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| Division: Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst, Headington and Quarry |
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CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT– 12 SEPTEMBER 2013

LONDON ROAD, HEADINGTON – PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS AND BUS LANE

Report by Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Introduction

1. This report considers objections and comments received to a formal consultation on proposals to introduce two new lengths of bus lane on the A40 London Road; the Oxford bound approach to the Green Road (Headington) roundabout and at the exit of the Thornhill Park & Ride site. The exercise has also been used to consult generally on proposals forming the next phase of the London Road Improvement Scheme.

Background

2. These proposals form part of a package of measures to improve non-car access between Thornhill Park & Ride and the hospitals and other major destinations in Headington. Other elements include expanding the park and ride site and new bus services. The package has received funding from the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). Longer lengths of bus lane on both sides of London Road had previously been considered but rejected due to the cost, limited effectiveness in improving bus journey times and objections from local people concerned about the impact on existing footways and cycleways and loss of trees.

3. The report considers the proposed provision of a new length of bus lane at:

- Oxford, Headington A40 London Road, location as shown at Annex 4;

and provision of an extension to the existing bus lane at:

- Oxford, Risinghurst A40 London Road, location as shown at Annex 5;

This follows the publication of the draft Oxfordshire County Council - (City of Oxford and North Hinksey) (Bus Lanes, Cycle Lanes and Traffic Management) (Variation No. 9) Order 20**.

4. In addition to the formal consultation held on the proposals the opportunity was also taken to formally consult on the overall provisions of the London Road Improvement Scheme, which included the introduction of two new lengths of bus stop clearways within the extent of the scheme

associated with the relocation of the Oxford bound bus stop on London Road, and the extension of the London bound bus stop on London Road. The location of these is shown at Annex 4.

Formal Consultation

5. Oxfordshire County Council sent a copy of the draft variation Order, statement of reasons and a copy of the public notice appearing in the local press, containing all the proposed lengths of bus lane to formal consultees on 28 June 2013. These documents, together with supporting documentation as required and plan showing the proposed scheme, were deposited for public inspection at County Hall and Headington library. They are also available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.
6. The Council also wrote to local residents affected by the proposed lengths of bus lane and the relocation or alteration to bus stops, asking for their comments. Public notices were displayed at each site and in the Oxford Times. Copies of the consultation material were made available on the Council's website which made provision for submission of comments. Additionally, a drop-in session was held at the Quarry Village Hall on 18 July 2013 where plans of the proposals were on display and Council officers on hand to discuss the scheme with members of the public.
7. A total of 44 responses were received regarding the proposals for London Road, 4 of which were formal objections. Of the 44 responses, 11 were submitted via the Council's website, 13 were received as either emails or letters and 20 were submitted on comments forms made available at the drop-in session. Annex 1 contains details of the objections received along with officer comments. Annex 2 contains comments received from local members, Thames Valley Police and bus operators again with officer comments. All other responses received are summarised at Annex 3 together with officer comments.

Brief summary of comments received

8. Following analysis of the comments received, one main theme emerged:
 - Concern over the lack of west bound cycle facilities on London Road.
9. Other comments received concerned:
 - Retention of yellow box markings at side road junctions on London Road.
 - The effectiveness of the short length of proposed bus lane on the A40 London Road.
 - Loss of existing footway and verge space.
10. Of the 4 objections received, 3 were from groups representing cycling and 1 from a resident in Lyndworth Mews. Several suggestions have been

made by the cycling groups and a recommendation made to address their concerns. Annex 1 details their objections and corresponding officer comment.

11. Although not objecting to the proposals contained in the improvement scheme, Thames Valley Police raised concerns over certain aspects of the proposed layout. These have been noted and included in the recommendations contained in this report.
12. The views of local members are detailed at Annex 2 and generally reflect the common themes evident in the comments received. Whilst broadly supporting the aims of the proposals Councillor Roz Smith has raised a particular concern relating to movement of westbound traffic leaving the Green Road roundabout at the Green Road exit leading onto Toot Hill Butts. Further traffic survey work, including traffic counts and origin & destination surveys, has been recommended in order to support a proposal to close this exit of the roundabout to motorised vehicles should the need arise. A decision to close the Green Road exit should be based on a period of post-completion monitoring of the new road layout for an initial period of 6 months.
13. Comments submitted by 2 of the main bus operators using the route are in favour of the proposals and are summarised at Annex 2.

