

Army and Navy Sustainable Task Force - Meeting Minutes

Project:	Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package		
Meeting title:	Army and Navy Task Force meeting #14		
Date:	03/12/21	Location:	Microsoft Teams virtual meeting
Attendees	Cllr Lesley Wagland	LW	
	Cllr John Spence	JS	
	Cllr Marie Goldman	MG	
	Cllr Stephen Robinson	SR	
	Vicky Ford MP	VF	

Agenda	Item
Item	
1.	<p>Introduction</p> <p>LW welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the project team were aiming to secure endorsement from the Task Force on a preferred junction option, while potential design changes, the components of the wider sustainable transport package and next steps would also be discussed.</p> <p>JS questioned whether the next steps were securing funding for the project and LW confirmed that was one of the key next steps.</p>
2.	<p>Preferred junction option discussion</p> <p>The Task Force was given a summary of the public consultation which took place from August to October 2021. There was wide-spread engagement during the consultation period, with almost 6,000 visitors to the virtual exhibition and over 9,000 visitors to the project webpage. In total, there were 842 responses to the public consultation survey, as well as some email responses. The majority of respondents to the online survey visited the virtual exhibition and most people felt the information provided was helpful. The majority of responses were from residents of Chelmsford and a high number identified car, van or lorry as their most common mode of transport when travelling through the junction.</p> <p>The hamburger roundabout came through as the clear preference between the two junction options, with 60% preferring the hamburger roundabout, 21% the separate T-junctions, 18% undecided or having no preference and 1% not answering the question. There was a feeling that the hamburger roundabout would encourage people to use different modes of transport more than the separate T-junctions.</p> <p>A significant percentage felt the proposals would create a more coherent network for pedestrians and cyclists. In terms of the proposed Widford Park and Ride, there was no strong preference, but a slight preference for the Greenbury Way site, potentially due to safety concerns that Widford Lodge School had</p>

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raised about pupils crossing the proposed site access junction to access a neighbouring playing field.

There was significant support for expanding Sandon Park and Ride in advance of works at the Army and Navy junction, which is seen as an important mitigation measure during construction of the new junction.

Just over half of people agreed the overall Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package would have a positive impact on Chelmsford.

There was mixed feeling about the proposed removal of the subway, with some concerns about the safety and journey times with ground-level crossings, but also some positive comments regarding safety and no flooding issues. There was positive feedback about the walking and cycling proposals but also some feeling that the measures did not go far enough. A number of respondents expressed a desire for a two-way flyover, but others recognised why it had been ruled out. There were some concerns about an inaccurately perceived worsening of traffic flow and congestion, and potential for confusion as a result of the new layout.

The Task Force was told that the initial consultation analysis had been fed into the decision framework and the hamburger roundabout had come out quite clearly as the strongest option. They were told the project team were now seeking endorsement from the Task Force for the hamburger roundabout to be identified as the recommended preferred option.

VF requested clarification about the number of people who had expressed concerns about the removal of the subway and a preference for a flyover and was provided with figures.

SR stated the feeling the walking and cycling initiatives did not go far enough matched the views of the city council and suggested there was a need to look at the impact of the proposals on the whole of Chelmsford and not just the junction. He added that he felt a benefit of the separate T-junctions option was that some parts were better for cycling and walking, particularly the cycle lane being separate from the junction on the Moulsham Mill side of the junction. He said it was important the cycling and walking elements through the junction still needed to be given attention to ensure they were the best they could be.

MG said she did not think too much weight should be given to the percentage of people who agreed the junction proposals would create a more coherent network and that what would really make the cycling network better would be to have it extended. She added that whatever happens at the junction would not make people decide to walk or cycle. She suggested what really matters is how far people could get on a safe and continuous cycling network.

LW suggested that wider improvements to the cycling network needed to be considered separately to this project. She asked for endorsement from the task force to identify the hamburger roundabout as the preferred junction option to move the project forward.

