

Subject:	Access to the South Downs National Park – Ditchling Road		
Date of Meeting:	8th October 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Abby Hone	Tel: 29-0390
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Ward(s) affected:	Patcham and Hollingdean & Stanmer		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 In 2012 Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) were successful in achieving funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund Tranche 2. The bid made to Department for Transport was a joint Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) proposal to improve sustainable transport access into the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and New Forest National Park. The project associated with the funding is collectively known as '2 National Parks Local Sustainable Transport Fund' (2NP LSTF).
- 1.2 A number of scheme elements in the bid have been further approved by the 2NP LSTF programme board for their potential to contribute to reducing CO2 emissions and the national park economy. Creating opportunities for people to walk, cycle and use public transport along Ditchling Road was one of the schemes proposed & approved. This report requests permission to proceed with implementation of facilities on Ditchling Road which create an environment to support people walking, cycling and using public transport to access the SDNP.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the results of the informal consultation, showing 62% support for the proposal to improve the Ditchling Road environment to enable people to walk, cycle and take the bus comfortably to the South Downs National Park and 67% support the proposal to reduce the speed limit on Ditchling Road from 60mph to 40mph along Ditchling Road between Coldean Lane and Woodbourne Avenue and grants permission to proceed with those elements of the scheme not bound by Traffic Regulation or Speed Reduction Order as set out in paragraph 3.11(a) to (f) of the report.
- 2.2 That the Committee grants permission to the Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing to proceed with advertisement of a Speed Reduction Order in relation to the measures set out at paragraph 3.11(g) in the report and that any objections to the Speed Reduction Order are brought to the next Environment and Sustainability Committee for consideration.

- 2.3 That the Committee notes that a report will be brought back to this Committee prior to the introduction of the limit and associated features.
- 2.4 That the Committee instructs officers to submit a report to Policy & Resources Committee recommending that the land adjacent to Ditchling Road, which is currently not available for Highway use, is appropriated for highway purposes.
- 2.5 That the Committee instructs officers to investigate the legal and regulatory requirements necessary for the introduction of open grazing and to bring a further report to ETS Committee with the outcome of the investigations and any subsequent recommendations.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 On 6th February 2013 a report was taken to Environment and Sustainability Committee formally requesting that the committee note the success of the Sustainable Transport Solutions for England's Two Newest National Parks bid (aka 2NP LSTF) and support its continued development. The local project proposals for Brighton & Hove were in the appendices of that report, including walking & cycling improvements at Ditchling Road.
- 3.2 Successful proposals were those judged to perform well against the twin objectives of supporting the local economy and facilitating economic development, and of reducing carbon emissions. If proposals met these initial criteria, they were also scored on their potential to deliver wider social and economic benefits, to improve safety, to bring about improvements to air quality, or to promote increased levels of physical activity.
- 3.4 The New Forest and the South Downs are England's two newest National Parks. They provide energising green spaces for leisure and recreation within densely populated South East England, generating 53 million visitor days a year. The South Downs is a short distance from a number of urban areas, of which the largest are Portsmouth, Winchester, Brighton and Eastbourne. These urban centres also function as important employment, education and retail destinations for the local communities.
- 3.5 Visitor numbers to the parks are concentrated largely in seasonal influxes such as summer weekends and school holiday periods. This influx of car-borne visitors threatens many of the special qualities that draw both residents and visitors to the two National Parks in the first place. Air and water pollution levels rise; habitats and landscape character are threatened by vehicle encroachment; tranquillity is broken by traffic noise; and the wider impacts of transport emissions and their contribution to climate change are already being seen in changing ecosystems, migration patterns and other critical aspects of species and habitat survival. The numerous roads, railways, and other transport infrastructure within National Parks need to be managed carefully given the sensitive nature of these environments.