Conclusion

14. In light of the comments received from the formal consultation, amendments to the traffic regulation order should be made in order to allow the introduction of the 2 new lengths of bus lane on the A40 London Road.
15. However, some minor amendments to the proposals as consulted on are recommended in order to address concerns raised by local residents and Thames Valley Police in relation to the layout and detailing of elements of the improvement scheme. In particular it is recommended to proceed with preparatory work to support the permanent closure to motorised vehicles of the Green Road (Toot Hill Butts) exit of the Green Road roundabout, to enable this to be implemented quickly should the need arise. Annex 2 sets out specific officer comments in relation to this recommendation.
16. Although partially funded by the LSTF, the principle aim of the London Road Improvement Scheme has been to provide bus priority along this important route into Headington. The proposals as consulted on seek to maintain the current level of cycling provision.
17. A number of valid suggestions have been made by cycling groups and will be taken into account in any future work to investigate the possible provision of improved west bound cycle facilities on London Road. This

investigation work could be incorporated into future project briefs generated by the LSTF currently available to the Council.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

18. The cost of all the proposed work under consultation, including that described in this report, will be met from the fund set up for this purpose. This fund is made up of £340,000 from the Council's capital budget and £500,000 of match funding available through the LSTF fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. **The Cabinet Member for Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve:**

- (a) **the proposed length of new bus lane on the A40 London Road at the approach to the Green Road roundabout and that that length of bus lane should have an appropriately coloured surface treatment applied to it;**
- (b) **the proposed bus lane extension on the A40 London Road at the access to the Thornhill Park & Ride;**
- (c) **the proposed London Road Improvement Scheme with the following amendments:**

in relation to Green Road roundabout:

- 1. **Additional survey work to be carried out to determine the level of use for the Green Road exit and gauge the impact it might have on local traffic;**
- 2. **Preparatory work to be carried out for the formal consultation to close the Green Road exit from the Green Road roundabout to motorised vehicles;**
- 3. **Formal consultation to be carried out in connection with the permanent closure of the Green Road exit from the Green Road roundabout;**
- 4. **Monitoring of the new road layout at the Green Road roundabout to be carried out for a period of 6 months from opening to determine if the permanent closure of the Green Road exit from the Green Road roundabout is required.**

in relation to the A420 London Road:

- 1. **The proposed length of the London bound bus stop on the north side of the road (west of Lyndworth Close) be reduced to 19 metres;**

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2. **Retention of the yellow box junction markings at the junctions of London Road with Northfield Road and Lyndworth Close;**
 3. **Provision of west bound cycle facilities on London Road be investigated separately to this scheme.**
- (d) to instruct that further consideration be given to the concerns raised by Cyclox regarding the merging of cyclists and general traffic on the existing carriageway shared use footway/cycleway.**

MARK KEMP

Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Background papers: Consultation documentation
Contact Officers: Jim Daughton 01865 815803

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ANNEX 1

Objections Received

Cyclox

1. Although not objecting to the proposed introduction of the new bus lanes, Cyclox has objected on the grounds that the proposals for London Road make inadequate provision for cyclists. They have suggested 3 changes to the proposed layout; road widening to accommodate a mandatory cycle lane; provision of an off-carriageway segregated cycle facility on the south footway of London Road between the Pelican crossing at Northfield Road to the junction with Gladstone Road; provision of dropped kerbing either side of the relocated Oxford bound bus stop to allow cyclists who feel threatened by traffic to exit the carriageway.
2. Although partially funded by the LSTF, the principle aim of the London Road Improvement Scheme has been to provide bus priority along this important route into Headington. The proposals as consulted on seek to maintain the current level of cycling provision without making the situation any worse than it already is.
3. In order to give further consideration to the concerns raised by Cyclox in relation to the merging of cyclists on the existing off carriageway shared use footway / cycleway and general traffic, it is recommended that the proposal as consulted on is reviewed during the detailed design stage.
4. Some valid suggestions have been made by Cyclox therefore it is recommended that further investigation work be carried out into the possible provision of improved west bound cycle facilities. This investigation work could be incorporated into future project briefs generated by the LSTF currently available to the Council.
5. A request was also made by Cyclox to reinstate the faded yellow box marking at the sharp bend on the service road known as The Roundway adjacent to the McDonald's restaurant to assist cyclists by deterring parking. It is recommended that this is retained but it should be noted that enforcement of this type of restriction would be required to improve its effectiveness and is unlikely to be a high priority for Thames Valley Police.

