

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 DECEMBER 2009

TWYDALL ACCESSIBILITY SCHEME

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Summary

This report requests the Committee to consider and comment on the Twydall Accessibility Scheme before the Gateway 3 Contract Award is considered at Cabinet in February 2010.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The implementation of the Twydall Accessibility Scheme would be funded through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) settlement for the years 2009 / 2010 and 2010 / 2011. There is sufficient funding available from this financial settlement, when account is taken of the agreement of Sustrans to provide a grant of 50% of the project capital cost upto a maximum amount of £330,000.
- 1.2 The probable expenditure profile of the scheme for the two financial years is 2009 / 2010 £250,000 and 2010 / 2011 £410,000.
- 1.3 The proposed accessibility scheme meets the following Local Area Agreement Targets:
 - NI 47 People killed and seriously injured in road traffic accidents
 - NI 56 Obesity among primary school age children in year 6.
 - NI175 Access to services and facilities by walking, cycling and public transport
 - NI 198 Children travelling to school – modal shift to sustainable transport

2. Background

- 2.1 Since 2004 there have been on-going discussions with Ward Councillors and residents concerning the introduction of a traffic

calming scheme within that part of Twydall bounded by the A228 (Ito Way) - Beechings Way - Pump Lane (its eastern side) and the A2 Watling Street/London Road.

- 2.2 The reasons for, and purpose behind, the proposed scheme was one of reducing through vehicular traffic use of the local roads and reducing general traffic speed to around 20 mph; all in the interests of improving road safety and pedestrian accessibility.
- 2.3 The scheme prepared towards the end of 2008, proposed the introduction of traffic calming measures on practically all roads within the identified area, through the provision of speed cushions, in sets of 2 or 3 dependent on the road width.
- 2.4 The estimated cost at that time of the proposed scheme, based on term contract rates, was in the order of £450,000 - £475,000. The proposed method of funding was to be through the Councils own resources; for which £330,000 was included in the 2009 / 2010 Budget.
- 2.5 A review of the scheme, in late 2008 / early 2009, identified that the number of sets of speed cushions could be reduced by their removal from a significant number of residential roads, on the basis of their layout, extent and on-street parking. It also identified a further reduction in such measures by considering the total layout of the total street scene and the introduction of horizontal deflection measures.
- 2.6 In mid-2009 the review was extended to include Sustrans 'Links to Schools' programme through which grant funding for schemes improving pedestrian and cyclist accessibility in areas such as Twydall was available; offered the opportunity for a Partnership with Sustrans. The outcome of this resulted in the scheme being amended to include all residential streets to the north of Beechings Way and east of Bloors Lane and Beechings Way / Bloors Lane from Eastcourt Lane to The Splashes. Also specific measures throughout the area concerned with further improvements of pedestrian and vehicular accessibility.
- 2.7 The proposed scheme, including all the additions referred to at paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6, was the subject of the recent public consultation.

3. Options

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The proposals within the scheme, for which options need to be considered, for the reason that their provision has been questioned by either Ward Councillors or residents through their response as part of the Public Consultation are:

- (a) The provision of Zebra Crossings, and
- (b) The extent of the 20mph Zone on Beechings Way.

3.2 Consideration Of Scheme Proposals

Zebra Crossings

- 3.2.1 The proposed scheme provides for the introduction of humped Zebra Crossings on Featherby Road at its junctions with Chilham Road and Allington Road, and Eastcourt Lane at its junction's with Gouldhurst Road and Elmfield / Brenchley Road. Requested, by parents whose children attend local schools, through Ward Councillors.

Advantages

1. Provide a facility through which pedestrians can establish priority over vehicular traffic in order that they 'may cross the road' in safety.
2. Provide a safer point of crossing than the general highway.

Disadvantages

1. Zebra crossings, as with all controlled pedestrian crossing facilities, should be provided for the reason that they are required to accommodate pedestrian demand throughout the day. The only pedestrian demand identified at the location of the proposed zebra crossings occurs during the arrival and departure periods of the local schools through school children accompanied by their parents/carers. This does not meet the required general criteria.
2. As a consequence of disadvantage 1 provision would be detrimental to road safety in that drivers of vehicles would pass over the crossings with such regularity without encountering pedestrians that when they do encounter them they could fail to stop. This would be detrimental to road safety.
3. The provision of zebra crossings on Featherby Road at Chilham Road and Eastcourt Lane at Brenchley Road / Elmfield would result in a significant loss of on-street parking at them on Featherby Road and Eastcourt Lane. Recognising the high demand for on-street parking generated by the residential frontage premises the loss of parking space could result in neighbour disputes and abuse of the zig-zag markings, to either side of the crossing, on which stopping / parking is prohibited.
4. Zebra crossings must connect with footways to both sides of the road to which they are being provided. At that proposed on Featherby Road at Allington Road, there is currently no footway on the west side of Featherby Road. Whilst one could be provided it would only provide a route from the south which pedestrians would probably not use because they would access

Allington Road prior to the zebra crossing. This would be of little benefit.

