**London Road Improvement Scheme**

Consultation Report

February 2018

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide an overview of the consultation exercise undertaken for the London Road Improvement Scheme.

**2. Background**

2.1 The Connecting Leicester project aims to provide a connected safe and family friendly city.

2.2 Proposals have been developed for improvements to London Road between Granby Street and Victoria Park Road, with the aim of enhancing the connectivity between the city centre and south of the city.

2.3 The proposals include:

* Segregated one way cycle tracks on both sides of London Road from Granby Street to Evington Road/Granville Road junction.
* A two way cycle track alongside Victoria Park to link with existing facilities on Victoria Park Road.
* The introduction of new and improved signalised crossing points.
* The raising of the carriageway to pavement level on side roads to introduce priority for pedestrians and cyclists.
* The removal of the outbound bus lane and alteration of the existing carriageway to allow the creation of improved footways and the new cycle lane.
* The retention of sections of the current on road off peak pay and display parking.

2.4 Two potential options for the section of London Road in front of Leicester Rail Station have been put forward. Option 1 features a bus only route in front of the station including bus stops, while Option 2 features a car passenger drop off area instead with the bus stops moved south of Conduit Street.

2.5 The estimated cost of the scheme is £3.9 million, this will be met from the Connecting Leicester budget and ERDF funding.

2.6 A bid has been submitted seeking ERDF funding to cover half of the total cost, a decision is awaited.

2.7 Work is expected to commence on site July 2018.

**3. Stakeholder Engagement**

3.1 An initial consultation with stakeholders was held in August 2017.

3.2 Healthy Streets expert and former Principal Technical Specialist for Transport for London Brian Deegan was commissioned to carry out an audit of the plans. This audit was carried out on 14th and 15th September 2017.

3.3 The Healthy Streets Approach focuses on creating streets that are pleasant, safe and attractive. The check is carried out by firstly assessing the existing situation and giving a score for various indicators. The same check is then carried out on the proposals for the scheme. The healthy streets check for the London Road plans showed a significant improvement on the existing situation. Several potential revisions to the plans were identified that would provide additional improvements.

3.4 A stakeholder meeting was held on 14th September. The meeting was attended by Brian Deegan, five local cycling groups, bus companies operating in the area, Leicester Disabled People’s Access Group (LDPAG) and Vista, a local charity for people with sight loss. During this meeting an overview of the scheme was presented and the healthy streets audit findings and proposed revisions were discussed.

3.5 A number of the recommended revisions were then incorporated into the plans, these changes being:

* The introduction of cycle gates at Waterloo Way, University Road and Evington Road junctions to improve safety for cyclists.
* The introduction of a new toucan crossing opposite the bowling green.
* The redesign of bus only option in front of the train station to allow space for bays for buses to pull into.

3.6 Brian Deegan said following the recommendations being incorporated “It has been really encouraging to see the Healthy Street Check used to improve the quality of the London Road design.   I look forward to seeing this scheme get built so the people of Leicester can feel the benefits of the healthy streets approach.”

**4 Consultation method**

4.1 The public consultation period began on 11th October and ended on 10th November 2017.

4.2 A press release was issued on 11th October 2017 (Appendix 1). It included a description of the key features of the scheme and an invitation to members of the public to submit their comments on the proposals to the project team via email 10th November.

4.3 The press release was published on the Leicester City Council website, alongside plans and artist’s impressions of the scheme.

4.5 A post and four artist’s impressions were published on the Leicester City Council Facebook page. The consultation was also promoted on the Leicester City Council Twitter feed.

4.6 Posters were sent to Ward Councillors and displayed at around 30 locations in the area of the proposed scheme. (The poster is attached as Appendix 2)

4.7 Letters were sent to 700 properties on and around London Road, informing owners of the scheme and inviting their comments.

4.8 A public exhibition was held across three dates:

* Thursday 19th October 2017 , 16:00-18:00, Leicester Rail Station.
* Tuesday 24th October 2017, 8:00-10:00 and 12:00-14:00, Leicester Rail Station.
* Wednesday 25th October 2017, 12:00-14:00 and 16:00-18:00, Bowls Pavilion, Victoria Park.
* A total of 113 people attended the public exhibition across the three dates, with 44, 39 and 30 people attending on the 19th, 24th and 25th October 2017 respectively.

4.9 As part of the consultation the two options under consideration for the section of London Road in front of Leicester Rail Station were presented, with the aid of two artist’s impressions.

**5 Results**

5.1 147 responses were received from members of the public and community groups either via letter or email.

5.2 64% of the responses were supportive of the scheme, while 8% stated that they did not support the scheme. The remaining 26% of respondents did not specify whether or not they supported the scheme.

5.3 19% of the responses were supportive of the design as shown while 31% expressed support for the scheme with suggested changes to the design.

