

Topsham Road/Southbrook Road/Tollards Road – Junction Improvement

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

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

Recommendation: It is recommended that the scheme shown on attached plan no. C12020/5A be approved at an estimated cost of £180,000.

1. Summary

This report seeks approval for a proposed scheme to improve the Tollards Road/Topsham Road junction, Exeter. The scheme simplifies the signals arrangement and balances a number of issues including red light running, pedestrian and cycle safety; rat running on the service road, and impacts on capacity for citybound traffic on Topsham Road.

2. Background/Introduction

There are reports of consistent, unintentional red light running at the junction of Southbrook Road/Tollards Road with Topsham Road by eastbound drivers from Southbrook Road as a result of the signal phasing coinciding with the pedestrian crossing. Despite this, the current arrangements have not introduced any collisions within the last 5 years. The green phase out of Southbrook Road has been linked with the pedestrian crossing to minimise delays to cars travelling into/out of the city on Topsham Road. The pedestrian crossing only allows stacking for a few vehicles turning left out of Southbrook Road. As a result, during peak times vehicles from Southbrook Road are also observed using the service road as a diversion, in order to avoid the traffic signals at the junction and pedestrian crossing.

Due to the proximity of The West of England School and College (WESC) a higher proportion than normal of blind and visually impaired people use the crossing to access the bus stops, emphasising the importance for a safe system of crossing points.

Consideration has been given to all modes and user groups, and has included consultation with WESC.

The scheme has made full consideration to the implications on capacity post Bridge Road outbound widening scheme.

This report was previously deferred to allow a more detailed analysis of pedestrian/cycle movements at the junction and appraisal of the safety issues of red light running. In April 2013, cameras recorded 3 days of pedestrian/cycle/driver behaviour at the junction.

3. Proposals

The survey of the junction found that over 3 days approximately a quarter of all vehicles turning left from Southbrook Road use the service road, rather than use the signals. There were several instances of red light running through the toucan crossing and it was noted that there were a high number of instances of cars accelerating northbound through the toucan crossing (as it turned amber), which meant that cars went through the lights at the

Southbrook junction on red. It is clear that the spacing and synchronisation of the two sets of signals is both confusing and encourages more dangerous driving.

Attached plan no. C12020/5A shows the proposed scheme, which includes the provision of a toucan crossing in Topsham Road at the junction with Southbrook Road incorporated into the signal controlled junction. The new Toucan crossing will replace the existing signal controlled crossing, which is to the east of the proposed scheme. The Toucan crossing is specified as it links directly to the shared cycle path and footway. A new traffic island, which will eliminate the existing conflict between the pedestrian crossing and red light running, is proposed at the junction. It will incorporate the Topsham Road Toucan crossing, a Puffin crossing at the eastbound exit of Southbrook Road (specified as it is a pedestrian footway) and an uncontrolled crossing across the Southbrook Road arm of the junction. A footway is proposed across the entrance to the service road to tie into existing footways on Topsham Road and Southbrook Road, which will discourage the use of the service road as a rat run. The footway will include dropped kerbs to allow refuse vehicles to access the properties on Topsham Road. The footway on the west side of Southbrook Road will be widened to incorporate the requirements of scheme.

The proposed improvements can be delivered within the existing limits of the highway and will involve the removal of one tree and the adjustment of the existing stone-faced hedge bank.

4. Financial Considerations

The estimated cost of the scheme is £180,000, and funding to carry out the works has been identified through a combination of 2013/14 and 2014/15 Local Transport Plan programme.

5. Sustainability Considerations

The provision of improved walking routes and cycling routes helps promote alternatives to private car use. This crossing will directly link into the existing networks improving access to education and workplace sites as well as to King George V playing fields.

6. Carbon Impact Considerations

The proposals should have a positive impact by encouraging more children to walk to school, which will help reduce levels of car use.

7. Equality Considerations

No new policies are being recommended in this report and therefore an Equality Impact and Needs Assessment is not considered necessary. Students from The West of England School and College for young people with little or no sight use the crossing to access King George V playing fields. It is therefore particularly important at this location that the operation of the crossing is clear to drivers, as a larger proportion of users will not have the ability to perform a visual check to ensure that vehicles have stopped before crossing. Meetings have been held with representatives from WESC who are supportive of the proposals and will arrange training for the new arrangement post completion of the scheme.

8. Legal Considerations

The lawful implications/consequences of the proposals have been considered and taken into account in the preparation of this report.

9. Risk Management Considerations

This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or actions have been taken to safeguard the Council's position.

10. Public Health Impact

The scheme is expected to have a positive public health impact by improving safety for pedestrians/cyclists using the toucan on Topsham Road, and encouraging more children to walk to school. In addition it will improve access to the King George V playing fields where students can play.

The scheme also forms part of the strategic citywide cycle network and helping to encourage more people to travel by healthy modes.

11. Options/Alternatives Investigated

Do nothing

Although the scheme costs are high, the proposed solution achieves a balanced solution for a number of users of the network. The scheme addresses red light running concerns and rat running through the service road; it improves pedestrian and cycle accessibility and also maintains capacity on Topsham Road – a key city centre radial route.

All red phase

Some concerns were raised about the mix of controlled (across Topsham Road) and uncontrolled (across Southbrook Road) crossings and that this could be addressed by introducing an all-round pedestrian stage, which will mean that the number of stages would increase from a two-stage to a three-stage operation. Stage 1 would be Topsham Road; Stage 2 being the pedestrian crossing, and Stage 3 being Southbrook Road.

