

**DATE:** 29 OCTOBER 2024

**REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER:** MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

**LEAD OFFICER:** OWEN JENKINS, INTRERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR- HIGHWAYS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING

**SUBJECT:** LONDON ROAD GUILDFORD ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME – INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT OF SECTION 1 FOR CONSIDERATION TO PROCEED.

**ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA:** TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITY / ENABLING A GREENER FUTURE / EMPOWERED AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

**Purpose of the Report:**

London Rd, Guildford is an active travel scheme, funded by an Active Travel England grant. It has progressed through the design and decision-making process as three separate identified sections.

The scheme was previously considered for decision in February 2024. At this meeting, the decision was taken to proceed to delivery on Section 2 and carry out an independent technical review on Section 1 to enable future decision making on its delivery.

This report provides an update on the outcome of an independent technical review of section 1 on the proposed active travel corridor scheme from New Inn Lane to York Road along the A3100 London Road, Guildford.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the independent technical review of section 1 and its conclusions concerning whether the scheme complies with current design guidance.
2. Proceeds with the construction of Section 1 –based on the strength of support from the local community, alongside the conclusions of the independent technical review.

**Reason for Recommendations:**

- Following the Leader decision on 27<sup>th</sup> February, officers were asked to review the design of section 1, specifically the use of the road by large vehicles and the shared use path. Officers engaged an independent professional engineering organisation to undertake a technical review focusing on the points of concern highlighted through the community engagement. That review concludes that the design allows HGVs to safely pass and that the shared use paths comply with LTN 1/20 guidance.

- Proceeding with the delivery of section 1 following the outcome of the independent technical review 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.
- Active Travel England, who is the government's executive agency responsible for making walking, wheeling and cycling the preferred choice for everyone to get around in England have also reviewed the scheme. As well as funding the scheme, they have endorsed the design of the scheme.

## **Executive Summary:**

### **Background**

1. 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.
2. A delivery programme of a range of activity and infrastructure is helping the Council to realise its LTP4 ambitions. For example, the Council is making improvements to local bus travel, has reviewed road safety policies, and is delivering new infrastructure across the county to enable residents to make more sustainable travel choices. The scheme also contributes to Guildford Borough Councils local plan, as London Road is a key corridor link to a strategic development site.
3. 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.

### **The scheme**

4. 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)
5. 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, 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.
6. 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
7. Community engagement was held for 12 weeks from September to December 2023 and 995 individual submissions were provided for each of the three sections of the scheme. The results for 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, were as follows:
    - 50% agree the design of Section 1 positively contributes to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable road users
    - 31% disagree with the statement
    - 19% neither agree nor disagree / Don't know
  8. At the Leaders decision meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024, it was agreed to commence with section 2 and not to proceed with section 3. It was also agreed to defer a decision on section 1, subject to a further design review informed by comments received through the engagement to ensure that the scheme considers the needs of all road users.
  9. Specifically, the Leader indicated at the meeting that further review work was required to consider the concerns raised through the community engagement about large vehicles passing safely and possible encroachment on the shared use path through the narrower sections.
  10. Therefore, officers engaged Arup, an independent professional services company, to undertake a design review of section 1 focusing on the short length of narrower shared use path that specifically looked at the following:
  11. The proposed carriageway lane widths and the potential to result in conflict between heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) using the road and pedestrians/cyclists using the footway.
  12. The safety of the short length, approximately 70m, of the scheme where constraints mean that 1.8m width shared use paths are proposed.

### **Outputs from the independent technical review**

13. The proposed shared use path is a minimum of 1.8m width and adequate for two adults walking side-by-side or for a double buggy including additional elbow room. It is also wide enough such that a wheelchair user and a pedestrian can pass one another. Therefore a 1.8m width is acceptable in principle to accommodate the needs of a diverse range of pedestrians as well as people on bikes.
14. The width of the shared use path should lead to lower cyclist speeds and the relatively straight alignment would afford ample visibility. Cycle numbers would be manageable even with significant future growth within the available width.
15. The scheme replaces advisory on-carriageway cycle lanes with off-carriageway cycle tracks and cyclists would be at footway level with kerb protection from road traffic thereby offering safer facilities to people on bikes.
16. The scheme proposes trafficked lane widths throughout the scheme, including adjacent to the sections of reduced width shared used paths, are each 3.25m, giving an overall width of 6.5m throughout.

17. In the UK, HGVs and buses are the widest vehicles on the roads with an assumed 2.55m width although this does not account for elements such as wing mirrors that extend out from the vehicle body. Including wing mirrors indicates an overall vehicle width of approximately 3.0m.
18. Therefore, given a road width of 6.5m and vehicle width of 3.0m maximum it indicates that two HGVs can pass each other safely without their wing mirrors encroaching on the shared use path.
19. In conclusion, the technical review finds that the principle of the reduced width shared use paths for short stretches of Section 1 is acceptable. There may be an element of discomfort and giving way when users are passing one another, albeit an infrequent occurrence. The design of the reduced width shared use paths need to recognise this discomfort and minimise the risk of conflict as much as possible. Suggested measures are:
- no street furniture within these sections to maximise the effective width
  - Coloured surfaces that highlight shared use
  - markings to indicate “bikes are guests” symbols on the path surface
  - pedestrian symbols on the paths and ‘share with care’
  - ‘slow’ markings on the path.
  - Ladder & tramline tactile paving would be required at the start and end

#### **SHARED USE PATHS:**

20. Surrey currently has over 128 miles of shared use paths, where pedestrians and cyclists share space, with 25% of the shared paths equal to or less than 1.8metres in width and 11% of the shared paths with widths between 1.8 metres to 2.0 metres.
21. This scheme has around 40% shared use path with the average width over 3 metres, with a 70 metres stretch with a width of 1.8 metres, which as referenced in the Arup report complies with guidance.

