

Sweetbrier Lane Bidirectional Cycle lane: Exeter North-South Strategic Cycle Route

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) **Despite some concerns from residents no changes are made to the current layout. However, the situation will be monitored and if the problems with the location of parked vehicles persist then options are available that could be progressed in future.**
- (b) **Any future amendments to the scheme to be referred to HATOC for approval.**

1. Introduction

A new two-way (bidirectional) cycle route has been completed on Sweetbrier Lane. The scheme opened in August 2021 and has been delivered as part of the County Council's Tranche 2 Active Travel Fund measures.

A significant amount of feedback on the changes have been received. In response to this feedback, the proposed next steps are being brought to a meeting of the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee.

2. Background/Proposals

The bidirectional cycle facility has been provided along the western side of Sweetbrier Lane from Sycamore Close to north of the junction of Vaughan Road and Sweetbrier Lane. Cyclists are segregated from motor traffic by low level physical measures termed 'light segregation'. The proposal also includes changes to the Sweetbrier Lane/Vaughan Road junction with narrower entries, aimed at reducing vehicle speeds and giving cyclists priority at this location. The scheme plan is provided in Appendix I.

The works form part of the North South Strategic Cycle Route (E12), identified in the Cabinet-approved Transport Infrastructure Plan. The route provides a good quality and convenient facility connecting Wonford and Whipton (both priority areas in the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot and Exeter City Council's [Physical Activity Strategy](#)). It also improves access to green spaces (Hamlin Lane Playing Fields, Ludwell Valley Park), Education (St Peter's secondary school) and employment at the RD&E Hospital and Marsh Barton.

A funding bid has also been submitted for the next section of the route along Rifford Road. That would provide the missing link from Honiton Road to Ludwell Valley Park, connecting to Ludwell Lane to the E9 (St-Leonards/Wonford) strategic cycle route and the off road paths that link to cycle routes along the Exe Estuary.



E12 (North/South) Cycle Route (green) connecting to E9 (red), E3 (blue) and the riverside NCN routes (yellow).

The design of the scheme represents a step change in standard of cycle provision and is consistent with new design standards in the Government's Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance (LTN 1/20). All schemes funded by the Active Travel Fund are expected to comply with this latest design guidance.

Approval for the bi-directional cycle route on Sweetbrier Lane was granted at the October 2020 meeting of Exeter HATOC. Reflecting the short timescales to deliver the tranche 2 schemes, the detailed design was ongoing at this time and completed in early 2021. Work started on site in June 2021 and the scheme was opened in August 2021.

The October HATOC report identified that "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". This statement was made based on the mapping data available. However, as a more detailed survey of Sweetbrier Lane was undertaken for the detailed design (providing detailed geometries) it became apparent it was not feasible for two-way traffic to pass cars parked on street, with vehicles needing to give way to oncoming traffic.

The carriageway arrangement reflects many residential streets in the city and across Heavitree where parked cars limit two way traffic. Discussions took place with the Local Member and it was agreed to proceed. This enabled the works to be completed in line with the Tranche 2 Active Travel Fund programme and maintained the pace of implementation of cycle infrastructure in Exeter. With significant correspondence received on the scheme, it has however been brought back to Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee for review.

3. Technical Data

The Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance (LTN1/20), 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 approximately 4,000 vehicles. The guidance shows 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.

Speed Limit ¹	Motor Traffic Flow (pcu/24 hour) ²	Protected Space for Cycling			Cycle Lane (mandatory/ advisory)	Mixed Traffic
		Fully Kerbed Cycle Track	Stepped Cycle Track	Light Segregation		
20 mph ³	0					
	2000	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	4000	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber
	6000+	Green	Green	Green	Pink	Pink
30 mph	0					
	2000	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber
	4000	Green	Green	Green (Dashed oval)	Amber	Pink
	6000+	Green	Green	Green	Pink	Pink

Appropriate Protection from motor vehicles (Table 4.1 in LTN¹ 1/20) Green represent suitable for most people, amber not suitable for all and pink exclude most potential users.

