

Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package – Task Force Meeting Minutes

Project:	Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package		
Meeting title:	Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package - Army and Navy Task Force meeting		
Date:	20/10/23	Time:	11:30 – 13:00
Location:	Microsoft Teams		
Attendees	Cllr Lesley Wagland	LW	
	Hilary Gauthier (on behalf of Vicky Ford MP)	HG	
	Cllr Peter Sadowsky	PS	
	Cllr Stephen Robinson	SR	

Agenda	Item
Item	
1.	<p>Welcome and introduction</p> <p>LW welcomed people to the meeting and thanked the team for their hard work on the project up to this point. She also thanked those who had been involved in lobbying Government for a decision on the business case and funding. She noted that some of the presentations and latest visualisations were still work in progress and that attendees should therefore refrain from sharing them at this point. She encouraged attendees to contact her or the project team with any queries over sharing project information/material. She then handed over to the project team to run through a presentation.</p>
2.	<p>Progress update</p> <p>It was explained that a new project manager would now be taking over on the project due to their construction expertise. It was noted that the previous project manager would remain on the project in an advisory capacity to help address any historical issues and provide some continuity.</p> <p>A member of the project team gave an update on the business case process. He explained how the Outline Business Case had been submitted to the Department for Transport in October 2022, seeking £69 million of funding from the Government’s Major Road Network programme. He explained that a decision had yet to be received, but the application had now reviewed by the Department for Transport and recommend to the Treasury for funding. He noted that the Treasury’s decision was expected around the time of the Autumn Statement. It was also noted that the scheme was included in a list of projects that could benefit from the HS2 cancellations, so current indications were positive.</p> <p>He explained that the DfT had recently updated their business case guidance and that new calculations had now been made. Following this, the scheme benefit-cost ration was now 2.3, falling from to 2.7 at Stage 2. However, he noted that the figure was still high. Another member of the project team explained that other projects had suffered worse reductions in BCR following the updated guidance, meaning this scheme continued to compare positively.</p>

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	<p>The task force were updated on progress relating to planning and told that feedback from the pre-application process in March and the Essex Quality Review Panel had been incorporated in the submissions. It was explained that there were three separate planning applications as part of the scheme - the Army and Navy Junction Improvements, Sandon Park and Ride expansion and the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride expansion. It was noted that planning applications would be submitted by the end of November/early December, depending on the funding decision, and an outcome was expected in Spring 2024.</p> <p>The project team member then updated on the design. He revealed that following work on the Flood modelling, the Environment Agency had confirmed that no mitigation areas were required. Key design changes were also noted, including the Chelmer Road/Essex Yeomanry Way signalised left turn lane, Chelmer Road cycle lane, and Parkway cycleway.</p> <p>The project team updated on the latest surveys and site investigations which had been undertaken. These included trial holes to locate utilities. It was also explained that work with Anglian Water was being undertaken to produce a drainage survey for the necessary diversion of a water main at the junction.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Chelmer Valley Park and Ride consultation results</p> <p>A project team member provided a summary of the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride consultation. He explained that it ran from 30 January 2023 to 12 March 2023 and approximately 400 people had responded to the survey. Drop-in consultation events were run at High Chelmer Shopping Centre and approximately 165 people attended. The team member summarised that 60% of people had indicated they supported the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride expansion, while a further 20% were neutral, which showed a good level of support.</p> <p>The task force was told a good level of support was also evident from the qualitative feedback received, including general support for Park and Rides as a way of reducing congestion. The concerns expressed through the consultation included loss of countryside, and the potential impacts of additional traffic and rat-running through Little Waltham. Suggestions to improve the site included a larger waiting area, a multi-storey car park to reduce site footprint, solar panel canopies and improved walking and cycling connections. Numerous respondents expressed strong views about the need to reinstate the Broomfield Hospital shuttle service from the site.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Final designs – Army and Navy junction</p> <p>A member of the project team reminded the task force of the various elements included as part of the proposed Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package. He recapped on the benefits of the scheme, including unlocking economic and job creation opportunities by improving journey times, a direct increase in UK GDP valued at £32 million, and 844 metres of new dedicated bus lanes, among others.</p> <p>Another project team member then presented a set of visualisations of the newly designed junction. He reiterated the point that these visualisations were not final</p>

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and some elements, such as additional vehicles cars and people, still needed to be added before they were published.

