

PTE/17/35

Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee
4 July 2017

Alphington Road/Sydney Road, Exeter

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the scheme shown on plan C15008-05, included in Appendix I, is approved for construction at an estimated cost of £110,000.

1. Introduction

The report seeks scheme approval to introduce a new staggered, signal controlled pedestrian crossing of Alphington Road on the northern arm (city side) of the Alphington Road/Sydney Road signalised junction.

2. Background

The local member requested that the safety concerns for pedestrians at the Alphington Road/Sydney Road junction be considered at the July 2014 meeting of this committee. At that committee it was resolved that the Chairman, local members and officers meet on site to identify options for a pedestrian crossing. An evaluation was provided to this committee at the January 2015 meeting, where approval was given to undertake detailed design for a staggered pedestrian crossing. This report provides details of the preferred design and the results of the public consultation undertaken on the options.

Alphington Road is a key strategic route into the city and, by volume, the busiest radial route in the City. There is a pedestrian demand for the crossing of Alphington Road at the Sydney Road junction. The demand for crossing Alphington Road has recently increased due to the expansion of retail outlets at the Alphington Road Retail Park. An existing pedestrian crossing at Ebrington Road provides access for pedestrians from the south; however it is not on the desire line for people walking either from Sydney Road or from the city (i.e. from Exe Bridges) towards the retail park.

Travelling from the city, the main pedestrian route is via the railway arch on the western side of Alphington Road and to cross on the northern arm of the junction. The existing crossing facility is uncontrolled, and pedestrians cross in gaps in the traffic or during inter-stage periods. Although this is sufficient for many pedestrians the crossing is difficult for vulnerable users, including people with visual or mobility impairments and parents with young children/prams.

The introduction of a staggered crossing would provide pedestrians with a suitable signal controlled crossing. A number of options for a staggered crossing on the north side of the junction have been assessed to consider the needs of pedestrians crossing Alphington Road and balancing these against the impacts on congestion by providing such a facility. The most effective option is presented in this report. A brief outline of the impact of the alternative, a straight through crossing, is also included.

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3. Proposal

Plan C15008-05 included in Appendix I outlines the recommended scheme proposal for a staggered signal controlled pedestrian crossing. The crossing will be a Puffin style to detect the presence of pedestrians waiting to cross.

The crossing is on the desire line for pedestrians to and from the north. Although it is expected all of these people will use the crossing, not all will wait for the green man. From the south, particularly Sydney Road, it is likely that able bodied pedestrians will continue to cross to the central island from Sydney Road, and may choose not to use the crossing.

The proposed scheme introduces a stagger with a new pedestrian refuge area of approximately 10 metres length on the northern Alphington Road arm. This new refuge extends between the access to numbers 16 and 20 Alphington Road and will make access into and out of those properties more difficult. In particular, vehicles will be unable to turn right into or out of the northern access to number 20 and the left out of this access will be difficult due to the location of the signal pole. It will be difficult to turn into and out of number 16, and there is potential for conflict between vehicles accessing the property and pedestrians waiting to cross.

To accommodate the refuge and maintain the existing outbound ahead and right turn, the cycle lane on the outbound approach to the junction will be removed.

Current Operation and Capacity Implications

The traffic flow on Alphington Road is typically 1,000 vehicles per hour in each direction. At busy times of day the junction operates on a 120 second cycle time, which typically comprises 10 seconds of lost time, 10 seconds green time to the side roads and 100 seconds green time to the main road.

Outbound - A staggered crossing facility would provide pedestrian green time when the Alphington Road outbound arm is already on red and therefore will have little impact on the capacity of the junction for outbound traffic.

Inbound - The stagger on the inbound arm will require a new signal stage that will result in more red time to inbound traffic. The pedestrian crossing phase would result in up to 10% reduction in green time for inbound traffic. This reduction will decrease the theoretical capacity for inbound traffic.

