

Meeting Minutes

Army and Navy Taskforce Meeting #9

Project Army and Navy Junction, Chelmsford

Location Virtual meeting **Date/Time** 4 December 2020

Participants Cllr Kevin Bentley **KB**
Cllr Stephen Robinson **SR**
Cllr John Spence **JS**
Cllr Peter Sadowsky **PS**
Vicky Ford MP **VF**

	Introductions KB welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1	Short-term options update The Taskforce was given an update on potential short-term measures which were subject to an expression of interest for the Department for Transport's (DfT) Pinch Point Fund in January 2020. These include a potential scheme to utilise the space created by the removal of the flyover, and two Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) cycle routes. They were advised that work had been paused because the Pinch Point Fund is on hold indefinitely and no other funding was currently available. However, elements of the two LCWIP routes were included in the recently successful Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) Tranche 2 bid. Therefore, results of traffic modelling work, undertaken to assess a new toucan crossing on Parkway and one-way options on Victoria Road, will be reviewed as part of the EATF work. Once the EATF measures are finalised and delivered, the two LCWIP proposals will be updated to include these as part of the baseline.
2	Park and Ride update In order to include the two Park and Ride proposals, expansion of Sandon and a new site at Widford, in the MRN business case as planned, there would need to be sufficient demand for both. The Taskforce was told that modelling of the future use and demand of Park and Ride services in Chelmsford showed an expected need for additional spaces at Sandon Park and Ride site and also showed there would be enough demand for a successful new Park and Ride site in Widford. It was explained that Park and Ride improvements could be particularly important during construction of a long-term solution at the Army and Navy junction when demand for the service would be expected to be well in excess of Sandon's current capacity. It was, therefore, concluded that there was a strong case for both expansion of Sandon and a new site in Widford, and it was hoped that the majority of additional demand during construction for Sandon P&R would be retained in the longer term. The Taskforce was advised that expansion of Sandon Park and Ride could not be delivered in advance and then retrospectively funded by the Department for Transport as part of the Army and Navy MRN bid. However, it was explained that the preferred strategy was for the expansion to still be completed in advance to mitigate the impacts during construction and encourage lasting change. It was explained this would need to be funded separately by Essex County Council or Chelmsford City Council to avoid

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	<p>extending the overall project programme. Alternatively, it could be included in the MRN bid and be expanded at the same time as the junction improvements or the programme could be extended to allow the expansion of Sandon to be completed first.</p>
3	<p>Options assessment update</p> <p>The taskforce was told that the majority of the assessment work had been completed, including traffic modelling, initial economic assessment and construction phase modelling of the four remaining options for future years. It was added that air quality and noise modelling had started, along with accident benefit analysis.</p> <p>The current advantages and disadvantages of the remaining options were individually presented to the taskforce.</p> <p>The indicative decision framework, consisting of strategic, economic, managerial and financial cases, was explained. It was emphasised that all scoring and ranking of options was provisional, with air quality and noise modelling and accident benefit analysis yet to be completed. Based on initial scoring, there were three options (hamburger roundabout, separate T-junctions and two-way flyover) with fairly balanced scores, however the flyover was likely to rank third and had some key disadvantages. It was clarified that the hamburger roundabout and separate T-junctions were expected to be the best performing options, but that would need to be confirmed.</p>
4	<p>Engagement plan – dropping an option</p> <p>It was explained that the council would be in a position to drop one or two of the remaining options in January once accident benefit analysis and noise and air quality modelling was completed. This would enable the project team to focus on a final shortlist of the best performing two or three options, which would then be taken to public consultation. The taskforce was told that the team would look to announce which option/s had been discarded in late January or early February. It was added that final confirmation of the shortlist of options for consultation must be in March 2021 at the latest if a decision had not already been made earlier.</p> <p>The project team outlined its proposed strategy for announcing the options that were discounted, with update briefings with the taskforce and key partners including county and city councillors, Chelmsford City Council's Improving Movement Around the City (iMAC) Working Group, Great Baddow East Neighbourhood Association (GBENA), landowners, community and transport groups, and businesses. The briefings would include an explanation of the option assessment process, how the various options performed and confirmation of those being dropped. Next steps would also be outlined. It was added that a written briefing note would be sent to partners alongside invitations to the briefing sessions to remind them of the project objectives and progress so far. A similar briefing note would also be provided to equip partners with key messages ahead of the public announcement of the options being discounted.</p> <p>Communications to announce the decision to the public would include updated information on the project webpage, a project e-newsletter, press release, social media content, digital/print advertising on Essex Live/in the Essex Chronicle and communications via partner's channels. It was explained that a video or animation was also planned to help explain the background and objectives to the project and the reasons for an option/options being discarded.</p>
5	<p>Consultation strategy</p>

