

MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB) – THURSDAY 15 JULY 2020

CONTACT OFFICER: TIM WHEADON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL

Item 12: 2.09.2 Slough: A4 Cycle Route NCN422 – One Year Evaluation Report

Purpose of Report

1. At your meeting in March 2017, you approved guidance for the preparation of one- and five-year- on impact reports for BLTB funded local transport schemes.
2. This report introduces the impact report for scheme 2.09.1 Slough: A4 Cycle Route NCN422.

Recommendation

3. You are recommended to note the reports from the scheme promoter and the independent assessor.

Other Implications

Financial

4. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

Risk Management

5. The government requires all LEPs to have Assurance Frameworks which set out governance arrangements and financial procedures. One of the specific requirements for transport schemes is to require scheme promoters to submit impact reports one and five years post implementation.

Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

6. Slough Borough Council will provide legal support for the BLTB should any questions arise on the application of the Assurance Framework.

Supporting Information

7. Slough Borough Council received £483k in LGF towards the cost of this £930k scheme.
8. The one-year on impact report is attached at Appendix 1; and the independent assessor's report is attached at Appendix 2.

Conclusion

9. The Independent Assessor concludes that the A4 Cycle Route one-year impact report represents a well-constructed and balanced document. It is considered to meet many of requirements for a one-year impact report, relating to what and how the scheme has been delivered; however, there are significant limitations in the quantified assessment of the outcomes.
10. The report provides a good overview of the scheme that was delivered and the positive impacts that have occurred in terms of enhanced walking and cycling provision and the effect this has had upon overall cycling amenity. There is some secondary evidence to indicate that cycling levels may have increased as a result of the scheme and direct evidence that the scheme is having a positive influence on accident levels.
11. At this stage, it is unclear whether any significant mode shift has resulted and whether private car trips have reduced at all as a result of the scheme. In addition, it is unclear what mechanisms the scheme sought to address gender inequalities in cycling and no data was collected before or after the scheme implementation that would permit this to be assessed.
12. The scheme was delivered close to budget (+2%) but was substantially delayed in its completion by nearly two years. There is no data presented to understand how outturn costs evolved in relation to forecast costs; however, overall, the budgeting process appears to have been reasonably robust. Clearly substantial improvements could have been made to the overall delivery of the project in terms of the programme; however, the actual standard of the outputs appears to be good and the scheme elements appear to be working well and has delivered the broad outcomes required, albeit this cannot be verified by quantified data on usage and mode shift.
13. It is noted that the original monitoring and evaluation plan stated that before and after surveys would be undertaken for the 1 and 5-year evaluations, however, it would appear this has not come to fruition. This has placed significant limitations on the evaluation process. Furthermore, the case for investment was justified on the basis of a range of benefits to cyclist and highway users. Whilst some of these are referenced within the evaluation report, others (e.g. health benefits) are not specifically referenced.
14. To enhance the understanding of the impact of the project, as well as to maximise future outcomes, there is a clear requirement to conduct the following quantified survey work:
 - Cycle counts along the route;
 - User surveys - to assess journey purpose, characteristics of users, levels of satisfaction, and mode shift (particularly from private car); and
 - Accident analysis.
15. Additional points to facilitate wider learning across future projects include:
 - The requirement for clear and realistic scheme objective setting so as to provide a fair assessment of the benefits that will be delivered by a scheme;

- Enhanced overall project planning, incorporating a realistic assessment of the potential risks to delivery and incorporating appropriate contingency planning;
- The importance of tracking outturn costs against projections produced at the FBC stage. This will provide understanding of how costs elements vary and whether appropriate levels of contingency and risk have been included; and
- Clear identification of metrics that can be captured before and after the scheme implementation, to provide quantified evidence of the impacts.

16. There is no further action required.

Background Papers: None.

Appendix 1



Growing a place of opportunity and ambition

Slough: Mass Rapid Transit 1

Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB)

One Year On Evaluation report

Bill Hicks

June 2020



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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Slough is a thriving town with a population of approximately 150,000 people, with an extremely strong commercial presence in the Thames Valley Berkshire region and an extensive transport network serving the wide-ranging needs of residents and commuters. Key areas of activity include the Town Centre and the Trading Estate, one of the largest in Europe, with 486 acres of commercial property, over 450 businesses on site and more than 20,000 people employed, and the many schools across the borough. SEGRO continues to plan for expansion. The town centre is currently undergoing extensive regeneration, with much more development on the way.

To the west of the borough, Slough shares a boundary with Buckinghamshire County Council, which has responsibility for the highway beyond the site of the scheme covered in this report. The closest, neighbouring town of Maidenhead is part of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

To the east of the borough, Heathrow airport is a prominent generator of trade and employment, and again, there are considerable plans to expand here. Hence there are enormous opportunities for increased connectivity and growth across the borough.

Traffic congestion has an adverse impact on business efficiency and inward investment and, as such, threatens the future economic vitality of Slough. Cycling has some role to play from this perspective, however the main focus in this scheme is on the impact of cycling in terms of social inclusion, wellbeing, safety, and environmental concerns.

