

Transport, Environment and Residents Services Select Committee Minutes

Wednesday 12 February 2014

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Steve Hamilton (Chairman), Iain Coleman, Robert Iggulden, Wesley Harcourt (Vice-Chairman), Lisa Homan, Jane Law and Gavin Donovan

Other Councillors: Councillors Nick Botterill, Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler, and Lucy Ivimy.

Officers: Nick Boyle, Transport and Development Manager, Thomas Cardis, Senior Planning Officer, Pat Cox, Head of Planning Policy, Nick Austin, Bi-Borough Director of Environmental Health, and Owen Rees, Committee Coordinator.

31. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

RESOLVED THAT

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2014 be agreed as a true and correct record.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors De Lisle and Adam.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. HAMMERSMITH FLYUNDER FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Committee received a report and presentation on the Hammersmith Flyunder Feasibility Study. The Committee heard about the engagement undertaken by the group carrying out the Feasibility Study, which had met

with neighbouring boroughs and Transport for London, held a Flyunder summit, with those in attendance completing a questionnaire, met with local stakeholders and meetings with both administration and opposition Councillors.

The Committee heard that the Feasibility Study showed that a tunnel was possible, and that 3 possible routes for that tunnel had been identified. The Study had identified benefits and disbenefits associated with each of those 3 options, and had examined the 4 areas identified as key concerns at the summit (traffic diversions, cost, A4 closure, construction lorries).

The options identified were for a short tunnel to run from Furnivall Gardens to west London College, and for a longer tunnel to run from Sutton Court Road to either North End Road or to Earls Court Road. The Study identified that, due to the volume of the traffic exiting the A4 between Chiswick and Earls Court (50%), the latter options would require either additional tunnel exits (at additional cost) or would not enable the removal of the existing structures in Hammersmith Town Centre. It was noted that the Study would not be able to make a full strategic assessment of the impact of any of the options, and that this would require TfL input.

The Study identified that all three options would have a similar impact in terms of traffic disruption during construction, though the disruption would occur in different places based on the option chosen. The construction time and associated disruption was of similar duration for all three options. In relation to construction traffic, the Study had identified the likely quantity of spoil to be removed, and the quantity of lorries required, with and without use of the river. Finally, the Study had estimated the cost for each option, with Option 1 estimated as £218 million, and options 2 and 3 at £1210 and 1297 million respectively.

The Study had also undertaken a master Planning exercise, to identify the value of the land freed for redevelopment which could support the cost of construction. Based on the assumptions set out in the report, a figure of £1 billion had been identified. The completed Feasibility Study would be sent to Transport For London, who would be asked to continue the work undertaken.

The Committee asked the following questions and received the following responses

What was the life of the existing structure and what was TfL's position on replacement?

- TfL believed that the Flyover had decades of life, but had been supportive of the Study and of the idea of tunnelling in general.

How did local businesses feel about the potential disruption?

- Hammersmith BID was commissioning its own study of the economic impact, which would be included with the final Study submitted to TfL, but were excited by the idea in principle.

How would the proposed plans increase public open space and access to the river?

- The removal of the Flyover would create additional public space in the centre of Hammersmith, though enabling development would also take place.

Why was the use of the river for spoil not confirmed?

- The Study was to look at the feasibility of a tunnel, and did not contain a full construction plan, including on the use of the river for spoil.

What impact would tunnelling have on drainage and the water table?

- There should be no issue, if the tunnel was designed correctly.

What were the merits of Option 2 and 3?

- Option 1 would not allow the reconfiguration of the gyratory, and would leave the A4 in place along a significant section of the route, including Hogarth Roundabout.

When could a response from TfL be expected?

- The Study was a direct response to the challenge set to Boroughs by the Roads Taskforce, and TfL had been engaged with the Study Group's work throughout. There was no firm date for decision, however.

Residents who had attended the meeting were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions. The questions asked and answers given are summarised below:

Several residents emphasised the need for as long a tunnel as possible, and noted that the significant contributions to the urban realm and to air quality a tunnel could make should be emphasised.

- The Study authors said that the Council could press TfL to take full account of these issues in reaching a decision. They also noted that air quality might not benefit at tunnel exits and entrances.

Residents asked whether a North-South Tunnel had been investigated.

- Officers said that preliminary study had shown this to be prohibitively expensive and difficult, with little traffic usage. Full strategic modelling would be required to be assured of this, however.

Residents asked what the approximate size of a tunnel entrance would be.

- The Study authors said that the ramp would be approximately 200 metres in length.

Residents asked for clarification of the impact on residents living south of the A4.

- The Study authors said that this would depend on the option chosen, and the subsequent treatment of the A4.

Residents expressed a desire for open space and a minimum of residential development.

- The Study authors said that the proposal would allow for an increase in open space around St Pauls and the Apollo, with a possible increase in size of Furnival Gardens, but that development would be required to fund the development.

Residents asked why no option began at the Hogarth roundabout.

- The Study authors explained that the entrance needed to be further back to allow the tunnel to get under the roundabout, the Fullers Brewery and the river.

Residents asked for an estimate of the timescale for a solution, assuming one could be agreed.

