

CABINET

27 January 2015

Title: Merry Fiddlers Junction Improvements - Minor Scheme Amendments	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: Heath; Valence; Whalebone	Key Decision: Yes
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Accountable Divisional Director: Jeremy Grint, Divisional Director of Regeneration	
Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Director of Growth	
Summary	
<p>By Minute 113 (19 March 2013), the Cabinet approved plans to implement a series of highways and public realm improvements to the busy road junction at Merry Fiddlers in Becontree Heath. These included proposals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replace the paving around the junction.• Reduce the number of lanes on Wood Lane next to the leisure centre from 5 to 3• Make the dangerous Wood Lane/Homestead Road junction safer.• Link the Becontree Leisure Centre and Morrisons car parks together.• Ban the dangerous right hand turns into and out of Althorne Way and out of Morrisons onto Wood Lane. Open up Stour Road to allow access from Althorne Way to Rainham Road North. <p>Work to implement all the banned turns, create a link between the two car parks, open up Stour Road to through traffic and alter the re-phasing of the traffic signals was completed in early 2014. However no work has yet been undertaken on the Merry Fiddlers junction itself due to the long lead in time that changes to a complex junction such as this entail. Detailed design work on the main junction is now complete, and following discussions between officers and Transport for London a number of minor improvements to the junction scheme are now recommended in order to improve pedestrian and cyclist accessibility and safety without affecting congestion. These include :-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a) Reducing the number of lanes on Green Lane from 3 to 2 (so that there is one lane for left turning and straight ahead traffic and one lane for right turning and straight ahead traffic) to reduce the time taken for pedestrians to cross the road;b) Widening of the Green Lane pedestrian crossing island to improve safety for pedestrians;c) Providing Advance Stop Lanes (ASLs) at all arms of the junction to improve safety for cyclists;	

- d) Up-grading traffic signals on all junction arms to provide SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique) to enable more effective management of signal timings and reduce vehicle and pedestrian waiting times.

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is recommended to agree the following minor amendments to the designs for the Merry Fiddlers junction in order that the outstanding highways improvements can be implemented:

- (i) Up-grading traffic signals on all junction arms to provide SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique);
- (ii) Reducing the number of lanes on Green Lane from 3 to 2;
- (iii) Widening of the Green Lane pedestrian crossing island ;
- (iv) Providing Advance Stop Lanes (ASLs) at all arms of the junction.

Reason(s)

To assist the Council in achieving all of its Community Priorities, in particular enabling social responsibility by protecting the most vulnerable, keeping adults and children healthy and safe; and growing the borough through supporting investment in public spaces to enhance our environment.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Following an extensive public consultation exercise in Autumn 2012, Cabinet approved in March 2013 a package of highways and public realm improvements for the Merry Fiddlers junction in Becontree Heath (Minute 113 refers). These included proposals to:

- Replace the paving around the junction;
- Reduce the number of lanes on Wood Lane next to the leisure centre from 5 to 3;
- Make the dangerous Wood Lane/Homestead Road junction safer;
- Link the Becontree Leisure Centre and Morrisons car parks together;
- Ban the dangerous right hand turns into and out of Althorne Way and out of Morrisons onto Wood Lane;
- Open up Stour Road to allow access from Althorne Way to Rainham Road North.

1.2 Work to implement all the banned turns, create a link between the two car parks, open up Stour Road to through traffic and alter the initial re-phasing of the traffic signals began in Summer 2013 and was completed in early 2014.

1.3 Work to produce detailed designs for the main junction improvements began in Autumn 2013, but following further discussions with Transport for London, minor amendments to these plans are now required before the outstanding junction improvements can be implemented.

2. Proposal and Issues

- 2.1 Transport for London is responsible for the operation and maintenance of all traffic signals in London and therefore the changes to the junction require their approval. Therefore officers have been discussing the detailed design of the Merry Fiddlers Junction Scheme with Transport for London and in particular the Council's proposals to reduce the number of lanes on Wood Lane from 5 to 3 and alter the signal timings.
- 2.2 Following a review of the detailed designs and an examination of the traffic modelling data, a number of concerns were identified that aspects of the original proposals do not provide optimum safety and accessibility benefits for pedestrians and cyclists and could result in additional road traffic congestion at the junction. However, these issues can be easily resolved by making a number of minor alterations to the designs.

