

REPORT FOR:

Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel

Date of Meeting:

23rd November 2016

Subject:

INFORMATION REPORT

Wealdstone Transport Issues

Responsible Officer :

Tom McCourt – Corporate Director,
Community

Exempt:

No

Wards affected:

Wealdstone, Marlborough

Enclosures:

Appendix A – Harrow & Wealdstone
area action plan

Appendix B – Transport study location
plan

Appendix C – Regeneration sites and
transport links

Appendix D – Major scheme

Appendix E – Trinity Square
visualisation

Appendix F – Kodak site section 106
developer contributions

Appendix G – Headstone Drive / Ellen
Webb Drive scheme

Appendix H – Harrow View /
Headstone Drive scheme

Section 1 – Summary

This report provides an update on transport issues in Wealdstone in relation to the Council's regeneration programme.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

- 2.1 Wealdstone is a district centre in the heart of Harrow that has good accessibility to public transport via an important bus and rail interchange at Harrow & Wealdstone station. A major north / south strategic road, the A409, runs through its centre. There is a significant movement of through traffic via road, rail and bus modes and the area over time has become more congested with increasing journey times. The road network is struggling to accommodate the demand and this is a problem for road users and buses in particular at peak times.
- 2.2 The section of the High Street parallel to George Gange Way, where most of the commercial centre is located, now has reduced levels of traffic since the construction of the George Gange Way bypass in the 1980's which is now the designated A409 route. The strategic route has a very high throughput of traffic in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day and the junction with Palmerston Road is an identified air quality focus areas in the borough where air quality pollutants PM10's (very fine particles) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) exceed nationally set objectives.

Regeneration Programme

- 2.3 Wealdstone town centre and the nearby Harrow town centre, have been collectively named as the 'Heart of Harrow' by LBH in the 2013 Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan. This area has been identified by the Council and the Mayor of London as a priority area for regeneration and is designated in the Harrow Core Strategy and the London Plan (2011) as an Opportunity Area. The vision for the area as described originally in the Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan and updated in the draft Regeneration Strategy 2014 – 2026 is to deliver 5,500 new homes, two new schools and 3,000 additional new jobs.
- 2.4 A significant part of the regeneration programme will be to relocate the Council's Civic Centre here by 2019. The intensification of development will place greater demands on the existing transport network and public realm in the area which is already struggling to cope with the existing levels of traffic. The general appearance, design and condition of the public realm is tired and unattractive and not conducive to encouraging new businesses to come to the area. Wealdstone is an area of deprivation which the Council seeks to revitalise.

- 2.5 A plan of the development sites within the regeneration programme can be seen in **Appendix A**.

Transport Study

- 2.6 The impact of this intensive level of development from so many additional homes and businesses and the potential increase in demand on the transport network needs to be assessed in order to understand the short, medium and long term affects. The council's transport consultant has therefore been engaged to undertake a transport study which was commissioned earlier in the year and is expected to be completed by March 2017. The extents of the study can be seen in **Appendix B**.
- 2.7 The objectives of the study are to determine:
- The current performance of the existing highway network in terms of capacity to accommodate additional traffic demand.
 - The level of additional traffic demand forecast on the highway network due to the committed and known development proposals in the Harrow and Wealdstone area.
 - The impact of the development proposals on the highway network.
 - Proposals to mitigate the impact of the developments on the highway network, including sustainable transport measures.
 - Opportunities and development of proposals to enhance the public realm.
- 2.8 The study will include a survey of current traffic levels and movements, estimated future levels of new homes and businesses in the area to update Transport for London's regional transport model which will be used to assess future traffic conditions and test possible network interventions. This analysis will identify areas of stress on the network and allow the Council to plan for vital infrastructure improvements and the necessary funding to implement them.
- 2.9 The study will also assess the amount of on-street and off-street (car parks) space in the centre of Wealdstone and determine current levels of usage and occupancy. An assessment of future parking needs will be provided to assist with any decisions on future parking provision.
- 2.10 A report on the outcome of the study will be presented to TARSAP when it is completed.

Wealdstone High Street – Major Scheme Bid

- 2.11 Transport for London (TfL) has a major schemes programme which is funded as a part of the Local Implementation Plan. All boroughs are eligible to bid for major schemes and need to demonstrate a substantial case to be successful in attracting major funding. Housing opportunity areas do provide an ideal rationale for this type of investment where public realm improvements and accommodating an increase in journeys

is necessary and Harrow has been encouraged by TfL to submit a bid for Wealdstone.

