

# EAST BOLDON FORUM

24 March 2020

## Response to South Tyneside Council's on-line LCWIP consultation: Cycle and walking Routes in East Boldon

### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The following suggestions have been identified by the Forum and where applicable will be set out within the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) along with other sustainable transport proposals. However, this paper has been prepared in the first instance as a direct response to the on-line consultation being carried out by South Tyneside Council and as a means of promoting a better dialogue with the Authority over this and other issues.

1.2 The Forum supports the strategic objectives concerning sustainable transport adopted by the Authority, and recognises the importance of these for the future. We remain committed to work constructively with South Tyneside Council and hope that we can be involved meaningfully in the discussions concerning these and other proposals as they affect the Neighbourhood Plan Area, and the immediate adjoining settlements.

### 2.0 Background and general principles:

2.1 East Boldon Neighbourhood Forum area has a number of established walking/cycling routes which connect the Village of East Boldon to the surrounding area and these are relatively well used by the public. Although some of these routes are in need of general improvement, the main issue is one of connectivity. EBNF believe that proposals should be developed which focus on how these routes can be 'joined up' so that a network of **safe**, integrated routes can be developed, which give more direct access to the surrounding area, and in so doing encourage greater use by the public.

2.2 EBNF recognise that people, whether they be cyclists, walkers or joggers etc., are concerned about noise, air quality and the dangers associated with motor vehicles. We believe therefore, that where it is possible to upgrade existing footpaths to bridleways, or created new off road routes away from traffic in order to develop better connectivity etc., then this approach should be adopted. This approach seems to be echoed by the emerging Local Plan.

2.3 The problems associated with developing safe and connected routes through a busy and long established village such as East Boldon is appreciated by EBNF. The high volume of cars passing through the village and the problems of car parking make it particularly difficult for cyclists, and also present many road safety issues for pedestrians. Narrow footpaths next to busy main roads and poorly planned street furniture all contribute to the problem, making it difficult for pedestrian, and effectively preventing shared use. Taking these issues into account, we recognise the importance of identifying the best and safest routes through the village and the need to effectively signpost these.

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## **3.0 Cycleway Proposals:**

### **3.1 Creation of dedicated off road route to Nissan/IAMP, Wardley and the west from the Neighbourhood Plan Area**

3.1.1 There seems a great opportunity to create a defined off road cycling route using established tracks and footpaths that follow the course of the river Don from a point where it passes under the A184 near the Travelling Man Public House at West Boldon, and heads in the general direction of Tiledsheds Railway Crossing and junction of Boker Lane and New Road. As outlined in 3.1.2 below, EBNF believe this route can be extended to give an off road link to the major cycleway that runs alongside the Metro Railway line from East Boldon and follows the disused railway line running toward Whiteleas and West Harton.

3.1.2 The proposed route referred to above, offers the potential to link into it Boldon School and a number of housing estates in Boldon Colliery and East Boldon, however a major obstacle to its off road status exists where it currently joins New Road. Here the footpath is very narrow and the adjacent bus shelter introduces a further hazard. New Road itself is extremely busy and proposals within the emerging Local Plan for new housing will exacerbate the issue of traffic flow. However, there is an opportunity to avoid this junction altogether. The existing footpath already offers the opportunity to leave the river Don and enter the relatively quiet Kipling Avenue, which extends to its junction with Boker Lane. Immediately adjacent to this junction, a footpath runs across the field which lies between Boker Lane and the public Bridleway running north from East Boldon. We believe this footpath should be upgraded to form a new Bridleway (see attached Cycle Routes proposals Map 1), effectively forming an off road link between East and West Boldon.

3.1.3 There is further opportunity to complete the near off road status of this route and link it as close as possible with the railway crossing at Tiledshed and the major cycle route located on the opposite side of the railway line. By creating a new Bridleway to the south of the beck at the bottom of North Farm field, and crossing it with a new footbridge near to the railway line, the busy New Road and its often dangerous junction with Boldon Lane (the B1298) would be entirely avoided.

We hope that this consultation will result in a study to look at the above points in more detail.

### **3.2 Completion of Cycleway along Sunderland Road/A184 and its extension to footpaths leading to Moor Lane.**

3.2.1 There is a need to complete this cycleway in its entirety. The footpath has been widened along the length of the A184 except for a small section to the east of the Greyhound Stadium. The current problem caused by the narrowing of the footpath here is made worse by inadequate maintenance of the hedge, which is often overgrown. This footpath should be widened as a priority to complete this important route.

