

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	07/09/2015
Subject: LBWF Mini Holland Project – land dedication at Lea Bridge Road.	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 38/15	For Decision

Summary

In March 2015, your Committee received report SEF 12/15 LBWF Mini Holland Project - Whipps Cross Roundabout/Lea Bridge Road remodelling works, which outlined the final design for the remodelling of this junction, located on Forest land dedicated to highway.

Since then the traffic modelling exercise has been completed and the outcome has resulted in some proposed changes to the outer margins of the junction. The change impacts on Forest land. The remodelling permits the return to Forest land of a previously dedicated to highway totalling an area of 1875m² (0.463 acres). This report requests permission for approximately 24m² required land to be dedicated to highway to accommodate the amended design, reducing the net gain to 1851m² (0.457 acres).

The proposed design has no direct financial implications for the City of London and represents an improvement in access to the Forest for pedestrians and cyclists. The 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 amendments for the remodelling of Whipps Cross junction with use of Forest land at Lea Bridge Road.
- Approve the dedication of land at Lee Bridge Road (24m²) for highways purposes to facilitate the borough's aspirations to improve the Whipps Cross junction for pedestrians and cyclists and as a consequence improve Forest access, subject to 1875m² to the east of the junction ceasing to be highway and being returned to Epping Forest.
- Authorise all deeds and agreements with the highway authority as are required to dedicate the land at Lea Bridge Road (24m²) as highway, and to secure the return of the formerly dedicated land (1875m²) to 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). The £30m 'Mini Holland' programme aims to transform the borough making it more cycle friendly and encouraging people to take up cycling and walking as their chosen transport method. It aims to improve safety on main roads, create new public spaces, ease congestion and improve air quality.
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. In March 2015, your Committee received report SEF 12/15 LBWF Mini Holland Project - Whipps Cross Roundabout/Lea Bridge Road remodelling works outlining the design for the Whipps Cross Roundabout remodelling.
4. Forest land at Whipps Cross Road was dedicated to highway for tramway use in an agreement with Urban District Council of Leyton dated 25 January 1923. The use of the London tramways ceased in the 1950s but land did not return to Forest at that time.
5. With the consent of your Committee, the 'tramway' highway dedicated land was used to construct the Transport for London/ Olympic Delivery Authority (TfL/ODA) Greenway cycle route, in 2011, at a cost of £190,000.
6. Forest Land at Whipps Cross Roundabout, 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 roundabout is wholly situated on former Forest land dedicated to highway and any junction remodelling for highway purposes is permitted under the existing dedication.
7. 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.
8. 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

9. The final design of the junction underwent traffic modelling assessment by Transport for London (TfL). Engineers were content that the new junction design did not negatively impact local traffic flow.
10. Further traffic modelling to identify the effects on the wider area traffic flow, from Hackney to the North Circular (A406) have now been completed.
11. To provide sufficient capacity and allow for the continuation of two lanes for traffic travelling north east from Wood Street and Whipps Cross Road onto the Lea Bridge Road and vice versa, there is a need to extend the scheme east to tie in the proposed carriageway alignment using a section of the central grass verge. 24m² of this grass verge land is not currently dedicated to highway (Appendix 1).
12. A public consultation ran between the 22 June 2015 and the 21 July 2015 to assist the borough planners with their public realm improvements, including the bus facilities required by TfL and any potential community building.
13. 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

14. The revised design permits the return of 1875m² (0.463 acres) of existing highway dedicated land to extend the Forest, increasing accessible open space in the area but requires the sacrifice of 24m² of Forest land to highway dedication. This is an overall gain of 1851m²(0.457 acres).
15. Land to the east of the junction, marked as 'Increase in Hollow Pond area' (Appendix 1), will be returned to the City of London by LBWF.
16. **Option 1:** Dedicate the required area of land, for the purposes of highway, permitting the traffic flow required for the remodelled junction. This sacrifice is mitigated by the area of land (1875m²) being returned to Forest to the east of the junction. The overall increase in accessible open space and the improved pedestrian and cycle friendly access is favourable. Aside from the increased cost of maintenance of returned land, there are no direct financial implications for the City of London, with the exception of staff time. **This option is therefore recommended.**
17. **Option 2:** Seek to negotiate with London Borough of Waltham Forest the return of the Forest Land currently dedicated to highway, previously used as tramway, in addition to the proposed 1875m². This negotiation would see the City take control of that land and the refreshment facility known as the Log Cabin. This option provides the City of London with potential income opportunities from the log cabin facility however, the long-term maintenance of the cycleway could counteract any small income generation. **This option is not recommended.**

18. **Option 3:** Refuse the land dedication. This will impact negatively on traffic flow in the local area and would likely attract negative publicity for the City and Epping Forest. Furthermore, if it is identified that LBWF require land to the east of the junction to ease traffic congestion as an alternative, they may not agree to stop up this area and return it to Forest. There are no direct financial implications for the City of London, but this course of action may attract negative publicity for the Conservators and may not see land returned to City of London control. **This option is not recommended.**

Proposals

19. To align the carriageway on Lea Bridge road using the existing grass verge to accommodate the continuation of two lanes of traffic. A total area of 510m², with 486m² covered by an existing highway dedication.

20. LBWF would like to commence the remodelling in January 2016, subject to agreement to use Forest Land by your Committee.

21. Officers to work with LBWF to put in place the necessary arrangements required to implement the proposals, and to protect the interests of the Forest.

22. 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

23. **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'.

24. **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.

25. **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

26. 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 remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout and the surrounding

associated highways is currently estimated at £3.5 million. The majority of the funding comes from the GLA (Greater London Authority) and TfL.

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 and maintenance of the portion of Leyton Flats land returned to the City of London, which will be met from the local risk budget.
28. **Legal:** Section 7 - the protection of Forest Land and Section 33 (iv) - power to dedicate land to highways.
29. **Property:** Land to the east of the junction, marked as 'Increase in Hollow Pond area' (Appendix 1), will be returned to the City of London by LBWF.
30. A review of historic highway dedications conducted by City Surveyors (Appendix 2) indicates that the Lea Bridge Road carriageway alignment proposal sits within the existing highway dedication, with the exception of 24m² (shown in blue).
31. LBWF will be responsible for the maintenance of the 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.
32. 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

33. The proposed design for the remodelling of Whipps Cross Roundabout and Lea Bridge Road requires an area of Forest land to be dedicated for highway purposes if the scheme is to align with existing carriageway and cope with traffic flow.
34. The revised design permits the return of 1875m² of existing highway dedicated land to extend the Forest and increase accessible open space in the area but requires the loss of 24m² of Forest land to highway dedication. This is an overall gain of 1851m².
35. 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. The new design for the junction would therefore be in the interests of the Conservators and Forest users.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Lea Bridge Road – A Street for Everyone
- Appendix 2 – Lea Bridge Road - Proposed Carriageway widening

Background Papers

SEF 12/15 LBWF Mini Holland Project - Whipps Cross Roundabout/Lea Bridge Road
remodelling works

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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