

Crawley Borough Council

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Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 9 February 2015

Report to Cabinet 11 February 2015

Three Bridges Station Forecourt Project

Report of the Head of Strategic Housing and Planning Services **SHAP/43**

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The report seeks approval of a scheme for the improvement of the forecourt area at Three Bridges Station, recommending support for the use of S106 monies which have been received for transport or interchange improvements at the station to fund this project.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2 To the Cabinet

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the allocation of the Section 106 monies of £430,000 received from the development of the maintenance depot and operations centre permitted under planning application CR/2011/0075/FUL and CR/2011/0093/FUL to the implementation of the full scheme as set out in Option 1 of the consultation document.
- b) Approve the transfer of the ownership of the subsoil of a small area of land within the forecourt currently owned by the Council to Network Rail at a nominal value in order to facilitate the improvement scheme and its economic and social benefits.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 A financial contribution has been received from the development of the maintenance depot and operations centre at Three Bridges Station. The Section 106 agreement requires this funding to be spent on improving access to Three Bridges Station. The proposed full scheme (Option 1) will improve safety and access to the forecourt of Three Bridges Station and address many of the needs of people travelling to and from the station by different forms of transport. The requirements of the S106

agreement mean that the monies can only be used at the station and cannot be allocated to a scheme elsewhere therefore presenting a one off opportunity to achieve these improvements.

4. Background

- 4.1 As part of the planning permission for the development of the maintenance depot and operations centre at Three Bridges Station, there was a requirement in Section 106 legal agreements for the developers to make a contribution towards improving access to the station. As a result, contributions of £430,000 have been received from the developers which can only be used on improvements to the station. These contributions must be spent by March 2017 or the legal agreement requires them to be handed back to the developer. The Council's constitution requires the allocation of Section 106 monies in excess of £100,000 to be approved by the Cabinet. Smaller contributions associated with the Forge Wood development and from Southern Railway are also contributing towards the scheme.
- 4.2 Since receiving the monies, the Borough Council has been working with Southern Rail and West Sussex County Council to identify a scheme to improve access to the station forecourt area and to try and meet the many different transport and safety needs of people accessing the station. Consultants identified a number of elements and options for a scheme which were the subject of a public consultation exercise in November and December 2014. Ward members were consulted on the initial design proposals the feedback informed the proposals which were subject of the public consultation.

5. Three Bridges Station Forecourt Project

- 5.1 Improvements to the forecourt at Three Bridges Station should address the needs of people using the station by a variety of forms of transport. These include:
- Pedestrians
 - Cyclists
 - Bus passengers
 - Taxis
 - Vehicles dropping off / picking up passengers
 - Vehicles using the car park

There is also a need to ensure that traffic continues to flow along Haslett Avenue East which runs past the station, and at the surrounding junctions. Furthermore, there is a history of traffic accidents around the forecourt and surrounding roads which are associated with the intense use of this area by people accessing the station by different means within a small area with many conflicting movements.

- 5.2 Consultants were appointed to help develop the options to address these needs and examined a wide range of possibilities. During the course of considering the options, major changes to the junction arrangements were not found to be possible within the limited space available and the need to maintain traffic flow. The initial findings of the consultants were presented to ward councillors at a seminar in October 2013 but as a result of concerns raised by Members they were subsequently reviewed to ensure that all possible options had been fully considered.
- 5.3 As a result a scheme was proposed that contained a number of elements and options that addressed as many of the different transport requirements as possible. Separate from the forecourt scheme Southern are seeking to create a new

pedestrian passenger access on the eastern side of the station onto platform 5 with a small drop off /pick up area on Station Hill (A). This and the forecourt scheme are set out on the consultation plan which is attached as appendix A. These include :

- A dedicated pick up and drop area (B)
- A new dedicated taxi at the side of the station (C)
- All buses including the westbound route 20 stopping at improved bus waiting facilities at the location of the current bus stop in front of the station.
- Improved pedestrian access from the pick up / drop off area and the bus stop (D)
- Pedestrian area immediately in front of the station (E)
- Realignment of the pedestrian crossings (F)
- Widening of footway on southern side underneath railway bridges to create shared use pedestrian and cycle path (G)

