

PROPOSED WIDTH OF THE CYCLE/PEDESTRIAN LINK BETWEEN BLUE MILLS HILL TO CONSTANCE CLOSE ON THE BLACKWATER RAILTRAIL WITHAM

Agenda Item

Contact Details: - Juliet Strathern
Designation: - Planner
Ext. No: - 2559
E Mail Address: - julst

Background Papers: - Designing for cyclists: a guide to good practice (Essex County Council) Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005. Department for Transport – LTN 2/04 – Adjacent and Shared Use Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists

Financial Implications: - Costs of design and construction of cycleway/footway.

Equalities Implications: - Improved disabled access.

Legal Implications: - Finance provided through S106 agreement.

Options:

1. To construct a 3.0 metre wide cycle/footway
2. To construct a 2.5 metre wide cycle/footway
3. Not to construct cycle/footway

Risks:

Failure to follow guidance regarding the width of a un segregated cycle/pedestrian path from the '*Designing for cyclists: a guide to good practice*' (Essex County Council 2006) could lead to conflict with cyclists/pedestrians/wheelchairs/push chair users.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks authorisation to provide a 3.0 metre wide un segregated cycle/footway, Witham using S106 finance from the Benton Hall golf course development.

DECISION

It is RECOMMENDED that the construction of a un segregated **3.0** metre wide cycleway is approved from Blue Mills Hill to Constance Close, Witham

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS BETWEEN BLUE MILLS HILL TO CONSTANCE CLOSE ON THE BLACKWATER RAIL TRAIL WITHAM

Background

The proposed improvements between Blue Mills Hill to Constance Close on the Blackwater Rail Trail, Witham was considered by Witham Local Committee on the 26th February 2008.

At the Committee members expressed a concern at the proposed width of the path feeling that 3.0 metres was unnecessary and should be reduced to 2.5 metres. The decision was made that further discussions should take place between Braintree District Council and Essex County Council with the view to reducing the proposed 3.0 metre width cycle/foot path.

Finance

It is estimated that the proposed improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail to provide a 3.0 metre wide cycle/pedestrian path between Blue Mills Hill and Constance Close will cost approximately £89,000. This includes a site survey, design, safety audit of the proposals, construction works and fees.

This scheme will be funded from the Benton Hall golf course development S106 agreement that provided a financial contribution to Braintree District Council for improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail.

Scheme Design

The Blackwater Rail Trail is owned and managed by Essex County Council as a Country Park.

'Designing for cyclists: a guide to good practice' was produced by Essex County Council in 2006. The guide is based on national guidelines and accepted good practice. The design advice conforms to the Department for Transport requirements and standards.

The proposed route between Blue Mills Hill to Constance Close is to be unsegregated (shared use facility). Segregation of this section of the Blackwater Rail Trail (white line or coloured surfacing) would be an unnecessary visual intrusion considering the surroundings. It is proposed that the Blackwater Rail Trail will eventually form part of the National Cycle Network (NCN route number – 1).

The surface proposed will be a compacted (gravel type) material so that it is sympathetic to the surrounding environment. However, with this type of material it is inevitable that vegetation from the boundaries will eventually encroach upon the path, reducing the width of the path further. This is evident on sections of the Flich Way,

Braintree. The Country Park rangers at Essex County Council currently carry out maintenance works i.e. hedge/tree trimming on the Blackwater Rail Trail three times a year. The proposed 3.0 metre wide path would enable some margin for vegetation encroachment onto the path during the period between maintenance works, yet still enable sufficient width for cyclists/pedestrians/wheelchair and pushchair users to pass comfortably.

Table 1 ‘Cycle track widths’ below from the ‘*Designing for cyclists: a guide to good practice*’ indicates that the minimum width for a un segregated cycle track/pedestrian path is 2.5 metres and the preferred width is 3.0 metres. However, it notes that the widths are for paths without physical boundaries. A further 0.5 metre should be added for each side that is bounded i.e. by vegetation.

Table 1 Cycle track widths		
Type of cycle track	Minimum width	Preferred width
Shared use un segregated cycle track/pedestrian path	2.5 metres	3.0 metres
<p><i>Note: The above widths are for paths without physical boundaries. Add 0.5 metre for each side that is bounded by kerb, wall, vegetation or similar obstruction.</i></p>		

The existing path on the Blackwater Rail Trail is surrounded by vegetation, trees and shrubs. Therefore, if the minimum width of 2.5 metres was implemented on the Blackwater Rail Trail an additional 0.5 metres would need to be added to each side of the route in accordance with the guidance in Table 1. The proposed route would therefore be 3.0 metres wide. This would also be a suitable width to enable emergency vehicles to access the trail if required.

