

# Swindon Cycling Framework

**Cabinet**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

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Author:	Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport, and Board Director, Service Delivery.
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

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## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report outlines the conclusions and major issues arising from the recent public consultation on the Borough's draft Cycling Framework and seeks Cabinet support for the priority corridor approach.
- 1.2 The report describes the recently launched Department for Transport "Sustainable Travel Transition Year revenue competition for 2016/17" and seeks approval for submission of a bid by 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016.
- 1.3 The Cycling Framework seeks to address the obligations under Priority One of the Council's Vision: "Improve Infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low carbon economy." It also supports the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2015, which contains a number of references to transport as part of an overall vision towards sustainable economic growth and building upon the aspirations agreed in the Local Transport Plan

## **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the responses to the consultation and approve the draft Cycling Framework as a basis for development of a Delivery Plan to bring forward specific proposals emerging from the Framework, including identification of appropriate funding opportunities.
- 2.2 Agree the priority corridor approach as shown on the plan on page 21 of the Framework as the basis for the next stage of the Delivery Plan process.
- 2.3 Authorise the Head of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport, to submit a revenue funding bid to the Department for Transport "Sustainable Travel Transition Year revenue competition for 2016/17 by the closing date of 29 March 2016.
- 2.4 Authorise the Board Director Resources, as Section 151 Officer, to sign any agreed bid in accordance with the bidding requirements.

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Anne Stevens, Direct Dial Telephone Number 01793 466539, [astevens2@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:astevens2@swindon.gov.uk).

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## 3. Detail

### Background

- 3.1 The draft Cycling Framework was developed during the course of 2015 and was the subject of collaboration across Council departments, (with input from the Public Health and Sports Development sections) and with a range of stakeholder groups with an interest in cycling whether for sport, health, recreation or utility purposes. This was in recognition of the fact that the focus behind such strategies has now moved beyond a traditional highway and transport one to a wider remit involving encouragement for increased activity levels, as highlighted in the Get Swindon Active Strategy 2015-2020.
- 3.2 There was considerable liaison and discussion with the Bicycle Users Group (BUG) through a number of public meetings, which included a stakeholder workshop to discuss the emerging Framework in December 2014. Meetings were attended by the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport and by Councillor Keith Williams as the Council's "Cycling Champion".
- 3.3 The Framework is intended to be a high-level document showing the Council's support for the development of cycling in the borough in conjunction with the relevant stakeholder groups. It is not intended as an implementation plan with specific schemes for delivery, but will be used to devise and prioritise such projects in a Delivery Plan that will in turn be used to support funding bids to Government and other bodies for cycling related projects and initiatives.
- 3.4 The Swindon Cycling Framework sets out a blueprint for the future development of all aspects of cycling in the borough, and places emphasis on the need for joint working within the Council, as highlighted in paragraph 3.1 above, and other partners. It seeks to establish best practice and paves the way for a Delivery Plan of specific schemes with sound business cases, designed to achieve the aims of the Framework and based initially on the priorities identified in the Movement Corridors (page 21 of the framework). The aims of the Framework are to:
- Double the number of cycle trips by 2026
  - Reinforce support from politicians, the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, private and public sector employers and the public to champion cycling in Swindon
  - Provide people with the skills and confidence to cycle for a variety of purposes
  - Normalise cycling as an everyday activity

