

Report to Councillor Joy Dennis, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

March 2022

A24 Findon to Findon Valley cycleway/walkway scheme

Report by Matt Davey, Assistant Director (Highways, Transport and Planning)

Electoral division(s): Angmering & Findon, Cissbury

Summary

The A24 Findon to Findon Valley cycleway/walkway scheme is a priority in the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy 2016-2026.

The County Council was awarded £2.35m through the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund in November 2020 to support the implementation of walking and cycling schemes in West Sussex. Proposed improvements along the A24 formed part of the funding allocation.

Public engagement exercises on the 2km-long scheme took place in spring and summer 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport will be asked to approve the scheme's route, including the proposed on-road section in Findon Valley using May Tree Avenue and Lime Tree Avenue, its construction and funding.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to approve:

- (1) The route of the A24 Findon to Findon Valley cycleway/walkway scheme as explained in section 2 and as indicatively shown on the plan at Appendix A
 - (2) The construction of the A24 Findon to Findon Valley cycleway/walkway scheme using WSCC's Highway Construction Lot 6 Framework Contract, Landbuild Ltd having made the most advantageous submission and
 - (3) The allocation of £1.2m from the Active Travel Fund to fund construction of the A24 Findon to Findon Valley cycleway/walkway scheme.
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Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The A24 Findon to Findon Valley cycleway/walkway scheme is a priority in the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy 2016-2026. It also forms part of the West Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- 1.2 In November 2020, the County Council was awarded £2.35m through the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund to support the implementation of walking and cycling schemes in the county. Proposed improvements along the A24 formed part of the funding allocation.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 This scheme is proposed to connect the South Downs National Park gateway of Findon village with Findon Valley and its local businesses, whilst enabling onward connections to Worthing and the Sussex coast via the existing cycle network. Communities will be linked with important local amenities, nationally significant tourist attractions, and leisure facilities with anticipated use of the proposed scheme by visitors and residents.
- 2.2 The proposal seeks to introduce cycling and walking facilities between High Street, Findon, and an existing shared-use cycling and walking facility on the A24's east side south of its junction with Lime Tree Avenue, Findon Valley, as indicatively shown on the plan at Appendix A. The route is within Findon and Worthing parishes as shown on the plan.
- 2.3 An off-road, 3metre-wide shared-use cycle and pedestrian facility is proposed on the A24's east side between its junctions with High Street and May Tree Avenue. Existing footways will be widened to achieve the 3m width.
- 2.4 The route will change at the A24's junction with May Tree Avenue.
- 2.5 Cyclists will be directed to an on-road section using May Tree Avenue and Lime Tree Avenue, which will be waymarked with traffic signs and road markings. This will connect with the existing shared-use cycling and walking facility on the A24's east side which proceeds southwards from its junction with Lime Tree Avenue towards the A27.
- 2.6 Cyclists will be expected to share the May Tree Avenue and Lime Tree Avenue carriageways with other road users.
- 2.7 Pedestrians are anticipated to use the existing A24 footways between its junctions with May Tree Avenue and Lime Tree Avenue, including those fronting the Findon Valley shops.
- 2.8 WSCC Officers consider the proposed scheme to be the most appropriate in meeting the project's objectives and the local community's requirements.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 An option for an entirely off-road route on the A24's east side between its junctions with High Street, Findon, and Lime Tree Avenue, Findon Valley, was prepared and presented to stakeholders.

- 3.2 The County Councillor for the Cissbury electoral division, supported by Offington Ward representatives and the MP for East Worthing & Shoreham, indicated a preference for an on-road route as constituents had conveyed safety concerns surrounding the potential for conflict between cyclists and the elderly and vulnerable.
- 3.3 The preference for a change to an on-road route within the Cissbury electoral division was recorded at a stakeholder engagement meeting on 16 November 2021.
- 3.4 WSCC Officers consider the change to an on-road route within the Cissbury electoral division will provide significant construction cost savings.
- 3.5 A Road Safety Audit (an independent formal assessment of potential road safety-related problems connected with new highway construction or a highway improvement scheme) was carried out for the original entirely off-road route proposals in November 2021. A further Road Safety Audit will be carried out for the on-road route section within the Cissbury electoral division after completion of its design by WSCC's Professional Service consultant, WSP. The Road Safety Audit Report will advise any potential road safety problems and recommend mitigating measures – any such matters arising would be addressed before construction starts. However, WSCC Officers do not consider the route's change to represent a decrease in user safety.

4 Consultation, engagement, and advice

- 4.1 An initial engagement exercise was carried out in spring 2021 before a public engagement exercise between 19 July and 15 August 2021. The latter was accompanied by a comprehensive public consultation hosted on the County Council's Engagement HQ platform. This included scheme information, a questionnaire and contact details to convey comments and/or obtain additional information.
- 4.2 Posters and postcards were distributed to promote the consultation; the former displayed at prominent locations along the route. 1500 postcards were delivered to homes and businesses within the target area and local schools sent a postcard home with every child.
- 4.3 Advance notice e-mails were sent to key stakeholders in advance of or concurrently with the start of the public consultation on 19th July 2021. Consultees included: Police, Ambulance and Fire & Rescue services; County, District, Borough and Parish Councillors; MP's; WSCC Highway Managers; representatives of the cycling fraternity; bus service providers; local schools and colleges; local businesses; residents association; and the South Downs National Park Authority.
- 4.4 A social media campaign took place during the consultation period, using WSCC's existing channels and a digital marketing company.
- 4.5 A stakeholder engagement meeting took place in November 2021. County, District & Borough Councillors, Members of Parliament, Parish Councillors, and representatives of the cycling fraternity attended. This meeting indicated a preference for an on-road cycle route provision, using the residential side roads May Tree Avenue and Lime Tree Avenue, instead of the parallel A24 eastern footway.

