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| Committee(s) | Dated: |
| Epping Forest and Commons | 09032015 |
| Subject: LBWF Mini Holland Project - Whipps Cross Roundabout/Lea Bridge Road remodelling works | Public |
| Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 12/15 | For Decision |

Summary

In March 2014, London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) received £30m of funding under the Mayor of London's 'Mini Holland' scheme to improve conditions for cyclists across the borough. As part of this scheme, LBWF proposes to redevelop Whipps Cross Roundabout, located on Forest land dedicated to highway.

In July 2014, your Committee received report SEF 12/14 outlining this background and the initial design for Whipps Cross Roundabout. Since then, LBWF have produced a final design, which is still subject to successful traffic modelling and subsequent public consultation. This report presents this design to your Committee.

The final design for the remodelling of the junction (Appendix 1) sits within the footprint of the existing highway dedication of the current roundabout (Appendix 2). The design will see some areas of land cease to be used for highway purposes.

The proposed design has no financial implications for the City of London and represents a significant increase in access to the Forest for pedestrians and cyclists. Proposals are in line with the City of London's policy to promote sustainable transport and the Conservators' aim to provide 'improved accessibility to the Forest for all users especially those arriving by public transport, on foot, bicycle or horse-back'.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Receive the design for the remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout and Lea Bridge Road
- Delegate authority to the Superintendent in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to agree any formal responses to public consultation and to enter into any agreements required to implement the remodelling (subject to the terms being in the best interests of the Forest)

Main Report

Background

1. In March 2014, London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) was successful in its bid for 'Mini Holland' funding from the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL). LBWF secured £30m to 'dramatically improve conditions for cyclists around Walthamstow town centre, to help trigger a cycling culture across the whole borough'.
2. Whipps Cross Roundabout and Lea Bridge Road represent a significant barrier to local residents wishing to access the Forest. Proposals aimed at improving access for cyclists would also benefit Forest users accessing Leyton Flats on foot.
3. As part of the Mini Holland bid, LBWF produced initial proposals for 'a new Cycle Super Highway along the length of Lea Bridge Road, with a radical rework of the Whipps Cross Roundabout'. Around £3.5m was originally budgeted for these changes. On 7 July 2014, your Committee received report SEF 12/14 detailing these initial proposals for the remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout.
4. Forest Land at Whipps Cross, Walthamstow, was the subject of a dedication agreement for Highways Purposes with The Mayor, Alderman and Burgesses of the Borough of Leyton in 1939. The Whipps Cross Roundabout is therefore situated on former Forest land dedicated to highway and remodelling for highway purposes is permitted under the existing dedication.
5. Your Committee agreed that Officers should review historic City of London documents to develop a definitive plan of the land dedicated to highway at Whipps Cross Roundabout to determine if plans encroach on Forest land.
6. Your Committee resolved that Epping Forest Officers should attend key stakeholder meetings and review designs, to ensure that plans were in the best possible interest of Epping Forest and its visitors.
7. The cycle-friendly proposals are in line with the Conservators' position of both supporting recreational cycling and encouraging sustainable methods of transport to access the Forest.

Current Position

8. LBWF have shared a final design for the remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout with the Superintendent and Epping Forest Officers (Appendix 1).
9. The junction in the final design has undergone traffic modelling by TfL and engineers are content that the design does not negatively impact local traffic flow. However, wider traffic modelling to ensure that the new junction has no adverse effects on traffic between Hackney and the North Circular is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2015.

10. Providing there are no issues resulting from the traffic modelling process, the current design will move straight into full public consultation. A 'soft' consultation with local businesses has already begun.
11. The design would increase the amount of accessible Open Space in and around the junction.
12. In consultation with the Superintendent, LBWF have agreed that the eastern area marked as 'Increase in Hollow Ponds area' in Appendix 1 will revert back to Forest, extending Leyton Flats around Hollow Pond. The process LBWF propose to use to achieve this has yet to be detailed, but it would seem likely to involve stopping up of the existing highway and transfer back to the Forest. Delegated authority to put the necessary arrangements in place is sought in Recommendation 2.
13. Other areas marked in green would remain dedicated to highway and it is expected that they will remain the responsibility of LBWF to maintain.
14. As part of the scheme, LBWF are required by TfL to provide welfare facilities for their bus drivers due to the poor nature of existing provision. LBWF have engaged architectural firm *What If* to scope the potential siting of a facility in the central refuge of the roundabout, which will be more accessible as a result of the remodelling works. There is the potential to extend any facilities to the public, which could provide valued services for the community, including but not limited to public toilets.
15. During meetings with City of London Officers, LBWF indicated that they would be willing to fund cycle parking facilities for Forest users near the remodelled roundabout, including potentially in the Boat House car park, Hollow Pond.
16. LBWF aim to have the remodelling works completed by the end of the financial year 2016/17. This will cause some disruption for Forest staff and users.

