

AREA COMMITTEE: WEST LUTON
DATE: 30th MARCH 2005
SUBJECT: POYNTERS ROAD - PROPOSED CYCLE TRACK
REPORT BY: HEAD OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORTATION

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES	ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL	CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING	OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: LEWSEY

PURPOSE

1. To report the response to a consultation carried out by Bedfordshire County Council on a proposed cycle track along Poynters Road and to agree if the cycle route should be introduced in full or in part.

RECOMMENDATION (S)

2.
 - (i) That the Committee notes the results of the consultation and the petition expressing concerns expressed about the scheme.
 - (ii) That the Committee agree that the proposed cycle route should be introduced between Wheatfield Road and Leagrave High Street.
 - (iii) That the Committee agree that the proposed cycle route should not be introduced between Leagrave High Street and Dunstable Road at the present time.
 - (iv) To inform the lead petitioner of the Committees decision

REPORT

3. This report summarises the responses received from local residents and others following consultation on Poynters Road Cycle Track, Dunstable. The proposals by Bedfordshire County Council and their consultants Jacobs Babbie involved widening the existing footway along the eastern side (Luton's side) of Poynters Road. The proposal is to widen the existing path into the adjoining grass verge by 1.5 metres to create a dual footway/cycleway, with cyclists separated from other users by a dividing white line. The footway 'side' would remain adjacent to the property boundaries, with the cycleway side nearer the carriageway. The existing verge is as wide as 8 metres in places and lies between the existing footway and the carriageway.
4. The boundary between Bedfordshire County Council and Luton Borough Council runs along the centre of Poynters Road. While there is an agreement that Bedfordshire County Council maintains the road, the final say on a proposed cycle route on the Luton side of Poynters Road will be taken by Luton Council.
5. As reported to the last Area Committee on 24 January 2005 a petition that was signed by around 125 local residents opposing the proposed scheme was received.
6. Poynters Road is a heavily trafficked urban distributor road. It is a main bus route and also carries a significant number of heavy goods vehicles. This level of traffic and the many central islands along the road (that can act as 'pinch points' for vehicles overtaking cyclists) combine to make the Poynters Road carriageway a particularly unattractive place for those riding pedal cycles.
7. Conversely, the Poynters Road 'corridor' is of obvious strategic importance to those making short journeys by pedal cycle and on foot as it connects the large Windsor Drive housing estate in Houghton Regis to the Tesco superstore in the eastern corner of Dunstable. At various points along its length Poynters Road also connects the same catchment area to less heavily trafficked routes that, in turn, form links to the Woodside Industrial Estate, Mill Vale Middle School and the Katherine Drive retail and residential area.
8. The benefit of providing a facility for cyclists along Poynters Road has, in strategic planning terms, been recognised and is featured in the latest adopted version of South Beds District Council's Local Plan, as well as in previous versions; it is included on the Strategic Cycle Routes Map of Dunstable; and it has previously been promoted by Bedfordshire County Council as part of the Safer Route to Mill Vale Middle School scheme. The route also connects with the proposed Luton Cycle Network.
9. In late December 2004 consultation leaflets explaining the proposals were delivered to all properties along the eastern and western side of Poynters Road by Bedfordshire County Council. Copies of the leaflet were also sent to elected members and other interested parties of the area. A strong negative response was received from the residents of the eastern side (the Luton side) of Poynters

Road. Residents from 11 of these properties wrote and/or telephoned to record their objections. In addition, a petition mentioned above was received.

