

Minutes of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 February 2010.

Present: Councillors:

Penny Bould
Ron Cockings
Mike Doody (Chair)
Jim Foster
Joan Lea
Barry Lobbett
Phillip Morris- Jones
Kate Rolfe
Ray Sweet
Martin Shaw
Chris Williams

Also Present: Councillor Alan Cockburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment)
Councillor Alan Farnell (Leader of the Council)
Councillors Martyn Ashford, Josie Compton, Les Caborn, Eithne Goode, John Whitehouse

Officers

Jane Pollard	Democratic Services Manager
Nicholas Dauncey	Transport Planner
Jean Hardwick	Principal Committee Administrator
John Harvey,	Transport Planner

Public Present : Rodney King (Stakeholders Group), James MacKay (Warwick Society) Archie Pitts (Chairman of the Leamington Society) and Andy Patrick (Cycleways).

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Helen Walton.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillors Martyn Ashford, Les Caborn, Jose Compton, Eithne Goode, John Whitehouse and Alan Cockburn declared prejudicial interests as Members of Warwick Area Committee who were present when the Area Committee made the decision relating to item 2 below. These Members left the meeting after they had addressed the Committee.

2. A445 Rugby Road Junction S278 Works

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Customers, Workforce and Governance which related to the decision made

by Warwick Area Committee, on 19 January 2010, to approve Option A as the preferred design for the A445 Rugby Road Junction. This decision was called-in by Councillors Naylor, Boad, Whitehouse and Davis for consideration by the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

John Harvey, with the aid of a power point presentation, introduced the item and explained that both options greatly improved the junction for pedestrians and cyclists. Option A provided the best solution for traffic (travelling times), but had 3 Toucan crossing, whereas Option E was more favourable for pedestrians and cyclists, had only 2 Toucan crossings but increased traffic journey times particularly for bus services. He had, therefore, recommended Option A to the Area Committee as the scheme best meeting the needs of all users.

A further potential option, Option F, had been identified since the Area Committee meeting. This reconfigured the junction by reducing the pedestrian refuge to allow the left hand filter lane, shown in Option E, to be extended to accommodate a further vehicle. This option reduced vehicle congestion but the reduced pedestrian refuge would not meet Government design standards' recommended guidelines. He had established, however, that the substandard pedestrian refuge would be acceptable, in principle, subject to Option F satisfying a Road Safety Audit.

Members were also advised that the intention was to construct the scheme in the summer months, during the school holiday, and any delay would risk losing the summer start date and the developer funding.

In reply to comments and questions -

- (1) The Chair proposed that Option F should be put to one side because remodeling a new scheme would take some considerable time and would not add a greater advantage, and that there was sufficient information to decide between A and E options;
- (2) Jane Pollard explained that a Section 278 developer contribution was secured by a Bond that was held by the County Council pending commencement of the scheme;
- (3) John Harvey clarified the differences between Options A, E and F.

Following which –

Councillor Jim Foster moved, seconded by Councillor Chris Williams, that Option F is not included in the debate, and with 7 Members voting in favour and 2 against it was –

Resolved that Option F be not included in the debate.

The Chair then invited the Stakeholder representatives to address the Committee.

Andy Patrick suggested that the issue be referred back to the Area Committee and highlighted the benefits of Option E for pedestrians and cyclists. He urged Members not to rush their decision and said that approving Option A would be a missed opportunity and waste the work done to enhance Option E. He congratulated the Council Members and Officers for putting in so much work into helping to resolve a difficult and complex situation. He said that the solution had almost been reached and it would be a tragic mistake to rush into Option A.

In reply to a questions John Harvey confirmed that at peak times, between 8:00-9:00 a.m, approximately 1,420 vehicles and 24 cyclists used the junction travelling towards Emscote Road, with a total of 2,845 vehicles using the junction.

Rodney King said he had nothing to add to the debate.

Archie Pitt made two points –

- (1) Traffic travelling along Rugby Road, coming off the Portobello Bridge, tended to speed up on the downhill section which was followed by the uphill section and causing a potential hazard for Rock Mill residents exiting onto the Rugby Road;
- (2) With regard to Option A – the Toucan crossings would cause conflict between pedestrians and cyclists and Option E would take away the incentive for motorists to speed up along the Rugby Road. Option E might increase the journey times for the G1 bus route to 9.4 minutes but Stage Coach had already built 10 minutes into the journey time with an extra 1 minute for delays.

