

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

## Agenda Item 92

**Subject:** Happy Valley Public Right of Way Improvement Scheme

**Date of meeting:** 14 March 2023

**Report of:** Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Culture

**Contact Officer:** Name: Colin Harwood  
Email: colin.harwood@brighton-hove.gov.uk

**Ward(s) affected:** Woodingdean, Rottingdean Coastal

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

- 1.1 The aim of the Happy Valley Right of Way Improvement Scheme is to improve access into and through the Happy Valley Park area by upgrading bridleways and permissive bridleways.
- 1.2 Improvements to the rights of way in this location are identified within the council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). In addition, Falmer Road is identified in the council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
- 1.3 This report sets out proposals for upgrading paths in this area.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Committee agrees to progress with the construction of the path improvements in phases, as outlined in paragraph 3.4 and subject to available funding, commencing with Old Parish Lane.

### **3. Context and background information**

- 3.1 The routes are identified in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) as a green corridor and Falmer Road is identified as a strategic route in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Falmer Road is also recognised by the South Downs National Park as an important link from Rottingdean to the Downs.
- 3.2 In response to the above, officers have developed proposals for upgrading Old Parish Lane, the permissive paths in Happy Valley parallel to Falmer Road, and Falmer Road itself, to improve access to the park and connect the upgraded paths to the wider walking and cycling network.
- 3.3 The purpose of these proposals is to provide paths that are more accessible to all users, including those walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding. By providing an alternative to Falmer Road, they are also intended to provide a safe cycling route.

3.4 A map and more detailed description of the proposals is provided in Appendix 1. This outlines how the proposal has been broken into sections to allow the scheme to progress in phases. These are as follows:

- *Upgrading the Old Parish Lane bridleway*

This existing bridleway runs between Ovingdean Road and Woodingdean Primary School and the proposal would be to upgrade the surface to make it more suitable for use by all.

- *Happy Valley Section 1*

This part of the proposal would extend the existing shared pedestrian and cycle path on Falmer Road north from Brownleaf Road to the signalised pedestrian crossing at the main entrance to Happy Valley Park. The purpose of this would be to close a missing link in the cycle network by connecting to the park.

- *Happy Valley Sections 2 and 3*

This part of the plan would provide a new path parallel with Falmer Road between Brownleaf Road and Warren Road. This would run behind the hedge in Happy Valley and follow the route of an existing permissive bridleway. The current path runs through grassed fields and is not surfaced.

The location of the car park would allow the path to be delivered in two sections to the south and to the north. The proposal would include associated improvements to the pedestrian route into and across the car park. It would also include improvements to the southern entrance to the park to provide an informal pedestrian crossing on Falmer Road and improve visibility.

3.5 It is expected that Old Parish Lane and the paths in Happy Valley would be surfaced in tarmac or a hard surface. This is to maximise the longevity of the path and is consistent with the path north of Woodingdean towards Falmer. The width is planned to be 3m wide, in addition to a soft border alongside this to accommodate equestrians. The design is subject to contractor procurement and may be adapted to fit within the budget available.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

4.1 Potential options include continuing Section 2 and Section 3 on Falmer Road itself rather than behind the hedge in Happy Valley. However, this section does not offer enough width to provide a safe segregated shared path. A path in Happy Valley will enable walkers, cyclists and mobility vehicle users to use a hard surfaced path away from traffic.

4.2 The option of only completing one route (rather than two parallel routes) was considered; however, the proposed improvements would serve different users. Old Parish Lane is a commuter route between Ovingdean and

Woodingdean, as well as a leisure route. Falmer Road serves Woodingdean and Rottingdean and the plans would also extend the shared path route from Longhill School.

## 5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 Local engagement was carried out between Thursday 27 October 2022 – Friday 25 November 2022.

5.2 Information was emailed to:

- Local and neighbouring Ward councillors
- The Active and Inclusive Travel Forum
- The Local Access Forum

5.3 In addition, eight notices were put up along the proposed path routes and letters were posted to addresses who have a direct frontage access where the changes to Falmer Road are proposed.

5.4 Other groups were contacted as a result of the initial engagement; this and further engagement includes:

- The Ovingdean Residents Society were forwarded the information pack.
- The information pack was shared in local groups on social media.
- A site visit was carried out with a member of the Sight Loss Council to discuss plans. Feedback was positive with suggestions for maintaining and widening the shared path on Falmer Road.
- The University of Brighton have circulated the information pack.

5.5 Overall, 33 individuals/groups contacted the council within the time frame given. These are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of Comments**

Positive	Negative	Neither positive or negative
15	9	9

5.6 Responses included in the analysis were those that emailed within the timeframe allowed. Two additional replies were received after the deadline.

