

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

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WARD(S): Foxborough and Colnbrook with Poyle

PART I

FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

MASS RAPID TRANSPORT PHASE 2 – A4 WIDENING AND SUTTON LANE GYRATORY

1. Purpose of Report

To provide information to the NCS Scrutiny Panel arising from the request received from the Cllr for Colnbrook with Poyle:

I request the Panel to scrutinise the impact of proposed changes to the layout of the A4 and junctions off it at Brands Hill, Colnbrook. Outline plans were released last year by SBC's Highways Department for the A4 London Road at Brands Hill to become a four-lane highway, with two of the four lanes becoming bus lanes, and for changes to its junctions with Sutton Lane, Colnbrook By-pass, London Road connecting to Colnbrook Village, and Brands Road, including removal of a gyratory system. The A4 London Road at Brands Hill suffers the worst air pollution of any road in Slough, and before any detailed plans to make changes to this road are implemented their impact on traffic congestion and air quality should be scrutinised. Not only the changes to junctions but also the introduction of bus lanes will impact on both these indices - changes here in this highly sensitive residential area should only be given approval if the evidence shows they will significantly reduce current levels of traffic congestion and air pollution, including for each junction affected.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Panel is requested to note the report and comment on it.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

The [Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy](#) (SJWS) is the document that details the priorities agreed for Slough with partner organisations. The SJWS has been developed using a comprehensive evidence base that includes the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Both are clearly linked and must be used in conjunction when preparing your report. They have been combined in the Slough Wellbeing Board report template to enable you to provide supporting information highlighting the link between the SJWS and JSNA priorities.

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Whilst not directly supporting any of the wellbeing priorities, the local road network and its operation improve accessibility for all residents. This particularly applies to those with limited mobility (e.g. disability, the elderly)

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

A high quality and reliable road network supports the following Five Year Plan outcome:

- Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

The cost for the widening along the A4 from High St, Langley to the By-pass is contained within the allocated budget assigned by the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP as part of the Business Rate Retention Pilot scheme.

(b) Risk Management

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no legal or Human Rights Act implications relating to the content of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

The development of a rapid transit service along the A4 corridor was an integral part of Slough's Third Local Transport Plan 2011- 2026 which was the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out in 2010. The aims of the scheme are to offer significant improvement to transport routes and public transport that will benefit all equality groups. The SMaRT Business Case has also assessed the specific social and distributional impacts of the scheme and the results were:

- **Severance** - The impact was found to be neutral to equality groups, due to a very small number of roads experiencing an increase and decrease in traffic flows as a result of the proposed scheme;
- **Personal Security** – The scheme is expected to have a neutral impact on security. It will improve the overall reliability of bus services and have a positive impact on personal security as people have a reduced waiting time between buses; and
- **Accessibility** - The impact on vulnerable groups was appraised as slightly beneficial because the scheme demonstrates an improved bus service frequency. Certain protected characteristics (disability, children and young people, older people and women) are more reliant on public transport than others; therefore improving access to public transport is a positive impact from the scheme. The 2011 census revealed that car ownership amongst Slough residents is lower than the regional average; therefore enhancements to public transport also address this point.

A separate EIA will be conducted on the detailed design proposals as the scheme progresses to identify, and mitigate against, any potential adverse impacts arising during the individual work programmes.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 The SMaRT scheme is a key element of SBC's document "A Transport Vision for the 'Centre of Slough'", and is a continuation of improvements being made by Slough Borough Council to increase the level of accessibility to, from and around the town for residents, employees and visitors. The overall scheme aims to make radical changes at key hotspots to tackle longstanding congestion and air quality issues, and build highway capacity for the future.

5.2 SMaRT Phase 1 focused on the A4 corridor between Slough Trading Estate, the town centre and Langley. The Phase 1 scheme delivered a combination of highway infrastructure measures aimed at delivering journey time reliability performance improvements of bus services while also improving the efficient operation of the highway network for general traffic, and complementary improvements to bus service provision.