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3.2.2 A track which has footpath status runs from the A184, near to 9 Wells Gardens, under the metro railway line, and connects to footpaths leading to Moor Lane, and also towards Sunderland AFC Football Academy. This important link lacks signage, the surface is particularly unsuitable for cycling and the bridge over Cut Throat Beck is in a poor state of repair. This track gives good off road connection to Seaburn, Whitburn and Cleadon via the paths to Moor Lane and the Academy. It should be given better recognition (signage) and upgraded as soon as possible.

## 3.3 Improving routes to Whitburn & Seaburn

3.3.1 (3.2.3 on map 1) As a continuation of the track east towards the SAFC Academy referred to in paragraph 3.2.2, to the east of the A1018, a good gravel path continues east around the perimeter of the Academy land towards the footbridge over Cut Throat Beck. It then turns north to join the B1299, opposite West Hall. This track provides excellent off road connectivity to Fulwell, Seaburn and Whitburn, and is well used by cyclists and walkers. It would appear to have no footpath status and is not shown on the South Tyneside Cycle Map. We would welcome a review of the status of this route with a view to giving it the recognition it deserves.

## 3.4 Footpath through Cut Throat Dene to Seaburn (on boundary with Sunderland City Council?)

3.4.1 (3.2.4 on map 1) To continue the route east identified in paragraph 3.3.1 above, from the footbridge mentioned, the route follows the south side of Cut Throat Beck, through the church/cemetery grounds, to the rear of Seafields, ending nearing the sea front. This route, which is also used by cyclists, is actually signed as a public footpath, but does not appear on the OS 25,000 map or the South Tyneside Cycle Map. We would suggest that this route is given recognition when new documents are published, and provided with appropriate signage.

## 3.5 Improving routes through East Boldon Village

3.5.1 (3.3.1 on map 1. Ref 3.5.1 on map referred to cycle storage - now resolved) The issues outlined in 2.3 above are difficult to resolve and the route through East Boldon Village along the A184 is particularly difficult as far as cycling is concerned. However, a safer, less congested route from east to west can be found via Gordon Drive, South Lane and the Bridle Path, leading to Hylton Lane. Here, there is the potential to create or link into routes leading to Nissan and IAMP. With good signage, this route could be promoted and cyclists encouraged to bypass Front Street and the busy A184.

3.5.2 (3.3.2 on map 1) Connecting this route, where it starts at Gordon Drive, to the cycleway which enters the village and runs alongside the A184 from Sunderland, is more problematic. Residential car parking in the village along both sides of this road cause considerable difficulty for cyclists, as do the road markings which cause the road to narrow into single lanes. By necessity, cyclists are required to cross onto the West bound carriageway where the cycleway enters the village and the footpath narrows and prevents

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shared use. A crossing point should be clearly defined and signposted. Road marking should be revised and a defined cycle lane should be created to link the crossing point with Gordon Drive, helping on the way to safely navigate the busy traffic light controlled junction at Blacks Corner.

3.5.3 (3.3.3 on map 1) Retracing the route in the opposite direction toward Sunderland from Gordon Drive can also be difficult. Negotiating Blacks Corner junction can be dangerous for cyclists wishing to go straight ahead as a result of the large volume of traffic turning left into Station Road. Beyond this junction the single lane structure of the road can also be problematic. The opportunity should be taken to look at this area and make it more friendly and safe for cyclists.

3.5.4 (3.3.4 on map 1) Linking the cycle route from Sunderland as it enters the village to the Metro Station and the cycleway beyond which runs to Tilesheds and Whiteleas, needs to be defined and signposted. A route via Nately Avenue and St. Johns Terrace currently offers the most appropriate connection. NB. The end connection from St Johns Terrace and Glencourse shown on maps is not possible as the footpath is not continuous from Glencourse to the Metro Station.

3.5.5 (3.3.5 on map 1) Should the field at the south end of St. Johns Terrace be developed at a future date, a dedicated and direct cycleway/footpath through the proposed development, linking St Johns Terrace to the cycleway running to Sunderland via the cricket club drive, should be a requirement.

