



Highways Committee
10 December 2013

**Report from the Head of
Transportation**

For Information

Wards Affected:
All

Brent Cycle Vision - Ways to Wembley

Forward Plan Ref:

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report informs the Committee about Brent's "Ways to Wembley" cycle funding bid, which was submitted to the GLA and TfL at the beginning of July 2013.
- 1.2 Outer London boroughs were invited to submit expressions of interest to become "cycle mini-Hollands" and receive funding for cycle improvements that will make a step change in infrastructure development and encourage cycling in their boroughs.
- 1.3 This report outlines the content of the bid submitted, the response received from the Mayor's office and the next stages of the process as agreed with the Mayor's cycling commissioner.
- 1.4 The report also highlights concerns regarding the way in which cycle route improvements will be selected and delivered, and how and when the funding for these improvements will be released.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee notes that Brent has been very successful in reducing numbers of serious and fatal collisions but is keen to improve cycle safety further by securing investment in infrastructure and training.
- 2.2 That the Committee supports the proposed TfL investment in cycle infrastructure and approves Brent's approach and priorities for enhancing cycling infrastructure through our "Ways to Wembley" document.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes initial reservations set out in Section 6.2 regarding the method by which cycle infrastructure funding will be allocated, and by which priority routes and infrastructure will be identified and delivered.

- 2.3 That the committee approves limited further investigative study work into cycle routes and bridge locations, focussed on both strategic and local cycle routes.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Mayor described in his Vision for Cycling how he will spend more than £900 million to promote and improve cycling in London. GLA is looking to identify three, possibly four outer London boroughs to make into “mini-Hollands” for the bicycle, with very high spending concentrated on relatively small areas for the greatest possible impact. There will be £100 million available for the programme.
- 3.2 The Cycling Commissioner for London, Andrew Gilligan, wrote to all outer London boroughs, inviting them to bid for these funds. Boroughs were encouraged to use international best practice to help them shape their proposals.
- 3.3 Successful boroughs needed to demonstrate significant political and officer commitment to genuinely significant change. GLA were looking for radicalism and imagination within the proposals.

4.0 Brent’s Cycle Submission

- 4.1 Brent is committed to increasing use of cycling as a preferred mode of transport, and in making cycling safer through infrastructure investment. Brent has been very successful in reducing numbers of serious and fatal collisions from 350 per year in 1991 to 86 in 2012, beating both national and Greater London reduction targets by a significant margin.
- 4.2 Brent’s highways services contractor also takes cycle safety seriously. Every lorry over 7.5 tonnes that they use on Brent’s streets has been fitted with safety features such as side guards; near-side blind-spot cameras and; reversing cameras. Their vehicles are also fitted with sensors to detect nearby objects, as well as an audible ‘turn left’ warning. All highway contractor HGV drivers have also undergone cycle safety training, which allows them to experience the vulnerability a cyclist can experience.
- 4.3 There have been no fatal cycle accidents in Brent since 2009/10. However, the numbers of serious injuries to cyclists has increased in the past few years and we are keen to ensure that this problem is addressed through investment in cycle infrastructure and training. Following the Mayor’s request for Boroughs to set out their plans for cycle improvements, Brent’s approach and priorities were described within our “Ways to Wembley” Mini-Hollands Cycle submission, which is attached.
- 4.4 The Brent Mini-Holland Cycle submission discussed why Brent would be a good candidate for cycle investment, with low modal share when compared to other Boroughs and some key barriers to cycling formed by numerous underground and overground rail lines, waterways and the North Circular route.

4.5 Wembley was put forward as the geographic and economic centre of Brent, and it was explained that the benefits of unlocking this part of the borough will ensure that the regeneration benefits are wider than just Wembley.

4.6 In total, four Underground lines (Bakerloo, Jubilee, Metropolitan and Piccadilly) and four rail lines (London Overground North London Line, Chiltern Railways, West Coast Mainline and the Dudding Hill freight line) pass through the Borough. In addition, the North Circular passes through the centre of the borough, and there are a number of waterways causing additional severance including the Grand Union Canal and River Brent, and its tributaries which connect to the Brent reservoir. These features combine to create significant barriers for cyclists.

4.7 Our bid discussed how we would look to increase cycling participation amongst Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, where cycling is substantially lower than among other groups.

4.8 Our cycle vision included a network of new routes, these include:

- The Jubilee/Metropolitan Superhighway - a direct route between Wembley and Willesden to include a “green bridge” crossing over the North Circular.
- The Jubilee/Metropolitan Quietway - to run parallel to the Jubilee line between Northwick Park and Wembley Park, and again between Dollis Hill station and Kilburn station.
- The Bakerloo Superhighway - along the Harrow Road between Wembley and Kensal Green towards central London; and
- An Orbital Quietway - to run along the canal between Alperton and Stonebridge Park, and also along the River Brent.

4.6 In preparing the bid, meetings were held with GLA and senior officers met with the Cycling Commissioner on a number of occasions to discuss the proposals. The Leader of the Council also attended a meeting of Brent Cyclists at which the Mayor’s Vision for Cycling was presented. GLA gave very positive feedback about the level of both officer and Member support for the proposals in Brent.