He hoped that Members would refer this back to the Area Committee.

Councillor John Whitehouse, on behalf of the Members who had called this item in, expressed concern that not all Warwick Area Committee members were made aware that they could speak at this meeting. He referred to the reasons for the call-in, as set out in the agenda papers, but said that the main reason was that the modelling did not include simulation of the left turn filter for east bound traffic turning into Rugby Road and given that the delays to the G1 buses taking this route was the main reason behind the decision this seemed a significant omission.

He commended the officers for their willingness to engage very rapidly after the call-in and had arranged a further briefing with Members. The consensus of the officers was that the left turn filter for eastbound traffic had been omitted from the model but that this did not make a material difference between the two options. However, the proposal to extend the length of the filter would eliminate the timing difference for the two options. He agreed with the decision not to debate Option F and asked that the matter be referred back to the Area Committee's 16 March meeting or a specific meeting arranged to coincide with the Local Transport Plan meeting scheduled for 23 February 2010.

Councillor Josie Compton, Chair of the Area Committee, stressed that this issue had been considered by the Area Committee for a long time, and recently at meetings in November 2009 and January 2010 and that the Stakeholders had been involved at all times. She said that the issue had been debated long and hard and the aim was for the work to start on the scheme in the school holidays. Steve Bird, the Managing Director of Stagecoach had spoken in support of the bus passengers and supported Option A. The Stakeholders opposed this option because it favoured bus users more than pedestrians and cyclists. She said that this would never be a perfect scheme but the Committee supported Option A and she hoped

that this would not be referred back to the Committee for further debate and that the Committee's January 2010 decision would stand.

Councillor Les Caborn said he was surprised that discussion had taken place after the call-in and had resulted in Option F. He said he used the junction every day and he believed that Option A was the right scheme for the junction.

Councillor Eithne Goode expressed concern about the calling of this meeting at short notice, which made it difficult for Members to attend, and said that this was a poor day for democracy.

Councillor Martyn Ashford said that Option A was chosen by the Area Committee for good reasons. This was a major transport route and working up another option would not benefit traffic turning out of Greville Road. This was a very difficult junction and the option chosen would provide the best solution for the majority of users of that route.

Councillor Alan Cockburn said that the Area Committee's decision was good and expressed support for Option A.

(At this point Councillors Martyn Ashford, Les Caborn, Jose Compton, Eithne Goode, John Whitehouse and Alan Cockburn left the room.)

Councillor Penny Bould thanked the officers for their work and said she recognised that Members' time was valuable. She proposed that, in the light of the further evidence, the opportunity should be taken to refer this back to the Area Committee for discussion either on the 23 February or 16 March 2010.

In reply to further questions John Harvey said that his recommendation to the Area Committee was Option A, as the best option; this had not wavered and he could not recommend Option F, without the outcome of the Road Safety Audit being carried out.

Councillor Kate Rolfe said that the Area Committee's vote was 6/5 in favour of Option A and, in the light of new evidence, thought it only fair to refer it back to the Area Committee.

Councillor Ron Cockings referred to the Chair's comment that this was a difficult junction and, having acquainted himself with the junction himself the previous day, said he would support referring it back to the Area Committee.

Councillor Joan Lea expressed support for Option A.

Councillor Barry Lobbett said he thought the differences between Options A, E and F to be only marginal and that cyclists represented only 1% of users at peak times and he considered Option A to be a better option.

The Chair consulted the Members on whether they wanted a short adjournment before moving to the voting, as proposed by a Member earlier in the meeting. Members agreed not to adjourn and to continue to the vote.

Councillor Ray Sweet, seconded by Councillor Penny Bould, moved that issue be referred back to the Area Committee for them to look at Options A, E and F (subject to a satisfactory Road Safety Audit of Option F) and that the Area Committee should consider holding a special meeting on 23 February 2010 with 4 Members voting in favour and 7 against the motion was lost.

Councillor Chris Williams, seconded by Councillor Jim Foster, moved that no action be taken, and with 7 Members voting in favour and 3 Members voting against it was –

Resolved that no action be taken.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 11:25 a.m.