

WIRRAL COUNCIL
HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATIONS PANEL

19 SEPTEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	OBJECTION: CYCLING STRATEGY / WALKING STRATEGY / SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL SCHEME – POULTON ROAD, SPITAL
WARD/S AFFECTED:	CLATTERBRIDGE WARD
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORT SERVICES COUNCILLOR HARRY SMITH
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report considers an objection submitted against the proposal to introduce a Toucan crossing near the junction of Poulton Road and Dibbins Hey, Spital along with associated cycle links.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 The report recommends that the Panel note the objection and that the proposed scheme consisting of a Toucan crossing and associated cycling and pedestrian improvements as shown on attached Drawing No. DTS/5/11 be recommended to Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval and implementation.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 Based upon the Council's adopted criteria for the provision of signalised crossings, this location was revealed as the highest scoring site against the criteria (as reported to Council's Cabinet on 17th March, 2011) even without the additional consideration for cyclists.
- 3.2 Following a successful bid and recognition of the benefits of the scheme to the wider community, a significant proportion of the scheme costs are to be funded by Sustrans (Sustainable Transport) under their 'links to school' programme. Funded by the Department for Transport, the 'links to school' programme is in its eighth year and local authorities across England are working with Sustrans to connect schools and their communities to the National Cycle Network.

These 'links' come in a variety of forms, from new cycle routes to pedestrian crossings, all providing the safe routes that young people need to cycle and walk to school. Apart from safety, there are of course other direct benefits to communities. By reducing the number of cars taking children to and from

school, there is less congestion and pollution, and less potential for accidents outside school gates. Walking and cycling also provide everyday exercise, encouraging children to be more active and healthy. The whole community benefits since links also connect people to their work, to their shops, and to green spaces.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 On 17th March 2011 Cabinet considered and approved this year's Local Transport Capital Programme. Identified within the programme was the proposal to introduce a Toucan crossing on Poulton Road, Spital, which would be part funded from three elements of the Local Transport Capital Programme namely the 'Cycling Strategy', the 'Walking Strategy - Pedestrian Signals' and 'School Travel Improvements - Safer Routes to School'. In addition Sustrans have committed to a 50% financial contribution towards the scheme with additional funding for improved cycle storage at the school.
- 4.2 Following detailed design, letters were delivered to residents of properties in the vicinity of the proposed scheme informing them of the proposal. Notices were erected on site and Party Spokespersons and Ward Members were informed. A detailed drawing of the scheme was also displayed at Claremont Farm Shop, which is situated along the proposed cycle route, for public perusal.
- 4.3 During this consultation period, one unresolved objection was received. The content of the objection along with a detailed response are as follows:-
- 4.4 The noise created from the establishment of the Toucan crossing would disturb the objector's standard of living due to vehicles accelerating and decelerating. The noise from the audible tactile device fitted to the Toucan crossing would also disturb their dogs.

For a number of years, it has been standard practice to fit audible and tactile devices to signalised crossing facilities in order to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the former Disability Discrimination Act and guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT) on the provision of signalised crossing facilities. The sound from the bleeper unit can be toned down in addition to being switched off altogether during agreed periods such as evenings.

Noise created from vehicles accelerating or decelerating as a result of siting a crossing at the proposed location should be no different than the noise generated from vehicles currently turning in and out of the junction of Poulton Road / Dibbins Hey. There is already an informal crossing at this location when the 'School Crossing Patrol' is in operation.

- 4.5 The whole scheme seems unnecessary, meaning the loss of an established path for dog walkers and pedestrians.

The existing footway (locally known as 'Piggy Lane') between Poulton Road and Poulton Royd Drive will still be available for the use of dog walkers and pedestrians. It is proposed as part of the scheme for the path to be designated for the use of both pedestrians and cyclists as an unsegregated route.

- 4.6 Cycle paths should go on the road and not on existing pavements.

The primary purpose of the proposed Toucan crossing and associated links is to provide both pedestrians and cyclists with a convenient and safe place to cross the busy road that divides the Poulton Royd Drive and Dibbins Hey communities, access local amenities and allow safe passage to local schools. The proposed scheme will facilitate a more formalised use for the more vulnerable cyclists who do not yet have the skills to negotiate difficult junctions and cycle on other less desirable routes.

The proposed crossing would also assist the existing School Crossing patrol which operates at this location.

The Toucan crossing and associated cycle links have been designed in accordance with the Guidelines set by the Department for Transport.

- 4.7 The proposal will involve the loss of trees and grassed areas.

The proposal does involve the removal of one tree to ensure that there is adequate visibility of the proposed signal head. Although the tree is within the adopted highway it has been suggested that the tree in question may not have been planted by the Authority. Notwithstanding this it is intended to ensure that a replacement tree of an appropriate species will be planted in an appropriate position adjacent to the site following removal of the tree in question.

It is only proposed to remove short sections of grassed areas to enable a segregated section of footway / cycleway to be provided at the junction of Poulton Road and Dibbins Hey.

- 4.8 The work of Sustrans is misplaced in this location as the local School is a Primary School and children will not cycle there unaccompanied.

