



Report to December 2020 meeting of the Leighton-Linslade Partnership Committee

Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel

Background:

In February 2020 the Greensand Trust presented the Draft “Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel Masterplan” to the Partnership Committee. The Committee were receptive to the project and its principles, and recommended that each of the constituent authorities adopt the Masterplan.

Leighton-Linslade Town Council have subsequently adopted the Masterplan.

Central Bedfordshire Council are still taking it through the process, and it is expected to be adopted imminently.

A ‘Gear Change’ in Government Policy:

During the summer of 2020 the Government published its “Gear Change – a bold vision for cycling and walking” policy document (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>), and along with the associated Local Transport Note LTN1/20 this has significant implications for the Green Wheel. The Gear Change document represents a significant step-change in Government policy and will ultimately deliver major benefits to cycling and walking infrastructure, with £2bn of new investment over the next 5 years, channelled through local authorities.

However, there needs to be some ‘pain’ before we get the ‘gain’. The Government wishes to see the quality of infrastructure installed on roads drastically improved, in order to see significant increases in the number of people cycling. New cycling design guidance has been published to facilitate this. Inevitably this will make some schemes more complicated and therefore more costly, and other schemes may no longer be feasible.

Implications for the Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel & Masterplan:

Within the Green Wheel Masterplan Action Plan, most ‘within-the-highway cycle routes’ were predicated on creating share use paths which are no longer considered acceptable for funding purposes under the new guidelines (where the routes are off highway then this is less an issue). Cycles are now to be treated as ‘vehicles’ and must be physically separated from pedestrians.

Analysis of the Gear Change policy document and its implications for the Green Wheel Masterplan suggest that, as a minimum, the following are required:

- An update to reflect the ‘enhanced’ policy context;
- The Design Guide section needs to be updated to align with Government policy;
- The Action Plan needs to be reviewed, with some schemes no longer feasible.

The Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel differs from other CBC-endorsed Green Wheels in that it is seeking to create the cycling network alongside the walking network, while other Green Wheel Masterplans have a staged approach, involving the creation of an initial continuous walking route, with cycling rights being added when infrastructure is ready and all legal processes in place. This



option was considered for Leighton-Linslade, but with the ‘inner wheel’ nearly complete it was felt that the target should be a cycling and walking outer wheel (and spokes).

Assessment of the existing Action Plan and identification of proposed routes that will no longer meet Government guidelines is required. It may be necessary to re-consider a phased approach, with a ‘walking wheel’ created before cycling (and horse riding) opportunities are created.

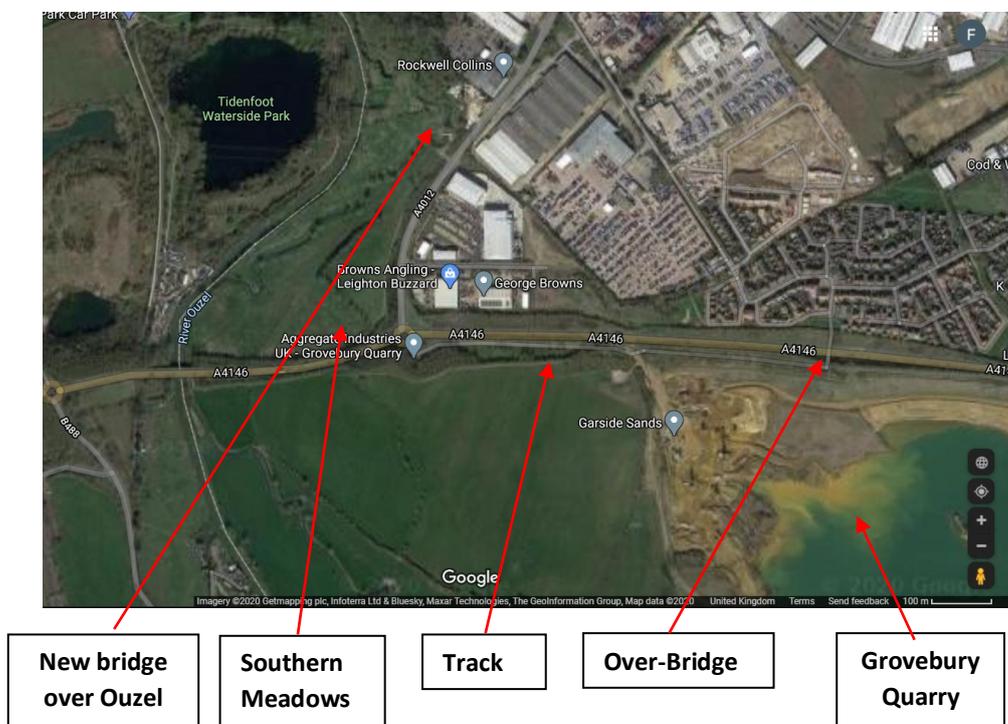
Partnership Committee views on this potential change in direction are welcomed.

Ongoing route delivery

CBC has submitted a bid to draw down earmarked Tranche 2 Emergency Active Travel monies and is awaiting notification from DfT as to whether the five schemes put forward are acceptable.

Improvements to Hockliffe Road, one of the main corridors serving ‘land east’, were included but have not been prioritised for funding. It had been hoped that the funding would allow gaps in pedestrian infrastructure along this road to be filled, and potentially a contribution towards the provision of a cycle track adjacent to the Clipstone Brook. CBC will now look at other ways to bring these works forward.

CBC are also seeking to enable the opening of the A4146 bypass overbridge linking development on the south of the town to Grovebury Quarry, where existing track will link walkers and cyclists through this space and on to the southern meadows where CBC has recently secured the land and created access infrastructure, including a new crossing of the River Ouzel. This would add significant value to what is already a major and long-awaited achievement, and would deliver a significant part of the outer Green Wheel.





New bridge over Ouzel