

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 11th April 2011

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WARD(S): Chalvey

PORTFOLIO: Councillor James Swindlehurst, Commissioner for Neighbourhoods & Renewal

PART I **NON-KEY DECISION**

HIGHWAY CHANGES IN CHALVEY

1 Purpose of Report

To seek approval to carry out an experimental consultation of Chalvey residents and affected road users in order to gauge support for a range of measures to ease traffic flow and reduce congestion in this area of the town.

Discussion with residents as part of the preparations for regeneration have consistently highlighted heavy congestion on Chalvey roads as one of their main priorities for action.

As part of the wider regeneration of Chalvey, the Council has already brought forward works to enable a new community hub on the site of the former Thames Valley Community Centre as well as a number of other projects completed and proposed.

This report seeks to start work on the next phase identified through the consultation of local residents in 2009, which includes measures to improve traffic flow on a number of key roads in this area.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) That Officers draw up a number of options for measures to improve traffic flow and safety for pedestrians and road users in Chalvey.
- (b) That an experimental consultation exercise be held with road users and residents affected by changes outlined in (a) so that public support can be gauged and the scheme amended as appropriate.
- (c) That the scope of consultation be delegated to the Head of Transport in consultation with the Commissioner for Neighbourhoods & Renewal.
- (d) That options for the implementation of a scheme be reported to Cabinet at its next meeting.
- (e) That expenditure of up to £40k is agreed from the available capital allocation within the Chalvey regeneration project.

3 **Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Adding years to Life and Life to years**

Regeneration in Chalvey is the Council's response to the identified needs of the area, which suffers from high levels of deprivation ranking amongst the 10% most deprived in the South East Region. Significant progress has already been made on regeneration, with the former Thames Valley Community Centre refurbished on a design and build basis to house a new Early Years Centre which gives young children a good start in life, and builds education and wellbeing into their lives at an early age. The new community hub currently under construction will provide a number of new community facilities including a library and adult learning facilities which address the needs of the local community.

- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**

A number of accidents involving pedestrians have been recorded over the past 3 years, including on designated crossing points and near to local schools. Standing traffic increases the difficulty of pedestrians to cross busy road junctions, and by working to address these issues the safety and wellbeing of residents can be supported while the environmental quality of the area, both aesthetically and in terms of pollution can be improved.

- **A Cleaner, Greener place to live, Work and Play**

Another of the stated aims of the regeneration is the improvement of the urban environment which can be achieved in part by reducing congestion and standing traffic. The declaration of an Air Quality Management Zone along the town centre section of the A4 has been made necessary by increased volumes of traffic and congestion. In this location the increased pollution is being addressed by improvements to the road network around the former Brunel roundabout and investment in smart technology to manage traffic flow. Due to the current road layout in Chalvey and the complexity of some of the junctions standing traffic is a common feature, which not only increases pollution output but presents difficulties for residential traffic.

- **Prosperity for All**

Regeneration taking place in a number of areas of the town, coupled with continued investment in education, skills training, parks and open spaces and key public services all contribute to individual wellbeing and personal development. The quality of the townscape influences the propensity of businesses to locate in Slough, so efforts to make the town more attractive will also have positive effects on the local economy.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

£40k is available from the Chalvey Regeneration budget to develop options and design work, and for public consultation for the possible highway changes outlined within this report.

It is anticipated the costs of the consultation and subject to member agreement any arising pilot/experimental solution will be met within the available £40k cash envelope.

Members will consider the outcome of any pilot and associated budgetary requirements for a permanent solution prior to implementation.

Risk Management

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation(s)</i>
<i>Consultation exercise held to gauge resident support</i>	<i>Going ahead with changes to the road network without consulting local residents could miss the opportunity of utilising local knowledge and wishes</i>	<i>Conduct a thorough consultation around a range of options to gauge resident support</i>
<i>Measures be considered to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion</i>	<i>These changes have the potential to significantly improve the urban environment in this area of the town, while improving the safety and wellbeing of local residents. Failure to act could lead to a worsening situation</i>	<i>Bring forward a range of proposals with to consult local residents and gauge support for differing options</i>

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

None at this stage.

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

Consultation will be targeted at all members of the local community to capture a wide range of views on the proposed scheme. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out to ensure that any proposals which gain support and are approved do not disadvantageously affect any section of the community.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 In November and December 2009 a consultation was carried out with around 4000 residents in the Chalvey area, with booklets setting out a number of options for improvements to the local area, and a reply slip to seek the views of local residents as to their priorities. Of the questionnaires returned over 50% of respondents chose option around improvements to the highways, pavements, parking and street scene.
- 5.2 Support was also given for a new Community Hub and a Primary School to serve Chalvey children. The Community Hub is in the process of being refurbished in the former Thames Valley Community Centre at the Green, ready for opening in the summer. Cabinet have also approved proposals for the Town Hall to be converted into a Primary School to admit pupils in September 2012. The next highest priority is therefore improvements traffic flow in Chalvey.
- 5.3 Transport officers met with the Traffic Sub-Committee of the Chalvey Forum in February to review what the most pressing concerns around traffic and congestion were and the findings from this meeting have fed into the desire to bring forward some options for consideration. Officers will continue discussion with this group as part of the consultation to identify preferred options.

- 5.4 The area in question suffers from rat running as the road layout has north-south and east-west routes which mirror the main arterial routes of the A4, Tuns Lane and Windsor Road. Chalvey Road East and Chalvey Road West run east-west and are parallel to the A4/Bath Road and are therefore used by drivers seeking to avoid this route. Ledgers Road and Ragstone Road form a north-south route which is parallel to Tuns Lane and Windsor Road presenting drivers with the opportunity to avoid these routes. Whereas the aforementioned arterial routes are designed to carry heavy traffic flow, the historic road layout in Chalvey is not similarly disposed to cope with the volumes of traffic which currently use it. The road layout also presents difficulties namely the staggered junction of Ragstone/Ledgers/Chalvey Roads East and West which is a focus for congestion on north-south and east-west running routes.
- 5.5 There have been 14 Personal Injury Accidents in three years in the vicinity of Chalvey Road West and its junctions. A number of these have included pedestrian casualties, including the Puffin Crossing on Chalvey Road West and also in Ragstone Road between Chalvey Road East and school entrance. There have also been three vehicle accidents at the junction of the High Street and Chalvey Road West.
- 5.6 Thames Water have informed the Council that as part of their Victorian water main replacement programme they will be carrying out work in the Chalvey area which is likely to require work on roads and footpaths. It may be prudent to work alongside Thames Water's work to support the implementation of the chosen traffic management options, though the scope to which this is possible will only become clear once Thames Water have confirmed the extent and timetabling of their works.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

This report has not been considered by any other Committees.

7 **Conclusion**

This report is seeking Cabinet approval to conduct a resident consultation to gauge public support for measures which could be implemented to mitigate the identified issues around traffic, congestion and road layout in Chalvey.

Previous consultations have shown public support for measures to improve the current road layout, though no specific options have been considered by previous consultations.

The current road layout not only leads to heavy congestion and standing traffic at peak times, but poses a danger to pedestrians and other road users, and creates a negative urban environment.

If approved Officers will work up a number of options which will be presented to the public for their comments and views, and based upon these findings will bring recommendations back to Cabinet dependent on the outcome.

8 **Background Papers**

None.