

**JOINT COMMITTEE (SPELTHORNE)**

**DATE: 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2017**



**SURREY**

**LEAD OFFICER: NICK HEALEY, AREA HIGHWAY MANAGER (NE)**

**SUBJECT: IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW IN STAINES TOWN CENTRE**

**DIVISION: STAINES**

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The current road network arrangement in Staines Town Centre was first implemented in the late 1990s at the same time that the High Street was pedestrianised. Since this time transport patterns have changed significantly but there has been no significant development of the transport infrastructure.

Through the Business Improvement District retailers are expressing concerns that the inefficiency of operation of the current road network is deterring potential customers coming to Staines to shop due to the congestion experienced by drivers. There is particular concern about the impact the additional expected visits to the town centre resulting from the opening of a new store in Spring 2018.

Congestion in the town centre has also been the subject of a recent paper presented at a Spelthorne Borough Council Leader's Economic Task Group.

This report summarises the existing situation with the road network in Staines Town Centre, details recent activities relating to the development of the road network, and suggests possible future projects for consideration.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**For information only.**

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Not applicable.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 Staines is an area of significant economic potential, ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the 2013 UK Competitiveness Index. It is home to a high concentration of company headquarters, which may well be attracted by the proximity to London and Heathrow, and excellent transport connections, including access to the M25, M3, and M4. In recognition of the area's potential, Staines has been identified by the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (EM3 LEP) as a "Step-Up Town".
- 1.2 Today's road network in Staines town centre was established as part of the project to pedestrianise the High Street in the late 1990s. Motor vehicle traffic was diverted onto a route comprising Thames Street and South Street.
- 1.3 Since the late 1990s the town centre has undergone substantial development, resulting in increasing economic activity, which in turn has resulted in an increase in the number of journeys to and from the town centre. During this time the road network has not benefitted from any significant development.
- 1.4 Congestion is a regular experience for drivers in Staines. Through the Business Improvement District retailers are expressing concerns that the current road system is deterring potential customers coming to Staines to shop due to the congestion experienced by drivers. There is particular concern about the impact the additional expected visits to the town centre resulting from the opening of a new store in spring 2018. Congestion has also been the subject of a recent paper presented at a Spelthorne Borough Council Leader's Economic Task Group.

## **2. ANALYSIS:**

### **2.1 The existing road network in Staines**

- 2.1.1 The town centre area has four points of entry, all of which are constrained:
  - Staines Bridge – which is constrained by the fact that it is a major listed structure spanning the River Thames;
  - Laleham Road – which is constrained by the railway bridge;
  - The Iron Bridge – which is constrained by the fact that it is a railway bridge;
  - Wraysbury Road – which is constrained by the fact that it leads directly to the County Boundary with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 2.1.2 There are a number of significant car parks – including the Elmsleigh Centre, Two Rivers, and Bridge Street. A car park guidance system has previously been installed, but is now defunct and obsolete.
- 2.1.3 Access to the Two Rivers car parks and retail area is very restricted with two constrained access points. Mustard Mill Road provides an entry point from both the London Road and South Street directions, but only provides an exit towards London Road. Hale Street provides access to Wraysbury Road and

Bridge Street, which in turn connects to Staines Bridge. Bridge Street itself is narrow and twisting, and frequently heavily congested, resulting in congestion on the approach to Bridge Street across Staines Bridge.