The segregated cycle provision is 3.0 metres wide, which is the minimum width to accord with LTN¹ 1/20. The priority side road crossing arrangements at the Sweetbrier Lane/Vaughan Road junction are also consistent with LTN¹ 1/20.

North of the Sweetbrier Lane/Vaughan Road junction, traffic count shows flows are below 2,000 vehicles a day. 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. As such, it is considered appropriate for cyclists to mix with motor traffic, although there is also a shared use path along this section.

Following installation of the cycle lane, the remaining vehicle carriageway is approximately 5.7 metres wide. Widths above 5.5 metres are identified in Manual for Streets as sufficient for two large vehicles to pass. The presence of some limited on street parking reduces the carriageway width so that only one vehicle can proceed at a time. This is likely to help reduce vehicle speeds on Sweetbrier Lane.

4. Consultations/Representations

Consultation letters on the original scheme 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.

¹ LTN 1/20– Department of Transport Local Transport Note – Cycle Infrastructure Design

A verbal update on the consultation responses was provided at the October 2020 meeting of HATOC, describing the comments in favour and against the proposals. Those against the scheme raised concerns about the arrangements at the junctions and the impact of narrowing and in relation to parking. Retention of on-street parking was highlighted as the most important thing to local residents. A summary of consultation responses was sent to respondents in November 2020 (**Appendix II**).

Although the impact of more accurate site measurements was discussed with the then local member, notification of this change was not sent to residents.

Since opening, some in-favour and several against the scheme correspondence has been received. This was particularly the case during the first two weeks when East Wonford Hill (part of the main Heavitree Road radial route) was closed to eastbound/outbound through traffic. Approximately 9,000 vehicles a day make this outbound movement. During this time some traffic was diverting through Heavitree, leading to higher traffic flows on Sweetbrier Lane. Comments raised included:

- Cars parked alongside single white line section.
- Cars parked near the junction with Vaughan Road and limiting turning.
- Cycle facility being too wide.
- Narrow width of vehicle carriageway.
- Report indicated that there would be sufficient width for two cars to pass a parked car.
- Reported cars using, or driving over part of the segregation into the cycle path.
- Increased risk of vehicle wing mirrors being clipped.
- Tailbacks from the junction of Sweetbrier Lane/Heavitree Road junction.
- Poor visibility of cyclists approaching from behind turning drivers.
- The scheme has Improved safety for cyclists.
- Facilities like this make me more likely to cycle in the city.
- Will help more residents and students switch to cycling to work/school.

5. Options/Alternatives

Going forward, a range of possible options and the merits of each are discussed below.

Option 1: Removal of current facility.

This is not considered a recommended option as it would be contrary to many adopted policies that support the need to significantly increase active travel across the city in the interests of public health and the environment, namely reducing carbon emissions.

Option 2a: Restrict all on-street parking.

This would address concerns about impact on vehicle capacity, prioritising two-way vehicle flow over parked cars. Prohibiting all on-street parking would disbenefit residents, particularly as they highlighted during the consultation that retaining on-street parking was a priority. Therefore not recommended.

Option 2b. Restrict some on-street parking.

The use of some sections of parking restrictions could help to formalise sections for vehicles to pass and make turning manoeuvres at the junction of Sweetbrier Lane/Vaughan Road easier. As per option 2a, removing on street parking may disbenefit residents. It is therefore recommended that this is monitored, and if the problem persists then a Traffic Regulation Order to restrict parking in the vicinity of the junction could be advertised.

Option 3: Narrow cycle lane by approximately 0.5 metres.

