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**Meeting:** Traffic Management Committee  
**Date:** 1st March 2011  
**Subject:** London Road and The Baulk Biggleswade  
**Report of:** Basil Jackson  
**Summary:** The purpose of this report is to present to the portfolio holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles a report on a recent consultation on a safer routes to school project in Biggleswade, to set out the wider context and seek approval for a way forward

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Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: Biggleswade

Function of: Committee

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Council Priorities:**

##### **Financial:**

1. The £75k GAF funding can be carried into next financial year. The £70k S106 has no time limit.
2. The Council's capital contribution towards the SRtS is funded partly from the Integrated Transport budget (£56k) and partly from developer funding (£43k). Strictly speaking, the Integrated Transport money does need to be spent during this financial year. However, it is possible spend the allocated funds against another scheme in this year's program, releasing money for the Biggleswade scheme in next financial year.

##### **Legal:**

None as a result of this report.

##### **Risk Management:**

None as a result of this report.

##### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

None as a result of this report.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

None as a result of this report.

**Community Safety:**

None as a result of this report

**Sustainability:**

None as a result of this report

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1.

- (a) **That the portfolio holder approves the suspension of the current proposals and that further scheme options be prepared in consultation with stakeholders in 2011/12**

**Background.****Strategic issues**

3. The population of Biggleswade is estimated to be 16420. This is an increase of 1037 on the 2001 census (source: The joint BBC, CBC & LBC Bedfordshire Population Model - next update due in 2011).
4. Improvements to the transport infrastructure in Biggleswade are required to link the 'Kings Reach' development which comprises 2,100 dwellings with the services and amenities in Biggleswade town centre, and enable accessibility to Biggleswade via sustainable modes for residents of the new development. This is in addition to upgrades to the current infrastructure to create safer walking and cycling routes to Stratton Upper and other local schools providing for vulnerable road users in line with the Authority's safer routes to schools initiative, further encouraging sustainable journeys and improving safety for local residents.
5. Infrastructure improvements in this area of Biggleswade are therefore fundamental in order to:
  - address road safety targets and casualty reduction targets particularly for vulnerable road users;
  - promote and encourage sustainable journeys;
  - deliver a 'sustainable' development at Kings Reach;
  - provide safer routes to schools;
  - reduce traffic congestion;
  - manage traffic and cope with an increased infrastructure capacity demand; and

- enable accessibility between the King's Reach development and the town centre.

The approach to encourage more sustainable journeys for short distances is supported in emerging Government policy as well as local strategy and policy which are outlined below:

6. PPG13 requires the Authority to promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight, promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling and reduce the need to travel, especially by car. Additionally the Central Bedfordshire – Sustainable Communities Strategy Vision states:

*“Globally connected, delivering sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all”*

So by delivering infrastructure between Land East of Biggleswade and Biggleswade town centre, a scheme will contribute to seven of the eight Sustainable Communities Strategy priorities:

- Maximising employment opportunities and delivering housing growth to meet the needs of our communities
  - Keeping our communities safe
  - Nurturing a sense of pride and belonging
  - Getting around and caring for a green and clean environment
  - Promoting health and reducing health inequalities
  - Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people
  - Supporting and caring for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable
7. Central Bedfordshire's emerging Local Transport Plan further supports infrastructure improvements which encourage sustainable journeys to be made for short distances. Within LTP3, the walking strategy, cycling strategy and Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy, outline infrastructure improvements and the need for enhancement of provisions for walking and cycling journeys between key trip attractors in Central Bedfordshire's towns and villages. It should be noted that there was a 97 page report on the King's Reach development that was the subject of a number of member fora at the time of public inquiry.

### **Information and Context**

8. There are two adjacent, but individual, projects most accurately described as:
  - a) The Baulk junction enhancement (with added cycling and structural maintenance elements). This was part of the Biggleswade enhancement works outlined in the masterplan as one of the key entrances to the town requiring updating and improvement.
  - b) London Road Safer Routes to School

Both schemes have been programmed as one visit to site, to secure economies of scale and minimise disruption to the travelling public.

The Baulk enhancement, cycling and surfacing includes a mini-roundabout at the junction with London Road, a kerb line realignment, carriageway and footway re-surfacing, a raised table crossing (to join up existing cycleway routes) and a new zebra crossing. This enhancement is seen as a gateway to the town.

9. The London Road/Baulk junction improvements were specifically requested as a masterplan 'quick win' project by members of the Biggleswade Town Centre Partnership (comprised of members representing Chamber of Trade, Town Council, CBC ward members, EEDA and the Town Plan group).

London Road SRtS includes a series of speed cushions, a 20mph speed limit extension, two zebra crossings and a mini-roundabout at the junction with Elm Road.

### **Funding**

10. The Baulk junction improvement is funded from a combination of Growth Area Funding (GAF) and S106 contributions from developments. Recently, officers have determined that the £75k GAF funding can be carried into next financial year. Furthermore, the £70k S106 has no time limit.
11. The Council's capital contribution towards the SRtS is funded partly from the Integrated Transport budget (£56k) and partly from developer funding (£43k). Strictly speaking, the Integrated Transport money does need to be spent during this financial year. However, it is possible spend the allocated funds against another scheme in this year's program, releasing money for the Biggleswade scheme in next financial year.