5.4 Stakeholder comments were received from Leicestershire Police, Leicester Cycling Campaign Group (LCCG), bus companies operating in the area, the University of Leicester, Friends of Victoria Park and Leicester Civic Society.

5.5 The post on the Leicester City Council Facebook page had a notable impact, achieving a reach of over 37,000 and receiving over 6,000 engagements including over 170 comments.

**6 Comments and Suggestions**

**6.1 Leicester Rail Station options**

* + 1. 36% of respondents expressed a preference on the two options for outside the station, 67% favoured Option 1 (bus only) and 33% favoured Option 2 (car drop off). 64% of respondents did not specify preferred option.
    2. Respondents from the stakeholder engagement: LDPAG and bus companies were in favour of Option 1, while Leicestershire Police were in favour of Option 2.

Two of the three bus companies who responded expressed a preference for Option 1, although they had reservations about the reduction to one outbound lane.

* + 1. **Comments given by those in favour of Option 1 included:**
* It was the more convenient option for public transport users.
* It would potentially encourage use of sustainable transport.
* Were Option 2 implemented, the car drop off bays may be abused by cars staying too long and become a source of friction.
* Were Option 2 implemented and the bus stops were positioned on the other side of Conduit Street to the Rail Station, crossing this street to access them could be difficult for pedestrians, particularly those with disabilities.
* The view that it would be safer for pedestrians if cars and taxis were kept away from the front of the Rail Station
* Other nearby streets such as Station Street, Prebend Street, Nelson Street and Regent Street offer viable alternatives for car drop off provision for the station.
  + 1. **Comments given by those in favour of Option 2 included:**
* Current car pick up and drop off provision is inadequate and more is needed.
* It is more pedestrian friendly, as high-sided vehicles such as buses could restrict visibility and make the area more dangerous for pedestrians.
  + - In Option 2 the two outbound lanes are retained, while the plans for Option 1 show a reduction to a single outbound lane for all vehicles and a bus gate for buses.

**Officer response**

Following the results of the consultation the decision was made to progress the option which retained the bus stops outside of the railway station.

**6.2 Cycleway in front of Leicester Rail Station**

6.2.1 Some respondents expressed unhappiness at the location of the cycle lane in front of the Rail Station and the lack of segregation between it and the footway

**Officer response**

The Railway Station is a busy and complicated area with a number of different uses. The cycle track has been located away from the carriageway and bus stops to provide a safe facility for cyclists. Materials will be considered carefully to provide a safe route at this location for cyclists, with some form of segregation for pedestrians and waiting bus passengers.

**6.3 Tree removal**

6.3.1 25% of the written responses expressed concerns regarding the proposed removal of trees from Victoria Park to make way for the two-way cycle path on the section of London Road that runs alongside the park.

**Officer response**

Designers are looking at options to reduce the need to remove trees where possible.

**6.4 Section in front of Victoria Park**

6.4.1 17% of the written responses made negative comments about the proposals for the section where London Road runs in front of Victoria Park.

6.4.2 A number of respondents questioned how heavily used the new two-way cycle path will be, as they feel that cyclists are unlikely to go to the effort of crossing London Road to use it.

**Officer response**

The two way cycle track will provide a safe and pleasant facility for those cyclists who are less confident and may choose to not continue on the carriageway. A new toucan crossing has been provided in order for cyclists to cross over to this new facility.

**6.5 Segregation between the cycleway and the pavement**

6.5.1 19% of the written responses expressed concern of the perceived lack of segregation between cyclists and pedestrians

**Officer response**

The proposal for the majority of the route is for the cycle track to be at carriageway level. The pedestrians will be on the footway with a full height kerb between them and the cycleway. In locations where the cycleway is at footway level there will be demarcation between the two areas.

**6.6 Segregation between the cycleway and the carriageway**

6.6.1 In the written responses, 19% expressed concerns about the means of segregation between the cycleway and the carriageway.

6.6.2 Concerns were raised that issues with cars parking in the cycle lane could become prevalent if there is inadequate segregation.

6.6.3 The Healthy Streets audit recommended back to back kerbs as a means of both segregating cyclists from traffic and preventing parking.

**Officer response**

The proposal is to provide segregation between the cycle track and the carriageway for the majority of the route.

**6.7 Parking on London Road**

6.7.1 5% of respondents raised concerns about parking and parking enforcement on London Road.

**Officer response**

Location of parking bays is being reviewed as part of the scheme design. There is a “buffer” between parking bays and the cycle track to avoid car doors opening into the path of cyclists or parking on the cycle track instead of in the marked bays.

**6.8 Comments from stakeholders**

6.8.1 Additional comments from stakeholders included the following:

6.8.2 Concerns about connecting beyond Mayfield roundabout and Leicester Rail Station, particularly in accessing the cycle hub via Station Street.