Officers explained to the Task Force that endorsement of a preferred option was being sought so that the final stages of transport modelling work, needed for the outline business case, could be progressed. It was explained that the transport

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	<p>modelling was not dependent on the wider package so there could be ongoing discussion about the walking and cycling improvements. The Task Force was told that a decision on a preferred option would then be subject to a formal Essex County Council decision.</p> <p>SR queried whether the difference in the scoring of the two junction options was that significant and reiterated the points from himself and MG about the importance of getting the walking and cycling elements correct. He said he agreed to support the hamburger roundabout option but that the other strategic elements should not be forgotten.</p> <p>Officers clarified that the separate T-junctions layout option included more green areas and there would be greater separation of the cycle route but that journey times through the junction would actually be slower for cyclists and pedestrians, so the hamburger roundabout would be a better option for walking and cycling in terms of journey time. The Task Force was told the difference between the two options in terms of the business case was actually significant and a good business case would be needed to secure funding from the DfT. They were told the hamburger roundabout option had a very good business case, which would allow sustainable measures to be added on, whereas the separate T-junctions did not have a very good business case and the project team would therefore be more restricted in the sustainable measures which could be added into the package.</p> <p>JS stated that funding would not be secured for the wider walking and cycling network from Government but would be for the junction and, therefore, while he recognised the need to try and continue to improve those aspects, he was happy to endorse the hamburger option.</p> <p>VF agreed there was a need to continue looking at walking and cycling improvements but reiterated that the hamburger roundabout would not stop that from happening. She added that it would be vital to continue to explain to the public why it was important to expand Sandon Park and Ride before works at the Army and Navy.</p> <p>LW asked for confirmation from the Task Force that the hamburger roundabout option was endorsed as the preferred option and agreement was given.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Design changes</p> <p>The Task Force was told that feedback was received during the consultation about Van Diemens Road and the Baddow Road crossing, so design changes had been explored.</p> <p>Attendees were reminded that the proposals consulted upon included a parallel crossing on Baddow Road and two lanes northbound on Van Diemens Road with a two-way cycle route on the eastern side and the proposed removal of permit parking bays.</p> <p>The Task Force was told that following public feedback about whether the Baddow Road junction could be signalised, the project team had investigated it and determined it could be done but would still be subject to a road safety audit.</p>

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	<p>The Task Force was told that members of the project team had visited residents of Van Diemens Road on site, along with MG, and the design for Van Diemens Road had subsequently been updated to look at retaining the permit parking bays, moving the two-way cycle route to the western side and changing Van Diemens Road to being one lane northbound for traffic rather than two, flaring to two at the entrance to the junction. They were told that traffic modelling showed that would work well and, although the queue length would be a bit longer, there would still be an overall traffic benefit compared to the current situation.</p> <p>It was explained that the project team were also asked whether improvements could be made to the Lady Lane junction and options had been explored. Three possible Lady Lane junction layout options (two signalised options and one give-way option) were outlined. It was added that traffic modelling showed there would be little difference to journey times between the options.</p> <p>MG thanked the project team for listening to residents and said she felt the revised proposals addressed a lot of the concerns she and residents had. She said she was keen to have information and share it with residents together.</p> <p>VF agreed it would be good to look at the options for Lady Lane in more detail and to engage residents. She said she had some concerns about the potential restriction of certain movements for people turning out of Moulsham Chase/Van Diemens Lane with the two signalised designs.</p> <p>Officers explained that allowing all movements with the signalised options would cause delays and more queuing on Van Diemens Road.</p> <p>The Task Force was asked for endorsement in principle to reduce Van Diemens Road from two lanes to one lane northbound to accommodate the design changes and retain the permit parking bays.</p> <p>MG said she endorsed the proposal in principle and that it would achieve what the Task Force was aiming to do in prioritising walking and cycling over cars and would improve things for local residents as well.</p> <p>VF said she was happy to endorse it but there would need to be good communications with the public because of perceptions about queuing.</p> <p>MG added that she was pleased that a solution had also been explored to improve the right-hand turn from Lady Lane onto Van Diemens Road.</p> <p>LW asked for confirmation of endorsement and this was given.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Sustainable Transport Package content</p> <p>Officers reminded the Task Force about the elements that had made up the proposed Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package – junction improvements at the Army and Navy junction, walking and cycling improvements to and through the junction, Sandon Park and Ride expansion and enhancement, and a new Park and Ride site in Widford.</p> <p>The Task Force was told that the project team had also been investigating potentially adding cycle links to and from Sandon Park and Ride and the</p>

