

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)

DATE: 25 MARCH 2015

LEAD OFFICER: JOHN HILDER

SUBJECT: GUILDFORD HIGH STREET SETTS

DIVISION: GUILDFORD SOUTH WEST



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

Subject to tender costs and a satisfactory resolution for the Thames Water main, work on relaying the granite setts in Guildford High Street is planned to start in August, continuing a period of around twelve months with a break for Christmas. This report provides details of the planned works.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to agree that / asked to:

- (i) Note the contents of this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report is for information and the committee is not asked to make any resolutions.

1. UPDATE

Background

1.1 In June 2013 the committee agreed that the granite setts in Guildford High Street should be re-laid in their entirety due to the deteriorating condition of the road and the varying degrees of success of the piecemeal repair work that has been carried out in the past by both Surrey County Council (SCC) and Guildford Borough Council (GBC), see **Annex 1**. The indicative cost reported at that time was £1.5m, though a lower estimate of £1.1m was subsequently provided by an external highways consultancy.

Funding

1.2 In June 2014 the committee agreed to allocate £150,000 of the 2014/15 budget to the project. Preparatory costs of around £15,000 will be incurred in 2014/15 and the remainder of the allocation will be carried forward to 2015/16.

1.3 In November 2014 the committee agreed to allocate £150,000 of the 2015/16 budget to the project.

1.4 It was agreed that the Guildford Local Committee, Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council (economic regeneration budget) would each commit to paying one third towards a project budget of £1m.

1.5 While the three estimates made to date and referred to in this report all exceed £1m, only testing in the commercial market will provide an accurate costing for what is an unusual highway maintenance project in terms of both content and scale.

Retain Historic Appearance

1.6 In August 2014 The Project Centre (consulting engineers) were commissioned to produce a scoping report, see **Annex 2**, looking at how relaying the setts might be widened to a public realm/environmental enhancement scheme. They had been asked to look at different configurations for the High Street including wider footways, bringing the carriageway to the same height as the footways, planting (trees) and street furniture.

1.7 The joint Steering Group convened to advise this project, comprising County & Borough Councillors, a representative of the Guildford Society, and supported by officers, met at the end of October 2014 to consider the scoping report. The group felt it was appropriate that consideration should be given to the idea of altering the appearance of the High Street in view of the scale of work involved in relaying the setts. However after a lengthy discussion the group concluded that given the overall appearance of the High Street has remained unchanged since the nineteenth century and that it is within a Conservation Area (so to be preserved for future generations) any radical

change would be inappropriate, would require lengthy consultations, and would likely provoke widespread objection.

- 1.8 The steering group considered that the project should remain as originally proposed, namely to relay the setts with consideration given to the provision of further 'flatter' crossing places such as that at Tunsgate. The group noted that the scoping report estimated costs for a public realm scheme in to be excess £2m, but that this included rebuilding everything between shop facades including footways and kerbs.

Armed Forces Day June 2015 and Works Start Date

- 1.9 Guildford will host the Armed Forces Day on 27 June 2015 with much focus of activity on the town centre and the High Street. The November 2014 Highways Update report to the committee advised that it would be unwise to attempt to commence in advance of this event and that work should start in August. This remains the objective.

Target Programme

- 1.10 The target programme is as follows:-

<i>Issue Tenders</i>	<i>May 2015</i>
5 week tender period	
<i>Tenders Returned</i>	<i>June 2015</i>
3 week tender evaluation period	
<i>Award*</i>	<i>June/July 2015</i>
4 week mobilisation	
<i>Commence on site</i>	<i>July/August 2015</i>
12 month construction period**	
<i>Works Completion***</i>	<i>August 2016</i>

* *Award will be subject to the value of preferred tender plus supervision costs being less than allocated funding, and a satisfactory resolution to the Thames Water main, see 1.12 and 1.13 below.*

** *Sectional completion will be specified in order to fully re-open the road mid-November 2015 with works re-commencing mid January 2016.*

****Estimated, with target duration subject to discussion and agreement during tender evaluation period.*

Procurement

- 1.11 Procurement will be via competitive tender based on price and quality to ensure best value is achieved. Potential tenderers will be identified and contacted to verify competence, capacity and interest during April.

