

Highway Cabinet Member Decision Session

Highway Cabinet Member Decision Session held 11 August 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Chair) (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport)

HIGHWAYS Simon Botterill, Team Manager, Traffic Management

OFFICERS IN Dick Proctor, Transport Planning Manager

ATTENDANCE: Nat Porter, Senior Transport Planner

Chris Galloway, Principal Highways Engineer

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1. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

1.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SESSION

3.1 The minutes of the previous Session, held on 14 July 2016, were approved as a correct record.

4. CHARTER SQUARE HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

4.1 The Executive Director, Place submitted a report in relation to the Charter Square Highways Improvement Scheme.

4.2 Julie Gill, representing Westfield Health, attended the Session to make representations to the Cabinet Member. She commented that she had recently met with officers in relation to the scheme and was informed that the new cycle lane would be 2 metres away from the new Westfield Health building entrance. This was unacceptable as Westfield Health had invested a lot of resource into the new building and this could potentially cause issues for those visiting the new building.

4.3 Ms. Gill further added that she believed that officers had suggested that the cycle lane could be moved to the other side of Charter Row but it no longer seemed that this was an option. The proposal also seemed like it would conflict with the evacuation point for those using the new building.

4.4 Chris Galloway, Principal Highways Engineer, confirmed that he had met with representatives of Westfield Health and had brought along a larger scale plan of the proposals than was available with the agenda papers to this meeting, The option of moving the cycle lane to the other side of Charter Row would have to be

considered as a separate issue to the scheme being proposed but would involve the installation of additional crossing points.

- 4.5 Nat Porter, Senior Transport Planner, added that the design of the scheme had given consideration to a level of separation between cyclists and pedestrians. Simon Botterill, Team Manager, Traffic Management, further added that there would be additional signage on the route but a legible, visible route was needed. There would be kerbs installed as part of the scheme and other furniture in the footway including bollards.
- 4.6 Nat Porter further commented that the Council had met with the Access Liaison Group, an independent body concerned with issues affecting disabled people, to obtain feedback on the scheme with the hope that the scheme would not adversely affect, but actually enhance, access for disabled people. The feedback that had been received was that, once the issues of separation and tactile signing and the raised kerb for pedestrians crossing had been explained, they were comfortable with the proposals.
- 4.7 In response to questions from the Cabinet Member, Nat Porter stated that if there was a fire drill in the Westfield Health building, cyclists would not be able to use the route, so there would be no danger to customers and staff. There would be facility for pedestrians to safely cross the street at the nearby junction.
- 4.8 Julie Gill then further asked if there was a possibility to move the cycle lane across the road from where it was proposed? Simon Botterill stated that this option was never proposed as part of this scheme. The link was necessary for full movement for cyclists at the junction. The only alternative was shared use for pedestrians and cyclists which was a much worse option.
- 4.9 In response to further questions from Ms. Gill regarding mitigations proposed to ensure users of the Westfield Health building were not affected and levels of traffic volume from cyclists, Simon Botterill confirmed that if the scheme was agreed, discussions would be held with Westfield Health regarding mitigation measured. He acknowledged the concerns of Westfield Health but stated that a balance would be struck to ensure all affected were satisfied.
- 4.10 Nat Porter commented that traffic volumes had been predicted as around one cyclist per minute. The cycle route would be promoted as the preferred route for cyclists. In relation to questions about the alternative scheme in the area, Chris Galloway commented that officers would be looking to develop this in the future in liaison with interested parties.
- 4.11 Julie Gill then commented that Westfield Health had invested millions of pounds in the new building. They were not opposed to the scheme in principle but were seeking protection for visitors to the building. Nat Porter responded that he acknowledged the risks but believed they had been mitigated. He believed that, given the volume of traffic in the area, cyclists would be inclined to use the footway if the lane wasn't brought in, which would effectively result in a shared footway.

- 4.12 In response to questions regarding whether officers were aware of the entrance to the Westfield Health building when designing the scheme, Simon Botterill stated that the scheme would have been designed the same either way.
- 4.13 Councillor Mazher Iqbal then asked officers what would happen should there be reports of accidents following the scheme's introduction? Simon Botterill answered that, following the end of the construction period, a Stage 3 Safety Audit would take place to examine how the scheme was working in practice and whether any changes were necessary. Also, following twelve months after the scheme was introduced, a similar audit would take place. Nat Porter added that a Safety Audit which had taken place during the design process had not raised any concerns.
- 4.14 Representatives of Debenhams also attended the Session to make representations to the Cabinet Member. They stated that they were not against the scheme in principle but were concerned about the impact on access to the store during the construction work. They also had concerns regarding the impact on the loading bays to the store.
- 4.15 Simon Botterill commented that he had sent an email to the Project Manager regarding this and the contact details of everybody who had contacted the Council in relation to the scheme had been forwarded on. The contractor had been told on numerous occasions that they would need to liaise with all interested parties. However, it was clear that construction couldn't take place without slight disruption but it was hoped that this would be limited. If the contractor required access which affected Debenhams they would need to speak to them and any issues Debenhams had should be reported to Simon Botterill.
- 4.16 The contractor was required to provide the Council with the methodology on the process for construction. There was a need to emphasise with the contractor the importance of retaining accessibility and the constructors plan would be shared with Debenhams. If approved, it was expected that construction would begin before Christmas and the need to speak to Debenhams as a matter of urgency would be stressed to the contractor.
- 4.17 In conclusion, Councillor Mazher Iqbal commented that, following all the representations and comments from officers, he was satisfied that, on balance, he would be approving the scheme as proposed. Cyclists were an important aspect of the City and their needs should be balanced with other users. He would also ensure that the Council worked with Westfield Health, Debenhams and other interested parties to discuss any issues and attempt to resolve them. If he believed there would be any material impact to Westfield Health arising from the scheme he would not be approving it. Councillor Iqbal thanked officers for their hard work and commented that this showed the importance of liaising with all those affected to try and balance all their needs.
- 4.18 **RESOLVED:** That:-
- (a) the Traffic Regulation Orders be made, in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, in relation to the Charter Square Highways

Improvement Scheme;

- (b) a further Traffic Regulation Order be promoted to create a two way operation on a section of Wellington Street;
- (c) the scheme be approved for detailed design and build; and
- (d) the respondents be informed accordingly.

4.19 **Reasons for Decision**

- 4.19.1 To allow the scheme to progress to detailed design and build so that the proposed improvements for pedestrians and cyclists can be realised quickly.
- 4.19.2 The proposal seeks to remove one of the remaining subway systems in the City Centre which are generally considered to be unfriendly for pedestrians. In its place, new pedestrian crossing and cycle routes will be created which will be of significant benefit to road users.
- 4.19.3 The scheme creates a large public realm area which could readily be adapted to meet future regeneration or development needs.

4.20 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 4.20.1 The removal of the Charter Square roundabout and subway system has been a longstanding proposal and was included in the planning application for the New Retail Quarter, which received approval in 2006. The proposal is consistent with that concept, as well as the City Centre Master Plan. Officers believe that the scheme can be a catalyst for further regeneration in the city centre and can be adapted to accommodate any access needs that future regeneration development proposals might bring forward. As such no other alternatives have been considered.