The project team talked through a series of visualisations showing different parts of the proposals, including an overview of the Army and Navy junction, the centre of the junction at ground level, the Princes Road bus lane, Lady Lane junction, Van Diemans Road, Baddow Road and Meadgate Avenue, Meadgate Avenue, Essex Yeomanry Way, Parkway, and the Parkway to city centre cycle way. As the team member presented each of these visualisations, he explained key elements of the proposals in each area and how they would function for different users..

Questions were taken on the visualisations and the latest designs for the Army and Navy junction. The first three of these questions from **PS** were typed in the meeting chat.

PS: ‘With the dedicated bus lanes, are we expecting more buses to be running as in Baddow our service is reduced to two buses an hour?’

A project team member answered that work engaging with bus operators was being undertaken and currently operators clearly supported increasing bus priority and had indicated they would look to improve services to take advantage of the improved journey times and reliability. He also noted that further discussions would be taking place as the scheme progressed.

PS: ‘Will the surface water drainage (road gullies) be improved on Van Diemans Road as it floods at that junction in heavy rain?’

A project team member answered. He noted that the catchment size for the Army and Navy junction was very significant, with the majority of south-east and south Chelmsford draining into it. He explained this resulted in large volumes of water being drained through the junction which the pipes could not cope with, resulting in flooding. He said the project would look to ensure this did not get any worse but could not completely resolve it.

PS: ‘What is happening on cycleways in Great Baddow? Seen little development on this so far.’

A member of the project team answered that work on cycleways and cycle connectivity was being undertaken through a partnership of Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council. This work covered both this project and the East Chelmsford Cycle Links project. It was explained that a plan was in place to undertake a visibility study and initial design work looking at improving cycle connectivity between Chelmsford and east Chelmsford. A Chelmsford City Council officer confirmed this work was underway.

PS reiterated concerns over bus routes into Great Baddow and commented he was looking forward to seeing progress in this area. He then commented he was happy with the comments on the drainage works. He felt that the current plans he had seen for the Great Baddow cycle route(s) to Chelmsford town centre did not seem direct. A project team member answered that this area/route would be addressed by the cycle connectivity work being undertaken by Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council. He also encouraged **PS**

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	<p>to reach out with specific bus route/bus service concerns so they could be addressed by the Essex County Council passenger transport team.</p> <p>SR asked whether the project team had met with bus operators to explain the proposals. A project team member confirmed that they had previously met with bus operators and explained proposals. Another team member also noted that bus operators had been invited to an upcoming business and transport groups briefing on the proposals and had been contacted at key milestones in the project to date.</p> <p>SR asked if the cycle lane on the northside of Parkway was a two-way cycle lane. A team member confirmed that this was the case.</p> <p>SR raised concerns about cyclist safety at a crossing near Aldi. A team member answered that this was not a new crossing, but improvements would be made to improve safety. He also explained that most cyclists should not need to use this crossing due to the new off-road Parkway cycleway to the city centre.</p> <p>SR asked if it would be possible to begin some of the scheme works early to show early scheme benefits to local people. A project team member answered that this was a good idea, but discussions would have to take place with the appointed contractor over the feasibility of this. SR suggested bus lane works as an area that would be beneficial to begin early to help mitigate the impact of construction. Another project team member agreed on the sentiment of delivering early scheme benefits but did explain that being too prescriptive to contractors could drive prices up. He noted that ability to deliver some of the works early could be considered during the procurement process.</p> <p>SR raised Van Diemens Road as a point of discussion. He felt that residents in that area were grateful for the engagement work that had been done but felt that wider members of the public were still apprehensive about going down to one lane. He then asked if the cycle lane would remain on the western side of Van Diemens Road and a team member confirmed this would be the case.</p> <p>SR raised concerns about the Lady Lane junction, particularly relating to whether cars would give way to pedestrians and cyclists using the crossing. A team member responded that clear signage would be provided regarding rights of way and the utmost would be done to ensure people understood how to use the junction correctly.</p> <p>SR asked if the crossing on Princes Road would be shared between cyclists and pedestrians. A team member confirmed this would be the case.</p> <p>SR reiterated the importance of providing good cycle links from the east side of Great Baddow to Chelmsford city centre. He said he was keen to see the Memorandum of Understanding agreed between Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council for the work in this area. A project team member agreed on the need to progress this Memorandum of Understanding quickly.</p> <p>PS asked about traffic capacity at the Lady Lane junction, specifically if there was room for a car to turn left at the junction while a car next to it went straight across. A team member confirmed this was possible.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Final designs – Park and Rides</p>