5.3 SMaRT Phase 2 is designed to achieve a number of positive outcomes for the borough:

- To deliver convenient, sustainable, high quality passenger transport between Heathrow and Slough town centre;
- To relieve congestion on the eastern section of the A4 corridor;
- To help bring forward the delivery of housing development in the town centre over and above that previously support by SMaRT Phase 1;
- To improve journey time reliability and enhance sustainable accessibility to the future housing and employment sites;
- To future-proof the eastern section of the A4 for changes likely to result from the Heathrow expansion;
- To provide an increased frequency of bus services to / from Colnbrook and the surrounding area;
- To bring about net improvements in air quality.

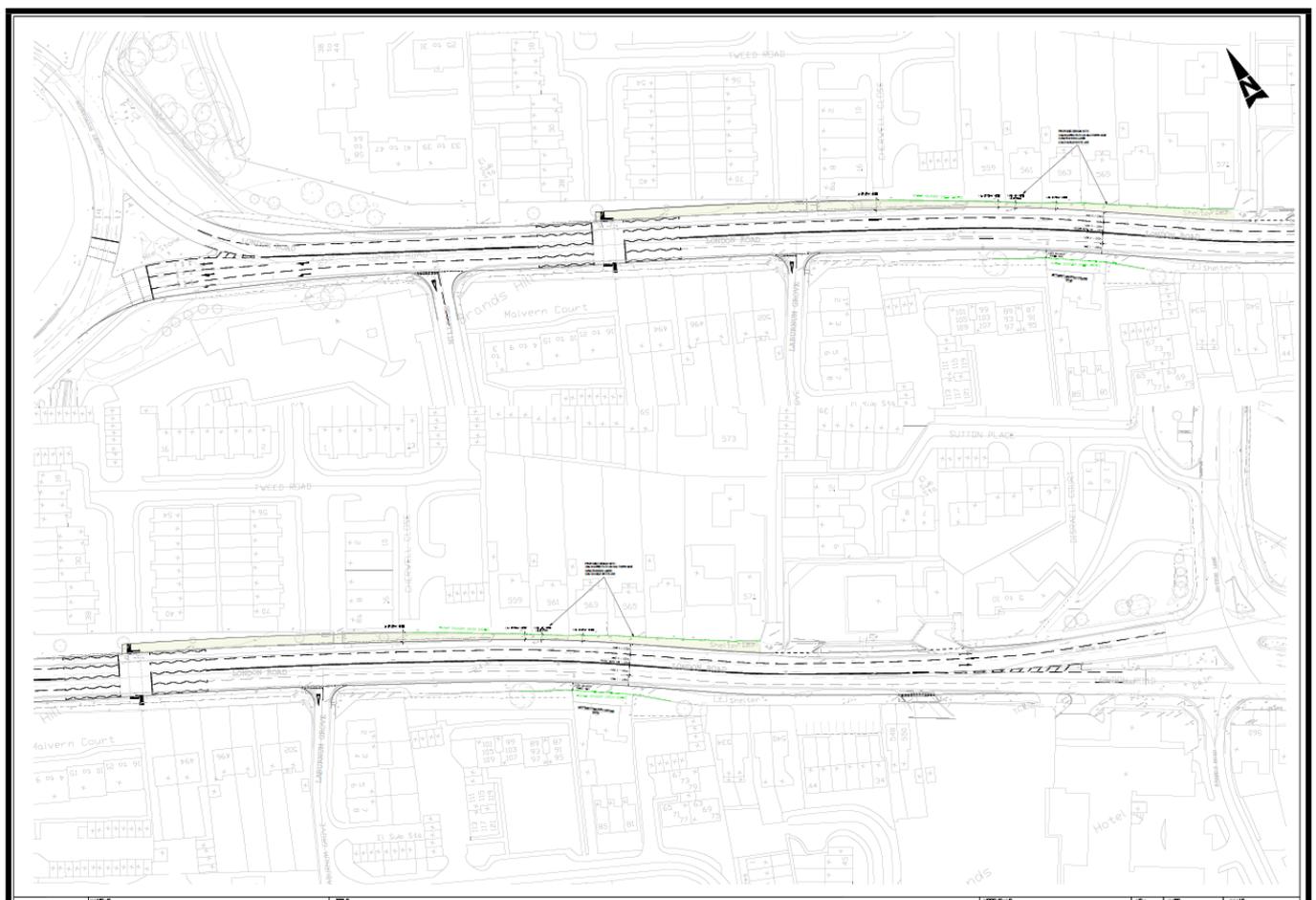
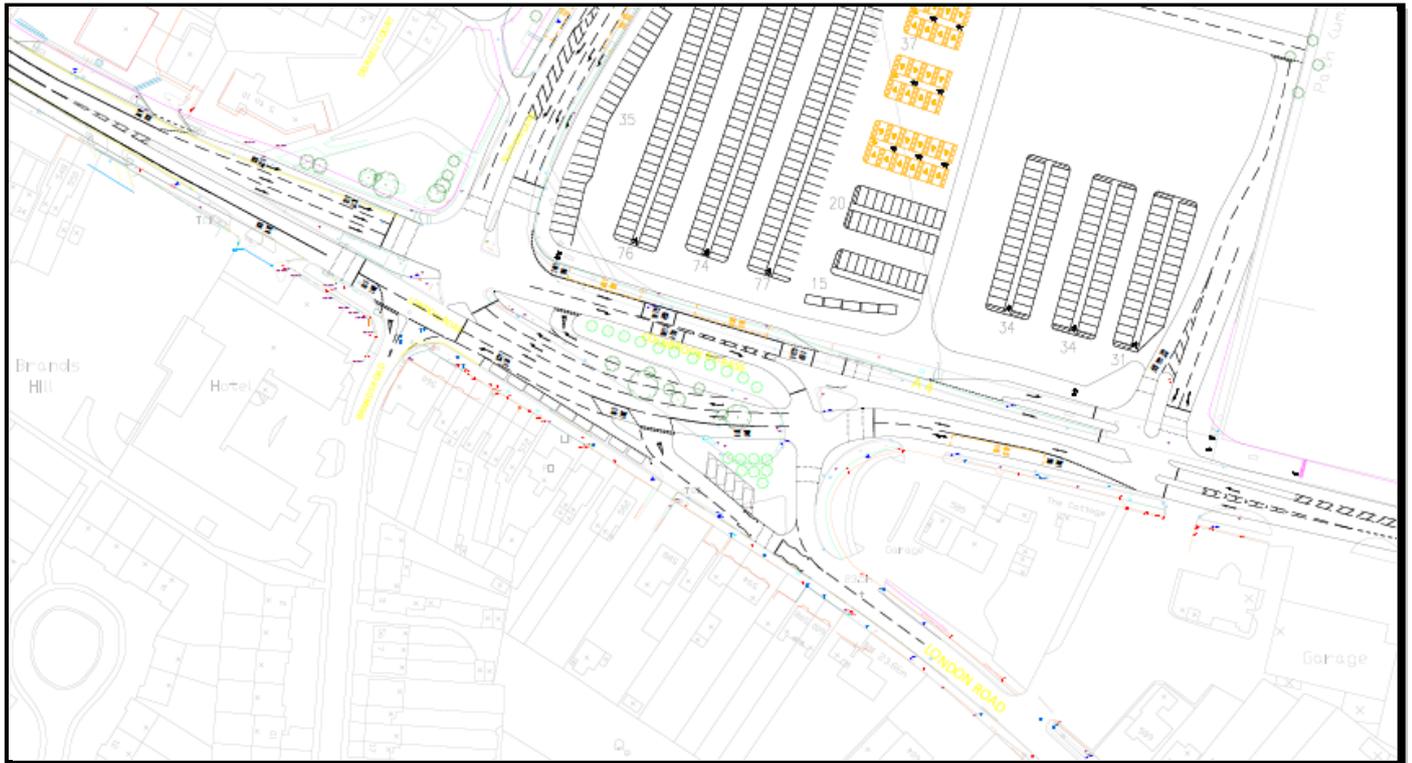
5.4 The proposals under SMaRT Phase 2 comprise the following elements:

- Junction modifications and traffic signal provision at the London Road / Sutton Lane / Colnbrook Bypass gyratory. Pedestrian and cycle crossings on London Road will be improved and bus stop waiting areas upgraded to provide for local needs at Brands Hill including residential, commercial and hotel properties. Discussions will be held with third parties to improve road safety by relocating existing services in the vicinity of the junction.
- The widening of London Road to 2 lanes westbound between M4 Junction 5 roundabout and Sutton Lane with the conversion of these lanes to bus lanes improve bus services to the area.

5.5 The design below is the latest iteration for the Sutton Lane Gyratory and is currently being modelled to ascertain whether this option will provide extra capacity but more importantly reduce the congestion that is currently faced by commuters and residents in the area.

5.6 The redesign of the gyratory is expected to eliminate the "exit blocking" that is experienced everyday and will incorporate a new traffic signal control layout

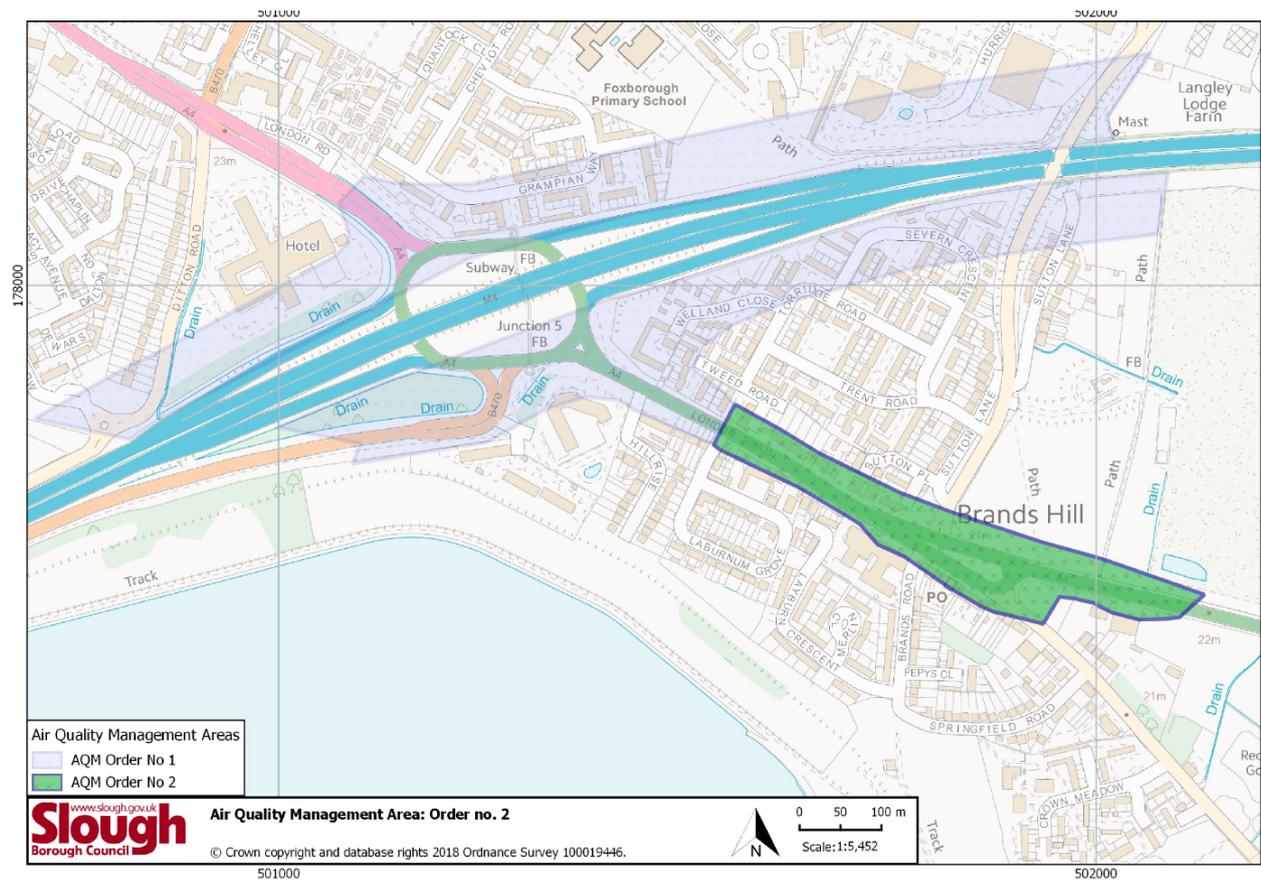
including managing the flow from the Old London Road and the By-pass to make traffic more free-flowing.



