

## **Proposed Bi-Directional Cycle Facility: Sweetbrier Lane (E12)**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

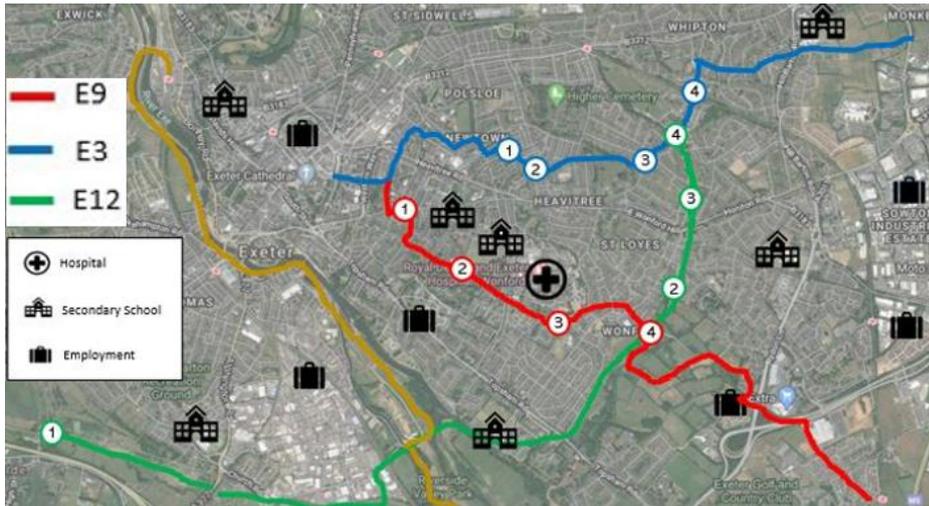
Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- (a) Subject to consultation feedback, a proposed bi-directional cycle facility on Sweetbrier Lane, shown indicatively in Appendix I, is approved for construction at an estimated cost of £250,000; and
- (b) the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment be given delegated powers, in consultation with the Chair of HATOC and the local member, to make amendments to the scheme details.

### **1. Background/Introduction**

The number of people walking, and cycling has increased during the current Covid-19 pandemic. With reduced capacity on public transport whilst social distancing is required, the government has strongly encouraged local authorities to improve facilities for walking and cycling as an alternative for short distance urban journeys. To enable this, the Government has allocated Emergency Active Travel Funds to deliver new cycle infrastructure.

Devon County Council has delivered several 'pop-up' (temporary) changes including point closures along the identified E3 and E9 east west strategic corridors to create safer corridors for cycling, linking up residential areas with schools, jobs and public open spaces. The routes complement wider city plans to boost physical activity, particularly through the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot. Whilst the E3 and E9 routes provide east – west corridors, there is an opportunity to create a more comprehensive, dense network with a north to south strategic cycle route (numbered E12), intersecting the E3 and E9 strategic routes. These are identified in the April 2020 Transport Infrastructure Plan.



E12 Cycle Route (green) connecting to E9 (red), E3 (blue) and the NCN along the river.

The E12 route will create a joined-up and coherent network with a number of benefits to local residents. It not only creates improved links to jobs at major employment sites such as the RD&E but also connects two secondary schools, helping to achieve modal shift, reduce congestion and incorporate physical activity into people's daily travel habits. In addition, the route will form part of a safe route for all between green spaces at Hamlin Lane Playing fields, the Ludwell Valley park and improved connection to the Riverside Valley Park and Exe Estuary Trail.

An Exeter strategic cycle network is central to achieving the target of 50% of trips to be made by walking and cycling in the draft Exeter Transport Strategy 2020-2030 and in supporting the County Council's commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These changes contribute towards increasing physical activity in target communities through the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot.

## 2. Proposal

The proposals shown in the Consultation Plan in Appendix I include a new two-way (bidirectional) cycle facility, along the western side of Sweetbrier Lane from Sycamore Close to north of the junction of Vaughan Road and Sweetbrier Lane.

Along the approximate 280m stretch of infrastructure, low level physical measures termed 'light segregation' will be used to protect cyclists and provide a protected buffer between pedestrians, cyclists and motor traffic. The County has not previously used light segregation and the exact detail of these is still being finalised in liaison with our highway management teams.

The proposal also includes changes to the Sweetbrier Lane/Vaughan Road junction. The proposed facility runs through the Vaughan Road/Sweetbrier Lane junction, giving cyclists priority at this location. As part of this, the entrance to the junction will be narrowed in line with new Department for Transport guidance (LTN 1/20) to reduce speeds for vehicles entering and existing side roads.

The facility has been proposed on the western side of Sweetbrier Lane as properties on the east have direct vehicular accesses that would otherwise be in conflict with passing cyclists.

We recognise that on street parking currently takes place adjacent the western footway, with observations suggesting this parking is typically 25-50% utilised. Although the on street parking will be affected by the proposal, the road width is such that there is sufficient room along most of the length of Sweetbrier Lane for a protected cycle facility and space for two-way car traffic to pass parked cars. Furthermore, mitigation for any specific requirements identified through consultation can be considered in the detailed design.

The proposed facility has been designed to provide a safe and attractive facility for cyclists of all abilities and reduce potential conflicts with pedestrians.

### **3. Technical Data**

Traffic count data recorded in June 2020 found that of the 500 cyclists a day that travel through the Vaughan Road/Whipton Lane/Georges Close junction, 200 of these travel via Sweetbrier Lane/Vaughan Road. The number of cyclists at this location is similar to the flows travelling across the popular Redhayes Bridge.