Any loss in capacity will increase queuing and has the potential to increase disruption to traffic flow in the Marsh Barton trading estate. Increased delays on Alphington Road inbound may result in some traffic diverting to Cowick Lane and Cowick Street or other alternative routes.

The proposed scheme has been through a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit. Comments from a Stage 2 audit are pending. Only minor changes, if any, are expected as a result of this and these will be agreed with the Local members prior to construction.

Subject to approval, it is proposed to begin construction of the scheme in September 2017.

4. Options/Alternatives

A number of options for a staggered crossing on the north side of the junction have been assessed to consider the needs of pedestrians crossing Alphington Road and balancing these against the impacts on congestion by providing such a facility.

An alternative option providing a straight through crossing in the same location was considered. This left the existing central island unchanged and introduced a controlled crossing.

Although a straight through crossing is more convenient for pedestrians, the pedestrian crossing would be an additional third stage and a red signal would be shown to all traffic. As per the staggered crossing, the impact on capacity on Alphington Road is dependent on the frequency of demand for the pedestrian phase. It is considered the likely use of the pedestrian crossing phase would result up to a 20% reduction in capacity for main road traffic affecting approximately 200 vehicles per hour in each direction. This is double the projected impact of the staggered crossing and would impact both inbound and outbound traffic.

This would have considerable impacts on traffic flows in both directions, with inbound queues expected to impact the Marsh Barton trading estate junctions and in the outbound direction it would impact on the existing queueing at Exe Bridges and beyond. There would also be an impact on bus services using Fore Street, Exe Bridges and potentially South Street. This option is not therefore recommended.

5. Consultations

Consultation was carried out through a letter drop to the 2 neighbouring properties (16 and 20 Alphington Road) on 10 May 2017, providing them with 2 weeks to respond. No responses were received.

6. Financial Considerations

The estimated scheme cost for the crossing is £110,000. Developer contributions of £61,000 have been secured through Section 106. This is made up of approximately £45,000 from The Range, £13,000 from the County Ground and £3,000 from the Loft Club. The remaining will be funded through the 2017/18 Local Transport Plan programme.

6. Environmental Impact Considerations

By promoting sustainable travel modes the proposal will have a minor but positive effect on the environment. However, the additional red time needed to accommodate the new crossing will increase vehicle delays and increase emissions. The proposed staggered crossing is felt to provide an appropriate balance to these two conflicting elements.

7. Equality Considerations

An Equality Impact and Needs Assessment (EINA) was undertaken for the Local Transport Plan. No negative impacts were identified. No new policies are being recommended in this report and therefore an individual Equality Impact and Needs Assessment for the scheme is not considered necessary.

Nevertheless, the improvements are anticipated to improve safety and accessibility for people with visual and mobility impairments. No adverse impacts on any particular groups with protected characteristics are expected.

8. Legal Considerations

To introduce a new or amended pedestrian crossing a public notice will be required to be advertised in accordance with Section 23 of The Road Traffic Regulation Act.

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9. Risk Management Considerations

The proposed staggered crossing forms part of an existing junction. Therefore whilst the additional signals kit will represent an additional maintenance liability, it will not increase the periodic maintenance already required at a signalised junction. No commuted sum to cover future maintenance is provided for this scheme.

10. Public Health Impact

Improved pedestrian crossing facilities will enhance walking links between shopping facilities and residential areas. This will have a positive effect on promoting healthy and sustainable travel within the community. However, the removal of the cycle lane will dis-benefit cyclists and increased vehicle delays are likely to worsen air quality.

11. Reasons for Recommendations

The scheme has been progressed following strong support from the local member(s). It is recommended that on balance members consider the detriment to traffic on a major corridor is overridden by the requirement to improve pedestrian crossing facilities therefore the scheme can be approved for construction in order to support pedestrian safety and improve access to local shopping facilities.

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: All in Exeter

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper

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| 1. | HATOC Report | 27 January 2015 |
| 2. | HATOC Report | 22 July 2014 |

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