## 3.6 Safe Routes to School and Cycleway connecting Metro Station to Western Edge of Village.

3.6.1 In order to provide a route that connects the proposed South Lane/Bridle Path/Dipe Lane route with the village shops, the Metro station and the old mineral line traffic free path (with onward connectivity to South Shields, Cleadon, Whitburn & Seaburn), the following route is suggested:

3.6.2 From South Lane, a route should be identified which runs along the lane between the Infant School and Prospect Terrace, crossing the A184 at the pedestrian crossing and entering Grange Park from Grange Terrace. The route would leave Grange Park via the Hawthorns, turning north to join Langholm Road and then east to join Station Approach. This route should also be considered as a major route to school, connecting as it does the Infant, Junior and the Nursery school.

3.6.3 To provide connectivity for residents on the north side of Front Street, a branch route could be extended from the Grange Park/Grange Terrace entrance along North Lane and North Road to Boker Lane. This would link up with the existing bridleway from North Road to the New Road/Benton Lane junction and residents in the Pastures.

These routes would also facilitate routes for both walking and cycling to both the Infants School and Junior School.

NB: this particular suggestion is not indicated on the proposed cycling map provided..

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## **3.7. Improvements to Moor Lane**

3.7.1 (3.4.1 on map 1) Moor Lane does not have a footpath of any description. There are several dangerous blind bends and the speed limit increases to 40 miles per hour for most of its length. Yet this route is used by cyclists, runners, walkers and horse riders. It links the village with important footpaths and cycle routes to Cleadon, Whitburn, Seaburn and the coast beyond. Much could be done to improve its safety and encourage greater use of it and of the wider network of paths which connect to it. The Boldon Flats Bird Sanctuary is on the doorstep of the village but Families are not encouraged to visit, mostly as a result of the dangers mentioned above. There is a compelling case for major improvements, so that people and not cars are given priority.

3.7.2 EBNF believes that there should be a major consultation with the community to determine what should be done.

## **3.8 Consideration of surface treatment and maintenance of cycleways**

3.8.1 EBNF has been requested to raise the issue of the type of material being specified for off road footpaths/cycleways. A number of members have asked that material suitable for more standard bike tyres rather than those fitted to mountain bikes should be specified. This is very important given the growing popularity of e-bikes and the increase in cycling generally as a pass time.

3.8.2 The need to maintain cycle routes has also been identified as a concern. EBNF appreciate the financial constraints that South Tyneside Council currently operate under however, we would ask that the adequate short and long term maintenance of cycleways are built into future budgets.

3.8.3 We also request that cyclists are encouraged to report maintenance issues, perhaps by the creation of an on-line, user friendly, map based system and similar to the one being used in the current on-line consultation.

## **4.0 Walking Route proposals:**

### **4.1 Footpath between Boker Lane and bridleway from North Road to junction of New Road/Benton Lane.**

4.1.1 The existing public footpath which runs east-west across the northern end of the west field at North Farm, should be upgraded to bridleway status. This will direct pedestrians and cyclists away from the heavy traffic and poor air quality on New Road, thereby improving road safety and health and wellbeing issues.

4.1.2 This is also an important element of our suggested through village cycle route, to improve overall connectivity - see paras 3.1.2 and 3.1.3.

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## 4.2 Other footpaths in East Boldon

4.2.1 The attached maps (North Farm Paths map and Quarry Hill Wood map) indicate the paths which the Forum have been giving serious & lengthy consideration to, on behalf of the community (indicated light brown on the Quarry Hill Wood map, & red on the North Farm paths map). Those paths of most interest to us are Mundles Lane; the lane heading south starting between No 12 Belle Vue Villas and No 14 South Lane; paths adjacent to Quarry Hill Wood; and the established paths on North Farm fields.

4.2.2 These are long established paths, which are well used and highly valued by the community. The Forum consider that the Council should do everything possible to ensure that the future of these paths is preserved, for public amenity. The objective is to maintain free and open community access to the countryside and the green belt, maintaining leisure opportunities and community wellbeing.

4.2.3 The Forum (and the community) are reviewing the existing network of established rural paths, in order to determine if it is appropriate to submit any PROW applications to the council.

4.2.4 The Forum fully support the effective maintenance & signage of existing Public Rights of Way

## 4.3 Future development

4.3.1 In the future, when new housing and related development proposals come forward and planning applications are submitted to the Council, it is essential that the Public Rights of Way Officer and appropriate Highways Engineers are fully consulted as a formal part of the planning application process for every new housing or regeneration project, no matter how small.

4.3.2 All resulting comments relating to public footpath and cycle route opportunities, both within the site and linkages from & beyond the site, must be fully taken into consideration as part of the decision making process.