



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (MOLE VALLEY)

WESTCOTT TO DORKING CYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ROUTE PROPOSAL

07 DECEMBER 2010

KEY ISSUE

To give members an update on the planned cycle/pedestrian route between the northern end of St Johns Road, Westcott and Milton Court (Unum), Dorking. The route would form a missing link of National Cycle Route 22 (NCR22) that currently stops in Westcott, restarting in Dorking

SUMMARY

Over the past few years negotiations have been taking place between S.C.C., local landowners and residents in order that a new cycling/pedestrian route could be created as an alternative to walking or cycling along the A25. Part of the proposal is to construct an off-road route across fields to the north of the A25, between the existing Public Bridleway at Milton Court and St. Johns Road, Westcott

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Mole Valley) is asked to:

- (i) Note the contents of the report

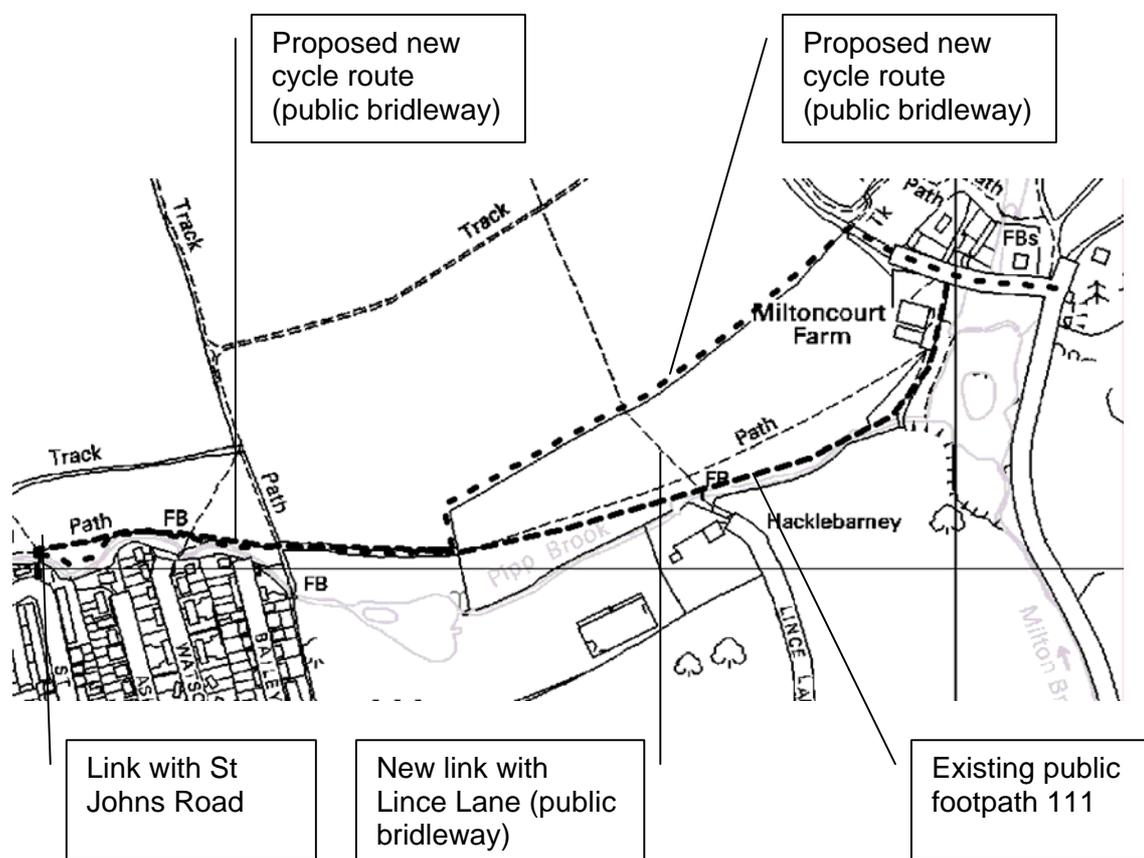
1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Sustrans (who work closely with local authorities on the development and promotion of the National Cycle Network) included a route (no. 22) that goes between London and Portsmouth. Part of this route goes through Surrey (between Woodmansterne and Farnham).
- 1.2 In 2002 officers from Surrey County Council conducted a feasibility study for the Surrey section that included a potential route between Westcott and Dorking. The study concluded that the only available route at the time that could be used by cyclists was along the A25. This was deemed totally unsuitable for a national cycle route and the study identified a possible alternative across fields to the north of the A25.
- 1.3 Since 2002 SCC has completed the NCR22 in Surrey apart from the Westcott to Doking and Shere to Abinger Hammer sections. Local Committee approvals were obtained in order to undertake the work.
- 1.4 SCC has consulted with the Mole Valley Cycle Forum, Mole Valley District Council, Dorking Needs Action (formally Dorking Healthcheck), local residents and councillors in order to identify a route between Westcott and Dorking that could potentially be constructed. It was agreed that such a route should be constructed in order that it would benefit all non-vehicular users.
- 1.5 During the informal consultation with local residents, several issues of concern were raised:
 - (i) Flooding – Part of the proposed route runs over agricultural land that has been subject to regular flooding during winter periods when the Pippbrook overflows its northern bank. This is an existing problem for local walkers and concerns have been raised that a newly constructed cycle route would be compromised by the flooding. Officers have been working with consultants to identify the exact nature of the problem and identify measures that can be implemented to reduce incidents of flooding and any negative effects on the path surface.
 - (ii) Path specification – Residents expressed concerns that the surfaced path would be constructed from ‘Tarmac’ which would not be appropriate in a rural location. The proposed surface is a ‘softer’ specification, consisting of a compacted aggregate base, sealed with a flexible surface dressing and finished with a buff-coloured stone. This specification has been used extensively on other rural routes with minimal visual impact and high level of local support. Residents were also concerned that the path would be excessively wide, allowing vehicles to gain access. The proposal includes anti-vehicle measures that will physically prevent vehicular access, other than essential maintenance. Residents were concerned that there may be conflict between different users. There is no evidence to support this view that multi-user routes lead to greater conflict between users, particularly where the route is sufficiently wide to accommodate it.

