

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	14 December 2020
Agenda Item	15

To note the proposed cycle route from Earls Colne to Halstead and nominate two Councillors to work with the project team

Draft Proposal for a Cycle Route between Earls Colne and Halstead

(being the northern part of the total proposed cycle route between Halstead and Kelvedon via Coggeshall)

Outline

A safe cycle route between Earls Colne and Halstead has been a community ambition for some time as the road between the two is fast and dangerous. Sustrans (The Cycling and Walking Charity) recommend that cyclists should be segregated from traffic where speeds are above 40mph, the A1124 is a heavily used main road. Optimally a cycleway should be a 3m wide surfaced route, soft verges alongside the route could allow it to also be a bridleway. A low maintenance quality of surface would be desirable to allow the County Council to adopt the route.

The project group for a cycle route was started in January 2020 with the aim to create a route from Earls Colne to Coggeshall and Coggeshall to Kelvedon, the extension of this route to Halstead has recently become a possibility due to the permission of the landowner. The route between Earls Colne and Halstead runs down Station road from Earls Colne, turns left down Elms Hall road to Langley Mill. From there it uses the old railway track to Halstead, where it would need to re-cross the A1124 to meet paths into Halstead Town centre.

Aims of the Project

Short term. Clearly there is a potential use by commuters from Halstead to the Earls Colne Business Park and in the other direction to the Bluebridge Business Park as well as the town/village centres. When the full route is realised then commuting to the station at Kelvedon will allow connections by rail to London.

The increase of cycling for leisure has been a notable feature of the coronavirus epidemic, recognised by the governments desire to massively boost cycling in general (see 'Gear Change' government policy paper July 2020). The route offers residents the opportunity to safely cycle to Coggeshall and then to Marks Hall Arboretum and to Earls Colne.

Safe, surfaced paths help provide year round use for active travel for all – family groups, walkers, the disabled, cyclists and joggers. With benefits for health, mental health, obesity, the local economy and reducing congestion on the roads.

Long term. The Long term aims are ambitious. To link villages in Essex with their local towns and to the National Cycle Network (the NCN16 in Braintree, NCN1 at Tiptree/Colchester and NCN13 at Bures). Coggeshall would aim to be linked to Braintree and the Flitch Way which goes the whole way

to Bishop Stortford; and to both Witham and Colchester. Attracting longer distance cycling enthusiasts from London to travel by train to Kelvedon, then cycle via Coggeshall and Braintree to Bishop Stortford or up the Colne valley, using facilities and local attractions along the route would help local village economies and prevent villages turning into dormitories.

Support from public bodies

EC2K has representation from 3 District Councillors, Parish Councillors from three councils, and 2 County Councillors (including the Deputy Chair of the Highways Committee). Support for the project has been expressed by the Councillor responsible for Highways at Essex County Council and he has asked the County cycling advisor to join the group. EC2K has had representation from Sustrans, the cycling charity from the outset and could potentially engage Sustrans for technical support as the project progresses. The strategic principle of creating safe cycle routes was approved at Braintree Council on the 1st June and a presentation was made to BDC council in October.

Potential route.



- The route connects to the Coggeshall to Earls Colne route through the new development currently underway from Persimmon Homes between Thomas Bell rd and Morley rd to Halstead rd. Crossing the Halstead rd will be an issue which needs to be addressed.
- Leaving Earls Colne along the A1124 the route turns left down Station road towards Colne Engine. After about a quarter of a mile it turns left down Elm Hall road. This is a quiet country lane running parallel to the old railway track. At Langley Mill the route turns right to follow the old railway track to Halstead
- The railway route as far as the A1124 crossing at Halstead has one landowner who has given permission for the cycle route. At the moment this is full of scrub but there is considerable

experience in Sustrans in repurposing abandoned railways. The existing public footpath in the fields alongside the railway should be redirected down the new route.

- At the A1124 there used to be a bridge over the road which has now gone. Ideally a new bridge would span the road and connect to the railway route on the town side. Alternatively this will require dropping 3 metres or so to the road level and a crossing.
- On the Halstead town side of the A1124 the route could run up Nightingale drive and connect to the riverside walk. Alternatively there are plans to repurpose the railway route on the town side of the A1124 which would lead to the lower part of the town. Existing cycle routes shown in the BDC cycle policy within Halstead could connect to this new route.

Timescale and Project development

- If the railway route between the A1124 and the lower town is chosen then landowners would need to agree the route
- The project cannot succeed without gaining full support from the Parish, District and County Councils involved. The project will need planning permission and be addressed by the BDC Local Highways Panel. The BDC Panel potentially unlocks the route to a preliminary feasibility technical assessment, and subsequently a full feasibility report. A feasibility study could also be purchased from Sustrans if funds were available.
- The route will need to be subject to local consultation.
- A business case will need to be prepared to attract funding from both public sources, charitable funds (eg Heritage Lottery/Landfill Tax) and potentially local fundraising.
- Highways and Transportation at Essex County Council would need to consider adoption of any proposed cycleway and its maintenance
- A project group would need to be set up with membership from the 5 parish and one town councils. This would be a subgroup of EC2K which has agreed a formal constitution. Ideally the project would need to be adopted by a public body to allow a regulated body to draw up a business case, draw up or commission a delivery plan, run a tendering exercise, let and monitor contracts and take ownership of the finished cycleway.
- Timescales are unpredictable but the quickest progress would be at least 2-3 years.

Recommendation : that HTC notes the report on the proposed cycle track, and nominates 2 councillors to work with the project team.



Sarah Greatorex Town Clerk