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**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR GUILDFORD**

DATE: WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2013
LEAD OFFICER: JOHN HILDER, SCC AREA HIGHWAY MANAGER SW
SUBJECT: GUILDFORD HIGH STREET SETTS MAINTENANCE STRATEGY
DIVISION: GUILDFORD SOUTH EAST

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

To agree a maintenance strategy for Guildford High Street setts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:**The Local Committee for Guildford is asked to agree that**

- (i) the setts in Guildford High Street should be re-laid in their entirety, rather than repairing damaged sections only as has been the case in the past, with work commencing in 2014/15.
- (ii) a Steering Group is established to agree standards for installation, the manner in which work is carried out (with consideration of potential for disruption), the timescale for completion (with consideration of available funding) and future protection of completed work.
- (iii) the committee will contribute to funding from 2014/15 onwards. (The committee will make allocations for 2014/15 at the December meeting).
- (iv) Surrey County Council's central Asset Management Team is asked to contribute towards funding.
- (v) Guildford Borough Council is asked work in partnership Surrey County Council on this project and direct available planning contributions towards funding.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Guildford's steeply sloping High Street is perhaps the most iconic road in Surrey, contributing to the charm of a historic county town which attracts thousands of visitors from around the world. The road served as backdrop to the finish of the 2012 Tour of Britain cycle race, as it will again in 2013, and was part of the Olympic torch route. It is also one of the most successful high turnover retail streets in the country.

Areas of the granite setts that form the carriageway in the High Street have been re-laid over the years, resulting in a patchwork appearance. Various areas remain in need of repair and ongoing deterioration can be expected through the length of the road.

In order to bring this flagship road up to a good and uniform standard it is recommended that the maintenance strategy should be to re-lay the setts entirely, rather than continue to repair failed areas on an ad-hoc basis.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The carriageway in Guildford High Street is formed of granite setts jointed with mortar. Such roads are usually referred to as being 'cobbled', although cobbles are a rounded stone whereas setts are rectangular and flat topped. Though rarely used, the correct term is a 'setted street'.
- 1.2 Surrey County Council (SCC) is responsible for maintaining the highway network in a safe condition for all road users. Formal Highway Safety Inspections (HSI) of Guildford High Street are carried out every month and any defects that are identified are repaired, as are those reported by the public between inspections. Repairs are undertaken by reactive gangs who make safe, usually using bituminous materials. Follow up permanent repairs, using matching materials, should be made by May Gurney, SCC's term contractor, within 28 days. These running repairs apply to relatively small areas only, larger repairs must be planned in advance.
- 1.3 In the last five years both Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council (GBC) have invested in the High Street by individually funding repairs of failed areas of setts. The two authorities used different contractors and different techniques. As a result the final appearance of the repaired areas differ, as they also differ from repairs carried out in previous years, and from reinstatements undertaken by various utility companies. SCC have also undertaken a programme of replacing broken and missing Yorkstone flagstones in the footways, though not all have been replaced as yet.
- 1.4 The overall appearance of the carriageway could be described as reasonably uniform with repaired areas discernable to the eye as well as sometimes having a different texture underfoot. Different materials used for the surface joints are particularly noticeable. Failing areas remain throughout the length of road and are evident where the joints between individual setts crumble and the setts loosen. Deeper seated failure of the road foundation is indicated by depressions where the surface drops below the surrounding road profile. Currently up to 10% of the carriageway is in need of repair in scattered areas of various size.
- 1.5 The road is wide and has a mild camber but this profile is spoiled by badly executed repairs and areas of foundation failure. Sunken and undulating areas hold water and are particularly noticeable during wet weather.
- 1.6 Before investing in further extensive repairs both SCC and GBC wish to develop a maintenance strategy for the High Street.

2. ANALYSIS:**MAINTENANCE STRATEGY**

- 2.1 Continuing to carry out repairs in individual areas is not recommended. Such repairs are unlikely to be any more successful in terms of appearance than those carried out in the past since they will usually tie in to sound but already badly profiled sections of carriageway, and the impression of a patchwork will remain or worsen.
- 2.2 All future repairs should span the full width of the carriageway and be of a minimum length of 10m. Full width repair will allow the cambered profile of the road to be properly restored.
- 2.3 It is recommended that the objective of the strategy should be to restore the entire road, re-laying the setts throughout. The timescale for achieving this objective will be dependant on available funding and the way in which works are carried out, both discussed further below. Once completed further intervention should be obviated.
- 2.4 If this strategy is adopted, localised repairs in areas that have yet to be re-laid should be confined to the minimum necessary to keep the road safe for users.
- 2.5 The smooth flush crossing point at Tunsgate is intended to assist those with disabilities and will be retained. Consideration should be given to providing additional crossings.

UNDERGROUND UTILITY EQUIPMENT: ADVANCE WORKS

- 2.6 Gas, electricity, water & communications mains as well as foul sewers are buried beneath the High Street. Officers have noted the frequency of mains water leaks, which result in the road being dug up to effect repairs. Southern Gas Networks has a programme of main replacement required at a national level by the Health & Safety Executive. The two gas main in the High Street are thought to have been replaced already, but this needs to be checked.
- 2.7 When a section road is to be reconstructed, notice (Section 58 of the New Street Works Act) is served on utility companies which allows them to undertake any planned works in advance, and which also prohibits them opening the road for a period of five years after reconstruction is completed.
- 2.8 Obviously, any main replacement should be carried out in advance of extensive work on relaying the setts. Highways officers have opened discussions with utility companies on any planned or desirable main replacements.
- 2.9 It is very likely that some replacement will be necessary and the programme should include a window for this advance work. This period of time will be used to investigate the existing road foundation, agree repair specifications, refine cost estimates, secure funding and arrange procurement.

