

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT DECISIONS****DATE: 13 OCTOBER 2020****LEAD OFFICER: MRS KATIE STEWART – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE****SUBJECT: GUILDFORD QUALITY BUS CORRIDOR AND BUS LANE
ENHANCEMENT****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

To decide whether to proceed with the Woodbridge Road and Onslow Street Quality Bus Corridor Scheme following a statutory consultation proposing the extension of the bus lane, changes to the operational hours and days and permitted use of the bus lane and associated on street parking changes.

We are proposing to implement a number of highway improvement schemes along Woodbridge Road and Onslow Street, Guildford, in relation to the LEP funded Quality Bus Corridor Project (QBC) following a public consultation.

The proposed changes include:

- An extension of the existing bus lane under the railway bridge to improve bus journeys.
- Changes to the operational times and days of the bus lane along the whole length of Woodbridge Road and Onslow Street - it is proposed to operate all day every day.
- Changes to the classes of vehicles that can use the bus lane - primarily, HGVs will be excluded.
- To enable the introduction of the proposals described above, some changes to parking and waiting restrictions at various places along the road are also proposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

1. Following a statutory consultation process, approval is given to proceed with the Woodbridge Road Quality Bus Corridor Scheme for Woodbridge Road and Onslow Street in Guildford as described in the report, Specifically to:
 - i) extend the bus lane under the railway bridge (with consequent amendments to parking and waiting restrictions)
 - ii) change the operational times to all day, every day (with consequent amendments to parking and waiting restrictions.
 - iii) prohibit HGV's from using the bus lane

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Quality Bus Corridor Project which had funding granted by EM3 LEP in 2018 has three main objectives:

- 1) Improved bus journey time reliability and punctuality
- 2) Increased levels of bus patronage
- 3) Reduced bus journey times

This will help us achieve our 2030 Community Vision objectives

- Residents live in clean, safe and green communities where people and organisations embrace their environmental responsibilities.
- Journeys across the county are easier, more predictable and safer

In July 2019 Surrey County Council declared a climate emergency and in April 2020 Surrey's Climate Change Strategy was approved. The strategy was developed by Surrey's 12 local authorities and is the result of a shared ambition across the county council and the districts and boroughs, for Surrey's Greener Future – one where residents can live in clean, safe and green communities and embrace their environmental responsibilities.

To deliver on Surrey's ambitions, the county's current rate of carbon consumption would have to decrease significantly. Buses are a vital mode of transport for Guildford, used by 15,000 people per day. Surrey County Council has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions across Surrey by 2050 as 46% of the county's carbon emissions are produced by transport. Making buses more practical and attractive for journeys has an important part to play. Additionally, with new homes proposed in Guildford Borough over the next 20 years, a reliable bus network will be vital in ensuring that an already congested road network is not overwhelmed.

DETAILS:

Project Overview

1. As part of the wider 'Unlocking Guildford' package, the Guildford QBC project is specifically a set of measures designed to improve journey time reliability and provide improved on-street infrastructure and an on-board experience to encourage growth in patronage along key bus routes into and around Guildford. The focus of the Quality Bus Corridor project is along key bus corridors for the major bus routes into and out of Guildford. This specifically involves addressing congestion pinch-points for buses on the highway network, bus priority signal technologies, new electric buses and improving bus stop accessibility and real time passenger information (RTPI).
2. The proposed improvements to the local bus network enhance the overall provision of sustainable transport facilities in the area, enabling the QBC project to fully complement the other schemes within Unlocking Guildford.
3. The total QBC project cost includes EM3 LEP funding and Local Contribution. The Project commenced in Q3 2018/2019 and the Local Government Funding needs to be spent by March 2022 and that is the completion date for the overall QBC project. The match funding has already been spent on electric buses which were operational in 2018.

Scheme Background

4. Woodbridge Road is a key bus corridor from the north to the Town Centre and caters for seven bus routes; five frequent and two infrequent. There are approximately 48 two-way buses per hour at peak times. Woodbridge Road forms part of the Guildford Borough Council (GBC) promoted Sustainable Movement Corridor (SMC) 3 & 4 with the vision for a priority pathway along Woodbridge Road for buses, pedestrians and cyclists.
5. There are existing sections of bus lane along Woodbridge Road but these are narrow and not coherent. There is also no bus priority where the bus operators consider to be the most congested section; north of the Stockton Road roundabout to under the railway bridge. The southbound bus lane on Woodbridge Road heading towards the town centre stops short of the rail bridge leading to buses becoming delayed, particularly during peak periods, as they attempt to merge into a single lane with general traffic. The proposed bus priority improvements along Woodbridge Road aim to resolve the existing congestion points along one of the main bus corridors, and this is supported by the bus operators.
6. Buses also experience issues at the Woodbridge Retail Park southbound bus stop where the kerb alignment of the bus lay-by exit causes conflict with general traffic as the bus lane is very narrow and subsequently makes it difficult for buses to navigate the Stockton Road/Woodbridge Road roundabout. Additionally, the traffic lanes are narrow along Woodbridge Road, creating further delays as buses can get obstructed by vehicles in the adjacent lane and vice versa.

