

Issues and Options consultation for Slough – public rights of way

Rights of way throughout the borough and across boundary into South Bucks and Windsor and Maidenhead combine with other forms of access routes, housing paths, parks, open spaces and streets to provide a network of opportunities for residents to improve their level of activity and so their health and wellbeing. The link between access improvements and an increase in individual health and wellbeing is proven.

The Bucks public rights of way response to the Slough Issues and Options consultation is wholeheartedly agreed and supported by the Slough Local Access Forum (See Appendix 1). Where development allows creation of new walking and cycling provision and improvements to existing walking and cycling routes across borough boundary, funding should be actively sought through the planning process and proactively designed into new housing areas.

The challenge expressed in the consultation at 3.9 shows the importance of a modal shift required to stem congestion. While looking at improvements to existing cycling routes and new options for cycling and walking it is important to recognise equestrian needs too which can be easily incorporated through the use of new surfaces such as; flexi pave which is also beneficial for cyclists and walkers being not only porous and flexible, but non-slip too. Creation of bridleways as multi-user routes should always be considered an option where possible. (see Appendix 2 British Horse Society response).

Countryside recreation corridors are identified in 3.10.13 within easy reach for slough residents. These are;

- The Colne Valley Park
- The Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal – towpath
- The Jubilee River – (including NCN route 61)
- Routes north from Britwell to Burnham Beeches
- Routes north to Country Parks in Bucks and links between the country parks

It is important that the Council develops a strong approach to maintaining these corridors as well as planning and improving links to them. The Council should aim to ensure that all developers are aware of the need to design such links into housing schemes which may not be adjacent to each corridor but which may provide the opportunity for a new route or a missing link in the network thus enhancing the accessibility of these recreation corridors. The network available for walking and cycling journeys in Slough must be viewed holistically taking into account the value of strong well maintained routes to encourage sustainable commuting.

The need for GI to be injected into existing neighbourhoods is agreed though this must incorporate a joined up approach across service areas to ensure it can be delivered.

It is agreed that whilst strong measures should be taken to discourage people using their car for short journeys, this must be balanced with providing improved and more attractive places to walk and cycle and better public transport.

3.11.22 – The Local Plan will need robust policies to ensure that developments provide infrastructure at the appropriate time. It will be important to note that where section 106 agreements include the dedication of public rights of way the wording must be carefully structured to ensure that the S106 agreement itself can be the “legal event” necessary to add the way to the Definitive Map and Statement and that a further S25 agreement is not then required.

Spatial Options-

Option B – Expand the Centre of Langley

This option would allow improvements to the canal towpath as a vital walking and cycling link through to the town centre and provide opportunities for commuting to other towns. The Local Access Forum believes that the historical partnership between the Canal and River Trust and the local authorities along the Slough Arm of the canal (Slough, South Bucks, BucksCC, and Hillingdon) should be resurrected to provide a focus for maintenance and management of the canal. Improvements to existing public rights of way linking communities to the canal and the NCN route 61 from Slough could be made and links enhanced north to Langley Park would address the need for recreation.

Solutions to the severing of Langley Park and Black Park brought about by the A412 Uxbridge Rd could be sought through development contributions. The BHS has actively sought a Pegasus crossing over this busy road in the past and it is considered that if housing is developed as proposed in Option B and the other Options J1 outside of the borough but surrounding Wexham Park Hospital then this should be actively sought to allow integration of the two Country Parks for recreation purposes and as mitigation for the existing residents.

Option C- New neighbourhood on Akzo Nobel and National Grid sites

There are opportunities to improve the towpath and links to it from any new housing on these sites. The design of the housing could be open to the towpath and the canal rather than facing away from it. This would encourage greater use, providing natural surveillance of the canal and therefore reduce any anti-social behaviour it suffers from.

It is supported and agreed that walking and cycling and public transport links must be provided through the housing to the canal and the historical bridge over the canal on Wexham Road should be improved if possible. The access points to the canal from this bridge do not comply with DDA guidance but the historical significance and character needs to be safeguarded wherever practicable. Eg; ironwork bollard can be re-used.

