

**PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS BETWEEN BLUE MILLS HILL TO CONSTANCE CLOSE
ON THE BLACKWATER RAILTRAIL WITHAM**

Agenda Item 2.4

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.
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 cycle/footway in accordance with design
2. To amend design of proposed cycle/footway
3. Not to construct cycle/footway

Risks:

Insufficient finance to construct proposed cycle/footway. Loss of S106 finance if not spent according to legal agreement requirements. Construction costs increasing, due to unforeseen circumstances.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks authorisation for the improvement of the Blackwater Rail Trail from Blue Mills Hill to Constance Close, Witham to provide a cycle/pedestrian path using S106 finance from the Benton Hall golf course development.

DECISION

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

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Background

The Council's Direction and Ambition includes the following aim to: -

'Reduce the impact of traffic on the District by promoting and supporting improved public and community transport, cycling and walking'.

The Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005 supports the provision of cycleways and indicates proposed routes on the Inset Maps, including a route along the Blackwater Rail Trail from Blue Mills Hill to Constance Close.

Finance

It is estimated that the proposed improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail to provide a 3 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.

The proposed improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail to provide a cycle/pedestrian path between Blue Mills Hill and Constance Close will be the first phase of improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail. The length of this section is 750 metres.

A feasibility study will be carried out in 2008/2009 to identify possible links across the River Brain to continue the improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail up to Catholic Bridge near Colchester Road, Witham. It is intended to construct this second phase when further S106, or other funding is available.

The guidance document produced by Essex County Council *'Designing for cyclists: a guide to good practice'* indicates a minimum of 3.0 metres for cycleway/footways.

The new proposed cycle/pedestrian path will improve the existing unsegregated path that is overgrown in places. The surface to be provided will be a compacted (gravel type) material so that it is sympathetic to the surrounding environment. This is with the exception of the link from Maldon Road to the Blackwater Rail Trail, which will be tarmac.

Dog bins will be provided at the entrances to the Blackwater Rail Trail this is to enable the Dog Warden easy access for emptying the bins.

Appropriate signage/map panels will be provided at the entrance points onto the Blackwater Rail Trail.

It has been advised by the Country Park Rangers that wooden logs are retained to create habitat piles on the edges of the Blackwater Rail Trail to benefit the local wildlife.

The existing mature trees on the Blackwater Rail Trail will be retained. To protect the tree roots only the top 100mm of soil will be removed, with the exception of areas where there are drainage issues.

The existing bollards, field gates and fencing will be replaced with a standard design agreed with the Country Park Rangers.

Consultation

The Country Parks team at Essex County Council have been continuously involved with the proposals for the improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail with various meetings being held.

Essex County Council Highways and Transportation have been consulted.

The River Walk and Whetmead Management Working Group were presented with the proposals for the improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail on the 22nd November 2008 and they were generally supportive of the proposals.

Local residents will be notified prior to construction works taking place.

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.



DO NOT SCALE
IF IN DOUBT
ASK

CAD filename: 1789_Blackwater Trail.dwg

Contractors must check all dimensions on site and report any discrepancies to the Engineer immediately.

Notes:
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Revisions:

Blackwater Rail Trail Witham

Phase 1 – Blue Mills to Constance Close Cycleway Link

Scales: N.T.S. @ A3



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
P. J. Crofts Dip TP., MRTPI
Development Director
CAUSEWAY HOUSE,
BRAINTREE, ESSEX CM7 9HB
Tel: Braintree (01376)552525

Approved :
Project Leader : N Suppiah
Checked by :
Drawn : B Mayhew
Date : 3.12.07

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