

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**DATE: 27 FEBRUARY 2024**

**LEAD OFFICER: KATIE STEWART – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
FOR ENVIRONMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH**



**SUBJECT: LONDON ROAD GUILDFORD ACTIVE TRAVEL CORRIDOR  
SCHEME**

**ORGANISATION STRATEGY: GROWING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY SO EVERYONE CAN  
BENEFIT/ TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITY/ENABLING A  
PRIORITY AREA: GREENER FUTURE/EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES/ROAD  
SAFETY**

#### **SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The purpose of this report is to present the outcomes of the non-statutory public engagement process on the proposed active travel corridor scheme from New Inn Lane to York Road along the A3100 London Road, Guildford, in order to inform a decision on whether or not to proceed with the construction of all or part of the proposed scheme.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Leader:

1. Note the efforts that have gone into extending the engagement with the local community and stakeholders for the London Road active travel corridor in Guildford and acknowledge the feedback provided on the scheme proposals.
2. Proceed with the construction of Section 2 – Boxgrove Roundabout based on the strength of support from the local community, with the detailed design incorporating comments from the community engagement to deliver a scheme that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists.
3. Defer a decision on Section 1 subject to further design review informed by comments received through the engagement to ensure that the scheme considers the needs of all road users, with further consideration to be given by the Leader at a future date.
4. In the interim, commit to progressing with the delivery of a controlled crossing near Winterhill Way to assist with safer routes to school, following strong representation from local stakeholders.
5. Not proceed with Section 3 - Boxgrove Roundabout to York Road, as there were legitimate concerns raised about the design of this section and there is an existing alternative route through Stoke Park, but instead to progress with the delivery of a more targeted improvement in the form of a zebra crossing on the junction of Nightingale Road and London Road

## REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. When the engagement exercise for this scheme was launched, there was a commitment to only proceed where there is not substantial opposition to the scheme. After careful consideration of the community feedback on the proposed scheme following a 12-week extensive community engagement, the results indicate that on balance, there was overall support for progressing with section 2 (Boxgrove Roundabout), more mixed views on Section 1 (New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Roundabout), and less overall support to proceed with section 3 (Boxgrove Roundabout to York Road).
2. Proceeding with the delivery of the Boxgrove roundabout improvements and considering the improvements to the stretch of road from New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Roundabout will enable key links to be made with existing walking and cycling routes and key local destinations. Enhancing the infrastructure at this location also contributes to the delivery of important policy priorities for the County Council, including the ambitions of the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and achieving the county's net zero carbon target by 2050.
3. Progressing with the zebra crossing at Nightingale Road reflects that whilst there was less overall support for Section 3 of the proposed corridor, the feedback received during the engagement exercise highlighted the need for improved infrastructure at this location which would further contribute to the provision of safer walking and cycling facilities. There was also positive feedback for a new controlled crossing on London Road, near to the junction with Winterhill Way which again will contribute to safer walking.

<b>DETAILS:</b>
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### Background

4. In 2023, Surrey County Council adopted its fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4). This Transport Plan sets out the Council's transformational and ambitious roadmap to deliver the required carbon reduction targets set out in the Climate Change Delivery Plan, whilst supporting the county's communities and economy to thrive and ensure no one is left behind. The LTP4 is therefore a significant component of the Council's contribution to the delivery of the county's net zero carbon target by 2050.
5. A delivery programme of a range of activity and infrastructure is being developed and delivered to help the Council to realise its LTP4 ambitions. For example, the Council is making improvements to local bus travel, reviewing road safety policies, and delivering new infrastructure across the county to enable residents to make more sustainable travel choices.
6. Whilst many of these changes can be delivered as part of the Council's wider road and transport network responsibilities, there are certain changes in which the Council seeks to engage with the community to gather views as to the changes proposed. In the case of active travel schemes, this engagement is not statutory but good practice – and some external funding such as that the Council has received from Active Travel England, sets expectations around such engagement.
7. However, the Council - and indeed the wider local government industry – is still developing good practice in terms of non-statutory engagement of communities, and work is underway to develop corporate guidance and standards for such engagement. In the meantime, the London Road Active Travel Scheme was seen as an opportunity to

pilot a new approach to community engagement from which the Council could learn and inform such corporate practice.

