

Divisions: Witney North & East

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT– 9 OCTOBER 2014

PROPOSED ZEBRA CROSSING – BRIDGE STREET, WITNEY

Report by Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Introduction

1. This report considers responses to a consultation for a proposed zebra crossing on Bridge Street, Witney.

Background

2. Bridge Street provides a link between Witney Town Centre and the residential areas in the north and east of the town. It also provides links from these residential areas to health, education and leisure facilities, as well as job opportunities. Bridge Street has footways on both sides which generally vary in width between 2m and 3m, although there are pinch points on both sides which narrow the footway width to less than 1m in places. There are no formal crossing points in terms of signal controlled or zebra crossings on Bridge Street.
3. In 2004 a public consultation on the design for a pelican crossing on Bridge Street was held. The responses to the consultation were presented, at that time, to the Witney Integrated Transport Strategy steering group, the members of which agreed not to proceed with the installation of the crossing. Since 2004 further housing development has been built in the vicinity of Bridge Street and new residents have persistently lobbied for a pedestrian crossing. The current Witney Area Transport Strategy within the Local Transport Plan includes policy WIT6 of “Improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists in Bridge Street and the town centre”.
4. The Transport Infrastructure Strategy for Witney was agreed by County Council Cabinet in March 2013. This recognises that the Shores Green A40 west facing slip roads scheme will need to progress before any whole scale traffic management improvements at Bridge Street or in the town centre can be delivered. However, it is now felt that, as an interim measure, the introduction of a formal crossing point in Bridge Street can be progressed to improve conditions for pedestrians, and that such a crossing will have a negligible impact on the existing level of road congestion, whilst significantly improving the level of pedestrian infrastructure in Bridge Street. A zebra (rather than a signalised ‘puffin’) crossing is proposed as this type of crossing is less disruptive to traffic flows when the number of pedestrians wishing to cross is not high.

5. As developer funding has been identified to implement a pedestrian crossing in Bridge Street it is a timely opportunity to revisit the type of crossing, design and location and subsequently hold this 2014 public consultation.
6. The location of the proposed crossing is on a desire line from the new residential area on the south of Bridge Street to shops and services on the north side. The scheme also includes a short span of pavement widening, making the environment slightly better for pedestrians. The crossing and associated zig-zag markings do not remove any daytime parking spaces; however they will remove the opportunity to park in the evening and on Sunday over a length of approximately 40m on either side of the road.
7. Plans showing the proposed crossing location are at Annex 1 and 2.

Consultation

8. In July 2014 a statutory consultation took place on the proposal. As part of the consultation the Council wrote to local residents and businesses affected by the proposal and public notices were displayed on site. Forty seven responses were received of which thirty two supported the crossing, one response included a four hundred signature petition. Of the fifteen objectors most were residents or businesses located on Bridge Street. The issues raised are summarised below (copies of all the responses are available in the Members' Resource Room).
9. County Councillor Richard Langridge objects to the proposal on the grounds of increased pollution and strong local opposition. The Police do not object to the crossing and the Town Council's Planning and Development Committee fully supports the proposal.
10. Whilst fully supportive of the provision of new and improved pedestrian and cycle linkages, West Oxfordshire District Council has strong reservations about this particular proposal. They state that Bridge Street suffers from significant traffic congestion at peak times and as a result is a designated Air Quality Management Area. Although there are a number of planned measures to help reduce the flow of traffic in this area including Shores Green and the West End Link these are long-term and will take some time to bring forward. In their absence, Bridge Street will continue to take a large number of daily traffic movements. As such, the provision of a pedestrian crossing in the suggested location is likely to cause a significant backlog of traffic at peak times, thereby exacerbating the current air quality concerns and also raising potential safety concerns as vehicles suddenly come to a halt to allow pedestrians to cross. Until the wider strategic measures to reduce traffic flows in Bridge Street are introduced, the District Council is likely to raise concerns in relation to the provision of new pedestrian crossing facilities in this location.
11. Other concerns raised by objectors are that the crossing will prohibit deliveries to local businesses and prevent customer parking; will increase

noise pollution; evening and Sunday parking would be lost and a reduction in property values.

12. In response, it is acknowledged that some kerbspace for loading and evening/Sunday parking will be lost as a result of the zebra crossing, but not all businesses in Bridge Street will be directly affected. However, the loss of parking will only be over a distance of 40 metres so there will only be a small additional walk required.
13. With regard to air and noise pollution, during peak times it is unlikely that any increase in pollution will be noticed, as traffic movement at these times is already stop-start. Although the concerns over the impact on property values are noted, this is not considered a material concern, mindful that pedestrian crossings are routinely provided in urban areas adjacent to housing.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

14. The cost of the proposed work will be approximately £50k including fees funded by S106 developer monies.

RECOMMENDATION

15. **The Cabinet Member for Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposed zebra crossing on Bridge Street as advertised and set out in this report.**

MARK KEMP

Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Background papers: Consultation documentation
 Bridge Street, Witney - Scheme Appraisal Report
 Consultation Responses
 Complementary Traffic Measures Study

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