**Princes Road, Dartford Cycle Route Consultation Report**

**Introduction**

This report details the responses to the consultation on the proposal to provide a cycle route along Princes Road (A296) in Dartford. The public consultation was open between 30 April and 10 June 2018.

Kent County Council (KCC) is keen to encourage active travel by making it an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent. By developing and promoting Kent’s cycling and walking infrastructure in the county, KCC aims to reduce congestion, improve air quality, increase levels of physical activity and improve the health of its residents.

KCC’s [Active Travel Strategy](#) supports Dartford Borough Council’s (DBC) Core Strategy which aims to implement an integrated walking and cycling network joining communities with the facilities they need to access, including public transport facilities, primarily through the Green Grid and including the Public Rights of Way network.

Dartford has the potential, through large scale mixed use development, to significantly increase the levels of cycling and walking among its residents thereby reducing reliance on motorised modes for local travel. However, the cycling and walking network must be enhanced and expanded if there is to be a significant increase in the number choosing to travel using sustainable modes.

Through the Local Growth Fund, KCC has been awarded funding to deliver substantial enhancements to pedestrian, cycle and public transport facilities and infrastructure to make these modes more attractive when compared to the private car.

The purpose of this consultation was to invite comments on a proposal to construct a new a shared use pedestrian and cycle path along the section of Princes Road (A296) to the East of M25 Junction 1b. The length of the path will be approximately 900m.

The scheme proposed a shared use path to be constructed through widening the existing northern footway between the Princes Road Interchange Roundabout and the Peanut Roundabout. This has been identified as a suitable route because, the new path will provide a more direct route for cyclists travelling in the area than the existing cycle route (that forms part of National Cycle Route 1) which currently takes a path around the housing estate to the south of Princes Road. At its eastern end the new path will join up with an existing high quality shared use path linking to Bluewater and Ebbsfleet Garden City.

The proposed cycle route design would meet all national minimum design standards, including:

- Widening of the existing footpaths to a minimum of 2.5m.
- The installation of shared pedestrian footway/cycleway signage where necessary throughout the length of the route.
• Removal of build out located outside of ‘Vauxhall Dartford’ to facilitate the delivery of vehicles to the commercial sites and to allow the shared use path to remain in a straight line.

• The relocation of existing sign posts and street furniture to ensure pedestrian and cyclist movement is relatively unobstructed.

An initial design stage safety audit was completed and available from the consultation directory. Another audit will be carried out at the construction stage.

Consultation Process

The consultation for the proposed cycle route ran from 30 April to 10 June 2018. The consultation and supporting documents were hosted on the KCC Consultation Directory.

The consultation leaflet was downloaded 67 times in PDF format and 17 times in Word. The road safety audit was downloaded 29 and each section of the design plan was downloaded 38, 31 and 37 times respectively. In addition, the Equalities Impact Assessment was downloaded 27 times in PDF and 9 times in Word. Consultees were able to provide feedback to the scheme via email or post.

A consultation poster was circulated directly to 200 homes and businesses in the roads adjacent to the proposed cycle route. Posters were displayed on the route of the proposed location and in Dartford Library. An extensive list of stakeholders, including Darenth Valley Hospital, local schools and Dartford and Gravesend Cycling Forum were also contacted directly to alert them to the consultation. A press release advertising the consultation was published, and local elected County and District Members were contacted individually.

All publicity material included a phone number and email address for people to request hard copies and alternative formats of the consultation material.

Respondents

Seven responses were received, via email direct to the designated mailbox. No information in relation to the demographics of the respondents was requested, however, six of these responses were from local residents or businesses along the proposed cycle route. Therefore, the majority of respondents would be directly impacted by the proposed route, the other response was from Dartford and Graveshame Cycling Forum. There were no responses from the ward councillors.

Consultation Responses

Of the seven responses, six (86%) had an overall positive view on the proposed scheme. However, further comments from the six responses were provided about the detail of the scheme and where improvements could be made.

The positive comments recognised that the scheme would have an impact on improving the local cycle infrastructure and proving greater choice of route.
There were nine themes identified in the comments received:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Positive Comments Received</th>
<th>Negative Comments Received/ Suggested Improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement to existing cycle infrastructure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>More Direct Route for NCR1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Use Path/Segregated Path</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5m Width Insufficient</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Crossing Point – Watling Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position of Bus Shelter Relocation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Section – Insufficient for Mode Shift</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Lane Unnecessary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main concerns from respondents are:

1. A shared use path for both cyclists and pedestrians can be unsafe due to the differing speeds and direction of travel. Segregated paths are more beneficial as they provide a separate space for each travel mode and often allow for a cyclist to feel safer in their movements.
2. Current parking behaviour could render the scheme unusable. Parking in the area is limited and some businesses do not have onsite parking.
3. 2.5m width for the shared use pathway is not sufficient. Current recommended guidelines state a width of 3m is required where there is no segregation between pedestrians and cyclists.
4. The current courtesy crossing point at Watling Street is dangerous. A signalised crossing on the proposed re-alignment of NCR1 is required as part of this scheme to ensure the safety of all users.

**Equality Analysis**

Within the comments received, the conflict between cyclists and pedestrians sharing a pathway was raised as a concern. It was felt that this could potentially impact vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, young children and parents/carers more than the wider population. Unfortunately, whilst a segregated pathway would be preferred, due to the lack of space available this is not a feasible option. It is common practice for shared use pathways to be provided where space is restricted and in general these are well received with cyclists restricting the requirements of other users. Signage along the length of the route will alert both pedestrians and cyclists to the dual use of the pathway. In addition, following feedback from the consultation there are also proposals for additional signage alerting road and cycle path users to the vehicle movements around the businesses.
Post Consultation

Following the consultation, the main concern raised was in relation to parking, in particular around some of the businesses that trade along Princes Road. To address this specific issue a meeting has been held with the business owners in order to discuss the concerns raised in more detail and allow KCC to work to resolve or reduce any of the issues identified. Following this meeting KCC will formalise any agreement reached with the business owners. As there is a need to control parking in this area, a new Traffic Regulation Order will be required with a further consultation period before this is implemented.

Whilst KCC appreciates the comments received, in particular in relation to segregated space and the width of the shared use path, the space available for the scheme to be constructed within limits the ability to address some of these concerns. However, where possible, design adjustments will be considered to try to accommodate these elements.

Next Steps

Feedback from the consultation, along with the additional information above, has been considered by officers at KCC and DBC, and has been used to inform the finalisation of the proposal.

Taking into account the benefit of the scheme to enhance the strategic cycling and walking network in Dartford in accordance with KCC and DBC policy objectives, together with consultation feedback, KCC officers have concluded to proceed with the scheme and implementation is now being planned.

The scheme and results of the consultation will also be submitted to the Dartford Joint Transportation Board for information on 4 September 2018.

Following this, we are planning to build the scheme in Spring 2019. In order for the scheme to be built, lane closures will be required but it is intended that two way traffic flow will be maintained and it is therefore unlikely any full road closures will be required. Advance Notice Boards will be put up two weeks prior to construction and local residents will receive a start of works notice that will include the full traffic management plan. In addition, if necessary Variable Message Signs may be used to ensure information can be updated during the construction period. We will continue to liaise with all local businesses to ensure that construction minimises any disruption to their activities. We will endeavour to ensure that any inconvenience during the build is kept to a minimum.