

Decision Maker: **Environment Portfolio Holder**

For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Environment PDS Committee on:

Date: **23rd September 2014**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: **WIDMORE ROAD A21 JUNCTION IMPROVEMENTS**

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Chief Officer: Nigel Davies, Executive Director of Environment & Community Services

Ward: Bromley Town

1. Reason for report

Congestion on Widmore Road, both in and out of Bromley town centre, has been a problem in recent years. This report recommends completion of the detailed design and then implementation of the Widmore Road/A21 junction improvement, which should significantly reduce traffic congestion at the junction.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Environment Portfolio Holder agrees that:

- 2.1 **Detailed design of the junction improvement at Widmore Road and the A21 be completed and the scheme then proceed to implementation; and**
- 2.2 **The Executive Director for Environment and Community Services be given delegated authority to make any required changes at the detailed design stage, after consultation with Ward Members and the Environment Portfolio Holder.**

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
 2. BBB Priority: Quality Environment Vibrant, Thriving Town Centres
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost: Design & survey costs of £30k; and implementation costs of £170k
 2. On-going costs: Non-Recurring Cost:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: TfL funding for congestion relief 2014/15 and 2015/16
 4. Total current budget for this head: £102k for 2014/15, of which £75k is the uncommitted balance, and £570k for 2015/16
 5. Source of funding: TfL LIP Formula Funding 2014/15 and 2015/16
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 1
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 30
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None: Further Details
 2. Call-in: Applicable:
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Around 300 vehicles per hour use this junction during the peak hour; i.e. around 2,500 vehicles per day.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Yes
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Ward Members support the scheme and would like to see it implemented.

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The junction of Widmore Road and the A21 is one of the most congested junctions in Bromley town centre. It is common to see significant queues on all arms of the junction both during peak and off-peak times.
- 3.2 The A21 is part of the Transport for London Route Network (TLRN), managed and operated by TfL. The focus of the current design work has therefore been on the two Borough arms of the junction – Widmore Road (West) and Widmore Road (East). These two arms of the junction suffer from worse congestion than the A21 itself, and The Glades management have made numerous requests for improvements to help clear congestion to and from their northern car park entrance.
- 3.3 LB Bromley has commissioned Atkins consultants to investigate the junction and provide options for improvements. Their report includes an initial design for the junction, as well as a traffic model to investigate the impact of the design.

Proposed Scheme

- 3.4 Three possible design options were considered. The preferred option (option 3) would see the addition of a new lane on the west (town centre) side of the junction. This would mean that *right-turning* traffic into Kentish Way (which includes a number of bus routes) would be far less likely to block *straight ahead* and *left-turning* traffic. At present this is a frequent occurrence.
- 3.5 If western arm traffic were no longer being blocked by *right-turning* vehicles, the whole of this arm of the junction would clear much more quickly than with the existing layout. This would mean that the western arm signals could be shut off earlier than at present, consequently extending the green signal time for the eastern arm of the junction. This would be particularly beneficial for traffic turning right from the eastern arm of Widmore Road into Tweedy Road.
- 3.6 Some other minor lane marking changes could also make the junction slightly more efficient.
- 3.7 The other options considered were: not adding early shut off/extension to the traffic light phasing (option 1); and excluding the minor lane marking changes (option 2); but these were not as effective at reducing congestion. Detail on all 3 options is attached to this report.
- 3.8 Initial modelling suggests that the proposed improvements would reduce congestion by around 50%, meaning traffic in both directions would normally get through the junction in one traffic light cycle.
- 3.9 There is a concern regarding the location of utilities. A full survey will be undertaken to assess their location accurately. Based on plans provided by the utility companies, there are a number of ducts and cables in the vicinity as well as a British Telecom phone box. Although these could be moved, this could take time and add significant cost.
- 3.10 The proposed improvement would require the loss of five trees from outside the Old Town Hall, three of which are mature. The scheme would seek to replace these trees on Widmore Road, subject to the location of utilities. Officers are considering whether to propose extending the paving of Bromley North Village along Widmore Road, so the re-planting of trees could be considered as part of this larger scheme should it be approved and funding be identified.
- 3.11 The Old Bromley Town Hall building is also subject to a planning application. Currently these plans include a build-out from the side of the building facing Widmore Road as part of a restaurant. The proposed junction improvements could therefore affect this development.

Next Steps - Detailed Design

- 3.12 Subject to Member approval, the next stage would be to undertake a detailed design. This would include a more detailed traffic survey to enable more accurate traffic modelling, as well as drainage, utility diversions and a more detailed cost plan.
- 3.13 Given that the junction includes part of the TLRN, Atkins would continue to undertake this work due to the potential risk and liability.
- 3.14 Consultation would be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders including The Glades, the Old Bromley Town Hall developers, and TfL. Where the scheme abuts the TLRN a legal agreement would be required for any changes, although this should be fairly straight forward.
- 3.15 Given the complexity of the design and engagement process, detailed design is expected to take around 6 months. Implementation could start in Spring 2015 and carried out by LB Bromley's term contractor. Widmore Road is identified for Principle Road Maintenance in the upcoming year, therefore works would be implemented prior to re-surfacing.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The draft Environment Portfolio Plan 2014/17 includes the aim "*Improve the road network and journey times for all users*" and the objective "*Look to decrease congestion and reduce journey times on priority routes*". These plans aim to help deliver this objective, focussing on a junction highlighted by the Congestion Working Group in 2008.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The estimated cost of survey and design work is £30k. From the initial designs, it is estimated that the civil works would cost around £170k, including £20k for signals. Given the likelihood of having to move some utilities in this area, a contingency of 20% has been included in the above figures. This is larger than normal.
- 5.2 The Widmore Road/A21 junction project is one of a number of potential Congestion Relief schemes identified within the existing 3 year Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding programme. £102k has been set aside for this project from TfL LIP Funding for 2014/15. An uncommitted balance of £75k is available to meet the costs of this scheme. The additional funds for this project would be set aside from the 2015/16 LIP programme, where £570k is allocated to Congestion Relief schemes such as this one.

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| Non-Applicable Sections: | Legal and Personnel Implications |
| Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer) | Atkins Option Report |