

ITEM: ASCOT TO WINDSOR CYCLE ROUTE

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1. Purpose of the Report**1.1 To inform the Cycle Forum about options considered for the Ascot to Windsor Cycle Route.****2. Background**

- 2.1 Improving cycle routes between Ascot and Windsor is a priority for the Windsor and Ascot and Sunnings Neighbourhood Plan Groups.
- 2.2 Existing road links between the towns are mostly A and B class roads. These carry significant volumes of traffic, are subject to 50 mph / 60 mph speed limits, and have no street lighting or dedicated provision for cyclists. As such, these roads are not conducive to cycling, particularly in winter when commuters have to travel in the dark due to the shorter days.
- 2.3 Although there have been relatively few cyclist casualties recorded on these roads in recent years, a cyclist was fatally injured in a crash on the B3022 Winkfield Road on 5 January this year. The incident took place at 06.50 on the section to the south of the LEGOLAND roundabout. The causation factors for this crash are not yet known. Another cyclist was killed in a collision on the A332 Sheet Street Road back in September 2009. In both incidents, the cyclist was struck from behind by a vehicle.
- 2.4 Representatives from the Royal Borough, Bracknell Forest Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Groups have worked with the Crown Estate to look at possible cycle routes between Ascot and Windsor.
- 2.5 The Crown Estate permits cycling on a number of routes through Windsor Great Park – and National Cycle Network Route 4 passes through the park in an east-west direction. These routes utilise quiet estate roads and are primarily intended for recreational cycling to allow visitors to enjoy the beautiful setting of the park. While it is possible to use these routes for utility journeys between Ascot and Windsor, this incurs a significant detour compared with on-road alternatives, particularly when travelling between North Ascot and Windsor.
- 2.6 The Crown Estate faces considerable challenges in balancing the desire for public access to the park and the need to protect the environment and ecology of some of England's most important and sensitive wildlife sites. Significant areas of the Great Park and the wider Estate are designated Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 2.7 The Great Park is hugely popular, attracting nearly 5 million visitors each year, and it is increasingly difficult to cater for the often conflicting needs of walkers, cyclists and equestrians who all wish to use the park. There is a particular issue with cyclists riding through the park at inappropriate speeds, and there have been reports of collisions between cyclists and pedestrians.
- 2.8 The Crown Estate is understandably keen to manage the situation to ensure that visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience. They have said that they will not

consider any further permitted cycle routes through the Great Park, but would consider options that utilised the highway verge on public roads through the park.

2.9 The most direct option is via Hatchet Lane, B383 Mounts Hill and B3022 Winkfield Road and a route was designed along this route, incorporating:

- A signed quiet route via Burleigh Road / Kennel Avenue / Kennel Ride
- A shared use path on Hatchet Lane between Kennel Ride and Lovel Road
- A 'bicycle street' on Hatchet Lane between Lovel Road and B383 Mounts Hill, featuring visual treatments to emphasise that bikes have priority)
- A shared path alongside B383 Mounts Hill and B3022 Winkfield Road as far as the LEGOLANE roundabout to connect into the existing shared path to Windsor.

2.10 Unfortunately, there were a number of issues associated with the scheme:

- A lack of highway land meant that minimum widths could not be achieved for the shared path on Hatchet Lane, with a severe pinch point at the Lovel Road junction.
- A lack of highway land on Winkfield Road meant that minimum widths could not be achieved within the constraints of the highway boundary, and there was not enough space to provide a buffer between the carriageway and the shared path.
- The route would need to be lit in order to ensure the safety of users. However, lighting would be inappropriate in the setting of the Great Park and would not be permitted due to the ecological impact in the SAC.

2.11 Because of the issues around widths and lighting, the route failed the safety audit. Unfortunately, no mitigating measures could be identified that would fully address the issues raised in the safety audit.

2.12 Alternative routes were considered, including options along the A332 Sheet Street Road corridor. However, a safe route through the 'Peanut Roundabout' could not be identified. Also, the verges alongside Sheet Street Road are not highway land.

2.13 It should be noted that the Crown Estate has recognised the challenges faced by cycle commuters and has agreed to open the permitted cycle routes through the Great Park to cyclists after nightfall. Previously, the routes were closed to cyclists between sunset and sunrise. Although far from ideal, this would appear to be the only viable option given the constraints that exist.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that members of the Cycle Forum note the contents of the report.

CYCLE FORUM

24 JANUARY 2017

APPENDIX 1: WINDSOR ABC CYCLE ROUTE

APPENDIX 2: NCN 422