

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

WEDNESDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A Marshall-Katung in the Chair

Councillors N Buckley, B Flynn, M Foster,
J Garvani, S Hamilton, A Hussain, S Lay,
M Millar, M Shahzad, N Sharpe and
I Wilson

35 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

36 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

The agenda contained no exempt information.

37 Late Items

No late items of business were added to the agenda.

38 Declarations of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

39 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

40 Call In Briefing Paper

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report advising the Scrutiny Board on the procedural aspects of Calling In the decision.

Members were advised that the Call In is specific to the key decision in question, and issues outside of the decision, including other related decisions, were not to be considered as part of the Board's decision regarding the outcome of the Call In.

Members were also advised that the options available to the Scrutiny Board in respect of this particular called in decision were as follows:

Option 1- Release the decision for implementation

Having reviewed this decision, the Scrutiny Board may decide to release it for implementation. If the Scrutiny Board chooses this option, the decision will be immediately released for implementation and the decision may not be called in again.

Option 2 - Recommend that the decision be reconsidered

The Scrutiny Board may decide to recommend to the decision maker that the decision be reconsidered. If the Scrutiny Board chooses this option a report will be submitted to the decision maker.

In the case of this officer decision, the report of the Scrutiny Board will be prepared within three working days of the Scrutiny Board meeting and submitted to the relevant Director.

In reconsidering the decision and associated Scrutiny Board report, the Director may vary the decision or confirm the original decision. In either case, this will form the basis of the final decision and will not be subject to any further Call In.

Failure to agree one of the above options

If the Scrutiny Board, for any reason, does not agree one of the above courses of action at this meeting, then Option 1 will be adopted by default, i.e. the decision will be released for implementation with no further recourse to Call In.

RESOLVED – That the report outlining the Call In procedures be noted.

41 Active Travel Fund - A660 Headingley Lane/Woodhouse Lane, Walking & Cycling Improvements

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented background papers to a Key Decision made by the Director of City Development which had been Called-In in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The decision had been called in for review by Councillors Stewart Golton, Diane Chapman, Conrad Hart-Brook, Colin Campbell and Ryk Downes

The Scrutiny Board considered the following written information:

- Copy of the completed Call In request form.
- Copy of the Delegated Decision Notice of the Director of City Development "Active Travel Fund – A660 Headingley Lane/Woodhouse Lane, Walking & Cycling Improvements" dated 4th September 2023
- Copy of the report of Traffic Engineering to the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) "Active Travel Fund – A660 Headingley Lane/Woodhouse Lane, Walking & Cycling Improvements" dated 23rd August 2023 associated with the Key Decision.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillors S Golton, Lead signatory to the call-in
- Councillor H Hayden, Executive Member Sustainable Development & Infrastructure
- Martin Farrington – Director of City Development
- Gary Bartlett - Chief Officer, Highways & Transportation

- Nikki Deol - Section Head Property & Development (Legal Services)
- Paul Foster – Transport Planning Manager
- Nick Borrás - Principal Traffic Engineer
- Catherine Jebson – Project Manager

As the Nominated Lead Signatory to the Call In, Councillor Golton addressed the Board on the reason for the Call-in, noted as *“The scheme is detrimental to the vast majority of road users whilst providing small benefit to cyclists and pedestrians (and no significant benefit to buses) and therefore does not represent value for money considering this scheme comprises two thirds of the entire cycling expenditure in the city.”* Councillor Golton raised the following issues:

- Oversight of the scheme’s Value For Money (VFM) had been compromised during the decision making process, citing his concern that there was a systemic weakness in the decision making style of West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and Leeds City Council (LCC) which limited the ability to pause and check the decisions.
- Other routes for reflection had been sought but the Call-In process operated by WYCA prevented non-WYCA elected Members from requesting a Call in.
- This single scheme amounted to two-thirds of the investment in cycle lanes/highways for Leeds and although it should improve the city’s green credentials, he believed that LCC’s own business case showed that it would fail to deliver the outcomes sought.
- In terms of improving air quality, it was felt that encouraging a modal shift to bus use would be neutral, and even if the modal shift of cycling was achieved, the share of car usage was expected to increase due to new housing developments.
- In terms of the impact of the scheme, he predicted that 3,500 vehicles would seek to use alternative routes to avoid the highway works, and pedestrians would be impacted by the proposals for shared cycle/pedestrian spaces.
- The business case indicated associated costs of £60m, but he believed that there were lower impact, lower cost options that provided better VFM and queried why those schemes had not been prioritised. It was also felt that, due to rising inflation, the VFM could worsen which could be detrimental to the delivery of other schemes planned in the city. He recalled an inflationary review of schemes in 2022 had led to some schemes being halted and funds from those schemes being diverted.

