
Cabinet Member for City Services

7th September 2020

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for City Service – Councillor P Hetherton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Transportation and Highways

Ward(s) affected:

Sherbourne, Radford, Bablake

Title:

Petitions – Stop the Coundon Cycleway and Support the Coundon Cycleway

Is this a key decision?

No – although the matter affects three wards in the City, it is not anticipated that the impact will be significant

Executive Summary:

Coundon Cycleway will be a 2.75km long segregated cycleway connecting the City Centre with Coundon Green. It is part of the Local Air Quality Action Plan (LAQAP) approved by Cabinet on 21st July 2020. The LAQAP is a package of measures that the Government has directed the Council to implement in order to comply with the legal obligation to ensure air quality compliance (specifically nitrogen dioxide levels) in the shortest possible time.

A petition of 156 e-signatures has been received, supported by Councillor Glenn Williams, requesting that the Council stop plans to build Coundon Cycleway without face to face meetings.

A counter petition of 398 e-signatures has also been received in support of the cycleway.

The Council held a public consultation between Monday 1st June and Sunday 5th July 2020 regarding how the cycleway would fit within the street. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, which remain ongoing, the consultation was entirely online, via phone and through leaflet drops as no face to face sessions could be held.

The level of engagement was significant with around 2500 participants visiting the webpages. There was also an on-line public event held via MS Teams.

As a result of the consultation, many amendments have been incorporated into the scheme design.

This report is seeking approval of the scheme incorporating the updated design amendments.

The scheme is being fully funded from the Air Quality Implementation Fund capital grant, worth £24.5 million, which was received in March 2020.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for City Services is recommended to:

- 1) Note the first petitioners concerns and the second petitioners support.
- 2) Consider the high quantity and value of feedback received during the public consultation period and the amendments to the scheme that have been made as a result.
- 3) Subject to recommendations 1 and 2 approve the scheme and the construction of the cycletrack.
- 4) Note the advertising of Traffic Regulation Orders to enhance the safety of users of the highway and particularly the cycletrack.

List of Appendices included:

- A - Scheme Details
- B - Coundon Cycleway Consultation Summary Report

Background papers:

Environment Act 1995 (Coventry City Council) Air Quality Direction 2020

Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan, CCC Cabinet Report, 21st July 2020

Other useful documents

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 On February 12th 2020, the Council received a Ministerial Direction under the Environment Act 1995 to implement the local plan for NO₂ compliance for Coventry. This local plan comprises a package of measures to achieve NO₂ compliance within the legal threshold in the shortest time possible and no later than 2021. This package of measures includes the construction of a cycleway from the City Centre to Coundon Green, with the aim of encouraging people to make local journeys by bike rather than by car through the Holyhead Road corridor.
- 1.2 The Council held a public consultation between Monday 1st June and Sunday 5th July 2020 about how the cycleway would fit within the street.
- 1.3 A petition of 156 e-signatures has been received requesting the cycleway plans do not proceed without face to face meetings.
- 1.4 The petition advises:

'We the undersigned petition the Council to To stop plans to build a Cycleway from Norman Place Road to Hill Street Coventry, without face to face meetings with concerned residents. Attempting to push through a proposal during a pandemic with only internet communication, when the community it most affects are largely elderly, shielding and alone. This is to stop the proposal being rushed through, and to stop a face to face Cycleway being built. Cyclist will be riding towards each other and passing each other with no social distancing between them. This tactic is being used by the team to attempt to push this through unchallenged by the public, that it most affects during isolation. The petition is to stop this being forced upon residents that will lost vehicle access to their homes, some elderly, vulnerable or with small children. The road is being expanded and the pavement narrowed, enhancing danger to the hundreds of school children that use it daily, the pavement provides safe walking access to several schools.'
- 1.5 A second petition of 398 e-signatures has been received supporting the cycleway.
- 1.6 The petition advises:

'We the undersigned petition the Council to Please support the building of a 2.75km of two-way, fully segregated cycleway along the Coundon Road/Barker's Butts Lane corridor linking the city centre with Coundon Green. This is being delivered as part of a package of measures to improve the air quality in Coventry. This will help to remove traffic from the section of Holyhead Road where Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels are at their greatest. This is being funded from a government grant specifically to deal with NO₂. Brilliant news for health, wellbeing and pollution reduction.'
- 1.7 Poor air quality is a major public health burden and is the fourth largest risk to public health in the UK behind cancer, obesity and cardiovascular disease. Local Authorities have a statutory role in assessing and improving local air quality. The effect of a range of interventions to improve air quality has greater potential to reduce the associated burden of disease than any one intervention alone, and the Council's Local Air Quality Action Plan proposes a package of measures. Coundon Cycleway is one of the interventions within this package.
- 1.8 Public Health England recommends addressing air pollution by providing good quality infrastructure to encourage people to walk and cycle rather than drive. This can mean reallocation of road space to support walking and cycling and restricting vehicle access.

- 1.9 Motor traffic is the main deterrent to cycling for many people and fear for their safety is consistently the number one stated reason given in surveys as to why they do not cycle. Providing protected space for cycling has resulted in huge increases of cyclists on routes in London, Manchester and other major cities and is the basis for high cycling numbers in places such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.
- 1.10 The Coundon Cycleway proposes a step change in the quality of cycling infrastructure not seen before in Coventry. It will provide a physically separated space within the highway protected from motor traffic and away from pedestrians. It will be safe, coherent, direct, comfortable and attractive, which are the core design principles for high quality cycling infrastructure required to encourage people to switch modes and cycle for some journeys.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The Council is under a legal Ministerial Direction to implement the package of measures comprising the LAQAP, including the cycleway, and achieve air quality compliance in the shortest possible time. Social distancing requirements were and still are in place preventing face to face public meetings from taking place. Delaying the implementation of the scheme until a time when such consultation meetings could take place would leave the Council in a position unable to meet its legally required obligation. The Council has undertaken a very large online engagement process and received a significant amount of feedback.
- 2.2 As a result of this feedback from residents and stakeholders, minor alterations and improvements have been made to the scheme design along the length of the proposed route.
- 2.3 The Cabinet Member for City Services is recommended to approve the revised post-consultation scheme, which include the well-considered amendments and improvements taken on board as part of the public consultation. The scheme details are shown in Appendix A.
- 2.4 As with any proposed changes to the public highway, not everybody is in favour. 15% of respondents to the consultation were opposed to the scheme, in addition to those who signed the petition against the scheme. Many of the technical issues raised by these objectors, such as drainage, cleansing and highway surface quality problems, will be addressed as part of the detailed design.
- 2.5 There will be a small reduction in on-street parking of around 5% along the northern section of Barker's Butts Lane, and there are five dwellings on Westhill Road without easy access to off-street parking that will lose the ability to park on-street directly outside of their property. It is recommended that the Westhill Road properties in question are provided with a vehicular cross over (dropped kerb) the cycleway and footway, with construction costs covered in full by the scheme. It is also recommended that properties on Barker's Butts Lane, where works are proposed to take place directly in front and that would likely be approved for a dropped kerb from a highways perspective, are offered heavily discounted dropped kerbs cross overs if they are constructed at the same time as the scheme. This will reduce demand for on-street parking and generally improve highway safety. The on-road parking provision in Coundon Road from Meriden Street to Barras Lane will be displaced by the scheme. It is proposed that alternative parking will be made available when Barras Lane is closed at Holyhead Road and Barras Lane becomes a cul de sac. It should be noted that Coundon Road, Barker's Butts Lane, Westhill Road and Hollyfast Road are classified roads and therefore applications for vehicle cross overs