The A4 Cycle Route was designed to improve the basic cycling infrastructure along the given stretch, to encourage an increase in cycling levels and to improved road safety for all road users, but primarily cyclists. Modal shift and increased uptake of Active Travel are part of a wide-ranging solution to the sustainable transport challenge, increasing connectivity, providing healthy travel alternatives and improving air quality, as well as creating opportunities for economic growth. All of these benefits will help to make Slough a more vibrant and attractive place in which to live and work.

Although a relatively minor scheme, this stretch of cycle route is part of a much larger vision for the town, which is dedicated to the reduction of travel by private car, and increased use of public transport, cycling and walking.

The original plan was for the development of a wider scheme with Slough Borough Council, Buckingham County Council (BCC), the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) all either constructing or enhancing a cycle route along their respective stretches of the A4. However, although various meetings were held, with possible joint working considered, the BCC and RBWM elements of the scheme were postponed, and only the SBC scheme went ahead. This evaluation report therefore only considers the Slough element.

1.2. Funding

Slough Borough Council received £483,000 from the Local Growth Fund towards the introduction of the A4 Cycle Route infrastructure and related measures. Additional funding was provided by Slough Borough Council via capital funds (£397,000) and S106 agreements (£50,000), making an overall total of £930,000 to fund the delivery of the scheme.

1.3. Objectives and outcomes

As stated in the business case, the following objectives applied to the project:

Objective
1. Encourage a mode shift towards cycling for a range of journey purposes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work• Education• Leisure
2. Reduce the necessity to undertake journeys by private motor vehicle.
3. Address the existing gender inequality in cycle use.
4. Improve perceived cycling amenity on the A4 corridor.
5. Minimise cycling personal injury accidents on the A4 corridor.

This report evaluates the success of the project with reference to these stated objectives, taking into account the strategic fit with the Council's Local Transport Plan and related policies, and all the related impacts, as well as the ongoing requirements for monitoring and review.

For this scheme, there were no wider outcomes specified as there commonly are, for example, for larger highways infrastructure construction projects.

1.4. Description of the scheme

Original scheme proposal.

The original scheme, as set out in the business case was promoted as a safe and convenient cycle route between Slough and South Buckinghamshire. This would follow the A4 corridor and would link with a scheme being promoted by Thames Valley Buckinghamshire LEP, which was due to be progressed along a similar timescale. The scheme would connect the two urban areas of Slough and Maidenhead and would give access to: the Bishops Centre Retail Park, Slough Trading Estate, Burnham and Taplow stations and adjacent residential areas. It would also cater for commuting and other utility cycling trips, as well as leisure trips, connecting to National Cycle Network Route 61 via the Jubilee River, and to Cliveden and Burnham Beeches.

Revised scheme

The BCC and RBWM stretches of the route (not part of this evaluation per se), were not developed, and hence the eventual scheme (the Slough only stretch), was less extensive than the combined scheme. The SBC scope of the SBC scheme was also commensurate with what was possible given the total amount of funding available for the project. The principles of providing a safe and convenient cycle route, and increasing connectivity, were, however, carried through into the eventual designs. The scheme that was delivered was also consistent with Slough's objectives and expected outcomes. Further, these must be viewed essentially in terms of how they have had an impact in Slough, rather than across the boundary.

The scheme designs were developed in order to maximise the benefits available from the components of the original concept designs that were considered likely to bring the most benefit. These focused on the main signalised junction improvements at Huntercombe Lane North/South and the associated and adjacent highway enhancements.

The section of route included in this scheme mainly comprises shared footway use, with one section along a service road. This is in-keeping with the commitment in the original business case to "an off-carriageway cycling facility", which is also consistent with the majority of the cycling infrastructure along the A4. All of this reflects the expectations set out in the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP3).

In this way, the scheme that was realised is perhaps best described as *a highways improvement scheme for cycling purposes*, rather than the creation of a brand new cycle corridor. However, for the sake of clarity, reference throughout the report will be made to the *Cycle Route* scheme.

1.5. Location

The cycle route for this scheme is a relatively small stretch of the overall A4 cycle corridor that runs across the borough, along the A4/Bath Road, becoming Wellington Street in the town centre and London Road to the east. The majority of this overall cycle route takes the form of shared footway, for the joint use of cyclists and pedestrians.

This specific stretch of route under review runs from the western borough boundary, across the A4 junction with Huntercombe Lane North/South, and onwards towards the town centre. The easternmost junction included in the highway modifications for the scheme is the intersection of Burnham Lane with the A4/Bath Road. The route takes the form of a shared footway with crossing points. The subsequent length of the route (not part of this scheme) then continues along the frontage of the Trading Estate, towards the A4 junction with Tuns Lane, and onwards into the Town Centre.

Image 1: (see below)

A4 Cycle route – from the borough boundary, via the junction with Huntercombe Lane North/South, to the junction with Burnham Lane, towards the Town Centre.