- (iii) Fencing – Residents expressed concerns about fencing sections of the route, which are currently unfenced facilitating unofficial access across the fields adjacent to the Pippbrook. There is no public right of access beyond the existing statutory rights of way and as part of the negotiations with the landowner, fencing was identified as necessary, so that the land can be managed effectively from an agricultural point of view.

1.6 A report was put to the Mole Valley Local Committee on 9th December 2009 to seek approval to carry out further consultation, commence the legal process to divert part of Public Footpath 111 and upgrade it to bridleway status, allowing cycle use. Approval was also sought to carry out work to reduce the incidence of flooding on the proposed route.

The following map shows the approximate alignment of the section of route proposed in the 9th December 2009 item:



The committee did not approve the recommendations and officers were asked to carry out further consultation and investigation of an alternative alignment of the route, possibly running along the parallel track further north. The track further north is currently the subject of a Map Modification Order, to possibly be added to the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way as a Public Footpath.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 Investigation and consultation has been carried out with the owner of the land over which the route will run, regarding an alternative alignment from the one originally proposed. The landowner has indicated that only the originally proposed route would be acceptable.
- 2.2 The County Council has powers under the Highways Act to legally create a new route on an alternative alignment without the landowner's permission. However, it is likely that the landowner would object to such an order, with it being referred to the Planning Inspectorate for determination. If the order was confirmed by the Planning Inspectorate, the County Council would be liable for costs to landowner. There is currently no scheme budget available for the payment of costs.
- 2.3 The survey and options report regarding flooding has now been completed, with measures identified to address issues. Consultation with affected landowners is being undertaken to secure the necessary permission to carry out works.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 Route alignment – Any route linking with the north side of St Johns Road will need to pass through the flood plain at some point. There are effectively two options available regarding route alignment:
 - (i) A route similar to the original proposal, with minor amendments to reduce the distance running over the flood plain. This route would need the diversion of part of Public Footpath 111 and dedication as a public bridleway. This proposal has the landowner's agreement.
 - (ii) An alternative route, possibly further north. This route does not have the landowner's agreement and would need to be subject to a Highways Act Creation Order, as identified in paragraph 2.2.

Members are not being asked at this stage to recommend a route.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Some informal consultation has been carried out, with a high level of overall support received for the scheme, but also a wide range of concerns about related issues and route alignment, as identified in paragraph 1.5.
- 4.2 Further local consultation is needed to clarify details of the proposed scheme and to receive comments.

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The original proposal was to be funded in the following way:
 - (i) Work to address the flooding issue would be paid for from the existing rights of way maintenance budget, which is still available and estimates for the work indicate that it will be within

allocation from 2010/11 budget. This work is a maintenance issue, which affects existing rights of way, so will proceed regardless of cycle route proposals.

- (ii) Funding of around £90,000 for cycle route construction would come from Local Transportation Plan Cycling allocation. This budget is no longer available.
- (iii) Grant funding of £90,000 from Sustrans under the Safe Routes to School programme. This grant is no longer available, as work has not been completed within required timescale. A revised grant application will be submitted.

The overall scheme costs of £180,000, included work to the A25 footway and improvement work to the existing public bridleway at Milton Court. The bridleway improvement work has already been completed during 2009/10, so a revised and significantly reduced scheme budget will need to be prepared.

- 5.2 If a Creation Order was undertaken to establish the route on an alignment not agreed by the landowner, the County Council would be liable for costs. There is currently no scheme budget available for the payment of costs, with any grant funding only available for construction costs. The likely amount for costs is unknown at present. The County Council paid around £12,000 costs to a landowner in 1992 for a Creation Order for a similar, but shorter route.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Improvements will benefit users with mobility problems by making the path network more accessible

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no crime and disorder implications

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The proposed new route will be a major benefit to the residents of Westcott in that it will provide a safe cycling/pedestrian route for travelling to and from Dorking. There are also benefits to equestrians as the route will be recorded as a public bridleway, with an additional link to Lince Lane, which is currently a cul-de-sac.

9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 As above

10 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 10.1 Work is undertaken to address flooding issues.
- 10.2 Local consultation is undertaken, with possibly a small exhibition in Westcott.
- 10.3 Once flooding works and consultation are completed, a report is brought back to the Mole Valley Local Committee for decision regarding the alignment of the route.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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