

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING TRANSPORT)

Extract of MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 15 May 2014 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 11.35 am

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor David Nimmo Smith – Cabinet Member for Environment

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Les Sibley (for Agenda Item 5)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Graham Warrington (Law & Culture); Yim Kong (Environment & Economy)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
4	Lynda Dunsdon (Environment & Economy)
5	David Tole (Environment & Economy)

The Cabinet Member for Environment considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except as insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

30/14 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 3)

<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Item</i>
Matthew Reeve Stefanie Rachmann-Davies Councillor Les Sibley) 5. Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester:) Proposed Road Humps & Puffin) Crossing

32/14 MIDDLETON STONEY ROAD, BICESTER: PROPOSED ROAD HUMPS AND PUFFIN CROSSING

(Agenda No. 5)

The Cabinet Member for Environment considered a report CMDE5 setting out comments received to a consultation on two separate proposals for a series of road humps along Middleton Stoney road and a puffin crossing. The proposal arose from the development of land adjacent to and to the south of Middleton Stoney road as part of the south west Bicester Kingsmere development for housing and community facilities.

Matthew Reeve on behalf of Countryside Properties UK Ltd explained that they were part of a joint venture company delivering the Kingsmere development at Bicester within an outline planning consent for 1,585 dwellings. Currently approximately 250 properties had been occupied to date. A significant amount of infrastructure works, including strategic landscaping and off-site highways works had been carried out under the terms of a S278 agreement signed with OCC Highways in 2010 for 6 phases of off-site highways works all of which had been successfully delivered in close collaboration with OCC highway officers save for the last piece of off-site highway traffic calming works for the Middleton Stoney Road. This scheme had been 3 years in the making with all options carefully considered. He confirmed that some of the other phases for off-site highway works ie. Vendee Drive (Perimeter Road) had been completed well ahead of the relevant S106 trigger of 500 occupations and the road had opened in April 2012 with only around 20 occupations. Similarly the trigger for delivery of the Middleton Stoney Road traffic calming works was 650 occupations but delivery of that element was also well advanced as currently there were only around 250 occupations. There had been a close co-ordinated approach with OCC highways over the past 3 years to create and develop the works from an in-principle design agreed at S106 stage through to detailed design submitted as part of a reserved matters planning application, approved by Cherwell DC. A contractor had been lined up to carry out the works under an existing contract and any further delays in approval would increase cost and be likely to delay delivery of the works.

Stefanie Rachmann-Davies WSP Transport Consultants gave a short presentation on the technical aspects of the design and how it had evolved from the original proposal for build-outs to the current proposed scheme. During that time there had been several iterations undertaken to accommodate cyclists and the potential access to Kingsmere Phase 2 development for which planning application had been submitted in 2013 but not yet determined. The scheme had included a puffin crossing east of Shakespeare Drive which had been the preferred scheme of OCC officers and in accordance with Department for Transport advice. The principle of provision of a traffic calming scheme had been supported by Thames Valley Police in order to reduce speeds. Her presentation also set out a comparison between speed cushions and build-outs/chicanes concluding that the former offered more advantages. These included the most widely used form of calming, effectiveness at controlling speed of traffic, emergency vehicles not significantly affected, easy to accommodate cyclists, potential to reduce traffic levels on average by 25%, fewer drainage problems. There had however been concerns expressed regarding their effectiveness in controlling the speed of motorbikes and damage to vehicles. Some of the disadvantages of build-outs were seen as the potential for some drivers to speed up on the approach to a chicane, large vehicles not easily accommodated by narrow chicanes but if chicanes were wider then their effectiveness in reducing speed was reduced, average traffic reduction levels less, could cause congestion and potential for increased number of

shunts on approach. However, it had to be recognised that chicanes offered an opportunity to accommodate cyclists via bypasses although that could lead to debris accumulation and drainage problems.

Responding to a question from the Cabinet Member she confirmed that from a technical point of view cushions were preferable. She felt sure that the cushions had been subject to a safety audit but she didn't have that information to hand.

Supporting the use of build-outs Councillor Sibley had major concerns regarding use of speed cushions. He referred to the potential for damage to vehicles, adjacent buildings and road surfaces and danger to cyclists. There were no properties fronting onto Middleton Stoney Road which had been part of the old Bicester ring road system with a 50 mph limit. He could see no good reason to have a 30 mph limit and suggested that a 40 mph limit would be more realistic because of the nature of the road. Consistency in speed limits was needed along a road which was well used and likely to continue to be so or even increase with the Eco-development and other planned major development in Bicester. However, the 2 new roundabouts help to offset that impact and slow traffic. There had been a lot of changes in the law to help reduce the speed of traffic and he suggested alternative options for traffic calming such as vehicle activated speed signs. He felt there was a strong case for the use of chicanes to reduce traffic speed which was also supported by Section 153 of the Highway Code. He considered that buses and emergency vehicles presented a risk to cyclists unless properly constructed footpaths and cyclepaths were provided. Painted white lines on the side of the road offered no real protection. There was no footpath on the south side which would put pedestrians at risk and where there was an existing footpath that was narrow. There were also concerns regarding siting of bus stops. He stressed this was the time to act on district and county policies to provide proper facilities on Middleton Stoney Road. Heavy goods traffic was horrendous on this road and more consideration was needed before a final decision was taken. He suggested deferral of a decision to allow for further discussion between the developers, Cherwell district council, Oxfordshire county council and the Cabinet Member for Environment.

The Cabinet Member pointed out that an increase in the speed limit and separate cycle and footpath structure were beyond the remit of the planning permission.

Mr Tole clarified the differences between a pelican and puffin crossing. With regard to traffic calming it was difficult to accept the argument that there could be damage to property as no properties fronted onto the road. Cushions were considered more suitable on routes with buses and also favoured by emergency services. Build-outs had the potential to promote erratic behaviour. The rationale behind the proposals was to downgrade Middleton Stoney Road to a local road as opposed to a key road into Bicester. He confirmed that rules regarding vehicle activated signs had not changed and in his experience whilst they had some influence he considered in this instance that the benefit would be limited if traffic calming was introduced. County officers view was that build-outs were not the best option in this case and that cushions presented the best way forward. He accepted the point regarding safety of pedestrians walking to bus stops and would consider that issue again. The question of shared foot and cycle paths whilst an aspiration could not be delivered as part of the planning process and was further complicated because of land acquisition

problems. If cars were driven carefully then they wouldn't be damaged or present a danger to other road users. Also the higher speeds associated with build-outs may not pass a safety audit. He commended the scheme.

Mr Kirkwood confirmed that build-outs had caused some problems elsewhere in Bicester and officers were as confident as they could be that the scheme as proposed in the report offered more in terms of successful traffic calming.

The Cabinet Member thanked everyone for their full presentations. There was no likelihood of separate cycle and foot paths being provided for the reasons given earlier with regard to the limits of the planning permission. He could not support calls for an increase in the speed limit.

Having regard to the arguments and options set out in the documentation before him, the representations made to him and confirmation that a safety audit had been or would be carried out the Cabinet Member for Environment confirmed his decision as follows:

To approve the implementation of proposals as advertised.

Signed.....
Cabinet Member for Environment

Date of signing.....