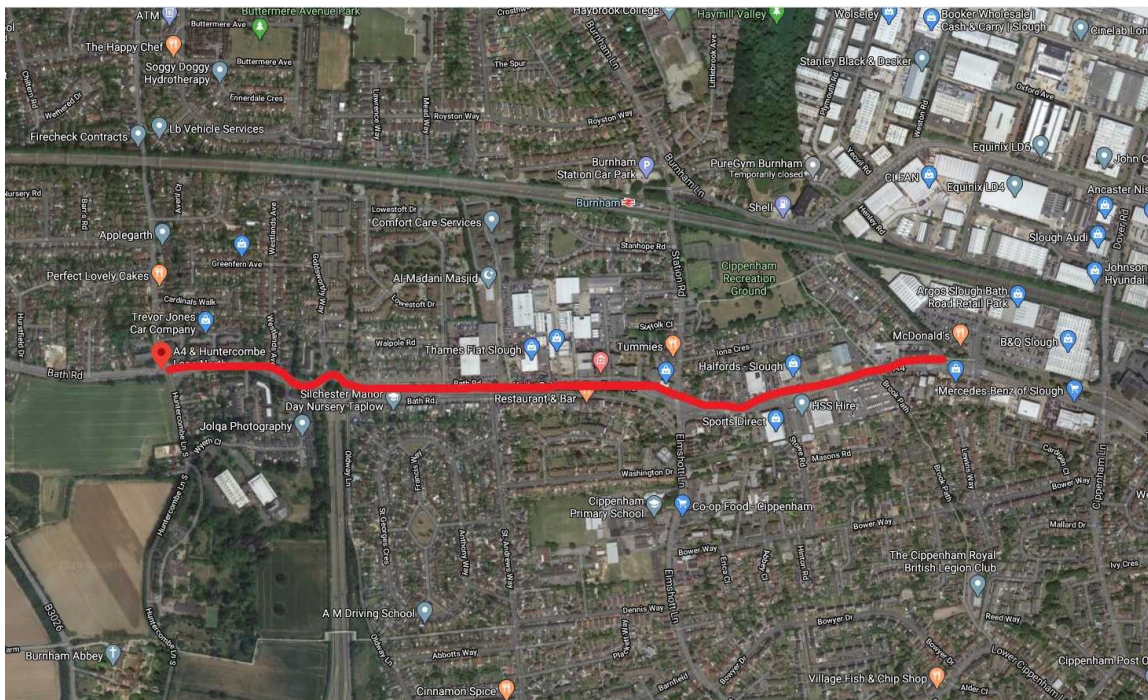
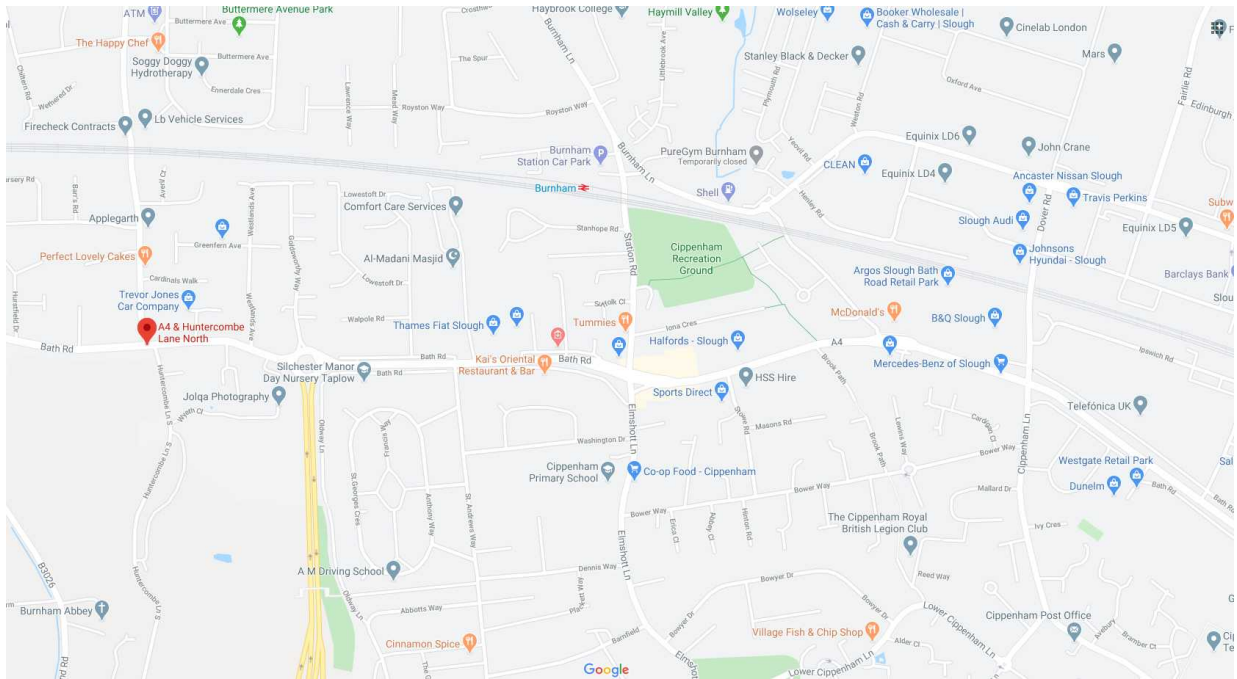


Image 2:

A4 Cycle route – area map.



