

WALKING AND CYCLING FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 25th March 2009 Charter House, Ashford

Present: Jonathan Beare (in the Chair), Emily Neighbour(taking minutes), Jonathan Dance, Christine Knight, David Cowley, Ted Prangnell, Greg Williams, Steve Fawkes, Elizabeth Tweed, Christine Green, Andy Phillips, Paul Britton, Colin Cresser and David Markson

Apologies: Stephen Bourner Ashford's Future, David Robert, Sustrans Bike-it Officer, Paul Panton.

The meeting started with introductions of all those present:

JB: cyclist, commutes to work from Kennington to Givaudan, Sustrans Ranger

DC: one of four leaders of Health Walks from New Hayesbank Surgery, also cyclist, on and off road

EN: Secretary of Central Ashford Community Forum (CACF), leisure cyclist, walker, town centre resident, husband cycles to station daily

TP: member of Ashford Cycling Touring Club, Roadpeace, Living Streets

JD: Chairman of CACF, keen leisure cyclist for 20 years in Ashford, also walker, and wife cycles to Norton Knatchbull school daily

GW: Webmaster and Rides Co-ordinator for Spokes East Kent, also producing maps for all towns in East Kent including Ashford

ET: County Councillor for Central Ashford and Kennington

CG: Chairman of Environment Group, Ashford Town Centre Partnership, Trustee of CACF, cyclist and walker, does not own a car

AP: standing in for Stephen Bourner, Head of Transport, Ashford's Future

PB: Walker, cyclist, driver, resident of Kennington

CC: Sustrans Ranger, cycle commuter from Willesborough to Ellingham Business Park

DM: resident of Kennington and cyclist

SF: Spokes East Kent

The sole purpose of this meeting was to decide which were the parts of the cycle network that most urgently required improvement. The meeting split into four groups which discussed between themselves the most obvious places, and then the meeting came together to itemise the most important and to decide which to put forward for assessment under the PIPKIN process, by which Kent Highways Services decide which traffic safety improvements to implement each financial year.

ET provided information of schemes that were already budgeted for: Christchurch School to Park Farm linking the paths along Britannia Lane - Ashford road over the Great Stour, and Noakes Meadow to Halstow Way – completing the link from Victoria Park through to Brookfield road.

AP was able to offer advice as to the feasibility of the suggestions made by the Forum.

The following were proposed as high priority as they were potentially dangerous:

1/ Kennington Road, Route 18 cycle route opposite the Batchelor's Works. At this point the cycle route crosses to the north-eastern side of the road for a short stretch which involves cyclists crossing this busy road twice unnecessarily. It was agreed that efforts should be made to move the route onto the other side of the road for this section, which would involve liaison with Batchelor's. Alternatively, a pedestrian crossing at either or both points

would help make the area safer and should be well used as they are both adjacent to the Julie Rose Stadium.

2/ Kennington Road, Route 18. The route crosses this road when it turns off down Blackwall Road North in an easterly direction and Blackwall south in a westerly direction. Both of these junctions are by no means ideal due to the narrowness of the road and the poor visibility, but it was agreed it was hard to see how improvements could easily be made, although better signage of the one way system could help, plus warning signs for motorists of the two crossing points. It was agreed to request that KHS fund a safety audit to see what could be done.

3/ Norman Road adjacent to ASDA roundabout. There is a cycle track leading to the north side of Norman Road from the bridge by the Designer Outlet and the station underpass, but it is extremely dangerous to cross at this point. Currently, pedestrians and cyclists are forced to walk along the grass verge to the B&Q roundabout on order to cross more safely. A pedestrian crossing would join up the two cycle tracks and make a coherent route to south Ashford, particularly if the cycle route along the west side of Romney Marsh Road could be completed.

4/ The southwest corner of Norman Road and Romney Marsh Road roundabout is not adequate for cyclists and pedestrians as it turns into the pedestrian crossing and requires widening.

5/ Corner of Mace Lane and East Hill. This section of pavement could join the cycle path running on the west side of the Stour to the route 18 at the pedestrian crossing over Mace Lane but currently requires cyclists to dismount as there is no safe dropped kerb to use. The pavement also has a signpost and flower bed in the way. In the other direction it would allow cyclists on Route 18 to go into town up East Hill to the High Street.

6/ Heathfield Road. Currently many cyclists use Heathfield Road to Access Route 18 on their way to work/school. Commuters park their cars on the north side adjacent to Canterbury Road so there is not much room for cyclists if there are cars exiting Heathfield Road at the same time. The suggestion is to extend the double yellow lines further from Canterbury Road to provide more room for cyclists at peak times.

7/ Stour Centre. A need for a well signed route around both sides of the Stour Centre was identified. Currently it is left to the cyclist to pick their way around either to the west or the east of the building to access the routes on the other side of the building, mixing up with pedestrians at the same time.

[8/ Crossing at bottom of hill on Station Approach. Currently there is no safe direct route from the cycle racks towards the town centre. A suitable crossing, or even just a speed bump painted as a zebra crossing could reduce traffic speeds here allowing cyclists and walkers to cross more safely. This could then join up with a dedicated route across the new car park adjacent to Dover Place which is already well used as a direct off-road route into town, leading to the pedestrian crossing by the sorting office, allowing access to town via the Memorial Gardens.

AP agreed that these improvements could be incorporated into the works around the station which are already planned, so it was not necessary to put these forward to Pipkin.]

The following suggestions were less to improve danger spots, more to join up sections of existing paths to improve the network relatively easily.

A/ Section of track between Mill Court and Birling Road. this is currently well used but is only a cinder track joining Willesborough to Route 18 without the need to go along Hythe Road. it is a short section (10m?) which requires tarmac and lighting to be made safe.

B/ Beaver Road to Cade Road. Again, this is an existing path which is well used but an unofficial safe route into Ellingham Industrial Estate and on towards Stanhope, avoiding a narrow, busy section of Beaver road. It requires tarmac and lighting.

C/ Path joining Orchard heights to Godinton Park. There are cycle paths on both sides of the CTRL joined by a bridge, but the middle section is an unsurfaced footpath, suitable only for use in the day time by off-road cyclists. It could be upgraded and lit and become a very useful route between the two estates. There is also opportunity to link with the Greensands Way.

Discussions also took place about:

a/ Siting of the proposed bridge over the M20 and the subsequent route into town.

b/ An off-road route from Towers School to Challock

c/ The position of the crash barrier on Bad Munstereifel road.

d/ The two routes from the ASDA area to Park Farm, one across the Willeborough Dykes, the other, already partially complete, running parallel to Romney Marsh Road.

It was agreed these were issues to address in the longer term.

JB offered to take the list (1-7 and A-C) to LW the following day to ensure that she had as long as possible to prepare the list for the PIPKIN process.

GW provided a list and photographs of minor problems with the cycling network that required attention, particularly signage. He had already passed this to LW.

The Forum is grateful to Ashford's Future for hosting this event.

Next Meeting:

Friday 24th April at Charter House, 6.30pm start, with tea and biscuits available from 6pm.

Meeting closed 8.35pm