

Economy and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday 24 August 2021 at 1.00pm

Present:

Councillor Harpreet Uppal (Chair)
Councillor Gwen Lowe
Councillor Martyn Bolt
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Robert Iredale

Co-optees:

Chris Friend

In Attendance:

Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje
Keith Bloomfield, Programme Manager, Major Projects, Environment and Climate Change
David Shepherd, Strategic Director, Growth and Regeneration
Angela Howard (representing the residents of Oak Road)

Observers:

Councillor Eric Firth
Councillor Peter McBride

Apologies:

Councillor Yusra Hussain
Andrew Bird

1. Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Yusra Hussain and Andrew Bird (Co-optee).

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Panel considered the minutes of the previous meetings held on 4 March 2021 and 13th July 2021.

The Panel had received guidance from the Head of Governance on holding virtual scrutiny meetings in response to a request from the Panel in the meeting held on 13th July 2021. The Panel noted that meetings could continue on a virtual basis.

Councillor Iredale requested that specific dates for receipt of information requested by the Panel should be added to the minutes in future.

RESOLVED -

The minutes of the meetings held on the 4 March 2021 and 13th July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Interests

Councillor Uppal declared an interest regarding her position as Ward Councillor for the Ashbrow Ward in relation to agenda item 7.

Councillor Bolt declared an interest regarding his position as Ward Councillor for the Mirfield Ward in relation to agenda item 7, noting the scheme also affected the Mirfield, Liversedge and Gomersal Wards. Councillor Bolt requested that the above wards were consulted.

4. Admission of the Public

All items were considered in the public session.

5. Deputations/Petitions

Councillor James Homewood, representing the affected ward area Ashbrow, raised concerns in relation to the A62 to Cooper Bridge Improvement Corridor Scheme and the detrimental impact additional traffic, including heavy goods vehicles (HGV's) would have particularly on Oak Road, Leeds Road and Bradley Road residents in terms of reducing access and increasing poor air quality. Councillor Homewood stressed the importance of listening to the concerns raised by residents, as well as the need for further understanding and analysis of the impact of the scheme.

Ms Angela Howard, a member of the public representing residents of Oak Road and Leeds Road, raised concerns in relation to the increased volume of traffic travelling on Oak Road, the reduction in air quality, increased noise pollution particularly from HGVs, and the issue of children being able to access the park on Oak Road safely.

It was explained that Oak Road was a narrow residential street that was not designed for high volumes of traffic. There were also concerns in relation to a listed building which could be disrupted by increased traffic, particularly HGV's. Ms Howard also highlighted that the disruption meant that residents would have to take a detour to get to their homes.

Ms Howard further questioned how the re-routing of traffic on Oak Road would alleviate congestion at Cooper Bridge?

6. Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

7. A62 to Cooper Bridge Corridor Improvement Scheme

The Panel considered a video presentation setting out the proposed improvements to the A62 to Cooper Bridge Corridor, which highlighted the following key points:

- Reduced congestion and improved journey times.
- Improved air quality and support for future housing and job growth.

- Integration with other planned interventions to improve access into Huddersfield town centre and other neighbouring towns.
- Improved pedestrian and cycling facilities to create a safer environment and encourage healthy lifestyles.
- A new, larger signal-controlled roundabout with left flow links to reduce traffic on the Cooper Bridge roundabout.
- Improved signal timings.
- The Dumb Steeple would be relocated nearby and would be easily accessible to the public.
- Wakefield Road, Cooper Bridge Road and Colne Bridge Road were to be widened.
- Lanes on Leeds Road to Cooper Bridge would be reconfigured to provide 3 lanes.
- Oak Road would become a one-way street with access to Bradley Road.

Councillor McBride advised that the scheme was to deal with the movement through Cooper Bridge and the reverberations throughout the network, taking account of increased traffic. Councillor McBride acknowledged there would be more traffic on Oak Road which could cause significant problems. However, Councillor McBride advised that the scheme did try to minimise the negative impact for residents and was a compromise in trying to ease movement overall.

Councillor McBride also noted the importance of listening carefully to residents, their objections, and reactions to future proposals.

David Shepherd, Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration highlighted the benefits of the consultation, in terms of the overview of responses and frequently asked questions. He also advised that officers were able to provide comprehensive answers to each of the questions and shared his view that the Panels comments would be helpful in moving forward with the report to Cabinet.

The Panel highlighted that the Ashbrow ward was the focus of the scheme within the report but questioned the implications beyond the physical changes within the Ashbrow ward and asked how these changes might impact on neighbouring wards.

In response, David Shepherd confirmed the report was correct in its focus on physical changes in the Ashbrow ward and Oak Road, but acknowledged the scheme had wider implication on neighbouring wards.