1.6. Historic Problems

Congestion

The overall A4 corridor, along which the stretch relating to this particular scheme sits, is subject to heavy traffic flow, as it carries a large number of commuters as well as local traffic accessing businesses, schools, shops and other destinations. Tens of thousands of commuters enter and exit Slough on a daily basis, Monday to Friday. Many of these commuters engage in single occupancy vehicle journeys. As a result, congestion arises and journey times can be unpredictable. Cycling is regarded as being an important part of the overall solution.

Car Culture

As above, there is a high level of commuting in Slough, with many journeys made by private car. The problem is considered to be particularly severe in Slough, which has a reputation for having a culture of car ownership and usage. As ever, the various sustainability challenges must be addressed through a mixture of engineering, enforcement, and educational measures. All cycling measures, including new routes or related highways improvements, are therefore designed to reduce the widespread reliance on car travel, and to promote a variety of more sustainable travel modes and behaviours.

Uptake of Active Travel

It was recognised in the development of Slough's Local Transport Plan (latest published version LTP3), that Slough has a relatively low level of cycling activity in the borough.

Further, it is widely recognised that unless you are a highly competent, experienced commuter cyclist, this form of travel is mainly engaged in for short journeys or where it forms part of a longer multi-modal journey. The Council is working hard, through the Access Programme for behavioural change, and the emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, as well as the LTP which is currently being revised, to facilitate a substantial increase in the uptake of active travel across the borough.

Road Safety

Road safety can be problematic in any built up area, particularly where there is a large number of vulnerable road users interacting with the traffic road network, even at designated crossing points. This *Cycle Route* scheme, which covers a relatively short stretch of the full A4 route, contributes to the realisation of the Council's road safety by delivering junction improvements (mainly at Huntercombe North/South), better crossing facilities and signals and related minor highways enhancements for cyclists and pedestrians.

1.7. Evaluation timetable

The A4 Cycle Route scheme was completed in September 2018. Hence this one-year-on evaluation report has been produced later than the standard one year assessment period. With the agreement of the TV LEP team, it was agreed that there would be a delay in this evaluation report in order to better assess the overall impacts of the scheme.

2. Funding

2.1. Funding details

Just over 50% of the funding for this scheme came from the LEP Local Growth Deal. Additional funding was provided by the Council from capital funds and S106 contributions. The full figures are shown in the tables below:

Source of funding	Total
Amount from LEP Local Growth Deal	£483,000
<i>Local contributions from:</i>	
- Council Capital Programme	£397,000
- Section 106 agreements	£50,000
- Other sources	
Total Scheme Cost	£930, 000

3. Scheme details

3.1. Design elements

The scheme included:

- Improvements to the junction of Huntercombe Lane North/South with the A4/Bath Road (the main site). Including: signalisation upgrade (Toucan crossing), new crossing point, new signs and lineage.
- Improvements to the junction of Station Road with the A4/Bath Road
- Minor highways improvements at various linked points along the route, including island modifications and further dropped crossing facilities, further new signage.
- Footway resurfacing with new line markings

3.2. Key dates

Construction started on site in February 2017. The work was completed in September 2018.

4. Project Management

4.1. Construction Project Delivery

The construction work was carried out by Amey as the main contractors.

Siemens were contracted to carry out the signals work at the Huntercombe Lane junction.

An excellent health and safety record was maintained for the duration of the project, with no serious incidents on site during the project.

4.2. Delay to the programme

There were no major problems on site. However, the overall duration of the project was delayed to a certain extent. It appears that there was some original under-estimate in the amount of time it would take to finalise the designs and to address unexpected utility services, a common problem.

4.3. Costs and financial control

There was a relatively minor overspend on the construction, of approximately £20k due to compensation events arising out of additional utility service related work. This additional expenditure, bringing the total to £950,000 for the whole project, was covered by the Council from additional Section 106 funds. This level of overspend is considered to be reasonable for a projective of this size and scope.

5. Review and evaluation of the outcomes:

5.1. Overall outcome:

The scheme was completed satisfactorily, to a high technical standard and close to budget. The construction work took somewhat longer than had originally been anticipated, and the completion date was therefore later than planned. However, the delays were due to a certain amount of technical complexity, some unforeseen utility service issues, and a need to make best use of the overall resources available in-house across the whole service delivery.

The infrastructure created has provided better, safer controlled crossing points for both cyclists and pedestrians. Although a totally new route has not been constructed, the relevant stretch of the existing footway and highway interfaces, along with signage and line markings, have all enhanced this stretch of the cycle route along the A4 corridor. This has made a welcome and necessary contribution to the wider network of cycle routes in the immediate area and across the borough.

Improved signalisation has also benefited all road users approaching the various junctions involved, notably the Huntercombe Lane North/South junction with the A4. This has improved traffic flow and reduced delays.

Limited quantitative data has been available for this evaluation exercise. Recommendations are set out in the following review of the specific objectives. Most prominently, it is not possible at this stage to state the level of modal shift achieved to date by this relatively small scale scheme. Nor is it possible to state with a high level of confidence the size of the reduction in car journeys specifically. This level of assessment is highly challenging under most circumstances. It is particularly challenging at the time of writing this report, given the recent impacts of the COVID-19 situation and the likelihood of ongoing changes to behavioural patterns.