Cyclist Tourist Club (Right To Ride)

6. The Cyclist Tourist Club (Right To Ride) has taken a similar view as Cyclox and whilst not objecting to the proposed lengths of new bus lane they have objected to the overall proposals on the grounds of inadequate cycle provision. In common with Cyclox, they have suggested some sort

of physical protection for cyclists where they rejoin the carriageway east of the relocated bus stop on London Road. They have also expressed support for the Cyclox request to provide a mixture of both on and off carriageway cycle facilities on the south side of London Road.

7. These comments are noted and should be considered in any future review of cycling facilities on London Road.

Oxonian Cycling Club

8. The Oxonian Cycling Club has objected to the proposals citing 'inadequate attention to cycling as a desirable mode of transport'. The point of objection being the proposed treatment at the end of the existing shared-use footway cycleway located on the south side of London Road between the Green Road roundabout the existing Pelican crossing adjacent to Northfield Road.
9. These comments are noted and should be considered in any future review of cycling facilities on London Road.

Resident of Lyndworth Mews

10. A resident of Lyndworth Mews has objected to the proposed changes on London Road relating to the relocation of the Oxford bound bus stop on the south side of the road and the loss of footway and verge space to accommodate the relocated stop.
11. The proposed relocation of the Oxford bound bus stop is being promoted as a way of addressing the problem of traffic backing up onto the Green Road roundabout whilst queuing behind buses using this bus stop in the current location. This 'exit-blocking' onto the roundabout affects the overall capacity and results in delays for drivers on all arms of the roundabout.
12. It is proposed to relocate the Oxford bound bus stop into an area which is sufficiently wide enough to maintain serviceable footway widths on both sides of London Road and provide an off-line bus stop which will allow general traffic to pass stationary buses and, therefore, reducing delays. It would not be possible to create a layby at the current location of the bus stop as non-highway land would be required in order to maintain a serviceable footway width. The relocation of the bus stop to a position opposite the junction with Lyndworth Close has not been objected to by Thames Valley Police.

ANNEX 2**Responses from Local Members, Thames Valley Police and Bus Operators****Councillor Roz Smith**

1. Councillor Roz Smith, the local member for the Headington & Quarry Division, has submitted comments covering 4 aspects of the proposals; Green Road (Toot Hill Butts) exit from the Green Road roundabout; provision of west bound cycling facilities; retention of yellow box markings at junctions and relocation of the Oxford bound bus stop.
2. Issue 1 - The possible conflict with vehicles travelling on the A40 (west) and the Green Road (Toot Hills Butts) exit off the Green Road roundabout.

Response - This possible conflict was also raised by members of the public at the drop-in session, although no other written responses regarding this have been received. A traffic count to record the number of vehicles making this manoeuvre has subsequently been carried out and the results are reported as:

Table 1 Traffic count data for the Green Road exit

| manoeuvre | Number of vehicles | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|------------|---------|
| | 7 Aug 2013 | | 8 Aug 2013 | |
| | AM peak | PM peak | AM peak | PM peak |
| A40 (west) into Green Road | 10 | 4 | 9 | 6 |
| Other routes into Green Road | 60 | 34 | 50 | 27 |

Note: data has been collected during non-term time

3. It can be seen that significantly more traffic exits into Green Road from routes other than the A40 (west) approach. Although not insignificant, the volume of traffic existing into Green Road from the A40 (west) approach is low in terms of traffic flow. It is recognised that there may be potential for possible conflict between buses and coaches using the proposed bus lane and vehicles positioned at the front of the adjacent traffic lane wanting to exit at Green Road. A comparison can be made with left turning traffic having to cut across a bus lane on their near side, a common occurrence on bus lanes in urban areas.

4. It is therefore recommended that monitoring of the new layout should take place over a period of 6 months of the opening of the bus lane. Should an increase in the level of reported accidents at this location occur which can be attributed to the introduction of the bus lane, it is recommended that the Green Road exit from the roundabout be closed to motorised traffic. To avoid any delay implementing this closure, it is recommended that a) survey work is carried out to determine the level of use for the Green Road exit and gauge the impact it might have on local traffic, and b) preparatory work is carried out, including formal consultation, for the permanent traffic regulation order required to enable closure.