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proposed new Widford Park and Ride site, but those elements were not in the package currently.

It was explained that funding for the project was being sought from the DfT's MRN Fund and there was a funding limit per scheme with a local authority contribution of 15% required. The Task Force was told that limited local authority funding was available and, therefore, decisions needed to be made to achieve the best package with the funding available.

The background to proposed Park and Ride improvements was outlined, including reference to the Essex Climate Commission, Chelmsford Future Transport Network Strategy and Chelmsford Local Plan.

The Task Force was told that enlargement of Sandon Park and Ride would provide additional capacity during construction, as well as scope to increase passenger numbers in the longer term. It was added that modelling showed having a new Widford Park and Ride site would lead to about 30% more Park and Ride users in Chelmsford overall, although that was based on pre-COVID travel patterns. However, the cost and financial risks of a new site would be high and there was continued uncertainty due to COVID and the potential impacts on the recovery of Park and Ride usage. It was outlined that Chelmsford City Council was not currently willing to take over running Park and Ride services in Chelmsford because of the uncertainty and risk.

It was added that, with or without a new Widford Park and Ride, a need for Chelmer Valley Park and Ride to be expanded by about 500 spaces had been identified and there was already land safeguarded for it in the Local Plan. Expansion of Chelmer Valley Park and Ride could therefore be seen as a potential alternative to a new Park and Ride in Widford and would still provide an increase in overall Park and Ride spaces in Chelmsford, but without the additional operating costs and risks.

The Task Force was given three potential options for a revised sustainable transport package going forward – one featured the current elements of the package, one included expansion but not enhancement of Sandon Park and Ride, as well as expansion of Chelmer Valley, and one included expansion but not enhancement of Sandon Park and Ride, as well as expansion of Chelmer Valley and a Park and Choose cycle route from Sandon, which would have to be LTN1/20 compliant. It was explained that two of the options would require larger local authority contributions which might not be achievable.

VF stressed that she would not want to delay work on the junction and that all three options would involve doing Sandon expansion so suggested that should be progressed while a decision is made on other elements. She added that the way people are working and commuting had changed because of COVID and there was continued uncertainty about the future. She said that unless the city council was interested in running it then she felt a new Widford Park and Ride had probably become too expensive because of the revenue risk.

Officers explained that it would not be possible to start work at Sandon early outside of the MRN funding and it would have to be part of the MRN bid, so a decision needed to be made on what was included in the bid in order to progress the outline business case.

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VF stated that, in that case, given the current uncertainty, her preference was the Chelmer Valley expansion option without a Sandon cycle route.

MG said a positive element of a new Widford Park and Ride would be a cycle route and a safe crossing to get across either Greenbury Way or Three Mile Hill (London Road), but she accepted financial viability was key.

MG questioned how capacity could be provided at either Chelmer Valley or Widford, given they are on opposite sides of Chelmsford and demand would be coming from different places. She also asked why a non LTN1/20 compliant cycle route from Sandon could not be pursued separately, outside of the MRN funding bid.

Officers advised that the cycle route could be pursued and funded separately, however the councils would want the routes to be as good as possible and ideally LTN1/20 compliant. They added that the councils would not get any Government funding if the routes were not LTN1/20 compliant.