Approval Process

7. The Woodbridge Road QBC scheme obtained Delegated Authority at the Guildford Joint Committee on the 18 September 2019. However, the approval process for bus priority related schemes has since changed.
8. On 25 February 2020 Cabinet approved the Bus Lane Enforcement Report which approved authorisation to the Director for Infrastructure & Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport to introduce Bus Lane Enforcement and also authorised the Cabinet Member for Transport to introduce new or amend existing bus lanes and determine any formal objections through the public formal Cabinet Member decision making meeting.
9. At the Cabinet Member Meeting on 9 June 2020 Authority was provided to consult about changes to the operational timing of the bus lanes in Guildford and the types of vehicle that would be permitted to use them.
10. The QBC Woodbridge Road scheme has incorporated Bus Lane Enhancement and extended the QBC project from Woodbridge Road to Onslow Street. Both elements have therefore been integrated for the public consultation and delivery, this makes financial sense for value for money and has cost savings.
11. Information has been provided to the Guildford Joint Committee following the approval process change to ensure they are aware of the consultation

responses and recommendations which now require approval through the Cabinet Member for Transport decision making.

Proposals

12. The proposed changes along Woodbridge Road and Onslow Street include:

- An extension of the existing bus lane under the railway bridge to improve bus journeys.
- Changes to the operational times and days of the bus lane along the whole length of Woodbridge Road and Onslow Street - it is proposed to operate all day every day.
- Changes to the classes of vehicles that can use the bus lane - primarily, HGVs will be excluded.
- To enable the introduction of the proposals described above, some changes to parking and waiting restrictions at various places along the road are also proposed.

13. The proposed extension of the existing bus lane southbound under the Woodbridge Road railway bridge requires the reconfiguration of existing on street parking arrangements. On street parking changes are usually a function of the Guildford Joint Committee. However, the on-street parking changes are considered subsidiary to the bus lane extension and therefore are being included within the approval sought through Cabinet Member for Transport authority.

14. There are currently parking bays along the western side of Woodbridge Road which allow for 14-17 vehicles depending on the size and parking position of vehicles. The extension of the bus lane requires the removal of the first section of eight to nine parking bays to the south of the railway bridge, directly outside the Woodbridge Café, but the re-provision of a parking bay section for approximately five to six parking bays opposite Gardner Road.

15. An on street parking survey was undertaken on Sat 29 June 2019 and 2-4 July 2019 to assess occupancy levels, parking patterns and direction of occupant travel for the three separate sections of parking bays along the western side of Woodbridge Road. The Guildford Joint Committee 18 September 2019 report details the surveys and analysis as a background report.

16. The analysis shows that the loss of approximately three to four formal parking bays would not have a detrimental on street impact. It is concluded that on balance the extension of the bus lane and the significant benefits to bus congestion is offset by the loss of three to four formal parking spaces which can be reabsorbed on street based on existing parking occupancy levels.

Consultation Summary

17. Under the proposals, there will continue to be on-street parking bays in the vicinity of the Woodbridge café for 15 (approx.) cars or vans, in place of the current provision for 18 (approx.). Only the bays underneath the bridge are to be removed at the slightly narrower point in the road, and new additional bays are to be installed around 60m further south opposite Gardener Road as a replacement. Customers will still be able to access local businesses; the proposed improvements will not affect or impede any access arrangements

into local businesses. A parking survey, undertaken before the coronavirus pandemic, has shown that the relocated parking spaces are enough to meet current demand for parking at this location, including at the busiest time for parking in the bay fronting the café which is between 7am and 8am just after the café opens for breakfast. The parking survey is considered a worse case given the traffic levels currently.

