

**REPORT TO:** Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 17 June 2009

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director - Environment

**SUBJECT:** Highway Improvement Scheme – A5080 Lunts Heath Road / B5419 Wilmere Lane Junction

**WARDS:** Farnworth

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To inform members of progress made in the development of a proposed highway improvement scheme at the junction of Lunts Heath Road and Wilmere Lane junction, Widnes, as requested by the Farnworth Ward Councillors.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) The progress made in the development of a scheme to improve the junction of Lunts Heath Road and Wilmere Lane be noted and
- (2) Options for funding for the design and implementation of a scheme are explored.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Background to the Scheme**

3.1.1 The origins of the need to consider a highway improvement scheme date back to 2005, when the Birchfield, Farnworth and Halton View Area Forum requested investigation of a scheme to close the existing left-turn slip road from Lunts Heath Road to Wilmere Lane. A number of layout options were considered by the Area Forum, however due to various site and safety constraints, it has not been possible to propose a solution that could be implemented from the Area Forum's limited budget allocation.

3.1.2 At the Forum's January 2008 meeting, concerns were raised about increased traffic flows, which were resulting in congestion and unsafe traffic manoeuvres at the junction, and the Highways Division was asked to investigate these problems. It was recognised that the cost of a scheme to resolve capacity and safety issues at the junction would be beyond the scope of the Area Forum budget and that if a scheme were to proceed, funding would be required from other capital budgets.

- 3.1.3 At the end of October 2008, Area Forum members requested that a report be prepared for the Urban Renewal PPB to consider a highway improvement scheme to address the problems at the junction.

### **3.2 Progress to Date**

- 3.2.1 A traffic survey was undertaken in February 2008 and following analysis of the traffic movements at the junction, a range of options to improve its layout and capacity was prepared. Initial budget cost estimates of the options range from £87,000 for an improved priority junction, to £199,000 for a widened junction with traffic signal control.
- 3.2.2 Operational capacity and road safety are key factors to the satisfactory performance of an improved junction layout. Traffic modelling work has been undertaken to test the operation of the design layout options. The results of this work have indicated that a simple remodelling of the current priority junction would not be sufficient to provide the increased capacity necessary to cope with current and future traffic demand. However, conversion of the junction to either traffic signal control, or to a roundabout layout would reduce the potential for conflicts, build-in capacity and would provide improved pedestrian crossing and cycle facilities.
- 3.2.3 Further preliminary design work, traffic modelling and junction analysis will be required, using a cost benefit and accident prediction approach, before a preferred scheme can be proposed for the improvement of this junction.

### **3.3 Issues**

- 3.3.1 There are housing allocations in North Widnes contained within the UDP which when implemented could generate additional traffic and the resultant traffic growth in the area may impact upon the design of the Wilmere Lane junction. These would need to be taken into account in the junction analysis.
- 3.3.2 In addition to road safety and capacity issues, there are a number of other considerations to be taken into account in the junction design:
- The junction lies on the designated abnormal load route and therefore the improved junction layout will need to accommodate these vehicles and loads;
  - The ongoing routine maintenance and energy costs of the amended junction need to be considered within the cost benefit analysis;
  - The location of existing access to residential properties within the junction must be taken into account in the planned junction layout and residents who are affected by the scheme, consulted at an early stage of the development of proposals.
- 3.3.3 There is currently no funding allocation for either the design or implementation of this potential improvement scheme in any approved

programme. This is a matter for consideration by the Council's Executive Board, however, two main sources of funding could be considered:

- Local Transport Plan Local Safety Scheme Budget. Although not specifically listed in the current LTP implementation programme, the scheme addresses the key shared priorities of improving road safety and tackling congestion. Pedestrian, cycle and public transport accessibility will also be improved in the redesign of the junction. Therefore the scheme would be an appropriate use of the integrated transport block funding through the LTP.
- Mid Mersey Housing Growth Point related funding. Transport infrastructure improvements were identified within bids for funding from the Communities Infrastructure Fund (CIF) and through the Programme of Development (POD). Unfortunately, the expression of interest for CIF funding for transport improvements in North Widnes was not successful. However POD or Section 106 funding may be available in the future, as housing developments are brought forward.

3.3.4 It is not proposed to carry out any further work on the design or analysis of the improvement scheme for Lunts Heath Road / Wilmere Lane junction until appropriate funding has been approved and the scheme has been accepted into the Council's Capital programme. It could also be deemed inappropriate to do any further work until the sites allocated in the UDP are brought forward and accepted. It is not anticipated that this will be until 2011.

3.3.5 Potential sources of funding for the scheme will continue to be explored and pursued.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications relating to the scheme design and implementation

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Resource Implications

Scheme design and implementation costs are not yet known at this stage. These would be a matter for the Executive Board to consider for acceptance of the scheme into the Capital Programme.

5.2 Sustainability Implications

An improved junction arrangement at Lunts Heath Road / Wilmere lane would reduce congestion, improve road safety and enhance access to north Widnes. The scheme would also include sustainable transport improvements through the provision of pedestrian, cycle and public transport facilities.

5.3 Best value implications  
There are no best value implications at this stage.

5.3 Legal Implications  
There are no legal implications.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no direct implications for children and young people, however, the provision of improved pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction could allow these groups to negotiate the junction in greater safety.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The scheme would include pedestrian, cycle and bus stop improvements, promoting sustainable modes of travel, aimed at reducing reliance on the motorcar.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

The scheme would address road traffic accident problems related to the existing layout of the Lunts Heath Road / Wilmere Lane junction. Improving the junction capacity would also reduce congestion and delays and improving traffic flow through the junction, which, in turn, should reduce the incidence of potentially unsafe manoeuvres that currently occur. The scheme meets the key LTP shared priority of safer roads.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The scheme would address the existing traffic congestion that occurs during peak times at the junction that might constrain future development. Additional capacity for traffic growth resulting from future housing developments in north Widnes would be built into the design. The scheme meets the key LTP shared priority of tackling congestion.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

There are no specific risks in relation to this report.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no equality and diversity issues.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Scheme layout options	Highways Management Division	Dave Cunliffe x3017?
Traffic survey data – vehicle turning counts	Environment Directorate Rutland House, Runcorn	
Road traffic accident plots.		