#### **STAKEHOLDER MEETING:**

22. A meeting was held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024 with representatives of the stakeholder group to discuss the Arup report. Varying views were exchanged about the Arup report and the scheme in general, with written comments submitted, which are annexed to this report.
23. We have received submissions commenting on the Arup report from;
- County Councillor George Potter
  - George Abbot school
  - Guildford Borough Council
  - a. London Road Action Group
  - Guildford Bike User Group
  - Oliver Greaves
  - Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

- Zoe Franklin MP for Guildford

These submissions are shown within Annex 2

24. With specific reference to the letter from the Surrey Coalition of Disabled people concerns, shared spaces are not in any way unique to this scheme, or to Guildford as they have existed for decades in Surrey as well as across the UK, so this scheme is not proposing anything that doesn't already exist in Surrey. However, we will continue to work with the coalition in the design of shared use paths.
25. Surrey Coalition of disabled people raised objections to the original floating bus stop proposal and following discussions with the Coalition and SCC's Passenger Transport Group, we decided to provide shared use facilities at all the bus stops.
26. At four of the bus stops, cyclists will be routed to the rear of the bus shelter. This is similar to the current arrangement at the Burpham Shops bus stop opposite the BP Garage. There has been no personal injury accident at this bus stop over the period Jan 2014 to February 2023.
27. Officers approached the Director of Inspections from Active Travel England to gain their perspective on the Arup report. They stated;

*"The width of the short section of reduced shared space is below the stated minimum in LTN 1/20 of 3m. However, given the site constraints and the lack of parallel alternatives the choice becomes binary: either you accept a compromise, or you end the provision. Given that the rest of the route is of high quality and should attract a lot of new users as well as serving the schools, then ATE would advise, that you do not end the provision. If you did do dismount or rejoin carriageway signs, then the result may be that they were ignored or that people encouraged to ride by the rest of the route would move into hazardous on-carriageway conditions. We therefore support your conclusions".*

*"In conclusion it is fair to say that you have no easy solution but you can make the compromise as safe and as comfortable as possible. ATE are not here to make delivery decisions or insist on guidance being followed. We exist to support authorities reach the best design quality outcomes. For this reason, we support you in your suggested approach".*

28. ATE have suggested a coloured strip of paving to indicate the edge of the path and improved signage for the shared use path to ensure all users are aware that the space is shared. It is also proposed to use markings that indicate that bikes are guests on the path and must yield to pedestrians.
29. George Abbot secondary school who support the scheme have committed to an educational programme for pupils at George Abbot about using the shared use path. Surveys undertaken by pupils consistently indicates that safer facilities would lead to greater walking and cycling amongst pupils and reduce car usage

<p><b>Risk Management and Implications:</b></p>
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30. The proposal to implement improvements to A3100 from New Inn Lane to Boxgrove Roundabout is a positive contribution to achieving Surrey County Council's LTP4 objectives. The detailed design will balance the needs of all road users to deliver safer journeys for the travelling public which is of paramount importance.

### **Financial and Value for Money Implications:**

31. The funding for this scheme is provided by a grant from Active Travel England (ATE) following a competitive bid process. 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.
32. Section 1 will be wholly funded by ATE grant following the design reviews previously mentioned.

### **Section 151 Officer Commentary:**

33. The Council continues to operate in a very challenging financial environment. Local authorities across the country are experiencing significant budgetary pressures. Surrey County Council has made significant progress in recent years to improve the Council's financial resilience and whilst this has built a stronger financial base from which to deliver our services, the cost of service delivery, increasing demand, financial uncertainty 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 deliver financial efficiencies and reduce spending in order to achieve a balanced budget position each year.
34. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2024/25 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.
35. The costs of the scheme are expected to be met from Active Travel England grant funding. As such the Section 151 Officer supports the recommendation.

### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:**

36. The Infrastructure Act 2015 ("the Act") provided for the setting of a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy for England.
37. 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.
38. As required by the Act, a second strategy ("CWIS2") sets out the objectives and financial resources for the period April 2021 to March 2025.
39. 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.
40. 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.

41. LTN 1/20 provides that there will be an expectation that local authorities will demonstrate that they have given due consideration to that guidance when designing new cycling schemes and, in particular, when applying for Government funding that includes cycle infrastructure. The guidance contains tools which give local authorities flexibility on infrastructure design and sets a measurable quality threshold to achieve when designing cycling schemes. It also provides that in rare cases where absolutely unavoidable a short stretch of less good provision will be appropriate, rather than jettisoning an entire scheme which is otherwise good. This scheme meets the approval of met the approval of the Director of Inspections of Active Travel England and given that the majority of the route meets the guidance criteria, may be considered to be such a rare case.

**Equalities and Diversity:**

42. 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 London Road Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). 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 Section 1.

**Other Implications:**

43. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

<b>Area assessed:</b>	<b>Direct Implications:</b>
Public Health	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:**

44. 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.
45. Residents and businesses will be informed of the decision through Surrey County Council’s website and social media. Prior to any construction works starting, should

the scheme proceed, advance notification will be provided to impacted residents and road users.

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**Annexes:**

Annex 1 – ARUP A3100 Burpham to Boxgrove Roundabout Technical Review

Annex 2 - Stakeholder group comments