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- 3.5 In addition, the opportunities for improving cycling in Swindon will be aligned with the following six objectives:
- 3.5.1 Create a safe and convenient cycle route network that links people to places in Swindon and beyond
  - 3.5.2 Develop and promote the role of cycling within initiatives aimed at improving health and wellbeing
  - 3.5.3 Ensure that cycling is a safe and convenient way to travel to school and work, or as part of a work journey
  - 3.5.4 Promote cycling as a realistic choice for an array of everyday trips and as a great activity in general
  - 3.5.5 Support and encourage cycling as a sport in Swindon
  - 3.5.6 Ensure that cycling is a consideration in all development proposals
- 3.6 The Framework has come forward in parallel with various initiatives at national Government level. In October 2014 the Department for Transport (DfT) published a draft Cycling and walking Delivery Plan for consultation. This is the Government's ten-year strategy for increasing cycling and walking across England. There are two main ambitions in this document:- to double the cycling level by 2025 and to increase the percentage of schoolchildren aged 5-10 years that usually walk to school from 48% (2013) to 55%.
- 3.7 As a result of concern expressed over the lack of funding commitment, a section was added to the Infrastructure Act 2015 which requires Government to produce a walking and cycling Investment strategy. This will set out the financial resources the Government intends to make available to meet their cycling and walking objectives and is expected sometime in spring 2016. Funding already allocated includes that from the Roads Investment Strategy, which provides £100 million between 2015 and 2021 to improve conditions for cyclists and walkers traveling alongside and crossing the strategic road network.
- 3.8 On 15th February 2016 the DfT invited local authorities to submit bids to the "Sustainable Travel Transition Year revenue competition for 2016/17". This "Access" fund will see the DfT spending £20 million of the £80 million revenue allocated to it under the Spending Round settlement last November 2015. The remaining £60m revenue will deliver the future "Access" fund, which will be formally launched later in 2016 for award in 2017/18; it will focus on access to employment, education and services, and improving walking and cycling.
- 3.9 For 2016/17, this £20m "Sustainable Travel Transition Year" enables the DfT time to publish the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy; time to work with the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) to understand the
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future approach for the Local Growth Fund; and time to identify the highest value for money approach to launching the formal “Access” fund.

- 3.10 The competition will support highly deliverable, ‘ready to go’ schemes. To be considered for funding, bids must demonstrate evidence of building on previously successful sustainable transport initiatives; must demonstrate support for boosting the numbers of people cycling and walking; and must articulate a future strategic vision for sustainable travel in relation to accessing jobs, skills, education and training. Bids that receive the highest scores against the assessment criteria will be awarded funding.
- 3.11 The DfT will look favourably on bids that support cycling and walking in the context of the manifesto commitments to double cycling and reduce the numbers of cyclists killed or seriously injured; and sustainable transport schemes, which support access to work, skills, education and training.
- 3.12 The objectives of this competition are as follows:
  - 3.12.1 Support the local economy and facilitate economic development, for example by reducing congestion, improving the reliability and predictability of journey times or enhancing access to employment and other essential services; and
  - 3.12.2 Reduce carbon emissions, for example by bringing about an increase in the volume and proportion of journeys made by low carbon sustainable modes including walking and cycling. be economic growth and carbon reduction.
  - 3.12.3 Help to deliver wider social and economic benefits (e.g. access to employment, education and services); and
  - 3.12.4 Actively promote increased levels of physical activity through walking and cycling.
- 3.13 Bids need to express a minimum interest of £350,000 and a maximum of £500,000 and must be submitted by 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016. A local contribution of 10% is required and delivery must be completed by March 2017. It is proposed that Cabinet authorises the Head of Highways and Transport to submit an appropriate bid in consultation with the Cabinet Member for sustainability and Transport.
- 3.14 It is envisaged that the capital schemes to be brought forward for the Swindon Cycling Framework will build on the success of the strategic cycling corridors (Western Flyer and Southern Flyer) developed between 2013 and 2016 using grant funding from DfT and the Local Growth Fund. Both these schemes are designed to accommodate the aspiration for longer distance, quick, continuous and convenient routes.

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## Cycling Framework Consultation response

