranches.
5. Tranche 1 funding was intended to help provide new temporary facilities for walking and cycling in the early months of the pandemic. Wiltshire Council delivered five pedestrian and cycling schemes across the county following a successful funding bid.
6. Tranche 2 funding is for temporary low cost and permanent walking and cycling schemes. The Department for Transport's (DfT) fund criteria are very specific in that the schemes must provide a meaningful reallocation of road space including on strategic corridors. It is also a requirement that schemes are built in accordance with the latest design standards for cycle infrastructure, Local Transport Note 1/20. These new standards are a step change in how cycle infrastructure should be built. This means, other than in short sections, new cycle lanes should have some form of physical segregation from motor traffic. DfT also states “schemes which do not follow this guidance will not be funded.”
7. The publication Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking outlines the Government's plan for walking and cycling in conjunction with the new design guidance.

8. In July 2020 the DfT invited the Council to bid for funding under the Tranche 2 allocation for permanent measures to promote active travel. The bid amounted to £1.435 million and included schemes at the following locations:
 - A420 Bristol Road, Chippenham
 - Lowden Hill, Chippenham
 - Downton Road Hospital Path, Salisbury
 - Hilperton (Trowbridge) to Melksham via Semington
 - Easton Lane, cycle link between Chippenham and Corsham
9. In November 2020, the DfT confirmed that the Council had been awarded a conditional allocation of £681,000.
10. This funding amount was below the bid amount and is therefore insufficient to allow delivery of all the identified schemes.
11. Wiltshire Council undertook a public consultation in December 2020 regarding the Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schemes. The consultation identified the two preferred schemes for implementation as being the Easton Lane cycle link between Corsham and Chippenham and the provision of a cycle route between Hilperton and Melksham via Semington.
12. Further public consultation has now taken place on those two schemes in order to invite comments from members of the public on the proposed cycle link on Easton Lane and with an opportunity to identify a preferred route option for the Hilperton to Melksham scheme. This report outlines the consultation response to the proposed Easton Lane scheme. A separate Cabinet Member Report has been prepared for the Hilperton to Melksham proposal.

Main Considerations for the Council

13. The main highway network within the urban area of Chippenham consists of a number of single carriageway routes that converge on the town centre and this scheme focuses on providing an alternative route for those people who usually travel by public transport or cycle along the A4, Bath Road between Corsham and Chippenham.
14. The provision of a cycle and pedestrian route alongside the A4 has been discounted due to insufficient road width and safety concerns. Nonetheless, part of National Cycle Route 403 (NCN 403) runs between the two towns, along Easton Lane, and this bid proposes a prohibition of motor vehicles on part of the route as well as surface and drainage improvements to provide a safe and convenient route for cyclists and pedestrians between the two towns.
15. A prohibition of motor vehicles on the road bridge over the A350 is proposed. This will allow Easton Lane to become an almost traffic free route by removing through traffic while maintaining access to adjacent farmland and the byway open to all traffic CORM122. Provision for errant turning vehicle movements will be provided either side of the bridge. These areas will be subject to parking restrictions to ensure they are kept clear for this purpose.
16. Emergency vehicle access to the Hunters Moon development will continue to be via Methuen Park. Emergency responders to incidents within the estate will primarily be attending from Chippenham and, as such, access via Methuen Park would be the preferred route. Emergency Services will be consulted by officers and through the legal order process to determine the requirements for emergency access via Easton Lane

should there be a large-scale emergency at Hunters Moon. Emergency access in such circumstances can be accommodated by utilising specific bollard types.