18. It should be noted a number of responses referred to the Coronavirus pandemic and their views that the scheme was no longer required. It is therefore important to note that the Coronavirus Pandemic is unprecedented. It is however clear from current Government policy and the Active Travel funding that has been released by Central Government following the pandemic, that active travel, which includes public buses, should be encouraged and journeys should be made easier and more reliable. Users are also once again being encouraged to use public buses and follow the social distancing guidelines. It is therefore felt that the QBC project along Woodbridge Road is even more important to encourage sustainable travel and reduce single occupancy journeys which also has added health benefits.
19. From bus frequency data the existing southbound bus lane is heavily used by buses, and therefore improving the bus lane by extending it and altering the hours and users will improve reliability and journey times which in turn will enhance the passenger experience and bus passenger usage.
20. Department of Transport regulations specifically allow pedal cycles to use bus lanes. Officers have assessed whether a continuous bus lane for the entire length of Woodbridge Road and Onslow Street could be provided, however, the bus lane stops for short distances where other vehicles need to turn left, at a side road or across a junction. In some locations the road/extent of highway is too narrow to facilitate a bus lane as well as two way traffic and pavements so the lane cannot be provided where this is the case.
21. Motor cycles are currently not permitted to use the bus lane and because the width of the lane is only 3m (the most that can be provided in the space available) the Department for Transport do not permit motorcycles to share the lane with buses/cycles.
22. The introduction of a bus lane operating 24/7 and 'at any time' waiting restrictions would remove the ability to park on Sundays and evenings. There are a number of drop kerbs providing access to private parking along this part of Woodbridge Rd which effectively reduces the kerb space available for parking on Sundays to about 6 vehicles in areas where businesses are located and these spaces are not reserved specifically for any business but could be used by local residents or other visitors and general public. Although loading and unloading will still be permitted in the bus lane, parking should be prohibited to allow the free flow of buses and cycles.
23. Part of the development of further bus lane facilities along a corridor involves making its hours of operation consistent and simple to understand. If there are a number of exemptions to this, then this could lead to confusion over the hours of operation.
24. SCC are committed to provide the enhanced bus priority to assist further development of bus services in the Guildford area, as travel patterns return further back to normal, and beyond. In respect of concerns regarding the

impacts upon other traffic, any changes to their journey times would need to be weighed up and compared with the increased reliability of bus services, making them more attractive to existing and potential bus passengers.

Conclusion

25. In conclusion Woodbridge Road has been identified as a key corridor for sustainable modes (including buses) – including being part of Guildford Borough Council's Sustainable Movement Corridor – this has led SCC to progress increased and enhanced bus priority along this route.
26. Safeguard Coaches provided comments to the public consultation requesting a minor kerb realignment and street furniture de-cluttering at the southern end of the Stockton Road bus southbound lay-by so that buses can exit the bus stop without their front end extending into the southbound traffic lane which would further reduce delay to buses. Officers have assessed this request and undertaken swept analysis of a bus which shows there should be sufficient room to facilitate this request. The design has therefore been revised to taken on board Safeguard's request. This is subject to trial holes and services on site once construction starts. We are working with all Bus Companies within Guildford to ensure the Quality Bus Corridor proposals assist as many of the existing bus routes to improve bus journey time reliability and punctuality, increase levels of bus patronage and reduce bus journey times. This is evidenced with the amendments following the public consultation.
27. It is not considered that any of the other public consultation responses received require any amendments to the design and have been satisfactorily responded to and addressed within the detailed Consultation summary included in **ANNEX 1 and listed at the end of this report.**
28. Surrey County Council Officers went to the Woodbridge café to speak to owners directly on 25th February 2020 to explain the scheme. Under the proposals, the nearest bays to the café will be located approx. 35m to the south of the café. On balance it is felt the enhanced bus priority to assist further development of bus services in the Guildford area is a priority for Surrey CC to meet the Climate Change Strategy.
29. The final design for the Woodbridge Road QBC and Bus Lane Enhancement Scheme is included in **ANNEX 2 and listed at the end of this report.**

CONSULTATION:

30. A public consultation was undertaken between 24 July 2020 to 24 August 2020 which combined the Woodbridge Road QBC project and the bus lane enhancement. There were 53 consultation responses in total to the joint consultation for both schemes.
31. The scheme consultation was comprehensively advertised by way of street notices, letters delivered to nearby properties, articles in the local press, advertisements on social media, Surrey County Council's main website and a webpage with the more memorable address of www.ourroads.today/guildford.

32. A list of consultees is included within **ANNEX 3 and listed at the end of this report.**
33. A petition on behalf of the Woodbridge Café was also submitted as part of the consultation which included 867 Surrey based resident signatures. The petition is centred on the removal of the parking bay (circa 8 vehicles approximately 46m) being removed directly fronting the café which is required to facilitate the bus lane extension. On street parking is however being relocated with the infilling of the existing parking bays opposite Gardner Road to provide approximately 32m of new on street parking bays. This would result in the loss of three to four on street parking spaces.
34. Guildford Joint Committee have been provided with the consultation summary following the public consultation given that delegated authority was originally provided for the QBC Woodbridge Road scheme through Joint Committee before the approval process for bus priority schemes changed in February 2020. The Surrey County Council Project Team have assessed all the consultation responses and petition and provided the detailed summary in Annexe 1.
35. A detailed consultation summary of the responses received is included in **ANNEX 1 and listed at the end of this report.** This outlines the comments received which have been placed in themes. Officer responses to the response themes are provided for completeness to support this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