### The scheme

8. The scheme itself was identified in several Guildford transport studies by Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council from 2015 as follows:
  - Guildford Cycling Plan (Surrey County Council, 2015);
  - Guildford Borough Transport Strategy (Guildford Borough Council, 2017); and
  - Guildford Cycle Routes Assessments report (Guildford Borough Council, 2020)
9. On this basis, the London Road scheme was submitted to Active Travel England for funding as part of the Government's active travel programme which funded schemes across England. Funding was received for all three sections of the proposed scheme, which meant the scheme was fully funded by Government grant monies to construct segregated footways and cycleways along the length of the scheme including converting Boxgrove Roundabout to a Dutch style roundabout which gives priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles.
10. The proposed scheme is split into three sections.
  - Section 1: New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Roundabout;
  - Section 2: Boxgrove Roundabout; and
  - Section 3: Boxgrove Roundabout to York Road
11. Originally, it was proposed to start construction of the section from New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Roundabout in early 2023. The original proposals to construct the scheme involved a 5-month single direction road closure, which would have impacted the local community, as well as a reduced carriageway width to facilitate the introduction of segregated walking and cycling routes.
12. However, after publishing the original proposals for the New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Roundabout section on 1 December 2022, a significant number of residents were concerned about the proposed dimensions of the carriageway if the scheme were to progress, and the proposals for traffic management during the construction phase for the scheme.
13. A community meeting was held on 5 January 2023 at which the Leader of the County Council and senior officers attended to listen to and respond to concerns and questions from the community about the original proposals. Following this meeting, it was agreed to postpone the works to allow for further engagement with the community. At the time, the Council committed to use the opportunity to pilot a new approach to community engagement which would not only inform a decision about the London Road scheme itself, but from which the Council could take lessons for future engagement in non-statutory contexts such as the active travel programme.
14. In order to ensure that this further engagement was undertaken in line with best practice, an independent consultant, the Consultation Institute (tCI), was engaged to advise on community engagement. This included: stakeholder mapping, the formation of a 'balanced room' stakeholder group, which comprised of representatives from local schools, residents' association, local county councillors, Guildford Borough Council, transport operators and local businesses as well as the completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA).

## Community Engagement Programme

15. A programme of engagement to gather views from stakeholders and partners on the impact of the proposals was developed with tCI which was based on three key mechanisms to gather stakeholder feedback, including:
  - Structured drop in events;
  - Targeted discussions with groups identified as likely to be most impacted by the proposals identified through the EqIA for the scheme; and
  - An online survey hosted on SCC's Commonplace digital platform, which is an interactive website allowing respondents to provide their comments and suggestions on the proposals.
  
16. A stakeholder group was formed from representatives from the local community to co-produce the engagement process, ensuring that the voice of the community was heard in designing the engagement materials. The membership of the stakeholder group was as follows:
  - County Councillors representing the affected wards.
  - Representatives from George Abbot school
  - Representatives from Guildford High School
  - Representatives from Surrey Collation for disabled people
  - Representatives from London Road Action Group
  - Representatives from Guildford Residents Association
  - Representatives from Boxgrove Residents Association
  - Representatives from Guildford Borough Council
  - Representatives from Stagecoach
  
17. The published information on Commonplace included:
  - The proposed benefits of the scheme;
  - Plans for the scheme and traffic management proposals;
  - EqIA for the scheme;
  - Transport modelling for the scheme;
  - Animation of proposed scheme; and
  - Frequently asked questions
  
18. The purpose of the engagement was to gauge views on the scheme proposals and the proposed delivery of the proposals for the London Road corridor. The engagement was not limited to drop-in events and the online survey; in addition, direct comments via email and letter were also encouraged and received. Two letters were sent to over 4,000 local residents and businesses informing them of the engagement.
  
