

Report To/ Decision Making Body:- Witham Area Committee	Date of Meeting: - 18 th July 2006	Agenda Item: - 5
Title of Report:- Chipping Hill to Ebenezer Close Cycleway		
Wards Affected:- Witham Wards	Background Papers:-	
Financial Implications:- Cost of constructing cycleway	Policy Implications:- As set out in report	
Sustainability Implications:- Yes	Equalities Implications:- No	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the results of the public consultation on four route options for the Chipping Hill to Ebenezer Close cycleway and to seek approval of the preferred route option, Option Four.

2. BACKGROUND AND THE NEED FOR A SCHEME

2.1 The 'River Route' cycleway currently runs through Witham from Maldon Road to Chipping Hill in the vicinity of the River Brain. Braintree District Council has received funding to construct the final section of the River Route between Chipping Hill and Ebenezer Close from the Local Transport Plan. The aim of the cycleway is to provide both pedestrians and cyclists a safe and improved route to schools, community facilities, the railway station and the town centre, in line with the transport objectives outlined in the Braintree District Local Plan Review (adopted July 2005).

2.2 Initially Braintree District Council and Essex County Council looked at improving the existing path between Chipping Hill and Ebenezer Close, however a number of issues have been raised concerned with safely connecting the new route with the existing River Route:

2.3 Toucan Crossing and Traffic Control:

Chipping Hill Road Bridge is a narrow humped backed bridge, with poor driver visibility of vehicles approaching on the other side of the bridge. There is currently one-way traffic allowed across the bridge, with priority to vehicles driving towards the station. It is an accident site, where 10 accidents involving motor vehicles, 2 wheeled motor vehicles and pedal cycles have occurred between October 2000 and September 2005. As a result, Witham Town Council have made a request to Essex County Council to install traffic lights to regulate the one-way traffic movements over the road bridge. If the existing footpath north of Chipping Hill Bridge was replaced by a cycleway, a new toucan (pedestrian and cyclist) crossing would also be required to safely take pedestrians and cyclists coming from Ebenezer Close across Chipping Hill to join with the existing River Route. The lights for toucan crossing and traffic control would be integrated.

2.4 Footbridge:

There is an existing 1.8 metre wide footbridge alongside the Chipping Hill road bridge. Essex County Council has explored options to widen the existing footbridge to 3 metres (the County standard width for a foot/cycle bridge). However, the ECC Heritage and Conservation team, [due to the unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the listed structure], raised an objection to extending the width of the footbridge towards the road bridge. Concern was raised about widening the footbridge in the other direction, as this would involve the removal of the willow tree.

2.5 As a result, Essex County Council and Braintree District Council prepared two options for a new cycleway including a new foot/ cycle bridge located downstream from the existing structure and an option involving the widening of the existing footbridge. All of these three options included the installation of a toucan crossing.

2.6 Following consultation with Witham Town Council, in November 2005, a fourth cycleway option was prepared. The route of this option is from Ebenezer Close to the rear of Spring Lodge. Because this does not connect with Chipping Hill, this would not require a toucan crossing or a new bridge. The four route options are attached to this report.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

3.1 A public consultation on the four options for the Chipping Hill to Ebenezer Close cycleway was held between Monday 3rd April and Friday 28th April 2006. A display showing the options was in Witham Library for two weeks. Two displays were also held in Witham Town Hall on 5th and 7th April, staffed by Braintree District Council and Essex County Council officers. The four options were also available to be viewed on the BDC website for the entire consultation period.

4. RESULTS

4.1 In total, 48 responses to the consultation were received. The comments about each option are summarized below; the full comments made are attached as an appendix to this report. The consultation asked for people to specify their preferred option, the results are as follows:

Option Number:	Number of Responses
One	5
Two	12
Three	5
Four	23
None	1
Not Specified	1
Option one and two	1

4.2 Summary of comments made about Option One (cycleway from Ebenezer Close to Chipping Hill, toucan crossing and new cycleway bridge):

4.2.1 For:

- Most direct route
- Allows willow tree to be retained
- Less development on the meadow than option two
- Would improve access to the meadow

4.2.2 Against:

- Too expensive

4.3 Summary of comments made about Option Two (cycleway from Ebenezer Close to Chipping Hill, toucan crossing, cycleway across meadow and new cycleway bridge):

4.3.1 For:

- The best compromise route
- The reorganization and improvement of safety on Chipping Hill bridge is the most important consideration to prevent accidents
- Avoids removal of willow tree
- Avoids widening of footbridge
- Would improve access to the meadow

4.3.2 Against:

- Oppose construction of embankment
- Too expensive

4.4 Summary of comments made about Option Three (cycleway from Ebenezer Close to Chipping Hill, toucan crossing and widening of existing footbridge):

4.4.1 For:

- Has least impact on the meadow
- Bat Willows grow quickly so a replacement tree could be planted

4.4.2 Against

- Oppose removal of willow

4.5 Summary of comments made about Option Four (cycleway from Ebenezer Close to Bramble Road/ Spring Lodge):

4.5.1 For:

- Traffic control would damage the character of Chipping Hill Conservation Area
- Traffic signals would cause traffic to back up Chipping Hill
- Traffic signals would encourage people to speed up to jump the lights
- No need for new bridge
- Would serve existing Bramble Road estate and new homes behind Spring Lodge
- Avoids removal of willow tree
- Avoids development on meadow

4.5.2 Against:

- Not a continuous route
- Does not address any of the safety issues on Chipping Hill
- The path between Ebenezer Close and Chipping Hill would not be completely upgraded

4.6 Other comments:

- Encroachment on to the River Walk next to Bridge House, Chipping Hill
- Consideration needs to be given to the flora and fauna of the meadow. The ragged robin, ladies smock has disappeared under the present management scheme.
- Opposes cycleways due to health and safety risk to pedestrians.
- Cycleways are underused, no need for any further expense
- Safety camera should be installed on Chipping Hill
- Crossing is necessary at Church Lane/ White Horse Lane/ Moat Farm Chase
- Traffic bumps should be installed on Chipping Hill
- A crossing should be installed by Spring Lodge
- There should be no lighting installed on the River Walk
- Improve footpath between Bramble Close and Chipping Hill

5. FURTHER CONSULTATION

5.1 Witham Town Council considered the results of the public consultation on 27th June 2006. Safety concerns were expressed about Option Four due to cyclists who might try to cycle through Spring Lodge car park, or cross Powers Hall End, near to Spring Lodge. It was noted that these issues would be considered as part of the safety audit of the route. The Town Council voted to support Option Four as the preferred route for the cycleway.

6. FUNDING

6.1 Braintree District Council already hold £120,000 of Local Transport Plan funding allocated for a cycleway scheme in this area, and it is proposed that this fund the design and construction of the proposed section of the cycleway between Ebenezer Close and Bramble Road. It is proposed that the section of the cycleway directly behind Spring Lodge be constructed as part of the proposed development on this site, constructed and funded by the developer. This had been discussed and agreed in principle with the Development Control team and the developer.

7. FURTHER WORK REQUIRED

7.1 If Members approve the scheme in principle the following work will be required:

- Detailed design
- Full Safety Audit
- Cycleway creation order.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Due to the level of public support for Option Four, and the support of Witham Town Council for this route, it is therefore recommended that this is the route constructed using the Local Transport Plan funding held by Braintree District Council for this scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that Witham Area Committee support Option Four, between Ebenezer Close and Bramble Road/Spring Lodge as the preferred route for the new cycleway.

Date report prepared: - 28th June 2006

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