5. Issue 2 - Provision of Cycling facilities on the south side of London Road.

Response - The councillor has requested provision of a shared use footway cycleway on the south side of London Road between the roundabout and the relocated bus stop. Westwards from this point she councillor has requested introduction of a segregated off-carriageway cycle route. Although partially funded by the LSTF, the principle aim of the London Road Improvement Scheme has been to provide bus priority along this important route into Headington. The proposals as consulted on seek to maintain the current level of cycling provision without making the situation any worse than it already is.

6. Issue 3 - Retention of yellow box markings at the side road junctions of Lyndworth Close and Northfield Road with London Road.

Response - Although originally not shown on the proposals as consulted on, it is recommended that for operational purposes, the existing yellow box markings are retained at the junctions of London Road with Northfield Road and Lyndworth Close.

7. Issue 4 - The relocation of the Oxford bound bus stop to a position opposite Lyndwoth Close.

Response - Although not ideally located, the position of this bus stop, albeit in a layby, should pose no more difficulty for road users than is experienced at the moment. Thames Valley Police has not objected to the position of this relocated bus stop.

Councillor Glynis Phillips

8. Councillor Glynis Phillips, the local member for the Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst Division, has not objected to the proposals and is of the opinion that relocation of the Oxford bound bus stop will have a beneficial effect on the movement of traffic.

Councillor David Williams

9. Councillor David Williams, the local member for Iffley Fields and St Mary's has not objected to the proposals and has submitted comments relating to

the junction of Collingwood Road and the A40 London Road. These comments have been passed to the appropriate officer.

Thames Valley Police

10. Thames Valley Police (TVP) although not objecting to the proposals for London Road raised concerns relating to particular parts of the proposed layout and operation of the scheme. In particular they queried the inconsistency in approach by the Council to bus lanes located in the approach to roundabouts, and used Banbury Road as an example. The general principle has been to terminate bus lanes a set distance back from the roundabout in order to accommodate left turning traffic. This is not the case at the Green Road roundabout where left turning traffic onto the A4142 Eastern Bypass uses the segregated left turn lane.
11. TVP also comment on the potential for unlawful use of the proposed bus lane at the roundabout by queue-jumping drivers. It could be argued that this is a common occurrence at similar sites and would not be unique to this location. In order to minimise this potential for bus lane abuse, TVP has suggested using a coloured surface treatment on the carriageway to emphasis the status of the bus lane. Although the Council has preferred not to use colour surface treatments in the past due to the increased maintenance liability, its use on this relatively short length of bus lane at this location would be beneficial and is therefore recommended.
12. TVP commented on the proposal to lengthen the last London bound bus stop on London Road, located to the immediate west of Lyndworth Close, and the impact on forward visibility to the adjacent Pelican crossing. The proposed layout as consulted on would result in slightly reduced forward visibility to the crossing for drivers travelling westwards along London Road when 2 buses are at the bus stop. In order to address this concern it is recommended that the proposal to lengthen this bus stop is amended to provide a single 19 metre length bus stop.

Oxford Bus Company

13. Although generally supporting the proposals, concern has been raised by the Oxford Bus Company (OBC) regarding the Bayswater Road entry onto the Green Road roundabout. They have commented that bus services in the morning peak suffer considerable delays as a result of there being no traffic signal control at this entry. However, signalisation of this entry onto the roundabout falls outside the scope of the improvement scheme and has therefore not been investigated.
14. OBC also raised concern with the safety of the layout of the existing bus layby on the A40 London Road immediately east of Collingwood Road junction. Their opinion is that the layby is too short and should be made long enough to accommodate 2 buses. They have reported that on some occasions their drivers have been unable to use the layby as other buses

have been parked in it, forcing the driver to miss the stop. This is an operational issue and lies beyond the scope of the improvement scheme.

Arriva (the Shires & Essex) Bus Company

15. The Arriva bus company has expressed support for the proposals but commented that more should have been done to improve the start of the west bound bus lane on the A40 London Road adjacent to the exit of the Thornhill Park & Ride. Although options for extending the start of the bus lane prior to the junction were considered during the development of the design for the extension to the park & ride site, it was considered that the works required to alter the layout would be too costly and provide very little benefit, and therefore did not form part of the approved scheme for the expansion of this park & ride site. It also falls outside the scope of this improvement scheme.