

Divisions affected: Henley-on-Thames

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 29 APRIL 2021

HENLEY – GRAVEL HILL – PROPOSED ZEBRA CROSSING

Report by Corporate Director for Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member for Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the provision of a zebra crossing at Gravel Hill.

Executive summary

2. This report presents responses received to a statutory consultation on a proposed zebra crossing on Gravel Hill, Henley, as shown in Annex 1 put forward to address concerns raised over the safety of pedestrians crossing Gravel Hill near its junctions with Hop Gardens and Paradise Road.

Financial Implications

3. Funding for the proposals has initially been provided by Henley on Thames Town Council. There is also a s.106 developer contribution of £18,521.56 available. The total estimated costs, excluding the advertisement/consultation already undertaken amount to approx. £24,000

Equality and Inclusion Implications

4. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

Sustainability Implications

5. The proposals would help facilitate the safe movement of pedestrians.

Consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 29 January and 26 February 2021. A notice was published in the Henley Standard newspaper and an email sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, South Oxfordshire District Council, Henley on Thames Town Council and local County Councillor. Notices were placed on site and letters also sent to premises adjacent to the proposals.
7. One hundred and sixteen responses were received during the formal consultation. 4 objections, 3 expressions of concern and 109 in support. The

responses from Thames Valley Police and those expressing an objection or concern are shown at Annex 2. Copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.

Response to objections and other comments

8. Thames Valley Police objected.
9. County Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak, the local member for Henley on Thames, supports the proposal and further comments that the crossing has met with overwhelming support from members of the public as it is much needed. The Mayor of Henley, Principal of the Henley College and the Headteacher of Badgemore Primary School all attest to the need for the crossing. Many students and parents have to cross this busy road and the crossing will aid travel and safety. This also forms a safe route into Henley via West Street.
10. Henley Town Council supports the crossing and is funding its installation.
11. The Headteacher of Badgemore Primary School supports the crossing.
12. South Oxfordshire District Council's Team Leader for Development Management has commented that the proposed crossing is located within the Conservation Area and that the brick and flint wall on the southern side of Gravel Hill, is a Grade II listed building. He asked whether it is possible that the belisha beacons (particularly the one on the southern side of the road) can be removed from the scheme as they would detract visually from these important features of the historic environment. The Department for Transport's (DfT) regulations for the installation of zebra crossings stipulate that one yellow globe (belisha beacon) must be provided at each end of the crossing, positioned to ensure approaching traffic can see them in time to react to any pedestrians on the crossing. Therefore, it is not possible to agree to this request. However, the top and bottom of the posts supporting the belisha yellow globes can be coloured 'Henley Green' to blend in with the surroundings.
13. Objections raised by local residents comprise: -
 - a. Unaware of the need for a crossing on Gravel Hill as there aren't many pedestrians on either side waiting to cross, so this is trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist and perhaps is just an emotive response. There is already a 20mph speed limit - which seems to address any perceived problems, so why not save the money and spend it on something worthwhile.

Officer response

A pedestrian count survey was undertaken over 12 hours on Tuesday 17 March 2021 and the local Henley College students were back in attendance at this point, following the recent Covid lockdown. This showed 553 pedestrians crossing the road, within 50m either side of the proposed location and a further 902 walking along the pavement without crossing. The latter figure may include some pedestrians who might

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choose to cross at the proposed location if a zebra was present, but chose not to and cross elsewhere, possibly due to the busy flow of traffic. A traffic survey over 7 days, including the date of the pedestrian count, indicates that 1835 vehicles traversed the proposed crossing point (on average over the 7 days) during the same 12-hour period as the pedestrian count. The busiest hours showed 404 vehicles and 50 pedestrians crossing (between 8am-9am), and 353 vehicles and 125 pedestrians crossing (between 11am-12pm).

These results provide evidence that there is both an existing demand to cross by pedestrians, that there may be a latent demand if a crossing facility was provided and that the traffic volume can, at times, discourage pedestrians from crossing at this location.

