

Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Date: 1 September 2022

Subject: Cycling Infrastructure

Lead officer: Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton

Lead member: Cllr Stephen Alambritis, Cabinet Member for Transport

Contact officers: Paul Miles, Cycle Engineer

Louisa Green, Transport Planning and Projects Officer

Recommendations:

- A. Members to note the update on the existing cycling strategy and infrastructure in Merton.
- B. Members to consider the overview of potential options, opportunities and challenges to the further development of cycling infrastructure and provide comments on priorities to feed into the development of a cycling strategy.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Cycling is an environmentally friendly, cheap and reliable form of transport that provides a realistic alternative to the car for many short trips. The Council places a high priority on increasing rate of cycling which will support several cross cutting strategic objectives including, reducing congestion, cutting climate change emissions, improving local air quality and better health and well-being outcomes.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to:
 - set out a high level overview of the latest Council, Government and TfL strategies and policies in relation to Cycling.
 - summarise the existing cycle infrastructure in Merton and progress in the delivery of cycle schemes in recent years, including schemes delivered as part of the emergency Covid response.
 - set out potential opportunities for the further development of the cycling network and the main challenges and barriers including lack of adequate funding and the need to balance limited road space amongst different road users.
- 1.3. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan sets out a commitment to developing a Cycling Strategy by 2023. This report provides Scrutiny and Overview Committee Members with an opportunity to provide comments that can be fed into the development of the cycling strategy at an early stage.

2 DETAILS

Cycling Strategy and Policy

- 2.1. The Government has set out a strategic approach to transport and cycling in a number of recent strategies. The [decarbonising transport](#) plan, sets out a strategy to increase walking and cycling and includes the overarching objectives of delivering a world class cycling and walking network by 2040 and increasing the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled to 50% in 2030.
- 2.2. In 2020, The Department for Transport released "[Gear Change](#) – a bold vision for walking and cycling" and also published new detailed design standards for cycle infrastructure, [Cycle](#)

infrastructure design LTN 1/20. Recently published amendments to the [Highway Code](#) to include a road user's hierarchy that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists over car users.

- 2.3. The [Mayor's Transport Strategy](#) sets out the transport policy framework for London and has the overarching goal that by 2041, 80% of journeys are to be made by walking, cycling and public transport. Other cycling targets set out in the MTS are that by 2041, all Londoners get 2 x 10 minutes of active travel each day and 70% of Londoners will live within 400 metres of the London-wide cycle network.
- 2.4. TfL's [Cycling Action Plan](#) sets out that this will be achieved through three key strands of delivery; streets that enable cycling, making it easier to get around by cycle (through route planning, signage, cycle hire and cycle parking) and promotion of cycling to all Londoners through cycle training and school travel plans.
- 2.5. TfL have published a range of guidance documents to support the delivery of cycling measures including The Healthy Streets Approach, London Cycling Design Standards, [Streetscape Guidance](#) and the [Cycle Parking Implementation Plan](#).
- 2.6. The Council's [Sustainable Transport Strategy \(Local Implementation Plan 3\)](#), has been developed to align with and contribute toward to the delivery of the Mayor's Transport Strategy/ Objectives.
- 2.7. Increasing cycling will also make a vital contribution toward Merton's strategic objectives and policies as set out in the borough's [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), [Air Quality Action Plan](#), and the [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#). The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan sets out a commitment to developing a Cycling Strategy by 2023.

Cycling in Merton

- 2.8. The Government's decarbonising transport strategy sets out the aim that half of all journeys in towns and cities will be cycled or walked by 2030. Approximately 30% of Merton residents' daily trips are already conducted by walking but less than 2% by bicycle. TfL research indicates that a significant number of existing short car journeys in Merton could potentially be made by walking or cycling.
- 2.9. The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets a target for all Londoners to do at least 20 minutes active travel to stay healthy each day by 2041. However, only around a third of Merton residents do 20 minutes of active travel a day and worryingly, there has been a slight decline over the last five years.