The school was initially approached prior to the public consultation and it was the school that identified that children cross at this point and that they also have children who already regularly cycle to school (also evident from the number of bicycles in the limited number of stands that the school already have). They are keen to promote more cycling to school and have applied to become a Sustrans 'Bike It' School. Under the 'Bike It' programme children are encouraged to cycle to school (unaccompanied) and the 'Bike It' project has been hugely successful in achieving increased cycling to schools at the other 28 'Bike It' schools in Wirral (all of which are Primary Schools). The 'Bike It' project is also backed up by a programme of Cycle Training to the National Standard (Bikeability Training) to give children the skills and ability to cycle confidently. This is carried out with pupils from Years 5 and 6 and is part of the largest training programme in the country. Sustrans have visited the site and agreed that the route is a very useful one and are to support the scheme with a very substantial financial contribution amounting to 50% of the scheme costs with additional funding to provide additional cycle storage at the school.

- 4.9 There does not appear to have been any consultation regarding the establishment of a cycle path on the footway between Poulton Road and Poulton Royd Drive.
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There has been a widespread public consultation exercise undertaken for this scheme taking the form of individual letter drops to all residential properties (71 properties) fronting and adjacent to the proposals, discussions with the local school, consultation with the Wirral Footpaths & Open Spaces Preservation Society, Wirral Cycle Forum and Wirral Pedestrian Forum, together with a large scale plan displayed at Claremont Farm Shop as part of the current consultative process.

As stated in paragraph 4.5, it is proposed that the path be an unsegregated cycle/pedestrian route.

- 4.10 At school times there is a School Crossing Patrol operating at this junction. Has there been any research into how many children cross at this junction.

As previously mentioned, based upon the Council's adopted criteria for the provision of signalised crossings, this location was revealed as the highest scoring site against the Council's adopted criteria, even without the additional consideration for cyclists. The surveys carried out in assessing this location revealed not only a high number of school children crossing at this location but also elderly pedestrians and persons accessing public transport.

The scheme will not only provide a safe crossing facility for school children and cyclists but also for the wider community when the school crossing patrol is not in operation, such as elderly people, persons with disabilities and persons with prams.

- 4.11 There is already a place where pedestrians and cyclists can cross safely at the end of Poulton Road (Three Stags Junction).

Presently there are no controlled facilities for pedestrians or cyclists at the junction of Poulton Road and Spital Road (Three Stags junction). Following concerns raised by local residents via the Wirral South Member of Parliament about the lack of pedestrian facilities at the Three Stags junction it has been agreed that further investigations and traffic counts will be undertaken at that location and reported back to a public meeting which has yet to be arranged.

The primary purpose of the Toucan crossing and associated links at the proposed location is to provide both pedestrians and cyclists with a convenient and safe place to cross the very busy road that divides the Poulton Royd Drive and Dibbin Hey Communities, access local amenities and allow safe passage to local schools. The proposed scheme will facilitate a more formalised use for the more vulnerable cyclists who do not yet have the skills to negotiate difficult junctions and cycle on other less desirable routes.

- 4.12 The consultation for this scheme should have happened before the plans were drawn up.

The plans were drawn up to provide sufficient detail to enable the consultation exercise to be undertaken. As with similar schemes that have been introduced it is standard practice to consult adjacent properties that may be affected by such schemes.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 None identified.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 None identified.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 As part of the consultation exercise for this scheme letters were delivered to seventy-one local residents informing them of the proposals. In addition, consultation was undertaken with Poulton Primary School, Party Spokespersons, Ward Members, Cycle Forum, Pedestrian Forum, Local and National Walking Groups, Emergency Services, Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association and Merseytravel. Notices were also posted on site.

7.2 Following the submission of the objection, further consultations between the objector and Council Officer's were undertaken to discuss the concerns raised. The points raised by the objector were carefully considered and it was concluded by officers that the benefits that the scheme provides outweigh the objection raised and that the objection should not prevent the scheme from going ahead.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 There are no specific implications under this heading arising from this report.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 The budget allocation for this scheme is £120,000 and will be financed from the 2011/12 Local Transport Capital Programme. In addition, Sustrans have agreed to contribute 50% of the final cost of the scheme subject to the scheme being implemented on site before the end of December 2011.

9.2 Existing staff resources will be utilised in the progression of this scheme.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no implications under this heading.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
(a) Is an EIA required? No

11.2 The proposed Toucan crossing scheme and associated cycle link meets the aspirations of Equality Impact Assessments, which have been completed for Road Safety, Accessibility, Dropped Crossings and Public Transport.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The scheme will assist cyclist and pedestrian movements and thereby support a reduction on reliance upon the private motor vehicle and therefore assist in reducing the overall carbon footprint – key aims within the Merseyside Local Transport Plan.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications under this heading arising from the recommendation of this report.

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APPENDICES

Drawing No. DTS/5/11 Indicating the proposed layout of the Toucan Crossing.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Letters and emails from residents objecting to the scheme have been used in the preparation of this report.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date