

# Chester Cycling Campaign Response to CIL consultation – Cheshire West & Chester

– March 2016

## 1. Introduction

Chester Cycle Campaign welcomes the principle of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy proposals in Cheshire West and Chester Borough. If adopted appropriately they offer the potential of a valuable source of funding enabling the development of high quality infrastructure to support and encourage cycling and walking in all parts of the borough as part of an overall strategy to increase the level of sustainable and low carbon travel modes for visitors and residents alike.

## 2. Context

Cheshire West and Chester, as a council, has long supported greater use of cycling as part of an overall strategy to reduce car use across the borough. A number of strategic documents adopted by the Council including the Cheshire West and Chester Cycling Strategy (adopted in 2013) have outlined the various mechanisms through which increasing usage of cycles can be achieved including the planning process.

Such policies are also in line with the Government's National Policy Framework

### 2.1 National Policy Planning Framework

*Section 4 para 35:-*

*“Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to:*

- *Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies;*
- *Give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and have access to high quality public transport facilities;*
- *Create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing home zones;*
- *Incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles; and*
- *Consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.'*

### 2.2 The Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan

*The Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan states:*

*Part 1:*

*Chapter 3: Strategic Objectives*

## *Social*

*SO8: Create stronger healthier communities by enabling leisure, recreational and community facilities and promoting walking and cycling*

### **Chapter 5: Spatial Strategy**

#### *Strat 1: Sustainable Development*

*The Local Plan seeks to enable development that improves and meets the economic, social and environmental objectives of the borough in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Proposals that are in accordance with relevant policies in the Plan and support the following sustainable development principles will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise*

*Explanation.....*

*5.17 The sustainable development principles reflect the Council's shared sustainability objectives and priorities set out within the Council's Sustainable Communities Strategy as updated by 'Altogether Better: An interim partnership plan, July 2012' and Council Plan 'Altogether better, the Council Plan 2011-15'.*

#### *4 Strat 10: Transport and Accessibility*

*New development will be required to demonstrate that:*

- *Appropriate provision is made for access to public transport and other alternative means of transport to the car*

*New developments will be expected to provide adequate levels of car and cycle parking in accordance with the Council's parking standards, taking account of:*

- *Opportunities will be sought to extend and improve access to local footpath and cycle networks, including greenways, canal towpaths and the Public Rights of Way networks.*

*Explanation*

*5.85 The Cycling Strategy sets out the Council's plans and proposals to make cycling easier, cheaper, safer, attractive and more convenient over the next 15 years. It sets out standards for cycle parking in new developments. An aim of the strategy is to ensure that all new development and housing that is built close to our existing cycle networks is linked to the network, and that new buildings have suitable cycle facilities. In line with actions set out in the Council's Cycling Strategy, planning obligations and conditions will be used to extend and improve access to local cycle and pedestrian networks and to make sure that new developments possess a high standard of facilities for cyclists.*

### **Chapter 7: Social**

#### *SOC 5 Health and well-being*

*In order to meet the health and well-being needs of our residents proposals will be supported that:*

- *promote safe and accessible environments and developments with good access by walking, cycling and public transport*

## **Chapter 8: Environment**

### **ENV 6 High quality design and sustainable construction**

*The Local Plan will promote sustainable, high quality design and construction.*

*Development should, where appropriate:*

- *Ensure ease of movement and legibility, with priority for pedestrians and cyclists*

## **Chester District Local Plan - Policies Retained after 29th Jan 2015**

### **Chapter 4: Transport**

#### **Cycling**

##### **Policy TR 5**

*A network of safe and convenient cycle routes will be developed as shown on the Proposals*

### **2.3 'Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cycling Strategy' (adopted in 2013) :-**

*'The need for a more pro-active approach to using the Local Development Framework and Planning Development Management process. This is to ensure that a high standard of cycling provision is provided in new developments and housing and funding is secured through measures such as CIL and Section 106 agreements to improve access to local cycle networks.'*

There is also reference in all documents to the need for carbon reduction for transport, including in the 'Monitoring Framework' in Section H of the CWaC Local Plan.

## **3. Implications for Community Infrastructure Levy**

Given the above stated policy objectives, resources to achieve them need to be identified. Every opportunity should be sought to obtain these from external sources (central government funding and contributions from developments) as well as from the extremely limited internal resources available to the council for this purpose.

3.1 Chester Cycling Campaign is concerned that the proposals as set out in the draft CIL charging rates currently under consultation miss a valuable opportunity to access the relatively small sums required for cycling infrastructure developments. These, once in place, will encourage greater use of cycles as a means of transport for a range of purposes whether for employment or leisure.

