

# The Chichester District Council

**CABINET**

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## **Engagement Response to National Highways A259 Chichester to Emsworth Cycling and Walking Route**

### **1. Contacts**

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### **2. Executive Summary**

The six mile A259 corridor from Chichester to Emsworth connects a number of villages and parishes. It is a largely flat and straight-line route offering a good opportunity to create modal-shift to non-car modes of transport. The road is the diversion route for when the parallel section of the A27 is closed. The corridor and nearby settlements are likely to be included in the emerging Revised Local Plan for some additional residential development. The route is the second priority in WSCC's Walking and Cycling Strategy for delivery and WSCC has subsequently been successful in accessing National Highways (NH) grant monies for its delivery. NH has completed initial designs for improved walking and cycling infrastructure along the whole route and has recently completed a public engagement exercise. Overall, the indication is that there is majority support for the proposal in the ratio 59% to 30%. The local cycle forum and selected Bourne Forum parishes have proposed an alternative design which NH inform us is not technically feasible due to highway constraints and is non-compliant with disability requirements. The Council's Environment Panel has also considered the proposals and resolved that NH should reconsider the shared-use sections through villages. NH has asked the Council to confirm its view and states that there is no further design work that can be done and that the proposals are compliant with existing DfT guidance. Further NH state that they consider the Council as a partner in the work to upgrade the infrastructure and that were the Council to indicate its non-support or partial non-support then that risks NH ending the £5M project at this stage. WSCC is likely to indicate its position shortly and Cabinet will be provided with a verbal update if it is available.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1. **Having considered the recommendation from Environment Panel (para 9.4), Cabinet is recommended to indicate the Council's support**

## **for National Highways' proposed walking and cycling improvements to the A259 Chichester to Emsworth.**

### **4. Background**

- 4.1. An upgraded cycling and walking route known as the Chemroute, is proposed along the A259 between Chichester and Emsworth.
- 4.2. The route ranks second in WSCC's priority list of schemes in their Walking and Cycling Strategy. Being a high priority in an adopted WSCC strategy, and as a route running parallel to the A27 meant that it secured National Highways (NH) Designated Funds (DF). A feasibility study and the preliminary design has been carried out by NH, the latter being the subject of this report. To date the NH DF has delivered 160 cycling schemes across England and at the core of NH's work is 'safety'.
- 4.3. Currently, despite being a signed and designated cycle route (the National Cycle Network Route 2), it is formed of narrow shared use paths, poor cycle design and has gaps within the cycle infrastructure (ie it is not 'coherent').
- 4.4. The specific objectives of the proposed improvements are to:
  - Improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians and other road users.
  - Encourage healthy and active modes of travel – in line with the Government's 'Gear Change' vision for cycling and walking.
  - Support the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy and Chichester City Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
  - Maintain the core function of the corridor as a local A road and diversion route for the A27.
- 4.5. NH, in partnership with WSCC, is developing this project via NH DF Programme to an approximate value of £5M. Subject to a successful outcome from the consultation NH will take the scheme forwards for detailed design and WSCC will make a financial contribution towards the improvements.
- 4.6. All new cycle routes need to meet the Government's guidance, Local Transport Note 1/20, which sets out five principles which represent the essential requirements to achieve more people travelling by cycle or on foot.
- 4.7. WSCC and NH public engagement state that, 'The design process has complied with the principles of LTN 1/20 throughout the route, with the aim of creating high-quality and inclusive walking and cycling infrastructure between Chichester and Emsworth. Shared use facilities have been proposed as a last resort only, on sections where physical and operational constraints have determined this.'
- 4.8. The proposals are to improve cycling and walking facilities along the A259 corridor between Chichester and Emsworth through a mixture of

infrastructure improvements that include segregated cycling and walking facilities, shared cycling and walking facilities, enhanced crossing points, junction amendments, highways widths alterations, tactile pavements and sections of reduced speed limits. Further descriptive detail is at Appendix 1 and annotated route section plans are at Appendix 2.

- 4.9. Highways constraints on some sections of the route mean that an idealised LTN1/20 design is not possible but, as outlined at para 4.7 above, WSCC and NH state that the design is LTN1/20 compliant.
- 4.10. The NH Engagement Report (Appendix 4) indicates support for the overall scheme is 59%, however, officers are aware of concern in some parts of the community, including the Chichester and District Cycle Forum (Cycle Forum) and the Bournes Forum Working Group for Chemroute consultation (Fishbourne, Bosham, Chidham and Hambrook and Southbourne Parish Councils). These groups published a joint response which includes alternative designs for parts of the route. Being a Highways engineering project, this report does not comment on the technical aspects of the proposal. However, given the concerns of some local groups, officers sought clarification from WSCC and NH with regards to the alternative design proposed by local communities. Both have confirmed that the highway has inadequate capacity to allow for the alternative design. An NH informed appraisal of the proposed alternative design is at Appendix 3.
- 4.11. The Council's key consideration is the strategic nature of the route with regards to corporate objectives; the emerging Local Plan and the future housing development on the A259 Chichester to Emsworth corridor, modal shift for air quality and the climate emergency. NH state in their 'A259 Chichester to Emsworth Walking and Cycling Improvements Engagement Report' (NHER) (see Appendix 4) report that 'The future housing development (on the A259 Chichester to Emsworth corridor) and increase in inhabitants is why the scheme is being proposed; to encourage modal shift for shorter journeys.'
- 4.12. WSCC will be making their indication as to whether they support the scheme in due course and that will be provided to Cabinet as soon as it is available.

## **5. Outcomes to be achieved**

- 5.1. Overall, the scheme will provide improved and safer walking and cycling infrastructure on the A259 corridor and a coherent route from Chichester to Emsworth, noting that the design is compromised in places by the available highways' space.