- b. The crossing point should be several meters further down Gravel Hill so that it aligns with the pathway between the ornamental statue and the grass. This would allow easier access from West Street and move it further away from the Hop Gardens exit, to which it is dangerously close. Cars turning out from Hop Gardens will not have enough warning of pedestrians waiting to cross from their side of the road, if the vegetation in the garden obscures their view as they arrive at the junction. Perhaps the crossing should be slightly further towards Henley, more than the 19ft proposed?

Officer response

The proposed location is centred 19 metres from the centre of the junction with Hop Gardens. DfT guidance requires at least 5m clearance from a junction. Were it to be repositioned further away than 19m from Hop Gardens, it is considered this could discourage pedestrians from using it, especially if they are trying to cross (relatively directly) from Hop Gardens to Paradise Road. If the vegetation in the gardens overhangs the highway, then Henley Town Council can be approached to cut it back.

- c. Gravel Hill needs traffic calming measures, not a zebra crossing. Using pedestrians to slow traffic down is not a good idea and it is doubtful whether the students from Henley College will use it. A pinch point with refuge was proposed previously and not progressed.

Officer response

The previous proposal for a pedestrian refuge island was abandoned due to difficulties maintaining adequate width for large vehicles. The evidence from the pedestrian survey is that some college students are already crossing at this location. Vehicle speeds will be monitored again, if and after the crossing is installed, and consideration can be given to further enhancing the signing and markings that remind motorists of the 20mph speed limit.

- d. Concerns about the fast speeds of vehicles travelling up and down Gravel Hill. A pedestrian crossing would slow the traffic down but would cause some drivers to slam on their brakes, especially those travelling downhill after turning a blind corner into Gravel Hill and they would need to be

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given considerable warning that they were approaching a crossing. Could we use additional measures that include much clearer 20mph signs, Vehicle Activated Speed (VAS) signs and a speed camera? Vehicles leaving the town centre generally accelerate as they go uphill and as the road straightens. Excessive vehicle speeding in both directions along Gravel Hill is a serious problem. Gravel Hill is used by residents living along the road and beyond, there are sections where the pavements are particularly narrow and large farm vehicles and lorry transporters come especially close to pedestrians at these places. A resident was unaware of the consultation period.

Officer response

The 7-days traffic survey collected data on the speeds of some 35,399 vehicles, indicating '85th%ile' speeds of 30.61mph uphill (westbound) and 29.64mph downhill (eastbound). DfT criteria for implementing zebra crossings is that 85th%ile speeds should be below 35mph. It is acknowledged that, whilst there is some 90m of clear forward visibility for traffic approaching downhill, vehicles may require more braking and so it is intended to provide an improved skid-resistant road surface on this approach for a distance of 40m. The uphill approach has already been resurfaced recently. Vehicle speeds will be monitored again, if and after the crossing is installed, and consideration can be given to further enhancing the signing and markings that remind motorists of the 20mph speed limit. The details of how the consultation was publicised are provided above at paragraph 6.

