**Creating a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan for Steyning, Bramber and Beeding**

*Briefing to Parish Councils, March 2024*

***Rationale***

Over the last few years a whole range of ‘active travel’ initiatives have been suggested for the Steyning, Bramber & Beeding area to encourage people to leave their cars at home, and walk and cycle more. These include introducing a 20mph zone in Steyning & Bramber, installing improved bike racks in Steyning High Street, creating zebra crossings near schools, reducing speed limits on the bypass, and upgrading the White Bridge Link across the river. So far, and for a variety of different reasons, progress has been slow. But there is no doubt that many residents would welcome a shift in this direction – particularly parents with young children who need to get safely to and from school.

Up to now, these initiatives have been considered individually, with working parties set up to pursue some of these ideas, but others being progressed through a more ad hoc and piecemeal approach.

To provide a more holistic and strategic approach the suggestion has been raised of developing a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Steyning, Bramber and Upper Beeding – as the three communities are so close together, and interlinked.

The concept of creating LCWIPs has been actively promoted by the government as part of its strategy to encourage more active travel. The County Council has created one for West Sussex as a whole, and the District Council has produced one for Horsham District, focusing mainly on the Horsham area. The suggestion is to go down to the next level and create a more specific and fine-grained plan for our local community.

The purpose of an LCWIP is to set out an overall strategic framework for future investments in cycling and walking infrastructure. It does not come with any funding guaranteed. But it provides an agreed set of priorities so that when resources do become available they can be directed in ways to achieve the maximum benefit for the local community.

This is particularly relevant to Steyning given the Glebe Farm development, which is one of the potential schemes outlined in Horsham’s draft District Plan. If this goes ahead, it will release significant CIL funds for local infrastructure development. So having an agreed LCWIP already in place would be very timely.

***What is an LCWIP?***

The key outputs of LCWIPs are:

* A plan for walking and cycling which identifies preferred routes and core zones for further development. In a local context this might include small improvements, such as improved crossings and lighting, as well as more ambitious schemes to create new cycling and walking routes.
* A prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment.
* A report which sets out the underlying analysis carried out and provides a narrative which supports the identified improvements.

The government has published guidelines on how to develop an LCWIP. They involve

* Agreeing the scope of the plan, and setting out roles and responsibilities.
* Deciding on which stakeholders to involve and how to engage with the public.
* Gathering relevant information.
* Agreeing a decision-making mechanism to sign off on the plan.

The guidelines are designed for local authorities to implement, so are quite detailed and elaborate. The suggestion is to come up with a lighter touch version of the process suitable for the parish level that can be developed by a Working Party of volunteers, rather than council officials or paid consultants.

Several local residents have already put their names forward to join the group\* and some initial conversations have begun on how to take the process forward.

It is still very early days. But the hope is to get moving on the process over the summer, so a final plan can be agreed before the end of 2024.

***Suggested governance arrangements***

To provide it with the necessary legitimacy, the suggestion is that the LCWIP Working Party should be set up under the auspices of the Steyning and District Community Partnership’s Sustainable Travel Committee *(note, this is still tbc).*

The District Partnership is well placed to take on this role as it already has representation from the Parish, District and County Councils on this committee, as well as local stakeholders such as Steyning Grammar School, Greening Steyning and the Business Chamber. It is an approach that has worked well in the case of the White Bridge Link project, and will allow the Working Party to tap into local expertise and enthusiasm, and be responsive to local views and concerns.

***Getting Parish Council support for the process***

Having explicit Parish Council buy-in to the LCWIP process will be essential for its success and for ensuring the legitimacy of the plan that will eventually emerge.

The LCWIP Working Party is now looking to engage with each of the Parish Councils to:

* Explain what the Working Party has in mind in creating an LCWIP
* Get their support for the process and any advice on how to develop the plan
* Agree how the Parish Councils would like to be involved in the creation and sign-off of the final plan

The Working Party has been invited to give a presentation on the LCWIP idea to Upper Beeding and Bramber Parish Councils at their full council meetings in March, and to Steyning Parish Council at their April meeting.

*\* At present, LCWIP Working Party members include: Sarah Collins, Sally Barnard, Geoff Barnard, Mike Croker, Russell Barnes, Michael Owen and Ray Powell. We expect to be expanding this group over time.*