3. Options Appraisal

- 3.1 To address these concerns, and to enable the outstanding highways improvements to be implemented, a number of minor amendments to the designs for the Merry Fiddlers junction are required. These are designed to bring additional benefits to pedestrian/cyclist safety and accessibility, but also have implications for traffic flow. A plan of the proposed junction layout is included in Appendix 1 to this report and the main changes are summarised below. They include:
- 1) Reducing the number of lanes on Green Lane from 3 to 2 (so that there is one lane for left turning and straight ahead traffic and one lane for right turning and straight ahead traffic) to reduce the time taken for pedestrians to cross the road;
 - 2) Widening of the Green Lane pedestrian crossing island to improve safety for pedestrians;
 - 3) Providing Advance Stop Lanes (ASLs) at all arms of the junction to improve safety for cyclists;
 - 4) Up-grading traffic signals on all junction arms to provide SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique) to enable more effective management of signal timings and reduce vehicle and pedestrian waiting times.
- 3.2 Traffic modelling undertaken as part of the scheme design process has indicated that the inclusion of SCOOT at the junction will off-set any congestion that may have arisen as a result of the proposals to reduce the number of lanes and widen the pedestrian crossing islands on Wood Lane and Green Lane.
- 3.3 If approved, the Merry Fiddlers Junction improvements are timetabled to commence at the end of January 2015 and will last for approximately 8 weeks. Every effort will be made to minimise disruption during the works, with the bulk of work being undertaken outside the main morning and evening peak periods.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 As detailed in the March 2013 Cabinet Report, a comprehensive programme of community consultation involving a range of local stakeholders including residents, schools, businesses, transport operators and emergency services was undertaken between October and November 2012. Around 62% of respondents were broadly

supportive of the original proposals with strong support for measures to improve safety/accessibility at and around the main Merry Fiddlers junction.

- 4.2 The proposed minor amendments to the original junction improvement scheme have come about following further discussions and consultation on the detailed designs with Transport for London.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Carl Tomlinson, Finance Group Manager.

- 5.1 The proposed traffic signal and highway improvements works are the final part of the Merry Fiddlers Junction Improvements scheme which has been fully funded by Transport for London as part of the Borough's Local Implementation Plan (LIP). The total capital budget for the entire scheme, including design, consultation, construction and administration is £860,000 and this has been spread over two financial years.
- 5.2 The proposed improvements to the design of the junction can be funded from the existing budget.
- 5.3 Once the works have been completed, no additional revenue costs are anticipated in respect of maintaining the junction's highway infrastructure.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Paul Field, Senior Corporate Governance Solicitor.

- 6.1 The Council is a Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980. The Act places a statutory responsibility on the Council to maintain and repair all those roads which are not trunk roads or roads administered by the Greater London Authority. To reduce the risk of accidents and so as to be able to rely on a statutory defence against claims in the event of accidents, the Council is obliged to establish a programme of inspections and prioritisation of works.
- 6.2 The proposals set out in this report are identified as a priority and if as appears to be the case a junction presents an increased risk of danger to road users and pedestrians then such works as are necessary to reduce the risk should be accorded a special priority.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 **Risk Management** – The minor amendments to the scheme are required to address issues identified during the detailed design stage by Transport for London, who operate and maintain the traffic signals and the Council, to ensure that the scheme will offer the maximum safety benefits to vulnerable road users such as cyclists/pedestrians, whilst maintaining the safe and expedient flow of traffic on the borough road network.
- 7.2 **Contractual Issues** – Procurement relating to the delivery of this project will be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Council's contract rules and procurement rules including EU procurement rules where applicable. Legal

procurement advice would be consulted in entering into terms and conditions with suppliers in relation to such procurement.

- 7.3 **Corporate Policy and Customer Impact** – The proposed changes are in line with Council priorities. In particular the changes will contribute to enabling social responsibility through protecting the most vulnerable, keeping adults and children healthy and safe. The recommended improvements will benefit all those who use the Merry Fiddlers junction including motorists, pedestrians and cyclists and will improve safety at the junction. The changes also contribute to the Council's 'Growing the borough' priority through investment in enhancing our environment.

There are no specific equality implications as a result of the changes. The plans have been through consultation with relevant stakeholders including TFL and road safety and accessibility have been considered in great detail. The changes will result in a safer junction benefitting all protected groups.

- 7.4 **Safeguarding Children** – The current junction is a formidable barrier to the thousands of children accessing Robert Clack and All Saints Secondary Schools and people using the Becontree Heath Leisure Centre. Therefore improvements to pedestrian and cyclist access have been one of the key motivations for securing improvements to the junction and local schools have been consulted on the proposals. It is also the objective of the improvements to reduce the rate of accidents in the locality and to create a safer environment for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

- 7.5 **Health Issues** – The proposals are expected to have beneficial impact on health of local residents of Becontree Heath by helping to reduce traffic congestion at the junction and thereby improving air quality, whilst promoting healthy travel practices through the provision of improved pedestrian/cycle facilities. In addition, general well being will be improved as a result of the enhanced visual appearance of the junction and surrounding public realm. It is anticipated that the various proposals will result in a reduction in the incidences of collisions at the junction, thus helping the borough to meet its road safety targets. Finally it is hoped that the junction improvements will make it easier for people to access the leisure centre.

- 7.6 **Crime and Disorder Issues** – The proposals will provide a safer and more secure environment where opportunities for crime are reduced will help make the area more user friendly and more legible.

- 7.7 **Property / Asset Issues** – The recommended proposals work within the existing footprint of the junction.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- Merry Fiddlers Junction Feasibility Study, February 2012; Parsons Brinkerhoff
- Merry Fiddlers Junction Consultation Cabinet Report; February 2013

List of appendices:

- Appendix 1: Merry Fiddlers Junction Existing Layout
Appendix 2: Merry Fiddlers Junction Final Designs