Responding to Ms Howards earlier question about the re-routing traffic onto Oak Road, David Shepherd explained that the scheme allowed traffic to be maximised along the A62, maintained air quality and allowed the scheme to deliver a better arrangement for all road users, including cyclist and pedestrians.

The Panel further raised concerns about the listed building on Oak Road and asked if there were any objections at the planning stage because of this.

In the discussion to follow the panel referred to the strategic aims of the scheme and asked to know what the measurable outcomes were which would help determine if the scheme was a success. It was also highlighted that there was no reference to the

Cabinet's and West Yorkshire Combined Authorities commitment to reducing motor vehicle usage in the report and advised this needed to be factored in, as it was significant aim.

The Panel questioned whether the consultation was robust enough and suggested that it would be useful to see the consultation responses as a percentage. In response David Shepherd highlighted the importance of undertaking consultation, acknowledging that there were costs and risks involved with all schemes on a similar scale. The Panel noted that around 2000 leaflets were sent out and over 300 detailed responses were received, which was statistically significant. David further advised that people would be invited to respond as the scheme progressed.

In response to the question asked regarding the heritage of Oak Road, David Shepherd advised that this had been assessed and would continue to be assessed as proposals developed, and that liaison with heritage experts would continue. David also acknowledged the planning risks and advised on the development of an appropriately robust scheme before submitting a planning application.

In relation to the question regarding reducing motor vehicle usage, David Shepherd responded that active travel was a feature of the scheme and was a continuing feature of all schemes to promote healthy lifestyles, as well as addressing climate concerns. This had resulted in some compromises being made to accommodate all road users and ensure cyclist and pedestrian safety.

Keith Bloomfield, Project Manager for Major Projects advised the panel that the key objectives of the schemes, as listed in the report pack, were to:

- Relieve congestion.
- Improve journey times for all vehicles.
- Improve road safety.
- Improve facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Support the improvement of air quality.
- Support the improvement of the local economy and housing growth.

Keith Bloomfield advised in relation to a question regarding finances, that there was 69.3 million in the budget and the forecast output was around 75 million. In regard to travel time benefits, it was explained that the 1 minute per vehicle time saved was multiplied by the number of vehicles on the network at peak travel time periods.

The Panel shared their sympathy for the residents of Oak Road and asked questions in relation to air quality, pedestrian usage and safety. David Shepherd further agreed that it was important to ensure residents on Oak Road continued to live in a pleasant environment and that the issues created are addressed in the final scheme.

The Panel highlighted that several options had been considered but questioned whether fly overs had also been discussed as an option to mitigate some of the issues. The Panel also noted that the video focused on traffic volume but made no reference to the significant housing growth areas that may increase traffic volume further and questioned if this had been taken into consideration. Further questions were also asked regarding expenditure to date.

Keith Bloomfield responded to the question in relation to whether fly overs had been considered, and advised that the option had been looked at, however due to several reasons, including heritage, the option was not considered. Regarding the volumes of traffic being taken into consideration for 2041 in relation to housing growth in the area, Keith Bloomfield confirmed that the 2041 model did take account of all current future developments and schemes. In relation to the question regarding expenditure, Keith Bloomfield advised to date, this was slightly in excess of one million pounds.

The Panel highlighted their concerns regarding climate issues and questioned whether there was any metric information showing how pollution was going to be reduced.

It was also noted that the development of the plan was to take place over 60 period and asked if there were any checkpoints within the next 10 to 20 years to identify and measure the success of the scheme.

David Shepherd shared that there was still a long way to go in terms of developing the proposal and that some answers will come over time as the detail of the scheme develops.

In relation to pollution control and monitoring, and air quality management, David Shepherd advised that data would be monitored overtime to identify impact. David also advised detailed modelling had already been carried out and was set out within the report which identified that there would be no negative impact as a result of the scheme.

The Panel highlighted that the Department for Transport's (DfT) Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN1/20) criteria is coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive. Concerns were raised regarding the cycling facilities around Leeds Road, Oak Road and Bradley Road, noting cyclists would have to cross the flow of traffic with no facility to cross safely. The Panel also asked questions about regular maintenance and winter maintenance of the cycle routes. The proposed increase in capacity for traffic travelling towards junction 25 of the M62 noting there was only a single lane for traffic leaving the M62 travelling towards Kirklees was also noted.

The Panel questioned what protection would be given to the businesses that would be affected by the scheme and shared the importance of the scheme having a positive impact on those businesses.

It was noted that in 2018 a proposal to make changes to Cooper Bridge included the option of a large fly over. The Panel questioned this option, acknowledging it would be a useful link to the Bradley housing area and could be constructed with minimal disruption.

