

Meeting date: 5th September 2023

Report to: CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Report title: ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND Tranche 2 update

Report from: HEAD OF HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT

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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
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Public/private report: Public

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy and the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 cycle routes completed in 2022 at the following locations:
- B4102 Blossomfield Road (Tudor Grange Leisure Centre to Widney Lane)
 - B4104 Birmingham Road (Between Millisons Wood and Meriden Village).
 - A4141 Warwick Road (Knowle to Solihull Town Centre).
- 1.2 The report seeks approval to make permanent the traffic regulation order that supports the contra-flow cycle route along the B4102 Blossomfield Road corridor and recommends some minor amendments to the other two routes.

2. Decision(s) Recommended.

2.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- (a) Note the feedback on the B4102 Blossomfield Road contra-flow cycle lane and agree to make the associated experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent, as set out in Appendix A, and officers will then undertake further consultation with residents and stakeholders on the future of the scheme and permanent design.
- (b) Note the feedback received on the B4104 Birmingham Road (Millisons Wood to Meriden) active travel corridor and agree the changes, as set out in Appendix B
- (c) Note the feedback received for the A4141 Warwick Road (Knowle to Solihull Town Centre) active travel corridor and agree to consult on the proposed improvements, as set out in Appendix C.
- (d) Agree to receive a further update report in Spring 2024.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 Both at a national and regional level, providing improved cycling infrastructure is a high priority with funding available through the Active Travel Fund (ATF).
- 3.2 The ATF was established by the Department for Transport (DfT) in May 2020 for the implementation of walking and cycling measures. The strategic direction is set out in the DfT's Local Transport Note 1/20 – Cycle Infrastructure Design, which promotes new design standards and segregation of different modes of transport where practical.
- 3.3 The ATF Tranche 2 funding programme focuses on creating longer term cycle infrastructure improvements and supports the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP).
- 3.4 On 22nd January 2021, the Council received confirmation of ATF funding from the DfT totalling £1,049,141 for three new high-quality cycleways and a cycle parking improvement scheme, all of which are now complete.
- 3.5 At the Environment and Infrastructure Cabinet decision making session on 8th July 2021, the ATF Tranche 2 cycle infrastructure improvement schemes were approved, and the three schemes were completed in April 2022. The current position is outlined below.

B4102 Blossomfield Road Active Travel corridor

- 3.6 Of the 3 schemes, the Blossomfield Road corridor has generated the most feedback to the new contra-flow cycle lane. Appendix A provides a summary of the views shared and actions taken.
- 3.7 This innovative project was implemented using the Council's experimental powers to gain an understanding of how best to apply Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 compliant cycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements.
- 3.8 It is acknowledged that mixing different modes of transport produces safety risks and segregation reduces potential conflict. In summary, the findings suggest the new highway layout has had minimal impact on motorists' journey times, has not created any additional road safety implications and has provided a better quality space for cyclists that affects access to fewer residential properties. However, further time will be required to establish the long-term impact of the route, particularly on safety and usage.

- 3.9 This scheme was implemented as a trial under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order to understand the potential uptake of a facility of this kind. It was always envisaged that the final form of the route would be subject to further discussions once the principle of the scheme was established.
- 3.10 The experimental Traffic Regulation Order ends on 3rd October 2023, and needs to be made permanent or revoked before this date. Options have been considered in Appendix A and the recommendation is that the order should be made permanent, subject to Officers undertaking further consultation and gathering feedback and evidence on the perceived impacts of the current scheme and the overall design and visual appearance, making further changes were justified and appropriate to improve the overall aesthetic.
- 3.11 By approving the making permanent of the TRO subject to these conditions, it will allow further data to be collected and design consultation to be undertaken with residents and stakeholders whilst still allowing the flexibility to revoke the order should the decision ultimately be taken to do so following the results of the additional engagement.
- 3.12 Its future form should also be considered as part of the next phase of improvements extending the route towards Dickens Heath, via the Cranmore area and Marshall Lake Road and may provide a basis of design for future cycle schemes in the borough if successful.

B4104 Birmingham Road – Meriden to Millisons Wood

- 3.13 This scheme uses the B4104 Birmingham Road from Meriden village to Millisons Wood. It was initially designed to provide an option to travel more sustainably. The previous on-carriageway cycling provision was narrow and unsegregated along a 40mph road, which acted as a deterrent to cycling and walking.
- 3.14 The issues raised are summarised in Appendix B, together with the recommendation to help resolve the highway maintenance and local community concerns.

A4141 Warwick Road - Knowle to Solihull town centre

- 3.15 The Knowle to Solihull Town Centre route comprises of a section of lightly segregated cycle lane along the Warwick Road between Knowle High Street and the roundabout junction at Wychwood Avenue. The rest of the route towards Solihull town centre is either provided on a shared surface or unsegregated formats.
- 3.16 Overall, the response to the scheme has been positive and the themes identified have been summarised and responded to in Appendix C.

