



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Wokingham Borough Active Travel Fund – Woodley to Reading Active Travel Route

Introduction

The aim of the Active Travel Fund is to encourage more walking and cycling, to make it easier to walk and cycle for local journeys, reducing the need to use private cars. This should then help to create benefits in health, air quality and the local environment.

Overall route

ETC's Comments

- It is unclear why the Option 1 route from the initial consultation has been changed from Culver Lane to Palmerstone Road.
- ETC is not convinced that when considering cycle routes from Woodley Town Centre to Palmer Park, that the views of all stakeholders (including, adult and child cyclists) have been obtained and taken into account. There are other options than those proposed by WBC which might be quieter, less steep, and more obvious options (to cyclists), at no greater distance, than the ones proposed, such as Beechwood Avenue, Town Lane, Hilltop Road, Sidmouth Grange Road, Culver Lane.
- In short, a full consultation with all stakeholders seems to be lacking, thus far.

Section: Woodlands Avenue between Lytham Road and Howth Drive - Woodley

ETC's Comments

- The traffic restriction on Woodlands Avenue will either displace traffic elsewhere, or lead to an overall reduction in traffic. This needs to be modelled.
- Grass verges would be lost.
- ETC supports the proposed 20mph zone.
- ETC queries whether in determining to opt for this type of cycling infrastructure appropriate consideration has been given to people with disabilities.

Section: Woodlands Avenue between Howth Drive to Church Road - Woodley

ETC's Comments

- ETC does not support the proposed removal of a mature tree near Addington School, nor any other trees.
- Grass verges will be lost.
- It is hoped that the proposed 20mph zone will calm traffic around this concentration of schools.
- A continuous cycle path across the entrance to the leisure centre would be preferred.
- The two additional pedestrian crossings are welcomed.
- The bollards along Woodlands Avenue, that prevent unauthorised incursions on to the Bulmershe open space, need to be retained
- The disabled parking bays facilitate access to the open space and need to be retained. The long-term parking along this road is not required and could become 2-hour stay, along with disabled parking.

Option 1

Section: Church Road, Palmerstone Road, Culver Lane – Earley

ETC's Comments

- Church Road is a busy, secondary classified route, acting as part of an unofficial eastern Reading bypass between the A4 at Shepherds Hill and the A327 at Shinfield.
- Currently there is no pedestrian crossing on Church Road between St Peter's School and the Shepherd's Hill roundabout, a distance of over a mile. This creates a barrier to, for example, children from Whitegates travelling to schools in Bulmershe and on Church Road, and to slower pedestrians trying to reach bus stops on the opposite side of the road.
- The proposed four new crossings are welcomed.
- A crossing on Pitts Lane between Hilltop Road and the Town Lane cycle track, would also be welcomed in connecting Whitegates to Bulmershe.
- A crossing on Church Road between St Peter's Road and the entrance to Sol Joel Park would be welcomed.
- A pedestrian phase on the traffic lights at the Three Tuns crossroads, across Church Road, is required.
- A "Twenty is Plenty" policy would be welcomed across the whole Whitegates, not just limited the Palmerstone Road or Anderson Avenue.

- ETC supports the proposed reduction in the speed limit on Church Road to 20mph, from Woodlands Avenue to the Three Tuns crossroads, thereby creating a continuous 20mph zone from Woodley Town Centre to the Three Tuns crossroads and to Palmer Park.
- The loss on grass verges is noted.

ETC prefers Option 1 this being the most direct route, but ETC has significant reservations about the proposed use of Palmerstone Road for the following reasons:

- It is busy, being the most direct route also for cars travelling from Woodley to Reading
- The parked cars along the whole length leave a narrow carriageway.
- It is steeper than Culver Lane – so some cyclists may opt for the lesser incline (Culver Lane) when proceeding from Palmer Park towards Woodley.
- The parking around the shop at the bottom, with motorists not observing double-yellow line restrictions, often gives rise to hazardous conditions.

ETC considers that the original Option 1, from the top of Culver Lane should have been left in the consultation.

Option 2

Section: Church Road, Anderson Avenue, Culver Lane - Earley

ETC's Comments

This is not ETC's preferred Option for a cycle route from Woodley to Palmer Park for the following reasons:

- It is a longer route than Option 1. Cyclists are likely to opt for the shorter route.
- The cycle path on Church Road is contrived and unlikely to be used properly.
- A lot of grass verge will be lost.

Anderson Avenue is, nevertheless, ETC would contend, an important cycle route from Palmer Park to Maiden Erlegh. It is slightly less steep than Palmerstone Road and has a lot less traffic. So, ETC would welcome improving its connection to the Mays Lane cycle path. (Before the A329(M) was built, Anderson Avenue connected directly to Mays Lane at a crossroads on Church Road.) At present, the motorway bridge is narrow. There is a lack of dropped kerbs at both Anderson Avenue and Mays Lane. Metal barriers prevent an easy transition from Church Road to either Anderson Avenue or Mays Lane. There is no pedestrian crossing at this point.

CONCLUSION

ETC's key position summary to WBC in respect of the current consultation is as follows: -

Earley Town Council -

- welcomes the investment in new cycling and walking infrastructure in both Earley and Woodley;
- welcomes the new crossings on Church Road and Woodlands Avenue;
- welcomes 20mph speed limits on Woodlands Avenue, Palmerstone Road and Anderson Avenue;
- of the 2no. options currently proposed, believes that the Option 1 route is the best choice for the cycle route, but that other, possibly better options, have not been considered, and should be considered after a full consultation with all stakeholders;
- requests that additional crossings be added to Pitts Lane and Church Road;
- requests a permanent 20mph zone on a section of Church Road;
- requests a "Twenty is Plenty" zone across the whole of Whitegates;
- requests a pedestrian phase on the traffic lights for Church Road at the Three Tuns crossroads;
- requests that the needs of disabled residents are considered with respect to any new infrastructure;
- endorses the position of Woodley Town Council and requests that its views and the views its residents be properly and fully considered, following the representations they have made;
- requests that the different emphasis between how pedestrians and cyclists co-exist with road traffic, as set out in the recently updated Highway Code (published after this consultation commenced), is taken into account in the design of the whole scheme; and
- requests that WBC has regard to all of ETC's Comments in relation to each section of the current proposal, as set out in this document.

This concludes the comments of Earley Town Council

Dated: 18th February 2022