

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Corporate Director for Place

to
Cabinet

On
5th November 2013

Report prepared by:
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Planning Policy

Review of Victoria Gateway Scheme

Executive Councillor: Councillor Cox

A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the initial findings of the independent review of Victoria Gateway and consider the recommendations for further action.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1
- i) The recommendations, a) to h), set out in the review are agreed and further design work progressed to support the implementation of these, an estimate of cost for this has been prepared.
 - ii) Approval is given to resource the implementation of the Victoria Gateway Enhancement works and to be funded from the Priority Works Budget in the approved Capital Programme.
 - iii) The issues in section 4 of this Report are noted and further investigated to determine the implications and priority.
 - iv) Delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection, Waste and Transport to agree the detail of i) and progress of the other recommendations raised in ii).

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has commissioned an independent, post implementation, review of the Victoria Gateway scheme to report on the scheme's performance in meeting its objectives. A draft of this is attached as **Appendix 1**. A review is good practice in circumstances where the changes represent a significant departure from previous layouts and where a considerable amount of comment, concern and discussion requires an appropriate and considered response in a

coordinated and focused manner. Up to date road safety data is attached as **Appendix 2** and will be incorporated into the final report.

- 3.2 The review concentrates on the highway and road safety aspects of the layout and, in particular, widths, design features, pedestrian and vehicle interaction and crossings, with reference to and comment on the principles of what has become known as “shared space”.
- 3.3 The reviewer has used, and was provided with, a considerable amount of background reports, supporting documents, data and information, supplemented by a series of “interviews” with stakeholders and a formal design review meeting.
- 3.4 The review considers the above in a structured manner and sets out the process, firstly considering the objectives, design and delivery and then evidence gathering, key issues and finally a response to these, together with key recommendations for the Council to consider.
- 3.5 It is important to note that the report states that:

“The collision record for the site since the Gateway scheme opened does not indicate that there are any clear identifiable safety issues with the single surface area through which buses, taxis and some other motor vehicles pass. This is despite the fact that the space is still very well used, with thousands of pedestrians crossing the vehicle path every day”.

The “before and after” road safety data is presented in **Appendix 2**. This shows that the overall accident and casualty rates have decreased (based on an annual average). Significantly, the accident rate to pedestrians has reduced from 4 per year to 1.71 per year.

4. Issues and Responses Identified in the Review and at Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny

- 4.1 The Key Issues and Responses are presented in Sections 4 and 5 of the Review. In terms of this report the focus is on issues of pedestrian risk, guidance through the area, pedestrian traffic conflict at the road crossing (to the High Street), the layout of the westbound traffic lanes and signals at the Queensway/Victoria Avenue junction, cycle routes through the area and general views on usage and attractiveness.
- 4.2 Section 5.6 of the Review discusses the potential for further enhancements to the sense of place and activities in the Gateway. Enhanced ‘greening’ of the Gateway and encouraging different ways of using the space, including the use of public art has been put forward. This will be explored further as part of the joint Council and Sustrans “pocket places” project which is focusing on the Queensway urban corridor and supporting the local communities to improve activity and interaction by increasing walking and cycling, improving street infrastructure and landscaping and helping re-knit the social and physical fabric of the area.

4.3 The Review was considered at Place Scrutiny on 7th October 2013 and Members of the Scrutiny Committee raised a number of points which are summarised below:-

- there is a potential “rat run” through the station forecourt by drivers seeking to avoid the traffic signals (this will be reduced once the signal timings are adjusted);
- there could be improvements to the signage to the seafront by placing a sign at the junction;
- better guidance for pedestrians through the area could be developed by positioning street furniture, planters, trees and shrubs to enhance the area.
- more obvious definition of the route to the High Street between New Look and the Odeon needed, by emphasising the entrance, would help visitors to the Town Centre to navigate better.
- brightening the area under the bridge should be considered to aid the visibility of buses emerging from the bus stops.
- better signage needed to avoid conflict with vehicles exiting the station forecourt directly onto Victoria Avenue has also been picked up.

5. Review Recommendations

5.1 To take forward the report and “action” the responses, a series of recommendations have been made in Section 6. These are set out below and are described under the same headings as the review:-

Tactile Paving

a) Install corduroy tactile paving to mark the full edge of the main vehicle path other than where blister paving is retained in association with the main pedestrian crossing desire line to the southern station access.

b) Extend ‘guidance path’ tactile paving all the way to the southern station wall, replacing temporary rubber corduroy extension.

Officer’s Comment:- this requires further consideration over type and colour of tactile to ensure that it is contrasting and effective. The corduroy tactile paving will also be installed to demarcate the exit from the station car park. The cannon ball bollards provide a useful demarcation and prevent vehicle overrun. It is not proposed to remove them.

Queensway Pedestrian Crossing

c) Widen the central pedestrian reservation by local carriageway realignment and reducing the westbound carriageway to just two lanes of equal width at that point.

Officer’s Comment:- this can be carried out in conjunction with d) and e) below to reconfigure the lane markings

Westbound Approach to Main Junction

- d) Remove marked cycle feeder lane and advanced cycle stop zone.
- e) Reconfigure lane markings/layout and signal controls to increase efficiency and safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians.

