

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 4 January 2016

Report Title: Proposed designated Cycle Route in Alexandra Park

Report By: Mike Hepworth
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Purpose of Report

Outline the results of the consultation on the East Sussex County Council funded proposals for providing a cycling route through Alexandra Park, and agree the recommendation to be made to the Borough Council Cabinet.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. Hastings Borough Council agree to a shared cycle route through Alexandra Park in principle subject to East Sussex County Council:-**
 - a, Removing the proposed route in front of the café;**
 - b, Fully reviewing the results of the consultation and incorporating measures such as those listed below where practicable;**
 - c, Maximising the numbers of signs, bollards, finger posts and surface markings to ensure safety concerns are fully considered and addressed through appropriate measures implemented in the final design of the route;**
 - d, Where appropriate, using different coloured surfacing as a safety feature;**
 - e, Using clearer signage where the route merges or crosses with existing footpaths;**
 - f, Using cyclists dismount signs at appropriate locations;**
 - g, Providing cycle racks at appropriate locations.**
- 2. Hastings Borough Council publicly thank everyone who responded to the consultation, and in particular the participants of the Reference Group for informing the pre-consultation design process.**

Reasons for Recommendations

Cycling is recognised as a key health benefit and provision of cycling facilities is supported by Government. Hastings Borough Council's Development Management Plan identifies a number of proposed cycle routes in the town, one of which is the route through Alexandra Park. East Sussex County Council are supportive of the route and will fully fund its implementation. Extensive consultation has been undertaken to inform the details of the final scheme.

Introduction

1. Successive Governments have recognised the health benefits of cycling and encouraged Local Authorities to look at ways to increase opportunities for cycling. The current proposal is to implement a shared cycling and pedestrian route, using existing paths through Alexandra Park to join Silverhill and Queens's Road.
2. Although the new shared route would pass through Alexandra Park, which is owned, managed and maintained by the Borough Council, the route through the park has been designed by consultants appointed by East Sussex County Council, and the cost of installing the new route would also be funded by the County Council.
3. If Hastings Borough Council approves the principle of the proposed route, the County Council will instruct their consultants to refine and complete the design in light of feedback from the public consultation and the Borough Council's comments, and set a timetable for delivery of the project.

Policy Framework

4. It should be noted that the provision of a cycle route through and within Alexandra Park is a strategic policy ambition of the Borough Council. The Hastings Local Plan, the Hastings Planning Strategy 2011 - 2028, adopted 19th February 2014, identifies a number of routes around the town, including Alexandra Park. A route within Alexandra Park is shown on the key diagram in the Planning Strategy and on the policies map. The Local Plan was subject to extensive consultation and a public inquiry prior to adoption.
5. Policy T3 of the Hastings Planning Strategy states;
 - a. The Council will work with East Sussex County Council using the Local Transport 3 policy framework and other partners to achieve a more sustainable transport future for Hastings. Particular priority will be given to supporting the provision of new and enhanced cycle routes in the town, and in particular, supporting the implementation of the strategic cycle network as identified on the key diagram and the policies map.
6. Hastings Council, together with East Sussex Country Council, and Hastings Urban Bikes (HUB) produced a Hastings Walking and Cycling Strategy in 2014. The strategy provided a supporting document to the County Council's Local Transport Plan and the Hastings Local Plan and outlined opportunities for increased walking and cycling in the town.
7. On this basis, the local consultation carried out this summer was not about whether there should be a cycle route through Alexandra Park. It was about how such a route should be implemented, and sought feedback on the detailed proposals developed by the County Council.

The proposed route through Alexandra Park

8. Alexandra Park is a grade 2* listed park as designated by Historic England. The current proposal is for a shared cycling/pedestrian route through the park joining Silverhill and Queens Road. The proposed cycle route follows existing paths. No new routes will be constructed. It is not a single use cycle lane.
9. The proposed route does not require planning permission and Historic England did not comment as the route follows existing paths in the park. The provision of cycling in a designated route will be compatible with our proposed new parks' bye laws.
10. To progress the route, East Sussex County Council appointed engineering consultants to design and deliver the scheme. The County Council will be responsible for project managing and fully funding the implementation of the route and associated signage. The route is identified on the attached plans together with the proposed signs. East Sussex County Council envisages the route will be constructed mid to late 2016.

Consultation

11. As landowner, Hastings Borough Council undertook a specific consultation exercise on the proposed route and accompanying signage, paths, crossing points etc. As mentioned earlier, the consultation was not about the principle of a route through the park, it was about the detailed implementation of the route.
12. In April 2015, we established a Reference Group of interested groups (Friends of Alexandra Park, The Greenway Group, The Ramblers Association, Hastings and Bexhill Disability Forum, Hastings Urban Bikes) to assess the initial proposals and give early feedback to the County Council and their design consultants, Amey, prior to the full public consultation.
13. The Reference Group was able to provide helpful early feedback for the consultants prior to full public consultation. The public consultation took place from 15th June until 21st August 2015.
14. We invited comment through our web site, invited comment in person at the Community Contact Centre and held a specific consultation event at Armed Forces weekend on 28th June 2015, where officers from the Councils and the design consultants were available to discuss the proposed route and invite further comment.
15. East Sussex County Council is awaiting the outcome of our Cabinet's consideration of the proposals and the results of the public consultation before commissioning further work to address the concerns received from the public consultation.