In conclusion, Councillor Golton stated that the A660 scheme presented low VFM, utilised a high percentage of city wide monies and therefore presented a high risk.

In response to comments and questions, discussion included the following:

The impact on climate change and modal shift – it was noted that it was assumed that the carbon footprint of the construction phase had been factored into the business case. There was concern that the scheme did not encourage a significant modal shift. The shift to cycle use did not focus on

encouraging existing car users to cycle as the scheme was likely to see car users divert down smaller routes to avoid this highway scheme. Bus services were not part of the scheme which meant there was little incentive for car users to use them.

The works proposed in the whole scheme would improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers in the area. Records show that incidents are high in the area of the A660, with 42% of those at junctions. Currently people were less likely to cycle along the route as they did not feel it was safe to do so. It was acknowledged that the scheme equalled two-thirds of the funding for Leeds, but the scheme also included greenspace and public realm, installation of pedestrian crossings and one-way treatment to existing routes as well as works to improve safety at junctions.

Councillor Golton responded that future usage of the route could not be predicted. The vast majority of usage is currently car users, so unless the predicted cycle journeys could be created by converting drivers to cyclists, the overall safety benefits could not be achieved. Additionally, the safety of pedestrians and cyclists who use the side streets would be jeopardised by an increased risk of collision as cars divert away from the construction works.

Concern over the proposal for shared pedestrian/cycle space as it was felt that the newly constructed flat cycle lane could encourage faster cycling speeds, particularly from electric bikes, and a shared space may discourage pedestrians from using it especially where pedestrians cross a cycle lane to access a bus stop. Additionally, there were concerns over congestion along the route and the report did not reference what alternate routes may be utilised by drivers. It was noted that there was a significant amount of residents-only parking in the area, so car drivers would not be able to park their vehicles there and use the bus.

Councillor Hayden, Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure addressed the Board. The following was highlighted:

- The A660 is a crucial, well used busy route with a large volume of use by buses, cyclists, cars and pedestrians, including 60 buses per hour.
- The initial scheme was subject to a bid and Active Travel England offered greater level of funding to enable an enhanced scheme which would better fulfil LCC ambitions for the area. She confirmed that the funding would not impact on other schemes and would need to be returned to Government if it was not used.
- Historically VFM was determined by achieving a reduction in car journeys. Now, Active Travel England were concerned with issues of safety and setting as well as VFM and the scheme does present VFM in terms of safety.
- The ambition was to increase the use of the A660 for cycling and walking, but safety was an issue along the route. 172 casualties were recorded in that area last year, 71% of these were cyclists/pedestrians which is well over the city's average.
- Extensive consultation had been undertaken with those who lived along the A660 and/or used the retail offer there. Of approximately

2000 responses, 63% were positive, 11% neutral and 25% did not support the proposals.

In conclusion, Councillor Hayden turned to the scheme specifics and reiterated the following:

- The scheme will have a positive effect on air quality for the children who live or attend school along this highway corridor. The reduction in cars will be no small benefit.
- The scheme includes junction reforms, new lighting and crossings which will benefit pedestrians and improve bus time reliability.
- Shared pedestrian/cycle space represented a small percentage of the whole scheme and was concentrated to those junctions where it was difficult to install a dedicated cycle lane.
- Green spaces are included, public realm is introduced with public realm treatment around the war memorial.
- The scheme will connect the historical parts of the city and deliver 21st century infrastructure.

Gary Bartlett, LCC Chief Officer, Highways and Transportation, addressed the Board and highlighted the following information:

- The scheme did pass through two Conservation Areas, but this should not prevent the works being undertaken.
- LCC in conjunction with WYCA did submit a £5m scheme for this highway corridor, which did not include all the elements of the approved scheme. On the advice of Active Travel England, the additional critical elements were developed and this scheme was submitted.
- Active Travel England have provided guidance throughout the process and on two occasions had deemed the scheme to be VFM and responded positively to the proposals when representatives had visited the site.
- Consultation with Ward Councillors had taken place at various times during the development of the scheme.
- The scheme was submitted in response to the 155 collisions recorded in the area leading to the 172 recorded casualties, as well as the number of sites and areas of concern in the locality.

In response to the comment regarding ward Councillor consultation, the Chair noted that she and Councillor Wilson had previously received consultation information as the ward Councillors for Little London & Woodhouse and Weetwood ward respectively.

The Board then heard from Paul Foster, LCC Transport Planning Manager, who provided the following information:

- The business case for the scheme was developed to the Department for Transport guidance with WYCA providing assurance for the schemes which are approved for funding.

