

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	15 01 2018
Subject: Request for Highway Dedication on Forest land at Gilbert's Slade, Woodford New Road (SEF 05/18)	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Decision
Report author: Sue Rigley – Epping Forest	

Summary

This Committee, on 20 November 2017, considered a request from the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) for the dedication for highway purposes of approximately 66m² of Forest Land. This report is necessary as your Committee refused the request and asked for additional information which is contained within this Report.

The dedication would enable the relocation of an existing bus-stop on Forest Land at Woodford New Road and the provision of a footway from the bus-stop to connect to a new signalised pedestrian and cyclist crossing.

The relocation of the bus-stop allows for the reinstatement of 32m² as Forest Land. The resultant net loss from dedication would therefore be 34m² prior to completion of negotiations regarding suitable compensatory land from LBWF which would seek 660m² of land to compensate for this total loss.

The LBWF has emphasized that there is a strong road safety case for the construction of a signalised crossing based upon the accident record, traffic volume and the pedestrian / traffic ratio at this location.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve the dedication to public highway of approximately 66m² of Forest land at Woodford New Road, of which 32m² is already in highway use, in favour of the London Borough of Waltham Forest upon appropriate terms, including the provision of suitable compensatory land, and as further agreed by the Superintendent.
- Instruct the Comptroller and City Solicitor to undertake any necessary documentation.

Main Report

Background

1. The bus-stop on Forest Land at Gilbert's Slade on the A104 Woodford New Road has been at this location for at least 45 years. See Appendix 1.
2. Due to the poor drainage at this location, a Wayleave was granted to LBWF in 1973 for the hard surfacing of 32m² of bus-stop with hoggin extensions to either side of the bus-stop to make it less intrusive in the context of the Forest.
3. A further wayleave was granted in 1981 to London Transport for the installation of a bus shelter at the bus-stop.
4. Your Committee approved the Forest Transport Strategy (FTS) as policy in May 2009 (SEF 13/09) to manage the impact of public highways on the Forest. The FTS proposals fall into 5 guiding principles which includes:
 - Site Accessibility and Road Safety – Crossing Islands – proposed at key locations, including the A104, to assist walkers, cyclists and horse-riders crossing the roads; to reunite sections of the Forest dissected by roads; and to slow traffic speeds at this point.

Traffic Movements

5. The A104 Woodford New Road is a very busy main road, dissecting the Forest at Gilbert's Slade and Walthamstow Forest. Traffic is fast (40mph) and constant throughout the day. The Woodford New Road connects the North Circular Road with Lea Bridge Road and is heavily used road.
6. Traffic data collected in June 2017 shows 118,323 vehicle movements travelling south towards Whipps Cross in one 24 hour period, and 119,437 vehicle movements travelling north towards the Waterworks roundabout in one 24 hour period.
7. LBWF do not foresee any change in traffic volume following the Mini Holland improvements at Whipps Cross Roundabout. The roundabout is to be replaced with a signalised junction; it should not change peoples' routes.

Existing bus-stop

8. This request bus-stop serves the No. 20 bus only. According to the timetable, the potential number of buses stopping at this bus-stop is:

Monday – Friday	65
Saturday	60
Sunday	33

9. Vehicle flows are such that pedestrians have difficulty in asserting precedence. Currently, the bus-stop is neither accessible for disabled people nor connected to the existing uncontrolled crossing by a proper footway.
10. The bus-stop has been serving residents on Forest Rise and Upper Walthamstow Road area. See Appendix 1.

Safety

11. One of the main walking routes to the nearby 1,300 pupil Forest School, crosses the Woodford New Road via a pedestrian refuge island crossing outside St Peters Church. This links with a well-worn Forest track into Gilbert's Slade which gives access to a network of un-surfaced footpaths within the Forest.
12. The next nearest pedestrian crossing point on the Woodford New Road is a zebra crossing sited approximately 235 metres south of the proposed crossing.
13. There have been two accidents at this location between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2016, one of which was fatal.
14. A count of pedestrians crossing this road taken at this location on a March weekend in 2016 shows the following:

Saturday 09:00 – 17:00		Sunday 09:00 – 17:00	
eastbound	westbound	eastbound	westbound
45	38	86	48

15. The current PV² values, where the degree of conflict between vehicles and pedestrians is measured over a 100m section, meet the Transport for London's minimum requirement for the installation of a Toucan crossing. With the provision of the proposed crossing, LBWF expect a higher volume of pedestrians using it to access the bus-stop and the Forest.
16. The Gilbert Slade area was included in the 2013 Visitor Survey, and 'heat maps' produced from the results of the survey demonstrate a higher density of visitors to the west of the Woodford New Road than to the east of Woodford New Road; possibly confirming how difficult it is to cross this road throughout the day.

Current Position

17. Reflecting the ambition of the FTS, the Friends of Walthamstow Forest have presented a petition to LBWF signed by over 250 people requesting improved crossing facilities to improve road safety and to improve links to the two areas of Forest enabling walkers and cyclists' greater use and exploration of the Forest.
18. The scheme and petition were also reported in an edition of the Waltham Forest Echo newspaper. See Appendix 2.
19. To accommodate the necessary footpath and signalling and to also meet up with the existing Forest track into Gilbert's Slade the bus-stop on Forest Land on the

east side of the road (Gilbert's Slade) needs to be relocated. The bus-stop is currently opposite the Empire Lounge Nightclub where there is no highway land available for the crossing to be installed due to the existing entrance and exit of the nightclub.