17. Upon reaching Easton Road, signing will encourage cyclists to utilise the lightly trafficked Easton Road then following the C157 through Easton and Westrop to reach Lacock Road, Corsham thus linking the cycle networks of the two towns.
18. In addition to linking to Corsham to the west, the proposed route provides linkages to the recently installed cycle facility on the eastern end of Easton Lane, joining Saltersford Road. There are agreements in place for additional cycle infrastructure on Saltersford Road linking to the A4 Bath Road at the Pheasant Roundabout, in association with the new Hunters Moon development.
19. The proposal aligns with the guidance set out in *Local Transport Note 1/20 – Cycle Infrastructure Design*.
20. A plan outlining the route options can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Consultation Information

21. The Department for Transport on 9 December issued the Active Travel Fund Public Opinion Surveys Good Practise Guidance on how it expected Highway Authorities to engage and consult with local communities prior to the introduction of Active Travel Schemes. Using this guidance, a survey was prepared to consult upon the Tranche 2 cycle scheme proposed for Easton Lane, Chippenham. A copy of the survey can be found in **Appendix 2**.
22. The consultation went live on the Council website on 25 June 2021, closing on 18 July 2021. In addition to a press release highlighting the consultation, properties adjacent to the proposed routes were sent letters informing occupants of the consultation and how to give their feedback. Letters were also sent to randomly selected addresses within Corsham and Chippenham inviting residents to take part in the consultation.
23. Community Engagement Managers were asked to circulate information regarding the proposed scheme and consultation.
24. During the consultation period a total of 531 comments were received.
25. Responses were also received from Cllr Derek Walters, Corsham Without division, Cllr Nick Murry, Chippenham Monkton division, on behalf of Chippenham Cycle Network Development Group (CCNDG), and the Corsham Estate.
26. CCNDG provided a report supporting the proposal and identifying a number of items for consideration, including resolving issues with ponding surface water and surface deterioration. The group highlighted the need for barriers at the proposed closure point that will prevent vehicle access but ensure other users are not impeded.
27. The group requested a reduction of speed limit both on Easton Lane and the rest of the route into Corsham and provided suggestions for the location of wayfinding signing.
28. Cllr Walters supported the route from Easton Lane following the C157 through Westrop; however, raised concerns regarding the possibility of increased fly tipping on Easton Lane that may result from the proposed closure.

29. Corsham Estates, who own land on either side of Easton Lane, submitted a response in conjunction with their tenant farmer who leases the farmland adjacent to Easton Lane. Concerns were raised regarding the potential for increased fly tipping along Easton Lane leading up to the overbridge and requested that the proposed prohibition start at the junction with Easton Road.
30. The response set out the current issues faced as a result of frequent fly tipping blocking drainage ditches and field access.

Consultation Responses

31. When responding to the question 'Do you support the proposed Easton Lane cycle link between Chippenham and Corsham?' the following responses were given:

Yes: 325 (61%)

No: 58 (11%)

Don't know: 126 (24%)

32. A breakdown of the responses showing answers to all questions can be found in **Appendix 3**. The summary below outlines the common themes within the responses.

Provision for equestrians

33. A significant proportion of comments related to the provision of routes for horse riding and ensuring access for horse riding is retained.
34. Respondents are concerned that proposal will place equestrians at a disadvantage, and it does not cater specifically for them.
35. Horse riding is already permitted on Easton Lane and this right will not be removed. Access to the byway from Easton Lane will also remain. While the scheme aims to increase the number of cycles using the route, the removal of through vehicular traffic will offer a significant benefit for all vulnerable road users, including equestrians.

Proposed Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on A350 over-bridge

36. The proposed prohibition of motor vehicles on Easton Lane forms a point closure at the A350 overbridge. Introducing the prohibition at this point of the lane ensures that access to farmland between Easton Road and the overbridge is unhindered as well as maintaining access to CORM122, a byway which is open to all traffic. Easton Lane, a C class route, is currently used as an alternative route to the A4 and A350 to access Chippenham from the west. Removal of the through traffic will ensure this is a predominantly traffic free route for cyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians. A number of respondents commented specifically on this benefit.
37. Opinions on this element of the scheme are mixed, with a number of respondents commenting in favour of the removal of through traffic as it is felt that it would provide a safer route for cycling and walking. However, a number of respondents raised concerns about the impact of such a closure and the increase in journey distance and time if they were to follow the alternative route of the A4. Respondents stated that they use Easton Lane to access Chippenham either as it is more convenient, or is perceived as a safer route option than travelling on the A4 to Chequers roundabout.

