

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATIONS PANEL

16th JULY 2014

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>OBJECTIONS: PROPOSAL FOR INTRODUCTION OF PUFFIN CROSSING, OLD CHESTER ROAD, BEBINGTON</b>  <b>LOCAL TRANSPORT CAPITAL FUNDING &amp; THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT BLOCK (ITB) PROGRAMME 2014/15</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>BEBINGTON &amp; ROCK FERRY WARDS</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>MARK SMITH, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT &amp; REGULATION</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report considers one objection received as a result of proposals to introduce a Puffin Crossing to assist members of the school and local community to cross Old Chester Road.
- 1.2 The report recommends that the objection be noted, but that in the interests of road safety, that the scheme be recommended to the Regeneration & Environment Policy & Performance Committee for approval and implementation.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 As part of a joint initiative to support the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to promote walking as an alternative to car use on journeys to and from schools the Council and the national walking charity Living Streets, have worked with St John Plessington Catholic College, St John's Catholic Junior and St John's Catholic Infant schools.
- 2.2 In March 2013 a School Route Audit Report was produced in partnership between Living Streets, pupils and staff at these schools. Within the route audit report, pupils and teaching staff highlighted a number concerns including difficulties encountered crossing the Old Chester Road at the existing pedestrian refuge outside the petrol station and St John Plessington Catholic College (SJPCC).
- 2.3 Analysis of the road safety record provided by the police identifies that during a 5 year study period there have been 3 crashes involving (teenage) pedestrians on the section of Old Chester Road between the vehicular

entrance to the one way section of the Oval outside SJPC and Beresford Avenue.

- 2.4 Based on the information available, Officers from my Road Safety Team consider that a scheme to introduce a formal Puffin type crossing as shown on plan R&ED/1/14/DJR would improve road safety in this area. A safer crossing facility across the Old Chester Road could also encourage more parents and children to undertake the journey to school by walking and public transport rather than by car.
- 2.5 On 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 Cabinet considered and approved the 2014/15 Local Transport Capital Programme. Identified within the programme was the proposal to introduce a puffin crossing to assist the school and local community to cross Old Chester Road, Bebington. The scheme is to be funded from the Local Transport Capital Programme, 'Improving Road Safety' block allocation.
- 2.6 Following preliminary scheme design, consultation letters were delivered to residents of properties in the immediate vicinity of the proposed scheme, detailing the scheme proposals. Party Spokespersons and Ward Members were also informed.
- 2.7 During the formal public consultation period, we received telephone contact from 3 residents to express their support to the proposed scheme. Throughout the process, Officers have received strong support from St John Plessington Catholic College.
- 2.8 During the formal consultation period four objections to the proposed scheme were received. Following further discussion between individual objectors and Officers three of the four original objections have now been withdrawn. The outstanding objection, made by a resident of No. 30A Old Chester Road, Bebington is summarised, along with Officers' comments, as follows:
- 2.9 **The resident of no. 30A Old Chester Road, Bebington is concerned that access to the roads, houses and facilities on the Northern side of Old Chester Road are compromised by parking of staff and pupils from Plessington School. The objector states that this has been caused by the loss of parking spaces outside the school in the last revamp of traffic flow by Wirral Council. The objector states that *'this new scheme, at much costs, will do nothing to address this matter- either yellow lines on corners / junctions or a residents only parking scheme would be a far more economical solution'*.**

In April 1994 a Local Safety Scheme was introduced on the Old Chester Road between SJPC and Bebington Road to address a number of crashes involving vehicles turning into/out of Beresford Avenue, Stonehill Avenue and Ashbrook Terrace together with incidents involving inappropriate overtaking and to assist pedestrian movements. The scheme incorporated junction buildouts, refuge islands, hatched road markings and waiting restrictions.

Officers are aware that the expansion of SJPC over a number of years has put pressure on parking provision in the general area including the Old Chester Road and residential roads near the school. The school regularly

raise the issue with staff to encourage lift sharing and use of public transport where possible. It is understood that SJPCC would like to expand their car parking provision within their own site, however this is also subject to planning approval. In the meantime, the school have informal use of a car parking area within The Oval leisure centre which the school actively encourages.

Whilst Officers are mindful that the proposed Puffin crossing will result in the removal of one on-street parking place due to the introduction of the build out this design will ensure that visibility of pedestrians is maintained whilst maximising parking provision.

- 2.10 **The resident of no. 30A Old Chester Road questions whether an additional puffin crossing is required as there are *'some four lighted crossing and four / five refuge crossings plus a large chunk of central reservation which acts as a refuge crossing'*. It is also stated that the proposed site is used, at most, for only 30 minutes a day and then only on school days.**

There is an alternative light controlled crossing outside St. John's Catholic Junior and St John's Catholic Infants schools to the north east of The Oval access road. Whilst some pupils use this facility, this route is effectively in the opposite direction from the desire line for those alighting from the scheduled bus service on the Old Chester Road and those who are attracted to the shop within the existing petrol station. Officers have noted that some children travelling by the school bus services which stop within The Oval service road area outside SJPCC choose to visit this shop, crossing and re-crossing the Old Chester Road before going to school. Whilst the school is concerned over this, they have informed Officers it is not within their power to prevent this.

Living Streets, the National Walking Charity, has worked with SJPCC and both the local Infant and Junior schools to promote walking on the journey to and from school.

