



Executive Director/Director Non-Key Executive Decision Report

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Duncan McIntyre

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Report to: *Tom Finnegan-Smith*
Date of Decision: *20/09/2017*
Subject: *Hutcliffe Wood Cycle Track*

Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? Place	
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? Economic and Environmental Well Being	
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 1130	
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-	
<i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>	

Purpose of Report:

To gain financial approval for the £161,000 construction element of making a 1.2km footpath through Hutcliffe Wood into a cycle track. The remaining scheme costs have already been approved through the Capital Approval process by Cabinet. The construction element should have already been approved following the Outline Business Case stage but was missed off in error.

The full scheme has also been signed off through an Individual Cabinet Member decision on 12th October 2017.

Recommendations:

To approve the budget variation of £161,000 for the construction element of making a 1.2km footpath through Hutcliffe Wood into a cycle track. The scheme is funded by Section 106 contributions.

Background Papers:

n/a

Lead Officer to complete:-	
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.
	Finance: Julie Currey
	Legal: Richard Cannon
	Equalities: Annemarie Johnston
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	Lead Officer Name: Duncan McIntyre
	Job Title: Senior Transport Planner
Date: 20/09/2017	

Form 2 copied below

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Officers propose to convert the 1.2km footpath through Hutcliffe Wood into a cycle track – a path shared by walkers and cyclists. The path starts at Abbey Lane and ends at Hutcliffe Wood Road. Construction would involve widening the path to 2.5m and surfacing it with crushed brick. It would not be lit.
- 1.2 We would increase the width to 2.5m. This will make it wide enough for cyclists and walkers to pass each other.
- The path is mainly unsurfaced – often muddy in winter. We will give it a crushed stone surface, rather than asphalt.
- 1.3 We are carrying out a Cycle Track Order to legally change the status of the footpath to a cycle track.
- 1.4 This cycle track meets the criteria for spend of available local section 106 funding – see section 4.2. Other options were considered for spending of this funding but proved to be unrealistic – see section 5.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 The increased width and improved surface will improve and encourage usage of the path. These enabled commuter and leisure journeys will contribute to Council aims to increase levels of physical activity – including walking, jogging and cycling. It will also contribute to Council aims to increase levels of cycling.
- 2.2 Improvements to the path could bring more visitors to the woodland and therefore the local area, including Millhouses Park. This will mean greater utilisation of green spaces run by the Council and potentially a boost to the local economy if more shops and cafes are visited.
- 2.3 A survey in July 2017 found that current use of the path is very low. On two weekday mornings 2 and 3 people were counted between 7:15 and 8:45. On a Saturday afternoon 8 people were counted between 14:00 and 16:00. All were walkers or joggers – no cyclists (though cyclists have been observed outside of this survey). Weather on all occasions was dry and clear.

This means that not many current users will be affected and that there is much scope for increasing use.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

3.1 Cycle Track Order

A public consultation process has been carried out to decide whether the legal conversion of the path from a public foot path to a cycle track should take place – see 4.3.2. The consultation ended in June 2017. This report is not part of the approval process for the cycle track order, but the results below should be taken into consideration.

One objection was received – that the “cycle path would be the first step in the urbanisation of one of Sheffield’s few remaining natural woodlands – the beginning of it becoming Hutcliffe Park”. Officers will address the concerns through the Cycle Track Order process. The officer response is that the crushed brick path will be sympathetic to the woodland and will benefit many users.

Two members of the public raised concerns that cyclists may pass walkers quickly creating safety hazards and asked what officers could do to reduce the risk of this. Officers propose to put information at either end of the route encouraging cyclists to slow down for walkers. Unfortunately chicanes cannot be placed along the route as visibility will be limited at darker times of the day.

Cycle tyre tracks on that path suggest that some cyclists do use it. However these numbers are currently expected to be very low. Our survey (see 2.3) counted no cyclists.

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association contacted us to discuss how the visually impaired could be catered for. Officers will consider putting tactile paving outside both entrances. The actual path cannot segregate walkers from cyclists using a painted line, because of the unbound crushed brick surface and because the 2.5m width suits non-segregation.

