

**Minutes of the Portfolio Holder (Transport and Highways) Decision Session
held on 25th January 2013**

Present:

Councillor Peter Butlin (Portfolio Holder, Transport and Highways)

Other Councillors:

Councillors Peter Balaam, Ron Cockings, Mike Perry and Kate Rolfe

Officers:

Georgina Atkinson, Democratic Services Team Leader
Nicholas Dauncey, Principal Transport Planner, Transport and Highways
Adrian Hart, Team Leader – Transport Planning, Transport and Highways
Ian Marriott, Community and Environment Legal Services Manager

1. Members' Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Proposed Traffic Signals at the A3400 Birmingham Road/Western Road junction, Stratford-upon-Avon

Councillor Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways, welcomed the Councillors in attendance.

The meeting commenced with a presentation from Nicholas Dauncey, Principal Transport Planner, which provided background information in respect of the proposed recommendation. This included an outline of the key issues, which primarily appertained to traffic congestion along Birmingham Road and the need to provide safe access to a significant number of commercial, residential and retail developments.

A study was undertaken by JMP Consultants Ltd to assess possible options to tackle congestion and improve the air quality along the A3400 Birmingham Road corridor, while considering the access and safety requirements of all road users. As part of the study, JMP were required to recommend an appropriate form of junction at A3400 Birmingham Road/Western Road within the operational context of the route as a whole and including the effects of the proposed Cattle Market development and other committed developments affecting the corridor. Six assessment scenarios had been considered by JMP including traffic signals, the existing junction layout, the existing layout with a hardstanding island south of the junction, a roundabout, a restricted movement junction (with no right turn out of Western Road) and a restricted movement junction (with no right turn in or out of Western Road).

The results of this assessment, together with the County Council's obligations as part of the Section 278 agreement with Redrow Homes Ltd for the Cattle Market development, had concluded that traffic signals outperformed all alternative junction arrangements when considered against all assessment criteria. This would include

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crossing facilities for both pedestrians and cyclists. Although a restricted movement junction would improve journey times for left turners, a safe road layout was not achievable within the current highway boundary. There was a risk that drivers would ignore the right turn prohibition and a risk of collisions between large vehicles turning left into Western Road and outbound traffic leaving it. It would also increase crossing distance for pedestrians and journey lengths for buses, which could deter passengers and increase operating costs.

Following the presentation, Cllr Butlin invited each of the four Councillors present to set out their views in relation to the proposal.

Councillor Perry spoke in objection to the proposed recommendation. He considered that the proposed option had been identified before the end of the study and that there had been no consultation with the Birmingham Road Steering Group. In addition, he was concerned that the decision would further exacerbate traffic issues along Birmingham Road corridor, which he felt had been generated over time by a piecemeal approach to planning and developments.

Councillor Balaam spoke in objection to the proposed recommendation. He considered that as the option had been proposed on the basis of two assumptions, which he felt were flawed, the option was therefore not the most appropriate solution. He explained that the decision not to proceed with the roundabout option and Restricted Movement Junction had been made on the assumption that the acquisition of the required land would involve a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). In addition, Councillor Balaam felt that the decision not to proceed with the restricted movement junction (with no right turn out of Western Road) had been made on the assumption that it would not be agreeable to bus operators and passengers, due to increased journey lengths. He believed that no consultation had been undertaken with the bus operators regarding this assumption.

Councillor Balaam agreed with Councillor Perry that new junctions for accessing developments along Birmingham Road had been implemented in a fragmented manner and considered that this was just cause for an alternative traffic management option to be applied at the Western Road junction.

Councillor Rolfe spoke in objection to the proposed recommendation and expressed concern that the implications of the development had not been fully realised when the planning application had been originally considered by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council. This had subsequently created a difficult situation for Warwickshire County Council, as highway authority, to resolve. Councillor Rolfe considered that the assumption that motorists would ignore the restricted movement junction was inaccurate, as she believed that heavy traffic and the physical restraint of the junction would force motorists to adhere to the restriction.

Councillor Cockings spoke in objection to the proposed recommendation. He considered that both the District and County Councils needed to develop a long-term and co-ordinated strategy for the consideration of future developments both along the Birmingham Road and within Stratford as a whole. Councillor Cockings also highlighted that the Section 278 agreement with Redrow Homes Ltd had created a challenging situation for the County Council.

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In response to the concerns and comments raised, Councillor Butlin acknowledged the complications caused by the approval of the Cattle Market development on appeal in 2007 and believed that these would hopefully be improved in relation to future developments once the District Council's Core Strategy had been finalised.

With regard to the acquisition of the land required for the installation of a roundabout, Councillor Butlin explained that the timescale associated with the process for a CPO would be approximately 18 months. This delay would be unacceptable due to the implications it would have on the Cattle Market development and the legal implications of not discharging the planning condition associated with the development to provide traffic signals at Western Road. Furthermore, the size of the roundabout at Regal Road would be insufficient for the safe U-turn manoeuvre of buses and HGVs.

In response to a question raised, Nicholas Dauncey explained that the proposed traffic signals would enable both buses and HGVs to manoeuvre without the acquisition of private land. Adrian Hart, Team Leader – Transport Planning, explained that the piecemeal approach to development along Birmingham Road was a significant issue and had constrained the number of options available to the County Council for dealing with traffic generation. He explained that while the Birmingham Road study had assessed the feasibility of a range of options, there was never a guarantee that it would identify an ideal set of solutions that would be both feasible and affordable for the corridor. A significant rationale for the proposed option at Western Road was the impact of safety to both motorists and non-motorists. He explained that making the decision based purely on the impact on traffic congestion alone was insufficient and that the junction had to operate safely for all road users.

In response to a question raised, Ian Marriott, Community and Environment Legal Services Manager, explained that a CPO application to acquire the land to install the roundabout or restricted movement junction would be judged on a range of criteria, with safety being a significant factor. This would become more difficult to justify following the installation of the traffic lights at the junction, unless there were serious concerns about safety.

To conclude, Councillor Butlin thanked the Councillors for attending the meeting and assured them that their concerns and suggestions had been noted; however, on the basis of the study results, together with the County Council's obligations as part of the Section 278 agreement with Redrow Homes Ltd for the Cattle Market development, Councillor Butlin approved the recommendation to install traffic signals at the A3400 Birmingham Road / Western Road junction.

Councillor Butlin agreed to issue a press release to provide the public with information regarding the decision. Councillor Balaam requested that he and the Birmingham Road Study Steering Group have the opportunity to review and contribute towards the press release before it is issued, to which Councillor Butlin agreed.

The meeting closed at 1.10 p.m.