In March 2013 a school route audit report was produced in partnership between Living Streets, St John Plessington Catholic College pupils and staff and St John's Catholic Junior School. The report highlights concerns and issues by pupils who use the existing pedestrian refuge crossing. The school pupils comment that the existing refuge island is too narrow and raise safety issues. The school have confirmed that the current pedestrian island is used during the school day.

Officers have noted that the grassed central reservation to which the objector refers *'which acts as a refuge crossing'* is not a formalised safer crossing and the school and local community would not be encouraged to use it to cross the Old Chester Road.

- 2.11 A site meeting was held between a Council Officer and the objector from 30A Old Chester Road. The objector raised additional concerns and although these comments are not logged as part of the original objection, for transparency and clarity, they have been summarised paragraphs 2.12 to 2.15 below.

**2.12 Fumes and pollution from traffic stopping and starting at the proposed Puffin crossing.**

Impact is considered minimal given that vehicles would only have to stop if the crossing is operated by a pedestrian wishing to cross safely. The impact of traffic fumes is considered to be less than many other locations across the Borough where residential properties are located near to traffic light junctions.

**2.13 Light pollution from the proposed Puffing Crossing.**

Light Controlled Crossings have specified requirements outlined by Department for Transport (DfT). Signal heads, have shields fitted as standard which direct the light towards oncoming traffic.

Officers note that there is already light given off by other sources, such as the nearby lighting columns and the petrol station which are considered to provide a greater spread than the directed light from the signal heads.

**2.14 Poor visibility exiting their property.**

The proposed scheme outlines our intention to introduce an Access Protection Marking. This marking is shared with the resident from 30 Old Chester Road and will help protect both driveways. The proposal would be an improvement to existing situation at this locality which has no form of traffic control.

**2.15 The objector also stated that they are 'unhappy' that money is being used on works of this nature, whilst School Crossing Patrol funding is being threatened. Suggests double yellow lines or a possible residential parking scheme would be more economical.**

This scheme is funded from within the Integrated Transport Capital Programme (Road Safety Block) and was highlighted by the Road Safety Team and local schools as a safety concern. Analysis of collision data during a five year period reveals there have been 3 road accidents involving injuries to pedestrians in the immediate vicinity of the proposed scheme. The scheme is funded as 'capital' grant which can only be used for physical measures and could not be used to fund 'revenue' items such as School Crossing Patrol staff.

The points made by the objector with regard to parking restrictions or residential parking scheme would not be an acceptable alternative. The Puffin crossing is designed to safely assist pedestrian movement across Old Chester Road at a key crossing point. I do not consider that the casualty record would be significantly influenced by the introduction of additional waiting restrictions or residents parking.

**3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 Failure to undertake the proposed scheme would reduce the Council's opportunity to address LTP3 Objectives and meet the priority to reduce the number of killed and seriously injured casualties on the roads.

#### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Given the analysis of the road casualty records provided by the police which identified that there have been 3 (teenage) pedestrian casualties outside or near St John Plessington Catholic College and the identified route to/from the school across the Old Chester Road at this location, no alternative measures have been considered.
- 4.2 The proposed scheme provides the Council with the opportunity to address the Council's LTP3 Objectives and meet the priority to reduce the number of killed and seriously injured casualties on the roads.

#### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 As part of the consultation exercise for this scheme letters were delivered to 117 local residents informing them of the proposals. In addition, consultation was undertaken with Party Spokespersons, Ward Members, Cycle Forum, Pedestrian Forum, Emergency Services, Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association and Merseytravel.
- 5.2 Following submission of the objections, further discussions and a meeting between the objector of 30A Old Chester Road, Bebington and Council Officers were undertaken to discuss the concerns raised. The points raised by the objector have been carefully considered and it is concluded by Officers that the benefits that the scheme provides outweigh the objections raised and should not prevent the scheme from proceeding.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

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

#### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 7.1 The budget allocation for this scheme is £90,000 and will be financed from the 2014/15 Local Transport Capital Programme – Improving Road Safety Strategy block.
- 7.2 Existing staff resources will be utilised in the progression of this scheme.
- 7.3 If approved and implemented the new facility will require maintenance to be carried out using the revenue allocation for traffic signal maintenance.

#### **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council has statutory duties under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to investigate the causes and trends for road traffic accidents and promote programmes to prevent such accidents.

#### **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The proposed puffin crossing scheme is included within the Local Transport Capital Funding & The Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Programme 2014/15 Road Safety Block approved by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014, for which an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has already been undertaken. A specific EIA has also been produced for this scheme.

## **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The implementation of the proposal will make a positive contribution to road safety and reduce road traffic casualties.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 12.1 The report recommends that the Panel note the objections and that the proposed scheme consisting of a puffin crossing, as shown on attached drawing number R&ED/1/14/DJR, be recommended to the Regeneration & Environment Policy & Performance Committee for approval and implementation.

## **13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 13.1 The introduction of a puffin crossing on Old Chester Road provides the Council with the opportunity to address the Council's LTP3 Objectives and meet the priority to reduce the number of killed and seriously injured casualties on the roads.

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## **APPENDICES**

Drawing number R&ED/1/14/DJR indicating the proposed layout of the scheme.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL**

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

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet - Local Transport Capital Funding & The Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Programme 2014/15	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2014