require planning consent and must go through the planning process. This report does not and cannot approve their implementation.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 The consultation period commenced with the delivery of a 'Street News' leaflet to over 4,000 properties along the corridor of the route. This showed a plan of where the route is to run and gave a web address to visit to view the detailed plans, along with a phone number and email address to call or write to provide comments and ask questions. The web-page had a pdf download showing the detailed annotated proposals along the route and a discussion forum to comment and discuss the proposals. There was also a map that allowed comments to be easily provided in relation to different sections of the route.
- 3.2 There were 3,700 visits from 2,440 different participants to 'Lets Talk'. From the discussion forum comments and emails received, around 63% of participants were positive and in support of the proposals, 15% were against and 22% were neutral or purely asked technical queries.
- 3.3 The most common 'theme' mentioned by respondents in the forum and email was that they would like the proposals to go further than a single route and to build more of this type of infrastructure across the City.
- 3.4 The second most common theme was a concern of loss of on-street car parking. Whilst the scheme does propose a reduction in on-street parking, it is apparent from the feedback that the plans did not make clear enough to respondents the general retention but realignment of parking and it was misinterpreted by many that large sections of on-street parking would be removed. Parking will be removed from Coundon Road but off-set with new parking on Barras Lane. There would be a reduction of approximately 5 on-street spaces on Barker's Butts Lane between Moseley Ave and Scots Lane from 115 to 110. There would be a loss of parking on-street on Westhill Road in front of 13 dwellings, of which eight have easily accessible off-street parking but five have difficult to access off-street parking.
- 3.5 The consultation being online only was the sixth most common theme mentioned in the online discussion forum with 10 respondents raising this as an issue.
- 3.6 The consultation was about how the cycleway would fit within the street. A significant number of minor changes to the design have taken place along the length of the route following feedback received during the consultation.
- 3.7 A consultation summary report is included in Appendix B.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Approving the scheme will exercise the powers under section 65 of the Highways Act 1980 to create a Cycletrack. Traffic Regulation Orders will be advertised that will enhance the safety of users of the cycletrack and the rest of the highway. The scheme will start on site in the autumn following completion of the detailed design process.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

The Coundon cycleway scheme is being fully funded from the Air Quality Implementation Fund grant of £24.5 million already received by the City Council from Central Government. This grant is for the delivery of the Local Air Quality Action Plan as approved by the Council's Cabinet on 21st July 2020, which includes the Coundon Cycleway. The changes to the scheme design that respond to the consultation do not affect the budget required to deliver the scheme. There are therefore no additional financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations of this report.

5.2 Legal implications

The Council in its capacity of Highway Authority and pursuant to S.65 Highways Act 1980, may in or by the side of a highway maintainable at the public expense construct a cycle track which forms part of the highway.

Those Traffic Regulation Orders referred to in this report may be advertised pursuant to existing delegated powers in favour of the Director of Transportation and Highways

6. Other implications

Any other specific implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?

These proposals support the Council's core aims, as set out in the Council Plan, by:

- improving the health and wellbeing by improving air quality through the reduction in traffic generated emissions.
- creating an attractive, cleaner and greener city by providing improved cycle routes and better public realm on key routes into the City, and;
- making the city more accessible for businesses, visitors and local people through increasing mode choice.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

There are inevitably a mixture of risks associated with such an infrastructure project. Some of the main risks are securing the statutory approvals to implement the scheme, the unknown effects on utility providers' apparatus once the ground is opened, the cost of construction increasing due to external market factors like material costs or plant hire costs, a prolonged bout of inclement weather would affect the programme for delivery and the ongoing impacts of the Covid 19 virus.

A dedicated scheme project manager and programme manager will control these risks on a day to day basis. The risks are overseen by the Air Quality Programme Board, which in turn reports into the Strategic Transport Board.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

There is no impact on the organisation, as all resources required to deliver the scheme will be funded through the Air Quality Implementation Fund grant received from Government.

6.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Air Quality Action Plan, of which this scheme forms part of the programme of works.

This identifies that the local plan scheme, by having a beneficial impact on air quality, will have a beneficial impact upon those groups of the community who are particularly vulnerable to respiratory disease, such as children and younger people, elderly people, disabled people, people from black and ethnic minority background, and women who are pregnant. The scheme improves the walking and cycling environment and improves access to economic and social opportunities for households without access to a car.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

The scheme will lead to an increase in cycle use as a mode of transport which will reduce car use. This will reduce the emissions generated by road transport, supporting the Climate Change Strategy and improve local air quality.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The scheme will result in improved air quality and provide improved infrastructure for people to walk and cycle. The scheme will also upgrade some bus stop infrastructure benefiting TfWM and bus passengers along the route.

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