- 3.6 In 2003, 71% of staying visitors and 87% of day visitors travelled to the South Downs National Park by private car. For the South Downs, this generates an additional 33million two way car trips per year on the local road network. These trips bring some economic benefits but also have adverse effects on the local environment with queuing traffic, reduced tranquillity and severance.
- 3.7 63% of the working population living in the South Downs travel to work by car with an average journey of 19.6 km representing 7.76 million two way car trips each year. There are high levels of car ownership in the South Downs (85% with one or more cars and 44% with two or more). This results in high dependency on private vehicles for trips that contribute to the overall traffic movements in the Parks. In the South Downs, 57% of all transport CO2 emissions are the result of day visitors travelling to, from and around the park by car. This was almost double the next biggest source of CO2 emissions, which is residents' car travel (30%).

- 3.8 The headline objective for the bid is to:

'Develop and promote sustainable access to and within the two national parks in ways that protect and enhance the Parks' natural beauty, cultural heritage and wildlife, provide opportunities for understanding and enjoyment and, wherever possible, support social and economic well-being for all.'

The SDNP Authority want visitors to feel that there are lots of great ways of enjoying their visit to the park that do not require a car and to establish a new social norm, so that people feel positive about leaving their cars at home and feel that other people like them also use sustainable modes. In the South Downs, a visitor survey in 2011 found there was significant concern about reducing car traffic, traffic calming, and keeping traffic off inappropriate minor roads. In order to keep visitors coming to both National Parks, it is important that such concerns are addressed.

- 3.9 The 2NP LSTF project acknowledges that failure to tackle the problems caused by private motor traffic in the two national parks would threaten their future viability as attractive visitor destinations. As Britain's newest national parks, the SDNP Authority and partners are committed to promoting a type of tourism which makes a positive contribution to our local economies and communities, and provides visitors with a real connection to our landscape and local people. A high quality sustainable travel 'offer' – whether by train, bus, cycle or on foot – is an essential ingredient to attract new visitors. The combined delivery of measures within the bid will ensure that the special landscapes of the SDNP remain accessible and welcoming whilst ensuring that they remain protected and open for enjoyment and understanding by future generations.

3.10 The proposed improvements for Ditchling Road are designed to create a safe and welcoming environment which positively encourages and supports people to walk, cycle and take the bus or indeed a combination of those transport options. From Woodbourne Avenue to Coldean Lane, Ditchling Road and the green spaces either side are fully within the South Downs National Park boundary. This section of road also has a poor casualty record with two fatalities, two serious and 4 slight injuries recorded in the last 3 years. Traffic speed was cited as a contributory factor in half of the collisions above.

3.11 The current proposals for Ditchling Road include the following elements:

- (a) Introduction of a gravel surface (self-binding) shared cycle and pedestrian path on the west grass verge area
- (b) Removing lining to encourage a reduction in speed
- (c) Introduction of courtesy crossings where they are most needed
- (d) Improving bus stop provision on the east and west side of the road
- (e) Improving lay-bys to protect wildlife areas
- (f) Creating wildflower areas for wildlife and bees
- (g) Speed limit reduction from 60mph to 40mph

3.12 Proposals requiring further investigation;-

- Livestock grids to allow for open grazing in future and clearly identify the national park

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1 The proposals to improve sustainable access to the SDNP were first brought to the attention of Environment and Sustainability Committee on 6th February 2013. The appendices to the report highlighted the schemes which had also been agreed by the 2NP LSTF Programme Board, including cycle and pedestrian facilities at Ditchling Road.

4.2 Headline consultation results (detailed breakdown of the consultation results is attached in appendix 5) -

- 62% support the proposal to improve the Ditchling Road environment to enable people to walk, cycle and take the bus comfortably to the South Downs National Park
- 67% support the proposal to reduce the speed limit on Ditchling Road from 60mph to 40mph
- 68% support the proposal to improve the bus stops and crossing points
- 64% support improvements to lay-bys and the introduction of picnic areas