5.4 As a consequence of incorporating all these improvements within the available space, it was found that it was not possible to retain the ability of vehicles to turn right out of the station towards Pound Hill and Maidenbower. It was recognised that this could have an impact on people accessing the station by vehicle from that side of the town and as a result, the consultation document also proposed as an alternative that there could be a smaller scheme which would just involve elements B and C only which would see new arrangements for picking up /dropping off and for taxis. This was referred to as Option 2 in the consultation documents. These findings were presented to all members at a seminar in October 2014 and following this it was agreed to go out to public consultation in order to find out the views of rail passengers and local residents on the proposed options.

5.5 In order to find out the views of passengers using Three Bridges Station and residents in the surrounding area, a four week period of consultation was undertaken in November and December 2014. This involved :-

- Letters to stakeholders and residents and businesses in the area immediately surround the station
- Two staffed exhibitions at Three Bridges Station
- Two staffed exhibitions at Crawley Library
- Two staffed exhibitions at County Mall
- Leaflets handed out to passengers at Three Bridges Station
- Information left on windscreens of vehicles in station car park
- Press, social media and web coverage

5.6 There have also been two meetings in October and December 2014 with representatives of the Hackney Carriage Association at which the proposals for the forecourt at Three Bridges Station have been discussed.

Results of Public Consultation

5.7 The Three Bridges Station consultation received 269 responses. A full consultation report summarising the results and the issues that have been raised has been produced. The majority of participants came from Pound Hill (76), Maidenbower (75) and Three Bridges (36). Most of the participants travelled to the station by foot, cycling or public transport. Only 38% travel to the station by car.

5.8 Option 1 was the preferred option with 62% (166) in favour of the proposal and 38% (100) against it. Many comments in favour of option 1 considered it to offer a greater level of safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Others in favour mentioned the need to improve the number 20 bus service. There were comments from those in favour

expressing concern about the no right turn but concluding felt the trade-offs such as increased safety and improved bus stops would be worth it.

- 5.9 Many of those in favour of option 2 considered it to solve some safety and taxi requirements but nearly all comments focussed on the disadvantages of option 1 and its restriction on the right turn out of the station and the impact of traffic flow past the station as a result of the removal of a traffic lane due to the widening of the footway underneath the bridge.
- 5.10 The Hackney Carriage Association raised a number of concerns about the location of the proposed new taxi rank and the number of vehicles that it would provide for. There was a specific request for the taxi rank to remain in its current location and for the pick-up and drop off area to be located to the side of the station instead of the new taxi rank.

Issues arising from consultation

- 5.11 Loss of right turn out
Although, the majority of respondents supported option 1, it was highlighted that the restriction on the right turn out was a concern to a number of respondents as well as being the main concern with option 1 by those who identified option 2 as their preferred option. Some responses also highlighted that the provision of the new eastern station access and the provision of a small drop off area would address some of their concerns particularly from the Maidenbower area. This scheme is planned to be implemented separately and in advance of the forecourt scheme itself.
- 5.12 It is recognised that the loss of the right turn out of the station is a particular issue affecting those residents from Pound Hill and Maidenbower as well as some train passengers from outside the town when leaving the station. The journey to the station is unaffected. The removal of the right turn out was as a consequence of seeking to achieve as many other benefits to the overall scheme as possible. The benefits of option 2 are limited solely to vehicles picking up / dropping off and taxis. The option 2 scheme does not address the issue of traffic moving in many different directions within the forecourt area and the adverse impact that this has on pedestrians accessing the station on foot or from the bus stop or drop off points themselves.
- 5.13 Many different options to retaining the turning movement and keeping all the other benefits were considered and reviewed. However, there is not the physical space available within the forecourt area or due to the proximity of other signalised junctions to retain all the traffic movements and maintain the traffic flow on Haslett Avenue East. Alternative restrictions on traffic entering or leaving the forecourt area were considered but affected a greater number of vehicles or had an adverse impact on the traffic flow. Whilst appreciating that the restriction does affect quite a number of people, a far greater number of station users either access the station by non-vehicular means or from the other direction. Video surveys indicate that around there are around 700 vehicle movements turning right out of the station compared to 1,200 that turn left out of the station forecourt. Taking into account the volume of traffic that uses Haslett Avenue per day of around 36,000 vehicles then the right turning traffic represents only 2% of the total traffic movements in this area.
- 5.14 The provision of an eastern access to Three Bridges station will reduce this demand as will the modal change to cycling and walking engendered by the improved facilities under the bridge. A number of alternative possible routes for those wishing to travel to the east of the station have been highlighted and some schemes will be identified to help facilitate turning movements on some of these alternative routes.