Option D1 – the canal basin

The Slough Local Access Forum supports the re-development of the canal basin and welcomes further consultation concerning the detailed design. As the entrance portal to the Slough Arm of the Grand Union canal an important recreation and commuting green corridor, it is essential that the design for this site incorporates significant public open space and promotion of the area as a

recreation destination. The north side of the canal bank which provides a path through to Kendal Close must be further enhanced and widened to at least a 5m corridor with a path and seating for enjoyment of the environment. It would be preferable to ask for this path to be dedicated as a public right of way and surfaced in a suitable porous surfacing such as; flexi-pave to allow complete sustainable drainage capability.

The installation of cycle docking for cycle hire has been accepted by the SUR and would be enhanced by the provision of a walking and cycling link towards the town centre and Slough rail station. These could incorporate the existing bridleways from Mill Street and Grays Place through the new developments known as The Junction and Rivington and Lexington Apartments.

Option D2 – New Central Cippenham Strip

Development of the option could accommodate improvements to the existing public footpath 2, a, b and c running alongside the recreation ground and through to Burnham Lane and Bath Road. This could be an upgrade to a bridleway to legalise cycling use and widening of the section of path adjacent to commercial property 352 Bath Road. A signalised crossing point on the desire line across the Bath Road corridor is needed to link this public path to Brook Path (a public footpath on the south side of the A4). This would allow walking and cycling all the way down to the Jubilee River on off-road paths and quiet roads.

Option D3 – Chalvey Regeneration

Fully support this option incorporating an attractive walking and cycling link from Salt Hill Park (FP21) through enhancement of the Salt Hill Stream corridor.

Option H – Slough Green Belt Sites

1 – St Anthony’s Field – the path adjacent to the field on the northern boundary leading through the St Mary’s schurtyard to Church Road needs to be recorded as a public right of way.

7- land in Bloom Park - it is considered further housing would be detrimental to the area and overwhelm the park which is currently being redesigned to incorporate improved access links to the canal corridor.

8 – land east of Mansions Lane – This land known as Gypsy Field was suggested by the Slough Local Access Forum as a potential recreation area/Local Nature Reserve which could incorporate a new cycling route along the Withy stream.

Options J2 – Sites H2 and D7 Land west of Crown Meadow, Brands Hill, and land south of Austen Way

Development of these areas should attempt to incorporate the agreement of Thames Water or landowner for the extension of the Slough Linear Park around the reservoir, an improvement previously pursued by RBWM and Slough councils. TW eventually turned the prospect down. Development here would benefit from this previously envisaged route being provided to allow pedestrians and cyclists to avoid the busy London Road and Jct 5 roundabout while linking to Ditton

Park cycle path to the west, north to the NCN 61 and to Crown Meadow Wildlife Heritage site and the Colne Valley Way to the east.

Option J1 – East Burnham

If this area is released for housing then there is opportunity to create multi-user routes through to Burnham Beeches using the existing Bucks PRoW network and dedication of land as new provision. Existing bridleways are BUH/37/1, BUH/38/1 and BUH/32/1 and existing quiet lanes such as; Walton, Crow Piece and Thompkins Lane. This would encourage a modal shift of short journeys to Burnham Beeches (NNR) from Britwell.

Option J1 - Land around Wexham Park Hospital and Middlegreen

As at Option B, above; any development of this area for housing should seek to deliver solutions to the severance of Langley Park and Black Park brought about by the A412 Uxbridge Rd. If a Pegasus crossing is not feasible then a bridleway bridge is needed.

Every opportunity should be taken to improve the existing walking and cycling routes from residential areas in Slough to the Country Parks. This would involve the upgrade of footpath WEX/9/1 to a bridleway suggested by the BHS creating a more attractive link for walkers and cyclists as well to George Green/Langley Park. Improvements to the network of public rights of way in the Middlegreen area have already been identified by the Slough Local Access Forum with the priority being a better multi-user route along the line of footpath WEX/13/1 linking to Langley Park. Funding should also be sought through the planning process for major improvements to the NCN61 following the route of bridleway WEX/26/2, which needs an entirely new surface.