5. The proposed scheme will have the effect of reducing general traffic speed to around 20-25 mph. With such speeds allied with the speed reducing measures, zebra crossings are not considered relevant on either Featherby Road or Eastcourt Lane. Their provision could reduce the beneficial road safety impact of Zebra Crossings on other road to which such road measures have not been applied.

Extent Of The 20 mph Zone

- 3.2.2 The proposed scheme provides for the inclusion of Beechings Way and Bloors Lane, between Eastcourt Lane and The Splashes, within the 20 mph Zone. Ward Councillors have requested that the section of Beechings Way between Eastcourt Lane and Pump Lane, be deleted from the 20 mph Zone.

Advantages (of the deletion)

1. Would permit drivers to proceed at speeds upto 35 mph (30 mph + 10% +2 mph ACPO Guidance) without receiving a speeding offence.

Disadvantages (of the deletion)

1. The advantage of 1 above is considered to be a disadvantage in respect of road safety on a residential road.
2. The traffic use in terms of volume and speed, of Beechings Way provides a barrier between the residential development to its north and south sides. The effect of this barrier is demonstrated by the provision of zebra crossings at various specific locations to provide safe pedestrian crossing points. Where speeds are reduced to 20 mph the 'barrier affect' is effectively removed and pedestrians would be able to cross with safety over its full extent.
3. Government accident statistics show that a pedestrian hit by a car travelling at 20 mph has an 95% chance of survival whilst the survival rate for incidents at 30 mph and 40 mph are only 80% and 20% respectively. Therefore, retention provides for safer roads.
4. Traffic use would continue to impede pedestrian and cyclist accessibility between the residential areas to the south and north sides of Beechings Way.
5. Would require considerable levels of additional signing at junctions with Beechings Way to advise of the start and end of the 20mph Zone; 4 traffic signs required at each of 13 junctions, therefore an additional 52 signs which is contrary to Council Policy to reduce Street Clutter.

4. Advice and Analysis

Zebra Crossings

4.1 The Recommendation in respect of the issue of the provision of Zebra Crossings is that they should not be provided. The reasons for the advice is that:

- The proposed scheme through the totality of its measures will reduce traffic speeds to some 20mph providing the opportunity for pedestrians to cross roads safely over their full extent.
- At the locations where Zebra Crossings are proposed specific changes to their road layout will reduce vehicle speeds to less than 20mph to the benefit of pedestrians.
- Insufficient pedestrian demand.
- Request for Zebra Crossings is based on the existing perceived traffic conditions, which will materially change to the benefit of pedestrians.

Extent Of the 20mph Zone

4.1 In the matter of the extent of the 20mph Zone on Beechings Way it is recommended that it be retained through to Eastcourt Lane. The reason for the advice, is that no discernable benefit can be identified for retaining its length between Eastcourt Lane and Pump Lane at 30mph. However, the consideration of all relevant factors, that is pedestrian road safety and pedestrian and cyclist accessibility, show that they would significantly benefit from its inclusion within the 20mph Zone.

Sustainability and Diversity.

4.2 In the matter of the Zebra Crossings there are no sustainability or diversity matters to be considered. However, the extent and provision of the 20mph Zone whilst not raising issues of diversity, does raise issues of sustainability in the area of transportation. The purpose of the 20mph Zone together with its associated measures is to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists at the expense of the private car. Through this encouraging people to make more journeys, in the context of the Twydall area local journeys, by the sustainable means of walking and cycling.