Alternative routes

- 5.15 A range of alternative routes to those wishing to travel in an easterly direction were highlighted during the consultation. Some concerns were raised about the feasibility of using some of these routes to enable cars to ultimately travel in an easterly direction, whether these movements would be legal or the consequences of a greater number of vehicles using these routes. All these alternative routes are currently allowed and possible but some minor improvements may be implemented to improve the ease of the turning movement. These include :-
- Altering the signal phasing at the junction of Haslett Avenue and Three Bridges Road will allow private cars to make U-turns.
 - Providing a small roundabout at the junction of Three Bridges road and the stub of Three Bridges road leading to the shops for longer wheelbase vehicles. HGVs will have to proceed to the squareabout to perform a U-turn.
 - The industrial estate at Stephenson's Way can be used for U-turning manoeuvres for all vehicles without additional engineering measures although the possibility of providing a mini roundabout at the first junction will be explored during detail design.

Removal of traffic lane due to widening of footway

- 5.16 The impact on traffic flow of the loss of a vehicle lane underneath the bridge as a consequence of widening the footway to provide a shared cycle/pedestrian path was highlighted in a number of responses. This impact has been analysed using a traffic model which was also then reviewed to help ensure the robustness of the findings. The modelling was initially produced in the summer of 2013 and included models for the area local to the station and the redevelopment options being considered. These Linsig models were reviewed by West Sussex County Council Traffic Signals team in June 2013. The conclusion was that the Station Forecourt Option 1 provided the best redevelopment option; as it could be achieved without any detrimental effect on the traffic flow. The project was passed to Watermans and they further developed the initial modelling and managed to improve the predicted performance of the within the models. Their conclusion stated that Option 1 showed a slight improvement on current traffic conditions and was the best solution of the proposals.
- 5.17 In addition to this, West Sussex County Council Traffic Signals proposal to upgrade the entire Three Bridges region to MOVA operation will see an improvement to the optimisation of each individual junction and thus the region as a whole. It is estimated that the overall improvement to a junction can be between 10%-15% when compared to the more ridged SCOOT control method currently employed across the region.
- 5.18 The widening of the path will also improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists that travel underneath the bridge by providing more space for both sets of users. This will help address some concerns highlighted in responses about conflicts that currently occur between cyclists and pedestrians when they use the very narrow existing path under the bridges.

Facilities for Hackney Carriages

- 5.19 The retention of the taxi rank in its current location and the use of the proposed new taxi rank for picking up and dropping off was proposed by the Hackney Carriage Association as they consider the current location is more visible and can provide for more vehicles. This proposal has been fully assessed. It would not be possible to use the proposed new taxi area for picking up and dropping off because of the greater amount of vehicle manoeuvring that this involves compared to hackney carriages which queue and pick-up in turn. The new location of the taxi rank close to the platform subway provides an attractive location for passengers and appropriate

signing to the taxi rank from both within the station and from the front of the station for those non railway passengers wishing to use a hackney carriage would be provided. In terms of the number only 8 vehicles are officially permitted to use the current rank although it is recognised that this has not been enforced. The new rank would increase this number to around 20 vehicles. Given the other uses which need to be accommodated within the forecourt area, this volume of vehicles is considered to be an appropriate share of the available space being given to hackney carriages.

Need for additional car parking

- 5.20 A number of respondents highlighted the need for an increased amount of car parking to be provided at the station and cited the length of the waiting list for car park season tickets and the difficulty in finding a space. Whilst not within the remit of the forecourt scheme itself, it is recognised that there is a demand for additional car parking. Southern have over the past couple of years extended the car park at ground level but with the flood plain in this vicinity there are periods of the year, when car parking bays are out of action. Southern has explored utilisation of surrounding areas, but these schemes have not been able to progress. attempts. The possibility of a decked car park has also been considered but would need to take into account UK Power pylons within the car park. Southern & Network Rail are looking at further possibilities, but without the pylons being removed, the options are limited.