- The Study authors suggested that while construction would be relatively quick once commenced, the governance process could be lengthy, with the Limehouse Link taking ten years to reach final approval.

Residents present also expressed the following concerns:

- Residents expressed concern at the idea that a tunnel could be used to add capacity to the network without the removal of existing roads, given the changing patterns of use.
- Residents welcomed the report, but suggested that a comprehensive solution, addressing issues such as the north-south route along with tunnelling was required from TfL.

The Committee welcomed the work done by the Feasibility Study, and recommended that the final version be forwarded to TfL for further action. Having noted the comments of residents in attendance, it also resolved to recommend that the Study and the Study group should place a strong emphasis on the environmental benefits and the benefits for Hammersmith Town Centre that the proposal would bring.

RESOLVED THAT

- (i) The report be referred to Cabinet, with the recommendation that they endorse the Feasibility Study and forward it to TfL, and;
- (ii) That the Study and the Study group should place a strong emphasis on the environmental benefits to residents and the restoration of

community links that the project would bring, and that TfL be recommended to take full account of this in their decision-making process, and;

- (iii) That the minutes of the meeting be forwarded to Cabinet with the report.

35. VOTE OF CONGRATULATIONS

The Committee offered its congratulations to Councillor Law on the birth of her daughter Charlotte.

36. TRADITIONAL PUBS IN THE BOROUGH

The Committee received a report on pubs in the borough. The report contained contributions from Planning Policy, Licensing, the Campaign for Real Ale, and the British Beer and Pub Association, and the committee meeting was attended by Pat Cox, Head of Planning Policy, Nick Austin, Director of Environmental Health, David Wilson and Jim Cathcart of the BBPA and Katie Smith, general manager of the Sands End, SW6.

With regards to planning issues, the Committee heard that pubs identified as having community value were subject to a viability assessment before a change of use to residential was agreed. However, the Council had no control over changes of use within retail (i.e. from A4 to A1 or A2, from a pub into a supermarket). With regards to licensing issues, the Committee heard that the Council was responsible for licensing of pubs, but was bound by the Licensing Act to do this on a case-by-case basis. The Council did have in place cumulative impact policies in Fulham and Shepherds Bush town centres, but these did not necessarily mean that an application from a new pub in those areas would be refused.

With regards to the view of the industry, David Wilson of the British Beer and Pub Association said that pubs supported a large number of jobs, including an estimated 2,000 in Hammersmith & Fulham. He said that, in contrast to CAMRA, the Association disagreed with blanket planning restrictions being imposed on pubs, as a number of outside factors, including changing public taste, were affecting the wet-led trade in particular. He noted that many pubs threatened with closure were in or adjacent to high streets, and increasing the success and viability of the latter would assist the former. He said that the BBPA's analysis showed that the number of closures was levelling out.

From the perspective of a local operator, Ms Smith said that it was possible to run a pub in the borough, and the company she worked for had two contrasting models at the Brown Cow and the Sands End, with the latter retaining a community feel. She said that it was increasingly less viable to open and maintain wet-led pubs.

Councillor Homan asked about the suggestions made by CAMRA to tighten planning controls. Councillor Nick Botterill said that, having examined the list of pubs still open in the borough, he was convinced that the borough retained

a strong pub sector, and that those pubs which had closed were usually trading poorly.

Councillor Homan suggested that there was an issue where change of use led to a concentration of one type of retail. Ms Cox said that the Council had not sought to prevent change of one retail use for another, though it had sought to protect retail as a whole. She said that the level of protection in RBKC was not substantially higher than that in the borough, and that to be protected, a pub was required to have community value and for a willing operator to be found.

Councillor Botterill added that if an area was not attractive to passing trade, pubs found it as difficult as other types of retail to succeed. As such, mini-supermarkets could be of assistance.

Councillor Iggulden suggested that the larger breweries and pub companies managed their estates carefully, and in certain cases, could allow the viability of a pub to decline through their management practices. He said that flexibility would only result in increasing closures.

Mr Wilson said that the focus of his membership was on operating pubs and selling beer, rather than property sales. He said that the demographic changes experienced by the sector affected what could be viable, and that assessment had to be made by the trade itself.

Councillor Harcourt said that the operator could act as Councillor Iggulden described, and that he believed a restriction on change of use from A4 should be imposed. Mr Wilson said that residents were able to register a pub as an asset of community value and this would mean that there was a window to find an operator for the site. However, both he and Ms Smith noted that a site might be viable with a different operator, who might operate it differently, raising issues of gentrification. Mr Wilson noted the importance of entrepreneurial managers in the future of pubs, and the increasing importance of a diversity of beers, but noted that small corner pubs were difficult to operate because of the demographics of the trade.

The Committee thanked all those present for attending and contributing. It agreed that further protection should be investigated by officers.

RESOLVED THAT

- (i) The Council should seek to introduce of a pub protection policy similar to that in operation in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and;
- (ii) The Council should seek greater controls over changes of use within the A class.

37. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

RESOLVED THAT

The report be noted.

38. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Committee agreed to add an update on flooding to the agenda for its next meeting.

RESOLVED THAT

The report be noted.

39. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on 24 March 2014.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.45 pm

Chairman

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