3.2 Other consultation

The Walking Forum is in support of the scheme because of the benefits to walkers of an improved surface and increased width. Those with limited mobility, i.e. those who could walk but were unsteady, would gain from a more even and solid path. The potential issue of speeding cyclists was noted, but the above benefits were felt to outweigh this.

The Cycle Forum is in support of the scheme and see the planned surface and width improvements to be helpful to cyclists, even though this won't be a key cycling route for a large number of cyclists.

We have consulted Network Rail about the stretch of path from the Abbey Lane end that lines their land and metal fence. We will avoid affecting the land and fence by keeping works to a minimum, which means not widening the path. Specifically we will resurface the existing path and install a wooden fence to guide path users away from a dip

down to Network Rail's metal fence.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

- 4.1.1 Overall there are no significant differential, positive or negative, equalities implications from this proposal. There will be some positive health benefits to new users of the path who can walk, jog and cycle. The improvement of the path surface probably won't open it up for wheelchair users, but people with minor walking impairments may benefit. We will mark up the two entrances with tactile paving for visually impaired people to see the change in path type. Equality Impact Assessment number is 1130.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 The total cost of implementing the scheme is £314,000 and is funded by Section 106 numbers 650 (£274,000) and 855 (£40,000). In line with the Council's capital approval process the Outline Business Case was approved by the Thriving Neighbourhoods and Communities Board on 1st February 2017. The capital budget of £64,000 to complete the feasibility and commence detailed design was endorsed by the Capital Programme Group on 21st February 2017, then approved by cabinet. The outline construction cost should have been approved at the same time, but was missed off in error.
- 4.2.2 This report provides the necessary financial approval (within the Leaders scheme of delegation) to enable the contract award to be signed in advance of November's Cabinet date. This budget variation (to enable the scheme to be constructed) will still be reported to Cabinet.
- 4.2.3 The commuted sum to cover future maintenance is estimated at £6,000 per year for 10 years. There is a maintenance element of the S106 funding which will be used to fund this cost.

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 Section 106 funds have legal restrictions around how they can be spent. Both funds restrict any expenditure to the area that can be summarised as the 'Sheaf corridor', which includes Millhouses Park and Hutcliffe Wood. Both also specify the provision of a route for walking/cycling.
- 4.3.2 To enable the widening of the footpath, the Director of City Growth, using delegated powers, has dedicated areas of Council owned land as footpath where necessary.
- 4.3.3 The process to convert the widened footpath to a shared use footpath/cycle track by legal order is ongoing. Authority for the creation of the order was given by the Planning and Highways Committee on 7th

March 2017. Officers are authorised to refer the order to the Secretary of State for confirmation in the event objections are received. Confirmation is necessary for the order to come into effect. An Inspector, appointed by the Planning Inspectorate, will decide whether the order should be confirmed.

- 4.3.4 Sheffield City Council will be able to designate the path as a shared use footpath and cycle track once the order is confirmed. This will give cyclists the legal right to share the path with walkers. Until then, any use of the footpath by cyclists without the permission of the landowner (SCC) is a trespass.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Sheffield City Council considered the following options in Millhouses Park. Though each met the criteria of the section 106 funding, feasibility design highlighted significant problems with constructing them.
- 5.2 **Option 1** – We considered widening the main path through Millhouses Park to enable cyclists to share it with walkers. However it is possible that works will be undertaken on the park to better manage flooding in the city. Such works would probably replace any existing infrastructure, including the path that we had constructed.
- 5.3 **Option 2** – We considered constructing a ramp up to Archer Road (at the end nearest to the city centre). The ramp would enable people to cycle up to and down from Archer Road as well as assisting people with limited mobility. However, along with the above flood management issue, we found that there was significant underground Yorkshire Water infrastructure at the location we chose for the ramp, which we would not be able to construct upon.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The funding is appropriate to the recommended scheme.
- 6.2 The upgraded path will have benefits to current and future users.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To approve the budget variation of £161,000 for the construction element of making a 1.2km footpath through Hutcliffe Wood into a cycle track. The scheme is funded by Section 106 contributions.