Officers also explained that a new Widford Park and Ride and expanded Chelmer Valley Park and Ride would both reduce overall traffic going into the city centre and that a lot of traffic from Widford would not be going via the Army and Navy so there would actually be more of an impact on the Army and Navy junction by expanding Chelmer Valley. It was added that there was a large amount of growth planned in north east Chelmsford and north of Chelmsford.

MG said that she understood usage of Chelmer Valley was lower and questioned whether future demand had been modelled.

Officers confirmed the site was not at full capacity at the moment but that the planned growth had shown that it would need approximately 500 spaces.

SR said he thought Chelmer Valley expansion could be funded by developers rather than through the Army and Navy project and clarified that Chelmsford City Council was not opposed in principle to taking over Park and Ride services in Chelmsford but that there was nothing viable to take over at the moment.

JS said that he fully understood why Chelmsford City Council was currently unable to pursue taking over Park and Ride services and was content with expansion of Sandon Park and Ride.

SR said he felt it would be a flaw not to enhance Sandon Park and Ride, given it is the most successful site, and particularly if Widford was not taken forward. He also questioned if local contributions for Chelmer Valley could be from developer contributions from the proposed garden community and whether there were specific time scales to secure local contributions and deliver the expansion.

Officers advised that from a business case perspective, confirmation of funding would need to be available in writing in the next few months which may be difficult.

VF said she felt the Task Force should go with the Sandon and Chelmer Valley expansions and press developers to contribute to the Chelmer Valley Park and

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	<p>Ride. She added that she agreed with SR that the project team should try to retain the enhancement of Sandon Park and Ride, in addition to the expansion.</p> <p>MG suggested it made sense to identify a scheme that would maximise the amount of money from Government to get better value for investment.</p> <p>Officers said that confirmation about any local contributions would be needed in writing very soon.</p> <p>SR said he needed to go away and have discussions with Chelmsford City Council officers and the garden community. He also questioned the cost of the enhancement of Sandon Park and Ride and whether it could potentially be put back in the package if developer contributions are secured.</p> <p>Chelmsford City Council advised they needed to look at what was in the Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.</p> <p>LW said the real risk was not getting the outline business case finalised to secure funding.</p> <p>VF reiterated that the business case was the main priority and that if Sandon could be enhanced as well then that would be a bonus.</p> <p>Officers confirmed they needed agreement from the Task Force about the assumptions that Sandon and Chelmer Valley Park and Rides would be expanded.</p> <p>LW summarised that a base position needed to be agreed and then anything else that can be secured was additional.</p> <p>Officers explained that the revised option of expansion (not enhancement) of Sandon and expansion of Chelmer Valley was devised in light of the current understanding of available local contributions and because the business case needed to be similar to the strategic outline business case already put to the DfT. They added that if additional local contributions could be secured then the project team could look at something over and above that.</p> <p>LW sought confirmation from the Task Force that members agreed that the project team would proceed with the option including junction improvements, expansion of Sandon Park and Ride and expansion of Chelmer Valley Park and Ride, while discussions would also continue to see if the necessary confirmations of funding could be obtained to also enhance Sandon.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Next steps and programme</p> <p>The Task Force was told that the project team would confirm the impact of having one lane on Van Diemens Road on air quality and noise, and there would be conversations to update DfT on the development of the project.</p> <p>The project team outlined the latest outline business case programme, explaining that a formal decision on a preferred junction option was expected in early 2022, followed by updated transport modelling and economic assessment,</p>

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	<p>and updated air quality and noise assessment, ahead of submission of the outline business case in summer/autumn 2022.</p> <p>VF stressed the need to meet the deadline set for submission of the outline business case to avoid delays to the project.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>MG asked for the project team to liaise with her to coordinate any follow-up engagement with residents of Van Diemens Road to discuss the design changes.</p> <p>LW thanked the project team for their hard work and closed the meeting.</p>