3.2 A number of Government studies have confirmed that the cost benefit analysis for improving and developing cycling facilities have a return far greater than virtually any other category of transport spending.

3.3 The Campaign notes that a large range of development types as set out in the draft CIL charging rates have been exempted from making any contribution at all towards the sort of infrastructure required to meet the strategic objectives outlined above.

This will leave a significant shortfall in resources available for developing the sort of infrastructure that, in overall terms, is relatively inexpensive, but once in place, will be able to yield significant benefits not least of which is the encouragement of the local population to become more active in their day to day living, whether accessing work, leisure opportunities or shopping facilities.

3.4 A very modest “sustainable transport mode” charge could be made on all those development types currently rated at £0 per sq. Mtr. without compromising the economic viability of such developments.

3.5 We would propose that the following development types be required to contribute to this “Sustainable Transport fund” at a basic rate of **£15** per sq mtr with that amount deemed to be included within the larger rates already proposed for a small number of development types.

- Residential – Zone 2
- Apartments (Whole Borough)
- Hotels (Whole Borough)
- Residential Institutions (Whole Borough)
- Retail – Zone 5
- Offices (Whole Borough)
- General Industrial Use (Whole Borough)
- Storage or distribution (Whole Borough)
- All other uses (Whole Borough)

3.6 Many of the development types listed above will have employees, a significant proportion of which may be part time and locally based to the development. They are likely to be relatively poorly paid and thus more likely to be attracted to using bicycles to get to work.

3.7 The Council is facing significant shortfalls across a number of areas of its responsibilities and it is difficult to see, in the light of this situation, how the necessary improvements to the quality and extent of the walking and cycling networks in all areas of the Borough can be funded and implemented. Such improvements being necessary to provide the pleasant environment safely away from busy, polluted and congested streets that will attract significantly more people to cycling in their day to day lives.

3.8 The proposed ‘Sustainable Travel Fund’ generated from the CIL charging rates would enable improvements to take place as developments place ever greater demands upon the already overloaded infrastructure.

#### **4. A few proposed additions to the Draft Regulation 123 list to accompany the CIL Policy.**

The Campaign suggests that the following improvements would go a considerable distance towards the enhancement of key routes from various parts of Chester to the City Centre to encourage greater cycling and walking levels in the city. Together with proposals for improvements in other areas they could form the basis of an action plan that would be related to the Cycling Strategy adopted by the Council.

- A shared use crossing of the River Dee from the Lache/Westminster Park/Curzon Park areas to the city centre.
- A shared use crossing across the River Dee from Saighton/Huntingdon area across to Handbridge/Queens Park areas and on to the Chester Business Park and the City Centre.
- A safe pedestrian and cycle route to negotiate the railway line that divides the Hoole, Newton and Upton areas from the employment and retail opportunities available in the City Centre.
- An off road connection linking the Millennium Greenway to Hoole Road running in parallel to Ermine Road but on the boundary of Railway land.
- An off road connection running parallel to Lightfoot Street to connect Hoole Bridge and the above link to the Greenway to Railway Approach and access to the Canal towpath strategic cycle route.
- Improvements to crossing points on various arterial routes into the city to allow safe passage for cyclists and pedestrians to access schools, shops and recreational facilities including:
  - Newton Lane/Hoole Road/Hamilton Street junction: Remodelling of existing signalled pedestrian traffic light crossing across Hoole Road to a 4 way traffic light crossing including pedestrian/cyclist phase at Hamilton Street/Newton Lane junction – this would a safe link between the Millennium Greenway and the Canal routes and additionally facilitate bus routes turning right onto the busy Hoole Road towards the City Centre
  - Rock Lane, Chester- connecting Liverpool Road and Park Gate road facilitating safe negotiation of the above busy roads – repair works to retaining walls to be funded to enable the route to be re-opened.

There are almost certainly potential schemes in the other major settlements within the borough to improve cycling infrastructure but members of the campaign are not sufficiently familiar with those areas to be able to comment usefully on potential schemes apart from the Ellesmere Port area – suggestions for potential inclusion on this Draft Regulations 123 list include:

- Sutton Hall Farm, Ledsham - improvement of cycle routes to Hooton Station and to Ellesmere Port.

- Completion of the Ellesmere Port Greenway. (already begun)
- Hooton on the site of the Old Roften Works Hooton improvements to the Wirral Way and access to Hooton Road and to the station.

In conclusion, our proposals set out above should help to assemble a significant proportion of the necessary funding to ensure a cohesive implementation of cycling infrastructure improvements right cross the borough with consequent increases in levels of usage.