PROPOSED CYCLE-PATH ON SHEPHERDS LANE FROM PRINCES RD TO HEATHCLOSE ROAD

1. Summary

1. To inform Members and request endorsement of a proposal to permit cycling on the widened footway on the south side of Shepherds Lane between Princes Road and Heathclose Road.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are recommended to endorse the proposal to redesignate 355 metres of footway as a shared-use “Cycle Track” on the south side of Shepherds Lane, between the junction with Princes Road and the junction with Heathclose Road.

3. Background and Discussion

3.1. The footway of Shepherds Lane between Princes Road and Heathclose Road is a well-used route to school.

3.2. On a survey on 11th May 2010, the footway was used by 72 pupils walking to school and 3 pupils cycling, in addition to 14 adults on foot and two on bicycles.

3.3. The scheme under consideration is part of a proposal to create a cycle route from Common Lane (and its schools) in Wilmington to the cycle path along Princes Road. This will enable the new route to be connected to the rest of the Dartford cycle network.

4. Existing and Proposed Provision in Shepherds Lane

4.1. The section of Shepherds Lane under consideration is a dual carriageway provided with a cycle lane on both carriageways. Although the cycle lanes are used by adults, they are not well used by children cycling to and from school.

4.2. For the purposes of travelling home from school, the main difficulty with the cycle lanes is that children would have to cross Shepherds Lane to use the eastbound cycle lane. This is clearly unsatisfactory if a safer route can be provided.

4.3. The existing south footway of Shepherds Lane varies in width between 5.44 metres (near the northern end) and 2.37 metres (near Heathview Crescent).
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4.4. It is proposed that wherever the footway is currently narrower than approximately 2.8 metres it should be widened to 3 metres.

4.5. Along this section of Shepherds Lane the outermost part of the carriageway (i.e. furthest from the kerbline) is marked by hatched white lines, and it is proposed that the hatched area will be reduced where necessary to allow for the footway widening.

5. Consultation

5.1. Information about the proposals was distributed in April to houses adjacent the proposed route, i.e. 157 to 213 Shepherds Lane, a total of 30 properties. This resulted in four responses from local residents.

5.2. The first respondent was against the proposals on the following grounds: “the danger of accidents that might occur between cyclists and when cars are attempting to back in or out of driveways on to the very busy dual carriageway. At the moment we have to be very aware of pedestrians, but with the faster cycles I think that it is courting disaster.”

5.3. The second respondent said that the proposal was ill-conceived and unacceptable. “Residents already have great difficulty in entering and leaving the road at peak periods…. The window of time available to complete either of these manoeuvres is minimal, with no pause in the flow of traffic travelling westwards. If your proposal is implemented we will have the addition of cyclists travelling in both directions at up to 20mph… With pedestrians, two-way cycling, the constant traffic flow in peak periods and no sight lines, this stretch of road will become very dangerous.”

5.4. The third respondent telephoned to express concern about problems involving cars entering or leaving driveways, but this resident was not against the principle of the proposals, and queried whether “SLOW” could be painted on the pavement on the bend at the junction with Heathclose Road.

5.5. The fourth resident phoned to ask if the footway would be widened outside his property, and when told that this would not be the case he appeared to be satisfied.

5.6. The designer’s response to the residents’ concerns expressed above is that the proposed design for the cycle path outside their properties is low risk and complies with guidelines. Cycle paths are known to operate successfully even when they are narrower than the proposed scheme and have more restricted visibility at driveways.
5.7. Kent Police have been consulted, and they have no objections to the proposal although they point out that vegetation overhanging the footway will need to be cut back.

5.8. Wilmington Grammar School for Boys fully supports the scheme.

6. Legal issues

6.1. “Cycle track” is the legal term used to describe a way (constituting or comprised in a Highway) over which the public have rights of way on pedal cycles. The legal basis for redesignation of all or part of a footway to a cycle track is sections 65 and 66 of the Highways Act 1980.

6.2. Section 66 of the Act is used to remove the designation of footway and Section 65 is used to formally create the Cycle Track. There needs to be clear evidence that the local highway authority has exercised its powers, and this can be provided by a resolution of this Board.

7. Equal Opportunities Implications (including DDA)

6.1 A Disability Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and the findings incorporated into the design of the footway to be converted. As a result there are no residual concerns.

8. Human Rights Act implications

7.1 None as a result of this report

9. Crime and Disorder implications

8.1 None as a result of this report

10. Details of Exempt Information Category

9.1 Not applicable

11. Appendices

Appendix A –
Map showing location of footway proposed for conversion to cycle track.
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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

Contact Officers: Peter Slaughter
Contact Number: 08458 247 800
Kent County Council
Proposal to allow cycling on south footway of Shepherds Lane between Princes Road and Heathclose Road.

KEY:
- Black line shows proposed cycle route.
- Dashed line shows existing cycle path on Princes Road and northwards on Shepherds Lane.