What we can say, however, is that the establishment of this enhanced stretch of route has increased cycling opportunities and cycling amenity. Further, through the Access Programme, building on the previous success of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund initiatives, the Council has engaged in an extensive programme of engagement with schools, businesses and other members of the community, learning about their travel experiences and habits. Travel planning advice has been provided to stimulate modal shift towards active travel and public transport. Although not a major area of focus for the Access

programme, the Huntercombe area has been included in this since it is geographically an area that leads to schools, businesses and other attractions.

5.2. Specific objectives

5.2.1. Improve perceived cycling amenity on the A4 corridor

As a general principle, the enhanced route is consistent with the majority of the cycleway provision in Slough, especially along the A4 corridor within the borough. Historically, roadspace has been limited, with priority being accorded to motorised traffic on the carriageway, and footways being used as shared-used routes for cyclists and pedestrians. This has provided a safer option for cyclists than the carriageway. The enhanced stretch of the A4 route between the western borough boundary and the junction with Burnham Lane (this scheme) has followed this format. Significant improvements to the route have been included in this scheme in the form of improved signalised crossing points and better signage. At one particular point, on the eastern side of the Huntercombe roundabout, the route takes the course of the northern service road, well segregated from the main carriageway of the A4, before then re-joining the footway.

Hence, cycling amenity has improved considerably as a result of this scheme. This facilitates better visibility, continuity of route, and increased safety features constructed to a high standard. The photographs below show examples of the infrastructure for the A4 Cycle Route:



Image 3: The junction of the A4/Bath Road with Huntercombe Lane North



Image 4: The continuation of the route at the junction with Goldsworthy Way (just off Huntercombe roundabout)



Image 5: Service road north of the A4, showing re-joining point of the cycle route with the footway



Image 6. A4 Junction with Station Road (Toucan crossing)



Image 7. Crossing point along the A4, just past the junction with Station Road
(including shared used signage)

5.2.2. Encourage a modal shift towards cycling for a range of journey purposes

The enhancement of the route forms part of an overall programme of initiatives to encourage greater uptake of cycling for all purposes, notably the three main categories of work, education and leisure.

Given that the cycle route is mainly along what remains a relatively narrow shared used footway, this stretch cannot really be regarded as a main commuter route, and high speed cycling would certainly not be considered appropriate. However, the route is better now for those choosing to cycle to work and all other cyclists.

Regarding cycling to school, there are no schools immediately situated along this stretch of the A4, nor indeed any that are especially close via linked routes. However, again, all using the enhanced route as part of a longer, connected cycling journey will be better served by the measures that have been implemented.

Leisure cycling is likely to be the category where the most benefit will be experienced, since the route overall is perhaps best suited to casual cycling, but cyclists seeking an off carriageway facility, at different times of the day.

In terms of a quantitative evaluation, specific cycle count data has not been available for this specific stretch of the route on the A4, either from before the scheme or after. This has limited the ability to evaluate the actual change in level of cycling along the route. Installation of cycle counters, along with regular monitoring will be essential in order to evaluate this specific objective. This is part of a general requirement across the entire borough, where the network of counters requires review and improvement. This will form part of an overall review of all cycle routes and infrastructure in Slough.

However, cycle count data is available for the section of the A4 corridor further to the east of the scheme under evaluation. This stretch again runs along a shared use footway, in the vicinity of the Twinches Lane junction (along the frontage of the heart of the Trading Estate and onwards towards the town centre). The data indicates that from October 2017 to September 2018, the year prior to the completion of the route being evaluated, the count was 34,148 (journeys in both directions). Post completion of the route in question, from October 2018 to September 2019, the count was 39,316. This represents an increase in cycle uptake / increased travel by this mode, of approximately 15%. Although these figures relate to the more eastern stretch, it seems reasonable to consider that during the same period there will have been a substantial increase in cycling along the linked stretch, i.e. the Huntercombe to Burnham Lane stretch currently under evaluation. It also seems likely that there will have been a still greater increase in cycling due to the recent and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 situation.

5.2.3. Reduce the necessity to undertake journeys by private motor vehicle

Progress towards achieving this objective is difficult to assess, given that the need to travel by car is largely a subjective need, perceived by the person travelling. Such a need is also subject to a number of factors that are not directly, or even indirectly in some cases, related to the improvements to the cycle route itself. It would not be fair, for example, to evaluate the scheme in question on the basis of cycling storage availability at all possible or likely destinations. Although this is linked, in terms of encouraging behavioural change, such provision was not part of the budget for this specific scheme.

On a related note, the Council is continually increasing the number of cycle hire docking stations across the borough, in addition to an extensive behavioural change programme, but all of these features must be considered together in order to evaluate the level of need to travel by a specific mode, and this goes beyond the scope of the evaluation of any specific infrastructure scheme.

This objective is, however, intrinsically linked to all the other objectives stated in the original business case, most notably cycling '*amenity*' and safety. In terms of providing a more attractive, resilient, safer route, it is reasonable to conclude that the public perception will be that cycling is now a better option. This is particularly so for shorter journeys, or for journeys where cycling forms part of a linked, multi-modal trip. Further, by extension, it is reasonable to conclude that the need to travel by private motor vehicle has indeed been reduced by this scheme. It is recommended that the extent to which this is true be explored through wider public consultation and engagement on an ongoing basis, as well as more extensive and reliable traffic data collection for all modes.

