

## INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Gurpreet Bhangra (Chairman), Mandy Brar, Phil Haseler (Vice-Chairman), Geoff Hill and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillors Johnson, Werner, Stimson, Clark, Del Campo, Taylor, Price, Baskerville and Cannon.

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Russell O'Keefe, David Scott, Tracy Hendren and Ben Smith

### ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

**RESOLVED: That Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra be elected Chairman.**

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Da Costa.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### WORK PROGRAMME

It was agreed that Ben Smith, Head of Commissioning, Communities, would convene a meeting with Ward Members regarding the potential for installing crossings along Oldfield Road and Stafferton Link Road where it was deemed hazardous for pedestrians to cross during peak times. An update on progress would be brought back to Panel for Members to review.

- ❖ **Action** – Ben Smith, Head of Commissioning – Communities, to meet with Ward Members and devise a plan for safer crossings to be installed at Oldfield Road and Stafferton Link, and provide an update on progress at a future Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny meeting.

### CALL IN - MAIDENHEAD STATION - QUEEN STREET JUNCTION

Adam Bermange, a resident of Boyn Hill stated he had spoken to residents that had raised concerns about the junction as it was a big route up to Boyn Hill. The alternative route would be to drive past Stafferton Way roundabout and back past the station. He added he was worried about bus users as the number 5 went up to Boyn Hill and to Cox Green as concerns had been raised by the bus company, as stated in the last Maidenhead Town Forum minutes, about the route due to the changes to the junction. Adam Bermange confirmed he had sent substantive points regarding his objections to the Panel Members prior to the meeting.

Councillor Del Campo stated he had received and read Mr Bermange's email and a particular point raised was a procedural one. Maidenhead Town Forum mentioned that Courtney Buses had indicated changes would increase time and costs to their route. She had received a letter dated 28 June 2019 outlining Courtney Buses concerns. And she also read out the formal objection from Courtney Buses. Councillor Del Campo said Courtney had implemented an emergency route diversion so some routes did not service the train station. The new routes for those buses were contrary to the Local Transport Plan and the Town Centre Plan. Ben Smith,

Head of Commissioning – Communities, stated the Council had not yet made a Traffic Regulation Order. He was aware of the objection and if it could not be resolved, then a public enquiry would be raised. The Borough had been working with Courtney to try and resolve the objection and the intention was to integrate the buses with the train station far better than it currently was. The Head of Commissioning – Communities stated where the bus stop was currently situated was less convenient for passengers to use the train so it was a benefit to have buses stopping in the train station and a new bus stop would be installed at Broadway which would make up the three minutes they lost travelling around the Stafferton Way roundabout. He added that buses currently went down Frascati Way and around the roundabout in the same way they did with the new layout near the station at Queen Street.

Councillor Johnson stated it was a project in inception for a while and it was now at the end of the process. The change was to increase pedestrian safety and if Cabinet wanted to keep the layout to the road as it was, then no Traffic Regulation Order would be raised. He stated public enquiries were costly to hold and any enquiry would mean a continuation of works. The Council wanted to seek a resolution with Courtney Buses.

Councillor Johnson said many people had concerns regarding the removal of the right turn at Queen Street, but he had received positive feedback as safety for pedestrians and cyclists was being prioritised. He added there needed to be a more holistic approach to the traffic system and environmental agenda; this was to improve the public realm and make access to the station easier. Councillor Johnson stated he had seen some of the issues raised by the public on social media while the works were in progress but, the traffic issues and less available space for pedestrians were due to the temporary lights and once the works were completed, the issues would be resolved.

Councillor Clark stated he had had discussions regarding the bus routes and how Courtney managed their routes. The Council was in dialogue and the issues would be resolved or a public enquiry would be raised. He added the junction improvements had been discussed at Council as the Borough was building a Maidenhead and environment fit for the future, fit for passengers and traffic. The Council was hoping to improve bus services and availability of transport for passengers. The Borough were looking at proposals which were carbon neutral and also looking to the future, to offer services to passengers they so need and to promote cycling also.

Councillor Brar stated the call in was because it was to do with the permanent change to the right turn at Queen Street. There was a fundamental problem with the decision to change the layout of the station. Traffic that wanted to go to Redford Road now needed to go round the roundabout; the Borough needed to think about pollution. Members of the public took part in an online survey but their concerns were overlooked. Changes to the junction appear positive to cyclists and pedestrians but the modelling said it did not meet the requirements due to the increase in traffic. There were other options available for the junction but they were ignored. The Borough council have trialled an Oxford Street style crossing but that was not taken forward.

Councillor Brar stated the business case looked at two types of pollutants which showed particulate pollutants would reduce at first but would then rise over a decade and more households would be exposed to polluted air with 753 families worse off. She believed the decision required more scrutiny and she asked for the decision to be referred to Full Council for further consideration.