Officer's Comment:- the feasibility of this has been investigated with the Council's traffic signal engineer and it is recommended that the straight ahead and the right turn be split by the use of separate signal phases. The cycle box marking would be removed and the bus bay layout would be reconfigured to allow a single lane ahead, a signal splitter island and two right turn lanes. Whilst this is similar in terms of lanes there is a significant benefit to traffic flows as the straight ahead (Queensway lane) would have much greater "green time" than at present. This will improve straight ahead traffic flows and remove the vehicle conflict seen at the moment. It is suggested that this change be implemented on an "experimental" basis to ensure that the signal timings can be adjusted and the benefits fully evaluated before progressing to the full implementation stage. Item c) above can be incorporated in this in the form of a temporary arrangement as the layout of traffic lanes will determine whether the widening of the pedestrian crossing is feasible in practice.

Cycle Facilities

- f) Increase the visibility/legibility of the cycle route through southern shared space, including TSRGD Diagram 956-style paving tiles and improvements to the westbound cycle on-slip to Queensway west of the junction.
- g) Enhance local cycle signage, to emphasise the route across the Queensway Toucan, using existing columns/poles, not new vertical elements.
- h) Link (f) with the shared foot/cycleway on south side of Queensway, if this proposal is implemented in due course as per the related Pocket Places (Queensway project as identified in the 2013/14 capital programme).

Single Surface

- i) Along with (a), consider modification of the "junction" between the main vehicle/bus path and the western station forecourt.

Officer's Comment:- Officers believe that any marginal benefit of undertaking the work is outweighed by the cost and disruption that this would involve.

6. Petition Presented to Full Council on 15th December 2011

- 6.1 Members may recall that a petition was presented to Full Council on 15th December 2011 regarding the City Beach and Victoria Gateway schemes, which was the subject of a debate during this meeting.

- 6.2 The Petition asked signatories to “*Please support our campaign to retain our pedestrian crossings with audible signals and to give us back our pavements at City Beach and Victoria Gateway*”.
- 6.3 This petition had been gathered to support the view that at both Victoria Gateway and City Beach there are accessibility and safety problems due to a lack of formal crossings and that the “shared space” concept and the use of level surfaces can cause concern due to the lack of defined kerbs.
- 6.4 The Department for Transport are clear that audible signals should only be used where users cannot mistake the signals for another close by. Thus they are not considered appropriate for staggered crossings where, in effect you have two independently operating sets of signals operating in close proximity. The use of audible signals in such a location would reduce safety. The use of rotating tactile cones at signals is the alternative approach that the Department for Transport specify.
- 6.5 At Victoria Gateway, the only signal crossing fitted with audible beepers is directly opposite the High Street/Victoria Station. At the other locations around the junction guidance is provided by the use of rotating tactile cones fitted to the underside of the push button units.
- 6.6 The junction is fully compliant with the latest standards regarding the installation of tactile surface equipment. The primary route for buses and taxis in front of the Station has a level surface, with a contrast in the granite paving and tactile paving leading from the pedestrian exits from the station. A study has shown that this is now a popular pedestrian route to and from the High Street. **The report does not recommend changes to the crossings.**

7. Corporate Implications

7.1 Contribution to Council’s Vision & Corporate Priorities

- 7.1.1 The scheme has contributed towards the Council’s Vision and the delivery of Corporate Priorities.

7.2 Financial Implications

- 7.2.1 It is proposed that the council’s highways term contractor will undertake the enhancement works and an outline estimate of scheme costs of the anticipated works has been prepared based on the contractor’s rates and supply of materials which amount to circa £55k. The expenditure may increase/decrease as the recommendations are developed further.
- 7.2.2 Currently no budget exists for the proposals in this report. If Members agree to the recommendations then the cost of circa £55k or the final cost when it is established from final scheme proposals will need to be included within the capital programme and to be funded from the Priority Works Budget.
- 7.2.3 On-going monitoring and maintenance of the scheme can be managed from within the existing Traffic & Highways revenue budget.

7.3 *Legal Implications*

7.3.1 There legal implications with regard to the safety audit process, which are managed by the Traffic & Highways group.

7.4 *People Implications*

7.4.1 There are no property implications

7.5 *Property Implications*

7.5.1 The scheme has had a positive impact on nearby property.

7.6 *Consultation*

7.6.1 Full public consultation was carried out in the preparation of this scheme and stakeholder consultation has been undertaken as part of this Review. The review was presented to Place Scrutiny on 7th October 2013 as part of Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny. A number of the points raised have been set out in 4.3 above. Other comments made included disappointment that the review had not decided that a formal crossing is required to make the crossing easier for disabled people and that it was pleasing to see that the westbound traffic flows will be improved.

7.7 *Equalities and Diversity Implications*

7.7.1 The implications of the scheme on different user groups have been considered as part of the design, implementation and Review processes.

7.8 *Risk Assessment*

7.8.1 Risk Assessments have been undertaken in the form of Safety Audits and through the Review process.

7.9 *Value for Money*

7.9.1 The scheme has been delivered through processes which secure value for money.

7.10 *Community Safety Implications*

7.10.1 The scheme has improved community safety in this area.

7.11 *Environmental Impact*

7.11.1 The scheme has had a positive environmental impact and the requisite impact assessments were undertaken as part of the delivery process.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Report to Full Council on 15th December 2011, in response to the petition received by entitled "*Petition Regarding the Provision of Pedestrian Crossings and Pavements at City Beach and Victoria Gateway*"

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Southend Victoria Gateway Post-Implementation Design Review

Appendix 2 – Summary road safety data, before and after