5.2.4. Address the existing gender inequality in cycle use

There is no data available to assist in the assessment of levels of cycling broken down by gender. As above, extensive, ongoing public consultation would be necessary for this purpose also.

However, the work carried out in the Access Fund programme does specifically include measures to address the gender imbalance. This includes specifically encouraging girls to cycle more, when the Access team engage with schools. Hence, the Council is actively seeking to bring about behavioural changes, and to bring about equality both in terms of opportunity and active participation. This programme is complementary to the infrastructure schemes of which the A4 Cycle Route is a prime example.

5.2.5. Minimise cycling personal injury accidents on the A4 corridor

In the original business case, the average number of accidents involving cyclists along this stretch of route was approximately 1.2 per annum. The word 'minimise' in this objective is significant here, since this annual accident rate was already low. The emphasis, therefore, is on helping to ensure zero accidents on this route, and at the very least ensuring the existing level does not increase. The expectation in the FBC is to reduce the accident level to 0.86 per annum with the scheme.

Accident reports via Crashmap have indicated that prior to completion of the scheme, in the period from September 2017 to August 2018, there were four accidents (one serious, three slight). Only one of these accidents involved a cyclist, at the junction of the A4 and Westlands Avenue. This was of a serious nature. Post completion of the scheme, from October 2018 to August 2019, there were three accidents (two slight, one serious). Of these, none involved cyclists.

These figures show an overall improvement in the rate of accidents along the relevant stretch of the A4 cycle route, and specifically no accidents here involving cyclists.

6. Growth related outcomes

6.1. Growth Forecast and Actuals

There were no forecasts in the business case (FBC) for growth in terms of jobs, floorspace or houses.

There was one highways related outcome proposed, relating to resurfacing.

The original plan at the time of submission of the FBC was for 2400m of highway to be resurfaced. This appears to have been an early estimate which was subsequently revised downwards as the designs were developed. The actual extent of the resurfacing carried out was 1800m. This was the total deemed necessary and appropriate for the final design and construction of the route enhancement.

7. Links to wider Growth Fund projects and Network activity

The section of the A4 Cycle Route under evaluation is part of an extensive cycle network across the borough. This, in turn, is part of the overall transport infrastructure in Slough. As such, this links up with the road network, and with previous major highways infrastructure projects including the A332/Windsor Road and the SMaRT scheme along the A4 and into the town centre. Cycling is typically off carriageway along the major routes, via shared use footways. In the case of SMaRT, plans are currently being developed to open up the use of the bus lanes to cyclists. This is currently being considered as part of the

response to the opportunities that have arisen through the COVID-19 situation. Longer term, the expectation, as set out in Slough's *Transport Vision*, is that cycling provision will go hand in hand with further reallocation of road space for public transport purposes.

To date, there have been relatively few active travel schemes funded by the Local Growth Fund. The majority of schemes have been based on major highways improvements and public transport developments. Including cycling and walking measures within this type of scheme must form part of the plans for future development. To some extent, Slough is leading the way here with the designs for the Stoke Road scheme, which includes significant elements that make provision for active travel. Typically, growth is regarded in economic terms, but better connectivity through cycling and walking can make a considerable contribution to growth too. Further active travel schemes are likely to be proposed when new funding streams are announced in due course.

8. Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

Some of the objectives set out in the original business case have proved challenging to evaluate. The objective to address gender inequality in cycle use does not, in hindsight, appear to be a particularly helpful objective to assess, since the measures comprising the scheme that was delivered do not include any gender specific elements. The design elements have implications for all cyclists. Further, measures designed to reduce gender inequality relate more widely to the behavioural change programme that was not part of the specific, funded scheme.

The need for qualitative data relating to volume and journey times relies on the existence of automated counters in situ both before and after any scheme where such measures are to be evaluated. In the case of this particular stretch of the A4 cycle route, this was not the case. Hence it has not been possible to comprehensively evaluate the increase in modal shift away from private, motorised travel and towards cycling. It is strongly recommended here that when traffic related objectives are set in the business case, the installation of automated traffic counters, where not already in place, be a mandatory part of the project plan. Ideally, data should be collected from at least a year before any such scheme is constructed, to allow a thorough *before and after* comparison.

However, given the size and scope of this particular scheme, and the extent of the infrastructure measures included in the designs which followed the approval of the business case, the objective to increase modal shift is valid, but the weighting attached to the level of increase must not be overly

ambitious. It is noted, also, that this scheme was ultimately constructed effectively as a stand alone scheme, rather than the original joined up scheme proposed, involving neighbouring local authorities.

9. Final comments

Slough Borough Council would like to express its appreciation to the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Berkshire Local Transport Body for the Growth Fund financial contribution enabling the delivery of this project. The resulting infrastructure has been successfully constructed, creating a safer, more amenable route for cyclists. This particular stretch of the A4 cycle corridor, although fairly short, is part of a much wider overall cycling network.