5.7 Some responses have been categorised as neither positive or negative. These included queries regarding information sharing, map requests or were not project related.

5.8 Comments were then coded to capture a more detailed review of themes of support, objections or suggestions. One response could have multiple themes. Themes are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of Comment Themes**

<b>Comment</b>		<b>Officer response</b>
<b>Positive</b>		
General support	15	
Improve accessibility	2	These comments are noted and are amongst the aims of the proposal.
Safer	2	
Encourage children to cycle	1	
<b>Negative</b>		
General	8	
Limited / no consultation	3	This point was raised by Ward Members for Woodingdean in reply to an invite to comment on the proposals. Details of the engagement undertaken are provided in paragraphs in 5.1 to 5.4. This level of engagement is considered proportionate for a scheme of this nature.
Already existing path	4	The purpose of the proposals is to upgrade the paths and make them more suitable for a wider range of users.
Waste of money / spend money elsewhere	2	The council allocates funding to schemes following consideration of relevant priorities. The construction of all sections will be subject to funding becoming available.
Cycle path dangerous	3	The plans will be developed at detailed design stage and will be subject to a Road Safety Audit.
Paths not used	1	The purpose of the proposal is to provide more people with the opportunity to travel by active means through more accessible and safe routes with the aim of increasing use of the paths.
Discomfort	1	It is intended to provide a smooth surface to the paths to allow them to be used by all.
<b>Other comments / Suggestions</b>		
Link to Woodingdean-Falmer off -road path	6	There would be scope to continue the path in future as part of a long-term plan.
Tarmac Old Parish Lane	5	In response to feedback, it is now planned that a hard surface will be used to provide a smoother and more durable path.
Pedestrian crossing on Warren Road	5	There are no plans to improve crossings as part of this project; however, future crossing requests will be considered and prioritised through

<b>Comment</b>		<b>Officer response</b>
		the Safer, Better Streets process agreed by this Committee in January 2023.
Improve Old Parish Lane	4	This report recommends that Old Parish Lane is the first section of the proposals to be progressed.
Kissing gates not stiles	2	Where stiles are replaced, this will be with gates, or kissing gates where livestock are present.
Section 3 (Falmer Road north of car park) linked with Section 4 (Old Parish Lane)	2	There would be an option to extend the path to run parallel with Warren Road; however, this is not part of the current proposals.
More routes around Woodingdean needed	2	Current priorities are identified in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
Don't remove trees	2	The path will be routed to avoid trees; however, it may be necessary to cut some vegetation back, including the hedge to improve visibility from the existing crossing on Falmer Road north of Brownleaf Road.
Bus transport request	1	Noted but not applicable to this proposal.
Pedestrian/cycle priority across side roads	1	The proposals are subject to detailed design and current government guidance will be considered in developing these.
Warren Road/Falmer Road junction redesign	1	This is not part of the scope of the current proposals and would require additional funding.
Other - Archaeological	2	The County Archaeologist has been consulted and will be informed prior to excavation in fields.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to agree proposed designs and to progress construction of the paths in sections as funding becomes available.
- 6.2 The project will improve accessibility for multiple users (pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility vehicle users) to and within Happy Valley Park away from traffic.
- 6.3 The recommendations will improve existing conditions on Old Parish Lane bridleway for multiple users mentioned above and equestrians.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The report sets out the various phases of this scheme starting

with the Old Parish Lane bridleway subject to available funding. There is available capital budget of £0.110m from the Carbon Neutral fund for the Access to Parks Rights of Ways Scheme. Additional capital budget of £0.200m will be available as part of the Local Transport Plan 2023/24 programme should it be agreed at Policy & Resources Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

- 7.2 Future phases of this scheme will only commence where there is available funding such as the proposals within the Local Transport Plan 2023/24. Any significant variations to approved capital budgets will be reported as part of the Capital Programme to Policy & Resources Committees including future years' variations and funding source if required.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 23/02/23

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 The council has consulted relevant parties in advance of putting forward its proposals. It will continue to ensure relevant parties are kept informed as the scheme progresses and enters into any required agreements that may be necessary to facilitate the implementation of the scheme.

Name of lawyer consulted: Katie Kam Date consulted: 28/02/23

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out. It is not considered individuals or groups with protected characteristics will be disadvantaged by this scheme. Opportunities for access will be increased for disabled people as a result of a smoother, more stable surface being installed.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 The proposals aim to improve conditions for walking and cycling and therefore encourage more people to travel this way.

- 10.2 No adverse impacts have been identified.

## **11. Public health implications**

- 11.1 As with the sustainability implications above, the proposals to improve conditions for walking and cycling may encourage more people to travel this way with associated public health benefits. The proposals will also improve access to the countryside for a wider range of people.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

1. Map and summary of proposed path improvements