



**ST JOHNS HILL ROAD
RAILWAY BRIDGE**

**LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR WOKING
18 JULY 2005**

KEY ISSUE:

To consider the implementation of mitigation measures against vehicle incursion onto the railway at St John's Hill Road railway bridge in accordance with Government guidance.

SUMMARY:

The Committee deferred its consideration of the proposals shown on drawings 3386/111 and 3386/316 at its meeting on 6 April 2005, until full local consultation on the proposals had taken place.

Notwithstanding the additional assessment work undertaken since 6 April 2005, Officers still believe a proposal with traffic signals, is best suited to provide a comprehensive package of measures, which will mitigate vehicle intrusion onto the railway at this location.

However, consideration of a modified scheme without signals is also reported. Although offering very similar levels of protection against incursion, the modified proposal has, with few vehicle movements, the

potential for higher vehicle speed approaching and across the bridge, which could result in conflict.

The Committee is recommended to agree a scheme, which includes the traffic signal option.

CONSULTATIONS:

County Divisional and Borough Ward Members.

Residents at an evening meeting on 15 June 2005.

Postal letter and questionnaire within the local area.

The following are aware of the proposals as before:

- Woking Borough Council
- The Utility Companies
- Local Transportation Service – Woking
- Network Rail
- Emergency Services

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree

that the proposals shown on drawings 3386/111 and 3386/316 be implemented in accordance with Government guidance to mitigate the potential for vehicular incursion onto the railway.

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

1. The Committee deferred its consideration of the proposals shown on drawing 3386/111 and 3386/316 at its meeting on 6 April 2005 pending full local consultation on the proposals. The report to Committee at its meeting on 6 April 2005, is attached **Annex A**.
2. This report highlights certain aspects of the previous report and describes the additional assessment work and public consultation undertaken before representing the proposal to the Committee at this meeting.
3. The Local Transportation Service held an evening meeting for residents in the St John's Lye memorial hall on 15 June 2005. Approximately 90 people who heard about the Selby accident and background to the proposal, the bridge evaluation leading to the traffic signal proposal, additional assessment work following the 6 April 2005 Committee meeting and the potential for a modified scheme, attended the meeting. The meeting also heard that the bridge would undergo a strength assessment during July/August.
4. Those attending the meeting were clearly not in favour of the traffic signal proposal; they seemed more content with the modified scheme, without traffic signals.
5. A County Council public consultation letter and questionnaire (**Annex B**) was circulated locally shortly after the meeting, the results of which will be reported orally to the Committee at the meeting. Recipients are requested to indicate their view and preference for the proposals, a) with, and b) without traffic signals and to give their reason for their choice.
6. Notwithstanding the additional assessment and consultation Officers believe the recommendation in the report to Committee at its meeting on 6 April 2005 is the most appropriate to fit the circumstances at this location.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

7. Following the Committee's resolve on 6 April 2005, Officers undertook to corroborate the data used in the original risk assessment of the site, collected additional traffic data to cross-reference with that modelled by the County Council's traffic signal programme, prepared for and carried out the local consultation.
8. The original risk assessment was rechecked against the Department for Transport's national guidance in their publication – Managing the accidental obstruction of the railway by road vehicles (Feb 2003), it was correct.
9. The additional traffic data collected also confirmed that the mitigation measures proposed by the inclusive traffic signal and barrier scheme shown on drawings 3386/111 and 3386/316 were appropriate at this location and significantly reduced the potential for an incident at the railway bridge.

10. The temporary traffic signals erected with temporary barriers and with no alteration to the existing highway layout, have generated public disenchantment towards the proposal for permanent traffic signals at this site.
11. Therefore, understandably residents made their views known to the Committee at its meeting on 6 April 2005, and at the public meeting held on 15 June 2005, in the St John's Lye memorial hall.
12. Whilst re-evaluating the risk assessment in conjunction with the additional traffic data it was evident that modest speeds were recorded across the bridge; the low score in the risk assessment also reflected this.
13. The permanent traffic signal layout with its carriageway sensors to detect vehicle flows and volume, coupled to an intelligent electronic signal controller that varies signal settings accordingly to control and manage traffic, which is also monitored remotely for faults from the County's Network Management Centre, would enhance driver awareness of the bridge and thereby influence behaviour further. Furthermore, in normal circumstances traffic signals normally enhance drivers awareness that they are approaching a potential danger or conflict site, requiring additional caution.
14. However, consideration of the likely mitigation effect by removing the traffic signals from the proposal was investigated.
15. Officers concluded that in a worst case scenario where a driver fails to negotiate a bend or is tired or inattentive or in the extreme case where, a driver has fallen asleep or is taken ill and may make little attempt to recover the situation (DfT Feb 2003), traffic signals by themselves would probably not prevent an incident at the bridge.
16. The modified scheme without traffic signals was shown to the meeting of residents in St John's Lye memorial hall on 15 June 2005, to gauge their reaction. The overall layout is identical to that with traffic signals, the only change is the signal equipment is removed; all the barriers, etc would need to remain. Although residents seemed happier with the modified proposal, some concern was still expressed over alterations to the existing junction at Firbank Drive/Lane and to the overall extent and appearance of the barriers.
17. To gauge wider public opinion locally a consultation letter and questionnaire was circulated shortly after the meeting to 2,200 properties in the locality. The results from which will be presented orally to the Committee at its meeting.
18. The documents **Annex B** briefly sets out why the County Council is proposing changes, identifies proposals a) with, and b) without traffic signals and asks for respondents view and preference on the schemes. Outline drawings showing both sides of the bridge before and after implementation are included on the documents.
19. A variation to the traffic signal scheme would also require the approval of

Network Rail who with the County Council is jointly funding the proposals. Network Rail's acceptance of any modified scheme would depend on them being satisfied the revised proposal could significantly reduce and or minimise a potential incident at the bridge. Network Rail has expressed no formal view about the modified scheme.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

20. The estimated cost of the scheme is £215,000 (excluding Statutory Undertakers works). Network Rail and the County Council would fund this jointly. The County Council has made funds available for the mitigation measures from the County's budget for bridge strengthening.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

21. There are no specific sustainable development implications.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

22. There are no specific crime and disorder implications.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

23. The proposals should raise no equalities implications.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

24. The Department for Transport agreed a process to mitigate, as far as possible, vehicle intrusion onto the railway. The County Council has identified the St John's Hill Road railway bridge is a high risk site and requires intervention.
25. The proposal shown on drawings 3386/111 and 3386/316, developed jointly with Network Rail is ready for implementation in accordance with Government guidance.
26. Officers believe in normal circumstances the traffic signal scheme offers the better potential all round solution that would perform satisfactorily at this location.
27. However, following public concern about the permanent traffic signal proposal, a modified scheme without traffic signals was evaluated, although Network Rail has yet to endorse this proposal.
28. In a worse case scenario, the traffic signal equipment alone offers little protection to the railway.
29. Officers reaffirm their recommendation to the Committee that the permanent traffic signal proposal be implemented.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: 6 April 2005

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ANNEX B

PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND QUESTIONNAIRE