- 3.15 Following approval by the stakeholder groups, wider public consultation commenced in October 2015. The draft framework and questionnaire survey were published online in October 2015 with a six-week consultation period ending on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Consultation was publicised through a press release, local coverage in the press and media as well as on-line and through social media. The consultation was included in the agenda for the regular Parish Clerks Forum and the consultation was sent to each town and Parish Council.
- 3.16 A total of 48 responses were received to the on-line questionnaire with an additional four responses separately – two from the sustainable transport charity Sustrans, one from the Bike Users Group and one from an individual. The Framework contained six objectives relating to different aspects of cycling development and the questionnaire asked whether they were supported. There were also opportunities for comments and additional suggestions on how cycling can continue to be encouraged in Swindon. The six objectives are listed below with the number of respondents in favour in brackets.
- 3.16.1 Create a safe and convenient cycle route network that links people to places in Swindon and beyond (47 responses /47 in favour)
- 3.16.2 Develop and promote the role of cycling within initiatives aimed at improving health and wellbeing (46 responses/43 in favour/3 against)
- 3.16.3 Ensure that cycling is a safe and convenient way to travel to school and work, or as part of a work journey (48 responses/26 in favour/22 no comment)
- 3.16.4 Promote cycling as a realistic choice for an array of everyday trips and as a great activity in general (47 responses/43 yes/4 no )
- 3.16.5 Support and encourage cycling as a sport in Swindon (47 responses/42 yes/5 no)
- 3.16.6 Ensure that cycling is a consideration in all development proposals (47 responses/46 yes/1 no)
- 3.17 All the questionnaire comments, with officer response, are shown in Table 1 of the consultation report. The comments most frequently made were:-
- requests for better lighting,
  - dislike of shared cycle/pedestrian paths,
  - lack of parking for cycles at supermarkets & in the town centre, and that some supermarket facilities were inadequate in terms of numbers of spaces or their position,
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- children should be encouraged to cycle to school,
  - traffic speeds should be enforced and there should be more education for both cyclists and drivers,
  - cycle links through the town centre are urgently required,
  - better communication with residents on availability of cycle facilities is needed,
  - cycle routes should be continuous, not stop/start
  - flooding is a problem, particularly in subways
  - more attention should be paid to providing connections between town centre and outlying villages, particularly Highworth and Wroughton.
- 3.18 Table 2 in the consultation report (Appendix one) lists the missing cycle links identified in the questionnaire responses. The comments made in the individual responses have been noted and incorporated into the document where possible.
- 3.19 The revised Cycling Framework is attached as Appendix two and Cabinet is asked to approve this document as the framework to underpin further work with stakeholders to develop a delivery plan. This will act as the business case to support funding bids as opportunities arise either through the LEP, from central government or through other agencies or partners.
- 4. Alternative Options**
- 4.1 Failure to produce a cycling strategy would prove harmful to the Council's case in securing Partnership status with the DfT and would leave the Council in a weakened position when bidding for scheme funding. Approval of the framework will enable a strong foundation on which to develop the schemes put forward in the forthcoming Delivery Plan.
- 5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**
- Financial and Procurement Implications
- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the Framework as future commitments will be entirely dependent on the availability of funding. Page 9 of the Framework details information relating to potential funding sources for cycling projects. Any measures identified in the Delivery Plan will be progressed to a stage sufficiently advanced to establish feasibility, with progression thereafter being dependent on the availability of funding from appropriate sources.
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## Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights implications have been taken fully into account in the preparation of this report and it is believed that the recommendations are compatible with convention rights.

## All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 It is not anticipated that the recommendations in this report will adversely affect existing teams or roles. Development of cycling will achieve both environmental benefits, in the form of carbon reduction, and assist in the achievement of aims relating to improved public health. The Government's response to the Cycling Plan consultation stressed that the best way for people to become more active is to incorporate activity into their everyday life, with walking and cycling being the interventions considered the most realistic options. No crime and disorder implications have been identified.

## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been produced for this report and is available from the report author. The beneficial effect of increased activity will be felt particularly in lower income groups, where health outcomes are currently poorer than in more affluent households. The future design of schemes as part of the Delivery Plan will take account of the needs of groups such as disabled, black and minority ethnic (BME) and womens' groups as well as the elderly and other more vulnerable sectors of society.

## Risk Management

- 5.5 As outlined earlier in this report, the risk of failing to agree and build on a strategy for cycling would compromise the Council's ability to obtain funding for future schemes. Lack of provision and support for cycling will continue to inhibit growth in cyclist numbers and prevent the attendant health and environmental benefits in terms of reduced congestion, for example, from being fully realised.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 In addition to the relevant DfT publications, there were four background documents used in the preparation of this report and which underpin the Framework document: a Literature Review, a Review of Demographic Data, a note on Development of Priority Corridors and a note on Funding Opportunities.

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## **8. Appendices**

8.1 Appendix One: Report of Consultation

8.2 Appendix Two: Cycling Framework

## **9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan**

9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for March 2016.