In response to questions asked in relation to compliance with the LNT120 and cycling facilities, Keith Bloomfield advised the Council needed to comply with LTN120, acknowledging there were different types of cyclists and a need to cater for them all. Keith further advised there would be facilities for cyclists to support them to access cycling routes and to cross the roads safely.

It was advised that the Council were in conversation with all the affected businesses and that, in regard to increased capacity at the motor way junction, the aim was to maximise capacity around Cooper Bridge whilst also providing cycling and walking facilities that were in keeping with the Locality.

In response to a question raised regarding the option of a fly over, Keith Bloomfield explained that the option of a relief road was considered from Bradley to the motorway intersection, but that it would involve environmental works that would need to be carried out, costing in excess of 100 million pounds and so it was discounted.

The Panel noted the report lacked emphasis on modal shift and questioned how this was being encouraged as part of the scheme.

It was also noted that the Bradley and Cooper Bridge areas were part of an air quality management zone and the Panel questioned whether an assessment would be needed as part of the action plan on air quality for the schemes business case, in terms of how reductions in air quality were expected to happen and what assessments had been done for potential increases in air quality for surrounding areas.

The Panel highlighted further concerns regarding HGV's travelling on roads that were not designed for them and the impact this would have on residents' homes. The panel questioned how traffic flow measures were being explored to reduce impact.

Keith Bloomfield responded to the panels question in relation to encouraging modal shift and advised on the expectation of a thorough transport assessment as part of the Bradley housing development that encouraged modal shift, with cycling and walking at the fore front of that proposal. Keith highlighted that if cycling and walking facilities were available, people would be encouraged to use them. Keith also advised on the need to educate the public in relation to what is available.

In response to a question regarding air quality, Keith Bloomfield advised that the Council are seeking to move traffic without stationary flow, including intelligent traffic signalling, video imaging to alter signalling to better coordinate HGV's and larger vehicles. Regarding the impact of increased HGVs on Oak Road, Keith shared that the view was to limit the number of HGV's using Oak Road with appropriate measures. Keith further explained that the road would be 5 meters in width for one way traffic which would be further away from the houses. This would help improve air quality overall, would move vehicles away from houses and reduce congestion in the area.

The Panel discussed the capital reconstruction work that was due between Cooper Bridge and the River Calder and questioned the timescale between the capital reconstruction work and work starting on the proposed scheme, highlighting the importance to avoid duplication of work and spend.

In response Keith Bloomfield advised that conversations were taking place with colleagues in the Highways maintenance team to make sure the scheme was taken into consideration.

The Panel also noted that Kirklees are committed by 2038 to reduce private car travel by 21% and highlighted that plan should show a reduction in car travel.

Keith Bloomfield responded, confirming that 21% was the stated aim and that the model is based on current DfT guidance. Keith further advised on the need to work with the DfT using their flow analysis and predictions going forward.

David Shepherd responded further regarding the 21% reduction to highlight the need to think about the wider transport investments and model shift, advising that the scheme relied on a package of measures to achieve its aim rather than on an individual scheme.

The Panel shared their reservations in relation to the scheme being able to achieve the objectives and the need for greater clarity, in terms of impact and costing.

Councillor McBride highlighted the usefulness of the meeting and shared his view that there had been a serious attempt to address the concerns raised by residents on Oak Road. Councillor McBride acknowledged the scheme overall was beneficial but were some localities that do not benefit, he concluded that the purpose of scrutiny was to explore where problems are and identify how best to address issues highlighted.

RESOLVED-

The Panel noted the contents of the 'A62 to Cooper Bridge Improvement Corridor Scheme' report and thanked the officers for their contribution.

It was agreed that the following comments and recommendations raised by the Panel be referenced and responded to as part of the report due to be submitted to Cabinet:

- (i) The Panel recognised the key concerns of residents of Oak Road and the importance of these concerns being understood and responded to as the scheme develops.
- (ii) That clear metrics need to be demonstrated that can enable the measurement of the impact and success of the scheme in areas such as air quality and traffic flow.
- (iii) That consultation be undertaken with Elected Members in all wards impacted by scheme particularly in respect of the effect on existing and potential traffic flows.
- (iv) That it is important to recognise within the Cabinet report and ongoing business case of the project, the Council's commitment to tackling climate change and measures to encourage modal shift to public transport and active travel.

8. Work Programme 2021/22

The Panel acknowledged the Economy and Neighbourhood Scrutiny panel had scheduled an additional meeting on 7th September 2021 to discuss the Cultural Heart Regeneration Programme and the Winter Maintenance Review.

The Chair advised that there was a view to bring forward an update on Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhood.

AOB

No other business.