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

- 4.1 Since implementation of these schemes, the Council has engaged with local communities, Ward members, Parish Council, and various stakeholders. The three schemes have been monitored, evidence collected, and the available options are summarised in the appendices to this report.
- 4.2 Any change takes time to be accepted and understood as travel behaviours are currently dominated by the private car. Transport policies suggest that a greater proportion of the trips need to be carried out by more sustainable modes of transport such as cycling and walking to promote economic growth.
- 4.3 The longer-term evidence suggests that safety, health, and air quality benefits can be achieved with such interventions. Across all three projects, there has been no significant change in road safety casualty statistics and journey times for motor

vehicles.

4.4 Feedback on these schemes have raised issues including ongoing maintenance needs, safety concerns and accessibility. However, many of these concerns existed previously and this change has given road users the opportunity to raise these matters with the Council.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option.

5.1 The Council’s Transport policies around the need to increase sustainable travel have been approved as set out in the LCWIP. These three routes form part of improvements needed if a high-quality sustainable transport network is to be made available to meet future demand.

5.2 Nationally transformational change is required, and these three schemes demonstrate that road space can be reallocated for cycling and walking without significantly affecting other modes of transport.

5.3 It is recommended that the Blossomfield Road Experimental Traffic Regulation Order should be made permanent, as set out in Appendix A, thereby providing further time to design and consult on the next phase of project.

5.4 The other two schemes were introduced as permanent changes and where monitoring and community feedback supports the recommendations set out in Appendices B and C, these should be progressed and where appropriate, consulted upon, before any further changes are made or funding applications submitted.

6. Implications and Considerations.

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

| Priority: | Contribution: |
|---|--|
| <p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull. 2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it. 3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. | <p>The active travel route is being used by children and young people as it travels past multiple education establishments. This helps to improve outcomes and allows the most disadvantaged a safe and easy way to attend school or college. Without the segregated route it would be more dangerous to suggest children with little experience to use.</p> |
| <p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Develop and promote the borough’s economy, revitalise our town and local centres and maximise the opportunities of UK Central and HS2, 5. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable. | <p>Improving cycle infrastructure allows for better, safer and continuous connectivity between key local economic centres and the town centre.</p> |
| <p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions. | <p>Providing the facilities for active travel allows for a choice of mode to be decided and supported. More cyclists will have a direct impact on improving air quality and</p> |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Priority: | Contribution: |
| | reducing carbon emissions resulting in a modal shift from car to cycling. |

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

- 6.2.1 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.
- 6.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure was briefed on 8th February 2021 on the approach to consultation and preliminary design options. Opposition Members were briefed on 9th February 2021 followed by individual Ward Member briefings between 9th and 15th February 2021.
- 6.2.3 Consultation commenced on 22nd February 2021 and lasted for a 4-week period.
- 6.2.4 A report was presented to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure on 8th July 2021 on the results of the consultation and ratified the decision to approve construction of the three cycleways proposed.

6.3 Corporate Parenting Implications:

- 6.3.1 None associated with the recommendations contained in this report.

6.4 Financial implications:

- 6.4.1 The cost of c£5,000 to make the Blossomfield Road Traffic Regulation Order permanent can be funded from the Local Network Improvement Plan capital allocation within the City Regions Sustainable Transport Settlement.
- 6.4.2 The other minor changes to these schemes, as set out in the appendices will be funded from prioritising current Highway Maintenance budgets.
- 6.4.3 As part of the capital works programme, it will be necessary to consider these three corridors as a priority for any funding that becomes available through the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement, and this will be considered further in the next Local Transport Plan (Transport Priorities) update report due later this year.

6.5 Legal implications:

- 6.5.1 The Experimental Temporary Traffic Regulation Order will expire in October 2023. A decision is required on making the order permanent.

6.6 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

- 6.6.1 The Corporate Risk Management process is being used for this project and at this stage in the process no RED or significant risks have been identified.

6.7 Equality implications:

- 6.7.1 These were considered prior to the decision being made to implement these Sustainable Transport Schemes.

6.8 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and / or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

- 6.8.1 This project is being delivered with the support of the WMCA as part of the regions

Walking and Cycling Improvement plans.

7. List of appendices referred to.

7.1 Appendix A – B4102 Blossomfield Road review

7.2 Appendix B – B4104 Birmingham Road review

7.3 Appendix C – A4141 Warwick Road review

8. Background papers used to compile this report.

8.1 Previous Cabinet papers.

9. List of Other Relevant Documents.

9.1 Local Transport Note LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design.