Councillor Del Campo stated she had a photo of a public traffic regulation order but she was not sure where that fit in; she had heard it had not quite started yet. Councillor Del Campo added that RBWM stated the works would commence the Monday after Cabinet so she was not sure why that was put out as a statement prior to consultations being completed, although she added that the statement was withdrawn shortly afterwards.

Councillor Johnson said he wanted to improve conditions for cyclists; sadly the station had a very high record of bicycle thefts so anything that can improve the environment for cyclists and pedestrians was welcome. 70 car spaces would be moved from the front of the station to Stafferton Way and in five to 10 years, that would have a beneficial impact on the environment and it would also improve the appearance of Maidenhead Town Centre and will improve the environment.

The Head of Commissioning – Communities stated the Traffic Regulation Order had been published in draft, it was a temporary draft measure discussed at the Maidenhead Town Forum. He added he was happy to discuss it with legal officers as the draft was presented at Maidenhead Town Forum twice where residents could comment and provide feedback. With regards to the options for the junction, the current scheme was three quarters funded by the LEP and there had been rigorous assessment by the LEP which included a 120 page business case, independently assessed so that all options were scrutinised in detail before the funding was approved. Option two scored most highly and was the preferred option by the LEP.

The Head of Commissioning – Communities stated that improving air quality was a piece of work within the business case. Work carried out by independent experts concluded the scheme as neutral on noise and air quality. With regards to congestion, it was complex to factor in congestion on that road. If drivers could not turn right, they were diverted 700m around the Stafferton Way roundabout but, the business case showed that the additional 700m were neutral once all the other factors were considered such as the right turn out of Broadway. Drivers could use the Stafferton Link along to the A4 and other alternative routes which would reduce congestion and increase capacity. Traffic signals would be linked to improve flow and vehicles would only need to stop for pedestrians to cross. The Head of Commissioning – Communities added that all factors were considered in the business case, although some drivers might be disadvantaged, the overall benefits outweighed that disadvantage.

The Head of Commissioning – Communities stated the consultation went to the Maidenhead Town Forum, and at the last meeting, the Forum agreed to a marketing company conducting face to face interviews and included online feedback. The online survey feedback was mostly made up of motorists. The consultation concluded that the scheme should continue. He stated the longer the temporary lights were set up, the worse the disruption would be so, other works were being carried out while Cabinet received the report. That meant the works could continue even if the closing of the right turn did not go ahead.

Councillor Clark stated in the original consultation it was skewed towards motorists so, Members decided to engage pedestrians with face to face interviews. Within 10 years eight million people would be using Crossrail so, if the consultation had been carried out then, there would be even more pedestrians and passengers providing feedback in favour of the changes. Councillor Hill stated he had heard lots of good explanations he was one of the Councillors that voted for the Council to become net carbon neutral by 2020. He expressed concern at the words used stating the works would begin on the Monday after Cabinet as there needed to be at least five days to allow for a call in. Councillor Hill added he did not like the removal of the right turn and believed it was an error. He felt an Oxford Street style crossing was the right thing to do, making it as pedestrian and cyclist friendly as it would be for motorists. The two ladies he had spoken to rode bikes into the Town for shopping but, they had nowhere to park their bikes so, if the Council was going to be pedestrian and cycle friendly, there needed to be places for them to park their cycles.

Councillor Hill commented with the lack of right turn at Queen Street, looking forward with Vicus Way car park and the gold course development, there would be 2,600 new homes and 500 parking spaces in the area and all of the additional traffic would clog the Stafferton Way roundabout. Closing the right turn moved the pollution up towards Bray and Oldfield, away from the Town Centre. A number of scenarios around the Town should have been investigated.

The online survey took second place and the on street face to face interviews had been prioritised; St Mary's Ward had not been included in the findings either. Councillor Hill's other concern was the LEP funding. He understood the Borough needed the funding as it was a small Borough but, his worry was that the LEP was driving the scheme. They were building the station for Crossrail but, it was driving the station build and Vicus Way more than the Council was and the Council was losing control. The Head of Commissioning – Communities responded to alleviate the congestion across Town, there were other projects to increase capacity which would mitigate developments in the Borough Local Plan (BLP). A traffic model had been run that looked at the background growth and increase in cars and also, known changes. The model highlighted junctions which were over capacitated. The Head of Communities – Commissioning stated that whilst the scheme was being worked on, it did make up part of the work going on across the area so, the modelling would factor in traffic caused by losing the right turn at Queen Street.

Councillor Singh queried if the marketing company that carried out the face to face interviews had used the old ward boundaries as a significant number of responses were from his ward. He welcomed the idea of introducing more cycle and pedestrian friendly access, the idea had been on the Maidenhead Town Forum agenda twice as it was so important. The Head of Commissioning – Communities confirmed he was very happy to engage with Ward Members. He added he was not sure if the old ward boundaries had been used in the survey.