With regard to improved connectivity, the benefits associated with ease of access to the Trading Estate, the Town Centre and the major transport hubs are already being realised to a certain extent, but further success depends on a more ambitious approach to cycling infrastructure overall. This is currently being addressed in the review of the Council's Local Transport Plan / core strategy and the associated cycling supplementary strategy document, which will be informed by the emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

In terms of mode of travel, genuine modal shift remains a challenge, and the Council is committed to addressing this through the realisation of its *Transport Vision*. As well as infrastructure related projects, success here will also require an increase in publicity and educational programmes desired to bring about behavioural change, as well as further partnerships, cross-boundary initiatives, engineering solutions and increased funding opportunities.

End of report

Appendix 2

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

**Independent Assessment Summary Report: Slough A4 Cycle Route
One Year Impact Report**

July 2020

www.hatchregeneris.co.uk

Contents Page

Independent Assessment

Process

Scheme Summary

Review Findings

Independent Assessment

- i. This technical note provides an independent assessment of the One-year Impact Report submitted by Slough Borough Council (SBC) in relation to A4 Cycle Route.
- ii. The A4 Cycle route scheme received £483,000 funding through the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP) Local Growth Fund deal. As part of the on-going assurance process, TVB LEP requires all funded schemes to produce one-year and five-year post-implementation impact reports to demonstrate how each scheme has performed against expectations.

Process

- iii. The one and five-year impact reports are expected to assess the following elements of the scheme:
 - a. did it get built?
 - b. was it to plan?
 - c. was it on time?
 - d. was it to budget?
 - e. is it working ok?
 - f. what impact has it had?
 - g. any learning points?
- iv. Hatch Regeneris have applied these criteria, but also sought to use the process as positive influence to identify specific ways in which project scheme design or delivery could be enhanced to enhance future value of this scheme or other future LEP funded schemes.

Scheme Summary

- v. The Council received £483,000 (52%) from the TVB LEP Local Growth Fund as part of an overall estimated scheme cost of £930,000.
- vi. The Slough A4 Cycle Route represents a series of improvements to junctions and crossing facilities along around a 1 mile stretch of the A4 corridor between the Huntercombe Lane North/South junction and the Burnham Lane Junction.
- vii. The planned work consisted of:
 - Improvements to the junction of Huntercombe Lane North/South with the A4/Bath Road (the main site). Including: signalisation upgrade (Toucan crossing), new crossing point, new signs and lineage;
 - Improvements to the junction of Station Road with the A4/Bath Road;
 - Minor highways improvements at various linked points along the route, including island modifications and further dropped crossing facilities, further new signage; and
 - Footway resurfacing with new line markings.
- viii. The scheme was designed to address issues of congestion along the A4 corridor through encouraging mode shift from single occupancy private car trips to cycle trips. It was recognised that Slough has a culture of car use and that measures are required to encourage alternative modes of travel. The Local Transport Plan shows that Slough has relatively low levels of cycling activity and that behavioural change to encourage active travel is required. It was also

recognised that road safety can be an issue for vulnerable road users and that measures were required to address real and perceived issues of safety.

- ix. The original scheme proposals was supposed to form part of a wider package of cycling measures along the A4 that would connect the urban areas of Slough and Maidenhead and would give access to: the Bishops Centre Retail Park, Slough Trading Estate, Burnham and Taplow stations and adjacent residential areas, as well as cater for other commuting and leisure trips. The element of the wider scheme to be developed by Buckingham County Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead have not progressed. The scale of the SBC scheme proposals were also scaled to meet the available funding package.
- x. A summary of the primary objectives of the scheme were to: encourage a shift towards cycling for a range of trip purposes; reduce the necessity to undertake journeys by private motor vehicle; address the existing gender inequality in cycle use; improve perceived cycling amenity on the A4 corridor; and minimise cycling personal injury accidents on the A4 corridor.
- xi. The original Full Business Case (FBC) Outline Monitoring and Evaluation Plan included reference to pre-construction traffic, pedestrian and cyclist surveys having been undertaken at key locations on the A4 corridor (survey locations and specifications were detailed in the original ASR). These were to be repeated for the 1-year and 5-year evaluation.
- xii. It should also be noted that, within the original FBC, the case for investment was justified on the basis of journey time savings and quality benefits to cyclists, reduced absenteeism, health benefits, accident savings, and highway decongestion benefits from mode shift to cycling, as well as wider economic benefits.

Review Findings

General Observations

- xiii. It is noted that the A4 Cycle Route was completed in September 2018 and so this one-year report is overdue. It is stated that the delay in reporting was agreed to better assess the overall impacts of the scheme, albeit it is not clear what additional information has been obtained within the interim period.
- xiv. The overall scheme is reported to have been subject to delays in construction. It was originally scheduled for completion in December 2016 but was not ultimately completed until September 2018. This was due to both a delayed start date and an extended construction period by 10 months. The delays are stated to be as a result of under-estimating the require time for detailed design, resolving issues with utilities, and the need to make most efficient use of in-house SBC resources.
- xv. The scheme was delivered for a final cost of £950,000, representing a modest cost overrun of £20,000 (2%), which was covered by diverting additional S106 contributions. Information is not presented available to understand where these additional cost overruns occurred. It is understood that there may not have been any contingency included within the original construction cost estimates. As such, the original baseline assessment of scheme costs can be considered to be relatively accurate, especially considering the delays to the programme, which can often incur excessive costs.
- xvi. It is reported that the infrastructure created has provided better, safer controlled crossing points for both cyclists and pedestrians, along existing routes. The improved signalisation is also stated

to have benefited all road users. The report recognises that there is no quantified data available to assist in the evaluation process, particularly in terms of mode shift and reduction in private car usage. The report states that the route has at least increased the opportunities for cycling and cycling amenity.