19. The engagement period was originally planned for an eight-week period commencing 18 September 2023. This was subsequently extended to 15 December 2023 in recognition of the delay in publication of traffic modelling data, thereby providing stakeholders and residents the opportunity to respond to the updated information.
  
20. Six drop-in events were held to allow members of the public and other stakeholders to comment on the London Road corridor proposals. Originally, there were four such events planned, but the extra two events were added to take account of any comments following the delayed publication of the traffic modelling data.

21. Targeted face-to-face discussions were also held with groups identified by the EqIA as being most likely to be impacted by the proposal. Seven group discussions were held with the following stakeholders:
- Pupils and parents at Guildford High School
  - Pupils staff and parents at George Abbot High School
  - Residents at Clockhouse Retirement Home
  - South West Surrey Valuing People Group
  - Surrey Vision Action Group
  - Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
  - Family Voice

### Community Engagement Feedback

22. Overall, the Commonplace website received 8,930 visitors and 1,242 contributors which, following validation of the dataset which included the removal of duplicate entries, resulted in a total of 995 responses being provided to the online survey.
23. Analysis of the responses and feedback received from the engagement is contained in **Annex 1 – Engagement Report – London Road active travel corridor** attached to this report.
24. In line with the statutory requirements to understand the impact of the proposals on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, respondents were asked to provide responses to a set of standard demographic questions. It was purely voluntary to provide these details and a breakdown of the demographic data can also be found in **Annex 1**. On the basis of these responses, it is known that 79% of respondents who provided this information were Surrey residents.
25. In addition to the above responses, 23 responses were received from stakeholders, either via letter or email. Finally, the results from an alternative survey undertaken from a group of residents outside of the SCC engagement process, were also received.

### Quantitative Response Summary

26. The Commonplace survey asked a series of questions to understand the views of the community and determine the level of support for the proposed scheme, the detail of which is shown in **Annex 1**. 995 individual submissions were provided for each of the three sections of the scheme. The results for each of the sections are described below.
27. In relation to Section 1 from New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Roundabout, when asked '*To what extent do you agree that the design of Section No. 1 contributes to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and vulnerable road users?*', responses were as follows:
- 50% agree the design of Section No. 1 positively contributes to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users
  - 31% disagree with the statement
  - 19% neither disagree nor agree

28. In relation to Section 2 concerning the Boxgrove Roundabout section, when asked ‘*To what extent do you agree that the design of Section No. 2 contributes to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and vulnerable road users?*’, responses were as follows:
- 51% agree the design of Section No. 2 positively contributes to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users
  - 31% disagree with the statement
  - 18% neither disagree nor agree
29. In relation to Section 3 from Boxgrove Roundabout to York Road junction, when asked ‘*To what extent do you agree that the design of Section No. 3 contributes to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and vulnerable road users?*’, responses were as follows:
- 49% agree the design of Section No.3 positively contributes to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users
  - 32% disagree with the statement
  - 19% neither disagree nor agree
30. Of those completing the survey, 79% stated they were Surrey residents, of which around 75% left a postcode. Of those, 60% live in GU1 and GU4 locations, which are the locations closest to the proposed scheme limits. Considering these specific respondents as a subset of the overall response, the sentiment responses for each of the sections were as follows:

#### Section 1

- 50% agree the design of Section No. 1 positively contributes to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users
- 36% disagree with the statement
- 14% neither disagree nor agree

#### Section 2

- 52% agree the design of Section No. 2 positively contributes to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users
- 36% disagree with the statement
- 12% neither disagree nor agree

#### Section 3

- 46% agree the design of Section No. 3 positively contributes to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users
- 37% disagree with the statement
- 17% neither disagree nor agree

### **Qualitative Response Summary**

31. A series of engagements took place with local secondary schools including George Abbot and Guildford High school, which included sessions with pupils. The feedback from these sessions demonstrated support for the scheme, as referred to in **Annex 1**. In addition, both Headteachers submitted letters of support for the scheme on behalf of their schools.