Options

17. **Option 1:** Receive the design for the remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout and Lea Bridge Road. Delegate authority to the Superintendent to negotiate and enter into any necessary agreements including a suitable Care and Maintenance agreement with LBWF for areas of Open Space not reverted to Forest, if considered appropriate. There are no direct financial implications for the City of London, with the exception of staff time. This option is therefore **recommended**.
18. **Option 2:** Receive the design for the remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout and Lea Bridge Road. Do not liaise with LBWF to stop up the land to the east of the junction. There are no direct financial implications for the City of London, but this course of action may not see land returned to City of London control. This option is therefore **not recommended**.

Proposals

19. Officers will continue to feed into the planning process to ensure that any changes to the current design are in the best interest of the Conservators, and will continue to work with LBWF to put in place any necessary arrangements required to implement the proposals, and to protect the interests of the Forest.
20. The Superintendent will continue to liaise with LBWF on plans for the central refuge area, which will be subject to future approval by your Committee.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

21. **City Together Strategy:** The remodelling of the roundabout is in line with the vision of the City of London as 'The heart of a World Class City that: 'supports our communities', specifically by encouraging and supporting services and initiatives which benefit communities within the City and City fringes, contributing to local prosperity; and 'protects, promotes and enhances our environment', by continuing to minimise noise, land and water pollution and improving air quality, and by encouraging sustainable forms of transport.
22. **City of London Corporate Plan 2013-2017:** The remodelling of the roundabout complies with the strategic aim 'To provide valued services to London and the nation.' It is also in line with Key Performance Priority 4: 'Maximising the opportunities and benefits afforded by our role in supporting London's communities'.
23. **City of London Sustainability Policy:** The remodelling would also comply with the following elements of the City's Sustainability Policy:
 - i. EN 7 – Reduce the negative impact of transport on the environment.
 - ii. EN 14 – Protect, maintain and enhance open spaces, and other areas with landscape, wildlife or historical interest on all the property it manages, in partnership with the local community.
 - iii. SO 1 – Enhance and encourage preventative health services, activities and education.
24. **Forest Transport Strategy:** The final design is in line with the Forest Transport Strategy, which aims to provide 'improved accessibility to the Forest for all users especially those arriving by public transport on foot, bicycle or horse-back'.

Implications

25. The overall 'Mini Holland' scheme is expected to cost LBWF £30m, though most of these costs are not associated with the Whipps Cross Roundabout remodelling. The majority of this funding comes from the GLA and TfL.
26. The remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout and Lea Bridge Road is currently estimated at £3.5 million.
27. **Financial:** Financial implications for the City of London are limited to staff time liaising with LBWF and compliance with legal requirements. There will be

additional costs associated with the restoration of the portion of Leyton Flats land returned to the City of London, which will be met from the local risk budget.

28. **Property:** The review of historic highway dedications conducted by City Surveyors (Appendix 2) indicates that the new design will sit within the existing highway dedication and will not encroach further on Forest land.
29. Land to the east of the junction, marked as 'Increase in Hollow Pond area' in Appendix 1, will be returned to the City of London by LBWF.
30. Additional Open Space within the current dedication, specifically all verges, the revised central refuge and the area marked as 'New Urban Park Space' would remain dedicated to highway and be the responsibility of LBWF to maintain.
31. Any proposals which go beyond the scope of existing highway dedication agreements, such as LBWF's potential proposals to provide facilities for bus drivers and/or the public, would be subject to a subsequent report to this committee.

Conclusion

32. The proposed design for the remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout and Lea Bridge Road would sit within the footprint of the current highway dedication.
33. The proposed plans are in line with the City of London's position of encouraging sustainable transport methods of access to the Forest, including cycling.
34. The new design for the junction would therefore be in the interests of the Conservators and Forest users.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Proposed design for Whipps Cross Roundabout/Lea Bridge Road remodelling works detailing green space created
- Appendix 2 – Proposed design for Whipps Cross Roundabout/Lea Bridge Road remodelling works showing existing highway dedication

Background Papers

SEF 12/14 Epping Forest & Commons Committee Report: Whipps Cross Roundabout Highway Dedication Scheme

Waltham Forest Council Mini Holland Bid Document, December 2013

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