## **6. Proposal**

- 6.1. To consider the NH design proposals and the overall benefit of the scheme against the Environment Panel's resolution (para 9.4) and the

National Highways Engagement Report (NHER) (as at Appendix 4), with the intention of the Council indicating its support for the scheme.

- 6.2. The proposal is strongly congruent with the Council's adopted policies as expressed by the Corporate Plan Objectives:
- Support our communities:
    - Help our communities to be healthy and active, and
  - Maintain our built and natural environments to promote and maintain a positive sense of place:
    - Encourage sustainable living and
    - support the provision of essential infrastructure.
- 6.3. The adopted and emerging local plans take a balanced approach to the transport impacts of growth including promotion of active transport. The A259 corridor Chichester to Emsworth has seen development in recent years and is likely to see additional growth going forward, as indicated in the Council's published Preferred Approach Local Plan 2018 and work undertaken since then. The technical work underpinning the emerging local plan has an aim of securing a 5% modal shift away from the private car. Improvements in walking and cycling are essential if that model shift is to be achieved or exceeded and the NH proposals are well placed to provide a significant improvement to active travel facilities in a location which will continue to see pressure for development.

## **7. Alternatives considered**

- 7.1. The first alternative would be not to indicate any Council position for the proposed scheme. The route, however, is important for Chichester District in the context of the emerging Local Plan and the likely development along the A259 corridor between Chichester and Emsworth. To remain silent would present an ambiguous position on such an important piece of infrastructure and NH have encouraged the Council to state its view. As such this 'alternative' is not appropriate.
- 7.2. A further alternative is to consider that the scheme is so compromised by the shared use sections and is not ambitious enough as the design is constrained to highways land only such that the Council indicates it's non-support for the scheme. It is not considered that this position would place adequate value on the improvements to the corridor that the scheme would bring. Such a position risks the loss of the ~£5M investment that the scheme represents. As such this position is not considered appropriate.
- 7.3. The alternative as proposed by the Environment Panel's resolution is to 'broadly support' the scheme with the exception of the shared-use sections of the scheme through the villages. However, NH indicate that there is no alternative to shared use through these sections of the route. Discussions with NH about the Environment Panel's resolution indicate that, if the Council formalises the Panel's resolution as its response to the scheme, this will pose a significant risk that the scheme does not progress in any form and the £5M funding would be spent outside of Chichester District. NH want to work in partnership with local authorities (LA) and if a

LA does not support a scheme then NH do not impose it on the LA. As such this position risks the scheme not progressing in any form and should not be pursued.

## 8. Resource and legal implications

8.1. There are no resource or legal implications for the Council.

## 9. Consultation

9.1. NH has engaged with a range of stakeholder groups to inform the development of the design through two interactive online workshops. More than 200 responses were recorded, and the feedback and suggestions gathered have been used to inform and refine the preliminary design.

9.2. WSCC and NH also carried out a public engagement exercise 22 July 2021 to 23 September 2021. (note NH has confirmed that they will receive the Council's response after the close of the public engagement).

9.3. NH has published its NHER document (see Appendix 4) which summarises the responses received, responds to a selection of those responses and provides a statistical analysis of the responses. The total online responses received were 436. For the overall scheme support was 59% and non-support was 34%. The consultation support for the sections of the path are summarised in the Table below:

<b>Chemroute section description:</b>	<b>Supportive consultation responses (%)</b>	<b>Non-supportive consultation responses (%)</b>
Emsworth to Southbourne	53	38
Southbourne to Nutbourne	60	32
Nutbourne to Bosham	60	32
Into Bosham	61	29
Bosham to Fishbourne	61	29
Into Fishbourne	58	32
Fishbourne to Chichester	59	30

9.4. The NH A259 proposals were considered by Environment Panel at its meeting on 15 October 2021. The Panel resolved:

- To indicate the Council's broad support for National Highways' proposed walking and cycling improvements to the A259 Chichester to Emsworth scheme with the exception of shared-use proposals through village centres which need further consideration.

## 10. Community impact and corporate risks

10.1. If the proposed scheme is delivered, then the community will benefit from overall improved walking and cycling facilities along the A259 corridor. This is by the provision of a safer route and a consistent and coherent route.

- 10.2. There are reputational risks in rejecting the scheme and avoiding inward investment and overall improvements in infrastructure to meet Local Plan, air quality and Climate Emergency objectives.

## 11. Other Implications

	Yes	No
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>		✓
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation</b> Enabling a greater number of journeys to be taken by walking and cycling and the related reduction use of liquid fuelled vehicles both reduce carbon emissions.	✓	
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact</b> NH confirms that it has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on the scheme. That assessment will form part of the Preliminary Design Report which will be publicly available for review in due course.	✓	
<b>Safeguarding and Early Help</b>		✓
<b>General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)</b>		✓
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b> Active travel and reduced air pollution from less vehicle traffic have mental and physical health co-benefits.	✓	

## 12. Appendices

- 12.1. Appendix 1: Textual summary of NH proposals as presented on the public engagement webpage.
- 12.2. Appendix 2: Section plans of sections of the A259 Chichester to Emsworth proposed NH improvements to Walking and Cycling Infrastructure.
- 12.3. Appendix 3: NH informed appraisal of the alternative Chemroute design published by Chichester and District Cycle Forum (Cycle Forum), The Bournes Forum Working Group for Chemroute consultation (Fishbourne Parish, Bosham Parish Council, Chidham and Hambrook Parish Council and Southbourne Parish Council).
- 12.4. Appendix 4: NH A259 Chichester to Emsworth Walking and Cycling Improvements Engagement Report.