38. Respondents also raised concern that traffic volumes on the A4 between Corsham and Chippenham would increase as a result of this proposal.
39. It was made clear by farmers that 24 hour access, 7 days a week to the farmland on Easton Lane is required to allow the moving of livestock and other farming activities.
40. Some respondents asked that the prohibition be in place from the Easton Road junction to prevent vehicle from accessing Easton Lane at this point. This was predominantly suggested as a solution to prevent concerns relating to fly tipping of waste.
41. A Traffic Regulation Order is needed in order to proceed with the proposed prohibition of motor vehicles, creating the point closure; therefore, a further legal advertisement is to be undertaken, allowing all interested parties to comment.

Fly tipping

42. Respondents raised concerns that the proposal may lead to an increase in fly tipping. Easton Lane is an area that suffers from fly tipping currently and respondents were concerned that a decrease in vehicular use, whilst still permitting vehicular access between the Easton Road junction and the A350 overbridge, would serve to make the lane more attractive for those who undertake this illegal activity.
43. The Council's Enforcement team responded to the consultation and echoed concerns regarding the potential to see an increase in this activity. Officers confirmed that Easton Lane suffers from regular illegal tipping of waste, ranging from household waste to large deposits of green waste. This already results in considerable complaints from the public. One of the main hotspots is at the access to the byway CORM122, west of the overbridge.
44. The proposed position for the prohibition of motor vehicles to commence, with bollards to prevent vehicle access is to the west of the overbridge and would be located in close proximity to the byway access. Should the proposal proceed, enforcement officers feel this would make this location an ideal remote location for tipping as it will be out of sight and with a turning area available. Enforcement officers are also concerned that fly tippers will deposit waste either by dumping on the current byway entrance, proposed turning area, or indeed into the main carriageway after turning around. There have been instances of similar actions blocking roads in the county after quickly tipping and driving away.

Technical Assessment

45. The proposal for this route has been prepared in accordance with *Local Transport Note 1/20 – Cycle Infrastructure Design*. This document sets out the design standards to be adhered to when designing and constructing new cycle infrastructure. It is expected that all cycle schemes are designed in accordance with this standard and highway authorities who do not meet these standards may have restrictions placed upon future government-led funding opportunities.
46. The proposed route linking Corsham and Chippenham aligns with the LTN1/20 guidance as it reduces motor vehicle traffic and provides a cycle route along lightly trafficked or almost traffic free roads.
47. Traffic counts undertaken in May 2021 determined that an average of 752 vehicle movements per day take place on Easton Lane. Site observations suggest that a proportion of these movements relate to the ongoing construction.