- 4.3 Internal consultation and discussion is ongoing with Estates, Cityparks, (officers involved in management of Hollingbury Golf Course), Biosphere Project officer, Planning, Legal, Public Transport and Road Safety.
- 4.4 External consultation with partners has assisted in developing the initial proposals. Partners from the SDNP Authority assisted in the consultant design agency.
- 4.5 In May 2013 officers attended Hollingbury LAT meeting to talk to potential resident consultees. At this meeting suggestions were made about the sort of improvements the community would like to make to the area, and concerns were expressed regarding severance created by traffic and speed on Ditchling Road, particularly to get across from Hollingbury to Wild Park, 39 Acre woods and crossing Coldean Lane to reach the Great Wood at Stanmer. A number of suggestions made by those attending the meeting were explored and developed when drawing up proposals. A subsequent meeting/presentation was held on 30th July which sought opinion on the initial design proposals for Ditchling Road. Invites were emailed to all ward councillors, Hollingbury LAT, Coldean LAT/Residents Group, Trust for Developing Communities, Patcham & Hollingbury Libraries and Old Boat Community Centre, Stanmer Park Stakeholders Group, Stanmer Park Preservation Society and Friends of the Earth. Following this meeting some key themes and priorities emerged.
- Speed reduction is a key element in helping people feel comfortable walking, cycling and crossing the road. Proposals will make walkers and people on bike feel more welcome on the road, and make it clear what type of road it is.
 - Urban/open grazing is seen as a strength, creating identity and changing the feel of the area and contributing to a more biodiverse environment. Livestock grid gates could be used for SDNP signing, marking the entrance to the SDNP
 - Walking from Hollingbury to Falmer Stadium is quicker than getting a bus – crossing Ditchling Road is important.
 - A bus 'flag' at stops gives people confidence to use the bus (people can see timetable on post too), also good for advertising the bus service.
 - Drivers rest laybys should be formalised sensitively to reduce informal verge parking
 - Benches and tables for picnic areas are unlikely to be maintained due to be BHCC budget constraints
 - Proposals will make the area cleaner & less polluted
- 4.6 Informal public consultation began on 19th August for 3 weeks (scheduled closing date 8th September). A press release was sent out and picked up by The Argus and Brighton & Hove News. The flyer notifying interest groups and stakeholders was sent out via email. This included all those invited to 30th July meeting, PTP email networks (LSTF corridor), Sports Development Networks, Sussex and Brighton Universities, Cityparks, Active for Life, Cycling and Walking interest groups, CVSF, Brighton & Hove Wildlife, The Fed, Taxi Forum, Bus Companies, and Emergency Services,. Local Access Forum (LAF) members from both Brighton & Hove and SDNP LAFs have also returned comments. The consultation period was also extended until 15th September following representations from the LAF.

- 4.7 BHCC are obliged to consult with local Police on any proposed change to speed limits as the Police are the enforcement authority. The Police position on schemes such as this is that sufficient measures are put in place in order to make the speed limit self-enforcing. The Police contact from Road Policing has written stating that all the measures being proposed for Ditchling Road should be introduced together as a complete package to give the maximum impact to bring about the desired speed reduction and as such they can support speed limit reduction.
- 4.8 The greatest level of concern for consultees has been the open grazing proposal. Members of the LAF have taken issue with any possible restrictive fencing for moving across and within open spaces, some residents are concerned about the well-being of livestock, type of livestock, safety for motor vehicle users and the ability to let dogs off-lead. Some LAF members support the proposal and officers with responsibility for biodiversity are in also in favour. Sussex Police see the introduction of livestock as part of the speed reducing 'package'. The tenant farmer would be happy to farm across the highway should the speed reduction be in place. Cityparks colleagues states there is only value in open grazing if it is across the highway.
- 4.9 In order for open grazing to be permissible, it would be necessary to undertake research to evidence that the area is unenclosed land where open grazing has taken place in the past or that fencing is not customary. Evidence of historical open grazing would be required. It is proposed that officers undertake further research to gather the relevant data that would be required to enable open grazing to take place lawfully and to report back to Committee with this information.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Capital costs of the proposals will be funded from £0.337m of Linking Communities funding from the Department of Transport, £0.075m of Local Sustainable Transport Fund and £0.025m from the 2013-14 Local Transport Plan capital programme. The cost of officer time associated to the scheme will be met from the existing Transport Planning revenue budget.

