



WOKING TOWN CENTRE ACCESS STUDY - PROGRESS

LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR WOKING 19 JANUARY 2005

KEY ISSUE:

To consider further short and long term proposals to improve access within Woking Town Centre.

SUMMARY:

The Town Centre Access Study has identified a number of locations within Woking Town Centre where improvements could be made to improve pedestrian access, particularly for those with mobility impairments. Some of these improvements are minor and could be carried out quickly during the 2005/06 financial year. However, several of the proposals, which are likely to be of considerable benefit to pedestrians, will require significant survey and consultation work before detailed proposals can be presented to a future Local Committee.

These proposals should be viewed within the wider context of the forthcoming Surrey County Council / Woking Borough Council joint review of the town centre pedestrianisation.

CONSULTATIONS:

Stakeholders and groups representing cyclists, pedestrians and,

importantly, the mobility impaired have been involved in the Town Centre Access Study from its commencement.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree

- (i) that the list of short-term measures shown at Annex A to this report be approved for construction during the 2005/06 financial year; and**
- (ii) that initial survey, consultation and design work be undertaken on the long-term proposals described in paragraphs 7 to 10, for reporting back to a future meeting of this Committee.**

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

1. The Woking Town Centre Access Study began in early 2003, its principal aim being to improve accessibility for pedestrians within the study area, particularly by providing facilities that ease the movements of those with mobility and visual impairments.
2. The Town Centre Access Study is a long-term project that will require funding in successive financial years. However, the funding that will be available during the 2005/06 financial year can be used to make a number of improvements to the existing infrastructure which, although minor in themselves, will make a major improvement in accessibility for the mobility and visually impaired.
3. Several larger potential improvements have been identified which will need more survey, design and consultation work to be undertaken before firm proposals can be presented and specific funding sought.
4. A series of Town Centre “walkabouts” were carried out with stakeholders and user group representatives in May 2003. This resulted in a list of desirable improvements, which is still valid.
5. Although these proposals should be viewed within the wider context of the joint Surrey County Council / Woking Borough Council review of pedestrianisation within the town centre (as resolved by this Committee in October 2004), they are “stand alone” proposals and, therefore, can be progressed and / or implemented independently of the review.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Short-term improvements

6. There are a number of short-term improvements that could be made that will make an immediate difference to all pedestrians. These range from re-locating finger post direction signs to providing dropped kerbs and tactile paving slabs and building out kerblines. These are shown in the spreadsheet at Annex A

Long-term improvements

7. During the various walkabouts that Officers have undertaken, a number of locations have been identified where the need to carry out improvements is extremely important but which are more involved and potentially controversial. They would, however, produce significant benefits for all pedestrians and are described below.

Stanley Road junction with Walton Road

8. Observations suggest that although the existing zebra crossing on Stanley Road, immediately to the south of Walton Road is well used and is required, there is as much, if not more need for a similar crossing between Walton

Road and the Chertsey Road / Church Street East roundabout. Actual pedestrian flows will need to be surveyed. The mouth of Walton Road could also be reduced in width, which will help to reduce vehicle entry speeds into the road and a future redevelopment of the Salvation Army site will take care of this issue.

Maybury Road junction with Stanley Road

9. There is currently no footway between Maybury Road and the bus stops adjacent to the railway station. It is proposed to remove 5 of the trees adjacent to the railway and construct the missing footway link. Dropped kerbs near the end of Maybury Road will allow easier crossing of this road, which is a one-way street.

Broadway / Locke Way area

10. Further to the report to this Committee on 14th July 2004, it is clear that in order to satisfactorily resolve some of the issues along Broadway and in particular the problem of the pedestrian island at its junction with Locke Way, a more radical solution will be needed. Currently, when trying to cross Broadway from the bus stops adjacent to the railway station to Locke Way, using the existing refuge island, if a bus is parked to the east, pedestrians have to virtually cross to the island before they can see any oncoming traffic. It is suggested that a scheme similar to that proposed in 1997 to route all east-bound traffic into Locke Way and Duke Street, is promoted. This is shown at Annex B. As well as improving pedestrian facilities, it could reduce the number of collisions that still occasionally occur at the Duke Street / Broadway junction.

Church Street East

11. To many visitors to Woking who use the Victoria Way car park, Church Street East is their first impression of the town centre. The road is heavily used, even by Heavy Goods Vehicles delivering to the Christchurch Way / Chobham Road area. Part of the road is two-way and part one-way and although the area is signed as a 20mph zone, vehicle speeds appear to be intimidatingly high. There are no formal crossing areas, so it is proposed to investigate the possibility of introducing a crossing point, along with measures to reduce vehicle speeds. Any such measures will need to take into account the access to the disabled parking bays adjacent to Town Gate.

A-boards

12. All around the town centre there are traders' advertising boards illegally placed on the highway, causing obstructions. Officers have previously told traders to remove their boards, particularly if the footway is narrow and the obstruction is more evident. Unfortunately, where the footway is wide, this obstruction is less noticeable and some traders cannot appreciate why they have been told to remove their boards whilst others have not. Other districts in Surrey have recently issued a "blanket prohibition" of A-boards on the highway in order not to appear to be discriminating between traders. It is proposed to introduce a similar prohibition in Woking Borough during the

next financial year.

13. It should be noted, however, that A-boards may still be placed on private property. Many shops in the town centre own narrow margins of land in front of their properties, which could give the impression that the boards are still on the Highway but the proposed action should keep the highway clear, especially where the footway is narrow.

Access for cycles

14. Item 7 on this agenda gives details of proposed improvements to encourage more trips by cycle and includes proposals for improved cycle access within and to the town centre.

Access for buses

15. Improvements have already been made to the bus stops in Cawsey Way, which are probably the busiest in Woking. Waiting facilities for passengers on the north side of the station have been improved as far as possible but future development opportunities could provide scope for considerable further improvements.

Access for freight

16. The introduction of a Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) by 2006 is one of Woking LTS's targets. A report giving details of the FQP, which will include access for freight to the town centre, will be presented to the Committee later this year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. £15,000 has been allocated in the 2005/06 financial year for town centre access improvements. It is proposed to use further LTP funding in subsequent years.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

18. The proposals will improve pedestrian access within and to the town centre, encouraging more journeys on foot, in line with Local Transport Plan targets.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no crime and disorder implications.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

20. The proposals will assist movements within and to the town centre for those with mobility and visual impairments.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

21. The Town Centre Access Study has identified a number of locations where

improvements are needed to enable pedestrians, particularly those with visual or mobility impairments, to travel to and within the town centre. Some of these are long-term aspirations. Others, however, can be implemented quickly and relatively cheaply and as such, it is recommended that the funds available for this financial year are targeted predominantly at these locations.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Item 17 of the Local Committee for Woking meeting on 14th July 2004

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