Cycle Network and Routes

- 2.10. Merton's existing cycle network comprises of a mix of types of cycle infrastructure of varying quality. The network includes some sections of high quality fully segregated or off-carriageway cycle lanes as well as sections where cycle lanes are only marked on the carriageway. Existing cycle infrastructure in Merton is shown on the map in Appendix A.
- 2.11. The network contains some cross boundary links to neighbouring boroughs, including the cycleways into Central London from Colliers Wood and from Raynes Park to New Malden.
- 2.12. There are some pleasant, traffic free walking and cycling routes though the Borough's parks and open spaces that enable active travel choices by connecting key destinations via convenient shortcuts. In particular the Wandle Trail provides a major active travel route across the borough that connects neighbourhoods including Morden and Colliers Wood and forms part of the National Cycle Network route 20 (NCN20).
- 2.13. Transport schemes such as 20mph speed limits, school streets and low traffic neighbourhoods also contribute toward improving conditions for cycling by reducing car dominance and creating safe and pleasant street environment. The majority of roads in Merton (borough roads) are subject to 20mph speed limits with some TfL roads also to become 20mph over the next 2-3 years. Merton is the leading borough in London for the number of schools located in a school street with 30 schools within school streets. A relatively large proportion of Merton is already

subject to long standing and successful low traffic neighbourhoods particularly around Colliers Wood and South Wimbledon.

- 2.14. Merton's Transport Strategy (LIP3) set outs a delivery plan for the installation of cycle routes for the plan period up to 2025. Some of these schemes have now been implemented but others have not yet been delivered in accordance with the proposed timetable due to lack of TfL funding or other complex issues.
- 2.15. Some additional schemes that were not included within the LIP were delivered through emergency Covid streetscape funding and / or other funding sources. This included 5 LTNs, 28 school streets; segregated cycle lanes on Haydon's Road bridge, along some sections of Church Road, Mitcham and Merton High Street. Cycling improvements were also introduced as part of the reconstruction of Mitcham Bridge (previously known as Bishopsford Rd bridge) with linking segregated cycle lanes provided on London Rd and Bishopsford Road.

Cycle strategy and future network development

- 2.16. It is recognised that cycle infrastructure in Merton requires improvement in many areas and there are significant gaps in the network that create barriers to cycle journeys. In 2012 Transport Initiatives was commissioned by London Borough of Merton Council to carry out a [Cycle Skill Network Audit](#) of the whole borough, which is a detailed survey of all roads and motor traffic free paths in an area, to assess the skill level needed to cycle on them in relative safety. Whilst there have been a number of improvements in the last decade it is recognised that there is further work to do to create a coherent and comprehensive cycle network.
- 2.17. To inform the long-term development of Merton's cycle route network, the Council proposes to develop a detailed cycling strategy for publication in 2023. The cycling strategy will provide an updated assessment of existing routes in accordance with latest design standard and identify where improvements are needed. The strategy will identify gaps in the network and develop detailed feasibility options for schemes.
- 2.18. Potential schemes will be costed and prioritised to better enable the Council to make future bids for available funding from TfL or Government or to seek funding contributions from developers.
- 2.19. A substantial amount of investment and funding will be required to develop a high quality cycle route network which is a significant barrier to the delivery of the required improvements.
- 2.20. The Government has recently announced the formation of Active Travel England, but it is not clear yet what the remit in London will be and whether Government funding for cycle schemes will be available to London Boroughs directly.
- 2.21. The majority of Merton's transport funding during pre-pandemic years, was received from TfL via the Local Implementation Plan (LIP). This included funding of £1.4 million per annum for the delivery of sustainable transport initiatives, with additional funding available for specific cycle schemes under the "borough cycling programme".
- 2.22. The reduction in TfL finances as a result of the Covid pandemic has had a severe impact on the ability of TfL and London Boroughs to deliver schemes that support active travel. Over the last 2 financial years TfL funding to boroughs has significantly reduced and has been allocated on a drip feed basis with extremely tight deadlines which has had a severe impact on the delivery of cycle schemes.
- 2.23. TfL have recently released guidance to boroughs on the development of a LIP delivery plan and funding application for the next two financial years, 23/24 and 24/25. However, considerable uncertainty remains around the likely amount of TfL funding that will be available and allocated to boroughs for cycling for the remainder of 2022/23 and from 2023/24 onwards.
- 2.24. TfL have also introduced a more strategic approach to the LIP delivery plans and have set out that they will prioritise the allocation of funding to cycling schemes that are identified as priority routes in their strategic cycling analysis. In order to receive funding all cycling schemes will be

required to demonstrate that they meet TfL's Cycle Route Quality Criteria based on London Cycle Design Standards best practice guidance.