32. Results of a survey undertaken by Kidicall Mass, Guildford which is a group of residents who campaign for safer streets for children, allowing kids' greater autonomy through improved cycling, wheeling, and walking options across Guildford, was submitted within the engagement period. It summarised a poll gathered from 550 children and families who took part in events in the town in May and September 2023. In summary, the report provided a statement of overall support for the Burpham scheme along with the following information:
- The biggest proportion of respondents (45%) said the destination they most want to cycle to was school.
  - 80% said road safety was a major concern for them.
33. A further alternative survey, the London Road Active Travel Survey, was submitted. This survey was undertaken by a group of residents who felt that the SCC survey was biased in favour of the scheme and who therefore undertook their own survey. The survey is reported to have received 1241 responses, with the results suggesting that 87% want the scheme cancelled, 11% to proceed with the scheme and 2% with no view. The survey was submitted to Surrey County Council with a disclaimer indicating that the data had not be independently verified.
34. The analysis of comments provided at the drop in events, by written submission and via the open question on the survey identified a number of key themes both in terms of support and opposition to the proposed schemes, with further detail contained within **Annex 1**.

### **Overall Summary of Engagement**

35. The analysis of the qualitative data shows a range of views from those who are supportive of the scheme and those with concerns, all which have been taken into consideration as part of the decision-making process. In addition, the quantitative results also show a varied level of support for each of the sections.
36. Taken in turn, section 2 received the most support from the survey – both overall and from the GU1 and GU4 postcodes – and feedback from stakeholders in the immediate area. However, some of the qualitative comments received raised concerns about whether motorists would understand how to use such a roundabout, given it is still a relatively new design in the UK. There was general feedback that any improvements of this nature would need consideration of how to ensure that residents and those travelling through the area can use the roundabout effectively.
37. Section 1 received more support than opposition in the quantitative survey and positive feedback from some of the qualitative outputs of the exercise. However, some of the qualitative feedback raised concerns about (a) the safety of shared use paths; (b) the road widths proposed and whether they were safe, and (c) concerns over the pinch points or narrower parts of this stretch of road. Whilst officers went to some lengths to assure respondents that the design of all three sections were compliant with safety standards for schemes of this nature, it is clear that parts of the community remain concerned as to these particular aspects of section 1.
38. Section 3 received the least support overall, and on top of similar concerns about road widths and shared use as with the feedback on section 1, there was qualitative

feedback provided regarding safety concerns in this section from shared use paths and the mixed use road outside of Guildford High School. In addition, there was feedback that there exists an alternative cycle way, which although not as convenient as that proposed in Section 1, does offer a cyclist the ability to continue their journey through this part of the corridor off the main road.

39. Whilst safety concerns about the proposal for this section of the corridor were raised, there was still a good level of support for making improvements to the corridor for this stretch of road. There was also qualitative feedback in relation to this stretch of road from Boxgrove Roundabout to York Road as to the need for specific improvements – one of which is a zebra crossing at Nightingale Road, which received particular support from stakeholders local to this area including Guildford High School.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

40. The proposal to implement improvements to Boxgrove Roundabout is a positive contribution to achieving Surrey County Council's LTP4 objectives. The detailed design will focus on giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists, and will be based on the feasibility design shared as part of the engagement. The detailed design will look to balance the needs of all road users to deliver safer journeys for the travelling public which is of paramount importance.
41. Further considerations will be given to the feedback received on section 1, New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Road, to ensure that we have considered stakeholders feedback to enable the delivery of a scheme that fulfils the needs of all road users, whilst focusing on safer routes to school.
42. With the funding that is not used from Active Travel England on this scheme – given that not all three sections are being delivered – the Council will seek to find an alternative scheme that can be delivered, with community support within Surrey. This will be determined following consideration of the Active Travel England criteria for reallocation, and in the continuing aim to deliver the ambitions of the LTP4 and the Surrey Infrastructure Plan.

