



LEATHERHEAD DECONGESTION STUDY

**Local Committee for Mole Valley
20 July 2005**

KEY ISSUE:

This report gives an update of progress so far with the Leatherhead Decongestion Study initiative and sets out additional topics of interest, aimed at reducing congestion and improving accessibility within Leatherhead town centre. Members are asked to agree the way forward.

SUMMARY:

Following a Members' Working Party, a report was presented to this Committee on 29 September 2004. That report included detailed findings of a modelling exercise and set out how the overall project could be developed. Following on from this, progress of the initiatives agreed are given herein, together with information on new issues focusing on accessibility.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are asked to:

- (i) Note the intention to reconvene the Leatherhead Working Group to help steer the decongestion project.
- (ii) Approve reconvention of the Members' Working Group, in 2006/7, subject to funding being assigned, to investigate and review parking restrictions in and around Leatherhead
- (iii) Approve the progression of all schemes and projects identified / detailed within this report, subject to funding and safety audit where appropriate and subject to agreement where necessary of the Leatherhead Working Group.
- (iv) Delegate the agreement of all points of detail, where necessary, to the Local Transportation Director or his Successor / Representative in consultation with the Leatherhead Working Group.
- (v) Authorise the advertisement of any necessary Traffic Regulation Orders related to this report and if no objections are maintained the making of the Orders.
- (vi) Agree that the Local Transportation Director or his Successor / Representative, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair has delegated authority to formally consider objections to any statutory consultations related to this report.
- (vii) Agree that the schemes listed within this report now supersede any previous measures agreed for progression under the decongestion study.
- (viii) Authorise the Local Transportation Director or his Successor / representative, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee, to acquire highway rights and / or enter into negotiations for the acquisition of land for any issue related to this report, subject to normal standing orders that may be required.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 29th September 2004 the Mole Valley Local Committee approved officer actions for the 2004/5 financial year to:
- Review bus stop facilities in North Street / Bridge Street with a view to improving accessibility for the disabled.
 - Acquire the redundant stairwell in Station Approach Road and to remove the stairwell and make good the adjoining retaining wall in readiness for road widening.
- 1.2 Looking ahead to the 2005/6 financial year, the Committee approved actions to:
- Widen Station Approach Road
 - Appoint a travel officer for Leatherhead
 - Further develop the Waterway Road to Leatherhead Station cycle link.
- 1.3 The below information provides an update on the various issues being taken forward and highlights any opportunities that have arisen since the time of the original report.

2.0 STATION APPROACH ROAD

- 2.1 Since last September, permission has been received from the current owners of the stairwell in Station Approach Road to carry out a structural analysis. For a detailed survey to be undertaken, it has been necessary to arrange significant works to stabilise the structure and remove vegetation that had prevented inspection. The findings of the analysis has established that, were the stairwell to be removed, a structural wall would be needed to retain the adjoining embankment.
- 2.2 The County Council's Valuation Office were appointed to conduct negotiations with the present owners of the stairwell and a sale price of £7,000 has been agreed. Acquisition of the stairwell at this price has been approved by the Asset Management Committee and the Council's Property Management Team are completing the purchase.
- 2.3 Based upon the findings of the analysis report, tenders have been sought for the removal of the stairwell and construction of a replacement structure to retain the embankment. Negotiations leading to the appointment of a specialist contractor are presently being finalised and it is expected that the works will take place this financial year.

- 2.4 In parallel, the Council's Design Team have been instructed to undertake a feasibility design of the proposed road widening in Station Approach Road, in readiness for works, which due to limitations on funding will be implemented next financial year (2006/7).

3.0 HIGH STREET JUNCTION WITH NORTH STREET

- 3.1 The report of 29th September made specific reference to improvements within the area linking High Street and North Street. An access audit undertaken, following phase 2 of the works in High Street, identified access shortcomings for the mobility impaired. In association with Aedas (a consultant specialising in access issues), the Council's constructor, have investigated measures that may be used to address concerns raised in the audit and have produced a preliminary design.
- 3.2 Given the sensitive location of this site, the Local Transportation Director suggests resurrection of Leatherhead Decongestion Working Group to consider the suggested measures and agree upon an appropriate timescale for implementation. It is therefore suggested that approval of the detail of the scheme is delegated to the Local Transportation Director in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee, following agreement of the working group.
- 3.3 **Annexe A** is an outline drawing that illustrates the proposed measures. It should be noted that the alterations will require the amendment of the waiting restrictions' Traffic Regulation Orders. It is possible that any revisions could tie in with the future parking restrictions review that is likely to commence moving forward in 2006/7.
- 3.4 Whilst investigating the North Street / Bridge Street junction, it is advisable to also consider the 'pinch point' in North Street as there have been calls for the removal of this pedestrian facility to aid the delivery of more parking on street.
- 3.5 The measure was originally installed to provide a safe location to cross the road for large groups of employees and customers making their way to or from the adjacent premises, which was formerly the Post Office (now occupied by the Penny Black public house). The pinch point has served to reduce the number of personal injury accidents (especially those involving pedestrians), has provided benefits for all pedestrians and has helped restrain traffic volumes and speeds. It is believed retention of the pinch point will fully complement the measures proposed nearby at the junction with High Street.