- xvii. In terms of delivering against the five specific objectives of the scheme, the report provides evidence of how the cycle amenity has been improved by providing safer options than using the A4 carriageway, signalised crossing facilities, and improved signage.
- xviii. There is no clear evidence of how the scheme may have supported mode shift towards cycling, albeit evidence is presented that shows why the route may be attractive to use for education and leisure trips, albeit the standard of the shared cycle path along the corridor is indicated not to be suitable for faster commuter cycling. Cycling data on an adjacent section of the A4 corridor indicates a 15% increase in cycling levels over the year post-scheme opening. Whilst a direct correlation with the scheme cannot be made, it at least provides some evidence that the scheme could be having a positive influence on cycling levels along the corridor.
- xix. The report indicates that assessing how the scheme is reducing the necessity to undertake private car trips is difficult to assess. As such no conclusions can be drawn as to whether the scheme has been successful in reducing car trips.
- xx. The report indicates there is no data available to assist in the assessment of levels of cycling broken down by gender. It is not stated how the scheme was anticipated to address this objective and, as such, no conclusions can be drawn as to whether the scheme has been successful in addressing gender inequalities in cycle use.
- xxi. The report indicates that the average number of accidents involving cyclists along this stretch of route was approximately 1.2 per annum. The FBC forecast the scheme could reduce this to 0.86 per annum. In the year since the completion of the scheme there were no accidents involving cyclists and fewer overall accidents. Whilst there is only a single year of data, the implications are that the scheme is having a positive impact upon reducing cycling injury accidents.
- xxii. It is recognised that the scheme was not forecast to directly support growth in terms of jobs, floorspace or housing. Whilst 2,400m of highway was supposed to be resurfaced, in reality only 1,800m was completed.
- xxiii. The report makes reference to the role of the scheme as part of a wider network of cycling provision that SBC are looking to develop, although it is not specifically shown what role this route has within the overall network.
- xxiv. The report concludes by acknowledging that some of the objectives from the original business case have proved challenging to evaluate. In addition, the need for qualitative data required more initial consideration and the report recommends installation of automated traffic counters to support future schemes of this nature. This recommendation is endorsed by the Independent Assessor.

Conclusions

- xxv. The A4 Cycle Route one-year impact report represents a well-constructed and balanced document. It is considered to meet many of requirements for a one-year impact report, relating to what and how the scheme has been delivered; however, there are significant limitations in the quantified assessment of the outcomes.

- xxvi. The report provides a good overview of the scheme that was delivered and the positive impacts that have occurred in terms of enhanced walking and cycling provision and the effect this has had upon overall cycling amenity. There is some secondary evidence to indicate that cycling levels may have increased as a result of the scheme and direct evidence that the scheme is having a positive influence on accident levels.
- xxvii. At this stage, it is unclear whether any significant mode shift has resulted and whether private car trips have reduced at all as a result of the scheme. In addition, it is unclear what mechanisms the scheme sought to address gender inequalities in cycling and no data was collected before or after the scheme implementation that would permit this to be assessed.
- xxviii. The scheme was delivered close to budget (+2%) but was substantially delayed in its completion by nearly two years. There is no data presented to understand how outturn costs evolved in relation to forecast costs; however, overall, the budgeting process appears to have been reasonably robust. Clearly substantial improvements could have been made to the overall delivery of the project in terms of the programme; however, the actual standard of the outputs appears to be good and the scheme elements appear to be working well and has delivered the broad outcomes required, albeit this cannot be verified by quantified data on usage and mode shift.
- xxix. It is noted that the original monitoring and evaluation plan stated that before and after surveys would be undertaken for the 1 and 5-year evaluations, however, it would appear this has not come to fruition. This has placed significant limitations on the evaluation process. Furthermore, the case for investment was justified on the basis of a range of benefits to cyclist and highway users. Whilst some of these are referenced within the evaluation report, others (e.g. health benefits) are not specifically referenced.
- xxx. To enhance the understanding of the impact of the project, as well as to maximise future outcomes, there is a clear requirement to conduct the following quantified survey work:
- Cycle counts along the route;
 - User surveys - to assess journey purpose, characteristics of users, levels of satisfaction, and mode shift (particularly from private car); and
 - Accident analysis.
- xxxi. Additional points to facilitate wider learning across future projects include:
- The requirement for clear and realistic scheme objective setting so as to provide a fair assessment of the benefits that will be delivered by a scheme;
 - Enhanced overall project planning, incorporating a realistic assessment of the potential risks to delivery and incorporating appropriate contingency planning;
 - The importance of tracking outturn costs against projections produced at the FBC stage. This will provide understanding of how costs elements vary and whether appropriate levels of contingency and risk have been included; and
 - Clear identification of metrics that can be captured before and after the scheme implementation, to provide quantified evidence of the impacts.