5.7 Alongside the changes to the gyratory the MRT phase 2 project is to deliver widening of the A4 to facilitate bus lanes in both directions. The Council's approved Transport Vision and more recently the approach to supporting more

bus lanes to prioritise bus services endorses the need to tackle air quality and modal shift in all transport projects.

- 5.8 The design over the next few months will be reviewed for air quality impacts utilising the standard Air Quality Assessment process. This area of the A4 (Brands Hill) was declared as an air quality management area (AQMA) in 2006 due to exceedances of the EU limit value for nitrogen dioxide ($40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). A map outlining the boundaries of the AQMA is shown below. Brands Hill AQMA had the highest nitrogen dioxide concentrations in the borough during 2018 ($53.2\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, corrected to $47.9\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at the nearest receptor); therefore, it is important that action is taken to improve air quality in this area and that any scheme put forward is thoroughly scrutinised to ensure that the scheme does not contribute to a worsening of air quality, particularly as the scheme will result in an increase in capacity on the road network.



- 5.9 The assessment must consider the current baseline air quality in Brands Hill and compare to future scenarios with and without the scheme in place and resulting air quality impact. This would focus on both the construction and operational phases, taking into account in-combination effects with other schemes in the area. To ensure that air quality impact is avoided, appropriate mitigation shall also be sought. For example, during the construction phase, all construction related HGVs will be limited to Euro 6 and routing plans will be designed to reduce air quality impacts elsewhere.
- 5.10 It is expected that the alterations will show an improvement; however, the Council recognises this will come at the cost of longer delays on the A4 for the private car. In order to encourage more patronage on public transport, we need to provide more space for buses and with the limitations on available land this will mean better journey times for bus users but longer journey times for the car users.

- 5.11 The reduction of general traffic lanes will still have to be balanced to ensure that air quality does not deteriorate and therefore the Council will need to consider whether the bus lanes operate at peak times only or as permanent bus lanes; this will be subject to the growth in bus services along the A4. The Transport Vision and the emerging Transport Strategy are acknowledged and referred to in the Low Emission Strategy (LES) and vice-versa and therefore the council will be expecting the two strategies to support the overall objectives of modal shift and cleaner air.
- 5.12 The emerging transport strategy is not intended to penalise car users severely but to alleviate the growth in traffic by providing alternative and sustainable modes of travel to the private car. The strategy looks to provide more highway capacity but this will be for sustainable travel.
- 5.13 Evidence of the Council's commitment to improve public transport in the area of Colnbrook with Poyle is the recent Electric Bus trial and now the launch of the permanent 459 service from Heathrow to Langley and Iver. This has been a joint funding proposal by Slough Borough Council and Heathrow Airport to support bus travel and reduce the reliance on the car.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

None

7. **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Council is committed to improving air quality in the Brands Hill area and has secured funding to support the modal shift agenda but at the same time looking to improve capacity and traffic flow at the Sutton Lane Gyratory. It is expected that when the works are completed later in the year there will be more reliable bus services supporting the local area of Colnbrook.

8. **Background Papers**

MRT Phase 2 Cabinet Paper March 2019