BILL COTTON

Strategic Director, Environment and Place

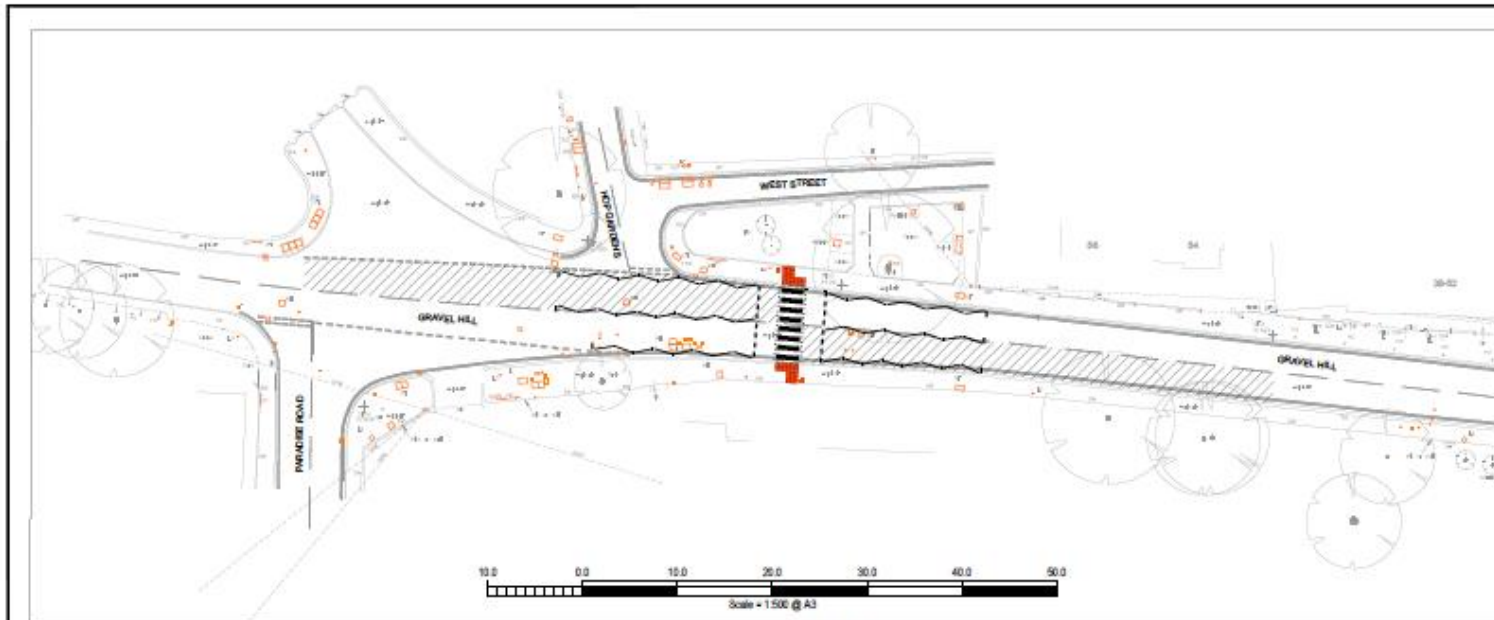
Annexes

Annex 1: Plan of proposed zebra crossing
Annex 2: Consultation responses

Contact Officers:

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April 2021



NOTES

1. This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all relevant documents and specifications.
 2. Dimensions are not to be scaled.
- Source: Glanville Survey drawing 8200789/101

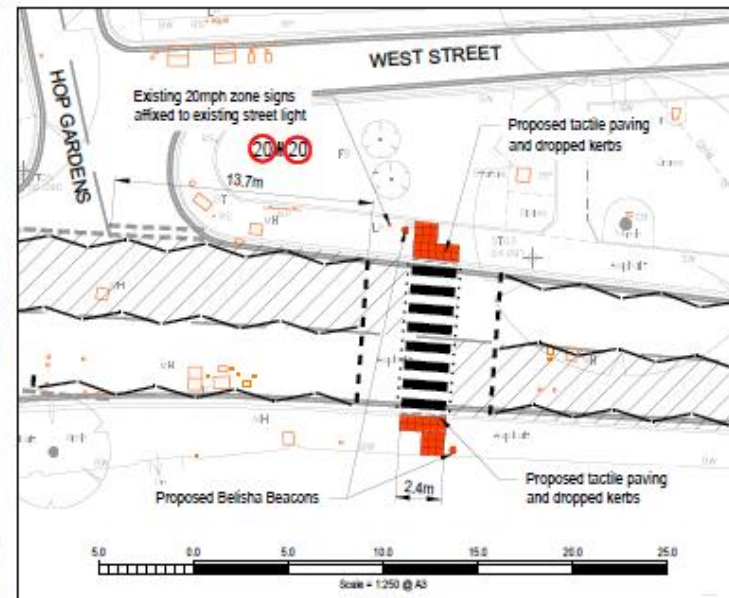
KEY


Existing utility covers / street furniture

PROPOSED NEW ZEBRA CROSSING



SCALE 1:10000



Rev	Description	Date	Chkd
 <p>Glanville Cornerstone House 62 Foxhall Road, Didcot Oxon, OX11 7AD Tel: (01235) 515550 Fax: (01235) 817700 jordan@glanville.co.uk www.glanville.co.uk</p>			
Client:		Henley-on-Thames Town Council	
Project:		Gravel Hill, Henley Proposed Zebra Crossing	
Title:		General Arrangement Plan	
Project Engineer:		T. Hart	Scale: As Shown @ A3
Project Director:		M. Frost	Date: December 2020
Status:		PUBLIC CONSULTATION	
Drawing No. 8200789/6101			Rev

RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	No objection - providing that the necessary speed monitoring has taken place and results support such features. The crossing fully complies with current design standards.
(2) Henley Town Council	Support - it will benefit parents and students of Badgemore School and Henley College. It will provide a mechanism for slowing the traffic and helps to reinforce the Council's aim of improving pedestrian routes around the town to facilitate walking rather than car usage.
(3) Badgemore Primary School	Support - As the Headteacher of Badgemore Primary School I am delighted to hear that Oxfordshire County Council and Henley Town Council are considering adding a zebra crossing to Gravel Hill. At Badgemore Primary School, nearly 50% of our pupils live on the other side of Gravel Hill and therefore have to travel across this dangerous road twice a day. Around 25% of our pupils walk across this road as part of their school commute and whilst I am very proud that they are walking to school, crossing this road worries me. Even with the new speed reduction in place, cars travel too fast along the road and visibility is tricky when looking up the hill. Adding a zebra crossing on Gravel Hill would not only make the road safer, but it would further encourage more families to walk to school thereby reducing pollution in the area. My staff and I all strongly support the proposal to add a zebra crossing to Gravel Hill and I know this consultation will be met positively by our wider school community.
(4) South Oxfordshire District Council	Concerns - My only observation on this consultation is that the proposed zebra crossing on Gravel Hill is located within a designated Conservation Area and the brick and flint wall located on the southern side of Gravel Hill, is a Grade II listed building. Is it possible that the belisha beacons (particularly the one on the southern side of the road) can be removed from the scheme as I feel that they would detract from these important features of the historic environment?
(5) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)	Object - I think it should be several meters further down Gravel Hill so that it aligns with the pathway between the statue and the grass. This would allow easier access from West Street and move it further away from the Hop Gardens exit, to which it is dangerously close.

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(6) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)	Object - I am not aware of a need for a crossing on Gravel Hill.
(7) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)	Object - Gravel Hill needs traffic calming measures, not a zebra crossing. Using pedestrians to slow traffic down is not a good idea!
(8) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)	Object - Gravel Hill needs something to slow traffic leaving the town. A pedestrian crossing is not the answer and I am doubtful as to whether the students will use it. A pinch point with refuge was proposed and was never progressed. Slowing the traffic is the answer to the safety issues on Gravel Hill.
(9) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)	<p>Concerns - My major concern is the danger of injury due to the speed of the traffic. There is minimal signage for 20mph. Numerous vehicles speed well above 20mph both day and night. It has been suggested that a Pedestrian Crossing would slow the traffic down; it's possible it's presence at the proposed site would cause some drivers to slam on their brakes, especially those travelling down the hill turning a fairly blind corner into Gravel Hill. Whilst a crossing would be helpful in slowing vehicles when it is in active use, what about other times? From a safety point of view, I would prefer additional measures that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much clearer 20mph signs - the current small ones are not very visible or ignored • VAS - Vehicle Activated Speed signs facing both directions - this would be a positive reinforcement to slowing speeds <p>The location of the proposed crossing on Gravel Hill is near what is already a tricky 4-way junction. Suitable advance warnings would be key to slowing the traffic as it enters Henley. Excessive vehicle speeding in both directions along Gravel Hill is a serious problem. Gravel Hill is used by residents living along and beyond, by students (when the college is open), by walkers, children and their parents, including those enjoying The Henley Trail. There are sections where the pavements are particularly narrow and large farm vehicles and lorry transporters come especially close to pedestrians at these places. I know this has been an ongoing issue and am pleased that positive actions to improve safety are being taken. I trust that safety measures of the kind mentioned above - VAS and larger 20mph signage - will be incorporated as well as the proposed crossing. This will help ensure that vehicles adhere to the existing speed limits, thereby making the entire length of Gravel Hill road much safer.</p>

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<p>(10) Local Resident (Henley on Thames)</p>	<p>Concerns - I welcome the concept, however wonder whether cars turning out from Hop Gardens will have enough warning of pedestrians waiting to cross from their side of the road, if the vegetation in the garden there is obscuring view as they arrive at the junction? Perhaps the crossing should be slightly further towards Henley, more than the 19ft?</p>
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