- 2.10 Note that while issuing notices prohibits planned work for five years, utility companies are permitted to install new services to developments, and of course undertake emergency repairs.

COSTS

- 2.11 Costs and available funding will form the major consideration in delivering a strategy for relaying significant sections of the High Street, or the entire road.
- 2.12 Based on the cost of works described at 1.3 by both SCC and GBC and discussions with a specialist contractor an indicative figure for re-laying all the setts through the entire length of the High Street is £1.5 million. It must be stressed that this is a very preliminary estimate and actual costs could vary significantly dependant on factors such as the quantity of setts that can successfully be re-used, and the condition of the road foundation & sub-grade.
- 2.13 Based on this estimate, spreading full re-laying over four years would require an annual investment of £375,000.

FUNDING STREAMS

- 2.14 Potential funding streams comprise SCC central maintenance budgets, the budget controlled by this committee, environmental enhancement developer contributions (S106 funds held by GBC) and possibly private contributions.
- 2.15 No SCC funding has been committed to the High Street in 2013/14, and the earliest that SCC funds could be allocated is 2014/15.

ENGINEERING & AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.16 Engineering considerations include depth & type of foundation, bedding & jointing between setts, all of which determine the strength of the road.
- 2.17 Individual setts vary in size, and are typically between 250mm to 300mm long. The final appearance once re-laid depends on bedding each sett exactly flush to the surface profile, the width and uniformity of gaps between setts, as well as the colour, texture and depth below surface of pointing.

PROCUREMENT

- 2.18 Laying variable sized natural setts of this type successfully requires skill and experience and a specialist contractor should be used. Procurement via tender process is recommended, with contractors pre-qualifying for invitation based on the quality of similar work completed elsewhere.

TIMING AND DURATION

- 2.19 With no funding allocated in the current financial year the earliest start date for re-laying will be April 2014, the start of the next financial year. The

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achievable start date will depend on both securing funding and completion of any mains replacement in the High Street.

- 2.20 To keep disruption to an acceptable level and maintain vehicular and pedestrian access at all times and works should be confined to a relatively small area, in the same way that previous re-laying has been undertaken. With work confined in this manner officers estimate re-laying the entire High Street would take two years or more to complete.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The High Street will continue to deteriorate in various areas, and so require ongoing repair. As discussed at 2.1 above the option of continuing with 'patch' repairs is not recommended.
- 3.2 The High Street could be tackled in three or four sections with work spread over a greater timescale. While probably less economic than letting as a single contract, this approach allows the work to be tailored to available funding, rather than requiring the entire budget to be in place or committed on award of a single contract.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

STEERING GROUP

- 4.1 As at 2.17 above the final appearance will be critical to the success of re-furbishing the High Street. It is suggested that the aim should be to match the best sections of the existing setts.
- 4.2 It is recommended that a Steering Group is established to agree the standard of finish required. This group should include GBC planning and conservation officers, SCC highways officers and others as agreed by the chairman of this committee and the GBC town centre portfolio holder. It is recommended that the Steering Group visits setted streets to inform their decisions.
- 4.3 The Steering Group would also be asked to agree the manner in which the work is carried out. Guildford High Street is a busy thoroughfare throughout weekdays, and is thronged with shoppers at weekends. It is the venue for regular open markets and hosts national events such as the Tour of Britain cycle race. At 2.20 it is suggested that works are confined to a small area to minimise disruption. The larger the working area the more quickly re-laying could progress, and the Steering Group would be asked to consider this balance as well as other restrictions such as the Christmas embargo on works which applies from November through to January.
- 4.4 The Steering Group should also consider the future protection of the High Street setts. All future utility reinstatements should be to the same standard and specification as the re-laying work itself. Levels of supervision of reinstatements should also be considered.

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SCC/GBC PARTNERSHIP WORKING

4.5 The North Street project demonstrates how SCC and GBC have successfully worked together to deliver environmental enhancement schemes.

4.6 North Street Phase 1, re-paving the top and bottom of North Street, was undertaken jointly with GBC. The design was developed and materials selected by officers representing the two authorities. SCC provided the technical expertise to design, commission and oversee the work, while costs were met by both SCC (highway central capital maintenance funding) and GBC (S106 environmental enhancement monies).

4.7 North Street Phase 2 will start in August or September. The elevated footway, steps and parking/market area will be re-modelled. As for Phase 1 SCC and GBC worked together to develop and finance this scheme.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 The work would be subject to competitive tender by specialist contractors pre-qualifying for invitation based on the quality of similar work completed elsewhere.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 There are no equalities and diversity implications.

7. LOCALISM:

7.1 As perhaps one of the most iconic streets in Surrey the High Street is highly valued by local residents and businesses alike.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 No are no additional implications.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

9.1 In order to bring the High Street to a good standard it is recommended that the setts are re-laid in their entirety.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

10.1 Highways officers will progress decisions made by the committee.

ANNEXE 1**Contact Officer: John Hilder**

SCC Area Highway Manager SW
Tel 0300 200 1003

Consulted:

SCC/GBC officer and member discussions

Annexes:

None

Sources/background papers:

Local Committee for Guildford 13 March 2013: Item 10 'Highways Update and Budget Allocations for 2013 2014' Annex 2

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