Consultation Summary

16. There were 177 single responses to the consultation. 82 responses were identified as for and 84 against.

17. We received one petition with 63 signatories against the proposal. However, instead of stating a single petition statement for signatories to acknowledge and add their signature to, it was essentially a collection of comments against the proposed route.
18. Much of the feedback was very detailed and provided a mixture of personal views and constructive comments. However, many related to the same issues, and made very similar points. Therefore a representative selection of comments from the consultation feedback is attached as Appendix 1, with Borough Council Officer responses to the feedback in the right hand column.
19. After assessing all the comments, the feedback generally highlighted issues around;
 - a. public safety
 - b. enhanced and effective signage
 - c. enforcement

Discussion

20. The provision of a cycle route through the park is a key policy priority for the Council.
21. The consultation prompted very strong feelings both for and against the details of the proposed route. The main concerns from opponents of the route focused on safety, signage and enforcement, as well as opposing cycling in the park as a matter of principle. Of course, we were not actually seeking views on the latter, only on the details of the route.
22. On the other hand the advocates of the route, in general, felt the benefits outweighed the risks and encouraged the Council to approve the proposal.
23. The proposed route follows existing footpaths. It is a shared route so cyclists and walkers will share the same path. Cycling will not be allowed on footpaths not designated for cycling, and cycling will remain prohibited from the majority of footpaths in the park.
24. A number of respondents to the consultation identified the route in front of the café in the lower park as of particular concern, and wished to see this section removed. Hastings Borough Council agrees and will require this section of the proposed cycle route be removed from the final plans.
25. In addressing the key concerns from the consultation, Hastings Borough Council will require East Sussex County Council to:-
 - a. Remove the proposed route in front of the cafe
 - b. Fully review the results of the consultation and incorporate measures such as those listed below where practicable

- c. Maximise the numbers of signs, bollards, finger posts and surface markings and ensure safety concerns are fully considered and appropriate measures implemented in the final design of the route
 - d. Where appropriate, use different coloured surfacing as a safety feature
 - e. Use clearer signage where the route merges or crosses with existing footpaths
 - f. Use Cyclists Dismount signs at appropriate locations
 - g. Provide cycle racks at appropriate locations.
26. Hastings Borough Council will fully participate with the County Council and their consultant to ensure signage is not only appropriate for the location, but is clearly worded and clearly visible to both pedestrians and cyclists using the new route.

Enforcement

27. The enforcement of cycling in the park will be a matter for Hastings Borough Council. We propose working with cycle groups to enforce a self-management approach to cycling, and to working with park users to highlight and challenge unacceptable behaviour by cyclists.
28. In the initial stages officers will design a programme for the Rangers and Wardens to have a heightened presence in the park at specific times to engage with cyclists and deter unsafe use. Cycling outside the designated route would be liable to potential Fixed Penalty Notices for contravention of the bye laws.
29. It is hoped that this proportionate approach of education and enforcement will quickly establish behaviours that are compatible with a shared route through the park, enabling all to use it with confidence, both pedestrians and cyclists.
30. Following on from this initial phase of education and enforcement, we will continue to monitor how the shared route is used, and should any serious concerns arise, we will deploy enforcement staff to address them.

Policy Implications

Equalities

31. The Council formed a Reference Group to include a cross section of park users and interest groups, including the Hastings and Rother Disability Forum. The views of the reference group informed initial changes to the proposed design. Further public consultation invited views from all sectors of the community. Those views have been passed to ESCC and AMEY for consideration in the final design.

Risk Management

32. Safety features such as warning signs and information signs are already integral to the design proposals for the route. The consultation highlighted safety concerns

which have been passed to ESCC for consideration and inclusion in the final designs wherever reasonably practicable.

Environmental Issues

33. Promoting cycling as a sustainable form of transport is a key environmental consideration nationally and locally. Promoting cycling conforms to the national health agenda for increasing exercise and healthy living, as well as reducing car use and fossil fuel consumption.

Economic and Financial

34. The route is being fully funded by ESCC. No contribution is sought from Hastings Borough Council. Whereas the long term maintenance of the path will fall to the Borough Council. However as the route is on existing footpaths that are already maintained by the Council, there are no significant implications for the maintenance budget

Local Peoples Views

35. Local people were invited to comment on the scheme through the consultation process facilitated by the Borough Council.

Wards Affected

Braybrooke, Silverhill

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	Yes
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

Appendix One - Summary of responses to the consultation.

Officer to Contact

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