- 2.1.4 Vehicle movements are controlled by a series of traffic signal controlled junctions, which are coordinated as part of a SCOOT region. SCOOT stands for “Split Cycle Offset Optimised Timing” and is a system whereby all the traffic signal controlled junctions are connected to an Urban Traffic Control (UTC) computer. The UTC computer receives information from vehicle detectors on site, and uses this information in real time to control the timing and coordination of the traffic signals so that all the junctions work together as a team to optimise capacity. If the system is working well, it should respond quickly to the prevailing traffic flows to provide capacity where it is needed.
- 2.1.5 The SCOOT region was implemented and its operating parameters first validated in the late 1990s, in the context of traffic patterns at the time. It has not been revalidated since the late 1990s, which means the algorithms controlling traffic rely on operating parameters that are out of date. In addition for some time the communications links between the junction controllers and the UTC were not operational. Communication has now been re-established, and arrangements are being made to repair faulty vehicle detectors. At the present time there is no funding available for revalidation of the operating parameters to suit today’s traffic patterns.
- 2.1.6 Transport to and from the centre of Staines is dominated by the private car. Staines Railway Station provides connections to London Waterloo, Reading, Weybridge, and Windsor. Staines also benefits from a number of bus services. Pedestrian facilities within the town centre area are very good. There are very few cycling facilities either within the town centre or connecting to the town centre from the surrounding residential areas.

## **2.2 Recent work relating to Staines**

2.2.1 There have been a number of activities in the past few years relating to Staines:

- The Local Transport Strategy (<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/surrey-transport-plan/surrey-transport-plan-consultations-on-the-plan/local-transport-strategies-and-forward-programmes>) was published in September 2014 and sets the transport context for Spelthorne as a whole, as well as outlining a forward programme of potential schemes to address different challenges. The Local Transport Strategy is due to be reviewed and updated in the coming months.
- The Staines Movement Study was completed in June 2014 and explores existing perceptions and attitudes to walking and cycling, identifying issues and potential issues that might overcome critical barriers to movement for pedestrians and cyclists accessing Staines. This is a lengthy (253 page) report and is available on request.
- The Wider Staines Sustainable Transport Package (STP) (<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/major-transport-projects/spelthorne-major->

[www.surreycc.gov.uk/spelthorne](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/spelthorne)

[transport-schemes](#)) is due to be implemented over the next 2 to 3 years. This is a package of new and improved cycling routes connecting Staines to Heathrow via Stanwell, and also a number of improvements to bus infrastructure in the same corridor.

- An expression of interest has been submitted to the EM3 LEP for a scheme to improve the capacity of Staines Bridge and adjacent junctions. This potential scheme is at a very early stage of development. A copy of the expression of interest is available on request.

2.2.2 There are also two projects near to Staines town centre, which are expected to be beneficial to transport patterns in the wider area:

- The Egham STP scheme (<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/major-transport-projects/runnymede-major-transport-schemes>) was completed in January 2017. The scheme included walking, cycling and bus improvements, focusing on the A308 The Causeway between Woodhaw roundabout and Staines Bridge.
- The Runnymede Roundabout scheme (<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/major-transport-projects/runnymede-major-transport-schemes>) is designed to improve this junction for all road users – reducing congestion and improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

## 2.3 Options for the Joint Committee to consider

2.3.1 There are a number of options for the Joint Committee to consider as possible future activities / projects. Some options are outlined below – these are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Committee should note that there is only a limited additional capacity available for motor vehicles within the constraints of the existing road network. The demand for continuous growth in motor vehicle transport simply cannot be served in the medium to long term. At some stage a decision will need to be taken to loosen society's dependence on the private car as the first choice mode of transport, either by proactively and positively restraining car ownership and usage, or by provision of high quality alternatives. In practice a combined strategy of traffic restraint and provision of high quality alternatives is the most effective way to facilitate changes in transport choices.

2.3.2 As a quick win it would cost approximately £30,000 to **revalidate the SCOOT region**. This would result in the coordination of the existing traffic signal junctions being optimised for today's traffic condition. It would not include any changes to the physical arrangement of the road network. If funding could be identified for this revalidation it would provide a baseline against which to measure the benefit of further projects. Revalidation of the SCOOT region would only benefit motor vehicle traffic.