### **Consultation**

12. Prior to November 2010, engagement with stakeholders was discretionary. The Town Council were initially consulted on the London Road/Baulk junction scheme during March 2010. This helped to formulate feasibility designs that would later evolve into designs for the formal consultation. At the same time, design engineers were mindful that CBC officers had already engaged the TC and Chamber of Trade on the concept of the scheme.
13. The elements of the scheme requiring statutory consultation are the London Road 20mph limits and the speed cushions. The Baulk mini-roundabout does not require statutory consultation, however, it was included as part of an exhibition for the town centre masterplan options consultation carried out in August 2010. It was also included in the public consultation in November because of its prominence as a "gateway" to the London Road 20 mph scheme.

### **Consultation Summary**

14. A summary of the consultation objections are contained in Appendix A of this report. Out of a population of 16,420, there were only 89 formal responses to the consultation. This represents only 0.5% of Biggleswade's population. There have been 51 objections in total (plus petition signatories). In support

of the scheme there were 38 individual comments. An e-petition is currently running at 76 against the proposals. The statement on this petition is as follows:

“We the undersigned petition the council to Withdraw Plan "London Road, Biggleswade, 20mph zone extents" and the three associated public notices as shown on the CBC web site under this subject heading. Engage in full and proper consultation concerning the principles and detailed implementation with all interested stakeholders with a complete and coherent plan Safer Routes to School and for the implementation of the roundabout proposal for this junction.”

15. A summary of the consultations can be found at Appendix A. The documentation received is not contained within the body of this report due to volume but is available as a background document.

### **Conclusion and Way Forward**

16. The Town Council and Chamber of Trade have clearly had a significant influence on how a number of people have responded to the formal consultation. This is apparent from the fact that a number of respondents subsequently changed their comments from being in favour to being against the scheme. In suggesting a recommendation, officers have taken the following into consideration:
  - the majority of respondents to the consultation are against the Biggleswade traffic calming proposals;
  - the number of respondents expressed as a percentage of Biggleswade residents is very small;
  - given the size of the King's Reach development, and the clear impact it can have on traffic movements locally, to do nothing, in terms of infrastructure improvements, is not deemed to be an option;
  - much of the funding is not constrained to this financial year as originally thought;
  - there is a concern that pushing ahead with the scheme without better support from the community would tarnish future walking, cycling and SRtS initiatives that the Authority might wish to implement
17. After consideration of the above it is considered that the most appropriate course of action that will best meet the aspirations of the local stakeholders is to involve them in a discussion or series of discussions. This will enable options to be produced for wider consultations that have a increased degree of local ownership from the outset.
18. It is accepted that in all cases there are alternative ways of achieving the desired outcomes and in that respect any integration of local views into the design process that leads to a successful project is to be welcomed.
18. This will require a further considerable investment in the design and consultation process. Subject to budgetary constraints it is likely that the consultation and design process may commence this financial year but will only be completed in 2011/12.

19. It is proposed that a project group be formed including representatives of the Town Council, Chamber of Commerce, Amey personnel, CBC officers and CBC elected members to establish the acceptable options for outline design prior to further public consultation.

## Appendix A – Summary of Consultation Feedback

400616 The Baulk, Biggleswade  
401581 SRtS Biggleswade

### Objection Register

Type	Detail	Comments Made	Number of comments	Response
<b>General</b>	General objections to the whole scheme	No evidence of accidents produced The proposals are excessive ignores other priorities for the town and will restrict opportunities for the Town Centre I agree with the proposed zebra crossing near Dells La and Elm Rd, otherwise most of the work is unnecessary I agree with the proposals for 2 new zebra crossings in London Rd Ridiculous scheme	10 plus Petition (135)	No real mitigation as objections are general in nature
	Support for Baulk RA	I agree that Red Lion High St junction and Dells La is a problem and should be improved with a new roundabout and changes to layout	5	
<b>The Baulk Roundabout</b>	All General comments (mostly by TC/and Councillors)	Mini roundabout at the baulk will cause Traffic congestion, discourage access to town centre and reduction in commercial trade, bottleneck, the narrowing makes it dangerous in presence of HGV vehicles, crossing in High St is dangerous, too narrow.	7	We believe that the Baulk roundabout will not restrict traffic and will be an improved 'gateway' to Biggleswade.
<b>Speed Limit</b>	Enforcement and compliance	20mph speed limit will be unenforceable (side roads)	3	Extents into side roads have been limited to where vehicle speeds are expected to be low Traffic calming designed to promote compliance to the 20mph zone

<b>-Traffic Calming</b>	Noise and Vibration, Traffic calming is excessive/unnecessary Hamper Emergency Services Speed Cushions not effective, Suggest Signalised crossings would suffice Access/Personal Mini RA at Elm Road is not required Technical Details/Changes to layout	Speed tables will cause noise and vibration, unnecessary, damage to vehicles, features need moving, should be pelicans, will be dangerous, not democratic, unpopular	32 plus mention in petition(135)	These are fairly regular and standard objections received to traffic calming schemes. It is only the number that is greater than usual. No specific mitigations except that we believe the scheme to be an overall benefit.

<b>Crossings</b>	Retain SCP	Would like <b>to retain School Crossing Patrol</b> at north end of London Road, personal problems with locations, increase noise and pollution, object to beacons, drivers don't stop at zebras, wouldn't be used, prefer pelicans.	12	WE believe that zebras are superior to Pelicans and will improve traffic flow not hinder it.



