
Maidstone Sustainable Access to Education and Employment LEP Scheme – River Medway Towpath

To: **Maidstone Joint Transportation Board 14th October 2015**

Main Portfolio Area:

By: Colin Finch, KCC, PROW & Access Service

Classification: **For Information**

Ward: Aylesford South, Allington, Bridge, Fant, and Barming

Division: Environment, Planning and Enforcement

Summary: This report provides further detail on the approved LEP scheme to improve the River Medway towpath between Barming Bridge and Aylesford Bridge

1.0 Introduction and Background

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is to update the JTB on progress made on the LEP approved scheme for the development of a traffic free sustainable transport route alongside the River Medway from urban fringes into central Maidstone.
- 1.2 The overall purpose of the investment is to encourage cycling and walking by providing attractive, direct routes for cyclists and pedestrians to access employment, education and other facilities in Maidstone Town Centre and along the River Medway corridor.
- 1.3 It is intended that this project will also deliver benefits to health, transport and enhance the desirability of Maidstone as a location for employment and residence.

2.0 Sustainable Access to Maidstone Education and Employment (LEP) Scheme

- 2.1 The scheme was approved by leaders of both KCC and MBC through the LEP in 2014. Since then KCC's PROW and Access Service have been progressing with the required ecological surveys and designs to enable construction of the route during the Summer of 2016.
- 2.2 The scheme has been further endorsed through the report and recommendations made by the MBC "Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committees" report on "A Review of Transport in Maidstone Borough" 2014-2015.
- 2.3 Ongoing consultation with the Borough Council has resulted in two notable changes to project, these being;
 - i. The original scheme has been extended to East Farleigh bridge. A further recommendation from the Maidstone Cycle Forum and Borough Councillors was received, requesting an extension to Barming Bridge. This request has been approved by the County Council and Barming Parish Council.
 - ii. That a cycling "Hub" be created at the Lockmeadow retail site. Discussions are required with MBC property and the management team for the site.
- 2.4 Outline designs of the section between Allington Lock and Barming Bridge have been received and are attached to this report for review and comment.
- 2.5 Outline designs for the section between Aylesford and Allington Lock have been commissioned and are due for return at the end of February 2016. These will be shared

through a subsequent report to this JTB at the appropriate time. This section is subject to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council approval and financial contribution.

3.0 Financial

- 3.1 The project has an approved £3 Million budget.
- 3.2 £2 Million is to be provided through a LEP grant. Whilst the scheme has been agreed, it remains subject to Business Case approval which is expected to be secured before November of this year.
- 3.3 MBC capital contribution towards the scheme was approved at committee on 13th August 2014.
- 3.4 Aylesford Parish Council has also approved a financial contribution of £10k towards the scheme.
- 3.5 KCC PRoW & Access Service has identified a contribution to be made from its capital allocation.

4.0 Legal implications

- 4.1 The route follows the alignment of an existing Public Right of Way and as such the planning authorities have confirmed this scheme falls within permitted development.
- 4.2 Although cyclists already use the route, unchallenged, a Cycle Tracks Conversion Order will be sought for the avoidance of doubt and to formalise access rights that reflect the current use.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The scheme remains on course for delivery in 2016 with designs and stakeholder engagement progressing well.
- 5.2 Further discussion will be required with Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone Borough Councils in respect of the section between Allington Lock and Aylesford.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Officer recommends members review the proposed Outline Designs and contact the Lead Officer with any comments or recommendations they wish to provide.

Future Meeting if applicable:	Date:
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Contact Officer:	
Reporting to:	

Annex List

<i>Annex 1</i>	<i>Scheme Proposal / Plan</i>
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