- 2.25. However, there are some major challenges in providing cycle infrastructure of adequate standard due to the constrained physical road space available and the need to balance the competing needs of road users including pedestrians, those with disabilities and buses.
- 2.26. Some routes which are key cycling desire lines including several identified in TfL's strategic cycling analysis, are on busy and constrained routes that lack the physical space required to accommodate cycle routes. This includes Wimbledon Hill Road and Western Road where there are also no easy alternative parallel routes. On other routes, providing cycle lanes would require the reallocation of road space from other uses, particularly the removal of on carriageway parking and loading provisions which will be controversial and some may consider as determinantal to some users and local businesses.
- 2.27. Wimbledon, Raynes Park and Morden town centres are dominated by heavily trafficked gyratory road systems, which create a barrier to cycling. Major schemes to remodel the road networks would be required to accommodate high quality cycle infrastructure.
- 2.28. Despite the number of challenges in improving the cycle infrastructure in some areas, there are also some potential opportunities that can improve conditions for cyclists.
- 2.29. This includes the removal of physical barriers such as chicane barriers that are located on many of the off-road paths in the borough and which can create a hostile environment and inconvenience for cyclists as well as for pushchairs and wheelchair users. LTN 1/20 sets out that access control measures, such as chicane barriers and dismount signs, should not be used. In 2015 Merton commissioned a review of pedestrian and cycle route barriers and many of the recommendations in this report could be implemented relatively quickly and cheaply in the coming years. On appropriate routes this could involve the replacement of chicane barriers and the introduction of signage and public messaging that supports a "share with care" approach to cyclists using the route. On some routes the path could potentially be enhanced or widened to better accommodate shared use with cyclists. Historically barriers were introduced to prevent cyclists from using PRWs. To allow cyclists to use such paths would have legal implications. Removal of barriers may adversely impact pedestrians particularly children, those with mobility issues and more specifically the visually impaired. There is a great deal to be done to modify behaviour of pedestrians and cyclist when using shared areas. Removal of barriers could also encourage the use of the paths by mopeds, which has become a common nuisance over the last year. There is always a fine balance when considering the various competing needs and level of acceptable risk.
- 2.30. There may also be opportunities to introduce additional low traffic areas that could form part of the cycle network. However, these can be controversial and would be subject to comprehensive assessment and consultation with residents; such measures can be resource intensive and costly.
- 2.31. There are also significant opportunities to progress a number of major cycling schemes on TfL's road network and the Council is keen to work with TfL to further explore this. Potential schemes include an extension of Cycle Way 7 along the A24, which could incorporate a healthy streets scheme on Merantun Way and link to the proposed major redevelopment of the road network in Morden Town Centre. It is worth noting that for some years the Council has been campaigning to TfL to consider the introduction of a footway, cycle lane and bus stops along Merantun Way.
- 2.32. There are also opportunities for the cycle network to be improved through a number of development proposals in the borough. The new Local Plan sets out the requirements for development proposals to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements; maximise opportunities to improve cycling and walking networks through financial contributions and/ or providing new routes across development sites and to fully protect and upgrade any existing routes.

Cycle Parking

- 2.33. To enable cycling it is important that secure and convenient cycle parking facilities are provided at or near homes, schools, stations, workplaces, other public buildings, parks and other destinations. A lack of convenient and secure bicycle storage facilities leaves bicycles vulnerable to theft, vandalism and weather damage, which creates a significant barrier to the uptake of regular cycling.
- 2.34. Many homes in Merton do not have adequate space to accommodate secure cycle parking facilities and this can act as a significant barrier to cycling. Some of the areas in the Borough with the highest potential for increased cycling rates also coincide with housing types that lack space for the storage of bicycles, such as terraced housing and flats. The provision of on-street secure cycle storage units also known as cycle hangers, can better support cycling in these areas. Cycle hangers are designed to protect the cycles from vandalism, theft and the weather and have self-lifting doors and are easy to open.
- 2.35. In 2020/ 2021 the Council installed 20 bicycle hangers around the borough but Merton is currently far behind other boroughs such as Lambeth and Wandsworth in the number of cycle hangers provided. All 21 existing cycle hangers in Merton are fully occupied with many on the waiting list for spaces in these existing units. In addition, over 200 requests have been received by the Council for additional hangers in new locations, indicating that there is substantial demand in the borough.
- 2.36. However, there are several key challenges to the provision of additional cycle hangers including the high costs and lack of available funding. The cost of supply and installation of a unit has increased significantly due to increase in costs of materials and labour and is now £4-5k per unit. The Council has made several recent applications to TfL for cycle parking funding, but this has not been allocated due to the ongoing funding situation at TfL. Some SCIL funding is available but this will only fund a maximum of 10 additional hangers, although it may be possible to apply for additional SCIL funding in future years.
- 2.37. The cost of the ongoing management and maintenance of the cycle hangers are also a consideration. The cost of this service per space is at least £70 per year, which is substantial if fully passed onto residents in rental fee.
- 2.38. This year, the Council has allocated some parking income to subsidise the management and maintenance costs to reduce the annual rental fees payable by residents to £20, in line with the cost of an EV parking permit. The financial implication of continuing this subsidy in future years will have to be considered in light of budget availability, particularly if more hangers are provided, which would increase the total maintenance costs. The Council must, therefore, be mindful of the annual maintenance costs.
- 2.39. A further challenge to the provision of additional cycle hangers is the lack of available road space. Often the only realistic option for provision of hangers in residential streets is the reallocation of existing car parking spaces. Each car parking space can accommodate 2 cycle hangers and a total of 12 bicycles. However, the loss of parking bays in some areas can be controversial and result in objections from residents which means that difficult decisions would need to be taken in terms of priorities.
- 2.40. The Council also installed 20 cycle shelters at 15 schools across the borough during 20/21 and a further 5 in 21/22, but there are still outstanding requests for cycle and scooter storage from a number of schools.

