

Wards Affected:

Stony Stratford Ward and Bradwell Ward

ITEM 10**CABINET****11 OCTOBER 2016****WESTERN EXPANSION AREA – V4, WATLING STREET PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS**

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Gifford – Cabinet member for Place

Report Sponsor: Tony Toynton, Head of Highways and Transport

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Tel: 01908 252056**Executive Summary:**

The work to assess the feasibility of grade separated crossings is now complete and has identified that:

There are two primary locations where crossings are necessary, Junction 4 (J4), at the intersection with Millers Way (H2) and Junction 25 (J25) at the intersection with Barrosa Way at Whitehouse.

The number of large scale buried pipes and other services, many of which are post-war, at J4 indicate that it is not feasible to construct an underpass at that location.

It may be realistic to construct a footbridge at J4 but additional land will need to be obtained and further work will be necessary to consult with local residents on the impact of a footbridge before detailed design and build work could commence.

It is more feasible to construct an underpass at J25 as there appear to be fewer buried services in the ground. However, this option carries a significant risk that the existing services mapping is not complete or wholly accurate due to the age of buried services. If this option is pursued detailed ground surveys will be need to be procured.

It is also feasible to construct a footbridge at this location but, as at Junction 4, that would require additional land and a consultation process with local residents before proceeding with detailed design and build work.

To comply with the direction provided by Cabinet in December 2013 this report recommends construction of a footbridge at J4 and an underpass at J25, subject to further ground investigations necessary at J25. Footbridges at both locations are a realistic alternative option if required.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the construction of an underpass at J25 and a footbridge at J4 of the V4 Watling Street be approved.
- 1.2 That residents likely to be affected by the provision of a footbridge at J4 should be consulted on the design of the footbridge and their views taken into account before the detailed designs for the footbridge are produced.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Occupations of homes in the Western Expansion Area (WEA) began late in 2015 and are now increasing rapidly. However, as yet, no means of safely crossing the V4, Watling Street, by foot/cycle, has been identified.
- 2.2 The outline planning approval for the WEA was granted in 2007 by the Milton Keynes Partnership (MKP) and was based on the provision of "at grade" crossings at the junctions between WEA development and the V4. However, this is contrary to the current policy outlined in the 2013 Core Strategy and Residential Design Code. That Policy requires all grid roads to have "grade separated" crossings which meant that a Cabinet decision on the preferred means of providing crossings was necessary.
- 2.3 In December 2013 Cabinet decided to initiate feasibility studies for the provision of underpasses or footbridges across the V4. This feasibility work has now reached a stage where it is apparent that that each grade separated option carries significant delivery, cost and time risks.
- 2.4 As part of the feasibility work a study was commissioned to identify the likely "desire lines" for pedestrian and cycle traffic between the WEA and adjoining estates. This work has identified two primary locations where crossings are necessary, J4, at the intersection with Millers Way (H2) and J25 at the intersection with Barrosa Way, Whitehouse (see Annex A).
- 2.5 Underpasses across the V4 are difficult to plan and construct due to the number, size and nature, of existing buried services, several of which pre-date the original outline planning for the WEA. The existence of buried services is particularly problematic at J4, at the junction with Millers Way (H2) (Annex A). This means that it is highly unlikely that an underpass could be designed and built without risks of considerable cost escalations and potentially having to abandon the project should a service be discovered that cannot be moved for technical or wayleave reasons. However, the feasibility work has identified that it is, potentially, feasible to construct an underpass at J25 where there appear to be fewer buried services. However, this location also carries an element of risk of further cost escalations should further buried services be discovered that are not currently mapped.
- 2.6 The feasibility work regarding the provision of footbridges has identified a need for additional land to be made available to provide for the footprint of the bridges and their associated accesses. However, it is unclear whether developers will be willing to sell or exchange land with the council in the areas concerned to permit the construction of the footbridges. The cost of the land required could be significantly higher than current estimates, particularly if the developers are unwilling to sell or exchange land with the council.
- 2.7 To comply with the spirit of the December 2013 Cabinet decision this report recommends the construction of an underpass at J25 and a footbridge at J4. However, it may be that a lower cost and risk option will be construct footbridges at each location, although this would be likely to attract significant objections from the existing residents, particularly in the adjoining areas of Two Mile Ash (J25) and Hilltops (J4).

- 2.8 Whatever option is selected, the provision of underpasses or footbridges is likely to take a year, or more, to design in detail, obtain necessary planning permission, let the contract – possibly via Ringway, and then construct. It is also recommended that local residents are consulted on the design of the footbridge as these can be perceived to increase intrusion due to the 6m height such structures would need to achieve across the V4 Grid Road.

3. Options

Table 1

Crossings Options Analysis		
Options	Risk	Notes
Option A Underpasses at J4 and J25	Red	Very significant risk of further cost escalation at J4 due to buried services.
Preferred option - B Underpass at J25 and footbridge J4	Amber	Risks of cost escalation at J25 but potential for local opposition to footbridge at J4
Second preference option - C Footbridges at both locations	A/G	Potential for local opposition – could potentially be alleviated through good unobtrusive design. Need to purchase additional land from developer

4. Implications

Policy

- 4.1 The Milton Keynes Council Cabinet decision of December 2013 required the feasibility of constructing grade separated crossings for the WEA to be evaluated on the basis of existing policy:
- 4.2 The Milton Keynes Core Strategy states “grid roads – are urban clearways...with no at-grade pedestrian crossings”.
- 4.3 The 2012 MKC Residential Design Guide indicates that: Underpasses will be required where pedestrian and cycle routes need to cross grid roads.

Resources and Risk

- 4.4 Resources to deliver the grade separated crossings have been identified within the council's capital programme with funding allocated for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20. The sum allocated is £3m. This funding would come from the council's capital budget. The total cost of the recommended option is estimated to be within the budget available for the project. However, costs could increase significantly if unmapped buried services are discovered at J25 or the additional land required for the bridge footprint cannot be readily sourced from developers.

Table 2

Detailed Crossings Options Considered		
Location	Risk	Notes
Underpass Jct 4	Red	High number of buried services. Permission required and costs likely to escalate significantly
Underpass Jct 25	A/R	Fewer buried services at location but could still be problematic as permission required to divert nearby services.
Footbridge Jct 4	A/G	Services not significantly affected by footbridge works. However, likely to create significant opposition from local residents due potential overlooking of existing properties. Land acquisition may be problematic
Footbridge Jct 25	A/G	Services not significantly affected by footbridge works. However, likely to create significant opposition from local residents due potential overlooking of existing properties. Land acquisition may be problematic
Do Nothing	Red	Danger of pedestrians crossing 60 mph grid road Reputational risk to MKC

4.5 This infrastructure would be an asset of the Council which would require ongoing maintenance. This would be met for the council's maintenance budgets

Y	Capital		Revenue		Accommodation
	IT		Medium Term Plan	Y	Asset Management

Carbon and Energy Management

4.6 There will be a neutral impact in terms of carbon and energy management

Legal

4.7 Delivery of highway works within highway land is within the powers of Milton Keynes Council as Highway Authority.

Other Implications

4.8 Design and delivery of the crossings will as far as possible be in line with current design guidance and standards. The needs of disabled users will be considered fully within the detailed design phase

	Equalities/Diversity		Sustainability		Human Rights
	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders		Crime and Disorder

- Annex A – Underpass and footbridge crossings location, layout, existing services and initial plans
- Annex B – Policy background and chronology of previous V4 crossings options analysis
- Annex C – Background to WEA Growth
- Annex D - Cost estimates