2.3.3 Another quick win would be to **renew the car park guidance system**, to reduce the volume of traffic "hunting" for parking spaces. Related to this a **review of the charging strategy for the different public car parks** would enable drivers to be steered towards car parks positively to manage traffic flow through the town centre. A natural part of this would be a **review of the**

**charging strategy for any on-street parking** in the town centre, for example in Church Street.

- 2.3.4 A **detailed survey of transport movements** into and around Staines would provide an understanding of the town's catchment area, and enable a strategy to be developed to serve the transport needs of the town in the short, medium and long term.
- 2.3.5 A short term benefit is likely to be possible by implementing **minor remodelling of the junctions** within the town centre area, so that they are as well suited as possible to the prevailing traffic patterns. For example there may be a benefit in adjusting the junction of Mustard Mill Road, South Street, and High Street to enable traffic exiting from Two Rivers to turn right. The detailed survey of transport movements would confirm whether this kind of remodelling would be beneficial.
- 2.3.6 In the short to medium term, an understanding of the catchment area of the town centre derived from the detailed survey of transport movements would enable **new cycle facilities** to be prioritised intelligently. A coherent network of cycle routes both around and connecting to the town centre from the surrounding catchment area would provide a high quality alternative to the private car for employees, commuters, utility and leisure journeys.
- 2.3.6 Looking to the medium to long term, the detailed survey of transport movements would enable more substantial solutions to be explored. For example the gathered evidence may lead to the identification of a **park and ride** opportunity, or to the implementation of a **high quality public transport corridor**. Only in gather the necessary evidence in a detailed study could this kind of project be promoted with confidence that they would be beneficial.

## **2.4 Possible routes to delivery**

- 2.4.1 The Joint Committee has modest revenue and capital budgets. To make the most of these it is suggested that Committee uses its own budgets to develop projects through feasibility and (where appropriate) detailed design. Once Committee's priority projects have reached an appropriate point of maturity, bids could then be prepared for funding from CIL, or from the EM3 LEP. If business cases can be made, third party funding from other sources may be forthcoming – for example Heathrow Airport Ltd contributed a substantial sum to the Wider Staines STP scheme.
- 2.4.2 The first step, as outlined in the Highways Update report, is to agree a common set of priorities for strategic improvement schemes between Surrey County Council and Spelthorne Borough Council. Once a common set of priorities is identified, funding has already been allocated to begin to develop projects.

## **3. OPTIONS:**

- 3.1 As described in section 2 above.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS:**

- 4.1 None at this stage.

[www.surreycc.gov.uk/spelthorne](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/spelthorne)



## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

5.1 As described in section 2 above.

## **6. WIDER IMPLICATIONS:**

<b>Area assessed:</b>	<b>Direct Implications:</b>
Crime and Disorder	A well-managed highway network can contribute to reduction in crime and disorder as well as improve peoples' perception of crime.
Equality and Diversity	High quality sustainable transport infrastructure can widen accessibility to local education, employment, and leisure opportunities to all members of local communities.
Localism (including community involvement and impact)	The Joint Committee needs to gather evidence of local transport needs to inform its decision making.
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	By positively and proactively restraining car ownership and usage, and by providing high quality sustainable transport infrastructure, the growing transport needs of Staines town centre may be served into the long term while minimising the impact of transport on the environment.
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report.
Public Health	By positively and proactively restraining car ownership and usage, and by providing high quality pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, visitors to Staines town centre are better able to make transport choices that carry health benefits.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

7.1 Staines town centre is regularly congested.

7.2 There are short term options available that would result in modest motor vehicle capacity benefits.

- 7.3 It is not possible to provide for unrestrained growth in traffic in Staines Town Centre in the long term.
- 7.4 In the medium to long term continued growth in the number of journeys to and from Staines town centre, needed to fuel continued growth in the economic activity, can only be achieved by implementing measures to restrain traffic and provide high quality sustainable transport infrastructure.

## **8. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

- 8.1 The Joint Committee needs to agree its strategy to respond to the congestion in Staines town centre, and then identify funding to deliver this strategy.

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**Consulted:** N / A

**Annexes:** 0

**Sources/background papers:** As described in section 2 above.