Other Cycling Support Measures

Cycle Training

- 2.41. Cycle training for all is an important aspect of enabling cycling and thus far Merton has provided a comprehensive cycle training service through an external cycle training provider

which have been subject to the appropriate procurement process. This includes offering bikeability cycle training for all school children in the borough and one to one or group training opportunities for adults. The cycle training provider also provides additional support services such as Dr Bike maintenance sessions.

- 2.42. Cycle training is normally fully funded through TfL, but unfortunately TfL announced in July that funding for face-to-face cycle training has been paused pending reaching a long-term funding settlement with Government. Merton has made funding available through the income generated via school streets and LTNs that were implemented using TfL funding. This has ensured continued cycle training; however, due to the limited available funding, one to one cycle training for adults has now been put on hold until further funding is made available.

Cycle Hire

- 2.43. Dockless e-bike hire schemes are expanding across London and becoming an increasingly popular option for cycle trips. A number of neighbouring boroughs already have formal e-bike hire schemes and Kingston and Sutton are planning to launch a scheme in September 2022. Merton is currently in discussions with a number of Operators exploring options for launching a scheme. Setting up formal arrangements with Operators will allow us to better manage any nuisance safety and parking issues, particularly the accumulation of bikes in busy town centre areas.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Not developing a cycle strategy or delivering inadequate improvements to cycle infrastructure would be contrary to the aim of the Council to encourage cycling and will impact on Merton's ability to achieve its strategic objectives in relation to transport, public health, air quality and climate change.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The Cycling Strategy will be subject to the consultation process including engagement with residents, cycling groups, equalities groups and Members and will be subject to approval by Cabinet.
- 4.2. Individual cycle schemes will be subject to the relevant statutory consultation and democratic approval processes.
- 4.3. There is an established relationship between the Council, Merton Cycling Campaign and Merton Residents Transport Group.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. Cycle Strategy to be developed by 2023 for long term implementation up to 2040.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The financial implications for delivering the Government's aim of a "world class cycling network by 2040" will be significant. It is not clear at this stage what level of funding will be available to the borough from TfL and/ or the Government to deliver these ambitious aims. The cycling strategy will develop costed scheme options to better inform decisions around funding priorities.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Individual cycle schemes will be subject to a Traffic Management Order (TMO) statutory consultation.
- 7.2. The provision of Dockless e-bike hire schemes would be subject to the appropriate procurement process.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The Cycling Strategy will be subject to an equalities assessment which will include engagement with relevant consultees including the various user and equalities groups and representatives.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Cycling Strategy and all proposed schemes will give consideration to crime and disorder implications. The Police Designing Out Crime Officers are statutory consultees on all schemes which will require a Traffic Management Order.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The Cycling Strategy will give consideration to risk management and the appropriate level of assessment and any health and safety implications. Most individual cycle schemes will be subject to an independently conducted road safety audit.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- 11.1. Appendix A – Map of existing cycle infrastructure

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Decarbonising transport](#): a better, greener Britain, Department for Transport July 2022
- [Gear Change](#), Department for Transport, 2020
- [Cycle infrastructure design LTN 1/20](#) Department for Transport, 202
- [Mayor's Transport Strategy](#), TfL, 2018
- [Cycling Action Plan](#), TfL, 2018
- [Cycle Parking Implementation Plan](#), TfL, July 2019
- London Borough of Merton's [Sustainable Transport Strategy \(LIP3\)](#) June 2019
- London Borough of Merton's [Air Quality Action Plan 2018-2023](#)
- London Borough of Merton's [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#)
- London Borough of Merton's [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Cycle Skill Network Audit](#)- Merton, Transport Initiatives, 2012

