



Prey Heath Road, Mayford

Local Committee (Woking) 28 February 2007

KEY ISSUE:

To consider proposals to provide a pedestrian footway under the railway bridge adjacent to Worplesdon Railway Station.

SUMMARY:

Worplesdon Railway Station is a popular commuter station but the pedestrian routes to it are poor. In particular those commuters who do walk have to walk in the carriageway and when they pass under the railway bridge next to the station, they come into very close contact with road traffic. In addition, there is a flooding problem under the bridge which adds to the problem and increases the possibility of pedestrian / vehicle conflict.

CONSULTATIONS:

No consultations have yet taken place as the drainage problems need to be resolved before the pedestrian facilities can be progressed, even though it is known what form these facilities are likely to take.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree;

- (i)** to approve in principle the proposal to provide a pedestrian footway under the railway bridge on Prey Heath Road, adjacent to Worplesdon Station and introduce priority working under the bridge for road traffic, as shown on drawing No 12331

- (ii)** that Officers investigate further the possibility and cost of pumping water from the bridge into an existing watercourse some distance away from the bridge rather than using the existing ditch on Network Rail land.

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

1. Worplesdon Railway Station is a popular commuter station on the Portsmouth Direct railway line, which links with the South Western Mainline at Woking. Access to the station is from Prey Heath Road. Most of the commuters travel to and from the station by car.
2. A number of commuters walk to the station. These live along Prey Heath Road or in Prey Heath Close, although anecdotal evidence suggests that some live to the east of the A320 Guildford Road.
3. Prey Heath Road is a D-classification road and between its junction with the A320 and a point a little way to the south of its junction with Goose Rye Road, is subject to a 40mph speed limit. There are streetlights along the road and under the bridge; however, the road is still rather dark, particularly from a pedestrian's perspective.
4. There is no footway on either side of the road and minimal verge and, consequently, pedestrians walk in the carriageway. Carriageway flooding at the low point in the road, which is under the bridge, exacerbates the problems that are faced by pedestrians.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

5. A recent survey of pedestrian and vehicle numbers under the railway bridge during morning and evening peak periods did not yield high numbers of pedestrians. This was to be expected given the relatively small pedestrian catchment area for the station, despite its general popularity. However, there are sufficient numbers to warrant action, particularly if such action is likely to make existing commuters carry on walking to the station or encourage more to do so.
6. The weather during the survey was cold but generally dry even though beforehand and afterwards there was quite heavy rain. Whilst on the one hand this may have reduced the number of pedestrians walking to the station, on the other, it demonstrated the flooding that occurs under the bridge. It is not uncommon for half of the road to be flooded with pedestrians walking in the middle of the road. Despite the existing street lighting, many pedestrians are not conspicuous to drivers until they are quite close to each other. The inclement weather may have had an effect on vehicle speeds but during the survey the recorded speeds were generally in keeping with the 40mph speed limit.
7. It is proposed that a footway should be built under the bridge on the south side of Prey Heath Road, as outlined on drawing 12331, shown at Annex A. This is the same side of the road as the station and is the side on which pedestrians usually walk, although it is the side of the road that floods. Any narrowing of the road by constructing a footway will necessarily introduce single lane working, for which reason it is not feasible to construct a footway over an extended length. Whilst it is proposed to tie the new footway into the existing path on Network Rail land, adjacent to Violet Cottage, commuters making their way to and from the station will still have to walk in the carriageway to the east of the bridge.

8. It is also proposed to resurface the remaining carriageway alongside the new footway and resign the bridge with regulatory height signs both on the structure and in advance of it. It is intended that these signs will display both imperial and metric heights.
9. When pedestrians walk under the bridge and particularly during flooding conditions, traffic often reverts to single lane working, so it is clear that the road can accommodate such operation over an extended period of time. Consequently, it is not intended to introduce positive control in the form of traffic signals but to use signs and road markings to indicate priority. Since the footway will be built in the lane currently occupied by traffic coming from the A320, it is intended that this traffic should give way to traffic coming from the station. Additional street lights will highlight the presence of the road narrowing / footway as well as giving improved illumination for pedestrians.
10. The flooding problem needs to be resolved before the proposed footway is constructed. If this is not done, the surface water will merely collect further out into the road and the situation will be worse for both pedestrians and drivers. Some of the drainage gullies along the road are blocked. However, the main problem lies on Network Rail land, where there is a ditch that carries the surface water away. In the past, Network Rail have been very reluctant to clear this ditch and, unfortunately, SCC Contractors cannot carry out the work because it would be deemed as working on the railway and additional safety accreditation is required that is not needed for working on the Highway. This ditch needs to be cleared before gullies are similarly maintained and the road can be drained effectively. This effectiveness will be lost once the ditch begins to fill up and become blocked again.
11. It is obvious that there will be an ongoing maintenance issue with the ditch and the gullies but the other option of installing a pump, in order to pump the surface water into an existing highway drainage system would not be without its own problems. Such work would be a more specialist operation than is normally undertaken by Woking LTS but it appears that a submersible pump could be used and placed in a sump, such as an existing gully pot, with relative ease. Unfortunately, the highway drainage on either side of the bridge appears to rely on existing watercourses, rather than piped drainage systems, to remove surface water. Even if these watercourses could accept the water from under the bridge, it would be necessary to excavate for and lay a small diameter pipe all the way along Prey Heath Road from the bridge to either the Guildford Road to the east or Smarts Heath Lane to the west. More enquiries and investigation will be required to establish the exact requirements and cost but it is clear that laying pipe work for a distance of at least 480 metres would be considerably more expensive for SCC than Network Rail clearing its own ditch, although the longer-term ability of the pump to keep the road free from surface water is likely to be better than reliance on this ditch being cleared.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. A budget of £48,750 has been allocated for the construction of this

scheme in the 2007/8 programme.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

13. The provision of additional pedestrian facilities is in accordance with the County Council's LTP aims of modal shift and promoting walking. The lack of a footway under the railway bridge in Prey Heath Road presents a potential obstacle that may be dissuading more commuters from walking to Worplesdon Station. The provision of a footway and additional street lighting will improve the journey for those commuters who already walk to the station and may encourage more to walk rather than be driven.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

14. There are no crime and disorder implications.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

15. There are no equality implications as it is not possible to provide an extended length of footway, which would improve accessibility.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Although there is no accident history along the length of road under the bridge, there is a potential for conflict between vehicles and those pedestrians who walk to Worplesdon Station.
17. Providing a footway under the bridge with additional street lighting will be a relatively easy undertaking. Vehicles will operate under the bridge using a priority system, with traffic coming from the A320 giving way to traffic coming from the station.
18. The road regularly floods under the railway bridge and this is due to a blocked ditch on Network Rail land; SCC is reliant on the railway authority clearing this ditch, which has proved very difficult in the past. When the road floods, pedestrians have to walk in the middle of the road, with an even greater potential for conflict with vehicles. It is, therefore, vital that these drainage problems are resolved before a footway is constructed.
19. One option is to rely upon the railway authority to clear the ditch and keep it clear. Past experience suggests that the ditch will not be kept sufficiently clear. Another option, which would require further investigation, is to install a pump to move the surface water to a more remote watercourse that does not rely on Network Rail's ditch. This might mean piping the pumped water for a distance of at least 480 metres.

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Background Papers: None