Councillor Werner stated the works should not be carried out in a piecemeal way. All of the plans should be put forward so a debate and decision could be made on the whole picture. The bus company said that in the short term, there would be an increase in journeys, costs and pollution. There seemed to be conflict between motorists, cyclists and pedestrians whereas, the scheme should be carried out when all users were considered. It had been done in Oxford Street well. Councillor Werner did not see how the scheme would help to make the area carbon neutral as mass transit vehicles would help the Borough become carbon neutral. The Council had already got rid of the right turn at Queen Street without negotiating with the bus company. Councillor Werner said Crossrail was coming and more houses and cars would be using that roundabout so everything the Borough was doing was piling congestion on that area. Mass transit vehicles would be electric by 2030 and the government was moving away from petrol and diesel cars; the Council needed to be investing in technology for electric vehicles and cycling. Councillor Werner asked for the report to be referred back to Full Council for proper debate or, the scheme should be shelved and reinstate the right turn and stop with the piecemeal development.

Councillor Johnson said it would have been useful if Councillor Werner had asked his questions at Cabinet or at the Maidenhead Town Forum. He added the Borough was making a clear statement of intent, prioritising movement of cyclists and pedestrians over cars and motor vehicles. To be carbon neutral. The Council was making a shift towards sustainable transport methods. The Borough was trying to encourage people onto buses but, to do that there needed to be changes such as moving the bus stop to the station. Bus technology was evolving fast, especially in London, and Councillor Johnson did not see why the same could not be rolled out in Maidenhead; more e-charging points were being invested in and Vicus Way would have a whole host of charging points for electric vehicles. The scheme was shifting priority to pedestrians and cyclists, the most vulnerable users of the roads.

Councillor Hill requested the list of the other options considered by the LEP. The Head of Communities – Commissioning confirmed the following options were considered:

- An Oxford Street style crossing
- Remove the right turn at Queen Street to create improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (preferred option).
- To do nothing and leave the junction as it was
- Reconfigure and remove the island with a two stage crossing in a different location further down
- Replace the crossing with a footbridge.

Councillor Haseler stated three of the four reasons for the call in were related to congestion. He had spoken at the Maidenhead Town Forum and there was no evidence to suggest closing the right turn at Queen Street would increase congestion. He initially had some concerns regarding closing the right turn but, a right turn was created from Broadway and that helped with traffic flow. Councillor Haseler also confirmed there was cycle parking available at three locations in the Town Centre.

Councillor Brar proposed a motion for the report to go to Full Council for debate and Councillor Hill seconded that proposal stating there were other options available. Two Councillors voted for the motion (Councillors Brar and Hill), and three Councillors voted against the motion (Councillors Bhangra, Haseler and Singh voted against the motion), so the motion fell away.

Councillor Haseler stated Courtney Buses had a big issue with the new layout but, traffic congestion was not a justified reason to refer the report back to Full Council. The bus issue needed to be looking into by the Head of Commissioning – Communities team. Councillor Hill said 437 residents signed an online petition in objection to the changes to the junction and they had not been taken into account. Councillor Clark stated he understood what was being said but the online responses were biased towards drivers so the consultation was widened to face to face interviews and included pedestrians to add balance to the consultation. Councillor Hill responded that was not a good bases to make a decision. The public had the right to be biased and if it was still biased towards drivers, they needed to be listened to.

Councillor Stimson commented she had read from Friends of the Earth that looked at different Councils and they had looked at the demographics for Windsor and Maidenhead of how people travelled around; the highest proportion of residents drove, 3% cycled and 10% walked. Councillor Clark replied that 85% of online respondents were motorists but pedestrians needed to be represented too and 15% of online respondents was not enough to make an informed opinion. Councillor Hill said he was not opposed to pedestrians and cyclists but Members had to accept that 85% of people in the Royal Borough drove cars. There was a solution to keeping the right turn at Queen Street and if that is what people wanted, the Council should listen and respect that and find ways to encourage and increase cycling and walking. It was not democratic to ignore 85% of the respondents to the consultation.

Councillor Johnson stated the consultation reached out to vulnerable groups and other road users to get the most data. Valid concerns had been raised and all the Council had tried to do was get a balanced view from the people that live and work in the Town. Councillor Singh stated the reasons for running the additional consultation were raised at the Maidenhead Town Forum and there was a two week trial period for the changes prior to that.

Councillor Haseler proposed a motion to take no further action with more work to be done with Courtney Buses so a resolution could be found and a review of the junction improvements to be presented to the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Panel in the future. Councillor Singh seconded the motion. Three Councillors voted for the motion (Councillors Bhangra, Haseler and Singh), and two Councillors voted against the Motion (Councillors Brar and Hill).

**RESOLVED: That the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Panel:**

- i. Agreed to take no further action on the call in on the Maidenhead Station – Queen Street Junction report.**
- ii. That a review of the Junction improvements at Queen Street be brought to a future Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Panel.**

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 7.55 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....