Thames Water Main Replacement

- 1.12 The drinking water main that runs the length of the High Street near the centre of the road and associated service connections suffer regular leaks and the road is excavated and reinstated by Thames Water (TW) to effect repairs. Surrey highways officers have been in discussion with TW for over a year requesting that the main is replaced either in advance of re-laying the setts, or at the same time.
- 1.13 In February the Leaders of Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council sent a co-signed letter to TW requesting that they work with the two authorities to replace the main at the same time the setts are re-laid. At the time of writing this report no response had been received.

Section 58 Protection

- 1.14 In August 2014 SCC Highways issued a Section 58 notice under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) to all utility companies informing them that the setts would be re-laid commencing June 2015.
- 1.15 This notice give utilities the opportunity to undertake any planned works in advance of a road being rebuilt, and they have a three month period in which to issue counter-notices of such planned works. No responses were received within the three month period, nor have any been received to date.
- 1.16 Since issuing the notice Surrey Streetworks officers, who co-ordinate work on the public highway, have reminded utility company representatives of the planned works at co-ordination meetings that are held quarterly.
- 1.17 The Section 58 notice also prohibits utility companies undertaking any planned works for a period of five years following completion of the works, though they may excavate for emergency repairs and to provide services to new developments.

Special Surface Designation & Reinstatement Specification

- 1.18 Highways officers are in the process of obtaining a Special Surface designation under NRSWA for the setted section of the High Street and this will be in place by June.
- 1.19 This designation requires that all excavations must be reinstated to a specification stipulated by the County Council. Temporary reinstatements may be permitted if the highway authority agrees they are necessary to quickly re-open the road, but if so a permanent reinstatement complying with the specification must be completed within a period of one month.

- 1.20 SCC would retain a stock of certain reinstatement materials (granite setts, kerbs, Yorkstone footway slabs and mortar mixes) and only these would be permitted in reinstatements unless agreed otherwise.

Traffic Management, Access and Deliveries

- 1.21 The specification for the works will include the requirement to maintain access for emergency vehicles at all times.
- 1.22 The specification will also include the requirement that the contractor is to agree vehicular access for delivery & servicing for all premises which currently enjoy such access from the High Street.
- 1.23 Pedestrian access to all properties will be maintained at all times.
- 1.24 The contractor will be required to develop a traffic management plan meeting these requirements to be agreed by SCC, who will of course consult GBC, prior to commencement.

Working Area and Working Hours

- 1.25 The single length of the High Street made available for working at any one time will be confined to 20m for tender purposes. Such a restriction may affect the duration and cost of the works and tenderers may suggest alternative arrangements which would be considered at tender appraisal.
- 1.26 Subject to the agreement of GBC Environmental Health officers it is proposed to permit limited hour working on Saturdays and Sundays to reduce the duration of the works.

Markets and Events

- 1.27 The works will affect regular street markets to some extent and SCC will work with GBC to minimise this as far as possible.
- 1.28 Annual events that use the High Street will be listed in the tender documents, with associated minimum access requirements. Works may be suspended for events for a single day only. There will be no requirement for sectional completion (the road fully re-opened).

A Rigid Construction Specification for re-laying the Setts

- 1.29 The advantages and disadvantages of re-laying the setts in either flexible or rigid construction have been discussed by the project steering group at some length. SCC highways engineers are now satisfied that a rigid construction should be used for the reasons set out below.
- 1.30 Flexible construction comprises laying on a crushed limestone foundation, and bedding and jointing with a sand/grit mix. Although this type of construction is included in national standards for carriageway pavements it is

ITEM 14

rarely used in the UK, where rigid construction is the norm when natural stone materials such as cobbles or non-machined setts are used.