The financial implications in relation to appropriation of land for highway purposes will be reported in the proposed report to Policy & Resources committee.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steve Bedford

Date: 18/09/13

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Council has power under the Highways Act 1980, following consultation with such owners and occupiers as it thinks appropriate, to install and maintain cattle grids where it considers it expedient so to do for controlling the passage of

animals along the highway. It also has the power to construct cycle tracks by the side of a road that consists of or comprises (i.e. includes) a carriageway. Some appropriation of BHCC estates land is required for highway use & is currently in the tenancy agreement of a tenant farmer. A deed of surrender will need to be arranged through BHCC Estates team and a report to P&R committee making clear any further implications.

The Council regulates traffic by means of orders made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Procedural regulations require public notice of orders to be given and any person may object to the making of an order. Any unresolved objections to an order must be considered by the Transport and Sustainability Committee before it can be made.

In carrying out consultation the Council is under a general duty to ensure that any consultation is fair. This means that it must be carried out when proposals are being formulated, that adequate time and information about proposals must be given to consultees to ensure that they can provide a proper response, and that any consultation responses must be properly considered in reaching the decision.

The Council is under a legal duty as a public authority to consider the human rights implications of its actions. Parking and traffic restrictions have the potential to affect the right to respect for family and private life and the right to protection of property. These are qualified rights and therefore there can be interference with them where this is necessary, proportionate and for a legitimate aim.

Lawyer Consulted:

Carl Hearsom

Date: 13/09/13

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An EIA will be carried out alongside other assessments required for planning permission by the South Downs National Park Authority.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The measures outlined in this report will promote and encourage greater use of sustainable transport, and particularly overcome current barriers to walking, cycling, and bus use. It is predicted that reductions in travel by private car would result from implementation of the scheme, with people instead choosing to travel by walking, cycling or bus due to their increased attractiveness and viability made possible through the improvements identified. The scheme will seek to enhance health by encouraging active travel amongst local people.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The scheme as proposed is likely to have a positive impact on reducing road casualties highlighted and increase natural surveillance by encouraging more people on foot and on bike to use the area.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The main risks include the potential for the project costs to exceed the available budget and the risk of any identified enhancements having unforeseen negative consequences when implemented. The risks are being mitigated by a careful design process, taking heed from the consultation process in the first instance.

Further funding for Ditchling Road has been awarded from the 'Linking Communities'

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There is a clear need to improve public health by increasing ease of access to travel actively for both utility and leisure trips. Creating an environment which carefully supports people to travel in a sustainable, active way along Ditchling Road will help BHCC meet its obligations. Increasing the number of pedestrians and cyclists and encouraging greater use of public transport will directly lead to improved public health through increasing the amount of exercise undertaken by local people. Reducing the number of people travelling by private vehicle will also lead to an improvement in air quality which in turn will improve public health.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Creating an environment conducive to walking & cycling along Ditchling Road, into the South Downs National Park meets LTP3 objectives to:
- Create safe and attractive streets and places that everyone can use responsibly
 - Enable greater access to a wide range of goods, services, and places, including the city's natural environment.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Brighton & Hove is constrained by its' city boundaries, the boundaries of the SDNP and the sea. Ditchling Road is a main radial route from the centre out to where the city boundary meets or falls within the SDNP. Other radial routes have some form of cycling and walking facilities to provide support for sustainable transport users, unlike Ditchling Road.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 There are very clear benefits to implementation of facilities to support walking, cycling and public transport while also bringing a safer environment through speed reduction measures to support the introduction of a 40mph speed limit, many of which have been highlighted in this report.
- 7.2 The consultation results show overall support for the proposals.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Scheme plan
2. General layout x-section
3. Photoshop impression no. 1

4. Photoshop impression no.2
5. Consultation results report

Documents in Members' Rooms

None.

Background Documents

1. Bid to DfT LSTF fund (Tranche 2) – 2NP LSTF
2. Local Transport Plan 2011 – Brighton & Hove City Council