- The business case and VFM were supported by modelling through the Active Mode Appraisal Tool – which assessed active travel benefits. All schemes use the AMAT tool and Active Travel England uses the result to prioritise schemes.
- Highways modelling is currently being undertaken to assess the impact of the scheme. It was acknowledged that some of the modelling utilised pre-Covid pandemic data but did show that traffic will increase 29% by 2028.
- The consultation and briefings undertaken specifically referenced the treatment to junctions and consultees responses to the questions “*how do you travel/how would you like to travel?*” revealed that 33% would like to travel by bicycle or on foot.
- The capacity reduction works would be implemented mainly at junctions to increase safety, and the overall scheme would bring significant health benefits through works to encourage walking/cycling.

The Board then held discussions on all of the information presented which included the following:

- The anticipated modal shift and subsequent benefits to those who live in the area and those who travel into the city.
- The forecast made elsewhere that E-Bikes will replace motor vehicles at a faster rate than other measures. It was noted that E-Bikes had the capacity to travel further than pedal cycles and work to factor the impact of this would be factored in.
- A comment was made that the risks are lower in shared cycle/pedestrians spaces than risks in shared cycle/vehicle spaces.
- The importance of being able to scrutinise large cost schemes like this.
- The breadth of consultation undertaken, as one Member reported that he knew of Otley Road residents who had not received a consultation letter.
- The likely alternative routes, such as St Michaels Road, and whether this would impact on events at Headingley Stadium.
- The Board received assurance on the impact of the scheme on the Conservation Area. The Board heard that the A660 runs through two Conservation Areas and work had been done with the Conservation Officer particularly on retaining Conservation Area materials, such as York Stone paving and kerbstones, and to have regard to the historical buildings along the route such as the former Leeds Girls High School and the Elinor Lupton building. The new materials proposed in the scheme would be sympathetic to the setting and the route would not become a harsh corridor.

- In respect of the works around the War Memorial, consultation included the Royal British Legion and 57% of consultees were in favour and 73% support the proposed treatment to the War Memorial which included closing the adjacent road. A street furniture audit had identified 400 items which are old and in need of refurbishment or removal altogether.
- Concern that during the previous ten years, a huge number of road safety measures had been implemented, yet the city's road safety figures did not appear to have improved. This was an important but narrow pinch point on the route into the city from the North. One comment that that the presentation did not show how the scheme will improve safety, specifically the shared space for pedestrians and cyclists, was noted.
- The need to connect the cycle lanes together to provide cohesive routes, previously some routes ended at junctions requiring cyclists to navigate the main highway.
- The proposed junction improvements would significantly improve road safety at those points. Similar schemes in other parts of the city would expect 50% reduction in collisions. It was acknowledged that nationwide, the road safety reducing collisions pattern is not shifting, and many other Local Authorities had also adopted the Vision Zero approach to try to address this.
- The need to encourage behaviour change in road users. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there were less collisions, emphasising the point that less cars on the road does reduce collisions.
- It was noted that collisions generally occurred at junctions where pedestrians cross the path of vehicles. The proposed works include raised crossing points to reinforce pedestrian presence and Right of Way on the road as brought in by the new Highway Code, signalised crossings, halfway waiting bays and signalised junctions. Additionally, the works will seek to address vehicles turning left across a cycle lane in order to reduce conflict points along the route.

Following a short break, the Board heard from the Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure to conclude her presentation.

Councillor Hayden highlighted the benefits of the overall scheme, which as well as keeping people safe from poor air quality, injury and collision would also address the three pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and carbon zero. The scheme would provide public realm, safe use for cyclists and pedestrians, planting and biodiversity and an opportunity for place-making.

Councillor Golton, as the lead signatory to the Call-In, concluded by highlighting the reason for the Call-In and providing a precis of his presentation:

- The nature of the decision making process employed by WYCA
- The development of the business case and how the VFM and affordability of the scheme is calculated.
- Consideration of any unintended consequences of the scheme.
- The need to retain on oversight of all schemes to ensure they do not impact on each other.
- The need to retain financial oversight and prepare for the unforeseen to mitigate against inflation and escalation in costs.

In conclusion to the Board's discussions, the Chair invited both the Executive Member and the Nominated Lead Signatory to provide a final summing up before moving to the decision of the Board.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report, along with comments from Members, be noted.

42 Outcome of the Call In

The Scrutiny Board considered whether or not to release the decision for implementation. A vote was subsequently held and the Scrutiny Board agreed (by majority decision) that the decision be released.

RESOLVED – That the decision be released for implementation.

43 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth) as Wednesday 1st November 2023 at 10.30 am