- 4.6 A consultation report was produced by WSCC's Term Consultants, WSP, in September 2021; this is included at Appendix B.
- 4.7 The initial engagement exercise in spring 2021 generated 43 responses. 88% of respondents supported the principle of a cycle scheme between Findon village and Findon Valley, with 83% supporting or strongly supporting a proposed shared cycleway/footway, and 72% opposing a proposed segregated cycle/pedestrian route.
- 4.8 A total of 685 responses to the July/August 2021 public engagement exercise were received through online questionnaires, e-mails, and letters, 637 of which indicated West Sussex residency.
- 4.9 There was a deeply polarised split between those supporting and opposing a cycle scheme along the A24 between Findon village and Findon Valley: 50% of respondents strongly supported or supported such measures, while 41% respondents opposed or strongly opposed the same. Respondents from the Arundel & South Downs constituency were more supportive (62% strongly supporting or supporting) compared to those in the East Worthing & Shoreham constituency (49% strongly supporting or supporting).
- 4.10 One-third of respondents considered the proposals would encourage them to walk or cycle more frequently, while 56% indicated no inclination to increase such activities.

5 Finance

- 5.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) awarded West Sussex Council a £2.35m Active Travel Fund (ATF) grant, of which £1.2m is available for the A24 Findon cycle scheme.
- 5.2 The changes to the original proposal, as outlined in Section 3 of this document, present a scheme differing from that submitted within the bid for, and subsequent award of, the ATF grant. These changes will likely result in a scheme costing less than the £1.2m award; any surplus from this amount will be used for other ATF schemes within West Sussex.
- 5.3 The project is being delivered through existing internal and external resources; the latter through WSCC's Professional Services contract with WSP. Construction is procured through WSCC's Highway Construction Lot 6 Framework Contract, Landbuild Ltd having made the most advantageous submission.
- 5.4 The completed scheme will be subject to the standard Area Highways Office maintenance and inspection regimes.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Community and/or other stakeholder dissatisfaction causing scheme delay or cancellation.	This scheme represents the best opportunity to provide safer and more effective measures for cyclists between Findon Valley and Findon village. Due consideration has been given by WSCC

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
	Officers to comments and concerns raised by residents and other stakeholders during several engagement and consultation exercises and meetings. The proposed scheme is considered by WSCC Officers to be the most robust solution.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

7.1 Our Council Plan:

7.1.1 WSCC's corporate plan for 2021-2025, known as Our Council Plan, focuses on four priorities: keeping people safe from vulnerable situations, a sustainable and prosperous economy, helping people and communities to fulfil their potential, and making the best use of resources.

7.1.2 The proposed scheme is intended to provide cyclists with a safer alternative than using the A24's carriageway between Findon village and Findon Valley, while providing adequate space for cyclists and pedestrians to share the new facility north of May Tree Avenue. The use of sustainable forms of travel is actively encouraged by the County Council; this scheme is intended to increase such usage to access local amenities, tourist attractions, and leisure facilities. WSCC construction contracts require contractors to be diligent about recycling redundant materials; typically all suitable excavated material is reused in some way and not sent to landfill.

7.2 Legal Implications:

7.2.1 The creation by WSCC, as the Highway Authority, of new shared surfaces used by pedestrians and cyclists is permitted by Section 65 of the Highways Act 1980: *65 Cycle tracks. (1) Without prejudice to section 24 above, a highway authority may, in or by the side of a highway maintainable at the public expense by them which consists of or comprises a made-up carriageway, construct a cycle track as part of the highway; and they may light any cycle track constructed by them under this section. (2) A highway authority may alter or remove a cycle track constructed by them under this section.*

7.2.2 No Traffic Regulation Orders are required for the proposed shared pedestrian and cycle route alongside the A24 between its junctions with High Street, Findon, and May Tree Avenue, Findon Valley, nor for the proposed on-road cycle route on May Tree Avenue and Lime Tree Avenue.

7.2.3 All traffic signs placed on the highway as part of this scheme will either be prescribed by The Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions or authorised by the Secretary of State for Transport.

7.3 Equality Duty and Human Rights Assessment:

An Equality Impact Assessment is included at Appendix C. The proposed improvements within the Angmering & Findon electoral division will replace a narrow and uneven footway with a 3m-wide high-quality surface providing fewer barriers for all users, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, or vulnerability. The separation of pedestrian and cycle flows within the Cissbury

electoral division alleviate the concerns of elderly constituents fearful of collisions with cyclists, particularly in the vicinity of the Findon Valley shopping area.

7.4 Climate Change:

The improved infrastructure is intended to encourage the use of sustainable methods of travel, benefiting those users wishing to access local amenities, tourist attractions, and leisure facilities by such means.

7.5 Crime and Disorder:

No concerns have been raised by Sussex Police with respect to the proposed scheme.

7.6 Public Health:

Active travel can reduce the burden on health care costs by tackling the health problems associated with sedentary lifestyles. Improvements to air quality, through reduced reliance on motor vehicles, also contributes to relieving the health care burden.

7.7 Social Value:

The improved infrastructure should encourage greater leisure use, particularly when weather conditions are more conducive to active means of travel, by individuals, families, and other groups, thereby increasing social interaction.

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Appendices

Appendix A	Scheme route overview
Appendix B	Consultation report
Appendix C	Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers

None