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	<p>A project team member presented a visualisation of the expanded Sandon Park and Ride and explained the key design features. This included a new bus lane/bus drop off area. He also mentioned how the existing bus lane would be reutilised as a bus standing area. The cycle connections into Great Baddow were mentioned, as were new bike storage lockers.</p> <p>The team member then presented a visualisation of the expanded Chelmer Valley Park and Ride. He noted how the terminus building would remain in its position but be extended. He then explained the rest of the features of the expanded site, including connection points to existing walking and cycling infrastructure and new crossings within the site. He also noted that the expansion of this park and ride was important to futureproof and provide additional capacity ahead of proposed new developments.</p> <p>SR asked if the layout of the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride site accounted for a cycle path towards the hospital. A team member answered that the site connected to the existing cycling infrastructure, but there was no specific access planned for the suggested cycle route.</p> <p>SR asked about the possibility of using solar panel roofs/canopies for the terminus buildings. He also raised the importance of good links to Broomfield Hospital from the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride site. A team member explained that solar canopies were currently being explored, but it was too late to include them in the park and ride expansions. He also explained that the passenger transport team were working with the hospital to try and reinstate bus services from the Park and Ride site to the hospital and that talks on this were positive.</p> <p>SR asked if there would be EV charging points and bases for electric scooters at both Park and Rides. A team member confirmed that EV charging would be provided, and their numbers would increase as demand grew. He explained e-scooters had been discussed, but their inclusion in the plans would depend on ongoing trials. Another team member mentioned that it would be easy to convert car park spaces to e-scooter storage in the future if needed.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>The project team set out the next steps for the project. They explained the project was currently in a good position but stressed the importance of receiving a decision on the Outline Business Case to prevent delays. He noted that planning applications were due to be submitted in November and decisions on the applications were expected in Spring 2024.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Programme</p> <p>A team member then explained the wider programme dates for the project. An estimated timeline was provided for the remainder of the project, including elements such as CPO preparation and decision and tender activities. It was explained that construction for the Army and Navy Junction was currently estimated to be complete by February 2028, with construction at Chelmer Valley Park and Ride complete by March 2028, and construction for Sandon Park and Ride finished by December 2026.</p> <p>Another team member made the point that when planning applications were submitted, letters of support from councillors and MPs would be appreciated.</p>

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	<p>A team member raised the point that if a decision on funding was not received soon, work on the project may need to be paused as the existing funding had now been spent.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>A member of the project team closed the meeting and thanked all attendees. He confirmed that minutes of the meeting would be published and made available on the project webpage.</p> <p>Another team member reiterated that briefings for Essex County Council members, Chelmsford City Council members, parish councils, business and transport groups, and local community groups were being held in early November.</p>