Extension of Residents Parking Scheme

- 5.21 Again, whilst not within the scope of the forecourt scheme itself, a number of residents requested the extension of the residents parking scheme to include Saturdays as they experienced high levels of on street parking at the weekend as well as during the week. These comments will be discussed with WSCC who are responsible for the residents parking scheme.

5.22 Construction Phase

Some respondents highlighted the need to minimise disruption during the construction of the improvements. This issue is indeed appreciated and the scheme would be constructed in phases as the station needs to continue to operate throughout the construction period.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1 Although the proposed scheme removes the ability of vehicles to turn right out of the forecourt, it is felt that the wider benefits that the scheme brings and the alternative arrangements that will be put in place to assist those people most affected, outweighs this concern. This is supported by the results of the consultation exercise summarised in section 5 above and the review of the alternative options and testing. Therefore the do minimum option 2 is not recommended as it does not achieve as many benefits.
- 6.2 Two members seminars were held with Councillors from the three most affected wards with Three Bridges, Pound Hill and Maidenbower specifically invited to attend although as the Three Bridges Station is the mainline station serving Crawley, residents in all wards could be affected by improvements to the station. The initial findings of the consultants' work were challenged and reviewed following concerns raised by Members at the first seminar, and the public consultation was agreed following the second seminar.

7. Implications

- 7.1 The forecourt improvements will be funded by the S106 contribution from the maintenance depot development. If the £430,000 of Section 106 funding is not spent on station improvements by March 2017, then the legal agreement requires it to be returned to the developers. Southern are also supporting the development of the scheme with £100,000. The developers of Forgewood are also required to fulfil condition 54 and 56 of their planning permission for the new neighbourhood which concern the provision of improved bus shelters and pedestrian crossings at the station which results in the contribution of around £60,000 to be made to the project.
- 7.2 The allocation of S106 monies to the forecourt scheme forms match funding for the Crawley Area Local Transport package application to the Coast to Capital Local Economic Partnership Local Transport Board for wider improvements in the immediate area. A bid for funding of £850,000 for the new eastern pedestrian access from Station Hill and a bid for £1,755,000 for the improvements to the traffic controls along Haslett Avenue have been included in the Crawley Area Local Transport package application made in December.
- 7.3 The subsoil of a small area of land (0.058 hectare/0.143 acre) to the eastern part of the current taxi rank is owned by Crawley Borough Council. This land currently has nil value as public highway. The Station Forecourt Project requires the land to be subject to a stopping up order to enable it to be de-highwayed. Once it has been de-highwayed the value of the land would be £26,000.
- 7.4 The Power for the Council to dispose of land is provided by Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. The General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 allows Local Authorities to dispose of land at less than best consideration where the authority considers it will contribute to the promotion or improvement of economic, social, or environmental well-being of an area and the undervalue is less than £2 million. It is recommended that this land be transferred to Network Rail at less than best consideration (at a nominal value) because the disposal will facilitate the improvement scheme and contribute to such well-being for the reasons set out above.
- 7.5 The Council is working in partnership with WSCC and Southern on the delivery of this proposed transport improvement project. Given the scale of the proposals, none of the organisations have the internal capacity to project manage the implementation of this project. Therefore, an external project manager will need to be appointed to deliver the project using some of the capital project funds. Each organisation will need to make arrangements to identify an internal client lead for the project.

8. Background Papers

S106 agreement for CR/2011/0093/FUL

http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pub_livx/groups/operational/documents/plappother/int219576.pdf

S106 agreement for CR/2011/0075/FUL

http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pub_livx/groups/operational/documents/plappother/int227970.pdf

Consultation report for Three Bridges Station
http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pw/Streets_Roads_and_Transport/index.htm

Rachel Cordery, Principal Planning Officer.
01293 438498
Rachel.cordery@crawley.gov.uk

Appendix A