New design standards published from the Department for Transport (LTN 1/20) sets out the appropriate protection for cyclists on highways with varying levels of motor traffic. Sweetbrier Lane is a 30mph residential route with an average annual daily traffic flow (AADT) of between 2,000 – 4,000 vehicles. The guidance (Figure 4.1, Page 33) recommends that light segregation is the appropriate level of protection to enable cyclists of all abilities to use a route with that speed limit and flow of traffic.

North of the Sweetbrier Lane/Vaughan Road junction, traffic count data shows a lower daily flow of approximately 1,500 vehicles. This section of road up to the Vaughan Road/Whipton Lane/Georges Close junction is a traffic calmed route, where speeds are likely to be around 20mph. The new design standards identify that for a 20mph road where flows are less than 2,000 vehicles a day it is acceptable to mix motor traffic with cyclists without the need for physical protection.

### **4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data**

Consultation letters were sent out to local residents in the week commencing 28 September 2020. These included a leaflet detailing the background to improvements in the local area and scheme details for the proposed Sweetbrier Lane Cycle improvements.

A verbal update on the consultation responses will be provided at the committee meeting and the full feedback when the consultation closes discussed with local member. Any amendments arising from the consultation would be agreed through delegated authority with the local member.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

It is estimated that the works would cost £250,000 and would be funded through the following package:

- £50,000 from S106 from Matford Green.
- £200,000 from Emergency Active Travel Fund (tranche 2).

The County Council has an indicative allocation of £1.35m for tranche 2 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund and would seek £200,000 of this towards the scheme.

In the event that Devon County Council does not secure any of the tranche 2 funds, (which is considered to be a low risk) then we would have to delay delivery until an alternative funding source was found.

## **5. Environmental Impact Considerations**

Construction of the cycle and pedestrian paths will improve walking and cycling, encouraging reduced car use. The environmental impacts arising from the proposals are therefore expected to be positive and support the County Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions.

## **6. Equality Considerations**

The proposed facility would provide a safe and attractive facility for cyclists of all ages and abilities and has been designed using the latest guidance to incorporate the designs of different types of adapted cycles. The route also separates pedestrians and cyclists, reducing the likelihood of conflicts. This will improve pedestrian safety for protected characteristics groups including young people, older people, people with disabilities, pregnant women or parents with pushchairs.

The proposal is expected to therefore increase the diversity of people participating in active travel.

## **7. Legal Considerations**

The facility meets the standards set out in the new Local Transport Note for Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 1/20) and the recently published "Gear Change" vision from the Department for Transport.

There are no Traffic Regulation Orders associated with the proposal.

## **8. Risk Management Considerations**

The design of the scheme has been overseen by a qualified road safety engineer. A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit will be undertaken in due course following consultation once detailed design has been finalised. Any changes arising from the Road Safety Audit could be agreed through delegated powers as per recommendation b) of this report.

Although the new Local Transport Note for Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 1/20) recommends increased use of light segregation for pedestrians and cyclists, the County has not previously implemented such schemes. This project will provide a useful test case of the latest Government guidance and will help inform future schemes. To minimise the potential risks to the County Council the details of the segregation are being designed in liaison with our highway management teams. This will ensure that long term maintenance impacts are minimised alongside providing a safe and suitable design.

## **9. Public Health Impact**

The proposed upgrades along Sweetbrier Lane will improve pedestrian and cycle safety and encourage sustainable travel, increasing activity levels, reducing carbon emissions and contributing positively to general health and wellbeing.

The E12 north-south route links up the east-west corridors of E3 and E9, providing a joined-up network that supports access to employment, two secondary schools and a number of green spaces. Furthermore, the route also travels through a number of target areas identified as having low levels of physical activity through the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot. By providing new opportunities for cycling in these areas there is an opportunity through active travel to help people incorporate physical activity into their daily habits and help to achieve modal shift and reduce congestion.

## **10. Options/Alternatives**

A number of alternative design standards have been considered. This included an on carriageway lined facility, although given the speed and volume of traffic this is unlikely to provide suitable protection for cyclists on a road of this type in line with latest DfT guidance.

Full kerbed segregation is a potentially suitable approach design but would take longer to build. The Emergency Active Travel Fund measures need to be delivered within tight timescales and full kerbed segregation is unlikely to be deliverable in the short timescales required to spend the grant funding.

The preferred option of light segregation provides a balanced solution which takes into account the safety of users, costs, maintenance requirements, impact on parking and the physical appearance of the street.

## 11. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

The recommendation supports government advice to local authorities to enhance local cycle infrastructure by creating joined-up networks of strategic cycle routes. This proposal provides a high-quality link between the existing east to west strategic cycle routes (E3 and E9), helping to support the community in accessing commuter, education and leisure routes.

It supports the County Council's ambitious target of encouraging 50% of Exeter's population to walk and cycle to employment and education destinations. It is hoped that by taking the opportunity for grant funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund, we will be able to create a lasting legacy of safe, healthy travel for the residents of Exeter.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

### **Electoral Division: Heavitree & Whipton Barton**

#### Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Will Pratt

Room No: Matford Offices

Tel No: 01392-383000

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
1. None		

wp290920exh  
sc/cr/Proposed Bi-Directional Cycle Facility: Sweetbrier Lane (E12)