- 1.31 The two main advantages of flexible construction are perceived to be that joint widths between individual setts can be minimised and that reinstatements are likely to blend in significantly better than where setts are laid in rigid construction, where new mortar joints are likely to vary in colour and surface relief.
- 1.32 For rigid construction setts are laid on a concrete foundation and are bedded and jointed with mortar, which is how the High Street as it is today was built. Transverse expansion joints are incorporated at intervals to accommodate thermal movement.
- 1.33 Rigid construction is stronger and more robust than flexible construction, which is an important consideration for the High Street.
- 1.34 When open to traffic goods vehicles delivering to retailers pull away up the hill, imparting significant torque loading to the road surface via the drive wheels. This torque loading would be less significant on a flat road and is applied by all vehicles to some degree as they climb the length of the High Street. Where traffic is channelised into a single lane, as it is at the lower gate end, loading is further concentrated.
- 1.35 Flexible construction is normally associated with man made paving units, such as those recently installed in Market Street. These have exactly uniform dimensions and integrated spacer ridges on their sides to achieve exactly uniform joint widths. Individual units lock with each other to form a semi-rigid raft. Structural integrity relies to a lesser degree on the strength of the sand jointing materials which are used.
- 1.36 By comparison the existing granite setts are rough dressed on four sides. They have irregular dimensions and varying depths, which makes achieving a smooth surface profile difficult when laying on a compacted sand bed.
- 1.37 The irregularity of the four sides means that when laid touching each other (at random points) a single joint will vary in width, and some joints will be relatively wide. To maintain a visually acceptable 'straight parallel line' stretcher bond, which is how the setts are laid at present, it is likely that few setts in an individual course would abut their neighbours in the adjacent courses. As a result the structural integrity of the finished pavement would rely to a very high degree on the strength and integrity of the jointing material, rather than on the setts themselves mechanically locking together.
- 1.38 Comments on sand bedding and jointing apply equally when cement is added. This is known as dry mix, relies on ambient moisture for curing, and does not achieve strengths comparable to wet mortar mixes, particularly where epoxy additives are used in the latter.
- 1.39 Sand bedding and joints are prone to 'wash-out', and be lost to surface or ground water intrusion. The High Street is on a long and steep gradient and during heavy rain fast running water cascades down the road, making wash-out a significant risk.

- 1.40 The underlying subsoil is chalk, a material prone to developing rising springs in hilly areas, posing the threat of progressive wash-out of unbound bedding.
- 1.41 A significant pressurised water main leak could affect a large area of sand bedded setts downhill of the burst in a short space of time.
- 1.42 The use of pressure washers, to remove gum for example, is likely to dislodge sand from joints.
- 1.43 Given these considerations and with Special Surface designation ensuring the quality of reinstatements, SCC highway engineers are confident that the correct decision is to adopt a rigid construction. The road was built as it is for good reason and a pioneering approach is thought unwise for one of the highest profile retail streets in the country.

Other considerations

- 1.44 The specification will include a guarantee period, method statement requirements, an approval process for the provision of additional setts (a shortfall is expected due to loss during recovery and narrower joints), and installation of a preliminary trial section for approval prior to the continuation of works.

Footways, Kerbs and Highway Drains

- 1.45 The specification will include provision for replacing damaged Yorkstone flags in the footways and damaged kerbs.
- 1.46 The piped highway drainage system will be subject to a full CCTV survey and any damaged pipes and gullies will be repaired as part of the works.

2. OPTIONS:

- 2.1 Officers recommend that a rigid construction is used for the reasons set out in the report.

3 CONSULTATIONS:

- 3.1 Retailers in the High Street will notified of the planned works and start date follow award of contract, expected to be in June, and the appointed contractor will agree access arrangements with them prior to works commencing.

4. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 The work will be awarded following competitive tender, based on price and quality.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Additional areas of new 'flat' setts will be incorporated to assist all those crossing the road.

6. LOCALISM:

6.1 The works represent a significant investment by both the Borough and County Councils in the future vitality of Guildford town.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 None

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

8.1 As set out in the body of the report.

9. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

9.1 See programme included in body of report.

Contact Officer: John Hilder
SCC Area Highway Manager SW
Tel 0300 200 1003

Consulted:
As described within the report

Annexes

- 1 Local Committee for Guildford Wednesday 19 June 2013: Item 9 'Guildford High Street Setts Maintenance Strategy'.
2. Guildford High Street Concept & Scoping Report by Project Centre.

Sources/background papers:

Local Committee for Guildford Wednesday 26 November 2014: Item 12: 'Highways Budgets for 2015/16'