**Officer comment**

Design options are being considered.

6.8.3 Concerns about the design of the side junctions. LDPAG commented that carriageways raised to the level of the footway can cause difficulties for visually impaired people and that tactile and visual differentiation should be implemented.

**Officer comment**

Side streets will include tactile paving.

6.8.4 Concerns from bus companies about the removal of the outbound bus lane. Bus companies felt that this would lead to congestion problems and increased journey times for their passengers.

**Officer comment**

Journey times and consideration of congestion was included in the design process. The Healthy Streets check included a consideration of different modes of transport.

**Appendix 1**

**Press Release – 11/10/2017**

**Plans for major revamp of London Road revealed**

PLANS have been revealed for a major transformation of a stretch of Leicester’s busy London Road.

Leicester City Council is inviting comments on a proposed £2.9milllion scheme to revamp the busy route between Granby Street and the Mayfield Road roundabout and create a safer and more appealing route for pedestrians and cyclists.

New off-road cycle lanes will be created – one inbound and one outbound – on either side of the road between Granby Street and Victoria Park.

The outbound bus lane will be removed to provide space for the new cycle lanes and retain the already generous width of the pavements, which will be reconstructed with bonded gravel. Two lanes for traffic will be retained in both directions.

The improved pavements and new cycle lanes will continue in front of the railway station, where options for a bus-only lane or a drop-off point for motorists are still being considered. The central reservation here will be completely remodelled to provide a safer crossing for pedestrians and cyclists.

Improved crossings will also be introduced at other key points along the road.

The ‘Dutch-style’ design of the new cycle lanes will see riders channelled behind bus stops along the route, helping to improve safety for all road users.

Side roads off London Road will be raised to pavement level at their junctions to help give priority to pedestrians and cyclists, and signal schemes at major junctions will be redesigned to give cyclists a head-start and avoid any conflict with traffic turning left.

Sections of off-peak pay-and-display parking will be kept along both sides of the road, which will also be resurfaced as part of the scheme.

A new two-way cycle track is also proposed alongside Victoria Park to provide a continuous link to existing cycle lanes from Mayfield Road Roundabout. This could require the removal of up to 18 trees on the very edge of the park, but the council would plant new trees nearby to compensate for any lost as part of the scheme.

The major scheme is part of the wider Connecting Leicester project, which is improving routes through the city centre for pedestrians and cyclists, while making it more attractive to investors and developers.

City Mayor Peter Soulsby said: “We’re proposing a fairly radical revamp of London Road which will bring about major improvements.

“It’s an ambitious scheme but there really is no easy solution here. London Road is a busy route and the area in front of the railway station is an important public transport interchange.

“This presents some real challenges, and opportunities to do things a bit differently. We will be very interested to hear people’s thoughts on options to introduce a bus only lane, or use this space as drop-off point for car passengers.”

Cllr Adam Clarke, deputy city mayor and executive lead on health and environment, said: “It has taken a long time, a lot of hard work and some invaluable feedback to develop this plan and we are looking forward to hearing the public’s views on the potential transformation of London Road.

“Following the tragic accident last year, it is entirely understandable that this has heightened people’s safety concerns and this has been at the forefront of our minds.

“By reallocating a relatively small amount of road space, we can introduce wider pavements, improved crossings, better bus stops and new dedicated off-road cycle lanes. This will create a much safer and more appealing route for cyclists and pedestrians and help make London Road a more attractive environment for everyone.”

The scheme has been developed with input from local bus companies and user groups, city cycling groups and the family of cyclist Sam Boulton, who was killed in an accident outside the railway station.

Leicester City Council also sought expert guidance from international ‘Healthy Streets’ consultant Brian Deegan, one of the main authors of Transport for London’s cycling design standards.

His assessment of the proposed London Road scheme – based on its ability to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport – was that it represented a huge improvement on the current situation. A small number of outstanding issues were highlighted as part of this assessment, which have been addressed in the design now being put out for public comment.

People can find out more about the proposed London Road improvement scheme when the plans go on display from next week. Members of the project team will be available to answer any questions at the following events:

* Leicester Railway Station, Thursday 19 October, 4-6pm
* Leicester Railway Station, Tuesday 24 October, 8-10am & 12noon-2pm
* Bowls Pavilion, Victoria Park, Wednesday 25 October, 12noon-2pm & 4-6pm

The plans will also be available to view on the council’s website at www.leicester.gov.uk/connectingleicester

People can email their comments on the proposals to transport-strategyenquiries@leicester.gov.uk

Closing date for comments is 10 November 2017.

If given the go-ahead, work on the London Road scheme could begin by summer 2018 and is expected to take around a year to complete.

**Appendix 2**

Consultation Poster