- 2.12 Wealdstone town centre has a poor appearance and has consistently had one of the highest business vacancy rates in terms of empty shops within Harrow. The identity of this district centre is not very well established and the High Street area at the centre lacks vibrancy and vitality.
- 2.13 Whilst public transport provision is good, access by road and foot is poor. The centre is isolated by a combination of the railway line to the west and a town centre bypass (George Gange Way) to the east which act as barriers to pedestrian / cycle movement.
- 2.14 Bus routes through the town centre are affected by the congestion and delay on the existing Strategic Road Network (A409) which is heavily congested due to the poor performance of the current network layout and traffic signals. This affects the overall journey time reliability on the network for buses, and limits the potential to improve and expand services in the future.
- 2.15 The expansion of a large number of housing sites in the area combined with the relocation of the Council offices to the High Street will generate a considerable amount of additional traffic in the area and place greater pressure on the existing road network.
- 2.16 The key issues identified from a site audit were:
- Poor quality of public realm and overall appearance, cluttered and excessive street furniture,
 - Perceived safety concerns and fear of crime from overall appearance and tone of area,
 - Traffic congestion and delay on main road network affecting journey time reliability, particularly buses
 - Poor environment for pedestrians, segregation by railway and SRN, excessive vehicle dominance,
 - Local cycle routes have complex routes and motor vehicle dominance makes access difficult,
 - Poor junction design with underutilised space for other modes
- 2.17 An initial concept scheme was devised to address the issues in the site audit earlier in the year and a design surgery arranged with Urban Design London, as advised by TFL, to consider the design approach. Useful feedback was provided which suggested that this should be considered as a place making scheme, that a civic square should be created and that a clear rationale for transport connections should be developed as well as introducing “slow” street interventions. This advice has been incorporated into the outline scheme.
- 2.18 A plan of the proposed regeneration sites and the proposed transport networks has therefore been developed in conjunction with the bid as shown in **Appendix C**. This highlights the main walking, cycling, bus and

freight routes on the network that need to be introduced to support development. Some of these routes will be developed within developer proposals for sites and most within the extents of public highway.

- 2.19 The cycle infrastructure, in particular, needs significant improvement. The existing east to west link along Headstone Drive and Canning Road has a well-established route but needs to be made more accessible and clearer to encourage greater usage. A new north to south route using quiet ways running parallel to the A409 needs to be developed via the central section of the High Street to connect Harrow Town Centre to Wealdstone and Harrow Weald to accommodate the potential demand to use this route. The A409 cannot safely accommodate dedicated or segregated cycle facilities due to the limited space available along its length.
- 2.20 The council has developed an outline major scheme intended to meet TfL's better streets agenda, facilitate growth and provide Wealdstone with a more defined sense of place and character. The scheme is as follows:

Tidy up / de-clutter / relocate merge functions

High Street - Review road space allocation and redesign the widths of footways and carriageways to introduce "slow street" interventions and accommodate bus stops and parking / loading areas. Minimise and rationalise all street furniture in the main commercial / retail areas to improve accessibility and introduce easier 'straight across' crossing points. Introduce new LED lighting and tree planting and give careful consideration to the streetscape using higher quality construction materials to create an attractive urban environment with more functional, accessible spaces for pedestrians. A similar model to the Station Road scheme in Harrow will be used.

George Gange Way (A409) – This road is a barrier to pedestrian movement across this corridor and needs to be integrated into the town due to the wider regeneration programme which will increase pedestrian movement. Interventions to civilise the street scene and make it more accessible will be made by removing excessive street furniture (e.g. pedestrian guard railings, central traffic islands) and providing additional pedestrian crossing points.

Rethink traffic management options

Bus routes – Buses currently experience congestion and delay at the northern entry/egress point into the district centre. A new entry point will be created via a dedicated one way corridor along Canning Road. The exit from the High Street will remain the same via a one way section of road. Junction improvements at the A409 junctions with the High Street and Canning Road are proposed including the removal of traffic signals at the High Street / Palmerston Road junction. These changes will result in improved bus journey times.

A409 corridor - all traffic signal junctions will be amended based on user priorities to maximise network performance and smooth traffic flow to

improve journey time reliability and air quality. Traffic signal linking via SCOOT will be introduced. General access into the town will be via Palmerston Road which will become one way.

Slow streets - a 20mph zone / limit will be introduced in parts of the High Street and George Gange Way to support and enhance pedestrian and cycle movement. Speed platforms will be used at junctions on the A409 to reinforce slower speeds particularly at pedestrian crossing points.

Recreate the street

Harrow & Wealdstone Station - the Station is a key gateway access to/from the station for pedestrians, the Ellen Webb Drive / High Street junction will be redesigned to make better use of the public realm space and create a more attractive and welcoming gateway into the town.

Trinity Square – There is an independent complementary scheme to introduce a public square in Headstone Drive by the High Street which will act as a focal point in the town funded via the GLA's London Regeneration Fund.