This would make it feasible for two cars to pass a parked car in some places. However, this would not be possible along the whole street. Inconsistent road widths could mean drivers misjudge where they can pass vehicles safely, thereby possibly increasing the likelihood of parked cars and/or the segregation units being clipped by passing traffic. This is unlikely to fully resolve the concerns about vehicles being able to pass and the resulting cycle facility would also be slightly below standards in the LTN1/20.

Option 4: Retain current layout, and review in future

This would retain a cycle facility that is consistent with current cycle infrastructure design guidance and the presence of on-street parking would assist as a traffic calming feature. If concerns about the impact on the capacity of the route continue after the scheme has had sufficient time for users to adjust to the new layout, localised parking restrictions could be considered to reduce parking and improve traffic flow and turning movements. Any more significant changes to the layout (such as Option 3) could be included alongside any planned maintenance/resurfacing schemes on Sweetbrier Lane.

It is recommended that no changes (Option 4) are made at this time. However, the situation will be monitored and if the problems with the location of parked vehicles persist then Options 2b or 3 (or both) could be progressed in future to resolve this.

Traffic counts will also be undertaken to evidence the impact of the scheme on active travel numbers.

6. Financial Considerations

The scheme was approved at October HATOC with a value of up to £250,000. The works were funded from S106 from Matford Green and from tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund allocation (grant funding). There is an expectation that Local Authorities allow sufficient time for scheme funded by Active Travel Fund to settle in.

7. Equality Considerations

The delivered scheme helps enable pedestrians and cyclists of a wide range of abilities and confidence levels to more safely travel along Sweetbrier Lane. There may however be a disbenefit from parking being removed on the west side of the road, however on-street parking is still possible on the eastern side of the road.

Overall, the scheme improves pedestrian and cycle safety for people with protected characteristics 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.

8. Legal Considerations

In June 2019, the UK became the first major country to legislate for a net-zero target for carbon emissions by 2050. The delivered scheme supports low carbon travel and adopted carbon commitments.

9. Risk Management Considerations

Stage 2 road safety audit was undertaken on the scheme before construction, and a Stage 3 audit has been undertaken since scheme opening.

A summary of the problems raised in the Stage 3 audit, and draft responses are provided below:

Problem Identified	Response and Proposed Action
Difficulties for vehicles turning to/from Sweetbrier Lane (east/west) into Sweetbrier Lane (north/south) could lead to vehicles striking kerbs.	Swept path analysis indicates this movement can be made by large vehicles by swinging out into the carriageway. However, the presence of parked vehicles on the eastern side of Sweetbrier Lane inhibits this manoeuvre. It is suggested that this is monitored – but if it persists then provide parking restrictions around the junction, especially on the eastern side of Sweetbrier Lane opposite the junction, could be advertised.
Visibility for northbound cyclists to 'Cyclists rejoin main carriageway' sign	Sign to be mounted on new post in the verge.
Lack of pedestrian tactile paving at Sycamore close crossing	No action proposed. The location of a private drive on the corner means tactiles would be trafficked on a regular basis. This may lead to damage and trip hazards for pedestrians so was not included in the scheme. There were no tactiles at this location before the works, so has not be worsened by the scheme.
Risk of ponding on existing table tops	No action proposed. This has not been affected by the scheme, it will however be relayed to the maintenance teams and can be picked up as part of future maintenance works.

In response to concerns raised regarding the visibility of cyclists approaching from behind turning drivers it is also proposed to add additional signage and/or surface treatment to ensure vehicles and cyclists recognise the conflict point and encourage slower speeds through the Vaughan Road junction.

10. Environmental and Health Impacts

The works encourage sustainable travel, increasing activity levels, reducing carbon emissions and contributing positively to general health and wellbeing.

When completed, the north-south route will connect 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.

11. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

It is recognised that the scheme on the ground varies in detail from that presented at HATOC and the consultation letter. The report details the concern of local residents.

The scheme has been in place now for a number of months and it has been reviewed. The “light segregation” design provides many benefits for cyclists at an affordable cost. The carriageway arrangement reflects many residential streets in the city and across Heavitree where parked cars limit two way traffic on lightly trafficked roads.