10. From a total of 129 properties on the Dunstable side of Poynters Road, only one response was received. This respondent was in favour of the scheme. Another letter of support for the scheme was received from a resident of Houghton Regis. Responses in support of the proposals were received from local cycling representative, the Cyclists Touring Club; from Bedfordshire Police; from the Head Teacher of Mill Vale Middle School; and from Town Clerk of Dunstable Town Council.
11. The main points of objection can be summarised as follows:
 - the proposals will increase the risk of conflict between cyclists and drivers reversing out of their driveways, with attendant safety implications
 - there are few cyclists and therefore the proposals are poor value for money as they will assist only a small number of people
 - objections disputing the coherence of this proposal within the wider cycle network or suggesting that other routes, along busier roads, are more worthy of treatment
 - the proposals will increase the risk of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists on the dual pathway, with attendant safety implications
 - the proposals will remove, or at least adversely affect, the existing and long-established practice of residents parking on the grass verges or crossovers
 - objections disputing the status of the residents crossovers, which the leaflet states are part of the highway
 - the proposals will encourage residents to drive their motor vehicles along the new widened path when gaining access to and from their driveways
 - concerns at the speeds of cyclists on the pathway due to steep gradients
 - concerns that cyclists will not keep to their lane
 - concerns that it is inherently unsafe for children to cycle from Houghton Regis to Mill Vale Middle School, regardless of the proposed facility in question
12. The following suggestions were made as alternatives to the main proposal of creating the dual path on the Luton side of the road:
 - 1) Locate the path in the verge on the Dunstable side of the road instead.
 - 2) Remove the central islands etc from the carriageway to provide additional width for two on-carriageway cycle lanes.
 - 3) Introduce further speed restrictions on the road to enable cyclists to use the carriageway in greater comfort.
13. In principal this is the sort of scheme that the Council would generally support as it should be of benefit to existing cyclists and help encourage new cyclists. It is noted that some cyclists already use this route and that the proposals should therefore actually reduce conflicts with traffic and pedestrians and improve

overall safety. The route would also tie in with our own proposed cycle network, particularly at Leagrave High Street. The type of scheme being proposed for Poynters Road is of a similar design to schemes that Luton Council would consider elsewhere in the Borough and which have been successfully used in many locations in throughout the country. The type of scheme being proposed is not inherently dangerous as suggested by some of the responses to the consultation.

14. One of the issues raised in the response to the public consultation is the believe that the Council have given residents the right to use the crossovers as they see fit including the right to park on them (though not to block the pavement) and that the driveways are not part of the highway. This in fact is not the case. The driveways between the road and front gardens form part of the Public Highway and there is no actual right for residents to use these areas for parking. It is however, accepted that this practice often occurs along Poynters Road and the Council would not generally seek to take action against residents parking in such a way as long as there were no complaints or problems being created.
15. The section of the cycle route between Wheatfield Road and Leagrave High Street would have significantly more benefits than the second between Leagrave High Street and Dunstable Road as it serves more people and destinations and is better linked into existing and proposed cycle routes in Luton and Bedfordshire. The initial section is therefore considered to have a reasonably high priority and the section to Dunstable Road a relatively low priority.
16. One option would be for the Council to agree to introduce the section of the cycle route from Wheatfield Road to Leagrave High Street and not to introduce the section between Leagrave High Street and Dunstable Road for the time being. Most of the objections to the proposals were from the section between Leagrave High Street and Dunstable Road. This would provide the most important sections of the proposed route linking the main destinations and providing and better links to existing and proposed routes in Luton and Bedfordshire but would also take into account the views and concerns of local people. It would also provide an opportunity for the initial section to be monitored and for this to be taken into account before any proposals are considered for introducing the section between Leagrave High Street and Dunstable Road. Due to the relatively low priority placed on this second section of the proposed route it is unlikely that this part of the scheme would be reconsidered for many years.

OPTIONS

17. The Council could decide to approve the introduction of the whole of the proposed cycle route subject to the funding being provided by Bedfordshire County Council. This would be the most beneficial scheme for cyclists but take little account of the views and concerns expressed by local people.
18. The Council could agree that none of the proposed cycle route be introduced. This would mean that this useful cycle link would not be provided, cycle use is likely to remain and potentially dangerous and that there would be gaps in the proposed cycle network between Bedfordshire and Luton.

19. The Council could decide to introduce the section of the cycle route from Wheatfield Road to Legrave High Street and not to introduce the section between Legrave High Street and Dunstable Road for the time being. This would provide the most important sections of the proposed route but also take into account the views and concerns of local people.

COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

20. The proposed scheme should improve community safety by providing an improved facility for cyclists which should improve safety and reduce conflicts with pedestrians and vehicles.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

21. The cost of the proposed cycle track and associated works would be met by Bedfordshire County Council.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

Report to West Area Committee on 24 January 2005