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	<p>The taskforce was told that public consultation was expected to take place after the local elections and in the summer 2021. The aims of the consultation were outlined as being to inform the decision-making process regarding the identification of a preferred option, receiving public feedback to incorporate within the decision-making process and improving understanding of the project objectives. It was explained that the consultation would last for six weeks, which was in line with best practice and would allow adequate time for response. The consultation survey would be hosted on Essex County Council's consultation portal.</p> <p>The remaining options at consultation would be presented clearly and visually, with a series of flythroughs developed to show the options from the viewpoints of a pedestrian, cyclist, bus passenger and car driver. An animation would also be produced to set the scene, reiterate the objectives of the project and the wider need to encourage people to think differently about how they travelled in the city. Sustainable transport measures, such as the park and ride proposals and Great Baddow to city centre cycle route, would also form an important part of the project and consultation.</p> <p>It was explained that, given the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing uncertainty about future Government restrictions, there was an opportunity to do things differently and that a predominantly digital approach would be taken to the consultation. Over 90% of adults were now online so digital channels actually represented an opportunity to engage with a wider audience than traditional face-to-face consultation events. To ensure accessibility of the consultation, traditional communications channels would be used, and printed materials would be made available at venues throughout Chelmsford. There would also be engagement with the Chelmsford Area Access Group, Chelmsford Talking Newspaper and various equality and diversity groups. In addition, an easy-read version of the consultation brochure would be produced for those with learning disabilities and to enable children to participate.</p> <p>A virtual exhibition would be open throughout the consultation, offering increased flexibility and allowing people to visit at a time to suit them, with four live web chat sessions with the project team also proposed. No face-to-face consultation events were planned, however appointments for calls with the project team were to be available to book by appointment only. Another set of meetings with key partners was also to take place ahead of the consultation to share consultation plans and preview materials. To promote the consultation, a variety of communications channels were proposed, including the project webpage and e-newsletter, press releases, newspaper and digital advertising, social media, posters sent to parish councils and displayed at leisure centres, libraries, P&R sites and other locations, letters to residents and business closest to junction, other e-newsletters, councillor briefing notes and stakeholder email updates, on-site signage at the junction and partner channels.</p>
6	<p>Programme</p> <p>The current project programme was explained, with air quality and noise modelling expected to be completed by Christmas, ongoing highways design, such as site layout and further access junction design was progressing on Sandon Park and Ride, while work was still ongoing to identify a preferred site option for the proposed Park and Ride site at Widford.</p> <p>The taskforce was told that ECC had been advised to incorporate 10 weeks per stage for the Department of Transport to review and approve the business case for progression to the next stage. Therefore, an outline business case was expected by late summer 2021, with approval anticipated by early 2022 and planning approval by</p>

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	<p>2023. A final business case was expected in spring 2023 and construction was estimated to start by summer 2024.</p> <p>JS praised the intended approach to community engagement but said he was concerned about the project timelines, questioning when construction would be completed if it started in 2024. He was advised that construction was estimated to take between 18 and 24 months, depending on the option. KB pointed out that the timescales were not entirely in the council's hands and that it would also be important to sequence any works to avoid clashing with schemes such as Chelmsford North East Bypass, Beaulieu Station and A12 improvements wherever possible. VF stated that she felt people in Chelmsford would be disappointed if work did not see construction starting until 2024 and urged the project team to look for opportunities to reduce the programme. KB agreed but reiterated that the council was not in full control of the timescales and would also be dictated by DfT processes.</p>
7	<p>AOB</p> <p>It was stated that the project would be renamed as the Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package to emphasise the importance of sustainable transport to the final scheme.</p> <p>PS stated that the likely increase in use of Sandon Park and Ride because of Bradwell B starting should be considered, although KB felt it was unlikely to be an issue. PS also requested that the meeting slides were shared. KB agreed but stressed that they were confidential and suggested a separate briefing could be arranged for the parish council as an alternative.</p> <p>PS questioned whether the modelling had been based on all proposed developments, referencing a large development in Great Baddow, and was told that the modelling included all developments proposed in the adopted Local Plan.</p> <p>VF questioned whether the enlarged roundabout option could be dropped now as it was unlikely to be one of the better performing options. KB stated he was not in favour of the two-way flyover as he did not want someone else to inherit the problems he had.</p> <p>VF stated that GBENA should not be singled out ahead of other community groups, to which SR agreed. SR stated that Chelmsford City Council officers were members of local Facebook groups and they could be used to help reach residents. He was told that the project team were also members of local groups and intended to make use of these, as well as a new Essex Highways Major Transport Projects Facebook page.</p> <p>PS requested copies of proposed cycle routes in the Great Baddow area. KB said they would be shared once they were available.</p> <p>KB requested a timetable of proposed future works across all major projects in Chelmsford for the next Taskforce meeting so that they could understand the sequencing and any overlaps that may lead to congestion and delays.</p> <p>The taskforce was told that the tender process was currently underway for the removal of temporary barriers and installation of safety fencing and kerbing at the Army and Navy junction, with works expected to start at the end of March 2021. Communications would take place in the new year ahead of the works.</p>

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VF requested that there was a significant communication push to encourage people to use the buses again once it was safe to do so and that there should be a focus on the quality and reliability of service, as well as building confidence to use public transport again. She added that First Essex was under new management and there was a big opportunity to start from scratch. **KB** advised that this was already underway and would continue. He added that the taskforce also needed to lead by example in using more sustainable modes wherever possible. **PS** stated it was cheaper to drive to the park and ride and buy a return ticket than to use the bus service in his area.

KB thanked attendees, wished them a happy Christmas and closed the meeting.