



**A25 WESTCOTT ROAD  
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO UNUM  
INSURANCE ENTRANCE**

**Local Committee for Mole Valley**

**15 DECEMBER 2005**

**KEY ISSUE:**

Approval is sought to pursue the opportunity of improving the main entrance to Unum Insurance off Westcott Road incorporating new cycle and pedestrian crossing facilities.

**SUMMARY:**

This report explores the opportunities that exist presently to broker a multi partner scheme delivering safety improvements for drivers entering and leaving Unum Insurance, a safe crossing point for pedestrians using the nearby bus stop on the north side of Westcott Road and linking the proposed National Cycle Network route 22 with local schools. Success of the scheme would be dependant upon joint funding from Unum Insurance, a contribution from Sustrans and Section 106 monies derived from the development of the Longfield Road site near Priory School, Dorking.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to approve:

- (i) Development of the design in association with Sustrans and Unum Insurance.
- (ii) Construction of the scheme based upon the design outlined in **Annexe A**, subject to safety audit and subject to funding being made available.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In response to a questionnaire distributed as part of the A25 Route Study undertaken in 2003, many Unum employees complained that entering and leaving at the A25 junction with Westcott Road was very dangerous, particularly for those leaving to turn right. Investigations on site confirmed to officers that such claims were realistic because of a tight bend in the road to the east and the poor sight lines this created. Despite this, the cost of addressing the problem was deemed disproportionate to the number of drivers who regularly made the manoeuvre and the problem was awarded low priority particularly as there had been no recent accidents at the junction involving injury.
- 1.2 Since the time of the Route Study there have been two accidents at the junction resulting in injury, one involving a motorist turning right into the site and the other a cyclist attempting to cross the road.
- 1.3 As set out in the Westcott Road cycle path proposals report being presented to this Committee on 15th December (see separate item on this agenda), Sustrans are keen to develop National Cycle Network route 22 which is to pass through the Unum Insurance premises. One of Sustrans' main aims is to encourage children to cycle to school thus helping to develop their interest in this form of transport and promote a healthier lifestyle.
- 1.4 Recently monies have become available following a Section 106 Agreement associated with the development of the Longfield Road site at Priory School. It was felt that the most appropriate way of utilising the money would be to improve safe routes to the school and, in particular, make provision for pedestrians and cyclists needing to cross the road in the vicinity of the Unum Insurance entrance.
- 1.5 With two potential sources of income already identified for a highway improvement at this location, Unum Insurance were contacted and appraised of the opportunities that may exist to improve their access in partnership with others and thus at reduced cost. In the first instance a feasibility drawing was developed and shown to the company and later, at their request, a presentation was given to the company's senior management which set out the opportunities for match funding and the possible options.

## **2.0 ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY**

- 2.1 When drivers attempt to turn right out of the Unum premises, they are faced with a clear view to the right but a very restricted view to the left. At the end of the working day many drivers will be waiting to leave the site, putting considerable pressure on those at the head of the queue to make the manoeuvre as quickly as possible. In the testimony received from Unum staff, there were many reports of near miss incidents and damage only accidents.
- 2.2 The design proposed (**Annexe A**) provides scope for drivers turning right into the site to decelerate and pull to the centre of the carriageway, well out of the way of westbound through traffic. The easternmost traffic island will serve to keep traffic in the nearside lane thus reducing the likelihood of shunt accidents.
- 2.3 For drivers turning right out of the Unum site who have poor sight of traffic from the left, the five metre wide central lane provides a safe refuge for them to move in to before committing to join the flow of eastbound cars. Whilst waiting within the central lane, the driver's view to the left is significantly improved.
- 2.4 Drivers turning left into the Unum site, arriving from the west, would see no obvious advantage to the scheme, but the central island directly prior to the entrance would help moderate driver behaviour, reducing average speeds.
- 2.5 The proposed layout utilises, as carriageway, the existing bus lay-by. Although lay-bys were constructed in the past to help reduce delays for other road users, the thinking now is that buses are at best advantage when they stop within the running lane so that rejoining the traffic is made easier.
- 2.6 The westernmost island shown on the drawing incorporates facilities for both pedestrians and cyclist. A well used footpath and bridlepath on the south side of Westcott Road leads to Priory School. Mole Valley District Council manage the path and negotiations with them are at an advanced stage to convert the whole of the route to bridleway status so that it may be travelled in full by cyclists.
- 2.7 Westcott Road is carried over Milton Brook by a short bridge. Construction drawings for the bridge have been scrutinised and it appears that the possibility of widening the road was anticipated when it was built as the entire width of the structure is suitable to support a carriageway. However, services presently buried beneath the northern footway will be too shallow if left within the new carriageway and diversions will be necessary.

- 2.8 In order for the scheme to proceed it will be necessary to utilise a small section of land belonging to Milton Heath Lodge, which is a grade 2 listed building. It is envisaged that acquisition of the land would be made by Unum Insurance and then dedicated for highway use. The work would include the demolition and repositioning of approximately 20 metres of flint wall, which Mole Valley planning staff have indicated they would have no objection to.

### **3.0 CONSULTATIONS**

- 3.1 With Committee approval, consultation would be carried out with the owners of Milton Heath Lodge.
- 3.2 Details of the scheme have been discussed in depth with Sustrans and they are happy that it delivers a safe and valuable facility for cyclists.
- 3.3 Consultation with the Council's Passenger Transport Section will be needed with regard to changes to the bus stop.
- 3.4 Unum Provident have already been consulted and have given an optimistic response.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Presently £40,000 is available from the Section 106 Agreement. Sustrans have promised £25,000 and Unum Insurance have offered an optimistic response to the Council's suggestion of contributing £85,000. The initial estimate of the total scheme value is £150,000.
- 4.2 Within the figures shown above, an allowance of £15,000 has been made for compensation to be paid to the owner of Milton Heath Lodge.
- 4.3 It is estimated that £50,000 will be needed to divert buried services.

### **5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The proposals will help promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport in addition to improving road safety.

## **6.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no perceived crime and disorder implications.

## **7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The design makes provision for the visually impaired and mobility impaired with the use of tactile paving and lowered kerbs at the new crossing point.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The proposals embrace the concept of partnering and would deliver a facility valued by cyclists, pedestrians and staff at Unum Insurance. The scheme takes advantage of funding made available by Sustrans and valuable use of monies from a Section 106 Agreement. The proposal also demonstrates the Councils wish to heed the concerns of members of the public by addressing a matter highlighted by the A25 Route Study.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS: None**

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