The recommendation is to maintain the existing scheme that supports the objectives of the Exeter Transport Strategy and is in line with Government advice to local authorities to enhance local cycle infrastructure by creating joined-up networks of strategic cycle routes.

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

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
1. None		

wp061021exh

sc/cr/Sweetbrier Lane Bidirectional Cycle lane Exeter North South Strategic Cycle Route
01 061021

Sweetbrier Lane Scheme Plan



DRAWING TITLE
EXETER NORTH SOUTH
SWEETBRIER LANE CYCLE ROUTE
OVERALL PLAN

date	05/10/21	designed	TA
scale(s)	1:500 @ A3	produced	TA
		checked	DS
		approved	MM
AC60_ref	SK010		
drawing number	70075903-SK010 P01		

Consultation Summary sent to consultation respondents



Planning, Transportation and Environment
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter EX2 4QD
Tel: 01392 383000
Email: transportplanning-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

Date: 10th November 2020

Dear Resident,

Re: Highway Changes to Sweetbrier Lane to Support Walking and Cycling Consultation Feedback.

I am writing to you, on behalf of Devon County Council, to provide an update on the proposal for a new two-way cycle facility, from Sycamore Close along the western side of Sweetbrier Lane to north of the junction of Vaughan Rd and Sweetbrier Lane.

At the beginning of October 2020 we asked for feedback on the proposals and we received 35 responses. The main comments received are outlined below;

Reasons respondents gave for **supporting the cycle facility** included:

- **Improved road safety**, particularly for children, as provides a safe route for children of St Peter's School, encouraging active travel.
- **Encouraging more walking and cycling** and linking up cycle routes will help reduce pollution and congestion.
- **Improved footway experience**, a new on road facility for cyclists would help reduce conflict between cyclists and pedestrians on the path.

Reasons respondents gave for being **against the cycle facility** included:

- **Impact on parking** and that there would be less on street spaces on the eastern side of Sweetbrier Lane, which would be adjacent to driveways and would narrow the width of Sweetbrier Lane.
- **Insufficient numbers of cyclists** using the route to justify new infrastructure.
- **Reduced visibility at the allotments access road entrance**. The proposed change in parking provisions could result in vehicles parking close to the entrance of the allotment access road, reducing visibility when exiting.

Respondents also raised concerns about the impact on traffic flow and vehicle speeds along Sweetbrier Lane as a result of the temporary closure of Vaughan Road. Following a significant amount of feedback on the impact of the Vaughan Road closure, the closure point was subsequently removed on 14th October.

Respondents also gave **suggestions to improve the scheme**, the most commonly raised points included;

- **Clear road markings for parking** around the allotment entrance to prevent vehicles blocking all visibility when exiting.
- **A pedestrian crossing** at the Sweetbrier Lane and Vaughan Road junction
- **Link between proposed cycleway with shared pathway** already on Vaughan Road.

The scheme proposal and an overview of the consultation feedback were presented at the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee on 13th October.

Details of the information presented are available via the committee report and minutes to proceed with the new cycle facility subject to the outcome of the consultation can be accessed by searching the 'Committees' pages on the Democracy in Devon website (<https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/>).

The feedback received is now informing the next iteration of the design, including measures to prevent vehicle blocking the access and movement into the allotments. We are also reviewing the proposed geometries to seek to maintain space for two cars to pass a parked car along the length of Sweetbriar Lane.

We are also about to launch a consultation in the Heavitree area to seek views from residents about transport in their area. The feedback from this will help to inform how best to provide for vehicles, cyclist and pedestrians at the northern end of the bidirectional lane proposals as they head into Vaughan Road.

Thank you for getting in touch to comment on the proposals, and I hope that this letter provides a useful summary of responses and next steps.

Yours Faithfully

Will Pratt

Principal Transport Planning Officer