This would have a detrimental capacity impact on Topsham Road, which is already over capacity during the peak periods. Every cycle that the pedestrian stage would run will result in a loss in capacity of 20% to 25%. The result would see an increase in queuing on Topsham Road, adding to delays to buses and traffic in both directions. Inbound queues of traffic in the morning peak will block back to Countess Wear roundabout and affect the operation of this junction more frequently and for longer periods of the day. This in turn will have an adverse effect on Bridge Road and Rydon Lane. The effects of this proposal are not isolated – introducing an all-red phase would reduce the capacity benefits at Countess Wear roundabout achieved by the Bridge Road major scheme, which is due to commence in Spring 2015. Having consulted with WESC, who are satisfied with the proposals, a decision was taken not to impact on the strategic operation of a main route into the city, and roads linking to it.

Banning the left turn

Maintaining the existing junction arrangement but banning the left turn from Southbrook Road into the service road was considered; however, this was not pursued as it would be difficult to enforce (and sign in proximity to the junction with Topsham Road) and it would worsen the existing issue of queuing on Southbrook Road during peak times.

12. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

The proposed scheme will improve the safety of a pedestrian/cycle crossing where there are currently red light violations and evidence of vehicles speeding up to get through the second set of signals. This is in a crucial location as it is in close proximity to the West of England School and College for young people with little or no sight. There will also be a reduction in the number of cars using the service road.

The proposed scheme will also help to reduce car dependency by giving people the confidence and ability to make more local journeys to be made by foot or bicycle, and will maintain inbound/outbound capacity on Topsham Road.

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Electoral Division: St Loyes & Topsham

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

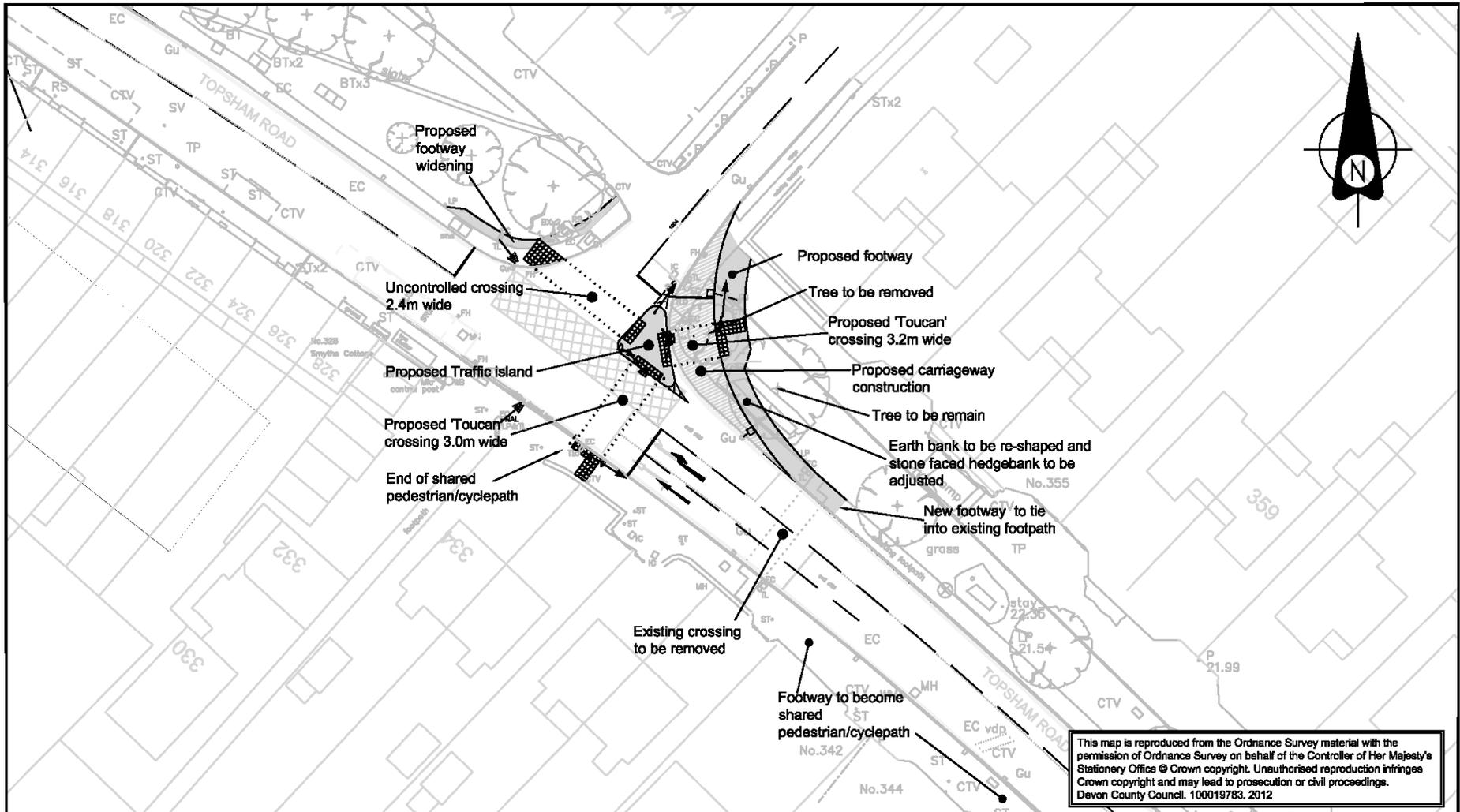
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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
None		

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sc/cr/topsham road southbrook road tollards road
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