36. The scheme has detailed design and has been through a stage 1/2 road safety audit and recommendations have been taken on board. C2 statutory undertaker's estimates have been obtained and C3 quotes will be the next stage once approval is given. A high level cost estimate has been provided based on the detailed design. A final cost estimate will be provided from Kier our framework contractors once approvals are given. Additionally, risk/contingency/ Optimism Bias costs have been applied based on the stage of the detailed design. Monthly finance monitoring is undertaken and quarterly reports are provided to the LEP on the overall QBC scheme as per the funding legal agreement. A risk register is updated regularly as the project progresses.

Localism Implications

37. The schemes will require local changes to the road network. Statutory consultations are needed for various elements of the schemes and the consultation which has been undertaken allowed for objections to be received. The consultation information was delivered to every property in the consultation area. This included all the relevant information, for example relating to any on street parking changes, bus lane extension and bus lane enhancement changes. The responses have helped us to decide whether the scheme should be introduced and how it will operate. All representations were assessed and a response compiled.
38. SCC's Air Quality Strategy (2016) emphasises measures which lead to the air quality improvement outcomes by: restraining or reducing traffic volumes;

reducing traffic delays; and improving provision of information available to people on the air quality impact of their travel choice. The measures proposed by this project will contribute to improving air quality in the long term by enabling and encouraging more sustainable travel. Reducing vehicle emissions and more active travel improves the health of local people.

Sustainability implications

39. Increased use of public transport, specifically buses, where it replaces motorised forms of transport such as single occupancy car journeys, will improve air quality and reduce carbon emission levels, which is a key objective of the Surrey LTP3. Transport is responsible for one third of carbon emission in Surrey. The council's LTP3 has a target to reduce carbon emissions from (non-motorway) transport by 10% (absolute emissions) by 2020, increasing to 25% reduction by 2035 from 2007 baseline of 2,114k tonnes.

Public health implications

40. Increased use of sustainable modes of travel has a positive impact on the health of a person. The emerging Surrey Health and Well-being Strategy has identified obesity as one of the priority public health challenges

Reputational risks

41. The project is LEP funded and SCC have a legal agreement with EM3 LEP to deliver Quality Bus Corridors in Guildford, to which this project is key. Not undertaking the scheme holds significant reputational and financial risks as the funding would need to be returned to the LEP if the agreed outputs are not provided.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

42. The scheme is expected to cost £0.25m and is part of the existing Unlocking Guildford package of works, funded through EM3 LEP grant. A full cost estimate breakdown will be presented to us from Kier, our framework construction contractors, once the scheme is approved and can progress through pre-mobilisation.
43. The schemes within the Guildford QBC Project are fully funded as per the business cases submitted to the EM3 LEP and form part of an agreed capital programme.
44. Non-delivery of any scheme within the agreed Projects would create a risk that the LEP may ask the council to refund any costs to date spent on developing said scheme.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

45. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium term financial outlook is uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which are not fully funded in the current year. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected from next year onward, our working assumption is

that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. The Section 151 Officer supports the proposed scheme which is reflected in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

46. An approved local authority has the power to enforce bus lanes by the imposition of civil penalty charges in accordance with the Bus Lane Contraventions (Penalty Charges, Adjudication and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2005. Guildford Borough is one of the authorities within Surrey which are approved local authorities for the purposes of section 144 of the Transport Act 2000.

Equalities and Diversity

47. The recommendations in this report have no material impact on existing equality policy and therefore a full equalities assessment was not deemed necessary.

48. Before any changes are made on the highway, relevant and proportionate consultation was carried out with users and interested parties.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

49. If approved the scheme will progress to pre-mobilisation with road space being booked and Kier providing a detailed cost estimate and programme. It is hoped that the project can be constructed within Q4 2020-2021.

Contact Officer:

Neil McClure Transport Strategy Project Manager 03456 009 009

Consulted:

The list of consultees is included within **ANNEX 3**

Annexes:

Annexe 1 – Public Consultation Summary and responses. Quality Bus Corridor and Bus Lane Enhancement Woodbridge Road/Onslow Street.

Annexe 2 (a/b/c) – Scheme Detailed Design

Annexe 3 – List of Consultees.

Sources/background papers:

- Bus Lanes and Bus Lane Enforcement, Cabinet, 25 February 2020
- LEP Funded Schemes in Guildford, Guilford Joint Committee, 18 September 2019.

- Cabinet Member for Transport 9th June 2020 Bus Lane Operation in Guildford report.
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