20. LBWF has requested permission to relocate this bus-stop and install a footpath measuring approximately 33 metres in length and 2 metres in width on Forest land at Gilbert's Slade as there is not enough highway width available. LBWF are asking for 66m² of Forest land to be dedicated for highway purposes.
21. The Forest land where this bus-stop is currently located measures approximately 32m² and this land will be reinstated as Forest land. There will be a net loss of 34m² of Forest land.
22. LBWF has submitted an application for the Toucan crossing to Transport for London (TfL) which has been officially accepted and TfL will now begin the design. If your Committee agrees to dedicate the Forest Land for highway purposes, it is hoped that the crossing will be installed in early 2018.
23. The Forest at Gilbert's Slade is part of the Epping Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) / Special Area for Conservation (SAC). The construction works will constitute 'operations likely to damage the special interest' (OLDS) and LBWF will need to seek Natural England consent before any works take place.
24. Your Committee of November 2017 approved a policy approach in relation to further highway dedication requests and Officers are seeking compensatory land on a 1:10 gearing ratio from the Highway Authority in relation to each dedication.

Options

25. There are two options available to your Committee:
26. **Option 1** – Recognising the strong safety argument made by the Highway Authority, agree to the request for the dedication of approximately 66m² of Forest Land for the relocation of a nearby bus-stop currently on Forest land and for the installation of a footpath and associated infrastructure required for a new signalized pedestrian and cycling crossing. Dedication terms can be offered to ensure the proposed footpath is a resin-bonded gravel surface to the Superintendent's satisfaction, reflecting the proximity of the footpath to Forest Land at Gilbert's Slade, and to also ensure the reinstatement of Forest Land where the bus-stop currently sits. **This option is Recommended.**
27. **Option 2** – Continue to refuse the request as the additional infrastructure will increase the urbanisation at this location. Refusal by the City Corporation for such a high profile scheme which would improve access for the local community and Forest users could cause reputational damage for the City of London Corporation if deemed to be unreasonable. **This option is Not Recommended.**

Proposal

28. It is proposed to dedicate to public highway approximately 66m² of Forest land at Woodford New Road in favour of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, of which 32m² are already provided as a Wayleave, upon appropriate terms, including the provision of suitable compensatory land, and as further agreed by the Superintendent.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

29. **City of London Corporate Plan:** the proposal meets the Corporate Plan's vision of providing modern, efficient and high quality local services and maximising the opportunities and benefits afforded by our role in supporting London's communities.
30. **Open Spaces Department Business Plan:** the proposal meets the Open Spaces Department's Business Plan Vision by preserving and protecting our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities.
31. **Forest Transport Strategy:** The primary aim of the Epping Forest Transport Strategy is to investigate and identify options in order to improve safety and accessibility for Epping Forest users. The proposal meets one of the key aims of the Forest Transport Strategy by providing improved accessibility to the Forest for all users especially those arriving by public transport on foot and for cyclists.

Implications

32. **Financial:** There should be no financial implications for the City Corporation in dedicating land for public highway purposes. Terms would be offered that would include all highway construction and future maintenance costs being borne by LBWF, together with the removal of the current bus-stop and reinstatement of the Forest Land it is located upon.
33. **Legal:** Section 33(1.)(iv.) of the Epping Forest Act 1878 provides the Conservators with the necessary powers '*to maintain and make roads, footpaths, and ways, and to dedicate roads to the public...*'. The Comptroller & City Solicitor has previously advised that dedication is preferable to the use of wayleaves.
34. **Property:** LB Waltham Forest is seeking a dedication of 66m² Forest land to use for highway purposes and is suggesting that it repositions an adjacent bus stop and surrender 32m² of Forest land from a previous licenced scheme as part of the overall proposal. If the City Corporation is minded to approve the new request, LBWF should be asked to confirm that it will return the licenced land to the Forest when the new dedication is made. The dedicated area of 66m² may also be considered together with the Superintendent's land bank proposals that are being submitted for consideration.
35. **Public Relations:** The proposal has been reported in the local newspaper and the petition mentioned in para.18 now has 314 signatures. Continued refusal by the City Corporation for such a high profile scheme which would improve safety

and access for the local community and Forest users could cause reputational damage for the City of London Corporation if deemed to be unreasonable.

Conclusion

36. The City Corporation needs to strike an appropriate balance between requests by Highway Authorities where the safety of pedestrians has been identified and the duty to protect Forest Land. While the progressive urbanisation of Epping Forest and the damage to tranquillity remain a concern the overall impact of the additional highway infrastructure at this location will be minimal and will help realise an important FTS objective.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Location
- Appendix 2 – Waltham Forest Echo Newspaper

Background Papers

SEF 29/17 Request for Highway Dedication on Forest land at Gilbert's Slade, Woodford New Road

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