5.0 **Outcomes of GLA’s Review of Bids**

5.1 The Mayor’s Office reviewed all of the funding bids received from Boroughs. Brent’s bid was not successful in being shortlisted for mini-Hollands funding, but GLA wrote to Brent to state that they were minded to award substantial amounts of funding anyway to take forward the objectives within the bid.

5.2 Officers met with Andrew Gilligan on 21st October to discuss how the bid would be taken forward. There was support from Andrew Gilligan for two routes:

- A route following the Jubilee Line linking Wembley with Neasden, Willesden and Kilburn; and
- An orbital route paralleling the North Circular linking to Brent Cross.

Both of these routes are important strategic corridors, but we identified a number of alternative corridors within the Borough that are equally important as local connectors. There was no indication that any of these routes would be supported or attract funding through the Mayor’s cycle initiative.

5.3 The Cycling Commissioner wanted to see more detail on where the cycle bridges across the North Circular would be and what they can do for cycling. Two options are being considered as locations for bridges across the North Circular:

- At Neasden close to the Jubilee Line; and
- Further south, linking to the Shri Swaminaryan Mandir temple.

The latter, which is known as the Green Bridge, is a priority for Brent due to the strong links it would create between Brent growth areas and employment centres. It would provide excellent links between Stonebridge and St Raphaels and onwards to the Old Oak Common opportunity area, as well as enabling walking and cycling trips to the Shri Swaminaryan Mandir temple and providing a more direct “quiet” route to Wembley via the Brent River park.

5.4 The Cycle Commissioner expressed a preference for the route via Neasden, which effectively forms a cycle corridor between Central London and Brent. The Cycle Commissioner felt that strategic cycle routes to and from Central London were key and that a bridge further north bridging across the North Circular at Neasden would be preferred as it would be on a more direct line to Central London. Although a better cycle and pedestrian connection at Neasden would be desirable and supported by Brent, a Green Bridge further south of this location fits better with local priorities.

5.5 In considering the options for bridging the North Circular, officers have reiterated in subsequent correspondence with GLA that our local priorities are for a Green bridge crossing to link to the Shri Swaminaryan Mandir temple. It was emphasised that the local cycle connections and employment links that this structure would deliver are very important to the Borough’s growth aspirations and would encourage local cycle trips. It was stressed that we are keen to keep this plan on the agenda and look to see how it might be better linked to more strategic long-distance routes to central London.

6.0 **Next Steps**

6.1 GLA are holding discussions with all Boroughs during autumn 2013, and funding will be awarded at three levels:

1. Boroughs not shortlisted for mini-Hollands, but would be awarded funding anyway to take forward their objectives (Brent falls into this category)
2. Boroughs shortlisted for mini-Hollands but not successful in being part of the final selection
3. Boroughs which are one of the 3-4 boroughs finally selected for mini-Hollands funding

6.2 Brent officers are very supportive of the Mayor’s cycle initiative. It complements sustainable transport, employment opportunities, public health and regeneration objectives for the Borough as well as contributing to improving cycle safety. At the same time we have some concerns about its delivery. These concerns are as follows:

- a) Officers are concerned that there is a focus on strategic routes into central London rather than more local cycle routes, which is where the greatest growth in cycling is likely to be achieved – only a certain population of our residents work in central London and we believe that the proportion that could be persuaded to cycle to central London would not be as great as the number of local cycle trips that we could encourage through local infrastructure investment;

- b) Selection of routes and local priorities does not appear to be as collaborative as expected, with priorities being set and defined by the Mayor's office rather than being discussed and agreed in partnership with Brent;
- c) TfL have appointed consultants to develop the feasibility and design of local cycle routes, which intimates that Boroughs will not have the freedom and flexibility to commission and develop cycle projects on Borough roads – Brent has recently entered into the London Highways Alliance contract, which has the flexibility to enable delivery of consultancy services and we are concerned as to why alternate consultants are being used outside of the LoHAC framework;
- d) We are also concerned about decision making powers and processes by which local councillors and communities will be engaged given that design consultants are being employed by TfL to develop schemes on local roads; and
- e) At present, none of the boroughs have received any of the published funding and there is no indication of how and when any funding will be made available and what the role of Boroughs will be in utilising and receiving this funding. To date all development costs have been borne by the Boroughs and we have been given no indication as to when funding will be made available.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There will be further staff time, and hence costs, required to develop the proposals in more detail. These costs will be met from existing resources. These additional costs may be reimbursed by the funding being made available, but as yet, the process for this re-imburement is unclear.

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this information report.

10.0 Diversity Implications

- 10.1 The public sector duty set out at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that protected characteristic. Members must consider the effect that implementing a particular policy will have in relation to equality before making a decision. There is no prescribed manner in which the equality duty must be exercised. However, the council must have an adequate evidence base for its decision making.
- 10.2 The cycle vision document contains information on a vision for how Brent would look to increase cycling participation amongst Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, where cycling is substantially lower than among other groups. This is considered to be a positive benefit for BME groups, who would directly benefit from targeted training and would therefore be encouraged to participate in healthier travel modes.
- 10.3 There is potentially positive benefit across many of the protected characteristic groups from enhancement of cycle infrastructure in the Borough, however for the sake of this assessment the benefit has been considered to be at worst neutral.

Background Papers

Ways to Wembley – Brent Council's submission for a mini Holland, July 2013.

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