Additionally, its existence will help concentrate pedestrian movements at that location.

- 3.6 At certain times of the day, traffic in North Street can become relatively busy and the pinch point has occasionally caused difficulties for buses and other large vehicles when attempting to pass one another. No formal study has been conducted but ad-hoc observations suggest that many of these occasions have arisen when drivers have become impatient and moved into the pinch point before their exit is clear. Additionally, the illegal parking that occurs in the vicinity, during the day does tend to exacerbate the problem. It is proposed to carry out formal observations of movements through the pinch point and suggested that the issue and possible solutions is debated at the Members' Working party.

4.0 TRAVEL OFFICER

- 4.1 The Travel Management Executive appointed for Dorking has successfully established the Dorking Decongestion Forum. The Forum has been joined by all of the major companies and organisations in Dorking who are now able to share resources and ideas to provide cost efficient sustainable forms of transport for their employees. Recent charity events have helped raise the profile of the Dorking Decongestion Forum and much interest in what we are doing has been expressed from Districts elsewhere within Surrey.
- 4.2 Despite the successes, it is felt important at this time to concentrate the efforts of the Travel Management Executive to achieve the best results for Dorking, before moving the concept to Leatherhead. Given the available resources, it is suggested that this work starts in Leatherhead next financial year (2006/7), subject to funding being made available.

5.0 WATERWAY ROAD TO LEATHERHEAD STATION CYCLE LINK

- 5.1 The Post Office has shown interest in the disposal of its sorting office in Waterway Road for development. The proposals failed to materialise but optimism remains that an agreement will eventually be possible. If this happens the Council could use the opportunity to acquire a strip of land alongside the existing public highway that is sufficiently wide enough to develop a new shared footway and cycle path. This would build upon the links established between Red House Grounds and Mill Lane.

- 5.2 The Council's Development Control Officer (Highways) reports that proposals have been put forward to redevelop the ERA site in Cleeve Road and that resources may be made available to undertake associated improvements to the highway in the area. It is suggested that the opportunity be used to put part of the money towards widening of Station Approach Road (see paragraphs under 2.0). Additionally, the opportunity could be used to create a cycle crossing point over Randalls Road where the existing cycle path exits from Red House Grounds. A conceptual arrangement is shown in **Annexe B** but it should be noted the idea would necessitate the reconfiguration of the signals at the Station Approach Road / Randalls Road junction and the full impact on traffic movements has yet to be assessed. An instruction is with the Council's Traffic Control Team to develop a feasibility design.
- 5.3 Mole Valley District Council have proposals to make improvements to the short-term car park on the southern side of Red House Grounds and to rationalise the area at the northern limit of the cycle path. Consent has been given to the District Council to extend their work alongside Randalls Road onto the public highway provided provisions for cyclists are retained. Working in partnership with Mole Valley, the Local Transportation Service has created plans to remove the steps at the southern end of the cycle path; grade the path to an acceptable gradient; locally widen the footway alongside Station Road where the cycle path meets the highway and reposition / extend the brick retaining wall as necessary. This will form an important element of the cycle route once fully developed. The arrangement proposed alongside Station Road is illustrated in **Annexe C**.
- 5.4 Ultimately the Council's aim is to extend the link to Mill Lane where it will join an existing path heading west towards Fetcham. An initial inspection of the route reveals there are distinct possibilities to acquire highways rights on land to the northeast and southwest of the bridge and utilise the existing bridge footway to carry cyclists.

6.0 STREET SIGN REVIEW

- 6.1 Concern has been expressed in recent years with respect to the number of signs that exist in Leatherhead Town as well as the state of repair of some of the current signs in place. Officers have taken on board these concerns and are actively progressing with their investigations. To date, two signs have been replaced (Randalls Road and Bull Hill) and it is envisaged that further works to replace / rationalise will take place over the coming months where opportunities exist.