The Department for Transport states in the ‘*LTN 2/04 – Adjacent and Shared Use Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists*’ that ‘*Insufficient width may lead to conflict between pedestrians and cyclists and if the recommended widths cannot be realised, the facility may become difficult or impossible for some people to use*’. It is also stated in Paragraph 6.2.2 that, ‘*Practitioners should not regard minimum widths as design targets*’.

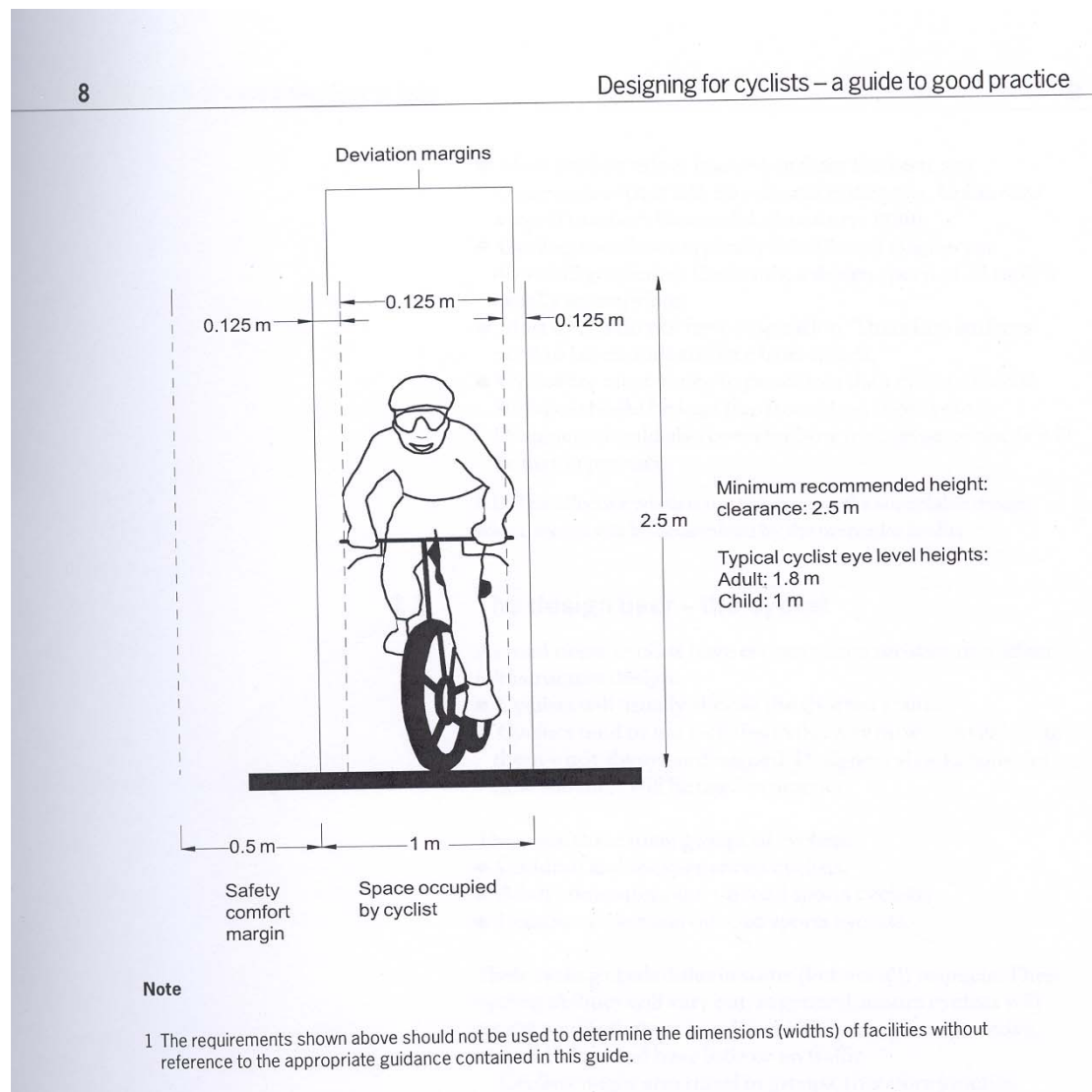
It is proposed that the improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail will encourage more usage by cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair and pushchair users therefore cyclists and other users are likely to pass more often.