#### **FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:**

43. The funding for this scheme is provided by a grant from Active Travel England (ATE) following a competitive bid process. The scheme was subject to value for money assessment using ATE tools and any alternative schemes would be subject to similar assessment.
44. The funding for the scheme costs to date have been wholly funded by Active Travel England who have been informed throughout of the design proposals and the community engagement.
45. Section 1 and Section 2 will be wholly funded by ATE grant following the design reviews previously mentioned, and monies allocated for section 3 maybe be redirected to active travel schemes within Surrey following further engagement with ATE.



<b>Section 151 Officer commentary:</b>
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46. Significant progress has been made in recent years to improve the Council's financial resilience and the financial management capabilities across the organisation. Whilst this has built a stronger financial base from which to deliver our services, the increased cost of living, global financial uncertainty, high inflation and government policy changes mean we continue to face challenges to our financial position. This requires an increased focus on financial management to protect service delivery, a continuation of the need to be forward looking in the medium term, as well as the delivery of the efficiencies to achieve a balanced budget position each year.
47. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2023/24 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, 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 the stable provision of services in the medium term.
48. The costs of the scheme are expected to be met from Active Travel England grant funding. Any reallocation of grant funding would need to be undertaken in accordance with Active Travel England requirements. As such the Section 151 Officer supports the recommendation.

<b>Legal implications – Monitoring Officer:</b>
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49. The Infrastructure Act 2015 ("the Act") provided for the setting of a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy for England.
50. The Government's first cycling and walking investment strategy, ("CWIS1") was published in 2017 and set out ambitions, objectives, aims and targets. It also detailed available financial resources, governance arrangements, performance indicators and future plans.
51. As required by the Act, a second strategy ("CWIS2") sets out the objectives and financial resources for the period April 2021 to March 2025.
52. The Government's 2020 Gear Change Plan set out cycling and walking aims and led to the creation of Active Travel England an organisation resourced to ensure that future investment in active travel infrastructure is delivered to a high standard and supported by evidence led behaviour change programmes.
54. Equality and inclusion are golden threads that run through CWIS2 as well as Gear Change and the Cycle infrastructure design guidance (LTN 1/20) A proactive and inclusive approach to engagement and support are promoted including consideration of people with protected characteristics and also the needs of urban and rural communities and health and economic disparities.
55. It is noted that this engagement was non statutory and was not a formal consultation, meaning that there are no particular legal requirements other than to have considered the outcome of the engagement and been reasonable and rational.

### Equalities and diversity:

56. The County must abide by its Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) when exercising its public functions. There is a requirement when deciding upon the recommendations to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups, and eliminate any unlawful discrimination. These matters are dealt with in the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). The EQIA is annexed to this report as **Annex 2**. Subject to the recommendations of this report being agreed, the EQIA will be reviewed to ensure it reflects any further development of the designs for Sections 1 and 2.

### Other implications:

57. None

### Public Health implications:

58. The Council remains committed to its aspirations to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and it is recognised that to achieve this goal, greater choice needs to be offered for sustainable transport options including schemes such as this. However, the delivery of such schemes needs to be with the support of the communities impacted.

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

59. The outcome of the decision at this meeting will be reported on the Council's website and key stakeholders will be contacted on the outcome.
60. Residents and businesses will be informed of the decision through Surrey County Council's website and social media. Prior to any construction works starting, advance notification will be provided to impacted residents and road users.
61. Discussions will take place with Active Travel England on the opportunity to utilise any unallocated grant funding for section 3 on other schemes elsewhere in the county.
62. The design for section 2 will be updated with the necessary checks completed and Officers will work with our contractor to determine the optimum method of delivery to minimise any inconvenience to residents and highway users.
63. Divisional members will be engaged on the proposed minor improvements at Nightingale Road and A3100 junction with Winterhill Way outlined in Recommendation 4
64. Officers will undertake a further review of section 1 with a view to bringing back a decision on this section which addresses and/or provides assurance over the key concerns raised in the engagement around pinch points and road widths.

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#### Contact Officer:

Roger Williams

#### Annexes:

Annex 1 – Engagement Report by the Consultation Institute



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