- 6.2 The District Council's Conservation Team have expressed interest in participating with a review of all signs in the town centre and the Local Transportation Team await an opportunity to secure sufficient funding from a local development to undertake a programme of renewal.
- 6.3 The Local Transportation Service recently made a successful bid for funding to undertake a Streetscape scheme on the Cleeve Road Estate. One element will be to introduce a width restriction immediately south of Randalls Crescent preventing HGVs from gaining access to the industrial estate from Kingston Road. To complement the measure, new advisory signs are planned to direct HGV drivers from Kingston Road around the one-way system.
- 6.4 There have been several instances where drivers of high vehicles, negotiating their way through Leatherhead, have been 'trapped' by low bridges at the western end of Station Road, in Waterway Road and in Randalls Road. The planned street sign review would include investigation of measures that may be used to help prevent this recurring.

7.0 ACCESS FOR ALL

- 7.1 Surrey is promoting "Access for All" and the intention is to audit the key 28 towns across the County to determine the potential difficulties faced by all groups of the community. Within a defined boundary, volunteers with a wide range of mobility impairments would note issues preventing ready access to the town's facilities. Officers would then be assigned to develop a list of coherent proposals and from that a prioritised programme of works. Priority may be awarded to reflect greatest impact, ease of implementation or affordability but with the aim of making the town centre accessible for all. This process will be applied to proposals to alter the North Street / Bridge Street junction and generally throughout the town in order to identify where the most pressing difficulties for the mobility impaired exist. In line with the County Council's initiative, Leatherhead Town Centre will be surveyed in coming months and it is deemed appropriate that evolving measures are progressed through the Town's decongestion study as well as other channels of funding that may materialise.

8.0 PARKING REVIEW

- 8.1 Control of parking is vital if congestion and accessibility are to be successfully addressed. A single thoughtlessly parked vehicle can bring local traffic to a standstill or prevent reasonable access for the mobility impaired. A review will investigate where and when loading and parking may be permitted without adversely affecting access to the town or its commercial viability. The review may need to include the parking arrangements for the High Street which could in turn have an effect on the current access provisions.
- 8.2 A parking review is likely to commence in 2006/7 under the Parking Management project that has been ongoing for a number of years. A working group will need to be re-established to consider all issues highlighted since the implementation of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement.

9.0 CYCLE PARKING

- 9.1 Improving cycle links to the town will be of limited value if cyclists feel there are no suitable safe and secure sites to leave their bicycles while they visit the area. The parking review will include a thorough survey of existing cycle parking and investigate where the demand exists for additional facilities.

10.0 SERVICE VEHICLE DETECTION

- 10.1 The Leatherhead Decongestion Study found that there is limited scope to introduce bus lanes on approaches to the town centre without adversely affecting traffic flow. Although promotion of public transport is to be encouraged, the working party of members and officers were of the view that such provision could not be justified at the present time, due to resources and the level of usage.

11.0 PREVIOUS INITIATIVES

- 11.1 In the past there have been numerous initiatives for the Leatherhead area aimed at addressing isolated issues pertaining to traffic flow and accessibility. The Leatherhead Decongestion Study has served to provide a holistic perspective of the problems, with the rolling programme of implementation proposed, it is recommended that all previous initiatives are now formally recognised as being superseded.

12.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The levels of funding available for the decongestion study are set out in the report on this agenda titled 'Capital Projects'. The provisional sum identified for the 2005/6 financial year is £90,000. It is expected that this sum will cover the costs of the work identified in paragraph 2.3. Additionally, it is considered possible that the design work for the carriageway widening identified in paragraph 2.4 can be undertaken this financial year. As discussed within this report there are also other possible sources of funding that are being investigated so that opportunities can be taken as funding becomes available.

13.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 13.1 Certain elements of schemes within the Leatherhead decongestion study will require statutory consultations. In addition the Leatherhead working party will be fully engaged with all schemes of a significant scale, where further decisions on the 'detail' need to be made. A copy of this report has been sent to Surrey Police for comment. Any issues will be reported verbally to this meeting.

14.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The ethos of the Decongestion Study follows the accepted strategies of sustainable transport by:
- Aiming to reduce congestion thus reducing fuel consumption and pollution.
 - Identifying means of encouraging people to walk thus reducing car use and promoting personal fitness.
 - Providing safe cycle routes.
 - Promoting use of public transport.
 - Exploring other alternatives to single occupancy car use by engaging with local businesses and schools.

15.0 CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 At present there are no crime and disorder implications identified, however it is expected that as schemes evolve there may be issues that have an effect on this.

16.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 Many of the proposals listed in this report include measures to assist wheelchair users and the visually impaired. The access audit, as identified in paragraph 7.1 and its resultant 'actions', will assist in providing improvements for all user groups.

CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The measures set out in this report will help to address the issue of congestion which, if left unchecked, will weaken the economic viability of Leatherhead and reduce its appeal as a place to live, work and visit. It is suggested that the Local Transportation Service takes forward the issues identified within this report, as per the recommendations.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Previous Committee papers