The ‘*Designing for cyclists: a guide to good practice*’ indicates that a bicycle/cyclist has specific characteristics that affect infrastructure design. As stated in Paragraph 1.7, ‘*In practice, the effective width will usually be determined by the cyclist. In addition to elbow width (approximately 0.75 m) a cyclist needs manoeuvring space (an additional 0.25 m) as it is not possible to cycle in a perfectly straight line, and as a margin for safety and comfort an additional 0.5 m is recommended*’.

This is illustrated more clearly in the diagram below.

Diagram – Cyclist’s Dimensions and Space Requirements.

(*Designing for cyclists: a guide to good practice, Essex County Council –2006*)



From the diagram illustrated above one cyclist would generally require 1.5 metres effective width for movement. Therefore, two cyclists, cycling parallel, would generally require 3 metres effective width.

It is proposed that the Blackwater Rail Trail will be a multi user environment, which will need to serve the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and other non motorised users.

Consultation

The Country Parks team at Essex County Council has stated '**a 3 metre width would be most appropriate for the type of use it would receive and maintenance**'. (Appendix 1)

Essex County Council Highways and Transportation has stated '**for a shared use unsegregated cycle track/pedestrian path the absolute minimum is 2.5 metres this is assuming there is no side growth (i.e. in an urban/estate area). Where there is side growth the absolute minimum is 3 metres. The information you require is in "designing for cyclists – A guide to good practice published by ECC2006.**' (Appendix 2)

The Sustrans Engineer has stated, '**We would strongly recommend a constructed path width of 3.0 metres. Within a short while there will inevitably be some growth over the edges giving an attractive rural feel to the path without a hard edge but retaining useable width of about 2.5m**'.(Appendix 3) Sustrans is a civil engineering charity which designs and builds routes for cyclists, walkers, and people with disabilities.

Atkins Highways and Transportation are in the process of completing a Safety Audit for the proposed scheme on the Blackwater Rail Trail. We hope to have the comments received from this to feedback at the Witham Local Committee on the 1st May.

Planning Approval/Future Maintenance

Planning Permission is not required for these proposed improvements.

Essex County Council Country Parks will remain responsible for the future maintenance of this section of the Blackwater Rail Trail.

Appendix 1

Great Notley Country Park
Great Notley
Braintree
Essex
CM77 7FS

Our ref: GN/BWRT
Date: 22 April 2008

Dear Juliette,

Black Water Rail Trail Cycle Path Width

I have considered the issues with regards to the width of the proposed path on the Blackwater Rail Trail. It is my opinion that a width of 3 metres would be most appropriate for the type of use that it will receive and for maintenance.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely

Steve Bunn
Head Ranger

Telephone: 01376 347134
Internet: www.essex.gov.uk
Email: fritchway@essex.gov.uk

Appendix 2

You forwarded this message on 09/04/2008 09:25.

From: Bob Wiltshire HT District Manager [Bob.Wiltshire@essex.gov.uk]

Sent: Wed 09/04/2008 08:33

To: Strathern, Juliet

Cc:

Subject: Blackwater Rail Trail.

Juliet,

For a shared use unsegregated cycle track/pedestrian path the absolute minimum is 2.5 metres this is assuming there is no side growth (ie in an urban/estate area). Where there is side growth the absolute minimum is 3 metres. The information you require is in "designing for cyclists – A guide to good practice published by ECC2006.

Bob.

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Appendix 3

Dear Juliet,

I was pleased to hear that the improvements are to be made to the Rail Trail between Blue Mills Hill and Constance Close.

This, together with the proposed crossing of Maldon Road to Laurence Road, will provide a part of our aspiration for the National Cycle Network route to Maldon and of course a good access to the Golf Club and Gym.

We would strongly recommend a constructed path width of 3.0m. Within a short while there will inevitably be some growth over the edges giving an attractive rural feel to the path without a hard edge but retaining a useable width of about 2.5m. Railway paths are inevitably almost straight and some meandering within the width available would be beneficial, although I appreciate that it was a single track width here.

I hope that these comments are useful, I would be pleased to discuss the specification further if you wish.

Yours sincerely,

Alan.

Alan Morgan, Engineer Essex,
Sustrans 5 St John's Close, Colchester, CO4 0HP.
Tel/fax 01206 842646 e mail: alan.morgan@sustrans.org.uk



Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Its vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. It is achieving this through innovative but practical solutions to the UK's transport challenges. Sustrans' flagship project, the National Cycle Network, is now around 12,000 miles and runs within one mile of over half the UK population. During 2006 over 338 million trips were made on the Network. It is maintained by a team of 2,400 volunteer Rangers.

To find out more visit www.sustrans.org.uk
Registered Charity No: 326550

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