

Cycling in Yeovil

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Purpose of the Report

To promote discussion regarding cycling infrastructure and activity in the town, to draw together threads of work and create a point of contact/feedback loop.

To update members, through a presentation, of the current situation regarding cycling routes, potential future infrastructure projects and the intentions to promote cycling.

Public Interest

The creation of a continuous network of cycling routes across the town linking key areas of residential growth and employment/leisure destinations is considered to be a key area of work in creating a more sustainable town.

Recommendation

That members note and comment on the report and presentation and give support and encouragement (without prejudice) to officers to progress with current intentions to develop cycling in the town.

Background

The Area Lead Officer (South) has responsibility for overseeing the planning applications and the development of three key residential housing sites and two emerging sustainable urban extensions, plus housing schemes within the urban framework totalling some 7500+ homes in the plan period.

The Local Plan and good planning requires these homes to be well connected to new and existing employment areas, transport interchanges and leisure and retail facilities in the town centre.

One way of ameliorating growing concerns regarding car borne traffic is to promote sustainable means of transport including bus, walking and cycling. When associated to new development this is called Travel Planning.

SSDC and in particular Development Management can, as part of the planning process, play a significant role in seeking and delivering new cycling infrastructure in the town and as such is perfectly placed to oversee the town wide provision and where attention is needed. At the moment there are some fantastic stretches of cycle routes, although in other places it is more fragmented and still second fiddle to the motor car.

Working with colleagues in Spatial Policy, Area Development, Community, Health and Leisure, County Highways, Countryside, Streetscene plus developers and other stakeholders we have the potential to develop a safe, useable, continuous and sustainable network with

coverage across the town. There is a body of work concerning 'green' travel including the UWE Active and low carbon travel paper 'A transport vision for Yeovil', 2010 and the work underpinning the Local Plan.

In infrastructure terms what is good for cycling is generally good for walking and so whilst this report has cycling as its emphasis the benefits are also found by pedestrians and runners, undertaking physical exercise. The health benefits associated with cycling are significant, and reduce car borne traffic and the associated air pollution created. Improving access to the growing Yeovil Country Park for recreation is also a significant benefit.

The creation of a continuous network for cycling, building on what currently exists will also create the opportunities for spin-offs such as the bike-park at Birchfield/Wyndham Park, cycle to school initiatives, the SSDC cycling app for smartphones/tablets and a cyclists forum to gain feedback from everyday users of the network. A generic form of Yeovil branded signage would add character and legibility to the routes and show how long it would take in minutes to get to key focal points and destinations. Avoiding congestion and parking charges whilst gaining physical activity with knowledge of safe and secure parking at destination will encourage first timers to take up cycling in Yeovil or for former cyclists to take it up again. Many proficient cyclists will continue with current on-road travel, the key aim is to encourage more people into the habit by creating a series of commuting and recreational linkages.

Attention should not only be paid to the creation of routes and links but also the storage of cycles at home, the parking of cycles at destination and welfare facilities to give people a realistic alternative to the car.

Levering in developer funding through s106 and/or CIL by creating defined projects will ensure projects can be delivered. Based on current work bids have been made to the LEP and Great Western Railway Customer and Communities Improvement Fund. No monies are currently sought from Community, health and Leisure for cycling infrastructure.

The promotion of cycling requires coordination, focus and a vision. No one person currently has responsibility for this matter and the diminishing resource available from the County Council means that opportunities will be missed if not progressed now.

Various planning applications, member/officer led projects and initiatives will be discussed over the coming months and years and it is therefore important to see the whole picture and how small pieces of the jigsaw fit together.

As such Members will be shown a powerpoint presentation outlining a draft cycling 'masterplan' of existing and proposed routes in the town which can be used as a base-plan for further related projects.

This report therefore acts as a rallying call for member support to pursue and coordinate good planning.

Financial Implications

Financial support for some projects may be sought on a case by case basis.

Corporate Priority Implications

The effective management of planning obligations and the promotion of health and wellbeing will be beneficial in achieving all of the Councils Corporate Priorities.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

The provision of local, quality sustainable travel is paramount within a sustainable, low carbon, community.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The normal planning assessment criteria will ensure such matters are suitably addressed and promoted.

Background Papers:

None.