48. Data from a Department for Transport traffic count site on the A4 Bath Road, close to the junction with Easton Road, identifies the average annual daily flow at this point as 18,860 vehicles. Based on the assumption that all vehicles currently using Easton Lane will divert to the A4, the additional 752 vehicles equal 4% of the current traffic volume on the A4, increasing the average annual daily flow to circa 19,612 vehicles. This is an acceptable increase as motor vehicles should be encouraged to use main arterial routes, particularly for journeys between towns. It should also be noted that not all of the vehicles using Easton Lane will divert to the A4 and it is anticipated that the surrounding network will share a proportion of the diverted vehicular traffic.
49. The provision of the cycle route between Corsham and Chippenham via Easton Lane will provide a safe cycle route that currently is not available and will further encourage modal shift for those travelling between the two towns. As such, this may be beneficial on reducing vehicle numbers on the A4 Bath Road.
50. The positioning of the proposed prohibition of motor vehicles, forming a point closure, has been determined by the requirement to maintain access to adjacent farmland and byway CORM122. The byway is open to all traffic, meaning that all vehicles are permitted to use it and as such access must not be impeded. The proposed point closure allows the installation of bollards at either side of the A350 overbridge to aid compliance with the prohibition. If the prohibition were to commence at the Easton Lane/Easton Road junction, a physical barrier could not be installed as this would prevent access for legitimate vehicular users such as farm vehicles and byway users.
51. It has been the experience of the Council that where removable bollards have been installed, with keys supplied to adjacent landowners for access purposes, issues arise when keys are misplaced, bollards left in a 'down' position or when bollards fail preventing access. In the case of Easton Lane, the provision of such a system would also not be feasible due to the need to maintain access to the byway for motor vehicles.
52. The Council has the power to promote a traffic regulation order seeking to alter the current byway status. This could seek to remove access for all motor vehicles or remove access for 4-wheeled motor vehicles, thus reducing the access requirements. It is likely that such a proposal would receive significant objection from the Green Lane Association, Trail Riders Fellowship as well as other users of the byway.
53. The introduction of a prohibition of motor vehicles without a physical barrier would likely lead to a significant lack of compliance with the restriction. Limitation with Police resourcing and other priority demands on their time will mean that enforcement is infrequent. It is unlikely that Wiltshire Police would support the introduction of a prohibition without the physical measures to aid compliance. Such scenarios diminish the effectiveness of the prohibition, and can lead to increased frustration by legitimate users.
54. Turning heads to allow vehicles to manoeuvre will be provided at either side of the rail bridge. The introduction of waiting restrictions to prevent parking in these turning areas is proposed.
55. With regard to fly tipping, the use of overt camera enforcement has been considered by officers; however, there is a concern that any such installation would be subject to vandalism and the fly tipping would continue. The use of covert cameras remains an option; however, their use requires judicial approval and evidence of an ongoing issue is required.
56. Aside from the concerns regarding the potential for increased fly tipping, there are no other environmental or ecological concerns relating to the provision of the proposed cycle facility.

57. Street lighting is not present on Easton Lane, or on the C157 leading to Lacock Road, Corsham. Whilst LTN1/20 recommends lighting routes to enhance their attractiveness to cyclists, it is recognised that additional lighting across this rural area is not in keeping with the locale and would be detrimental to the local wildlife.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

58. Overview and Scrutiny Committee has not yet been involved in this project or had oversight of the proposals.
59. The Active Travel Steering Group formed of senior officers and the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding has overseen the Department for Transport funding bid and the development of the associated proposals.

Safeguarding Implications

60. The provision of an unlit route that is not overlooked by properties may raise concern regarding personal safety. Increased use of the route by pedestrians and cyclists may mitigate this concern.

Public Health Implications

61. The introduction of measures which promote sustainable measure of travel can lead to improved health through active travel and improvements with air quality through reductions in vehicle emissions.

Procurement Implications

62. There are no procurement implications for the Council associated with this proposal as work will be undertaken by the authorities appointed term contractors.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

63. The proposed improvement to Easton Lane will benefit pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians and are intended to provide local residents with sustainable and safer access to local services while improving links to the wider cycle and walking network. The proposed improvements will offer a direct link between the conurbations of Corsham and Chippenham away from the main traffic corridors. The focus will be on providing improved facilities for vulnerable road users.
64. In addition to improving the route for pedestrians and two wheeled cycles, the improvements will benefit wheelchair/mobility scooter users, those who use tricycles and recumbent cycles. Existing non-motorised vehicle users of the routes will not be excluded.
65. The most likely protected characteristic groups to be affected by the proposal are age and disability. The impacts of the proposal are overall likely to be positive rather than negative as the schemes objectives is to improve the highway environment for vulnerable users including these protected groups. However, there may be motor vehicle users within these protected groups who may find additional time or distance added to their journey as a result of the Prohibition of Motor Vehicles.
66. Design will ensure existing conflict between users is reduced and crossing facilities will be improved for vulnerable highway users.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

67. The introduction of measures which promote sustainable measure of travel can lead to improved health through active travel and improvements with air quality through reductions in vehicle emissions.
68. The Council's draft Climate Change Strategy (currently under consultation) commits to promoting and developing active travel networks to assist with its aims to achieve a zero carbon mobility and transport system. The promotion of schemes which encourage use of sustainable methods of travel at the expense of the motor vehicle are an element which can assist in delivering this aim.