5. Risk Management

Risk		Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
1	Sustrans grant not taken up.	The total cost of the project would have to be met through LTP and / or Medway Council funding. However, the required funding is not available through these funding streams.	Agree Partnership arrangements with Sustrans, which includes acceptance of their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and ensuring that works commence on site in late January / early February 2010.
2	Negative view of future applications by Sustrans/ Government	If the grant offered by Sustrans is not taken up there is a possibility of future similar applications to Government/Sustrans receiving a negative view / response to the detriment of Medway Council.	Agree Partnership arrangements with Sustrans, which includes acceptance of their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and ensuring that works commence on site in late January / early February 2010.
3	Residents negative view of Medway Council	The introduction of measures within the Twydall area to improve road safety and reduce through traffic movement has been discussed and expected over a number of years. If measures are not implemented as a result of the current process residents could take the view that measures will never be introduced and therefore adopt a negative view of Medway Council.	Proceed to implement the proposed scheme having amended its content, where relevant and appropriate in the context of the overall proposals of the scheme, to meet the comments made by residents etc., received through the recent Public Consultation process.
4	Seen by Government as failing to achieve sustainability accessibility and road safety targets	Government will have been advised of the offer of grant made by Sustrans to Medway Council. They would also be advised if the offer of grant was not taken up which could result in their taking the view that Medway Council are not committed to sustainability, accessibility and road safety targets.	Proceed to implement the proposed scheme with the assistance of the grant provided by Sustrans.

6. Consultation

6.1 Stakeholders

6.1.1 The stakeholders with whom consultation has been undertaken extends from the individual emergency service organisations to the bus operators providing services to the Twydall areas. Also and most importantly, the residents of the Twydall area together with those responsible for the day to day management and operation of its nine schools.

6.1.2 Also Sustrans, the sustainable transportation organisation.

6.2 Nature, Extent and Outcome

Emergency Services and Bus Operators

6.2.1 Consultation with the individual emergency services was undertaken through the circulation of copies of relevant drawings and thereafter meetings in late 2008 / early 2009. No objections were raised to the proposed scheme, which, at the time of the consultation, contained a far greater level of speed cushions than the current scheme.

6.2.2 The reduction in the level of speed cushions should receive a favourable response from the emergency services and bus operators.

Residents, Schools and Businesses

6.2.3 The residents, schools and businesses within the Twydall area were consulted on the proposed scheme through the circulation to them of a consultation document with returnable questionnaire. Also, the holding of two public exhibitions each held at different locations within Twydall.

6.2.4 Of the occupiers of the 5,000 properties in the Twydall area, 385 (7.70%) returned a completed questionnaire. Of those returned, 235 (61%) indicated they were in favour of the proposed scheme, 98 (26%) indicated for varying reasons their opposition to it and 52 (13%) indicated a mixed opinion through contradicting comments. Of those indicating a mixed opinion some 16 could be viewed as in support by undertaking requested achievable amendments to the scheme

6.2.5 A detailed analysis and consideration of the returned questionnaires is provided at Appendix 1.

6.3 Sustrans

6.3.1 Knowing of their '*Links to Schools*' programme and in recognition of the significant level of schools within the Twydall area, the views of Sustrans, were sought on the proposed scheme in mid-2009.

6.3.2 Sustrans, having considered the content of the scheme, advised that they were impressed by it and were prepared to provide a grant of 50% towards its capital costs, through its *'Links to Schools' programme*.

7. Financial and Legal Implications

7.1 Financial Implications

7.1.1 The estimated cost based on measured works and term contract rates, of the proposed scheme is £660,000; this includes a 10% contingency item. Therefore, the estimated cost is considered to be rigorous.

7.1.2 Through their letter of 3 September 2009, Sustrans confirmed that they would provide a grant of 50% of the cost of the proposed scheme upto a maximum level of £330,000, being 50% of the estimated cost.

7.1.3 Therefore, the financial implications for the Council amount to a total sum of £330,000 on the basis of the estimated cost of £660,000. This would be funded through the Local Transport Plan settlement for the financial years 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. The planned expenditure for each of the two years being £250,000 and £410,000 respectively.

7.1.4 Through their letter of 3 September 2009 Sustrans advise that their grant would be payable in arrears. However, they would be prepared to release interim payments as work progresses.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 If the scheme proceeds, the Council will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sustrans, as a condition of the grant from Sustrans. The Memorandum of Understanding contains obligations relating to good management practices and planning of the scheme and compliance with relevant standards and design processes.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and comment on the following:

- (a) The Twydall Accessibility Scheme at an estimated cost of £660,000;
- (b) The offer of a grant of £330,000 towards the estimated capital cost of £660,000 of the Twydall Accessibility Scheme which is subject to a commencement of the scheme no later than February 2010;
- (c) That the residents of Twydall Area are advised of the revisions made following the consultation.

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Background Papers

Letter dated 3 September 2009, from Sustrans.

Report on the responses received to the Public Consultation undertaken in respect of the proposed scheme.