

On Wednesday 25th August, the Chelmsford Active Travel steering group met again to review their recommendations for the Active Travel Fund routes in Chelmsford.

The Steering Group is made up of local Cllrs and resident representatives, with the objective of determining a recommendation to the Cabinet member who makes the final decision.

Summary of the discussion:

It was clarified by ECC officers that the alternative cycle route proposed last week, using Van Diemens/ Parkway was out of scope as it was being picked up by the Army & Navy proposals, but also that a route through Moulsham was still strategically important for the Chelmsford's wider cycling aspirations and for Old Moulsham residents.

It was also clarified that this DfT funding cannot be used for regular Highways Maintenance e.g. potholes or general traffic calming or speed restrictions not directly linked to the cycle route.

Discussion then focussed on the revised Route 1 (Chelmsford Station to Baddow, through Old Moulsham) proposals as shared on the 18th August. Based on the negative reaction from some members to any modal filtering, the group discussed the feasibility and acceptability of a route without these interventions.

The Steering Group agreed that critical elements of Route 1 should still be recommended as they would be beneficial to people who cycle and supporting Moulsham Street as a destination. This includes the modal filter on New Writtle Street (south) at the junction with Moulsham Street which is generally accepted, with cycle storage provision; 20mph limit on Moulsham Street; and the contraflow cycle lane along Moulsham Street between New Writtle Street and Grove Road.

In response to the negative reaction of modal filters the steering group proposed that the modal filter on New Writtle Street (north) near Baker Street is proposed to be removed and the one on Lady Lane is proposed to be changed to road narrowing treatment only. Also the proposed modal filter on Mildmay Road, as consulted upon, was proposed to be changed to road narrowing treatment and moved to the east of Hamlet Road. The rationale for two 'treatments' being to reduce speeds and traffic along the cycle route to promote and encourage increased cycling, but not stop any local traffic using the route.

The one way system involving Hamlet Road and Grove Road had also received negative feedback and an alternative proposal was reviewed which eliminates Hamlet Road from the cycle route, instead promoting a 2 way cycle route via Grove Road. Concerns were raised about safety of cyclists under this scenario, and the possibility of junctions being reprioritised and a road narrowing treatment at one of the junctions, were discussed.

Extending the 20mph zone to the whole area was supported by the steering group, including along Moulsham Street. this may or may not be possible depending on what other measures are introduced. the dft will not fund speed restriction measures in isolation.

However, the next step is for officers is to review whether this proposal would meet DfT criteria and any changes in scope can be delivered within the programme. For instance, reduction in traffic is essential DfT criteria for an on-carriageway cycle route – road narrowing treatment measures rather than a modal filter cannot guarantee this; also elements of a route, rather than a comprehensive route, may not be acceptable. If it does not meet DfT criteria or cannot be delivered within the programme, the funding would not be secured. These revised proposals and recommendations would also be subject to Cabinet Member approval.

Discussions around Routes 2 and 3 have not changed and are to proceed as per discussions last week.