- 2.21 A plan of the proposed scheme can be seen in **Appendix D**.
- 2.22 A bid of £2 million was submitted in September and will be supported by match funding by the borough from Harrow Capital (£370k), Harrow LIP funding (£200k) and S106 developer contributions (£320k). The overall budget for the scheme would be £2.89 million.
- 2.23 The bid process is very competitive and there is no guarantee of success, however, it is considered that a strong case has been put forward for Wealdstone. An announcement with regard to funding is expected in early 2017.

Headstone Drive - Trinity Square

- 2.24 In October 2015 Harrow Council submitted an application to the GLA's London Regeneration Fund. This was a fiercely competitive funding round, with only £20m allocated for the whole of London. In January 2016 Harrow secured £1.5m in funding to provide space for new businesses at Artisan Studios (former Colart offices) and for creating a new public square in Wealdstone. This new civic square will provide a space for events, amusement and markets to draw more shoppers and visitors into Wealdstone in order to improve the local economy.
- 2.25 The section of Headstone Drive between the High Street and Ellen Webb Drive is the area within the scope of the brief for the public realm improvements. Funding of £850k has been allocated to the public square project for design and implementation.
- 2.26 This project is being overseen by the Council's Economic Development Team and a consultant was appointed in August this year to undertake

the delivery of the project. A project board and project team have been established to oversee progress and provide direction for the project.

- 2.27 There is a need to ensure consistency in public realm design and the details of the major scheme bid (detailed above) have been shared with the consultant to ensure the Trinity Square project will complement the wider public realm aspirations.
- 2.28 The project is currently at a very early stage and no designs have been developed at the time of writing this report. A visualisation of a potential concept design can be seen in **Appendix E**.

Developer contributions

- 2.29 There is an extensive set of financial provisions within the Kodak development site section 106 agreement which includes contributions for controlled parking, traffic management in Victor Drive, bus service improvements, wayfinding signs, walking and cycling routes, a junction improvement for the Headstone Lane / Ellen Webb Drive junction, a junction improvement for the Harrow View / Headstone Drive junction and flood mitigation measure for the rail bridge in Headstone Drive. Details of the provisions can be seen in **Appendix F**.
- 2.30 Some of these funds will contribute to the match funding indicated in the major scheme bid and these are indicated.
- 2.31 A sum of £150k is available to improve the Headstone Lane / Ellen Webb Drive junction once the triggers in the section 106 agreement are satisfied for the release of the monies. This improvement is indicated in the major scheme bid as a complementary scheme linked to the Trinity Square project.
- 2.32 An outline scheme design has already been developed by the Council's transport consultant and a scheme proposed to introduce traffic signals at the junction. A plan of the proposal can be seen in **Appendix G**.
- 2.33 A sum of £50k has been released this year to undertake feasibility and design work on the Harrow View / Headstone Drive traffic signals junction. This design work will be completed by the end of the financial year. An outline scheme design can be seen in **Appendix H**.
- 2.34 Funding to implement the scheme will be released in 2017/18 subject to the satisfactory completion of the design and traffic signal modelling work.

Future considerations

- 2.35 There will be a need to develop an infrastructure improvement plan for the Wealdstone transport network based on the findings of the Transport Study. The use of sustainable transport modes and measures to improve air quality will also be important as these will continue to be mayoral priorities.

- 2.36 A costed programme of interventions with identified funding sources will be required for the next 5 to 10 years in order to accommodate the scale of growth expected. This would need to consider all possible funding sources including section 106 developer contributions, community infrastructure levy contributions, capital funding and TfL LIP funding.
- 2.37 The mayor's transport strategy (MTS) will be revised to reflect the transport priorities of the new London Mayor and a new MTS, is likely to be approved during 2017. Following this there will be a requirement for London Boroughs to revise their Local implementation Plans (LIP) to reflect the MTS. The infrastructure plans for Wealdstone will need to be reflected in the LIP objectives and programme of investment.

Section 3 – Further Information

- 3.1 There is no further information.

Section 4 – Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

Section 5 - Equalities implications

- 5.1 A programme of investment was included in the Transport Local Implementation Plan which was approved by full Council. The LIP was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment where schemes were identified as having no negative impact on any equality groups. Positive impacts of the programme were demonstrated on some equalities groups, particularly, women, children and people with mobility difficulties.

Section 6 – Council Priorities

- 6.1 The transport improvements identified in the report will contribute to achieving the administration's priorities:
- Making a difference for the vulnerable
 - Making a difference for communities
 - Making a difference for local businesses
 - Making a difference for families

Section 7 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jessie Man



on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 10/11/16

Ward Councillors notified: YES

Section 8 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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Background Papers: