

Meeting date: 8th JULY 2021
Report to: CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Subject/report title: ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND – TRANCHE 2 CYCLEWAYS
REPORT FROM: HEAD OF HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE
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Wards affected:

All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: N/A

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Cabinet Member with an update on the outcome of the design and consultation stage of the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 Cycleways project and to seek approval to progress with the construction of three routes and an area wide cycle parking scheme.

2. Decision(s) recommended

2.1 Cabinet Member is asked to:

- (a) Note the contents of the report relating to the consultation undertaken in February / March 2021
- (b) Approve the construction of the three cycleways proposed as part of the Tranche 2 Active Travel Programme

3. Matters for Consideration

3.1 The Active Travel Fund (ATF) was established by the Department for Transport (DfT)

in May 2020 for the implementation of walking and cycling measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of Tranche 1, residents were encouraged to participate in daily walking and cycling. Through this programme, Officers recognised the opportunities to change travel behaviour and the benefits to health, wellbeing and the environment. The programme, which ran from July 2020 to September 2020 implemented temporary schemes to support social distancing measures along some of our busiest routes and areas.

3.2 The Tranche 2 investment builds on work already delivered as part of the Tranche 1 walking and cycling temporary measures. Tranche 2 is a strategy focused on creating longer term projects and is part of the stepping stone to achieve the Councils local cycling and walking infrastructure aspirations. The Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) enables a long-term approach to local walking and cycling within the borough with the aim of improving cycling and walking opportunities over the next 10 years.

4. The invitation to bid for Tranche 2 funding was issued by DfT on 10th July 2020. A funding application was submitted to DfT on 7th August 2020 with a total ask of £1,280,000.

On 22nd January 2021, we received confirmation of our funding allocation from DfT which totalled £1,049,141 for three cycleways and a borough wide cycle parking scheme.

4.1 The Active Travel Fund Consultation period ran from 22nd February 2021 to 22nd March 2021, although representations made after this date were accepted and individually responded to.

4.2 The consultation set out to achieve the following key objectives:

- To engage with the public, elected members, key stakeholders, and interested parties /affected organisations to provide constructive feedback on the draft scheme proposals. To illustrate through plans and visuals, the basics of the scheme proposals, material palettes and provision of a range of possible light segregation infrastructure to support cycling improvements
- To help refine and identify areas of constraint and opportunity which previously had not been considered with the scheme proposals
- To identify what changes and improvements should be made to the scheme proposals

4.3 The consultation attracted 986 unique contributions, in addition to 38 written responses. In total there were 2,174 visitors to the consultation website

4.4 65% (639) respondents expressed support for the scheme proposals. The majority of users considered, on balance, that the proposals provide a safer environment for cyclists (30%) and supported the health and well-being benefits cycling could offer (23%). 18% of respondents stated that the proposals were not needed.

4.5 The schemes were presented for the following locations (see Appendix A):

- Blossomfield Road – Solihull Town Centre
 - Knowle to Solihull Town Centre
 - Meriden to Millisons Wood.
- 4.6 All of the individual routes were strongly supported; 65% (Blossomfield Road – Solihull Town Centre); 62% (Knowle to Solihull Town Centre) and 74% (Meriden to Millisons Wood).

Blossomfield Road to Solihull Town Centre

- 4.7 Whilst route wide (Blossomfield to Solihull Town Centre), the proposal was to remove parking (58%), the localised view around Marshall Lake Road was strongly supportive of retaining on street parking. In addition, route wide the consultation responses leaned towards a cycleway along Marshall Lake Road rather than Cranmore Boulevard; however the localised view was the preference to traverse along Cranmore Boulevard, thereby not requiring the removal of parking along Marshall Lake Road.
- 4.8 Following completion of the consultation exercise, Officers have been making further design changes and costing these. Given the localised view regarding use of Marshall Lake Road, the proposal is to provide a route traversing along Cranmore Boulevard. It is envisaged that the parking issues along Marshall Lake Road require further investigation and may need to be looked at as part of the LCWIP programme in the future. The route that is being proposed is shown in Appendix A and will include the section from the town centre along B1402 Blossomfield Road, turning onto Widney Lane, it will then travel along Widney Lane and onto Cranmore Boulevard where it will connect to the A34 Stratford Road.

Knowle High Street to Solihull Town Centre

- 4.9 The Knowle to Solihull Town Centre route consultation confirmed that respondents preferred the Warwick Road rather than the service road and termination at Mill Road. Brueton Park was shown as a secondary route. There is a balance to be struck between cost, light segregation and route choice for the Knowle to Solihull Town Centre route. A stepped cycleway will be difficult to deliver due to cost pressures; however, officers received comments that most keener cyclists will not use the stepped cycleway as they would have to give way at every junction (north of M42).
- 4.10 The Knowle to Solihull Town Centre route costs are higher than anticipated for a fully segregated cycle lane. At this stage it is proposed to provide light segregation with a consolidated lining scheme on the carriageway. A more engineered design i.e. stepped cycleways will be considered as part of the LCWIP programme. The route being progressed is shown in Appendix B and will include the section from Lodge Road / High Street along the A4141 Warwick Road veering off onto the Old Warwick Road and using Brueton and Malvern Park to access the town centre.

Meriden to Millisons Wood Cycleway

- 4.11 The Meriden to Millisons Wood cycleway attracted the highest number of positive comments, with speed compliance being the main negative issue. Meriden Parish

Council expressed strong support to upgrade the existing advisory cycle lane from Meriden to Millisons Wood to encourage and facilitate cycling. Millisons Wood saw a reduction in public transport including the loss of the school bus. The school is therefore isolated from the village and the main mode is the car. As a result, speed is a dominant feature that discourages cycle usage.

- 4.12 The Millisons Wood to Meriden proposed route is shown in Appendix C and travels along the section of Birmingham Road from Millisons Wood to Meriden.
- 4.13 Should the Cabinet member agree the recommendations of this report, it is envisaged that the current term contractor will be commissioned in the summer with routes being completed by October 2021. The process may take longer than normal due to demand and waiting lists for the specialist infrastructure required. We have ensured value for money by undertaking a separate bottom up exercise to costing the proposals. Officers concluded that using our term contractors agreed rates would allow greater cost savings and also deliver programme benefits with other routine work being undertaken along these routes

5. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 5.1 The evidence gathered through the Solihull Cycling and Walking Strategy and national transport surveys has identified safety as the key barrier to cycling. The introduction of high-quality cycle provision through the three cycle ways proposed, will address safety issues and enable more people to take up cycling.
- 5.2 Officers have considered these routes under the backdrop of the local challenges and the objectives of the Fund. The first two routes (Knowle to Solihull Town Centre and Blossomfield to Solihull Town Centre) were selected following work undertaken by Officers looking at the propensity of change along these routes, opportunities for model shift and the various trip attractors along the routes. The Knowle route was ranked as a number 1 priority for cycle provision in previous consultation carried out.

6. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 6.1 The three preferred options have been selected based on an assessment to positively change travel behaviour and encourage cycling whilst providing a safe and pleasant environment for cycling. In addition, the three routes meet the local challenges and the fund objectives.

7. Implications and Considerations

- 7.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
Economy: 1. Revitalising our towns and local centres.	Cycling infrastructure will provide direct continuous connectivity between key local economic centres and the town centre.

<p>2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2.</p> <p>3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing.</p>	
<p>Environment:</p> <p>4. Enhance Solihull's natural environment.</p> <p>5. Improve Solihull's air quality.</p> <p>6. Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions.</p>	<p>Provision of cycling infrastructure provides a choice of mode. Uplift in cycling levels as a result will have a direct impact on improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions resulting in a modal shift from car to cycling.</p>
<p>People and Communities:</p> <p>7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>8. Enable communities to thrive.</p> <p>9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.</p>	<p>Cycling will improve the health and wellbeing of residents by providing an affordable, sustainable and healthier mode of travel.</p>

7.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

7.2.1 A report was presented to The Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways on 5th January 2021 which presented an update on the COVID-19 Emergency Active Travel Fund measures and to consider taking forward the Tranche 2 programme of semi-permanent improvement schemes under the Active Travel Fund.

7.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways was briefed on 8th February 2021 on our approach the consultation and preliminary design options. Opposition Members were briefed on 9th February 2021 followed by individual Ward Member briefings between 9th – 15th February 2021.

7.2.3 Consultation commenced on 22nd February 2021 and lasted for a 4-week period.

7.3 Financial implications:

7.4 Tranche 2 (supporting the creation of longer-term projects) funding was announced by invitation in July 2020; subsequently a funding application was submitted by the West Midlands Combined Authority on behalf of SMBC on 7th August 2020.

7.5 On 22nd January 2021, we received confirmation of our funding allocation from DfT which totalled £1,049,141 for three cycleways and a borough wide cycle parking scheme. Within this, SMBC has allocated £208,000 of match funding to the Meriden to Millisons Wood cycleway from within available capital resources.

7.6 Detailed bill of quantities are being prepared for each route with contractor involvement in order to minimise costs and maximise value.

7.7 Legal implications:

7.7.1 None.

7.8 Risk implications:

7.8.1 None.

7.9 Equality implications:

None.

8. List of appendices referred to

8.1 Appendix A – Blossomfield Road to Solihull Town Centre.

8.2 Appendix B – Knowle to Solihull Town Centre.

8.3 Appendix C - Millisons Wood to Meriden.

9. Background papers used to compile this report

9.1 Tranche 2 Consultation Outcomes Report

10. List of other relevant documents

10.1 None