Risk Assessment

Funding

69. The funding allocation made by the Department for Transport has a deadline for completion of construction by end of March 2022. It is also set out that schemes completed using this funding are to be compliant with LTN 1/20. The Department for Transport may penalise the authority, either by removal of funding or reduced funding in future initiatives, if these criteria are not met.
70. The proposed scheme outlined in this report can be delivered within the available budget and in compliance with LTN1/20. Delivery to timescale is presently achievable; however, significant delays in the decision-making process may negatively impact upon this.
71. Should the scheme not progress, the Department for Transport may require the Council to develop an alternative scheme within the county or return the funding allocation. The Council may be liable for the scheme development costs incurred to date.

Integrated Transport Construction Programme

72. The construction of the proposed scheme holds a significant place within the annual construction programme within the Traffic Engineering workstream. Should the scheme not progress, there will be a gap of approximately five weeks in the contractors work programme. Due to the current workload of the Traffic Engineering team and constraints relating to funding and road space booking, it may not be possible to find alternative construction schemes to fill this gap. Should the scheme be cancelled or postponed following the issuing of a task order to Ringway under the terms of the NEC 3 Term Maintenance Contract, a compensation event may be triggered with financial implications to the Council.

Covid-19 Impact

73. The ongoing pandemic poses a risk to the availability of resources, both during the design and construction phases. Delays may be faced due to lack of human resource. This is particularly impactful should it occur during the construction phase and would result in the works, and associated disruption, taking longer to complete.
74. Early Warning Notices have been issued by the contractor in relation to the Term Maintenance Contract as whole to alert the Council to the limited availability and increased lead in times for certain construction materials. Core materials such as concrete, kerbs and traffic signal heads are currently in short supply nationally with significantly increased lead times. Should these issues persist, the completion of the proposed scheme may be impacted.

Financial Implications

75. The funding risks to the Council are set out in the 'Risk Assessment' section above.
76. Should fly tipping reports increase, there may be additional costs incurred by the Council associated with clearing any debris.

Legal Implications

77. The proposed Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on Easton Lane, at the A350 overbridge, requires a Traffic Regulation Order. There is a statutory requirement under the Road Traffic Regulation 1984 to formally advertise the intent to make this order, allowing all interested parties to comment on the proposal. Should comments be received during the consultation, the proposal will be subject to the Cabinet Member decision process.

Options Considered

78. To:
- (i) Progress implementation of a cycle route as proposed on Easton Lane, Chippenham.
 - (i) Not implement a cycle route as proposed on Easton Lane, Chippenham and refer to Department of Transport for funding guidance.

Reason for Proposal

79. Taking into consideration the content of this report, it is evident that there is public support for the proposed cycle scheme. It is necessary to ensure that legitimate vehicular access to farmland and byway CORM122 is maintained although the concerns relating to a potential increase in fly tipping are acknowledged.
80. There is no suitable alternative to the proposed point closure, which enables effective enforcement and minimises reliance on the Police to enforcement. Efficient enforcement of the restriction is a key part of this cycle scheme providing a link between Corsham and Chippenham.
81. An increase in fly tipping is undesirable; however, should this occur, the Council has recourse to enforcement mechanisms to manage this.

Proposal

82. To:
- (i) Progress implementation of a cycle route as proposed on Easton Lane, Chippenham.

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None